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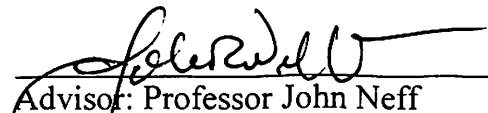
“A Higher Duty”: The Sectionalization of Antebellum American Institutions of Higher
Education

by
Patricia Grace Ethel Gauthier

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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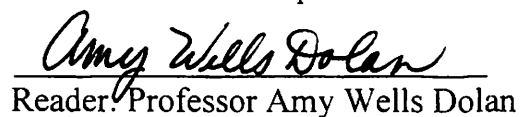
Approved By



Advisor: Professor John Neff



Reader: Professor April Holm



Reader: Professor Amy Wells Dolan

This manuscript is fondly dedicated to my father, Mark William Gauthier, and my sisters, Jessica Lynn and Johanna Rochelle Gauthier, who believed in me. My love always.

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ABSTRACT

PATRICIA GRACE ETHEL GAUTHIER: "A Higher Duty": The Sectionalization of Antebellum American Institutions of Higher Education
(Under the direction of John Neff)

This thesis is a comparative study of the rise of sectionalism in northern and southern antebellum American institutions of higher education. The West Point Military Academy, which maintained a roughly equal number of southern and northern cadets, presents a case-study of how faculty, staff, and students dealt with sectionalism in a mixed group. Information was gathered from numerous sources including college histories, archival material from the University of Mississippi, and southern military school studies. Several general trends were discovered from this data. 1) Southern academia actively encouraged the development of sectionalism because it provided public funding and enrollment for southern college establishment. 2) Southern educators did not originally intend to encourage secessionist sentiment; however, their conception of southern sectional identity under attack gradually radicalized southern academic and students. 3) Northern students were generally indifferent to southern sectionalism, slavery, and the prospect of war; however, following the Battle of Fort Sumter, they were inspired to enlist. 4) Sectionalism was very present at West Point though it was forced underground by faculty and staff concerned with preserving the nationalizing influence of the military academy on cadets.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: THE SOUTHERN COLLEGE MOVEMENT.....	6
CHAPTER II: THE SOUTHERN MILITARY SCHOOL MOVEMENT.....	24
CHAPTER III: SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN LITERARY SOCIETIES.....	35
CHAPTER IV: WEST POINT AND THE 1850'S.....	64
A CONCLUSION IN THREE PARTS:.....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	100

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UGA	University of Georgia
UM	University of Mississippi
Ole Miss	University of Mississippi

Introduction

The advent of the American Civil War inspired a generation of southern and northern Americans to enlist in their respective armies partially out of patriotism and other factors. Like every village, town, and city, American colleges and universities were intimately affected by the mass enlistments of young men, who had previously been aspiring college students. The Civil War was the result of the decades of built up sectional tension, which touched the lives of college students throughout America. This thesis is a comparative study of the development of sectionalism in northern and southern institutions of higher education and highlights two general trends: southern student sectional awareness and northern student indifference toward slavery.

Southern students were intimately aware of their sectional identity. Though this awareness was fostered by everyday society, it was also deliberately promoted by the southern college movement that had promoted sectionalism in order to encourage local college establishment and enrollment. Likewise the contemporaneous southern military school movement promoted a separate southern sectional identity perceived to be under attack by northern extremists. Values asserted by these concurrent movements were affirmed by students in college literary societies. Decades prior to the American Civil War, these factors began to shape the southern college population and, though none of these three institutional movements were originally pro-secession, gradually radicalized students into accepting the possibility of secession.

No likewise dominating sectional identity existed among the northern college population perhaps because northern sectional identity was not perceived as under attack. Prior to the Civil War, the North was relatively indifferent about the institution of slavery, an attitude shared by the majority of northern college students. What student interest in slavery existed was carefully stifled by college faculty because northern colleges were still interested in attracting southern students. Student attempts to found anti-slavery societies were repeatedly shut down by the administration and students could face expulsion for causing trouble. Though a few colleges, like Oberlin College in Ohio, were passionately devoted to abolition, the majority were determined to remain neutral on a nationally divisive issue. Overall students initially perceived the prospect of war as the fault of meddling of abolitionists, who became targets for student anger. Like the general northern population, the Battle of Fort Sumter proved instrumental in instilling patriotism and war fever among northern college students long after southern efforts had been successful.

If there was a middle ground, it might have been the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. The southern college movement had enjoyed immense success and by 1860 the United States college population was heavily segregated by section. Though long-established universities like Harvard, Princeton, and Yale still had a sizable minority of southern students, the majority of American universities and colleges were predominantly either southern or northern. In this context, West Point offers an invaluable opportunity to examine the development and effect of sectionalism on a mixed cadet population.

Though West Point faculty and staff studiously attempted to limit the sectionalization of the cadets, they were generally unsuccessful. Nominated by politicians, cadets were often politically oriented prior to their entrance to West Point. Though inter-sectional interaction did occur, sectional cadet companies quickly developed at West Point and fistfights were often inspired by sectional tension. Retarding the development of cadet sectionalism, however, was the sincere efforts of the faculty and the unionizing influence West Point exercised over the cadets. Nevertheless, these factors were unable to prevent the break out of violence during the election year of 1860 or the mass withdrawal of cadets following their individual state's secession.

Numerous sources were used in reconstructing student attitudes towards sectionalism; however, no article found during the literature review directly addressed student sectionalization. Though *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, by Willis Rudy, explores student response to the oncoming Civil War, it does so in an abbreviated fashion as one small section in a book which includes American college student response to wars ranging from the American Revolution to the Vietnam War. Furthermore, Rudy's examination focuses primarily on literary societies and neglects the overlapping influences of the southern college and military school movements. He does not address the United States Military Academy at all.¹

West Point, however, has not been neglected by other authors. Antebellum West Point enjoyed lengthy explorations in no less than six books by military historians. Though these authors thoroughly examine the sectionalization of cadets, this study connects the development of sectionalism at the national military academy to the larger

¹ See Willis Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis From the American Revolution to Vietnam* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1996).

American college and military school scene. Southern military schools have also received intense attention; however, these studies are primarily devoted to the southern cadet at war with only small sections or introductions devoted to how sectionalism shaped the southern military school movement and how this fits into the larger southern academic context.²

Finally information about individual schools was primarily obtained from school histories, which of course do not address the larger American academic context and rather focus exclusively on their particular school. Furthermore the year of publication for each history may be of deep importance. School histories written in the 1960's may be subject to attempts to whitewash history and defend schools against accusations of moral culpability for slavery, Jim Crow laws, and other racially discriminatory practices. For example, many northern college histories point out nineteenth-century students debated slavery in their literary societies, but do not record the debate decisions. Though this may be due to the loss of literary society records, it may also be because those decisions could reflect unfavorably on the college. Though this study is not without its

² For West Point see Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country A History of West Point* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999); John M. Carroll, ed., *Custer in the Civil War His Unfinished Memoirs* (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1977); Theodore J. Crackel, *West Point a Bicentennial History* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002); Martin Dugard, *The Training Ground: Grant, Lee, Sherman, and Davis in the Mexican War, 1846-1848*, (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009); Ellsworth Eliot Jr., *West Point in the Confederacy* (New York: G.A. Baker & Co., 1941); Ralph Krishna, *The Class of 1861 Custer, Ames, and Their Classmates After West Point* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999); Marguerite Merington, ed., *The Custer Story The Life and Intimate Letters of General George A. Custer and His Wife Elizabeth* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987); George S. Pappas, *To The Point The United States Military Academy 1802-1902* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1993); and Morris Schaff, *The Spirit of Old West Point* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co, 1907). For southern military schools see Rod Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines: The Southern Military School Tradition, 1839-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). James Lee Conrad, *The Young Lions: Confederate Cadets at War* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1997); John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956); and Lorri Glover, "'Let Us Manufacture Men:' Educating Elite Boys in the Early National South," in *Southern Manhood*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

flaws, it integrates all of these sources to create a composite picture of the United States' academic encouragement of and response to sectionalism.

Chapter One: The Southern College Movement

During the nineteenth-century, American higher education was characterized by tradition and transition. As it had for centuries in the western world, higher education focused on classical learning. Beginning in the early 1800's, however, this program came under increasing attack. Average Americans perceived classical education as the stronghold of elitism much as the West Point Military Academy was seen as a training ground for a military aristocracy. They questioned the use of a classical scholar who could not contribute materially to the new nation.³

The observations of one Princeton scholar reflected popular doubts about classical learning. He believed classical education was “about as fit for the station they [his classmates and him]...[were] to occupy through life as the military tactics of the Baron de Steuben [*sic*] for fighting the Blackfoot Indians among the passes and glens of the Rocky Mountains.”⁴ His words also reflect contemporary American opinion that classical education was derivative of effete European society and culture just as Revolutionary War hero Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben's tactics belonged on the battlefields of Europe. Just as European battle tactics were ineffective against the guerilla warfare practiced by Native Americans, a classical education was perceived as useless to a utilitarian American society.

³ Fredrick Rudolph, *The American College and University* (New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1962), 237.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 235-236.

Believing the classical curriculum to be inimical to American societal ideals and of interest only to the wealthy, voters resisted efforts to found state universities or chose to reduce funding to existing institutions. The University of Mississippi's establishment was opposed by no less a person than President Jeremiah Chamberlain of Oakland College, a church school, who argued that a state university would only use public funds for the education of the wealthy.⁵ Though Chamberlain was also likely motivated by fears that his college would lose state funding, his charge of elitism indicates that this perception of public universities was widespread. Accusations of this nature were hard to refute because they were partially true. Antebellum educators struggled to justify classical education and occasionally their individual institution's existence.

Though state colleges in particular were challenged financially by reduced funding, few educators believed that changing the classical curriculum or adding or expanding existing mathematics and science programs was the solution. While defending the classical system at South Carolina College, the college president, James H. Thornwell, stated, "While others are veering to the popular pressure...let it be our aim to make Scholars and not sappers or miners—apothecaries—doctors or farmers."⁶ The majority of antebellum educators agreed with Thornwell, believing classical scholarship disciplined the mind to its fullest extent.

A growing minority of educators, however, believed that American higher education must change to suit the needs and ideals of America or disappear from lack of funding and students. New York University President William Draper sadly noted, "[W]e have been trying to sell goods for which there is no market....In this practical community

⁵ David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 17.

⁶ Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 240.

of men, hastening to be rich, we found no sympathy....But few American youth...care to saunter to the fountains of knowledge through the pleasant winding of their flowery path. The practical branches must take the lead and bear the weight, and the ornamental must follow.”⁷ Though men like Draper did not particularly approve of a transition from classical education to a program driven by practical mathematics and science, they nevertheless believed it was necessary.

Though supporters of educational transition resided in both the North and South, they enjoyed more success in the North. Due to a more diversified economy, northerners placed a higher emphasis on the need for educated technical professionals, allowing schools such as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to thrive. Founded by Stephen Van Rensselaer in 1824, the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute should be seen as a product of utilitarian American societal thought. In a letter to its future president, Rensselaer stated that the goal of the Rensselaer Institute was “to qualify teachers for instructing the sons and daughters of farmers and mechanics by lectures or otherwise, in the application of experimental chemistry, philosophy, and natural history, to agriculture, domestic economy, the arts, and manufactures.”⁸ Instead of advancing the classical education of well-tutored sons of the American gentry, the Rensselaer Institute was intended from its conception to teach the practical applications of science to common Americans to use in everyday life.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁸ Stephen Van Rensselaer, *Stephen Van Rensselaer to Revd. Dr. Blatchford Lansingburgh, November 5th 1824*, letter, From Rensselaer Libraries, *Early Documents of Rensselaer Collection*, http://www.lib.rpi.edu/archives/early_documents/svr_letter_transcription.html (accessed January 12th, 2012).

Stephen Van Rensselaer's vision prevailed and the Rensselaer Institute provided the United States' first chemistry and physics laboratories when it opened.⁹ Furthermore, by 1835, the institute had designed the first civil engineering program in America and issued its first engineering degree.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, many other colleges modeled their own engineering programs after Rensselaer's beginning in the 1850's.¹¹ Though most northern attempts to add utilitarian programs and increase popular appeal failed, their existence and successes like the Rensselaer Institute indicate that American higher education was in a state of transition as educators sought to cope with industrialization and incorporate it into the college curriculum.

In the American South, however, education reform faced steeper challenges. In order to secure entrance into college, a student had to pass an examination "on English grammar, Composition, Arithmetic, and Geography; also in five books of Caesar, the Eclogues, and six books of the Aeneid of Virgil, and Cicero's Orations, together with the Greek Reader, and must be well versed in the Latin and Greek Grammars, including Latin Prosody."¹² In order to meet these stringent requirements, boys had to receive a thorough preparation in primary and secondary school. In the South, however, public primary and secondary schools received little or no public funding. It was typical that Mississippi Governor Alexander G. McNutt's plan to establish a common school system was rejected in the early 1840's.¹³

⁹ Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 230.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 230; It should be noted the United States Military Academy's engineering program did predate Rensselaer's program, however, Rensselaer was the first engineering program open to the general public.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹² Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 59.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 16.

Though private primary and secondary schools did exist, they were in larger cities and expensive. For example, Frederick Barnard, the son of a Mississippi planter, received his preparatory education in New Orleans before applying to the University of Mississippi.¹⁴ Though a child could receive a basic primary education from a literate relative, the cost of transportation, room, board, and tuition for secondary schooling was beyond the means of most southern families. As a result, the south's general population, like Chamberlain, considered state colleges and universities to be entities solely for the benefit of the wealthy and a waste of public funds.

These accusations were particularly hard to refute because it was mostly true that southern colleges primarily taught scions of the upper class. A survey of students' post graduation careers at Charleston College and the University of Georgia indicates that most college graduates were members of the upper class. During President William P. Finley's tenure at Charleston College, the later careers of 117 of 163 graduates were recorded.¹⁵ The college produced "36 doctors, 26 lawyers, 21 clergymen, 12 teachers, 21 merchants and planters, and 1 surveyor."¹⁶ At the University of Georgia, the careers of 474 of the 900 pre-Civil War graduates were recorded with similar results.¹⁷ Eighty-one students became planter, sixty-three were doctors, 186 entered the legal profession, and the remainder became clergymen, merchants, and farmers.¹⁸ The majority of the professions listed required wealth, social influence, an advanced degree, or all three. After attaining these professions, the former students belonged to the upper crust of

¹⁴ Frederick Robert Barnard, *Frederick Robert Barnard to Father*, undated letter, *The Frederick Robert Barnard Collection*, 1:3, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi (Oxford, MS).

¹⁵ J.H. Easterby, *A History of the College of Charleston* (Charleston: Scribner Press, 1935), 140.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁷ Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia A Bicentennial History 1785-1985* (Athens: University Georgia Press, 1985), 46-47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

society in their locality. The public perception of state colleges as the province of the wealthy was overall correct.

Nor could educators resort to utilitarian additions to the curriculum like in the North to improve school reputations because of southern cultural standards. The manual labor school movement is an example where education reformers ran afoul of these standards. Due to the importance of agriculture, there were many southern proponents for manual labor schools, which focused on teaching scientific farming through practical experience. It proved impossible to gain public support for the establishment of such a school, however, because of the negative cultural association between slavery and labor.¹⁹ Lack of support spelled the end to the manual labor school movement in the 1840's, though utilitarian studies were reincarnated in the southern military school movement that paid due heed to the demands of culture and sectionalism.²⁰

Few of the manual labor supporters were educators, however. Generally the products of southern culture, educators opposed curriculum reform and vehemently defended classical education. While defending the classical system at South Carolina College, college President James Thornwell expressed the typical sentiments of a southern educator when he exhorted other Southern academics to continue to produce scholars, not professionals.²¹ That many of their former students entered professional life post graduation was immaterial to Thornwell and others like him because they believed scholarship was innately profound. Implicit in Thornwell's statement was the belief that scholarship was an elite association that few could attain.²² They believed the college

¹⁹ Dan R. Frost, *Thinking Confederates* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹ Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 240.

²² Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 12.

curriculum should not be altered to appeal to the general public because it was not for the general public.

Hindered by a reputation as the bastions of elitism and the refusal of educators to effect curriculum change, southern schools, like northern ones, began to wrestle with the dilemma of securing financial support in the early nineteenth-century. Southern colleges, however, faced additional challenges that made their task more difficult. The majority of schools were founded in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The earliest southern state college, the University of North Carolina, was founded in 1795 long after many northern schools.²³ Furthermore, new colleges typically struggled for the first few years with lack of equipment and books, an ill-defined curriculum, and lackluster professors. It was normal that the University of Mississippi opened its doors in 1848 without textbooks for the term.²⁴

Unable to compete with well-established schools in the North and South, the new college had to accept whatever students might arrive. Despite opening with rigid academic standards in 1831, the University of Alabama had to admit such unqualified students they were unable to follow the set curriculum and focused on basic skills like reading, writing, and spelling.²⁵ Many so-called colleges actually served the purpose of glorified high schools for an undereducated populace.²⁶ Many southern schools failed soon after opening because they were unable to provide the quality of education available

²³ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 27.

²⁵ Suzanne Rau Wolfe, *The University of Alabama: A Pictorial History* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1980), 16.

²⁶ Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 6.

at northern schools like Princeton or Harvard, where many southern families had a long tradition of attendance.²⁷

Hampered by accusations of elitism, strict adherence to a classical curriculum, and establishment difficulties, southern educators used sectionalism to attract students and secure public financial support. Though averse to funding public colleges, fears that their future societal and political leaders might imbibe abolitionism inspired the general population to support institutions of higher education within their state. For example, it could be argued the University of Mississippi owed its existence to sectionalism. In the 1830's and 1840's, Mississippian supporters used sectional rhetoric to advocate the founding of a state college. In 1837, the *Vicksburg Sentinel & Expositor* ran an article about the travails of a Vicksburg man on the way to enroll his daughters in a northern school. While on the train, he was confronted by an abolitionist and, after throwing an anti-slavery tract out the window, the man was subjugated to “an eloquent torrent of the foul and monstrous slanders which the demons of abolition have concocted....[P]assengers and bystanders crowded around, and the gentleman and his family were for some minutes compelled to a tirade of abuse.”²⁸

Whether this story is true or not is irrelevant because readers would believe it was an accurate depiction of the North. Readers would be appalled the Northern crowd forced the man and his family to submit to such an attack. Having presented this image, the *Sentinel* concluded, “Yet we have seen our planters yearly seeking an education for their children among a people...who encourage a system of the most flagitious falsehood- this ought not to be.... [I]t is of the deepest importance that the minds of our youths of both

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁸ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 18.

sexes should be trained up under our own glorious institutions.”²⁹ Though the *Sentinel* is advocating a general system of education rather than a singular state college, it is important the article appealed to sectionalism; clearly the writer believed this tactic would generate support.

The article also conceded education was usually the prerogative of the wealthy. The protagonist of the story is a “gentleman” wealthy enough to finance his multiple daughters’ northern education. Later the article mildly admonished planters for educating their children in the north.³⁰ Quickly following this concession, however, the *Sentinel* insisted that sectional supportive education for Mississippian youth was more important.³¹ This argument targeted all social classes and attempted to use sectionalism to unite them in support of state educational reform.

Two years later, Governor McNutt used a similar argument to advocate for his educational agenda. “Patriotism, no less than economy, urges upon us the duty of educating our children at home. Those opposed to us in principle can not [*sic*] safely be entrusted with the education of our sons and daughters.”³² McNutt also estimated that Mississippians spent one million dollars, around nineteen million dollars today, on out of state education.³³ By adding an economic perspective, McNutt expanded the argument for sectional education’s framework: northern education was dangerous and took money out of Mississippi. Supporters of the University of Georgia employed a similar argument when they pointed out that boys from wealthy families would still receive a college

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 13.

education at risk of imbibing foreign ideas and to the financial loss of Georgia.³⁴

Couched in this manner, state education was a cultural and economic necessity.

Such arguments triumphed over those of Oakland College's President Chamberlain and others, who held a state college would only benefit the rich.³⁵ In 1844, the University of Mississippi finally received its charter, an event foreshadowed by Governor Brown's inaugural remarks that Mississippi needed to stop "sending our youth abroad, where they sometimes contract bad habits [and] false prejudices against our home institutions and laws."³⁶ Throughout the rest of the antebellum period, supporters of the university used sectional language to secure funding and students. Following the university's first commencement, the Jackson *Mississippian* asserted "[i]t is the duty of the enlightened press of Mississippi...to support and advance this institution, and no less the duty of our citizens who have sons to educate...to give it preference."³⁷ The *Mississippian* expressed the belief that the state's and its citizens' support of the university was a civic duty. Couched in these terms, fathers who sent their children out of state, particularly to the north, were bad citizens guilty of unpatriotic actions.

Likewise, the Board of Trustees emphasized the state's financial duty to the school: "When, therefore, we demand that southern men shall have a southern Education, we cannot shake off our sense of obligation to provide a worthy southern Education....And when we insist that our youth shall be educated at home, we surely can never cease to blush so long as we fail to provide for them at home an Education in all

³⁴ E. Merton Coulter, *College Life in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 172 & 182.

³⁵ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

respects as good as they can obtain abroad.”³⁸ Student patriotism must be rewarded by the state with adequate financial support to provide a quality education. Southerners constructed sectional education as an interlocking responsibility of citizen and government to support.

Southern educators did not perceive sectionalism simply as a tool to secure funding and increase enrollment; educators truly believed southern institutions and culture were under attack and needed protection. As a result, many educators were heavily involved in the movement to extend and justify slavery and to secure southern economic independence from the northern states. Unsurprisingly, given its beginnings were rooted in sectionalism, the University of Mississippi’s faculty were involved in the defense of slavery. Fredrick Holmes, UM’s first president, was hired because he was a brilliant scholar and a vehement defender of slavery. He published articles in the *Southern Quarterly Review*, *DeBow’s Review*, and the *Southern Literary Messenger*.³⁹ Holmes remained a staunch supporter of slavery throughout his life and continued to defend it even after the war.⁴⁰

In 1856, the mathematics professor, Albert T. Bledsoe, wrote an *Essay on Liberty and Slavery*, a book the *Mississippi University Magazine* praised for revealing abolition’s “glaring absurdity.”⁴¹ Augustus Longstreet, the University of Mississippi’s second president, portrayed the Civil War as a conflict between the northern “science-taught band” and the southern “Christ-taught band.”⁴² William Finley, president of Charleston

³⁸ Florence E. Campbell, “Journal of the Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the University of Mississippi 1845-1860” (Masters’ Thesis, University of Mississippi, 1939), 276-277.

³⁹ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 47.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 49 & 64.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 60.

College from 1844 to 1857, was an elected delegate to the Southern Rights Association in 1851. In 1852, Finley was a designated speaker at a convention protesting the exclusion of slavery from the western territories.⁴³ His nomination to both these events indicates Finley was an active participant in the defense of slavery and states' rights, an activity no one found in conflict with his position as college president.

Trinity College's President Braxton Craven was an advocate for southern economic independence beginning in the 1840's when he began to write public tracts in support of southern industry.⁴⁴ In an April 1860 address, Craven asserted, "In position we [the South] never have been free. The Revolution broke our servitude to England, but left the South subject to the North. I am for Union against all comers now and forever, but I am also for Southern social independence....[I]t is time to commence business on our own resources...or shall we be the mere outpost of a nation; shall we be the great capital of a kingdom of [the] mind or shall we be the Ireland of America."⁴⁵ The activities of these men reveal sectional arguments for education stemmed not only from expediency, its proponents believed their argument. They perceived their duty was not only to uphold sectional education, but defend southern sectional interests as well.

State schools were founded for the express purpose of providing an education supportive of southern sectional interests.⁴⁶ The southern school movement in turn magnified the importance of academic sectional activity and presumably the development of student sectionalism. By 1860, academic sectionalism had accomplished its aim.

⁴³ Esterby, *A History of the College of Charleston*, 122.

⁴⁴ Nora Chaffin Campbell, *Trinity College, 1839-1892: The Beginnings of Duke University* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1950), 217.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁴⁶ Lorri Glover, "'Let Us Manufacture Men': Educating Elite Boys in the Early National South" in *Southern Manhood*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 27-28.

Though a minority of southern boys still went north for college, this number had shrunk dramatically. For example, in 1850 thirty-five Georgian boys were enrolled at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton; by 1860 only thirteen boys were at these schools. In 1850, Harvard and Yale were attended by twenty-eight of the thirty-five Georgians; however, in 1860 they each had only one of the thirteen boys.⁴⁷ Encouraged by sectionalism and the increasing quality of southern institutions, fathers chose to school their sons in-state or in-section and state colleges became a source of pride for the state.⁴⁸

Academic sectionalism had another effect: wholesale discrimination against northern-born professors. Though southern colleges were initially staffed by a majority of northerners, the passage of time had furnished plenty of college-educated southern men to replace them. Furthermore, fears about northern education had become attached to northern professors who were viewed as tainted by their place of origin. These fears drastically affected their chances of being hired in the south. At the University of Georgia, policy dictated no northern-born professor be hired by the 1850's. Ironically, UGA's President Church hailed from Vermont originally, however, his long residence in the South rendered him culturally southern.⁴⁹ The lack of demands for Church's resignation implies southerners believed a northerner could be saved from the errors of northern society; however, the treatment of Fredrick Augustus Porter Barnard, the last president and first chancellor of the University of Mississippi, suggests this belief was not universal.

Like Church, Barnard had lived and taught in the South for decades. He also owned slaves and appeared to be a typical southern gentleman.⁵⁰ Unlike Church, his

⁴⁷ Coulter, *College Life*, 182.

⁴⁸ Glover, *Southern Manhood*, 28.

⁴⁹ Coulter, *College Life*, 192.

⁵⁰ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 96.

tenure was marred by repeated accusations stemming from his northern birth. In 1856, following his election to college president, UM Professors Lewis Harper and John N. Waddel attempted to discredit Barnard because of his northern upbringing and consequent lack of morals.⁵¹ The Mississippian press and church schools characterized the University of Mississippi as a bastion of atheism and abolitionism only during his tenure.⁵² In 1858, rumors of Barnard's anti-slavery sentiments grew more virulent and the new UM Professor of Ethics, Reverend George Carter, openly asserted Barnard was a "free-soiler."⁵³ Though these accusations appear to be groundless and stem partially from Barnard's attempts to introduce a more scientific-centered curriculum, these attacks nevertheless use the language of sectionalism.⁵⁴ Whether his accusers believed he was an abolitionist or not, they used his northern birth to instill suspicion among the general Mississippi public and generate widespread distrust and disapproval.

The University of Mississippi's Board of Trustees certainly maintained their confidence in him. In July 1858, the Board of Trustees added a new edict requiring professors under consideration for hire "[t]o residence in the South and especially in the state [of Mississippi] with an identity, with the Educational interests of the state & reputation in that connection."⁵⁵ In essence, this edict required professors to identify culturally with the south and be "sound" with regards to slavery. Had the Board lacked confidence in Barnard's sentiments, they could have used the rumors as a pretext to remove him as chancellor and professor at the university. The majority of students also

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 87. Barnard was in fact a slave-owner and did not denounce slavery until after the advent of the Civil War. Furthermore, it is likely the Barnards' move north was financed by the sale of their house-slaves.

⁵⁵ Campbell, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees," 344.

supported their chancellor despite the rumors. In 1854, the Phi Sigma Literary Society made him an honorary member, evidence of his popularity among students. Later after the rumors were widespread, the *Mississippi University Magazine* published an article praising Barnard and refused to print articles criticizing the north because it might reflect badly on him.⁵⁶

A powerful minority of faculty members, students, and Mississippians still hated Barnard because of his northern background and sectional hatred influenced the events surrounding the night of May 12, 1859. That evening the Barnards were at the Southern Commercial Convention in Vicksburg so there were no direct white witnesses present when two students broke into the chancellor's house, beat, and raped Jane, one of the Barnards' female slaves.⁵⁷ Though the two boys never confessed to the assault, other students identified them as J.P. Furniss and Samuel Humphreys; Jane also told Mrs. Barnard that Humphreys raped and beat her while Furniss watched.⁵⁸ It is impossible to establish the motive of these two young men with complete accuracy; however, inferences can be made.

Throughout the South, colleges either allowed students to bring slaves with them or included the services of campus slaves in the cost of tuition.⁵⁹ A campus slave's life was rather grim. Both students and professors physically abused school slaves and college directives often prohibited students from "chasing Negroes around college," indicating the daily frequency of abuse.⁶⁰ Campus violence against slaves was an integral

⁵⁶ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 81.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

⁵⁹ Robert C. Pace, *Halls of Honor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 48.

⁶⁰ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 49; Dyer, *University of Georgia*, 58.

though little-noted part of southern sectional education.⁶¹ Jane, however, was not a campus slave and she should have been protected from abuse by the students by virtue of Barnard's position; she was not.

A possible clue exists in the fact Jane's rape occurred in the midst of increased suspicions of an Oxford servile insurrection. Driven by fears of a slave revolt, University of Mississippi students participated in a series of unprovoked assaults on Oxford's black population. Prior to Jane's assault, other students had brutally beaten and branded Oxford-area slaves.⁶² The identity of Jane's owner and these assaults suggest it is probable Furniss and Humphreys believed the rumors about Barnard and identified him as a potential source of empowerment for servile insurrection. Unable to attack him directly, Humphreys raped Jane to symbolically violate Barnard and express sectional hatred towards the north.

Whether Furniss and Humphreys were inspired by sectional hatred or perverted lust, Barnard's actions following the rape resulted in scandal for the University of Mississippi. Humphreys claimed he was not involved in the assault and, though believing him to be "morally convicted," the faculty refused to expel him because a white person could not be convicted in Mississippi by a slave's testimony.⁶³ In the aftermath, Barnard convinced Humphreys' parents to withdraw him and refused to readmit him in the fall. Barnard's actions exposed him to accusations of accepting "Negro testimony" against a white man, abolitionist sentiments, and encouraging sectional factionalism among the

⁶¹ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 50.

⁶² James Allen Cabaniss, *A History of the University of Mississippi* (Birmingham: Birmingham Printing Company, 1949), 54.

⁶³ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 97.

faculty.⁶⁴ Carter, Barnard's old enemy, implied the vote to expel Humphreys was sectional in character with Barnard leading northern faculty members in a hunt for Humphreys' blood. The Oxford *Mercury* happily printed these charges and other rumors.⁶⁵ Meanwhile several students transferred in protest of Humphreys' treatment and students were more apt to view Barnard suspiciously.⁶⁶

Opposition to Barnard reached such an extreme in November 1859, he admitted to a friend, "I would take up any mechanic art, I would even be a private soldier or a day laborer, before I would again be an officer in a southern college."⁶⁷ Ultimately a special Board of Trustees meeting was held to investigate and determine Barnard's soundness "in the Slavery question."⁶⁸ The Board dismissed the charges against him, but public accusations and rumors continued to circulate until his resignation and return to the north at the beginning of the war.⁶⁹ Though Barnard enjoyed widespread support, Mississippian opposition to him was rooted in suspicion of his northern origin.

Academic sectionalism claimed northern education championed ideals like abolition that were anathema to southern society. Logically it followed products of the north, like Barnard, were guilty by association of these ideals and, if allowed, would pervert southern education as well. The persecution of Barnard and other northern professors was a natural outgrowth of academic sectionalism. This climate of academic sectional suspicion was communicated to the general public as well as students through propaganda and the professors' own political activities. Another branch of academic

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁶ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 97; Cabaniss, *A History of the University of Mississippi*, 49.

⁶⁷ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 96.

⁶⁸ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 98; Campbell, "Minutes of the Board of Trustees," 399.

⁶⁹ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 98.

sectionalism supported and enhanced the southern military school movement, which in turn increased widespread sectionalism.

Chapter Two:

The Southern Military School Movement

In 1849, Colonel Philip St. George Cocke commented, “[N]ot a few...now look to the [Virginia Military] Institute as a West Point for the South in case of disunion-- which God forbid, but which the fanaticism of the North now threatens.”⁷⁰ Though Cocke referenced VMI alone, his remarks could be applied to the numerous military schools and programs throughout the South. The southern military school movement was not founded, however, with secession and sectional defense in mind; originally, it was fueled by utilitarian studies, discipline, and regionalism. Increasing sectionalism radicalized the military school movement and, in the 1850’s, the belief secession might be inevitable resulted in the rapid proliferation of military schools and programs through state funding.

Due to the United States’ initial abhorrence of standing armies and its consequent dependence on the militia, many early American thinkers believed the military education of citizens was necessary for continued liberty.⁷¹ Benjamin Rush, a signer of the “Declaration of Independence,” argued, “In a state where every citizen is liable to be a soldier and a legislator, it will be necessary to have some regular instruction given upon the ART OF WAR and upon PRACTICAL LEGISLATION.”⁷² Early supporters

⁷⁰ Rod Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines: The Southern Military School Tradition, 1839-1915* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 20.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 10.

hearkened back to Rush's argument and emphasize the connection between a military education and civil leadership.⁷³

Alden Partridge, one of the most influential proponents for military schools, founded the first private military academy in 1820. Bitter over his dismissal from the post of West Point superintendent, Partridge argued the professional officer class produced at the national military academy was dangerous because he considered them to be mercenaries and potential Caesars; only a powerful militia was needed to counteract their malign influence.⁷⁴ He believed militia officers must receive a military education that emphasized civil service and obedience. Partridge and his students founded a nationwide network of military schools though it was most densely concentrated in the southern United States. In order to explain the predominance of military schools in the South, the forces of utilitarian studies, the perception of an unruly southern youth, and regionalism must be explored.

In the South, utilitarian studies had focused initially on agriculture and the development of scientific farming, however, suspicions of "Book-farming" combined with the negative connotations attached to manual labor and its association with slavery ultimately defeated this branch of the movement in the 1840's.⁷⁵ Supporters still believed in their manual labor school movement's ability to limit southern economic dependence on the North through the inclusion of utilitarian studies in higher education. For example, in 1849, President Alexander M. Clayton of the University of Mississippi's Board of

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁵ Dan R. Frost, *Thinking Confederates* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 7-8.

Trustees identified the lack of utilitarian studies as the reason for continued southern economic dependence on the North.⁷⁶

For supporters, military schools became central to their plans for the promotion of utilitarian studies. Modeled after West Point in most respects, military schools like VMI and the South Carolina Military Academy already emphasized practical studies such as engineering and practical science.⁷⁷ As a result, military schools were perceived as a perfect way to promote utilitarian studies without incurring the suspicion that was attached to manual labor schools. The product of sectionalism, the movement unabashedly used sectionalism to promote the founding of military schools throughout the South because they believed it would result in economic though not political independence from the North.⁷⁸

Additionally, proponents also emphasized the disciplinary benefits of military education because male southern youth were perceived by southerners as brash, selfish, and uncontrollable. Southern supporters believed a military education could discipline unruly southern boys because it emphasized respect for authority and self-discipline.⁷⁹ Ironically, opponents identified the same lack of self-discipline as a persuasive reason to block military school development. Prior to the founding of the Virginia Military Institute, a Buchanan Virginian paper argued, "It would not be safe to trust frolicsome, inconsiderate boys with the duty of guarding instruments of death.... Who would rest secure if his own life and that of his wife and children were perpetually dependent upon

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁷ James Lee Conrad, *The Young Lions: Confederate Cadets at War* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1997), 4.

⁷⁸ Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 18.

⁷⁹ Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines*, 13-14; Walter L. Fleming, *Louisiana State University 1860-1896* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1936), 55.

the vigilance and prudence of a boy...especially a Virginian boy...proverbially indiscreet as our youth are?"⁸⁰ Unfortunately for the editorial author's peace of mind, the argument failed and VMI opened in 1839.

Despite increased sectionalism, founders of later military schools still emphasized discipline. Shortly after the 1860 founding of the Louisiana State Seminary and Military Academy, Braxton Bragg commented to its first president William Tecumseh Sherman: "The more you see of our society, the more you will be impressed with the importance of a change in our system of education, if we expect the next generation to be anything more than a mere aggregation of loafers charged with the duty of squandering their fathers' legacies and disgracing their mother."⁸¹ Another supporter likened Louisiana youth to disease-stricken patients whose parents had "sent chronic cases to this institution as their last hope for a cure."⁸²

Though these explanations seem somewhat disingenuous given the academy opened in 1860 just prior to Louisiana's secession, fears about the perceived dissipated nature of southern youth remained a motivating though secondary factor for military school establishment up to the beginning of the war. Sherman was certainly convinced, noting "the dullest boys have the most affectionate mothers and the most vicious boys here come recommended with all the virtues of saints."⁸³ Later he asserted the removal of military discipline would result in disaster, stating that "[o]ne hundred young men in this building under civil government would tear it down and make study impossible."⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Conrad, *The Young Lions*, 3.

⁸¹ Fleming, *Louisiana State University*, 45-46.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 67.

The military system was also introduced to great effect at the University of Alabama in 1860. Prior to the introduction of military discipline, Alabama students were overly contentious and riotous even by antebellum standards. Students rioted regularly and gunfights were known to break out among the students targeting other students and their professors as well as residents of the town.⁸⁵ Between 1831 and 1837, all the original professors either resigned or were dismissed because of student rebelliousness.⁸⁶ Disgusted by its reputation and fearing their own sons would be corrupted, parents preferred to send their sons out of state for college.⁸⁷ Finally, in 1858, a statewide controversy began in response to the murder of Edward Nabors by fellow University of Alabama student David Herring at their shared boarding house.⁸⁸ Two years later, the State General Assembly created a military department at the university and all students were subject to military discipline for the coming term.⁸⁹

Within months of the institution's application of military discipline, student behavior had greatly improved, impressing all involved at the school.⁹⁰ In a November 1862 letter to Alabama Governor John Shorter, UA Superintendant Landon Garland claimed the lack of discipline was the reason for the transition. "The old collegiate system had proved a failure. The Institution was doing more harm than good. For one good scholar it sent out, perhaps two...who were rakes or drunkards or problems [were sent out]. This was an evil inherent in the system....It was to correct these evils that for six years I labored to effect the introduction of the Military System-- and it was for this

⁸⁵ Suzanne Rau Wolfe, *The University of Alabama: A Pictorial History* (University: The University of Alabama Press, 1980), 21-22 & 38.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

purpose that the Trustees introduced it.”⁹¹ Had the University of Alabama transitioned solely to provide military training in preparation for secession Garland would have no reason to prevaricate about it in 1862 after the secession of Alabama.

Tasked with controlling ill-behaved students on a daily basis Garland undoubtedly was motivated by the hope that military discipline would control his unruly pupils. It is improbable, however, that this was the sole reason the state transformed the University of Alabama to a military school, particularly because sectionalism, the product of radicalized regionalism, was also an early force in the development of the southern military school movement.

Though an overarching southern sectional identity did exist, early military schools were initially shaped by state specific regionalism. Prior to its transformation into a military school, the future VMI was a federal arsenal guarded by United States soldiers who locals characterized as rowdy and disruptive to the community.⁹² VMI supporters used the negative perceptions of the guards as “drones” to augment their glowing descriptions of the brave and noble Virginian youth who would replace them.⁹³ The characterization of the guards reveals a deep distrust for standing military forces while the glorification of their potential replacements suggests a deep distrust of outsiders, northern and southern alike.

In an 1841 report to the Virginian governor and General Assembly, VMI Superintendent Francis Smith reported that his charges, as members of a state-supported institution, were taught “to respect its [Virginia’s] laws, and to obey those in authority:

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁹² Conrad, *The Young Lions*, 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

and...we have every reason to believe they will prove themselves *faithful to Virginia*.⁹⁴ Though VMI graduates and cadets would later prove Smith's statement martially during the Civil War, in 1841 Smith referred only to their development as good, patriotic Virginian citizens. South Carolinian Governor John Richardson employed a similar argument before the state legislature while advocating for the state support of fifty cadets per year because it "would imbue those youth with patriotic gratitude toward the state."⁹⁵

Prior to Richardson's appeal, South Carolina had established two military schools, the Citadel and Arsenal, in 1842 because of their deep distrust for the preexisting federal arsenal soldiers and preference for native guards.⁹⁶ VMI and the later incorporated South Carolina Military Academy were established for the benefit of their specific state and were intended to instill allegiance for that state into its cadets. In keeping with this mentality, VMI did not admit out of state cadets until 1860. Although initially open to applicants from other states, after 1850 only South Carolinians were admitted to the South Carolina Military Academy.⁹⁷

Only about a decade after the establishment of both VMI and the Citadel, however, Colonel Cocke commented that VMI and, by extension other military schools were now perceived as bastions of sectional, not regional defense.⁹⁸ VMI is "a West Point for the South," not just Virginia.⁹⁹ Cocke's statement not only reveals how southerners perceived the purpose of military schools, but also how the military school's perception of itself had changed. This perception shift is indicted by VMI's decision to increase the

⁹⁴ Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines*, 13, emphasis present in original.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁶ Conrad, *The Young Lions*, 6-7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5&9.

⁹⁸ Andrew Jr., *Long Gray Lines*, 20.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

history course load of its cadets. The Institute's faculty explained every Virginia citizen "should understand and believe the foundation of that divine institution of slavery, which is the basis of the happiness, prosperity, and independence of our southern people, and [be] thoroughly fortified to advocate it and defend it."¹⁰⁰ Though out of state students were still not admitted, Virginian advocates now perceived themselves as part of a concerted and rapidly growing southern military school movement dedicated to defending a shared sectional identity ideologically and martially.

Though many military school records are lost, the rapid proliferation of military schools throughout the South during the 1850's suggests the movement was preparing for the possibility of secession. Between 1839 and 1860, over a hundred private and state military schools opened though primarily in the 1850's.¹⁰¹ Convinced of the potential importance of military programs, state governments extended financial and material aid to most private schools. For example in Alabama, the governor procured arms for eleven military schools and programs though only three were public institutions.¹⁰²

Other military schools received federal support in obtaining arms and other military equipment. The Louisiana State Academy, for example, was a beneficiary of federal support when Sherman obtained two hundred muskets along with belts, bayonets, and swords from the federal government in late 1860.¹⁰³ Despite Sherman's general disapproval of secession, the arrival of these weapons and other military accoutrements for the school was interpreted by the press as "getting the sons of Louisiana ready for any

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰¹ Jennifer R. Green, "'Stout Chaps Who Can Bear the Distress': Young Men in Antebellum Military Academies" in *Southern Manhood*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 175.

¹⁰² John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 153-154 & 160.

¹⁰³ Fleming, *Louisiana State University*, 90.

emergency of civil war or servile insurrection that may arise,” which they approved of.¹⁰⁴

Increased state financial aid and the diversion of federal arms southward to southern military schools indicates the South was militarily preparing for secession.

Graduates from VMI, the Citadel, and other military schools played an important role in expanding the network of southern military schools, indicating the growing sectional identification of the movement. VMI and Citadel graduates staffed military schools throughout the South as well as serving as the heads of traditional schools with new military departments. For example, the West Florida Seminary hired three VMI graduates to staff their new military department and the University of Alabama hired two.¹⁰⁵ Others followed the path of Citadel graduates Micah Jenkins and Asbury Coward and founded new military schools like their King’s Mountain Military Academy.¹⁰⁶

Even those military schools that chose to employ northern-born West Point graduates believed they were participating in the southern military school movement because army officers were perceived as sympathetic to slavery. In February 1861 then Lieutenant Oliver O. Howard, a staunch anti-slavery man, was bemused by the offer of a position at a North Carolina school because it was assumed “[a]s an officer of the army...you entertain no views on the peculiar institutions which would be objectionable to a Southern community.”¹⁰⁷ Placed in this context the hiring of William T. Sherman and Caleb Huse by the Louisiana State Seminary and Military Academy and the University of Alabama respectively was not odd. Their employers believed them to be sympathetic to

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

¹⁰⁵ William Dodd, *History of West Florida Seminary* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1952), 12-14; Wolfe, *The University of Alabama*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ John Peyre Thomas, *The History of the South Carolina Military Academy* (Charleston: Walker, Evans, & Cogswell Co., 1893), 158.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country A History of West Point* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 171.

the South's "oppression" by the North and may have expected them to remain even if secession occurred.

In the case of Huse, these possible expectations were fulfilled when he resigned from the United States Army to stay at the University of Alabama.¹⁰⁸ Sherman did not; he was, however, sympathetic to the South as his letters during his tenure as superintendent reveal. In a letter to his brother-in-law Republican politician Thomas Ewing, Sherman wrote, "The South is right in guarding against insidious enemies or against any enemies whatever, and I would aid her in so doing. All I could object to is the laying of plans designed to result in secession and civil war."¹⁰⁹ In this letter, Sherman suggests that the South has a right to feel threatened by abolitionism and slave revolt and prepare for it, however, he does not concede the right of secession. In a later letter from Ohio to his coworkers in Louisiana, Sherman explains why: "I am sick of this war of prejudice. Here, the prejudice is that planters have nothing to do but hang abolitionists and hold lynch courts. There all the people of Ohio are engaged in stealing and running off negroes."¹¹⁰ Sherman believed stereotypes of southerners and northerners had resulted in increased sectional tensions. For the South to secede would be an extreme and unjustified response for Sherman.

As the secession crisis drew closer, secession was a common topic of discussion between his staff and Sherman, who succinctly summarized their views. "Among ourselves it is known that I am opposed to disunion in any manner or form. Professor Smith ditto, unless Lincoln should encourage abolitionism after installed in office. Mr. Boyd thinks the denial to the Southern people of access to new territories is an insult to

¹⁰⁸ Wolfe, *University of Alabama*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ Fleming, *Louisiana State University*, 58.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

which they cannot submit with honor and should not, let the consequences be what they may. Dr. Clarke is simply willing to follow the fortunes of the South, be what they may."¹¹¹ These conversations suggest Sherman's quasi-insider status because his staff trusted him enough to confide their point of view with him. Furthermore, Sherman's viewpoint is very reminiscent of a southern Unionist and his opinion would have been respected. Staff and supporters of the school urged Sherman to remain after secession because of their respect for him and preconceived notions about United States Army officers; he refused, however, and departed for the North on February 20, 1861 though his resignation had not yet been accepted.¹¹²

Though not initially founded to facilitate secession, military school movement supporters used sectionalism to foster the growth of the southern military school network. As southern sectionalism radicalized because of the perception that the southern institution of slavery was threatened, the general southern public as well as the movement perceived military academies as sources of defense against an aggressive North. Whether entering a civilian or military college, southern students would have been aware of the goals and propaganda of both the southern college and military school movements. Educated in an environment of academic sectionalism, students became strong supporters of sectional values as witnessed by their literary society activities and decisions.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 100.

Chapter Three: Southern and Northern Literary Societies

As it had for centuries in the western world, antebellum American education focused on classical learning. As the majority of American colleges and universities, students primarily devoted their time to the study of Greek and Latin rounded out with classes in theoretical mathematics and natural science.¹¹³ Lesson plans did not encourage original thought, focusing instead on recitation or student regurgitation of the textbook.¹¹⁴ Antebellum education sought to discipline the brain through constant drill while elaborate codes of conduct stifled student life. While necessary restrictions were placed on the possession of deadly weapons, the majority of rules were paternalistic and overly restrictive.¹¹⁵

For example, the authorities of Charleston College defined profanity, card-playing, drinking alcohol, denial of Christianity, and verbal and physical arguments as “highly censurable.”¹¹⁶ Likewise, the University of Georgia outlawed noisiness, singing during study time, unapproved hikes beyond two miles of campus, and playing instruments on Sunday.¹¹⁷ All antebellum colleges had similar restrictive codes of conduct that were

¹¹³ J.H. Easterby, *A History of the College of Charleston* (Charleston: Scribner Press, 1935), 130; Dan R. Frost, *Thinking Confederates* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 2.

¹¹⁴ Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 2.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹¹⁶ Easterby, *A History of the College of Charleston*, 132.

¹¹⁷ E. Merton Coulter, *College Life in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 60-61.

enforced by unannounced patrolling professors and tutors.¹¹⁸ Some colleges, like Charleston College, went further and sent monthly behavior reports to parents.¹¹⁹

Stifled in thought and behavior, college students turned to literary societies to gain a measure of academic intellectual freedom. Literary societies allowed students academic freedom by providing them with the opportunity to question and discuss central tenets of religion and societal convention. In 1836 a UGA literary society debated the religious question asking, for example, if, “[l]aying aside all scriptural authority[,] could we reasonably conclude that all men were descended from the same pair?”¹²⁰ By a vote of fourteen to twelve, they decided that no non-Biblical evidence existed for such an origin.¹²¹ This question is striking because it cast doubt on a popular position, supported by many religious and scientific authorities, that Adam and Eve were the ultimate ancestors of the human race. Though the close vote indicates student controversy over the topic, academic freedom of consciousness was present in the choice of topic and final decision. It should be noted, however, this exercise of academic freedom could also be a validation of slavery by disputing the common descent of all humans from a single pair and therefore their equal creation.

Another example was the debate over whether society should force men to marry women whom they seduced or not.¹²² This topic questioned nineteenth-century American social convention that condemned unmarried sexual intercourse rooted in paternalistic conceptions of women. The Phi Kappas agreed with society at large whereas the

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹⁹ Easterby, *A History of the College of Charleston*, 132.

¹²⁰ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 116.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 118.

Demosthenians did not.¹²³ Though debates that challenged religious or societal values often returned conformist decisions or only narrowly ruled against those values, students were able to ask questions typically never allowed in the classroom. Furthermore, debate allowed students to voice their reservations about religious doctrine and social policy, another freedom rarely allowed in the classroom.

This academic freedom of thought was not the original intention of literary societies, which owed their existence to the emphasis placed on oratory in nineteenth-century American colleges and universities. Daily lesson recitation, student oration on national holidays and other events, and the senior commencement address, equivalent to the modern undergraduate thesis, were all intended to display student oratorical skills.¹²⁴ In particular, the commencement address was so important that some schools, like the University of Georgia, withheld degrees from seniors who refused to give one.¹²⁵ The University of Mississippi further emphasized oratorical development by requiring a senior to present an oration every Monday before their professors and peers. At the beginning of every month, underclassmen were also picked to give a speech before several professors and the members of their class.¹²⁶ Strangely, however, few colleges offered classes for oratorical development. Instead the onus of responsibility was placed on students, who formed literary societies to develop the necessary skills.

Public-speaking skills were taught to underclassmen at society meetings through observation of upperclassmen and debate performance. Debate education began soon after joining a society. University of Mississippi student Fredrick Robert Barnard

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹²⁴ Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 2; Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 126&135.

¹²⁵ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 136.

¹²⁶ David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 65.

solicited money for his Hermean membership fee and described his first debate experience in the same letter to his father. A new member could take part in a debate, but the stars of the show were the seniors. In his debate debut, Barnard felt awkward in comparison to the polished senior debaters.¹²⁷ Literary society seniors provided oratorical examples for younger members like Barnard.

Over time, however, the influence of societies grew and became a dominating force within American colleges because nineteenth-century college life was a frightening and occasionally dangerous experience. College dormitories were uninsulated, cold, often infested by bugs, and prone to fires.¹²⁸ The food served in the school commons was unappetizing and often the subject of dissatisfaction.¹²⁹ The paternalistic and restrictive codes of conduct encouraged students to misbehave and violence between students was very common.¹³⁰ College boys feared disease the most because illness could devastate campuses quickly. Fellow students were often the only caretakers of ill boys.¹³¹ Poor living conditions, disease, and violence encouraged student interdependence and literary societies functioned as ready-made support systems for members.

The literary society institution dominated the lives of its members. Boys primarily associated with other members of their society and only rarely with rival society members.¹³² Inter-literary society relations were usually fraught with jealousy and tension. At Brown University, the recruiting rivalry between the Philermenian and United Brother

¹²⁷ Frederick Robert Barnard, *Frederick Robert Barnard to Father*, undated letter, *The Frederick Robert Barnard Collection*, 1:3, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi (Oxford, MS).

¹²⁸ Robert C. Pace, *Halls of Honor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 38 & 40-41.

¹²⁹ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 45.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹³¹ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 42-43.

¹³² Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 108.

Societies once resulted in gunfire in the late 1850's.¹³³ At the University of Georgia, Phi Kappa-Demosthenes Society relations were governed by treaties and diplomatic correspondence that struck scholar and author, E. Merton Coulter, as hostile as those between two rival world powers.¹³⁴ To signify their allegiance, members generally wore an emblematic pin or charm specific to their society. On formal occasions, silk badges were worn instead.¹³⁵ Of the twenty-eight members of the University of Mississippi's Class of 1861, sixteen students can be identified as members of the Hermean or Phi Sigma Societies by insignia proudly worn in their graduation photographs.¹³⁶ These emblems helped develop a sense of solidarity among the members and prevented unwelcome friendships between rival society members.

Presumably literary society members, like other students, tended one another when ill, protected each other against violence, and helped in other situations; their role in death rituals, however, is well-documented. Student death far from family and home was common because of improper hygiene, disease, and primitive medical care, making college cemeteries a necessity.¹³⁷ When a member died, the society stepped in, fulfilling the role of the nineteenth-century family in death rituals. Fellow members wore mourning clothes, passed resolutions honoring the deceased, and paid for the burial. When the deceased's parents resided nearby, the society would escort the body home for burial.¹³⁸

¹³³ Robert Perkins Brown et al., *Memories of Brown: Traditions and Recollections from Many Sources* (Providence: Brown Alumni Magazine Company, 1909), 170-173.

¹³⁴ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 107.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³⁶ Franklin E. Moak, *Biographical Sketches of the Class of 1861*, Commencement Collection, 1:5, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi (Oxford, MS).

¹³⁷ Wolfe, *The University of Alabama*, 31.

¹³⁸ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 133.

Literary society participation in death rituals reveals that the society was not only a place to learn public-speaking skills, it could act as a surrogate family for its membership.

As a combination support system and sanctuary from the restrictive college atmosphere, it is unsurprising that the literary society enjoyed a tremendous influence over its members. In the mid-nineteenth-century, the University of Georgia faculty jealously noted, “[T]he duties of college are of little importance [to students] in comparison with an attendance on the Societies.”¹³⁹ The recollections of literary society alumnae reveal the extent of influence literary societies exercised over their members. One University of Georgia graduate remembered, “There, in that Hall, is the sweetest haunt of memory, and often will mind relax her efforts from the pursuit of worldly cares, and fondly ponder over the hours of youthful struggle and early contest. Times and things may change, but the heart will ever cling to the idols it once so fondly loved.”¹⁴⁰ Another UGA alumnae recalled, “To me the name *Demosthenian* is fraught with the most happy associations, & the most pleasurable recollections of my life are identified with that *Hall*.”¹⁴¹

Nor was this outpouring of sentiment restricted to the south. In 1886, Ezekial G. Robinson, a member of Brown University Class of 1838, wrote, “[I]t was my good-fortune to be a member of a debating society....In direct education for the real work of life, no influences of my college-days were equal to those of this society.”¹⁴² Fifty years after his graduation, Robinson credited his literary society as the best career preparation available during his college days. The celebrated academic Frederick Augustus Porter

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁴² Walter C. Bronson, *The History of Brown University: 1764-1914* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1971), 240.

Barnard also credited his literary society as an excellent preparation for his later career.¹⁴³ UGA's former students remembered their society involvement as incredibly pleasant and relaxing. Whereas professor influence was circumscribed by the tenuous teacher-student relationship mandated by the paternalistic American college system, literary societies were not subject to such restraints. Literary society influence over students flourished because they were perceived as fun, familial, and useful for career preparation.

The influence of literary societies, however, was not always restricted to the students alone. Much like modern fraternities and sororities, society alumnae remained deeply interested in their operation and provided a network of contacts for students post graduation. Commencements often gathered all past and present society members for intergenerational meetings.¹⁴⁴ While these meetings reveal the depth of attachment the societies inspired, they also influenced the development of student sectionalism, which will be discussed later. Furthermore, alumnae contributions allowed many societies to purchase books for their libraries and, in some cases, erect their own individual halls. At the University of Georgia, both the Demosthenes and Phi Kappa Societies were able to erect two halls costing four thousand and five thousand dollars respectively because of alumnae financial support.¹⁴⁵

Literary societies could also exercise a great deal of authority over college affairs. For example, in 1825, UGA's two literary societies were able to prevent the expulsion of Robert Toombs by jointly petitioning the faculty for forbearance. No doubt shocked by this inter-society effort, the faculty allowed Toombs to remain until he got into further

¹⁴³ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 81.

¹⁴⁴ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 138.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

trouble.¹⁴⁶ Later, the two literary societies organized the student homespun movement in reaction to the Tariff of 1828 and convinced the Board of Trustees to require students to wear a homespun uniform.¹⁴⁷ Though few American college societies exercised as much authority over campus affairs as Phi Kappa and Demosthenes, literary societies were usually charged with organizing their school's celebration of Independence Day and Washington's Birthday. The literary society appointed student orators and chose guest speakers on these occasions.¹⁴⁸ The societies also often chose commencement speakers, who were generally politicians, clergymen, or from other socially prominent professions.¹⁴⁹ These men's social importance illustrates the influence possessed by antebellum literary societies.

Due to the inherent purpose of literary societies and their influence over students, societies profoundly shaped student political thought and were a source of sectionalism in American higher education. Literary societies passively shaped their members' political thought through their libraries and magazine subscriptions. Limited college libraries hampered debate performance so societies developed their own extensive book collections to increase member debate proficiency. For example, in 1849, the Brown University Philermenian Society possessed 3,224 books.¹⁵⁰ UGA's two literary societies had a combined total of 5,200 books in 1860.¹⁵¹ It is impossible, however, to determine what books literary societies possessed and accurately ascertain how these libraries

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 125-126.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁵⁰ Bronson, *Brown University*, 240.

¹⁵¹ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 132.

effected the development of student sectionalism. These books did guide student debate and must have had a key role in influencing student sectionalism.

Magazine subscriptions were another passive agent of sectionalism in the south. Magazines, like books, were printed primarily in the north. As the southern college movement gained momentum, northern-printed textbooks, literature, and magazines were all viewed with suspicion by southern educators, scholars, and students.¹⁵² Sectionally proud societies fretted over the lack of southern support for the *Southern Literary Magazine* and other southern journals in favor of northern subscriptions like *Harper's*.¹⁵³ Many of these societies chose to patronize, though not exclusively, southern subscriptions. For example, Phi Kappa at the University of Georgia subscribed to *The American Whig Review*, *The Southern Review*, *The Whig Journal*, and *The Southern Literary Messenger*.¹⁵⁴ All these magazines were based on southern sectional pride and sectional political compromise.

Literary society debate actively shaped student political thought and sectionalism. Debate topics ran the gamut from the moral influence of Shakespeare's plays to whether Native Americans or slaves should be more pitied.¹⁵⁵ The majority of topics, however, dealt with contemporary political issues, revealing keen student interest in politics. Though literary societies allowed free thought and members sometimes reached surprising conclusions about science, religion, and politics, an in-depth analysis of debate decisions at the University of Georgia reveals that student political thought aligned with prevailing trends of thought in America.

¹⁵² Frost, *Thinking Confederates*, 19.

¹⁵³ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 187.

¹⁵⁴ Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 61.

¹⁵⁵ Bronson, *Brown University*, 240-241.

Southern Literary Societies

Phi Kappa and Demosthenian debates about immigration and Catholicism correlate with the rise of nativism in the United States. Though in 1854 the Demosthenians decided that the nativist Know-Nothing Party was undesirable, previous debate decisions reveal that nativism was alive and well at UGA.¹⁵⁶ Earlier, in 1835, the Demosthenians decided that immigration was undesirable and citizenship should not be granted to all immigrants.¹⁵⁷ Like most nativist movements throughout the U.S., UGA nativism specifically targeted Catholicism. In 1831, both societies decided that Catholicism was mostly evil in content. Several years later, the Phi Kappas decided by a vote of 13 to 7 that naturalized Catholics should be prohibited from holding public office. Later, in 1852, they decided that Catholicism should be suppressed in the United States.¹⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly, both societies decided that the Know-Nothing Party was beneficial in 1855.¹⁵⁹ Literary society opinion about Catholicism and immigration grew progressively negative in tandem to the rise of American nativism.

A similar relationship between sectionalism and literary society debate decisions can be observed clearly at the University of Georgia because of abundant data. This exploration will be supported by data from other schools. In the South, growing southern sectional identity was expressed through a defense of slavery, arguments for southern territory acquisition, condemnation of the tariff, and support for nullification. Unsurprisingly all these topics featured prominently in southern literary society debate.

¹⁵⁶ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 117.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

Slavery was a perennial issue debated by UGA's two literary societies and they periodically reached surprising conclusions about it. In 1828, Phi Kappa decided that slavery was an unjust institution and, in 1837, decided that it should be abolished. Though the Demosthenians never condemned slavery, they came very close in 1833 with a vote of only six to five against condemnation.¹⁶⁰ These decisions are surprising because the invention of the cotton gin had long since made slavery immensely popular and the majority of UGA students were the sons of wealthy planters, all of whom had benefited from the institution. These decisions were all made in the 1820's and 1830's, suggesting that prior to the increase of sectionalism, dissent over slavery was acceptable. This viewpoint is further supported by the Phi Kappas' decision to uphold Calhoun's argument that slavery was beneficial to both government and society the year before they declared it unjust.¹⁶¹

Further society debate decisions, however, reveal that these decisions were anomalies; defense of slavery was generally the rule. Student debate over the plight of Native Americans and slaves is particularly revealing of UGA student mindset. Whether Indians or slaves were more degraded by white civilization was one of the most common topics debated by both societies. Both always decided in favor of the Indians.¹⁶² It is clear from this oft-rendered decision that students believed that slaves were treated better than Native Americans despite being deprived of their freedom and humanity. Another revealing decision was the Phi Kappa's stance on abolitionists and capital punishment. Though they denied the right to execute abolitionists without a trial, they nevertheless

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 122.

held that execution was an acceptable legal punishment for preaching against slavery.¹⁶³ These two decisions reveal that UGA student thought was mostly in line with mainstream southern thought on slavery.

Likewise at the University of Mississippi, the jointly published literary society *Mississippi University Magazine* protested attempts to ban anti-slavery textbooks from the library because “[i]f the institution of slavery is wrong, we ought to be willing for the wrong to be exposed, and the truth of its criminality forced into our minds....If slavery is tolerable on the principle of morality and religion, which we believe, to reject a textbook, in other respects of high merit, for the reason that it contains something against slavery [is] a tacit admission of the weakness of our cause.”¹⁶⁴ Though willing to academically consider anti-slavery sentiment, University of Mississippi students still profoundly believed slavery was a beneficial system for black and white people alike.

In the 1850’s, however, student opinion on slavery had radicalized along with mainstream southern thought. At UGA, the societies no longer debated whether slavery was justified or not. Instead in the late 1850’s, both societies debated if the external slave trade should be reopened or not. The Demosthenians decided that the slave trade should reopen and the Phi Kappas narrowly decided against it.¹⁶⁵ Implicit in both the choice of topic and society decisions was the inarguable belief that slavery was justified. Following the Battle of Fort Sumter, University of Mississippi student tolerance for dissent weakened and they burned anti-slavery books whose existence they had previously defended.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁶⁴ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 63-64.

¹⁶⁵ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 123.

¹⁶⁶ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 102.

UGA debate about southern territorial acquisition followed a similar trend as debate about slavery. Prior to the 1850's, society decisions could be remarkably liberal; however, student opinion became progressively more conservative along with mainstream southern thought. The United States acquired southern territory primarily through the Texas Revolution and the Mexican-American War; as such literary society debate focused on these two events. Beginning in the 1830's, students believed that the U.S. should acquire southern territory, albeit through peaceful means. In 1830, the Demosthenians wanted the U.S. to purchase Texas from Mexico and, in 1836, believed that Texas should be admitted as a state if it won its independence from Mexico.¹⁶⁷ As war between Mexico and the United States seemed more likely, the Demosthenians came to a startling conclusion: Texas should not become a state because it would escalate hostile tension between the two countries. Phi Kappa, on the other hand, adhered more closely to mainstream thought; they believed that the U.S. should extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.¹⁶⁸

Student opinion crystallized by the 1850's, however, and neither society disputed that the Mexican-American War had been justified. Furthermore, in sectional solidarity, both societies believed the south should support Texas in its boundary dispute with Mexico even "in opposition to the general government" of the United States.¹⁶⁹ Like with slavery, dissent over the justice of southern territorial acquisition was initially allowed. As the question of territory was increasingly tied to southern sectional identity, dissent was perceived as traitorous to sectional interests and banned both from literary society debate and societal discussion.

¹⁶⁷ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 121.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

Unlike slavery and territory acquisition, UGA's literary societies never argued that tariffs were anything but odious in nature. The Demosthenians, in particular, railed against the tariff. In 1831, the Demosthenians also decided that a southern convention should be conveyed to organize tariff resistance.¹⁷⁰ Though no evidence of similar Phi Kappa debates was found, it is clear that they too strenuously disagreed with protective tariffs. In 1829, the societies joined forces to organize a Georgian produced uniform movement in protest of the Tariff of 1828.¹⁷¹ Though the uniform ultimately fell into disfavor because of its expense and lack of style, the societies did convince the faculty to proscribe a homespun uniform to be worn by all students.¹⁷²

University of Georgia student debate of nullification, a state's right to nullify federal laws it believed were unconstitutional, reached its peak during the Nullification Crisis. The Nullification Crisis began after President Andrew Jackson signed the Tariff of 1832 into law. South Carolina was vehemently opposed to this tariff because the previous Tariff of 1828 was blamed for America's economic depression, which had hurt the South Carolinian economy badly. The same year, South Carolina's State Legislature passed the Ordinance of Nullification, which stated that both the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 were unconstitutional and therefore null and void within South Carolina. Furthermore, South Carolinians prepared to resist federal attempts to enforce the tariff with force. The Nullification Crisis was eventually resolved in 1833 with the passage of the Force Bill, which authorized Jackson to use force to ensure South Carolina's compliance, and a compromise tariff. Shortly thereafter, South Carolina repealed the ordinance.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁷² Dyer, *University of Georgia*, 51-52.

In Georgia, however, student opinion was divided on the legitimacy of Nullification. The Demosthenians generally held every state could nullify federal law as a legal right and believed the South should aid South Carolina if it seceded. In 1831, however, they denied nullification's legality and, in 1832, the Phi Kappas condemned South Carolina's action because it was not beneficial to the Union.¹⁷³ These two decisions, however, were unusual. Probably the threat of war temporarily sobered student passion for nullification and instilled caution in its place. If so, it was short lived for, in 1833, the two literary societies condemned Jackson's actions towards South Carolina.¹⁷⁴

Anti-tariff demonstration and the controversy over nullification at the University of Georgia illustrate how town and gown influenced each other politically in Athens. Athens' papers routinely printed literary society orations and it is probable that these young men's opinions helped validate those of the townspeople.¹⁷⁵ Commencement, however, was the primary means of influence between the university and town in the south. College commencements were very important socially and politically during the antebellum period and well attended. University of Georgia graduate and future Confederate vice president Alexander Stephens described the southern commencement as "the great gala day in country, village, and town-- the day when all business is suspended, and the whole people turn out to catch and enjoy the prevailing spirit of the occasion."¹⁷⁶ Everyone capable of attending a college commencement did and it is illustrative of the importance of commencement to community and state morale that the University of

¹⁷³ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 123.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁷⁶ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 56.

Mississippi held one in 1847, the first year it was open, despite having no graduating class.¹⁷⁷

Though the main festivities of commencement focused on the university, many off-campus parties and dances were held as well. At these events the sons and daughters of the southern aristocracy could meet and court, forming socially acceptable couples. The resulting marriages allied elite southern families socially, but commencements were not only valuable to the southern aristocracy socially. College graduates dominated local and state politics and were elected to national office because of their education and family's power.¹⁷⁸ College commencements drew not only alumnae members, but statesmen and other political leaders as well, facilitating statewide political discussion and organization. For example, the 1829 UGA student homespun movement was preceded by the 1828 commencement, which served as a statewide anti-tariff meeting.¹⁷⁹ It is utterly improbable that anti-tariff rhetoric at commencement did not inspire literary society tariff protest.

The 1832 Commencement had a far more politically dramatic conclusion. Following the commencement, someone posted notices across campus advising people that “[t]he friends of Gen. Jackson, and those opposed to the *Protective System*, and opposed to a redress of Tariff grievances by *Nullification*, as a mode of relief, are requested to attend at New Chapel.”¹⁸⁰ This anti-Nullifier group attempted to use the high commencement attendance to gather popular support against nullification; however, their plan went awry. Pro-Nullifiers seized control of the meeting, passed resolutions against

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷⁸ Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 69.

¹⁷⁹ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 145.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

the tariff, and successfully called for a state convention at Milledgeville in November 1832. At the November convention, unionist delegates narrowly prevented the passage of an ordinance of secession.¹⁸¹ Georgian response to the Nullification Crisis was effectively organized at UGA's 1832 commencement, illustrating the importance of college commencements to southern politics.

It is impossible to accurately ascertain the degree of influence these and other politically charged campus incidents had on southern students, literary society and otherwise. It is also illogical, however, to argue that the politically charged atmosphere of commencement had no effect on students, particularly since students were politically receptive because of commencement activities. As previously noted, graduating seniors were required to deliver orations at commencement.¹⁸² Many schools also held a Junior Oratory or Exhibition Day, during which juniors, handpicked by the literary societies, held further on various topics.¹⁸³ A more limited number of schools, such as the University of Mississippi, also included a number of sophomore declamations in the commencement program.¹⁸⁴

Though oration topics could touch on anything from Latin to Shakespeare, a majority of students chose to address political themes. An 1860 Mississippian paper article on commencement contained a list of student oration titles. Sophomore declamations included "America Her Glory & Her Shame," "Eulogy on Henry Clay," "Plea for Union," "The South," and "The American Trio." Junior exhibitions included "America Past, Present, and Future," "Cotton Manufacturing in the South," "The Texas

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁸³ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 135;

¹⁸⁴ Commencement article, Unidentified Jackson Mississippi paper, June 1860, Commencement Collection, 1:4, J.D. Williams Library (Oxford, MS).

Revolution” and “Cuba Should Be Annexed to the United States.” Senior oration included “The Anglo-Saxon Race” and “Calhoun.”¹⁸⁵

Though the oration texts are unavailable, the titles alone are rather revealing. All are political in nature and many suggest student sectional feeling. “America Her Glory and Her Shame,” “America- Past, Present, and Future,” “The American Trio,” and “Eulogy on Henry Clay” are the only orations to address the U.S. on a national scale.¹⁸⁶ The title of “Plea for Union” suggests that it was the product of a southern student unionist’s fear of growing southern radicalism and perceived northern political aggression. “Cotton Manufacturing in the South” is a sectionally interested oration that probably championed slavery because of its use in cotton production. Both “The Texas Revolution” and “Cuba Should Be Annexed to the United States” are blatantly sectional in nature because they support the annexation of territory for the expansion of slavery. Likewise, “Calhoun” is about a man who advocated slavery, states’ rights, and nullification. This topic exploration of Ole Miss sophomore, junior, and senior orations reveals that southern students were highly interested in politics and that commencements were in many ways politically focused. Students expected to hear political themes discussed by their peers and were, as a result, receptive to political messages from commencement speakers, professors, politicians, and other attendees.

Given that oration titles of sectional topics were proudly published in a state paper, the University of Mississippi was not afraid of student sectional feeling. The actions of other schools, however, reveal that academic concern over the political nature of commencement did exist. At the Maryland Agriculture College, faculty members

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ “The American Trio” most likely addressed the political relationship of John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster.

attempted to keep sectional affairs not only out of commencement, but daily conversation as well. The college president referred to these efforts when he stated, “In the lecture room, and literary societies, as also in social intercourse, mere political issues and questions are practically ignored.”¹⁸⁷ No doubt despite the faculty’s best efforts, this statement seems overly optimistic and it is highly unlikely that they actually managed to ban political discussion among students.

The University of Georgia also tried to limit student political discussion. As early as 1825, the *Senatus Academicus*, a leadership body at UGA, believed it prudent to ban all student orations on local and national politics at commencement.¹⁸⁸ Unsurprisingly, UGA’s literary societies disagreed with this stance and Phi Kappa decided it was unjustified “in restricting the students, from expressing in public their political Sentiments.”¹⁸⁹ In order to circumvent the political ban, students began to add material after securing approval or gave an entirely different speech.¹⁹⁰ In response, the Board of Trustees decided to refuse degrees to all students whose orations had not received faculty approval.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless this failed to completely curb student violation of the ban as in 1856 the faculty noted “[s]everal ridiculous speeches, calculated to produce disorder in the chapel, have been spoken lately on stage.”¹⁹² Though students were probably initially inspired to defy the ban out of resentment and rebellion, their willingness to risk their degrees suggests deeper motivations. The students seemed to truly believe that the public sentiments they expressed in oration were worth the potential cost.

¹⁸⁷ George H. Callcott, *A History of the University of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1966), 158.

¹⁸⁸ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 178.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 179-180.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 180.

The faculty of UGA also worried about the political influence of the literary societies. In 1833, they petitioned the Board of Trustees to prohibit student involvement in “party or sectional politics or political discussion...either oral or in writing, or publishing, or any other display of emblems of personal indignity to public characters.”¹⁹³ The trustees refused by a vote of 15 to 6.¹⁹⁴ If this prohibition had passed, literary societies would have been restricted from discussing politics, but it would also have restricted all other student political activities. These attempts to limit student political discussions are particularly interesting because many of their professors were actively involved in the southern college movement, which was always couched in sectional rhetoric. Whether faculty feared student disrespect of public figures would result in rebellion against college authority or simply a damaged college reputation, their fears proved well-grounded when literary societies and commencements became instrumental in shaping student discussion of secession.

Student secession debate started in the 1850’s; however, secession featured as a topic of commencement addresses long before society debates began. In 1836, revered southern statesman John C. Calhoun attended the annual meeting of the Phi Kappas at the University of Georgia’s commencement. According to the Phi Kappa minutes, Calhoun addressed the audience, consisting of both present society members and alumnae, on sectional themes.¹⁹⁵ He “enlarged upon the present state of our Country, touched upon the abolition question, now so much agitated. He then spoke of the probability of some of the

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

Members of the Society being called upon to act in this scene with their talents and perhaps with their muskets, which last he said God Grant might never be.”¹⁹⁶

Calhoun’s speech to the Phi Kappas was the earliest evidence found of an authority figure addressing college boys about secession, though they were probably aware of the concept at least since the Nullification Crisis and South Carolina’s threatened secession. Nor is it likely that Calhoun was the only individual to speak to southern students about secession. Secession was enough of a widespread topic by 1857 that a political lesser known like Henry Miller could hold further on it to the University of North Carolina literary societies and those societies could publish the address.¹⁹⁷ Between the years of the two addresses, it can be assumed that many men spoke with varying degrees of enthusiasm about secession at many colleges.

Colleges were often the scene of these addresses because of the political importance of southern commencements and the leadership potential of the assembled college students. Calhoun paid tribute to this potential when he impressed upon the Phi Kappas of how important their talents might be in checking abolitionism.¹⁹⁸ Miller also referred to this potential when he urged the young men of the Philanthropic and Dialectic Societies to “unite...in improving the vast advantages with which we have been blessed-- in educating our youth-- in cultivating a pure and high-toned literature-- in encouraging the arts and sciences...in inspiring the hearts of our people with an elevated patriotism... in building up and sustaining institutions of learning...in developing our agricultural and

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁹⁷ Henry W. Miller, “Address Delivered Before the Philanthropic and Dialectic Societies of the University of North Carolina on June 3, 1857,” University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, docsouth.unc.edu, (accessed November 10, 2011), 1.

¹⁹⁸ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 138.

manufacturing resources.”¹⁹⁹ Though Miller addressed the southern people as a whole, he perceived his audience as future leaders, who could implement his plan to develop southern economic prosperity.

Both addresses also feature the reluctant opinion that secession may be necessary to defend the southern institution of slavery. Calhoun, unlike Miller, does not outright urge secession if necessary, but implicitly connected the threat of abolition of slavery with muskets or defensive violence.²⁰⁰ After ranking abolition with other social ills like free love and Mormonism and comparing the north with the Huns and Goths, Miller, on the other hand, ended his address with a ringing endorsement of the possible necessity of secession.²⁰¹ “[W]e *dare* not surrender one jot...of that constitution to [the] demands of [northern] sectional ambition or the mad behests of fanaticism [abolition]!...But if-- which heaven forbid!-- the dread conflict with faction and fanaticism *must* come, let us appeal to the example of... Washington, to inspire our hearts with patriotism...and to the just God...to lead us through that conflict.”²⁰² Though both orators expressed reluctance about secession, Miller glorified secession far more than Calhoun, almost overpowering his admission of reluctance with passionate justifications for secession and denigration of the North.

Student literary society debate about secession exhibited a similar reluctance about it. At Trinity College, the later Duke University, the first literary society debate on secession concluded it was impossible.²⁰³ Likewise at the University of Georgia, the Phi

¹⁹⁹ Miller, “Address,” 29-30.

²⁰⁰ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 138.

²⁰¹ Miller, “Address,” 20-21 & 27.

²⁰² Miller, “Address,” 33-34.

²⁰³ Nora Chaffin Campbell, *Trinity College, 1839-1892: The Beginnings of Duke University* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1950), 218.

Kappas and Demosthenians debated whether a state had a right to secede. In 1856, the Phi Kappas decided that secession was a state right, but the next year they reversed their decision. The Demosthenians, however, routinely upheld a state's right to secession "when she thinks her rights have been sufficiently infringed."²⁰⁴ Student indecision over the right of secession indicates their reluctance to contemplate the dissolution of the United States. Students believed southern sectional was under attack by northern extremists. They also believed that preservation of their identity required the defense of slavery and its extension of it through southern expansion; however, like many southerners, college students had no desire to leave the Union and their indecision over the right of secession reflected this.

It was also reflected in how they phrased early debate prompts on secession. For example, in 1855 the Phi Kappas heatedly debated whether "present causes indicate a dissolution of the Union" before deciding that they did.²⁰⁵ At Trinity College, the Hesperian Literary Society determined in September of 1860 that "there was danger of dissolution at present."²⁰⁶ These two decisions are a sharp contrast to the direct questions and decisions that characterized literary society debate. Neither society took a stand on whether certain events justified secession, merely if those events would cumulate in secession.

Even when debate questions asked them to determine if an event justified secession, students tended to think not. In 1854, the Phi Kappas decided that failure of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill would not justify secession.²⁰⁷ Despite their continued support for

²⁰⁴ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 124.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁰⁶ Campbell, *Trinity College*, 220.

²⁰⁷ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 124.

the right of secession. the Demosthenians believed until 1857 that no reason existed to break up the Union and foundation of a southern confederacy should never occur.²⁰⁸ In December 1859. the Hesperians believed Brown's Raid should not result in disunion.²⁰⁹ Like for the southern states. however, literary societies viewed Abraham Lincoln's election as unbearable after decades of what they perceived as northern oppression, hate, and fanaticism. This perception led Miller to believe that northerners desired sectional conflict and servile insurrection.²¹⁰ He also believed "[t]he young are taught...to inhale, with the first breath of knowledge, the noxious effluvia of sectional hatred."²¹¹ Inoculated with a paranoia similar to Miller's about northern aims, members of the Hesperian, Phi Kappa, and Demosthenian Societies all decided that Lincoln's election justified secession, echoing or pre-empting southern state legislatures and literary societies across the south.²¹²

Northern Literary Societies

Though Miller claimed northern children were taught "the noxious effluvia of sectional hatred." the debates and decisions of northern literary societies reveal a much more complicated picture. The majority of northern institutions of higher education were more concerned with attracting southern students than debating the morality or immorality of slavery; as such, anti-slavery sentiment among students was actively discouraged. Furthermore, racism was widespread throughout the North and though a

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁰⁹ Campbell, *Trinity College*, 220.

²¹⁰ Miller, "Address," 18.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²¹² Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 124; Campbell, *Trinity College*, 220.

minority of colleges like Oberlin embodied everything southerners feared the majority of northern college students were predisposed to ambivalence towards slavery.

Though many found slavery personally distasteful, the majority of northern academics did not believe anyone, particularly northerners, should interfere with it. In his 1838 article *The Limitations of Human Responsibility*, Brown president Francis Wayland summed up the feelings of many northern educators. “As *citizens of the United States*, we have no power whatever to either abolish slavery in the southern States; or to do any thing [*sic*], of which the direct intention is to abolish it.”²¹³ Later he targeted abolitionists claiming, “They have already become the tools of third rate politicians. They have raised a violent agitation, without presenting any definite means of constitutionally accomplishing their object.... They have rivetted [*sic*], indefinitely, the bonds of the slave, in those very States in which they were, a few years since, falling off; and, every where [*sic*] throughout the South, they have rendered the servitude of the enslaved vastly more rigorous than it ever was before.”²¹⁴

Likewise, at Princeton College, President John Maclean Jr. was personally disgusted with slavery, but believed aggressive northern Presbyterian anti-slavery agitation had resulted in the sectional split within his church.²¹⁵ Wayland, Maclean, and others like them absolved themselves of responsibility for confronting slavery while condemning abolitionists of political divisiveness and, according to Wayland, increasing the plight of slaves. Determined to dodge the issue of the morality of slavery, maintain inter-sectional denomination integrity, and attract southern students to their campus, the

²¹³ Bronson, *Brown University*, 312.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 312.

²¹⁵ Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, *Princeton 1746-1896* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 265.

majority of northern academia actively suppressed anti-slavery student activism prior to the war.

Though drawing only a small percentage of their students from the South, the Baptist-affiliated Colgate University faculty was particularly zealous in rooting out anti-slavery student organizations. In 1834, 1837, and 1841, they blocked the establishment of anti-slavery societies.²¹⁶ In his diary, a student accurately identified the reason for the faculty's response: they considered such societies "a nuisance and labored zealously for [their] dissolution. They wished to compel no one's conscience or restrain liberty in any respect save this: the society was noxious to the best interests of the institution and must be dissolved."²¹⁷ The existence of anti-slavery societies reflected badly on northern schools and could cause them to be labeled political extremists, an epithet which could cause a consequent cession of funding and southern students.

It was in the best interests of northern colleges and universities to ignore slavery and restrict student discussion of it. As a result, many schools besides Colgate University rebuked or dismissed faculty or students who challenged the status quo. Amherst College, like Colgate, shut down several anti-slavery societies, Western Reserve College expelled a vocal anti-slavery group of students, and at Marietta and Granville Colleges, faculty were fired for expressing anti-slavery views. Likewise Harvard professor Karl Follen was dismissed for his activities with the New England Anti-Slavery Societies.²¹⁸

Furthermore, some universities and colleges actively taught the legality and rightness of slavery. For example, Harvard taught the legality of the Fugitive Slave Law,

²¹⁶ Howard D. Williams, *A History of Colgate University 1819-1969* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1969), 69.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

²¹⁸ Willis Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis From the American Revolution to Vietnam* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses Inc, 1996), 52.

and the economic necessity and constitutional right of slavery.²¹⁹ Though most schools were content to simply restrict an organized group expression of student anti-slavery feeling, abolitionist or anti-slavery students felt persecuted for their personal beliefs.

As a result students were far less likely than their southern peers in literary societies to express their beliefs because they were not supported, confirmed, or tolerated by society or the school administration. It is telling that the one commencement oration on slavery published by *The Brunonian*, the Brown University student magazine, was written by a South Carolinian student in defense of slavery.²²⁰ This suggests southern students were trained to openly defend slavery whereas northern students were trained to suppress their anti-slavery views in order to avoid the label of extremist or fanatic.

A minority of northern educators, however, were passionate defenders of abolition and sought to educate their students to share similar views. Predominantly in the Mid-West, these schools were quickly labeled as “hotbeds” of abolition by eastern colleges and universities.²²¹ Nevertheless anti-slavery sentiment was not wholly restricted to this region: Pennsylvania’s Bucknell University faculty, for example, was politically active. Though they rarely chose to confront slavery directly, they nevertheless opposed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, both causes dear to the hearts of abolitionists. Professor George Bliss openly supported Charles Fremont, the Republican presidential candidate prior to Abraham Lincoln, and

²¹⁹ Arthur Stanwood Pier, *The Story of Harvard* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co, 1913), 163-164.

²²⁰ Bronson, *Brown University*, 242.

²²¹ Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, 52.

opposed the extension of slavery.²²² Likewise, at great risk to his job, Yale President Theodore Woolsey condemned the Fugitive Slave Law.²²³

Oberlin College, however, was the epitome of southern fears. A co-educational, co-racial institution, it championed the cause of abolition and offered its black students as proof of the equality of the black and white race. Though racial prejudice did exist among Oberlin students, it was addressed through constant interaction with black students. As professor Reverend Henry Cowles responded to one racially prejudiced prospective student: at Oberlin, “[t]he white and colored students associate together in this college very much as they choose. Our doctrine is that mind and heart, not color, make the man and woman too. We hold that neither men or women are much the better or much the worse for their skin. Our great business here is to educate mind and heart.”²²⁴

In keeping with this policy, black students were active in the college’s four literary societies and some attained high positions of leadership.²²⁵ For example, J. Mercer Langston, a future lawyer and politician, served as the secretary of the Theological Literary Society for a year.²²⁶ Likewise Lucy Stanton was president of the Young Ladies’ Association in 1850.²²⁷ Unsurprisingly given the college’s professed aims and the co-racial nature of the institution, Oberlin students were vehemently anti-slavery and many of their debates and orations sought to address the abolition of slavery. Yale students at one point criticized the *Oberlin Students’ Monthly*’s preoccupation with

²²² J. Orin Oliphant, *The Rise of Bucknell University* (New York: Meredith Publishing Co, 1965), 90.

²²³ Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis*, 52.

²²⁴ Robert Samuel Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College From its Foundation Through the Civil War* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1971), 526.

²²⁵ These literary societies were segregated by sex, though not race. As a result, to encourage competition, two male societies and two female societies were formed.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 763.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 525.

slavery, abolition, Dred Scott, Stephen Douglas, and other related issues, which they characterized as “a rehash of what has been in the country papers for the past year or too.”²²⁸

The efforts of Oberlin College and institutions like it, however, were minor compared to monolithic avoidance of slavery that characterized northern academia. Afraid of offending potential southern students and donors, northern educators, whatever their personal feelings about slavery, generally chose to restrict student and faculty anti-slavery activity. Though northern literary society records were scarcer than southern records, the existing evidence suggests anti-slavery expression was limited even in society meetings. Meanwhile, southern students were allowed to present defenses of slavery to a mixed audience. Though a vocal minority, southern students were still a minority and may have enjoyed protected status because of this. It is important to keep in mind that by the 1850`s, college populations were heavily sectionally segregated and students interacted primarily or completely with students from their own section. Only at the United States Military Academy did a roughly equal mixture of northern and southern students interact on a daily basis.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 765.

Chapter Four: West Point and the 1850's

In his unfinished memoir, George Armstrong Custer stated, "As each Congressional district and territory of the United States had a representative in Congress, so each had its representatives at the Military Academy....Hence it was no difficult matter to find exponents of the greatest political extremes; from the sturdy and pronounced abolitionist...to the most rabid of South Carolina nullifiers or Georgia fire-eaters."²²⁹ Congressmen nominated the sons of members of their own political party, a trend that Custer used when he bypassed his own district's Republican representative and wrote instead to Representative John A. Bingham, a Democrat.²³⁰ In his letter, Custer openly identified himself as "a Democrat boy."²³¹ Custer secured a nomination from Bingham and in 1857 entered West Point.²³² As a result of this feature of nomination, West Point was essentially a political America in miniature, including its extremes and because of this the United States Military Academy provides an excellent case-study of north-south interactions in a setting of higher education.

²²⁹ John M. Carroll, ed., *Custer in the Civil War His Unfinished Memoirs* (San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1977), 79.

²³⁰ Marguerite Merington, ed., *The Custer Story The Life and Intimate Letters of General George A. Custer and His Wife Elizabeth* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 7.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²³² *Ibid.*, 8.

Due to the southern regional movement and its resultant colleges, the college population of the United States had become highly sectionalized.²³³ Northern boys attended northern colleges and southern boys attended southern ones. Though it is true that some southern fathers continued to send their sons north to long established schools, this practice was in decline and only Princeton maintained a sizable minority of southern students, who made up about one third of the student population.²³⁴ West Point represents an almost unique opportunity to observe how escalating sectional tensions affected a mixed group of boys and how the faculty responded to the situation. Though Princeton could also be used in this capacity and will be used to supplement this case-study, West Point proves completely unique in another aspect: it was the only national military academy.

Military academies abounded, particularly in the South, during the 1850's. Their student population tended to be drawn from in-state or, more seldom, regionally.²³⁵ As a result, students shared a similar political and cultural make-up. Furthermore, though military graduates might be commissioned in the state militia, they did not enter into the service of the country as a whole.²³⁶ Their allegiance was to their state, not their country. At West Point, however, a national allegiance was cultivated and cadets entered the Academy with the intention of defending their country. This sense of a shared national mission combined with the small, inclusive nature of West Point, cross-sectional

²³³ Lorri Glover, "'Let Us Manufacture Men:' Educating Elite Boys in the Early National South," in *Southern Manhood*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 27-28; Dan R. Frost, *Thinking Confederates* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 18-19.

²³⁴ Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Princeton 1746-1896* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 265.

²³⁵ Andrew Rod Jr., *Long Gray Lines: The Southern Military School Tradition, 1839-1915*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 13; James Lee Conrad, *Young Lions: Confederate Cadets at War*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1997), 5&9.

²³⁶ Rod, *Long Gray Lines*, 9-10.

friendships, and faculty response to the political atmosphere was able to restrain, though not eliminate, sectional tension within the Military Academy. During the 1850's, however, sectional tensions did increase despite these mitigating factors.

Regional tensions were present long before the 1850's, as controversy over the West Point entrance examinations reveals. After securing a congressional nomination and acceptance to West Point, all candidates upon arrival were required to pass an oral exam consisting of basic reading, writing, and mathematical problems.²³⁷ Though former cadet Morris Schaff described his own entrance exam as untaxing, many boys failed each year and were sent home.²³⁸ For example, Schaff noted that J.C. Ritchey, Schaff's traveling companion from Ohio to New York, and Reuben A. Higgason of Mississippi both failed their entrance exams.²³⁹ Schaff's class originally had ninety-one appointed cadets, however, eighteen boys were rejected after failing their oral examinations.²⁴⁰

The controversy over the entrance examinations began because it was believed that northeastern cadet candidates had a higher rate of admission due to their better access to common schools.²⁴¹ This perception was already well-established in 1836 when Cadet Richard Ewell complained to his brother in a letter about the more thorough mathematical preparation of northeastern cadets.²⁴² It is interesting to note that, in Schaff's narrative, the two cadets who failed their examinations were from the western and southern regions of the United States. Meanwhile another cadet, Kenelm Robbins, who hailed from

²³⁷ Morris Schaff, *The Spirit of Old West Point*, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1907), 28; George S. Pappas, *To The Point: The United States Military Academy, 1802-1902*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1993), 149.

²³⁸ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 38; Pappas, *To The Point: The United States Military Academy*, 112.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁴¹ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 132; Pappas, *To The Point*, 310.

²⁴² Ellsworth Elliot Jr, *West Point in the Confederacy*, (New York: G.A. Baker & Co., 1941), 2.

Massachusetts, did pass.²⁴³ Whether this perception was accurate or not, southern and western cadets felt discriminated against, a feeling that was enhanced given the importance of mathematical scores for placement in the Point's elite Army Corps of Engineers.²⁴⁴

Resentment towards the entrance examinations reached such a pitch that attempts were made in Congress by southern and western representatives to abolish West Point as an aristocratic and undemocratic institution.²⁴⁵ Though these attempts ultimately failed, they reveal that regional tension not only developed early at West Point, but was also a matter of national attention. Early regional tension, however, is not easily defined along north-south lines. Rather western and southern cadets were united in a shared feeling of discrimination not because of sectional feeling, but because of their shared limited access to adequate education. Future sectional tension at West Point would be characterized by a complicated interchange of factors that would never resolve into simply northern cadets versus southern ones.

As an 1824 Board of Visitors' report noted, overall West Point exercised a unionizing influence on the Corps of Cadets.²⁴⁶ Years later, during his stint as Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis stated, "Those who have received their education at West Point, taken as a body, are more free from purely sectional prejudice, and more national in their feelings than the same number of persons to be found elsewhere in the country."²⁴⁷ This nationalizing influence was partially the result of deliberate policy on the part of West

²⁴³ Schaff, *The Spirit of Old West Point*, 26-27.

²⁴⁴ Pappas, *To The Point*, 134, 232, & 337.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

²⁴⁶ Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 167.

²⁴⁷ Matrtin Dugard, *The Training Ground: Grant, Lee, Sherman, and Davis in the Mexican War, 1846-1848*, (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2009), 114.

Point's faculty and staff, as revealed by their response to the cadets' attempt to debate the Nullification Crisis.

In 1832, West Point cadets seem to have ignored the Crisis possibly because the tariff had received the yeas vote from about half the southern congressmen and the majority of the northern ones. The same could not be said of cadets a decade later. In 1842, the West Point Dialectic Society, led by Cadet Ulysses S. Grant, decided to hold a debate on the concept of Nullification.²⁴⁸ The Dialectic Society was the Military Academy's equivalent to the civilian college's debate society; as previously argued, debate societies at both northern and southern universities and colleges contributed to the sectional political development of students. Founded in 1824, the Dialectic Society encouraged the development of cadet oratory and debate skills through regular discussions over assigned readings.²⁴⁹ It even sponsored amateur theatrical performances by the cadets.²⁵⁰ The Dialectic Society had, however, never chosen such a politically charged debate topic before and the response of Superintendent Richard Delafield reveals how alarmed West Point faculty and staff were at this development.

Delafield indefinitely suspended the Dialectic Society the same year and it would remain suspended throughout the rest of Delafield's first tenure as superintendent at West Point.²⁵¹ Though Delafield's response seems extreme, it was in keeping with the policy of the nineteenth century American military. During the Nineteenth Century, army officers were studiously apolitical and often did not even vote.²⁵² The practice of not voting began

²⁴⁸ Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 167

²⁴⁹ Pappas, *To The Point*, 146.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 321.

²⁵¹ Theodore J. Crackel, *West Point A Bicentennial History*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 123.

²⁵² Pappas, *To The Point*, 284.

as cadets, who were not allowed to vote even if they were New York State residents.²⁵³

The political development of officers and future officers was actively discouraged because of the threat it presented to the unity of the armed forces. In an age when passionate political discussion led to duels and fisticuffs in statehouses and even the dignified halls of Congress, highly political developed officers would have resulted in many unfortunate incidents to the detriment of army discipline and order. In his mind, Delafield's decision was a necessary step to arrest political development among the cadets, especially over such a sectionally divisive issue.

Unlike at a civilian institution, the suspension of the Dialectic Society did not cause student riots. Instead the cadets accepted, albeit reluctantly, the suspension of the Dialectic Society. Furthermore, after being allowed to reform the society in 1846, during the tenure of Delafield's successor Henry Brewerton, the cadets accepted a ban that restricted their debates to politically non-controversial topics.²⁵⁴ By banning the Dialectic Society and then allowing its return only under stringent conditions, the faculty of West Point hoped to at least delay the political development of cadets and keep peace among the Corps of Cadets. By the turn of the century, Morris Schaff, a cadet from 1852 to 1862, wrote *The Spirit of Old West Point*, which primarily documents the last tenuous years at the Military Academy prior to the Civil War. Given that Schaff never mentions the Dialectic Society, it seems that the faculty succeeded in neutralizing the society as a force of political polarization.

The faculty, however, was unable to eliminate political discussion among the cadets or control the sectional polarization of individual cadets. Cadet candidates did not,

²⁵³ Ibid., 319.

²⁵⁴ Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 167.

after all, arrive at West Point completely politically undeveloped, especially given the political nature of the nomination system. Perhaps the best example of this is Emory Upton, who, prior to his acceptance as a cadet, had been a student at Oberlin College.²⁵⁵ In the Nineteenth Century, Oberlin College was unique as an interracial, coeducational facility that championed the common humanity of all races and the “damnable” nature of slavery.²⁵⁶ When Upton chose to attend Oberlin College, he made his decision as a politically developed young man and he retained these views when he departed for West Point, where he remained a passionate and outspoken abolitionist.²⁵⁷ Given the shared political development of his peers, it was impossible for Upton to remain unharassed because of his abolitionist views.

Furthermore, though the faculty had banned the Dialectic Society, they could not ban or censor cadet mail. Newspapers from home kept cadets well-informed about local and national political events. Family letters, meanwhile, not only allowed conversations about family matters, but also political events, such as the annexation of Texas, John Brown’s raid, or the election of 1860.²⁵⁸ Nor could the faculty do much about conversation between individual cadets. Though Schaff insists that politics were not discussed much at West Point, he also mentions that he and his roommate John A. West III, a Georgian, often discussed politics in the privacy of their room, particularly as the election of 1860 drew closer.²⁵⁹ This suggests that while politics were not a common conversational topic, they were, nevertheless, well-discussed among trusted friends.

²⁵⁵ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 145.

²⁵⁶ Robert Samuel Flecher, *A History of Oberlin College: From Its Foundation Through the Civil War*, (Chicago: R.R. Donnalley & Sons Co, 1943), 909.

²⁵⁷ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 145.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 160 & 162.

Politics were also often the subject of violent ‘discussions.’ Schaff noted that sectional tensions were often the driving force behind many of the duels between regular army officers.²⁶⁰ A concurrent trend of a less deadly fashion existed among the Corps of Cadets. The boredom of New York winters had often inspired bouts of fisticuffs, however, beginning in the early 1850’s, these clashes occurred most frequently along sectional lines.²⁶¹

In March of 1855, one such fight occurred between northern Cadet William Hertz and an unnamed southern cadet. When Hertz won the fistfight, the other cadet accused him of sectional prejudice and challenged him to a duel. After Hertz threatened to report the cadet, the challenge was withdrawn.²⁶² Though the speed with which the challenge was withdrawn could suggest that the southern cadet was not wholly serious about his claim and was looking for an excuse to continue the fight, the potentially deadly violence inherent in a duel does not. Rather the southern cadet withdrew his claim because he knew that the West Point faculty would vehemently disapprove of both a duel among cadets and the degree of sectionalization present in the challenge and severely punish him.

As the Hertz duel shows, in 1854, the West Point staff exercised a degree of control over violent political fights. They could prevent them from escalating to potentially deadly force, but they could not prevent fistfights over political differences. Nor could they stop private political discussions from occurring. Furthermore, following John Brown’s raid in 1859, the power of the faculty to prevent duels also disintegrated as will be shown later. By suspending the Dialectic Society and placing a ban on political

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 96.

²⁶¹ Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 160; Schaff, *Old West Point*, 139.

²⁶² Ambrose, *Duty, Honor, Country*, 160.

discussion on it, the faculty simply removed an officially sanctioned forum for political discussion, but they could not silence the ongoing political dialogue at West Point.

It is also possible that the faculty actually accidentally encouraged the growth of sectionalization at West Point by forcing political discussion underground. While it is true that debate societies heavily contributed to the sectionalization of students at civilian colleges, it is also true that those student populations were predominantly southern or northern. Though there were more northern cadets than southern cadets at West Point, the gap was minimal. In Schaff's class of sixty-six, for example, twenty-seven were southerners.²⁶³

The suspension of the Dialectic Society rendered the peaceful discussion of differing political views almost impossible. Cadets could now only discuss politics in private with close friends, who were likely to hold similar views or at least be sympathetic towards them. The only examples of political divergence cadets had were bloody fistfights. It is pure speculation, not to mention highly doubtful, that an active, uncensored debate society would have decreased the mass exodus of southern cadets in late 1860 and early 1861. It is quite possible, however, that open political discussion would have promoted greater understanding between politically opposed cadets and decreased the violence that characterized the aftermath of John Brown's Raid and the months leading up to the election of 1860.

At Princeton College, for example, debate societies were central to student life and several were active on campus.²⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the presence of southern students, who made up a third of the student population, led to peaceful debates between boys of

²⁶³ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 40.

²⁶⁴ Wertenbaker, *Princeton*, 201.

different political opinions and sections.²⁶⁵ Southern students were also often popular among their fellow students.²⁶⁶ Princeton was not, however, free from sectional tension in the 1850's and, like at West Point, this often led to politically inspired fights. J.M. Ludlow of the Class of 1860 remembered that "[p]olitical opinions or prejudices went off at hair trigger touch and from the excited tones of the self-appointed protagonists in the melee, one might have thought that the Civil War began on the Princeton Campus instead of Charleston Harbor."²⁶⁷

An important distinction existed between West Point and Princeton fights, however. From Ludlow's description, it is clear that Princeton fights were primarily verbal in nature, not physical like at West Point. Furthermore, Princeton student reaction to John Brown's Raid was vastly different from the violence that briefly divided West Point. On December 3, 1859, the majority of Princeton students marched in a peaceful political demonstration against John Brown's Raid.²⁶⁸ Implicit in this demonstration was a rejection of the use of violence to solve political differences. This stance would also determine how sectional differences were handled at Princeton following the election of Abraham Lincoln and the subsequent secession of the southern states as will later be demonstrated.

Is it possible that a similar situation could have resulted at West Point had the faculty allowed open political discussion? Could faculty have actually increased sectionalization by their interference? Yes to both these questions, however, given contemporary army policy towards politics and the authoritarian nature of the armed

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 265.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 266

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 266.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 266.

forces. West Point faculty had no choice but to suspend the Dialectic Society. The verbal violence of the Princeton debates would have also been detrimental to discipline in the cadet ranks, as it would have sponsored open questioning of the authority of senior cadets. If the faculty's implicit ban of political discussion, at best, alleviated sectional tension or, at worst, increased it, the inclusive nature of West Point decreased sectionalization significantly in the decade prior to the Civil War.

Though sectionalization had increased among the cadets to the point that so-called southern and northern companies had formed, the atmosphere at West Point, nevertheless, allowed poignant friendships to form over sectional lines.²⁶⁹ West Point faculty clearly failed to realize the sectional nature of the companies because they never made an attempt to reintegrate the companies. This oversight of the usually vigilant instructors was probably because company assignment was determined based on height. Cadets circumnavigated this system by the simple expedient of stuffing oversized boots to achieve the desired height. Ironically, however, this method is revealed by Morris Schaff, a northerner, used this method to secure assignment into Cadet Company D, a 'southern' company to which his best friend John West, a southerner, belonged.²⁷⁰

The West-Schaff friendship is just one example of cross-sectional friendships that flourished at West Point. George Custer's friendship with John W. Lea, a southerner and later Confederate officer, was so strong that he served as his best man at Lea's wedding despite the ongoing war.²⁷¹ Later in the war, Custer and James B. Washington, another former West Point chum and Confederate officer, were photographed sitting together

²⁶⁹ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 159; Carroll, ed., *Custer*, 81 & 90.

²⁷⁰ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 160.

²⁷¹ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 181; Merington, ed., *The Custer Story*, 35.

while chatting amiably after Washington's capture.²⁷² Ulysses S. Grant's friendship with James Longstreet led to his introduction to his future wife Julia Dent, Longstreet's cousin.²⁷³ Though such friendships would later serve as a liability to West Point while suspicious congressmen debated closing it as a traitorous institution; in the years before the war these friendships were beneficial in reducing sectionalization.

But how did these friendships between boys of different sections and different political thought form in the first place? In *The Spirit of Old West Point*, Schaff advances his own theory: hazing as a great leveling tool. "At the risk of being charged as a covert advocate, I must say it was a mighty leveler in my day."²⁷⁴ While there is some truth to Schaff's belief that hazing forcibly united the plebe boys in a sense of community, it discounts many other influencing factors. One such factor was the ban on political discussion, which allowed cadets to judge each other by individual physical and mental capabilities instead of as gross political caricatures.

Perhaps the most important factor, however, was a sense of shared national mission. Cadet candidates embarked for West Point with naïve dreams of glory or a pragmatic desire for a free technical education, but also with a desire to defend their country. No cadet saw secession as a desirable outcome, though they might bitterly resent slavery or abolitionism. As a result, cadets could form friendships over sectional lines because the inclusive nature of West Point enabled cadets to make important distinctions between section and politics.

For Morris Schaff, one of the most shocking moments of his West Point career was during his plebe year when a Georgian cadet asked what his political party was. On

²⁷² Merington, ed., *The Custer Story*, 129.

²⁷³ Dugard, *The Training Ground*, 23.

²⁷⁴ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 28

learning that Schaff was a Democrat, the cadet observed that he was all right. "It made an impression, for up to that time the question of where a man came from, or what his politics were, had had no importance whatever with me."²⁷⁵ Though the question was confusing to Schaff because it had never occurred to him before that a person's value could be determined by his political party, this anecdote is revealing of West Point in the late 1850's. Schaff, though a northerner, is 'all right' because he is a Democrat. A letter written by yearling Dodson Ramseur, however, suggests that had Schaff belonged to the Republican Party the Georgian cadet's reaction would have been quite different.

A yearling was a cadet who had just finished his plebe year. Yearlings were responsible for inducting new cadets into West Point during summer camp and maliciously hazed them.²⁷⁶ During the summer of 1856, Dodson Ramseur of North Carolina wrote about his intention to severely haze any abolitionist plebe he might encounter.²⁷⁷ Schaff's anecdote combined with Ramseur's letter suggests that prior to 1859 southern cadets' discontent and hostility was directed at Republicans primarily, not northerners in general. Far from equating the two, a common practice of contemporary southern educators and politicians, these young men made clear distinctions between northern Democrats and Republicans.

These distinctions, however, were blurred in 1859, following John Brown's Raid on Harpers' Ferry. Unlike Princeton, where a peaceful protest demonstration followed the raid, simmering political tensions at West Point erupted. Following Brown's Raid, southern cadets openly denounced both abolitionists and northerners who were

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁷⁷ Crackel, *West Point*, 130.

ambivalent about slavery, holding both as partially responsible for the raid.²⁷⁸ These denunciations are important because they reveal how polarized southern cadets' beliefs were by the raid. Previously, their beliefs were of a more moderate tone, drawing clear political distinctions between northern Republicans and Democrats and basing their behavior towards them on these distinctions. After the raid, however, southern cadet opinion became more politically extreme. Though all northerners were not condemned, northerners and northern cadets who did not openly support slavery were now targets of verbal violence.

The raid was also the root cause of one of the most famous duels in West Point history. Emory Upton's outspoken abolitionist views had previously made him the target of hazing and verbal harassment. After Harper's Ferry, however, his beliefs made him even more vulnerable. One day, Cadet Wade Hampton Gibbes of South Carolina exploited this vulnerability and made disparaging remarks about Upton's possible relations with his former black female schoolmates. Unsurprisingly, Upton challenged Gibbes to a duel.²⁷⁹ The Upton-Gibbes duel reveals how badly the political tension had affected West Point. Unlike the perspective duel previously referenced, no cadet reported or threatened to report the matter to the West Point faculty, which would have brought a heavy-handed but peaceful resolution. Both of the combatants, their seconds, and the other cadets involved clearly desired the fight to occur.

Writing about the events surrounding the duel in the early Twentieth Century, former cadet Morris Schaff still vividly remembered the excitement of all concerned. Schaff and his friends rushed into the hall, attempting to see the duel. Schaff also recalled

²⁷⁸ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 143.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

how one southern cadet, a Robertson, urged Gibbes to bayonet Upton. These death threats were silenced by Upton's roommate, who else served as his second, threatening physical violence in return.²⁸⁰ The vehemence of the threats, the excitement of the cadets, and the occurrence of the duel itself suggests that this had gone beyond Gibbes and Upton. The duel was emblematic of two politically opposed ways of life.

It is important to note that this violence was expressed in a duel and that neither of the boys were killed: the duel cumulated in first blood and ended after Upton was injured.²⁸¹ Upton was perhaps intentionally baited into a duel, but he was not jumped in a darkened hallway and beaten. Though Upton's beliefs were viewed by southern cadets as a personal attack on their way of life, Gibbes still believed that Upton was a social equal with recourse to the contest of honor. This suggests that both parties were still heavily influenced by West Point's standards on sectional political dissension. A duel with minimal bloodshed could be hidden from the faculty; a duel and a dead body could not.

Symbolic and foreshadowing of the violence that had and could erupt between the two sections, the Upton-Gibbes duel seems to have provided both a catharsis of political tension and frightened the West Point cadets. Following the duel, there was a renewed absence of political discussion among the cadets.²⁸² This self-imposed censorship suggests that cadets were scared by their own violence. Furthermore, school albums continued to feature pictures of mixed sectional groups signed with messages from both southern and northern cadets, suggesting a return to relative harmony at West Point.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁸² Pappas, *To The Point*, 311.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 311.

Another interesting facet of the Upton-Gibbes duel is the ambiguous role of northern cadets. Though Schaff, writing in the early 1900's, is critical of the institution of slavery, and he claims that threats were made only along sectional lines, his account suggests a more complex situation.²⁸⁴ Schaff enters the hall where the duel took place among a gaggle of his southern friends and company-mates. He records that he too is cheering and shouting, though as to what he does not say.²⁸⁵ It is possible that Schaff was cheering for Upton, but it is highly unlikely. Schaff was a Democrat, his roommate was Georgian, and they had previously schemed together to get Schaff into Cadet Company D, a primarily southern company.²⁸⁶ Schaff spent the majority of his time with southerners. This suggests that even if he did not outright agree with them, he was at least sympathetic towards their beliefs. In any case, surrounded by his closest southern friends, it is highly improbable that Schaff would yell support for Upton. Nor would he have been alone. Other northern boys, such as Custer, were in Company D and the other so-called southern company.

Perhaps it was the violence of the threats that shocked the cadets back into harmony; but it seems that the splintering effect of the duel on the cadets that was most frightening. It was this effect combined with the surprising violence that restored harmony to the Corps of Cadets. This harmony would not last long, however. America and West Point were about to enter the election year of 1860, a year that would cumulate in the election of Abraham Lincoln and the end of peace at West Point.

²⁸⁴ Schaff, *Old West Point*, 49 & 147.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

A Conclusion in Three Parts: The Southern Campus and 1861

Secession and civil war threatened the very survival of the southern collegiate system. Though a few northern-born or Unionist faculty members voiced their reluctance about secession, the majority of faculty and students were inspired by patriotic fervor and war fever. College students and military school cadets eagerly supported secession and enlisted in droves. Southern faculty response was complicated by the need to ensure their institution's survival while still contributing to the war effort. Both faculty and student responses were natural outgrowths of the southern societal values upheld by literary societies and the southern college and military school movements.

Influenced by sectionalism affirmed in everyday society as well as in their literary societies and the college and military school movements, southern college students responded to secession with support and enthusiasm. Student support manifested in two ways: the creation and display of pro-secession emblems, particularly flags, and mass enlistment.

The crafting and raising of a pro-secession or Confederate flag was important because it identified the entire college with the Confederate cause. For example, prior to Georgia's secession, Athens, the site of the University of Georgia, became a focal point for secessionist sentiment. Prominent local citizens like Thomas Cobb and Joseph Henry Lumpkin gave speeches in favor of disunion to a mob composed of students and the local

citizenry.²⁸⁷ Athens gave a parade and fired a fifteen gun salute in honor of South Carolina, explicitly demonstrating their support for secession.²⁸⁸ On March 9 1861, following the formation of the Confederate States of America, a Confederate flag was proudly raised in Athens.²⁸⁹ Though these events involved the Athens community at large and were not solely derivative of the university, it is implausible to suggest students were not heavily involved in and inspired by these activities.

A similar situation prevailed in Oxford, Mississippi, where the fall semester 1860 opened with fears about Lincoln's election. Aping a real election, students organized and conducted a straw poll: unsurprisingly Lincoln did not receive a single vote. Overall University of Mississippi students favored Breckinridge corresponding to the actual Mississippian vote.²⁹⁰ This straw poll, which 'elected' a pro-secession candidate, reveals the majority of college students at Ole Miss believed secession was a right in certain circumstances. Following Mississippi's secession, Oxford celebrated.²⁹¹ Once again, though students are not specifically identified as organizers or participants, it is improbable to suggest students did not join the festivities and were influenced by them.

In Virginia, university and college students aggressively asserted their Confederate allegiance without official sanction. In a letter home, University of Virginia student George K. Miller expressed annoyance with Virginia's caution and stated many students, particularly those from lower south, were wearing blue cockades to express

²⁸⁷ E. Merton Coulter, *College Life in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 233&237.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

²⁹⁰ David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 101.

²⁹¹ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 102.

their support for secession.²⁹² University of Virginia students did not receive overt approval from any faculty member, but chose of their own initiative to identify as pro-secession.

At Washington College, now Washington and Lee University, students rebelled against authority in order to express their allegiance. In late 1860 and early 1861, the president of the college George Junkin was a strong Unionist who tried to control the growth of secessionist sentiment in the student body. On December 10 1860, pro-secession students raised a flag with the word "Disunion" printed on it over campus to Junkin's intense ire.²⁹³ Junkin had the first flag and each successive one removed and burned. In protest, pro-secession students wore strips from the burned flags and dubbed Junkin the "Pennsylvania Abolitionist" and "Lincoln Junkin."²⁹⁴

Though Junkin initially enjoyed faculty support, the faculty eventually sided with the students after a well-timed student petition followed the Battle of Fort Sumter and the state secession convention. "It being our unanimous opinion that we...should signify our approbation of the recent action of our State Convention and our willingness, if need be, to sustain the same in the trying scenes that may ensure, we hoisted a southern flag over the College as the best exponent of our views. It is now our unanimous desire, that the flag should continue to float; and we, therefore, respectfully request, that you will not suffer it to be taken down."²⁹⁵ Junkin resigned after his faculty voted to allow the flag to remain.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Robert C. Pace, *Halls of Honor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 101.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

Though the rebellion of Washington College students is unsurprising and consistent with the fractious behavior of antebellum students, it is nevertheless indicative of the development of student sectionalism. Passionate about secession, Washington College created or obtained numerous pro-secession flags and hoisted them around campus for roughly four months. This was not a passing rebellion over alcohol or policing professors: southern students were dedicated to what they perceived as the defense of their rights.

Following the call for troops, southern students also demonstrated their dedication by enlisting en masse. Many southern universities were forced to close due to low or no enrollment. The University of Mississippi was forced to close in August 1861 after their enrollment dropped from 196 to four students.²⁹⁷ At the University of Georgia, seventy-five of one hundred and three students enlisted.²⁹⁸ At Randolph-Macon College 134 students enrolled in 1860. By fall 1861, however, only fifty-four students remained, of which forty-two were eighteen or younger.²⁹⁹ Likewise at Trinity College the student enrollment dropped from 212 in the 1860-1861 school year to eighty-two in 1861-1862.³⁰⁰

Although devastating low enrollments later instilled caution in southern academia; however, initially faculty and trustee members as well as alumnae were intimately connected with secession. The University of Georgia supplied around three

²⁹⁷ James Allen Cabaniss, *A History of the University of Mississippi* (Birmingham: Birmingham Printing Company, 1949), 48& 58.

²⁹⁸ Thomas G. Dyer, *The University of Georgia A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 103.

²⁹⁹ James Edward Scanlon, *Randolph-Macon College A Southern History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 108.

³⁰⁰ Nora Campbell Chaffin, *Trinity College, 1839-1892: The Beginnings of Duke University* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1950), 229.

hundred graduates who entered the Confederate States Army compared to the one graduate who enlisted in the United States Army.³⁰¹ Eight of the ten Georgian delegates dispatched to Montgomery Alabama had been educated at UGA and by 1863 three Board of Trustee members were killed in the war.³⁰² At the University of Mississippi, several Board of Trustee members attended the state convention, voted for secession, and one drafted the Ordinance of Secession.³⁰³ Professors enlisted or organized home guards to satisfy their own patriotic impulses.³⁰⁴

Threatened by rapidly falling enrollments, however, professors began to believe war would result in the destruction of southern academia and sought to keep students in college.³⁰⁵ For example, students would often petition the faculty for a leave of absence for the remainder of the war so they could enlist. Faculty responses were often short and refused to explain their reasons for refusing. At the University of Georgia, the faculty briefly informed the students “the Faculty themselves bound to the law that no dismissal [*sic*] should be granted except upon the written application of the parent or guardian.”³⁰⁶

Superintendent Garland of the University of Alabama was unusual because he gave students a lengthy explanation for his denial; one of the reasons he identified was so “cultivated intellect” would survive the war.³⁰⁷ By reasoning with his cadets, Garland hoped to convince them to remain of their own freewill instead of force. The majority of institutions, however, responded much like the University of Georgia and attempted to

³⁰¹ Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 48.

³⁰² Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 235; Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 106.

³⁰³ Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 101.

³⁰⁴ Dyer, *The University of Georgia*, 103.

³⁰⁵ Dan R. Frost, *Thinking Confederates* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 33.

³⁰⁶ Coulter, *College Life in the Old South*, 238.

³⁰⁷ Suzanne Rau Wolfe, *The University of Alabama: A Pictorial History* (University: The University of Alabama Press, 1981), 47.

enlist parents in keeping their sons in school. Many sent out circulars, like Charleston College, requesting that parents not allow their sons to withdraw.³⁰⁸ Effective faculty response was stymied, however, because the majority of parents supported their sons' enlistments and granted their permission to withdraw.

Observing the success of military colleges in retaining students or at least attracting new students, southern colleges attempted to add military programs or convert into military schools. Randolph-Macon College was able to stave off closure for a few years by transforming itself into a military college. Quasi-military courses were added to the curriculum and a VMI graduate was chosen to oversee the patchwork program.³⁰⁹ Supervised by other members of the faculty with no military experience, drill proved to be a farce. As a former student later wrote, "When he [President John M.P. Atkinson of Hampden Sidney] undertook to induct us into the mysteries of the 'double quick,' he commenced his explanation by saying: 'Gentlemen, when I count one, you will bring up the right foot until the thigh is perpendicular to the body, and when I count two, you will bring the other up beside it.'"³¹⁰ However comical and slipshod the program was, Randolph-Macon did not close until 1863 long after most other schools had closed down.³¹¹ Few were as successful. For example, the University of Mississippi sent Barnard on a fact-finding tour of various southern military colleges with the intention of designing their own; however, they were forced to close before implementing the program.³¹²

³⁰⁸ J.H. Easterby, *A History of the College of Charleston* (Charleston: The Scribner Press, 1935), 148.

³⁰⁹ Scanlon, *Randolph-Macon College*, 108.

³¹⁰ Pace, *Halls of Honor*, 105.

³¹¹ Scanlon, *Randolph-Macon College*, 108.

³¹² Cabaniss, *A History of the University of Mississippi*, 58.

The Northern Campus and 1861

Though northern student reaction varied on an individual basis, the majority of college students were deeply ambivalent about secession, abolition, and the prospect of war. An analysis of student writing and action on seven northern campuses reveal that, prior to the Battle of Fort Sumter, most northern college students believed that agitating abolitionists, not fire-eating secessionists, were the root cause of their country's present misery. Following the Battle of Fort Sumter on April 12 1861, however, northern student beliefs about the responsibility for secession and the ongoing war underwent a fundamental shift. Fired by patriotism and war fever, northern students participated in patriotic activities and contemplated enlistment. They were encouraged or discouraged by their college faculty on a case by case basis.

On January 1, 1861, Henry S. Burrage, a Brown University senior, began the only diary he would keep during his college career. From January 1 to July 3 1861, he covered 179 pages with incidents caused by rising sectional tension, the early events of the war, and his reactions to them.³¹³ Though Burrage ultimately chose to enlist, his first diary entry revealed his deep ambivalence about the crisis at the beginning of the year.³¹⁴

"It promises to be an eventful year," Burrage wrote, "Our country, a few months since prosperous, happy, united, seems today almost on the brink of destruction. The government maintains a masterly inactivity. The people no longer have confidence in it—indeed it seems to have no confidence in itself. One member of the cabinet after another is retiring, and the old public functionary [President Buchanan], yet more lachrymose than ever, stands almost friendless and alone amid the ruins of his administration..."

³¹³ Robert Perkins Brown et al., *Memories of Brown: Traditions and Recollections from Many Sources* (Providence: Brown Alumni Magazine Company, 1909), 175.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

Whatever may be the issue, whether the states remain united, one family, or whether they be rent with civil feuds. God speed the right."³¹⁵

Burrage's uncertainty about the future and his frustration with Buchanan's administration is readily apparent. His reference to the government's lack of activity is bitterly sarcastic and his disrespect for Buchanan is especially apparent when Burrage expressed his belief that all Buchanan will do about the secession crisis is continue to weep.³¹⁶ Burrage does not believe that Buchanan's administration will take any action to handle the crisis and is, therefore, culpable in the continued secession of the southern states. His condemnation of Buchanan reveals that Henry Burrage believed that inaction would lead only to continued secession and interstate conflict, but it is impossible to infer what Burrage believed should be done.

Though it is clear that Burrage is for the reunion of the states, he did not express how he felt this reunion should be affected or if violence would be justified to achieve reunion. Burrage is ambivalent over the prospect of war. As a young man, soon to graduate from college, Burrage knew he would be expected to fight the oncoming war, a war he did not necessarily agree with. Burrage's ambivalence and confusion were likely what inspired his first diary-- to work out on paper his feelings and to express his frustration and uncertainty about the future. Burrage felt that his thoughts on the crisis were shared by many of his fellow students at Brown, but students throughout the north shared his confusion and frustration.³¹⁷

Harvard, for example, had long been sympathetic to southern concerns. The college taught that slavery was both an economic necessity for the growth of civilization

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 175.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

and a constitutional right. Harvard Law School also upheld the legitimate legality of the Fugitive Slave Law.³¹⁸ These teachings influenced students to believe that the institution of slavery was under attack by abolitionists and, therefore, secession was a defensive response by southerners to these attacks. The Harvard student population ambivalence towards the crisis was also influenced by the presence of southern students on campus. Southern fathers still believed that Harvard was a safe place to send their sons because of what was taught about slavery.³¹⁹ Northern Harvard students had been taught that slavery was justified, abolition was not, and they faced the depressing prospect of fighting fellow classmates and friends if war began.

At Princeton College, where roughly a third of the student population was southern, similar apprehensions existed.³²⁰ In 1859, two years earlier, Princeton students had marched in solidarity, protesting John Brown, William Seward, and Reverend Henry W. Beecher.³²¹ Though implicit in this march was a rejection of the use of political violence, it is also clear that Princeton students believed a connection existed between Brown's attempted slave insurrection and the abolitionist beliefs of Beecher, Seward, and the Republican Party.

Student fears about abolition were confirmed by the beliefs of John MacLean Jr., the president of Princeton. Though MacLean personally believed that slavery was distasteful and morally wrong, he condemned northern Presbyterian institutional opposition to slavery because he believed it had caused the sectional split of the

³¹⁸ Arthur Stanwood Pier, *The Story of Harvard* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1913), 163-164.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

³²⁰ Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Princeton 1746-1896* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 265.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

Presbyterian Church, which had founded Princeton.³²² For MacLean, outspoken, aggressive abolitionism had crippled the Presbyterian Church and the country, at large. Princeton students and faculty members believed that abolition and the Republican Party, not slavery, threatened the South and, as a result, the peace of the United States. In opposition to abolition, they saw secession as a defensive action taken by the southern states.

Harvard and Princeton, however, were sympathetic to the South because of their history as intersectional schools and existing populations of southern students. Harvard and Princeton student reactions were influenced by these two factors and, without additional evidence, their reactions cannot be generalized to all northern colleges. Events at the University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus, however, support the argument that the majority of northern students believed that the agitation of abolitionists was the cause of secession.

Shortly before the Battle of Fort Sumter, an abolitionist speaker, Parkers Pillsbury, arrived at Ann Arbor to give a lecture. The University of Michigan undergraduates rioted and threatened to physically harm Pillsbury.³²³ A later lecture by abolitionist Wendell Phillips was carried out only under guard by the senior class, who had been humiliated by the behavior of the underclassmen.³²⁴ The University of Michigan students were so hostile to abolitionists because they blamed abolition agitation for the ongoing crisis and the possibility of war. Poor Parker Pillsbury was so hated by the students because he was a scapegoat on whom the college could take out their frustration and confusion.

³²² *Ibid.*, 265.

³²³ Kent Sagendorph, *Michigan The Story of the University* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. Publishers, 1948), 109.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

Unlike Harvard and Princeton, there were no southern students at the University of Michigan. Unencumbered by southern opinion, these students decided that abolition was the cause of the ongoing crisis. Furthermore, this belief was widespread enough on campus to warrant organized group action against a figure perceived as divisive. Given that the average age of University of Michigan students at enrollment was twenty-five, it is clear that the majority of college students at Ann Arbor were adults.³²⁵ As adult students, the beliefs and opinions of these men likely reflect widespread beliefs and opinions of the northern United States. Most likely, prior to the Battle of Fort Sumter, most Americans and their college student sons believed that southern secession was the result of abolition agitation and that southerners had legitimate grievances.

After the Battle of Fort Sumter, however, college campus ambivalence and war opposition was wiped out. As Henry Burrage remembered years later “[t]he attack on Fort Sumter... was the event which fired the hearts of the students, as indeed it did the hearts of the people.”³²⁶ At many colleges, students were strongly encouraged by their faculty to enlist in these early war days. At Brown University, Professor Gammell used one class day to informally discuss current events with his senior history recitation class, a class he knew would shortly be called upon to enlist. At the end of the class session, he stated, “It looks as though our flag must go down...but, young men, if it does, it must go up again, and that, too, at whatever the cost.”³²⁷

Gammell’s statement encouraged boys to enlist subtly, but the faculty shortly issued stronger encouragement. At the flag raising ceremony, President Sears of Brown stated he hoped Brown students had learned to be patriots at college and would show they

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

³²⁶ Brown et al., *Memories of Brown*, 176.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

appreciated the liberties inherited from Revolutionary War ancestors.³²⁸ Later that year at graduation, President Sears stated, "May our Alma Mater always have brave sons, ready to meet all the demands of patriotism!"³²⁹ Brown University faculty both subtly and openly encouraged student enlistment at this time.

Yet it is important to note that even at this point, this encouragement was primarily directed at Brown seniors. Professor Gammell is recorded as speaking to his senior class only. President Sears' first encouragement is given at an event sponsored by the senior class.³³⁰ His second encouragement is on graduation day and is directed at that year's graduating class. Brown University professors were also susceptible to war fever, but as their carefully directed encouragement suggests, they were also aware of the threat of war to student enrollment.

This caution is most clearly revealed in William W. Hoppin's account of the days following Fort Sumter: "In our senior year came the rumor of war and calls from various armories for men to enlist, and we students spent more time at the armories than in the lecture room. Meeting on the street one day, on our way to or from an armory, one of our most dignified professors, he stopped and said, "Come back to your studies; it is not well to breathe any longer this exciting atmosphere." And yet we kept on breathing it until some of our number marched away from the sound of the college bell to the tap of the drum."³³¹ Though William Hoppin is a senior as his friends probably are, this professor is interested in making sure these boys graduate instead of enlisting early and leaving

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 177.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

school before graduation. As Hoppin notes though, this unnamed professor was rather unsuccessful.

Few northern colleges, however, shared Brown's caution. At Northwestern University, for example, the members of the faculty were routine speakers at church war meetings, whose sole purpose was to inspire young men in the audience to enlist during the program.³³² Mary Willard recorded an April 23 war meeting: "This evening we went to a war meeting at the church....Several speeches were made and there was a call for those who were willing to come forward and sign the muster roll. Rapidly they went; young men whom we all know and esteem: students in college and theology; men who had wives and daughters looking after them with smiles on their lips; and beardless boys. Cheer after cheer went up as each took the pen and wrote his name as a volunteer in the army that goes to save the Union. One young man told us that he did not join here, because, although he came last week from a distant town to enter college, he would throw his books aside and return home to-morrow to go with his father and brothers to the field."³³³

As Willard's description reveals, war meetings did not target a specific audience; any young man, town or gown, could attend. Before the evening was done, worked into a patriotic fervor by a trusted professor or pastor and compelled by peer pressure, he could sign his name and enlist in the United States Army. Or, like the young man referenced by Willard, he could return home and enlist though he had just matriculated.

President Henry P. Tappan of the University of Michigan addressed the entire student body and openly encouraged them to enlist, despite his belief that the conflict

³³² Estella Frances Ward, *The Story of Northwestern University* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1924), 96.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 95.

would not be brief.³³⁴ Writing years later, former student Henry Utley remembered it as “[h]is address was inspiring. It aroused to even greater ardor the patriotism of the young men, and made an everlasting impression on every heart. It was a scene never to be forgotten.”³³⁵ Tappan’s faculty, however, disagreed with him about student enlistment and seemingly everything and by 1863 had forced his dismissal.³³⁶

At Oberlin, the faculty immediately repealed a statute that forbade student participation in military units.³³⁷ Soon after Monroe, who was both a state senator and Oberlin college professor, was allowed to hold a war meeting, at which forty-eight students volunteered.³³⁸ Many other northern colleges extended the same privileges as Oberlin to their enlisted students.

Overall northern colleges and universities were less cautious about student withdrawal and enlistment than their southern counterparts. Their lack of caution was partially rooted in the notion that the war would be brief, but other factors were equally important. The North had a higher population density and, though the number of young men seeking a college education did decrease, college enrollment did not suffer as much as in the South. Larger well-established universities like Harvard continued to have average class sizes and underwent no physical strain during the course of the war.³³⁹

Smaller colleges did suffer financially, but not as much as southern ones. Bowen College in Iowa, for example, was able to remain open throughout the war with only one

³³⁴ Sagendorph, *Michigan*, 97.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 95&97.

³³⁷ Robert Samuel Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College: From Its Foundations Through the Civil War* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co., 1943), 844.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 844.

³³⁹ Charles A. Wagner, *Harvard Four Centuries and Freedoms* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc, 1950), 130.

voluntary closure to allow students to temporarily enlist during the spring of 1864.³⁴⁰ Small northern colleges could also draw from multiple economic classes unlike small southern colleges. Bowen served the children of farmers mainly and emphasized subjects that did not require the extensive preparation that Latin and Greek did.³⁴¹ Able to draw from a far wider cross-section of the population or prestigious institutions, the majority of northern colleges were able to withstand the Civil War whereas southern colleges with a few exceptions were not.

Trained by their literary societies and a culture that found slavery repulsive only when it affected their lives directly, most northern students were ambivalent about secession and war initially. Aggressive abolition was perceived to be the root cause of the ongoing crisis and southerners were believed to have legitimate grievances. Had the Battle of Fort Sumter not occurred, it is highly unlikely lethargic northern college students would have enlisted in large numbers and the United States military would have been deprived of an important population of young men. Fort Sumter also influenced previously cautious professors and college administration to encourage their students to enlist just as it inspired northern patriotism and war enthusiasm.

West Point and 1860

The election year of 1860 reintroduced sectional tension at West Point. Though there was a ban on political conversation at West Point, particularly during such a divisive election, cadets were still very well-informed. Cadets received letters and

³⁴⁰ William Corbin, *A Star for Patriotism Iowa's Outstanding Civil War College* (Monticello: William E. Corbin, 1972), 26.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

newspapers from home.³⁴² Furthermore, the rising third class cadets, including Morris Schaff, went on their traditional summer furlough home.³⁴³ These cadets would have returned to West Point up to date about the ongoing political campaign. Despite the ongoing ban, cadets discussed the situation among themselves. Schaff often whiled away the time by talking to his roommate, West, about current events.³⁴⁴

Cadets were also aware of changes at West Point that heralded a potential sectional conflict and added to their insecurity. Beginning in 1860, bayonet drill was taught for the first time. Though the boys were excited about it, this and other course additions placed an emphasis on practical military skills, hinting that cadets might need them in the near future.³⁴⁵ The most obvious indicator of coming strife was the high turnover of personnel stationed at the academy. Towards the end of 1860, eighteen tactical officers and instructors were transferred back to their regiments. Many of the enlisted staff were likewise transferred.³⁴⁶ Furthermore many of these instructors were replaced by wounded officers or cadet instructors.³⁴⁷

Cadets would have realized that the army required every able-bodied man. This policy also extended to military units on duty at West Point. The academy artillery unit was not at full strength so it co-opted members of the neighboring dragoon unit to fill the holes.³⁴⁸ Cadets would have seen these former horsemen learning artillery duties. On January 19 1861, the academy sapper unit was dispatched to Washington D.C.³⁴⁹ On

³⁴² Morris Schaff, *The Spirit of Old West Point* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co, 1907), 162.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁴⁵ George S. Pappas, *To The Point The United States Military Academy 1802-1902*, 317.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 319.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 325.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 325.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 325.

January 31, the artillery unit also departed, taking every available horse with them and ending the cadet's horseback riding lessons.³⁵⁰ Cadets were intimately aware of the escalating crisis: they could read about it in the newspapers, write about it to their parents, and see it in the troop movements of the West Point contingent.

Sectional tension was high at West Point and when two cadets set up a pretend ballot box tension came to a head. There were ninety-nine votes for Breckenridge, forty-seven for Douglas, forty-four for Bell, and only twenty-four for Lincoln.³⁵¹ Though the results of this "election" reveal the majority of cadets were interested in compromise and union over divisive political parties, southern cadets were infuriated by the Lincoln votes. Many violent fights followed the cadets' fake election.³⁵²

Furthermore of the 278 cadets at West Point, 214 took part in the fake ballot. This means approximately seventy-seven percent of the cadet population was involved, indicating a high political interest in this election. This interest did not bode well for a service that attempted to be as apolitical as possible. Nor did the cadets' interest go unnoticed by the outside world. Congressional debates were held over whether cadets should be allowed to vote as residents of the state of New York. Cadet Samuel Benjamin wrote to his sister: "I tried to vote, but they decided in Buttermilk that we could not vote....I had made arrangements...and then was going to run it on election day and vote."³⁵³

Benjamin's account reveals the cadets were aware of these debates and were highly interested in the outcome. West Point cadets wanted to vote. Benjamin's letter also

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 326.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

³⁵² Schaff, *The Spirit of Old West Point*, 168.

³⁵³ Pappas, *To The Point*, 319.

cause of much ill feeling among cadets for the last few weeks...[T]he southerners swore...they threatened to do all kinds of terrible things and blustered around at a great rate. They were all going to resign...if Lincoln was elected. Southern cadets wear a blue ribbon cockade tied to a button on their caps. This was called a South Carolina cockade."³⁵⁶

Nor was McCrea completely innocent of generating sectional tension himself. Schaff recorded how McCrea, like other cadets in his company, put a miniature United States flag up in his room alcove. When Company Lieutenant Fitzhugh Lee ordered the flags removed, McCrea painted his water bucket with an American flag because there was no regulation against it.³⁵⁷ As these anecdotes reveal West Point was far from being united in grief and riven with sectional strife. The fake ballot had resulted in bouts of fisticuffs over political allegiances. Southern and northern cadets openly announced their loyalties and intentions both prior to and after the election. South Carolinian cadets to the *Guardian*, a newspaper in Columbia, South Carolina, to express both their disdain for Lincoln and intention to resign, suggesting parts of the country were aware of the sectional strife dominating West Point affairs.³⁵⁸

But confusion also reigned. Unable to approach instructors, southern cadets wrote to their state senators and governors for advice on what to do if Lincoln were elected. Such requests rarely resulted in clear directives. Many were told to resign only if their state seceded. Adding to the cadets' confusion was the need to obtain parental permission prior to resigning. Parents were as confused as cadets over the evolving political situation

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 319.

³⁵⁷ Schaff, *The Spirit of Old West Point*, 249.

³⁵⁸ Pappas, *To The Point*, 321.

and refused to give permission. This in turn left cadets confused over what their status would be if their home state seceded.³⁵⁹

In a December 1860 letter to his father, Cadet Rowland succinctly captured the dilemma of most southern cadets: “What is to become of our glorious Union? Everyone seems to despair of its perpetuation, but I cannot give it up. I will catch at the last straw, and stand by the Union until all is hopelessly lost. Then we must cast our lot with Virginia and hope for the best.”³⁶⁰ Whatever their confusion, political leanings, and resolutions, very few southern cadets, if any, desired a breakup of the Union. They had become cadets at West Point with the intention of defending that Union. Now they were faced with the unenviable decision that faced all southern personnel in the armed forces: to stay with the Union and fight against their homes or break their oaths and fight against the United States. Most decided to stay as long as possible and hope for compromise. However, when compromise failed, they resolved to go with their state.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 320.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

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