

10-2007

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Recommended Citation

Gear, Charles (2007) "Texans to the Home Front: Why Lone Star Soldiers Returned to Texas During the War," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 45: Iss. 2, Article 7.

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TEXANS TO THE HOME FRONT: WHY LONE STAR SOLDIERS RETURNED TO TEXAS DURING THE WAR

By Charles Grear

When the Civil War began soldiers from Texas expected a short conflict. Enlisting in units created to fight far from home was common in the first two years of the war since the Lone Star State appeared far removed from the war. These men remained motivated to fight far from their immediate homes for numerous reasons including personal honor, states rights, slavery, and to protect their old homes in the Southeast. As the confrontation stretched into a second year and then a third, many men wanted to return to Texas, especially when there was a perceived threat by the Union Army to their homes, wives, and children. Texans, though highly motivated to fight for the Confederacy, succumbed to the same despair that many soldiers experienced when the war threatened to reach the doorstep of their homes. The despair of Texas soldiers increased for many reasons including the hardships of soldiering, letters from home detailing the privations of their wives and children, and orders dismounting cavalry units. These reasons had a profound effect on the motivation of Texans but an interpretation that no historian previously examined is their desire to return to Texas to defend their hearth and home in the face of an imminent threat to the Lone Star State.¹

Attachments to localities, places where individuals grew up or where their friends and family members resided, is common throughout the South and motivated many soldiers throughout the South to fight. Two fine examples of how this motivation influenced Southern men to fight include units such as the Eight Georgia Infantry regiment and the "Red River Company" of the Fourteenth Tennessee Infantry regiment. The men in the Eight Georgia behaved in the same manner as the Texans when the Union Army threatened and then occupied their hometown of Rome, Georgia late in the war. Desertion rates increased when the city fell under the influence of Northern soldiers, because the war became meaningless to these men since they could no longer defend their hometown. On the other hand, local attachments had a different effect on the men of the Fourteenth Tennessee Infantry. They lost their hometowns to the enemy early in the war with the fall of Fort Donelson. When they reorganized themselves in 1862, the men examined the reasons why they wanted to remain together as a fighting unit. The men produced a contract amongst themselves entitled, "'Red River' Company Agreement." In the document, that the men signed, they outlined their motivation to remain in the Confederate Army. They continued "to stand together and drive that enemy from our Childhood homes – from the home of our Fathers and Mothers." These men welded a strong desire to "remain united and joined as a band of brothers, honorable representatives of the Old Red River Neighborhood" to "make an effort in behalf of our Red River homes that will be donned with honor and credit to us through all ages." They had a strong desire to take back their hometowns, the only places in the United States they had an attachment.

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The influence of local attachments extends to the rest of the country, but is the most pronounced in Texans because of recent migration to the state and the distances Texans traveled to fight in their old hometowns.²

When the war started, Texans were heavily influenced by local attachments when they made their decision to fight and the choice of which unit they would join. Texans who had recently moved to the state viewed their new state as far removed from the dangers of battles, and thus felt no pressing need for the immediate defense of their wives and children in Texas. Because there was no perceived threat to their homes in Texas, such men wanted to return to the state they had recently left, to defend the town where their parents raised them, and to defend the extended family they left behind. Motivations for Texas soldiers were very similar to those in the rest of the South with one major difference – they had more than one local attachment. Multiple local attachments were more pronounced with Texans than residents of the rest of the Confederacy because in the mid-nineteenth-century Texas was a migrant state. The population of the state grew from 212,592 in 1850 to 1,591,749 in 1880, mostly from migration. These people not only brought themselves and their knowledge, but also more importantly retained their attachments to other locations. The majority of the migrants came from the Old South, which directly influenced them to return east of the Mississippi River to fight in those states.³

The desire to defend the place of their birth was a significant reason many Texans wanted to fight east of the Mississippi River, but the desire to defend their newly adopted state when threatened later in the war influenced them to return to Texas. Though many of the men only lived in Texas for a short time, they developed attachments to the state through building their homes, starting families, and establishing farms and businesses. “Back in Tex how I love to think of my own loved Tex,” wrote J.K. Street of the Ninth Texas Infantry, a native of Kentucky before moving to Texas, “But what makes it peculiarly dear to me, is ‘The loved ones at home’ are there.”⁴ When their adopted state faced a serious threat to its security in 1863, Texans begin to reprioritize their motivation to fight. No longer was it to protect their extended families east of the Mississippi River, but to defend their homes and immediate families because the North finally threatened them. Many requested transfers, resigned commissions, or deserted from their units east of the Mississippi River to join units in the Trans-Mississippi. The Union menace to Texas in the second half of the war had a devastating impact on the motivation of Texas soldiers, which they demonstrated through their actions and many letters home during these episodes.

The greatest influence for Texans to reprioritize their motivation to fight revolved around major Confederate defeats in the Trans-Mississippi and the Western theater. These Confederate defeats became, in the minds of Texans, threats to the safety and security of Texas. Three battles that had a strong impact to Texans’ morale were Pea Ridge, Galveston, and Vicksburg. These defeats symbolized a new threat to Texas since they allowed the Union Army to encroach closer to their state and cut off the Trans-Mississippi department from the rest of the Confederacy, making the men feel farther away from Texas

because of the loss of control of the Mississippi River. This new threat sparked waves of desertion for Texans.⁵

The battle of Pea Ridge disrupted the military plans of Confederates in the Trans-Mississippi. Fought early in the war, March 7 and 8, 1862, the defeat allowed the Union Army to secure Missouri and half of Arkansas. This Federal victory isolated both Kansas and Missouri from the Confederacy and threatened Confederate positions within Arkansas and Indian Territory.⁶ The Southern defeat at Pea Ridge had a deep effect on the mentality of Texans, especially those east of the Mississippi River, because it appeared that the Union Army could threaten to invade Texas.

"Oh!" exclaimed Henry Orr of the Twelfth Texas Cavalry after the battle, "shall the foul foot of the invader even trace the soil of Texas and bring distress upon its people like they have here! God forbid that they may. I wish I were on its soil today to give my life if necessary for its defense."⁷ Writing letters was not the only way Texans expressed their dismay; they also spoke volumes through their actions. Within a month of the defeat at Pea Ridge, J.K. Street of Terry's Texas Rangers wrote about a wave of desertion in his regiment. "There is still strong talk of disbanding," Street wrote, "I shouldn't be surprised if we do and if we do I shall make right for Texas."⁸

Waves of desertion affected even those Texas units that had recently arrived in the western theater. Two months after Pea Ridge, John Allen Templeton of the Tenth Texas Cavalry expressed his dismay in a letter to his father:

I think I will be home in the course of a few months as I am exempt from military duty according to the new military law, and I am not going to volunteer so far from home when there will be need for men on the frontier of Texas and on the coast. I have not found out at what time I will get off but be assured that it will be at the earliest period for there is no telling at what moment the enemy will be spoiling Texas; & if they should get there I want to be close by. I hope that Texas may never be the battling ground for every thing is laid waste where a large army goes.⁹

Templeton was not the only Texan in the Tenth Texas Cavalry who wanted to leave the western theater. Almost a year later his "Cousin Frank says he is going to work for a transfer and wants me to get one and to go with him. He intends going to the coast of Texas and get into artillery service. I would be glad to make such an exchange if I could just get on Texas soil if nothing else."¹⁰ He continued to pursue his desire to return to Texas, because according to him, "nothing would please me better than to get a swap to Johnson's Co. so then I would be where I want to be."¹¹ Even though he wanted to leave the regiment to return to Texas, he remained east of the Mississippi because "I had rather meet them here [Corinth, Mississippi] than in Texas as this country is already ruined."¹² Like all motivations, his willingness to fight outside of Texas when there was a perceived threat to the state lasted only for a short time.

Other Texans affected by the Confederate defeat at Pea Ridge were the Sixth Texas Cavalry and its commander Lawrence Sullivan Ross. In June 1862, Ross wrote to his wife, "Perhaps we who are from Tex and Ark may

recross the River – God send the great blessings. I am truly sick of this side, and the vast Army here. We fare much better when off to ourselves. General Price has gone to Richmond for the purpose, I think, of getting his troops transferred to the other side of the River again – his men, as well as those from Texas are not satisfied here. I would give almost any consideration to touch the West bank of the Miss River again.”¹³ Later that month Ross again wrote, “I feel that I cannot remain from home longer, and if I can not get a leave of absence, I may resign and return home, & then Enter the service on the West side of the Miss River.”¹⁴ Pea Ridge had an influence on the morale of Ross and the Texans serving east of the Mississippi River, but that influence was not nearly as powerful as the effect of later defeats.

On October 5, 1862, the Union Navy established a blockade off Galveston that worried Texans, both civilian and soldier. Four days later U.S. Marines captured and occupied the town. It was the first time that Union soldiers had set foot on Texas soil and directly threatened the interior of the state. Soldiers from Texas were always concerned about a Union invasion of their state, as Elijah P. Petty wrote, “My feelings, inclinations and all my yearnings are to be in Texas if she is invaded. My all is there – All that is near and dear to me is there and I want to be there to protect it.”¹⁵ Even men east of the Mississippi River kept their attention on Texas. John Wesley Rabb of Terry’s Texas Rangers wrote of the regiment’s concern toward the safety of Texas when they received news of the Federal blockade of Texas ports. “We here it reported in the regiment that Col. Wharton is going to do his best to get this Regiment sent back to Texas because the Yanks have come there. The boys want to go back very much.”¹⁶ Texans remained vigilant in regard to their state and wanted to return to protect their loved ones when threatened.

Through letters, Texans outside of the state received news of the Union invasion and occupation of Texas soil. Elijah P. Petty and the men of the Seventeenth Texas Infantry heard news of the capture of Galveston and wanted to respond. While in Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 20, 1862, Petty wrote to his wife in Texas, “I have a good many applications by the boys to be transferred back to Texas to some of the regiments in that state all of which I have refused up to this time as a precedent of that kind would perhaps take all my men away as they are all verry anxious to get back to Texas by all means.”¹⁷ The men of the Seventeenth Texas Infantry wanted the Union Army out of their state, and wanted somebody, especially themselves, in Texas to protect their homes and interests. Petty wrote, “it is reported that a part of the Texas troops here will be sent to Texas ... I hope so.”¹⁸ Fears created by the capture of Galveston reached across the Mississippi. Men in Terry’s Texas Rangers received news of the event and expressed their relief when they heard the Yankees were driven out of the city. “We have just herd of the recapture of Galveston by Gen. McGrooder [Magruder]. It does us good to think there is nary a Yankey foot on Texas soil.”¹⁹

Pea Ridge and Galveston had a deep impact on the morale of all Texans serving outside of the state, but these battles did not have as big an impact as the fall of Vicksburg, Mississippi. Vicksburg was important for both the Union

and Confederacy. Abraham Lincoln stated the importance of the city and its significance for the Trans-Mississippi. "Let us get Vicksburg and all that country is ours. The war can never be brought to a close until that key is in our pocket."²⁰ The Mississippi River was key to controlling the far west. The Union Army recognized this fact since the river was a major component to their strategy for winning the war, inspired by Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan. Like the large snake, the Union Army and Navy would work in concert to squeeze the life out of the Confederacy by establishing a blockade on the Southern coast and splitting the nation in half by controlling the Mississippi River. Vicksburg was the last stronghold for the Confederacy in the Mississippi River. Without Vicksburg, the Union Navy would not have control of the Mississippi.²¹

The Mississippi River, though strategically important to both sides, was especially vital to the Texans. Texans realized the importance of the Gibraltar of the West and were willing to defend it. "We are looking anxiously for the result of the movements against Vicksburg," wrote Khleber Miller Van Zandt from Port Hudson, Louisiana in February 1863. Other Texans felt the same. Upon hearing the news of a possible transfer from Louisiana to Vicksburg, Petty of the Seventeenth Texas Infantry wrote, "If at Vicksburg we can stab the enemy to the heart or some other vital point, the hand that is laid upon Texas will paralyze so that where ever the most service can be done is the place for me."²² Texans recognized Vicksburg's importance as an obstacle to the Union Army. As long as it remained in Confederate control the Union would not devote a large army to invade Texas.

To Texans, the Mississippi River was an important psychological barrier. As long as the Confederacy controlled the river it was a bulwark between Texas and the bulk of the Union Army. A Texan wrote, "Our lines once broken, whether on the Mississippi or the Arkansas, or the Red River, would have thrown open the approach to the invasion of Texas, by an ever alert and powerful foe."²³ Once the Mississippi River fell under the control of the Union Army, Texans began to fear a Northern invasion into their state. Dr. John Claver Brightman of the Eighteenth Texas Cavalry worried about a possible Union invasion of Texas. In a letter to his mother and friends still in his hometown he advised them on how best to protect themselves from roving Yankees. "If the Yanks should come to Texas," Brightman wrote, "drive all the negroes before you and burn everything as you go, to destroy their subsistence on the country. Gather yourselves together and form bands and companies so as not to let them scatter out in small robbing parties like they have done in this country."²⁴

Though not cutting off all communication between the East and the trans-Mississippi, the Confederate defeat at Vicksburg did affect the amount of mail leaving and entering Texas. Van Zandt "had much rather they were below than above [Port Hudson]." He added, "I don't like having our communication with Red River cut off."²⁵ Van Zandt again wrote a few days later to his wife complaining about the lack of letters she wrote him. "I am consequently getting anxious to hear from you again. The fault must be in the mail as no one has had a letter from home since then. I am afraid that our letters will be very slow in passing to & fro as long as the Gunboats are in the river between here and

Vicksburgh.²²⁶ Finally, one month later, Van Zandt gave up and accepted the inevitable. "I presume our mail will be very irregular so long as the 'Feds' are between us."²⁷

If partial Union control of the Mississippi hindered communication with Texas, complete Federal dominance, established by the fall of Vicksburg, would cut it off entirely. Jeremiah Caddell of the Fourth Texas Infantry commented, "Viseburg [Vicksburg] had fell in to the hands of the Yankie's and there is a bad chance for letters to pass but I hope there will be some way to pass them threw."²⁸ Caddell was correct and it had a significant impact on the morale of the Texans. "Our communication with Texas," M.K. Simmons wrote, "is entirely cutoff & it's a great drawback to my happiness." A few days later Simmons continued, "I really feel lost since the mail with Texas has stopped."²⁹ Andrew J. Fogle, of the Ninth Texas Infantry, elaborated on the effects of the loss of the Mississippi River, a month after the fall of Vicksburg. "I dont think hard of you as their is no mail a gain a crose the river and the only way that I can send them by Privet conveyence."³⁰ Texans felt the impact of being cut off from their homes.

The lack of communication with their homes demoralized the Texans. Van Zandt knew that the fall of Vicksburg would dishearten Texans, both in the army and back home. "I suppose the fall of Vicksburg and the consequent possession of the whole of the Miss. River by the Feds made you all feel pretty blue, did it not? And so it would many of us I judge, if we had time to think about it much. It is indeed a dark hour to us, but I am not at all disheartened or cast down."³¹ Less than five months later he wrote to his wife from Chattanooga, "I shall take steps to get away from here as soon as practicable. If I don't succeed in one way I will try an other. If the Secty of War will grant it then I will go to Texas under his orders, but if he disapproves then I shall have to adopt some other measures, either to get a leave of absence or resign. I would not have any hesitancy about resigning, and would adopt it as the least objectionable course to pursue."³² Vicksburg had a huge impact on the morale of Texans in every theater of the war. Desertion increased throughout the Confederate Army after the simultaneous defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, but to Texans, Vicksburg had a stronger effect because with the loss of control of the Mississippi River, the enemy now blocked their way home.³³

Cut off from home, Texans, especially those fighting east of the Mississippi, began to desert. After the fall of Vicksburg, dozens of men in the Ninth Texas Cavalry returned to Texas. James C. Bates wrote from Vernon, Mississippi on September 3, 1863, "about 30 men have deserted the Brigade within the last two weeks - ten of them from my old co... . The men of this Brig are very much dissatisfied & want to get west of the Miss. I look for more desertions as soon as we move from here. They are not tired of the war but of this state & they have reason to be."³⁴ The men, distraught about the threat to Texas, wanted to leave Mississippi. Some of the men simply returned to their homes, but many joined other units in the Trans-Mississippi. Bates in a letter explained this occurrence to his mother. "You will probably hear before this reaches you of the desertions in this Regt... . Saying they will enter the service

on that side of the river does palliate their offense, but it is on the other hand, an aggravation of it."³⁵ Though he did not react in the same manner as his men, Bates had the same feelings of dismay about the loss of Vicksburg. He summarized his feelings and those of the men when he wrote, "My military aspirations have been long since satisfied & since Texas is threatened I would sooner than not return home."³⁶ Bates and the men of the Ninth that remained behind believed that the government would transfer the unit to the Trans-Mississippi once enough men deserted its ranks. They did not get their wish.³⁷

Texans in other units east of the Mississippi River expressed their concerns about a vulnerable Texas. Maurice Kavanaugh Simmons of the Second Texas Infantry that surrendered in Vicksburg, resigned his commission to fight under General John B. Magruder in Texas. Simmons wrote, "I joined the service in 1861; was a member of the Second Regiment of Texas Infantry; and expected to continue in service 'till the war should end, but three years absence from home has produced many changes. The Wolf [Union Army] is at my door & I have but one Leg with which to repel him."³⁸ The Union threat appeared imminent, and Simmons had to protect his home state. Others in the Second Texas Infantry decided to leave Vicksburg immediately after it fell because they did not want wait for the Confederate Army to exchange Union prisoners for them. Men such as J.H. Cravey just wanted to return to Texas. He wrote, "Myself brother Bill and Silvester Head we puld out to ourselves. We got to the river all right ..." built a raft and "Findla [Finally] we got over the river all right we felt like birds let out of a cage. We was on our way home."³⁹

Other units experienced the demoralizing effect of the loss of Vicksburg. In a letter to his sweetheart, Andrew J. Fogle of the Ninth Texas Infantry wrote, "they have got now the most of our importante plases now and if they ceap on like they have bin for the last twelve monthes on little Confedrecy will go up."⁴⁰ By October 1863, without any success in recapturing Vicksburg, Fogle also wrote about desertion in his regiment for the first time during the war. According to Fogle, "their has bin severl that has Deserted from our Regiment That is one thing that I nevr expect to do: there is severl more talks of Deserting we had one to leave our compney at that was Sipe bush."⁴¹ By November of that year, desertion became a major problem in the regiment. Even the men sent back to Texas to gather deserters used the opportunity to leave the cis-Mississippi. Jesse P. Bates in a letter to his wife noted, "I am in hopes that James Hooten will act more honorable than many that has gone to Texas and has not returned."⁴² The Third Texas Cavalry experienced increased desertion in the fall of 1863, because of the threat to their home and family in Texas.⁴³

Vicksburg's fall even affected Texans with the strongest connections outside of Texas – Hood's Texas Brigade, Terry's Texas Rangers, and Ross's Texas Brigade. Men in these units had a strong desire to protect their old hometowns, but the idea that Texas was vulnerable influenced the men to change their priorities from defending the unprotected homes of their early life to protecting their homes of the future. James Henry Hendrick of the First Texas Infantry wrote from Virginia, "Our brigade sent a petition to Governor Murrah asking him to use his influence to get the brigade across the

Mississippi River.”⁴⁴ Another man wrote, “all I wish is I wish I was in Texas.”⁴⁵ Even the most celebrated and proud of the Texas units succumbed to the fears of losing their home state.

Once the Texans realized that they would not receive a transfer to the Trans-Mississippi, they found other ways to get what they wanted. William H. Lewis, a member of the Fifth Texas Infantry, wrote to his mother in early August 1863, “I am very tired of all this and I have written to Uncle Albert to procure me a substitute at any price. I am fully aware that if I get one, a great howl will be sent up by various people at home and perhaps, it may not accord with your ideas of patriotism but I cant help that, and permit me to say not of yours but others opinion that I care less ... When I get there, I shall repose for a month or two and then I shall join some cavalry Co. Or Regt where I can see an easy time of it the balance of this unhappy struggle.”⁴⁶ Other men had even less-honorable reactions. According to A.B. Hood of the Fifth Texas Infantry, “many from our Brigade are deserting.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Jeremiah Caddell of the Fourth Texas Infantry penned, “There is a good many of the boys in this Brigade will take what they call a French furlough and come home.”⁴⁸

Men serving in Terry’s Texas Rangers were no strangers to the demoralizing effects of being cut off from Texas. George Washington Littlefield expressed his desires to return to Texas in a letter to his wife at the end of July 1863. “Oh how much I wish I was only off for Texas. My heart would be filled with overflowing joy ... Just to think that I was off for my home in Texas.”⁴⁹ After the fall of Vicksburg, Littlefield and other Texans desired to get back to Texas to defend their state, homes, and loved ones.

Demoralization affected not only Texans serving east of the Mississippi River but many in the Trans-Mississippi as well. Men of the Twenty-eighth Texas Cavalry, serving in Louisiana, became dispirited with the combination of the fall of Vicksburg and homesickness. Nor were they alone. Other Texans in Louisiana experienced the same demoralization. Dr. John Claver Brightman of the Eighteenth Texas Cavalry explained the importance of Vicksburg and the control of the Mississippi River to his brother just after the major Confederate defeats at both Vicksburg and Port Hudson:

One thing is certain: It is going to have the most demoralizing effect of anything that has occurred during the war. You can hear the expression every day by our men that we have ‘gone up the spout.’ They have lost confidence in our officers on the other side of the Mississippi River. They all think as I do, that rather than let those pieces fall, of so much importance to the entire country this side of the Mississippi, that Gens. Bragg, Johnson, Beauregarde, and if necessary, Lee, should have combined their forces and cut their way through and provisioned the two fortifications. They certainly were of much more importance to the Confederacy than the seat of the Government (Richmond, Va.) The Confederate soldiers may rally again, and take some other stand, but I don’t see what stand they can take to bring back in two years of hard fighting, the same or as good position as they have had, and have now lost. It is discouraging in the extreme to think about.

Brightman continued to write about the prospects that he would return to Texas. He wrote, “There is a rumor that our regiment will be called back to

Texas, and if it is so, the order will be soon issued. Our colonel is now in Texas on leave, and wants to go back very much. If an order can be secured, he will have it issued."⁵⁰

With continual losses and subsequent Union attempts to invade the Lone Star State with the Red River Campaign and an invasion through Brownsville, Texas the last year and a half of the war, Texans' morale did not recover but continued to plummet until they surrendered in 1865. Men continued to desert on both sides of the river. Cavalrymen in Parson's Texas Brigade, in the closing year of the war, became very disenchanted. According to J.C. Morriss, "I think I will get to be of no accounts as a soldier for when a soldiers sets his head to go home. I have noticed, that they are no account until they do get to go, and I have got my head set homeward and I will never be satisfied until I get there."⁵¹ Other men in the brigade had similar feeling. "The boys are very impatient and in great suspense." As George W. Ingram wrote to his wife, "They have their heads set homewards and many are determined to go orders or no orders. I hope that we may be ordered to go very soon and that no one will disgrace themselves."⁵²

Texans even began to protest openly any rumor they heard about receiving orders to transfer east of the Mississippi River. J.E. Harrison wrote to his son that there were "muttered protests over the proposed crossing of the Mississippi developed into stubborn opposition in August, 1864, among members of both infantry divisions who preferred to serve in defense of their home states. Two hundred men of Polginac's division deserted & Harrison admitted that 'there has been a greadeal of excitement in my Brigade. I have lost 123 deserted, [who] wont cross the River. There are many others who dis like it extremely."⁵³ Other Texans, such as Joseph David Wilson, had no desire to cross the river. Wilson wrote to his sister, "they think we will have to cross the Mississippi River but I do not know whether we will have to cross the river or not but I hope we will not have to cross."⁵⁴ With the threat of the collapse of the Confederacy Texas soldiers' morale plunged.

Men even surrendered to the Union Army to avoid crossing the river. Late in the war, James C. Bates was sent to Texas to round up deserters from the Ninth Texas Cavalry. Bates discovered even after he rounded up the deserters that once they reached the river they would leave him for Texas again or, as a lieutenant and three privates did, they "went to a gun boat to be paroled."⁵⁵ As the war progressed, Texans became increasingly hesitant to leave the state and, more important, reluctant to cross the barrier of the Mississippi River.

Texans east of the river became extremely dispirited in the closing months of the war. Feeling helpless, the men bided their time with thoughts of family and home. In early November 1864 Edward Thomas Broughton II of the Seventh Texas Infantry penned his dismay at still serving in the western theater. "I am determined to come home this winter," he wrote in a letter to his wife Mollie, "and when I get west of the Mississippi, I intend to stay there." Later in his letter, Broughton expressed his true reasons for wanting to leave: "I have no dreams of ambition to be fulfilled and expect happiness in the future

in the bosom of my family only."⁵⁶ Every motivation that drew him into the war dissipated and only one thought remained in his mind, to go home and protect his wife and family from the inevitable Yankee invasion.

Other Texans in the East, such as Rufus King Felder of the Fifth Texas Infantry, had only one goal at the end of the war: to get back to Texas. "We have been using every exertion in our power to have the brigade transferred or furloughed to Texas this winter."⁵⁷ In the last few months, the desertion rate of the remaining Texans in the east increased. A good example is the Terry's Texas Rangers. In mid-January 1865, the Eighth Texas Cavalry mustered 550 men. When the regiment surrendered four months later, it numbered only 175.⁵⁸ By time the war ended, Texans had no desire to fight for the Confederacy; they cared only for their homes and families back in Texas.

Many aspects and events of the war influenced the motivation of Texans. The hardships of war, letters from home, and major Union victories that threatened the Lone Star State demoralized Texans. Though demoralized, they continued to fight, and relatively few deserted. Desertion only became a major problem in Texans units with Union victories that directly threatened Texas, especially Vicksburg. Vicksburg not only cut-off Texans from communicating with their families in Texas, but also dissolved the psychological barrier of the Mississippi River. Once the Federals controlled the river Texans feared that their state would be vulnerable to invasion. Since Texas became exposed to the Federals, the motivation of Texans to defend their extended families and old hometowns east of the river became less important than defending their immediate families and current homes. In response, they deserted their units so they could return to Texas and defend its borders and protect their families from the depredations that other Southerners had had to endure.

NOTES

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³Randolph B. Campbell, "Statehood, Civil War, and Reconstruction, 1846-76," in Walter L. Buenger and Robert Calvert, eds., *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations* (College Station, 1991), p. 166.

⁴J.K. Street Letters, <http://wehaveneatstuff.com/streetpapers.htm>, accessed on December 14, 2003.

⁵Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens, 1986), p. 117.

⁶William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill, 1992), p. 306; Eddy R. Parker, ed., *Touched by Fire: Letters from Company D 5th Texas Infantry Hood's Brigade Army of Northern Virginia, 1862-1865* (Hillsboro, 2000), pp. 24-25.

⁷John Q. Anderson, ed., *Campaigning with Parson's Texas Cavalry Brigade, CSA: The War Journals and Letters of the Four Orr Brothers, 12th Texas Cavalry Regiment* (Hillsboro, 1967), p. 52.

J.K. Street Letters, <http://wehaveneatstuff.com/streetpapers.htm>, accessed on December 14, 2003.

¹Templeton to Father, May 16, 1862, John Allen Templeton, Tenth Texas Cavalry File, Texas Confederate Archives, Hill College, Hillsboro, (hereafter TCA)

²Templeton to Father, February 16, 1863, TCA.

³Templeton to Father, May 3, 1863, TCA.

⁴Templeton to Father, May 16, 1862, TCA.

⁵Perry Wayne Shelton, Comp., *Personal Civil War Letters of General Lawrence Sullivan Ross: With Other Letters* (Austin, 1994), p. 34.

⁶Shelton, comp., *Letters of General Ross*, p. 38.

⁷Donald S. Frazier, *Cottonclads!: The Battle of Galveston and the Defense of the Texas Coast* (Abilene, 1998), pp. 28, 30; Norman D. Brown, ed. *Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Captain Elijah P. Petty, Walker's Texas Division, CSA* (San Antonio, 1982), p. 108.

⁸Thomas W. Cutrer, ed., "'We Are Stern and Resolved': The Civil War Letters of John Wesley Rabb, Terry's Texas Rangers," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 91 (October, 1987), pp. 206-207.

⁹Brown, *Journey to Pleasant Hill*, p. 114.

¹⁰Brown, *Journey to Pleasant Hill*, p. 115.

¹¹Cutrer, ed. "'We Are Stern and Resolved,'" pp. 210-211.

¹²Davis D. Porter, *Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War* (New York, 1886), pp. 95-96.

¹³Terrence J. Winschel, *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar* (Abilene, 1999), pp. 16-17; Leonard Fullenkamp, Stephen Bowman, and Jay Luvaas, eds., *Guide to the Vicksburg Campaign* (Lawrence, 1998), p. 11; James R. Arnold, *Grant Wins the War: Decision at Vicksburg* (New York, 1997), pp. 1-2; Winschel, *Vicksburg*, pp.13-14, 16-17.

¹⁴Van Zandt to Wife, February 15, 1863, Khleber Miller Van Zandt, Seventh Texas Infantry File, TCA; Brown, *Journey to Pleasant Hill*, p. 108.

¹⁵Anne J. Bailey, *Between the Enemy and Texas: Parson's Texas Cavalry in the Civil War* (Fort Worth, 1989), p. 3; W.H. Getzendaner, *A Brief and Condensed History of Parson's Texas Cavalry Brigade: Composed of Twelfth, Nineteenth, Twenty-First, Morgan's Battalion, and Pratt's Battery of Artillery of the Confederate States, Together with the Roster of the Several Commands as far as Obtainable—Some Historical Sketches—General Orders and a Memoranda of Parson's Brigade Association* (Waxahachie, 1892), p. 21.

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¹⁷Van Zandt to Wife, April 7, 1863, TCA.

¹⁸Van Zandt to Wife, April 26, 1863, TCA.

¹⁹Van Zandt to Wife, May 10, 1863, TCA.

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²²Fogle to Miss Louisa, September 2, 1863, Andrew J. Fogle, Ninth Texas Cavalry File, TCA.

²³Van Zandt to Wife, June 16, 1863, TCA.

²⁴Van Zandt to Wife, November 22, 1863, TCA.

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³⁴Richard Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War: The Diary and Letters of James C. Bates* (Baton Rouge, 1999), pp. xii, 271.

³⁵Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War*, pp. 263, 272.

³⁶Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War*, p. 265.

³⁷Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War*, p. 264.

³⁸Mays, "The Vicksburg Diary of M.K. Simmons, 1863," p. 38.

³⁹J.H. Cravey, "Reminisces," Second Texas Infantry File, TCA.

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⁴¹Fogle to Miss Louisa, October 18, 1863, TCA.

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⁴⁵Wilson to Dear Niece, March 20, 1864, Robert Wilson, Fourth Texas Infantry File, TCA.

⁴⁶Parker, *Touched by Fire*, p. 69.

⁴⁷Hood to Cousin Jennie, February 14, 1864, A.B. Hood, Fifth Texas Infantry File, TCA.

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⁴⁹David B. Gracy II, "With Danger and Honor," *Texana* 1 (Spring 1963): p. 133.

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⁵²Bailey, *Between the Enemy and Texas*, p. 163.

⁵³Alwyn Barr, *Polignac's Texas Brigade* (Texas Gulf Coast Historical Association, Volume 8, No. 1, November 1964), p. 48.

⁵⁴Elvis E. Fleming, ed., "A Young Confederate Stationed in Texas: The Letters of Joseph David Wilson, 1864-1865," *Texana* 8 (1970), p. 359.

⁵⁵Lowe, ed., *A Texas Cavalry Officer's Civil War*, pp. 274, 278, 279; Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War*, p. 16.

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⁵⁷Stephen Chicoine, "'... Willing Never To Go in Another Fight': The Civil War Correspondence of Rufus King Felder of Chappell Hill," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 106 (April 2003), p. 592.

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