

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jeffery E. Allen for the Master of Arts Degree in

Social Sciences-American History presented on August 1, 1981

Title: JAMES MONROE SWALES: LETTERS OF A UNION SOLDIER

Abstract approved:

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This thesis explores the letters written by James Monroe Swales, a young volunteer of the 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment after his enlistment in August, 1861. The 21-year-old volunteer sent letters to relatives, who retained them until making them available to the public through the Illinois State Historical Library. As a result, the personal account of this Union soldier survives and allows this study to illuminate the man, his regiment, and to a certain extent the society in which he lived. In earthy language his letters expressed the high and low moments of life at the outposts at Cairo and Mound City, Illinois where Ulysses S. Grant was forming an army in the later months of 1861. A record of the individual and his regiment accompanies the letters, and together they contribute to the history of the common soldier's Civil War experience.

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JAMES MONROE SWALES:
LETTERS OF A UNION SOLDIER

A Thesis
Presented to
the Department of Social Sciences
EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
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July, 1981

Thesis
1981
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis is dedicated to the help and understanding of all who have been patient with me during this undertaking.

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APR 20 1982

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CHAPTER 1

1861 was a year of crisis for the United States of America as the threats and rumors of disuption caused by more than a decade of increasing discontent in the South festered into an actual cleavage of sections. Secession movements after the election of Abraham Lincoln spread through the deep South, and soon afterward stalwarts of the southern cause were arming themselves to challenge the United States flag at government installations in the region. Until the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, the conciliatory tolerance as well as firmness of Mr. Lincoln's policy had impelled the upper South's state governments to maintain loyalty to the Union. The attack and aftermath engendered by the President's call for volunteers, and for the suppression of rebellion, changed the relationship of several of these states with the national government. Four of the six had cast their fortunes with the self-proclaimed Confederate States of America in that calamitous year for the United States.

Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Arkansas had joined their fates with the Confederacy while Missouri and Kentucky remained in contention. Many Missourians' ferment and anger at the outcome of the results of the election

appeared to be moving the population and state government toward the establishment of a southern regime. However, in the excitement of the spring of 1861 events followed a less likely course. The complex events in Missouri were due to the unshared visions of the future which separated secessionists from non-secessionists. ¹

Missouri's Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson had begun quiet preparation for the association of his state with the Confederacy, only to be thwarted publicly by German immigrants who managed to dominate the state's secessionist convention with a 98 to 1 voting ratio against the proposition. Subsequently, violence erupted between the two factions, one backed by northern forces, and the other consisting of the governor and his pro-Confederate followers. It was the war's western theater in the latter months of 1861 while Union forces were continuing a build-up at Cairo under Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant. Grant's command at Cairo had received little official endorsement until late in 1861 after Confederate activity had increased in southeastern Missouri, and southern troops had entered western Kentucky. Those acts combined to threaten Union strategy, or lack of it, on that section of the Mississippi River. They presented the potential for a strong Confederate advantage in Missouri, Kentucky, and other points in the region. ²

The Confederates had moved into what they thought to be an advantageous position in Columbus, Kentucky. In hindsight this was pure miscalculation. Instead, their occupation of the area was seen as aggression by many undecided Kentuckians,

thus shying the people and legislature of the Bluegrass State closer to the Union. ² At the same stroke, the unwiley Confederates also gave the Union army under General Grant an acceptable pretext to enter the state and occupy the mouths of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. Grant's movements opened the gates to middle Tennessee, northern Alabama, and northern Mississippi. ³

The fort at Columbus being built by General Leonidas Polk's Confederate troops caused the value of the Union base at Cairo, Illinois to be more greatly appreciated. ⁴ Situated twenty miles north from Columbus, it monitored enemy activity there, and across the rivers in Kentucky and Missouri, Cairo also provided a secure riverine naval base at the juncture of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers for the gunboats and transports of Admiral Andrew Foote's inland navy. His fleet was gradually able to gain control of the South's rivers from Confederate gunboats and defenses, and to deliver Union troops to points of enemy concentration. ⁵

The building of additional new gunboats at St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Mound City, near Cairo, increased the mobile firepower of Grant's forces. As a dividend, the river operations Grant and Foote launched by the following year were greatly enhanced by an uncommon spirit of cooperation between Army and Navy, which brought success to the combined forces under General Grant. Those operations with a river fleet had been made possible by the joint efforts of the St. Louis contractor James B. Eads and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles who authorized the former's proposals. ⁶

With a nascent fleet grouping in the vicinity of Cairo, it was safer from enemy raids.⁷ Earlier in 1861 Cairo regulated river commerce, and the southern terminal of the Illinois Central Railroad with an ill-trained, but enthusiastic group of Illinois volunteer regiments under the temporary command of General Benjamin Prentiss, the first colonel of the 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Fortunately for them, the Confederates were as loosely organized as the early Illinois force, and thus unable to launch an attack.

Columbus similarly performed the functions of the South's northernmost Mississippi River sentinel, and railhead for its Gulf and Mobile Railroad. However, it was near high river bluffs useful for the emplacement of large artillery pieces to block northern use of the river. If it could be held against attack by land, it offered the south an anchor against the encroachment of Union forces. Soon, however, those plans were dashed by Grant's utilization of the northern forces grouped at Cairo. The fort at Columbus was bypassed and finally evacuated in 1862, despite the threat it had constituted in 1861.⁸

General Grant's arrival at Cairo on September 1 was a powerful boost for the morale and efficiency of the troops there. Many accounts of the situation at the camps in the vicinity of Cairo summarized the need for a leader such as Ulysses S. Grant. These men demonstrated fine fighting abilities the following year in battles such as Island Number 10, and the victory over the Confederates at Fort Donelson. Grant's experienced leadership brought out much of

the strength of these volunteers while overcoming many of their weaknesses. ⁹

Months before Grant had arrived to take command at Cairo, these soldiers of the volunteer regiments of Illinois had secured the southern tip of the state. The action was the result of early cooperation between the state of Illinois and the Lincoln Administration, which facilitated the rapid recruitment of regiments and their transfer to the outpost. Richard Yates of Jacksonville, recently elected Republican governor of Illinois, and his aides quickly reacted to a War Department dispatch ordering him to send troops there. ¹⁰ From the assemblage of companies in local communities, regiments were formed in Springfield in accord with Congressional Representative districts. ¹¹ The men and officers of these regiments were the vanguard of the troops Grant was to command in September of 1861.

The growth of the outpost emphasized its position in early Union strategy, and incidentally the proximity of large numbers of Confederate troops. As of May, 1861, there were 3,000 troops in Cairo; a month later the force had grown to 6,000. In the month when Grant took command, the number had swelled to 20,000, thus making it a formidable force in that region of Illinois. ¹² Another benefit of the base was to strengthen what had been weak Union sentiment in some counties of central Illinois, and even more so in southern Illinois. The unity of the state had been in doubt earlier in 1861. Helping moderate those sympathies in southern Illinois were 70,000 troops carried on the Illinois Central line stretching

from Lake Michigan to the two rivers at Cairo. ¹³ Many of those men and much war material either bypassed the rail terminal there or were transshipped through to points in Missouri, as Cairo continued its role as a port throughout the war.

The letters of Private James M. Swales who was a young volunteer of twenty-one years of age contribute a view of the military life in Cairo. His regiment was the 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, which was originally organized from the first four companies at Springfield on April 20, 1861 for three months of service. On April 22, they were ordered to Cairo, where three more infantry companies and three artillery companies were attached to the regiment before its reenlistment for three years service on July 29, 1861. ¹⁴ Colonel Benjamin Mayberry Prentiss was initially the elected leader of the 10th. The first of three colonels of the regiment, Prentiss had been a captain of the First Volunteer Infantry Regiment which participated in the Mexican War. Through the unusual twists of fate of the year 1861, Prentiss as a transplanted Virginian commanded the first regiment of Illinois volunteers from late April to May. Before being promoted to brigadier general of northern and central Missouri and continuing in charge of Cairo, he was able to lead the seizure of two river steamers carrying contraband to the enemy. ¹⁵

The regiment's second colonel was James Dada Morgan during the period of 1861 when James Swales corresponded with his family. Morgan was lieutenant colonel of the regiment from April 29 to July 29 when he became colonel. His perform-

ance as colonel was recognized by General Grant early in the following year, on January 29, by a letter from the general to the state adjutant general. "This is a very fine regiment and I am desirous of seeing it filled up," ¹⁶ was Grant's praise of Morgan's performance.

Morgan was a native of Boston, described as being as rigid "as a piece of statuary" by a captain in the regiment. During battle the captain, Ephraim A. Wilson of Company G., reported Morgan ordered soldiers taking cover to "stop that dodgin" from enemy fire. ¹⁷ Morgan was promoted to the command of the First Brigade of Illinois Volunteers which included the 10th, and was under the 4th Division of General John Pope's army. He was promoted to brigadier general on July 17, 1862. ¹⁸

The first two companies enrolled in the regiment were two from the Jacksonville vicinity, just forty miles west of the capitol rendezvous. The first company enrolled was the Union Guard as Company A containing James Monroe Swales, a twenty year old farmboy. ¹⁹ Their captain, McClean F. Wood, later became lieutenant colonel of the 10th.

Company B, the Hardin Light Guards, was the second company of the regiment, and was largely composed of Jacksonville's Illinois College students and faculty. They took their name from Colonel John Hardin who had been the colonel of Prentiss's and Morgan's First Regiment of Illinois Volunteers. He died in the Mexican War, in the battle of Buena Vista, becoming a state hero to be remembered in the martial spirit of April, 1861. ²⁰

Boosterism helped the companies to fill their ranks with volunteers quickly. Local records indicated that Swales's hometown of Jacksonville was one of the more forward towns in the state for its size. The local pride and competitive nature of racing to raise companies for the governor's call for volunteers led community leaders to raise funds to encourage the reluctant and those with dependents to fulfill the patriotic ethos of the time. The technique for raising soldiers had been utilized in the three and one-half decade history of the community to promote material progress and growth in enterprises such as the building of railroads and establishment of educational institutions. Jacksonville responded to its perceived need to outdo its rivals in the state in the number of troops it could raise. 21

Recruitment in Illinois exceeded the quota set for it by the War Department, and it was therefore the only loyal state not to require conscription statewide. So many men wanted to enlist in 1861 that Governor Yates had to refuse their service, sending them to Union regiments in Missouri after the six authorized regiments for Illinois had been filled. 22

- 1 J. G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Lexington, Mass., 1969), p. 197
- 2 Bruce Catton, U. S. Grant and the American Military Tradition, Oscar Handlin, ed. (Boston, 1954), pp. 66-67.
- 3 "It is now clear to us that the invasion of Kentucky by the rebels was, on their part, a crowning blunder, as it rendered her a staunch supporter of the National Government, led to the raising of her quota of troops and gave us among friends just the base we wanted for operations against Tennessee and further South." New York Times, November 24, 1861: Fletcher Pratt, Civil War on Western Waters (New York, 1956), p. 54.
- 4 Bruce Catton, Grant Moves South (Boston, 1960), pp. 46, 56.
- 5 Pratt, Civil War on Western Waters, pp. 22, 66.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
- 7 Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 55.
- 8 Ibid., p. 59.
- 9 Ibid., p. 51.
- 10 "On April 19, the secretary of war telegraphed Gov. Yates to take possession of Cairo as an important strategic point." John Moses, Illinois-Historical and Statistical (Chicago, 1892), p. 643.
- 11 "These first regiments were commanded by the following officers respectively: Colonels John Cook, Richard J. Oglesby, Eleazer A. Paine, James D. Morgan, Wm. H. L. Wallace, and John McArthur. Under the second call of the president, the ten regiments, one from each congressional district, for whose formation provision had already been made, were organized from two hundred companies immediately tendered and were mustered into service within sixty days." Moses, Illinois-Historical and Statistical, p. 649.
- 12 Robert M. Sutton, "The Illinois Central, thoroughfare for Freedom," Civil War History, VIII (September, 1961), 278.
- 13 A considerable amount of their equipment and supplies also accompanied the 70,000 from April 21 to December 31, 1861. Ibid., p. 278.

- 14 Morgan County History (Jacksonville, 1878), p. 438.
- 15 Robert C. Canby, "Andrew Foote," in Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1935), XV, 188.
- 16 Grant to A. C. Fuller, Adjutant General of the state of Illinois, January 27, 1861, from the 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry file, Illinois State Archives, Springfield, Illinois (see Appendix).
- 17 Ephraim A. Wilson, Memoirs of the War (Cleveland, 1893), pp. 77, 162.
- 18 Charles Dudley Rhodes, "James Dada Morgan" in Malone ed., Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1934), XIII, 171.
- 19 James Swales's declaration for pension, May 20, 1912, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
- 20 Morgan County History, p. 438.
- 21 Don Harrison Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community (Urbana, 1978), pp. 234-5.
- 22 Moses, Illinois-Historical and Statistical, p. 649.

CHAPTER 2

The common man of mid-19th century America was often literate, but seldom did he attain a level which could be described as eloquent. ¹ Many of the soldiers in the Civil War had little more than a few years or months of education. ² However, in James Swales's case, the lack of more than a few months of formal education did not impede his communications with family in Jacksonville. Although the letters were addressed to David Swales, James Swales's brother, some topics discussed suggest that communication with friends and family was also accomplished by those letters. As with many other soldiers who left to fight in the war, the correspondences themselves reflected the enthusiasm engendered by the call to arms in 1861. ³

This particular letter is the first of James Swales's letters on repository at the Illinois State Historical Society. The whereabouts of another nineteen letters that Swales mentioned in this letter are unknown. The prolific quantity of letters, in addition to those available to the contemporary reader, indicate that he was faithful to those at home. Swales seemed to have enjoyed his penchant for writing letters. Correspondence was his vehicle for sharing as much of his experience with David as possible, and he

uninhibitedly complemented them with vignettes of the life he alternately detested and admired. Through his letters the war became personalized for family and friends with a rich display of the attitudes of a common Illinois soldier. The views of the letters complement Bell Wiley's important macroscopic study of the common Union soldier, Billy Yank, which characterizes the multitude and variety of stresses and pleasures endured and relished by individual northern soldiers. Wiley captures the universality of those experiences in all of their odd ironies, and vastly disparate conditions. For example, Swales complained in this letter of August 29, 1861 that soldiers lose their liberty in the military, as most privates are known to do in the first few months of their first tours of duty. Also, he found the uniforms initially unattractive upon their receipt by the men. Private Swales was as adamant about these chronic issues as were Wiley's subjects and other soldiers in every war.

Disorder and confusion in the year 1861 made it a year of contrasts and a more difficult experience for the soldier. Secession had caused the remaining loyal states to be plunged into a chaotic search for military leaders, supplies, and internal security. Despite the excitement and vocal bravado on the part of many, fear seemed to be mixed with the high emotion of the times. Patriotism was very high among those favoring the national war policy, and very low among those favoring accommodation with the rebellious states. For the majority in the North, though, secession was a threatening force which rallied men to the flag. 4

"War of secession" was a phrase which captured that mood through which many northerners then saw the crisis. The people's concern was translated into early action under the competent leadership of several governors, such as Governor Richard Yates of Illinois. ⁵ They laid the vital groundwork which brought volunteer regiments such as James Swales's 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry to forward positions. Governors in the Midwest such as Yates utilized the urgency and cooperation of the citizenry to gain control of the border situation early enough in the year to have an effect on the later strategy of the war.

Since Illinois was close to the secessionist states both geographically and culturally, a series of actions by the state to protect itself was natural. Not only was rebellion along the long western border with Missouri a threat, but Governor Richard Yates had reason to be concerned about the loyalty of Illinois citizens who had strong sympathy for the South. ⁶ Many Illinoisans had migrated to the state from the older southern states, and they and their progeny were largely loyal to the Democratic Party which had been embroiled in partisan battle with the insurgent Republican Party. That fight, of course, had allied them with southern Democrats in the defense of southern prerogatives, including the ownership of slaves. Despite the clear statements by the apostle of Illinois Democracy, Stephen A. Douglas, on loyalty among Democrats, some men left the state to fight for Dixie, and some who stayed home were strongly sympathetic with southern aims. ⁷

Perhaps it was a measure of the success of the governor and his assistants that only one incident that involved bloodshed between Union and anti-Union forces occurred in the state. In that 1864 encounter, Union soldiers were attacked by a copperhead gang in eastern Illinois, near Charleston, on their way back to their unit in the South after having been on leave. Other midwestern states, including Wisconsin and Michigan, suffered more frequent incidents such as raids and bank robberies than did Illinois. ⁸

Under the threat of such possibilities, the governor made two military moves to protect the state against attack by southern forces. Although the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers provided a natural barrier to the defense of the state, any hesitation or hint of neutrality by the governor would have changed the political and military balance of the Mississippi River valley to a significant extent. ⁹

The 10th was a contingent of Illinois volunteers sent to garrison Cairo, a post incrementally important in relation to any military threats from the South. The troops at Cairo with Grant in 1862 included the regiments sent by the state in 1861. Their accomplishments were appreciable in the campaigns of 1862, as the northern army was gradually consolidated in larger commands such as the Army of the Tennessee.

On April 19, 1861, secretary of war Simon Cameron had telegraphed Yates with instructions, and he had dispatched General Richard Kellogg Swift of Chicago with a force to Cairo. Meanwhile, six regiments of eager infantrymen were being raised from local militia companies which had raced to

Springfield to be included in the President's call for 50,000 volunteers. ¹¹ These included the 7th to 12th Regiments, numbered successively following the 1st through 6th Regiments, which had been similarly raised for war against Mexico in 1848. These first six volunteer regiments raised in 1861, and thence transferred to Cairo, were designated as the First Brigade Illinois Volunteers, and were placed under the command of General Benjamin Prentiss, who relieved General Swift at Cairo.

These forces were recruited under state authority, paid by the state, and commanded by the governor under normal circumstances. However, within the president's constitutional powers they were at the disposal of the national military establishment. ¹²

James Swales to David Swales, August 29, 1861

Camp Defiance, Cairo, Ill

August 29th, 1861

Brother Dave

Lieutenant Tongley Just Come from the office with a fist ¹³ full of letters three for (James M. Swales) golly you ot ought have seen me Jump open and devoured the lts I Jerked their contents like a hungry wolf would a lamb I am exceedingly glad to hear that you are all well But I am soary to Say that for the last few days I have been very poorly hardly able to perform any duty I took a violent cold two or three days after we got here but feel a great deal better this morning the weather has been been cool or you might cold I tell you, you dont know what hardships is you are at lieverty to do as you please but we that are Soldiers are no longers Citizens but uncle Sam s property we have not got a single blanket yet shoes we have got socks our uniforms come yesterday it is very nice trimed in blue that is the coats high crowned hats with a leather neb ugly as the devil the pants and coats are a beatiful light grey they present a beautiful appearence when on dress parade or line of Battle or Company is getting on finely with our drill we drill in squads most of the time we have got the crack Captain of tenth regt he is not the man to ¹⁴ put on style over his men he is fast distg distinguishing himself he is worthy of promotion if he wanted be but he says he come as Captain and he is going sick stick to us every man of us likes him I have not heard complain of him yet

he is a man ought to rank with the Colonels as for the Lieutenants and non-commissioned officers they havent been tried yet

one regiment arrived here from Clear lake this morning I ¹⁵ dont know what I what number it is they past on through the camp and pitched thir tents about a half mile west of us Just above the Artillery camp they all look very much fatigued we have got a strong force here now it would be almost useless for old Gens (Bed) (tick) to attack us now we would make his feathers fly if he did there has been a ster around here within ten miles of here old pillow is in six hours march of us the Steamer (Graham) landed a boat load of Soldiers at Birds Point is guarded with about ten 1000 Strong Cavalry Infantry and a Artillery & CC

the report that we had gone to washington is false we ¹⁶ are here yet and more than likly we will remain here two months if not all winter I wish it was so we could leave here I dont think I can ever get use to this nasty river water it is so yellow it looks like Piss and tastes worse I have had the Military Shits for a day or two and feel weak dont let any lady read this it you do I will clean you out I must close grub is ready this makes 20 letters I have written give my respects to all inquireng friends you spoke about my picture in your letter tell mother She can give her one of theirs if she wants to that b tell mother I will hve one taken and send it up I told

mary to give Sin one if She wants to there is nothing to
write to about now I will try and keep you posted write
soon from your Brother Jim

Good-Bye

- Bell Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank (Indianapolis, 1953), pp. 304, 358.
- 2 Ibid., p. 304.
- 3 Ibid., p. 20.
- 4 Ibid., p. 18.
- 5 Richard Yates, Jr., and Catherine Yates Pickering, Richard Yates, Civil War Governor, John H. Krenkel, ed. (Danville, Ill., 1966), p. 156.
- 6 John Logan was influential in bringing southern Illinois's southern sympathizing Democrats into the company of Union supporters, but resisted the government earlier in 1861 before Stephen Douglas threw his weight behind Lincoln after the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter. Randall and Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 179.
- 7 A half company of Confederate volunteers was recruited by a "swashbuckling captain from Maryland" in the spring of 1861 from Williamson and Franklin Counties. Bluford Wilson, "Southern Illinois in the Civil War," Reprint from Illinois State Historical Society Transactions of the Society for the year 1911. For political and social consequences, individuals conceivably did not advertise service in the Confederacy after returning to the state. For instance, the oral lore of Cass County, in central Illinois, indicates that some men of southern origin left to volunteer in the South. However, as Wilson reported, the men of southern Illinois counties met their volunteer quotas as well as did the other counties.
- 8 On March 28, 1864 the 5th Illinois was attacked by a Copperhead mob while returning to the front on veteran furlough. Two Union men were killed, and eight wounded in the attack which occurred at Charleston. Three Confederate sympathizers were killed, four wounded, and twelve taken prisoner. Benson Lossing, Matthew Brady's Illustrated History of the Civil War (New York, 1912), p. 320.
An incident between Copperheads of the Knights of the Golden Circle, who came to Jacksonville in September of 1863 for the arraignment of one of their leaders, created a frightening situation for the Union Leaguers in town. The Knights came from Cass County with "two to four hundred" heavily armed men on horseback. The outcome was peaceable, although the Journal office had twice been torched by anti-Republican arsonists before the Cass invasion. Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community, p. 237.

9 "A Confederate Kentucky would have thrown the Southern frontier of the Ohio, fronting on the southern portions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois - where 2,600,000 persons had a sentimental attachment to the South." James A. Rawley, Turning Points of the Civil War (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1966), p. 14.

"Had not Cairo been occupied by Illinois troops, the soldiers of the South would have taken possession of that strategic point within a very few days; and upon its being threatened from the North, Confederate troops (in full force) would have been rushed in; and it would have taken thousands of Illinois lives to dislodge them." Yates, Pickering, and Krenkel, (ed.), Richard Yates, Civil War Governor, p. 156. The southern third of Illinois was too near to both Kentucky and Missouri to have been unaffected by developments in either.

10 Sutton, "The Illinois Central, Thoroughfare for Freedom," Civil War History, Vol. VII (September, 1961), p. 278.

11 Moses, Illinois-Historical and Statistical, p. 643.

12 Randall and Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp. 311-12.

13 Lieutenant James F. Langley of Jacksonville was first lieutenant of Company A from July 28, 1861. He was promoted to captain on June 13, 1862, and resigned December 31, 1862 at age 47. Brigadier General John Reece, Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, Vol. I (Springfield, Ill., 1900), p. 479.

14 Captain McClain F. Wood, a native of Jacksonville, was captain from July 28, 1861. He was promoted to the regiment's lieutenant colonelcy on July 23, 1863. Reece, Report of the Adjutant General, p. 479.

15 Clear Lake was a camp in eastern Sangamon County at which Illinois troops assembled. John N. Adams, Illinois Place Names (Springfield, 1969), p. 324.

16 Few Illinois regiments did go East in 1861.

CHAPTER 3

The Cairo that James Swales knew in September, 1861 was a boomtown of enterprise in the wake of the influx of Illinois volunteers. With military authority only recently established, rowdiness and bawdiness was provided to the soldiers at saloons and bordellos flourishing with their eager trade. Obviously charmed, Private James M. Swales described a prostitute with whom he had lingered at the St. Charles Hotel. The affair was a central feature in the letter, because of the carefree air it lent to this particular letter of the soldier. In his letter to his brother David, he shared a full sense of the adventure a young soldier could experience in such an environment.

Swales's good-natured and salty attitude enabled him to enjoy the moment despite the problems concerning health and safety. The remainder of his conversation in the correspondence of this letter became infected by the high spirits of that Cairo encounter. He chided the town for being composed of whorehouses and saloons in which "they have no more respect for the sabbath than a set of heathens."

More humor surfaced in the story he related about a flatboat being fired upon by a soldier on guard duty by the river bank. It caused a panic to sweep camp from fear of an

enemy attack, sending the men in search for cartridges for their firearms. Swales's perception of the incident as humorous underlied a presentiment of real combat. The "sensation," as Swales termed it, demonstrated the vulnerability of ill-trained units by a lesson which could have been a Confederate attack.

Two other predicaments that the private discussed in the same light vein were even more pitiful. Swales chose to laugh at disease among his fellows in September, although he was no longer able to do that by December.¹ While his description of sick fellow soldiers was probably accurate, it did not really sound sympathetic enough to lead the reader to believe that James Swales had yet had any serious intestinal difficulties.

Swales further mocked humankind's wartime suffering by deprecating a negro man who had been a company cook for Company A. The man received ill-disposed blame for the unsanitary environment contributing to bowel disorders, and was made the butt of a joke in the letter of September 8. That ethnic insult shows that there was racial prejudice in the company, as the letter's author did not make a connection between unhygienic conditions and the disease problem in general. An exception to that lack of association was his repulsion to using river water for drinking purposes. Few soldiers in the Cairo vicinity or in any other army camps of the Civil War years realized that loose discipline and ignorance, as well as gross indifference to sanitation, permitted the easy transmission of disease.² Despite the belief that

the negro cook was responsible, environmentally influenced diseases such as malaria were inevitable in such low lying areas as Cairo. The number of deaths from this tragedy was starkly recorded for posterity by the interments of men at the military cemetery near Mound City.

Swales' belief that he was too young and virile to succumb to malady probably augmented his carefree attitude toward the subject. That frontier attitude common to the western fighting men helped cause a disregard for basic health measures. Those such as the positioning of latrines, among others concerning basic cleanliness, contributed incalculable misery and death among the ranks. ³

From the swaggering attitude of the stories in this letter, it is easy to surmise that the volunteer had not lost the romance of soldiery which had inspired the formation of volunteer units in the spring of the year. Most of the men had expected a short decisive war that would gratify them with excitement and glory, and fulfill their patriotic obligation. ⁴ Disease and death in the camp were an indication that it would not be without high cost, but James Swales had not yet realized that certainty. He was most concerned with company performance and the arrival of arms and other equipment for his regiment. The "guns and things" he mentioned had arrived with Colonel Morgan.

When Ulysses S. Grant arrived on the scene he knew of those weaknesses as well as the strength framed in their independence and vigor. General Grant was the new cement which was to hold those hurriedly assembled regiments together.

The troops were passing from state authority to national authority without much awareness of it through the ranks, as evidenced by the private of the 10th Illinois Volunteers. Swales was soon to enter upon a period of intensified training under the command of an able professional soldier.

The measures taken under General Grant's command changed Private Swales's experiences in the army considerably. At Mound City, to which his regiment was soon transferred, drilling by companies and regiments intensified. The private also testified that his company was responsible for guard duty at the naval yards at Mound City where ships for riverine warfare were being constructed. Despite his complaints about this harsher phase of his military service, Swales received necessary training and conditioning. Without it his three years as a soldier in Union campaigns, and year as a prisoner of war at Andersonville Prison in Georgia, would have been more difficult. In the company of other soldiers who had volunteered to fight for their country, he was encountering the hardship that was to increase in the years to come.

James Swales to David Swales, September 8, 1861

Camp Defiance, Cairo, Ill.

September 8th, 1861

Brother Dave

I sit me down in thought profound a maxim wise I drew
 its as easy for you to write to me as it is for me to write
 to you this makes the third letter I have sent to you and
 have got not any from you it beats hell I havent had any
 for three days it is enough to discouge the devil to thank
 that I have got to do all of the writing I will say no
 more about this but sifice it to say that I feel better than
 I have since I have been in Camp it is cool & a pleasant
 feels like the faul of the year I hope these few lines may
 find you & Co. enjoying good health and in good spirits the
 Boys here are in better spirits than I have Seen them since I
 left home Col. Morgan has arrived with his guns and things
 begin to look somthing is going to be done the excitement
 is intense there is about 28 on the sick list now five
 days ago there was about 15 Bill Mc Evers has just come
 out of the Hospital like a ghost more than a living being.
 sickness is dimmising fast weather is getting cool river on
 the raise and the devil cant swim if any of us gets sick we
 have got plent of pull

the talk is that Col. Morgan is about to turn his regi-
 ment into men of War put us on bard of gun boats some of
 the Boys are in for it and some are opposed to it for my

part I would as soon go heaven by water as by land things are not working altogether right there is some secret shenanigan goin on there is two or three pets in the company which is going to raise the devil Some of these odd come Shorts if they dont keep on the alert we had a fire in town this morning which drawed out the old fire engines not much damage done if it had burned the accursed hole up I wouldnt help to put it out I believe it was a whore house that cached fire every other house in the town is a whore house or lager beer saloon they have no more respect for the sabbath than a set of heathens in consequence of the late Battle of Paducah of which the union Boys come out victorious without much loss the loss on our side is estimated to be about 25 killed and a few wounded the loss on the side of the Rebels is reported to be about three hundred killed and wounded but it hardly looks reasonable I think it slightly exaggerated the 8th and 9th regiments left here to reinforce them got these Just in time Paducah is situated about 40 miles up the ohio river on the Kentucky Side we was ordered to go but as we had no equipage we could not go three boats loaded withe troops passed up the river enrout for paducah each boat containing 1,000 each two last night that makes 5,000 that have gone up the river band to each but besid marshal music also we are looking for a bloody Battle soon where it will be I am not prepared to say amunition is going Aut of our magazine ever day Shot and shell mostly I dont think our stay here will be long the way things are going on Captain has began to crack us through here latley

there must be something in the wind that is uncommon what it I cant say and dont care much the other night we was aroused by the fireing of the sentinels gun down by the fort the first fire I did not pay much attention to the fourth I Jumped down out of my old Bunk and ran up to the levee to see what I could see when I got the guard was runing back and forward they did not no what they was about them selves said they was looking for cortridges it created quite a sensation for a little bit but proved to be an old flat boat that had been sent afloat up above town and as it come down by the Foet some part ass shot at it we went out in a skiff and pulled it ashore I thought when I first heard the gun we was going to have a Muss Some of the Boys lay in their Bunks Shaking like dogs shiting gravel I was up writing a letter when it took place I have just been up to the other camp brousing round to see what I see I seen Capt. Bazarth he was making his men fall in to go meetng its hard to tell which makes the best looking officer him or T smith Tom Smith has got about the most Shabby Company on the ground his Company is no more than about half full and we can throw ther sand in their eyes drilling.

they keep open their saloons all day sunday roling ten pins Billiards Pidgeon holds and games of all description going all the time if you were here you would soon be disgusted at the place as you pass a long the streets you can see wimen tending the bar and look as pleeing and smile just as good as to say if you have got two bits or fifty cents you can have all you want I was up town one day and walked by

the st. Charles hotel & there was a women looked down from the third story and comenced singing so as to attract my attention I couldnt help looking up and just as I looked up she give me the wink just as good as to say come up. She was as good looking a women as you could wish to look at The rest you know if you can guess good she was fresh nary clap sound I think She was newly enitiated it dont cost a cent we have the darndes time in our miss that you could imagine about cooking matters & we had a Bay Contraband nigger. efer our cook but he was so infernal nasty the we had to give him a dis honorable discharge when it would be warm he would sweat like a by Steer the Sweat would drop of the end of his nose and in to the victuals it would go he was enough to give a fellow a stomach to Shit if a fellow dont care what he says it is time for me close my bleguard languae I imagine you say so to George Dunavan is just on my right hand side writing he keeps Jugling & scracing his head trying to think of some thing write Tony Pots is about playd out he looks like consumtive pup I bet he wishes he was back to Ran's dont you, this is the laziest life a fellow can led I want you to wake up bub Willson and make him write dont foreget to for get to give these letters to their respective owners and oblige me dont let any lady read this for Gods Sake and mine also write soon Company or H in place of G give my respects to all

James M Swales J.r

- 1 From May, 1861 to July 30, 1865, 1,739,135 cases of diarrhea and dysentery caused 57,265 deaths in the Union Army. Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 136.
- 2 Dr. William A. Hammond, Surgeon General of the U.S. from April 25, 1862, noted later that "the Civil War was fought at the end of the medical Middle Ages." Allan Nevins, The War for the Union: The Organized War 1863-1864 (New York, 1971), p. 312.
- 3 "Ignorance of disease was, of course, a fundamental factor in epidemics and death." Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 125.

Dr. Joseph H. Brinton, General Grant's protégé and trusted surgeon at Cairo, noted that the volunteer soldiers there became incapable of self-protection from disease when in camp. Catton, Grant Moves South, p. 61.
- 4 That was attested by the three-month period for which they initially enlisted.

CHAPTER 4

The letter of October 9, 1861 sent by James M. Swales to his brother David contained examples of the ebullient and dark spirits which rotated in the soldier's consciousness. Swales was excited by his anticipation of the opportunity to test his mettle and find glory in coming battles. That emotional state darkened when his discussion touched upon the preparedness and quality of the officers and enlisted men with whom he had come in contact. In a moment of disillusionment, the private commented to the effect that almost all volunteers, commissioned and non-commissioned, were unmilitary and unpatriotic. He also accused the officers of being pompous, vane, and ambitious, and of possessing overbearing and disdainful attitudes toward the men. In turn, Swales chastised the men for being unenthusiastic, and otherwise unworthy of their calling. Their moaning and complaining especially aggravated him.

Only one individual received the private's praise in this letter. He was the redheaded second lieutenant of Company A from Meredosia, Otto D. Critzer.¹ From Swales's vantage, the man was a natural leader, one who was sociable with the enlisted men as well as officers. Private Swales was pleased by Critzer's refusal to drill the men on sick call

for more than a token five minutes. The lieutenant's leniency aided soldiers who were ill, but could not have pleased Critzer's superior, who had given the command. As a result of the election of officers up to the rank of colonel, the men expected that type of egalitarian treatment. They were disenchanted by officers who were both strict disciplinarians and amateurs in military affairs. ² James Swales summarized his view of the matter with the question, "What is an officer without the goodwill of his men?"

In another point in the discussion of the letter, Swales pursued an effort to separate his brother from any illusions concerning the virtue of soldiers. James was appalled by the description of soldiers being "lamblike" in their manners and speech in an article which both had read in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Papers. Perhaps that was the reason for Private Swales's honest and graphic letters about camp life to his brother. James also commented upon other popular literature which they found to their mutual tastes. ³ Some of the phrases of the letter may have been borrowed from the popular reading material, or the men in the camp. The phrases "ocasional pugilistic battles take place," and "it is a National affair that is by no means easily settled," were probably not original usage phrases for a barely educated private. However, the adaption he made of them was adequate.

In another segment Swales's nationalism was exhibited by a readiness to fuse his own fate with that of Washington and the patriots of 1776. His devotion to the cause of the Union might have borne a relationship to the circumstance of his

being a second generation American. Despite his patriotic emotions, he was concerned for the slaughter of his own ethnically dominant group, the Anglo-Saxons. However, his remarks about England show that he was not an anglophile.

Understandably, the nature of Private Swales's patriotic enthusiasm was touched by a premonition of the cost to be paid in the coming struggle, which he euphemistically referred to as a "national affair." Swales feared that the lack of resolve and patriotism among fellow soldiers, and the national government, would cause a disaster.

The soldiers in the camp received his scorn as he referred to them as the "rakings and scums of creations." Ironically, however, he did not direct his rancor toward the Confederate enemy as he wrote the letter.

Edward Zane Carroll Judson, better known to the readers of his adventure novels as Ned Buntline, was another topic of conversation for the brothers. He apparently provided the anti-British expressions reiterated by James in the letter. As was the case with James Swales, Buntline was a favorite of the men in the Union Army, who as a group had a voracious appetite for such literature. The notorious Buntline took pleasure in inciting nativism, and anti-British sentiments were his forte. ⁴

Another point of particular interest as a strategic observation in the letter was Swales's report that three gunboats were being built at the naval construction docks at Mound City. There was no censorship to interfere with such information.

Swales wrote the letter using a candle to see by in the hours of the evening before lights had to be extinguished. That circumstance caused his mediocre spelling and grammar to be more difficult to read. However, his esprit was obvious despite the flaws.

James Swales to David Swales, October 9, 1861

Camp Morgan, Mound City, Illinois, October 9, 1861

Brother Dave,

This morning finds me the happy recipient of your welcome letter that came to hand in due time to find me in good health with the exception of a cold and bruise on my left side which I received from a fall. I will tell how it happened. Press, Ayers and I got the Countersign and concluded to go out in⁵ town last night to get a few little items that we needed. and between our quarters and the store we wanted get to, the railroad crosses. we walked up the track as it was so dark that we could not see the wagon road and took the track you know there is culverts ever few steps --I stepped in one of these and fell and my left side was the first place that struck. and you bet how it knocked the wind out of me. I was dead for a minute but soon raised up and asked Press. what in the h...ll it meant he raised me up but I could not go. as I was at loose for wind in a few minutes I got at ease but felt very weak. This morning I sound am sound but a little sore. And that what's the matter ----This morning just before I received your papers containing the Story titled (Border Chivalry) you asked me to give you my opinion of it ----to tell you the truth about-it-I think it is bully so does the rest that have read it--and that description of (Ned. Buntline) I think it is rather a rough one, by the way how do like it, --I have no news of a thrilling nature to

communicate to you times are very dull and I am more so. I feel very stupid very much like having the chills. but hope that I will not. nearly all of the Boys have had the sore eyes for the last few days but as Press Ayers happend to have some eye water, he let me have some of it which has about cured my eyes--- Mrs. Langley is on her way here ⁶ from Cairo and will be here this evening to see the sick Boys and maybe brig some of them if old Floyd dont ⁷ care a mufs about it. if he does it wont take long to clean him out do you think it will? the Captain has adopted a ⁸ rule for the sick those that are not able to attend Battalion drill. he leaves Lieutenant Critzer to drill them he dont know much about drill as some of the boys-- I was one on the sick drill this evening--after the Captain had gone with the Company to the parade ground for Battalion. Critzer got an old musket an told us about to fall in for drill --and we did so. he drilled us about five minutes and quit and said he be damd if he was going to drill sick men. as much as to say he didnt want to drill himself - we had a big laugh over it and quit. good joke on the drill wasnt it? Critzer is the best man in our Company for all he is (red headed) he is as sociable a man as ever was he makes no distinction privates and officers. he treats us as well as he treats the uper tens he dont turn up his nose if he smells a private coming that is the kind of a man to win the favor of soldiers. what is an officer without the goodwill of his men? isnt he in more danger than a (high private) if we ever should be called on to the Battle field? I answer yes. common sense ought to

teach them that they cant come the (shenanigin) game over
 Volunteers. they must know that we didn't come at the call
 of our Country to be trampled on as we wasnt elected on that
 ticket. an officer is no officer at all until he knows how
 to treat his men as he would treat himself what do you think
 about at?-in the days of "76" was our forefathers fighting
 to assume a high position in the rank of Military distinction?
 did they bear the trials deprivations of that long and bloody
 Campaign of nine years over popularity did the gallant
 Washington fight for gold or love of Country? Patriotism
 led him on to the glorious victory he achived. after so many
 long an bloody Battles with Red Jackets, and red men of the
 forest, has that felling of Patriotism been aroused since
 the days of the Revolution of 76 does that feeling move in
 the heads of the American people to day? has it been kindled
 to blaze of love and true devotion to their Country and Flag?
 Nay verily it has not I fear. to much pride and style to
 much, broad cloth, to much fishing for high offices all this
 is (whats the matter) ----- you say that you didnt know that
 there were eight Corporals in a Company it is even so eight
 Corporals, five sargeants, three Comisioned officers. making
 sixteen altogether --and about that mutiny in the company.
 end the trial how it terminated the two privates are to be
 kept under guard the two three months and lose all the time
 up to the present and do all the fatigue duty that is to be
 done. acording to the military law they desereved it- this
 will teach the rest a lesson dont' you think it will? if
 they were to be hung it would be keep the Company from being
 disgraced?

Tis night and the clouds are Cowering over our horses giving every thing a dark and gloomy appearance also making a fellow feel lonesome as he turns his wandering eyes home-ward far away to the northwest. where he often thinks of the days of his childhood and the bright sunny hours he has spent around the old Cabin door. It after comes to my mind and looks as natural as if it was yesterday!---what a mighty change has taken place since the days of our childhood. where are they that in youth then are they still in the family circle yet enjoying the merry chat that is going on within the walls of peace and harmony. where discord never enters only occasional pugilistic Battles take place but soon gets ⁹ played as they are only family affairs--- but is this a family affair (no nary) it is a --- National affair that ¹⁰ is by no means easily settled and will never lie settled only by the loud roaring of cannon and clashing of steel and the effusion of human blood and the groaning of the --wounded and dying, then perhaps they will hear to reason and compromise after thousands of anglo saxons have licked the dust of the earth to rise no more. who thinks of the horrors of the Battle field and does not flinch at the thoughts of it the Bravest of the Brave will do it in spite of their herosim the man never drawed the sweet breath of life that could fase the cannon mouth without flinching from it. they can boast and brag all they will but let them try it on once and if they dont get up and howl, I will treat to the lager beer, aint that fair? I imagine you think I am just merely expressing my opinions about matters and things, but if a fellow

will get homesick now is the time as the Boy are getting sick all around him and the time of the year is calculated to increase his feelings of despondency if he will give way to it. I am not the one to grow dispirited. life is miserable enough without adding misery to it. ¹¹ some of our Boys are growing miserable every day some wish they had never been brought to the light of this world, and rue the day they enrolled their names on the list of Patriots if they are worthy of the name -- to tell you the truth about it I dont believe there is a true Patriot in the army I will tell you what our grand army is composed of -- it is composed of the very rakings of creation as you say the low born serfs of Victorias broad domain there are the Patriots Ragamufins that had nothing to resort to but uncle same--you have often seen representations, in the Illustrated papers about uncle Sams Northern gallant Chivalry and the gallant sons of Columbia ¹² and their shrewd and witty ways. and them being so lamb like in their manners and ways of conversation. this is all bosh it is not so. it may be that war is all for the best as it will clean out some of the rakings and of scums of creations now believe this or not. but I believe Jeff. Davis will clean out Scott -- they are building three gun Boats here in the Navy yard one is to be named in honor General George B. Mclelelan we are to guard them they will be launched in about five weeks and then may be we will take up our line of march for the land of cotton. but is impossible to think of going until Mousouri is entirely cleaned out if we go south? who is to protect the Borders and keep the Rebels out the pitiful home guard

or the Ellsworth guard it will take the western division to hold the rights ¹³ and property of the people in the northern states. where do you think Lincoln is with his 500,000 men and \$500,000,000. ¹⁴ where are they I repeat the question. to day they have got have as many men in the field as we have if they havent how is it that they always have more men to fight than we. ¹⁵ they have out numbered us in every Battle that has been fought yet, as true as God we can never conquer them we may fight them until the last man expires and then how much better will we be. they have every advantage in the world-- it is rumored this evening that we will go back to Cairo in a few days, but how true it is I cant say but hope that it is a fals expert I dont want to go back as long as we can stay here- we are nicely situated and have good water to use in place of that nasty river water the people think a Battle will take place at Colombus soon and if it so I guess we will have a chance to try our hand. if we have got to fight let them come we might as well fight first as last and the sooner the better every day that is lost only gives the Rebels a better chance to prepare to meet us-- it is getting late and my belly begins to hurt me from the effects of that fall I got last night- I think rest will do me good and tomorrow if feel able I will write some more. there the drum has just taped for lights to be put out and if I dont extinguish my luminary I might find myself neatly situated in the guard house

So good night

- The lieutenant enlisted on July 28, 1861, in Meredosia, a village on the Illinois River in Morgan County. He resigned on June 27, 1862. Reece, Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, I, 479.
- 2 Bell Wiley describes early volunteer units as composed of officers and men equally ignorant, and inadequately equipped through most of their training. Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 26.
- 3 See Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 155, for examples of the popular literature.
- 4 The New York Astor Place riot of 1849, in large part incited by Buntline, was the most notorious of his anti-British activities. He did, however, by stirring up a riot against German immigrants in St. Louis in 1852, demonstrate his thorough nativism. Jay Monaghan, The Great Rascal: The Life and Times of Ned Buntline (Boston, 1952), pp. 174, 198.
- 5 Press. was the nickname of a friend of Swales named William C. P. Ayers, a private from Jacksonville enlisted in the company from August 9, 1861 until August 31, 1864. Reece, Report of the Adjutant General, I, 480.
- 6 Mrs. Langley was the wife of First Lieutenant James F. Langley of Jacksonville. He was promoted to Captain on June 13, 1862, and resigned December 31, 1862. Reece, Report of the Adjutant General, I, 479.
- 7 He referred to General John B. Floyd, the Confederate general who was active in preparing defenses on the South's western rivers. Floyd had been Buchanan's secretary of war before resigning during the Fort Sumter crisis. Randall and Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp. 153, 203.
- 8 Captain McClean F. Wood was promoted to lieutenant colonel on June 23, 1862 and served as the regiment's commander until John Tillson of Quincy took over the colonelcy on a permanent basis. Wood had led the Union Guard, Company A, to the state capitol. Morgan County History, pp. 438-9.
- 9 This figurative alliteration was obviously meant to denote family bouts of lesser intensity than a boxing match.
- 10 The meaning of "nary" is given as "not either, none," and identified as a popular phrase in Western England. James Halliwell, A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words (London, 1924), p. 571.
- 11 Physical conditions which caused misery are described more fully in other letters.

- 2 It was apparently an article in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Papers, a popular periodical.
- 3 His reference to the Ellsworth Guard was probably the unit of well-dressed zouave soldiers from Chicago.
- 4 Lincoln's July 4, 1861 message to Congress called for 400,000 men and \$400,000,000. Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The War Years, 1861-1864 (New York, 1954), I, 98.
- 5 An estimate of the number of troops in the United States Army at the end of 1861 is 663,000. For the South in January, 1862, it is 315,418. Thomas Leonard Livermore, Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America: 1861-65 (Bloomington, Ind., 1957), pp. 43, 50.

CHAPTER 5

The privates of the company, as James Swales informed his brother, expected something to happen because the officers were walking about "concocting plans." The men felt distrust and resentment toward their untrained officers, when adjustment to routine was most difficult. ¹

Swales reported rumors about a night drill in his previous letter of October 9. Some foreknowledge notwithstanding, the soldiers, by his account, were frightened and confused by the bugler's call to arms. One may envision the scramble of inexperienced, and formerly overconfident, soldiers trying to find their clothing and rifles in the dark while those with bowel disorders suffered embarrassment, and the remainder fright, trembling hands, and general panic. It demonstrated the need for discipline in the face of danger, ² and the danger of illness to a camp or fortification vulnerable to attack.

The hazard to the men due to their lack of training and experience was gradually reduced as campaigns against the South proceeded. However, the existence of various diseases, including diarrhea and dysentery, continued to be largely beyond the reach of medicine through the remaining years of the war. ³

Compounding all other problems, most officers in charge of training and commanding the men were themselves untrained, in addition to having their authority weakened because of being elected by troops often familiar with them socially before the war. ⁴ Fortunately, from September 1, 1861, there was an able commander, General Ulysses S. Grant, able to improve the volunteer regiments at these southern Illinois camps. ⁵ His talents were evidenced by the results he was able to accomplish with these men, although other leaders obviously deserve recognition, as does the bravery of the volunteers in battle.

The enemy facing them in the lower valleys of the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland rivers were no more prepared for the warfare to come than were the ill-trained northern volunteers. Grant knew that time would allow the Confederates to store supplies and build defensive fortifications which would put a later northern offensive at a disadvantage. ⁶ In contrast, as a soldier in the ranks, James Swales was largely unenlightened about the strategy involved in carrying the war to the South. To him, the Confederate activities were a significant menace which might have led to a Confederate opportunity to achieve a victory.

The personal concerns of the moment surfaced in the private's letters, as Swales mused upon the death rate in the camp and the quality of the ranks. Both caused him distress, which his discussion revealed in the pages he sent home. In his estimation, hope for survival rested on those two factors concerning all men and officers.

Surviving the incidence of disease was paramount, because he did not want to die an inglorious death far from home and the battlefield. More specifically, he did not want to die a slow death from disease in a hospital, a possibility which he had especially grown to dread.

Survival and success on the battlefield, his second major concern, was heavily dependent on the fighting ability of all the men and officers in the regiment. Swales realized that fact, and was critical of the training program, and the men's attitudes. Likewise, he enjoyed chiding himself and his position in the army by using the term "high private." As if Swales made a point of demonstrating his own inconsistency, he also complained loudly about being prevented from making trips into town. He considered that discipline, imposed on him, to be tyranny on the part of the colonel. Swales wanted to see the improvement of his regiment, but had an aversion to more restrictions.

One may imagine that as a fairly serious soldier, the private foresaw destruction and defeat if his company and regiment, and the remainder of the Union Army, were not honed to a military edge. That fear, combined with personal pride, propelled his effort to become a better soldier.

James Swales to David Swales, October 25, 1861

Mound City, Illinois

October 25th

Brother David,

I now seat my self to answer your welcome letter dated the 23^d written by pencil. very good idea when a fellow is out of ink well at present and hope this may find you the same is misspelled - - items. the B has just run in to shore the landing. may be she has brought the mail up from Cairo Jhon Langley went to Cairo yesterday and got back this morning. ⁷ he said that old Col. Dunlap told him that there was a package there for James M. Swales. what it is I cant imagine. did any of our folks ever send anything? answer yesterday Rebel Cavalry could be seen from here watering their horses on the opposite side of the River, getting bold? Captn Carter of the artillery wanted to throw a shell over and scatter them but the Col. Morgan said not -- later from the Brigade Hospital four have died since yesterday. bully for them dont you say so? we dont think any more of a man dying than you of beast-- it has got to be so common. it is an every day occurence. to day is my regular day standing -- but as I was a little well I got the Orderly to let me of to day and go on tomorrow-- the first time that I have failed yet -- I feel well now though as I ever did in my life -- the paper of this morning give an account of a battle fought near Brinton Mousouri the Union Boys come victorious killing 200 of the Rebels bully for the Boys

just before I wrote the above I recieved a letter from Bill Clampit Bill wrote a very good letter in which he said the reason he has [not] written sooner it was not intentional neglect but that he was run very light with his work. Bill is a bully man don't you think so? I do. I must answer his to night. Mary put in a few lines said she wished it was so that she could send me a glass of cider Bully for her to dont you say so? ther is only five of us writing at the same time Press, Bill Mc, Ben Gladhill, Tim White⁸ and your humble servant -- the Col thought he would have some fun yesterday evening last night rather seen the officers walking around together concocting the plans-- consequently I mistrusted something of the kind Capt. woods knew all about it so he appreised us of the fact -- well every thing went of smoothly until about nine Oclock at night I was wide awake for the fun I kept my peepers strched -- seen Capt. Cheely⁹ slip up stairs, and directly him and Jhon Langley come down together Jhon had his drum. directly the long roll of the drum was heard two Companys turned out that is part of two. some took sick immediately after the long roll of the drum. some of them commited nuisance in their beds. some in their pants. some as they fell in ranks -- they was trufully scared you bets -- I suppose the intention of the Col. was to see how many men would turn out in case an attack should be made on this place good joke on the high privates -- it would take a very strong force to take this place, beside if they should take it would be a great advantage to them (Rebels) two large contraband boats are laying in here,

beside the new gun boats that are being built -- which cost not less than a million of dollars the quarter master department is full of money and provisions for the soldiers. it would be worth their labor if they could accomplish there design if they ever intend to fall in an try their charms. -- I guess Press told a little chunk of a yarn when he said that Bill had written that bag full of letters to me dont you? Bill says this is first -- Bill is more reliable than Press dont you think so you asked me what the major drummer wages was in fact cant inform you -- I told you Jhon was major but it was a mistake he is only princibal musician wont have any major until the Regament is filled up -- I suppose Jhon gets between 17 and 20 dollars per month and not more --. Couchman is one of Longley's pupils learning to drum he gets the same as private which I guess you know the wages of privates 13 or 15 one or another the paymaster has come so some of the Boys say if he has we will be paid of the first of next month -- I will send it home at once by way of check that is the way aint it? -- the old baggage wagon just passed the door with three coffins in it drawn by four mules -- two more ready to go in the morning may be by tomorrow night they will have another load ready -- the doctors kill them as fast as they can bring them out and drag them out to the boney

9 o'clock Saturday A.M. and I am seated to finish this letter nothing of importance is going on to day -- every thing quite and still it the weather is very pleasent the blue Birds are singing cheerfully as they hop bough to bough

in their native forest home -- the sick list is slowly decreasing with now and then dropping of -- good way to save robins aint it? -- the new and splendid gun Boat G.B. McClelan to be launched this evening at 5 'O'clock PM -- the entire regiment is to turn out and enjoy the fun -- the mail come this morning as usual and give them out to their respective owners you asked my opinion about it as a paper my high private opinion is that is one of the most neatly gotten up Journals of the day, and beside it is very interesting full of news-humor -- etc notice in this number of this week a piece headed -- Camp Morgan, Mound City -- read it to give your opinion about -- the names at the bottom is signed Map Sack -- do you think is very well gotten up -- it was written by one of the Meredosia Boys -- the officers think it wont be long before an attack will be made on this place -- the Rebels are lurking around the vicinity of the Ky side they come so close they can be seen by the naked eye -- the Rebels have almost deserted Columbus 1,000 remains there it is thought ¹⁰ that they have gone back to Mousouri to reinforce Gen. Sterling Price the soldiers are growing more dissatisfied every day in consequence of being left so close in camp privates are kept so close that they are not allowed to go in town without a seargeant along have to go and do their little business in less time than half hour -- and if cached out after the countersign is out are brought directly to the guard house -- and kept there until released by the Col. -- if things deep up at this rate many days longer you will no doubt hear of a general Rebellion in the gallant tenth -- it

only wants one Company to make the break and the rest will follow -- it does beat the devil -- a civill Soldier cant go the post office to mail a a letter -- you will get two letters about to night -- the reason for them both advancing at the same time is that I couldnt get to the office I asked for a pass three different times without getting any I just told them I was going out or bust so they let me out the old Col. is getting to be tyranical here of late -- I dont think there is a regament in the American service that does any more than does this one. we have to stand guard every week and guard the gun yard every Sunday night -- which makes about 36 hours for every one man per week -- company drill from 9 until 11 oclock A.M. clean our gun right away after dinner -- Battalion 3 oclock til have past 5 P.M., half hour left for eating supper and get ready for dress Parade, dress gets over Battalion till dark. who in the name of christ can stand this. I wish the Rebellion would take place to day no more now thank god amen on guard to day

- 1 Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 293.
- 2 The campaigns of Pope's Army of the Mississippi contributed to the 10th's experience. Lt. Matthew Jamison of the 10th's E Company explained the regiment's inclusion in Pope's army as the result of General McClernand's pro-slavery attitudes. He claimed that McClernand was angry because the regiment had attempted to secret a slave away from his master during a mission in Missouri. For that act, Jamison believed the 10th had been assigned away from Grant's force. Matthew H. Jamison, Recollections of Pioneer and Army Life (Kansas City, 1911), p. 172.
- 3 A four-to-one ratio of death from disease versus killed in battle, and twice the number of deaths from disease as from all other causes, demonstrate the gulf between contact and cure of disease by the Federal Army during the war. Surgeon General of the U. S. Army, Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion (Washington, D. C., 1870-1888), Medical Volume, pt. 1, xxxviii, pt. 2, 3, and pt. 3, 3 ff.
- 4 There was also often a predetermination by state officials for the leadership of regiments, before regimental elections. Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 24.
- 5 Bruce Catton, U. S. Grant and the American Military Tradition (Boston, 1954), p. 63.
- 6 Lloyd Lewis, Captain Sam Grant (Boston, 1950), p. 91.
- 7 John Langley was the drummer boy for the regiment, and came from Jacksonville. He was discharged on March 7, 1862. Reece, Report of the Adjutant General, I, 479.
- 8 Press [William Ayers] was apparently somewhat unreliable as a soldier as well as a friend, once having lost his pay for not being present for muster. However, on May 17, 1862 he was allowed to go back home for "recruiting services." Ben Gladhill was a private after the promotion of James Swales to corporal. Although Swales failed to mention them, several men from the Cairo area joined the company. Record collection of the 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the Illinois State Archives.
- 9 Captain Shelly was his name. Reece, Report of the Adjutant General, I, 477.
- 10 Grant was informed on October 7 that 45,000 rebels held the fort at Columbus. At the battle of Belmont in November, intended as a demonstration against it, Grant decided the conditions warranted waging battle. The battle lifted the morale of his volunteer force. Catton, Grant Moves South, pp. 60, 72.

CHAPTER 6

Personal and family matters intermingled with military concerns in the correspondence of Private Swales. He included three of the major themes contained in the total of his letters in this letter of December 3. They were, in order of concern to the private on that December day: family, camp, and the war. The letter home began with a genial conversation which centered on the letters he had received, a pistol he had acquired, and a photograph of himself and a friend. They had had a photographer take it in order to share their soldierly countenances with the homefolk. It was a new fad for the soldiers to have their images captured by the novelty; and, Swales was in that respect trend conscious. ¹

In the month of December, life in the camp of the 10th Illinois Volunteers was still unsettled. Swales, however, was becoming more discontented with the general lack of discipline and order than with discipline itself, which was being imposed from above. He welcomed a speech by Colonel Morgan to the troops, which probably tried to explain the war effort, and their contribution to it, in terms they could understand. This obviously enhanced Swales's morale, which helped to turn him from discouragement to contentment.

A portion of this transformation was the result of military activity as before. The description in this letter was of a gunboat engagement below Fort Holt, Kentucky between gunboats of the opposing forces.² This type of news was exciting to Swales in an otherwise dull and quiet period. There was promise of contact with the enemy, who seemed so distant. Suddenly, training and drill were of some real use to the private again, and his loyalty was once again undivided.

The detachment of Colonel Oglesby to Missouri to chase Jeff Thompson's Confederate guerillas on November 1, and the battle of Belmont, across the Mississippi from Columbus on November 7,³ contributed a revived martial spirit to Grant's army. The battle at Belmont, undoubtedly, stirred an interest in discipline and order amongst the competent soldiers at all levels, as a result of the disorderly conduct of that occasion. The near occurrence of disaster caused by the breaking of ranks by volunteer soldiers nearly allowed the just routed confederates to snatch away victory. Unmilitary behavior was more likely to be associated with a tangible danger to the individual soldier surviving such an experience, and to have been passed along as veteran's wisdom to those who had not seen battle.

Equally as promising to Private Swales's regiment, some of the other regiments had had their chance to see some real action, and the 10th Illinois would, too, in the not so distant future.

James Swales to David Swales, December 3, 1861

Mound City, Illinois

December 3d

Brother Dave,

I recieved two letters this morning one from you the other from Sister Mary. I am much pleased to hear from you all.--- night in December cold as get out I have just finished washing the dishes and sit down to finish this letter since I begun it I and Bill McEvers went and had our pictures taken. you may expect to see them about next friday or saturday. they are for mary. She told me have them taken and send them up. the fellow starts in the morning at 8 oclock. you will get a pipe and knife a small pistol. it will be bully for you Christmas times it needs a little fixing about the screw that goes through the works you can keep it until I get back if I am ever so fortunate as to get there you will find rench and needles for them is a gay pistol. Press Ayers has got the mate to it the brace cost five dollars I took it for a debt. I thought that was the best chance to get part of it you see I sold my boots for four dollars. they were nearly worn out and the never was fit for Soldiering to fight for a Camp. I will send you some aronoko to smoke you can go in on the nerve. that last letter I sent for the dispatch was a poor affair but a Captain asked me who wrote it. I never bet he said he said he didnt care who doesnt it was a good thing and no mistake they knew Seth Holmes o Jack O Lantern also. they think Seth is an awful fellow

in the Crusey toucher. who was tellin you the Jake on Tilson I guess it was Couchman wasnt it? He told it wrong about it being Tilson. it was Captain Shelley of Quincy Tilson never was Captain of a Company he has been major. Shelley is one of the biggest devils in the regament he often tells his men to take in their guts or he would cut their god dam mug of the Col gives him thunder every time. then he will walk the front rank and tell them in a whisper they will Cuss him back and tell him if he dont dry up they will clean him out (Son of a bitch) heavy cannonading has been heard all the day long and the word came up here this evening that our and the Rebel gun boats are engaged five miles below Fort Holt their boats are to strong for ours. they are to far below the Fort for the big guns to reach them. they are getting saucey and will have to be taken down. pretty soon if not a little sooner. as soon as there at these get (boats) done we we will give them a round. we may have to leave soon maybe tomorrow owing to circumstances. if they continue to fire on our boats we may have to go in the morning. no men have yet been killed two horses was killed this morning. they have been firing all day long. I cant think of any thing scarcely but that riot. that took place last evening I tell you, I looked for bloody time but as luck would have it the mess terminated without the effusion of blood. the Col had us out on Battalion drill this evening and after or rather before the Battalion was dismissed he formed us. form square to the rear with fifth company, we formed a hollow square --- wait till I get in a quid of the weedy. as I said he formed

us in a hollow square and he got in the middle and made speech to the men. the speech was very effecting. he talked it all over to us and I assure you some of the Boys was deeply affected. as for my self I never tried any of the ⁴ upon my self, as never have yet done any thing that has been out of the way I have never been in nary spree yet never committed any out rage, not nary one. never been in the guard house never have had a cross word spoken to me by any of the officers but have often heard them remark about my being a good Soldier. and if all was the same as me there never need to be any guard around the camp especially in our own Country. this is poor writing I must close this last one you wrote is the plainest one you ever sent but I can read any of your writing just as plain as print. I only wish I could write as well as you I must close.

Good night write soon and I will
Jack O Lantern

1 Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 25.

2 Fort Holt was a fort on the Kentucky shore across from Cairo.

3 The battle was Grant's first major action with the troops under his command at Cairo. After surprising and routing the Confederates, his Union soldiers were unable to control themselves and set about looting the enemy's abandoned camp. As a result of that spectacle, the Confederates were able to counterattack Grant's forces, sending them back to their transports. Grant was able to get the men back aboard and dash onto the last transport at the last possible moment still mounted upon his horse.

"Such untoward incidents are characteristic of fights between perfectly raw troops. But the affair showed at the same time of what excellent fighting stuff these novices were made." John Fiske, The Mississippi Valley in the Civil War (Boston, 1900), pp. 50-51.

4 He left the specific vice unnamed, perhaps deliberately.

CHAPTER 7

After he had written these five letters James Swales continued in the service of his country. Obviously, the letters had been valued highly enough by his relatives to have saved them. Their deposit in the Illinois State Historical Library collection insured that they be shared with posterity. By process of selection, the five letters of the collection included in this thesis leave several other letters of the years 1861 and 1862 unpublished. Those written from Cairo and Mound City and utilized were the more observant and exuberant of those written by James Monroe Swales. The young soldier, like the Union Army of the West, was inexperienced in 1861, but both were learning and largely eager for action.

The letters' significance to later, more detached readers are as a window to the history of the common soldier in the war, and of the life of one man in a volunteer infantry regiment in the western Union forces. The full history understandably involves human and physical forces often beyond the grasp of that one soldier in the field. All aspects of the Civil War as an historical phenomenon have inspired scholarly research and dialogue. The larger pictures of the conflict have often overshadowed the soldier's role and understanding of that same war.

Bell Wiley's creative works, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, reached back to the letters and other writings of the soldiers who had fought and died in the war, thereby bringing that aspect of the struggle into the focus of historical review. Other scholars have been a part of the alternative approach perfected by Wiley, and brought forth interesting contributions to this area of study.

An inside view of the regiment may be added to the other dimensions of the wartime experience of James Swales, as provided by his letters. It is provided by two officers of the 10th who wrote sentimental, but informative, regimental histories. These works by Matthew Jamison and Ephraim Wilson also index the chronology of the regiment's movements and engagements, as does a regimental scribe, Private M. J. Clerihan, for Companies A and B in the Morgan County History of 1878.

Supplemental information about the life and career of James Swales are provided by his military and pension records and his obituary in the Jacksonville Daily Journal. Together, these sources examine the niche in time, society, and history held by this individual. From pension and military records, and from his obituary, some effects of his war experience can be seen in Swales's later life.

Swales's regiment was one of the first organized in the North, and was involved or near the scenes of several of the important clashes in the middle South. The 10th's two colonels in the year 1861 both earned advancement, and honored the regiment by distinguished service. The regiment was attached

to various armies as it wended its way from Cairo to the grand review in Washington at the end of the war. Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant took command of the regiment as the troops were in training at the southern tip of Illinois.

The 10th's forward movements were begun from Cairo in February of 1862 as the regiment commenced to serve as a unit of the Union guardian force at Bird's Point, Missouri, across the Mississippi at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. In March of 1862 they were on the move against southern guerillas in the vicinity of Sykestown, to the northwest of Bird's Point. After sweeping for the Missouri guerillas, Colonel Morgan and his regiment were joined to General John Pope's Army of the Mississippi for the show of force against New Madrid, Missouri which led the Confederates to withdraw to Island Number 10. During the Union attack on that fortress, with the support of Admiral Foote's river navy, 5,000 prisoners were taken by flanking operations, according to Wilson; 6,000 in the Illinois Adjutant's estimation. Following the New Madrid and Island Number 10 campaign was Pope's thrust down the Mississippi River to Fort Pillow, Tennessee, resulting in a four-day encounter beginning on April 13, 1862.¹ The bloody battle at Shiloh on the Tennessee River a week before Pope's assault on Fort Pillow dictated Pope's overland march to reenforce Grant, and his force's assistance in pressuring the Confederate forces which had withdrawn to Corinth, Mississippi.

In the early summer of 1862 the 10th Illinois was employed in the advance upon Corinth, and pursuit of southern troops

after its evacuation. The regiment was involved in their skirmishes at Farmington and Booneville, Mississippi, encountering General Braxton Bragg's gray forces. ²

After that period of encountering the southern foe, the 10th was ordered to Tuscumbia, Alabama where Wilson reported loss of life to "sun stroke." ³ From there they marched to Nashville via Florence and Athens, Alabama, and Columbia, Tennessee under the banner of General John Palmer's division. They stayed at Nashville until July, 1863 as a contingent of General William Rosencrans' Army of the Cumberland. Near the capitol city and strategic center of the state they fought "frequent engagements," in Wilson's words. During that time it was attached to General George H. Thomas's corps, General Mitchell's division. ⁴

Following the extended stay at Nashville, the regiment proceeded toward Chattanooga as a component of General Gordon Granter's reserve corps, General James Morgan's division, and General C. F. Smith's brigade. ⁵ Smith was a thoroughly professional soldier, and Grant held him in high regard. He had been Commandant at West Point when Grant was a Cadet there. Some of those jealous of Grant, including Halleck, tried to use Grant's promotions over Smith as a means to depreciate Grant, and they increased the rapaciously false rumors about Grant's fondness of liquor. They were not successful in their attempts to limit Grant. ⁶

The movement toward Chattanooga included operations by Rosencrans against Murphreesboro, Tennessee, on Stone's River, but did not lead the 10th into fighting. Grant's campaigns

at Chattanooga did cause losses for the regiment as it passed through Bridgeport, Alabama, and crossed the Tennessee River near the foot of Missionary Ridge.⁷ It joined in the assault, under General Jeff C. Davis's division, which took place against the Confederate troops entrenched there.⁸ The Confederates were routed at the top of the ridge by the divisions of General Phillip Sheridan and General T. J. Wood, whose men spontaneously stormed to the top. General Granger and others were taken aback by the assault on the heights, which was intended only to secure the foot of the hill.⁹ According to Wilson's report, the 10th was on the left flank of the battlefield near a tunnel.¹⁰

The 10th's next action was a successful charge against Fort Chickamauga on November 26, 1863, a raid under General William Tecumseh Sherman in which the regimental record of the Morgan County History noted "many prisoners" being captured. Following the taking of Fort Chickamauga the regiment participated in another battle in the northern Georgia hill country farther east at Chickamauga Station on the Western and Atlantic rail line a few miles southeast of Chattanooga, and again at the small town of Ringgold, Georgia. (See map) From November 28 to December 8 the regiment was in the lead of Sherman's advance upon Knoxville, Tennessee, to relieve General Ambrose Burnside's army, which was threatened by Confederate General James Longstreet's force sent there from Chattanooga.¹¹ They returned to northern Georgia after that operation to be "veteranized," (a term used in Swales's military records and other regimental accounts), after which the reenlisting three-year

veterans received a month of furlough time to return home.

The 10th Illinois Volunteer Infantry returned to Georgia from its leave, as the History denoted it, "the Senior Veteran Regiment of the Western Army," with companies A and B being "the oldest in the service." ¹² They returned to participate in General Sherman's Georgia and Atlanta campaigns, which included hard fought battles with the defensively brilliant Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston.

The series of battles fought by the 10th in those campaigns were a testimony to the sacrifice which was called for in breaking the South's determined resistance in 1864. The series of battles between the generals stretched from the hill country of northern Georgia to the approaches of Atlanta, and chronologically from early May, 1864 to September. The 10th Illinois took a part in battles at Bald Knob, Georgia on May 4, Tunnel Hill on May 7, Rocky Face from May 8 to 11, and thence in the "hard and stubborn fighting" at Resaca from May 13 to 15. ¹³ All of those battles were fought along or near the Atlantic and Western Railroad.

General Sherman's massed armies of the Cumberland, Tennessee, and Ohio then moved from the northwestern corner of the state toward the less rugged topography midway between Chattanooga and Atlanta. The 10th then joined in fighting at Rome, Georgia on May 17 and 18, and thence advanced to Dallas against another Confederate stronghold. ¹⁴ The battle at Dallas, which was within a day's horse ride northwest from Atlanta, lasted from May 25 to June 4. It was described by Captain Wilson as one of "severe fighting and loss of life"

for the regiment. ¹⁵ The Union assault at New Hope Church on May 28 to 30 was a part of that same frontal onslaught against Johnston's well entrenched troops.

Sherman's attack as well as Johnston's defense again concentrated on the rail line to Atlanta after the stubborn Confederate defense that had been encountered. Its importance to both forces as a supply line drew the generals back to contest it again. Also, the battle of New Hope Church had convinced Sherman that he would make more forward progress by bypassing the high ground which the Confederates had utilized to their advantage. However, after Sherman had taken Ackworth, Georgia along the Atlantic and Western line he faced another fortified ridge at Kennesaw Mountain which he could not wrest from Johnston, even at great cost. It was adjacent to the Atlantic and Western, and again threatened to block Sherman's supply line, should he bypass it. ¹⁶

Even after a fierce assault, Sherman was unable to take the heights, and had to leave the comfort of his main supply line. The 10th Illinois Volunteers was one of the units to face the fury of that bloody match which continued from June 9 to the end of the month. By July 5 the 10th had reached Vining's Station on the southern side of Kennesaw Mountain. The following day the regiment was at the Chattahoochie River, another defensive line for the city of Atlanta. They stayed there until the 12th within 15 miles of the city, and reached Peachtree Creek within a stroll of Atlanta on July 19.

Peachtree Creek was to the north of Atlanta, and was skirted on its southern bank by the ring of Atlanta's immediate

fortifications. General Johnston had withdrawn his army behind the ring, and was continuing to make Sherman pay heavily for his gains. However, the fortunes of war improved for the Union when Johnston was recalled from command at Atlanta on July 18, 1864, and replaced by General John B. Hood. In addition to angering many of the soldiers, the tactics of Hood's new command changed the backdrop of the battle. For example, Hood tried a frontal assault against the Union forces on Peachtree Creek on July 20 without accomplishing a breakthrough. Eventually Sherman flanked Hood's forces to the east of Atlanta, threatening the Confederates' secure area to the south of the city. The Confederates finally evacuated the city on September 1, 1864 before the Atlanta and Western Railroad, its final link, could be cut. Hood then took a generally westward and northward course, which included interfering with Sherman's rail links to the north. ¹⁷

The siege of Atlanta had taken on political overtones with the approach of the 1864 elections. The Confederacy had survived three years of the most costly warfare that the nation had ever experienced, and it appeared that the war would be protracted further. Taking advantage of this collective misapprehension were Lincoln's numerous critics who favored peace under a George B. McClellan presidency, and a Congress favorable to a negotiated settlement. A key victory in the months before the election could only have strengthened the Union's resolve by demonstrating the South's vulnerability before the war-weary northern public. ¹⁸

The Battle of Atlanta and the campaign in Georgia were also of great importance in weakening the remaining military power of the Confederacy. Georgia was the least war damaged state of the eastern Confederacy by May of 1864, and unlike most of the other states still provided the war materiel and food for the armies of Lee and Johnston. In addition, Atlanta's railroads had provided a last link between Richmond and points westward not already occupied by the soldiers in blue. After Chattanooga's fall, it was the last means of moving troops from the southwest to Virginia other than breaking through Union lines on foot or horseback. ¹⁹

The Union force that accomplished the blow against Georgia was 98,000 strong at the beginning of the campaign, with wide fluctuations through the remainder of the year. The Confederate Army of Tennessee faced it with approximately 50,000 troops. ²⁰ Both Union and Confederate forces were largely composed of veteran troops who fought admirably. Generally, Confederate Johnston chose the ground to defend, and benefitted from slave labor to prepare fortifications and build obstacles in advance. As Sherman bypassed those positions he could not take, Johnston maneuvered to other defensible points in his path. ²¹ The battles at Resaca, New Hope Church, and Kennesaw Mountain were such fierce defensive battles, and helped to convince Sherman to make his primary objective over complete control of the railroad and terrain.

After the battle for Atlanta, and before Sherman led his armies eastward to Savannah, an attempt was made to liberate

the men at Andersonville, nearly 100 miles south of Atlanta. Unfortunately, the daring cavalry mission of Generals McCook and Stoneman were soundly defeated by the Confederate cavalry of General Joe Wheeler and other elements of General Hood's retreating army. ²²

Swales was captured earlier at Peachtree Creek on August 18, 1864 as his regiment attempted to break Atlanta's northern defenses. The 10th was a component of General Palmer's 14th Army Corps, which tried to make a break in Atlanta's defenses by crossing the creek. ²³ As a result, Swales was probably already imprisoned at Andersonville at the time of McCook and Stoneman's mission.

After Swales's capture, his 10th Illinois Regiment moved south of Atlanta past Utoy Creek and Jonesboro in pursuit of the Confederates whom General Hood led to the south, and then west from the city. ²⁴ The 10th pursued into Alabama, but returned to Sherman's main force on its course to the sea after following Hood for three weeks. From November 15 until reaching Savannah on December 10, they participated in the destruction of Georgia's pride and provisions. Their route after the capture of Savannah led north into South Carolina, reaching the small coastal town of Pocotaligo on February 3, 1865. ²⁵ Thereafter, the regiment was on the trail of General Johnston, who signed a surrender along the order of that signed by General Robert E. Lee, on April 26, 1865. ²⁶

Meanwhile, Swales and other unfortunate soldiers at Andersonville shared some of the severest deprivations endured by prisoners of either side. ²⁷ Those soldiers at Anderson-

ville were forced to endure another year of misery at the human cattle lot. Andersonville represented a side of the war that most men did not care to remember or share with family and friends. His obituary reported that Swales disliked talking about the horror of his year in the prison. It noted that the soldier entered the stockade with 185 pounds on his five-foot-nine-inch frame, and was released a few days after Lincoln's assassination weighing 72 pounds. Also mentioned was the fact that Swales "found genuine satisfaction in viewing Jefferson Davis as a prisoner at Macon, Georgia." ²⁸

An advancement in rank was probably one of the few improvements imprisonment at Andersonville provided James Swales. As he was "both self-made and self-educated," in the words of his obituary writer, the highest rank of second lieutenant, which he received while a prisoner at Andersonville, was remarkable.

Other promotions had come to the young man before his capture, and the rank of second lieutenant was apparently an achievement based on his good standing in his company and regiment, even though it was honorific because of his separation from the 10th. Swales's first promotion had been to the rank of corporal in August, 1862 when his regiment was in preparation for its march to Nashville. Corporal Swales remained at that rank for nineteen months, advancing to the rank of sergeant on March 14, 1863. ²⁹

James Swales lost his field commission rank of second lieutenant after his escape on April 4, 1865 from Andersonville. That escape apparently came shortly before the date of the dissolution of the prison. As of the date of his

military discharge, in the records of the state adjutant general, Swales was again a sergeant. Sergeant Swales, with the 10th Illinois, marched in the grand review of troops at Washington, D. C. before returning home, being sent there from Hilton Head, North Carolina. He returned home to Jacksonville by way of Benton Barracks in St. Louis for a short period of recuperation. He had suffered from malnutrition in the form of scurvy from imprisonment, according to the later testimony of his hometown friend and prison bunkmate, Charles Grady. As a result Swales had lost all of his teeth. ³⁰

After returning to Jacksonville he became a printer for the company which published the Jacksonville Journal, a Republican newspaper which gained a place of respect vis-à-vis the Democratic Jacksonville Sentinel during and after the war. The change in the paper's complexion mirrored that of the city, and the central region of the state after the war. It became a daily paper in 1867, proceeding to outdo its rival, which had often considered it to be a pesky interloper and a source of radical, Republican agitation. ³¹

For an interval in the thirty-five year post-war career that James Swales enjoyed, he was the appointed superintendent of Memorial Hall. Governor Richard Yates, Jr., appointed him to that patronage post in Springfield, where he served for twelve years. Swales was also active in state affairs with his work for passage of a legislative bill for the erection of a monument at Andersonville. ³²

As a civilian James Swales followed his interests in military matters by becoming the captain of a local militia

company, Company K, Fifth Regiment of the Illinois National Guard whose men were known as the "Light Guards," He led that military unit, which was one of two separate guard companies formed in Jacksonville in 1876. Their actions included service in an East St. Louis railroad strike in 1877.³³ However, drill sessions for both companies occurred on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, suggesting that the function of the companies was probably as much social as military.

James Swales maintained a family during his years in Jacksonville and Springfield. He was twice married, his first wife dying in 1873 only two months after her marriage to Swales. Six years later he remarried to a White Hall, Illinois woman. They had three children. One young daughter died in 1911 at twenty-five years of age, and a son and daughter lived to accompany their father in later life. Late in his life Swales was cared for by his daughter, Mrs. John Freeman, residing in Chicago, and his son, Dr. William Oscar Swales of Jacksonville. His second wife, Mary Eliza Higbee Swales, had died in 1914 again leaving him a widower. Other family members, including his brothers David and George, survived James Swales's death in 1920 at seventy-nine years of age. Like their older brother, both were printers, and stayed close to the place of their birth.

James Swales's obituary reflected a wholesome life in the community in which he earned respect and social status. His military service was recognized and praised, and his civilian accomplishments duly noted. His occasions for youthful disgruntlement with the military authorities in the year

1861 had apparently been erased by later experiences. By 1888 his service record was amended by special order of the Adjutant Generals of the U. S. Army and of the state of Illinois to second lieutenant. ³⁴ Swales received \$211.80 in retroactive pay, and reapplied in 1912 and 1915 for the higher benefits. He had received \$6 monthly for his claim of "debility and abdominal disease," and had been the recipient of a \$400 bounty at the time of his reenlistment in 1864. Thus, besides the social advantages of his military service, there were financial rewards. ³⁵ Of a generation which had created and absorbed great changes in the nature of American democracy, he had been remembered as one "for whom it was always onward and upward." ³⁶

- 1 Wilson, Memoirs of the War (Cleveland, 1893), p. 167.
and
Morgan County History, p. 439.
- 2 The movement of the Fourth Brigade commanded by General James Morgan from the Mississippi to Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River occurred between April 17 and April 30, 1862. The Fourth Brigade included the 10th, 16th, 22nd, 51st, Yates sharpshooters, and Houghteling's Illinois Battery among Illinois regiments; and Hezcock's Ohio Battery, 16th Michigan Infantry, and the 2nd Michigan Cavalry. Wilson, Memoirs, pp. viii-x.
and
T. M. Eddy, The Patriotism of Illinois (Chicago, 1865), I, 285.
- 3 Wilson, Memoirs, p. 167.
- 4 Morgan County History, p. 437.
- 5 Ibid., p. 437.
- 6 Catton, This Hallowed Ground (Garden City, 1956), pp. 102-103.
- 7 Morgan County History, pp. 437-438.
- 8 Jeff C. Davis's division was under General John Palmer's 14th Army Corps. Morgan County History, p. 438.
- 9 Randall and Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp. 415-416.
- 10 Wilson, Memoirs, pp. viii-x.
- 11 Ibid., pp. viii-x
and
Randall and Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 415.
- 12 Morgan County History, p. 439.
- 13 Wilson, Memoirs, pp. vii-x.
- 14 Ibid., pp. vii-x.
- 15 Ibid., pp. viii-x.
- 16 William Key, The Battle of Atlanta and the Georgia Campaign (New York, 1958), pp. 39-40.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 73, 77.
- 18 "...If the North can march an army right through the south, it can prevail in this contest, leaving only open the question of its willingness to use that power. Now, Mr. Lincoln's election, (which is assured,) coupled with the conclusion

thus reached, makes a complete logical whole." "Sherman to Grant, November 6, 1864: Supplemental Report of the Commission on the Conduct of the War," Supplement to Senate Report No. 142, 38th Congress, 2 Session, I, p. 261.

- 19 Key, The Battle of Atlanta, p. 17.
- 20 Randall and Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 424.
- 21 David Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered (New York, 1956), p. 98.
- 22 Key, The Battle of Atlanta, p. 78.
- 23 Swales's capture was noted in his company's muster roll. National Archives, Washington, D. C.
and
Key, The Battle of Atlanta, p. 51.
- 24 Wilson, Memoirs, pp. viii-x.
- 25 Ibid., pp. viii-x.
- 26 Randall and Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 529.
- 27 Ibid., p. 337.
- 28 Obituary of James Monroe Swales in Jacksonville Daily Journal, May 12, 1920.
- 29 Military records of James Swales, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
- 30 Pension records of James Swales, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
- 31 The Journal became a daily newspaper in 1866 in the city of Jacksonville, whose political leadership had been dominated by Democratic and southern-born leadership before the war. Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community (Urbana, 1978), p. 242; Table 18, p. 270.
- 32 See footnote #28.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Military records of James M. Swales, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
- 35 Pension and Military records of James M. Swales, National Archives, Washington, D. C. C. M. Eames, Historic Morgan and Classic Jacksonville (Jacksonville, Ill., 1885), p. 166.
- 36 See footnote #28.

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A P P E N D I X

LETTER FROM GENERAL GRANT TO A. C. FULLER, ADJUTANT GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

Head Quarters Dist. of Cairo
Cairo, Jan. 29th, 1862

Col. A. C. Fuller
Adj. Gen. State of Illinois,
Springfield, Ill.

Col.

I would respectfully request that, if practicable, a complete company with all its officers and two detachments of about seventy men in all, with a Capt. and one Lieutenant be attached to the 10th Ill. Vol. Col. Morgan Comdg. There is also a vacancy of one field officer in this regiment. This is a very fine regiment and I am desirous of seeing it filled up.

I am Col. very respectfully
Your Obt. Svt.
U. S. Grant
Brig. Gen.

KENTUCKY

NORTH CAROLINA
Greensboro

SOUTH CAROLINA

77.

TENNESSEE

WASHVILLE

Columbia

GEORGIA

ALABAMA

MISSISSIPPI

Sikeston

New Madrid

Island No. 10

Ft. Pillow

MEMPHIS

Covington

Booneville

Pittsburgh Landing

Athens

Tuscumbia

Bridgeport

Rossville

Tunnel Hill

Resaca

Rome

Acworth

New Hope

Kennesaw Mt.

Dallas

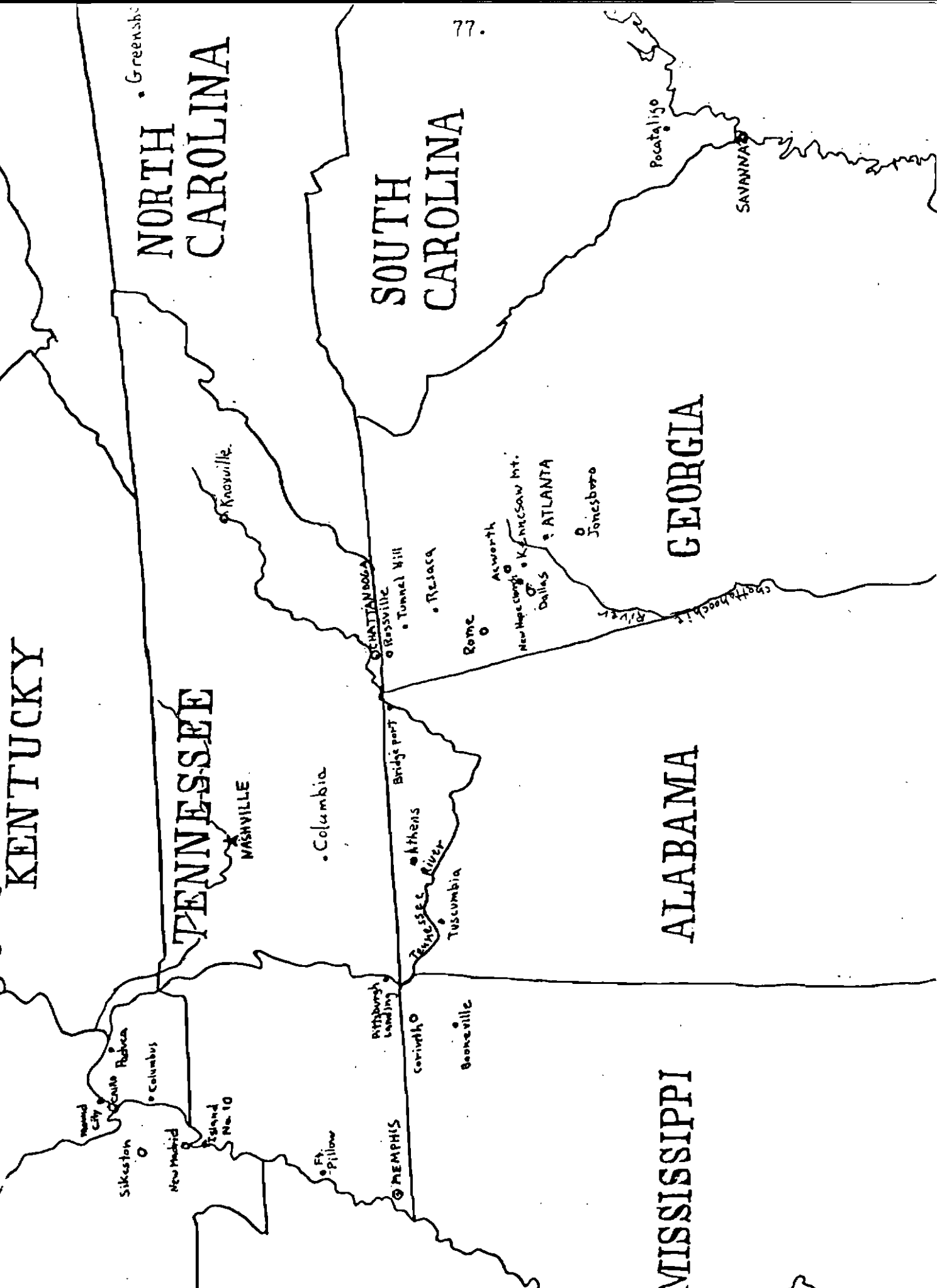
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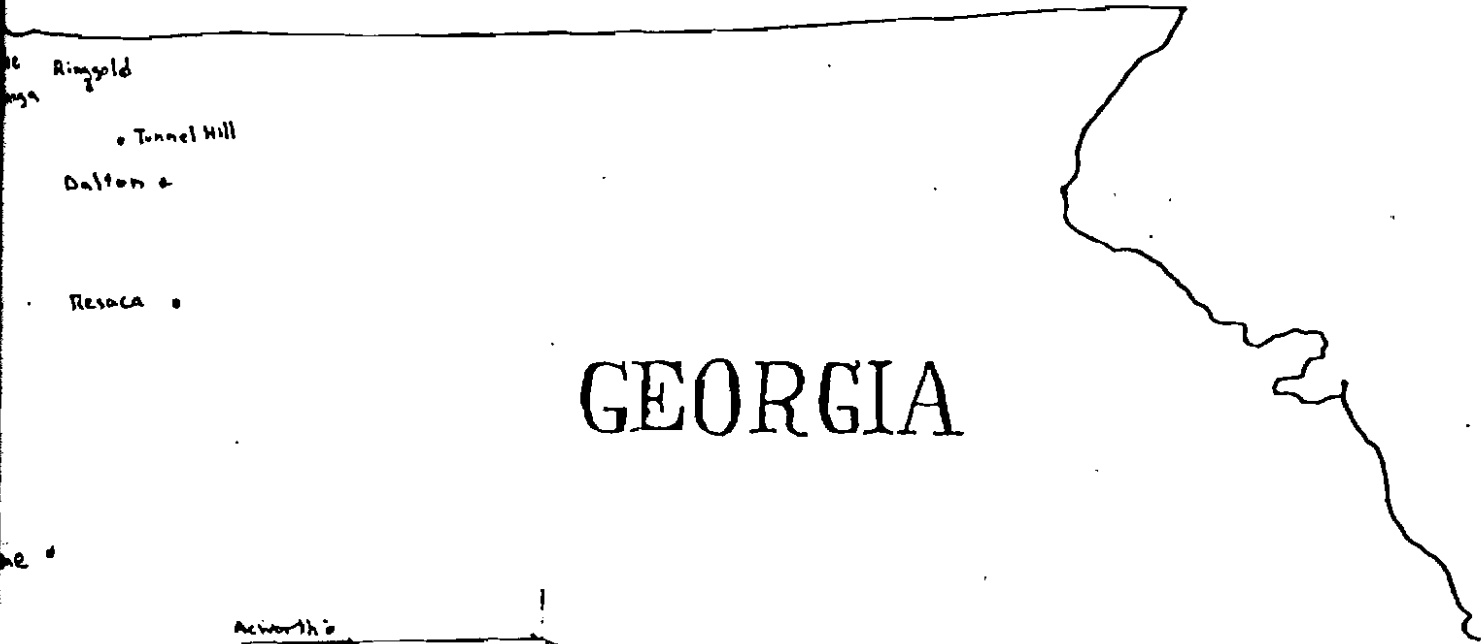
Jonesboro

Pocotaligo

SAVANNAH

Chattahoochee River





GEORGIA

