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of Three German-American Regiments from the St. Louis-Bellville
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University of Southern Mississippi

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SOLDATEN DES WESTENS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE WARTIME EXPERIENCES
OF THREE GERMAN-AMERICAN REGIMENTS FROM THE ST. LOUIS-
BELLVILLE REGION

by

John William Sarvela

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Sciences
and the School of Humanities
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved by:

Dr. Susannah J. Ural, Committee Chair
Dr. Kyle Zelner
Dr. Andrew Wiest

Dr. Susannah J. Ural
Committee Chair

Dr. Luis Iglesias
Director of School

Dr. Karen S. Coats
Dean of the Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

During the Civil War, Germans from the Greater St. Louis region enthusiastically volunteered for service in the Union Army and filled the companies of three regiments examined here: the 30th and 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiments. This thesis argues that German-American soldiers serving in these regiments joined the army to save the Union and end slavery. Once mustered into service, they experienced less nativism within the Union Army of the Tennessee than Germans in the Union Army of the Potomac. In contrast to the predominantly German 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri, the 30th Illinois was considered a native-born American regiment although 21 percent of the men identified as foreign born. This distinct ethnic makeup dispelled nativism from within the regiment, and allowed Germans to escape outside nativist prejudice. A result of St. Louis area German unit successes in the victorious Army of the Tennessee was their postwar acceptance of various Anglo-American cultural aspects.

Contemporary scholarship focuses overwhelmingly on German-American soldiers serving in the Army of the Potomac and inaccurately analyzes Midwestern German volunteers through Eastern Germans' wartime experiences. This thesis warrants Western serving German-American soldiers their proper attention and studies them within the context of their home communities and army. It also offers a scholarly examination of the relationships between German and native-born American soldiers in an ethnically mixed unit which challenges the historiographical trend of solely studying German experiences in ethnic units. This thesis relies on extensive soldier letters and diaries, official documents, and newspaper articles.

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The completion of a master's thesis is not a solo venture, but rather a collaboration between student and advisor. I would like to thank Dr. Susannah Ural, my advisor and the chair of my committee, whose thoughtful insight and knowledge of the Civil War was instrumental in influencing this project. Her steady guidance inspired my thinking and cultivated my abilities as a scholar, without which this project would remain in its infancy. I also want to thank my other committee members Dr.'s Kyle Zelner and Andrew Wiest, whose classes and tutelage ensured my transformation into a historian. I would likewise like to thank the Department of History at the University of Southern Mississippi, and all the help afforded me by the wonderful scholars who make the department so collegial and whose Graduate Travel Awards lessened my financial burdens as I traveled to several archives in Illinois and Missouri.

My research is likewise indebted to many wonderful archivists who helped me along the way. I would like to thank Dr. Christopher A. Schnell, Ms. Teri D. Barnett, and all of the helpful staff at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, whose excellent knowledge and care of documents enabled my usage of a wealth of soldier letters and newspapers. I likewise offer my sincere thanks to John Reinhardt of the Illinois State Archives and the reference staff of the Missouri State Archives, who aided my search through numerous adjutant general regimental files. Additional thanks goes to Sean Eisele of the Vigo County Public Library, Emma Lincoln of the Augustana College Special Collections, the reference staff of the University of Illinois' Illinois History and Lincoln Collections, the archivists of the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library, A.J. Medlock of the State Historical Society of Missouri, the reference librarians

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DEDICATION

My ability to complete this project transcends beyond the realm of scholarly study, as my mental wellbeing was maintained from the support offered me by my many friends in the Department of History and my family. I particularly want to thank Lucas Somers, who spent many a run talking through the roadblocks that accompanied this project. I would also like to thank my mother and sister for their support and encouragement while I strove to complete my master's degree. Also, special thanks goes to my fiancée Erika, who willingly accompanied me to Hattiesburg and has offered me nothing but the greatest love and support along the way.

To my father, who although may be gone from this world in a physical sense, but is ever present in my thoughts and professional development. You taught me from an early age what it meant to be a scholar and to have pride in all of my work. Thank you Dad, for encouraging me to pursue my dreams in history, and for first suggesting that I examine German-American soldiers in the Civil War.

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CHAPTER I – Introduction

On December 14, 1863, German born Joseph Kircher of Belleville, Illinois penned a letter to console his son Henry, a captain in the 12th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment. After receiving three bullet wounds at the Battle of Ringgold Gap, which resulted in amputation, the young captain lay in the hospital. “The loss of the leg and arm is hard, but there remains nothing else to do but to adjust to what cannot be changed and to fit yourself in to anything that will clearly lead to alleviate it,” Joseph wrote in German. “It must always be a great comfort to us that it occurred for our country, which deserved to be remembered all the time.”¹

Henry Kircher served in the predominantly German-American 12th Missouri, a regiment where 92.3 percent of men were German immigrants.² His time in the army followed a similar pattern to many of his fellow soldiers in the 12th Missouri and other German-Americans from his hometown of Belleville, Illinois. These men saw themselves as Americans, yet they harbored a deep cultural connection to their German heritage. This self-identification as American drove thousands of men like Kircher from the St. Louis-Belleville region to volunteer for three-years’ service in the Union Army following the secession crisis, and it was that cultural identity as Germans that caused Kircher and others to seek service in German-American units like the 12th Missouri. In the army, Kircher noted the anti-German nativist sentiment that plagued the regiment at the

¹ Joseph Kircher to Henry Kircher, December 14, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield, IL (hereafter cited as ALPLM).

² Earl J. Hess, “The 12th Missouri Infantry: A Socio-Military Profile of A Union Regiment,” *Missouri Historical Review* 76, no. 1 (October 1981), 60.

beginning of the war, but as the fighting pushed into its second year, most mentions of nativism disappeared from his letters and diary. Following the war Kircher became a successful local politician, ending his career as mayor of Belleville. Despite his continued practice of German customs and language following the war, Kircher maintained relationships with native-born Union veterans, most notably General William Tecumseh Sherman. The friendly correspondence between the two old warriors documents how the Civil War led to mutual acceptance among German-Americans and native-born Americans.³

This project focuses on the understudied voices of German-American soldiers from the Midwest by studying three representative regiments from the greater St. Louis region. The 30th and 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiments were raised in Illinois' western counties, and the 12th Missouri formed in St. Louis, Missouri and Belleville, Illinois. Only the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri fit the definition of ethnic regiments, which for the purposes of this thesis is defined as any regiment that was comprised of at least 75 percent foreign-born soldiers. The 30th Illinois, in contrast to the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri, was a mixed unit of German-Americans, native-born Americans, Irish-Americans, and several other ethnicities. Despite many differences within the two German populations of Belleville and St. Louis, common trends exist within the communities and regiments regarding their wartime experiences. By examining individual soldiers and regiments as opposed to brigades or a whole ethnic groups, this study pinpoints inconsistencies within existing scholarship and offers a more nuanced understanding of German-American motivations and experiences in the Civil War.

³ Engelmann-Kircher Papers, 1798-1903, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

A small-scale examination of western German-American soldiers allows historians to answer significant questions about ethnic Civil War service. What drove western Germans into the Union Army? Did they define themselves as German soldiers, American soldiers, or both?⁴ Was the nativism experienced by these soldiers similar or worse when compared to Germans serving in the East? Did serving in a non-ethnic unit like the 30th Illinois reduce or amplify nativist sentiment? Finally, did the war increase the rate at which German-Americans adapted to native-born American society?

This thesis argues that German-Americans from the St. Louis-Belleville region joined the Union Army for multiple reasons, but suppressing the rebellion and, to a lesser extent, ending slavery ranked among their most commonly cited motivations. In some cases, especially for those who joined the first three-month regiments in Illinois and Missouri, nativism pushed German-Americans into the service of the Union. John T. Buegel, for example, volunteered for three months' service in the 3rd Missouri Infantry because those Germans who were unwilling to "enlist voluntarily were beaten and had mud thrown at them" by pro-secession St. Louisans.⁵ As a German opposed to secession, Buegel fell victim to such violence.⁶ While not all of the region's Germans were Unionist, most did oppose secession and slavery.⁷

⁴ Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2006). In her study of Irish-American soldiers, Ural argues that Irish soldiers routinely connected their serving to a dual sense of Irish and American heritage. Irish soldiers regularly linked the Union war effort to Irish independence.

⁵ John T. Buegel, "The Civil War Diary of John T. Buegel, Union Soldier," *Missouri Historical Review* 40, no.3 (April 1946), 308.

⁶ Buegel, "The Civil War Diary of John T. Buegel," 308.

⁷ Bonnie J. Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region, 1840-1860," *Missouri Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (April, 1989): 295-310.: Krause argues that one aspect that made the German communities of the St. Louis region unique, was their opposition to slavery. Their opposition was not always moral, as many in the region opposed the institution on economic grounds.

For many of the German-American volunteers in these three western regiments, there was pride in being a German soldier fighting for their adopted homeland, and allegiances to the regiment, state, and country were omnipresent. As the war dragged into its second and third years, nativism began to fade within the Army of the Tennessee, largely driven by its success on the battlefield. Nativism undoubtedly continued within the Army of the Tennessee, but evidence from these three regiments points towards its diminishing in strength.⁸ In the case of the 30th Illinois, a sense of ethnic differences were present in soldiers' letters, but the regiment suffered few internal issues due to ethnicity. This thesis will demonstrate that for Germans serving in non-ethnic units, a group barely mentioned in contemporary scholarship, the effects of nativism weakened early on.

This thesis argues that greater St. Louis area German-American soldiers serving in the highly successful Army of the Tennessee more effectively associated and fraternized with native-born Americans in their Army because the negative images of Germans that existed in the Army of the Potomac were absent in the western theater of operations. No corps existed within the Army of the Tennessee that was viewed as uniquely "German," or both Dutch and weak, cowardly, or undependable – all criticisms faced by the Union XI Corps of the Army of the Potomac. On the contrary, native-born soldiers saw the German-American volunteers in the 30th and 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri as worthy comrades in the hard-fighting Army of the Tennessee. Together native- and foreign-born men fought to save the Union and abolish slavery.

⁸ Engelmann-Kircher Papers, 1798-1903, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL. All remarks related to Germans or Americans taper off following Shiloh in both Captain Henry Kircher and Colonel Adolphus Engelmann's correspondence. They acquire an outlook based on Union or Confederate.

The study of German-American soldiers is crucial in furthering our understanding of the Civil War. An estimated 200,000 soldiers of German ethnicity served in the Union Army. While comprising ten-percent of the army, German-American soldiers also represented sixteen percent of the over 1.2 million Germans living in the United States in 1860.⁹ Their numbers allowed German-American soldiers to have a notable impact on the war, and it, in turn, significantly influenced their communities. Yet, of the 200,000 German-Americans who served in the Union Army, only the contingent serving with the Army of the Potomac is well studied. This thesis addresses that gap in the existing literature by focusing on German-Americans serving in the West in ethnic and in non-ethnic units.

The seminal works concerning the German-American Civil War experience suffer in two key ways. Historians writing on German-American Union military involvement base their arguments in sources related to the eastern theater of the conflict, which were largely produced by German-Americans serving in the infamous Union XI Corps. Secondly, historians often apply their arguments to either the northern German-American community at large, or to main groups within German communities such as the Greens who immigrated following the German Revolutions of 1848, or the Grays who immigrated prior to the revolutions, or the Pennsylvania Dutch, who immigrated to Pennsylvania during the colonial period. Studies of this nature, even when they focus on

⁹Stephen D. Engle, "Yankee Dutchmen," In *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, And Identity In America's Bloodiest Conflict*, edited by Susannah J. Ural, 11-55. (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 19. Using U.S. census records from 1860, Engle deduced that 1,229,144 German-born Americans lived in the United States on the eve of the Civil War.

specific immigrant groups, still overgeneralize their interpretation of German-American communities.

The two leading scholars of Civil War era German-Americans are Christian Keller and Stephen D. Engle. Both approach the topic of Northern German-American wartime experiences broadly. Keller's *Chancellorsville and the Germans* follows the XI Corps into the battle of Chancellorsville, where they were routed by Confederate Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Second Corps, and subsequently blamed for the results of the battle by the U.S. War Department. Immediately after Chancellorsville, Keller contends, Germans across the North experienced a wave of anti-German nativism, the extent of which had not been witnessed since the rise of the Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s. He further argues that Chancellorsville reversed the trend towards which native-born Americans had been accepting German-Americans as fellow citizens. Instead of becoming more American, Keller contends, Chancellorsville made German-Americans become more German and hindered their adaptation into native Northern society.¹⁰

Stephen D. Engle, in an essay on northern German-Americans, stresses the formation of a German-American identity that the war enhanced through German soldiers' relationships with native-born Americans in the army. Engle argues that when men entered the Union Army, it was the first time they were exposed to the large ethnic diversity of the country. It was through their shared service in the Union Army that native and ethnic soldiers learned to appreciate one another. Engle asserts that because of the war, Germans began adopting aspects of American culture into their lives, but this

¹⁰ Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 1-9.

adaptation was not total. Indeed, he argues, ethnic consciousness and identity increased among Germans from concerns that the war might lead them too far from their European heritage.¹¹

Keller and Engle offer important, sweeping analyses of the northern German-American wartime experiences. Now the field needs focused studies that consider the significance of region, class, and wartime experience when studying how diverse German-American populations responded to and were influenced by the Civil War. The German communities of St. Louis for example were inherently different from those in New York. St. Louis Germans, lived in a slave state, and their close proximity to the institution enhanced their opinion over the matter. Furthermore, their service to the Union differed, as St. Louis German's predominantly served in the Armies of the Cumberland and the Tennessee, each of which maintained separate goals and were overall more successful than the Army of the Potomac. This study offers this through an examination of the wartime experiences of German-American soldiers from the Greater St. Louis region. By means of an evaluation of three regiments assembled in the region, each containing a different proportion of German-American soldiers, scholars can gauge how the experiences of these soldiers serving in the western theater differed from their counterparts in eastern Union armies that are the focus of Keller and Engle. Realizing these differences will enhance our knowledge regarding the complexities of ethnic Civil War service, while simultaneously further our understanding of the conflict as a whole.

Prior to German-American service in the Civil War, mass German immigration to America generated a major demographic shift in the United States, especially in the

¹¹ Engle, "Yankee Dutchmen," 42.

Midwest. The German populations of Milwaukee and St. Louis more than doubled between 1850 and 1860. Chicago, which had a German population of about 5,000 in 1850 saw an explosion in growth to over 22,000 Germans by 1860.¹² Bruce Levine's *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War*, remains the seminal work regarding German-Americans and communities that experienced exponential rates of growth before the war. He argues that German-Americans in the Civil War era cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group, but instead, German communities were as diverse as the country itself.¹³

Examinations into wartime Belleville and St. Louis confirm Levine's principle assertions. Despite the closeness of each community both spatially and socially, large rifts existed amongst the Greens and the Grays. For example, a pitched press battle between the more progressive Henry Boernstein and his St. Louis based *Anzeiger des Westens* and conservative Gustav Koerner's *Belleville Zeitung* pitted the two communities against one another. Disagreements between the two editors evolved as Boernstein and his fellow Greens continued to publish their radical ideologies in St. Louis, using speech reminiscent of that used in the German Revolutions of 1848.¹⁴ Rivalries between the two German communities continued into the war, despite their shared love of the Union and hatred of slavery. Belleville officers, for example,

¹² Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 60. The total German population of Chicago in 1850 was 5063. By 1860 that population more than doubled to 22,289.

¹³ Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*.

¹⁴ Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region, 1840-1860," 302.

dominated the 12th Missouri, a situation deeply resented by soldiers hailing from St. Louis.¹⁵

Since the 1990s, scholarship on German-American participation in the Civil War has steadily increased. Much of this began with Stephen Engle's *Yankee Dutchman: The Life of Franz Sigel*, which energized the study of German-Americans in the Civil War. Engle argues that Sigel was a champion of democracy who sought to uphold American freedoms by fighting for the Union. Ultimately, Engle concludes that Sigel was "a fool in action" who never-the-less generated massive support for the Union amongst German-Americans. Most importantly, Sigel's experiences during the Civil War, demonstrate the range of cultural issues found in the conflict.¹⁶ Sigel's popularity among northern Germans is confirmed by the men of each western regiment examined in this thesis, and even by many native-born Americans in the 30th Illinois. Even as Sigel struggled in the East, westerners — German- and native-born — applauded his leadership and staunch support for the Union.

David L. Valuska and Christian Keller offer a slightly narrower perspective on German-American wartime experiences in *Damned Dutch: Pennsylvania Germans at Gettysburg*. Their study aims at understanding German-American soldiers from Pennsylvania and the roles they played at the Battle of Gettysburg. They assert that the German population of Keystone state was diverse, and the authors split this into two groups labeled "Colonial Germans" (Pennsylvania Dutch) and "German-Americans."

¹⁵ Henry Kircher to Mother, June 14, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

¹⁶ Stephen D. Engle, *Yankee Dutchman: The Life of Franz Sigel* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), xiii-xix.

Both groups joined the Union Army during the Civil War and experienced the mutual respect of native-born American soldiers prior to the Battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. Valuska and Keller contend that while the Civil War ended organized nativism, it still existed within the ranks. They likewise emphasize the fact that the Pennsylvania Dutch, as opposed to German-Americans, received a more cordial welcome from native-born Americans in the army owing to several generations of Americanization. Valuska and Keller finally argue that German-Americans and Pennsylvania Dutch did not form a similar ethnic identity after the war. Instead, in response to the war and other factors, Pennsylvania Dutch retreated further into their communities to preserve their customs and language, whereas German-Americans began leaving their communities for outside opportunities.¹⁷ Despite their narrow gaze, Valuska and Keller remain fixed on generalizing the sentiments of the Pennsylvania Dutch and German-Americans, which leads to their applying the experiences of Pennsylvania Germans to those of another region. These generalizations blur the full picture of German service in the conflict, which perpetuates the misleading understanding of all Germans as one homogenous group.

Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Johannes Helbich edited letter collection, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home*, differs in scope from other works on German-Americans. The letters presented by Kamphoefner and Helbich were sent to the various German States, by relatives or friends serving in the war.

Interpretation of the letters led their editors to three main arguments. First, they argue that

¹⁷ David L. Valuska and Christian B. Keller, *Damned Dutch: Pennsylvania Germans at Gettysburg* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2010), xiii-xix.

German-Americans saw themselves as distinctly German even though they currently lived in the United States. Secondly, the authors contend that German-Americans had varying degrees of support for the war. Finally, Kamphoefner and Helbich conclude that the war did not lead to the large scale “Americanization” of the Germans. They instead contend (and somewhat ambiguously) that German-Americans across the country faced varying degrees of “Americanization.”¹⁸ Kamphoefner and Helbich applied their arguments to the entire northern German population, conclusions on loyalties and degree of “Americanization” do not hold up Germans in the greater St. Louis area. Here, Germans predominantly considered themselves Americans, were supportive of the war, and experienced significant degrees of Americanization as a result of the war.

Except for Kamphoefner and Helbich’s collection, most of the works above focus on German communities in the East while charting German-American soldiers’ experiences within the Army of the Potomac. Unfortunately, by focusing solely on German-Americans from the northeast who served in eastern armies, the voices of approximately half the German population within Union states remain muffled. If Levine’s contentions are correct, the arguments made about eastern German-Americans do not absolutely apply to those in the West. Only new research into western German-American communities can strengthen or complicate existing theories to better convey their Civil War experiences.

One recent work that sheds light on Midwestern German-Americans is Donald Allendorf’s *Long Road to Liberty: The Odyssey of a German Regiment in the Yankee*

¹⁸Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Johannes Helbich, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-34.

Army, The 15th Missouri Volunteer Infantry, which follows the predominantly German 15th Missouri throughout the war.¹⁹ Allendorf's work on the 15th Missouri is a useful addition to the historiography for its consideration of this western experience, but the work's narrow scope limits its impact on the field. My examination of three regiments from the region will expand on Allendorf's work, by offering several bold arguments which cannot be concluded through the study of a single regiment. Secondly, my study enhances our understanding of the German-American experience within the Greater St. Louis region, further separates this area's German population from those in the East.

Another current work, Mary Bobbitt Townsend's *Yankee Warhorse: A Biography Of Major General Peter Osterhaus*, is the first major biography of General Peter J. Osterhaus, a prominent German general who served his entire Civil War career in the West. Townsend argues that Osterhaus, unlike Generals Sigel and Carl Schurz, earned his promotions through skilled performance on the battlefield. Despite his solid wartime performance, she maintains that Osterhaus remained relatively obscure throughout the North.²⁰ Germans in the West held Osterhaus in high regard, but Sigel outshone him as an example of German martial leadership, which is largely due to Sigel's willingness to use political means to achieve promotion and bolster his image.

Andrea Mehrländer's article, "With More Freedom And Independence Than The Yankees: The Germans of Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans during the American Civil War," represents one of the only works that examines the development of pro-

¹⁹ Donald Allendorf, *Long Road to Liberty: The Odyssey of a German Regiment in the Yankee Army, The 15th Missouri Volunteer Infantry* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006).

²⁰ Mary Bobbitt Townsend, *Yankee Warhorse: A Biography Of Major General Peter Osterhaus* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010).

Confederate sympathies by Germans in the South. Mehrländer argues that German immigrants traveled South to provide industrial services desperately needed in the region. Following the secession crisis, Germans faced nationalist threats from their Confederate neighbors, which forced Southern German-Americans to either move north or offer their services to the Confederacy. Those that stayed adopted similar pro-slavery sympathies to non-Germans, which drastically differed from the views of many northern German-Americans.²¹

Prior to this study, there were only two contemporary publications that focused on only one of the three regiments examined here. Both are by Earl J. Hess, and include his article “The 12th Missouri Infantry: A Socio-Military Profile of A Union Regiment” and his an edited collection *A German in the Yankee Fatherland*. In his article, Hess argues that the study of individual regiments is crucial in our understanding of the war, because they were the building blocks with which divisions, corps, and armies were made. He chose to follow the 12th Missouri through the war because of its importance as a regiment and distinct character as an ethnic regiment. Hess is not interested in the 12th Missouri as a study of ethnic tensions within the army or as a means to uncover German-American wartime motivations. He instead uses this unit to help in understanding and documenting the inner workings of a Civil War regiment, the “basic building block” of the Union and Confederate armies.²²

²¹Andrea Mehrländer, “With More Freedom And Independence Than The Yankees: The Germans of Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans during the American Civil War,” in *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, And Identity In America’s Bloodiest Conflict*, ed. Susannah J. Ural, (New York: New York University Press), 2010 57-79.

²² Earl J. Hess, “The 12th Missouri Infantry: A Socio-Military Profile of A Union Regiment,” *Missouri Historical Review* 76, no. 1 (October 1981), 53-77.

Hess's *A German in the Yankee Fatherland* is an edited collection of the letters written by Henry Kircher of the 12th Missouri. Hess chose to publish the letters of Kircher because he was highly intelligent, making his letters more descriptive and insightful than other surviving letters, and because Kircher's German ethnicity provides insight into a sizeable ethnic portion of the Union Army. Hess argues that Kircher's letters reveal that the war was less of a "melting pot" than historians in the 1980s often claimed.²³ Hess maintains that Kircher and other German soldiers tended to segregate themselves within German speaking cliques, choosing not to converse with native-Americans. Hess's collection adds major weight to this thesis, as Kircher's letters represent the most complete collection on the 12th Missouri.²⁴

The most comprehensive study on the St. Louis-Belleville region prior to the war, and the most important source regarding the region to date, is Bonnie J. Krause's article "German Americans in the St. Louis Region, 1840-1860." Krause argues that, despite sharing the same language and culture, the Germans of the St. Louis-Belleville region held differing views on a range of issues. Krause's work predates that of Levine, but both scholars discuss the differences found within German-American communities. St. Louis and Belleville, Krause notes, did not contain homogenous immigrant groups. German-Americans in the region separated into four main cliques: the Grays, Greens, German Lutherans, and German Catholics. Germans who settled in the region prior to the 1840s

²³ William L. Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union's Ethnic Regiments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998). Despite being published in 1998, Burton's arguments epitomize the idea that the Union Army was a melting pot. Hess demonstrates through Kircher's writings that this is not always necessarily the case.

²⁴ Henry A. Kircher, *A German in the Yankee Fatherland: The Civil War Letters of Henry A. Kircher*, ed. Earl J. Hess (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1983), ix-xi.

were called Grays. Newspaper editor Gustave Koerner typified a Gray, with his deep political connections and desire for Germans to adapt to the American political system rather than alter it. The second group, the Greens, often identified as 48ers, arrived in the 1840s as political refugees following the failed Liberal German Revolutions of 1848. Due to a radical political outlook, the Greens often clashed with the more moderate Grays. Henry Boernstein and Franz Sigel personified the Greens, who lobbied for the integration of German and American political systems. The final two groups identified by Krause were the German Lutherans and Catholics. German Lutherans, or Missouri Synod Lutherans, were religious ultra-conservatives thrown out of Saxony. German Catholics self-segregated themselves from the other circles due to their strict adherence to Catholicism and an unwillingness to converse with those harboring different faiths.,²⁵

Belleville and St. Louis stand only seventeen miles apart, which resulted in close connections between their German-American communities despite their differences. German Lutherans ostracized German Catholics on matters of theology, and both groups considered the Greens to be Godless. The largest grudge existed between the Greens and Grays, who disagreed on a large array of issues. In the decades prior to the Civil War, each group assailed the others with barrages from their print shops. Koerner, who composed columns for the *Belleviller Zeitung* informing Germans about American politics, took offence to Boernstein's radical publications that allegedly spawned anti-German nativism in the region. Koerner labeled Boernstein a "charlatan," and in retaliation to the "Green" run press, geared his writing towards "correcting their views of

²⁵ Bonnie J. Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region, 1840-1860," *Missouri Historical Review* 83, no. 3 (April 1989), 295-310.

our institutions which I considered erroneous.”²⁶ Boernstein disregarded Koerner’s remarks, explaining that they were the result of Koerner’s and most Grays standing “at a very low educational level.”²⁷ Political similarities and outside stimuli eventually brought the region’s German groups together. The majority of Germans in the region detested the institution of slavery on either moral or economic grounds. Thus, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 shook Belleville and St. Louis Germans to the core, and led to a shift in the region’s party politics. The Kansas-Nebraska Act effectively nullified the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited the creation of new slave states north of 36° 30’ latitude. Koerner, a staunch Democrat and friend of Stephen A. Douglass, consented to the existence of slavery but objected to the institution and the Kansas-Nebraska Act on moral grounds. The Democratic Party in the region thus lost nearly all of its German members by 1855.²⁸

The ascendance of the Know-Nothing party in the mid-1850s marked a low point for ethnic relations throughout the Midwest. The Know-Nothing party emerged as if from nowhere in 1854, and swept elections across the North. Their platform hinged on the principle of native-born protestant rule, as Know-Nothings were decidedly anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic. In the face of steadily increasing immigration, Know-Nothings secretly and efficiently spread their nativist platform.²⁹ Ignorant of the

²⁶ Gustave Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener 1809-1896*, vol. 1. edited by Thomas J. McCormack (Cedar Rapids: The Torch Press, 1909. Reprint, HardPress Publishing), 548-50.

²⁷ Henry Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody: The Missouri Years of an Austrian Radical, 1849-1866*, translated by Stephen Rowan (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 220.

²⁸ Krause, “German Americans in the St. Louis Region,” 295-310.

²⁹ Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), xiii.; Mark Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party : Cultures of Antipartisanship in Northern Politics Before the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 102-5.

bitterness between German cliques, Know-Nothings considered all Germans as equally threatening to American values. Institutionalized anti-German nativism grew after St. Louis mayor and Know-Nothing Washington King passed anti-drinking laws that targeted German and Irish beer saloons and taverns. In response to increased nativist sentiment across the region, the Greens, Grays, and German Lutherans came together as a voting bloc and to defend the city's German citizens from nativist attacks. German Catholics maintained their distance to other Germans and the Know-Nothings. By the election of 1860, Germans in the St. Louis-Belleville region were more unified than at any time prior.³⁰

Apart from works on German-Americans, the study of Irish soldiers has maintained a more sustained popularity among scholars and general readers. Susannah Ural's work on Irish-American soldier enlistment and experiences in *The Harp and the Eagle* adeptly documents the varying attitudes within the northern Irish community. Ural argues that Irish-Americans maintained a sense of dual loyalties to both Ireland and the Union throughout the war that motivated their reaction to the conflict. However, when the Union's objectives began to impede on Irish interests, support for the war waned.³¹ David T. Gleeson sounds a similar tone in his work *The Green and the Gray: The Irish In The Confederate States Of America*. He argues that Irish ethnics in the South maintained a comparable sense of dual loyalty prior to the Civil War. Following the Secession Crisis however, they assumed a new allegiance to the Confederacy. In a manner similar to their cousins in the North, many Irish Confederates lost interest in the war as family members

³⁰ Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region," 295-310.

³¹ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*.

died in battle and more so when the Confederate economy plummeted.³² The reasoning demonstrated by Gleeson and Ural in their evaluations of dual loyalties in Irish-American communities, is applied to my examination of German-American soldiers in the Greater St. Louis region, but leads me to a different conclusion. German's of the region exhibit a similar sense of loyalty to the U.S. and Germany, but they ultimately saw themselves first as Americans.

Ryan W. Keating's *Shades of Green: Irish Regiments, American Soldiers, and Local Communities in the Civil War Era*, offers an examination of the wartime experiences of three Irish regiments from Wisconsin, Connecticut, and Illinois. Keating argues that military service led neither to acceptance nor alienation of Irish Americans. Nevertheless, Keating stresses that these Irish regiments faced little nativism during the war once they proved their willingness to fight for the Union. Furthermore, Keating asserts that Irish communities, much like northern German communities, differed greatly from one another, so it is impossible to tie their experiences together.³³ My study regarding German-American soldiers in the Army of the Tennessee reflects that of Keating's regarding the Irish. His argument that Irish soldiers faced reducing degrees of nativism within the army parallels the experience of the 12th and 43rd Illinois.

This thesis derives its method from two contemporary unit studies, Lesley J. Gordon's *A Broken Regiment* and Ural's *Hood's Texas Brigade*, provide methodological guidance for new research on German regiments in the West. Gordon follows the ill-fated

³² David T. Gleeson, *The Green and the Gray: The Irish In The Confederate States Of America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

³³ Ryan Keating, *Shades of Green: Irish Regiments, American Soldiers, and Local Communities in the Civil War Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

16th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry Regiment throughout the conflict and charts the steps taken by veterans to portray their mediocre wartime experiences in a positive light after the war. Gordon chose the 16th because of its fluctuating reputation as a regiment during the war, which separates her work from the majority of unit studies centered on storied units.³⁴

Ural's book on the revered Texas Brigade goes against the grain of common unit studies by employing a lens that scans beyond the battle front. Ural argues that, "units like the Texas Brigade succeeded because their families shared the men's strong devotion to the Confederacy, to their volunteer officers, and to Robert E. Lee."³⁵ Ural additionally contends that the unit's middle class values, such as work ethic, practicality, the idea of self-made men, and a reliance on morale in Texas shaped Hood's Brigade, and each factor positively affected their battlefield performance. Finally, Ural follows the brigade's Texas members home from the war, arguing that the camaraderie and support formed at the front continued to bring them together and shape their lives during peacetime.³⁶ Each regiment discussed here found success on the battlefield, and in similar was to the Texas Brigade, home front morale and support sustained the St. Louis-Bellefonte region regiments through four years of campaigning. Furthermore, the leadership displayed by regimental commanders positively affected battlefield performance.

Any study pertaining to Civil War soldier motivations owes a certain debt to James M. McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought In The Civil War*.

³⁴ Lesley J. Gordon, *A Broken Regiment: The 16th Connecticut's Civil War* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana University Press, 2014), 1-9.

³⁵ Susannah J. Ural, *Hood's Texas Brigade: The Soldiers And Families Of The Confederacy's Most Celebrated Unit* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 7.

³⁶ Ural, *Hood's Texas Brigade*.

McPherson's monograph draws inspiration from John A. Lynn's *The Bayonets of the Republic*, and employs Lynn's methodology of examining three phases of soldier motivation: initial, sustaining, and combat. McPherson argues that a "complex mixture of patriotism, ideology, concepts of duty, honor, manhood, and community or peer pressure" convinced men to enlist.³⁷ Where "group cohesion and peer pressure" along with the structure of Confederate and Union militaries persuaded or mandated men to stay in the army and face combat.³⁸ To explore German-American wartime motivations, this thesis asks similar questions to those posed by McPherson.

In order to properly document the wartime experiences of German-Americans from the Greater St. Louis area, my project assumes a similar methodological pattern as Allendorf's chronicling of the 15th Missouri, but will address the questions as to what drove western Germans into the Union Army. Did German-American soldiers see themselves as German, American, or as German-American soldiers? Did western Germans experience similar degrees of nativism when compared to Germans serving in eastern armies? How did German service in non-ethnic unit's, such as the 30th Illinois, effect nativist sentiment? Finally, did the war increase the rate at which German-Americans adapted to native-born American society? This thesis will answer these and other pressing questions through an examination of the 30th Illinois, 43rd Illinois, and 12th Missouri regiments. The format of this thesis will be chronological as opposed to viewing

³⁷ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought In The Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13.: John A. Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791-1794* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

³⁸ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 12-13.

each regiment separately in individual chapters. A format such as this adds to my ability to compare and contrast regiments throughout the narrative.

Chapter II argues that during the first year of the Civil War, members of the German 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri faced nativism within the ranks. As German regiments, the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri, were easily identified as being German, and were easier targets for anti-German sentiment. Soldiers in the mixed 30th Illinois however, were able to escape ethnic tensions through their service in a native-born regiment. This chapter details the range of problems plaguing the St. Louis-Belleville region's German communities prior to the war, and explains the extent of nativism within the ranks of the Union's first western armies. Despite facing nativism at home and in the army, German-American soldiers from the St. Louis-Belleville region were motivated by the rebellion's threat to their adopted country as well as an opposition to slavery. Nativism continued to plague members of the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois until the Battles of Pea Ridge and Shiloh in early 1862. Letters written by men in both regiments and the official reports of their commanders, indicate that each regiment's performance on the battlefield led to the erosion of long held ethnic prejudices in the Army of the Tennessee. Ethnic relations within the 30th Illinois however, proved favorable from the beginning of the war, because of their strong organization, solid leadership, the early formation of a regimental identity, and the quickness with which they were thrust into combat. This chapter is predominantly supported by the writings of several soldiers:

Captain Henry Kircher of the 12th Missouri, Colonel Adolph Engelmann of the 43rd Illinois, Sergeant Robert M. Dihel and Granville B. McDonald of the 30th Illinois.³⁹

Chapter III follows each regiment from the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862 through the Atlanta Campaign. As argued in this chapter, the Army of the Tennessee saw a smoothing of ethnic relations following Shiloh, which were directly related to the stellar performance of German regiments within the army as well as the army's overall success. The lessened anti-German sentiment is supported by the writings of Kircher and Engelmann, whose letters become less concerned with perceived nativist slights and more focused on the rigors of combat and the tedium of army life. The wartime experiences of the regiments are conveyed through the use of Kircher, Engelmann, and Dihel's writings in addition to the diary of Lieutenant Joseph Ledergerber of the 12th Missouri and letters composed by Lieutenant Ogden Greenough of the 30th Illinois.⁴⁰ In addition to these letter collections and diaries, the official state regimental files of each regiment are used.⁴¹

Chapter IV follows the 30th Illinois, 43rd Illinois, and 12th Missouri until the end of their terms of service. This chapter argues that the dismantling of western German-American regiments was not related to German hostility towards the Union or undertaken

³⁹ Engelmann-Kircher Papers, 1798-1903, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.; Dihel, Robert M. "My Beloved Kate: a collection of Civil War letters." Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.; Granville B. McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois Veteran Volunteer Regiment of Infantry*. (Sparta II: Sparta News, 1917).

⁴⁰ Joseph A. Ledergerber Diary, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.; Ogden Greenough papers, University of Illinois, Illinois History and Lincoln Collections (hereafter cited as IHLC).

⁴¹ 30th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, Discharges, Recommendations, Illinois State Archive, Springfield, IL (hereafter cited as ISA); 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, ISA.; 12th Regiment Infantry, Adjutant General Missouri Volunteers, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, MO (hereafter cited as MSA).

through any conscious efforts of the state or federal governments. Rather, German regiments such as the 12th Missouri, lost heavily in combat, which made it nearly impossible for each to refill their ranks with enough recruits to retain their designations as regiments.⁴² This chapter likewise argues that the influx of drafted and substitute troops which swelled the ranks of the 30th Illinois and 43rd Illinois in 1864 did not negatively impact either regiment.⁴³ This chapter relies on the letters of Engelmann, Lieutenant Ogden Greenough, and Private Frederick Bechtold of the 12th Missouri.⁴⁴

The surviving manuscript collections of the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois contain a heavy Belleville bias and favor regimental and company grade officers. To compensate for the lack of manuscript collections, newspapers and regimental records have been consulted. The most widely relied upon are the *Belleville Advocate*, an English language paper with many German contributors and the *St. Louis Daily Missouri Republican*. Each of these papers published letters from soldiers of the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois. Regimental documents such as commission and correspondence files are of particular importance to this project. These papers help outline daily life within each regiment and reveal many problems associated with army life.

As opposed to the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois, collections concerning the 30th Illinois are numerous. Unfortunately, writings by Germans in the 30th Illinois do not exist, but the voices of their native-born comrades are just as important. The most extensive collections of letters and diary entries come from Captain David W. Poak,

⁴² Hess, "The 12th Missouri Infantry," 76.

⁴³ Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*.

⁴⁴ Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.: Bechtold Family Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (hereafter cited as BHL).

Sergeant Robert M. Dihel, Lieutenant Ogden Greenough, and Musician Benjamin F. Boring. Two books authored at the turn of the century, *A History of the 30th Illinois Veteran Volunteer Regiment of Infantry* and *A Short History of Company "A" 30th Illinois Infantry*, detail the regiment's wartime experience and demonstrate the pride held by members of the 30th.⁴⁵ Their muteness on German-Americans points towards the conclusion that most men of the 30th Illinois did not harbor anti-German sentiment.

The term adaptation is used throughout this thesis to refer to the readjustments or modifications made by German-Americans socially and economically in relation to native-born Americans following the Civil War. A sense of "Germanness" and the preservation of German culture remained, but Germans in the Greater St. Louis region made a more concerted effort to associate with native-born Americans as a result of the war. Furthermore, the term nativism is defined as any act or display of anti-immigrant sentiment.⁴⁶ Additionally, German-Americans and Germans are used interchangeably to refer to Americans either born in Germany or of German descent.

This thesis is a microhistory that provides a valuable interpretation of German-American Union soldiers from the understudied St. Louis-Bellefonte region. Its findings reveal inconsistencies in the existing historiography regarding the wartime experiences of German-Americans. The conclusions drawn from this study regarding the service of German soldiers in these three regiments provide a case-study with which future comparisons might be made regarding the experiences of other German regiments during

⁴⁵ McDonald, Granville B. *A history of the 30th Illinois Veteran Volunteer Regiment of Infantry*. Sparta II: Sparta News, 1917; Alvin E. Sample, *A Short History of Company "A" 30th Illinois Infantry: the names of all who belonged to the Company and, as far as known, what became of them. Also a list of letters from some of those still living*. Lyons, Kansas: 1907.

⁴⁶ Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, xiv

the conflict. These include the fact that German-American soldiers from the Greater St. Louis region serving within the Army of the Tennessee experienced extensively less nativism during the war than their counterparts in the Army of the Potomac. Additionally, the degree to which the region's Germans saw themselves as American citizens overshadowed their connection to the German Confederation. German-Americans within the upper Midwest simply considered themselves American, even though they made little effort until the Civil War to associate with native-born Americans. Most importantly, it is clear that following the war German-Americans in the region began interacting regularly with native-born Americans.

CHAPTER II - “Zu Den Waffen”— “To Arms”

Following the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, Germans in St. Louis and Belleville rapidly took up arms. Days after President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to protect the Union, the St. Louis Turner Society, under the direction of Franz Sigel and Frederick Schäfer, organized 300 pro-Union Germans who began drilling in secret. Due to Missouri’s position as a border state, they concealed their training to avoid detection by pro-secessionist Missourians. By the end of April, 4,200 men, predominantly German, formed the first four Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiments.⁴⁷ Fifteen miles east, in Belleville, Illinois, three companies of Germans trained in the city’s fairgrounds. These enthusiastic men mustered into the 9th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment for three months’ service.⁴⁸

For Germans residing within the Greater St. Louis area, the war was closer than for other Unionists. Missouri was a border state and the important river hub of St. Louis became one of the war’s first battlegrounds on May 10, during the Camp Jackson Affair (a crucial action that kept St. Louis in the Union). As this chapter will show, German communities rallied to defend the Union and their adopted city, and to check the aggression of pro-secessionist St. Louisans. The scramble for St. Louis in 1861 came at the zenith of ethnic German cooperation in the region. Abandoning divisions within their ethnic communities, rival German factions had formed a united front in the 1850s against the nativist Know-Nothing party and voiced their shared anger at the passage of the

⁴⁷ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 278-9.

⁴⁸ Theodore E. Kircher, *A Civil War Episode*, March 14, 1969, Engelmann-Kircher Papers, 1798-1903. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

Kansas-Nebraska Act.⁴⁹ Facing Missouri's possible secession in 1861, most German-Americans rallied once again to the Union cause.

Despite their Unionist zeal, German-American soldiers serving in the early phases of the Civil War faced nativist prejudice within the ranks. This was especially true, as this chapter will demonstrate, for members of ethnic German regiments like the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri. However, German-American soldiers in mixed ethnic units, like the 30th Illinois, experienced comparatively minor ethnic tensions. This contrast resulted from the conspicuous nature of ethnic-German regiments (the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri) in a region dominated by native-born Union volunteers, and the volunteers often wrote of anti-German sentiment. German soldiers of the 30th Illinois, however, suffered little nativism due to their regiment's mixture of Anglo, Irish, German, and other ethnic soldiers. Germans in the 30th Illinois were less likely to have sought service with fellow German-Americans due to their adaptation to native-born traditions. They blended in with Anglo-American soldiers more easily and escaped the harassment felt by Germans in distinctly ethnic units. Despite their willingness to enlist in three-year regiments to quash the rebellion, members of the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois, both visibly German-American units, faced continued nativism until the Battles of Pea Ridge and Shiloh in March and April 1862. These battles quelled anti-German sentiment within the Army of the Tennessee—and in the Army of Southwest Missouri, whose regiments transferred to the Army of the Tennessee following Pea Ridge—when these ethnically German units demonstrated their competence as soldiers and their bravery under fire, earning the respect of native-born American soldiers.

⁴⁹ Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region," 302-310.

This chapter argues that, despite facing nativism at home and in the army, the Greater St. Louis region's German-American soldiers were motivated to serve by the rebellion's threat to their adopted country as well as their opposition to slavery. Colonel Adolph Engelmann of the 43rd Illinois, for example, frequently used anti-secession rhetoric in letters to his wife, a sentiment shared by his men in the 43rd Illinois, and the regiment routinely sheltered escaped slaves as early as January 1862.⁵⁰ Such actions reflected years of stubbornly defending the beliefs of their German-American communities in St. Louis and Belleville. In the decade prior to the Civil War, internal strife plagued the region's German communities, but they banded together to combat nativism spurred on by the ascendance of the Know-Nothing Party. Christian Keller and David L. Valuska, two scholars focused on eastern Germans during and prior to the war, observed similar responses by the two distinct groups of Pennsylvania Germans, the Pennsylvania Dutch and German-Americans. Tense exchanges between the two groups, and their subgroups, filled Pennsylvanian German newspapers prior to the war. As in St. Louis, however, Pennsylvania's Germans united to check nativism in the 1850s.⁵¹

Commenting on German intra-ethnic disunity in the 1850s, historian Bruce Levine's findings were opposite those of Keller and Valuska, noting that the only commonalities between America's Germans were a shared language and customs. As in the German States, politics and religion drove wedges between immigrants, leaving their communities anything but homogenous, Levine concluded. However, economic

⁵⁰ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, January 4, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM; Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, January 12, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. On two occasions Adolph Engelmann wrote to his wife about the 43rd Illinois and Colonel Julius Raith harboring slaves.

⁵¹ Valuska and Keller, *Damned Dutch*, 1-15.

hardships and rising anti-immigrant sentiment in the 1850s Levine argues, led German-Americans to develop “an all-German national self-identity among many emigrants previously accustomed to regarding themselves first and foremost as Palatines, Prussians, Hessians, or Bavarians.”⁵² Keller and Valuska recognize this, and likewise document cases where outside nativist pressures drove Pennsylvania Germans into a largely united front in the mid-1850s.⁵³ The same proved true in the German-American communities of St. Louis and Belleville, which united to support the Union just as they had the crises of the 1850s.

It is important to consider the diversity of these communities to fully understand the significance of their unusual unity in 1861. In the beginning of 1860, the Germans of St. Louis and Belleville numbered around 66,000 and influenced the region immensely.⁵⁴ German communities founded businesses, schools, newspapers, cultivated the Mississippi River valley, served in the military, and invested heavily in local politics. One of the region’s most prominent families were the Engelmann’s, whose members settled in St. Louis, Belleville, Chicago, and New Orleans. The Belleville Engelmann’s, whose patriarch, Theodore Engelmann, immigrated with his young family in 1833,

⁵² Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 83, 110.

⁵³ Valuska and Keller, *Damned Dutch*, 13. Valuska and Keller identify two dominant trends that brought German-Americans and Pennsylvania Dutch together prior to the Civil War. The first relates to the term “Deutschtum,” which in this context refers to a sense of belonging to a “greater German community” where common customs brought Germans together. Finally, they identify the unified efforts of German-Americans to combat nativism as a major factor in their coming together prior to the war.

⁵⁴ Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 60.; Kircher, *A German in the Yankee Fatherland*, ed. Earl J. Hess, 2. Levine and Hess provide only percentages of the whole German population of St. Louis and St. Clair County. Levine notes that in 1860, 31.4 percent of 160,773 were German. Hess writes of St. Clair County’s 37,694 residents, 43.3 percent were foreign born, the vast majority of whom were from Germany. Using these percentages, there were roughly 16,321 Germans living in St. Clair County and 50,482 Germans in St. Louis. This calculation does not include those Germans living in the neighboring Illinois counties of Clinton, Madison, and Bond.

worked as newspaper editors, lawyers, farmers, and highly respected vintners.⁵⁵ Other Germans in the area resembled the Engelmann's in appearance, drive, and industry. However, the squabbles of the old world invariably resurfaced in America.

Four distinct German factions existed in the Greater St. Louis area: The Grays (Latin Farmers), Greens (Forty-Eighters), German Catholics, and German Lutherans, who belonged to the Missouri Synod. Each faction published its own newspapers, formed clubs, and incessantly quarreled with one another. The Grays immigrated prior to the liberal German Revolutions of 1848, and the experiences of their most prominent members Gustave Koerner and Friedrich Münch exemplify the group. Grays belonged to all classes, but intellectuals and professionals, such as Koerner and Münch, represented a significant proportion. Grays largely emigrated as a means to avoid warfare within the German States and flocked to America for its perceived personal and economic freedoms and stable republic. The so-called "Latin Farmers," faced difficulties with the language barrier and scarcity of intellectual occupations, which led many into farming. Despite the odds, Grays established thriving communities on both sides of the Mississippi River.⁵⁶

For Greens fleeing persecution following their failed revolutions of the 1840s, adjusting to the U.S. was comparably easier than for Grays a decade earlier. Unburdened by language and customary barriers after settling into pre-existing German communities, immigrants like Henry Boernstein, Carl Schurz, and Karl Heinzen continued spreading their revolutionary ideals through the press. To the ire of many Grays, these factors led the region into political conflict. Perhaps feeling anger towards the Greens for not facing

⁵⁵ "A Pioneer Gone: Theodore Engelmann Called to the Grave," *Mascoutah Herald*, March 15, 1889, Engelmann-Kircher Papers, 1798-1903. Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

⁵⁶ Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region," 295-310.

the hardships of older generations, Grays sparred with the failed revolutionaries. In a press battle between Koerner, of the *Belleviller Zeitung*, and Boernstein, of the *Anzeiger des Westens*, each man criticized the other while outlining the basic complaints against the other faction.⁵⁷ Koerner saw Greens as arrogant, “would-be reformers,” and “charlatans,” who refused to give up their revolutionary aspirations.⁵⁸ In response, Boernstein, who still harbored deep resentment for Grays later in life, claimed that, “Whatever the gentle Gustave Körner and H. A. Rattermann and other praisers of ‘the good old days’ might say on this matter, the truth is that the German element, especially in the Far West, stood at a very low education level.”⁵⁹ Despite their fierce debates, German animus did not pertain solely to the Grays and Greens.

Two small religious groups, the German Catholics, led by Bishop Henry Juncker, and Missouri Synod Lutherans, following ultra-conservative theology of Martin Stephan and Carl Ferdinand Walther, joined this fray in mid-nineteenth century America. Both factions predominantly took issue with those who contradicted their religious perspectives. German Catholics immigrated among the Gray and Green waves, but they valued religious ideals above contemporary politics. Missouri Synod Lutherans left the German States following what they perceived as the liberalization of the Lutheran Church. In Missouri, German Lutherans self-segregated themselves to maintain their brand of conservative Protestantism. German Catholics and Lutherans primarily lashed out at Forty-Eighters, who in their eyes suffered from Godlessness.⁶⁰ Responding to the

⁵⁷ Krause, “German Americans in the St. Louis Region,” 295-310.

⁵⁸ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, 549, 555, 567.

⁵⁹ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 220.

⁶⁰ Krause, “German Americans in the St. Louis Region,” 295-302.

insults of German Lutherans, one Forty-Eighter remarked that their publications were akin to a St. Louis outhouse in summer.⁶¹

Despite bitter factional divisions, German-Americans ably stamped their cultural influence on the region by improving education, providing valuable labor, and forming an integral voting bloc of the Democratic Party.⁶² In 1853, Koerner became the 12th Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, and the first German to hold the title. His tenure brought him closer to the state's political elite and signaled the legitimacy of German influence. However, German political victories in Missouri and Illinois also generated resentment and retaliation from native-born Americans.⁶³ Nativists voiced their anger during the 1852 St. Louis April Voting Riots, the 1854 St. Louis Know-Nothing Riot, and the 1855 Chicago Lager Beer Riot, along with victories in local elections across the Midwest in 1853.⁶⁴

Washington King's victory in the 1854 St. Louis Mayoral election, for example, was a major victory for the Know-Nothing Party. This signaled a high tide for the

⁶¹ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 18.

⁶² Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 203, 220-224. According to Boernstein, German Democrats in St. Louis drove the victories of Thomas Hart Benton in the early 1850s. He additionally comments on the great emphasis on education brought in by the Forty-Eighters, who primarily pushed for students to maintain their use of German and to provide a better education than the statuesque. German interest in public education was brought to the rest of St. Louis as Germans were elected to public school commissions.

⁶³ Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region," 308.; Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, 603.

⁶⁴ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 177-80; "More Victims," *Daily Missouri Republican* (St. Louis, MO), Aug 12, 1865.; "The Consequences," *Daily Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Apr 24, 1865.; Ron Grossman, "Chicago's Lager Beer Riots proved immigrants' power," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Sept 25, 2015. In April, 1852, a series of riots erupted between Germans and nativist Whigs. Germans in St. Louis' First, Fourth, and Fifth Wards fought in the streets. Boernstein states, "the rising influence of Germans in the West was a horror to both the Whigs and the Nativists, and because the German organization in St. Louis had faded away, they decided in secret caucus to give us a lesson then and there." Know-Nothings sparked a riot in 1854 targeting Irish and German voters in a similar manner as the 1852 riot. The Chicago Lager Beer riot began as Germans frustrated their opposition to Sunday saloon closures, enacted by Mayor Levi Boone. German tavern keepers were arrested by the hundreds while American owned taverns were allowed to remain in operation.

region's nativist activity and influence. The city's Germans were stunned by the election, but in retrospect Boernstein saw King's election as inevitable. It hinged on two factors, Boernstein observed. First, the national and regional surge in the Know-Nothing Party in the face of immigrant advances attracted threatened native-born voters. Secondly, when Germans refused to back Democratic candidates following the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act earlier that year, Know-Nothings won elections over weakened Democratic candidates.⁶⁵

The Kansas-Nebraska Act nullified the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited the creation of additional slave states north of 36° 30' latitude.⁶⁶ The Act, which directly allowed the expansion of slavery, incensed the St. Louis and Belleville German-Americans, who overwhelmingly opposed the policy. Forty-Eighters connected slavery to German serfdom, outlawed in 1815, and fought to end its expansion because they viewed the institution as immoral. Likewise, Grays detested slavery because of the threat its spread posed to German wages. Thomas Hart Benton's refusal to vote for the Act, and German refusal to support those who allowed it, led to the disintegration of Missouri's Democratic Party. In the midst of this political chaos, Know-Nothings won St. Louis.⁶⁷

Once in power, Mayor King attacked the German community with legislation closing the city's ethnic beer saloons and taverns on Sundays, leading Boernstein to liken

⁶⁵ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 206-8.

⁶⁶ Krause, "German Americans in the St. Louis Region," 306-307.

⁶⁷ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 176, 194-6, 206-9; Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol. 1, 341. Henry Boernstein notes in his memoirs that the only political commonality between Greens and Grays prior to the war was their shared hatred of slavery. Gustave Koerner and many of his fellow Bellevillers settled in Illinois rather than Missouri because Illinois was not a slave state. Koerner remarked in his memoirs that "Negro slavery is the only rope by which the devil holds the American people."

Know-Nothing rule to “virtual slavery.” Beer was a central facet of German culture, and the beer halls, saloons, and other intuitions that supplied it were fundamental components of German communities. Here Germans socialized, conducted business, and held civic events. Boernstein, for example, owned three popular beer halls and a brewery between 1857 and 1861. Following the attack on Fort Sumter, a company of German volunteers intending to join the 3rd Missouri Volunteer Infantry met in a beer hall to muster into three months service and again to sign on for three years.⁶⁸ Inspired by their desire to save their social institutions from nativists and resist the spread of slavery, Germans found common political ground.

To combat nativists like King, Germans and former native-born American Benton Democrats (supporters of Thomas Hart Benton) realized the strength of their united vote and defeated the Know-Nothings in the elections of 1856. In his memoirs, Boernstein called the elections the “first victory of the Republican idea,” which thereafter “advanced without pause until our efforts were crowned with Lincoln’s election.”⁶⁹ Grays were not as quick to join the Republican Party, however, as the Forty-Eighters. Belleville Grays looked towards Gustave Koerner, a Democrat and former Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, to decide whether or not to remain aligned with the Democratic Party. Koerner and the Grays were wary of joining the Republicans, owing to the party’s Know-Nothing and anti-immigration ties. However, despite extensive connections to the Democratic

⁶⁸ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 2249-52.; Buegel, "The Civil War Diary of John T. Buegel," 308, 315.

⁶⁹ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 206-9, 210. Voting alone did not end Know-Nothing rule. On November 1, 1855, a train carrying prominent St. Louis Know-Nothings to view a newly constructed bridge over the Gasconade River, fell off the tracks and killing many. This accident generated a gap in the city’s Know-Nothing leadership. St. Louis Germans joined the Mississippi Republican Party in 1856, after being without a party since 1854.

Party, Koerner and many Belleville Germans became Republicans as it was clear that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise marked a new agenda in the Democratic party.⁷⁰

German factions thus put aside their feuds to combat nativism and the expansion of slavery. By 1861, relations within German communities were decidedly calm. In answering Lincoln's call for troops in April, they demonstrated a united willingness to defend their new country. However, as it had prior to the war, nativist sentiment followed Germans into the army while secessionists threatened their home communities.

After the fall of Fort Sumter, pro-Southern forces in St. Louis mobilized in earnest. The Minute Men, a secessionist militia group, quickly organized and attempted to intimidate Unionist St. Louisans by parading throughout the city, including daily marches through the heavily German First Ward. As staunch Unionists, the city's Germans presented an immediate threat to secessionist efforts. In retaliation, St. Louis Germans created the unabhängige schwarzer Jägercorps, or Independent Black Rifle Corps, to challenge Minute Men raids into German neighborhoods. Years later, Boernstein recalled that the Black Rifles "terrified the Minute Men, and dark rumors spread that there were over a thousand of them." Secessionists thought the Black Rifles were "bound to a fearsome oath to exterminate all slaveholders and friends of slavery."⁷¹

⁷⁰ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol. 2, 4-5, 24, 27-8. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act directly correlates to why many Grays and Greens left the Democratic Party. Not all did however, as Koerner notes that many Germans in rural St. Clair County remained firm Democrats. Koerner recounts that these rural Germans were weary of Republican views on temperance, and voted Democrat not only because they always had but also to maintain their German customs. This is also true for the majority of Germans residing in Clinton County.

⁷¹ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 275-6.: Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 268-9. Although not all Minute Men were anti-German, there existed a strong contingent of former Know-Nothings within their ranks. Boernstein wrote about Minute Men, "The organization of the pro-southern Minute Men became more extensive with every passing day, and into their ranks came that same anti-German and lawless element which had once taken part in armed assault and arson in the First Ward as well as in later Know-Nothing disturbances." The first German volunteer militia organizations were largely formed by members

When the Lincoln Administration authorized the formation of four Missouri Volunteer Regiments, St. Louis raised five. The 1st, 2nd, and 4th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiments were largely German, where the 3rd and 5th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiments were almost entirely German. Historian Stephen D. Engel states that “over four-fifths of the men in these units were German.”⁷² Such a proportion of German volunteers clarifies why Minute Men went to such lengths to disrupt German-American communities. Unionism in St. Louis was practically synonymous with being German.

Early German volunteers predominantly hailed from the Turner Bund and other German militia organizations in the city such as the Union Guards and the Black Rifles. The city’s most prominent figures, U.S. Representative Preston Francis Blair, Franz Sigel, Henry Boernstein, Nicholaus Schüttner, and Charles E. Salomon led these early regiments.⁷³ Despite facing elevated anti-German violence perpetuated by pro-secession St. Louisans, German-Americans followed their leaders and hastily volunteered for the Union. John T. Buegel of the 3rd Missouri cited anti-German nativism as his primary motivation to enlisting. In his diary, Buegel spoke for his fellow Germans saying, “since we Germans at that time were looked upon as belonging to an unworthy nation, and Americans old and young looked upon us with contempt and disdain, we decided, after having listened to some speeches, to sell our skins as early as possible.”⁷⁴ He further

of the Wide Awakes, a political organization that supported the election of Lincoln. St. Louis and Belleville each had sizable Wide Awake factions.

⁷² Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 54.

⁷³ Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 53-4.

⁷⁴ Buegel, "The Civil War Diary of John T. Buegel," 308.

states that he and other Germans serving in these first Missouri regiments were eager to “teach the German-haters a never-to-be-forgotten lesson.”⁷⁵

Among the first to enlist were Adolph Dengler and Fred Meier. Dengler served as a captain in Sigel’s 3rd Missouri and advanced to colonel of the 43rd Illinois by the war’s end. Meier likewise served in the 3rd Missouri, later joining the 12th Missouri as a private and mustering out with the regiment as a captain. Dengler, along with many German volunteers, had valuable military experience from the German Revolutions in 1848.⁷⁶ Their prior service was crucial during the first months of war, as many Forty-Eighters filled Missouri’s first volunteer regiments. Forty-Eighter leadership was likewise vital to early Union mobilization. Historian Stephen D. Engle states that many Forty Eighters “found themselves on the forefront of encouraging Germans to participate in the war effort. As members of the Lincoln administration reached out to immigrant communities, these prominent revolutionaries were some of the first Lincoln contacted.”⁷⁷ The full force of St. Louis German contributions were first unleashed on May 10, when tensions burst in the city in an operation known as the Camp Jackson Affair. German recruits under the command of Captain Nathaniel Lyon captured a pro-secession encampment of the Missouri State Guard. Through rapid maneuvering and strength of numbers, the new

⁷⁵ Buegel, "The Civil War Diary of John T. Buegel," 308-9.

⁷⁶ Fred Meier to Brig. Genl. John B. Gray, August 19, 1864, 12th Regimental Infantry Co. F, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, MO (hereafter cited as MSA).: Gustave Koerner to Governor Richard Yates of Illinois, September 11, 1861, Adjutant General’s Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Commissions, Resignations, Discharges, Recommendations, Illinois State Archive, Springfield, IL (hereafter cited as ISA). This letter, written by Koerner, contain his suggestions for officer positions in the 43rd Illinois. In doing so he details their prior military experience.

⁷⁷ Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen” 18.

Federal Units of Missouri won without a fight and silenced the last organized secessionist threat within St. Louis for the remainder of the war.⁷⁸

As tensions in St. Louis boiled over, Belleville Germans did not sit idle. On April 23, a detachment of men under the command of Forty-Eighter Augustus Mersy traveled to Springfield and formed six companies for the three-month 9th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. German-Americans comprised over half of the 9th Illinois' total strength, the majority of whom hailed from St. Claire County. Throughout its early service, the regiment fortified Cairo, Illinois, with breastworks, barracks, and campsites.⁷⁹

Due to the 9th Illinois's hasty mustering and rushed officer elections, deep rifts emerged within its command structure. According to Lieutenant Colonel Mersy, two of his company commanders were unfit for service and the once respected Colonel Eleazer A. Paine was accused of neglecting the German-Americans in his unit, preferring the company of native-born American soldiers.⁸⁰ Through an ongoing correspondence with Koerner, Mersy conveyed further problems. He identified Paine as the crux of the Regiment's issues saying that Paine "“was not the right man; he was foggy, a martinet, and was constantly electioneering . . . when the electioneering is going on, the Germans are called the best soldiers, the best drilled and disciplined men; but, previous to that, they were constantly neglected.””⁸¹

Similar complaints regarding the 9th Illinois circulated among the enlisted men as unhappy Sergeant Henry Kircher worried about promotion, poor camp conditions, and

⁷⁸ Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 53-9.

⁷⁹ Marion Morrison, *A history of the Ninth Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Monmouth: J.S. Clark, printer, 1864), 7-10.

⁸⁰ Augustus Mersy to Joseph Kircher, May 3, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

⁸¹ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol.2, 151-2.

health during his three-month. Kircher desired a promotion as a commissioned officer to escape the uneducated enlistees in his company, but the men he disliked voted to select company level officers. In addition to Kircher's doubtful prospects for promotion, the dilapidated state of their barracks and a painful toothache led to his general unhappiness.⁸²

By early June, difficulties within the regiment continued, compelling Kircher and many of his friends to contemplate leaving the unit just a month prior to the end of their service. The difficulties endured by Kircher and his fellow Bellevillers were largely unrelated to nativism. They were closer related to typical problems faced by most soldiers. In a letter to Kircher, his uncle Henry Goedeking, convinced the young sergeant to remain in the regiment until its term of service ended in July. Goedeking wrote his nephew saying "it does not look very patriotic, if you should quit the military service now, after having had the intention to serve your country in this war, and it might give cause of sneering remarks to some people here."⁸³ It is telling that Goedeking appealed to Kircher's patriotism to convince the young Belleviller to tough out his final month in the 9th Illinois. Service to the U.S. held an important place within the German community of Belleville, as evidenced by the remarks Kircher could face had he and his friends left the regiment early.

While the 9th Illinois labored to fortify Cairo, the first Missouri regiments struggled to expel secessionist forces from their state. Franz Sigel and the 3rd Missouri formed part of the southern arm of Lyon's operation to secure Missouri for the Union. On

⁸² Henry Kircher to Joseph Kircher, May 10, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

⁸³ Henry A. Kircher, *A German in the Yankee Fatherland*, ed. Earl J. Hess, 6.

July 5, Sigel's command met a mass of Missouri State Guard at Carthage, where they performed well but beat a hasty retreat in the face of the large enemy force.⁸⁴ Sigel's leadership at Carthage brought him to national prominence, especially in Northern German communities. Stephen D. Engle notes in his biography of the German commander that "the name Sigel became a war cry among his countrymen. 'I fights mit Sigel' became a passport to gallantry."⁸⁵ Sigel and his small force even gained the praise of several native-born officers, including General Lyon and Major John Schofield. Despite Sigel and the 3rd Missouri's disciplined conduct at Carthage, many native-born Americans criticized their performance. Many "anti-Dutchmen" countered the German exclamation "I fights mit Sigel" by remarking that Germans likewise retreated with him.⁸⁶

German soldiers moving with Lyon's arm in central Missouri, were likewise treated poorly. Boernstein, serving as Colonel of the 2nd Missouri, wrote of General Lyon and his anti-German prejudice, saying, "As much as General Lyon owed his success and fame . . . to German volunteers alone, he could still never quite overcome his hatred for foreigners in general Germans in particular." Boernstein continued, writing, "On every occasion he preferred his American officers to brave German leaders, while German volunteers always received from him nothing but contempt."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 64-6.

⁸⁵ Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 65.

⁸⁶ Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 65.: John Van Deusen Du Bois, "The Civil War Journal And Letters of Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois: April 12, 1861 to October 16, 1862 Part II," *Missouri Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (October 1966): 35. Following the battle of Wilson's Creek, then Lieutenant John Van Deusen Du Bois, criticized Sigel's actions and related them to Sigel's proposed misleading report of the battle of Carthage. Du Bois additionally voiced his hatred of the Dutch.

⁸⁷ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 343.

The Battle of Wilson's Creek, fought five days after Carthage, signaled a high tide for nativism in the West. The Union battle plan revolved on Franz Sigel leading a successful maneuver around the combined enemy force to attack its rear while General Lyon's main assault simultaneously attacked the Confederate front. The battle ended in disaster for Lyon's badly outnumbered force, as Sigel's maneuver failed early in the day and Lyon's attack broke following his death. Despite the poor performance of the army as a whole and bad decisions made by Lyon, blame for the union's embarrassing defeat was placed on Sigel, and inspired similar nativist criticisms.⁸⁸ In defeat, Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois, who fought under Lyon, and several of his peers, including Majors Frederick Steele and John Schofield, took the opportunity to blame Sigel for the loss at Wilson's Creek.⁸⁹ Du Bois wrote "Had Sigel behaved even well, the victory was ours . . . All the guns lost were Sigel's. All the defeat was Sigel's All the men killed were Lyon's."⁹⁰ Major Steele placed blame on Sigel, writing that had he "rallied his men, and come to the assistance of General Lyon, in all probability the contest would speedily have terminated in our favor"⁹¹ The German commander was an easy target after his failed flanking maneuver. In St. Louis, Germans spoke against Sigel's critics and instead hailed him for his heroic action in battle, which increased his popularity among northern Germans.⁹² During the Army's humiliating retreat to Rolla, Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois, who fought under Lyon, voiced his disgust of Sigel and the Germans. He claimed,

⁸⁸ Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 69-82.

⁸⁹ U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), ser. 1 vol. 3, 94-8. (hereafter cited as OR).

⁹⁰ Du Bois, "The Civil War Journal And Letters of Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois," 35.

⁹¹ OR, ser. 1 vol. 3, 98. Hereafter cited as OR.

⁹² Engle, *Yankee Dutchman*, 81-2.

“our scouts could find no enemy, and yet Sigel and his Dutchmen were behaving like whipped Dogs.”⁹³ Prior to the battle, Du Bois expressed his disdain for German-Americans, swearing, “Damn the Dutch element of Missouri. They are useful but cowardly, and never become Americanized.”⁹⁴ At this point in the war, nativism impacted the experiences of German-American soldiers serving in the West. The failure at Wilson’s Creek only intensified the severity of anti-German prejudice, despite their continued service to the Union.

The amount of blame placed on Sigel was unfairly assigned, as the entire Union force and especially Lyon, performed poorly during their first sizable engagement. The nativist remarks towards Sigel and German soldiers by Du Bois indicates the veracity of anti-German sentiment found in the Union army. Moreover, the scapegoating of Sigel by native-born officers demonstrates the ease with which official blame was placed on ethnic soldiers. This incident followed a similar pattern the army’s denouncement of the XI Corps Army of the Potomac following the Battle of Chancellorsville. For Germans in the West, continued battlefield losses might have led to a similar wartime experience as Germans serving in the East. Fortunately for western German-American soldiers, future battlefield performances altered the severity of nativism within the army.

A small scale example that demonstrates the effect of shared hardships and battlefield performance on ethnic relations can be viewed in the service of the three-month 1st Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The 1st Iowa played an important role

⁹³ Du Bois, “The Civil War Journal And Letters of Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois,” 37.

⁹⁴ John Van Deusen Du Bois, “The Civil War Journal And Letters of Colonel John Van Deusen Du Bois: April 12, 1861 to October 16, 1862 Part I,” *Missouri Historical Review* 60, no. 4 (July 1966): 452. Du Bois expressed disgust at the number of Germans in the army by stating that Dutch was the predominant language in camp.

during the Battle of Wilson's Creek, and contained a similar number of German-American soldiers as the 9th Illinois. Historian William Garrett Piston sheds light into the structure and experience of an ethnically mixed three-month regiment by examining the 1st Iowa. Unlike the 9th Illinois, the 1st Iowa experienced little ethnic tension, which partially stemmed from each company remaining spatially separate throughout the majority of their service. Consequently, instead of forming a regimental identity, each company strove to defend its home community's honor, as their physical separation prevented the 1st Iowa from developing a regimental bond or identity. The first appearance of a distinct unit identity emerged from the shared hardships encountered during the Wilson's Creek Campaign. However, this bond did not flourish as the unit's enlistments ended shortly after the battle.⁹⁵ Their active role in the campaign necessitated cooperation and led to the beginnings of a unit identity, unlike the 9th Illinois which performed garrison and fatigue duty throughout their term of service that amplified internal instability.

The structure and service of three-month regiments and the experiences of Germans within them enables the construction of several conclusions regarding early German-American service in the West. These regiments — the 3rd Missouri, 1st Iowa, and the 9th Illinois — were hastily recruited, which enhanced chances of voting in or receiving appointed officers who led unfairly or not at all. The 9th Illinois experienced leadership woes almost immediately, which produced anti-German nativism and low morale. In the 1st Iowa, ethnic tensions were a nonissue, but the physical separation of

⁹⁵ William Garrett Piston, "The 1st Iowa Volunteers: Honor And Community In A Ninety-Day Regiment" *Civil War History* 44, no. 1, (1998), 5-23.

each company combined with spending only three months in service prevented the formation of a regimental identity. The 3rd Missouri faced an altogether separate issue, as their colonel, Franz Sigel, experienced excessive criticism for his part in the Union defeat at Wilson's Creek, leaving the 3rd Missouri's short service marred by heightened nativist criticism. Whether Sigel's condemnation was deserved or not, the 3rd Missouri encountered anti-German sentiment as a direct result of their perceived battlefield performance. For Germans serving in three-month regiments, early service was not smooth, as they faced more than the boredom and depression associated with soldier life. Their conduct in combat, and that of their commanders, influenced how American soldiers viewed their German peers. Furthermore, Germans such as those in the 9th Illinois, did not see combat, and were unable to demonstrate their value, which enabled nativism to continue.

As a result of their poor treatment in the 9th Illinois, many German Bellevillers chose to join the ethnic 12th Missouri over reenlisting in the 9th Illinois. Gustave Koerner wrote, "the 9th regiment was tired of its colonel, Paine. A great many declared that they would not reenlist under him. There were among the other regiments hundreds of Germans who wanted to enter the German regiments. In fact, there were enough dissatisfied Germans there to make up a regiment."⁹⁶ Eight Germans formerly of the 9th Illinois became officers in the 12th Missouri, Albert Affleck, Henry Kircher, Joseph Ledergerber, Frederick Ledergerber, Fritz Kessler, Charles Deeke, William Albuch, and

⁹⁶ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol.2, 161-2.

George Wend.⁹⁷ The dissatisfaction and departure of many Germans from the 9th Illinois demonstrates the greater exodus of Germans from mixed-ethnic three-month regiments. This pattern influenced the formation of two Belleville companies in the 12th Missouri and the creation of the 43rd Illinois.

Despite the difficulties associated with service in three-month regiments, German-American volunteers gained valuable experience that transitioned well into company and regimental command in three-year regiments. On December 19, 1861, the 12th Missouri was mustered into the army. Its Colonel, Peter J. Osterhaus, recruited predominantly in St. Louis, but induced enough recruits from Belleville to enabled the formation of two companies.⁹⁸ Despite their small representation, Bellevillers gradually occupied the majority of officer positions, many of whom had cut their teeth in the 9th Illinois. August Mersy explained the progress of the young Bellevillers, “now they are getting more practical and I am firmly convinced that it is an excellent school for very many of them, since they must learn order.”⁹⁹ Mersy also discussed Joseph’s son Henry and his quality as a sergeant, noting that “the only thing that I always have to disagree with and correct in him is that he is too shy. A little more audacity can’t hurt. He is willing and does every duty without the slightest objection and I hope that the shy being will disappear after the first cloud of powder.”¹⁰⁰ Mersy’s tutelage gave Kircher and other Bellevillers a solid foundation that helped propel their climb within 12th Missouri.

⁹⁷ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol.2, 163; “9th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Month and Three Year Service,” The Illinois USGenWeb Project, last modified 1997, https://civilwar.illinoisgenweb.org/reg_html/009_reg.html.

⁹⁸ Hess, “The 12th Missouri Infantry,” 55.

⁹⁹ Augustus Mersy to Joseph Kircher, May 12, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁰⁰ Augustus Mersy to Joseph Kircher, May 12, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

Understanding the longing of the region's German-Americans to form a German regiment, Koerner lobbied Governor Yates for permission to form one in St. Clair County. His petitioning led to the creation of the 43rd Illinois, or the Koerner Regiment as it was also known, which mustered into service on October 12th, 1862. Initial recruitment efforts in St. Clair County brought the regiment to almost 600 German soldiers, and with the introduction of two Swedish companies from Rock Island, Illinois, the regiment achieved a full strength of 800.¹⁰¹ The men tasked with commanding the regiment were old hands at leading soldiers. Colonel Julius Raith led a company of Illinois volunteers during the Mexican-American War and his Lieutenant Colonel, Adolph Engelmann, served as a Lieutenant in Mexico and later fought alongside revolutionary forces in Schleswig-Holstein. Finally, Major Adolph Dengler had experience as a captain in Franz Sigel's 3rd Missouri.¹⁰²

As ethnic units, both the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri maintained their daily usage of the German language. However, all official regimental documents were composed in English, which was necessitated by their serving in an English speaking army. Colonel Engelmann of the 43rd Illinois understood the importance of English, consistently favoring promotions of those Germans who were proficient in both languages. Following the removal of the unit's Surgeon, Dr. Hugo M. Starkloff, Engelmann wrote to Gustave Koerner that, "I want a doctor who can write English correctly."¹⁰³ Maintaining officers fluent in English was likewise important for company

¹⁰¹ J. N. Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III, (Springfield: Phillips Bros., State Printers, 1901), 274.

¹⁰² Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol.2, 164-5.

¹⁰³ Adolph Engelmann to Gustave Koerner, April 20, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

communication within the 43rd Illinois, as not all spoke German, such Company C, otherwise known as the Swedish Company. In November, 1862, Colonel Engelmann secured the transfer and commission of Carl Arosenius, formerly the Quarter Master for the 59th Illinois, to serve as captain of the Swedish Company, specifically due to his fluency in English and Swedish.¹⁰⁴ The ability of officers to converse in English maintained proper channels of communication between ethnic and native-born American regiments. German unit emphasis on the English proficiency of officers likewise demonstrates how the war influenced change on some German soldiers, but not all.

No available evidence speaks to either regiment's enlisted Germans pursuing any degree of fluency in English. The fact that Colonel Engelmann went to such lengths in promoting or seeking the transfer of English-speaking Germans or Swedes, however, demonstrates the lack of English speaking soldiers in the regiment. With officers who spoke both languages fluently, there remained no reason for individual enlisted men to learn English, as their day to day operations occurred within the regiment rather than the brigade. Although serving in the East, the experiences of Surgeon Carl Uterhard of the 119th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment lends an example as to why German non-officers did not learn English despite serving in an English speaking army. Following his return to the 119th New York after being exchanged for Confederate prisoners, Uterhard wrote of his English language skills saying, "In the two weeks as a prisoner, when I was

¹⁰⁴Fred Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls: Arosenius, Carl.," Office Of The Illinois Secretary Of State, Illinois State Archives, <https://www.ilsos.gov/isaveterans/civilMusterSearch.do>. (hereafter cited as ICWMDR).: Carl Arosenius to Major J. P. Robb, October 16, 1862, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Commissions, ALPLM.: Aronesius wrote "The reason why the Colonel of the 43rd Ills. Deems it expedient to have me appointed to said place is just that the company is entirely composed of my Countrymen (Swedes), and that there is no one in the Company having Education enough even to write the English language."

together with American doctors, I learned more than the entire time before, I was really quite fluent. Here I've forgotten it all again, because I only associate with Germans.”¹⁰⁵ Whether or not this holds true to enlisted men in the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri, the fact remains that not all German soldiers were required to learn English while in the army, which was further negated by their close proximity to fellow Germans.

Despite serving in an American army, each regiment maintained certain German customs that tied them to their home communities and helped maintain their German identity in the service. The most distinct being the regular consumption of alcohol. Officers in the 43rd Illinois consumed lager beer, wine, or whisky almost daily, as they were continuously supplied with wine from Colonel Engelmann's vineyard. Colonel Engelmann in particular enjoyed wine, beer and spirits so much that he referenced alcohol in nearly a third of his letters home.¹⁰⁶ The 12th Missouri likewise engaged in the frequent libation of beer and whiskey. Alcohol was so important to the men of the 12th Missouri that, in the midst of a food shortage in April 1862, Kircher recorded that there was “plenty of Whiskey but no flour.”¹⁰⁷ The ubiquitous presence and importance of alcohol within German camps greatly differed from many native-born American camps, but did not always act as a wedge between the two parties. Keller observes that within the Army of the Potomac's XI Corps, Germans and Anglo Americans drank with one another. This likewise occurred in the West, as Colonel Engelmann frequently treated his

¹⁰⁵ Kamphoefner and Helbich, *Germans in the Civil War*, 161.

¹⁰⁶ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, November 22, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Kircher diary, entry for April 22, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

staff, and other American officers, to wine or beer.¹⁰⁸ Where many native-born American soldiers similarly relished spirits, the sheer quantity of alcohol consumed by the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri and its ubiquitous presence within their camps sets these German regiments apart from most native-born units and demonstrates its cultural importance to German soldiers.

Other customs found in German camps included the sounds of German singing and music. The 43rd Illinois had a singing troop, which dazzled guests of the regiment at parties or sang to bring cheer on holidays.¹⁰⁹ The singing troops were not unusual in Civil War camps, but the ethnic nature of their music was. Historian Christopher Keller likewise notes the importance of music to German regiments in the East, who formed singing societies, sang in their camps, while marching, and as they went into battle.¹¹⁰ German regiments, such as the 12th Missouri, also found pride in the cleanliness of their camps and the hygienic practices of their soldiers. Henry Kircher remarked that “Overall, one finds that the regiments consisting of Germans have better health than those consisting of Americans or Irish.”¹¹¹ Kircher chalked this up to the overall general cleanliness of the German soldier, their sparing use of sugar, proper cooking methods, and availability of bread made using pure flour.¹¹² Each of these customs uniquely characterized German regiments and separated their experiences from non-ethnic regiments.

¹⁰⁸ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 33.; Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, June 12, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁰⁹ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, June 18, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹¹⁰ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 34-5.

¹¹¹ Henry Kircher to Mother, January 30, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹¹² Henry Kircher to Mother, January 30, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

A general distaste of slavery further separated the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri from many native-born regiments, and other German regiments in the West. Anti-slavery sentiment was not shared by all Germans, nor was it a particularly German trait, but German-Americans from the Greater St. Louis area particularly detested the institution. St. Louis and to a certain extent Belleville German abhorrence of slavery came from their close proximity to the institution, which they saw on a daily basis. Many in the region likewise connected the institution to German serfdom, which was outlawed in 1815. Colonel's Raith, Engelmann, and the officers and men of the 43rd Illinois expressed their community's aversion to slavery on the front. On multiple occasions both colonel's harbored escaped slaves as early as January 1862. Their actions defied the Confiscation Act of 1861, that allowed only the confiscation of slaves used directly by the Confederate war effort.¹¹³ In a letter to his wife Colonel Engelmann spoke of one such event, writing that "a small negro boy, perhaps 10 years old and badly scared came to the Col. and asked for protection and said, 'I know you won't whip me.' We still have Joe with us, but how we can keep him if his owner asks for him, I do not know."¹¹⁴ A few days later Engelmann wrote, "some of our men took a 1 1/2 year old negro child from its master and returned it to its mother. The master had had a sale – sold the mother – kept the child."¹¹⁵ The men of the 43rd Illinois chose to actively express their anger towards slavery early in the war, a sentiment that did not change during their term of service.

¹¹³ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry Of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 353.

¹¹⁴ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, January 4, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹¹⁵ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, January 12, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

German-Americans in these regiments considered German slave owners or Confederates the worst sort of men. In a letter to his wife regarding the regiment's contact with a German slave owner, Engelmann wrote, "Among the places visited yesterday was the farm of a German named Gebhardt ... He owns a fine farm and slaves... who speak both English and German . . . Aside from being a 'Schwein-niegel', (Dirty Hog) he is a strong secessionist."¹¹⁶

This sentiment was likewise reflected in the 12th Missouri. In a letter home following the Battle of Chickasaw Bluffs, Kircher revealed that several Confederate prisoners were German. Shocked and angered upon finding the identity of one man, he penned, "One of the turncoats worked at Mohlmann's; I have forgotten his name. He was immediately recognized by true Bellevillers and not badly dressed down, as he was a secesh, a German and on top of that a Belleviller."¹¹⁷ Soldiers in the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri disapproved of Germans who embraced the Confederacy and regarded such men as worse traitors than non-German secessionists.

Although the majority of Germans in each regiment detested slavery, there were outliers. Captain Charles Engle of the 43rd Illinois wrote to Rock Island's *The Evening Argus* on the topic of contrabands. He penned, "a more ignorant, thieving, good for nothing set of people does not exist under all creation. I never was in favor of negro equality, and since my near acquaintance with them, my opinion in regard of them has

¹¹⁶ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, December 29, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹¹⁷ Henry Kircher to Augusta Kircher, January 3, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

not been altered.”¹¹⁸ Engle voiced the opinion of numerous Germans in northern and central Illinois, several of whom remained Democrats during the war. For many, even among those who opposed slavery, being likened to a slave assumed a derogatory connotation and was considered among the worst recriminations. In questioning the honor of a fellow officer in the 12th Missouri who failed to arrive at a duel, Henry Kircher criticized him saying that he, “in short did a thing that a miserable nigger would have thought to[o] dishonorable.”¹¹⁹ Despite a distaste of the institution, many Germans considered slaves inferior to whites.

During their first months of service, Germans in the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois continued to face nativism. Within ethnic units German-Americans continued to experience similar degrees of nativism as they had faced previously in three-month units. By joining German regiments, the soldiers avoided internal conflict with native-born Americans; however, they were easily distinguishable from other Union regiments by their use of German over English and were therefore easier targets for nativism. After serving in short three-month regiments where anti-German nativism was a very real occurrence, Germans in the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri were overanxious, which led to their paranoid propensity to denounce outside difficulties as nativist driven.

Following three demoralizing months with the 9th Illinois, Kircher and his fellow Belleviller officers of the 12th Missouri joined Sigel’s Division in General John C. Frémont’s Army of the West, operating in eastern Missouri. By mid-November, Kircher began to notice that Germans were segregated from the main body of troops. On

¹¹⁸ Charles Engle, “Letter From Tennessee” *The Evening Argus* (Rock Island, IL), December 17, 1862.

¹¹⁹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for November 7, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

November 10, the regiment returned from a two-day march, reaching the army's camp in Springfield, but were surprised to find the camp abandoned. Kircher surmised that "it was a Trick of Gen H. thinking perhaps in this way to get rid of the dutch."¹²⁰ General Henry Halleck's appointment to Frémont's former position incensed Germans in the Department of the West. Many considered Frémont a champion of German-Americans, where Halleck unashamedly demonstrated favoritism to native-born American soldiers under his command.¹²¹ Kircher's remarks on Halleck's command demonstrate how something as simple as military maneuver was perceived by Germans as being nativist in nature. In a similar manner to the 12th Missouri, Germans serving in the 43rd Illinois quickly encountered nativism. On October 12, 1861, the 43rd Illinois mustered into the army and received firearms the following day. To their disgust, the men were issued outdated Harper's Ferry and English Tower muskets.¹²² The crumbling state of the weapons led Colonels Raith, Engelmann, and Major Denlger to pen Koerner and ask that he press Governor Yates for better arms.¹²³ Upon hearing this, Koerner angrily wrote the governor saying, "Having seen by the papers that you are being supplied with serviceable arms to some, intent, let me repeat my request not to forget the 43rd Regiment, now at Otterville, and in face of the enemy. They have the poorest sort of guns (Tower muskets) with tubes too large for any caps, which the St. Louis Arsenal can furnish!!"¹²⁴ Koerner voiced the feelings of betrayal shared by the men of the 43rd Illinois. Not only did nativism play into

¹²⁰ Henry Kircher diary, entry for November 10, 1861, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹²¹ Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 372.

¹²² J. N. Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III, (Springfield: Phillips Bros., State Printers, 1901), 274.

¹²³ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol.2, 194.

¹²⁴ Gustave Koerner to Richard Yates, December 21, 1861, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA.

the minds of the regiment, but any action while the regiment was armed with old rifles incompatible for the use of standard percussion caps, would lead to catastrophe.

More importantly than the 43rd Illinois' poor equipage was their assignment to an Anglo-American division, as opposed to General Sigel's German division. In a letter to Gustave Koerner, Colonel Raith wrote, "It seems to one that there is a regular plan pursued to have all German regiments rather so divided as to be stuck in with American brigades than to be formed of entirely German regiments."¹²⁵ The 43rd Illinois and 9th Wisconsin were earmarked for Sigel, but their assignment never materialized. This slight, combined with the promotion of General Samuel Ryan Curtis, influenced Sigel to resign on December 31. Sigel understood the events as a demonstration of Halleck's nativism, whereas Halleck argued otherwise.¹²⁶ Whether the 43rd Illinois' assignment was motivated by nativism or other factors, there existed a silver lining. In his letter to Koerner, Colonel Raith penned that, "Colonel White of the 31st Illinois is at present our brigade commander. He is a gentleman, but will try everything to have us permanently attached to his brigade, as our regiment is, though I say it myself, an acquisition to any brigade."¹²⁷ Colonel White's need to keep the German regiment in his brigade speaks to their ability as a unit and the willingness of native-born Americans to appreciate it.

Not every nativist act witnessed by the German units affected the soldiers, but their families and other German families on the front likewise experienced such sentiment. Two days before the 43rd Illinois officially mustered into federal service,

¹²⁵ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol.2, 194.

¹²⁶ Earl J. Hess "Sigel's Resignation: A Study in German-Americanism and the Civil War," *Civil War History* 26, no. 1 (March 1980), 8-9.

¹²⁷ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol.2, 194-5.

Colonel Engelmann recorded an incident in a letter to his wife regarding German civilian relations with non-German soldiers. He wrote, “Last night, one and a half miles from here, four cavalymen attempted to assault a German woman and her daughter; the husband and father came with a club and killed two of them, whereupon the other two fled. For fear their comrades might seek revenge, a guard consisting of a Sergeant and ten men was put over his house.”¹²⁸ The incident unnerved Engelmann and likely impacted the mood of the enlisted men prior to their muster. Engelmann indicates no distinction to which army the assailants belonged, but he clearly indicated that anti-German sentiment plagued the region.

St. Louis-Belleville area Germans serving in three-month regiments documented genuine accounts of nativism within the ranks, but some problems encountered in three-year regiments appear less driven by actual prejudice but rather what German’s perceived to be nativism. For instance, the 43rd Illinois was initially equipped with outdated firearms, but so were other regiments mustered in around the same time. According to the official regimental histories published by the Adjutant General of Illinois, only three regiments out of the 30th to 59th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment’s were said to have been equipped with old or converted firearms: this includes the 36th, 43rd, and 57th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiments. Of the three, two were considered ethnic regiments, the 43rd Illinois (German) and 57th Illinois (Swedish). Only the 36th Illinois consisted predominantly of native-born Americans. Despite the fact that two of the three regiments who received poor quality arms were ethnic, it remains that only three regiments of the

¹²⁸ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, October 9, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

twenty-nine regiment sample received outdated firearms. Furthermore, the 43rd Illinois received new “Belgian Muskets” in January following the additions of companies I and K.¹²⁹ This indicates that the 43rd Illinois’ initial haul of poor rifles is an outlier, and most likely due to a logistical decision rather than nativism. A logical explanation could relate to the 43rd Illinois’ low size after being mustered into service. During their initial two months of service, the 43rd Illinois operated without two companies, leaving their numbers too low to be effective in heavy combat. Perhaps, the state and army prioritized the issue of quality arms to those units of full strength and of a higher probability of entering combat. It is possible however, that nativism played a part in this scene, but it remains unproven.

Nativism in the East however, remained very real and present throughout the war, especially during the conflict’s first two years. No event that captured national attention better attests to massive anti-German sentiment in the East than the disastrous march of Brigadier General Louis Blenker’s Division in the Spring of 1862. Following General Frémont’s transfer to the East Blenker’s Division was transferred from Washington to the Shenandoah Valley, to operate under his command. Blenker’s German Division was hastily sent on a forced march across three mountain ranges in winter conditions. The undersupplied contingent of 10,000 German soldiers suffered 2,000 casualties, tied directly to them being undersupplied with food and proper winter clothing. Tired, hungry, and unable to receive supplies from Washington, the men of Blenker’s Division foraged for supplies to survive. Rumors of the Division’s Germans “plundering” Northern

¹²⁹ Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III. 609.; Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III. 274.; Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. IV. 66.

Virginian filled eastern newspapers, and effectively portrayed Germans as barbarous and uncontrollable. Anti-German prejudice continued in the East, and exploded following the XI Corps Army of the Potomac's failure at the battle of Chancellorsville.¹³⁰

Although Germans serving in the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri escaped the brunt of nativism, other internal issues remained present. Henry Kircher addressed the internal rivalries of the 12th Missouri between St. Louis and Belleville Germans. Kircher wrote, "There are in the whole regiment, as is generally said, 3 cliques: namely, the Belleville or Illinois clique and the St. Louis or Missouri, which they call the misery clique, and then the neutral."¹³¹ The three cliques represent a continuation of the pre-war rivalries held between the St. Louis and Belleville communities. Not every issue resulted in hard feelings or grudges. The 43rd Illinois, for example, contained two companies of Swedish soldiers from Rock Island, Illinois. There were no documented ethnic issues between the Germans and Swedes largely because the two groups could not communicate with one another.¹³² Swedish-American Private Hans Westerlund was troubled by the ethnic diversity of the regiment because the regimental chaplain spoke only German. Westerlund sadly wrote, "Of course the regiment's pastor preaches sometimes, but the few times he has preached he has preached in German, because [members of] the whole

¹³⁰ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 35-8. German soldiers became ubiquitous with plundering following their portrayal in eastern newspapers, and the term "to blenker" was used to describe soldier's plundering. Keller notes that the newspapers and generals forgot to take into consideration three major points regarding the Division's movements: "first, the German division was harassed on its way to Romney by Confederate bushwhackers, which prompted some harsh measures against local civilians; second, General Frémont clearly witnessed the plight of the troops under his command and turned a blind eye; and third, the soldiers were literally starving in the field."

¹³¹ Henry Kircher to Mother, June 14, 62, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹³² Carl Arosenius to Major J. P. Robb, October 16, 1862, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Commissions, ALPLM.: Arosenius was commissioned Captain of the Swedish Company because no enlisted men could speak English.

regiment are German except for us.”¹³³ Both instances demonstrate the vast complexities involved in examining the service of ethnic soldiers as they cannot all fit into one cast, but instead must be examined as inherently different. Despite each regiment being overwhelmingly German, relations were not always smooth, and each regiment attained a different dynamic.

Once mustered into three-year regiments, St. Louis and Belleville Germans serving within ethnic units remained influenced by nativism, meanwhile, those in mixed units confronted dramatically less. With three years of service looming, officers and enlisted men of the 9th Illinois reorganized. Their troublesome first three months of service inspired tensions that led many Germans to seek shelter from nativism in ethnic regiments. With the promotion of Colonel Paine to Brigadier General in September and the removal of incapable officers, the 9th Illinois assumed a new shape and character. Despite losing two companies of Germans who refused to reenlist with the regiment, four German-American companies remained. In a letter to Henry Goedekeing composed in December, the regiment’s new Colonel, August Mersy excitedly wrote, “In my 9th everything is very quiet, the Germans and Americans live so happily together and with the exception of 2 or 3 I never heard a complaint.”¹³⁴ Only three months after Paine’s promotion, Colonel Mersy turned the 9th Illinois into an effective unit in which nativism hardly existed.¹³⁵

¹³³ Hans Westerlund to Unknown, November 29, 1861, translated by Lars Jenner, Hans Westerlund Papers, Special Collections Augustana College, Rock Island, IL (hereafter cited as SCAC).

¹³⁴ Augustus Mersy to Henry Goedekeing, December 7, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹³⁵ Augustus Mersy to Henry Goedekeing, December 7, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.; J. N. Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. I, (Springfield: Phillips Bros., State Printers, 1901), 459.

The 9th Illinois ably reorganized their unit once mustered into three-years of service, and were restructured into an efficient unit. Germans, and other foreign born members of the 30th Illinois, experienced little nativism once sworn into federal service, despite their minority status in the unit. The most obvious pattern associated with lessened nativism in the 30th and 9th Illinois was their strong organization. Like the three-year 9th Illinois, the 30th Illinois quickly expelled incapable officers and men, which brought competent soldiers into leadership positions. Additionally, the commission of Colonel P. B. Fouke and Lieutenant Colonel Elias S. Dennis provided the regiment with two tough disciplinarians who thoroughly prepared the regiment for combat through diligent drilling.¹³⁶

The 30th Illinois' comprehensive training ensured that the regiment worked together in combat, and also acted to bring the companies together. In a similar manner to the 1st Iowa, the 30th Illinois was comprised of companies from nine different Illinois counties, thus necessitating the formation of a single regimental identity.¹³⁷ As drilling brought the unit together, it equally highlighted the contributions of ethnic soldiers. In a letter published in the *Carlinville Free Democrat*, an anonymous soldier of Company H wrote,

I cannot close without mentioning the noble soldier and drill master of Co. H, John A. Vonkohl, of Nilwood. to whom the company and its officers are indebted for their advancement and proficiency in general discipline. We are most fortunate in obtaining his services, and what makes him more praiseworthy, he entered the service, as your correspondent did, a private and a

¹³⁶ McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*, 11.

¹³⁷ "30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service," The Illinois USGenWeb Project, Last modified 1997, https://civilwar.illinoisgenweb.org/reg_html/030_reg.html: The 30th Illinois formed companies from nine Illinois counties: Mercer County, Sangamon County, Union County, Randolph County, Crawford County, Clark County, Edgar County, Clinton County, Macoupin County, and Bond County.

stranger to most of the company. I believe he has some friends in your city. They may well be proud of the son of the Faderland.¹³⁸

Vonkohl was born in the German community of Hanover, Illinois and moved to Macoupin County prior to the war. It is unclear how he became conversant in military drill, but regardless of how he achieved this skillset, Vonkohl rose to the rank of 1st Lieutenant, by the war's end, and his skillful leadership and service earned the praise of his fellow soldiers.¹³⁹

The 30th Illinois' early battlefield deployment, as opposed to the three-month 1st Iowa and 9th Illinois, provides an additional explanation for the relatively low nativism experienced in that unit. On the morning of November 7, 1861, just two months after being mustered into federal service, the regiment participated in the Battle of Belmont. The encounter, though small in size and almost ending in a Union disaster, acted as the baptism by fire for the young Army of the Tennessee and Ulysses S. Grant's first test in combat leadership as a brigadier general.¹⁴⁰ During the battle, the roughly 500-strong 30th Illinois engaged in heavy firefights with enemy infantry and held their ranks during a Confederate counterattack as many regiments in Grant's command floundered in confusion. When the last bullet had flown and the smoke subsided, the men of the 30th Illinois reflected on their action. They had

¹³⁸ "Camp Correspondence" *Carlinville Free Democrat* (Carlinville, IL), October 3, 1862.

¹³⁹ Fred Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls: Vonkahl, John A.," ICWMDR.: This website provides complete rosters, descriptive rolls, and muster sheets for the 30th Illinois Infantry and all other units furnished by Illinois for service in the Union Army. Most importantly for the study of the mixed 30th Illinois, the nativity of most soldiers are listed.: Ogden Greenough to Han, December 29, 1861, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC. In a letter to a friend, Ogden Greenough wrote that "Jake Fraker . . . is the best officer (Sergeant) in the Regiment." Fraker was born in Switzerland and joined the regiment as it was formed. Greenough's ease at labeling a foreign born soldier "the best officer in the regiment," speaks to the willingness with which men of the 30th Illinois treated and accepted soldiers of varying ethnicities.

¹⁴⁰ Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory: The Army of the Tennessee, 1861-1865* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 47-61.

performed well, holding fast in the face of the enemy and captured the famed “Watson’s New Orleans Battery.” As a result of its courage under fire the regiment suffered thirteen men killed as well as the capture of its doctor. Although Belmont was their first experience under enemy fire, the unit displayed a coolness, which undoubtedly related to their diligent instruction under Colonel Fouke.¹⁴¹ The 30th Illinois’ first battlefield performance demonstrates its tight unit cohesion, and similarly indicates their ability to work together and look towards their judge their fellow soldiers on their merit rather than ethnicity.

Nativism within the 30th Illinois surely existed, but no surviving letters written by members of the regiment utilize anti-immigrant language, nor do they allude to it. The men appeared unconcerned with ethnic differences in the regiment, despite nearly a fifth of the unit identifying as foreign-born.¹⁴² Surviving letters and diaries composed by members of the 30th Illinois, demonstrate their awareness of ethnic soldiers within the regiment. For example, Corporal Robert M. Dihel and Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads identify ethnic soldiers in their letters by referring to their nativity. Many others, such as the letters of musician Benjamin Boring and Sergeant David W. Poak simply state the name of a soldier and completely ignore their

¹⁴¹ McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*, 17-20.; J. N. Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. II, (Springfield: Phillips Bros., State Printers, 1901), 503-38.; U.S. War Department, *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 3, 277.; General McClelland commanded the 1st Brigade during the Battle of Belmont, where he noted the full strength of the 30th Illinois to be 500 strong. Not every company was present at the battle, but the full strength of the regiment at this time could not have been more than 7-800.

¹⁴² Delap, “Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.”: “30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service,” The Illinois USGenWeb Project. The approximate percentage of foreign soldiers within the 30th Illinois is 21%. These and other statistics were calculated by the author using sources from the two online databases listed here. A random ten percent sample was taken from each company to provide as accurate calculations as possible. The subjects for each sample were chosen by starting with the third name on the compiled muster lists from “Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.” Each successive soldier represents the tenth soldier after the initial. In other words, the second soldier for the sample was the thirteenth soldier on the list, and the third was the twenty-third.

country of origin.¹⁴³ In rare cases however, soldiers specifically mentioned their relationships to ethnic soldiers. Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads of Company H for example, wrote his father of a group of court martialed soldiers sent back to Alton, Illinois. Haynes identifies two in particular as he wrote, “the rest you don’t know though their names are Joseph Richards, a frenchman and David Scott a scotchman, and if your are at alton you must go and see them for Scott and Richards are the best soldiers we had in our Co and they will be glad to see you when you tell them you are my father for I and them are old messmates.”¹⁴⁴ These examples demonstrate that within the 30th Illinois ethnic soldiers were viewed as belonging to the regiment rather than a particular ethnicity.

Perhaps ethnic soldiers were treated as any other soldier due to the pure number of different ethnicities and cultures represented in the regiment. The 30th Illinois was comprised of soldiers from at least ten nativities including native-born Americans, Germans, Irish, Canadians, English, Scottish, Austrians, French, Dutch, Swedish, Swiss, and after 1862 African Americans. The German and Irish contingents represented the two largest ethnic factions.¹⁴⁵ In total, the foreign born population of the 30th Illinois comprised around 21% of the soldiers, while native-born Americans constituted 74% of the regiment. Ethnic soldiers were represented in

¹⁴³Robert M. Dihel, “My Beloved Kate: a collection of Civil War letters,” ALPLM.: Jacob Haynes Rhoads, *The Civil War Letters of Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads*, ed. by LeVerne O. Wahl, (Published by Author: Illinois, 2000).: Benjamin F. Boring, collection, 1861-1918, Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute, IN (hereafter cited as VCPL).: David W. Poak, “*Dear Sister Sadie*”: *the letters of David W. Poak, 30th Illinois Infantry during the Civil War: also the diary of Edward Grow and letters of Henry M. McLain*, ed. Matthew Anderson (South Carolina: CreateSpace Publishing, 2014).

¹⁴⁴ Jacob Haynes Rhoads, *The Civil War Letters of Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads*, 86. Haynes provides no details on their charges or the trial, but both men rejoined the regiment shortly after the letter was written and served for the remainder of the war.

¹⁴⁵ Delap, “Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.”

each of the unit's ten companies, the largest contingent, predominantly Germans, belonged to Company K. This company contained a proportion of approximately 44% foreign born soldiers, which reflects the foreign population of Clinton County, where the company was raised.¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, it is likely that the regiment's demographics led to good ethnic experiences within the regiment. Private Henry Leonardt of Company K and Musician Benjamin Williams of Company F are representative of the typical soldier in the 30th Illinois. Initial volunteers were on average around 25 years old, unmarried, farmers or other laborers. Apart from Leonardt's German nativity, he and Williams appear similar on their respective descriptive roles. When mustered into Company K in August 1861, Leonardt was a single 26-year-old brick layer, living in Hannover, Illinois. Williams, who was likewise unmarried, 23, and worked as a farmer in Paris, Illinois. Each man enlisted in August 1861 for three years, Leonardt as a private and Williams a musician. Both men reenlisted as veterans in 1864, Leonardt as a sergeant and Williams a private. Leonardt, left the service after being wounded in South Carolina in early January 1865, though Williams fought with the regiment until the war came to a close. Demographically, the two soldiers are practically identical, but their ethnic differences, Leonardt being a German and Williams a native-born American, separate the two. Prior to the war, their differing ethnicities might have led both men to harbor animosity toward the other, as it had countless others in the Greater St. Louis region. In the 30th Illinois however, they

¹⁴⁶ Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.": "30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service," The Illinois USGenWeb Project.

were two soldiers in their mid-twenties who lived in the same region, worked with their hands, and likely had no military experience prior to joining the unit. Their demographics echo those of the regiment. It is these conditions, compounded with others, that enabled good ethnic relations within the 30th Illinois.¹⁴⁷

The factors leading to the 30th Illinois' low level of anti-immigrant sentiment include its strong initial organization and officer selections, Colonel Fouke's rough discipline and drilling of the unit, their early participation in combat, and the large ethnic makeup of the regiment. Where Germans serving in mixed-ethnic regiments dealt with little nativism from the beginning of their service, German regiments had to prove themselves in combat. For the 12th Missouri, their opportunity came in March.

In February, Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis marched the Army of the Southwest into northern Arkansas, in an attempt to force a strong Confederate army under the command of Generals Sterling Price and Benjamin McCulloch out of Missouri. The 12th Missouri, with a full strength of about 900 men, marched towards their first true test in combat as Curtis's command made contact with the Confederate army that outnumbered the Union army two to one at the Battle of Pea Ridge.¹⁴⁸ During the Union force's movements south, newly promoted 2nd Lieutenant Henry Kircher recorded that "Every soldier was in good humor and ready to fight like lions."¹⁴⁹ The Germans received their chance on March 6, when a combined Confederate force, now under the

¹⁴⁷ Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.": "30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service," The Illinois USGenWeb Project.

¹⁴⁸ Hess, "The 12th Missouri Infantry," 55. Hess's research on the 12th Missouri indicates that the 12th Missouri never attained a strength of 1000 men. He calculates that the regiment contained at most 931 men, and of those only 892 saw combat.

¹⁴⁹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for February 16, 1861, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

command of General Earl Van Dorn, clashed with Franz Sigel and a small contingent of 600 men at Bentonville. Sigel's detachment, predominantly comprised of eight companies of the 12th Missouri, remained heavily engaged with enemy infantry during a well-executed four-mile retreat.¹⁵⁰

For most in the 12th Missouri, the retreat from Bentonville was their first taste of combat. In his diary, Kircher reflected on their breakout through the Confederate lines exclaiming that the "constant hot firing of our gal[lan]t 250 Lions of the 12th mo made their whole number scaddle in the greatest confusion."¹⁵¹ In their first major engagement with the enemy, the 12th Missouri fought bravely, maintained discipline, marched four miles under an unremitting enemy fire, all while suffering only three casualties.¹⁵² Their bravery in combat was recognized by General Curtis who commended Sigel and his "gallant little band," for their stout confrontation with the enemy.¹⁵³

The following day, Colonel Osterhaus led a division containing a detachment of the 12th Missouri in the center of the Union lines, where they stood firm in the face several stout Confederate attacks.¹⁵⁴ Again on March 8, the regiment rushed into combat in a Union assault on Van Dorn's battered Confederates. In his diary Kircher recorded the ferocity of the early morning artillery duel and the thickness of the enemy fire during their assault, writing that the 12th Missouri "advanced like hell and the devil himself on a

¹⁵⁰ Franz Sigel, "Report of Brig. Gen. Franz Sigel, U.S. Army, Commanding First and Second Divisions. On The Battle of Pea Ridge," *Civil War Home*, <http://www.civilwarhome.com/pearidgecampaign.html>.

¹⁵¹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for March 6, 1861, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁵² Henry Kircher diary, entry for March 6, 1861, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁵³ Samuel R. Curtis, "Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis, U.S. Army, commanding Army of the Southwest on the Battle of Pea Ridge," *Civil War Home*, <http://www.civilwarhome.com/pearidgecampaign.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Curtis, "Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis."

poor sinner.”¹⁵⁵ The assault succeeded in dislodging the Confederate defensive positions, and proved the deciding action of the battle.¹⁵⁶

The 12th Missouri’s tough and stubborn demeanor during the battle did not go unnoticed. In a letter to his brother composed three days after the battle, Captain Jacob Kaercher wrote, “Everybody in camp knows our regiment now. Wherever we pass, they say; there comes the butchers, hurrah for Sigel and his Dutch. It is an honor here to be called a Dutchman. The Americans think the world and all of them.”¹⁵⁷ A direct result of the 12th Missouri’s stellar performance in the Battle of Pea Ridge, was earning the respect of native-born soldiers. This praise correlates to a sudden drop of nativist driven incidents recorded in the letters of the 12th Missouri’s soldiers. This trend continued following their transfer into the Army of the Tennessee, as the unit’s reputation remained intact due to continued success on the battlefield.

German-American soldiers from the St. Louis-Belleville area encountered a series of setbacks prior to the war, as they struggled to create their own community in the face of anti-German nativism. Anti-German tendencies continued to affect German soldiers during 1861, even as they volunteered for military service to preserve the Union. Continued nativism in three-month regiments enticed many German-Americans to join three year ethnic German regiments, but these regiments attracted nativist criticism. On the other hand, the St. Louis and Belleville German-Americans that served in Western mixed-ethnic units faced little nativism. In the case of the 30th Illinois, this was due to the

¹⁵⁵ Henry Kircher diary, entry for March 8, 1861, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁵⁶ Curtis, "Report of Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis."

¹⁵⁷ Jacob Kaercher to Peter Kaercher, March 11, 1862, "The Battle Of Pea Ridge," *Belleville Weekly Advocate*, (Belleville, IL), March 13, 1896.

strong leadership and structure of the regiment, their necessity to form a unit identity, their quick introduction to battle after their muster, the proportions of ethnic soldiers within mixed-regiments, and similar demographics. The months of March and April, 1862, mark a turning point regarding nativism experienced by the region's German-American soldiers in the West. Soldiers' references to nativism within the 12th Missouri decreased after demonstrating their proficiency in combat at the Battle of Pea Ridge, which dampened nativist pressures from outside the regiment. The 43rd Illinois' chance to prove themselves came at the Battle of Shiloh.

CHAPTER III - “Rally Round the Flag Boys!”

In the weeks following the Battle of Shiloh, Colonel Engelmann of the 43rd Illinois began to process what he and his regiment had undergone. Taking a break from the mounds of regimental paperwork that consumed his desk following the heavy engagement, he penned a letter to his brother-in-law Gustave Koerner. He explained, “I considered it my duty to the men, who on the 6th and 7th, I led into danger, wounds and death, that their acquaintances and the public should know with what courage – in spite of practical defeat, they attacked the enemy again and again.” Engelmann insisted, “In spite of their manly spirit and courageous endurance, it was a heavy sacrifice.”¹⁵⁸

Although nativism impacted the Germans of the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri during their first months of their service, soldiers in both regiments recognized a smoothing of ethnic relations within the Army of the Tennessee by the end of April 1862 that would continue until the end of the war. But it was the Union victory at the Battle of Shiloh in early April that, like a watershed moment, shifted the ethnic tensions experienced by the 43rd Illinois from hostile to tolerant. References regarding nativism or unequal treatment of the 43rd Illinois seemingly vanish from soldier letters and in official regimental documents, just as the 12th Missouri had seen decreased nativism a month earlier following their skillful performance at Pea Ridge.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Adolph Engelmann to Gustave Koerner, April 19, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁵⁹ Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: Adjutant General’s Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA. Prior to Shiloh, nativist rhetoric was used by Engelmann in his letters and by other officers in various official documents, many of which were outlined in the previous chapter. Following the unit’s participation at Shiloh most signs of nativism disappear from their writing.

This chapter explores this easing of ethnic tensions within these three regiments from Shiloh through the Atlanta Campaign. Two main factors led to this change and enabled its continuation until the final Confederate surrender. The first centers on Germans in combat. The 43rd Illinois had to prove itself in battle, which was accomplished at Shiloh, demonstrating its courage in combat even as other Union regiments broke under the pressure of heavy Confederate attacks.¹⁶⁰ The German's tenacity under fire earned them the respect of native-born Americans in the army thus easing the strain on the rest of their service. Secondly, the near disaster and ultimate Union victory at Shiloh bolstered the confidence of the Army of the Tennessee as they continued pushing deep into the heart of the Confederacy.¹⁶¹ This confidence continued to grow within the 30th Illinois, 43rd Illinois, and 12th Missouri until each regiment completed their terms of service.

Ultimately, the stellar battlefield performance of each unit removed the yoke of nativism from their necks, but other factors played roles in alleviating anti-German sentiment as well. Such influences as the hardships of campaigning or the boredom of camp life, are common themes throughout most letters and kept the attention of soldiers in the West, and left them plenty about which to complain other than nativist related happenings. Moreover, the strengthening of anti-war Northern Peace Democrats, otherwise known as Copperheads, became a popular topic in letters by the end of 1862. The threat of subversion in the North enraged soldiers of all ethnicities in the Army of the Tennessee. As long as German soldiers continued to perform well in combat, their

¹⁶⁰ Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Engelmann, April 17, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁶¹ Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory*, 197-202.

contributions to the Union were a nonissue to many, whereas Copperheads represented a present civilian danger on the home front.¹⁶²

One likely factor that lessened ethnic pressures within these regiments and in the Army of the Tennessee was the degree to which Germans and native-born American soldiers supported the Union. Germans in the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois maintained a strongly pro-Union attitude until the war ended, a sentiment shared by the 30th Illinois. Germans in the East likewise harbored considerable Unionist zeal throughout the war, despite their confrontation with renewed nativism following the Battle of Chancellorsville.¹⁶³ Unwavering German-American support for the Union greatly contradicts the experiences of northeastern Irish soldiers as documented by historian Susannah Ural, who argued that as the Union war effort began to impede distinctly Irish goals, support for the war waned within their communities.¹⁶⁴ Perhaps these two key similarities between Germans and native-born Americans, one relating to the dedication to the country and the second the importance of societal conceptions of honor, began to overshadow custom and language differences between Germans and native-born American soldiers.

The favorable ethnic relations experienced by St. Louis-Belleveille region Germans serving in the Army of the Tennessee contradict the arguments of historians Christopher Keller and David Valuska, who both contend that major nativist trends in the

¹⁶²Henry Kircher to Joseph Kircher, January 6, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: Rhoads, *The Civil War Letters of Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads*, 64.: Benjamin Boring to Friend Jones, March 14, 1863, Boring collection, 1861-1918, VCPL. Each of these soldiers, Kircher of the 12th Missouri and two soldiers from the 30th Illinois Rhoads and Boring, all describe their hatred of Copperheads, the hardships of campaign life, and boredom. Their feelings and writings follow similar patterns as most soldiers in their regiments.

¹⁶³ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 144-5.: Valuska and Keller, *Damned Dutch*, 189-93.

¹⁶⁴ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 4.

North resurfaced as German-Americans faced renewed nativism following the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863.¹⁶⁵ This chapter reveals that the Army of the Tennessee enjoyed more victories than did the Army of the Potomac, which enabled western German-Americans to avoid the scapegoating that plagued the German XI Corps in the Army of the Potomac and German communities in the East. Time after time, the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois did their duty in battle alongside native-born units and in doing so German-American soldiers gained confidence in themselves and earned the respect of native-born Americans. This chapter demonstrates that the breadth of nativism experienced by greater St. Louis area Germans during the first year of the war did not return to the Army of the Tennessee as it did in the Army of the Potomac, and thus demonstrating that historians cannot use the experiences of Germans serving in the East to interpret those of German-American volunteers in the West. The army, region, and individual regiments played integral roles in deciding how each regiment saw themselves and how they were viewed by other soldiers.¹⁶⁶

Even though Germans achieved increased acceptance in the army following their successes on the battlefield, Germans in the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri continued to self-segregate themselves from native-born Americans. As this chapter will demonstrate, this separation was not generated by animus between native-born and German-American soldiers, but it rather related to German-American desires to preserve their customs and language in the army.¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, their insistence on serving with fellow

¹⁶⁵ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*.: Valuska and Keller, *Damned Dutch*.

¹⁶⁶ The 30th Illinois experienced little ethnic change during the rest of their service. Unlike the German 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois, ethnicity rarely played a role in the daily operations of the regiment, and as such remained a relative nonissue.

¹⁶⁷ Henry Kircher to Mother, November 24th, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.:

countrymen from the St. Louis region led to major internal strife, most notably in the 12th Missouri. Through the first year and a half of the war, the 12th Missouri faced a sectional crisis of its own. As in the decade prior to the Civil War, St. Louis and Belleville Germans quarreled with one another within the regiment. Henry Kircher noted that the hostility between the groups was due to the unbalanced representation of Belleville officers to St. Louis officers. In a similar manner to the decrease in nativism, relations within the regiment improved as it continued to participate in combat.¹⁶⁸

Despite the German inclination to segregate themselves from other ethnicities within the army, their customs unintentionally spread. As service in the Army of the Tennessee forced interaction between ethnicities, a cultural transition unavoidably occurred, which led native-born Americans to adopt several staples of German culture, such as an appreciation of German food, music, and alcohol. Following the Battle of Shiloh, Colonel Engelmann and the officers of the 43rd Illinois frequently hosted singing and drinking events, which native-born American officers frequently attended.¹⁶⁹ In the predominantly native-born 30th Illinois, several instances including the eating of sauerkraut and the playing of German music, demonstrated the permeation of German culture into the daily lives of native-born Americans.¹⁷⁰

Adolph Engelmann to Richard Yates, February 2, 1863, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA. In his letter, Henry Kircher writes of flooding the south with "Dutchman and Yankees." By separating the two groups, Kircher demonstrates that despite serving in the same army the men of the 12th Missouri considered themselves German-American and not just American, which justifies, in their minds that they needed to serve among other Germans. In his letter, Colonel Engelmann expresses the desire of all officers in the 43rd Illinois to be consolidated with the German 24th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, if forced to consolidate. This demonstrates how deeply maintaining their customs and language meant to German soldiers.

¹⁶⁸ Henry Kircher to Mother, November 10th, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁶⁹ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, September 25, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁷⁰ Poak, David W. "Dear Sister Sadie," 150.: Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

German and native-born American soldiers were not as foreign to one another as it might have seemed, and perhaps ethnic pressures within the Army of the Tennessee dissipated in part because each group realized they were not so different from the other. One example of this revolved around the similar conceptions of honor shared by Germans and native-born American soldiers. As historian Lorien Foote argues, soldiers in the Union Army viewed honor as a defining factor in a man, and an insult to one's honor brought forth several steps to defend it. The most common methods of maintaining honor were through fights, usually among enlisted men, and duels between officers. Although many native-born Americans viewed Germans as inherently different, it was not always the case. Both maintained similar conceptions of honor and how it was preserved. The prevalence of dueling within the officer corps by those of German and American birth alike demonstrates the similarity between the two groups.¹⁷¹

A myriad of issues influenced the wartime experiences of German-American soldiers from the St. Louis-Bellefonte region, but these three regiments are also united by their shared focus on the war. Home matters were largely overshadowed by the war as it continued into its second and third years. Each regiment played an active role in the Army of the Tennessee's thrust southward along the Mississippi River, and the characters of each unit were altered by engagements with the enemy and the harshness of the campaign. This chapter follows the 12th Missouri, 30th Illinois, and 43rd Illinois from the Battle of Shiloh to the Atlanta Campaign, as each regiment entered combat while simultaneously dealing with many social matters.

¹⁷¹ Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen And The Roughs: Violence, Honor, and Manhood in the Union Army* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 1-16. Henry Kircher diary, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. Kircher documents frequent dueling between officers in the 12th Missouri.

The Battle of Shiloh

On April 6, 1862, as the 43rd Illinois and the Army of the Tennessee camped near Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River, the sudden crackle of rifle fire split the tranquil morning air. Within hours, it became clear that Major General Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee was under attack by a rapidly advancing Confederate force under the command of General Albert Sidney Johnston, who ably surprised the Union force. Losing ground quickly, the Union army fought throughout the day to avoid its own destruction. The following morning, Grant's beleaguered divisions received reinforcements from the Army of the Ohio, under the direction of Major General Don Carlos Buell, whose divisions turned the tide of the battle in favor of the Union. A final assault on the 7th secured victory for the reinvigorated Union force.¹⁷²

For the 43rd Illinois, Shiloh represented its first major action, and in a similar manner to the men of the 12th Missouri, the unit's stout confrontation with the swift Confederate attack won the admiration of native-born soldiers. When the Confederate advance first clashed with Union infantry on April 6, the 43rd Illinois under Colonel Raith, numbered barely 500 men. Within minutes after taking up their arms and scrambling into formation, Raith left the regiment and assumed command of the Third Brigade of Major General John A. McClernand's Division, leaving Lieut. Colonel Engelmann in charge of the 43rd Illinois. At the head of the regiment for the first time, Engelmann distinguished himself throughout the day through his steady leadership as the 43rd Illinois stood fast in the face of several blistering Confederate advances. Although

¹⁷² Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory*, 155-97.

the ranks of the 43rd Illinois held firm in opposition to several scorching assaults, they were unable to continue as the confusion of battle created supply problems. Engelmann wrote, “Being altogether out of ammunition . . . and the supply promised Marsh failing to arrive, we were again compelled to retire as the enemy advanced.”¹⁷³ As the cover of darkness eased the pressure of the Confederate advance, the 43rd Illinois was “totally exhausted” and the men “lay heedless to the shower of shot and shell that passed over their heads.”¹⁷⁴

Although the 43rd Illinois’ pugnacious conduct under fire was evident throughout the fight, one instance in particular exemplified their actions throughout the battle. As the regiment was engaged in a heavy firefight, General McClelland ordered his division to fall back several hundred yards to regroup and more effectively mass its fire into the surging Confederate ranks. The 43rd Illinois did not join the division on this maneuver, as word of its movement failed to reach Lieut. Colonel Engelmann. In awe, McClelland praised the “gallant” 43rd Illinois as it “continued the conflict until it was surrounded, and cut its way through the enemy to the right rear of my third line.”¹⁷⁵

The first day of the Battle of Shiloh witnessed the near destruction of the Army of the Tennessee. For the 43rd Illinois, their first combat experience yielded mixed results. The unit performed bravely throughout the day gaining valuable combat experience, and

¹⁷³ Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Engelmann, April 17th, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁷⁴ Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Engelmann, April 17th, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁷⁵ U.S. War Department, *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 10, 116.

had distinguished themselves on the battlefield. But as night approached, the regiment learned of the poor state of Colonel Raith, who lay mortally wounded.¹⁷⁶

On the following morning, after Buell's Army of the Ohio swelled the Union ranks, Grant's force attacked across the Confederate lines. This brisk and wholly unexpected attack forced the Confederates back and into a full retreat. When the 43rd Illinois retired from the assault, they began to take stock of how badly the regiment fared. Of the initial 500 men fit for service on April 6, only 206 remained. Reflecting on the fight, Engelmann commented that the regiment's casualties proved "the desperation of the conflict," and bore "testimony to the conduct of the men."¹⁷⁷

In the days and weeks after the battle, the 43rd Illinois and its officers were commended for their actions. General McClelland showered the unit and its two colonels with high praise, stating that Raith and Engelmann "distinguished themselves by the coolness, courage, and skill with which they managed their men." McClelland continued, commenting that "Colonel Raith, falling an honored martyr in a just cause, will be mourned by his friends and adopted country."¹⁷⁸ Another officer, Colonel L. F. Ross of the 17th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, wrote of Colonel Raith, declaring that, "our cause has lost one of its best and bravest defenders" further proclaiming, "but while deploring his loss we cannot but admire the heroism and patriotism always exhibited by him, even to the shedding of his last drop of blood upon the altar of his

¹⁷⁶ Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Engelmann, April 17th, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁷⁷ Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Engelmann, April 17th, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁷⁸ U.S. War Department, *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 10, 121.

adopted country for the preservation of its dearly-loved Constitution and laws.”¹⁷⁹

Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly how McClernand and Carr viewed Germans prior to Shiloh, it remains significant that both native-born American officers showered the German 43rd Illinois with praise after witnessing their aptitude in battle.

The 43rd Illinois’ conduct at the Battle of Shiloh exhibits how battlefield performance led to ethnic tolerance within the Army of the Tennessee. On September 6, when many regiments in Grant’s army crumbled under the pressure of the Confederate attack, the German-Americans of the 43rd Illinois proved their mettle. The unit’s stalwart posture and unflinching leadership won the admiration of its native-born division and corps commanders, and thus earned and maintained a reputation for reliability throughout the war. As experienced by the 12th Missouri at Pea Ridge, the 43rd Illinois’ performance at Shiloh greatly reduced the amount of nativism felt by the regiment.

As news of the battle made its way North, citizens in the St. Louis-Belleville region were deeply affected by the heavy Union losses, and in St. Clair County many citizens were as distressed by the battle as the men of the 43rd Illinois. An article published in the English language *Belleville Advocate* addressed the depth of sadness and loss felt within the community, “many tears have been and will be shed: many wild lamentations burst from desolate hearts, and many prayers go up to God whose ways are known only to himself.”¹⁸⁰ To console the populace and provide some consolation, the columnist wrote, “But that which are awakened only despair and grief in individuals who have lost those very dear to them, arouses the pride of our citizens when they dwell upon

¹⁷⁹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 10, 140.

¹⁸⁰ “Killed in the Great Battle,” *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), April 18, 1862.

the heroism of those who dying, reflected glory upon the country which boasted of their citizenship.”¹⁸¹ The article continued, “Our hearts can but swell with enthusiasm when we read of the valor which the Ninth and Forty-third showed upon the bloody field. While they went to die for their country, they did not forget the more important work of killing for their country.”¹⁸² Although Union victory at Shiloh struck the community hard as they suffered the loss of many husbands, sons, and friends, their regiments did not fold in the face of the enemy. The congratulations and gratitude expressed by the native-born American *Belleville Advocate*, demonstrated that the sacrifices of the German 43rd Illinois was equal to that of native-born regiments.

While the carnage inflicted on the 43rd Illinois at Shiloh struck Belleville with a heavy sadness, the death of Colonel Raith impacted the entire state. The *Belleville Advocate* insisted, “Perhaps no part of our great loss at Pittsburg will be more generally felt in this vicinity than the death of Col. Julius Raith, of the Forty-third regiment.”¹⁸³ The *Chicago Tribune* and *Daily St. Louis Republican* agreed, observing “He counted his friends by thousands, and no man ever had fewer enemies. His death is universally regretted by all who knew him.”¹⁸⁴ As Raith’s body lay in state, a reporter from the *Daily St. Louis Republican* connected the German’s death to the present struggle, arguing “On the coffin lay the flag of the Union, under whose folds he had lost his life...His pure life, his high character, his chivalric courage, and his heroic death will be claimed as a bright spot in the fame of St. Clair County.”¹⁸⁵ The response to Colonel Raith’s death in St.

¹⁸¹ “Killed in the Great Battle,” *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), April 18, 1862.

¹⁸² “Killed in the Great Battle,” *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), April 18, 1862.

¹⁸³ “Death of Col. Raith,” *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), April 18, 1862.

¹⁸⁴ “Death of Col. Julius Raith, of Illinois,” *Chicago Tribune* (Belleville, IL), April 21, 1862.

¹⁸⁵ “Funeral of Col. Raith,” *Daily Missouri Republican* (St. Louis, MO), April 28, 1862.

Louis and throughout Illinois by English language papers shows the influence western German-Americans had during the war. German-American willingness to sacrifice their lives for the preservation of the Union won the respect of many native-born Americans in the Army of the Tennessee and in western communities. Furthermore, the glowing terms used by the papers to describe Raith and the service of the 43rd Illinois at Shiloh, shows the war's influence in softening anti-German sentiment.

As German regiments like the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri found success on the battlefield, so too did the threat of anti-German nativism diminish. The combat effectiveness of German-American units undoubtedly effected this change, but other instances likely played a role as well. Despite the many real differences between soldiers of different ethnicities in the Army of the Tennessee, such as differing languages and customs, German and native-born American soldiers were not as different to one another as they perceived. Perhaps ethnic pressures within the Army of the Tennessee were dampened in part to shared social conceptions such as honor and how it was retained. Historian Lorien Foote defines honor as being “when a man’s self-worth is based on public reputation and the respect of others.”¹⁸⁶ Foote argues that Union officers engaged in duels to protect their manhood following an insult against their honor, and this was no exception to Germans in the 12th Missouri.¹⁸⁷

Many comments in Kircher’s diary entries corroborate Foote’s assertions, as the young officer frequently commented on his and other men’s honor. The most obvious occurrences follow duels between officers of the 12th Missouri. In November and

¹⁸⁶ Foote, *The Gentlemen And The Roughs*, 6.

¹⁸⁷ Foote, *The Gentlemen And The Roughs*, 6.

December 1862, the regiment experienced two challenges to duel, but neither materialized. On one occasion, two officers decided to duel with revolvers after calling one another “horned worms.” Once the initial rage created by the incident wore off, Kircher said, “Both parties met at the appointed time and place this morning, but after some talk agreed upon the fact that one or both might be hurt if the[y] fired, and therefore thought safest to let shooting be.”¹⁸⁸ On a separate occasion, one of the duelers yielded to the other before the action, an act labeled by Kircher as “dishonorable.”¹⁸⁹ The incidents recorded by Kircher were not uncommon to the Union Army as two documented duels occurred and thirty-one officers faced trials by courts-martial for challenging other officers to duel. More duels surely occurred throughout the war but remained unreported, such as those chronicled by Kircher.¹⁹⁰ The shared conception of honor held by Germans and native-born Americans possibly led to further acceptance of Germans within the army. Upon the realization that Germans in the Army of the Tennessee fought well and acted on similar principles of honor, the only remaining differences were several customs and a different language. The issues that kept the two groups apart before the war continually softened as the conflict continued.

In late 1862, the rise of Northern Peace Democrats, or Copperheads as they were often called, created an additional threat to the Union war effort and deeply affected the morale of soldiers in the Army of the Tennessee. Peace Democrats constituted a wing of the Democratic Party who opposed the war and supported an immediate end to the

¹⁸⁸ Henry Kircher diary, entry for December 19, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁸⁹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for November 7, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁹⁰ Foote, *The Gentlemen And The Roughs*, 95-6, 201-2. Foote only records two duel challenges between ethnic officers, one between Irish soldiers of the 11th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry Regiment and another in the 4th Missouri Volunteer Cavalry Regiment among two German officers.

conflict.¹⁹¹ Soldiers of the Army of the Tennessee, including those in the 30th Illinois, 43rd Illinois, and 12th Missouri, often considered Peace Democrats as traitors who represented a great danger to Northern morale and the war effort. Colonel Engelmann wrote of Peace Democrats saying, “During the past 18 months the soldiers have certainly learned how to meet the enemies of the Union. The only difference is that the Northern enemy is more thoroughly hated (despised) than the enemy in the South.”¹⁹² Captain Kircher echoed a similar view of Illinois Peace Democrats, writing, “If they don’t get invaded there soon with the sword as well as with the rope I don’t know what will happen to our country. No punishment is too hard for a traitor.”¹⁹³ Soldiers in the 30th Illinois harbored an analogous opposition towards Copperheads. Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads wrote, “I was glad to hear that there was so many of them coppersnakes caught . . . I am in hopes that they will all get their just dues and that would be a hemp rope because they are worse traitors than these southern souldiers.”¹⁹⁴ Northern Peace Democrats provoked feelings of hostility among many soldiers of all ethnicities within the Army of the Tennessee. Western Soldiers’ hatred of Peace Democrats may have influenced the fading of anti-German sentiment among soldiers in the Army of the Tennessee. As opposed to Copperheads, German-Americans proved themselves in battle and offered continued support to the Union, thus making Peace Democrats a far greater danger than Germans.

An unflinching support of the Union by Germans likewise prompted a change in the ethnic relationships in the Greater St. Louis area. In Belleville, the willingness of

¹⁹¹ Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory*, 296.

¹⁹² Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, September 25, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁹³ Henry Kircher to Joseph Kircher, Jan. 26th, 1861, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

¹⁹⁴ Rhoads, *The Civil War Letters of Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads*, 64.

German soldiers to fight encouraged many of the cities' native-born American citizens to defend their German neighbors. One example of this support followed a speech by U.S. Congressman James C. Allen, who remarked, "'a few old women with broom-sticks or a few Wide Awakes with caps and capes could whip the South.'" In response to the congressman's remarks, the *Belleville Advocate* defended the members of the German organization, saying, "We could tell him that it was in bad taste to speak lightly of the spirit that animated the Wide Awakes of St. Clair County."¹⁹⁵ The article continued, reading, "Perhaps he would like to know where some of the St. Clair County Wide Awakes now are," wrote the editor, "Let him go and look among the thinned ranks of the 9th, the 43rd, and the 49th Illinois and the 8th, 12th, and 6th Missouri volunteers and ask how many have borne the cape and torch through the streets of Belleville."¹⁹⁶ Clearly, the service of German-Americans from the Greater St. Louis area caused a direct alteration to ethnic tensions at home, as more native-born Americans accepted the actions of their fellow citizens of German origin.

30th Illinois

After its involvement in the Battles of Belmont the 30th Illinois participated in the capture of Fort's Henry and Donelson, and remained in reserves during the siege of Corinth. Although the regiment found itself in close proximity to heavy fighting, the unit had not participated in any major firefights since Belmont. Following the Army of the

¹⁹⁵ "Jim Allen on the Wide Awakes," *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), October 24, 1862.: Wide Awakes were a pro-Lincoln political group that held candle lit demonstrations or marches during the election of 1860. In the St. Louis-Belleville region, Wide Awake organizations were predominantly comprised of German-Americans.

¹⁹⁶ "Jim Allen on the Wide Awakes," *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), October 24, 1862.

Tennessee's successful capture of the railway crossroads at Corinth in late May, the 30th Illinois marched to the vicinity of Denmark, Tennessee, where it actively scouted the countryside. On September 1, a small force including the 20th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the 30th Illinois, a section of Schwartz's Battery "E" 2nd Illinois Light Artillery Regiment, and two small contingents of cavalry from the 4th Ohio Independent Cavalry Company and 4th Illinois Cavalry Regiment, intercepted a Confederate Cavalry Brigade roughly 6,000 strong, under the command of General Frank C. Armstrong. The Battle of Britton's Lane, as it was later named, witnessed the seizure of two artillery pieces and near capture of the 20th Illinois, but the arrival of the 30th Illinois ultimately tipped the battle in favor of the outgunned Union contingent.¹⁹⁷

Colonel Dennis of the 30th Illinois assumed command of the small Union force after Brigadier General Leonard F. Ross ordered the motley group towards a section of the Mississippi and Tennessee Central Railroad, to confront the swiftly moving Confederate force. As advance elements of the 20th Illinois first contacted and fired at the enemy, Lieutenant Ogden Greenough noted, "The boys looked anxious, their pace quickened, belts were tightened and accoutrements adjusted."¹⁹⁸ As the 30th Illinois neared the battle in which the 20th Illinois was fully engaged, Greenough remarked on their determination, "There is a magic in the influence of the first voice of the cannon . . . It added wings to the speed of the 30th which now with a wild shout, and loading as they ran, swept over the summit of the ridge and into the battle."¹⁹⁹ Musician Private

¹⁹⁷ McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*, 28-30.: Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. II, 537-38.

¹⁹⁸ Ogden Greenough to "Shotts", September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

¹⁹⁹ Ogden Greenough to "Shotts", September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

Benjamin Boring recalled the moment in which the unit crested a ridge that previously blocked the fight, writing, “Our Enfield rifles wer discharge in quick succession and we had made so much nois coming up the hill the rebels supposed likely they had met the whole Western Army instead of the 30th Ills.”²⁰⁰ The small force fought back every attack, only losing ground as Col. Dennis shifted his command into more practical defensive positions. Unaccustomed to the ferocity of battle, stretcher-bearer Corporal Robert S. Finley recounted the fighting, writing, “I was with the Regt during the fight attending the wounded and many bullets whistled unpleasantly near me but fortunately I escaped.”²⁰¹ A final desperate maneuver by the enemy cavalry nearly engulfed the Union force, but the men rallied. Greenough recalled the unyielding courage of the 30th Illinois in the face of the final charge, saying, “The mercenary hirelings who prop the blood-stained thrones of European Monarchies, might in such an hour have thought of submission,” he continued by connecting the battle to the Union cause “but freemen, who had ventured their all in the sacred cause of the Republic, veterans and victors of four bloody fields, knit their brows with the resolution of determination, not despair.”²⁰² Upon the repulse of this charge, the battle ended. Col. Dennis’s force held the field, losing only five killed and fifty-one wounded. Union estimates of Confederate casualties numbered 179 dead or wounded.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Benjamin F. Boring to Friend Jones, September 12th, 1862, Benjamin F. Boring collection, VCPL.

²⁰¹ Robert S. Finley to Dear Friend, September 6th, 1862, Robert Stuart Finley Papers, University of North Carolina Wilson Library Southern Historical Collection, Chapel Hill, NC (hereafter cited as UNCSHC).

²⁰² Ogden Greenough to “Shotts”, September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

²⁰³ “Report of General L. F. Ross, September 7, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 23, 44-5.: “Report of General Frank C. Armstrong, September 2, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 51-2. General Armstrong was confident that his force of cavalry had won the battle, having captured 200 prisoners and two pieces of

As the regiment demonstrated at Belmont, the 30th Illinois performed well under fire, validating their unit's discipline and courage under extreme adversity. Following the battle, which Col. Dennis won through his brigade's brisk maneuvering and excellent marksmanship, several men of the regiment set out to examine the carnage inflicted by their Enfield Rifles.²⁰⁴ Private Boring wrote, "The lane was so full of them that we could not count them or get through without climbing over them. Men shot in all ways some with their heads busted open. Some with insides passing out and then crying for water."²⁰⁵ Lieutenant Greenough wrote perhaps the most vivid account of the slaughter, "Everywhere in front of our lines lay the rebel dead, mangled semblance of men, of every age, size, and nativity—There was the mere boy with his brown lock, and his pale face crushed by the iron heel of war out of all resemblance to the feature of his mother." Further explaining the butchery and folly of the Confederate cavalry, he wrote, "there was the hoary headed traitor, with his white hairs dabbled in blood: - the misguided Celt from "Sweet Erin," beyond the waters." Their grotesque features "were pale and ghastly, others black and distorted: some smiled in death, some bore fierce determination in their black looks, while other faces were almost expressionless."²⁰⁶

artillery. Union command saw the battle as a solid victory, as their small contingent repelled a force four times its size and compelled the Confederate Cavalry Brigade to retreat into Mississippi.

²⁰⁴ Ogden Greenough to "Shotts", September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.; Robert S. Finley to Dear Friend, September 6th, 1862, Robert Stuart Finley Papers, UNCSHC.; Benjamin F. Boring to Friend Jones, September 12th, 1862, Benjamin F. Boring collection, VCPL. The general consensus among the men of the 30th Illinois was that Britton's Lane was won by the superiority of their arms. Both the 20th and 30th Illinois were equipped with rifled muskets with the capability to shoot accurately at great distances. The Confederate Cavalry was found to have short range carbines, shotguns, and pistols, which were far outclassed by the firearms used by the Union infantry. This episode highlights the effectiveness of high quality firearms and demonstrates why men in the 43rd Illinois were so upset to receive outdated smoothbore muskets, which if used at Britton's Lane, might have spelled disaster for the units.

²⁰⁵ Benjamin F. Boring to Friend Jones, September 12th, 1862, Benjamin F. Boring collection, VCPL.

²⁰⁶ Ogden Greenough to "Shotts", September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

Greenough's eloquent recitation of the battle is overshadowed by his linking the actions of the regiment to different points of European history and literature. The young Lieutenant connected the arrival of the 30th Illinois to the decisive arrival of Field Marshall Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher to the Battle of Waterloo, saying, "The situation was a desperate one. Like water to the parched wanderer on the desert, or Bl[u]cher's arrival on the lost field of Waterloo, was our shout of defiance, to the exhausted and almost despairing soldiers of the 20th."²⁰⁷ Later in his composition, Greenough mentioned a "misguided Celt" and offered a passage from Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, "From the bleak coast that hears The German ocean roar, deep booming strong, And yellow hair, the blue eyed Saxon Came."²⁰⁸ His inclusion of these anecdotes not only indicates Greenough's intelligence, but also sheds light onto why ethnic relations in the 30th Illinois were decidedly tame. Greenough's rhetoric in this letter indicates an "us or them" mentality, where those supporting the Union were "freemen, who had ventured their all in the sacred cause of the Republic." To Greenough and many in the 30th Illinois, regardless of ethnicity, Union soldiers were countrymen fighting to save their country, such as the members of the predominantly German members of Schwartz's battery who fought alongside the regiment at Britton's Lane. On the other hand, dead Confederates were traitors or "misguided."²⁰⁹

For several months after, the 30th Illinois continued to operate in and around Jackson, Tennessee. In November, the regiment had only 426 men fit for service, owing

²⁰⁷ Ogden Greenough to "Shotts", September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

²⁰⁸ Ogden Greenough to "Shotts", September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

²⁰⁹ Ogden Greenough to "Shotts", September 6th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

to the high casualties inflicted at Britton's Lane and to the number of its sick.²¹⁰ In February 1863, the regiment, now part of General McClelland's Division moved south, along the Mississippi River as General Grant's strategy to take Vicksburg began to take shape. During its journey towards the last point of resistance along the Mississippi, the 30th Illinois fought the enemy at Hankinson's Ferry, Raymond, and Champion Hill before finally reaching the breastworks surrounding the so-called Gibraltar of the Confederacy. The siege of Vicksburg marked the only action in which the 30th Illinois, 43rd Illinois, and 12th Missouri participated together.²¹¹

43rd Illinois

Shortly after the Army of the Tennessee's advance on Corinth, the 43rd Illinois marched back to Jackson, Tennessee, and then moved southwest to occupy the region surrounding Bolivar. Apart from an uneventful march to Corinth in September, the regiment remained in Bolivar from July to late May 1863. In Bolivar, the regiment first went about erecting extensive earthworks to protect the town from attack. The 43rd Illinois' objective for these months was shoring up defenses south of Jackson, and to rid the countryside of all Confederate forces. The tedium of their assignment was interrupted abruptly on December 19, when the regiment met a cavalry force under the command of Confederate Brigadier General Nathan Bedford Forrest near Old Salem Cemetery south of Jackson.²¹²

²¹⁰ Elias S. Dennis to Adjutant General, November 12, 1862, Orders and Reports, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 30th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, ISA.

²¹¹ Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. II, 537-38.

²¹² Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III, 274-5.

In the evening hours of December 18, Colonel Engelmann's Brigade, then consisting of the 43rd Illinois and 61st Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, along with elements of the 11th Illinois, 5th Ohio, and 2nd West Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry Regiments, located the encampment of Forrest's Cavalry. An excited Engelmann planned an attack that evening using the light of the enemy campfires, but Lieutenant Colonel Dengler of the 43rd Illinois blocked the hasty decision. After further consultation, Engelmann and his field commanders elected to fall back near the easily defensible timberline surrounding Salem Cemetery and to provoke an enemy attack the following morning with their cavalry. That evening, the brigade waited out the cold December night, and attempted to sleep on their arms. Engelmann recalled, "It was bitter cold and it was hard to deny our men fire when the Secessionists dared to have their fires burning."²¹³ Despite this hardship, the men lied quietly until daybreak.²¹⁴

The following morning began with the crisp crack of rifle fire, as Forrest's cavalry fell for Engelmann's trap, and pursued the Union cavalry towards the waiting infantry. After firing at the enemy from their mounts, Engelmann's cavalry received heavy fire from a battery of Confederate artillery, and quickly retreated past the concealed infantry. As the enemy cavalry advancing slowly and cautiously towards Salem Cemetery, skirmishers from the 43rd and 61st Illinois' fired into their ranks to instigate an enemy charge. Dengler wrote of the ensuing action, saying, "My men . . . had been cautioned to reserve their fire. I let the enemy advance till within 30 yards of us, when at my command the men poured in a deadly volley, causing great havoc among

²¹³ Adolph Engelmann to Sister, December 26, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²¹⁴ Adolph Engelmann to Sister, December 26, 1862, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

them.”²¹⁵ In response to the Union musketry, “The enemy . . . came to a momentary halt, which proved to be the cause of their destruction, for at this critical moment a well-directed fire from the Sixty-first and second battalions completed their confusion.”²¹⁶ From Engelmann’s vantage point, he witnessed the Confederate cavalry retreat and run headlong into their own advancing numbers, “The enemy’s cavalry farther to the rear still rode forward and got jammed up with those in front. This solid body of the enemy afforded a splendid opportunity to the infantry.”²¹⁷ To cover the confused and retreating cavalry, the Confederates brought up their artillery, which compelled Engelmann and his brigade to beat a hasty retreat where they met advancing Union reinforcements under Brigadier General Mayson Brayman.²¹⁸

The Battle of Salem Cemetery represented the peak of the 43rd Illinois’ fighting ability during the war. The regiment’s discipline and conduct against a superior force, demonstrated to the unit’s commanders and the soldiers themselves that the regiment was capable in combat. Subsequently, the men of the 43rd Illinois’ readily recalled the battle, and considered it one of their greatest actions.²¹⁹ Confederate losses are unknown, but estimates indicate their casualties at roughly 60 killed and wounded. Engelmann’s command suffered considerably less, losing only two killed and five wounded.²²⁰

²¹⁵ “Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Dengler,” December 28, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 559.

²¹⁶ “Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Dengler,” December 28, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 559.

²¹⁷ “Report of Colonel Adolph Engelmann,” December 29, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 556.

²¹⁸ “Report of Colonel Adolph Engelmann,” December 29, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 556-7.

²¹⁹ Gustav Wagenfucher to Adjutant General, December 15th, 1863, Adjutant General’s Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA. In his letter, Wagenfucher notes the lack of a regimental history of the 43rd Illinois in the Adjutant General’s files. Wagenfucher identifies the units “most important” contributions as “the Battles of Pittsburgh Landing and Salem Cemetery.”

²²⁰ “Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Dengler,” December 28, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 560.: “Report of Colonel Adolph Engelmann,” December 29, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 556-7.

Intensely proud of his regiment, Dengler wrote, “The regiment sustained in this fight its old reputation for bravery so gallantly and nobly won on the bloody battle-fields of Shiloh and Pittsburg Landing.”²²¹

Following their brush with General Forrest, the 43rd Illinois marched back to Bolivar, where they remained until late May 1863. While the regiment remained in Bolivar, the men’s morale stayed high, except during short absences when beer, wine, or whiskey were unavailable.²²² Private Hans Westerlund of Company C remarked on the favorable situation of the 43rd Illinois in Bolivar, observing, “Our regiment is on Provost Guard detail here in town, so that if we lie still, then we have it pretty good.”²²³ On the condition of their accommodations, Westerlund boasted, “we have Log Cabins to live in and baking ovens to bake bread in now, which is what soldiers call ‘outstanding.’”²²⁴

While in Bolivar, the 43rd Illinois often received visitors into their camp. One particular group of German women from Chicago traveled to demonstrate their support of the German soldiers of Illinois. Colonel Engelmann noted that the ladies “brought potatoes, onions, dried fruit, sauerkraut, herring, whiskey, brandy, wine, lemons, etc.”²²⁵ In their patriotic fervor to personally see that every Illinois German fighting in the Army of the Tennessee received some supplies, they had left little for the 43rd Illinois. In response, Lieutenant Colonel Dengler told the women “it was impractical to divide such an amount among 485 men. That, for example, meant 1 pt. of Whiskey for 12 men.”²²⁶

²²¹ “Report of Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Dengler,” December 28, 1862,” *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 24, 559.

²²² Adolph Engelmann to Sister, January 16, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²²³ Hans Westerlund to Brother and Parents, November 11, 1862, translated by Lars Jenner, Hans Westerlund Papers, SCAC.

²²⁴ Hans Westerlund to Brother and Parents, November 11, 1862, translated by Lars Jenner, Hans Westerlund Papers, SCAC.

²²⁵ Adolph Engelmann to Sister, January 29, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²²⁶ Adolph Engelmann to Sister, January 29, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

Dengler's words struck the women unprepared, and one of the ladies burst into tears. To resolve the matter, the ladies left more supplies with the regiment than initially intended, allowing more men to experience the comfort of home.²²⁷ These ladies' actions, despite being rather uncomfortable for some, demonstrated the support of German soldiers and the Union within Illinois' German communities.

In Belleville, an intense interest in the regiment's situation in Bolivar grew, which influenced the *Belleville Advocate* to imbed a correspondent with the regiment. As the unit left Bolivar for Mississippi, the correspondent offered a description of the regiment's position, and gauged the attitudes of the southern populace towards the German regiment. Of the regiment, the correspondent wrote of the 43rd Illinois' unceasing scouting missions throughout the adjacent country and the readiness at which the regiment jumped into action. On May 29, the regiment received orders to march, and the correspondent remarked, "The officers packed their trunks and the men their knapsacks with the most praiseworthy coolness and nonchalance."²²⁸ By the following day the unit had gone, and so too were the rest of the town's garrison. Once the Union presence left the city, the correspondent found that civilians "gave knowing glances to each other and secretly rejoiced over the departure of the Yankees," and were likewise delighted that "The invading Hessians have ceased to pollute their streets with their detested tread."²²⁹ Whether the civilians of Bolivar were elated, as the correspondent led on, the fact remained that the 43rd Illinois was gone and would not return to the town. While stationed in Bolivar, the 43rd Illinois again demonstrated their battlefield prowess and discipline. In

²²⁷ Adolph Engelmann to Sister, January 29, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²²⁸ "From Bolivar, Tenn.," *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), June 19, 1863.

²²⁹ "From Bolivar, Tenn.," *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), June 19, 1863.

Mississippi, the regiment found itself as part of the Army of the Tennessee's efforts to capture Vicksburg.

12th Missouri

As the 30th Illinois and 43rd Illinois remained stationary through much of 1862 and the early months of 1863, the 12th Missouri found itself continually on the move. In December 1862, the unit received a transfer to the Army of the Tennessee, and quickly engaged the enemy at Chickasaw Bayou, Chickasaw Bluff, and the attack on Fort Hindman during the Arkansas Post Expedition.²³⁰ In February 1863, the 12th Missouri joined the Yazoo Pass Expedition, the intent of which was to navigate the meandering bends and twisting rivers of the Mississippi Delta. Naval gunboats were to press east in search of a navigable route to the Yazoo River. Once on the Yazoo, soldiers were to disembark on the high ground east of Vicksburg. The 12th Missouri's role in the expedition involved the protection of the gunboats and to attack Confederate artillery positions by land when necessary.²³¹

Life aboard the gunboats was predominantly a boring affair punctuated by brief and quick bouts of action with Confederate guerillas or entrenched artillery. Captain Joseph Ledergerber wrote that he and other officers "pass much time playing chess and backgammon."²³² Lieutenant Kircher wrote of life aboard the gunships saying, "It is

²³⁰ Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion: compiled and arranged from official records of the federal and Confederate armies, reports of the adjutant generals of the several states, the army registers, and other reliable documents and sources*, (Des Moines: The Dyer Publishing Company, 1908), 1328.

²³¹ Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory*, 303-315.

²³² Joseph Ledergerber diary, entry for March 14, 1863, Joseph A. Ledergerber Diary, ALPLM.

getting noticeably boring lying here on the boat for us.”²³³ In spite of the boredom, Kircher cherished the fact that “We live here on the gunboat quite content. If we didn’t know that some time things have got to break loose you might think that we were making a pleasure trip.”²³⁴ Kircher’s understanding of impending action at a moment’s notice proved correct as the slow moving gunboats fell prey to marauding bands of pro-Confederate guerillas. Captain Ledergerber recorded one such instance with guerillas, writing, “After having gone about 20 miles a band of guerillas from 20 to 30 fired at us from the shore where they were secreted behind logs. Nobody was hurt although the men were standing exposed and in crowds together.”²³⁵ Where there was comfort in knowing the regiment was not fighting massed enemy infantry on open ground, unexpected guerilla attacks proved just as disheartening.

One luxury that worked to ease the unit’s discomforts was their periodic access to alcohol. In his diary, Kircher faithfully recorded when the regiment received this welcome cheer. On January 28, Kircher penned, “Drank first Lager again since left Bel. It was excellent.”²³⁶ Later in April Kircher wrote, “Bert and me struck up town as soon as possible and found plenty lager there to make our faces smile for 6 weeks after taken.”²³⁷ Kircher’s and the 12th Missouri’s affinity for lager beer demonstrates the importance maintaining the practice of German cultural habits in the field. The consumption of alcohol and other practices brought comfort and stability to the German soldier, who lived an otherwise unstable existence in the army.

²³³ Henry Kircher to Joseph Kircher, February 20, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²³⁴ Henry Kircher to Joseph Kircher, March 10, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²³⁵ Joseph Ledergerber diary, entry for March 17, 1863, Joseph A. Ledergerber Diary, ALPLM.

²³⁶ Henry Kircher diary, entry for January 28, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²³⁷ Henry Kircher diary, entry for April 9, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

On March 12, the flotilla reached the junction of the Tallahatchie and Yalobusha Rivers, the confluence of which was commanded by Confederate Fort Pemberton. The initial plan of Commodore Watson Smith was to pound the fort with two gunboats and send the infantry, including the 12th Missouri, to capture the crippled fort. After the gunboats *Chillicothe* and *Baron De Kalb* failed to silence the guns, and it was decided that no infantry could attack through the swampland surrounding the fort, the Union flotilla retired. On the 13th, Smith ordered a hasty artillery position fashioned on land to attack the fort from a different angle. This position, along with two gunboats and several mortar barges, fired at Fort Pemberton throughout the day. Kircher, positioned on the deck of the gunboat *Romeo*, noted that the shells sent over the fort “my have exploded but did no damage except to the pocketbook of Uncle Sam.”²³⁸ After failing to silence the Confederate position, the flotilla began its slow retreat on the 20th. The expedition ended shortly thereafter. In a fit of rage, Captain Ledergerber angrily critiqued the Union high command for the failed expedition. “Everlasting misfortune—our Union’s deplorable fate. With men and arms enough to do anything if properly led—nothing is done because nothing is properly conducted.”²³⁹ He continued, writing, “The men who sung cheerfully at starting are violent, the petulant young soldiers are downcast, depressed—they think of their Union and fear to look at her fate.” The ill-fated Yazoo Pass Expedition signaled a low point for the 12th Missouri’s morale. Surprisingly, their longest period of inactivity triggered their deepest bout of depression, even though they faced more carnage and heartbreak in the year to come.

²³⁸ Henry Kircher to Mother, March 17, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²³⁹ Joseph Ledergerber diary, entry for April 4, 1863, Joseph A. Ledergerber Diary, ALPLM.

Vicksburg

On May 18, after months of failure and maneuvering, the first elements of the Army of the Tennessee reached the Confederate fortifications east of Vicksburg. By the 19th, military engineers established a line of bridges and roads, which enabled a steady stream of supplies to reach the Union besiegers. So began the siege of Vicksburg, an action that tested the tenacity and resolve of the men and officers in the Army of the Tennessee for a month and a half.²⁴⁰

On May 19, Grant ordered an assault against the Confederate breastworks, which ended in failure. Three days later, Grant ordered a second assault across the entire Union lines. The 12th Missouri, part of Brigadier General Frederick Steele's Division of Sherman's XV Corps, was positioned on the northern extremity of the Union lines. The 30th Illinois, of Major General John A. Logan's Division of Major General McPherson's XVII Corps, found themselves at the center of the Union lines. Since May 18th, the two units acted as sharp shooters and skirmishers, losing few men, but on the 22nd, the 12th Missouri was flung headlong towards the impregnable Confederate trench systems. The 30th Illinois, fresh from its bloody action at Champion Hill, remained in reserves during the assault.²⁴¹

At dawn on the 22nd, the 30th Illinois took their position behind Logan's Division and waited for the signal to commence their attack upon the enemy breastworks. The Union assault began across the entire front at 10 a.m., and the 30th Illinois watched the

²⁴⁰ Woodworth, *Nothing But Victory*, 397-99.

²⁴¹ Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, 1328.; McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*, 28-30.; Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. II, 537-38.

deadly assault from their positions. Corporal Robert M. Dihel recounted the terrible attack, writing, “Our artillery opened a terrific fire on the enemy and our infantry moved cautiously toward the works...our men kept on in the face of a galling fire and our hearts beat with high hopes that they were successful.”²⁴² The advancing infantry quickly reached within thirty yards of the Confederate trenches, but the assault lost momentum as the infantry refused to further expose themselves to the massed enemy fire. Dihel described the moment the advance failed, “So thus they lay doing nothing till darkness set in, when commenced the grandest display of fireworks I ever beheld. Spouts of flame issued from the muzzles of thousands of muskets and vast sheets of fire were belched from scores of cannon.”²⁴³

On the Union right, the 12th Missouri prepared for their attack. To reach their staging area, the unit marched through “3 places each about 75-100 yards long, that was commanded by the enemies sharpshooters and artillery.”²⁴⁴ The regiment’s movement through three exposed stretches led to the death of one captain and the wounding of the regiment’s adjutant and another captain. At 5 p.m., the 12th Missouri moved forward, behind the 9th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment, towards the Confederate earthworks on top of a steep hill roughly 200 yards away. Through the murderous fire, the 12th Missouri followed close behind the 9th Iowa, who received the brunt of Confederate fire. Kircher recalled the assault, saying that they “had to climb the steep hills as fast as possible, over

²⁴² Robert M. Dihel to Kate, June 5th, 1863, “My Beloved Kate: a collection of Civil War letters,” ALPLM.

²⁴³ Robert M. Dihel to Kate, June 5th, 1863, “My Beloved Kate: a collection of Civil War letters,” ALPLM.

²⁴⁴ Henry Kircher diary, entry for May 22, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

tree trunks and brush. How those who survived God knows, I can't comprehend it."²⁴⁵ As the regiment closed within ten steps of the enemy entrenchments, Kircher and the other officers noticed that through some communication error, the 3rd Missouri and 17th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiments had not followed the 12th Missouri or the 9th Iowa into the attack. Understanding that the assault could not continue without the 3rd and 17th Regiment's, the 12th Missouri's officers ordered the regiment to hug any available cover and wait until nightfall. Kircher wrote that his company "had to drop down behind logs...and fire occasionally to keep the enemy in the works."²⁴⁶ Only under the cover of darkness was the regiment allowed to evacuate their wounded and leave the hill.²⁴⁷

The mass Union assaults of the 22nd failed much as those of the 19th. Altogether, the 12th Missouri suffered the loss of fifteen officers and 113 enlisted men killed or wounded.²⁴⁸ Angered by the failure of the attack, Kircher recorded in his diary that, "it was a sad scene to see so many brave boys slaughtered without having accomplished anything. It foolish of our Commanders to take all these troops by three blockades during daylight."²⁴⁹ The exhausted Lieutenant continued writing about the assault, "It made the tears come to my eyes as I was urging my brave company forward and seeing them drop one after the other like flies from the first frost."²⁵⁰ The assault was a disaster for the 12th Missouri, which achieved nothing but sorrow and regret.

²⁴⁵ Henry Kircher to Mother, May 24, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁴⁶ Henry Kircher diary, entry for May 22, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁴⁷ Henry Kircher to Mother, May 24, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁴⁸ Henry Kircher to Mother, May 24, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁴⁹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for May 22, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁵⁰ Henry Kircher diary, entry for May 22, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

The following month saw no all-out assaults on the Confederate fortress, as the Army of the Tennessee settled down for a siege of the city. The 12th Missouri and 30th Illinois manned the trench lines and acted as sharpshooters, where the 43rd Illinois, who arrived on June 9, acted as a rearguard against any outside Confederate attack. The 12th Missouri manned the rifle pits north of Vicksburg, and Kircher found life in the trenches more than uncomfortable. Writing of the heat on June 1, the Lieutenant wrote, “It is very warm and sultry today, almost enough to fry a white man, negroes and Southern [?] may find such weather pleasant but I don’t.”²⁵¹ Each company of the 12th Missouri took turns as sharpshooters, where for one to two days at a time, their duty consisted of continuously firing at the Confederate positions. During one stint in the trenches, Kircher wrote, “The rebs . . . seldom answer our guns with more than 1-2 shots or non at all during the whole day . . . The sharpshooters must annoy them also very much and will do it still more when our rifle pits are more extensive . . . Every night we are very busy putting up new pits, new batteries.”²⁵² The 12th Missouri continued on in this capacity until the citadel fell in early July.

The 30th Illinois likewise took turns manning a section of rifle pits. Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads of Company H wrote of the trenches, saying, “I was placed within 20 yards of the rebs fortifications and stayed there two days without being relieved to cook my grub so I ate it raw.”²⁵³ He further recounted that, “I shot 100 rounds at the rebs while I was there. We don’t let one of them raise their heads above the breastworks if they do

²⁵¹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for June 1, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁵² Henry Kircher diary, entry for May 31, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁵³ Rhoads, *The Civil War Letters of Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads*, 98.

there will be fifty shots fired at him.”²⁵⁴ Private Benjamin Boring of Company D likewise described rifle pit duty, saying, “There was a strong force of Sharp Shooters behind us who kept such a pecking away at them they could not get their heads high enough above their works to shoot at us.”²⁵⁵ Due to their inability to fire back, besieged Confederate soldiers resorted to throwing hand grenades at the 30th Illinois. Boring detailed the methods used by Confederate grenadiers, writing, “About noon the Rebs commenced throwing clods of dirt and stones over into our ditch the Boys threw back at them, that gave the Rebs range of us and they commenced throwing hand granades.”²⁵⁶ In response, the 30th Illinois, who also had grenades, hurled twice as many towards the Confederate trenches.²⁵⁷

While toiling away in the trenches and behind the lines, several men of the 30th Illinois, whether knowing or unknowingly began actively partaking in German culture and cuisine, thus demonstrating the cultural transitions that occurred during the war. The first example came from Lieutenant David W. Poak who wrote of his dinner on the outskirts of Vicksburg. “My dinner today consisted of light bread, tea, ham, potatoes, beans, pickles and last but no means least a bountiful supply of ‘Sour Crout’.”²⁵⁸ Poak’s emphasis on Sour Crout, indicates the dish’s special meaning. Whether he was fond of this German staple or simply intrigued by its position on his plate, cannot be determined. A second instance comes from Lieutenant Ogden Greenough who wrote a friend regarding a piece of music accompanying his letter. Greenough describes the piece as

²⁵⁴ Rhoads, *The Civil War Letters of Private Jacob Haynes Rhoads*, 98.

²⁵⁵ Benjamin F. Boring to Willie C. Jones, June 18th, 1863, Benjamin F. Boring collection, VCPL.

²⁵⁶ Benjamin F. Boring to Willie C. Jones, June 18th, 1863, Benjamin F. Boring collection, VCPL.

²⁵⁷ Benjamin F. Boring to Willie C. Jones, June 18th, 1863, Benjamin F. Boring collection, VCPL.

²⁵⁸ David W. Poak to Sadie, June 12th, 1863, “*Dear Sister Sadie*,” 150.

“containing a German air which I like very much. The words in the original language could not be translated into as good English.”²⁵⁹ This piece of German music touched Greenough in a way that compelled him to send it to home, thus showing his willingness to enjoy German culture freely. These two instances demonstrate the permeation of German culture into the daily lives of native-born American soldiers, which furthers our understanding of how ethnic relations began to improve within the Army of the Tennessee. Battlefield success was not the sole driving force behind the acceptance of German-American soldiers. Other factors such as an appreciation for German food and music normalized aspects of German culture, which possibly made German speaking soldiers appear less dissimilar.

In early June, the 43rd Illinois was ordered into a position along the rear of the Union lines to protect the besieging forces from a Confederate attack from the east. Colonel Engelmann wrote his wife of the regiment’s new position, saying, “We are occupying a new position, already strong by nature and we are strengthening it hourly, with shovel and ax, digging rifle pits, building forts and making abatis.”²⁶⁰ Commenting on the strength of the position, Engelmann noted, “If the enemy attacks us in the daytime we will be able to wreak terrible havoc in his ranks. The country is not such to invite night attacks.”²⁶¹ It was in this defensive posture that the 43rd Illinois remained until the Confederate garrison surrendered.

²⁵⁹ Ogden Greenough to unknown, June 19th 1863, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC.

²⁶⁰ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, June 16, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁶¹ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, June 16, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

On July 4, the besieged Confederates surrendered to Grant's Army of the Tennessee. The garrison withstood nearly two months of hardship, but eventually succumbed to the strength of the Union siege. The Confederate surrender sent shockwaves through the exhausted Union Army. Colonel Engelmann began a letter home by enthusiastically proclaiming that "VICKSBURG IS OURS!"²⁶² An excited Captain John P. Davis of the 30th Illinois wrote, "Vicksburg has fallen and our battery upon the river bank is thundering forth thirty five rounds in honor of the downfall of the stronghold."²⁶³ The excitement similarly spread to the 12th Missouri as Henry Kircher recorded in his diary that "This is will be a double celebration, of the 4th, the day of liberty to our forefathers, and now to the prisoners of Vicksburg."²⁶⁴ On the 5th, Kircher recalled the toll of the regiment's celebrations of the previous day, saying it was "awful hot...the sun almost burning our skulls. Several men were sun struck, but likely they had indulged to much in whiskey."²⁶⁵ This great triumph was brought to fruition by a coalition of various races and ethnicities who worked together to insure the Army of the Tennessee was victorious. The steady ethnic relations only improved the capabilities of the army.

After the fall of Vicksburg, the 30th Illinois continued to operate within the Army of the Tennessee. On January 1, 1864, the unit mustered in as a veteran regiment, and accompanied General Sherman from Meridian to the Carolinas. The 43rd Illinois remained in the Army of the Tennessee for only a month following the surrender of

²⁶² Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, July 4, 1863, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁶³ John P. Davis diary, entry for July 4, 1863, George M. Lucas Collection, ALPLM.

²⁶⁴ Henry Kircher diary, entry for July 4, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁶⁵ Henry Kircher diary, entry for July 5, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

Vicksburg. On August 6, the regiment was assigned to First Brigade, 2nd Division, VII Army Corps. Major General F. Steele commanding. For the remainder of their service, the 43rd Illinois operated in Arkansas.²⁶⁶

In a similar manner to their first two years in combat, the 12th Missouri remained active in heavy fighting. From July 10 to 17, just six days after the surrender of Vicksburg, the German's participated in the siege of Jackson, Mississippi. On September 1, General Osterhaus assumed command of the 1st Division, XV Army Corps, of which his old 12th Missouri was a part of the First Brigade. Again in late September, the 12th Missouri received marching orders, this time as part of a larger operation involving the Army of the Tennessee as it moved northeast towards Chattanooga, Tennessee to rescue the retreating Army of the Cumberland. As the regiment prepared to move, newly promoted Captain Kircher recorded sudden feelings of dread in his diary, "But still something is troubling my mind, is it an omen of something to come, is there anything like forefeeling?"²⁶⁷ Kircher's premonitions proved correct, as the 12th Missouri confronted the enemy in several of the unit's most bloody engagements in the following months.²⁶⁸

As the 12th Missouri approached Tennessee, Kircher again remarked in his journal of ill thoughts and dreams of his death. Another officer in the 12th Missouri, Captain Casimir Andel likewise dreamt of his own mutilation in battle. Kircher recorded that "Casimir dreamt several times already that he had a leg amputated. He thinks the next

²⁶⁶ Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. II, 537-38.: Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III, 274-5.

²⁶⁷ Henry Kircher diary, entry for September 29, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁶⁸ Townsend, *Yankee Warhorse*, 120-3.: Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, 1328.

fight or battle we have will cost one of his legs. I hope not.”²⁶⁹ The loss of General Osterhaus, who traveled to St. Louis during the campaign to see his dying wife, further depressed Kircher and the men of the 12th Missouri.²⁷⁰ However, to the relief of Kircher and most of the 1st Division, Osterhaus’ return on the eve of a major battle at Lookout Mountain swelled the morale of the largely German division. Kircher recounted Osterhaus’ arrival, saying, “About noon General Osterhaus made his appearance amongst us again. A smile and thundering cheers burst from all his division (except the 76 Ohio but they are small potatoes, and no one notices there doing.) and we again feel like Uncle Sam’s boys ought to ‘sure of victory.’”²⁷¹ Kircher’s remarks demonstrate the likely existence of continued ethnic tensions between Germans in the 1st Division and native-born Americans of the 76th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Where ethnic tensions might well exist, it remains more likely that the 76th Ohio was predominantly upset that their former Colonel, Brigadier General Charles R. Woods, lost command of the 1st Division when Osterhaus returned. However, Kircher’s observations of the Ohioans’ reactions to Osterhaus’ return appear to be exaggerated. Captain Charles Dana Miller of the 76th Ohio mentioned the event only in passing, writing, “On the 15th there was nothing transpired worthy of record . . . General Osterhaus returned to his command and assumed charge of the Division, having been promoted to a Major General.”²⁷² Captain

²⁶⁹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for October 10, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁷⁰ Henry Kircher diary, entry for November 2, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. Kircher wrote of Osterhaus’ absence, saying, “sorry to see leave us, for old Glory will make us all go to sleep or drink whiskey.” Kircher is likely referring to Brigadier General Charles R. Woods, who assumed command of the 1st Division in Osterhaus’ absence.

²⁷¹ Henry Kircher diary, entry for November 22, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁷² Charles Dana Miller, *The Struggle for the Life of the Republic: A Civil War Narrative by Brevet Major Charles Dana Miller, 76th Ohio Volunteer Infantry*, Ed. by Stewart Bennett and Barbara Tillery, (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2004), 196.

Miller's lackadaisical mention of Osterhaus' return indicates that the Ohioans were clearly not as upset as Kircher perceived.

The morning of November 24, was foggy, which shielded the movements of the XV Corps. At 10 a.m., the countryside was consumed by the lingering reports of an artillery barrage. Kircher and the 12th Missouri marched towards the sound of battle, but did not engage the enemy. The following morning likewise began with the rumble of an artillery barrage, and the 12th Missouri again marched towards the sound of battle. The regiment was lightly engaged, and suffered only a few casualties. So passed the Battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, the 12th Missouri having remained in reserves throughout both fights.²⁷³

Two days after the Union victory at Missionary Ridge, General Osterhaus led his Division headlong into a heavily fortified position along the ridges east of Ringgold, Georgia. Kircher awoke on the 27th and recorded in his diary that he had "no coffee this morning, only crackers and some bacon."²⁷⁴ His day progressively worsened, as the 12th Missouri was thrown into a senseless attack, which mimicked their assault on the breastworks of Vicksburg on May 22. During the thick of the fight, the 12th Missouri occupied the center of their brigade's line, and together with the 3rd Missouri, 76th Ohio, and the 13th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment's surged up the ridge. Brigadier General Wood remarked in his report that "The Twelfth Missouri, although exposed to a severe fire, held its position with undaunted courage."²⁷⁵ Unfortunately, their bravery under fire came at a heavy price, as the 12th Missouri suffered 28 casualties, a large proportion of

²⁷³ Kircher, *A German in the Yankee Fatherland*, ed. Earl J. Hess, 143-45.

²⁷⁴ Henry Kircher diary, entry for November 27, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁷⁵ U.S. War Department, *OR*, ser. 1 vol. 55, 606-9.

whom were officers, including the death of Captain Joseph Ledergerber and acting First Brigade Adjutant F. Kessler. Wounded officers included Colonel Wangelin, Major Frederick Ledergerber, and Henry Kircher. While recovering from his wounds, Captain Kircher laboriously completed a diary entry for November 27, that he left incomplete that morning. Kircher wrote, “Marched on about 5 miles arrived at Ringold Georgia and struck the enemies rear guard. Had a severe skermish . . . I left leg and right arm amputated about the upper joints therefore this smearing.”²⁷⁶ Kircher and several of the regiment’s officers gave their lives or a limb at Ringgold, in support of their country for which many had already fought for during three years in combat. Although these men predominantly spoke German and maintained the customs of their homeland, they embraced the language and laws of their adopted homeland. With their sacrifice, the killed and wounded of the 12th Missouri at Ringgold and in every other battle, demonstrated their devotion to the United States and Union cause.

The Battle of Ringgold Gap proved a pivotal moment for the 12th Missouri and their families in Illinois and Missouri. The casualties at Ringgold perhaps mostly affected Belleville, as the small community suffered the deaths and maiming of Joseph and Frederick Ledergerber and Henry Kircher. A grief stricken Gustave Koerner, then serving as the United States Minister to Spain, recalled in his memoirs the great losses of Ringgold, especially distressed by the news of his nephews Joseph and Frederick. Koerner wrote, “Our nephew, Major Frederick Ledergerber, was wounded, and his brother Joseph, a captain, whom General Osterhaus had pronounced the best officer in

²⁷⁶ Henry Kircher diary, entry for November 27, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

the whole regiment, lost his life.”²⁷⁷ A December 25, issue of the *Belleville Advocate* published a piece about Captain Joseph Ledergerber. The article began with a proclamation that connected his sacrifice to the Union cause, reading, “Another name added to the list of Columbia’s sacrifices. Another youth has yielded his life to his country.”²⁷⁸ The article continued, “Among those who pursued the rebels to Ringgold, was Capt. L. At that fatal spot was his warm, noble, generous heart stilled forever.”²⁷⁹ To conclude, the article favored his body’s return to Belleville, saying, “Let his fellow soldiers bring him to Illinois, that over his still and pulseless heart, the green grass of his prairie home may be gently waved by the winds of the North.”²⁸⁰ In a similar manner to the 43rd Illinois after Shiloh, the losses of the 12th Missouri at Ringgold shocked the people of Belleville. The experiences of the unit were intrinsically linked to its home region, and the tribulations encountered by the regiment likewise tried the citizens of Belleville and St. Louis.

Following the regiment’s assault on the hills near Ringgold, the 12th Missouri continued moving with the Army of the Tennessee. In May, the unit embarked on the Atlanta Campaign, which would be their last action as a regiment. The 12th Missouri fought in the Battles of Resaca, Dallas, New Hope Church, Allatoona Hills, Kenesaw Mountain, and Atlanta. Following the hard fought Battle of Atlanta, General Sherman

²⁷⁷ Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Kroener*, vol. 2, 397.

²⁷⁸ “In Memoriam,” *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), December 25, 1863.

²⁷⁹ “In Memoriam,” *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), December 25, 1863.

²⁸⁰ “In Memoriam,” *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), December 25, 1863.

ordered the Army of the Tennessee to besiege the city, an action that eventually overcame the Confederate defenses.²⁸¹

Since Kircher's wounding at Ringgold, he and his friend Captain Albert Affleck carried on a correspondence in which Affleck detailed the movements and dealings of the 12th Missouri. On July 26, Affleck wrote to Kircher from the rifle pits occupied by the regiment, writing, "We will be mustered out by Companies. A, B, D, E, G go out in August."²⁸² In Kircher's absence, there was some question as to if he would travel to Tennessee and muster out with the regiment, or resign his commission and receive a discharge in St. Louis. On this note, Affleck said, "If you want to come, you had better be in Chattanooga about the 20th of August, but I think it would save your trouble, to tender your resignation."²⁸³ In closing, after elaborating on his plans to get Kircher discharged without traveling south, Affleck wrote, "Please inform my sister of my safety, my regard to all. Your Friend, Bert."²⁸⁴ Two days later, the 12th Missouri repelled an attack made by Confederate General William J. Hardee during the Battle of Ezra Church. The regiment suffered thirteen casualties, but managed to maintain their position throughout the day.²⁸⁵ Affleck was among those wounded, having both thighs pierced by an enemy ball. On August 4, the young captain died.²⁸⁶

Affleck's death came at the tail end of the 12th Missouri's three years of service. Throughout which, Affleck experienced a shift from a Union Army in which many

²⁸¹ Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, 1328.: Frederick Bechtold diary, entries for July 22, 1864, Bechtold Family Papers, BHL.

²⁸² Albert Affleck to Henry Kircher, July 26th, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁸³ Albert Affleck to Henry Kircher, July 26th, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁸⁴ Albert Affleck to Henry Kircher, July 26th, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁸⁵ Frederick Bechtold diary, entry for July 28, 1864, Bechtold Family Papers, BHL.

²⁸⁶ Certificate of Decease of Officers for Albert F. Affleck, August 8, 1864, 12th Regiment Infantry Regimental History, MSA.

soldiers harbored a hatred of German soldiers to one where German-American regiments, like the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri, served alongside their fellow countrymen with less hostility. This change began as German units in the West demonstrated their skill in battle, which was solidified through continued victory of Germans and the Army of the Tennessee. Additionally, St. Louis and Belleville German-Americans continued their support of the Union, even though their sons, husbands, and fathers were sacrificed at such a high level. It was in this army, that Henry Kircher sacrificed an arm and leg, and where Albert Affleck gave his life. Their sacrifices made possible their acceptance by those who would not have them prior to the war. German sacrifices would continue until the final days of the conflict, but for the beleaguered 12th Missouri, they were over. In handwriting tighter than in previous months but still revealing the labored movements of his non-dominant hand, Kircher scratched a note into Affleck's letter of the July 26. His note read, "The last letter received from the best of my few friends. Dear Bert was wounded near Atlanta Georgia, in both joints, on the 28th day of July 1864 and died in consequence of the wounds on him."²⁸⁷ Further lamenting the death of his best friend, Kircher observed, "So one by one all my friends are dropping off to live in a better world than this, Oh Will we ever meet again?"²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Albert Affleck to Henry Kircher, July 26th, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

²⁸⁸ Albert Affleck to Henry Kircher, July 26th, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

CHAPTER IV - "The Only German Veteran Regiment of Illinois"

Fellow citizens and fellow soldiers! Citizens of Illinois and veteran soldiers of the late 12th Missouri Infantry Volunteers, honorably discharged and mustered out by reason of expiration of your three years term of service, we, your friends and neighbors and relatives, give you our cordial welcome home. Welcome, welcome from your hard fought battle fields, your many long and toilsome marches, and your bloody assaults upon fortifications at Vicksburg, at Mission Ridge and Lookout Mountain and Ringgold's Pass, and the hundred and thirty-four miles of almost continual fighting which brought you up against that stronghold and key of rebeldom, Atlanta—welcome to you all, privates, corporals, sergeants. I cannot say welcome to your officers—they are all dead or crippled for life with honorable wounds.

Colonel Nathaniel Niles
130th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment²⁸⁹

The speech by Colonel Nathaniel Niles of the 130th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment welcoming home men from the freshly discharged 12th Missouri demonstrates several key alterations to the ethnic climate of the St. Louis-Belleville area which resulted from German service in the war. The men of the 12th Missouri served bravely throughout their three years of service, paying a ghastly price for their courage and prestige on the battlefield. Colonel Niles recognized the unit's sacrifice and unwavering valor on the battlefield, as evidenced by the number of its dead and wounded. He likewise stressed their steadfast support of the Union by stating, "Soldiers, let your deportment as citizens and civilians be worthy of you and your great deeds as defenders of your country."²⁹⁰ This phrase reveals the immense changes in the region spurred on by German

²⁸⁹ "Return of the 12th Missouri—Speech by Col. Niles," *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), September 2, 1864.

²⁹⁰ "Return of the 12th Missouri—Speech by Col. Niles," *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), September 2, 1864.

participation in the conflict. The men of the 12th Missouri were no longer Germans, but Americans, who sacrificed dearly for their country. Colonel Niles, a New Yorker by birth, played the part of the region's native-born American population, as his speech congratulated the men for their service and welcomed them as equal citizens of the United States.²⁹¹

As their initial terms of service ran out, the Germans of the 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri formed consolidated units or merged with other regiments. Enough soldiers in the 43rd Illinois reenlisted, enabling the unit to retain its designation as a regiment. Veterans were consolidated into eight companies, while the two remaining companies remained open for one-year recruits. In contrast, Germans in the 12th Missouri, who remained active participants in combat until the final week of their muster, did not achieve high enough reenlistment numbers to maintain their designation as a regiment. Returning veterans joined a consolidated 15th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment along with veterans of the 3rd and 17th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiments. Despite losing their regiment, returning veterans of the disbanded 12th Missouri continued to serve with fellow Germans in a unit pieced together from four German-American regiments.²⁹²

The 30th Illinois, like the 43rd, retained enough veterans to remain a regiment through the end of the war, all while maintaining its distinct ethnic composition. The ethnic construction of the unit remained similar to its original, as draftee and substitute

²⁹¹ United States Bureau of the Census, 1880 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880).

²⁹² Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III. 276-7.: Hess, "The 12th Missouri Infantry," 76-7.

troops added to the regiment were uniformly split between native-born Americans and ethnics.²⁹³ Despite the influx of new and untrained men, the functionality of the regiment remained high and the favorable interethnic relationships forged in the early part of the war continued.²⁹⁴

If the 30th and 43rd Illinois achieved high reenlistment numbers, why did the 12th Missouri, arguably the most elite unit of the three, experience a lower degree of reenlistment? This chapter offers two probable factors that led to low reenlistment in the 12th Missouri. The first, war weariness, affected many other regiments in one way or another and undoubtedly drove men in the 12th Missouri to not reenlist. However, war weariness cannot represent the sole reason for low reenlistment numbers as the 43rd Illinois experienced similar bouts of depression in the waning days of its initial term of service.²⁹⁵ A second and more plausible explanation is that the 12th Missouri actively engaged in combat during most major actions involving the Army of the Tennessee throughout their service. Naturally, the compounded numbers of battlefield casualties and sickness discharges or deaths led to drastic losses in manpower. By July 1864, its last month of service, the regiment had roughly 170 men able to take the field. In all

²⁹³ Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.": "30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service," The Illinois USGenWeb Project. The ten percent sample taken from the roster of the 30th Illinois indicates that ethnic and native-born American draftees and substitutes constituted 49% of the total. African Americans and those with unindicated ethnicities made up the final 2%.

²⁹⁴ Ogden Greenough to his mother, May 9th, 1864, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC. Greenough comments on new draftees in several letters in 1864 and noting nothing in particular regarding ethnicity. In a letter to his mother on May 9th, 1864 he notes that "recruits are marking time over the stony hills." In a similar way to the first recruits of the 30th Illinois in 1861, new recruits and draftees were drilled hard to make them as efficient as possible.

²⁹⁵ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, March 24, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. Writing home shortly before his term of service is complete, Engelmann writes of the war saying, "I am tired of it, but as long as it lasts I will stay." His resolve did not last, as he left the army after not being awarded a promotion to brigadier general having serving as a brigade commander since April, 1862.

likelihood, the extremely low numbers of able-bodied soldiers led to the regiment's disbanding, as a full strength regiment needed to consist of roughly 800-1000 men.²⁹⁶

A further question surrounds the maintenance of the ethnic status of the 43rd Illinois and veterans of the 12th Missouri. By 1864, ethnic regiments were in the process of disbanding or consolidating while few new ethnic units formed.²⁹⁷ The fact that the 43rd Illinois remained an operational German regiment and the 12th Missouri was consolidated into a regiment with veterans from four German units speaks to their effectiveness. Not only was this a testament to the fighting ability of the 43rd Illinois and consolidated 15th Missouri, it demonstrated that the State Governments of Illinois and Missouri acknowledged each unit's successes and understood their desire to continue serving with soldiers who shared their same ethnic identity.²⁹⁸

Upon their return to the front, the men of the 30th and 43rd Illinois were joined by an influx of one-year draftees and substitute troops, who filled the vacated positions of soldiers that were medically discharged or chose not to reenlist. The study of these drafted men and later recruits is lightly discussed by scholars who instead focus on early

²⁹⁶ Hess, "The 12th Missouri Infantry," 76.

²⁹⁷ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 153-54, 271.: Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, 226. Susannah Ural notes that ethnic regiments had difficulty filling their ranks as early as August 1861, and by 1863 Irish commanders like General Thomas Francis Meagher were hard pressed to find Irish soldiers willing to replenish their ranks. Likewise, the Lincoln Administration's shift away from the appointment of political officers in favor of officers of known military ability lessened the likelihood of ethnic regiments being formed by political ethnic appointees. William Burton argues that the popularity of ethnic regiments waned by 1863, as ethnic soldiers elected to serve in native-born American units. This is not the case for the returning soldiers of the 12th Missouri and the 43rd Illinois.

²⁹⁸ Adolph Engelmann to Richard Yates, February 2, 1863, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA.: Drafted men of St. Claire County to Richard Yates, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA. As early as February 1863, the German-Americans of the 43rd Illinois asked to be consolidated with another German unit if the state decided the 43rd was too small to operate as a regiment. In 1864 as their terms of service ran out, German draftees petitioned the governor of Illinois to be sent to the 43rd so that they might serve with fellow Germans.

volunteer soldier motivations. McPherson's groundbreaking work on the reasons why soldiers enlisted and stayed in the army, for example, predominantly focuses on the experiences of soldiers in the first three-year regiments as opposed to draftees who had "poor reputations" within the army.²⁹⁹ Kenneth Noe's pioneering work on Confederates who joined the army following the close of its first year, delves into the experiences of Confederate draftees and late recruits. Noe argues that in battle, drafted men fought and acted in a similar manner to veterans, the only difference being their reasons for serving, slightly older age, and occupation.³⁰⁰ Ryan W. Keating, another scholar who engages with draftee motivations, examines Irish draftee relations within Irish and mixed-ethnic regiments. He argues that within the Irish communities from which members of the 9th Connecticut, 17th Wisconsin, and 23rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiments were formed, the draft was met with mixed feelings, and draftees were viewed as inherently less loyal. Once filled with drafted and substitute soldiers, these regiments continued operating as they had earlier, and in a similar manner to Noe's findings, did not alter the regiments in any adverse way.³⁰¹ This chapter offers a rare examination of German draftees and substitute troops, arguing that their placement in the 43rd and 30th Illinois' did not lead to diminished regimental activity or ethnic disorder.

As the war progressed into 1865, the 43rd and 30th Illinois remained active. The 30th Illinois participated in the Army of the Tennessee's march through the Carolinas and the Grand Review in Washington following the war's conclusion. Their service differed

²⁹⁹ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 1-13.

³⁰⁰ Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 1-11.

³⁰¹ Keating, *Shades of Green*, 139-43, 174-7.

greatly from the final year of the 43rd Illinois' service, which saw the unit performing various garrison duties and their participation in several expeditions in Arkansas until their service ended in December 1865. Once out of the army, it became clear just how much German-American service to the Union altered ethnic relations in the Greater St. Louis region. The once segregated German communities became more likely to engage with native-born Americans, who in turn began accepting Germans and their customs.³⁰²

A Unit Dissolved

On September 23, 1864, the last company of the 12th Missouri received its discharge from the army. In three years of fighting, the unit participated in seventeen-named engagements. Its continual presence on the battlefield led to massive losses in combat and made the unit a statistical anomaly, the regiment having lost more men in combat than to disease. Colonel Wangelin believed the impeccable health of the regiment was due to the skilled medical staff, whereas Captain Kircher associated the German regiment's health to their general cleanliness and healthy eating habits.³⁰³ Both explanations likely played a role in the overall well-being of the regiment, but the lives

³⁰²Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. II, 537-8.: Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III, 274-5.: W. Sherman to Henry Kircher, September 22, 1865, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. After receiving crippling wounds at Ringgold's Gap, Henry Kircher was elected County Clerk of St. Clair County. While holding this position, Kircher engaged in a correspondence with General William T. Sherman, about a parcel of land the general had in the county. Through their business, Sherman began to consider Kircher a friend. This and other instances demonstrate the new willingness with which Germans and native-born Americans began interacting as a result of the Civil War.

³⁰³ Hugo Wengelin to Adjutant General of Missouri, December 24, 1864, 12th Regiment Infantry Regimental History, MSA.: Henry Kircher to Mother, January 30, 1863, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. Commenting on the differences in health practices between Germans and native-born Americans, Kircher writes that "overall one finds that the regiments consisting mostly of Germans have better health than those consisting of Americans of Irish. First of all, the German stomach is better attuned to sauerkraut and root plants, and therefore can stand pretty much everything...And cleanliness is also much more in fashion among the Germans than in other regiments."

saved by doctors and cleanliness were taken in combat. August 1864, marked the last month of the 12th Missouri's three-year enlistment period, and the final month of the regiment's existence. Because the regiment did not retain enough reenlisted men to remain a regiment, the veterans of the 12th Missouri received transfers to the German 15th Missouri.

The reasons for low reenlistment rates among ethnic units in 1864 is a topic of contention continually debated by scholars, and several theories regarding different ethnic groups, predominantly those serving in the eastern theater, exist. William Burton argues that most soldiers serving in ethnic regiments gradually lost support for them, as stronger loyalties to the state or country overshadowed the ethnic identities of the first three-year soldiers in the army. Gradually, recruitment for ethnic regiments began to fail and replacement soldiers loosened the ethnic makeup of these regiments. He additionally contends that this was matched with a general lack of interest by ethnic soldiers, who in the latter half of the war predominantly elected to serve in non-ethnic regiments. Christian Keller similarly notes the seeming lack of interest of German-American recruits to join the regiments of the former XI Corps Army of the Potomac. He contends, in contradiction to Burton, that German regiments did not fade away, and despite the infusion of native-born Americans into these regiments, the officers successfully fought to retain the ethnic tradition of their regiments. Commenting on low reenlistment numbers of Irish Catholic volunteers, Susannah Ural argues that dual loyalties between Ireland and the United States caused support for the war to wain and saw less successful recruiting for Irish regiments. As strictly Irish goals were impeded by the Union war

effort and the nation's aims, such as emancipation, the draft, and high battle casualties, Irish regiments could not recruit enough men to replenish their depleted ranks.³⁰⁴

Low reenlistment rates in the 12th Missouri were largely unrelated to the reasons argued by historians. By August 1864, the total aggregate strength of the unit was less than twenty percent of its original force three years earlier. The story of the 12th Missouri's low rates of reenlistment directly relate to the high frequency with which they fought the enemy. In the seventeen major engagements in which the unit played a direct role, the regiment rarely found itself in a supporting position and rather on the attacking end of the Army of the Tennessee. In total 285 men of the 12th Missouri were discharged for injuries sustained in combat.³⁰⁵ The regiment was in essence ground down to the size of a battalion during its three years of service, making it impossible to retain the status of a regiment.

An additional explanation, or rather a secondary factor regarding the dismantling of the 12th Missouri, was war weariness. Unlike northeastern Irish soldiers, the war weariness experienced by the regiment seems less related to anger with the army or the Union cause, but rather their fatigued state after constantly facing combat.³⁰⁶ A month prior to his discharge, a tired Frederick Bechtold of Company B wrote, "In spite of the

³⁰⁴ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, 227.; Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 144.; Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 2-4.

³⁰⁵ Hess, "The 12th Missouri Infantry," 64. In total 254 enlisted men and 31 officers were discharged from battle related injuries or deaths. On average, eight enlisted men were wounded for every officer, but at the Battles of Ringgold Gap and Ezra Church that number was only four enlisted men to one officer.

³⁰⁶ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 2-4. Ural demonstrates that Irish regiments and civilians, especially those associated with the Fenian movement, succumbed to similar bouts of war weariness to the German regiments. The difference between the 12th Missouri and the Irish discussed by Ural, were that the Irish lost interest in the war as their distinct Irish goals were impeded by Union war aims. Germans in the 12th Missouri experienced exhaustion related war weariness, as they had been present in combat for three years and were simply tired of fighting.

fact that our time is nearly up, they always keep taking us to the front. We are all waiting with longing for the termination of our time so that we can go home.”³⁰⁷ Striking a similar tone, Captain Albert Affleck penned his wounded and already discharged friend Henry Kircher, writing “I feel worn out and tired, I need rest and good living for a time.” He further expressed his willingness to return to the army saying that “then I shall be ready to go into service again if I am needed.”³⁰⁸ War weariness clearly affected the 12th Missouri, but its tired state did not reflect any animosity towards the army or Union cause, it rather signaled the soldiers’ complete exhaustion after three years of combat.

Despite the dilapidated state of the regiment, several healthy men like Affleck were determined to continue fighting after a short leave. Another Captain, Frederick Meier of Company F, expressed a similar readiness to return to the army once the 12th Missouri was disbanded. In the waning days of the unit’s enlistment, Meier wrote to the Adjutant General of Missouri, John B. Gray, asking for a commission of equal rank in a new regiment upon receiving his discharge from the 12th Missouri. At the beginning of the war, Meier joined the three-month 3rd Missouri in April 1861, and when that regiment reformed he enlisted as a private in the 12th Missouri. In three years, Meier rose through the ranks, gaining a Captain’s commission by September 1863. Of his service with the 12th Missouri, Meier explained that he “was present in every action in which the regiment was engaged and was only absent when sick on account of wounds received in battle and on detached service.” Emphasizing his desire to stay in the army, Meier wrote, “after the 12th of September, when I shall be at St. Louis for the muster-out of my Company, I am

³⁰⁷ Frederick Bechtold to Father, July 12, 1864, Bechtold Family Papers, BHL.

³⁰⁸ Albert Affleck to Henry Kircher, July 16, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

ready to return to the front at once.”³⁰⁹ Although war weariness impacted the 12th Missouri, there were those who sought placement in other regiments following the regiment’s dismantling.

43rd Illinois Consolidated

The 43rd Illinois likewise bucks the trends as contended by Burton and Keller. The 43rd Illinois retained its status as a regiment by maintaining enough veterans to man eight companies. An additional 200 drafted and substitute men were added to fill the regiment back to full strength. Colonel Engelmann acknowledged that Germans in ethnic regiments chiefly elected against reenlisting as veterans in the western armies, explaining that this was due to the belief that the German regiments were discriminated against. This did not hold true in his view, as he noted, “I know of various cases where some good Americans are also discriminated against—as for example—Hicks of the 40th Ills.”³¹⁰ Clearly, nativism within the army continued to exist either in reality or at least readily perceived in the minds of German soldiers. In this case, however, Engelmann believed the discrimination was indiscriminate and not solely directed at Germans.

In a similar manner to the men of the 12th Missouri, Germans in the 43rd Illinois also experienced bouts of war weariness. Speaking of the war in early 1864, Colonel Engelmann voiced his then lethargic support for the war, “I am tired of it, but as long as it

³⁰⁹ Fred Meier to Brig. Genl. John B. Gray, August 19, 1864, 12th Regimental Infantry Co. F, MSA.

³¹⁰ Adolph Engelmann to his Sister, March 2, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III, 644. The grumbling of the men of the 43rd Illinois was likely due to their having to wait an extra month before going on their veteran furlough’s. The 40th Illinois faced a similar situation, as their participation in the Atlanta Campaign forced their furlough’s to be pushed back a month.

lasts I will stay.” In spite of his desire to go home, he chose to stay until his term of service was terminated saying, “I cannot honourably leave the service as long as the Veterans of the 43rd remain in the service or an enemy stays in the Field. . . . if I have my health and the use of my limbs I have no intention of withdrawing.”³¹¹ Despite weariness in the final months of their service, the men of the 43rd Illinois largely committed to stay in the army, thus contradicting the common trends associated with ethnic reenlistment. By 1865, the 43rd Illinois was the last of three German regiment from Illinois still active.³¹²

Although German regiments were literally dying off or choosing not to reenlist, by 1864 having faced three years of hard campaigning, the men of the 43rd Illinois chose not to go home and abandon their unit. By March 1864, the majority of men eligible to reenlist as veterans did so. Another German regiment in the Seventh Army Corps, the 9th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment, had similar proportions of reenlisting veterans as the 43rd Illinois.³¹³

The accepted arguments regarding low German reenlistment later in the war and the aversion of German-American substitutes and drafted men to join ethnic regiments do

³¹¹ Adolph Engelmann to his Sister, March 20, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. Colonel Engelmann would leave the service in December 1864, but it was not a result of war weariness, instead it was his reaction to being passed over for promotion to brigadier general. Engelmann served as a brigade commander since the Battle of Shiloh and was only promoted to full colonel as a result. Despite several letters of recommendation having been submitted to Governor Yates, Engelmann did not receive his much deserved promotion.

³¹² “24th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service,” The Illinois USGenWeb Project.: “82nd Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service,” The Illinois USGenWeb Project. Only three German regiments formed in Illinois, but several other units contained large proportions of German soldiers such as the 9th Illinois, 13th Illinois, and 44th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiments. The 43rd Illinois was the only German Illinois regiment to reenlist as a veteran unit, the other two having disbanded after their initial terms of service had ended. The 82nd Illinois continued to operate until June 1865 when their initial terms of service ended, and thus were not labeled a veteran regiment.

³¹³ Adolph Engelmann to his Sister, March 2, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

not wholly apply to the 12th Missouri or the 43rd Illinois. The small numbers of reenlisting members of the 12th Missouri was due to the decimation of the regiment in numerous battles, not a desire to leave the army or abandon ethnic units. Furthermore, the 43rd Illinois experienced a high percentage of reenlistment, as did the 9th Wisconsin and 15th Missouri.³¹⁴ The reenlistment percentages of each regiment contradict the arguments of Keller and Burton regarding ethnic regiment disintegration later in the war. It is true that many Germans chose not to reenlist or elected to serve with non-ethnic regiments later in the war as stronger loyalties to the state and country dwarfed the ethnic identities of the first three-year soldiers. These four German regiments however, buck this trend.

Another area of contention regarding Burton's argument that a loss of enthusiasm for ethnic regiments was stymied through the influx of native-born American replacements does not hold true for the 43rd Illinois. The 200 draftees and substitute troops sent to the 43rd Illinois in 1864 were predominantly German, not native-born American, and their numbers preserved the high percentage of German-Americans within the regiment. Secondly, the new men petitioned Governor Yates to send them to the 43rd Illinois specifically for their designation as a German regiment. In addition to their desire to serve amongst other German-Americans, they were drawn to the unit because it was predominantly formed in St. Clair County. Many in the contingent were previously acquainted with the men of the 43rd Illinois, and saw serving amongst acquaintances more desirable than joining a regiment of strangers.³¹⁵

³¹⁴Adolph Engelmann to his Sister, March 2, 1864, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: Allendorf, *Long Road to Liberty*, 222-3. The 15th Missouri, although debilitated from combat and sickness discharges, achieved a reenlistment rate of over 80 percent.

³¹⁵ Drafted men of St. Clair County to Richard Yates, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA. This undated letter sent to Governor Yates was

The 43rd Illinois' experience likewise demonstrates the differences between Irish Catholic and German regiments. As late as 1864, German soldiers and their communities back home in Missouri and Illinois maintained a positive outlook on the war and continued to enlist and fight for the Union. Irish soldiers and communities in the northeast lost support for the war as Irish men continued to die. Furthermore, their communities disagreed with the shifting Union war aims, such as the Lincoln administration's push towards emancipation of the slaves in 1863, and found the ways in which Irish men were being drafted or "tricked" into the army appalling. There are exceptions of course, according to Keating, Irish soldiers in Illinois and Wisconsin used Irish dissatisfaction to the draft to reaffirm and demonstrate their devotion to the country and war effort.³¹⁶ The Belleville community's push for 200 drafted and substitute men to be assigned to the 43rd Illinois, demonstrates German support for the Union in the region, as the citizens enthusiastically pushed for their regiment and its continued service. By September 1864, Gustave Koerner ventured to Springfield to aid the officers of the regiment bearing his name, and lobbied for the transfer of the German draftees to the 43rd Illinois.

Multiple factors encouraged Bellevillers and the draftees to lobby for the conscript contingent to be placed in the 43rd Illinois, but the most influential was the regiment's designation as the last German regiment in the state and their desire to keep it German. The 200 drafted Germans wanted to serve with the ethnic unit from their county,

signed by forty of the 200 recruits sent to the 43rd Illinois. Their reasoning for joining the 43rd Illinois read, "We are all german born citizens from said St. Clair County," and "large part of the 43rd Regiment and most of the officers are men, that we are all acquainted with and are Germans and as such more acceptable to us, than strangers."

³¹⁶ Keating, *Shades of Green*, 154.

thus giving the community a reason to push for their assignment to the 43rd Illinois.

Finally, the presence of Gustave Koerner, then acting ambassador to Spain, signaled the weight of the community's desire to retain their unit's identity German.³¹⁷

Once selected for military service, the 200 drafted and substitute soldiers desired placement into the 43rd Illinois, a unit that might prove friendlier than some. After their successful appeal to the governor, they received orders to join the unit, and all indications point to a smooth integration of these soldiers into the regiment. The unit remained good humored and efficient until the war ended. It was after the war however, when reenlisted veterans took issue with several of the newcomers. As the majority of soldiers in the Union armed forces received their discharges in the months following the surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia in April 1865, the 43rd Illinois continued to occupy parts of eastern Arkansas. With the war over, and seeing no reason to continue serving in a rapidly dissolving army, several of the unit's company grade officers resigned.³¹⁸

Final Months of the 30th Illinois

When compared to the 43rd Illinois, the 30th Illinois achieved a similar degree of regimental efficiency with the arrival of draftees and substitutes, but no evidence documenting any discourse between veterans and drafted men has surfaced in the regimental files, soldier letters and diaries. Despite this lack of documentation, animosity

³¹⁷ Adolph Dengler to Unnamed, September 26, 1864, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Miscellaneous Letters, ISA.

³¹⁸ Adolph Dengler to I. N. Haynie, June 13, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company D, ISA.

between drafted and veteran soldiers surely existed in some capacity, as it had in the 43rd Illinois. In a similar manner as the regiment's first recruits under Colonels Fouke and Dennis, drafted and substitute soldiers briskly drilled with their companies as soon as they joined the regiment.³¹⁹ Despite the swell of drafted and substitute men who joined the regiment during the war, the ethnic makeup of the regiment remained the same. The uniform proportions of new soldiers preserved the regiment's nativity ratio of approximately 21% ethnic to 74% native-born American. As discussed in chapter II, the unit's unique nativity percentages did not lead to anti-immigrant sentiment within the regiment, and retaining a similar ethnic composition during the final months of the war possibly preserved this equilibrium.³²⁰ Maintaining the same ethnic makeup along with the quick and structured introduction of military discipline to conscripts, enabled the 30th Illinois to retain their battlefield prowess as they actively campaigned with the Army of the Tennessee.

While the veterans of the 30th Illinois generally lived peacefully with conscripts and substitutes, the demographic makeup of the regiment altered slightly with their attachment to the regiment. The average age of drafted and substitute men when mustered into the army was around four years older than the average veteran. Despite this difference, draftees and substitutes principally hailed from the counties where each company initially formed and new men held similar civilian occupations as farmers or

³¹⁹ Ogden Greenough to Ma, May 9, 1861, Ogden Greenough papers, IHLC. Greenough rarely comments on recruits in his substantial letter collection, noting at camp the "recruits are making time over the stony hills." Once brought to the regiment, recruits were drilled and made into effective soldiers.

³²⁰ Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.": "30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service," The Illinois USGenWeb Project. Of the draftees and substitutes sent to the 30th Illinois, foreign born and native-born Americans each represented 49%. The other 2% represent those soldiers with no nativity listed or the African-American cooks that were added to the regiment's official rosters in 1863.

laborers. Private Frank J. Pauley of Company D closely resembled the average drafted or substituted soldier. Pauley, born in Prussia, officially joined the service in October 1864, at the age of 29. Before the war, he worked as a blacksmith near Quincy, Illinois, only to join the army as a replacement for Andrew J. McGee.³²¹ Although slightly older on average, the 30th Illinois remained much the same as it had prior to 1864.

Private Henry McLain of Company G, likewise fits this mold. The 29-year-old farmer left his wife and children in Henderson County after being drafted in October, 1864. His letters home offer rare insight into the experiences of the unit's drafted soldiers. McLain referenced little hostility between drafted and veteran soldiers throughout his time with the regiment. Draftees sent to the 30th Illinois, such as McLain and his cohort, had no notable adverse effect on the regiment's stability nor its combat effectiveness. In his first brush with the enemy a week before the Battle of Bentonville, McLain wrote of the attacking Confederates and his regiment saying "they fought like demons but they would not brake our lines . . . we was to mutch for them."³²² The regiment's continued effectiveness in battle demonstrated the unit's enduring efficiency, which remained largely unchanged with the addition of drafted and substitute soldiers.³²³

³²¹ Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.": "30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service," The Illinois USGenWeb Project. The average age of D/S recruits in the 30th Illinois was 28.52, where native-born soldiers were 24.65. Most men in the 30th Illinois worked as farmers or other laborers.

³²² Poak, "*Dear Sister Sadie*": *the letters of David W. Poak, 30th Illinois Infantry during the Civil War: also the diary of Edward Grow and letters of Henry M. McLain*, ed. Matthew Anderson, 222.

³²³ Poak, "*Dear Sister Sadie*," iii, 217-23.: Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls.": "30th Illinois Infantry Regiment: Three Year Service," The Illinois USGenWeb Project.: McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*, 101. It is not clear whether the battle McLain refers to is the skirmish that occurred on March 3rd or the regiment's actions in the Battle of Bentonville on March 19. The Letter was dated the 11th, according to editor Matthew Anderson, but it is possible that it was misread or typed in wrong. Regardless of which action McLain is referring to, the 30th Illinois performed well and the draftees fought much like the unit's veterans.

Despite the influx of fresh soldiers in their ranks, the 30th Illinois remained very much the same in appearance and functionality. The regiment continued to serve with the Army of the Tennessee and General Sherman as they advanced through Georgia and into the Carolinas. Their effectiveness and discipline as a unit provided valuable experience to the army in battle and in the occupation of Southern cities. Following the war, they joined the Army of the Tennessee at the Grand Review in Washington and were shortly after mustered out of the service.³²⁴

Continuation of Service

As the 30th Illinois rapidly advanced with Sherman and participated in the grandiose pageantry of the Grand Review, the 43rd Illinois continued its occupation of Arkansas. In September 1864, the regiment returned to the Arkansas and the war, following the end of their thirty-day veteran's furloughs in Illinois. Upon its return, the regiment consolidated into eight veteran companies and two draftee and substitute companies. As the unit drilled, regaining the brisk professionalism it had become famous for in the army, Colonel Engelmann wrestled with his decision to stay or leave the army.³²⁵

Since the 43rd Illinois' participation at the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862, Colonel Engelmann filled the position of brigade commander. His skilled leadership gained

³²⁴ McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*, 82-113.: Sample, *A Short History of Company "A" 30th Illinois Infantry*, 6-10.

³²⁵ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, June 7, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, March 31, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. General Daniel Sickles attended a review of the General Soloman's Division and calling the 43rd Illinois "A splendid Regiment." This was not the first time the unit was praised. As far back as March 1862, the regiment was complemented on their sharp drilling by General McClernand who called the unit "the pattern for the example of the rest of the army."

Engelmann the appreciation of his staff, men, and superiors, but by late 1864 he wrestled with the urge of leaving the service. The letters he wrote home attest to his depressed state as he failed to gain a commission as a brigadier general, even though he successfully led a brigade for two and a half years. In September, Engelmann explained his predicament, “Dozens of generals have been appointed from Illinois regiments, bearing a higher number than 65, and they were all my juniors.”³²⁶ Later that month, he further dwelled on his position saying, “I am in such a state of uncertainty about being mustered out . . . I really do not know what will be the most desirable for me: to remain in my present position or to be mustered out.”³²⁷ These thoughts further dampened the mood of the normally voluble colonel, as he penned a short letter to his wife in which he discouragingly wrote, “I am not in a writing humor.”³²⁸ Despite his depression, Engelmann maintained his stalwart unionism and continued tirelessly working for his brigade and to fill the 43rd Illinois with fresh German recruits. His tireless efforts are chronicled in the Adjutant General’s history of the regiment, in which it is recorded that Engelmann “succeeded in prevailing on the State authorities to assign a sufficient number of drafted men to the Forty-third, so that Lieutenant Colonel Dengler could be commissioned Colonel”³²⁹ After much deliberation, he decided to muster out of the army

³²⁶ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, September 16, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³²⁷ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, September 21-22, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³²⁸ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, September 28, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³²⁹ Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III. 274.: Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, November 6, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM. Despite receiving 200 draftee and substitute troops from the state, Engelmann wanted more as he thought their numbers were not enough to fully refill the regiment.

if he did not receive promotion, and none came. He was officially mustered out on December 29, 1864, leaving his beloved regiment and brigade.³³⁰

In his farewell address to the 43rd Illinois, the tired colonel confirmed his unrelenting support for the Union cause, the men of the 43rd, and his devotion to the United States. Engelmann departed the regiment on a strong note saying, “I have always endeavored to encourage you in the prompt fulfillment of your duties as soldiers, even as it has always been my earnest endeavor to promptly and to the best of my ability do my duty to you and my Country.”³³¹ His support of the regiment and country continued as he traveled home to his wife Mina, but the 43rd Illinois and the brigade lost an accomplished commander. Understanding the gravity of their loss, the officers of the 43rd Illinois drafted several resolutions to be published in the *Little Rock National Democrat*, *Chicago Tribune*, *St. Louis Democrat*, and most papers in Belleville.

The resolutions display the love shared by the officers and men of the 43rd Illinois for their former commander. Each officer agreed that through three years of combat, Engelmann “has won our esteem and confidence as a most efficient and exemplary Officer and Gentleman, brave commander, and patriot, whose whole heart has ever been with the cause for which we are still struggling.”³³² They further remarked that Engelmann’s “leadership on the bloody fields of SHILOH, VICKSBURG, LITTLE ROCK, JENKINS [F]ERRY, and at so many other places and under so many other trying

³³⁰ Adolph Engelmann to Mina Engelmann, December 29, 1864, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³³¹ Address Delivered to 43rd Regiment at Little Rock, January 4, 1865, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³³² Resolutions adopted at meeting of Officers of the 43rd Regiment Illinois Infantry Volunteers, January 2, 1865, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

circumstances,” compelled the officers “to look up to, trust and confide in him.”³³³ In ending their resolutions, the officers affectionately wrote “it is with hopes that there will always remain a Bond of Love and Comradeship between the Officers and soldiers of the 43rd Illinois Volunteers and their old Colonel.”³³⁴ The expressions of love voiced by the officers of the regiment, testify to Engelmann’s impact on the unit. His tenure with the 43rd Illinois left an impression not only on the Germans of the regiment, but native-born Americans who served under him as a brigade commander.

Colonel Engelmann was truly a champion of his regiment, but he likewise earned the respect of many native-born Americans. Following his exit from the army, Engelmann received several letters from his old staff. Each letter detailed the state of the brigade and its regiments while intimately recalling the leadership and friendship of their colonel. Just over a week after Engelmann’s departure from Arkansas, Lieutenant Charles J. Coles of the 40th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment wrote the colonel saying, “you must not be surprised at receiving a few lines from me, so soon after your departure from our midst.”³³⁵ Coles continued, writing “but believing that you are, and will be at all times, glad to hear of the doings and the whereabouts of your old Brigade. I shall make bold to write as often as I may find anything worthy your consideration”.³³⁶ Of the 43rd

³³³ Resolutions adopted at meeting of Officers of the 43rd Regiment Illinois Infantry Volunteers, January 2, 1865, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³³⁴ Resolutions adopted at meeting of Officers of the 43rd Regiment Illinois Infantry Volunteers, January 2, 1865, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³³⁵ C.J. Coles to Adolph Engelmann, January 17, 1865, Letters from Colleagues, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM

³³⁶ C. J. Coles to Adolph Engelmann, January 17, 1865, Letters from Colleagues, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: “Roster and Records of Iowa Soldiers, War of the Rebellion Historical Sketches of Volunteer Organizations, Vol. V.” formatted by Lynn McCleary, IAGENWEB.org, last modified June 30, 2018, <http://iagenweb.org/civilwar/books/logan/mil709.htm>. Lieutenant Coles was born in Ohio and lived in Chariton County, Iowa at the time of his muster into the 40th Iowa.

Illinois, Coles assured Engelmann that “The 43^d is getting along all right, the Col. has succeeded in getting a portion of the Picket lines to take care of, and is now learning his new men how to stand and look out for Rebs!”³³⁷

A month later Captain James C. Barnes, formerly of the 27th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment, also wrote his old colonel regarding the various leadership and regimental changes within the brigade and division. Barnes understood Engelmann’s desire to hear everything about his old regiment, so he likewise commented on the 43rd Illinois saying, “You have no doubt been of the reorganization order relating to the 43^d by some of the officers of the regt.”³³⁸ In closing the letter, Barnes warmly wrote, “I would like to hear from you Col. when you can make it convenient and pleasant so to do,” and on a more personal note wrote “Mrs. B. sends kind regards. Elsie is sick with ‘chicken pox’ but is getting better.”³³⁹ The relationship between the two officers undoubtedly went beyond that of a professional nature. The two were friends, who cared about each other and their families. Barnes concluded writing, “I shall always be glad to give you information or serve you in anything in my power, so command me when you will.”³⁴⁰ Barnes’ correspondence with Engelmann testifies to the strength of their friendship, an

³³⁷ C. J. Coles to Adolph Engelmann, January 17, 1865, Letters from Colleagues, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³³⁸ J. Barnes to Adolph Engelmann, February 11, 1865, Letters from Colleagues, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³³⁹ J. Barnes to Adolph Engelmann, February 11, 1865, Letters from Colleagues, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³⁴⁰ J. Barnes to Adolph Engelmann, February 11, 1865, Letters from Colleagues, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: “Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers, War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865. Volume II,” Wisconsin Adjutant General's Office, (Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Company, State Printers, 1886), 360.: United States Bureau of the Census, 1860 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1860). Captain Barnes was born in New York and lived in Manitowoc County, Wisconsin upon being mustered into the 27th Wisconsin.

interethnic relationship that might not have occurred in the turbulent years prior to the war.

An additional letter, mailed by Scottish born Captain Peter Mulholland also of the 27th Wisconsin likewise addresses Engelmann in a friendly manner. Although the letter predominantly focuses on professional topics regarding the brigade, Mulholland addresses several personal subjects, including a description of his wife's exploits and inquiring of the health of Mr. and Mrs. Engelmann. In closing, the Captain wrote, "I shall be always happy to hear from you col...and will endeavor to write to you at times, describing our summer campaigning...I remain your sincere Friend, P Mulholland."³⁴¹

The relationships between Engelmann and his brigade staff formed during his time in Arkansas testify to the apparent absence of ethnic tension within his brigade. The letters sent by his former staff members, Barnes and Coles being native-born American and Mulholland a Scotsman by birth, indicate the development of true interethnic friendships within the army. The Union army, especially in relatively isolated Arkansas, enabled the formation of genuine interethnic relationships to form. This is as much driven by the successful leadership and participation of German soldiers as native-born Americans acknowledgment of their abilities.

In Engelmann's absence, the 43rd Illinois petitioned to have Lieutenant Colonel Dengler promoted to full colonel. With the addition of two companies of drafted and substitute men, the regiment reached full strength. As its total numbers swelled to 850

³⁴¹ P. Mulholland to Adolph Engelmann, February 15, 1865, Letters from Colleagues, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.: United States Bureau of the Census, 1860 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1860). Captain Peter Mulholland of the 27th Wisconsin was born in Scotland in 1838. By 1860, he was living in Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

men for the first time since the Battle of Shiloh, it was eligible for the appointment of a colonel. In March 1865, twenty-four officers endorsed a letter sent to Governor Oglesby, urging him to promote Dengler. For three years, Dengler acted as the regiment's colonel and in doing so the officers stated that he, "won . . . the highest esteem and respect not only of us, his fellow Officers, but also of every private soldier in the Regiment."³⁴² The officer's petition continued as they stated, "for over three years and a half, and who have had abundant and daily opportunities to value and acknowledge his many admirable qualities, would respectfully but earnestly solicit Your Excellency to commission him as Colonel."³⁴³ Whether their plea or different means influenced Governor Oglesby's decision is unknown, but Dengler became Colonel of the 43rd Illinois on April 11, 1865.³⁴⁴

As April 1865 launched the beginning of the end of the war so too did the majority of Illinois regiments muster out of service, but the 43rd Illinois remained in Arkansas. Until November, the unit continued operating in a similar manner to the previous year, as it occupied Helena and patrolled the surrounding countryside. Although the unit's musters were set to end in November, many in the regiment were ready to return to Illinois. These feelings were felt by enlisted men and officers alike, which

³⁴² Letter to Governor Oglesby from Officers of the 43rd Illinois, March 24, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Commissions, ISA.

³⁴³ Letter to Governor Oglesby from Officers of the 43rd Illinois, March 24, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Commissions, ISA.

³⁴⁴ Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls," Adolph Dengler.: General Salomon to Governor Richard Oglesby, January 25, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Misc. Letters, ISA.: Reece, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. III. 276-7. Several others lobbied the governor for Dengler's promotion including Division Commander General Frederick Salomon. The Adjutant General's history of the 43rd Illinois wrote that Engelmann "succeeded in prevailing on the State authorities to assign a sufficient number of drafted men to the Forty-third, so that Lieutenant Colonel Dengler could be commissioned Colonel." It is unclear as to what convinced Governor Oglesby to promote Dengler, but a push from officers of the regiment past and present to make him colonel is evident.

created a void in leadership from May until the regiment's final discharge. Officers, unlike enlisted or drafted men, were commissioned by the state and as the war effectively ended in April, many officers elected to resign. Most companies saw one or more officers give up their commissions to return home before the unit was formally disbanded. The sheer number of officer resignations indicates the discontent felt amongst some of the officers. Company K, for example, saw the resignations of 2nd Lieutenant Lewis F. Chamberlin on June 4, and 1st Lieutenant Cornelius C. Hollenbeck on June 28. Their resignations left the company virtually leaderless until the promotions of 1st Lieutenant Ernest Hilyard and 2nd Lieutenant Jean P Dupont a month later.³⁴⁵

Further resignations impacted other companies, but the best documented and divisive occurred in Company D. The void in company leadership grew shortly after Captain Charles Hoenny mustered out of the unit on May 7, and his position was soon occupied by Captain Frederick Exter formerly of Company I. The gap quickly opened as 1st Lieutenant Charles Storch resigned on June 6. Exasperated and running the company by himself, Captain Exter implored Colonel Dengler to find a replacement for Storch, because there was not a single "non-commissioned officer or private in the Company, competent or worthy to fill the position."³⁴⁶ A month later, Clemens Nicksch earned a commission as 2nd Lieutenant and was transferred to Company D from regimental headquarters.

³⁴⁵ Official Record of Resignation of 2nd Lieutenant Lewis F. Chamberlain, June 24, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company K, ISA.; Official Record of Resignation of 1st Lieutenant C. C. Hollinbank, June 28, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company K, ISA.; Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls," Jean P. Dupont.: Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls," Ernest Hilyard.

³⁴⁶ Frederick Exter to Adolph Dengler, June 30, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company D, ISA.

In alleviating the strain on Captain Exter, by hurriedly promoting Nieksch, the regimental field staff unintentionally generated substantial animosity amongst the veterans of Company D. The conflict ignited because a year earlier, Nieksch was a draftee assigned to the 43rd Illinois. Several of the unit's drafted soldiers purportedly took advantage of early discharges from the regiment, and received commissions as officers once discharged. Nieksch was one such man, and his presence sparked hostility with the enlisted men and veterans of Company D. In opposition to the promotion of Nieksch, a handful of veterans in the company sent a letter of protest to then Governor of Illinois Richard J. Oglesby. "To be superceded and officerd by men whose military experience covers but a portion of a year," they angrily wrote, and continued saying, "whose pampered clerkship during that period has prevented his learning even the rudiments of a soldier's duty, and whose patriotism and love of Country could only be developed by conscription and force," was as they concluded "a humiliation and an insult we believe you will not ask us quietly to submit to."³⁴⁷

Despite their anger and appeal to Governor Oglesby, the veterans of Company D did not get their wish as Nieksch served as a Lieutenant until the regiment dissolved in November. Although the veterans of Company D specifically indicate that they held no direct animosity towards Nieksch, they nevertheless pressured the governor for his removal on the principle that he was drafted and served only one year prior to gaining his commission. The field staff of the 43rd Illinois, however, found Nieksch a sufficient replacement officer, as he continued to hold the position. In the months prior to his

³⁴⁷ Letter to Governor Oglesby from Veterans of Company D 43rd Illinois, August 1, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company D, ISA.

promotion to Lieutenant, Nieksch held the rank of sergeant major and was attached to regimental headquarters. His time amongst the 43rd Illinois' field commanders must have convinced his superiors that he was capable of holding a higher leadership role. Although regimental command maintained full confidence in Nieksch, veterans of the regiment protested on principle. As long as draftees and substitutes remained among the enlisted ranks, veterans of the unit found no reason to complain, but in rare cases when a conscript assumed a leadership position, veterans took offence.³⁴⁸ Whether resigning officers left their companies for legitimate medical reasons or simply to go home several months early, their abrupt departures left the 43rd Illinois with serious leadership deficiencies.

The mass exodus of officers from the 43rd Illinois between the months of May and July demonstrated the desire of the unit's officers to return home before the regiment. Unlike officers who could resign, the regiment's enlisted and drafted men were unable to leave the service until the termination of their terms of service. No available documents regarding discontent within the 43rd Illinois survive about remaining in the service, but several letters enquiring as to when the regiment might be discharged exist. One such letter written in late July to the Illinois Adjutant General by acting Sergeant George A. Loeffler of Company C, provides a testimony to the will of enlisted men of the regiment to return home. Loeffler wrote, "the Boys loves their homes and they like to now how long they have to stay in the filt yet. Weather we have to serve ouer time out or not."³⁴⁹ It

³⁴⁸ Letter to Governor Oglesby from Veterans of Company D 43rd Illinois, August 1, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Company D, ISA.: Delap, "Illinois Civil War Muster and Descriptive Rolls," Clemens Nieksch.

³⁴⁹ Sergeant G Loeffler to Dear Friend, July 27th 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Misc. Letters, ISA. It is unclear as to whom Loeffler is writing to, as

is unclear as to how many men Loeffler's letter represented, but several men undoubtedly shared his inquiry within Company C. Whether enlisted men in the 43rd Illinois were angered by their prolonged service or simply ready to go home is unclear, but this source indicates several men desired to return to Illinois.

The 43rd Illinois' continued service in the months following the war begs the question, why was this regiment in particular chosen to remain in the field when most were discharged? Did the Union Army select to discharge native-born American regiments upon the war's termination and chose ethnic regiments to remain in the service longer? In all likelihood, the answer is no. Although no available documentation surfaced surrounding why the 43rd Illinois remained in the service for six months after the war had ended, they were likely selected because the unit's terms of service were not over until November and the regiment's reputation as being particularly well disciplined and effective, leaving the Army no choice but to retain the unit.³⁵⁰

On November 20, after four years in the army, the men of the 43rd Illinois received their final discharges. With their service complete, the regiment returned to Belleville in December, where the tired soldiers were warmly received by the whole town. A small article in the *Belleville Advocate* detailed their arrival, saying that "they were received at the depot, and escorted up Illinois street, by a band and large crowd of citizens."³⁵¹ Despite staying in the army for half a year following the war's end, the men

his letter is addressed to "Dear Friend." It is likely that he is writing to the Adjutant General of Illinois because the letter was saved and chronicled the Adjutant General's office.

³⁵⁰ General Salomon to Governor Richard Oglesby, January 25, 1865, Adjutant General's Office Regimental Files, 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry, Misc. Letters, ISA. General Salomon's letter best exemplifies the reputation held by the 43rd Illinois. Salomon wrote "The 43rd is one of the best Regiments in my Division, well drilled, disciplined, and brave." Several other generals mentioned as much since the unit formed in 1861, and testifies as to why the 43rd might have been kept in the army over other regiments.

³⁵¹ "Local Department," *The Belleville Advocate* (Belleville, IL), December 22, 1865.

of the 43rd Illinois, their families, and fellow Bellevillers remembered their long held devotion and service to their country and gave them a hero's welcome. Despite being ethnically German, the war altered the men of the 43rd Illinois and the native-born soldiers they served with at Shiloh, Salem Church, and in Arkansas.

By 1865 the 12th Missouri ceased to exist, while the 30th Illinois and 43rd Illinois continued their service. Due to the severity of their combat losses, the 12th Missouri was forced to disband as their terms of service ended, where the 30th and 43rd Illinois retained enough veterans and were reinforced by drafted and substitute troops. The combat effectiveness and makeup of both regiments was only slightly changed, enabling each to remain highly effective combat units. The service of German-American soldiers in these units demonstrated their willingness to fight and die for their adopted country, and in doing so won the admiration of native-born American soldiers in the Army of the Tennessee. This admiration was demonstrated by the praise each regiment received by their various native-born American officers and the friendships that formed between Germans and Americans. Following the war, the contributions and respect earned by Germans in these regiments transitioned into the post war period, as they continued to accept various American customs and more formally merge into American society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

With the war over and home at last, the veterans of the 30th Illinois, 43rd Illinois, and 12th Missouri tried to adjust to life outside the army. Looking back on their service and all that had changed as a result, it was plainly visible that ethnic relations improved in the St. Louis-Belleville region in the soldier's absence. The changes were sometimes clear, at other times subtle and personal, but they all revealed German-American willingness to adopt certain American conventionalisms and the adaptation to native traditions. Another area of change centered around public service, as German veterans returned and secured positions in city, county, and state governments, indicating that native-born Americans' previous prejudices had faded, too.

Prior to the war, many German-Americans were unable to speak English, but the conflict began to change this. For example, Mina Engelmann, the wife of Colonel Engelmann, insisted on learning English in late 1862 while visiting the 43rd Illinois in Bolivar, Tennessee. Colonel Engelmann spoke of his wife's conviction, observing, "Mina reads English to me and I speak it to her. I have promised her that when she returns home I will write only English to her."³⁵² Mina's persistence was such that Engelmann happily wrote, "At present she is reading by herself in 'Souvenirs of Travel' and in a few weeks expects to be a real Englishwoman."³⁵³ Mina had four years in which to learn English following their marriage, but she waited until 1862.³⁵⁴ It cannot be proven, but it is worth

³⁵² Adolph Engelmann to sister, December 4, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³⁵³ Adolph Engelmann to sister, December 4, 1862, trans, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

³⁵⁴ Certificate of Marriage, Adolph Engelmann to Willhelmine Schirmer, 25 April, 1859, St. Claire County, Illinois, County Court Records, Belleville, Illinois.: Mina's immigration records are unavailable, making their marriage certificate the first source which documents her living in Illinois.

considering that it took the threat to the Union — her family’s adopted homeland — and her husband’s role in the war that saved the Union, to entice her into learning English.

Another example underscores a similar determination, as well as the tremendous cost that German-American soldiers and their families paid through their military service. Private Frederick Rehbock, who perished seven days following the battle of Shiloh, was survived by his wife, Elise, and their daughter, also named Elsie. In June 1862, the young widow received a letter from Frederick’s sister Caroline, who lived in Celle, Lower Saxony. Inquiring of Elise’s financial standing after the death of Frederick, Caroline asked, “have you other friends and acquaintances that support you? Would you not like to come to us? We would gladly accept you in our middle and then we could raise the child together.”³⁵⁵ She pleaded with Elise to return to the German States and questioned the charity of Americans, adding, “Here people still have a heart, but in America—I know it—they have not.”³⁵⁶ Despite the efforts of her sister-in-law, Elise chose to remain in Illinois. Although a precise explanation of her decision is unavailable, Elise’s determination indicates the comfort and security that she found in her adopted homeland, even as a young immigrant widow and mother. On at least some level, she considered herself an American, as her husband had when he joined the army.³⁵⁷

Other examples of the warming relations between German-Americans and native-born Americans surfaced as the veterans and families of the 30th Illinois remembered and celebrated their service long after the war was over. In 1916, Private Granville B.

³⁵⁵ Caroline to Elise Rehbock, June 15, 1862, Rehbock Family Papers, Historical Society of Missouri Archives, St. Louis, MO (hereafter cited as HSMA).

³⁵⁶ Caroline to Elise Rehbock, June 15, 1862, Rehbock Family Papers, HSMA.

³⁵⁷ United States Bureau of the Census, 1920 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920). Elise moved in with Elsie and her husband, and lived in Collinsville, Illinois until her death.

McDonald, formerly of Company C, wrote a history of the regiment. He recounted the deeds of the regiment, but the work is largely told from his point of view. McDonald's book was written with the purpose of educating the veteran's families, and fails to delve into the war's complexities and the regiment's varied reasons for their service. It does, however unknowingly, note the favorable ethnic relations of the regiment. In its opening pages, the book contains fourteen images, largely of officers or those who died in pivotal battles of the war. These are clearly favored men in the unit. One image, that of Corporal John A. Leiner of Company E, does not fit in with the rest, because Leiner is the only referenced native German in the unit history. His image was chosen over the hundreds of men who served in the regiment, and demonstrates the importance of the unit's German-American servicemen. The presence of his image likewise shows how Germans were readily accepted by the unit's veterans as valued members of the regiment, further demonstrating the alterations to the regions ethnic climate as a result of German service in the war.³⁵⁸

The German-Americans from the Greater-St. Louis Region who served in the Army of the Tennessee had demonstrated their willingness to fight for their adopted country, which altered their communities and changed how many native-born Americans viewed Germans-Americans. During the first year of the Civil War, members of the German 43rd Illinois and 12th Missouri faced similar degrees of nativism as they had in their German communities before the war. These German regiments were easy targets for anti-German sentiment because of their unabashed designation as German units. The

³⁵⁸ McDonald, *A history of the 30th Illinois*.: Leiner, John A.,” Office Of The Illinois Secretary Of State, ICWMDR.

mixed 30th Illinois, however, offered its German soldiers a refuge from ethnic tensions through their service in a mixed yet predominantly native-born regiment. Although the early service of the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois was exacerbated by nativism, German-American soldiers in these regiments remained steadfastly motivated to quell the threats posed to their adopted country by the southern rebellion as well as their opposition to slavery. Nativism effected the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois until the Battles of Pea Ridge and Shiloh in early 1862, where their stout confrontations with Confederate forces led native-born Union soldiers to accept and appreciate the sacrifices German-Americans were making to their shared cause. This erosion of long held ethnic prejudices in the Army of the Tennessee is revealed in the letters and diaries of the battle tested Germans in each unit, as well as in the reports of their brigade and division commanders. Where the acceptance of German-American soldiers in the 12th Missouri and 43rd Illinois hinged on their continued effectiveness in battle, ethnic relations within the 30th Illinois were starkly more favorable from the beginning of their terms of service. The unit's strong organization, solid leadership, clear regimental identity, and the quickness with which they experienced successful combat led to smoother ethnic relations throughout the conflict.

The Battle of Shiloh signaled a period in which anti-German sentiment declined for St. Louis and Belleville Germans within the Army of the Tennessee. This was related to the performance of German regiments in combat as well as the overall success of the Army, both of which continued until the culmination of the conflict. In 1864, many German regiments dissolved, but their dismantling was not related to German hostility towards the Union or undertaken through any efforts of the state or federal governments.

Instead, many German regiments serving in the Army of the Tennessee were afflicted by massive casualty rates from combat, which greatly diminished their ability to replenish their ranks with enough recruits. The years 1864 and 1865 also marked a period where existing regiments received large numbers of drafted and substitute troops. This influx, which swelled the ranks of the 30th Illinois and 43rd Illinois in 1864 did not negatively impact either regiment.

As the war ended, it became clear that ethnic tensions within the St. Louis-Bellefonte region were starkly different, and for the better. The quickness with which Germans took up arms for the country and their steadfast service throughout the war earned them a degree of acceptance from many native-born Americans that did not exist in the decades before the war. A representative and powerful example of this is found in the case of Henry Kircher, who lived with the wounds he received in Ringgold, Georgia, while he served as the elected clerk of St. Clair County, Illinois. Before the war, Kircher's old corps commander, Major Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman purchased a plot of land near the town of Caseyville. In the postwar period, Sherman saw no reason to retain the property and he sought Kircher's help in selling it. At the end of their dealings, Sherman told Kircher, "I am very much obliged for the pains you have taken about the 40 acres" and he signed himself "your friend W. T. Sherman"³⁵⁹ Kircher's correspondence with General Sherman in late 1865 demonstrates the subtle and the significant changes that resulted from German service to the Union. It's not that Sherman and Kircher remained especially close after the war, but their shared service and sacrifice in the Army of the Tennessee was a notable connection that trumped ethnic differences. More

³⁵⁹ W. T. Sherman to Henry Kircher, Dec 30, 1865, Engelmann-Kircher papers, ALPLM.

significantly, Kircher's election to county clerk meant that German and native-born American citizens of St. Clair County found him worthy of serving their needs. In 1860, St. Clair County had a foreign born population of 43%, meaning Kircher's election bid won through the votes of German and native-born Americans.³⁶⁰ Examples like this thread throughout the postwar lives of the veterans of the 12th Missouri, the 30th Illinois, the 43rd Illinois, and their home communities. In subtle and significant ways, the dedicated, successful military service of these three regiments led to German-American adaptation to native-born traditions and to diminished nativism in the greater St. Louis region. This transition is notably different from experiences of German-American Union veterans in the eastern U.S., and it needs to be incorporated into scholars' larger understanding of ethnic military service in the American Civil War.

³⁶⁰ Jay Monaghan, "Did Abraham Lincoln Receive the German Vote?" *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 35, no. 2 (1942), 137.

APPENDIX

Orders of Battle for 30th Illinois, 43rd Illinois, and 12th Missouri, 1861-1865

Battle of Belmont

Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant—Commanding Army
 Brig. Gen. John A. McClernand—Brigade Command
 27th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 30th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 31st Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Pea Ridge Campaign

Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis—Commanding the Army of the Southwest
 Brig. Gen. Franz Sigel—Commanding First and Second Divisions
 Colonel Peter J. Osterhaus—Commanding First Division
 Colonel Nicholas Greusel—Commanding 2nd Brigade
 36th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 12th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Shiloh Campaign

Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant—Commanding the Army of the Tennessee
 Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand—Commanding First Division
 Colonel Julius Raith—Commanding 3rd Brigade
 17th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 29th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 49th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 Carmichaels Company Illinois Cavalry

Vicksburg Campaign

Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant—Commanding the Army of the Tennessee
 Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman—Commanding XV Corps
 Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele—Commanding First Division
 Colonel Charles R. Woods—Commanding 2nd Brigade
 25th Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 31st Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 3rd Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 12th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment
 17th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment

76th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Maj. Gen. Cadwallader C. Washburn—Commanding XVI Corps
Brig. Gen. Nathan Kimball—Commanding Provisional Division
Colonel Adolph Engelmann—Commanding 2nd Brigade
43rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
61st Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
106th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
12th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson—Commanding XVII Corps
Maj. Gen. John A. Logan—Commanding Third Division
Brig. Gen. Mortimer D. Leggett—Commanding 2nd Brigade
30th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
20th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment
68th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment
78th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Atlanta Campaign

Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman—Military Division of the Mississippi
Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson—Commanding the Army of the Tennessee
Maj. Gen. John A. Logan—Commanding XV Corps
Brig. Gen. Peter J. Osterhaus—Commanding First Division
Colonel Hugo Wangelin—Commanding 3rd Brigade
3rd Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment
12th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment
17th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment
29th Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment
31st Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment
32nd Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment

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