Teaching with Primary Sources — MTSU

PRIMARY SOURCE SET: OCCUPATION

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the Civil War, civilians in the South had an unprecedented level of interaction with military personnel, including both Confederate and Union forces. Military occupation took place when the Union army gained authority over southern states (or parts of states) that had joined the Confederacy. Tennessee is significant in this regard because in February 1862 Nashville became the first capital of a Confederate state to be taken by the Union army. In Union-held areas, tensions developed between the occupying troops and civilians who remained loyal to the Confederacy. Early in the war, occupation forces generally treated Confederate civilians leniently, thinking that they would quickly change their loyalties. When occupation forces encountered ongoing resistance from Confederate civilians, they instituted harsher measures of control over the civilian population. Most occupied areas also included civilians who were Unionists, including formerly enslaved men and women who had used the advent of Union occupation to flee from their owners.

[SugGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS]

The visual documents in this primary source set provide one way to introduce students to the theme of Civil War occupation. Ask students to identify the types of buildings and community spaces used by Union troops. How might Confederate civilians have reacted to the occupation of these civic spaces? Where would everyday interactions between soldiers and civilians have taken place? Some of the textual documents in this primary source set contain rules and regulations that Union authorities issued for the conduct of both Union soldiers and civilians. What were some of these, and why were they necessary? How does President Abraham Lincoln’s 1864 letter (p. 6), demonstrate his views on occupation? Finally, several of the sources relate to the effect of occupation on slavery. How did occupation affect slavery?

Additional Links:

- TPS-MTSU: Civil War Links & Top Ten
- TPS-MTSU: The Home Front During the Civil War
- TPS-MTSU: Emancipation During and After the Civil War
- Tennessee 4 Me: Union Occupation
- TN Civil War National Heritage Area: Occupied Home Front
- Civil War Trust: The Home Front
- National Park Service: Chatham Plantation: Witness to the Civil War
Major General Rosecrans on contributions for the sick and wounded. Headquarters Department of the Cumberland, Murfreesboro, February 2, 1863. [1863]


The Nashville daily union., June 20, 1862, Image 2 [1862; detail] Courtesy of the University of Tennessee

[Sketch map of Camp Brentwood, Tennessee, while serving as quarters for the 86th and 104th regiments of the Illinois volunteers] / [1863; detail]
E. Cheek to Edward Bates, Wednesday, May 06, 1863 (Tennessee Unionist wants to keep his slaves) [1863]

Robert Dale Owen to Abraham Lincoln, Wednesday, August 05, 1863 (Sends report of John Eaton concerning freedmen in Tennessee; with abstract of Eaton’s report) [1863]
Franklin Tenn., Profield [sic] June 1863 [1863]

William S. Rosecrans to Henry W. Halleck, Wednesday, September 09, 1863 (Telegram reporting capture of Chattanooga) [1863]

Columbia Tennessee Sentinel, Saturday, February 06, 1864 [detail]

Camp in Monument Garden, Chattanooga [between 1863 and 1864]
The levee at Memphis, Tenn.-Hauling sugar and cotton from their hiding-places for shipment north / sketched by Mr. Alex Simplot. [1862]

William W. Gallaer to Abraham Lincoln, Monday, February 09, 1863 (Union sentiment in Memphis) [1863]

Abraham Lincoln, Friday, May 13, 1864 (Memorandum on church at Memphis, Tennessee) [1864]
129th Reg + ILL Volls. [sic] at camp "Lady Polk,"
Nashville, Tenn [1863 September 10]

Capture of Savannah--Gen. Geary issuing passes to citizens [published 1865]

Confederate War Etchings, #28, Cave Life in Vicksburg during the Siege [1864] Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society

Confederate War Etchings, #16, Formation of guerrilla bands [1863] Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society

Confederate War Etchings, #5, Searching for arms [1863] Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society
Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is May 23, 2012.


CITATIONS, cont.


The levee at Memphis, Tenn.-Hauling sugar and cotton from their hiding-places for shipment north / sketched by Mr. Alex Simplot. Illustration. 1862. From Library of Congress: Civil War. https://www.loc.gov/item/95504268/.


