

Southern Women in the American Civil War

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In the American Civil War, numerous Northern women had active roles and participated directly in the war effort. There are various accounts of Northern women disguising themselves and fighting in regiments as well as their emergence as nurses in the medical field. Thus, the role of Northern women was openly active in the Civil War. This is because during this time period, gender roles for women in the North were not as rigid as they were in the antebellum South. This poses the question: what about Southern women? Specifically white women? Traditionally in the South, gender roles were extremely rigid. Women were expected to remain in the home and tend to the children and remain in the domestic sphere while their husbands are in the public sphere, working, and in politics. Therefore, when war breaks out it was the man's job to go to battle and protect their wife, their home, and their way of life. These gender roles and expectations raise the question as to whether or not southern women had a role in the American Civil War and, if they did, how big of a role was it? Were there cases of Southern women who defied the traditional gender roles and had an impact on the war? The role of women is not given much attention in neither Union nor Confederate historical narrative due to their primarily domestic status. Some historians argue that the gender norms of the South and the Southern "cult of domesticity," kept any form of patriotism a sort of domestic patriotism adherent to subordination of men.¹ Renowned expert on this subject Drew Gilpin Faust does confirm this identity reconstruction that takes place in this shift of gender roles in society during the war. However, she doesn't necessarily see the majority of Southern white women actually deeply committed to the war and making a profound impact. She does indeed see a change in

¹ Borrmann, Kaitlin, "Power in Traditional Gender Roles: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and White Southern Women's Search for Authority," *Legacy* 18, no. 1 (Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2018) 2.

gender roles from the war and she states that some women embraced their new roles while others were happy to go back to normal.

After looking at various sources, both primary and secondary, it is demonstrated that the role of Southern white women was anything but passive and subordinate and there are instances where Southern women went against traditional culture and gender roles and had an impact in the American Civil War. This partially confirms Faust's thesis. However, the research here argues that many were committed and whether the women were happy to return to their traditional roles or not these events were still contributors to a beginning at challenging the cult of womanhood. The significance of the information found gives light to these perhaps forgotten women and also shows that the strict gender roles of the South were not universal for all during the antebellum era. This information also suggests the beginning of a slow and gradual dismantling of strict gender roles for women in the South. This research first highlights individual women and then later groups of women whom were directly involved with aiding the Confederacy. Then the discussion shifts into the idea of women and nursing and the role gender has in the medical field. From there, there is a brief evaluation of the primary sources used for this research that will lead to some more examples that support the claim. After that, there is some more noteworthy information that supports the claim. The ideas of women and war regarding their perception is also discussed. Lastly, before concluding the research, the schools of thought for other historians will be discussed, including the counterclaim.

As mentioned, firstly it is important to look at a handful of individual women whose stories defy Southern gender roles. Their stories are unique and their successes align with the claim of insubordination and making an impact outside of the domestic sphere.

An example of one woman whose role was blatantly impactful was Sally Tompkins. Sally Tompkins founded the Robertson Hospital in Richmond, Virginia. Her hospital would become the hospital with the lowest mortality rate in all of the American Civil War. Tompkins and her staff treated 1,333 soldiers and only had 73 deaths over the course of four years. Due to her outstanding efforts and success in her hospital, President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis proclaimed Tompkins as a Captain in the Confederate Army.² By the time of her death, she was buried with full military honors and was known as the “Angel of the Confederacy”.³

Sally Tompkins’s story is an important one and one that is often untold. Tompkins is the only woman to officially be in the Confederate army on record. Not to mention she was in a position of authority as a captain, appointed by the President Davis himself. This was something that was unprecedented in the American Civil War on both sides. While she was not directly involved in fighting on the battlefield, she still played a crucial role for the Confederate army.

The mortality rate for her hospital was extremely low which would have been especially difficult to achieve at this time in history because medicine was not yet advanced. Most injured men died in the war, making her statistics incredible for this time period. She achieved this by the cleanliness of her hospital, which prevented infection. Infection was not yet understood at the time, but her obsession with keeping her facility clean is what kept men alive. Tompkins’s success in the hospital to keeping men alive and having very few deaths is what earned her the status as a Confederate Captain. President Jefferson Davis even offered to pay Tompkins for her services but she did not accept. She wrote that she would not allow her name to be on the pay

² Ron Maggiano, “Captain Sally Tompkins: Angel of the Confederacy”, *OAH Magazine of History*, no. 2, (Winter, 2002), 32.

³ Maggiano, 33.

roll of the Confederate Army.⁴ Not only was a Tompkins a female captain in the Confederate Army, but she was a woman that was offered payment as well.

It is evident that Sally Tompkins's role was anything but defiant to gender roles and impactful to the American Civil War. While she is just one woman, she was able to achieve a status that made her higher up than most men, as well as equal to some very important ones and was offered payment for her services even though she was a woman. In a society where women strictly belong in the home, Sally Tompkins's role in the Civil War was completely contradictory to Southern culture. Thus, as previously mentioned, Southern women were not completely idle and passive during the Civil War; even though that is what Southern culture would expect and prefer them to be.

There was another Southern woman who shares a similar storyline to Sally Tompkins. Juliet Opie Hopkins was from Mobile, Alabama and set off to Richmond, Virginia to aid Alabamian Confederates in the war. She would end up establishing 3 hospitals in Virginia and keep contact with Confederate support groups back in Alabama whom would send her medical supplies and money that would help her run her hospitals.⁵ Hopkins actually went into battlefields during the fighting to rescue wounded soldiers. She was wounded when doing this in the Battle of Seven Pines and had a limp for the rest of her life. Hopkins' portrait was shortly put on the 25-cent piece and 50-dollar bills of Alabama's Confederate currency during the war. She was known as the "Florence Nightingale of the South" and commander of the Confederate Army

⁴ Maggiano, 33.

⁵ "Juliet Opie Hopkins (1818-1890)," Alabama Women's Hall of Fame, accessed December 9, 2021, awhf.org/hopkins.html

Robert E. Lee praised Hopkins for her work.⁶ The narratives of North reveal Florence Nightingale for her impact and success. Juliet Opie Hopkins would be her Southern counterpart.

A third Southern woman who had a large role in the American Civil War for the Confederacy was Isabella Maria Boyd, or more commonly known as, “Belle Boyd”. Belle Boyd was recruited by the Confederate Army to be a spy. She wrote about her experiences as a spy as well as the time she spent in prison in her book *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*. She earned her position because when Union troops tried to hang a Union flag in front of her home, she shot and killed the man who did it and put her Confederate flag back in its place.⁷ In her book, she also wrote about how her espionage included the seduction of Union Captain Daniel Keily to whom she is “indebted for some very remarkable effusions, some withered flowers, and a great deal of important information.”⁸ She would later receive the Southern Cross of Honor for her espionage and contributions to the Confederate cause.

Belle Boyd being a spy for the Confederacy reiterates the idea that not all Southern women remained subordinate to gender roles in the American Civil War. This woman was recruited by the Confederacy to be a spy for them. This is significant because a woman was needed for such an important role in handling, processing, and passing on classified information. However, this role was also extremely dangerous. Boyd had to risk her life and was in constant danger. Boyd’s duties resulted in her being in and out of prison the various times she was caught by the Union. The Confederacy’s usage of Boyd also contradicts traditional Southern culture and values because they were the ones who wanted her to be involved in the war and gave Boyd such

⁶ “Juliet Opie Hopkins: Nurse, Confederate States of America,” Arlington National Cemetery Website, accessed December 9, 2021, arlingtoncemetery.net/hopkins.htm

⁷ Belle Boyd, “Belle Boyd In Camp and Prison. In Two Volumes”, Vol. 1, (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1865) 68.

⁸ Boyd, 102.

a position that consisted of such direct involvement. By giving Boyd this position, the Confederacy has removed Boyd from the traditional domestic realm and thus removed her from her traditional domestic duties in the home. Boyd's espionage and acquisition of crucial information from the Union army for the Confederate generals is not entailed in the description of a subordinate Southern woman. This being so, Belle Boyd was another example of how not all Southern women were passive and unimpactful during the American Civil War.

To continue with the theme of individuals, Belle Edmondson is another example of a southern woman who also was directly involved in the war. Edmondson and her family lived on a farm where they were in close proximity of both armies. She was accustomed to seeing parties of scouts patrolling the Tennessee-Mississippi border at all times. Since her family was originally from Mississippi, they were pro-Confederacy. This being so, Edmondson took it upon herself to support the Confederate cause by becoming a smuggler. She carried information and supplies to the Confederate lines through Union scouting parties. Edmondson achieved this by putting money and letters in her bosom and other supplies under her petticoats because she had faith that the Union troops would not search a woman. In her diary, Edmondson wrote about how on one trip, she made parts of her dress out of the fabric that would later be turned into Confederate uniforms. She also pinned hats to the inside of the hoops that make up her skirt, and tied boots around her waist that also fit under her skirt. Edmondson also mentions how she stashed money, letters, and brass buttons into her bosom for their transport.⁹ All of Edmondson's smuggling trips through Union forces were successful. However, eventually her frequent trips in the direction of the Confederate lines caught the attention of Union General Stephen A. Hurlburt and he put a

⁹ Belle Edmondson, *The Diary of Belle Edmondson, January to November, 1864*, (Southern Historical Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill, 1998) 20.

warrant out for her arrest to have her searched. To avoid arrest she had to flee back to Mississippi and her time as a smuggler came to an end.¹⁰

Edmonson volunteered her services to the Confederate cause because she believed in Southern independence. The location of her family's farm was in a location where she encountered both troops. By being a woman, she was perceived as innocent because according to the gender roles of the time, women were not to be involved in the war. These two aspects are what gave Edmondson the ability to smuggle goods across the lines so easily. But her diary and her actions show that some southern women were interested in being actively involved in the war and supporting the Confederate cause. Edmonson worked with a number of women and family members to support the war effort. She wrote about how when Confederate soldiers passed through, the women sewed clothes for the soldiers, tended to their wounds, and fed them meals.¹¹ Edmondson even uses the stereotype that women were so passive to her advantage because it allowed her to smuggle supplies and information so efficiently across Union lines. Edmondson's account is a reiteration of just how impassive some Southern women were during the war. However, it also shows how the country perceived women's gender roles and so rigid that they never really suspected her. When the reality was that Edmonson was defying them and her along with other women, were involving themselves in the war.

There was another woman whose story line is extremely similar to Belle Edmonson's story. Clara Judd was another woman who had been a spy for the Confederacy who had also been slipping back and forth between Union and Confederate lines in Tennessee. Judd had also been imprisoned and released a number of times as well. To reiterate how women weren't

¹⁰ Perre Magness, "Belle Edmondson", *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, (The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, Tennessee: 2002).

¹¹ Edmonson, 100.

suspected to be involved, or this idea of women being the enemy was almost unfathomable for Union officers. In Clara Judd's case, the soldiers that had her imprisoned weren't entirely sure what to do with her even though she is technically committing treason. These men aren't sure because of the fact that Clara Judd was a woman. These Union soldiers would write to their captains and generals how the women were a problem and but they needed guidance on how to handle because of the idea that it was hard to conceive women as an enemy because of society's rule of war.¹²

There is also record of a number of individual women who tried to enlist in the Confederate army. Many would be discharged once found out, but their stories and their dedication show the impassiveness and drive some Southern women had towards aiding the Confederacy. One woman named Amy Clarke enlisted with her husband and continued to fight in the army after her husband died. It wasn't until she had been wounded twice that her sex had been detected and she was sent home. Then shortly after, she was caught trying to re-enlist in Mississippi but since she was caught, she was dismissed.¹³ Malinda Blalock of North Carolina enlisted by pretending to be her husband's brother. Mary Wright and Morgan Henry were arrested at the end of the war in Tennessee. No one knows how long they had been enlisted and had their identities concealed.

The most famous female Confederate soldier, is one who's story is lacking in credibility. However, her story is still important to tell in the event that it is true for the purpose of this argument. Her name was Loreta Janeta Velasquez and she wrote an autobiography about her experiences as a Confederate soldier that was published in 1876 titled *Woman in Battle: A*

¹² National Museum of Civil War Medicine, "Women's War: Fighting and Surviving the American Civil War with Dr. Stephanie McCurry," Youtube video, 1:05:03, March 12, 2021.

¹³ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 81.

Narrative of the Exploits, Adventures and Travels of Madame Loreta Janeta Velazquez, Otherwise known as Lieutenant Harry T. Burford. She claims that she was a soldier and a spy for the Confederate army. Velasquez first fought with a Floridian battalion at Manassas, Ball's Bluff, Fort Pillow, and Shiloh. Then she became a spy and used cross-dressing to her advantage as a means to constantly change her identity. As far as credibility goes, there are matches between the pseudonyms that Velasquez used at given time periods with prison records of women with those names being arrested and released for being a female soldier. When she writes about her imprisonment, there are parts where other individuals who had been imprisoned at the same time and place match Velasquez's account.¹⁴ Scholars are still unsure if Velasquez's autobiography is true. Some historians have also proposed the idea that perhaps Velasquez's autobiography was actually a compilation of experiences that belonged to a number of different women. Nonetheless, in the event that the story of Velasquez or possible mystery women is true, this would be another example of women directly involving themselves in the Confederate cause.

Lizzie Hardin was a southern woman from Kentucky who came from a family of a number of Confederate generals. Hardin's diary shows her dedication and passion to the Confederate cause. Her diary's first page actually has newspaper clippings of Confederate flags and portraits of Confederate generals adhered to the paper.¹⁵ Hardin's writing begins with her daydreaming of being able to join the army and fight in battle.¹⁶ These two details immediately show Hardin's passion towards the Confederate cause. When the war began, Hardin helped prepare soldiers for war by sewing and making items like clothes, knapsacks, haversacks, and

¹⁴ Massey, 84.

¹⁵ "Lizzie Hardin Diary, 1860-1865," University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center, Accessed December 9, 2021.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Pendleton Hardin, "The Private War of Lizzie Hardin: A Kentucky Confederate Girl's Diary of the Civil War in Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia," ed. G. Glenn Clift (University of Michigan, 1963), 2.

canteen covers.¹⁷ Later as the war really gets underway, Hardin works in Relief Societies that gathered supplies needed for wounded soldiers. She mentions how she collects “provisions for the sick, bandages, lint, pickles, wines, jellies, clothing, everything in short which could add to their comfort was sent in on boxes.”¹⁸ This quote is demonstrative of a lot of Hardin and her family’s efforts to support the Confederacy in the war. However, in the social circles of Kentucky, Hardin and her mother took on an outspoken role in promoting the South. Being a resident of Kentucky, made this outspokenness dangerous.¹⁹

Kentucky is described as a border-state during the Civil War because it was one of the states that was on the border of the Union and the Confederacy. Kentucky was a Union state but it was also a slave-holding state. Kentucky’s support of slavery, but overall loyalty to the Union, and its strategic geographic position, made it important to President Abraham Lincoln at the start of the Civil War. Lincoln was therefore determined to keep Kentucky and the other border-states a part of the Union. Lincoln would adopt a number of strategies to do this and one of them was to arrest leading Confederate sympathizers in these border-states. This was so those individuals could not persuade others to join their cause and get enough support for the state to succeed from the Union. As previously mentioned, Hardin and her family were very outspoken Confederate supporters. This being so, Hardin, her mother, and her sister, would all be arrested by Union authorities when spotted waving their handkerchiefs at Confederate troops that were passing through. The Union officials offered to release Hardin and her family members on the condition

¹⁷ Hardin, 18.

¹⁸ Hardin, 28.

¹⁹ Anne E. Marshall, “A “Sisters’ War”: Kentucky Women and their Civil War Diaries,” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (Kentucky Historical Society, 2012) 484.

that they sign an oath of allegiance to the United States. They refused so the Union authorities exiled them to behind Confederate lines and they would ultimately end up settling in Georgia.²⁰

The actions just mentioned about Lizzie Hardin and her family show their dedication to the Confederate cause. Hardin's diary in general shows her interest and devotion to the cause. Then her actions supporting the war by gathering supplies and sending them to the front lines also shows her involvement. Hardin's arrest though, speaks the most volume to Hardin and her family's impassivity to the war. These women were clearly taking their beliefs to the public sphere by going out and doing things like waving their handkerchiefs in support to the Confederates. Especially the fact that Hardin and her family were in a border-state so they were most likely aware that their actions could lead to arrest due to the fact that many Southern sympathizers were being arrested as per Lincoln's command. Once arrested, Hardin and her family were given the option to be freed if they pledged allegiance to the Union which they would refuse; further demonstrating their dedication and leading to their exile from the state of Kentucky.

Hardin and her family are just a few individuals but one part of Hardin's diary reveals that they were not anecdotes in their state. There is one part of Hardin's diary where her and her mother are in the company of well-known Confederate cavalry raider John Hunt Morgan. John Hunt Morgan was apparently greatly appreciative to female loyalists and said to Hardin's mother, "Oh! If the men of Kentucky had but the spirit of the women she would have long since been free."²¹ Morgan's comment is telling of the atmosphere created by the women of Kentucky. It tells that there are many more women in this region that are pro-Confederate. It also reveals

²⁰ Marshall, 485.

²¹ Hardin, 87.

that these women are extremely public with their support and passion for the Confederate cause to a point where a cavalry raider who would just be passing through the state is able to recognize this. Thus, defying the expectation that women are supposed to remain domestic and refrain from being politically involved.

While the stories of these individuals are brief, they nonetheless are strong examples of individual women who had extremely active roles in the war. Their efforts clearly conflict with gender norms as many of them were dismissed on the discovery of their sex. However, the importance of their determination and drive for activism stands as what is relevant. Their stories also pose the question how many other women did this and didn't get written about because they were never caught? Thus, reiterating the claim of Southern women insubordination and impact.

The next few paragraphs highlight women being involved in specific Southern states. The specific states that will be looked at first are North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Indiana, and Tennessee. These states have strong evidence of the involvement of groups of women in the war effort so that is why they are being categorized together. When looking at *War Days in Fayetteville, North Carolina: Reminiscences of 1861 to 1865*, which is a compilation of accounts put together by J.E.B. Stuart Chapter and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, individuals mention the more domestic tasks Southern women took part in to support the Confederacy. Many of them were tasked to sewing all of the Confederate soldiers' uniforms as well as making all of their hats.²² Similarly in Charleston, South Carolina, a small circle of women worked on the eve of near seizure by the Union army and produced a total of 519 shirts, 267 pairs of drawers, 189 pairs of socks, 179 pairs of pants, 23 pairs of shoes, and 37 blankets, comforters,

²² Mrs. Eliza Tillinghast Stinson, ed. J.E.B. Stuart Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, "Arrival of the Artillery", *War Days in Fayetteville, North Carolina: Reminiscences of 1861 to 1865*, (Judge Printing Company, Fayetteville, North Carolina: 1910) 12.

handkerchiefs, and scarves.²³ The fact that the city was on the brink of seizure yet the women continued to work despite the danger shows their commitment. Not to mention that machinery like sewing machines and looms were concentrated in the industrialized North so Southern women had to do most of the textile work by hand. Textiles and cloth itself would have also been produced in the North so it is noted in sources that many Southern women would donate their own garments if they could so that they could use the cloth to produce clothing for the soldiers instead since they couldn't necessarily get new cloth from the North due to the war. This would have been very time consuming and shows the dedication of these volunteers to supporting the Confederacy.

South Carolinian women also began opening "wayside homes" which was essentially where they would run small inns but not for the sake of profit. These inns were for providing soldiers with food, drink, and a place to sleep. These "wayside" homes would become common across the South and were run by wealthy women that could afford it.²⁴

How could the Southern women be passive if numbers of them are involved in directly producing the supplies for the Confederate Army? When supplies became short during the war, the women of the South continued to support the war by using scraps of old uniforms to make their own clothing. Thus, other, newer fabrics they were able to get would go to the war effort. This often made the Southern women more behind on fashions, and their dresses and bonnets were not the nicest they could possibly be, but they wanted to support the Confederacy and

²³ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 34.

²⁴ Massey, 37.

understood that the soldiers needed the fabrics more than they did so they were very willing to make the sacrifice and make do with whatever else was left.²⁵

Although these actions taken by the women of Fayetteville, North Carolina and the women of South Carolina were small, more domestic type war efforts, they are more applicable to the average Southern woman during the American Civil War. Not every woman could go out and be a spy or run a hospital if they have a number of children or elderly family members that needed to be cared for. Thus, this type of involvement was presumably more common. Nonetheless, it still is a way in which Southern women were actively involved in the war. They were direct producers of the soldiers' supplies. Therefore, they had an extremely important role to the men they were making the uniforms for because uniforms were obviously a necessity. All of the work done by these women were voluntary. They were not ordered or told. They wanted to do something to support the Confederacy in any way they could, even if it was just sacrificing high-end fashions so that the soldiers could be properly clothed.

In Tracy J. Revels' article "Grander in Her Daughters: Florida's Women during the Civil War", Revels wrote about how history often portrays Southern women as the helpless handkerchief-waving wives whom sit idly by waiting for their husbands to return from battle. Revels' article is about disproving this stereotype and she talks about how there was a variety of different types of women in Florida who engaged in many different activities in relation to the war.²⁶ Revel wrote about how Helen, Maria, Margaret, and Florida Broward, daughters of Colonel John Broward, wrote a states' rights manifesto to the *Jacksonville Standard* at the start of the war as a way to try and gain support for the Confederate cause before the war started and

²⁵ Stinson, 22.

²⁶ Tracy J. Revels, "Grander in Her Daughters: Florida's Women during the Civil War", *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, 77, no. 3, (1999) 261.

promoted succession. Many Floridian women wore palmetto cockades in their hats to show their open support for the succession of South Carolina. Palmetto is a type of palm, tree that is known to be a strong and resilient plant so it became a symbol for the Confederacy. The palmetto leaves would be woven into a rosette type patten and accompanied by ribbons to form a cockade. Women would adorn their hats or even sometimes their dresses with these palmetto cockades to publicly display their support for secession. They also attended public assemblies about the succession and the prospect of war in order to remain educated and informed on news of the day.²⁷

These Floridan women are in the public sphere and engaging in politics before the war even started. They were going out and educating themselves on the issues of the times like slavery and succession and taking a stance on the subjects and finding ways to promote their opinion. With the case of the Broward sisters, they even wrote about what they believed in and why to try and get others to agree with what they believed was right. It is important to recognize that during this time period it was not seen as entirely normal or even acceptable for women to be involved in politics, educating themselves, or writing for the public persuasively. While education for women was seen as important, the education they received was not the same curriculum that men received. Public schools taught both boys and girls reading, writing and arithmetic. If a woman was fortunate to attend a school of higher education, she was taught skills to make her a better mother and wife. This was because it was expected for a woman to marry and remain in the home, thus remaining in the private, domestic sphere.²⁸ This being so, the actions taken by these Floridian women were stepping out of their gender norms.

²⁷ Revels, 262.

²⁸ Newnham College, "Women's Education," University at Cambridge (Cambridge: 2021) [Women's Education – Newnham College \(cam.ac.uk\)](https://www.newnham.cam.ac.uk/women-education) .

When succession occurred and war broke out, women who were in favor of this cheered and celebrated with the fire-eaters whom “promised to drink to all the blood spilled in the war”.²⁹ Once the men began to prepare for battle, the women of Florida organized “sewing brigades” where women sewed and knitted uniforms, flags, and other banners for the soldiers to help “lighten their burdens” and support the Confederacy.³⁰ This is the same course of action that the women of Fayetteville, North Carolina took when the war broke out. Therefore, this is evidence showing that the actions of the women in North Carolina were not isolated to that region, because it is clear that women in Florida were doing the same thing. Even the rhetoric used by their actions is of note. The women described their sewing groups as “brigades.” The word “brigade” means a subdivision of an army. These women are describing themselves as a part of the army and the importance of this is even the rhetoric they were using demonstrates impassivity. Women in the Southern portion of Indiana who supported the Confederacy also had sewing brigades to help produce uniforms as well.³¹ To further reiterate this point, women in Knoxville, Tennessee created the Soldiers’ Relief Society which also was dedicated to sewing garments for Confederate soldiers.³² Thus, another example of more women being direct producers in supplying the Confederate Army and volunteering their services in order to have a more active role in the war. The different locations of these movements occurring show that these ideas were widespread across the Confederate states and not just in one particular region.

The Confederate government recognized the efforts of the Floridan women and gave them funds and as well as supplied them with the materials they needed to produce what the

²⁹ Revels, 263.

³⁰ Revels, 264.

³¹ Thomas E. Rogers, “Hoosier Women and the Civil War Home Front”, *Indiana Magazine of History*, 97, no. 2, (Indiana University Press, Indiana: 2002) 119.

³² William A. Strasser Jr., “Our Women Played Well Their Parts: Confederate Women in Civil War East Tennessee”, *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, 59, no. 2, (Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee: 2000) 90.

soldiers needed. With these materials they were also able to prepare bandages, lint, and flannel bags for cartridges.³³ Florida's women also found ways to directly fundraise money for the war efforts as well. The Confederacy encouraged women to donate cash, their jewelry, napkin rings, forks, spoons, and silver tongs, that could be of money value to the Confederate army. The women also organized festivals that sold flower arrangements, handicrafts, and a large dinner that would raise money that could be donated to the war efforts.³⁴

There was also a great gravitation of Floridian women that sought out to support the war via hospitals. Many took up nursing but others delivered food to soldiers or collected towels, linens, and bedpans that were spared by the locals so that they could be used in the hospital. Some women also created small hotels in unused space that would provide a home-like comfort for soldiers that were passing through and needed a place to stay.³⁵ These were very similar to the "wayside homes" in South Carolina.

Based off of Revels' studies, there were numerous ways in which the women of Florida volunteered their services and got involved in the war efforts in order to support the Confederate cause. Their political efforts that took place before succession and the war are also an example of breaking the stereotype that women were passive, idle, and remained in their traditional domestic sphere. Here they were in the public realm, voicing their opinions, becoming more educated, and involving themselves in politics which clearly contradicts traditional Southern culture before the war even began.

³³ Revels, 265.

³⁴ Revels, 266.

³⁵ Revels, 267.

Now to shift focus back to Tennessee. It was previously mentioned that the women of Eastern Tennessee took war efforts into their own hands by organizing the Soldiers' Relief Society to help make uniforms for the Confederate soldiers. But the women of Eastern Tennessee did more than just sew for the Confederate army. They often opened their front doors to the Confederate soldiers that were passing through and cooked for them and made them extra food for the road. Many of them took up nursing and working in hospitals as well.

There were also some women who wanted to be more visible in their contribution to the Confederate cause. For example, in Rhea County, twenty-seven women organized themselves into a "cavalry troop" and rode on horseback and delivered food, clothes, and other supplies directly into the Confederate camps.³⁶ Again, the rhetoric the women chose, describing themselves as a "calvary troop" is of note. Similar to the use of "brigade," the fact that these women call themselves a calvary and the fact that their actions mirror those of an actual calvary show their direct involvement in the war. When Federal troops took control of Knoxville, and took many Confederate soldiers prisoner after the battle of Fort Sanders, it was the women of Knoxville who came to the Confederate prisoners' aid. The women brought the prisoners food and clothing. The prisoners later exclaimed that they owed the women of Knoxville their lives and that they would have frozen to death if they had not come and cared for them.³⁷ During Union occupation, many of the women were forced to take loyalty oaths to the Union. Many of them disobeyed, became spies for the Confederacy, or continued to publicly proclaim their loyalty to the Confederates. Thus, many of them ended up in jail themselves.³⁸ Furthermore, Knoxville, Tennessee becomes another example of a place where Southern women took wartime

³⁶ Strasser, 90.

³⁷ Strasser, 91.

³⁸ Strasser, 97.

matters into their own hands and found ways to support the Confederacy and be involved in the war. Knoxville, Tennessee is yet another example of a place where women were extremely involved and impactful for the Confederacy.

To continue about women in Tennessee, the diary of a woman named Kate Carney further depicts what some women were doing in Tennessee. Carney came from a Southern military family that owned a plantation in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and the men in her family and her friends' families all immediately enlisted to be Confederate soldiers. Murfreesboro saw a lot of movement and action in the war as both armies often passed through because battles were taking place nearby. Carney's diary reflects on what news she heard about the war, the statuses of the people she knew in the war, and the actions her and the women in her family and the women she considered her friends took to aid their husbands and family members that were Confederate soldiers.

Carney wrote about how she willingly gave the first strawberry harvest to the Confederate troops since they were in need of food.³⁹ She also wrote about how her and her family donated bedding and sent flowers to the prisons that held friends and family.⁴⁰ These are two ways that Carney and the women she surrounded herself with gave their resources to the Confederate soldiers. They even went as far as sending flowers which would have helped boost soldier moral. To continue on about what Carney and her family and friends did during the war, there were a number of times when Union soldiers came into their town and onto Carney's plantation. The Union soldiers would take what they pleased from the plantation. Carney wrote about one instance where the Union soldiers ordered Carney and her family to go inside and

³⁹ Kate Carney, "Kate Carney Diary: April 15, 1861 – July 31, 1862: Electronic Edition," *Documenting the American South* (Southern Historical Society, UNC, 1999).

⁴⁰ Carney, May 7, 1862.

upstairs and leave the Union soldiers alone so they could pillage the plantation. Carney and her family didn't outwardly refuse the orders but they made a fuss, took their time going, and shouted insults, and they received dissent and threats from the Union soldiers in return. Carney mentioned how one man threatened that he was going to burn her house down while she was asleep. Carney mentioned in the morning how soundly she slept.⁴¹ This instance reveals women challenging Southern gender norms but in the name of Confederate support. Their resentment to the Union soldiers' orders not only shows their strong declaration of support for the Confederate cause, but it also shows them breaking the gender construct that women are to be submissive. The expectation of Carney and the other women if they were following the Southern gender construct would be that they obediently followed the men's orders quickly and quietly. Since they did not do that, they were loud, shouted insults, and took as much time as they could, they were breaking gender norms.

Lastly, Carney also wrote about another instance where her and her mother directly aided the Confederates. On May 25, 1862, Carney wrote about how a Confederate soldier whom had just escaped from a Union prison had found himself on their plantation. Carney and mother helped the man by disguising him – gave him new clothes, shaved him – and also fed him and provided him food for the road.⁴² By disguising him, Carney and her mother most likely ensured that this man would be completely successful in his escape back to the Confederate camps. The fact that Carney and her mother decided to do this shows the extent of their dedication to the Confederate cause. Aiding the soldier by disguising him and therefore ensuring his escape was risky for Carney and her mother. Especially since they were always encountering Union troops.

⁴¹ Carney, May 7, 1862.

⁴² Carney, May 25, 1862.

If they had been then encountered by Union troops, inquired about the escapee, and found guilty of helping him, they themselves could have been imprisoned. Thus, the risk is them being imprisoned, but they took that risk to aid the Confederate cause. It is also of note that Carney wrote about her experience and fortunately her diary was kept, preserved, and published so historians can read her story. Thus, Carney and her family are just the experiences of a handful of southern women whose stories we know. How many other women may have also aided the Confederate cause and stepped out of their gender roles without writing about it?

Sources also reflect that New Orleans Louisiana was a hotspot for Southern women involving themselves in the events of the war. In 1862, Union soldiers took over and occupied the city of New Orleans. As a bustling port, the city was a crucial victory for the Union because it allowed them to not only utilize the port themselves, but stop the Confederacy from using it as well. Thus, effectively carrying out the Union's Anaconda Plan to blockade Southern ports. What the Union soldiers did not anticipate was the extreme resentment towards the Union occupation, particularly from Southern women. The resentment led to a point where Benjamin F. Butler, the Union General who governed New Orleans had to issue military orders as a means to try and diminish the women's activities.⁴³ The women never acted violently, but they did go out of their way to annoy, anger, and humiliate the Union troops. They would sew Confederate flags across the chest of their dresses or within the folds of their skirts.⁴⁴ The women would also insult them, spit in their faces, and they would also move their skirts dramatically away from the Union soldiers so that they would completely avoid touching them, expressing their near repulsion of

⁴³ Jacqueline G. Campbell, "'The Unmeaning Twaddle about Order 28': Benjamin F. Butler and Confederate Women in Occupied New Orleans, 1862.", *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2, No. 1 (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 2012) 11.

⁴⁴ Campbell, 13.

the troops' presence. It was "as if [they] feared they might be contaminated if they touched the soldiers." If an officer boarded a streetcar, the women would get off it in protest. Or if they were about to walk past a Union officer on the sidewalk, they would cross the street over to the other side. Countless officers would go to Butler's office and complain about the women. Butler wrote that "their cheeks crimson with shame in the effort to repress their indignation," and how they asked him to take initiative "for the suppression of the evil."⁴⁵ What is described as the last straw for General Butler was when an Admiral was walking through the streets and felt what at first, he believed "a sudden and heavy shower... [which] proved to be emptying of a vessel of water... from the balcony above, and not very clean water at that."⁴⁶ Shortly after, Butler issued General Order 28.

General Order No. 28, known as the "Women's Order" essentially ordered Union soldiers to treat women based on how they were acting. The key part of the text reads as follows: "when any female shall by word, movement, or gesture insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be...treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation."⁴⁷ In practice, this meant that the women were acting like proper ladies, they ought to be treated as proper ladies because that is their job. Many took this order as justification for rape and it outraged the city, and ultimately led to Butler's removal. Despite Butler explaining how this was not the case, the order was still met with extreme discontent. Chamber pots with Butler's portrait in the bottom would become common in the city until Butler was removed.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Campbell, 14.

⁴⁶ Campbell, 14.

⁴⁷ "General Orders, No. 28," Official Records of the Civil War, vol 15, accessed December 14, 2021.

⁴⁸ Campbell, 14.

The significance of this is that Confederate women had been so actively engaged in the war-time events of New Orleans that their dissent to the Union troops was so extreme that there was a military order passed as a result of their actions. The language of the law itself automatically implies the idea that women are not behaving “properly” and therefore, they don’t deserve to be treated with respect since they are not acting how they “should.” This reaction shows that gender roles are being challenged because the military order is evidence of push back to change. It also connects back to how Union soldiers were unsure of what to do because of the psychological struggle to view women as enemies because of gender roles. The women in New Orleans were causing such issues for the Union soldiers that an order had to be passed that allowed the Union troops to be treated harshly. This demonstration is completely contradictory to passivity.

Now, it is extremely relevant to transition the discussion to the concept of women in nursing and its connection to gender roles. Throughout this paper, it is frequently mentioned that many women in the South took up nursing. What hasn’t been mentioned about nursing is that women typically were not allowed to be nurses or in a hospital up until this era. Women typically only medically took care of their fathers, husbands, and sons in the privacy of their home. This is because Southern womanhood strongly emphasizes modesty, domesticity, purity, delicacy, and subordination.⁴⁹ Being a nurse in a hospital strongly contradicts these ideals in a number of ways. For example, women would be touching men that were not her husband or family. Women would also be around gruesome injuries and men who would be indecent in her presence. These would not be acceptable for Southern women. Nursing requires women to be out of the home

⁴⁹ Cheryl A. Wells, “Battle Time: Gender, Modesty, and Confederate Hospitals”, *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 2, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2001): 409.

and in a place where they'd have to make crucial decisions, but also be in an intimate environment with men. Therefore, since hospitals were so graphic because they were full of wounded soldiers, in the beginning of the Civil War it was heavily frowned upon for women to become nurses. This being so, it was more acceptable for married woman to take up nursing than it was for single woman. In Mary Elizabeth Massey's book *Bonnet Brigades*, Elizabeth Massey lists numerous stories of young women quarreling with their fathers who didn't want them to become nurses because the job entailed being in such close proximity to men.⁵⁰ Some women and had success in persuading their fathers to let them go, but others did not.

Even when federal authorities finally officially called for women to come and be nurses, there were guidelines and selections made that the women allowed had to be "over thirty, plain looking, and devoid of curls, bows, and hoopskirts."⁵¹ This quote essentially demonstrates that at first the only women they wanted to allow to be nurses were the women that were the least feminine as possible. The duality of the selectivity is interesting. While it is rejecting women for being feminine like they are expected to be by society, it also can be interpreted as encouragement for women to abandon some aspects of their femininity if they want to take up nursing. There were a number of instances where women were actually rejected from volunteering their services. Some tried to volunteer to assist the military surgeons but those assistants had military ranks which wasn't allowed for women so they were turned down. Other women were turned down from being assistants or even just nursing in general because of their "youth, good looks, and strongmindedness."⁵² This poses the question as to how many women

⁵⁰ Massey, 76.

⁵¹ Jane E. Schultz, "The Inhospitable Hospital: Gender and Professionalism in Civil War Medicine," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (The University of Chicago Press: 1992), 366.

⁵² Schultz, 367.

maybe wanted to get involved and be active but were turned down and left discouraged? Another note about missing numbers that would skew statistics and allow for some women's stories to fall through the cracks is that a considerable number of hospital records were lost in the burning of Richmond in 1865.⁵³ Therefore, like much of older history, it is hard to estimate the true numbers but it is important to recognize this limitation and be aware that it could be possible that many stories and records have been lost.

The dissent from men towards women who were starting to get these positions in the medical field is also quite telling. Fannie Beers, a woman in her early twenties working as a nurse wrote "I could not help feeling that there was a reservation of power and authority, a doubt of my capacity, due to my youthful appearance."⁵⁴ Another woman named Katie Cumming who served as a nurse for the Confederacy said that the surgeons in the hospital she worked at "entertain[ed] great prejudice against admitting ladies into the hospital in the capacity of nurses."⁵⁵ Other women wrote about how they were concerned that if they disagreed with a male doctor or surgeon about the care of a patient, they would be dismissed due to their sex.⁵⁶ The quotes from these two Confederate women reveal that they were experiencing prejudice from men. Their experiences with men in the workplace make it evident that by taking up nursing, they are indeed challenging gender roles because the comments they are receiving are push back to the change that is taking place.

Historians Cheryl A. Wells and Jane E. Schultz both argue that women entering the hospitals as nurses became part of a new battle, one against patriarchy. As previously discussed,

⁵³ Schultz, 369.

⁵⁴ Schultz, 376.

⁵⁵ Schultz, 376.

⁵⁶ Schultz, 377.

many of the women in the hospitals faced hostility from the male surgeons.⁵⁷⁵⁸ Therefore, all of the women previously mentioned whom have taken up nursing in the South were also defying gender roles. To continue, based off of Massey's book, there were many more women who were interested in aiding the Confederate cause, but did not get the opportunity to actually take action because perhaps a father or a husband did not allow it. To return to discussing Sally Thompkins, she shattered the gender roles in her way. However, the significance here is not just the defiance of gender roles, but it's also the fact that the gender roles could have prevented many women from aiding the war effort if they had wanted to do nursing and in certain instances, it did. The spirit of impassivity towards the war though is nonetheless evident even if some women were turned away, faced prejudice, or simply were able to practice nursing for the first time.

During this time period, it was custom for those who were literate and well educated to keep a diary. These individuals were typically upper-class because in order to have a diary they would have had to have access to education but also have leisure time to be writing as well. Lower class or middle-class working people would be at a disadvantage for obtaining those two components that made keeping a diary possible. Therefore, most of the diary sources from that time period are for the most part from upper-class individuals but of course there are anecdotes to this statement. These diaries are crucial to historians for understanding the past. Nearly all of the primary sources for this research are diaries. Diaries are useful because they are first-hand accounts of the given time period events and they are often quite reliable due to the fact that diaries are personal items and are they are therefore usually quite accurate and honest.

⁵⁷ Wells, 410.

⁵⁸ Schultz, 365.

There are a handful of other women had left behind popular diaries that describe their war-time experiences. While these women did not have avid and stark participation in the war effort other than donating what they could and keeping up with the news, their diaries became popular recounts to historians for understanding what is happening during that time period. It is important to mention some of these diaries and some relevant details their diaries included to demonstrate just the quantity of examples available; and suggest a quantity that could be possible that are not included in this essay, or are lost in history.

One of these popular diaries “Recollections: Grave and Gay.” This was written by Constance Cary Harrison, also known as Mrs. Burton Harrison. Harrison came from a prominent Virginian family and after the war she would become a famous American novelist.⁵⁹ She was close with the family of Robert E. Lee and her husband had been secretary to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Harrison was actually the woman who would sew the final version of the Confederate flag at the start of the Civil War.⁶⁰ Her entire account covers the home-front experience of the Civil War for prominent Virginians whom had close contact with Confederate leaders.

Another popular writer from the Confederate South was Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston. Catherine’s husband entered the war and Catherine remained at home contributing clothing and food to the army. Her diary consists of patriotic songs she wrote for the Confederate States as well as her personal evaluations of military leaders.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Adrienne Dunning Rea, “Harrison, Burton, Mrs., (1843-1920),” *Encyclopedia Virginia: Virginia Humanities*, (2021), <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/harrison-burton-mrs-1843-1920>

⁶⁰ Constance Cary Harrison, “Recollections: Grave and Gay,” (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 86.

⁶¹ T.L. Armistead, “Edmondston, Catherine Ann Devereux,” *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, (University of North Carolina Press: 1986).

Harrison and Edmonston are small examples, but again it is the suggestion on quantity and other small tasks women decided to take on to support the Confederacy.

It is also of note that the Confederate State recognized women's efforts officially. Aside from the individual honors previously mentioned that went to Sally Thompkins and Juliet Opie Hopkins, there are a handful of ways in which the Confederacy recognized women as a group for their efforts in aiding the Confederacy. In April 1862, the Confederate Congress passed a declaration of gratitude that was replicated and reiterated amongst the Southern states that thanked the "mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives of this State" for their "ardent devotion" and "unremitting labors and sacrifices."⁶² What this statement shows is that women clearly had an effective role if the government is recognizing them for it by thanking them. This statement was released in 1862 which shows this was recognized fairly early in the onset of the war. Relating to the rhetoric of this statement, in 1904 a monument was erected in front of the capitol building of Jackson, Mississippi.⁶³ The monument depicts two women aiding a wounded soldier. The statue is inscribed with "Our Mothers," "Our Daughters," "Our Sisters," and "Our Wives;" one on each of the four sides accompanied by words of gratitude quoted from Jefferson Davis. The statue is pictured below for reference:

⁶² Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War", *The Journal of American History*, 76, no. 4, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 1990):1203.

⁶³ Faust, 1202.



Having a monument put in place for women also demonstrates how even after the end of the war going on years later, society thought to recognize the work Southern women put in to aiding the Confederacy and their contributions were impactful enough that the rest of society wanted to thank them and create a monument celebrating them.

Historian Lyde Cullen Sizer describes the movement of women during the Civil War as a transformation of social geography for women. Sizer says that women on both sides of the war were now subjects of war as opposed to objects.⁶⁴ This is referencing to the sort of change from being strictly in the domestic sphere to being more in the public sphere and as subjects because of their public involvement as opposed to being at home waving a handkerchief.

⁶⁴ Lyde Cullen Sizer, "Mapping the Spaces of Women's Civil War History," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 1, no. 4 (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill: 2011) 540.

To return to the focus on specifically Southern women, Sizer mentions how one Union officer wrote about how women on the Southern plantations often strongly resisted against Union soldiers trespassing their lands; sometimes becoming quite violent. This Union officer wrote about this because he was called in to help subdue a rebellion on a plantation that another troop had been dealing with. When he arrived, he discovered more than half of these rebels were the women of the plantation. The officer wrote that they had “made the mistake of underestimating women”.⁶⁵ This quote demonstrates how this officer hadn’t expected such dissent coming from women, indicating that this behavior is not normal or expected of women. This would be a result of the strict gender roles.

The language that Sizer uses and the examples they gave demonstrate further activism and involvement by Southern women. The metaphor to geography indicates that this was a momentous change in women’s history. The reflection in the account from the Union soldier demonstrates a witness to this activism and involvement to support the Confederacy. Another noteworthy action by the Southern women was their involvement in the political aspect of the Confederacy. Women in the South attended government meetings and expressed their grievances to those in charge regarding wages, taxes, prices, and other Confederate policies.⁶⁶ This could be interpreted as both aiding the Confederacy but also undermining it. They were aiding it in that they were advocating for better conditions for themselves as citizens and for their husbands as soldiers. However, this advocacy could also be seen as undermining the Confederate cause because their actions would be taking time and perhaps resources away from their leaders that most likely need to be focused on the war. Nonetheless, the fact that women were out and

⁶⁵ Sizer, 542.

⁶⁶ Sizer, 543.

advocating for themselves in the political realm is what Sizer means about women becoming “subjects” of war as opposed to “objects” of war because it again connects to, and reiterates the fact that women were making movements out of the domestic sphere and into the public sphere. Thus, a challenge to the Southern gender norms that had been keeping women solely in the domestic realm during and leading up to the antebellum era.

Historian Stephanie McCurry who wrote the book *Women’s War: Fighting and Surviving the American Civil War* dives into the perspective and interpretation of women and war as well. Similar to how Sizer describes women as “objects of war,” McCurry describes women as a “protected entity of war” which is of similar implications. This is a world-wide view that has been instilled since the beginning of time as a means to limit wartime destructiveness. An example of this is like an unspoken rule to not directly attack women or children because they are “innocent.” That plays into why it may be hard for men to conceive women as the enemy even when they are directly acting as the enemy. McCurry also mentions how war ultimately does disrupt these rules of society and women do get involved. Thus, the gender roles always do get disrupted. Not to mention the fact that this was a civil war; and for women in the South in particular, this was a war of occupation. The Southern women’s role was to be at home but in the nature of this war this war is disrupting and threatening their unit of the home. That is what gives so much motivation to get involved. McCurry also mentions how the normal gender roles do typically get restored. I will discuss my interpretation on this return to traditional gender roles after the war shortly.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ National Museum of Civil War Medicine.

While there is much evidence that shows that Southern women were actively involved in the American Civil War. Many historians do believe the claim that Southern women were passive and some even go as far to say that Southern women undermined the war effort. Historian Drew Gulpin Faust is a known leader in this school of thought. Faust stated that “Southern women undermined both objective and ideological functions for the Confederate effort; they directly subverted the South’s military and economic effectiveness as well as civilian morale”.⁶⁸ Faust’s book *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* supports the previously mentioned quote and is about how despite there being much to do for Southern women, the majority of them were undercommitted to the Confederate cause.⁶⁹

But if this was the case, how come there are accounts of Confederate women from numbers of states lining up preparing to do miles of sewing for the Confederate cause? If women in the South were so expected to dote on and support their husbands, it would be their duty to support him and the war effort as well. To return to the ideas of Stephanie McCurry, she talks about how the stories of women getting involved are always about how it is an exception and how they are exceptions. This poses the question: at what point are there enough cases of exceptions for it to not be an exception anymore?⁷⁰ Especially at a point of history where the women’s suffrage movement is right around the corner.

Historian George C. Rable poses a slightly different interpretation in his book *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*. Rable does agree with the idea that many

⁶⁸ George B. McKinney, “Women’s Role in Civil War Western North Carolina”, *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 69, no. 1, (North Carolina Archives of History, Raleigh: 1992) 37.

⁶⁹ Jane Turner Censer, “Reviewed Work: *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*”, *The North Carolina Historical Review*, (North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh: 1996) 390.

⁷⁰ National Museum of Civil War Medicine.

women were moving into the public sphere and defying gender roles. However, these changes reverted back to normal with the conclusion of the war because of the Southern women's conservative and preservative nature.⁷¹ The war for women was not about fighting Northern Yankees, it was about ultimately a battle over preserving the family and the home.⁷² The evidence that Rable provides for this claim is the diary entries from women in the latter part of the war. The diaries consist of entries asking for their husbands to come home and reluctance to let them go to the war if they haven't already. Records from the Confederacy show an increase of letters to leaders pleading for husbands and sons to be sent home.⁷³ Therefore, the women were driven by conservative motives that would preserve the family unit and to ultimately revert back to their traditions after the war. Rable also mentions how the political involvement like the wearing of cockades and writings and speeches were often carried out by young girls or very young women.⁷⁴ While this may have been the case, I beg to analyze the effects of this specific age group being the ones taking up these actions. If these are young girls that are being public and political, wouldn't this age group be the group that then starts to push women's suffrage in the post-Civil War era? He argues that the impact of this is that this adaptability but then reversion back to the normal is what saved the South.⁷⁵ Rable does indeed recognize how women stepped out of their traditional roles as much as they had to. Lower-class women who were not slaveholders had to take up the farming and outdoor tasks. Other women had to pick up office jobs, teaching jobs, and even factory jobs.⁷⁶ Rable says that this was done out of necessity and

⁷¹ George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), xi.

⁷² Rable, 46.

⁷³ Rable, 81.

⁷⁴ Rable, 45.

⁷⁵ Rable, xi.

⁷⁶ Rable, 112.

abandoned at the end of the war. Yes, this may have taken place out of necessity, and women often expressed their resentment of these new jobs and positions. However, humans are never entirely comfortable with unexpected changes which is what this would have been for women. The impact of this change is that it proposed the opportunity that women can do these things if they wanted to. The prospect of the idea is what is impactful. While women may have gone back to their traditional roles later on, it shows that for other women, or young girls and young women growing up that it is possible for them to be out of the domestic sphere. Again, this would be the generation that would grow up to push for women's suffrage and women's rights. Therefore, while the actions of women can be interpreted as a necessity to preserve traditional roles, I argue that it is still a chip into dismantling gender roles because change and growth is not always a linear process.

In the article written by Lyde Cullen Sizer, Sizer also mentioned how the Southern women undermined the Confederate cause with their political activism because it took attention away from the fighting itself.⁷⁷ While their actions could be viewed this way, I argue that they are helping the war effort. They were advocating for better wages for the soldiers and voiced their opinions on ways to better Confederate policies, which would translate into better quality of life for the soldiers. Ultimately, this could be beneficial to moral in the war, which would not at all equate to undermining the war effort.

By looking at the stories of individual Southern women such as Sally Tompkins, Belle Boyd, and Belle Edmondson, there are clear examples of individual women who were directly involved in supporting the Confederate cause. Sally Tompkins was even commissioned to the

⁷⁷ Sizer, 543.

status of a Confederate captain. Belle Boyd was also given military accolades for her services to the army as a Confederate spy. Then there are the accounts that tell the efforts of groups of women from a number of Southern States, North Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee. Large numbers of women from those states gathered at the start of the war to help produce supplies for the Confederate soldiers.

Based on the research conducted above and the analysis of both primary and secondary sources, the conclusion can be made that not all Southern women were insubordinate and impactful in the American Civil War. Some women chose to be more visibly involved while others took up more domestic type roles on the home-front by producing supplies. Their actions lead to the breakage of some Southern culture traditions in terms of the strict gender roles it implements. Sally Tompkins was made a captain offered pay, Belle Boyd was a spy who was in and out of prison throughout her life and also received military honors for her services. Here, both of these women have left the domestic realm and through their direct, visible services to the Confederate cause they earned military statuses that put them above men in the army. The women of Florida whom had educated themselves politically and voicing their opinions on succession are also breaks in the traditional Southern gender roles. The women in Knoxville that rode on horseback in their own cavalry to deliver supplies to the Confederate camps were most definitely not remaining passive in the domestic realm where they supposedly belong. Even all the women going out and sewing for the soldiers and giving up their fashion luxuries are sacrifices that go against sitting subordinately and uninvolved with the war. Southern women did have a role and thus an impact through their support of the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. Their actions also ended up testing the rigidity of the gender roles that tie into the traditional culture of the South.

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