

A MYSTICAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY: HOOD'S TEXAS BRIGADE AND THE
SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF
COMBAT SUCCESS IN THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

THESIS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: “THEY HAVE FOUGHT GRANDLY AND NOBLY”

Between 1861 and 1865, some 4,346 Confederate citizen-soldiers left behind their families, livelihoods, and home communities in east and central Texas and traveled to Virginia to serve as their state’s sole representatives in the eastern theater of the American Civil War.¹ Formally organized into the 1st, 4th, and 5th Texas Volunteer Infantry Regiments, these men comprised the rigid backbone of arguably the finest combat organization of its size to fight with any army, North or South: Hood’s Texas Brigade. Named in honor of John Bell Hood, its most popular—and most effective—commander, this command regularly counted at least one formation of non-Texans on its rolls as well.² Be that as it may, the brigade’s ever-present Texas regiments not only

¹Harold B. Simpson, *Hood’s Texas Brigade: A Compendium* (Hillsboro: Hill Jr. College Press, 1977), 533.

²Brigaded with the Texans in October 1861, the 18th Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment served alongside the Lone Star regiments until its transfer to a newly created Georgia brigade in November 1862. Additionally, in early summer 1862, one battalion of infantry from Hampton’s South Carolina Legion was assigned to the Texas Brigade, serving with it for a period of five months. Following the departure of the Georgians and South Carolinians from the brigade in the autumn of 1862, the 3rd Arkansas Volunteer Infantry Regiment was added to the command. The Arkansans remained with their Texas comrades until the Army of Northern Virginia’s surrender in April 1865 (Simpson, *Compendium*, 251-253, 323-325, 397). This study’s exclusive focus on the Texas regiments of Hood’s Brigade is meant neither to disparage nor omit the important contributions made by troops from other states to the organization’s magnificent service record. Clearly, the brigade’s largely transient non-Texans performed well and cannot—indeed, should not—be discounted as an element of its success. However, the express intent of this analysis is to examine the dominant reasons for the command’s extraordinarily consistent performance throughout the war. At the

constituted the bulk of its numerical strength throughout the war, they also provided its principal source of identity. Blossoming under Hood's steady leadership, the men and officers from the Lone Star state rapidly gained an incomparable reputation for battlefield heroics and ferocity under fire, martial qualities that elicited admiration from rank-and-file comrades and superiors alike in the rebel Army of Northern Virginia. In an after-action report written in late spring 1862, Major General Gustavus W. Smith declared: "In praise of the Texas Brigade of my Division, I could talk a week, and then not say half they deserve."³ A member of Major General D. H. Hill's staff, Major James Wylie Ratchford, also extolled the fighting abilities of Hood's troops, insisting their "very name was worth more in battle than two such brigades could have been without their well-deserved reputation."⁴ None other than General Robert E. Lee offered the weightiest tribute to the Texas regiments' record with the Virginia army, writing shortly after the Maryland Campaign of 1862: "I need them [additional Texas soldiers] very much. I rely upon those we have in all our tight places. . . . They have fought grandly and nobly, and we must have more of them. . . . With a few more such regiments as those which Hood has now, as an example of daring and bravery, I could feel more confident of the results of the campaign."⁵ Such effusive praise did not come easily, however, having been

risk of possibly giving offense, the brigade—having been primarily composed of Texans for the duration of the conflict—*was* first and foremost a Texas unit. It logically follows, then, that the brigade's distinctively Texan character should be at the center of any investigation attempting to establish the major conditions underpinning its lengthy procession of battlefield accomplishments.

³United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 volumes plus atlas (Washington, D C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol 21, Part I, 627-28.

⁴James Wylie Ratchford, *Some Reminiscences of Persons and Events of the Civil War* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, Printers, 1909; reprint, Austin: Shoal Creek Publishers, 1971), 56.

been exhaustingly secured by the brigade across better than three years of service on many of the conflict's bloodiest fields—most notably Gaines's Mill, Second Manassas, Antietam, Gettysburg, Chickamauga, the Wilderness—at the staggering cost of over 60 percent casualties.⁶ By the war's end, the accumulated exploits in combat that had produced this appalling level of sacrifice entitled Hood's Texans to claim—with considerable justification—to have fought as members of the most consistently successful (if not famous) brigade in the Confederacy's most consistently successful army.

With few exceptions, interested historians have generally agreed with the Texas soldiers' self-evaluation of their brigade's standing among Confederate military units. For example, in his mammoth 1946 work, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, the venerable Douglas Southall Freeman refers to the members of the Texas Brigade as “perhaps the most renowned of all”⁷ the men who served in the Army of Northern Virginia. Harold B. Simpson, author of the only modern history written about the brigade, dubbed it “one of the finest fighting units to charge across the pages of United States history.”⁸ More recently, scholars such as Gary W. Gallagher have proclaimed Hood's Texans the Virginia “army's finest shock troops.”⁹ Sounding a similar refrain, the former Chief Historian of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Robert K. Krick, admits in his forward to a postwar memoir composed by a veteran

⁵Quoted in Harold B. Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade: Lee's Grenadier Guard* (Waco: Texian Press, 1970), 159.

⁶Simpson, *Compendium*, 533.

⁷Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, 3 volumes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), Vol. 3, 751.

⁸Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade*, 9.

⁹Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *The Richmond Campaign of 1862: The Peninsula & the Seven Days* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), xiv.

of the 5th Texas that, “were I pressed to” select the best Southern brigade in the East, “the Texas Brigade would be my choice. . . . From June 1862 to the fall of 1864, the Texas Brigade represented Lee’s most reliable unit.”¹⁰ Interestingly, Krick pairs his statement in support of the Texas regiments with the following caveat: “Establishing with precision the identity of the best brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia probably is too subjective an undertaking to be meaningful. Students of the war regularly tilt at such windmills, knowing full well the impossibility of finding a solid answer.”¹¹

Robert Krick’s admonition is worth noting, for it alludes—however obliquely—to a weakness pervading nearly every scholarly effort to address the Texas Brigade’s celebrated career with the South’s premier fighting force. Chiefly preoccupied with the brigade’s participation in the several dozen significant military engagements that comprised its record of service, the authors of such studies generally devote an inordinate amount of energy, skill, and ink toward describing the Texans’ battlefield experiences and achievements. Thus engaged in precisely the sort of exercise warned against by Krick, historians of the brigade have neglected perhaps the most compelling question of all, namely, “What salient factors enabled the Texas regiments to develop and maintain their matchless dependability under fire?” A question of this kind has broad applicability beyond Hood’s troops alone, generating, as it does, an opportunity to further integrate social and cultural history into an area of inquiry long considered the sole domain of military scholars. Accordingly, the consensus recognition that one brigade probably stood head and shoulders above the rest in a Confederate army famed for its many

¹⁰Mark W. Perkins and George Skoch, eds., *Lone Star Confederate: A Gallant and Good Soldier of the Fifth Texas Infantry* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), viii

¹¹*Ibid.*, viii

excellent combat units should have, by now, provoked at least one serious academic attempt to detect and clarify the likely origins of that apparent supremacy. And yet, despite having for decades copiously documented—and esteemed—the Texas Brigade’s numerous wartime accomplishments, historians have ultimately demonstrated surprisingly little (if any) interest in comprehending the factors intrinsic to the unit’s protracted dependability and success.

Essentially, this thesis is an effort to remedy that crucial oversight in the historiography of the Texas Brigade. Mindful of current trends in the study of Civil War soldiers—and of Robert Krick’s sage caution—I am not so much here concerned with the question of whether or not the Texas regiments were indeed the Army of Northern Virginia’s most elite. Taken together, contemporary testimony and recent works of scholarship treating the brigade’s combat successes have already more than substantiated the organization’s inclusion among an exclusive handful of exceptional Confederate units to fight in the war’s eastern theater. It is, rather, this study’s principal intent to propose an interpretive framework through which an explication of why Hood’s Texans remained militarily effective for as long as they did becomes feasible. Having presupposed the brigade’s excellence in battle, I argue that its long-term efficiency mainly derived from a spontaneous confluence of factors extensively connected to social, cultural, and environmental conditions often peculiar to antebellum Texas. These conditions—far more than any of the largely unremarkable considerations associated with arms, equipment, training, or tactics—influenced how the brigade’s membership fought the war, virtually affecting every facet of their Confederate service from the very outset. Underlying this argument is the basic premise that soldiers in any war are, in essence,

reflections of the societies, cultures, and environments from which they originated.

Consequently, the one cannot be accurately understood without a careful consideration of the others.

The following chapters address the three factors most prominently involved in the Texas Brigade's prodigious ascendancy among the dozens of like-sized Southern units that composed the Army of Northern Virginia. The first of these chapters investigates the extent to which the antebellum Texas frontier experience influenced the brigade's rank-and-file, placing particular emphasis upon that experience's role in determining the kinds of expertise, military knowledge, and perceptions of the enemy Texans carried with them to the seat of war in Virginia. The second chapter suggests that a cultural construction distinctive to mid-nineteenth-century Texas—which I refer to as “the myth of Texan martial supremacy”—motivated the soldiers of the Texas regiments to aspire to an ultimately unrealizable ideal of utter invincibility on the battlefield. The Texans' tireless pursuit of this objective satisfied the exacting martial expectations of their home communities and the larger Confederate public alike, while sustaining their society's warrior-based notion of masculinity. In the third chapter, I accentuate the centrality of the unique command relationship cultivated between John Bell Hood and the men and officers of the Texas Brigade to their mutual success in the eastern theater.

Fundamentally rooted in an insightful comprehension of Texas culture, Hood's command approach was functionally responsive to Texans' penchant for extreme individualism and egalitarianism, as well as to their demand for aggressive—even reckless—demonstrations of combat leadership from the officers appointed to lead them.

In exploring these topics, I have not only endeavored to thoroughly ground my approach in dominant scholarly themes regarding the war's military affairs, but I have also liberally incorporated the perspectives of historians whose interests encompass broader social, cultural, and intellectual issues of the period and, when appropriate, those of social scientists as well. Moreover, with respect to sources, I have usually eschewed postwar accounts, electing instead to predominantly base my conclusions in wartime writings—letters, diaries, newspapers, military after-action reports, and the like—thereby taking advantage of the inherent immediacy of such sources to enhance the veracity of the assertions advanced by this thesis. In light of this choice, it is, indeed, fortunate that the soldiers of the Texas Brigade were generous contributors to the war's written record. Having made the pursuit of this study's immediate goal possible, their prolific writings have also presented valuable insights into the society and culture of antebellum Texas, while, at the same time, suggesting an alternative way of thinking about the factors integral to achieving success in war.

CHAPTER 2

“THE BEST FIGHTERS AND MARKSMEN IN THE STATE”: HOOD’S TEXAS BRIGADE AND THE FRONTIER EXPERIENCE

After visiting the 4th and 5th Texas Regiments at their camp of instruction near Harrisburg, Texas, in early August 1861, a special correspondent of the *Richmond Enquirer* writing under the *nom de plume* “CRESCENT” eagerly related his initial evaluation of the newly enlisted Texans to the Virginia newspaper, declaring, “I have seen the men destined for the battle fields of Virginia, and a finer set of men I never beheld. Of lithe and vigorous frames, they are the best fighters and marksmen in the State. Some of them had a great deal of sport at Eagle Lake, killing alligators. It was a most interesting occasion. They could shoot them in the eye at 200 yards, and hit them every time.”¹ Clearly written as an engaging account of Texas volunteers bound for service in the Civil War’s eastern theater, this reporter’s commentary obliquely touched upon a key ingredient of the Texas Brigade’s future success as an integral part of the rebel Army of Northern Virginia: the influence of the antebellum Texas frontier experience. Primarily drawn from twenty-seven counties spanning much of the state’s eastern half, a majority of the citizen-soldiers recruited in 1861 to fill the ranks of the Texas regiments were either residents of areas composing the westernmost fringe of

¹ *Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond), August 28, 1861, United States Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Anglo-American settlement or of locales that had emerged from frontier status sometime during the previous two decades.² Consequently, many of the enlistees from these counties joined the brigade having lived, if not their entire lives, then at least a part of them on the frontier.

This overarching fact distinguished Texans' presence in the East, for among the volunteers of the Union and Confederate armies operating in that theater of the war, they were the only men who could legitimately claim to hail from a true frontier state.³ Predominantly fighting alongside—as well as against—combat units of eastern origin, the Texas regiments were therefore something of a collective oddity by comparison. More importantly, however, their membership constituted a representative slice of Texas's white population, being largely composed of individuals whose civilian lifestyles and occupations tended to revolve around subsistence-oriented agriculture and stock raising—demanding livelihoods frequently made all the more so by the unpredictable

²C. Allen Jones, *Texas Roots: Agriculture and Rural Life Before the Civil War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 125-129; D. W. Meinig, *Imperial Texas: An Interpretive Essay in Cultural Geography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 38-56. The Texas counties that contributed the lion's share of the volunteers for the 1st, 4th, and 5th Texas Regiments included Anderson, Bexar, Colorado, Galveston, Goliad, Grimes, Guadalupe, Harris, Harrison, Henderson, Houston, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, McLennan, Marion, Milam, Montgomery, Navarro, Polk, Robertson, San Augustine, Travis, Trinity, Tyler, Walker, and Washington (Harold B. Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade: A Compendium* [Hillsboro: Hill Jr. College Press, 1977]). Of these counties, more than three-quarters were considered frontier areas for at least a portion of the intervening years between 1840 and 1861.

³Two of the foremost historians of Texas agree that the state was set apart from the rest of the Union by 1860 in direct consequence of its frontier status. According to T. R. Fehrenbach, at that time, "no other American state still faced a true frontier, where a line of fixed settlement was exposed to continual threats of violence. California and the Oregon Territory . . . and the regions of the upper Midwest—Iowa, Wisconsin, and other states—experienced pioneer conditions, but in reality almost none of their populations were ever exposed to a real frontier. There were either no truly recalcitrant, warlike Indians in these regions, or else all Indians were removed before large-scale settlement began (T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and Texans* [New York: Collier Books, 1980], 280)." Randolph B. Campbell endorses this contention as well, explaining that "Texas differed . . . in having a southern frontier occupied primarily by citizens of Mexican rather than Anglo ancestry and a western frontier populated by Indians still strong enough to resist encroachment on their lands. These frontiers made Texas different (Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 208)."

circumstances of life at the farthest reaches of Anglo-American civilization.⁴ For such men and their families, the very survival of homesteads located on or near the frontier had demanded an adept handling of the natural and manmade conditions they regularly confronted there. Interestingly, some of the adaptive responses Texans employed in the struggle to manipulate these conditions to their benefit proved remarkably well suited to military applications upon the outbreak of civil war in 1861.

Proceeding with this suggestive premise in mind, this chapter seeks to delineate the specific ways in which the frontier experience influenced the Texas Brigade's maturation into one of the most reliable combat organizations to fight in any theater of the American Civil War.⁵ Not unexpectedly, the manner in which this process transpired

⁴Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, 209-211. For the purpose of formulating an idea of the occupational backgrounds of the men who served in the Texas Brigade, I first established a representative sample of 102 individuals selected from Companies A and D of the 4th Texas Regiment and Company C of the 5th Texas Regiment. I then consulted Schedule 1 of the United States Census of 1860 for the Texas counties from which these troops originated—Leon, Guadalupe, and Goliad Counties, respectively—in an effort to identify on a case-by-case basis the civilian livelihoods of each soldier. As indicated by the census, seventy-three individuals (71.5 percent of the whole) had been engaged in mostly small-scale agricultural pursuits on the eve of the Civil War. Included among that group, the census recorded forty farmers, sixteen laborers, seven stock raisers, five teamsters, one overseer, one wagoner, one cattle driver, one well digger, and one saddletree maker.

⁵In analyzing the likely connections between the frontier experience and the Texas Brigade's excellence as a combat unit, my approach has been informed by a variety of inter-disciplinary studies of human-environment relations, including John Bayer, *Environment and Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999); Lester J. Bilsky, ed., *Historical Ecology: Essays on Environment and Social Change* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1980); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Claude Levy-Leboyer, *Psychology and Environment* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982); D. W. Meinig, *Imperial Texas: An Interpretive Essay in Cultural Geography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969); and Kay Milton, *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory: Exploring the Role of Anthropology in Environmental Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1996). Despite having been generated by scholars from diverse disciplines—anthropology, environmental psychology, cultural geography, and ecological history to be more precise—all of these studies agree insofar as they tend to construe the nature of man's relationship with the natural world as being one fundamentally characterized by continual adaptation and change. According to this consensus view, on the one hand, human groups encountering new or altered environmental conditions frequently develop adaptive responses to them in an attempt to more successfully relate to their surroundings. On the other hand, people also actively seek to change and manipulate their environment whenever possible with an eye toward both eliminating unpredictability in nature and establishing dominion over its many resources. That said, the authors of the works cited above generally reject the concept of environmental determinism—an idea that attributes variations in human culture exclusively to

was closely aligned with Texans' differentiated view of the frontier. On one level, the state's citizenry experienced and perceived the frontier as a distinct, physical environment replete with obstacles to overcome and resources to exploit. On another level, however, they conceived of the frontier as a cultural and ethnic line of demarcation separating them from non-white peoples deemed to be alien "Others."⁶ This two-tiered perspective determined the general tone of Texans' interactions with the frontier, encouraging them to craft adaptive responses particularly tailored to address the myriad challenges posed by the borderland wilderness and its "uncivilized" inhabitants. For the brigade's rank-and-file, it was primarily through this aggressive spirit of adaptability that the frontier most directly influenced their Confederate service. Having recognized in their war against the North circumstances analogous to those previously encountered during their home state's prewar efforts to extend its line of frontier settlement ever westward, Texas troops serving with the Virginia army unhesitatingly incorporated skills, knowledge, and attitudes garnered from that experience—broadly categorized herein as having been either functional or conceptual in nature—into their approach to fighting the war. In the interest of identifying the most prominent of these, this study will investigate the following: Texas soldiers' application of previously attained frontier woodcraft⁷

environmental factors. Although I will argue in the present chapter that Texas's frontier environment affected Anglo-American settlers' behaviors and attitudes, thereby contributing to the development of certain cultural characteristics within Texas society, I, too, reject the notion that environments alone determine culture. Clearly, Anglo-Americans immigrating to Texas carried with them a whole host of pre-established cultural attributes and ideals, many of which they fought to preserve within the context of the frontier experience. To this end, pioneering Texans attempted to re-shape the environment to meet the standards of Anglo-American culture.

⁶For an excellent synthesis of the anthropological literature addressing the ethnographic concept of the "Other," see Line Grenier and Jocelyne Guilbault, "Authority" Revisited: The "Other" in Anthropology and Popular Music Studies, *Ethnomusicology*, Vol 34, No 3 (Autumn, 1990) 382-390

expertise toward the execution of certain specialized military assignments such as reconnaissance and sharpshooting, how the brigade's significant number of frontier war veterans—officers and enlisted men alike—contributed to its efficiency in camp and on the battlefield, and how the prevalent Anglo-Texan perception of both Mexicans and Comanches as alien “Others” influenced—and perhaps even facilitated—brigade members' conceptual dehumanization of Northerners during the Civil War.

Frontier Woodcraft Expertise and Specialized Military Assignments

The Texas Brigade's stellar record of achievement with the Army of Northern Virginia was hardly confined to its performance in major combat situations. Indeed, however impressive the brigade's involvement in some of the war's more epic contests may have been, its soldiers' frequent assignment to a variety of specialized duties evinced their great efficiency, reliability, and value during periods of relative inactivity between campaigns and amid the army's preparations for impending large-scale operations. Not surprisingly, the enormity and drama of the major set-piece battles in which the Texas regiments played such vital roles has tended to obscure their contributions to a multitude of comparatively small-scale operations, the likes of which generally constituted the largest portion of the typical Civil War soldier's combat experience. Considering the commonplace nature of this category of missions, their relevance insofar as they relate to the frontier's influence upon the Texas Brigade's daily operation will be examined here.

⁷As employed in this study, the term “woodcraft” specifically refers to the traditional art of surviving in a wilderness environment.

To be sure, Texans' habitual employment by the army's high command in reconnaissance detachments and sharpshooter details was anything but an accidental trend. These kinds of assignments were, in fact, ideally matched to the rustic expertise many of the Texas Brigade's members had acquired while negotiating the frontier experience prior to the war's outbreak. Of particular significance in this regard was Texans' intimate knowledge of woodcraft. Subsisting on the frontier and, to an only slighter extent, in the better established regions of Texas demanded that settlers develop and master an extensive array of outdoor skills to effectively vie with and exploit the natural environment. Figuring prominently among these abilities were those essential to tracking and killing wild game animals for either food or protection. Whether compelled by necessity to hunt or lured to do so by the sheer abundance of native wildlife, antebellum Texans generally relied upon animal populations to fulfill many of their daily material needs, including food, clothing, and domestic fittings.⁸ As a result, numerous Texans—typically males—learned at an early age how to locate and follow game trails, to arrange and synchronize the movements and tactics of hunting parties for maximum effect, to utilize diverse forms of natural cover while stalking prey animals, and to adeptly handle firearms, knives, and other associated weapons.⁹ As they matured, young men not only “had to develop the qualities of the ‘hunter,’ who was skilled in woodcraft; they also assumed characteristics of the ‘sportsman,’ who savored the act of killing and received credit for the accurate shot and its resulting spoils.”¹⁰ Although Texans highly

⁸Robin W. Doughty, *Wildlife and Man in Texas: Environmental Change and Conservation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 23-33; Jones, *Texas Roots*, 171-176.

⁹Ibid., 79-85.

¹⁰Ibid., 80.

esteemed excellent marksmanship as the mark of a practiced woodsman, most also considered it something of a life-preserving necessity given the unsettling regularity with which they encountered the plentiful bears, panthers, wolves, and other dangerous carnivores that roamed the countryside.¹¹ Still, the state's residents did not exclusively apply talents such as these to just hunting. Throughout Texas, open range ranchers, small-scale stock raisers, cow hands, and day laborers necessarily depended upon many of the same woodcraft techniques—tracking and competent firearm use in particular—when conducting periodic searches for errant livestock, herd defense, round-ups, and cattle drives. Similarly, rangers, minutemen, and other military volunteers of the period profitably employed their skillfulness as outdoorsmen while pursuing Indian raiding parties as well as during larger campaigns against hostile tribes. Broadly speaking, then, mid-nineteenth-century Texans from various walks of life and in a variety of circumstances had little alternative but to be careful students of woodcraft, studying and refining its techniques as they endeavored to overcome the frontier's innumerable obstacles and dominate its natural bounty.

Considering Texans' collective familiarity with frontier woodsmanship upon joining the Virginia army, it is little wonder that they repeatedly—and successfully—executed the specialized tasks that they did. During the first summer of the war, a Texan operating as an independent ranger in Virginia, Thomas J. Goree, predicted that very state of affairs. "From what I have seen and know," Goree asserted, "Texas could render as much, or more, service for the cause in Virginia" by "acting as Rangers or as scouts" as

¹¹Ibid., 65-66, 70-76, 87-91; Jones, *Texas Roots*, 172-175.

in any other capacity.¹² He was conversely dismissive of other Southern troops' ability to effectively assume reconnaissance duties, bluntly writing to his mother: "if you were to think a week you could hardly imagine anything as harmless and inefficient than a company of Virginia Cavalry acting as scouts."¹³ Private Jeremiah D. Caddell (Company I, 4th Texas) not only agreed with Goree's evaluation, he was also struck by the operational possibilities offered by the Virginia landscape, which he believed corresponded well with Texans' frontier expertise. "If we Texians had our way," Caddell confidently informed his father in early 1862, "I believe we could run the last yankie out of this country in 6 months for it is the best country to take advantage of the enemy I ever saw."¹⁴ More than mere soldiers' rhetoric, statements in this vein explicitly reveal Texans' awareness of the distinctive skills they possessed as well as of the ways in which those skills might best be directed to beneficially contribute to the war effort in the East.

As it happened, Goree's and Caddell's separate identification of scouting as a natural role for Texans to perform accurately anticipated one of the two most common support functions the soldiers of the Texas Brigade undertook over the course of the conflict. Regularly dispatched on offensive reconnaissance forays to gather intelligence about the enemy's numerical and logistical strength, troop dispositions, and likely intentions, Texans in the Army of Northern Virginia brought to bear an intimate knowledge of tracking and concealment methods that enabled them to stealthily achieve their objectives and return with truly productive information in hand. On May 7, 1862,

¹²Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 20.

¹³Ibid., 20

¹⁴Jeremiah D. Caddell, Camp Hood, Va., Dear Father, January 19, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas

members of Company G, 4th Texas Regiment, participated in a fairly representative action of this kind near Barhamsville, Virginia. According to company commander John W. Hutcheson's (Company G, 4th Texas) official after-action report, the scouting detachment was deployed on marshy ground some distance ahead of the brigade with instructions to ascertain and reconnoiter the Federal position.¹⁵ Following "the tracks of individuals, supposed to be the enemy," Hutcheson's men crept "upon hand and knee" toward an "artificial dam of some height . . . where there were various indications to a woodman, that the enemy were near."¹⁶ With a little more skulking, they soon discovered an advanced party of Northern soldiers partially hidden in a wooded area immediately in front of them. No doubt intent on mischief, the Texans furtively scrambled to a "position where . . . [the enemy] would be unmasked . . . [and] began to open a fire, which, proving hot and effective,"¹⁷ resulted in the Unionists' precipitous withdrawal from the tree line. Having fulfilled the goals of their mission and a bit more, Hutcheson and the scouts "were ordered to return to the regiment"¹⁸ a short time thereafter.

For the men in the ranks, excursions of this sort understandably constituted a considerable source of pride and were therefore popular topics of discussion in their written correspondence. In a letter submitted to the editors of the *Richmond Dispatch* in mid-June 1862, an unidentified soldier writing under the instructive alias "A TEXAS

¹⁵*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), June 23, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid

SCOUT” detailed a reconnaissance operation undertaken by “a detail of one hundred and fifty men from the 1st, 4th, and 5th Texas regiments”¹⁹ one month previous. Organized “for the purpose of securing the woods in front of our line on the Nine-Mile road, seeing what Yankee force there was in the woods, and to drive them out if possible,” the roving patrol of Texans carefully picked its way through “a few hundred yards” of forest before detecting “a strong force of the enemy” enshrouded in the thick undergrowth and timber.²⁰ As the Texas soldiers darted through the woods and began to form a skirmish line, the Federals “imprudent[ly]” discharged “a constant fire . . . from among the trees,”²¹ thereby revealing their exact position to the advancing Confederates. Apparently emboldened by their enemies’ blunder, the Texans rushed forward with a “war-whoop, . . . and a thousand Yankees rose like spirits through the gloom of the forest.”²² The Union officers proved unable to persuade their men to hold fast in the face of this sudden assault, as the anxious Northerners “fired but one volley” and then “took to their heels” to seek the cover of their army’s entrenchments.²³ As recounted by Private R. H. Franks (Company D, 4th Texas) in a letter written to his brother near Richmond, Virginia, on May 22, 1862, on at least one occasion, infiltrating Texas scouts deprived their Federal opponents of the relative safety provided by trenches and rifle pits. In April 1862, “while we were at Yorktown[, Virginia],” explained Franks, the Confederate high command had “the idea” that Texans would “much rather fight than eat. . . [and

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

consequently] kept scouts out from our brigade all the time.”²⁴ Serving as one of those scouts, he accompanied a ninety-eight-man reconnaissance expedition “with orders to act as we saw fit” after establishing the location of an enemy outpost. With such generous instructions in hand, the Texans scurried to an observation point near the Union position and “found out that the Yankees had holes dug all along their lines to stand picket in,” which they typically occupied “about an hour before day.”²⁵ Not ones to pass up an ambush opportunity when it presented itself, Franks and his fellow scouts waited until after midnight before slipping in among the Federal earth works, “a man in each pit.”²⁶ Here they remained concealed until daybreak, at which point the Yankee sentries returned to discover with “great astonishment, their holes were occupied by”²⁷ rebels. Franks concluded his account by triumphantly noting: “We let the rascals run right up on us before we fired. . . . We killed eighty and took thirty prisoners, and drove the rest of them . . . [beyond] their inside pickets.”²⁸ According to First Lieutenant William C. Walsh (Company B, 4th Texas), the success of clandestine operations such as these produced an accumulatively unsettling effect on the enemy. As reported by Walsh, a Union “Lt. Colonel who was nabbed by some of our boys *within his own lines*, said that when men were detailed for picket duty they bade all their friends ‘good bye,’ and sent messages and locks of hair home . . . so terrible did the name of ‘Texian’ become to

²⁴*Dallas Herald* (Dallas), August 2, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

Yankedom.”²⁹ However embellished this story might very well be, the officers and men of the Texas Brigade plainly reveled in the notoriety they received as reconnaissance specialists. For that reason, soldiers like Corporal Nathan Oates (Company K, 5th Texas) simply could not resist boasting to friends and relatives at home that, wherever the army traveled, “our Texas Scouts proved a terror to”³⁰ the enemy.

If Texans’ adroit execution of reconnaissance duties was largely a natural outgrowth of the frontier woodcraft techniques they carried with them to Virginia, then their collective excellence—and, by extension, their lethality—as sharpshooters was doubtless firmly embedded in the same bedrock of basic skills. In much the same way as they channeled their tracking and hunting abilities toward scouting, the Texas Brigade’s rank-and-file likewise fell back upon their extensive prewar experience with firearms and precision shooting to accomplish the tasks entrusted to them when assigned to sharpshooter details. A report published in the October 5, 1861, edition of the *Richmond Examiner* fully expected the men of the then recently arrived “regiments called for from the Lone Star State” to be the crack shots they eventually proved themselves to be, describing them as “athletic, spirited looking men, the greater portion of whom are quite as familiar with the ready use of the deadly rifle, as a city young man is with his knife and fork.”³¹ Already supremely confident in their abilities as marksmen upon joining the Virginia army, Texas soldiers seem to have become increasingly more so after being

²⁹*Texas State Gazette* (Austin), August 14, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

³⁰Ruth Peebles, *There Never Were Such Men Before The Civil War Soldiers and Veterans of Polk County, Texas, 1861-1865* (Livingston, Texas: Polk County Historical Commission, 1987), 369.

³¹*Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond), October 5, 1861, United States Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

armed with British-manufactured, .577-caliber 1853 Enfield rifle muskets. One member of the 5th Texas was positively euphoric over his regiment's receipt of the much admired weapons, writing in November 1861: "We have received our arms—the Enfield rifle; I believe one of the best guns of the age when placed in the hands of *experienced* marksmen. The men have tried them and they speak of them in the most flattering terms of praise. . . . Every one that has tried them say that they throw the ball just where you hold them."³² Texans' wide-ranging experience with firearms and marksmanship had taught them an appreciation for small arms of superior quality, and with an approximate range of 1,000 yards, the model 1853 Enfield rifle unquestionably qualified as just such a weapon in their estimation.

Thus armed with a weapon of far greater range and accuracy than they were accustomed to handling in civilian life, the Texas Brigade's rank-and-file exploited their shooting expertise to the fullest possible extent as snipers for the Army of Northern Virginia. Although the army's high command detailed troops from the brigade to form sharpshooter detachments on diverse occasions throughout the war, perhaps the best documented—and most prolonged—assignment of this kind occurred during the Peninsula Campaign in the spring of 1862. Commenting shortly after the Texans' initial designation as sharpshooters that April, Private Arthur H. Edey (Company A, 5th Texas) observed that "before . . . that point, the enemy was very bold; walking on top of the intrenchments and occasionally drilling in front of them, because they felt secure."³³

³²*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), November 20, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

³³*Texas State Gazette* (Austin), May 24, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Worse still, Federal soldiers “were fond of climbing trees and shooting down into”³⁴ the rebel earth works. “But that has been stopped by the Texians,” Edey noted matter-of-factly, as they “hover about the enemy and annoy him as much as possible.”³⁵ A member of the 4th Texas provided an even fuller account, claiming: “previous to our arrival, the sharp-shooters of the enemy had approached to within two hundred yards of our [the Confederate] fortifications, and from tree tops and rifle pits easily picked off every man who thoughtlessly exposed his head.”³⁶ Such operations by the Unionists abruptly ceased, however, once roving detachments of sharpshooting “Texans . . . supplied with Minnie and Enfield rifles, and what was still more to the purpose, knew how to use them,” began to efficiently pick “Yankees. . . out of trees and holes, evidently very much to their surprise.”³⁷ In his diary entry for April 28, 1862, Private Joseph B. Polley (Company F, 4th Texas) succinctly confirmed both accounts, recording: “The day after we got here orders came for two men to be detailed daily from each company of the three Texas Regiments to act as sharpshooters. . . . The Yankees are much shyer now since the Texans have been testing their guns than they were before.”³⁸

Even so, however consistently formidable the Texas Brigade’s sharpshooters may have been, they rarely operated with uncontested impunity. Indeed, many Texans freely acknowledged that, depending on the marksmanship of their Northern counterparts in any

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Donald E. Everett, ed , *Chaplain Davis and Hood’s Texas Brigade*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 56

³⁷ Ibid , 56

³⁸Joseph B. Polley diary, entry for April 28, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

given situation, the rivalry between themselves and enemy sharpshooters could occasionally be quite fierce—a state of affairs that apparently appealed to their collective competitiveness as frontier sportsmen. For his part, Corporal John Marquis Smither (Company D, 5th Texas) readily admitted to his mother that, although he and his comrades gave a detachment of Vermont sharpshooters “fits sometimes, . . . now and then some of our boys get knocked on the head.”³⁹ Fortunately for the unlucky Texans who were hit, continued Smither, “as of yet but one of our Regiment has been killed and he by the most foolhardy recklessness I have ever heard of.”⁴⁰ In a memoir written after the war, Private William A. Fletcher (Company F, 5th Texas) not only conceded the advanced skill level of some Federal sharpshooters, he grudgingly expressed admiration for their performance. Recalling a brief, but intense, encounter with Northern snipers situated in a stand of timber fringing the rebel army’s Yorktown defenses, Fletcher remembered thinking at the time that “from the way the enemy could get from one tree to another that they were expert woodmen.”⁴¹ After exchanging fire with the Union troops for a while to no effect, his detail returned to camp with each of its members duly impressed by the evasiveness and accuracy of the enemy sharpshooters they had just faced. “I have fished and hunted a great deal from a small boy up,” Fletcher later informed his compatriots, “I have had the association and advice of both the white man and the Indian in Woodcraft, and I think the Yanks that we fought were as expert getting

³⁹Eddy R. Parker, ed., *Touched by Fire: Letters from Company D, 5th Texas Infantry, Hood’s Texas Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865* (Hillsboro: Hill College Press, 2000), 45

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 45.

⁴¹William A. Fletcher, *Rebel Private Front and Rear, Memoirs of a Confederate Soldier* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 15

from one tree or log to the other as ever I saw.”⁴² Eager “to find out” from which states “those Yanks” hailed, he eventually learned “that they were ‘Western trappers and Hunters.’”⁴³ As the enemy Army of the Potomac was predominantly composed of regiments raised in northeastern locales, Fletcher actually found comfort in discovering the regional identity of the elusive Yankee sharpshooters, correctly assuming “there would be but few of them”⁴⁴ from the western states to contend with in future engagements.

Frontier Military Experience

The studious, prewar acquisition of woodcraft expertise by members of the Texas Brigade was not the only pragmatic response to the realities of frontier existence to be profitably integrated into their experience as soldiers in the Confederacy’s eastern army. As residents of a state constantly in conflict with its frontier neighbors, a significant percentage of the brigade’s officers and men could not only boast prior military experience upon enlisting in 1861, a good number of those were already combat veterans as well. Threatened by Mexico from the south and the Comanches in the west, Texas’s defense needs were alike considerable and ongoing along the entire breadth of its frontier borderlands during the antebellum period. This situation was largely fueled by the frightful antagonism that existed between white Texans and their two traditional frontier adversaries, a relationship characterized by a seemingly permanent cycle of reciprocal

⁴²Ibid

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid

violence and bloodshed. Small wonder then, that for more than a few of the state's citizens, the substantial demands of the frontier's physical environment were often overshadowed by the persistent military perils emanating from beyond the bounds of Anglo-American settlement. Many mid-nineteenth-century Texans consequently perceived service in any one of Texas's military and paramilitary organizations—most notably the rangers and the militia—as an unavoidable obligation of all military-aged men. Commenting on this trend, one Texas historian has asserted that “nearly every able-bodied male” in the state's frontier counties “at some time served with the Rangers” in particular, regularly passing “in and out”⁴⁵ of their ranks as circumstances dictated. Moreover, during both the Republican period and the first decade of statehood, the Texas government legislated compulsory participation in the militia for all eligible males, a group usually defined as men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five.⁴⁶ Compared to similar organizations throughout the antebellum United States whose evolved purpose for existence at that point was primarily social in nature, Texas's militia system was extraordinarily active on an operational level, compelled, as it was, to react to and defend against an unremitting succession of Mexican incursions and Indian raids between 1836 and 1861.⁴⁷ As it happened, the relatively high incidence of frontier military service

⁴⁵T. R. Fehrenbach, “Foreword,” in Thomas W. Knowles, *They Rode for the Lone Star: The Saga of the Texas Rangers* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1999), xiii; Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 473. The most recent study concerning the activities of Texas ranger companies during the nineteenth century is Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005).

⁴⁶Handbook of Texas Online, s v “Texas National Guard,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/TT/qnt2.html> (accessed July 28, 2006).

⁴⁷According to Thomas W. Cutrer, this impressive program of militia mobilization was particularly effective during Texas's decade of nationhood, as “in every year of its existence the republic recruited thousands of volunteers to fight Indians or Mexicans” despite having an Anglo population of

among Texas males inadvertently guaranteed that each of the three volunteer regiments raised to satisfy the state's commitment to support the Confederate war effort in Virginia possessed an unusually qualified initial collection of officers as well as a cadre of veteran enlisted men around which to build effective combat units.

From both an organizational and an operational standpoint, the enduring importance of the Texas Brigade's fortunate recruitment of an officer corps that included a significant number of men with previous service under arms cannot be overstated. A group consisting of 129 individuals altogether at the war's outset, the brigade's inaugural pool of officers claimed not fewer—and perhaps many more—than twenty-nine men (22.4 percent of the whole) with chiefly frontier-related, military experience.⁴⁸ Divided by regiments, the 1st Texas had the largest concentration of experienced leadership with 27 percent of its officers having formerly served, followed by the 4th Texas with 22.5 percent, and the 5th Texas with 17 percent. Men of diverse ages, civilian occupations, and service backgrounds, these officers were a mixed crowd drawn from all phases of

fewer than one hundred thousand prior to 1848 (*Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Army of the Republic of Texas," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/AA/qja3.html> [accessed July 30, 2006]).

⁴⁸The data on the Texas Brigade's initial officer corps is based on evidence gleaned from a variety of pertinent primary and secondary sources. After consulting Harold B. Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade A Compendium* (Hillsboro: Hill Jr. College Press, 1977), I was able to establish a list of the original 129 junior- and field-grade officers which constituted the brigade's earliest leadership. I then carefully examined H. David Maxey's online database "Index to Military Rolls of the Republic of Texas, 1835 – 1845" at <http://www.mindspring.com/~dmaxey/>; the Texas State Library & Archives Commission's online database, "Texas Adjutant General Service Records, 1836-1835" at <http://www2.tsl.state.tx.us/trail/ServiceSearch.jsp>; the Texas State Library & Archives Commission's online database, "Republic of Texas Claims," at <http://www2.tsl.state.tx.us/trail/RepublicSearch.jsp>; Schedule 1 of the United States Census of 1860 for Texas, Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 155-170; and the October 12, 1861 edition of the *Texas State Gazette* to precisely determine how many officers had acquired military experience prior to joining the brigade, who those individuals were, and what the nature of their service had been. Although this approach enabled me to positively identify twenty-nine individuals who had, in fact, served under arms before the war, there may have been many more yet undiscovered. In truth, despite the best efforts of many fine archivists to improve the situation, the state's antebellum military records as a class remain not only jumbled, but also notoriously incomplete, with numerous muster rolls, enlistment and service papers, reports, requisitions, and other like documents simply no longer extant as a result of the 1881 Capitol fire

Texas's dynamic, conflict-plagued past, being veterans of the Texas Revolution, the Army of the Republic, the Santa Fe Campaign, the Vásquez and Woll invasions, the Mier Expedition, the Mexican-American War, the Cortina War, and countless engagements with the Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches. Aside from approaching the management, training, and care of their respective commands with an exceedingly more thorough grasp of how the military operated than the average volunteer officer typically possessed, such leaders also contributed to their companies and regiments in terms of education, imparting vital lessons learned amid the rigors of campaigning and the extremis of combat to their less seasoned colleagues. Additionally, men of this kind likely exuded a greater degree of confidence and decisiveness on the battlefield than officers lacking the depth of their experience, having, in many instances, already confronted and overcome the physical and psychological terrors of combat. Of the nearly thirty veterans who comprised this exclusive category of officers, few (if any) were better prepared to influence the brigade's overall development than Jerome Bonaparte Robertson. Forty-six years of age when the Civil War erupted, Robertson had amassed an impressive military reputation during the preceding quarter-century, having fought in every major clash with Mexico since the revolution's end and numerous retaliatory campaigns against hostile Indian tribes as well.⁴⁹ In the summer of 1861, he personally raised and organized Company I, 5th Texas, and subsequently served as its first captain.⁵⁰ Given the scope of his experience and the tremendous skill with which he directed and provided for the soldiers of his company, Robertson was promoted to the Lieutenant Colonelcy of the 5th

⁴⁹*Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Robertson, Jerome Bonaparte," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/RR/fro28.html> (accessed July 30, 2006).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*; Simpson, *Compendium*, 167, 234

Texas in October 1861.⁵¹ Little more than one year later, on November 1, 1862, he succeeded John Bell Hood as the brigade's commanding general, universally acclaimed by his fellow Texans for "the gallantry of his conduct"⁵² during the recent battles of Gaines's Mill, Freeman's Ford, and Second Manassas. However atypical, Robertson's wartime career was nonetheless demonstrative of the extent to which veterans of earlier Texas conflicts made indispensable contributions to the brigade's splendid, overall functioning in camp and on the battlefield.

Naturally, the officer corps was not the only segment of the Texas Brigade to benefit from the presence of frontier war veterans. Also serving with the three Texas regiments as common volunteers, individuals with prior military experience probably comprised at least as large a percentage of the enlisted ranks as they did the officer pool. More often than not reasonably well versed in the fundamentals of the soldier's trade, veterans casually disseminated their knowledge of close-order drill, camp-related chores such as cooking and cleaning, marching and campaigning preparedness, and routine details and duties to raw recruits through their daily interactions with them. Moreover, those with combat experience could palpably exert a steadying effect upon their rank-and-file comrades during battle, particularly if they were non-commissioned officers. One representative veteran of this stripe was Private Andrew Nelson Erskine (Company D, 4th Texas), a lifelong citizen of Texas from early childhood and a participant in numerous military confrontations on the frontier. In early June 1841, then sixteen-year-old Erskine encountered his first taste of combat and was wounded by an arrow in the

⁵¹*Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Robertson, Jerome Bonaparte," Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 164.

⁵²Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 164.

thigh while serving as a member of Captain John Coffee “Jack” Hays’s ranger company in a chaotic melee with a Comanche raiding party at Bandera Pass, Texas.⁵³ Remaining with Hays’s rangers through the next year, he participated in the Texan repulse of Mexican general Adrian Woll’s invasion force on September 18, 1842, near San Antonio at the Battle of Salado Creek.⁵⁴ Erskine returned to civilian life shortly thereafter, during which time, besides marrying and raising a family, he worked variously as a land surveyor, small business owner, and county clerk. By late 1859, he had returned to the rangers as a junior officer, accompanying Captain John Salmon “RIP” Ford’s command in a counter-insurgency campaign to defeat and subdue the Mexican outlaw, Juan Cortina, and his followers along the Rio Grande border. With the advent of disunion, Erskine waited until late April 1862 to enlist in Company D, 4th Texas, at the age of thirty-six. Over the course of the next four months, he traveled to Virginia and fought with his regiment in the battles of Gaines’s Mill and Second Manassas, only to be instantly killed by enemy fire at the Battle of Sharpsburg, Maryland, on September 17, 1862.⁵⁵

Regrettably, because of the fragmented and disordered nature of Texas military records from the antebellum period, truly reliable statistics addressing the Texas Brigade’s aggregate number of militarily experienced enlisted men, such as Andrew Erskine, are not readily obtainable at present. Even so, in the absence of hard data,

⁵³Frederick Wilkins, *The Legend Begins: The Texas Rangers, 1823-1845* (Austin: State House Press, 1996), 179, 182, 184, 206, 207.

⁵⁴Texas State Library & Archives Commission online database, “Republic of Texas Claims,” at <http://www2.tsl.state.tx.us/trail/RepublicSearch.jsp>; Public Debt Claim #1289, Reel 145-353, 145-392, and 145-393.

⁵⁵Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “Erskine, Andrew Nelson,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/EE/fer2.html> (accessed October 19, 2005).

anecdotal evidence extracted from Texas soldiers' writings is suggestive insofar as it references veterans—some identified by name and others mentioned anonymously—alongside whom the average, inexperienced volunteer bivouacked, marched, and fought. Former ranger Silas M. Hines (Company A, 1st Texas) wrote to his sister from Camp Quantico, Virginia, on November 21, 1861, that he “was agreeably surprised and highly pleased at finding [among the Texas regiments' volunteers] many of my old schoolmates & acquaintances of my earlier life. I met also many of my old Ranging companions who . . . comprise a portion of the 4th Regiment.”⁵⁶ In describing an April 3, 1862, reconnaissance expedition, a member of the 4th Texas made a similar observation, indicating that although Federal troops stumbled upon the scouting patrol and gave chase, “old rangers were not to be caught so easily,”⁵⁷ and the Texans ultimately eluded their pursuers. Private Val C. Giles (Company B, 4th Texas) was much more specific as he recalled the night of July 1, 1862, when his friend, William C. Calhoun, regaled a group of Virginians after the Battle of Malvern Hill with a series of stories detailing his past exploits as a ranger. According to Giles, Private Calhoun absolutely mesmerized his audience before a blazing fire, explaining: “Out in Western Texas, where I live, the Comanche Indians are sure plentiful. . . . we mount our fine mustang horses and go capering over the greensward until we flush a covey of Comanches. Then the fun begins. We charge them with a yell, and the Indians scatter in every direction. Then we chase ‘em and shoot ‘em on the wing, just like partridges.”⁵⁸ Another Texas correspondent

⁵⁶Silas M. Hines, Camp Quantico, My Dear Sister, November 21, 1861, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁵⁷Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 54.

selected a less extroverted veteran to highlight, reporting to the *Houston Weekly Telegraph* in August 1861 that among the members of Company I, 4th Texas, was “an old soldier, Wm. G. Smith, who has been in several of our wars before. He is 64 years old, over six feet high and well proportioned, and as active and capable as any man in the company.”⁵⁹ Liberally scattered throughout the Texas regiments, seasoned soldiers such as those discussed in the above accounts collectively represented an important concentration of knowledge and experience that their fellow volunteers could rely on for the duration of their service with the brigade.

Northerners As “Other”

Regardless of whether they were hardened veterans or fresh-faced recruits, the officers and men of the Texas Brigade—if residents of Texas for any significant amount of time—had always known an enemy. In a very real sense, their home state’s involvement in the Civil War constituted an episodic transition from one period of armed conflict to another, a dramatic (if ultimately impermanent) transference of the citizenry’s enmity for their traditional Mexican and Comanche adversaries to the emergent Unionist threat and all it ostensibly represented. Confronted in 1861, then, with military opponents that most Southerners had until recently considered fellow Americans, Texans readily resorted to familiar attitudes and patterns of thinking fashioned by nearly forty years of continuous armed conflict with non-white peoples in an effort to degrade and dehumanize their new Northern enemy. The manifest extent to which the mind-set they

⁵⁸Mary Lasswell, comp. and ed., *Rags and Hope. The Memoirs of Val C. Giles* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1961), 119.

⁵⁹*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 21, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

employed in this undertaking was blatantly ethnocentric in nature and thoroughly infused with racism at the heart cannot—and should not—be denied. In rationalizing their taking up arms against the people of the North, Texans appear to have re-conceptualized their former countrymen by swathing them in the stereotypical imagery commonly reserved to describe Mexicans and Indians. Depictions of this kind tended to portray such people as being, if not altogether subhuman, then a remarkably inferior lot at best. Thus, for Texans to be psychologically at ease with the notion of civil war, they had to first vigorously characterize Northerners as possessing similar racial, cultural, and behavioral traits as those they ascribed to the two peoples of color with whom they frequently clashed on the frontier. Having thereby relegated the unseen masses north of the Mason-Dixon Line to the status of “Other,” Texas soldiers subsequently journeyed to the seat of war in Virginia as unreserved advocates of their cause’s supposed superiority and that of their culture.

However unintentionally, the large scale emigration of Anglo-Americans to Texas between 1822 and 1860 provoked an explosive collision of cultures along the territory’s southern and western frontier expanses. In their quest to subdue and improve the vast Texas wilderness, pioneering whites not only cleared the land of native vegetation and animal species to make way for American forms of agriculture and habitation, they also pursued a policy of cultural and racial hegemony with an eye toward mastering—or, if necessary, purging—the region’s aboriginal inhabitants, Mexican and Indian alike.⁶⁰ To

⁶⁰For discussion of Anglo-American settlers’ views and practices with respect to expansionism, land improvement, and race-related issues in Texas during the first half of the nineteenth century, see Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 100-238, Adrienne Caughfield, *True Women & Westward Expansion* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Carol Lea Clark, *Imagining Texas: Pre-Revolutionary Texas Newspapers, 1829-1836* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 2002), Robin W. Doughty, *At Home in Texas: Early Views of*

a certain degree, this domineering attitude toward the Texas landscape and its original occupants was the average Anglo settler's intellectual and cultural inheritance. Like most nineteenth-century Americans, Texans perceived the wilderness as possessing little merit in its primitive state. In their view, only the redeeming agents of civilization—soil cultivation, technology, education, Protestant Christianity, republican government, and the like—could bring true completion and stability to the natural environment they encountered upon moving westward.⁶¹ This vision was purposefully applied to all that the wilderness encompassed, indigenes included.

Anglo-American emigrants likewise carried into Texas a sizable stock of largely negative preconceptions—some based on first-hand experience, many not—regarding both Native Americans and Mexicans.⁶² Although biases of this ilk almost certainly

the Land (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988); C. Allen Jones, *Texas Roots: Agriculture and Rural Life Before the Civil War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Arnold De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992); D. W. Meinig, *Imperial Texas: An Interpretive Essay in Cultural Geography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969).

⁶¹Caughfield, *True Women*, 17-18, 28; Clark, *Imagining Texas*, 59-71; De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 1-3; David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003); Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence. The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

⁶²Not surprisingly, of these two groups, Texas settlers were eminently more likely to be familiar with the former. As asserted by Alden Vaughan, the colonial Anglo-American view of Indian peoples as “forever distinct in color and character” gradually evolved into a far more virulent nineteenth-century perception that labeled them “inherently dark, incurably savage, and intrinsically non-American” as a result of “primordial racial shortcomings” (Alden T. Vaughan, “From White Man to Redskin: Changing Anglo-American Perceptions of the American Indian,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4 [Oct., 1982], 953). Thus, even if white newcomers to Texas had not previously encountered Native Americans directly, they “were already bred to certain hatreds and war. Their mothers and fathers had endured Indians as they endured winters and the typhoid; the sons and daughters were entirely convinced that life would be better once both plagues were conquered” (T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 447). This cross-generational prejudice invariably contaminated settlers’ initial reactions to and dealings with the various Texas tribes, as few among them were capable of discarding the widespread conceptualization of Indians as “the special demonic personification of the American wilderness” (Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, 4). Early Texans’ beliefs concerning Mexicans were not much better on the whole. Despite their almost universal

inclined pioneers toward ill-treatment of these groups from the outset, it is just as evident that Texans believed Mexicans and Indians—especially the Comanches and their allies—habitually behaved in a manner that more than justified their initial contempt for them. In their struggle with cultures recognized as “Other,” Anglo settlers doubtless contrived such an outlook to buttress claims to a superior morality, conveniently sidestepping the nastiest facets of their own behavior in the process. Still, Texans’ motivations for asserting their sense of cultural preeminence over Mexicans and Native Americans were at least partially triggered by real events. Insofar as Mexicans were concerned, invading *soldados* had committed outrages against Anglos during the Texas Revolution and, in the decades immediately following independence, Mexican aggression against the citizens of Texas variously persisted in government-sponsored, clandestine, and populist forms.⁶³

The warlike Comanches, on the other hand, endeavored to maintain their centuries-old

lack of interaction with the Mexican republic prior to colonizing Texas, Anglo-American settlers nevertheless possessed strong ideas about its population and culture. Addressing this very issue, Arnaldo De León contends that seventeenth-century England bequeathed to its New World colonists a repertoire of national aversions to Catholicism, the Spanish, and racial mixing, thereby establishing the unfortunate foundation of later American attitudes toward the Mexican people (De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 4-7). Texans, according to De León, consequently “imported certain ideas from the United States These attitudes ranged from xenophobia against Catholics and Spaniards to racial prejudice against Indians and blacks. Thus Mexicanos were doubly suspect, as heirs to Catholicism and as descendants of Spaniards, Indians, and Africans” (De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 4).

⁶³Specific examples of aggression repeatedly referenced by Anglo-Texans as evidence of Mexican “depravity” included the 1836 Alamo and Goliad massacres; covert Mexican efforts to incite Indian tribes against the Republic of Texas; the launching in 1842 of two separate Mexican military incursions—the first led by General Rafael Vázquez, the second by General Adrain Woll—into southern Texas; and popular Mexican support for the criminal fugitive, Juan Cortina, and his band of insurgents, whose activities in 1859 and 1860 terrorized whites along the Rio Grande border. For further discussion of these and other instances of actual and perceived Mexican hostility toward Anglos in Texas, see James R. Arnold, *Jeff Davis’s Own Cavalry, Comanches, and the Battle for the Texas Frontier* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000), 259-280; H. W. Brands, *Lone Star Nation: How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence—and Changed America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Thomas W. Cutrer, *Ben McCulloch and the Frontier Military Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993); De León, *They Called Them Greasers*; Stephen L. Hardin, *Texian Iliad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Sam W. Haynes, *Soldiers of Misfortune: The Somervell and Mier Expeditions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Mark E. Nickman, *A Nation Within a Nation: The Rise of Texas Nationalism* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1975).

dominance over the weaker tribes and hunting grounds of the southern plains by unremittingly raiding Texas settlements in search of horses and livestock, killing and capturing an average of two hundred Texans per year between 1836 and 1860 as they did so.⁶⁴ As a result, Anglo-Texans conceived their homeland as being iniquitously beleaguered by crude, malicious, alien cultures whose ultimate purpose was their utter destruction.

Thus convinced, many Texas settlers not only rejected their share of accountability for the relentless inter-cultural strife along the frontier, they extensively demonized their darker-skinned foes in order to eliminate any possible psychological barriers which might impede the successful prosecution of war against them. Fundamentally an endeavor of words, the social construction of Mexicans and Comanches as white Texans elected to perceive them was elaborated in person-to-person conversation, private correspondence, and particularly newsprint.⁶⁵ To this end, when

⁶⁴Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 280. In truth, when it came to raiding and warfare, Comanches cared precious little about pre-existing white prejudices against them and typically required no provocation whatsoever to engage in hostilities with settlers. For centuries before the arrival of Anglo-Americans in Texas, theirs was a martial culture in which “nearly every aspect of life became intertwined in one way or another with the art of war” (W. W. Newcomb, Jr., *The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961; University of Texas Press, 2006], 180). As horses were central to that culture—both as a source of wealth and of military power—Comanches sought to obtain them whenever and however possible, a state of affairs that dictated regular raiding of the ranches and farmsteads liberally scattered across Texas’s western frontier (James R. Arnold, *Jeff Davis’s Own*, 60-61; Brands, *Lone Star Nation*, 44-49). Although such forays were ordinarily small hit-and-run affairs, the “largest and bloodiest raid ever against Anglo-Texas” involved “some five or six hundred Comanches [who] entered the sparsely settled country along the northern boundary of Gonzales County and swept down the valley of the Guadalupe in the summer of 1840, killing settlers, stealing horses, plundering, and burning settlements. . . . all the way to the Gulf of Mexico” (Thomas W. Cutrer, *Ben McCulloch*, 40-41). However much the loss of horses and other property to Indian raiders incensed white Texans, the deaths of loved ones and neighbors—many of whom were horribly mutilated—at the hands of the same, so inflamed settlers’ bitterness toward the Comanche that violence became the recurrent mode of interaction between the two cultures for the greater part of the nineteenth century.

⁶⁵Given antebellum Texas’s high degree of literacy, the state’s many newspapers—three dailies, three triweeklies, and sixty-five weeklies by 1860—likely performed a prominent role in shaping the public discourse regarding both Mexicans and Comanches (Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, 230). To be sure, even as

referring to Mexicans, for example, Texans ordinarily pursued specific descriptive themes that emphasized what one contemporary observer summarized as “the entire and total worthlessness of the Mexican character.”⁶⁶ In constructing this distorted perspective, Anglos purported that Mexicans were, first and foremost, a pusillanimous people. Incapable of demonstrating either courage or honor, the inhabitants of Mexico were instead “wedded to all that is dastardly and treacherous.”⁶⁷ In consequence of this corrupt condition, the history of Mexico’s interaction with the citizens of Texas was, in their view, characterized by “perfidy and barbarity.”⁶⁸ “The Mexican people and Government,” averred an irate Texan in early 1842, had, in their treatment of Texas during and after the Revolution, exhibited an institutionalized disposition “for infamy, perfidiousness, and lying” that placed them “out of the vale of civilization.”⁶⁹ To the average settler, few (if any) events qualified this assertion better than the Mexican soldiery’s slaughter of Texans at the Alamo and Goliad in 1836. Episodes of this kind swiftly persuaded Texas’s Anglo populace that Mexico’s army was nothing more than a

they provided a forum for Texans to express their fears, frustrations, and personal assessments with respect to the region’s indigenous peoples of color through editorial correspondence and the like, they were also actively engaged in the formation and direction of public opinion on the topic. The two newspaper titles cited most often below—the *Houston Telegraph and Texas Register* and the *Austin Southern Intelligencer*—exemplify this tendency. In addition to containing the expected editorials and local news items, their pages frequently carried numerous first-hand narratives and articles solicited from private individuals and other Texas publications, many of which are no longer extant in original form. Taken together, these two newspapers offer crucial insights into the attitudes and modes of thinking embraced by mid-nineteenth-century Texans from a variety of geographic areas and socioeconomic backgrounds.

⁶⁶*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), March 2, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁶⁷*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), April 8, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

⁶⁸*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), February 9, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁶⁹*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), March 2, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

“savage horde”⁷⁰ of marauding mercenary soldiers who reveled in the very act of killing.⁷¹ Texans surmised that such inhuman mercilessness was attributable to just one, incontrovertible cause: the Mexican people’s multiracial ancestry. Having deduced that Mexico’s population—being “half Indian, half Spaniard, and half Monkey”⁷² in composition—constituted “the debris of several inferior and degraded races,”⁷³ Anglos thought it logical that miscegenation had concentrated the alleged penchant for ruthlessness long associated with both the Spanish and the Aztecs within their “hybrid descendents.”⁷⁴ Texans further maintained that racial amalgamation had predictably twisted the Mexican people into “a miserable mongrel race”⁷⁵ whose principal character traits would perpetually consist of imbecility, indolence, impudence, and duplicity.⁷⁶

If white Texans’ conceptualization of Mexicans as a crossbred race of cruel, dimwitted barbarians served to strengthen their ardor for war with peoples they deemed “inferior,” then their depiction of the Comanche Indians must have confirmed for them

⁷⁰*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), December 18, 1839, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷¹*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), June 24, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), September 28, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷²*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), March 2, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷³Mary S. Helm, *Scraps of Early Texas History* (Austin: B. R. Warner and Co., 1884), 52-53.

⁷⁴De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 61-66.

⁷⁵*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), March 22, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷⁶*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), April 8, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), June 10, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), September 21, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *The Southern Intelligencer* (Austin), March 24, 1858, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

the necessity of remaining under arms until their frontier rivals were either vanquished or eradicated. Although Anglos accorded at least some trace of humanity—however faint—to the Mexican people, their discourse on the Comanches was rarely even that charitable. Simply put, settlers tended to regard the Comanches as little better than predatory creatures bent on rapine and murder.⁷⁷ In accordance with this conception, Texans generally portrayed them as “blood-thirsty demons,” “murderous savages,” “avaricious fiends,” and “fierce and ferocious beings.”⁷⁸ Probably speaking for many Texas pioneers, one correspondent denounced the Comanches as “the greatest enemy the frontiersman has, . . . [for] they butcher our citizens and steal our property.”⁷⁹ Another Texan accused the Comanches of perpetrating “shocking and brutal outrages. . . too horrible to contemplate, much less describe.”⁸⁰ Statements such as these doubtless nourished the consensus notion among Anglos that the Comanches were, in essence, evil personified. In the estimation of various period commentators, they were “diabolical,” “brutal, cruel, and horrible,” “ruthless and savage Indian[s],” whose “tomahawk[s] and

⁷⁷For perhaps the most important contemporary Anglo treatment of the Comanches and other Texas Indians, see J. W. Wilbarger, *Indian Depredations in Texas* (Austin: Hutchings Printing House, 1889). A collection of narratives—some written by the author, many others penned by eyewitnesses—Wilbarger’s 700-page compilation stands as an invaluable (if patently biased) record of nineteenth-century Texan attitudes toward Native Americans, as well as of the language used to portray them. With that observation in mind, although the language to describe Indians employed throughout Wilbarger’s volume conforms closely (if not identically) to the style popularized by antebellum Texans, I have not referenced it directly in favor of relying upon sources from the period.

⁷⁸*The Southern Intelligencer* (Austin), May 19, 1858, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), June 29, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), January 12, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), June 10, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁷⁹*The Southern Intelligencer* (Austin), January 20, 1858, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸⁰*Texian Advocate* (Victoria), October 10, 1850, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

scalping kni[ves] were bathed in the blood of mothers and infants.”⁸¹ Malevolence was so deeply ingrained in Comanche culture, concluded an itinerant naturalist in his 1840 contribution to the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, that “they are enveloped in thick darkness,” forever ordained to “live and die in dismal estrangement from the God of heaven”⁸² Even so, however vile the Comanches may have seemed to whites, by ascribing collective imbecility to the tribe’s membership Texans found consolation in the notion that the Indians’ supposed lack of intelligence would inevitably contribute to their ruination. As one deluded settler insisted, the Comanches’ continued use of the bow and arrow alone suggested “their imbecility, and prove[d] that they cannot become formidable to the bands of hardy backwoodsmen that are rapidly encroaching on their hunting grounds.”⁸³

Thus, antebellum Anglo-Texan discourse concerning Mexicans and Indians primarily centered on the extreme “Otherness” of both groups, thereby making possible their representation as drastically inferior beings, undeserving of the land they occupied and categorically devoid of worth. Having mentally reduced their Mexican and Comanche adversaries to merciless barbarians and savage beasts respectively, whites arrogantly held firm to the conviction that, in the clash of cultures on the Texas frontier, their culture—and their race—was fated to be triumphant. As indicated by statements

⁸¹*The Southern Intelligencer* (Austin), May 19, 1858, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Texian Advocate* (Victoria), May 15, 1851, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), June 10, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸²*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), July 1, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸³*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), June 10, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

from the period, this acute sense of cultural and racial superiority clearly manifested itself in Texans' expectations for martial success against the non-white "Others." On the one hand, in considering their southern frontier, some Texans preferred to render Texas as Rome (civilized-victorious), and Mexico as either Carthage or Germania (barbaric-subjugated), in a metaphoric attempt to simultaneously contrast the two peoples and forecast their inevitable victory.⁸⁴ According to one correspondent, individualistic Texans were actually better situated to prevail in their struggle with the people of Mexico than the well-disciplined Romans were in their wars to subdue the ancient tribes of Germany. Whereas German warriors "excelled the Romans in personal strength, and equaled them in courage and activity," Mexican *soldados* were inherently inferior to Texas troops, who surpassed them "in personal strength, courage, activity, and in skill as marksmen."⁸⁵ From this writer's standpoint, "if to these attributes" Texans "add[ed] perfect military discipline, they will be invincible."⁸⁶

Texans' assessments of the western frontier, on the other hand, tended to construe their conflict with the Comanches as part and parcel of the larger Anglo-American campaign to exploit all wild plant and animal species identified as useful, and systematically eliminate any deemed to be either nuisances or threats. Characteristically assigning hostile Indians to the latter category, settlers frequently equated battling the Comanches with the pursuit of dangerous game. The "Commanche," one Texan

⁸⁴*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), February 9, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, *Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), October 19, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸⁵*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), October 19, 1842, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

remarked, “shrink back with terror and dismay” like frightened animals “before advancing bands of adventurous rangers.”⁸⁷ Evoking the image of a fox chase, another commentator remarked that the Comanches had to be harried with great vigor, as they “dread the active energy of”⁸⁸ mounted Texans. Yet another Texan gave voice to the prevailing sentiment among the state’s Anglo populace when he declared that “the [Comanche] Indians must be exterminated by the revolver and the sword”⁸⁹ like any other type of vicious predator. In the final analysis, however, whether the enemy was Mexican or Comanche, Texans understood their cultural and racial supremacy to be a firmly fixed fact. In the words of one correspondent to the *Houston National Intelligencer* in 1838, as Anglo-Saxons, Texans had predictably conquered their new homeland, for their race’s “march has always been onward and upward, and it will go on in the new world until not the Indian, the Gaul, the Frank, the Moore, the Castillian, or their descendents, will exercise dominion on this or the Southern continent.”⁹⁰ Hence, in combating their frontier opponents, Texans proceeded largely unfettered by ethical constraints. To them, Mexicans and Comanches were the debased adherents of two similarly animalistic cultures, both of which not only obstructed their “onward and upward” march across the Texas landscape, but, most importantly, also menaced their homes and families on a recurrent basis. Operating under such a culturally constructed

⁸⁷*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), July 8, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸⁸*Telegraph and Texas Register* (Houston), July 1, 1840, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸⁹*The Southern Intelligencer* (Austin), May 19, 1858, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁹⁰Eric C. Caren, ed., *Texas Extra: A Newspaper History of the Lone Star State, 1835-1935* (Edison: Castle Books, 1999), 17.

rationalization for unleashing aggressive warfare upon the alien “Others,” Texans acknowledged no moral compulsion for restraint on the battlefield—or off of it. They found their enemies incomprehensible in every respect and, for that deceptively simple reason, they fought fiercely and obstinately, utilizing whatever means seemed suitable at any given moment to achieve success.⁹¹

Long accustomed to conflict with “inferior” frontier rivals, the Civil War initially presented Texans with something of an intellectual quandary. Starring into the bleak face of a protracted internecine struggle, they—like all loyal citizens of the embryonic Confederacy—had little choice but to discard the antebellum conception of Northerners as fellow Americans and brothers in favor of constructing a decidedly less amiable mental portrait of their new enemy. However, unlike other Southerners whose military struggles with native peoples had largely concluded by the opening decades of the century, Texans could intensively mine a rich vein of imagery deposited by more than thirty years of uninterrupted inter-cultural conflict in accomplishing this task. Thereby drawing upon the shared language of cultural and racial dominance, Texans discursively reconstituted their former countrymen to such a heightened degree that Northerners soon joined Mexicans and Comanches in occupying the degraded rank of “Other.” As the war uncontrollably intensified in scope and bloodshed, Texas society’s shocking conceptual transformation of the Northern people proved particularly valuable in psychologically

⁹¹However tempting it may be to casually associate Texans’ disdain for Mexicans and Indians with slaveholding Southerners’ contemptuous view of African-American bondsmen, such an approach fails to take into account fundamental differences between the two perspectives with regard to both language and behavior. Whereas slaveholders—derisive, oppressive, and abusive toward blacks though they most certainly were—tended to comment about and interact with their slaves in a decidedly paternalistic manner, Texans’ rhetoric and behavior essentially communicated a fervent desire to eradicate their non-white adversaries. As will be detailed later in this chapter, the members of the Texas Brigade employed a perspective toward Northerners during the Civil War noticeably more aligned with their society’s overall treatment of Mexicans and Native Americans than with the average Southern master’s treatment of slaves

sustaining the state's citizen-soldiers—including, of course, the officers and men of the Texas Brigade. Assigned to fight with the eastern rebel army more than one thousand miles distant from their home state, the brigade's members came to depend on their recently assembled notion of the "savage," "barbaric," "racially impure" Yankee as a potent motivation for remaining in the theater, lest they permit the enemy to gain Virginia and refocus upon Texas.

For the vast majority of Texans, the process of re-conceptualizing the North's populace as "Other" likely began well before the first Texas regiments departed for service in the Confederate armies. Indeed, as contemporary newspaper commentary suggests, at least a portion of the state's citizens had already begun altering their views of the Northern people months before the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860. Given the belligerent political atmosphere of the period and Texas's considerable physical separation from the states of the North, Texans' early reformation of the way they perceived Northerners is not at all surprising.⁹² Initially applying their mental modifications predominantly toward abolitionist agitators and supporters of the reviled "Black Republican" party—an assemblage denounced in mid-October 1860 by a Waco *South West Quarter Sheet* editorialist as "insane and diabolical"⁹³—Texans wrathfully incorporated the whole of the North's population into their conceptual reorganization in the immediate wake of Lincoln's election. To many, Northern voters had starkly revealed their true nature in electing Lincoln to the Presidency. Just precisely what

⁹²For a thorough discussion of how Texans interpreted the myriad social and political issues that threatened the Union in 1859 and 1860, see Dale Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 7-41.

⁹³*South West Quarter Sheet* (Waco), October 17, 1860, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Texans believed that “true nature” to encompass, they would accumulatively define in culturally familiar terms over the ensuing months and years.

Like other Confederate Texans, the men who composed the Texas Brigade’s rank-and-file witnessed and not infrequently contributed to the state-wide effort to dehumanize the North’s citizenry during the war years, the deliberate object of which was to reclassify Northerners as a culturally and racially inferior people akin to Mexicans and Comanches. Underlying this entire undertaking was the provocative claim that the inhabitants of the Northern states were degenerating into an ethnic and racial composite, degraded and barbarized by decades of immigration and now, with the ascendancy of the anti-slavery Republican party, by miscegenation as well. No doubt influenced by the strong currents of xenophobia that propelled a sizable percentage of the state’s electorate to embrace Know-Nothingism during the 1850s,⁹⁴ this contention combined Anglo-Texans’ loathing of foreigners with their traditional abhorrence of inter-racial unions. Not unexpectedly, then, the large antebellum influx of European immigrants into the northeastern states offered Texans a convenient starting point for formulating their argument.⁹⁵ As presented by a *Henderson Times* columnist in October 1864, the North’s unrestrained “importation of the scum of Europe” had so hopelessly diluted the region’s original Anglo-Saxon stock that “it has been estimated that not one-tenth of the Northern population is descended from the old revolution”⁹⁶ generation. Enlightened by such

⁹⁴Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism*, 31.

⁹⁵For a thorough treatment of nineteenth-century nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land. Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick Rutgers University Press, 1955).

⁹⁶*Henderson Times* (Henderson, Texas), October 22, 1864, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

dubious “facts,” Texans conceived of Union troops as “a foreign soldiery,” “Hessians,” “Yankee mercenaries,” and “ruffian hordes gathered from the bar-rooms and gutters of the North.”⁹⁷

Still, as distorted as these images clearly were, Texans further warped their conception of Northerners by readily accepting reports of rampant miscegenation in the North. An editorialized reflection on the issue of Northern racial impurity published in the May 11, 1864, edition of *Flake’s Tri-Weekly Bulletin*⁹⁸ exemplified this attitude of acceptance. Plainly disgusted by what he labeled “the Yankee project of commingling their breed with the African race,” the author of the aforementioned article derisively predicted that “a quarter of a century hence, the United States bids fair to be an empire of mullattoes.”⁹⁹ In spite of his revulsion, however, he considered it “right and proper” that the North’s citizens, “having cohabitated spiritually with the devil till their souls have become as black as the ace of spades, . . . should adopt some process by which their bodies will approximate the complexion of their souls.”¹⁰⁰ When synthesized with the popular perception of the North as a dumping ground for Europe’s human refuse, the perspective articulated in this editorial implicitly encouraged Texans to regard

⁹⁷*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 29, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *South West Quarter Sheet* (Waco), August 22, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; Mark W. Perkins and George Skoch, eds., *Lone Star Confederate. A Gallant and Good Soldier of the Fifth Texas Infantry* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 5, 76; *The Southern Confederacy* (Seguin, Texas), July 19, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁹⁸*Flake’s Tri-Weekly Bulletin* was a Galveston, Texas, newspaper title.

⁹⁹Eric C. Caren, ed., *Civil War Extra: A Newspaper History of the Civil War from 1863 to 1865*, vol. 2 (Edison: Castle Books, 1999), 183.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

Northerners and Mexicans as kindred peoples, abominably joined together by a shared proclivity for miscegenational activity.

Whatever psychological advantages Texas civilians may have accrued from their society's conceptual consignment of Northerners to one of the lowest rungs of a perceived racial hierarchy, in all probability the most direct beneficiaries of this approach were front-line troops such as the officers and men of the Texas Brigade. Among those brigade members whose written remarks concerning the alleged ethnic composition of their enemy have survived, a corporal in the 5th Texas seemed to capture better than any the invigorating feeling of superiority derived from racially equating Northerners with his home state's traditional Mexican foes. In a letter composed near Fredericksburg, Virginia, in late November 1862, this soldier contemplated the military situation then facing the Army of Northern Virginia in language fascinatingly reminiscent of that employed by Texans during past conflicts with Mexico. Dismissively referring to the rank-and-file of the Federal Army of the Potomac as "the mongrel constituents" of its "newly inaugurated commander," Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, the Texan was anything but apprehensive about the possibility "that the Yankee army at Falmouth, on the opposite side of the [Rappahannock] river, numbers 100,000 men."¹⁰¹ To the contrary, in a forceful effort to contrast the members of the Texas regiments with the "mongrelized" Northerners they opposed, he confidently boasted that Texans "are hardened, strong, and unfearing—true soldiers, uniting enthusiasm for liberty, love of country, and natural courage in one powerful sentiment, inspired by which, they are

¹⁰¹ *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), December 29, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

invincible. . . . In fine, there are not better soldiers in the world.”¹⁰² Thus, through expressions of this kind, the brigade’s soldiers proclaimed their superiority over the lowly foreign hirelings and racial hybrids that they believed filled the Union ranks. That they did so in a manner evocative of previous Anglo-Texan assertions of supremacy over both Mexicans and Indians is significant.

In projecting upon the North’s population an array of ethnic and racial attributes that Texas society identified as being undesirable—even odious—Texans systematically erected a culturally acceptable framework for explaining why Northerners were, in their view, immoral and uncivilized. Peering through this familiar interpretive lens, Texans contended—just as they did with Mexicans and Comanches—that the Northern people’s inferior racial composition hereditarily predisposed them to engage in individual and collective displays of barbarism, savagery, deceitfulness, and imbecility. Exposed to this line of reasoning during the intervening months between the secession crisis and their eventual departure for the war’s eastern theater, the volunteers of the 1st, 4th, and 5th Texas regiments subsequently traveled to Virginia with certain preconceptions regarding their enemy’s intentions and behavioral characteristics. Local newspapers did much to foster this development through their publication of editorials and correspondence whose authors portrayed Northerners in language calculated to call to mind the state’s despised frontier adversaries. Echoing earlier Texan pronouncements directed at Mexicans and Comanches alike, a correspondent writing to the Seguin *Southern Confederacy* in May 1861 said of the North’s probable invasion of Texas: “We are now threatened with everything savage and terrible which the mind of man can imagine. . . . Such bloody-

¹⁰²Ibid.

minded warfare is almost inconceivable.”¹⁰³ An editorialist for the *Marshall Texas Republican* concurred, condemning “the Lincolnites” for being “worse than barbarians” in light of “their atrocious conduct”¹⁰⁴ toward the South’s citizenry. Another Texan, having traveled through Virginia in early July 1861, reported to the *Houston Weekly Telegraph* that “the Black Republican army” exhibited behavior there “never . . . before heard of in civilized warfare.”¹⁰⁵ To him, Northern soldiers were vindictive marauders “who do not respect the property of private citizens, but drive women and children out of their houses and steal and destroy everything they can lay their hands on.”¹⁰⁶ No doubt inflamed by such commentary, a Dallas resident resolutely informed the Waco *South West Quarter Sheet* that, should the Northern “demons” enter Texas, the state’s citizens must be prepared to greet them “with bloody hands and hospitable graves,” or else fall victim to Yankee savagery.¹⁰⁷

Barraged on an almost daily basis prior to leaving their home communities by such vivid characterizations of the North’s soldiery, the officers and men of the Texas Brigade marched off to war expecting to encounter an enemy whose shocking behaviors and cultural deficiencies closely approximated those typically associated with their frontier opponents. Lieutenant J. R. Ogilvie’s (Company I, 4th Texas) comments in a

¹⁰³*The Southern Confederacy* (Seguin, Texas), May 31, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁰⁴*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall, Texas), August 17, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁰⁵*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), July 31, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷*South West Quarter Sheet* (Waco), January 16, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

letter written from Camp Van Dorn near Harrisburg, Texas, on August 12, 1861, exemplified this outlook. Labeling Northerners “a sacreligious foe,” Ogilvie was committed to “driving these demon[s] . . . to their miserable haunts of woe and pollution, and teach them a freeman’s rights.” More often than not, personal experience with Federal troops tended to strengthen the rank-and-file’s preconceptions, as they instinctively sought to accumulate evidence that appeared to confirm initial views. Of these, the pervasive belief that Northerners were, like Mexicans and Comanches, barbaric was perhaps the one most frequently “verified” in accounts penned by brigade members. Some spoke in very general terms, maintaining, as one soldier in the 5th Texas did in October 1862, that the “maddened, unprincipled, and blinded people” of the North had “perpetrated every possible outrage and atrocity, compared to which the barbarities recorded in history pale into insignificance and are forgotten.”¹⁰⁸ Another Texan, Captain Proctor P. Porter (Company H, 4th Texas), was revolted by what he phrased, “the rapacity and cruelty of an insolent foe.”¹⁰⁹ In his judgment, Northern troops habitually behaved in an “unheard of, brutal, and infamous” manner, thereby revealing their collective propensity for “vindictive, unmanly wickedness.”¹¹⁰ Identifying himself only as a “Robertson Five Shooter,”¹¹¹ an anonymous member of Company C, 4th Texas, was similarly emphatic in expressing his contempt for the manner in which Union combatants

¹⁰⁸*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph Supplement* (Houston), November 7, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁰⁹*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), June 20, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹The local designation for Company C, 4th Texas Regiment, was the “Robertson Five Shooters.”

conducted themselves, accusing them of prosecuting “a war such as only tyrants, fanatics, madmen, and robbers would wage.”¹¹²

Still other Texans felt compelled to relate specific, observed forms and instances of Yankee depravity that seemed to mirror the destructive tendencies they ordinarily correlated with Mexican and Comanche behavior. After describing what he construed as the needless shelling of local farms situated near his regiment’s Potomac River encampment by Federal gunboats in early 1862, Corporal Charles. F. Hume (Company D, 5th Texas) concluded with discernable indignation: “This vandalism demonstrates what kind of enemy we are fighting. They wantonly destroy all property.”¹¹³ In a letter written to his sister in August 1862, Sergeant William H. Gaston (Company H, 1st Texas) patently agreed with Hume’s assessment of their adversary, arguing that “the Yankees are now treating the people of Virginia with greater cruelty than they have ever done. They plague the country wherever they go, burn the houses of secessionists, carry off their negroes, horses & stock of all kind.”¹¹⁴ Through the communication of such accounts, Hume and Gaston concurrently reflected and buttressed the widespread Texan perception

¹¹²*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 14, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹¹³*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), January 8, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. This soldier frequently wrote under the alias, “WANDERER.” Evidence from his correspondence with the *Houston Weekly Telegraph* and the Texas Brigade’s compiled service records as detailed in Harold B. Simpson, *Hood’s Texas Brigade: A Compendium* (Hillsboro: Hill Jr. College Press, 1977), 197, indicate his actual identity was Corporal Charles. F. Hume (Company D, 5th Texas). According to his service records, Hume was transferred from the 5th Texas to the 32nd Virginia Cavalry Regiment to serve as its Adjutant in December 1862. His final letter to the *Telegraph*, printed in that newspaper’s March 18, 1863 issue, carried the heading “Head Q’RS 32d Battalion Va. Cavalry” and mentioned the transfer (*Houston Weekly Telegraph* [Houston], March 18, 1863, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

¹¹⁴Robert W. Glover, ed., *Tyler to Sharsburg: The War Letters of Robert H. and William H. Gaston* (Waco: W. M. Morrison, 1960), 20.

of Northern armies as unrestrained “vandal hordes,”¹¹⁵ intent on plunder and destruction. Also commenting on this theme, the chaplain of the 4th Texas particularly emphasized the enemy’s violence toward the civilian inhabitants of Fredericksburg, Virginia, in his description of the Northern army’s pre-battle bombardment of the town on December 12, 1862. “From the enemy’s guns,” he wrote, “the houses were shattered and set on fire in many places. . . . When night closed upon the scene, and hushed the roar of the cannon, the burning houses of helpless women and children . . . lit the landscape, and still revealed the barbarity of the cruel and heartless invader. Harmless old men, women and children, were slaughtered in the streets, and even in their own houses.”¹¹⁶ From the preacher’s perspective, the Union troops’ bloody defeat at the hands of the Army of Northern Virginia during the next day’s engagement constituted God’s “righteous retribution” for the North’s barbarism.¹¹⁷ According to Private Fred Mathee (Company B, 5th Texas), Federal soldiers not only committed atrocities against Southern civilians, they were equally malicious to animals as well. Writing to his mother following the close of the Seven Days Battles in July 1862, Mathee recounted an occurrence associated with the Battle of Gaines’s Mill, Virginia, which evidently troubled him. “The Yankees are a very brutal people,” he exclaimed, “Our brigade took nineteen pieces of Artillery and every horse had his throat cut, for when [we] charged their batteries they did not have

¹¹⁵As evidenced by private correspondence, diaries, and newspaper editorials, Texan references to the North’s soldiers as “vandals” or “the vandal foe” were quite common, as were depictions of Union armies as “hordes” (William P. Powell, Richmond Va., Dear Parents, July 19, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas, Perkins and Skoch, eds., *Lone Star Confederate*, 10; *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* [Houston], August 20, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Columbus Citizen* [Columbus, Texas], July 20, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

¹¹⁶Everett, Chaplain Davis, 143.

¹¹⁷*Ibid*

time to unhitch them and they cut their throats to keep them from falling into our hands.”¹¹⁸ Regardless of whether the victims of such actions were humans or animals, for Texas soldiers like Mathee, each apparent manifestation of the enemy’s inhumanity only served to intensify the expectation of viciousness they had projected upon Northern troops even before their state became officially embroiled in the conflict.

Believing, then, that the Union’s “mongrelized” soldiery had visibly and recurrently demonstrated the Northern people’s true, barbaric nature through alleged exhibitions of lawlessness, immorality, thievery, vandalism, brutality, and murder, the Texas Brigade’s officers and men committed themselves to their enemy’s complete ruination—even if the achievement of such an outcome ultimately demanded the employment of drastic measures. A profoundly visceral response to the likelihood of Texas’s invasion by Northern armies, this sense of mission underscored the depth of soldiers’ collective determination to prevent Yankee “savages” from gaining opportunities to terrorize their home communities as Mexican *soldados* and Comanche raiders had for decades. Given the lengths to which Texans went to establish and subsequently exploit the purported similarities between the North’s population and their traditional frontier rivals, it should come as no surprise that they also framed the effort to defeat the Northern enemy in language designed to evoke the acrimony and ferocity generally correlated with Texas’s extensive history of inter-cultural warfare. To this end, one high-ranking Texas officer reminded the brigade’s membership in early January 1862 that to triumph in their present struggle against the North, they must fight with a desperate intensity not unlike their revolutionary forebears, “who many years ago

¹¹⁸Fred Mathee, Camp near Richmond, Dear Mother, July 11, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

gallantly defended their cause at the Alamo and San Jacinto against an enemy as superior in numbers, as cowardly and as treacherous.”¹¹⁹

Such exhortations—as well as the former conflicts and foes they referenced—plainly influenced how the men in the ranks conceived what might be required of them to successfully combat their “barbaric” adversaries. For his part, Private J. M. Taylor (Company E, 1st Texas) was sufficiently persuaded of Northern depravity to write a friend of his readiness “to suffer anything rather than submit to the tyrannical administration of Lincoln and the brotherhood of his vandal hordes.”¹²⁰ The prevalent perception among Texas soldiers that the opposing Army of the Potomac was insidiously engaged in a program of malfeasance and atrocity in Virginia compelled many of them to broach the subject of repaying Federal troops in kind for their misdeeds. A sergeant in the 1st Texas reasoned that “unless the North changes its policy & should this war continue, it will not be a great while before the black flag will be hoisted.”¹²¹ Another Texan concurred, suggesting that the Union’s uncivilized treatment of Southern civilians would force the Army of Northern Virginia to “resort to a species of warfare which, so far, we have sedulously avoided.”¹²² In a scathing missive composed in late summer 1862, Captain Proctor Porter of the 4th Texas elaborated on that “species of warfare” as he deduced that the Northern army’s “unholy example will only have a tendency to

¹¹⁹*Texas State Gazette* (Austin), March 15, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹²⁰*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall), September 21, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹²¹Robert W. Glover, *Tyler to Sharsburg*, 20.

¹²²*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 24, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

strengthen our cause, and ere long that ultimatum of war, *extermination*, will be the watchword of every Southern soldier.”¹²³ Porter was adamant that such a retributive approach was entirely justified, for, in his view, the North’s “unheard of atrocities can no longer be tolerated.”¹²⁴ “In whatever manner they [the Federals] choose to exhibit their horrible machinations,” he ominously added, “in such manner will we retaliate.”¹²⁵ The pursuit of reprisal for perceived Yankee depredations and outrages also ranked foremost for a member of the 5th Texas who, after detailing the Texas Brigade’s involvement in the Seven Days campaign, exclaimed with discernable satisfaction: “We will now be the aggressors, and learn the merciful foe what war means. They have never experienced its hopeless, agonizing miseries, now is their time. . . . O! how sweet will be revenge! . . . There is now no mercy, no compassion. All are inspired by the one fell spirit of destructiveness.”¹²⁶ An unidentified soldier in the same regiment shared his comrade’s enthusiasm for what he termed “an aggressive war”—a wrathful onslaught he hoped would not cease “until the North shall know that war has its horrors, and she has been made to bear her share of them.”¹²⁷ Differing little (if any) from their attitude toward Mexicans and Comanches, such Texans’ conception of invading Northerners as a scourge to be eradicated by force of arms appreciably diminished their willingness to curb their baser instincts when battling the enemy. To them, Northern troops had earned, by their

¹²³*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), September 10, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 20, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹²⁷*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), October 8, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

savagery, the kind of treatment Texans had long maintained was most suitable for contending with “savage” peoples: elimination “by the revolver and the sword.”

Having thus surveyed their Unionist enemy’s racial composition and behavior from the lofty cultural and moral vantage point they claimed to occupy, Texans in the eastern rebel army supposed that the Northern people’s “Otherness” was both as evident and as worthy of scorn as that typically ascribed to their former Mexican and Comanche opponents. In developing this notion, Texas soldiers merely inserted Northerners into a pre-cast conceptual mold of what their society considered an enemy to be, uncovering and relating “evidence” as the war unfolded which purportedly verified the accuracy of their construct. Consequently, the patterns of thought and language employed by Texans to characterize the people of the North mirrored their demeaning—and bigoted—approach to their home state’s longtime frontier rivals. The staggering extent to which they held fast to these established modes of defining “Otherness” is indicative of the ethnic frontier’s abiding cultural resonance among Texans in general, and the Texas Brigade’s rank-and-file in particular. By conveniently consigning the North’s population—alongside Mexicans and Comanches—to an artificial category of beings primarily distinguished by undesirable racial characteristics, barbarism, and immorality, the brigade’s officers and men achieved a conceptually seamless transition from combating their society’s traditional enemies to waging war against the new Northern adversary. For them, this critical shift made the epithet, “Yankee,” synonymous with “Greaser” and “Redskin,” as, in their eyes, all three terms similarly referenced alien “Others” against whose declensional influence and infectious degeneracy they had to safeguard their families, home communities, and institutions in order to preserve the

“onward and upward” advance of Anglo-Saxon civilization in Texas. This chauvinistic outlook—first fashioned within the fires of inter-cultural strife on the frontier—impelled the brigade’s officers and men to view winning the war in Virginia as central to protecting Texas. No more disposed to allow “mongrel hordes” from the North to threaten all they held dear than they were Mexican “barbarians” or Comanche “savages,” Texans in the East grimly interpreted their struggle with the Northern people as a war for survival between two vastly disparate cultures. Consequently, much as their predecessors had done in previous Texas conflicts, they fought in a manner more than commensurate with the gravity of the threat they believed confronted their culture and race.

Among the tens of thousands of citizen-soldiers that comprised the contending armies in the Civil War’s eastern theater, the members of the Texas Brigade occupied a unique position as representatives of the only antebellum state—North or South—with an active frontier as of 1861. Heavily recruited from frontier counties as well as those recently emerged from frontier status, Texas volunteers serving with the Army of Northern Virginia selectively incorporated some of their society’s adaptive responses to the frontier experience into numerous aspects of their Confederate military service. In this regard, the frontier’s influence on the brigade’s overall performance can be best classified as having been both functional and conceptual in nature. On the functional end of the spectrum, Texans’ extensive prewar familiarity with and utilization of frontier woodcraft techniques for survival purposes inadvertently prepared them to accomplish certain specialized military duties—most notably scouting and sharpshooting—with a high degree of dependability and success. In addition, the respectably high incidence of

Texas frontier war veterans among the brigade's officers and enlisted men further enhanced its operational efficiency by providing a readily accessible concentration of military knowledge and experience from which soldiers of all ranks profited while in camp and during active combat operations. From a conceptual standpoint, conversely, soldiers in the Texas regiments joined their brethren on the home front by mentally casting Northerners in the role of the alien "Other" in an effort to dehumanize their new enemy. In doing so, Texans comfortably resorted to a construct perfected over the course of a decades-long clash of cultures between themselves and their traditional Mexican and Comanche opponents. By characterizing the North's population as a barbaric, racially inferior people not unlike their accustomed adversaries on the frontier, the brigade's rank-and-file developed and internalized a familiar—yet forceful—sustaining motivation for staying the course in Virginia and elsewhere in the East until all potential Federal threats to Texas had been eliminated on the battlefield. Notably, Texas soldiers' adoption of this outlook not only swept aside the initially problematic issue of warring against former countrymen, it also prejudiced their perception of the Federal army's conduct during the conflict as they went about interpreting enemy behavior with the intent—however unconscious—of verifying their original views. Thus, in these ways, members of the brigade integrated the most applicable elements of the frontier experience into their daily existence with the Army of Northern Virginia, ensuring, in the process, the implementation of skills, knowledge, and attitudes partly responsible for their splendid record of service during the war.

CHAPTER 3

“WE CAN’T BE WHIPPED, BUT WE MAY ALL BE KILLED”: HOOD’S TEXAS BRIGADE AND THE MYTH OF TEXAN MARTIAL SUPREMACY

Shortly after the members of the soon-to-be christened Texas Brigade arrived by battalions at Richmond, Virginia, during the late summer of 1861, Confederate President Jefferson Davis reputedly addressed them, declaring: “Texans! The troops of other states have their reputation to gain; the sons of the defenders of the Alamo have theirs to maintain! I am assured you will be faithful to the trust!”¹ However novel the sheer spectacle of the president’s visit may have been to the assembled Texans, the substance of his message was likely anything but original. From the war’s outset, the Texas Brigade’s officers and men knew well—and typically accepted—the unique martial demands their state and nascent country alike projected upon them as Texas’ lone

¹A. V. Winkler, *The Confederate Capital and Hood’s Texas Brigade* (Austin: Von Boeckmann, 1894), 33; Winkler’s account is corroborated by period correspondence, the best of which was authored by a member of the 1st Texas, Corporal Robert H. Gaston (Company H, 1st Texas). In a letter to his sister dated August 1, 1861, Gaston attempted to relate the pageantry and emotional resonance of Davis’s oration as experienced from his position in the ranks:

The President, riding a beautiful grey horse, accompanied by a splendid band of music as well as by hundreds of the people was seen approaching from the city. He came up in about a hundred yards of us, when he alighted from his horse, took the [Lone Star] banner in his hand and came up close enough to be heard by our whole battalion. He then delivered one of the most eloquent addresses I ever heard. It was said by all that they never heard anything to compare in any way with it. He praised the Texians to the highest degree. He told the Texians that they already had a reputation for bravery and patriotism which would be very difficult to maintain. He closed by saying that he would expect to see that banner on the battlefield where musket balls fell thickest, where the blood of heroes flowed freest and death’s brief pang was quickest” (Robert W. Glover, ed., *Tyler to Sharsburg: The War Letters of Robert H. and William H. Gaston* [Waco: W. M. Morrison, 1960], 9).

representatives in the Confederacy's eastern army. Indeed, people across the South expected the brigade's rank-and-file—by virtue of being Texans—to excel in combat, to be, in a word, indomitable. Consequently, whatever their regimental designation, the Texans who traveled to Virginia for Confederate service did so buoyed—and perhaps also burdened—by a complex array of personal, community, and national expectations regarding their future success on the battlefield.

In the present chapter, I intend to demonstrate that a myth with origins deeply embedded in the Texas Revolution powerfully shaped such expectations, thereby directly contributing to the Texas Brigade's dazzling record of service with the Army of Northern Virginia. Herein identified as “the myth of Texan martial supremacy,”² this distinctive cultural construction flourished during the quarter-century preceding the Civil War, propelled, in large measure, by the Texas citizenry's lengthy struggle to overcome what one scholar has dubbed “America's longest-lasting and bloodiest frontier.”³ As a unifying cultural phenomenon, it seamlessly connected the state's revolutionary experience to its ongoing military travails along its southern and western frontiers by perpetuating the perception of Texans' capacity for, and invincibility in, war. A

²For the purposes of this study, my working definition of what constitutes myth in a modern society is informed by Elizabeth York Enstam, “The Family,” in *Texas Myths*, ed. Robert F. O'Connor (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986), 139-158. To Enstam, modern “myths may serve important functions, preserving widespread social ideals, for example, or expressing the excitement or pathos of revered experiences. By investing cultural memories with meanings that transcend the historical events or conditions that are their sources, myths may also transmit values across generations. In this way, modern myths serve to perpetuate the traditions, customs, and practices that first gave a people their identity” (139-140).

³T. R. Fehrenbach, “Foreword,” in Thomas W. Knowles, *They Rode for the Lone Star: The Saga of the Texas Rangers* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1999), xiii. In Fehrenbach's view, Texas' frontier military experience was unique in American history. “In most states,” he writes, “the true Indian frontier endured for a decade or less. The Army or militias subdued permanently settled, largely agrarian tribes with a few campaigns. In Texas different conditions prevailed. In no other part of North America did a numerous farming community live within raiding distance of dangerous ‘neighbors’ for two whole generations, sixty years” (xiv).

composite of mostly transplanted Southerners from across the antebellum slave states, Texas society embraced the myth's primary message and incorporated it into pre-existing notions of masculinity and honor. Accordingly, many Texans—particularly young males raised to revere the long procession of soldiers and rangers produced by nearly three decades of conflict with Mexicans and hostile Indians—came to conceptualize manhood as being inextricably tied to martial prowess.⁴ To them, the two were seemingly inseparable—a conviction that subsequently proved to be both a potent source of motivation for individual soldiers throughout the course of the Civil War and a critical contributing factor underpinning the Texas Brigade's superior performance as a military organization. In an effort to elucidate the processes by which the myth of Texan martial supremacy influenced the members of the Texas Brigade, I will examine in varying degrees of depth the myth's origins in the Texas Revolution and frontier warfare; the possible relationship between the antebellum South's adherence to the conception of primal honor and Texas society's myth inspired development of a warrior-based notion of manhood; how individual Texans perceived their role in the war; the myth's expectation shaping effect on the Texas and Confederate populations; how the brigade's officers and men approached the combat experience in view of "public expectation;" and the myth's discernable physical and psychological consequences for the brigade's officers and men.

⁴For relevant discussions of American manhood, see Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood. Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, *Divided Houses. Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); David G. Pugh, *Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983); Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993); and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

The Myth of Texan Martial Supremacy and Masculinity

Few serious scholars of antebellum Texas would—or could—dispute the contention that bloodshed occupied a central (if not defining) role in the formation and development of the state and its culture. For Anglo-Texans of the mid-nineteenth century, war and frontier violence constituted fundamental realities of their existence as a people. Admittedly, much of the conflict they routinely endured was, at least in part, a product of their own making. During the opening decades of the century, the aggressively expansive nature of Anglo-American colonization in Texas provoked innumerable confrontations with the region's indigenous inhabitants—most notably the Comanche⁵—and ultimately added fuel to an increasingly volatile relationship between Mexico and the flood tide of recently arrived settlers from the United States. Those first Anglo-Texans were hardly unacquainted with armed conflict, for as Stephen L. Hardin has observed, such individuals, being descendents of America's colonial frontiersmen and revolutionaries, “were no strangers to war: they were born to it.”⁶ Still, with the outbreak of the Texas Revolution in 1835, the territory's white population rapidly became more intimately acquainted with—and widely recognized for—fierce fighting and warfare. Invading Mexican military forces brought the harsh realities of war quite literally to Anglo-Texans' doorsteps, compelling them to either fight in defense of their homes and families or flee. The vicious character of this conflict has been thoroughly documented, exemplified, as it was, by such epic contests as the ill-fated defense of the

⁵According to Thomas T. Smith, the Comanche “seemed to view the Texans as a tribe apart, reserving for them a special fury not visited upon the army soldier, the Mexican, or other Indians” (Thomas T. Smith, *The Old Army in Texas: A Research Guide to the U S Army in Nineteenth-Century Texas* [Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2000], 22)

⁶Stephen L. Hardin, *Texian Jihad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press: 1994), 5.

Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto. Judging from the views expressed by Civil War-era Texans to be evaluated later in this essay, the psychological currents generated in the aftermath of the Revolution's most memorable battles spontaneously converged to create the foundation of a myth whose currency and influence swiftly extended well beyond the physical confines of Texas: the myth of Texan martial supremacy.

As is frequently the case, the easy diffusion and acceptance of such a myth—whether among Texans themselves or among people outside of the state—largely rested upon a few scattered elements of truth. Limitations of space prevent an exhaustive exploration of the myth's progress over time, but given the great significance the Texas Brigade's officers and men attached to its origins, an overview of the events intrinsic to its creation is warranted. During their struggle for independence from Mexico, Texas's citizen-soldiers were consistently outnumbered by their adversaries, the majority of whom belonged to a well-trained regular army. Yet despite this disparity, in many engagements, Texans not only performed respectably in combat, they managed to win. Even on those occasions when Texas forces were defeated, their battlefield accomplishments were, more often than not, considerable. Unquestionably, the most famous example of this kind was the siege and battle of the Alamo during the late winter of 1836. Totalling fewer than two hundred men altogether, the Alamo's ragtag garrison actively defended its position for two weeks against approximately thirteen times its number—the opposing Mexican Army of Operations commanded by Antonio López de Santa Anna boasted some 2,600 experienced *soldados* in the ranks at the time⁷—before finally collapsing under the weight of a determined enemy assault launched in the chilly

⁷Richard Bruce Winders, *Sacrificed at the Alamo: Tragedy and Triumph in the Texas Revolution* (Abilene: State House Press, 2004), 122.

predawn darkness of March 6, 1836. At the cost of their lives, the rifle-wielding Texan defenders inflicted perhaps as many as six hundred total casualties upon their opponents—a staggering figure considering Santa Anna committed little more than 1,400 men to battle that day, having elected to hold the remainder in reserve.⁸ For Texans, the battle's significance sprang not from its ultimate tactical outcome, but rather from the steadfast—and self-sacrificing—manner in which their beleaguered countrymen faced the enemy.⁹ That the meager Texan defense of the Alamo produced such heavy casualties in the attacking Mexican columns became more than a mere matter of pride for contemporary and future citizens of the state; it was a feat of arms that developed into something of a yardstick by which generations of Texans would come to measure their own military endeavors.

If lessons gleaned from the Alamo laid the initial groundwork for Texans' shared belief in their ability to defy overwhelming odds on the battlefield, then, to a certain degree, their bloody victory at the Battle of San Jacinto erected the basic structure around which they assembled a collective sense—however unrealistic—of martial superiority and invincibility. Although pursued by a 1,300-man detachment of Santa Anna's victorious army in mid-April 1836, the members of the motley Texan army—just over

⁸Jeff Long, *Duel of Eagles: The Mexican and U. S. Fight for the Alamo* (New York: Morrow, 1990), 239-240 and 259. According to Long's research, Santa Anna attacked the Alamo with four separate columns, composed of some 1,400 men altogether. A fifth column, consisting of grenadiers and the *Zapadores*, or Corps of Engineers, was held in reserve and did not enter the battle until late in the assault. At that point, the Mexican army had, in all probability, already amassed almost five hundred of the six hundred combined casualties it would suffer that day.

⁹Carol Lea Clark, *Imagining Texas: Pre-Revolutionary Texas Newspapers, 1829-1836* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 2002). In Carol's study of newspapers published during the Texas Revolution, she determines that "only days after the fall of the Alamo," its defenders were already "being memorialized in heroic terms" (114). As her analysis indicates, editorials of the period reveal that "even when they lost battles," Texans believed themselves to have "triumphed by the nobility of their sacrifice" (115). This collective conception seems a possible point of genesis from which the myth of Texan martial supremacy may have emanated

nine hundred strong—resolutely anticipated an opportunity to see combat.¹⁰ As it happened, that opportunity unexpectedly arrived on April 21, spurred, in large measure, by Santa Anna’s imprudent decision to bivouac his weary troops along a marsh-fringed bend in the San Jacinto River the previous evening. The Texan commander, Sam Houston, adroitly recognized the Mexican dictator’s error and made immediate preparations to entrap the enemy force before it could slip away unmolested. About 4:30 that afternoon, Houston’s men swarmed across an open field adjacent to the Mexican encampment, bolted over its hastily erected field works, and fell upon the unsuspecting *soldados*, most of whom were enjoying a *siesta* at the time. Caught completely by surprise by the Texan onslaught, the disorganized Mexicans proved incapable of mounting an effective defense of their position. What followed can only be described as a bloodbath, for while “the organized battle” was over within eighteen minutes, Texans determined to avenge the Alamo and Goliad massacres ensured that “the killing lasted for hours.”¹¹ Consequently, at the end of the day, Santa Anna’s entire force lay wrecked and scattered, all 1,300 of his men casualties.¹² The brutal thoroughness of Houston’s victory at San Jacinto effectively reinforced Texans’ emerging faith in their fighting prowess as a group, the seeds of which were sewn at the Alamo. Having overcome conspicuous deficiencies in manpower, *matériel*, and training in the effort to repel Santa Anna’s malicious campaign to reestablish Mexican authority over their adopted homeland,

¹⁰Hardin, *Texian Iliad*, 192. Hardin’s research effectively demonstrates that the men of the Texan army were determined to fight, despite the odds against them. Tired of retreating before Santa Anna’s force, some were actually on the verge of insubordination, so eagerly did they want retribution for the Mexican army’s brutal treatment of their Alamo and Goliad comrades.

¹¹Winders, *Sacrificed*, 132; Hardin, *Iliad*, 213.

¹²Winders, *Sacrificed*, 133

numerous Texans began to conceptualize themselves as a people apart, a distinctive breed of Americans with a talent for war, however born of necessity. From this standpoint, then, the myth of Texan martial supremacy might reasonably be considered to have been, in the words of Louise Cowan, a “communal psychic response” to the Texas Revolution’s most notorious battlefield episodes.¹³ Having both survived and prevailed over their new republic’s formative event, Texans came to interpret the experience as evidence of their invincibility on the battlefield—a process that would reach fruition by the eve of the Civil War.

Locked in a condition of nearly perpetual frontier defense for the better part of the next three decades, the extent to which many antebellum residents of Texas embraced the “warrior ideal” implicit in the myth of Texan martial supremacy was amply demonstrated by their almost obsessive fascination with prominent soldiers and rangers. Given the region’s violent past and treacherous present, Texas society’s veneration of the men who voluntarily confronted the myriad defense challenges presented by the interminable belligerence of the Mexican government and the Comanche alike should elicit little surprise. Indeed, Texans widely celebrated the exploits of the more audacious and successful of their citizen-soldiers, thus ensuring that the battlefield heroics attributed to these men became indelibly fixed elements of the state’s cultural landscape.¹⁴ In this

¹³Louise Cowan in “Myth in the Modern World,” *Texas Myths*, O’Connor. In Cowan’s view, myths are formed “when an occurrence in history . . . assumes so crucial a position in the memory of an entire people that it . . . enters into the communal mind and heart, seeming to reveal the deepest sense of the character and destiny of a people . . . It is not simply legend or saga, not fable or tale, but the very action of the myth incarnating itself in human life” (14). With this theory in mind, I consider the Texas Revolution to be an occurrence whose fundamental elements meet the criteria for myth-making advanced by Cowan.

¹⁴Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience. A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 265-266. The extreme level of adoration with

regard, such notables as John Coffee “Jack” Hays, Edward Burleson, John S. “RIP” Ford, Benjamin McCulloch, Samuel H. Walker, Alexander Somervell, and William A. A. “Big Foot” Wallace, among others, constituted a pantheon of ordinary individuals whose impressive military service on the frontier elevated them to iconic status in the eyes of their fellow citizens at a time when most Americans typically reserved their greatest admiration for individuals whose “public achievement” and “accomplishments in politics” presumably made them worthy of mass adoration.¹⁵ Alongside the Revolution’s great heroes—Sam Houston, William B. Travis, James Bowie, David Crockett, and the like—these soldiers and rangers towered before the public as archetypical Texan warriors: fearless, resilient, unselfish, and ferocious on the battlefield. However fantastical an expectation, Texas society demanded its soldiers habitually possess such traits, as time and again, both during the Republic of Texas’ decade-long existence from 1836-1845 and after statehood, a seemingly relentless succession of armed confrontations with Mexico and the Comanche forced large numbers of men from across the territory to leave their farms, ranches, trades, and professions to participate in military operations deemed vital to their common security. Thus, during the quarter-century prior to the

which Anglo-Texans approached their state’s soldiers and rangers has been thoroughly established in nineteenth-century Texas historiography. Although no study has exclusively—or comprehensively—treated military hero worship in antebellum Texas as a specialized subject, numerous historians have explored the issue within the context of broader topics. For various discussions of this kind, see H. W. Brands, *How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence—and Changed America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (2003); Carol Lea Clark, *Imagining Texas: Pre-Revolutionary Texas Newspapers, 1829-1836* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 2002); T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Collier Books, 1980); Sam W. Haynes, *Soldiers of Misfortune: The Somervell and Mier Expeditions* (1990); Thomas W. Knowles, *They Rode for the Lone Star. The Saga of the Texas Rangers* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1999); Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992); and Susan Prendergast Schoelwer with Tom W. Gläser, *Alamo Images: Changing Perceptions of a Texas Experience* (Dallas: DeGolyer Library and Southern Methodist University Press, 1985).

¹⁵Rose, *Victorian*, 196.

Civil War, a large proportion of Texas males eligible for military service enlisted as active members of local militia units, ranger companies, and the Republic's regular army for at least some portion of their lives.¹⁶

In combination with the Revolution's enduring cultural legacy and the omnipresent specter of continued frontier violence, the extreme likelihood of involvement in some genre of military service for many males had, by the onset of the Civil War, profoundly influenced how Texans conceived of themselves as a people, particularly with respect to the role of men in society. After serving as a member of the Texas Rangers between 1841 and 1865, James Buckner Barry asserted that during the mid-nineteenth-century "every man in Texas was a soldier."¹⁷ Although Buckner's claim may have straddled (if not actually traversed) the line separating verity from exaggeration, the spirit in which it was expressed reflected an essential truth for Texans: given the extraordinarily perilous conditions of life on the state's frontier, every man in Texas was, at minimum, a *potential* soldier. Accentuated by this realization, Texans' collective sense of combat superiority gradually modified their society's perception of manhood, generating, in the process, a decidedly warrior-based view of masculinity.

To a certain degree, a notion of this sort was simply a natural outgrowth of Texans' careful grooming of the very myth which fundamentally defined them as a people. If, as E. Anthony Rotundo relates, "each culture constructs its own version of

¹⁶Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, 247-276 and 445-521, Frances Terry Ingmire, *Texas Frontiersman, 1839-1860: Minute Men, Militia, Home Guard, Indian Fighter* (St. Louis: Fort Ingmire, 1982); Allan Robert Purcell, "The History of the Texas Militia" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1981).

¹⁷ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Barry, James Buckner," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/fba89.html> (accessed on October 10, 2005); Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Army of the Republic of Texas," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/AA/qja3.html> (accessed on October 10, 2005).

what men and women are—and ought to be,”¹⁸ then it would seem an almost appropriate development that a society such as that which existed in antebellum Texas, whose “self image” was one of “invincibility”¹⁹ in war, essentially equated fighting prowess with manliness. Even so, the contention that Texans somehow pieced together this warrior-based concept of manhood *in toto* fails to take into account the broader cultural heritage from which Texas society derived both its genesis and basic structure. From the earliest days of Anglo colonization, the state’s population expansion was primarily fueled by “a migration which drew strongly from the whole breadth of the South, bringing into Texas three general streams of movement whose sources reached back two generations and more to the Atlantic seaboard.”²⁰ As an amalgamation of people with direct kinship ties to Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, Tennessee, and the Deep South, Texas society was therefore predictably influenced by the prevailing cultural constructions then found in the southern portion of the United States.²¹

Of these, none was more instrumental in the formation of how antebellum Texans eventually defined masculinity than the traditional ethic of honor. In his pioneering works, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* and *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, Bertram Wyatt-Brown cogently argues in favor of viewing honor as the principal code of behavior that encompassed and governed all facets of Southern life,

¹⁸Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 1.

¹⁹Haynes, *Soldiers of Misfortune*, 7. Lack, in *The Texas Revolutionary Experience*, describes Texans’ societal penchant for militarism as a “‘national compulsion’ and an ‘individual necessity’ given the weakness of the state and the pervasive forces of disorder” (265).

²⁰D. W. Meinig, *Imperial Texas: An Interpretive Essay in Cultural Geography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 43.

²¹Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, 207-233.

referring to it as “the cement that held” the slave states together during the colonial and antebellum periods.²² Although a thorough discussion of Wyatt-Brown’s scholarship would tread considerably beyond the scope of this essay, his evaluation of Southern honor with respect to manhood and the demonstration of personal courage justifiably merits brief consideration.

To Wyatt-Brown, white Southern males were compelled by an ancient conception of honor—so-called primal honor—to either exhibit valorous conduct in defense of their families and kin-related communities during periods of armed conflict, or else suffer public humiliation for having failed to discharge one of the most basic of manly obligations.²³ The fear of the latter was enormously powerful, for a man so humiliated had to “admit the shame to himself” and confront the painful reality that “he had betrayed kinfolk and manhood; in fact, he had betrayed all things held dear.”²⁴ With this observation in mind, Wyatt-Brown concludes that since “the evaluation of the public . . . lies at the heart of honor,”²⁵ it must, therefore, be understood as being typologically indistinguishable from reputation, as antebellum Southerners did not—or could not—differentiate between the two constructs. Consequently, whether at peace or war, men regularly engaged in behaviors and rhetoric carefully calculated to provide public verification of their willingness and ability to protect family members and fellow citizens. “They were concerned, to a degree we would consider unusual,” writes Kenneth S.

²²Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Behavior and Ethics in the Old South*, xv.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), viii. See also Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 179.

²⁵Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence*, 14.

Greenberg, “with the surface of things—with the world of appearances.”²⁶ In the absence of an actual war, activities such as eye-gouging, dueling, participation in militia musters, gambling, even boasting and carousing afforded men opportunities to showcase the masculine qualities of courage and fortitude traditionally associated by Southern society with warrior virtue. By taking part in pursuits such as these, men endeavored to cultivate a public image as consistent with their home communities’ expectations concerning manhood’s martial aspect as possible, thus presenting before the judgment of public opinion the requisite evidence of one’s capacity for war. In this sense, then, a man’s inner value—his manliness—was determined by how his actions and words were construed by the community.²⁷

When paired with the myth of Texan martial supremacy, Wyatt-Brown’s interpretative approach can be profitably employed in the effort to understand mid-nineteenth-century Texas society’s militaristic perception of masculinity. Like their fellow Southerners, Texans were doubtless bound by the tenets and demands of primal honor as described by Wyatt-Brown. Indeed, given the generally unpredictable circumstances of life in Texas during the period, such a code must have retained a validity and weight far beyond that which existed in any other part of the South at the time. Predisposed by primal honor to be warlike, Texans were, in effect, forced by the harsh hand of frontier warfare to expand their martial expectations of men. Yet, the concept of manhood which evolved from that expansion was warrior-based in character, not because it was merely a regional variation of primal honor, but rather in direct

²⁶Kenneth S. Greenberg, “The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel in the Antebellum South,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (Feb., 1990): 58.

²⁷Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 45, Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 177.

correlation with the nasty sweep of events which facilitated the rapid transmission and acceptance of the myth of Texan martial supremacy. This myth, underscored as it was by the terrible human cost expended in its creation, shaped and molded Texas society's view of manliness in ways primal honor alone could not have. Otherwise, the entire antebellum South would have subscribed to a similarly extravagant expectation of fighting prowess and combat invincibility in its male citizens. The Texas military experience prior to the Civil War was so unique that Texans considered themselves truly distinctive among Americans—a claim, D. W. Meinig asserts, “the nation had in some degree readily accepted.”²⁸ Imbued with just such a spirit of military exceptionalism, the first of more than five thousand Texans destined to fill the regiments of Hood's Texas Brigade enlisted and marched off to war in the summer of 1861, collectively committed to preserving—and contributing to—the Lone Star state's legendary battlefield mystique of indomitability.

Satisfying “Public Expectation”

From the war's very outset, Texans bound for Confederate service in Virginia were completely cognizant of what was expected of them as their state's sole representatives in the eastern rebel army. Beginning with Texas Governor Edward Clark's June 8, 1861 proclamation calling for volunteers, men were repeatedly reminded by their families, communities, and political leadership who they were and of the

²⁸Meinig, *Imperial Texas*, 62. Lack, in *The Texas Revolutionary Experience*, concludes that in the years following the Revolution, “the sense of [Texas] distinctiveness lived on in the popular mind, whether in or out of the state” (266).

illustrious reputation they were to uphold in the field.²⁹ “There is not upon earth a people,” wrote Clark, “whom nature has endowed with more courage, whom experience has more thoroughly skilled in the use of arms, and inured to the hardships of the campaign, than Texans. The State may be proud, indeed, of her strong and valiant sons.”³⁰ Clearly, the governor’s statement encapsulated the public standard to which the officers and men of the Texas Brigade would be held accountable. Nothing less than unwavering valor in the pursuit of total victory—regardless of the odds—was acceptable from the heirs of the Texas Revolution.

As the bedrock supporting the myth of Texan martial supremacy, the memorable events of 1836 resonated with the citizen-soldiers of the Texas Brigade. Draped in the long shadow of the Revolution’s legacy, each man ultimately stood responsible for the maintenance of an intertwined set of reputations: Texas’s and his own. That the brigade’s rank-and-file not only recognized, but were inspired by this dual challenge is apparent from their personal expressions of commitment. In late summer 1861, Private T. D. Williams (Company E, 4th Texas) emphatically accepted the role he and his comrades would have to assume in furthering their state’s image, solemnly declaring in a letter home to Waco, Texas: “so you see we have a great responsibility resting on us, in order to sustain the well merited renown of our revolutionary sires of San Jacinto and ’36. I believe our boys *can* and *will do it*.”³¹ A corporal in the 5th Texas was even more

²⁹Governor Clark’s June 8, 1861 proclamation was circulated in response to two April manpower requisitions for eight thousand troops issued to the state by the Confederate War Department (U. S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 vols, index, and atlas [Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1880-1901], ser. 3, vol. 5, 691-692).

³⁰*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 29, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

eloquent, insisting that “Each individual soul should hold within its remembrance the daring deeds of ’36—should be moved by the same spirit that actuated the heroic dead who shed their heart’s best blood within the walls of the Alamo. If this be done, we can promise to make every battle field in Virginia, . . . redder than the ensanguined plain of San Jacinto!”³² Although Sergeant-Major John Marquis Smither (Company D, 5th Texas) agreed Texans had “a great reputation to maintain,” he predicted that in the midst of heavy fighting against the Northern army “a great many, may be all of us, may be slain.” Still, despite this sobering realization, Smither remained undeterred in his determination to do his share, whatever the cost. “This may be the last letter you may ever receive penned by hand,” he informed his mother in February 1862, “but if I fall it will be glorious though that I went down to the grave . . . striving to maintain the honor and in defense of ‘Texas my native land; my home.’”³³

Intimately connected to Texans’ awareness of the high martial standard set by their revolutionary forebears was the ever-present knowledge that their families and home communities fully expected them to meet (if not exceed) that standard whenever the Texas Brigade faced the enemy on the battlefield. The kind of community pressure exerted upon Hood’s Texans was, by no means, an isolated phenomenon, however. As recent scholarship has revealed, the vast majority of Civil War soldiers were invariably subject to the invasive influence of the various social, cultural, ideological, and religious

³¹*South West-Quarter Sheet* (Waco), August 22, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

³²*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 21, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

³³Eddy R. Parker, ed., *Touched by Fire Letters from Company D, 5th Texas Infantry, Hood’s Texas Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865* (Hillsboro Hill College Press, 2000), 39.

norms espoused by their communities of origin. Over the past three decades, historians seeking to identify and understand the motivations of the men that composed the Union and Confederate armies have progressively assembled something of a scholarly consensus regarding civilian society's role in determining soldiers' values and behaviors.³⁴ Most agree that Northern and Southern soldiers alike were impelled by an assortment of community reinforced cultural conceptions, the bulk of which included interrelated notions concerning manhood, duty, honor, patriotism, courage, and godliness. Not unexpectedly, the troops of both sides "saw themselves as belonging to some larger community, one that extended both in time and space,"³⁵ and they attempted as best they could within the context of war to conform to the "familiar moral values"³⁶ and expectations emanating from the home front. According to James McPherson, the civilian sphere's influence was particularly pronounced in determining how soldiers' reacted under fire. Since "most of the men in a volunteer company had enlisted from the same community or county," they typically pulled from a shared stock of ideas about what constituted manliness, courage, and the like. Moreover, "Letters home, articles in local newspapers, and occasional visits by family members to the regiment's camp" kept soldiers' firmly connected to civilian society. Thus caught between the judgments of

³⁴For discussions of civilian society's influence on Civil War soldiers, see Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University press of Kansas, 1997); Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988); Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Samuel J. Watson, "Religion and Combat Motivation in the Confederate Armies," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Jan., 1994): 29-55.

³⁵Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 16.

³⁶Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 80.

comrades in the field and those made by civilians waiting at home, men could not escape the “pressure . . . against cowardice,” for “The soldier who proved a sneak in battle could not hold up his head again in his company *or* at home.”³⁷ Given the sheer psychological

³⁷McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 80. To be sure, the civilian sphere periodically undermined military effectiveness by promoting political views, values, and ideals that were starkly incompatible with the war’s successful prosecution. In Texas, as in other Confederate states, such developments most commonly reflected pockets of Unionist sentiment, disaffection with the rebel cause, war-weariness, and the like. Recent studies treating this aspect of the Southern home front’s influence on the war’s progress include Dale Baum, *Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star state during the Civil War era* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Walter L. Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984); Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Katherine A. Giuffre, “First in Flight: Desertion as Politics in the North Carolina Confederate Army,” *Social Science History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Summer, 1997): 245-263; John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer, eds., *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Richard B. McCaslin, *Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Texas 1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); James Alan Marten, *Drawing the Line: Dissent and Disloyalty in Texas, 1856 to 1874*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1986); and Philip Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

Works as diverse as Larry J. Daniel, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee: A Portrait of Life in a Confederate Army* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988) and “The Perseverance of Soldiers,” in *Why the Confederacy Lost*, ed., Gabor S. Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); J. Tracy Power, *Lee’s Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and others have amply demonstrated that the most common manifestation of Southern soldiers’ susceptibility to expressions of discontent emanating from their home communities was the act of desertion. To the extent that civilian dissent prompted some rebel troops to abandon the Confederate cause, such individuals tended to implement that decision, to paraphrase Reid Mitchell, by “voting with their feet” (Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 168). While remaining mindful of this observation, it must be noted, however, that dissenters and deserters rarely contributed to this essay’s primary focus—success on the battlefield. With respect to the Texas Brigade, moreover, desertion was largely a non-issue. During their service with the Army of Northern Virginia, the three Texas regiments lost 282 soldiers to desertion out of an assigned total of 4,346 men (6.4 percent)—a paltry sum by any measure (Simpson, *Compendium*, 534). When compared to another of the Virginia army’s premier combat organizations, the Stonewall Brigade, the Texans’ low level of desertion becomes even more apparent. Composed entirely of Virginians, the Stonewall Brigade’s desertion rate was excessive, having encompassed nearly 16 percent of its eight thousand-man strength (Jeffrey D. Wert, *A Brotherhood of Valor: The Common Soldiers of the Stonewall Brigade, C. S. A., and the Iron Brigade, U. S. A.* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999], 312-314). Now, although one could easily argue that the Stonewall Brigade’s numerous desertions were likely tied to its operating either near or among its members’ residences and farms, yet another renowned unit, Harry Thompson Hays’s Louisiana Brigade, endured a level of desertion nearly double that of the Texas Brigade, despite having been separated from its communities of origin by more than one thousand miles. In fact, several of the Louisiana Brigade’s regiments struggled with desertion rates as high as 20 percent by the close of the war (Terry L. Jones, *Lee’s Tigers: The Louisiana Infantry in the Army of Northern Virginia* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987], 230-254). Taken as a whole, these numbers appear to suggest that

weight of such a dilemma, it is little wonder that a member of the 5th Texas was moved to assure his readers in March 1862: “the Texians will doubtless . . . bear a gallant part [in the upcoming campaign], performing their whole duty as soldiers sustaining the fond hopes of their friends and that of *public expectation* [italics mine].”³⁸

Although Civil War soldiers as a group likely labored under very similar societal constraints, in the case of those serving in the Texas Brigade, the perception and behavior shaping effects of “public expectation” appear to have been discernibly heightened by the myth of Texan martial supremacy. Conditioned by antebellum Texas society to believe themselves peerless in combat, the brigade’s officers and men were intent upon confirming the veracity of that view. To do otherwise would be to falter before the demands of manhood as Texans then understood the concept. That said, merely demonstrating courage in battle would insufficiently meet those demands. As one soldier phrased it in February 1862, many expected the Texans in Virginia “to do harder fighting and more daring deeds than ever were recorded in the annals of history.”³⁹ However hyperbolic such a statement may appear at first glance, it is nevertheless redolent of the manner in which Hood’s Texans actually perceived their involvement in the war. The products of a warlike society “that glorified combat and heaped accolades upon its heroes,”⁴⁰ the predominantly youthful members of the Texas Brigade were fervent in their desire to join the distinguished roll of soldiers and rangers whose conduct in war

the Texas Brigade’s rank-and-file was either relatively unexposed to or uninfluenced by disaffection on the home front—at least to the degree that it eroded their faith in the war effort and provoked mass desertion.

³⁸*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), April 4, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

³⁹Parker, *Touched by Fire*, 34.

⁴⁰Haynes, *Soldiers of Misfortune*, 14.

seemed to exemplify Texan masculinity. By emulating their idols' example on eastern battlefields, they, too, could claim to have fully achieved manhood, even if doing so meant being maimed or killed in the process. The alternative—emasculaton in the eyes of family members, friends, and neighbors—was an eminently more frightening outcome.

Interestingly, the people of Texas were not the only citizens of the Confederacy to have projected a preconceived standard of behavior upon the Texas Brigade's rank-and-file. From the beginning of the war to its end, wherever the Texans marched or bivouacked, they were met with an intriguing blend of fear, curiosity, and admiration. Considering the extensive antebellum journalistic coverage apportioned by newspapers across the United States and abroad to people and events associated with Texas's military travails, one would have been hard pressed, indeed, to find a Southerner who had not formed a distinct mental image with respect to how the Lone Star state's soldiers would appear and conduct themselves.⁴¹ Judging from the experiences of Texans either *en route* to or already serving with the Virginia army, those mental images tended to be deeply ingrained among the civilians they encountered. Shortly after arriving at his battalion's

⁴¹A representative handful of such accounts include *The Illustrated London News* (London), June 18, 1842, "The Texans are a young, but gallant people; they have achieved their freedom with spirit . . ."; *Brother Jonathan* (New York), Christmas 1848, discussing the Texas Rangers' form of justice: "The bowie-knife is called upon, and deliberately every male Mexican in that ranch is speedily done for, guilty or not guilty. But these are not enough to make an offset for the life of a Texan. Another ranch receives the fearful visit, and again blood flows. The number killed on some occasions has been fearfully great. . ."; *The Boston Weekly Museum* (Boston), June 14, 1851, speaking of San Jacinto: "It was a desperate struggle, hand to hand; but the fierce vengeance of the Texans could not be resisted, they were fighting for their homes, their families, and their dead kindred. Their enemies fell thick and fast; and the Texans stamped on them as fast as they fell, . . . and clambering over the groaning, bleeding mass, plunged their bowie-knives into the bosoms of those in the rear!"; and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York), January 15, 1859, describing the Alamo's fall: "The Thermopylae of Texan independence—the Alamo! a name familiar to the American people as a 'household word'—a name associated with a siege and defence the like of which can scarcely be found in the history of any State. The place where fell Bowie, Travis, Crockett, and a band of as brave spirits as ever upheld struggling freedom in any quarter of the globe. . . . The struggles and the sacrifices, the suffering and the martyrdom of those who fell in the short but terrible strife . . . deserve to be recorded as glorious examples of patriotism, as noble as that which immortalized a Leonidas. . . ." (Eric C. Caren, ed., *Texas Extra: A Newspaper History of the Lone Star State, 1835-1935* [Edison: Castle Books, 1999], 20, 41, 49, and 58).

camp on the outskirts of Richmond, Virginia, in September 1861, First Sergeant William H. Lewis (Company D, 5th Texas) wrote a letter to his mother detailing his lengthy journey from Texas. Lewis was clearly amused by the manner in which the inhabitants of the various towns and villages situated along the Texans' line of march responded to their passing through. "We were a perfect curiosity on the road," he remarked. "The people would come from every direction to see the boys from Texas. They had great ideas of the Texans." Particularly humorous, however, was the reception given them in Augusta, Georgia, where the locals provided "a supper and the boys put on their best behavior and the ladies were much surprised to see us so well behaved. I over heard one lady say to another 'Why Aren't they quiet! I expected to hear them yelling all the time, . . . with their hair down to their heels and yellow as an Indian!'"⁴² Private William L. Edwards (Company K, 4th Texas) also wrote of Texans provoking great interest during their trek to Virginia, recounting to his wife, Roxy, "we were saluted by the women, men, children and negroes all the way as we came down at every town and almost every private house they would come running to the road waving flags, hats, handkerchiefs, & etc. We were hailed with joy and the Texas boys bear as good if not the best name of any soldiers in the army."⁴³ For Private G. S. Boynton (Company I, 4th Texas), the entire trip seemed to be one, continuous celebration, as "It had been telegraphed in advance that the Texas regiments were coming, and at every city and station ladies and gentle men had

⁴²Parker, *Touched by Fire*, 20. Another example of this kind was penned by Private G. S. Boynton (Company I, 4th Texas) while his unit bivouacked at New Orleans: "One thing is self-evident, and that is a battalion of wild Texians is a great curiosity in this city. Our encampment has been visited today by all ages, shades, and complexions, who seem to regard us with great curiosity mingled with fear and dread" (*Navarro Express* (Corsicana), September 26, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin)

⁴³William L. Edwards, Meridian, Miss., A few words my dear wife and then I am done, April 24, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

assembled to get a sight of us, and nothing could excel their enthusiasm. . . . They would stand in long lines on each side of the Rail Road, and at our appearance the gentlemen would drown the rattle of the train with their cheers for the Texians; while the ladies would shower bouquete and apples upon the cars, and we were constantly presented with Confederate flags by the beautiful daughters of the South. . . .”⁴⁴

Once in Virginia, the members of the Texas Brigade attracted as much attention as they had been accorded while yet in transit. Perhaps because of the tremendous distance separating Texas from their own state, however, Virginians seem to have been more inclined than other Confederate citizens to approach Texans from a somewhat fanciful perspective. One Richmond resident admitted some time after the war that many Virginians "were prepared to think" Texans "a wild, reckless set of men, daring to risk everything for the Southern cause."⁴⁵ Encamped with his regiment near Manassas, Private John M. Taylor (Company E, 1st Texas) sensed as much, observing, "A Texian in this country is looked upon and admired with that awe and respect akin to the feeling inspired by the concoant lion upon his timid victim, and with such a predicate as this to our chivalry, we will have to give a new tension and energy to our belligerent capacity."⁴⁶ As he informed his parents in July 1861, Corporal Robert H. Gaston (Company H, 1st Texas) developed a similar impression: "The Texians have a great reputation here [in Virginia] as fighters. The people here look upon a Texian ranger (as they call all Texians) as a person who don't care for anything. They say that they had as soon fight

⁴⁴*Navarro Express* (Corsicana), October 17, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁴⁵Winkler, *The Confederate Capital*, 34.

⁴⁶*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall), September 21, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

devils at once as Texians. We will have enough to do, if we get into a fight, to sustain our reputation.”⁴⁷ After being invited by a "fine looking old man" to join a local family for dinner at their home near Yorktown, Corporal Joseph B. Polley (Company F, 4th Texas) noted in his April 19, 1862 diary entry the genteel interrogation he and his comrades received at the hands of their hosts "concerning our manners and customs at home and in camp," for "as Texans we were esteemed curiosities."⁴⁸ According to Sergeant-Major Smither, the residents of Prince Williams County, Virginia, were far from curious about the men of the 5th Texas Regiment—they were outwardly afraid of them. "It is strange what kind of people they had an idea we were," he explained to his aunt in a noticeably bewildered tone:

They thought we were a set of desperadoes that would kill a man if he looked hard at them. A band of lawless adventurers who respected neither God nor man. When we came up here we made a forced march of 28 miles from nine o'clock in the night until day light and the boys were very noisy and uproarious at the prospect of a fight—and were singing and yelling as they pushed on and the inhabitants on the road knowing that we were coming and hearing so much noise. We could see whole families taking to the woods in every direction.⁴⁹

Hood's Texans were thus compelled to confront—and accept—their Southern countrymen's conception of them as fierce, uncontrollable warriors hardened by the chaotic conditions of frontier existence. Indeed, for the men in the ranks, that idea proved as inescapable a part of their career with the Army of Northern Virginia as Texas society's insistence that they strictly adhere to the standard of soldierly conduct implicit in the myth of Texan martial supremacy. Through the projection of their shared

⁴⁷Robert W. Glover, ed., *Tyler to Sharsburg*, 7.

⁴⁸Joseph B. Polley diary, entry for April 19, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁴⁹Parker, *Touched by Fire*, 31-32.

expectations, however, Texans, Virginians, and other Confederate civilians inadvertently imposed an unattainable ideal upon the soldiers of the Texas Brigade: under all conditions, they were to be bold, valiant, and selfless in battle and, above all, consistently victorious. That the brigade's officers and men very nearly fulfilled the public's over-inflated vision is a matter well worth further exploration.

Becoming the Legend

In their collective effort to comply with the taxing mandates of “public expectation,” Hood’s Texans approached the combat experience by resorting to language and symbols consistent with the myth of Texan martial supremacy. As examples from their personal and public correspondence bear out, explicit references to Texan fighting prowess and battlefield invincibility were commonplace, and frequently composed with an eye toward predicting how the Texas Brigade’s soldiers would perform in combat. The extent to which such expressions resembled boasting was anything but coincidental. Although physically separated from their home communities by more than 1000 miles, Texans fighting in the East recognized the enormous importance of keeping up appearances. With their manliness and civil reputations hanging in the balance, they tried to convey their faith in themselves and each other in terms they knew their families, friends, and neighbors back in Texas would understand. A fairly representative statement of this kind was penned by an unidentified soldier in the 5th Texas, who proclaimed, “Should we engage in battle . . . as sure as there is a heaven a tale of honor will be told of the Texians . . . and Texas mothers will be no less proud of their sons than the patriotic

old dames of Sparta.”⁵⁰ Captain Proctor P. Porter (Company H, 4th Texas) was just as confident of success, having concluded that the men of his command were not only “anxious for a little ‘disturbance,’” they were resolved that “another laurel will soon be added to the already glorious wreath that encircles the Lone Star.”⁵¹ Another member of the 4th Texas, Private Josiah G. Duke (Company G, 4th Texas), proudly announced to his grandmother: “Not boasting at all but I am glad that I can call myself a Texian for Texian soldiers never knew defeat that is the reputation we have and we intend to keep it all we want is to have a fight with the Yankees and show them how bad we can whip them.”⁵² Echoing Duke’s sentiments, First Lieutenant William C. Walsh (Company B, 4th Texas) issued this warning to his readers: “I would not advise our Yankee friends to attack us with anything like equal numbers, for if there ever was a regiment [the 4th Texas] in which the ‘devil’ predominated over all other feelings combined, this is surely the one. . . . when the hour of battle does come the cry of mangled humanity will be hushed with ‘no quarter’ and a bayonet thrust.”⁵³ One Texan, writing under the alias, “A TEXAS SCOUT,” was more succinct, brashly predicting in a letter to the editors of the *Richmond Dispatch* that “when the fight takes place the *Texas Brigade* will kill more Yankees, storm more batteries, and capture fewer prisoners than any brigade in the service.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), November 20, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

⁵¹*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), May 21, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

⁵²Josiah G. Duke, Camp Texas near Richmond, Dear Grand Ma, date unknown, circa 1861-1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁵³*Texas State Gazette* (Austin), April 5, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Astonishingly, the combat experience seems to have done little to dissuade members of the Texas Brigade from perceiving the Civil War as an opportunity to connect themselves to their warrior lineage by triumphing over the Northern enemy.

⁵⁴*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), July 21, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. To dismiss comments of this ilk as nothing more than braggadocio or purple prose disregards the underlying historical value of these sources. An array of studies conducted within the past two decades by leading historians of the war's common soldier have authoritatively demonstrated the extraordinarily reflective nature of his wartime writings. As discerned by such scholars, soldiers' letters and diaries possessed an immediacy of emotion, conviction, and thought intimately linked to the complex social and cultural systems that regulated mid-nineteenth-century American society. Gerald F. Linderman directly—and adeptly—addressed this issue in his groundbreaking tome, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*, describing soldiers' evocative use of language as neither “self-delusion nor manipulation employed by high commands or governments; it was, rather, a fair reflection of the structure of values within which soldiers . . . thought about what was happening” (Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 99). Moreover, as James McPherson appropriately points out, unlike combatants involved in conflicts during the last one hundred years, Civil War soldiers were unencumbered by governmental censorship, a state of affairs which he contends permitted them to be “uniquely blunt and detailed about important matters that probably would not pass a censor: morale, relations between officers and men, details of marches and battles, politics and ideology and war aims, and other matters.” In McPherson's view, “This candor enables the historian to peer farther into the minds and souls of Civil War soldiers than of those in any other war” (McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 12).

Insofar as modes of written expression are concerned, then, the men and officers of the Texas Brigade were probably no different from the many thousands of non-Texans serving in the armies of either side. Free to communicate through their letters and diaries what they honestly thought and believed, Hood's troops plainly chose to frame their personal combat expectations within the familiar context of Texan martial supremacy. In light of their culturally reinforced belief in their inherited superiority as warriors, the decision to do so was likely a natural one. It is for this reason that Sergeant Samuel Tine Owen (Company K, 4th Texas) could write his uncle without the slightest trace of pretension: “Don't be the least uneasy about us when it comes to fighting all we want is a chance to fight and you bet Texas is in and Henderson County [his home county in Texas] will not have cause to wail herself on account of us but she may boast of sons who prefer deth to disgrace” (Samuel Tine Owen, State of Va., Dear uncle, 22 May 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas). Like several thousand of his fellow Texans, Owen's military service was characterized by an earnest desire to embody the conviction he articulated in writing. True to his word, one month after composing the lines above, Owen charged with his regiment into the Battle of Gaines's Mill, Virginia, where after two enemy rounds mangled his right leg—terrible wounds that proved mortal within weeks (John D. Owen, State of Va, Camp near Richmon, Dear Cosan, 28 July 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas).

For examples of recent studies that either directly discuss or implicitly accept Civil War soldiers' textual sincerity, see Larry J. Daniels, *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee. A Portrait of Life in the Confederate Army* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Joseph T. Glatthaar, *The March to the Sea and Beyond: Sherman's Troops in the Savannah and Carolina Campaigns* (New York: New York University Press, 1985); Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University press of Kansas, 1997); Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988); and J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables. Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Despite having been repeatedly subjected to the nearly indescribable shock and horror of battle, through much of the conflict, many of Hood's Texans continued to view their presence in the East as a mission to simultaneously maintain and extend their state's vaunted martial legacy. The brigade's consistent record of battlefield success solidified this sense of purpose, while presumably providing the requisite evidence to support Texans' assertions of their own invincibility. To this end, one soldier, reflecting on the battle of Second Manassas, proclaimed: "Texas, through the noble and heroic conduct of her brave sons, has added another laurel to the already brilliant wreath of glory that encircles her fair brow. Another battle has been fought and the prowess of the Lone Star Brigade has again shown that it is invincible against any and everything that is put into action by the agency of man."⁵⁵ Upon assessing its participation in the summer campaigns of 1862, a member of the 5th Texas decided that the brigade's success "has been of the most gratifying character, and has demonstrated the qualifications of her officers, and the indomitable energy, courage, and self-sacrificing devotion of her troops. . . . Each has vied with the other in the performance of duties, and all have exhibited an ardor and earnestness in the struggle worthy of the people they represent."⁵⁶ Pursuing a similar theme, in the aftermath of the Seven Days Battles on the Virginia Peninsula, Corporal Charles F. Hume (Company D, 5th Texas) invoked the memory of the Texas Revolution in a letter recounting the brigade's spectacular assault at Gaines's Mill. From Hume's perspective, he and his comrades had unquestionably "proven and expressed

⁵⁵*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), October 2, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁵⁶*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), October 8, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

their heroic ancestry” by their “late conduct in battle.” “The ‘Single Star,’” he wrote, “has shown again with the old luster of ’36 . . . surpassing all other luminaries in brilliancy and beauty. . . .”⁵⁷

Hume’s sentiments were readily shared by others in the Texas Brigade, as was the symbolic significance he attached to the Lone Star flag. Indeed, Texans frequently made worshipful reference to their state’s distinctive standard in their post-combat writings. The banner was for them more than simply a large piece of cloth—it represented their home communities and all that Texas society had asked its troops in Virginia to defend. Of the eleven states that composed the Southern Confederacy, only Texas had commissioned a state flag prior to the outbreak of war in 1861. In fact, the Lone Star flag was initially adopted by an act of the Texas Congress in January 1839, after which it served as the Republic’s national standard until statehood in 1845.⁵⁸ The flag therefore retained numerous layers of meaning for many of Texas’s citizens. Positioned within the context of the state’s cultural milieu, the flag possessed an almost sacred, totem-like quality, symbolizing as it did the complimentary forces of rugged individualism, courage, and frontier altruism typically credited with the preservation and expansion of American civilization in Texas by its Anglo populace. Consequently, if, as Reid Mitchell suggests, all Civil War soldiers conceptualized their battle flags as “physical tie[s] between the homelife they had left and fought for and the war into which they were plunged,”⁵⁹ then

⁵⁷*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 20, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁵⁸Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “Flags of Texas,” www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/FF/msf1.html (accessed on July 25, 2005).

Texans, with their nearly fanatical reverence of the “Lone Star,” may very well have been among the strongest adherents to such a notion. In this respect, Lieutenant-Colonel John Marshall (second-in-command, 4th Texas) likely spoke on behalf of the brigade’s rank-and-file when he wrote in September 1861: “The flag of the Texas camp [near Richmond] is a beautiful one . . . The hearts of all are riveted to it. It will never be given up.”⁶⁰ Fluttering amid the powder smoke and chaos of the battlefield, the flag was a highly visible—and steady—reminder of Texas’s unique history and the martial expectations of its people. To the brigade’s officers and men, the flag was “magnificent,” “beautiful,” “resplendent,” and, when battle-scarred, “a glorious relic” that preserved the “record of their deeds.”⁶¹ Moreover, once the Texans’ reputation for aggressiveness had spread through the enemy ranks, their instantly recognizable banner became an effective tool of psychological warfare, inspiring apprehension and fear on the battlefield.⁶² This elevated level of conceptual identification with, and pride in, the Lone Star flag explains its continued use by the Texas regiments in open violation of standing orders issued by

⁵⁹Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 20; James McPherson also comments on the symbolic importance of flags to Civil War soldiers in *For Cause and Comrades*, asserting that “The most meaningful symbols of regimental pride were the colors—the regimental and national flags, which bonded the men’s loyalty to unit, state, and nation. The flags acquired a special mystique for Civil War soldiers” (McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 84).

⁶⁰*Texas State Gazette* (Austin), November 9, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁶¹*Columbus Citizen* (Columbus), September 14, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; Parker, *Touched by Fire*, 58; *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 20, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; *Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), October 8, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; Donald E. Everett, ed., *Chaplain Davis and Hood’s Texas Brigade*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 136.

⁶²One example of this phenomenon was recounted in the July 2, 1862 issue of the *Galveston Weekly News* by Lieutenant J. C. S. Thompson (Company L, 1st Texas): “The prisoners said that the sight of the Lone Star Flag created an unpleasant impression among them, as they knew Texians were good ‘bush-whackers’” (*Galveston Weekly News* (Galveston), July 2, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

General Robert E. Lee prohibiting the carrying of state colors in the Army of Northern Virginia. Hood's men could not part with it, for, in a manner perhaps incomprehensible to present-day sensibilities, the flag was, in the words of a soldier in the 1st Texas, the "Texian's identity."⁶³ To enter an engagement without it would have signified to brigade members the loss of that virtual identity, and to a marked extent, the removal of a potent source of emotional strength in combat.

From a more tangible standpoint, however, the greatest threat to the Texas Brigade's continued battlefield dominance came not from the potential absence of the Lone Star flag, but from the unit's very success in combat. The horrific loss of life attendant to the brigade's effort to personify the myth of Texan martial supremacy—and thus to satisfy "public expectation"—provoked at least some of its soldiers to express serious concerns about the future. However proud of their accomplishments such men may have been, try as they might, they could not deny reality: the brigade regularly incurred too many casualties. Not surprisingly, Texans periodically voiced misgivings about this state of affairs throughout the summer campaigns of 1862, a four-month stretch during which the Texas regiments suffered catastrophic losses. In a letter written to his wife on August 7, 1862, Major William P. Townsend (4th Texas) reflected on the brigade's prominent standing in the Army of Northern Virginia and remarked, "The Texas troops have a reputation for desperate fighting whether they have ever seen an action or not and in consequence of this, our Brigade has been thrown in the advance . . . and the consequence has been that when-ever dangerous action was to be done, there we

⁶³*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall), September 21, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

were. Many of our men say they are tired of their character for bellicosity.”⁶⁴ Private Henry Travis (Company H, 4th Texas) was less diplomatic than his major, grumbling to his sister in late September: “There has been a heap of hard fighting down here. The Texas Brigade has been cut up pretty bad. The Texas Brigade has got a brave name here for fighting. It will not do it any good if it gets in another fight or two, for it will all be killed up. The Texas boys goes ahead in the fight.”⁶⁵ His regiment’s near annihilation at the Battle of Antietam, Maryland, induced Private H. Waters Berryman (Company I, 1st Texas) to likewise conclude, “They always take the Texans to the hottest part of the field, but her best men have fallen now and they will have to be more particular now, I reckon where she is carried hereafter.”⁶⁶ Private Jason C. Murray (Company F, 4th Texas) was perhaps the most candid of all, however, when he gloomily forecasted on September 22 “it looks like there will not be a Texan left if this little fuss is not settled soon.”⁶⁷

Evaluations of this sort forcefully underscored the great paradox of the Texas Brigade’s service with the eastern rebel army. On the one hand, to meet the lofty standard established by the myth of Texan martial supremacy, Hood’s men had to repeatedly prove themselves without equal in combat. On the other, the palpable result of successfully fulfilling that undertaking was the brigade’s eventual military ineffectiveness, as mounting casualties thinned its ranks beyond the point of restoration.

⁶⁴William P. Townsend, Camp Near Richmond, Dearest, August 7, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁶⁵Henry Travis, Richmond, Va., Dear Sister, September 25, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁶⁶H. Waters Berryman, Camp near Martinsburg. Va., My Own Dear Ma, September 22, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁶⁷Jason C. Murray, Camp near Martinsburg, Dear Sister Mary, September 22, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

Even so, as suggested by a letter penned by Private John C. West (Company E, 4th Texas) to his wife in late May 1863, most Texans were not only aware of this painful irony, they apparently accepted it as the price of their reputation. “The whole brigade is in fine spirits,” he observed, “and it really does seem strange to see men who have lost so many friends so careless and happy. They sometimes talk almost like bullies at a street corner, except with a mild, calm air of determination and no swagger. The usual feeling seems to be, ‘*We can’t be whipped, but we may all be killed* [italics mine].’”⁶⁸ That the three Texas regiments ultimately endured an aggregate casualty total of 61.7 percent by the close of the war testifies to the tragic veracity of West’s statements.⁶⁹

Whatever the cost of their numerous battlefield successes, the overwhelming majority of extant sources reveal that members of the Texas Brigade were much more likely to extol their hard-earned reputation, than to lament the blood spilled in its formation. A letter authored by Private Arthur H. Edey (Company A, 5th Texas) in the autumn of 1862 exemplified this trend. In discussing the brigade’s splendid combat record, Edey was jubilant: “The praise of that small band of Texians was rung from Virginia to the Lone Star State. The burst of enthusiasm was heard on the railroads leading to the Mississippi—the papers were exultant in descriptions of their charges and their undaunted bravery; and now they proudly bear, by public acclamation, the title—‘The brigade of the war’”⁷⁰ Corporal Charles S. Worsham (Company E, 4th Texas) also reveled in the Texans’ eminent position in the Army of Northern Virginia. Shortly

⁶⁸John C. West, *A Texan in Search of a Fight: Being the Diary and Letters of a Private Soldier in Hood’s Texas Brigade* (Waco: Press of J. S. Hill & co., 1901), 63.

⁶⁹Simpson, *Compendium*, 533

⁷⁰*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), October 10, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

after the conclusion of the 1862 Maryland Campaign, Worsham eagerly informed his mother of his gratitude to God for allowing him to remain “unharméd . . . through the blaze of bombs and crash of musketry” while his comrades in the Texas Brigade “by their gallantry and heroism have won for themselves the proud title of the bravest of the brave and the best troops in the world.”⁷¹ Oddly, the recognition that the brigade’s officers and men had done everything in their power to meet “public expectation” impelled one Texan in mid-October 1862 to express skepticism that rumored reinforcements from Texas could match their example. Captain Watson Dugat Williams (Company F, 5th Texas) was clearly uncompromising in this regard, bluntly telling his fiancée, Laura:

I wish we had a full Division here composed of Texans, but at the same time unless they were the very best men, the best of soldiers, I would not wish them to come. Our little Brigade has made itself known here and unless the new Regiments were fully our equals I would not want them to come. Now you must not think I brag too much on our Texas Brigade, however flatteringly I might speak of them I don’t think would be praising them too much. I do not hesitate to say ours is the best—decidedly the best, Brigade ever upon Virginia soil.⁷²

Justifiably pleased with their incomparable fighting record, members of the brigade, such as Williams, understood better than anyone else just how arduous it was to fashion.

Concurrently burdened by the physical demands of defeating Union forces on the battlefield and the psychological constraints of conforming to a myth whose strictures fundamentally determined the extent of one’s manliness, Hood’s Texans could only hope that their labors and sacrifices would garner them the esteem of their families, friends, and fellow citizens. Conceivably intent upon addressing this very issue in October 1862,

⁷¹Charles S. Worsham, Camp of the 4th Texas Regt. Near Winchester Va., Dear Mother, October 25, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁷²Watson Dugat, Richmond, My Dear, Dear Laura, October 18, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

Charles Hume fully anticipated that the many hardships endured by the brigade's rank-and-file would "not be lost upon the State they represent, and which they have honored by their uncompromising devotion," for "the blood that flowed at the Alamo was not more precious than that which crimsoned the battle field of West Point, Richmond, Manassas, and Sharpsburg. The souls that took their flight to the spirit land when Travis and Crockett fell, were no more devoted to their country's good and glory than those which breathed their last on earth in Virginia or Maryland."⁷³ Beyond articulating an overt desire that the Texas regiments receive the recognition he believed they deserved from their beloved state, Hume's words hint at an intriguing shift in Texans' perception of themselves vis-à-vis the myth of Texan martial supremacy. Whereas at the start of the Civil War, the average Texan in the Virginia army tended to conceive his military service as a manly rite of passage involving the pursuit and emulation of a mythical ideal, by mid-conflict, the brigade's renowned reliability in battle—forged in the blood of its members—had necessarily transformed that view. Simply stated, the men of the Texas Brigade realized they were no longer chasing a myth—they had become an integral part of it.

During the Texas Brigade's more than three years of service with the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, its officers and men sought to attain an impossible standard of military performance: utter invincibility in combat. Their quest to satisfy that standard was, to a certain extent, predetermined by their state's war-plagued past. Beset by enemies along their western and southern frontiers since the end of the Texas Revolution,

⁷³*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), November 7, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Texans considered themselves a people without equal in war, a collective state of mind that gradually manifested itself as the myth of Texan martial supremacy. That myth facilitated Texas society's cultish predilection for military hero worship, as well as the development of its fundamentally warrior-based notion of manhood. Simultaneously inspired by and compelled to uphold their state's international reputation for wartime heroics, the volunteers who composed the rank-and-file of the Texas Brigade struggled to meet the martial demands of "public expectation" upon which their civil reputations and masculine identities ultimately depended. Always cognizant of the innumerable battlefield achievements traditionally attributed to Texas's legendary soldiers and rangers, Hood's Texans invariably evaluated their own victories with an eye toward living up to that example. That that example was, in many respects, chimerical mattered rather little to the members of the brigade. For them, the myth of Texan martial supremacy was real enough to define their experience as Texas citizens, as soldiers, and, perhaps most saliently, as men.

CHAPTER 4

“TEXANS—LET US STAND OR FALL TOGETHER”: JOHN BELL HOOD, THE TEXAS BRIGADE, AND THE CRUCIBLE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CIVIL WAR

On September 14, 1862, mutinous rumblings permeated the ranks of the Texas Brigade as it accompanied General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia in western Maryland, during the first major Confederate raid north of the Potomac River. The brigade’s commander, Brigadier General John Bell Hood, had, after a trifling disagreement with a superior, been placed under arrest and indefinitely relieved of command—pending court-martial proceedings—just days before. Now, with the Texas regiments speeding in the direction of a developing battle near Boonsboro, the soldiers became almost riotous in anticipation of entering into combat deprived of Hood’s leadership.¹ In a spontaneous manifestation of their devotion to Hood, while the Texans filed past General Lee, who silently sat “on his horse by the side of the road,”² they deluged the army’s commander with impassioned demands for “Hood to lead us into

¹Donald E. Everett, ed., *Chaplain Davis and Hood’s Texas Brigade*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 124-125; Joseph B. Polley, *A Soldier’s Letters to Charming Nellie* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1908), 83-84; James Wylie Ratchford, *Some Reminiscences of Persons and Events of the Civil War* (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, Printers, 1909; reprint, Austin: Shoal Creek Publishers, 1971), 56; John W. Stevens, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (Hillsboro, Texas: Hillsboro Mirror Print, 1902), 69.

²Polley, *A Soldier’s Letters*, 83.

battle,”³ or else they would not fight. Rightly hesitant to send his best brigade into an engagement in such a rebellious frame of mind, within moments of this display, Lee rescinded Hood’s arrest and restored him to full command. Very soon thereafter, Hood was again at the head of his brigade, having returned to a chorus of “long and loud”⁴ cheering from the outfit’s ebullient rank-and-file. Subsequent events three days later at the Battle of Antietam ultimately confirmed the wisdom of Lee’s act of clemency toward Hood; the Texas Brigade, under Hood’s direction, stymied a massive enemy assault against the rebel army’s left flank that might have otherwise resulted in its complete annihilation.⁵ Although clearly the product of extraordinary circumstances, the incident depicted above nevertheless typified the unique command relationship enjoyed by Hood and the Texans under his command.

This study strives to illustrate how that relationship—fundamentally based on mutual expressions of trust, respect, and understanding—progressively evolved from a complex web of social interaction, tacit agreement, and negotiated compromise between the men in the ranks and John Bell Hood, therefore discernibly enhancing the Texas Brigade’s cohesiveness in combat. Like all Civil War volunteers, Texas soldiers conceived their formal military service as a temporary condition, at the conclusion of which they would naturally return to their civilian lives. Moreover, upon enlisting, they neither relinquished their civilian identities nor discarded their ardor for the basic tenets

³Stevens, *Reminiscences*, 69.

⁴Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 125.

⁵For a fuller treatment of the Texas Brigade’s role in the Battle of Antietam, Maryland, on September 17, 1862, see John Michael Priest, *Antietam: The Soldiers’ Battle* (Shippensburg: White Mane Publishing Company, 1989); Stephen Sears, *Landscape Turned Red. The Battle of Antietam* (New Haven: Ticknor & Fields, 1983); and Harold B. Simpson, *Hood’s Texas Brigade Lee’s Grenadier Guard* (Waco: Texian Press, 1970).

of republican citizenship. For officers assigned to lead the typical assemblage of citizen-soldiers, this state of affairs was challenging enough. Volunteers from Texas, however, posed an entirely different set of problems, most of which were inextricably tied to their society's distinctive martial tradition and lengthy frontier experience. As a result, upon taking command of the Texas regiments, Hood confronted a far more demanding test of his capacity for leadership than he probably expected. Even so, his four-year term of service on the Texas frontier as a junior officer in the peacetime army had not only exposed him to the state and its fiercely individualistic inhabitants—both of which he soon came to admire—it also furnished him with valuable opportunities to develop an insightful comprehension of Texas culture. Thus armed in 1861 with a sophisticated understanding of the soldiers in his charge and a fortunate endowment of physical courage, Hood crafted a command approach that was incredibly successful in promoting condition-specific discipline, camaraderie, and *élan* among the brigade's rank-and-file. In addition to ensuring Hood's intense popularity, these outcomes substantially influenced how his Texans both individually and collectively functioned while on campaign and in the presence of the enemy.

To fully grasp why the members of the Texas Brigade wholeheartedly embraced Hood's method of leadership their experience as citizen-soldiers must be viewed within the broader context of voluntary military service during the Civil War. It is, therefore, my purpose to reveal the many commonalities Texans shared with American volunteers in general in an effort to better frame those aspects of their service and command relationship with Hood which were truly exceptional among the conflict's combatants. To this end, this chapter will explore Civil War volunteers' attitudes toward military

service and its place in a republican society; the myriad difficulties encountered by officers in command of citizen-soldiers; the centrality of courage to successful leadership; how the frontier shaped antebellum Texans' perceptions of and involvement in most formal military organizations; the ways in which the brigade's rank-and-file viewed and sometimes reacted against military leadership and discipline; the principal prewar factors that contributed to Hood's readiness to command Texans; how Hood's well conceived leadership approach cultivated an enduring command relationship of mutual esteem between the men in the ranks and himself; and how outside observers interpreted the brigade's relationship with Hood.

Civil War Volunteers, Republican Citizenship, and the Dilemma Posed by Military Service

To be sure, the volunteer soldiers that predominated Civil War armies could hardly be broadly characterized as having been superbly disciplined troops.⁶ Much to the consternation of their officers—many of whom were amateurs themselves—Northerners and Southerners likewise proved largely averse to the antebellum regular army's insistence upon unquestioning obedience from the men in the ranks. Remaining true to their republican heritage, the citizen-soldiers of both sides found it nearly impossible to

⁶For discussions of the average Civil War volunteer's transition from citizen to soldier, see Joseph Allen Frank and George A. Reaves, *"Seeing the Elephant:" Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Ricardo A. Herrera, "Self-Governance and the American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 2001): 21-52; Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1997); Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York, The Free Press, 1987), James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988); Mark A. Weitz, "Drill, Training, and the Combat Performance of the Civil War Soldier: Dispelling the Myth of the Poor Soldier, Great Fighter," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 1998): 263-289.

reconcile military regimentation with the familiar civic values of egalitarianism and self-governance.⁷ Indeed, many (if not most) volunteers interpreted the restrictive, rank-stratified, and generally authoritarian nature of military service as being patently antithetical to the cherished conceptions of liberty in whose defense they had enlisted in the first place.⁸ In this respect, the immersion of the individual within the group, typically accomplished through close-order drill, fatigue duty, and submission to the chain-of-command, was a condition that violated both their previous experience with, and understanding of, citizenship in a democratic republic.

Still, as scholars have recently established, the great mass of Civil War soldiers came to terms with their new reality sooner or later. Some perceived military service as an opportunity to enhance “their republican identit[ies]”⁹ by voluntarily sacrificing “the exercise of their rights”¹⁰ on behalf of a greater, communal good—an act they considered to be one of the highest expressions of personal autonomy.¹¹ Yet others resigned themselves to the army’s onerous regulation of their lives—however grudgingly—only after the chaos and unpredictability of the combat experience had convinced them of “the

⁷Herrera, “Self-Governance,” 23-34; Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 36-37; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 46-48; Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 56-59. In Ricardo A. Herrera’s article, “Self-Governance and the American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861,” he concludes that Civil War volunteers were by no means the first in the nation’s history to invoke republican ideology while under arms. In Herrera’s view, “The American soldier’s belief in his right to govern his life in some measure transcended chronological boundaries, and it affected in some way or another regular, volunteer, and militia order, discipline, and life (Herrera, “Self-Governance,” 52). Thus, the men who composed the Confederate and Union military forces merely occupied the end position of an ideological continuum initiated by their colonial predecessors during the War for American Independence.

⁸McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 104-116.

⁹Herrera, “Self-Governance,” 29.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 57.

value of discipline” under fire.¹² Whatever the basis of his decision, the typical private eventually acknowledged the centrality of training and good order to battlefield success. Most men discovered that by mastering the repetitive mechanics of close-order drill and promptly obeying orders in camp, they obliquely contributed to their regiment’s sustained capacity for cohesive action in battle. Influenced by what Earl J. Hess has aptly classified “the psychology of the battle line,” individual soldiers learned that discipline fostered “the nearly inexpressible ties of comradeship and respect that enabled” them to operate in purposeful concert with their companions “during the worst trials combat had to offer.”¹³

More often than not, the extent and speed with which citizen-soldiers recognized and subsequently embraced the initially imperceptible benefits of the army’s rigid training regime was heavily dependent upon their officers. As members of community generated military organizations, few volunteers deemed their temporary martial status as a compelling reason to deviate from American society’s traditional disdain for class distinction and social stratification.¹⁴ They were, therefore, much more inclined at the war’s outset to conceive of the army—particularly the regular establishment—as a despotism dominated by petty tyrants and self-styled aristocrats, than not. The popular practice of electing company- and field-grade officers in volunteer regiments further exacerbated this issue, for “volunteers could not but continue to” consider themselves the equals of “those who were boyhood companions and friends or neighbors of long

¹²McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*. 48; Weitz, “Drill, Training, and the Combat Performance of the Civil War Soldier,” 263-289.

¹³Hess, *The Union Soldier*, 111.

¹⁴Herrera, *Self-Governance*, 27 and 39; Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 37; Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers*, 57.

standing.”¹⁵ Consequently, if an officer—whether professional or volunteer—failed to tread lightly when exercising the responsibilities and prerogatives of command, he ran the risk of being branded a martinet by the men in the ranks—a good number of whom were not above engaging in various forms of resistance against their superiors.¹⁶

Confronted with this thorny state of affairs, effective officers swiftly learned how to differentiate their leadership and discipline styles in an effort to better respond to the egalitarian character of their commands, as well as to the myriad circumstances and conditions presented by military life. In the problematical business of commanding volunteers, respect and ready compliance to orders could never be simply expected from the rank-and-file.¹⁷ On the contrary, officers had to earn such seemingly elemental courtesies as these by exhibiting a clear understanding of their men’s beliefs, expectations, and needs.¹⁸ As indicated by Gerald F. Linderman, citizen-soldiers were clearly uncompromising in their collective demand that “officers . . . be worthy of their men.”¹⁹

¹⁵Frank and Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*,” 49; Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 37, 40-41.

¹⁶Frank and Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*,” 52-53; Herrera, *Self-Governance*, 31-33, Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 50-56; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 55-58.

¹⁷Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 44.

¹⁸Frank and Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*,” 51-54; Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 56; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 53-55.

¹⁹Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 44. Such an approach to civil and military interaction between men of differing ranks enjoyed a currency of long standing among Americans, dating back to the deferential relationships practiced during the colonial period. Scholars of early America have emphasized the centrality of reciprocal exchanges in these relationships, particularly with respect to the stratified societies of the Southern colonies. Essentially, without mutual displays of give-and-take, deference as a form of social control would have been unworkable in practice, as subordinates typically expected a certain degree of reciprocity from their immediate superiors. Everyday interactions between white freemen therefore constituted a state of perpetual negotiation through which elites and commoners alike wrangled to have their social, political, and economic needs met. Even so, the greater onus lay with those who desired to lead, for “whether one held rank by appointment or election or enjoyed less formal prestige, the loyalty

To this end, leadership by example was by far the most direct and constructive means through which officers communicated—and ultimately proved—their grasp of volunteer *mentalité*.²⁰ In camp and on the march, such an approach typically included active participation in the drudgery and material discomfort regularly endured by those serving in the enlisted ranks. Although the troops may not have expected them to do so on a daily basis, officers who readily shared their men's hardships—drawing the same miserable rations; sleeping among them on the ground; helping to build field works; offering to carry an exhausted soldier's knapsack and rifle—initiated social interactions whose fraternal tone tended to contribute much toward legitimizing their commissions in the eyes of the rank-and-file.²¹ Exemplifying this observation, Corporal Zack Landrum (Company H, 4th Texas) wrote in July 1862 of his late company commander who was mortally wounded at the Battle of Gaines's Mill, Virginia: "Thus went as true and noble a man as lived—I always thought at home that [Captain Proctor P.] Porter was a cold and selfish man—but I found him very different anything he could do for his men he done with pleasure—I have seen him deny himself of Blankets to help one of his sick men . . . if a man was sick and had no money Porter would find it out and divide the last cent he

of the subordinate was based upon the assumption that the leader could never . . . 'run counter to his aims or desires' (Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982], 69)." As observed by Rhys Isaac in his groundbreaking work, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, this set of circumstances was applicable to the master-slave relationship as well. "The relationship of master to slaves entailed extremes of inequality," writes Isaac, "but even in this case it is evident that for authority to be effective as social *power*—or *control*—meaningful reciprocal exchanges had to be constantly performed." Thus, for a master "to convert that power into authority he had not only to provide subsistence and protection, but also to dispense appropriate acknowledgements of services rendered by his subordinates (*The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* [Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982], 339)."

²⁰Frank and Reaves, "Seeing the Elephant," 51; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 53.

²¹Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 48; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 55 and 58.

had with him—we will never have such another captain.”²² Thus, even officers unpopular in civilian life might win the admiration of their men through earnest attempts to provide for their welfare and well-being.

That said, however much an officer might attempt to express his solidarity with common volunteers through displays of sympathy, amity, and the like during periods of relative inactivity and safety, such actions became wholly irrelevant if his behavior on the battlefield did not convey a comparable message. More pointedly, citizen-soldiers could neither respect nor willingly follow an officer who did not consistently exhibit courage in combat. Encompassing a broad continuum that stretched from outward fearlessness in the face of the enemy to astounding acts of heroism, officers’ exhibition of valorous conduct simultaneously nerved and inspired the men in the ranks.²³ To be sure, the irrepressible pandemonium and sudden violence of combat incalculably heightened the necessity for leadership by example—an assessment most veteran soldiers made in short order. James McPherson contends that although personal bravery “was not the only” quality men admired in their officers, “it was the most important”²⁴ one. In his pioneering treatise, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*, Linderman is even more insistent on this point. According to his interpretation, “courage was the goad and guide of men in battle.”²⁵ Soldiers, therefore, held officers to a stringently applied standard of leadership which emphasized steadiness and valiant

²²Zack Landrum, Camp near Richmond, Va., Dear Mother, July 27, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

²³Hess, *The Union Soldier*, 120-122; Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 44-48, 76-79; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 58-59.

²⁴McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 58.

²⁵Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 16.

action under fire above all else.²⁶ In this regard, what volunteers customarily expected from themselves and each other, they logically extended to their leaders. Commanders who fulfilled that expectation invariably secured their men's trust, esteem, and, perhaps most critically, compliance. Those who did not suffered derision at the hands of volunteers who readily utilized indiscipline and humiliation as a means to shatter what little authority cowardly officers may have initially possessed.²⁷

In the final analysis, then, it was not enough for officers to merely express verbal empathy for the rank-and-file's plight. Truly successful leaders—whatever their rank—dedicatedly sought to understand their troops, adjusting their command approach in accordance with what they learned. As frequently as possible, moreover, they availed themselves of opportunities to lead by example, particularly on the battlefield. Since “most common soldiers simply refused to equate worth with rank,” preferring instead to “measur[e] the individual,”²⁸ officers had little alternative but to provide indisputable, visible verification of their faculty—and deservedness—for command.

“The Damndest Troops in the World”

Although Civil War soldiers generally challenged their officers with demands for equality, episodic indiscipline, and contemptuous behavior, volunteers from Texas might well have been among the most notorious in this respect. The extent to which Texans under arms were recalcitrant, however, was anything but a new development by the

²⁶Frank and Reaves, “*Seeing the Elephant*,” 145-147; Hess, *The Union Soldier*, 120-122, Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 43-49; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 58-60.

²⁷Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 47-56; McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 59-60

²⁸Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, 44.

outbreak of hostilities in 1861. Indeed, throughout the antebellum period, men from the Lone Star state collectively constituted something of an ordeal for any officer assigned to lead them. Accustomed to the incomparable freedom of action and thought attendant to rustic pursuits, rural competencies, and frontier living, most Texans were passionately individualistic upon entering military service and therefore loath to accept the army's strict regulations, inflexible hierarchy, and monotonous routine. This general unwillingness to submit to military discipline pervaded Texans' martial endeavors from the very beginning of their existence as a people. Establishing this very point, Paul D. Lack depicts the Texas army raised during the Revolution as a force whose "individualistic character and libertarian ethos" lay at the heart of its "penchant toward disorderly conduct."²⁹ Their independence won, the members of the Texas Republic's subsequently established regular and paramilitary organizations institutionalized that army's rampant unruliness, eschewing "military pomp and exep[ro]p[ri]et[arian] the egalitarianism of the frontier"³⁰ as a matter of course. In Sam W. Haynes's view, such a situation was largely unavoidable, given the average Republican Texas volunteer's social and cultural origins. "The self-willed frontiersman," insists Haynes, "was a splendid fighter, but a poor soldier; submissive obedience was foreign to his very nature. . . . Renowned for their tenacity and self-reliance, the citizen-soldiers of Texas possessed, in equal measure, an obduracy and a disrespect for authority that bordered on the anarchic."³¹ Thomas W. Cutrer has suggested that antebellum Texans' extreme,

²⁹Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 137.

³⁰Sam W. Haynes, *Soldiers of Misfortune: The Somervell and Mier Expeditions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 14.

oppositional attitude toward formal military discipline and order likely stemmed from their devotion to what he terms “the frontier military tradition.” According to Cutrer, Texans differed little from previous American frontiersmen inasmuch as they believed “the citizens of the republic were capable of defending themselves without assistance from the Federal government” and were “intensely suspicious of a military caste, especially an officer corps trained and maintained at government expense.”³² Not unexpectedly, Texas troops of the period largely dismissed most of the professional officers produced by the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, as supercilious automatons, preferring, instead, to personally select leaders whose natural courage, commitment to Jacksonian democracy, and familiarity with frontier warfare mirrored (if not exceeded) their own.³³ The gritty commander of invading American forces during the Mexican War, Major General Zachary Taylor arguably offered the best contemporary evaluation of the trials associated with leading Texans: “Them Texas troops are the damndest troops in the world. We can’t do without them in a fight, and we can’t do anything with them out of a fight.”³⁴

Whether by coincidence or design, the officers and men of the three principal regiments that composed the Texas Brigade successfully maintained their reputation as “the damndest troops in the world” upon entering the Confederate service. In August 1861, for example, while the first five companies of the 4th Texas were in the process of

³¹Haynes, *Soldiers of Misfortune*, 14 and 211.

³²Thomas W. Cutrer, *Ben McCulloch and the Frontier Military Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 3-4.

³³*Ibid.*, 3-7, 67.

³⁴Quoted in Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 189

departing the regiment's camp of instruction near Houston, Texas, to begin the long rail journey to Virginia, a potentially lethal episode of disruptive (if not riotous) behavior unfolded. As related by one volunteer, Private George H. Sweet (Company F, 4th Texas), not long after three of the companies had entrained, a rumor circulated among the men in the remaining two "that the conductor would not make another trip to Houston the same evening," and they would have to wait until morning to board the cars.³⁵ Incensed by the possible overnight delay, "the men, under the direction of their officers, immediately took possession of the road, blockaded it in front with logs and other obstructions, and as shortly the train did return, it was also blockaded in rear by similar obstructions, and was thus hemmed in, while the cars were surrounded on all sides by the soldiers."³⁶ An entreaty for calm made by local mustering officer, Lieutenant A. M. Haskell, apparently accomplished little in the way of defusing the situation and instead only further agitated the crowd. "A general uproar ensued," wrote Sweet, "in which I could hear nothing except, 'damn him!' 'kill him!' &c. . . ; fortunately for all parties, the excitement was quelled without personal harm resulting to any. The baggage was soon placed on board, the men followed, the obstructions were removed and all were in a fair way to get off. . . ."³⁷ This incident, occurring as it did before the Texans had even set forth from their home state, was a presage of the conduct they would habitually resort to as members of the Army of Northern Virginia when confronted by what they perceived to be insulting behavior, demeaning treatment, or the denial of customary rights by anyone, particularly

³⁵*San Antonio Herald* (San Antonio), August 31, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

the officers elected and appointed to lead them. William Beck Ochiltree, Texas representative to the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States and father of First Sergeant Thomas Peck Ochiltree (Company E, 1st Texas),³⁸ predicted this very development in a letter written to the *Marshall Texas Republican* in August 1861. "I hope as good and true men will be assigned . . . [to command] in the [1st Texas] regiment," he cautioned, "but if obnoxious men should be appointed, our Texas boys are hard to govern, where they have no love or knowledge of the governor."³⁹ Validating Ochiltree's warning, throughout the war, the brigade's rank-and-file simply refused to tolerate officers—especially non-Texans—whose overall demeanor palpably failed to measure up to their preconceived standards of leadership. As one soldier in the 4th Texas trenchantly explained, "the idea is, that free *Texians* dislike restraint, and *gentlemen* do not like to be *forced* into a position of even *seeming* inferiority."⁴⁰

Like the majority of Civil War volunteers, the members of the Texas Brigade fully expected a collaborative relationship with their officers, one fundamentally based on reciprocal displays of respect, trust, and responsibility. Should an officer fall short of that expectation—or any other of significance, for that matter—the men were quick to call attention to his shortcomings. On the less visible end of the spectrum in this regard, the most common expressions of criticism and discontent were written. Private John

³⁸*Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Ochiltree, William Beck," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/OO/foc2.html> (accessed on February 12, 2006); *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Ochiltree, Thomas Peck," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/OO/foc1.html> (accessed on February 12, 2006).

³⁹*Marshall Texas Republican* (Marshall, Texas), August 24, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁴⁰*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 28, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Marquis Smither (Company D, 5th Texas) composed just such a missive in February 1862, resentfully grumbling to his mother: "Our Lt. Colonel [Jerome B. Robertson] is not near as popular as Col. [James J.] Archer. Although he is a Texan, he seems to think that a soldier is a tool, an automaton, a mere machine subservient to every wish of their Supreme Officers. We thought the world and all of him when he was appointed over us because he was a Texan and by acting right he would have been the idol of his Regiment but he chose the other course."⁴¹ Directed against a fellow Texan, Smither's disparaging comments underscore the premium he and his comrades placed upon the preservation of egalitarian relations between enlisted men and officers despite their disparate positions within the army's structural hierarchy. As the adherents of a political culture whose guiding tenets abhorred the subordination of white freemen under any circumstance, Texans—and indeed Southern soldiers in general—considered strict observance of that hierarchy to be an act of deference a little too reminiscent of the master-slave relationship.⁴² That said, perhaps because Lieutenant Colonel Robertson was a well-known veteran of the Texas Revolution, ranger, and state politician, he was spared the absolute worst his troops could have offered in the way of retaliatory treatment for his authoritarian leanings.⁴³

By contrast, even the faintest hint of haughtiness displayed by a less renowned Texas officer—or worse yet, a non-Texan—usually proved ample justification to elicit

⁴¹Eddy R. Parker, ed., *Touched by Fire. Letters from Company D, 5th Texas Infantry, Hood's Texas Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865* (Hillsboro: Hill College Press, 2000), 37.

⁴²Charles E. Brooks, "The Social and Cultural Dynamics of Soldiering in Hood's Texas Brigade," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. LXVII, No. 3 (August 2001). 571, 558-559.

⁴³*Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Robertson, Jerome Bonaparte," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/RR/fro28.html> (accessed on February 12, 2006).

uproarious behavior from the Texas Brigade's rank-and-file. Just such an occurrence involving the men of the 5th Texas erupted in autumn 1861 at Camp Bragg, near Richmond, Virginia, following the Confederate government's hasty appointment of a non-Texan to serve as the regiment's lieutenant colonel. Identified by extant sources only as Schaller (or Shaller), this unfortunate officer's physical appearance and manner apparently offended the outfit's common soldiers from the very outset.⁴⁴ Even junior officers such as First Lieutenant Watson Dugat Williams (Company F, 5th Texas), who characterized Schaller as "a man so little worthy of remark that I deem it a waste of paper and ink as well as time and trouble to make the slightest mention whatever of him,"⁴⁵ were put off by his selection. Although the Texas soldiers serving in Virginia confronted many of their initial field officers with varying degrees of hostility—Robert T. P. Allen, Paul J. Quattlebaum, and John Marshall, to name just a few—without question, the 5th Texas's treatment of Schaller stands as the most abusive example of this ilk.

Resplendently uniformed and mounted on an equally impressive horse, the aspiring regimental commander inspected the unit's encampment soon after his arrival, making various comments as he rode along which the men in the ranks interpreted as having been expressions of condescension. An interested spectator to Schaller's inaugural visit, Presbyterian minister Nicholas A. Davis (Chaplain, 4th Texas) observed the ensuing spectacle with great amusement. Recounting the scene one year later, Chaplain Davis depicted the lieutenant colonel as "a veritable Jew," whose perceived arrogance aroused the men of the 5th Texas to menacingly crowd around him, jeering and heckling as they

⁴⁴Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 45.

⁴⁵Watson Dugat Williams, October 7, 1861, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

congregated: “‘What,’ says one, ‘*What is it?* Is it a man, a fish, or a bird?’ ‘Of course it is a man’ says another, ‘Don’t you see his legs?’ ‘Well,’ says another, ‘*that thing* may be a man, but we don’t call them men in Texas.’”⁴⁶ No doubt unnerved by his new command’s virulent reception, Schaller retired for the evening only to awaken the following morning to discover that the Texans had terrorized his horse while he slept. As Davis further related, the lieutenant colonel’s mount was brought to him “dejected in gait, and with downcast looks. An examination proved that. . . [the horse’s] tail had been cut off during the night.”⁴⁷ Evidently unwilling to learn what additional cruelties the Texas soldiers were capable of concocting, Schaller abruptly departed after this latest act of public humiliation “and was never heard of by the 5th Texas again.”⁴⁸ One member of the regiment, writing on November 2, 1861, briefly commented on the rank-and-file’s reaction to their now defunct superior, cryptically remarking that he and his companions “were dissatisfied with the Lt. Col. (Schaller) . . . [so] he was set aside . . .”⁴⁹—a terse description that clearly belied the droll severity of their response.

However infrequently the men of the Texas Brigade openly castigated their leaders by resorting to actions of the kind employed against Lieutenant Colonel Schaller, the extent to which they engaged in other forms of disruptive behavior became virtually legendary in the Army of Northern Virginia. Although by no means strictly limited to the Texas Brigade’s soldiers in their indulgence, wayward activities such as drinking,

⁴⁶Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 46.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), November 20, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

brawling, theft, vandalism, and mischievous trickery were common in and around the Texas regiments' encampments from the first day of their service with the Virginia army, a state of affairs which appreciably complicated the officer corps' already daunting managerial tasks. In the majority of cases, to be sure, Texans' participation in these diversions was light-hearted and frivolous, but that reality did little, if anything, to alleviate the myriad difficulties officers encountered in their often fruitless attempts to rein soldiers in. Not unexpectedly, given the sheer youthfulness of many brigade members, boyish antics of all types were among the most common forms of unruliness routinely engaged in by the rank-and-file. A fairly representative instance of this genre transpired one autumn evening in 1862, while the men and officers of the 4th Texas soundly slept following a long day of close order drill. As recorded by Private Thomas J. Selman (Company E, 4th Texas) in his diary that night, a handful of pranksters "of the 1st Texas Regt.," having sneaked into the 4th Texas' bivouac site, "turned a horse loose and ran him through camp which made the boys jump and dodge considerably. The horse knocked over a good many pots, skillets, etc. It was rather dangerous fun but as it happened" no significant injury or damage "was done by the animal."⁵⁰

Prompted by widespread Confederate subsistence and quartermaster failures, another unsanctioned activity prevalent among the men in the ranks was foraging—a practice typically labeled stealing in the civilian sphere. Indeed, Texans became remarkably adept at illegally procuring items of all kinds—fence rails, barn clapboards,

⁵⁰Thomas J. Selman diary, vol. 3, 91-92, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas. Having just arrived at Camp Davis, on the outskirts of Richmond, Virginia, Private G. S. Boynton (Company I, 4th Texas), detailed in a letter dated September 20, 1861, how one of his fellow Texans, "by the way of fun, lassoed a Virginia cow and rode her at full speed over the bluff and down into the parade grounds, to the evident terror and astonishment of all spectators, save the Texas boys" (*Navarro Express* [Corsicana, Texas], October 17, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

honey, chickens, hogs, milk, and the like—as they endeavored to improve their level of material comfort. To this end, some soldiers were occasionally more innovative than others. In late July 1862, for example, at least one private in the 5th Texas determined to make the best of his assignment to sentry duty on a major highway located near his regiment's camp by extorting passing merchants and farmers at the point of bayonet. In a reminiscence penned less than a year after the Army of Northern Virginia surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, Private Robert Campbell (Company A, 5th Texas) portrayed his scheme as “exacting a tax. . . . For instance if a cart came along with eggs and butter, I would say ‘My friend, I am here to protect you, hand over an egg, and a big slice of butter.’”⁵¹ Not only were the brigade's junior officers incapable of restraining men like Campbell from taking civilian property at will, the field and general officers commanding the Texans seem to have resigned themselves to the persistence of the practice for the war's duration, their official disapproval notwithstanding. Even General Robert E. Lee, in speaking of the brigade's notorious penchant for pilfering in early 1863, almost made light of the situation when he wryly observed that when “Texans come about the chickens have to roost mighty high.”⁵²

If foraging and mischievousness were popular illicit pursuits among the members of the Texas Brigade, then drinking—and the rowdiness it predictably produced—was eminently more so. Consequently, throughout the war, both on- and off-duty drunkenness was endemic in all three Texas regiments when alcohol was readily

⁵¹Mark W. Perkins and George Skoch, eds., *Lone Star Confederate: A Gallant and Good Soldier of the Fifth Texas Infantry* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 53

⁵²John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat: Personal Experience in the United States and Confederate States Armies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 51

available to the men in the ranks. Perhaps the most outrageous case of indiscipline associated with Texans' affinity for spirits developed on March 20, 1863, as the brigade traversed the streets of Richmond. Presented with an enticing array of taverns and bars bordering the column's route through the city, thirsty soldiers spontaneously broke ranks in small clusters until little more than a corporal's guard consisting of the most temperate men remained in line.⁵³ Not surprisingly, few of the truant Texans returned to their regiments until the following day.⁵⁴ On another occasion in mid-July 1863, the brigade was encamped at Bunker Hill, Virginia, recuperating from the rigors of the Pennsylvania Campaign, when a member of Company F, 5th Texas, "discovered" a number of whiskey casks concealed "under straw" on an adjacent farm.⁵⁵ According to Private Joe Joskins (Company A, 5th Texas), in short order, the contents of the barrels had been liberally distributed throughout the camp to all takers until "every kettle—canteen—pot—skillet—and everything else—were filled with brandy & whiskey."⁵⁶ The entire command was thus incapacitated, for "on all sides could be seen the men of Hood's Brig. lying drunk."⁵⁷ As it happened, the Confederate authorities at Richmond made efforts to curb alcohol consumption in the Army of Northern Virginia as a whole by dispatching provost guard detachments to those quarters of the rebel capital most heavily frequented by soldiers in search of whiskey and other modes of recreation. Authored by a member of the 5th

⁵³Joseph B. Polley, *Hood's Texas Brigade: Its Marches, Its Battles, Its Achievements* (Dayton, Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1988), 142-143.

⁵⁴Miles V. Smith, "Reminiscences of the Civil War," manuscript, circa 1915, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁵⁵William A. Fletcher, *Rebel Private: Front and Rear, Memoirs of a Confederate Soldier* (New York: Dutton, 1995), 88.

⁵⁶Joe Joskins, "A Sketch of Hood's Texas Brigade," 58-59.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

Texas, an interesting account from summer 1862 delineated how one pair of Texans successfully circumvented the government's attempted restrictions. The writer, despite having been issued "a permit approved from my Captain to Genl. [William H. C.] Whiting," was accosted by "a Major—with a guard of some 40 men" while visiting the city.⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter, he encountered his regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel John C. Upton—who "was about 3 sheets in the wind"—and complained about the treatment he had received.⁵⁹ After inspecting the enlisted man's paperwork, Upton supposedly slurred: "If they attempt to arrest you again, tell them you belong to the Texas Brigade, and that is not far from here, and *I* will bring them in and show them how to arrest Texans." Continuing about his business, Upton then "moved on down the streets, and a guard ran up against him and demanded a pass. Upton tapped the handle of his sabre once or twice and remarked 'I am Lieut. Col. Upton of the 5th Texas, dam you, and this is my pass' and with that he passed on."⁶⁰ However alcohol induced, Upton's response was indicative of the violent individualism which permeated the brigade's ranks. Texans of any rank balked at being arbitrarily controlled by anyone, especially by those they viewed as outsiders. With some Texas officers periodically complicit in undermining officially implemented attempts to establish and maintain good order, as was the case in the instance described above, it is little wonder that the men in the ranks brazenly defied regulations whenever they saw fit.

⁵⁸Perkins and Skoch, *Lone Star Confederate*, 52.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 52-53.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

Considering the staggering potential for habitual indiscipline, defiance, and irascibility proffered by the soldiers of the Texas Brigade from the earliest period of their unit's association with the eastern rebel army, the Confederate civilian and military officials responsible for appointing officers to various field commands must have at least contemplated the possibility that only the surest of hands would be capable of successfully forming the three Lone Star regiments into an effective combat organization. That that individual was destined to be a thirty-year-old Kentucky native whose affiliation with the State of Texas extended back fewer than six full years from his initial appointment to lead the 4th Texas Regiment in October 1861 likely constituted a scenario that markedly differed from what either the Richmond authorities or the Texas volunteers themselves—given their generally biased opinion of non-Texan officers and West Pointers—had envisioned. Even so, John Bell Hood's insightful leadership approach, deft handling of the troops under his command, and astonishing personal courage would leave an indelible imprint upon the hearts and minds of the brigade's rank-and-file that remained affixed far beyond the point of his promotion to lieutenant-general and formal reassignment to the Confederate Army of Tennessee in early 1864. As a result, the Texans who fought in Virginia fondly referred to their conjoined regiments as "Hood's Brigade" for the greater part of the war, despite serving under two other brigadiers—Jerome B. Robertson and John Gregg—subsequent to Hood. Cemented by mutual esteem and understanding, the command relationship cultivated between John Bell Hood and the members of the Texas Brigade was partly responsible for the exceptional streak of battlefield successes they achieved together, and is therefore deserving of close scrutiny. In exploring that relationship, this study will now proceed with an eye cast

with an eye cast toward establishing a more comprehensive portrait of how social interactions between Civil War officers and enlisted men affected combat performance.

The “Beau Idéal of Wild Texans”: John Bell Hood

The foundation of John Bell Hood’s unique leadership approach toward the Texas Brigade’s soldiers can be directly attributed to his experiences in the peacetime regular army. Upon his graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in July 1853, a brevet second lieutenant, Hood began his military career in a less than auspicious fashion.⁶¹ His first assignment was to serve as a junior officer with a detachment of the 4th Infantry Regiment, stationed at secluded Fort Scott in northern California.⁶² During his fifteen months at this far-flung post, Hood found that, aside from the routine discharge of his official duties, there was little else to do—a conclusion most soldiers quickly made after only a brief acquaintance with the numbing tedium of antebellum garrison life.⁶³ After a brief stint commanding a small force of dragoons detailed to accompany “a surveying expedition in the direction of Salt Lake,”⁶⁴ Utah, in summer 1855, he was unexpectedly promoted to “Second Lieutenant in the Second Cavalry, a new regiment organized”⁶⁵ by the United States Congress for the express purpose of shielding vulnerable settlements scattered across the perilous Texas frontier

⁶¹John P. Dyer, *The Gallant Hood* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1950), 33.

⁶²Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 6; Dyer, *Gallant Hood*, 34-35.

⁶³Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 6; Dyer, *Gallant Hood*, 35-36. For perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of life in the antebellum United States regular army now in print, see Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1-211.

⁶⁴Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 6.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 7.

from bands of Comanches, Kiowas, and other potentially hostile Indians.⁶⁶ The brain-child of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment was stocked with some of the ablest, West Point-educated officers then serving in the United States Army—Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, William J. Hardee, Earl Van Dorn, and George H. Thomas to name but a few.⁶⁷ Hood's arrival in Texas as a member of this elite regiment on December 14, 1855, initiated a formative process which, in a very real sense, shaped and directed his future as a battlefield commander.⁶⁸

Hood's four-year period of service in the Lone Star state not only familiarized him with the almost limitless stresses and difficulties associated with day-to-day leadership, military campaigning, and combat, it also exposed him to the distinctive culture and mind-set of the very populace which would ultimately furnish much of the Texas Brigade's rank-and-file. Understandably, every aspect of the 2nd Cavalry's mission in Texas—post construction, logistics, human and animal subsistence, patrols, offensive operations, and the like—was necessarily dictated by the sheer immensity of the state's frontier, stretching as it did across hundreds of miles of largely arid, rugged terrain.⁶⁹ This state of affairs invariably led to the frequent shuffling of officers and enlisted men from one area of the regiment's responsibility to another as new camps and

⁶⁶For thorough treatments of the Second Cavalry Regiment's service in Texas, see James R. Arnold, *Jeff Davis's Own: Cavalry, Comanches, and the Battle for the Texas Frontier* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2000) and Harold B. Simpson, *Cry Comanche The 2nd U. S. Cavalry in Texas, 1855-1861* (Hillsboro: Hill College Press, 1988). For a critical analysis of United States Army operations in Texas during the nineteenth century, see Thomas T. Smith, *The Old Army in Texas: A Research Guide to the U. S. Army in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2000).

⁶⁷James R. Arnold, *Jeff Davis's Own: Cavalry, Comanches, and the Battle for the Texas Frontier* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2000), 20-25.

⁶⁸Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 7; Arnold, *Jeff Davis's Own*, 50

⁶⁹Arnold, *Jeff Davis's Own*, 52-96.

forts were established, and as the unpredictable movements of raiding Indians offered fleeting opportunities for pursuit. Consequently, Hood “had occasion to visit almost every portion of that extensive and beautiful territory,”⁷⁰ while moving from post to post as ordered between 1856 and 1859. The regiment’s dispersal and wide-ranging operations brought “troopers . . . [into] frequent contact with white settlers,”⁷¹ thereby affording Hood numerous chances to attain first-hand knowledge of the dominant cultural attitudes and conceptions embraced by Texas society—not the least of which was the myth of Texan martial supremacy. Although neither Hood, nor the Texans he encountered, would have labeled it as such, that myth was ever-present on the frontier, and stridently embodied by the hardy members of the various ranger companies with which the 2nd Cavalry maintained an uneasy, but necessary, alliance.⁷² Judging from his later comments and actions as commander of the Texas Brigade, as well as the observations of the men he led, Hood apparently absorbed the most crucial elements of the Texans’ defining myth. As if to underscore this contention, a member of the 4th Texas averred after the war that none of the brigade’s other general officers—Texans though they all were—“made as just an estimate as Hood, of Texas character, nor felt and acted in such accord with it.”⁷³

It was during Hood’s six-month sojourn at Fort Mason, situated some one hundred miles northwest of Austin, that he first unveiled the aggressive (if not reckless)

⁷⁰Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 16; Dyer, *Gallant Hood*, 40.

⁷¹Arnold, *Jeff Davis’s Own*, 121.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 121-123; Frederick Wilkins, *Defending the Borders The Texas Rangers, 1848-1861* (Austin: State House Press, 2001), 9-36, 75-99.

⁷³Polley, *Hood’s Texas Brigade*, 205.

style of battlefield leadership that would convince Texans to speedily accept him as a kindred spirit. While leading a scouting patrol of twenty-five troopers to the Devil's River on the morning of July 20, 1857, Hood stumbled into an ambush organized by a mixed Comanche and Lipan Apache war party, numbering about forty-five warriors altogether. Rather than ordering an immediate retreat—as he probably should have done—he spurred his mount into the violent melee and ordered his horse soldiers to maintain their position. Inspired by their commander's decisive combativeness, the cavalymen efficiently responded, exchanging a withering fire with their adversaries. Despite suffering a painful wound—Hood's left hand was skewered to his saddle by an arrow shaft—the young lieutenant remained outwardly unruffled as his detachment stubbornly gave ground, until finally the Indians broke off their attack and melted back into the countryside from which they came.⁷⁴ Besides being the deadliest engagement fought by the 2nd Cavalry during 1857, the Devil's River affair dramatically displayed Hood's natural capacity for leading men in combat.⁷⁵ Confronted by superior numbers, the previously unproven officer accurately deduced that the enemy warriors *expected* him to precipitously withdraw. Intent on making a fight, Hood coolly counterattacked and, in doing so, he successfully preserved his command. The army was justifiably impressed with Hood's debut, rewarding him soon thereafter with a promotion to First Lieutenant, with instructions to take command of Camp Colorado, located a short distance from Lampasas, Texas.

⁷⁴Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 8-15; Arnold, *Jeff Davis's Own*, 143-158.

⁷⁵Arnold, *Jeff Davis's Own*, 155-156.

As details of the Devil's River clash was carried by word of mouth and newsprint from one frontier settlement to the next, many Texans must have been similarly impressed by Hood. After all, his valorous conduct in battle had certainly been evocative of the qualities traditionally ascribed to the most well regarded Texas soldiers and rangers. Moreover, those Texans who actually met and interacted with Hood—as had residents of Lampasas during his assignment at Camp Colorado from 1857-1859—quickly formed a flattering estimate of him. In a letter written on behalf of the town to Texas Governor H. R. Runnels on November 13, 1858, state official Hillary Ryan passed on the locals' praise for Hood, mentioning that he “found the citizens think very highly of Lt. Hood and believe that he does all in his powers, for their protection.” The bureaucrat further remarked that he personally “found Lt Hood to be a most perfect gentleman and anxious to do all he can” to defend the surrounding hamlets from Indian attack.⁷⁶ This approbatory appraisal of Hood, delivered to the highest level of state government, represented something of a rare occurrence in mid-nineteenth century Texas, for more than a few Texans regarded the United States regulars with unconcealed contempt.⁷⁷ Indeed, in light of the army's generally abysmal service record on the state's frontier, it was popularly judged “hopelessly inept. . . . versus the Indians.”⁷⁸ To Texas citizens long accustomed to depending on themselves and their neighbors for defense, Hood's strong resemblance to their own rustic brand of warrior might well have been perceived as a breath of fresh air in an otherwise disappointing relationship with Federal troops. In the

⁷⁶James M. Day and Dorman Winfrey, eds., *Texas Indian Papers, 1846-1859*, vol. 3 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1959-61), Hillary Ryan to H. R. Runnels, Lampasas, November 13, 1858, My Dear Sir, 307-308.

⁷⁷Arnold, *Jeff Davis's Own*, 74-75, 121-122.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 74, 121.

event, Hood plainly reciprocated the Texans' admiration. As he later recounted, Hood became "so deeply impressed" with Texas and its people by 1860, that he "determined to resign" from the army and settle in the state, "mak[ing] it my home for life."⁷⁹ Disunion and the outbreak of civil war inexorably dampened those plans, but as future events would definitively prove, not Hood's zeal for the state and its inhabitants.

During the autumn of 1861, and again in the spring of 1862, the Texas volunteers attached to the Virginia army favorably received the selection of Hood to lead them—first as colonel of the 4th Texas Regiment, and then as commander of the entire Texas Brigade—in large measure because of his reputation as a fierce Indian fighter and his decision to adopt their home state as his own. When Kentucky secessionists failed to persuade that state's population to withdraw from the Union, Hood acted upon his intentions, and "entered the Confederate service from the State of Texas, which thenceforth became my adopted land."⁸⁰ Accordingly, in October 1861, Hood was granted the colonelcy of the 4th Texas Regiment by the Confederate war department. As indicated by period correspondence, the reaction of the regiment's rank-and-file to their new senior field officer was broadly enthusiastic. Sergeant Howard Finley (Company H, 4th Texas) pronounced the 4th Texas "exceedingly fortunate in the appointment of Col. John B. Hood, formerly of the U. S. army, to its command."⁸¹ Continuing, Finley eagerly asserted: "If we had had the privilege of a choice, I am quite certain we could not possibly have made a better selection, or one that would have been attended with such

⁷⁹Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 16.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Houston Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), November 13, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

universal satisfaction. He is a Texian, and a gentleman and soldier in the full import of the term.” Obviously struck by Hood’s demeanor, the sergeant noted further: “He has none of that pomp and foolery, too often, I am sorry to say, the fault of men entrusted with such a position, but a plain unassuming man, who came here to fight for his country, and goes about it in a manner that shows that he understands his business, and intends that his men shall understand theirs, too.”⁸² Writing in early October 1861, Private G. S. Boynton (Company I, 4th Texas) also expressed his contentment with Hood, describing the newly appointed colonel “as a fine looking gentlemen” who had “distinguished himself on the frontier of Texas.”⁸³ Less than one month of service under Hood solidified Boynton’s initial impression, prompting the Texan to subsequently aver: “Our Colonel is a great favorite among the boys, and we were certainly very fortunate in securing his services as colonel.”⁸⁴ Chaplain Davis insisted that the 4th Texas’s easy approval of Hood stemmed from “his commanding appearance, manly deportment, quick perception, courteous manners and decision of character, [which] readily impressed the officers and men, that he was the man to govern them in the camp, and command them on the field.”⁸⁵ However accurate Davis’s assessment of Hood’s early popularity may have been, Private Josiah G. Duke (Company G, 4th Texas) seemed to size up his superior in a slightly different manner. In a letter penned to his grandmother, Duke expressed that he and his fellows were “well pleased” with Hood, for “he is a Texian himself and a good

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³*Navarro Express* (Corsicana, Texas), October 31, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

⁸⁴*Navarro Express* (Corsicana, Texas), November 21, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

⁸⁵Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 149.

soldier and has the appearance of a brave man and that is just what Texans want is a man that will lead them on to victories or death.”⁸⁶ Although Duke could not have known it at the time, he had, in one simple sentence, concisely conveyed the very essence of the fraternal connection which would bind Hood and his Texans together for the war’s duration and across many decades thereafter.

Characterized by a sophisticated reading of the men placed in his charge, the flexible method of leadership Hood employed during the little more than five months he directly managed the 4th Texas Regiment proved just as successful on a larger scale when, in mid-March 1862, he was promoted to brigadier general and awarded command of the Texas Brigade. Wholly conscious of their new commander’s exceptional standing with the soldiers of the 4th Texas, the men and officers of the other two Texas regiments warmly greeted the replacement of the brigade’s original general officer, Louis T. Wigfall—who had been elected to serve as one of Texas’s representatives to the Confederate States Senate—with the much admired Hood.⁸⁷ Often intoxicated, prone to angry outbursts, and visibly anxious when enemy forces were encamped nearby, Wigfall was missed by relatively few in the ranks—an outcome clearly implied by one diarist in Company A, 5th Texas: “Texas has our thanks [for electing Wigfall], thereby riding us of a bragadocio—and causing to be placed our head, the great & gallant Hood.”⁸⁸ As it

⁸⁶Josiah G. Duke, Camp Texas near Richmond, Dear Grand Ma, date unknown, circa 1861-1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁸⁷Even as early as October 1861, in speaking of the Texas Brigade’s initial array of regimental officers, one member of Company B, 5th Texas, referred to Hood as “a very excellent man,” while describing his own colonel, J. J. Archer, as “very unpopular among the men in the majority of the companies” (*Columbus Citizen* [Columbus], November 11, 1861, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

happened, the six months immediately following Hood's elevation to brigade command constituted the single most critical period of development for the Texas regiments. Between Hood's astutely conceived training regime and a string of horrific battles—Seven Pines, Gaines's Mill, Second Manassas, Antietam—the members of the Texas Brigade rapidly achieved a level of cohesiveness with each other and their commander that stood unrivalled in the Army of Northern Virginia.

While in command of Texans, Hood's notion of discipline was both tremendously nuanced and often subject to conditions. His experiences in Texas had prepared him for the irrepressible frontier individualism and incorrigibleness of Texas volunteers, and he adjusted his training program accordingly. As a professional, Hood implicitly grasped the extreme importance of soldiers' prompt obedience of orders, mastery of close-order drill, and "attainment of strict discipline" in the effort to build a smoothly functioning combat organization.⁸⁹ That said, he was also quite realistic. Cognizant that Texans would vehemently reject discipline that was either unnecessarily forceful or arbitrarily applied, Hood took pains to remain flexible. Private Joseph B. Polley (company F, 4th Texas) surmised as much, scratching in his diary, "Never did I see or know a man to rise

⁸⁸Joe Joskins, "A Sketch of Hood's Texas Brigade," 5. While the majority of Texans happily parted company with Wigfall, the members of the 4th Texas lamented the loss of Hood as their regimental commander. Private Robert V. Foster (Company C, 4th Texas) probably captured the mood of the regiment when he informed his sister on March 18, 1862, "Colonel Hood has been promoted to Brigadier General of this Brigade since Wigfalls return to the Senate. Lieutenant-Colonel Marshall therefore, takes command of this Regiment. The men of this Regiment have not half the confidence in him, as a colonel, as they had in Hood" (Robert V. Foster, Camp Wigfall Fredericksburg, Va., Dear Lida, March 18, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas). Another soldier in Company F, 4th Texas, was almost despondent over the matter, complaining to his father, "The loss of him [Hood] as colonel is very severe on us—all the men had great faith in him and none whatever in Col Marshall our present Colonel" (Joseph B. Polley, Camp Near Fredericksburgh, Dear Father, March 14, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas). Such expressions of disappointment illustrate the devoted following Hood's leadership engendered during his short assignment with the 4th Texas.

⁸⁹Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 19.

higher and move more quickly in the estimation of others than did Col. Hood. Well versed in human nature and thoroughly understanding the peculiarities of Texans character. . . . he . . . tempered his conduct towards us to win our favor at once.”⁹⁰ To this end, he simply relinquished a certain measure of control to the men, entrusting to them the handling of ordinary “breach[es] of military discipline” and “misconduct.”⁹¹ In permitting his Texans to essentially regulate each other’s behavior on a daily basis, Hood skillfully indulged the brigade’s soldiers and junior officers with a noteworthy (if limited) medium within which to exert their collective preference for self-governance. Moreover, when Hood and his subordinates issued orders in camp, he made certain the men in the ranks received those directives with “satisfactory explanation as to their object,”⁹² so as to involve the soldiers in the process. For this reason, he developed the habit of personally addressing the troops at the outset of arduous or vital operations. In March 1862, a member of the 4th Texas documented one such speech, delivered just prior to the brigade’s movement from its winter camp along the Potomac River to Yorktown, on the Virginia peninsula. In speaking to the gathered Texans, Hood clarified the purpose of their mission, announcing, ““Ours is the last Brigade to leave the lines of the Potomac. Upon us devolves the duties of a rear guard, and in order to discharge them faithfully, every man must be in his place, at all times. . . . I feel no hesitation in predicting that you . . . will discharge your duties, and when the struggle does come, that proud banner you bear, . . . will ever be found in the thickest of the fray.—Fellow-soldiers—Texans—let us

⁹⁰Joseph B. Polley diary, 51, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁹¹Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 19.

⁹²*Ibid.*

stand or fall together.”⁹³ However much Hood’s egalitarian-minded troops must have appreciated carefully crafted explanations of this kind, Sergeant William H. Gaston (Company H, 1st Texas) could not help but comment to his parents after yet another address: “Gen’l Hood . . . is a better soldier than speaker.”⁹⁴ Be that as it may, Hood plainly viewed speech-making as a vehicle by which he could present mission-related specifics to his Texans for their consideration and assent, thus partially satisfying their desire for collaboration, respect, and equal treatment.⁹⁵

Still, even though Hood endeavored to incorporate the Texas troops’ expectations into his leadership approach, he did not subordinate the necessity of good military order to that objective, particularly during periods of campaigning. By his own admittance, the inherently hazardous conditions present “in time of active operations”⁹⁶ demanded that discipline be both summarily enforced and accepted. Commenting on this point in late 1862, Chaplain Davis candidly observed of Hood, “He is a disciplinarian; and the discharge of duty is the way to his society and friendship.—And, notwithstanding his rigid adherence to discipline, I am persuaded that he is as much admired and esteemed by the men under his command, as any General in the army.”⁹⁷ In view of their heightened proclivity for independent action, that the Texans did in fact “admire and esteem” Hood, in spite of his use of discipline, was likely more a consequence of how, when, and to

⁹³Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 52-53.

⁹⁴William H. Gaston, Camp 8 miles from Richmond, Dear pa & Ma, June 29, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

⁹⁵Although one is tempted to wonder what *might* have happened if the brigade’s rank-and-file had refused one of Hood’s appeals, I have not encountered evidence which would indicate they ever did.

⁹⁶Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 19.

⁹⁷Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 150

what degree he applied that discipline, than anything else. As several seemingly trivial incidents suggest, having become attuned to Hood's insistence on unquestioning obedience while operating in the presence of the enemy, the men in the ranks—recognizing the relative impermanency of such situations—typically responded as expected. The more comical of the two occurred in June 1862, as the Texas Brigade participated in Confederate Major General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson's turning movement around the right flank of the Union Army of the Potomac, then making preparations to besiege Richmond. According to various accounts, during the earliest phase of the campaign, Hood assembled the Texas regiments to deliver one of his—at this point—customary briefings.⁹⁸ He notified the soldiers “that the division” they belonged to “was now subject to the orders of General Jackson, to whom alone its destination was known, and that to all questions asked, . . . the men should answer, ‘I do not know.’”⁹⁹ Captain George T. Todd (Company A, 1st Texas) distinctly remembered being instructed “that no man, even if he suspected our destination, should say a word . . . on pain of death.”¹⁰⁰ Sufficiently persuaded of the gravity of the situation, the rank-and-file did precisely as ordered: “They forthwith knew nothing of the past, present, or future,” especially with respect to foraged fruit, chickens, and other sundry items lifted from farms scattered along the brigade's line of march.¹⁰¹ The second example happened in the midst of the Army of Northern Virginia's 1863 Pennsylvania Campaign. As

⁹⁸Ibid., 70-71; *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), August 13, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; Polley, *Hood's Texas Brigade*, 35; George T. Todd, *First Texas Regiment*, ed. Harold B. Simpson (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1963), 6.

⁹⁹Polley, *Hood's Texas Brigade*, 35.

¹⁰⁰Todd, *First Texas*, 6

¹⁰¹Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 71.

related by a foreign observer traveling with the army, a detachment of Hood's "Texans were sent this morning into Chambersburg[, Pennsylvania] to destroy a number of barrels of excellent whiskey, . . . This was a pretty good trial for their discipline, and they did think it rather hard lines that the only time they had been allowed into the enemy's town was for the purpose of destroying their beloved whiskey."¹⁰² Had these men been in between campaigns, comfortably bivouacked somewhere nearby, they would not have hesitated to freely imbibe. But, respecting the constraints imposed by Hood within the context of an unfolding operation, the Texans resisted temptation and "did their duty like good soldiers."¹⁰³ All obvious humor aside, taken together, the events examined above are indicative of most soldiers' general willingness to demonstrate, through compliant behavior, their implicit recognition of Hood's discipline-related distinction between camp routine and active campaigning.

Striking the proper balance insofar as discipline was concerned, however, accounted for only one—albeit critical—facet of Hood's leadership style. Yet another included the remarkable regularity with which he keenly sought opportunities to interact with, express his concern for, and motivate the members of the Texas Brigade. According to Hood, he intended to establish this comfortable sort of relationship with the rank-and-file from the moment he took command of the 4th Texas, explaining, "I lost no opportunity whenever the officers or men came to my quarters, or whenever I chanced to be in conversation with them, to arouse their pride, to impress upon them that no regiment . . . should ever be allowed to go forth upon the battle-field and return with

¹⁰²Arthur James Lyon Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States, April-June, 1863* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1863; reprint, Alexandria: Time-Life Books, Inc., 1984), 255.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 255.

more trophies of war than the Fourth Texas; . . .”¹⁰⁴ Hood continued an expanded version of the same policy after his elevation to brigade commander. Frequently seen moving about the Texas regiments’ bivouac sites, he informally chatted with soldiers here and there about matters both great and small. During meetings of this kind, Chaplain Davis discovered that Hood did not expect the men in the ranks to “feel the dignity of his official position,” but instead offered “the pleasure of a social companion, familiar and kind.”¹⁰⁵ On October 21, 1862, Private Thomas J. Selman (Company E, 4th Texas) documented one of Hood’s visits in his diary: “Gen. Hood. . . . Walked all through our camp & looked at our cooking, sleeping apartments & etc. I was making biscuits. He took great pains in telling me how to work my dough which I listened at carefully, but thought at the same time that I knew more about the business than the general.”¹⁰⁶ Private Selman’s experience with his superior was in all probability a typical one, for as one North Carolinian assigned to Major General D. H. Hill’s division headquarters’ staff testified, Hood “knew every man in the brigade, could call him by his name, and ever had a pleasant remark for any he met. He was very careful of their comfort, looking after every detail very much as if caring for his own family.”¹⁰⁷ Hood’s commonplace interaction with the Texas troops was not strictly confined to fireside discussions and the like. Doubtless mindful of the benefits leadership by example could accrue, he seized upon everyday situations that provided a forum for him to inspire the men of his

¹⁰⁴Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 19.

¹⁰⁵Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 150.

¹⁰⁶Thomas J. Selman diary, vol. 3, 108-109, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

¹⁰⁷Ratchford, *Some Reminiscences*, 56.

command. In late spring 1862, for example, Hood selected an otherwise standard creek crossing as an occasion to encourage his men to push beyond their preconceived limits through personal example. One 4th Texas diarist described the scene: “We came to a creek and some of the boys were loth to cross it. . . . Genl. Hood called to the boys to pitch in, though they still seemed rather slow & he got down and asked them if they would follow him & in he went.”¹⁰⁸ Another soldier in the 1st Texas, wrote to his parents that, upon witnessing their commander’s plunge into the waist deep water, “the boys. . . . all went through without hesitation.”¹⁰⁹ Hood’s utilization of such ephemeral moments to motivate the brigade’s rank-and-file easily coupled with the many visible displays of his affection and concern for their welfare to promote in them a mutual amity which steadily strengthened over the passage of time.¹¹⁰

Having successfully secured the confidence, admiration, and respect of the Texas Brigade’s membership off the battlefield through flexible discipline and recurrent personal contact with the men in the ranks, Hood exhibited an extreme form of leadership by example while under enemy fire that assured their continued loyalty and, more saliently, their status as the Army of Northern Virginia’s most dependable soldiers.

¹⁰⁸Thomas J. Selman diary, vol. 2, 168-169, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

¹⁰⁹Robert W. Glover, ed., *Tyler to Sharsburg: The War Letters of Robert H. and William H. Gaston* (Waco: W. M. Morrison, 1960), 14.

¹¹⁰One notable expression of the Texas Brigade’s early fondness for Hood transpired on April 26, 1862, when the privates of the 4th Texas presented him with a horse, not inconsequently purchased at their own expense. The short speech Sergeant J. M. Bookman delivered on behalf of the regiment is worthy of brief examination. As Bookman effectively communicated, the gift horse was not given to Hood “to court your favor, but simply because we, as freemen and Texans, claim the ability to discern, and the right to reward, merit wherever it may be found. In you, sir, we recognize the soldier and the gentleman. In you we have found a leader whom we are proud to follow—a commander whom it is a pleasure to obey; and this horse is a slight testimonial of our admiration” (Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 57). Such words constituted a convincing tribute, indeed, given the troops they originated with were far more likely to discredit, disobey, and otherwise abuse their officers, than not.

Predicated upon his perceptive consideration of mid-nineteenth-century Texas culture, Hood's uniformly aggressive direction of the brigade in combat was an indispensable component of his command approach. As one North Carolina staff officer insisted, Hood "never ordered" his Texans "to go where he would not lead them, and his word could have sent them into the most appalling danger war can offer."¹¹¹ In this respect, he patterned himself after the prominent soldiers and rangers the men of the Texas regiments had esteemed throughout their lives. Hood's sizeable exposure to the myth of Texan martial supremacy and the society that spawned it must have purposefully influenced his behavior in battle, particularly given the value Texas troops attached to their central cultural construction. From a personality standpoint, moreover, Hood was an intrinsically combative individual, and therefore the ideal match for a brigade chiefly composed of soldiers whose collective conception of leadership firmly centered on heroic audacity in the face of the enemy. As suggested by a fairly brazen remark he purportedly made to an aged relative as a small child, Hood was fully aware of his inclination toward aggressive action early in life. "Other boys don't lead me into trouble," he brusquely asserted, "I lead them."¹¹² That Hood's supposed comment of so many years before spoke volumes about the manner in which he guided troops through the Civil War combat experience, his Texans could certainly attest.

For the men of the Texas Brigade, Hood's battlefield presence exemplified that standard of leadership—largely rooted in the myth of Texan martial supremacy—to which they uncompromisingly held all of their officers. In Hood, they recognized an individual who fit comfortably into the highly selective mold Texas society prescribed for

¹¹¹Ratchford, *Some Reminiscences*, 56-57.

¹¹²Dyer, *The Gallant Hood*, 23.

its military commanders. Towering over most soldiers at the then impressive height of more than six foot, two inches, and “gifted by nature with a voice that can be heard in the storm of battle,”¹¹³ Hood was depicted by one of General Robert E. Lee’s *aides-de-camp*, Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Venable, as a man “‘transfigured’” by battle, declaring, “‘The fierce light of his eyes—I can never forget.’”¹¹⁴ Eventually accustomed to his intensity, the brigade’s rank-and-file frequently generated even more descriptive—and complimentary—assessments of Hood. Of these, First Lieutenant William C. Walsh (Company B, 4th Texas) authored one of the most instructive, in terms of its portrayal of Hood’s leadership style and outward insensibility to danger in combat, while recovering from a painful bullet wound he suffered during the Texans’ astonishing debut performance at the Battle of Gaines’s Mill, Virginia. Writing from a Richmond hospital on July 17, 1862, Walsh reported how, just as the brigade was about to advance into a perfect tempest of ordinance, “Gen. Hood’s well known, glorious voice was heard calling for the [4th] Texas, ‘Where is my old Regiment—where is the [4th] Texas?’ He was answered with a yell which left no doubt where we were. He then rode up, ‘Boys,’ he said, ‘when I . . . presented you with that battle flag, I promised to lead you into action. . . . I am ready to redeem my promise—are you ready?’ A hearty shout of ‘yes, yes,’ was the answer, and we moved off at double quick”¹¹⁵ with “the noble form” of Hood “moving here and there, up and down the line, cheering his men on.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³Everett, *Chaplain Davis*, 149.

¹¹⁴C. Vann Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 441.

¹¹⁵*Texas State Gazette* (Austin), August 14, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

As described above, Hood's profoundly personal, hands-on management of troops—distinguished, as it was, by a hazardous tendency to dash headlong into a fight—became a common occurrence for the duration of his service with the Texas Brigade. Thus, his conduct at the subsequent battles of Second Manassas, Antietam, Gettysburg, and Chickamauga provided the men in the ranks with ample opportunity to comment on his inspirational leadership.¹¹⁷ To Private Val C. Giles (Company B, 4th Texas), Hood was “the coolest man I ever knew. . . . Under all circumstances, no matter how sudden or unexpected an attack might be, . . . he never showed the least bit of nervous excitement. . . [he] seemed made of steel.”¹¹⁸ During one battle, Private Robert Campbell (Company A, 5th Texas) thought “Genl Hood was everywhere that danger called.”¹¹⁹ Another soldier, Private Leonidas B. Holliday (Company E, 5th Texas) dubbed him “as brave and gallant an officer as ever lived or died.”¹²⁰ Yet another member of the 4th Texas claimed that Hood's habit of “looking as unconcerned as if we were on dress parade”¹²¹ immediately prior to battle bolstered his own confidence. Hood was likely conscious of the steadying effect he had on the rank-and-file, for as Private H. Waters Berryman noted

¹¹⁶Stevens, *Reminiscences*, 28.

¹¹⁷Commenting on the Texas Brigade's participation in the battles of Gaines's Mill, Second Manassas, and Sharpsburg, a Texan assigned to Major General James Longstreet's staff opined: “It is very probable that Genl. Hood will be promoted for his gallantry in these various contests. No man deserves it more (Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree* [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995], 100).

¹¹⁸Mary Lasswell, comp. and ed., *Rags and Hope: The Memoirs of Val C. Giles* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1961), 42, 151.

¹¹⁹Perkins and Skoch, *Lone Star Confederate*, 14.

¹²⁰*Galveston Weekly News* (Galveston), July 29, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

¹²¹Polley, *A Soldier's Letters*, 57.

in a letter to a friend in mid-August 1863, “Hood . . . always make[s] it convenient to get in front of the Texas Brigade . . . just before charging the enemy, . . .”¹²² With regard to the brigade’s military efficiency, the net result of Hood’s unwavering battlefield demeanor was palpable. According to Private Joe Joskins (Company A, 5th Texas), the Texas soldiers developed such confidence in Hood’s guidance under fire that they quickly learned to obey his orders “with alacrity . . . ever willing to follow where he led.”¹²³ Another outcome just as inextricably linked to his leadership approach, however, was the devastating physical toll it exacted on his body. Twice severely wounded within a span of less than three months—once at Gettysburg in July 1863, and again at Chickamauga in September of the same year—by thirty-two years of age, Hood’s left arm hung useless by his side and, in consequence of his right leg’s amputation at mid-thigh, he had to be strapped to his horse.¹²⁴ That said, with or without his wounds, the unifying experience of combat ultimately bolstered Hood’s relationship with the men of the Texas regiments to a degree no other aspect of military service ever could. In appreciation for that relationship, and the success it enabled, Sergeant Samuel Tine Owen (Company K, 4th Texas) expressed a straightforward sentiment of devotion in a letter to his parents, which, if broadly construed against the backdrop of Texas’ distinctive cultural milieu, may be suggestive of the brigade’s collective perception of Hood. Sergeant Owen, upon learning that his mother had recently named her newborn son “William Travis,” after the legendary Alamo defender, asked her simply, “why didnt yo

¹²²H. Waters Berryman, Camp near Fredericksburg, Va , My Dear Friend, August 16, 1863, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

¹²³Joe Joskins, “A Sketch of Hood’s Texas Brigade,” 4

¹²⁴Dyer, *The Gallant Hood*, 194, 210-212

name him J. B. Hood?”¹²⁵ Its brevity notwithstanding, one would have been hard-pressed, indeed, to elicit a more meaningful accolade from a mid-nineteenth-century Texan than Owen’s one-sentence tribute to Hood.

Throughout the war, interested observers within and without the Army of Northern Virginia marveled at the unusual nature of the relationship that existed between Hood and the Texas Brigade’s rank-and-file. One of the more interesting, externally produced depictions of that relationship was provided by Lieutenant Colonel Arthur James Lyon Fremantle. An English army officer and member of Her Majesty’s Coldstream Guards, Fremantle conducted an extensive, three-month tour of the Confederacy, spending a significant portion of that time with the Virginia army during the Pennsylvania Campaign of 1863.¹²⁶ On June 27, less than a week before the Battle of Gettysburg, the Englishman entered into his journal his earliest assessment of “Hood’s ragged Jacks,” as he dubbed the soldiers from Texas: “They certainly are a queer lot to look at. . . . all are ragged and dirty, but full of good-humour and confidence in themselves and in their general, Hood.”¹²⁷ Of Hood, with whom he met for the first time the next morning, Fremantle reported: “He is . . . accounted one of the best and most promising officers in the army. By his Texan . . . troops he is adored.”¹²⁸ Not one to leave out details of any kind, the British officer further recorded that Hood’s men “are

¹²⁵Samual Tine Owen, State of Virginia, Dear Father and Mother, March 16, 1862, Harold B. Simpson Confederate Research Center, Hill Junior College, Hillsboro, Texas.

¹²⁶Fremantle, *Three Months*, loose biographic sketch of author

¹²⁷Ibid., 244.

¹²⁸Ibid., 247.

accused of being a wild set, and difficult to manage.”¹²⁹ Writing some years after Fremantle, Major James Wylie Ratchford, a Confederate officer whose eventful career spanned both of the war’s principal theaters, remained utterly fascinated by the brigade and its commander. “Few generals,” he reflected, “have possessed the warm personal love of their men as Hood did. This attachment was something different from any feeling I have ever known to exist between men and commander; there was more of an element of comradeship in it. . . . It is equally true that few brigades have had the personal love and care as that Texas Brigade had from Hood.”¹³⁰ Military officers were not the only spectators to comment on Hood’s familial association with the men of the Texas regiments, however. Even the celebrated Southern diarist, Mary Boykin Chesnut, had occasion to remark on their unique relationship. Once, during the spring of 1863, Chesnut accompanied a few of her friends to view the Texas Brigade march “through Richmond.” As the Texans passed the assembled civilians, Chesnut was struck by the soldiers’ destitute appearance, but she was even more surprised by their lack of concern over “their shabby condition. They laughed and shouted and cheered as they marched by.” After a few moments, “Hood and his staff came galloping up, dismounted, and joined” Chesnut’s group, whereupon one of her female companions offered him a bouquet. As soon as the men in the ranks noticed Hood standing amid a crowd of women with a cluster of flowers clutched in his hands, “they laughed and joked and made their own rough comments. ‘Ah, general! Is that the matter with you? All right, we know

¹²⁹Ibid., 247-248.

¹³⁰Ratchford, *Some Reminiscences*, 56.

how it is ourselves--&c&c.'"¹³¹ For Chesnut—whose lengthy friendship with the Kentuckian-turned-Texan almost certainly familiarized her with the special bond that united him to the brigade—the lighthearted character of this interaction between Hood and his troops was hardly an aberration. From Chesnut's vantage point, Hood was the "beau idéal of wild Texans:" pleasant and well mannered when in the company of "ladies' society," fierce and inescapably drawn toward "the hottest of the fight" during combat.¹³² In short, the man was a mirror reflection of his soldiers, and they of him.

Writing many years after the Civil War's end, a former soldier in the 4th Texas remarked in his memoirs, "It has always been a question among us whether Hood made the Texas Brigade or the Texas Brigade made Hood."¹³³ Although there may not be a definitive answer to the veterans' question, what is clear is that much of the credit for the brigade's remarkable battlefield record with the Army of Northern Virginia belonged to the inimitably collaborative relationship established between John Bell Hood and the Texans under his command. Texas troops, like all Civil War volunteers, expected to preserve both their civilian identities and the privileges of republican citizenship while under arms. That expectation caused many to be suspicious—and even openly contemptuous—of officers whose style of leadership was too authoritarian, and therefore failed to publicly acknowledge their status as free men. Texans, moreover, shared the emphasis the vast majority of Civil War citizen-soldiers placed on visible expressions of

¹³¹Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's*, 442.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 441.

¹³³Lasswell, *Rags and Hope*, 43.

courage from their leaders. To the extent that soldiers from Texas stood apart from their counterparts, North and South, they did so primarily in consequence of their experiences on the frontier and their society's defining cultural construction, the myth of Texan martial supremacy. Operating in tandem, these factors produced something of an exaggerated effect among the Texas Brigade's rank-and-file with respect to their demands for egalitarian treatment, the frequency of obdurate behavior and indiscipline, and an uncompromising standard of battlefield leadership. As a result, upon taking command of the brigade, Hood had to fashion a command approach that not only took into account the expectations associated with the average volunteer, but also those culturally generated considerations peculiar to Texans alone.

Hood's stunning success in this regard can be attributed to how he structured the three major elements of that approach, all of which benefited from his lengthy prewar experience with and comprehension of Texas culture. First, he established an important distinction between camp discipline and discipline in the field. By satisfying his soldiers' desire for equality and self-governance in between campaigns through a variety of means, Hood was able to tighten his control over them during periods of active operations with relative ease. Secondly, Hood eagerly embraced opportunities to interact with, exhibit his concern for, and motivate the men in the ranks, thereby endearing him to them. And finally, he consistently demonstrated an extreme form of leadership by example during combat that drew heavily from his natural affinity for aggressive action as well as his grasp of the myth of Texan martial supremacy. Inspired by his steadiness and physical courage under fire, Texas soldiers viewed Hood in much the same way as the most renowned military commanders in their state's storied history. Each aspect of Hood's

command program therefore fulfilled the culturally defined qualities of leadership espoused by Texas society and, by the same token, individual Texans' personal expectations of their commander. Taken as a whole, then, the carefully crafted components of Hood's leadership approach encouraged the rapid development of a synergetic command relationship between himself and the Texas Brigade that must be interpreted as a vital of feature of their success together in the Confederacy's eastern army.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: "THE FLOWER OF TEXAS"

The status of Hood's Texas Brigade as at least one of the American Civil War's premier combat formations has been settled fact for quite some time. Lauded by contemporaries and critically acclaimed by modern historians, the Texans' achievements on the battlefield are undeniable, having in many instances involved breath-taking assaults that either turned the tide of battle in favor of Confederates in the East or, on occasion, rescued them from impending disaster. Even so, the principal reasons why the Texas regiments consistently accomplished as much as they did in the war's eastern theater have traditionally eluded interested scholars whose largely cursory explanations for their success have rarely entailed much beyond the Texans' association with Robert E. Lee and his army. In light of the current emphasis in the study of Civil War soldiers upon identifying and comprehending the myriad forces responsible for inducing volunteers to enlist and subsequently remain in the army for the conflict's duration, this shortcoming in the literature is all the more discernable.

This thesis has endeavored to comprehensively address the aforementioned gaps in our understanding of the Texas Brigade's service by clearly delineating and examining the major factors that propelled its sensational performance as a part of the Army of Northern Virginia. In isolating these factors, it has generally diverged from the

conventional military history approach of explaining martial success through an analysis of strategy, tactics, armaments, and the like, by alternatively investigating possible correlations between the brigade's record of achievement and select social, cultural, and environmental conditions largely specific to Texas. In short, for the Texans of Hood's command, military service in Virginia and elsewhere may have physically removed them from their home state, but to an overwhelming degree, their collective experience—and hard-earned renown—as Confederate citizen-soldiers remained profoundly influenced by factors intimately connected to the physical and ethnic environments of Texas as well as to the intricacies of mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-Texas society and culture.

Of these factors, perhaps the most predictable was the impact of the antebellum Texas frontier. A prominent facet of Anglo-Texans' collective prewar existence, the frontier experience naturally influenced how the Texas Brigade's rank-and-file approached their Confederate military service. Expert in survival-oriented woodcraft skills such as tracking and marksmanship, many volunteers enlisted in the Texas regiments thoroughly prepared to carry out a variety of specialized military duties. In this regard, reconnaissance and sharpshooting assignments were particularly well suited to Texans' talents—a fact the Army of Northern Virginia's high command quickly grasped and subsequently exploited throughout the war. Not only did Texans' proven proficiency as scouts and sharpshooters ensure their routine employment in small-scale operations, but, as evidenced by their wartime writings, it also became a significant point of pride among them.

In addition to woodcraft, Texans fighting in Virginia also relied upon frontier-related expertise of a military nature. During the antebellum period, recurrent armed

threats presented by Mexico and the Comanches along Texas's southern and western borderland expanses had necessitated the mobilization of large numbers of eligible male citizens for service in the state's militia and ranging forces. Consequently, a significant percentage of both the officers and enlisted men who entered the ranks of the brigade in 1861 did so with previous military experience on the frontier. Regardless of rank, such veterans beneficially affected the Texas regiments' functioning on and off the battlefield, simultaneously serving as visible examples for less experienced comrades to follow and as accessible founts of military knowledge largely unfamiliar to raw recruits.

To a conspicuous extent, the inter-cultural warfare on the Texas frontier that produced the Texas Brigade's cadre of experienced veterans also heavily determined how its soldiers conceptualized the North's population—military and civilian alike—during the conflict. Having long defined their state's traditional Mexican and Comanche enemies as barbaric, racially inferior, alien "Others," worthy only of subjugation or disposal, the officers and men of the brigade rapidly came to conceive of Northerners in a suggestively similar manner during the war's earliest phases. By taking this tried and true approach, Texans serving in the East effectively dehumanized their former countrymen, conferring upon Yankee soldiers the mantle of "Otherness" previously reserved for Texas's colored frontier rivals alone. This conceptual reconstitution of Northerners discernibly intensified Texas soldiers' determination to remain in Virginia until Confederate arms prevailed, as they believed such an outcome would interfere with (if not entirely prevent) the implementation of Federal plans to invade Texas.

Another factor essential to the Texas Brigade's military success was its rank-and-file's strict adherence to what I have termed the myth of Texan martial supremacy. As

their home state's defining cultural construction, this myth was born amid the traumatic events of the Texas Revolution and elaborated over the next quarter-century of armed conflict between Anglo-Texans and their adversaries on the frontier. For the white citizenry of Texas, the myth engendered a communal aura of invincibility in war, a warrior ethos that compelled them to revere military heroes and fundamentally associate manliness with fighting prowess. With respect to the latter, antebellum Texans integrated their collectively held attitude of combat superiority into pre-existing notions of honor and masculinity to forge a peculiarly militaristic conception of manhood.

Such an outlook accordingly demanded that Texas males consistently exhibit an aptitude for combat unequalled on any battlefield, lest their civil reputations and masculine identities be tarnished. By 1861, this stringent public expectation of Texans' military dominance had not only become a vital feature of Texas culture, but it was also a belief widely shared by citizens throughout the South. As a result, as their state's sole representatives in the Army of Northern Virginia, the Texas Brigade's officers and men were ever mindful of how people across Texas and the Confederate nation alike expected them to fight on eastern battlefields. That awareness invariably exerted a profound influence upon the men in the ranks, stirring them to make tremendous efforts in the face of the enemy to preserve and, if feasible, enhance the legendary reputation of Texans under arms. Judging from contemporary testimony, despite the dreadful number of casualties suffered by the Texas regiments as the war progressed, brigade members generally remained committed to the maintenance of their unit's renown as they sought to live up to the warrior ideal implicit in the myth of Texan martial supremacy.

The unique command relationship enjoyed by John Bell Hood and the Texans under his command constituted yet another crucial contributing factor underpinning the Texas Brigade's exemplary cohesiveness under enemy fire. Not unlike the majority of Civil War citizen-soldiers, Hood's Texans jealously guarded their civilian identities as well as the prerogatives of republican citizenship during their temporary service in the army, knowing full well that after the war, they would return to their peacetime lives. So disposed, the men of the Texas regiments were all the more intractable in direct consequence of their society's distinctive martial tradition and lengthy frontier experience. Taken in combination, these characteristics presented officers in command of Texas volunteers with an entire genre of leadership challenges not likely encountered by colleagues managing troops from other states. For this reason, officers who failed to measure up to Texans' conception of leadership in camp and on the battlefield quickly departed their posts, whether they wanted to or not.

Confronted, then, by soldiers infamous for their extreme dedication to egalitarianism, frequent displays of indiscipline, and rigorous treatment of officers, Hood assumed the colonelcy of the 4th Texas Regiment, and then command of the entire Texas Brigade, remarkably well prepared for the arduous tasks ahead. Having developed a considerable familiarity with and appreciation for Texas culture and Texans during the four years he served along the Lone Star state's western frontier as a lieutenant in the antebellum army, Hood understood better than most how to approach the troops he was assigned to lead. Indeed, relying upon his prewar Texas experiences as a guide, Hood formulated a multi-faceted mode of command finely attuned to Texans' distinctive mindset and leadership demands. With respect to discipline, he differentiated between

the daily routine of military life and active campaigning. In this regard, while in camp, Hood allowed the men in the ranks to generally police one another's behavior, thus satisfying their craving for self-governance. In the midst of combat operations, however, he wielded more direct authority over them, expecting summary compliance from each man as required by the change in conditions. Hood's varied interactions with his troops were also calculated to achieve results. As often as possible, he informally visited with the brigade's soldiers while in camp, personally attended to their well-being, and sought to inspire them by modeling the kinds of martial behaviors he wanted them to emulate. However effective Hood's flexible discipline program and frequent personal contact with the rank-and-file was, his charismatic battlefield presence proved even more so, exemplifying, as it did, the brand of aggressive leadership Texans universally equated with military greatness. Unyielding and almost reckless under fire, Hood motivated the men of the Texas regiments in battle to such an extent that their devotion to him was permanently cemented even as their fame as soldiers was ensured.

Operating in fortuitous concert, the three factors surveyed above—the frontier experience, the myth of Texan martial supremacy, and the distinctive command relationship established between Hood and the troops in his charge—enabled the Texas Brigade's officers and men to successfully undergo the complicated transition from citizen to soldier, while providing the sturdy structure of expertise, ideals, beliefs, and motives around which they assembled an enduring communal identity. Collectively essential to the Texans' wartime accomplishments, the complete absence of any one of these factors might well have made the brigade's elevated level of combat performance impossible to sustain over the long term. Be that as it may, the soldiers of the Lone Star

regiments regularly drew a steady supply of strength, comfort, and purpose from the almost mystical sense of community inherent in belonging to a military unit predominantly composed of men whose shared Texas heritage clearly set them apart from the remainder of the Army of Northern Virginia. So armed, they faced the experience of war together, shaped it according to the unique tenets of their society and culture, and emerged, if not as victors in the conflict, then as legends in their own right. As one Texan in the 5th Texas said of the brigade's killed and wounded in mid-October 1862, they were "the flower of Texas . . . fighting for a country they loved better than life. . . . [Their sacrifice] will be a proud boast of the coming generation of Texas to say their father fell in the maintenance of the liberties they will then enjoy. It will have a tendency to keep alive forever the martial spirit of our fellow-citizens, and our children's children will be influenced by their heroic precedent."¹

¹*Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* (Houston), November 7, 1862, Texas Newspaper Collection, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

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