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## **Border State, Divided Loyalties: The Politics of Ellen Wallace, Kentucky Slave owner, During the Civil War**

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Border State, Divided Loyalties: The Politics of Ellen Wallace, Kentucky Slave owner,  
During the Civil War

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
In  
History

by

Amber Nicholson

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the diary of Ellen Wallace, a woman who lived in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, during the American Civil War. A diligent diarist, Ellen recorded not only the workings of her farm and household, but also her interactions with slaves, her worries about secession, and her shifting views on President Lincoln, emancipation and the war itself. At the start of the war, Ellen was a staunch Unionist. By war's end, she was a Confederate. This thesis will examine the factors that contributed to Ellen's changing political ideals and how she sought to reconcile her opposing beliefs. Ellen occupied a role rarely discussed in Civil War scholarship: not a member of the southern paternalist society, or a northern abolitionist. Ellen was a slave-owning woman who supported the Union cause.

Keywords: Kentucky—Emancipation—American Civil War—Diary—Ellen Wallace—  
Slavery

## Section One: Introduction and Historiography

### *Introduction*

Two weeks after the outbreak of the American Civil War, Kentucky resident Ellen Wallace wrote the following in her diary:

This is a quiet beautiful Sabbath, but how long this quiet and safety will last is uncertain. The whole United States or rather Confederate United States are in a state of confusion, uproar and Civil War. When or where, or how it will end, is beyond the keen and most rigorous (sic) foresight. The passions of the people are lashed to fury by wicked and designing politicians. The storm is now beyond human control. The very ground is as it were, rocking under our feet and the sky rent with thunderbolts above our heads. In no direction is there one ray of light or spark of hope.

Ellen experienced the war perched on the border between the Union and the Confederacy. In 1861, Ellen favored Kentucky staying in the Union, and she anxiously considered the tumultuous future. The next two lines of this entry read, "There is yet one deeper shade to be added to the scene, that is servile insurrection. This is [what] the people of the north are praying daily for and hoping hourly to hear of." At the outset of war, Ellen was a Unionist, but not a Northerner; she was a Southerner, but not a Confederate. As the war progressed, Ellen's loyalty to the Union faltered and eventually collapsed.<sup>1</sup>

Though the Civil War is one of the most thoroughly studied events in American history, numerous facets have yet to be investigated. For all the studies written regarding battles, famous leaders, specific regiments, and weaponry, much remains unknown about

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen Wallace, *Diary*, April 29, 1961, Wallace-Starling Family Diaries, 1854-1932, 96M07, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY (hereafter cited as Ellen Wallace).

how the war affected the lives of everyday people and how it shaped their views on politics, society, and their place within a violent series of events.

Historians have studied military actions and consequences of the war for nearly one hundred and sixty years, but only in recent decades has the focus of Civil War studies shifted to the social ramifications of the conflict. The effects of emancipation on the slave population have received much attention, as have narratives written by slaves during the antebellum period and the war.<sup>2</sup> The histories of the silenced and ignored are now being brought to light, and these studies serve to widen the knowledge of the war itself.

Much recent literature has examined women's roles during the Civil War in new ways, but women in the border states have been overlooked. Books written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occasionally mention women soldiers and spies, but only recently did women become a major focus of scholarship.<sup>3</sup>

Even with this shift in attention to the plight of women during the war, most historians' focus remains heavily slanted towards women in either the North or the South—especially the latter. They have neglected women in the border states of Kentucky,

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<sup>2</sup> Some famous examples of slave narratives include Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: Published by the Author, 1861); Frederick Douglass, Henry Louis Gates, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave/My Bondage and My Freedom/Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Nina Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966); LeeAnn Whites and Alecia Long, eds, *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Laura Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live her Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000) all examine the lives of women during the Civil War. These books focus on either women in the North or women in the South, but not women in any border state. Though these books reflect many different experiences of women (nurses, spies, women who dressed as men to fight, prostitutes), their scholarship is relegated to either definitively Union or definitively Confederate experiences and locations.



Maryland, Delaware, Missouri and West Virginia in the arenas of Civil War and women's studies.<sup>4</sup> Examining the diaries of these women and comparing them to the extant works about women in the North and the South will help to establish an appreciation for the unique perspective of border-state women during the Civil War. To further this process, this thesis will focus on the wartime experiences of one woman in Kentucky. Examining her life and political environment will provide insights into the experiences of other border state women, supplying clues to their interactions with family and friends as well as their handling of the social transformations that accompany the outbreak of war. Ellen occupied a position unique to both her political beliefs and geographical region. Though she believed secession was treason, she had her own political leanings that were independent of others. Her southern sisters experienced new responsibilities as the men on whom they depended went off to war, but they were not required to make their own decisions and exercise their own political beliefs. Ellen, as a woman in a border state, had to negotiate her beliefs around her love of the Union and her status as a slave-owner.

*Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace*

The diary of Ellen Kenton McGaughey is located at the Kentucky Historical Society in Frankfort. The diary is part of the Wallace-Starling Family Diaries, a collection that also includes the diary of a young woman of privilege and Ellen's neighbor, Annie Starling. The diaries are very fragile and researchers can only use the transcriptions. Both Ellen and

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<sup>4</sup> There are published diaries such as Frances Dallam Peter, *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000) and Josie Underwood, *Josie Underwood's Civil War Diary* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009) of women who, like Ellen, lived in Kentucky during the war. However, there is very little in terms of analysis by scholars in either diary. They are more just published versions of the diaries themselves, with little annotation.

Annie were members of prominent Christian Country families, and their diaries offer entrance into lives of privilege in antebellum and wartime Kentucky.

Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace, born on August 28, 1821, was the eldest daughter of six children born to Colonel Arthur McGaughey and his wife Julia Hume.<sup>5</sup> Arthur McGaughey was born in Pennsylvania in 1790 and married Julia in 1819. Colonel McGaughey served under Andrew Jackson in the war of 1812, most famously at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. In 1826, Arthur and his family moved to the southern part of Christian County, where he settled a farm about ten miles outside of Hopkinsville in the township of Newstead. The 1850 Census described Arthur McGaughey as a man with “ample means” and an “extensive farm.” The family owned twenty-two slaves.<sup>6</sup>

Arthur McGaughey died in late July 1852, almost seven months to the day after his wife Julia’s death.<sup>7</sup> A cholera epidemic that year claimed the lives of both of Ellen’s parents as well as her younger sister Harriet.<sup>8</sup> Ellen marked the anniversaries of the deaths of her parents and sister in her diary, and she mentioned the “awful trial” she suffered during the outbreak. She noted that this experience had given her strength to be “able to meet any crisis.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> J. H. Battle, W.H. Perrin and G. C. Kniffin, *Kentucky, A History of the State* (Louisville: Battery Publishing Company, 1885), 540.

<sup>6</sup> According to the 1850 United States Federal Census and the Slave Schedules, the McGaughey farm was approximately 1,350 acres.

<sup>7</sup> Cemetery Listings of Christian County, Kentucky. Arthur McGaughey died July 30, 1852, and Julia died January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1852.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen Wallace, March 12, 1856. Harriet died in May, 1852.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Ellen married Albert Wallace, a Virginian twenty years her senior, in late 1846.<sup>10</sup> Ellen, Albert, and Julia, their first daughter, moved to the town of Hopkinsville sometime in the late 1850's.<sup>11</sup> Albert and Ellen settled Winter Hill, a farm next to her father's in Newstead.<sup>12</sup> Albert was later described by a local historian as a "man of stern integrity, temperance and purity of life."<sup>13</sup> He and Ellen had eight children, though only four survived to adulthood.<sup>14</sup> The deaths of her children coupled with the loss of her parents and sister tinged Ellen's words with a sense of depression and despair throughout the nine-year span of her diary.<sup>15</sup>

### *Ellen's Economic Status*

In addition to the farm Ellen and Albert owned next to Colonel McGaughey's farm, they also owned a home in downtown Hopkinsville. The value of the Wallace's property was \$26,000, which would be equivalent to several hundred thousand dollars in the twenty-first century.<sup>16</sup> It can be inferred that the Wallaces belonged to at least the upper-

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<sup>10</sup> Marriage Records, Christian County, Kentucky. Ellen and Albert married on October 17. Albert was born in Culpepper, VA on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1800.

<sup>11</sup> This fact is supported by the 1860 Census, which lists the family as living in Hopkinsville, "District 1, Christian County, Kentucky."

<sup>12</sup> Meacham, 195.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Cemetery Records, Christian County, Kentucky.

<sup>15</sup> For example: "the book of fate is read only on the wheel of time, where it unfolds slowly, but surely. The veil is impenetrable..." January 1, 1857.

<sup>16</sup> Ancestry.com "1860 United States Federal Census," ancestry.com, [http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&db=1860usfedcenancestry&rank=1&new=1&MSAV=1&msT=1&gss=and&gsfn=Albert&gsfn\\_x=XO&gsln=Wallace&gsln\\_x=XO&msbdy=1800&msrpn\\_ftp=Hopkinsville%2c+Christian%2c+Kentucky%2c+USA&msrpn=29956&msrpn\\_PInfo=8-%7c1652393%7c2%7c3246%7c20%7c607%7c29956%7c&uidh=a25&msbdp=5&pcat=35&fh=0&h=39368239&recoff=&qid=37bbb18bc96c4c69b8ad736c8fcb23e5](http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&db=1860usfedcenancestry&rank=1&new=1&MSAV=1&msT=1&gss=and&gsfn=Albert&gsfn_x=XO&gsln=Wallace&gsln_x=XO&msbdy=1800&msrpn_ftp=Hopkinsville%2c+Christian%2c+Kentucky%2c+USA&msrpn=29956&msrpn_PInfo=8-%7c1652393%7c2%7c3246%7c20%7c607%7c29956%7c&uidh=a25&msbdp=5&pcat=35&fh=0&h=39368239&recoff=&qid=37bbb18bc96c4c69b8ad736c8fcb23e5), (accessed March 17, 2011). According to measuringworth.com, a website used by the Economic History Service, \$26,000 in 1860 is roughly equal to \$692,000 in 2009.

middle class economic realm, as they owned two residences as well as a number of slaves. Ellen received two slaves from her father when she married Albert, and two more when Colonel McGaughey died.<sup>17</sup> Ellen's sister Harriet had also received two slaves when she married.<sup>18</sup> Ellen had been around slavery all her life and her family had been economically dependent on enslaved labor.

Ellen Wallace was a member of the slave-owning class in her town of Hopkinsville. Though her husband was a farmer, Ellen enjoyed the social and economic benefits of enslaved labor both at her home and on the farm. Throughout her diary, Ellen makes numerous references to her "servants" and "maids," never referring to them as "slaves". Ellen did not side with the Confederacy at the outbreak of the war, but her status as a slave-owner aligned her ideals more with the South. The names of the slaves most often appear when Ellen is describing the amount of cloth given to them for clothing. It is not possible to glean from Ellen's entries how most of these slaves were acquired, whether they lived their whole lives as Ellen's property, how they were related or exactly how many lived on the farm at any particular time. Ellen makes mention of at least thirty-seven different slaves in the pages of her diary; some names appear only once or twice while others make repeated appearances.<sup>19</sup> According to the United States Census of 1860, Ellen and Albert owned forty

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<sup>17</sup> Last Will and Testament of Colonel McGaughey.

<sup>18</sup> Harriet died before her father and did not receive two upon his death. Cemetery records, Christian County Kentucky. Hopkinsville Public Library.

<sup>19</sup> A section in her diary that lists the "clothing allotments" for the slaves, but one cannot be sure if this was a part of Ellen's original diary or a note the transcriber included. These notes appear after the entry for December 31, 1863. It would make sense for Ellen to include this kind of notation in her diary entry at the end of a given year as a way to keep records of her expenditures, but no such notes appear for other years. There is also a note that lists the "birth's (sic) of servants children" and the year they were born. The names of the servants/slaves mentioned in Ellen's diary are (in order of appearance): Mat, Caroline, Elijah, William (possibly Bill), Eliza, Sally, Jinny, Mary, Sanford, Tom, Henry, A.D.R. (possibly

slaves, and this is a good figure with which to begin a thorough assessment of the Wallace's socio-economic status.

Studies of planters, yeomen, and farmers in other areas of the South provide insight into the lives of farmers in Kentucky. Ellen apparently rarely ventured to the farm, mentioning in her diary travelling there only a handful of times.<sup>20</sup> Mr. Wallace, however, spent a significant amount of time at the farm, often overnight, as noted by Ellen in her diary with such entries as "Mr. Wallace went to the farm" or "Mr. Wallace at the farm tonight."<sup>21</sup>

Though Mr. Wallace employed overseers, he was very involved in the workings of his farm. He was on hand for, and possibly participated in, the slaughter of the livestock and the planting of crops. Ellen mentions the killings of both cows and hogs and the plantings of peas, beans, beets, corn, and potatoes. Ellen also mentions the arrival of "flour, meal, 10 hams, butter, eggs, soap, turkey and chickens" from the farm.<sup>22</sup>

Stephanie McCurry, in her book on yeoman farmers in the South Carolina low country, arrived at a distinction between "yeoman farmers" and the wealthier planters. Yeomen considered themselves "self-working farmers," people who worked the land with their own two hands.<sup>23</sup> There are exceptions to this broad rule, however, as some farmers owned a couple of slaves (perhaps three or four) to help with the farming, but also participated in the work themselves. McCurry summarizes the evidence she has acquired

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an acronym for another slave but I cannot figure out who), Kitty, Harriet, Milly, Sarah, Lotty, Rhoda, Keziah, Darkey, Lucy, Joe, Ann, Susan, Jacob, Jack, Rachael, Isabel, Mag, Mahala, Charlotte, Thomas, Aaron, Emily, Celia, Charles, Ruben.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen Wallace, May 9, 1863.

<sup>21</sup> Ellen Wallace, January 4, 1861.

<sup>22</sup> Ellen Wallace, April 6, 1862.

<sup>23</sup> McCurry, 48.

and states “self-working farmers” (yeomen) were “those who owned fewer than 150 acres of improved land and fewer than ten slaves.”<sup>24</sup> Breaking down the social stratification even further, McCurry states that small planters had fewer than twenty slaves, and great planters had more than one hundred.<sup>25</sup> If this sort of economic division and stratification were applied to the Wallaces, they would lie somewhere in the middle: not yeomen, but not “great planters.”

Ellen had the power to dismiss slaves from her house in Hopkinsville and send them to the farm outside of town, cycling through servants as she felt necessary. A few years before the war, Ellen apparently had a few incidents with her house maids, stating in one instance that she “was in a great passion with my maid, Caroline” and in another stating that Caroline “is not of an obliging turn neither is she brisk or handy” and that Ellen had “some idea of changing my cook (Caroline).”<sup>26</sup> Ellen also had trouble with Eliza, whom she viewed as “idle and disobedient.”<sup>27</sup> It is unclear whether these servants were indeed “idle and disobedient” or were practicing a form of passive resistance.<sup>28</sup> Whatever the cause for the displeasing behavior, Ellen would not stand for it and had the authority to return them to the farm and take others in their place.

Ellen Kenton McGaughey Wallace diligently wrote in her diary throughout the war. Her diary entries begin in 1856 and end in 1865. She recorded not only her personal feelings and thoughts but also troop movements, interactions with her neighbors, and other events related to the war. Ellen, though a slave-owner, was an ardent Unionist when

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<sup>24</sup> McCurry, 50.

<sup>25</sup> McCurry, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 17, 1856 and December 19, 1856.

<sup>27</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 26, 1858.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

the war broke out. As the war progressed, Ellen's allegiance shifted, and by 1865 she was a strong sympathizer for the Confederacy. This paper will examine Ellen's background and other factors that caused her to change her ideals over the course of the war.

Ellen Wallace makes little mention of contributions she made to the war effort, such as knitting socks or making bandages, which one typically finds in the scholarship regarding women in the Civil War.<sup>29</sup> She did, however, write of her loyalties and her patriotic fervor in her diary, the only place considered appropriate for a woman of a "certain character" or class to project her political ideals.<sup>30</sup>

Little scholarly work exists regarding women like Ellen Wallace, who literally straddled the boundary between North and South. Ellen, though she declared her loyalty to the Union at the beginning of the war, provided food to members of both armies as they alternately occupied her town. Ellen, like other women in the border states, felt strong ties to both the Union and the Confederacy. She politically allied with the North, but she economically allied with the South. Caught on an ideological, political and geographic border, Ellen sent aid to both sides, refusing to look on any of her countrymen as enemies. Hopkinsville never saw battle.

After the Emancipation Proclamation, she experienced an ideological and political crisis so strong that she herself crossed the border from Union to Confederate. For Ellen, and many other Kentuckians, the war was not waged to end slavery. The war was fought

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<sup>29</sup> Ellen does not write of knitting socks or cutting bandages or volunteering in hospitals as do other women in both the North and the South.

<sup>30</sup> Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 4.

for the “love of the Union.”<sup>31</sup> Ellen Wallace began the war as an ardent and loyal Unionist, one who prayed that Kentucky would not follow the treasonous path of her southern neighbors. By the end of the war, Ellen was a Confederate sympathizer who abhorred “yankeys” and their abolition cause. In four years, all of Ellen’s convictions had completely changed. Her diary traces this political sea change and details her private reflections upon the cause of her shift in ideology and loyalty: The Emancipation Proclamation.

### *Historiography*

In order to interpret Ellen’s Civil War experiences, one must contextualize where and when she was penning her entries, how the war was affecting women in other parts of the country, how Kentucky fared, and what events were transpiring in her town, Hopkinsville. Several historical studies provide help in understanding the circumstances of the war as Ellen and other border state residents may have experienced them in order to glean useful information from her words.

In their work *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber assemble a collection of essays that focus on women in both the North and South, and how their gender roles changed over the course of the war. Taken together, these essays “relate the experience of men and women and children...that changed forever the perspectives and social relations...”<sup>32</sup> Clinton and Silber sought to “highlight the centrality of gender as part of the Civil War experience.”<sup>33</sup> These ideas about gender influenced how

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<sup>31</sup> E. Polk Johnson, *A History of Kentucky and Kentuckians: The Leaders, and Representative Men in Commerce, Industry and Modern Activities, Vol. I* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), 335.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 331.



women of the South participated in the conflict, as well as how they forged their own independence and identities.<sup>34</sup>

The essays in *Divided Houses* discuss the politics of gender, race, social class and what each respective group had to gain or lose (freedom, dominance, independence, a voice within politics) within the larger conflict. Though none of the essays included in this book relate exactly to Ellen Wallace or women in her geographical location, they do illustrate just how widespread the societal upheavals were. They also facilitate the analysis of not only Ellen's words, but also her feelings towards the war, her relationship with her family and neighbors, and her attitude regarding emancipation.

Clinton and Silber's other collection of essays, *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, explores how gender as a social construction influenced the social, political and military landscape. The authors combine the different traditions of Civil War study, women's history and socio-cultural history to explain how and why Southern women experienced the war so differently than their Northern counterparts.<sup>35</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust's *Mothers of Invention* focuses closely on women in the slaveholding South. Faust and other historians that have researched plantations and slaveholding women argue that the Civil War dramatically affected the role of women within society and helped foster changes in gender dynamics and politics in the last part of the nineteenth and early twentieth

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> *Battle Scars* discusses the precarious situation of elite slave-holding women and their fear of losing their life of privilege, and compares that with the new responsibilities and autonomy they experienced while the men on whom they usually depended were off at war. Clinton and Silber also discuss the role of "public women" and how they simultaneously changed and reinforced traditional ideas of Victorian womanhood in the South. By distancing themselves from "public women", Southern ladies attempted to retain their feminine ideals in a changing society. Clinton and Silber provided two volumes of essays that discussed marginalized, often neglected, members of both northern and southern society and their experiences of the war.

centuries.<sup>36</sup> These women, by shouldering the responsibilities of men, began to turn antebellum southern paternalism on its head. The actions of southern women and their experiences in the war forever changed the social norms and societal interactions of the Old South.

When the institution of slavery was threatened and eventually overthrown, every aspect of this Southern hierarchy was in peril.<sup>37</sup> A major aspect of male dominance was taken out of the equation, which forced women to question their subordinate position. Their notion of womanhood, the importance of whiteness, and their wealth were “suddenly and forcefully” overthrown, causing them to reconstruct their ideas of self-definition and self-worth.<sup>38</sup>

In discussing different aspects of the lives of these elite Southern women and comparing their antebellum lives with their changing responsibilities during the war, Faust explains why the war was so life-changing for these women, and how they sought to reconcile their new independence and level of responsibility with the long-held traditions

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<sup>36</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997),; Giselle Roberts, *The Confederate Belle* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003). Because their husbands and other males on whom they depended were off fighting, many southern women had no choice but to step into the societal roles traditionally left to men: breadwinners, heads of the household, runners of businesses and plantations. These women experienced a new sense of independence and responsibility and importance. They were able to participate in the public sphere and voice their opinions on politics and other matters that were previously taboo for women to speak of

<sup>37</sup> Faust seeks to explore the meaning of the Civil War for the privileged, educated, slave-owning women in the Confederacy. She discusses the social hierarchies of the antebellum south, emphasizing how gender in the South placed women in a dependent, subordinate role to the male heads of the household

<sup>38</sup> Faust, 6.

of dependence, subordination and reliance on men.<sup>39</sup> Understanding the new responsibilities and struggles that women of the planter class experienced highlights Ellen's own struggles as a slave-owner and member of a somewhat elite class.

Much of the scholarship regarding women in the Civil War is focused on Southern women, mainly rich, slave-owning plantation women. In *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South*, Victoria Bynum discusses a marginalized section of a neglected part of society: those women who engaged in "unruly behavior."<sup>40</sup>

The ideal role of women, particularly those in the South, was not to question or attempt to influence public policy but to encourage the wisdom and leadership of men.<sup>41</sup> Their lives were merged with those of their husbands, which reinforced the patriarchal, hierarchal society of the South.<sup>42</sup> The women at the center of Bynum's study violated these societal norms by voicing their opinions and acting in ways not becoming of Southern

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<sup>39</sup> Faust also discusses the importance of slave labor in supporting the war, and how women had come to inherit a "different institution" than men.<sup>39</sup> Women were in charge of plantations with slaves who had heard the rumors of freedom and advancing Union lines, and were often rebellious or blatantly insubordinate. Because they could not manage the plantations or the slaves, women became aware of their own incapacities.

<sup>40</sup> According to Bynum, there were three categories of "unruly women": those who publicly complained about their misbehaving husbands or other family members; those who engaged in forbidden social and sexual behaviors such as miscegenation and those who defied Confederate authority during the war. These women were both white and black, though most were poor. Their behavior contradicted the ideals of white society, and as the war progressed, more efforts were enacted to reign in their behavior in order to maintain the societal status quo—an attempt to cling to some remnants of the Victorian ideals of the Old South that were dying along with the institution of slavery.

<sup>41</sup> Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 56.

<sup>42</sup> Men could beat their wives, divorces were rarely granted, and men could assume control of their wives' property upon marriage.

women. Their behavior during and after the war not only exposed as a myth the “frailty and meekness” of women, but it altered the balance of power between the sexes.<sup>43</sup>

The histories of southern women are dramatic and exciting, and they have warranted much attention. Women in the North shared many of the same ordeals as their Southern sisters, but the scholarly research dedicated to uncovering their experiences is more limited.<sup>44</sup> Nina Silber, in researching Northern women, found they were just as patriotic as Southern women, and they participated in many of the same wartime activities.<sup>45</sup>

Women in both the North and the South have received attention from scholars and historians regarding their experiences in the war and how the war affected their societal interactions and gender dynamics. Though this scholarly dedication has been more heavily focused on women in the South, it has illuminated aspects of the war that revolutionized societal and gender hierarchies.

Northern women have received less attention than their Confederate sisters, but women in the border states have been almost completely ignored. Did these women experience the same social upheavals as their southern neighbors? Did they participate in the same kind of wartime activities? How did the war affect their towns? There were five border states in the Civil War, and the way in which women experienced the war in the

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<sup>43</sup> Bynum, 149.

<sup>44</sup> Perhaps this is because some historians believe that women of the North did not experience the war in as dramatic of a way as those in the South due to their (lack of) proximity to the battlefield. Perhaps it is because historians do not believe the women of the North felt the same extreme social ramifications of the war, or did not participate in as active a way

<sup>45</sup> See *Daughters of the Union*, Nina Silber. She discusses how Northern women went to work in factories, manufacturing munitions and weaponry, supported their families and earned money, and dedicated their free time to preparing bandages and clothing for their soldiers.

geographical and ideological borderland will shed new light on the effects and consequences of the war.

## Section Two: The Battle for Kentucky and Slavery Within Her Borders

### *Slavery in Kentucky*

Though Kentucky remained in the Union over the course of the war, many of its citizens harbored strong convictions and a belief in the Confederate cause. At the beginning of the war, while Kentucky attempted to cling to her position of neutrality, citizens all across the state worried with which belligerent Kentucky would side. Most Kentuckians, as well as a majority of states both Confederate and Union, realized that Kentucky's policy of neutrality was fragile at best and might not survive the war. Even before General Polk launched his invasion, the "question of Union or secession" became the "all absorbing topic of conversation at every fireside" across the state.<sup>46</sup>

Most inhabitants of the bluegrass state believed that the coming war was essentially about slavery. Slave-owners within her borders, like those all across the south, worried that the elections of 1860 would bring the possibility of emancipation. Furthermore, they worried about their fellow Kentuckians. According to multiple Kentucky historians, many people across the state opposed slavery in "varying degrees" and a majority of the population would have welcomed a "miraculous metamorphosis" of Kentucky into a state that did not have and never had slavery.<sup>47</sup> Though not necessarily agreeing with immediate

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<sup>46</sup> Perrin, 350.

<sup>47</sup> Judge Charles Kerr, ed. *History of Kentucky, Vol. II* (Chicago: American Historical Society Press, 1922), 795.

emancipation as a course of action, many Kentuckians knew that if the Union won the war, slavery as an institution would be finished.

Slavery was brought to Kentucky with the first settlers from Virginia in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Though blamed for exacerbating economic disparity and agricultural woes, slave owning was a status symbol in Kentucky just as it was in the Deep South. According to historian Judge Charles Kerr, slavery created a white aristocracy marked by a “spirit of superiority” and a “contention of merit”: slave owning was seen as an indicator of economic and social success.<sup>48</sup>

Most Kentuckians were not slave-owners. Only one-fifth of tax-paying citizens owned slaves, and slaves comprised just under twenty percent of the population. Compared with states such as South Carolina, where in some areas slaves accounted for over seventy percent of the total population, Kentucky did not rely as heavily on slave labor to support its economy.<sup>49</sup> The climate in Kentucky was not conducive to growing the major crops of the Deep South, such as cotton and sugar. Most crops included tobacco and food such as corn, wheat, and livestock. Slavery had been on the decline in Kentucky since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and by the 1860’s the average Kentucky slaveholder had “a few slaves” as opposed to the “great gangs” owned by slaveholders in the Deep South.<sup>50</sup>

Though a vast majority of the citizens of Kentucky did not own slaves, many still saw themselves as “southern-rights people,” especially those who lived in the southwestern

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<sup>48</sup> Kerr, 797.

<sup>49</sup> Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 46.

<sup>50</sup> Kerr, 797.

part of the state.<sup>51</sup> While not ready to die for it, some non-slave owning Kentucky residents cast their allegiance with the South because of their distrust and intense dislike of the Federal government, emancipation and an urgent desire to uphold the Constitution.

According to patrician historian Judge Charles Kerr, the idea of emancipation was not completely abominable to most Kentuckians; the urgency with which this sweeping social and economic change was demanded, however, was off-putting. Many believed that if emancipation had been presented as occurring at “some indefinite future day” it would have been more acceptable, nearly an inevitability. However, demanding that slave-owners and others to act with immediacy caused feelings of anger and resentment.<sup>52</sup>

Northern abolition hurt the emancipation cause in Kentucky. Many felt that the “real purpose” of the abolitionists was to “inflamm[e] minds of slaves rather than convert the slaveholder.”<sup>53</sup> This distrust led many men to join the Confederacy, as they believed the “chief design” of the North was to “subdue the southern states, hold them as conquered provinces and liberate the slaves.”<sup>54</sup>

If distrustful of radical abolitionists, Kentuckians abhorred those whom they viewed as usurpers of Constitutional rights or “outsiders” attempting to influence state matters.<sup>55</sup> The heart of the citizenry was not “bound up in slavery,” attempting to maintain or increase the slave population, but “it’s (sic) every pulsation was for the Constitution to which she had subscribed and in every principle of which the state sincerely believed.”<sup>56</sup> Speaking for many of his fellow statesmen in the early twentieth century, one Kentuckian believed,

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<sup>51</sup> Perrin, 353.

<sup>52</sup> Kerr, 802.

<sup>53</sup> Kerr, 804.

<sup>54</sup> Perrin, 352.

<sup>55</sup> Kerr, 801.

<sup>56</sup> Johnson, 289.

“states had rights in their property which the general government must respect,” and that if slavery were to be abolished, so be it—but it was the states’ choice, not the choice of the federal government.<sup>57</sup>

Many Kentuckians believed that states did not have a right to secede. They also thought that the government had no right interfering with states’ business. This political game of tug o’ war found Kentucky in the middle of opposing ideologies and political allegiances. By declaring “that Kentucky should...occupy the position of strict neutrality...”, Governor Magoffin attempted to save his state from certain destruction.<sup>58</sup> Though he issued this proclamation shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861, “the people were fast deciding the question otherwise.” Families became divided in sentiment, fathers against sons, brothers against brothers and “ties of friendship which had existed for a lifetime were powerless to restrain the demon of discord that reigned supreme.” Many towns across the state bore witness to the “strange, unnatural spectacle of brothers enlisting under opposing flags.”<sup>59</sup>

### *Kentucky During the Civil War*

Few states in the American Civil War were as important both strategically and symbolically as the bluegrass state of Kentucky. Lincoln fully understood how important Kentucky was, and what was at stake if she were lost to the Confederacy. If Kentucky were to fall to the rebels, Missouri and Maryland would likely follow suit and the entire war would be lost. Lincoln wrote to a friend, "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to

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<sup>57</sup> Johnson, 290.

<sup>58</sup> Magoffin also spoke on behalf of his constituents: “this state and the citizens thereof should take no part in the Civil War...except as mediators and friends to the belligerent parties...”

<sup>59</sup> Perrin, 352.



lose the whole game.”<sup>60</sup> Additionally, if Kentucky joined the secession, the frontier for the Southern armies would touch the borders of Ohio, Illinois and Indiana, which were all states with sympathies for the Southern cause. Kentucky was also important offensively to the Union because it provided a way to penetrate directly into the heart of Dixie.<sup>61</sup>

Jefferson Davis also understood the importance of Kentucky: if under Southern control, the North would be denied easy waterway access into the heart of the South (through the Cumberland, Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers). Kentucky also had an extensive railroad system, including the Louisville Train Depot, which the Confederacy sought to control in order to provide supplies and munitions to armies in the South.<sup>62</sup>

Though slavery was permitted within her borders, Kentucky declared neutrality at the outbreak of the Civil War. In September 1861, Confederate general Leonidas Polk invaded Columbus in an attempt to secure Kentucky for the South. This angered both the government and the citizens of Kentucky, who felt their status and rights had been disrespected. Though Polk sought to bring Kentucky into the Confederacy, he only succeeded in arousing Union sympathies. The state government invited Union troops to drive out the Confederates.<sup>63</sup> By autumn 1861, Kentucky had confidently sided with the Union. This was not the end of the struggle for control of the bluegrass state, however. Over

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<sup>60</sup> J.H. Battle, W.H. Perrin, G.C. Kniffin, *Kentucky, A History of the State* (Louisville: F.A. Battey Publishing Company, 1885), 350.

<sup>61</sup> James McDonough, *War in Kentucky: From Shiloh to Perryville* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 62.

<sup>62</sup> McDonough, 63.

<sup>63</sup> The Union army took control of Louisville and Paducah and the Tennessee River, which negated the Confederate hold on Columbus.

the next four years, the South made several more attempts to “free” Kentucky from the “bondage” of the North.<sup>64</sup>

In late summer 1862, the Confederates began their major attempt to take Kentucky. Two divisions advanced North from Tennessee, one coming across the Cumberland River towards Glasgow, while the other marched one hundred miles to the east. The Confederate army did not experience the jubilation and praise they had expected during their initial foray onto Kentucky soil. One of the first towns the Confederate army encountered was the mountainous Barbourville, located about twenty miles east of what is now the Daniel Boone National Forest. Barbourville did not welcome the Southerners, who described the town as “desperately Union.”<sup>65</sup> The citizens were openly hostile, and bushwhackers attacked Confederate caravans.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> McDonough, 65. During the summer of 1862, Morgan led a series of raids against Union camps and outposts across central Kentucky and was praised by some of the population. The raids of Confederate sympathizer John Hunt Morgan helped facilitate this idea of “freeing” Kentucky from the oppressive hand of the North. Morgan sent a telegram to Confederate General Kirby Smith exalting and likely exaggerating the praise and Confederate support of his fellow Kentuckians, and stated that this was evidence of widespread discontent with the Union government. Upon receiving this telegram, Smith was struck with what James Lee McDonough terms “Kentucky Fever”: the insatiable desire to liberate Kentucky from the bondage of the North so she could rise with the Confederacy. Rebel newspapers had been printing articles about “freeing” Kentucky since the spring of 1862, and readers all across the Confederate states were infected with this “fever,” believing Kentucky was yearning to join her Southern countrymen in the war against oppression.

<sup>65</sup> McDonough, 114.

<sup>66</sup> The Union Army was aware of the Confederate aims and Major General Wright realized the place to stop the Confederate advance was on the road between Richmond and Lexington. He passed this message along to Major General Nelson, also advising Nelson not to engage the Rebel Army south of the Kentucky River, which he hoped to use as a line of defense—advice Nelson did not heed or pass on. The defense of Richmond then fell to Brigadier General Manson and a group of green soldiers. He prepared to fight the troops of General Smith, combat-seasoned soldiers. The Union camp did not prepare adequately, believing the Rebel army to be smaller and less ready for combat than it actually was. On August 29, 1862, the Union attacked the Confederate camp and met with surprising

When the Confederates reached Lexington, many citizens treated them as royalty. They gave the soldiers food and drink, and many ladies showered the troops with affection, inviting them to “call.”<sup>67</sup> The citizens of Lexington were overwhelmingly enthusiastic and excited to see the Confederate flag flying over Lexington, many stating that “the heart of Kentucky is with the South.”<sup>68</sup>

Not everyone in Northern Kentucky was as excited as their neighbors in Lexington. The inhabitants of Louisville and other towns on the Ohio River (and, undoubtedly, many towns across the Ohio River) were nervous about the reception given to the Confederates, and began to make preparations for the defense of Cincinnati. According to General Bragg, by 1862 both Kentucky and Tennessee had been “redeemed,” liberated from the yoke of the North and free to pledge allegiance to the South.<sup>69</sup> He then set his sights on Frankfort, the capitol of Kentucky, hoping to establish a Confederate government there so a draft of soldiers could be instituted. A government was established, but its officials spent the remainder of the war in exile, traveling with the army of Tennessee for the remainder of the war.<sup>70</sup>

In Louisville, a Union force was amassing, preparing to stop the Confederate march north to Frankfort. The forces of Major General Don Carlos Buell, combined with

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resistance. The battle continued for several hours, with the better-prepared Confederates emerging victorious. The road to Lexington was now wide open.

<sup>67</sup> McDonough, 148.

<sup>68</sup> McDonough, 150.

<sup>69</sup> McDonough, 182.

<sup>70</sup> On October 4, 1862, Richard Hawes was inaugurated as provisional Confederate governor of the state of Kentucky. His ceremony was interrupted by Union cannon fire, and the new government spent the rest of the war in exile. <sup>70</sup>

reinforcements from Grant, marched south to find the Confederates. The opposing forces met in Perryville, a small town in the heart of Kentucky.<sup>71</sup>

Several streams ran through the town and the surrounding countryside, which made Perryville militarily important.<sup>72</sup> The battle on October 8, 1862, was one of the bloodiest of the Civil War. Though the Union suffered heavier casualties than the Confederacy, it was considered a strategic victory for the North.<sup>73</sup> Realizing he lacked logistical support and the necessary amount of support from southern-sympathizing Kentuckians, General Braxton Bragg retreated to Nashville. The Confederate Army would never again launch a massive campaign into the Bluegrass State.<sup>74</sup>

#### *Hopkinsville, Home to Ellen Wallace*

A town that experienced this “unnatural spectacle” of brother against brother with perhaps more intensity than other locations in Kentucky was Hopkinsville. Located about twenty miles north of the Tennessee-Kentucky border, Hopkinsville served as the seat of Christian County. At the outbreak of war, Christian County contained a higher population percentage of blacks than any other county in Kentucky, which helped sharpen the divide between political opponents in the city of Hopkinsville.<sup>75</sup>

Hopkinsville occupies a unique geographical position, perched on a ridge that separates sandstone and limestone formations that underlie the soil of Christian County.

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<sup>71</sup> Population of less than five hundred.

<sup>72</sup> Both armies had been marching through dry, dusty countryside, often with no water available. The Confederates arrived in the oasis of Perryville first and set defenses for the impending battle. The Union arrived a short while later.

<sup>73</sup> The Union suffered 4,211 casualties, and the Confederacy 3,396. “The Battle of Perryville, Kentucky,” last modified November, 2001, <http://www.battleofperryville.com>. See also Christopher L. Kolakowski, *The Civil War at Perryville (Ky): Battle for the Bluegrass*.

<sup>74</sup> See also Lowell Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky*.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Mayfield Meacham, *A History of Christian Country Kentucky, from Oxcart to Airplane* (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce Company, 1930), 88.

This ridge “sharply divided the forests from the barrens in the early settlement days,” and even more sharply divided “the people themselves into hostile camps” at the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>76</sup> The southern part of the county, and the city of Hopkinsville, was home to many slave owners who possessed large estates and cultivated their land using slave labor. Northern Christian County, while home to some slave owners, was largely family-run farms that did not utilize slave labor.<sup>77</sup> The northern part of the county generally allied with the Union, and the southern part sided with the Confederacy. According to a Hopkinsville historian, since the “slavery question was really the cause of the war it was but natural that the slave owners should give their allegiance to the South.”<sup>78</sup> The city of Hopkinsville was quite literally divided in half, an unfortunate experience shared in cities all across Kentucky, with neighbors, family and friends in separate “hostile camps,” composed of people who “up to the very time they donned their uniforms had met on the common ground...”<sup>79</sup> Though no major battles occurred in Hopkinsville, the sharp division of sentiment pitted neighbors against one another and they joined opposing armies.<sup>80</sup>

These were the events influencing Ellen Wallace’s community while she was penning her diary entries. The nation, Kentucky, and Hopkinsville were divided, and Ellen experienced her own sense of division and shifting loyalties. A number of factors contributed to Ellen’s shift in allegiances, as well as affected the loyalties of many of her neighbors and scores of other people across the country.

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<sup>76</sup> Meacham, 143.

<sup>77</sup> Meacham, 128.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Meacham, 143.

<sup>80</sup> Meacham, 137.

### Section Three: Ellen Wallace During the Civil War

#### *Ellen's Politics*

From the very beginning of sectional tensions and hostilities, Ellen recorded her anxieties in her diary, stating on February 10, 1861, "The electing of the republican Mr. Lincoln to the presidency has fearfully convulsed the whole country. The Southern States in a state of revolution, forming a southern confederacy."<sup>81</sup> She was fearful not only for the safety of her own state, but of the nation as a whole, writing "...the great men of the nation are now holding a convention at Washington City in the hope of saving the Union or rather restoring the Union. The whole nation waiting with intense anxiety the result...If favorable one universal shout of joy will echo and re-echo through out the civilized world."<sup>82</sup> Ellen elucidated where she stood in the secession crisis: though she was indeed a slave-owner, she supported the Union.

Ellen does not discuss any of her family, neighbors or friends joining either the Confederate or Union Army.<sup>83</sup> Ellen was fortunate that she was spared the pain of sending her husband or son to fight. At the outbreak of war Albert Wallace was, at sixty-one years of age, too old for service. Alfred Wallace, Ellen's oldest son, aged four, was too young. By 1865, however, Alfred would have been old enough to drum or carry a flag for the army but

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<sup>81</sup> Ellen Wallace, February 10, 1861.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Josie Underwood, a twenty-one-year old girl of privilege and resident of Bowling Green wrote of the struggle to maintain outward shows of friendship when her acquaintances would join opposing armies. Like Josie, her sister was a Unionist, but married a Confederate. Josie wrote of the "politics of hosting," and selecting appropriate, compatible guests for dinner, as well as the bitterness that existed between old friends. Josie Underwood, *Josie Underwood's Civil War Diary* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009).

there is no mention of his desire to join or any anxiety on Ellen's part of this possibility.<sup>84</sup> Unlike many of her neighbors, Ellen did not bear witness to her friends or family marching off to battle. Annie Starling, a seventeen-year-old girl of privilege in Hopkinsville, described watching her friends and family enlist and the worry she suffered on their behalf. Annie grieved terribly at seeing her friend George depart, stating that her "heart has been heavy, heavy" and that after "he left I could not keep back the tears no (sic) longer, and so took a hearty cry..."<sup>85</sup> When her good friend Bob was drafted, Annie wrote of how "sad and troubling" she felt and wondered "what would we do without him?"<sup>86</sup>

Annie also wrote of her anxiety and sadness that members of her family were "perhaps marching wearily again from some scene and blood..." lamenting the bygone days when friends and family "made the time pass lightly."<sup>87</sup> Her diary entries also record the losses she experienced, stating that an acquaintance of hers, Tom Woodward, was killed and another friend mortally wounded.<sup>88</sup>

In April of 1861, Ellen was still fretful of the secession crisis and the fate of her beloved Kentucky, writing "Virginia seceded from the Union tonight. Kentucky it is feared will soon follow. She has all to lose and nothing to gain by such a course but ruin."<sup>89</sup> Secession and Civil War seemed inevitable. All Ellen could hope for was that Kentucky would cast its lot with the Union, saving itself from ruination.

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<sup>84</sup> Cemetery Records, Christian County Kentucky, Hopkinsville Public Library, Hopkinsville, KY.

<sup>85</sup> Annie Leslie McCarroll-Starling, *Diary*, January 29, 1861, Wallace-Starling Family Diaries, 1854-1932, 96M07, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, KY (hereafter cited as Annie Starling).

<sup>86</sup> Annie Starling, September 30, 1864.

<sup>87</sup> Annie Starling, May 26, 1864. In this entry, Annie is referencing her cousin, Tom.

<sup>88</sup> Annie Starling, August 24, 1864.

<sup>89</sup> Ellen Wallace, April 19, 1861.

At the beginning of the Civil War, Ellen believed secession to be treason, though she did not abhor the Confederates.<sup>90</sup> Stating that she “cannot look upon my countrymen as enemies,” Ellen sent the Confederate troops in “quiet possession of the town” a bucket of apples in October of 1861.<sup>91</sup> When the Union soldiers arrived ten months later, Ellen sent “one ham of bacon, potatoes and a loaf of bread” to them.<sup>92</sup> As the war continued, supplies became scarce. Consequently, she was not so eager to feed the soldiers on either side, intimating her incredulity in August of 1864 at the “audacity” of Lincoln’s soldiers to “come to our houses and order dinner and breakfast” without “...the slightest remuneration, only a worthless receipt.”<sup>93</sup> Though Ellen began the war as a Unionist, she still fed Confederate troops that came to Hopkinsville. As the war continued, Ellen’s politics began to waver, as did her material support to both the Union and the Confederacy.

By late 1864, Ellen’s views had changed. Instead of praising the Union soldiers and their cause, she wrote of “hearts [that] leaped for joy at the sight [of southern troops entering town]...the brave heros (sic)” that had come to liberate Hopkinsville.<sup>94</sup> She spoke adoringly of the “brave, undaunted South...fighting with unflinching determination for every inch of her sacred soil” and the southern soldiers, the troops “half clad, half fed, poorly mounted and badly armed” who yet “fight on if every advantage was in their favor. Their bitterest enemy cannot help acknowledging their dauntless bravery, their perfect indifference to hunger, cold and all the comforts of civilized life in which they were

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<sup>90</sup> Josie Underwood also writes of aiding both Union and Confederate troops, though she herself was a Unionist. Stating “if a mother’s son was ill, I want to help,” Josie put aside her political leanings to aid wounded Confederates in her town. Josie Underwood, 14.

<sup>91</sup> Ellen Wallace, October 9, 1861.

<sup>92</sup> Ellen Wallace, August 1, 1862.

<sup>93</sup> Ellen Wallace, August 7, 1864.

<sup>94</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 12, 1864.



raised....”<sup>95</sup> Ellen’s admiration of the Confederacy and its sons is evident. More surprising however, are Ellen’s views of the “yankey” army. Indeed, the “yankey” is “just the reverse” of the civilized, brave, courageous southerner. The Union was not only “subjugating the South” but also “...having their way in Kentucky. Treading down all law and order.”<sup>96</sup>

### *Emancipation and Daily Life*

President Lincoln issued a preliminary proclamation of emancipation on September 22, 1862, but the final version did not become effective until the first of January, 1863. Though the Emancipation Proclamation ignited the passions of people all across the South and in the border states, it was limited in its scope. Lincoln proclaimed all slaves in the Confederate states free, but left slavery in loyal border states, like Kentucky, untouched. Also exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation were slaves in parts of the Confederacy that had already fallen under Union control. The Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the United States. It secured the freedom of nearly four million slaves, but not until the thirteenth amendment was ratified did slavery become outlawed.<sup>97</sup>

Ellen hated abolitionists and the very idea of emancipation. She equated northern abolition with southern treason, and called Lincoln the “negro president.”<sup>98</sup> The Emancipation Proclamation was a “high handed outrage” and an “insult heaped upon them [the loyal Unionists] by the negro administration.”<sup>99</sup> After President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Ellen and many of her fellow Kentuckians considered Lincoln

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<sup>95</sup> Ellen Wallace, January 1, 1865.

<sup>96</sup> Ellen Wallace, September 18, 1864.

<sup>97</sup> “The Emancipation Proclamation,” National Archives and Records Administration, accessed April 13, 2011, [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured\\_documents/emancipation\\_proclamation](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation).

<sup>98</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 25, 1863.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

“a greater traitor than Jeff Davis because he pretends to support the constitution by the very means he takes to destroy it.”<sup>100</sup> Ellen describes President Lincoln as “the most contemptible man in the nation” and states that, “Old Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet are a disgrace to any half civilized nation.”<sup>101</sup> Ellen even suggests that a “church or state should set apart the 7<sup>th</sup> [of August] as a day of humiliation and prayer that Abe Lincoln is the chief magistrate of the United States.”<sup>102</sup>

Ellen detested Lincoln, his government and the Emancipation Proclamation. She must have worried about her future and how she and her family would survive if slavery were abolished. Like many of her fellow Kentuckians, she was also angry about what she viewed as a usurpation of her Constitutional rights. Ellen was not alone in harboring these conflicting loyalties. Frances Peter, a twenty-one-year old-resident of Lexington, shared similar sentiments. Frances was an ardent Unionist, but her views of blacks and slavery were more in line with her Confederate neighbors. She did not support emancipation and believed that slaves were inherently lazy and slow. Like Ellen, Frances was pro-Union and anti-Abolition, but unlike Ellen, Frances did not switch sides after the Emancipation Proclamation. Frances believed that in order for the Union to survive, they needed to “whip the rebels first” and then “let the ballot box decide” the issue of slavery.<sup>103</sup> Ellen’s complete abhorrence of emancipation and subsequent shift in loyalty rested on two major factors: her views regarding her rights, and her fear of a society without slavery.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ellen Wallace, July 3, 1864.

<sup>102</sup> Ellen Wallace, August 4, 1863.

<sup>103</sup> Frances Dallam Peter, *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 170.

Issues of racism and signs of social upheaval were prevalent during the war and they provoked racist observations. Subscribing to the philosophy of southern white paternalism, Ellen Wallace viewed herself as a “conscientious mistress” and her slaves as those who “with moderate labour have all the comforts and some of the luxuries of life without thought or care.”<sup>104</sup> According to Ellen, her slaves knew “their bed will be made for them in sickness, their doctors bills paid, their wants attended to and then taken care of in old age...”<sup>105</sup> Ellen, in the same vein as many other southerners, truly believed her slaves lacked nothing and lived a relatively decent life. Many Kentuckians believed their form of slavery was “in it’s mildest form”, and that slavery itself “...could not have been a universally grievous and oppressive burden...” if their slaves were protected and cared for.<sup>106</sup>

Ellen, though not a member of the plantation elite, managed the slaves within her household. Her diary does not mention much of the day-to-day interactions Ellen had with her slaves, but she does mention the births of slave children and instances of her servants arriving with supplies from the farm. Several times Ellen mentions events such as “Sandford brought up a fresh supply of flour” or “Mat came with a load of varieties from the farm; flour and bacon, vegetables.”<sup>107</sup>

Ellen had personal connections with her servants, and was emotionally affected when they departed from her home: “Mat took Mary to the farm. She has been in the house for so many years I feel sad at her departure.”<sup>108</sup> Though they were her servants, Ellen had

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<sup>104</sup> Ellen Wallace, November 20, 1856.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Johnson, 288, 381.

<sup>107</sup> Ellen Wallace, March 10, 1862.

<sup>108</sup> Ellen Wallace, April 6, 1862.

formed relationships with the members of her household. Ellen chides herself in the pages of her diary regarding her lack of patience with her servants. After discussing the removal of a servant from her house, Ellen reminds herself, "...[S]he (Eliza) has some good qualities that in some degree compensate for the bad," and says "I sincerely hope I may be enabled to bear her faults with patience." Though not looking forward to future occurrences of idleness and disobedience, Ellen resolves to rely on the "great and almighty power" to overcome her "great weakness...impatience." She prays to "find humility and faith...asking wisdom and patience to guide my children and servants aright."<sup>109</sup>

As the war continued and soldiers moved into Hopkinsville, Ellen was anxious about being left with "no man on the lot, and the town full of northern soldiers." However, Ellen felt some security as her "faithful servant Jinny has come in to act as body guard tonight."<sup>110</sup> In addition to acting as a bodyguard for the Wallace home, Jinny also cared for Ellen's children. After young Alfred "fell and cut his head," Jinny was the person who "brought him in."<sup>111</sup>

As the war progressed, Ellen's anxieties about the dwindling food supplies became evident. Ellen worried, "if this thing (the war) goes on much longer we will not have bread for our children and nothing for the negroes...."<sup>112</sup> Though her own children take precedent, Ellen mentions her fears of being unable to feed her servants.

Ellen writes of the material goods she provides for her slaves, including shoes and clothing. Ellen provided clothes for the "negro children" and dresses, "shimeses" and pants

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<sup>109</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 26, 1858.

<sup>110</sup> Ellen Wallace, November 6, 1862.

<sup>111</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 16, 1862.

<sup>112</sup> Ellen Wallace, September 13, 1862

for the adults.<sup>113</sup> Though Ellen states that she cuts the clothes herself, it is unclear whether she sews them or gives the cut material to her servants. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese discusses, it was not unheard of for plantation mistresses to cut and distribute the material and then sew side-by-side with servants, though the plantation spent more time and attention to detail on their own clothes. Occasionally the daughters of the plantation mistresses would also be present for the sewing of slave clothes.<sup>114</sup>

Ellen occasionally let her servants sleep in her house when they were ill so she “might be able to attend them better.” Ellen mentions sitting “up with them [Jinny and Sandford] giving them medicine almost the whole night.”<sup>115</sup> She became anxious with any news of sickness at the farm, fearing “....for the health of the servants there in this cold weather.”<sup>116</sup> After news that a slave named Kisiah was expected to die, Ellen lamented, “I feel very sad at the thought of Kisiah’s condition.”<sup>117</sup>

Though Ellen perhaps truly believed her slaves were well-cared for, and she formed intimate relationships with them, she did not consider them to be worthy of freedom and rebuked Lincoln and his cabinet for thinking “of nothing but the Negro, negro.” According to Ellen, “the constitution made by our fathers and sealed with their blood is nothing with them (the President and his cabinet) compared to the Negro.” Ellen viewed Lincoln’s policies as “giv(ing) way to the superior rights of the Negro,” and lamented, “the interest of the white man is nothing in comparison to that of the Negro.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ellen Wallace, May 13, 1862.

<sup>114</sup> Fox-Genovese, 128.

<sup>115</sup> Ellen Wallace, March 3, 1862.

<sup>116</sup> Ellen Wallace, February 21, 1863.

<sup>117</sup> Ellen Wallace, February 15, 1863.

<sup>118</sup> Ellen Wallace, February 17, 1862.

The very idea of abolition struck fear into Ellen's heart, as she often worried about "intended insurrections" around the country.<sup>119</sup> As early as 1856, Ellen was anxious over the issue of abolition and runaway slaves. She wrote of the "confessions" of some slaves of their desire to "rise and murder the whites."<sup>120</sup> Committees were drawn to "examine Negroes" and their plans for rebellion.<sup>121</sup> "I fear I shall never feel safe after this," wrote Ellen shortly before hearing of a plot in which all "negroes in the neighborhood [were] implicated."<sup>122</sup> Whether these confessions were coerced or even true did not matter to Ellen; the horrors were too great: "The leading Negro in each family was selected to kill their owner's wives and children. The young girls to be made wives of....[N]o exajuration [sic] of imagination or language can equal the reality..."<sup>123</sup> Ellen believed these accounts and confessions and worried for the safety not only of herself, but of her children and women across the nation.

Indicative of her opinions of the intelligence of Negroes, Ellen did not believe this "insurrection" was their idea alone. Rather, "the poor creatures have no doubt been instigated to such dreadful intentions by friends in the shape of white men."<sup>124</sup> Ellen took agency away from slaves, believing they would never want to give up the "luxuries" for which they only had to "moderately labour." It was not until Ellen learned of the existence

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<sup>119</sup> Ellen Wallace, November 20, 1856. Ellen wrote of a slave uprising in 1856 in or near Hopkinsville. However, a search of various newspaper databases yielded few results. Newspapers from Kentucky at that time are not available though America's Historical Newspapers or the Library of Congress.

<sup>120</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 7, 1856.

<sup>121</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 8, 1856,

<sup>122</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 13, 1856.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

of the Emancipation Proclamation that she began to demonize the slaves, turning them into “black monsters.”<sup>125</sup>

On October 15, 1861, Ellen described “President Lincoln’s message” as one that “filled the hearts of all loyal citizens with disappointment, shame and indignation...”<sup>126</sup> Ellen was beginning to question the Union cause. She believed herself to be a “loyal citizen,” but she argued that the idea of emancipation was an offense to loyal Kentuckians, a usurpation of their rights. Some “determined, patriotick men from the border states” tried to defeat the “weak and ruinous policy,” but to no avail.<sup>127</sup> Lincoln issued the proclamation, “liberating all the slaves in January (1863)...the finishing stroke to all these horrors.”<sup>128</sup> Ellen was incensed, noting with sarcastic incredulity the “protection the Federal Government extends to Kentucky, the only border state that did not pass the ordinance of secession.”<sup>129</sup>

Ellen thought the Emancipation Proclamation was insulting to the loyal Unionists of Kentucky as well as unconstitutional.<sup>130</sup> Lincoln ran a “negro administration” that cared only for the Negroes, according to Ellen’s hyperbole. “Kentucky institutions” should be let alone, not ruled by the “black republicans.”<sup>131</sup> The Proclamation, in Ellen’s eyes, ensured that “the white man is no longer free.” Thus, she interpreted the Proclamation as “a trampling of state law and the constitution underfoot.”<sup>132</sup> After Lincoln announced the end to slavery in the Confederate states, Ellen and the “better class of citizens throughout the

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<sup>125</sup> Ellen Wallace, September 27, 1862.

<sup>126</sup> Ellen Wallace, October 15, 1861.

<sup>127</sup> Ellen Wallace, August 16, 1862.

<sup>128</sup> Ellen Wallace, October 3, 1862.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 25, 1863.

<sup>131</sup> Ellen Wallace, February 14, 1864.

<sup>132</sup> Ellen Wallace, February 23, 1864.

country” suffered a “silent, burning indignation against Lincoln and his administration.”<sup>133</sup>

Though Kentucky was exempted from the Emancipation Proclamation along with the other border states that fought for the Union, Ellen’s ideological principles regarding states’ rights and the limited power of the President were now very much in line with her Confederate neighbors.<sup>134</sup>

Ellen also believed the Emancipation Proclamation presented a very real threat to the safety of women and children across the land. She worried that “the blood of women, children and helpless aged will flow in torrents....”<sup>135</sup> The proclamation left Ellen with a sense of “turmoil and dread;” she said she felt “anxious and apprehensive of danger.”<sup>136</sup>

In January of 1864, Ellen describes an incident in which “an old hired Negro,” apparently aware that Mr. Wallace was not at home, “walked in and deliberately took a seat” in the Wallace residence. According to Ellen, the former slave was “pretending he had some instructions to get,” but she “soon gave him instructions of another kind.” This event, in Ellen’s eyes, was an example of insolence brought on by “Lincoln’s damnable black republicans (sic) party.” Ellen believed events like these were happening all across the South, and she stated, “white women in town and country will find it necessary to carry daggers and revolvers in their girdles in place of pin cushions and scissors.”<sup>137</sup>

Insinuating that freed slaves will want nothing more than to take advantage of white women puts Ellen’s ideas and fears very much in line with those of her Southern sisters.

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<sup>133</sup> Ellen Wallace, March 5, 1864.

<sup>134</sup> Slavery was not officially ended in America until the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified in 1865.

<sup>135</sup> Ellen Wallace, September 29, 1862. Though Ellen wrote these words before the Proclamation was actually issued, the very idea of such a move caused her great anxiety.

<sup>136</sup> Ellen Wallace, December 21, 1863.

<sup>137</sup> Ellen Wallace, January 28, 1864.



Ellen, like plantation mistresses all across the South, had intimate relationships with her servants. Prior to emancipation, white ladies were not necessarily “engulfed by sexual alarm” when left alone with their male slaves.<sup>138</sup> After emancipation, however, when the patriarchal society and racial hierarchy of the South was threatened by the freedom of black men, white southern politicians began to “invoke the idea that newly freed black men would inevitably desire sex with white women.”<sup>139</sup> The freedom and potential political power of black men held the possibility of destroying the “Southern caste system” and “diminishing white supremacy.”<sup>140</sup> Undertones of these types of attitudes are present in Ellen’s diary, as well as other women across the South. Women such as Kate Stone, a Confederate woman from Louisiana, wrote in her diary of “numbers of strange Negro men standing around....[T]hey did not say anything but they looked at us and grinned and that terrified us more and more. It held such a promise of evil.”<sup>141</sup> The very ideals of southern womanhood were at risk with the freeing of slaves, and this terrified women like Ellen.

Ellen feared for the safety of herself, her family and her countrymen with “black monsters” running free. Perhaps she was not really the benevolent mistress she thought herself to be and feared reprisals from former slaves after they were freed. Perhaps she was struggling to maintain the antebellum ideals of society and economic status, attainable by owning property and slaves. Like her southern sisters, her very identity was cloaked in her status as a land and slave owner.

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<sup>138</sup> Martha Hodes, “White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South,” (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 140.

<sup>139</sup> Hodes, 146.

<sup>140</sup> Hodes, 147.

<sup>141</sup> Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 79.

Ellen Wallace believed Negroes to be subhuman, unintelligent and unable to fend for themselves. Like others in her town and county, Ellen viewed slavery, specifically in Kentucky, “so mild a burden that those who bore it were unaware that it was a burden...”<sup>142</sup> Even after slaves were freed, residents of Hopkinsville believed “...when they [slaves] escaped from it [slavery]...they desired most of all to come back to it.”<sup>143</sup> Many other Americans, including those in Ellen’s own town, “indignantly denied fighting for the destruction of slavery.” The effects of the Emancipation Proclamation became more pronounced in Ellen’s world when she witnessed “Negroes passing on horse back in squads...yelling and laughing as they prance along on fine horses, as if they had in reality changed places with the white man.” She complained, “the Negroes at both farms have become entirely unmanageable.”<sup>144</sup> Though Ellen did not agree with emancipation and viewed her slaves as nothing more than property, she could no longer handle their “insolence” and wished “earnestly that they would leave.”<sup>145</sup> By the time Ellen penned these words in July of 1865, the Confederacy had lost the war. She still felt emancipation was bad, but unmanageable, uncontrollable, “black monsters” running loose on the farm were far worse.

### *Conclusion*

The town of Hopkinsville did not see any combat during the course of the war, but its citizens witnessed occupation by both the Union and the Confederacy. The town itself was bitterly divided, with brothers fighting for different armies and neighbors refusing to acknowledge one another. Various factors affected how citizens reacted to the sectional

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<sup>142</sup> Johnson, 378.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ellen Wallace, January 28, 1864.

<sup>145</sup> Ellen Wallace, July 10, 1865.

conflict, though, and Ellen's experience demonstrates that these loyalties were not set in stone. As the war dragged on, the pressure of rationing, the loss of family members and loved ones, the destruction of property, and eventually the Emancipation Proclamation took their toll on white people across the country. Such factors could cause a woman such as Ellen who began the war as a stringent Union supporter to become a Confederate sympathizer by the end.

The war, for Ellen Wallace of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, meant different things and had different consequences than perhaps for a woman of similar social and economic status in Philadelphia or Jackson. Ellen Wallace occupied a unique place, both geographically and ideologically, during the Civil War. Though a loyal Unionist at the outset, Emancipation and the effects of war caused Ellen to change her political leanings. Though she shared much in common with her sisters to the South, Ellen had forged her own political identity during the turmoil of war. Throughout the conflict, she sought to reconcile her love and faith in the Union with her dependency on slavery and her belief in southern rhetoric. The Civil War was one of the most traumatic events in American history, and the consequences and ramifications of it were widespread and long lasting. By investigating precisely how and why the war affected border-state women, one can begin to understand why this particular event was the catalyst for such extreme social change in the decades and centuries that followed.

#### *Post-Script*

Not a lot of information exists regarding Ellen Wallace's life after the Civil War. Her diary ends July 12, 1865. According to the United States Census records of 1870, Ellen still lived in Hopkinsville with her husband Albert, and four children (Julia, Alfred, Henry and

Harrison). The census also listed a Clie Western, a fifty-year-old black female and Pref Johnson, a twelve-year-old black male, as members of the Wallace household. These names are not mentioned in the slave listings taken by the United States Census, so it is reasonable to assume that after the war, Ellen and Albert hired two servants to aid in maintaining their house and farm. According to the death records of Christian County and the headstone at Riverside Cemetery, Albert Wallace died in 1879. The census of 1880 lists Ellen Wallace as head of her house, which also included Julia Wallace, Horne Wallace (probably Harrison), and Fannie Jackson, a twenty-two-year-old black female and Howson Jackson, a two-year-old black male. Though Ellen hated emancipation and feared the “black monsters,” she employed black servants after the war, probably until her death in 1894.<sup>146</sup> Ellen was seventy-three when she died, and she was buried at Riverside Cemetery alongside her husband Albert and the four children that did not survive infancy.

Little is known about the last years of Ellen’s life, though a town legend suggests that she went a little crazy and was prone to running around town in just her undergarments.<sup>147</sup> According to the *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Ellen Wallace was one of the “Men (sic) of Wealth” in 1894.<sup>148</sup> She apparently paid over twelve thousand dollars in taxes that year, putting her in the same league as the richest men in town in the same year of her death. Though she worried about what the end of slavery would do to her social and

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<sup>146</sup>A fire destroyed the census of 1890, so it is not possible to tell if Ellen employed servants up until her death, but it is probable based on her socio-economic status and her life as a slave-owner.

<sup>147</sup> This is not based on documentation. After finding Ellen’s house and knocking on the door, I explained to the employees of Alpha Alternatives what my research interests were. I explained that I was researching Ellen Wallace, and the lady said “Oh we all know Ellen! She went a little nuts in her last years, she’d go try on dresses downtown and forget to put her clothes on and walk out of the store.”

<sup>148</sup> “Men of Wealth,” *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, January 16, 1894, 2.

economic status, Ellen Wallace and her family appear to have fared well in the aftermath of the war.

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