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WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION FROM AN EAST TEXAS PERSPECTIVE: NACOGDOCHES COUNTY FROM 1861-1876

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NACOGDOCHES COUNTY FROM 1861-1876

By

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NACOGDOCHES COUNTY FROM 1861-1876

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ABSTRACT

Initially founded in 1826 as a municipality of Mexico and organized as a county in 1837—and sharing its name with the oldest town in Texas—Nacogdoches County flourishes with a rich history and has been a factor in nearly every major event in early Texas history. The Civil War is no exception. Men from the county contributed to the war effort but also felt the war's sting at home. Citizens did what they could to survive. The county continued under the yoke of Reconstruction after the war before booming again in the 1880s thanks largely to the town the county shares its name with. While Nacogdoches County has a long history with racism and white supremacy as well, this public history project summarizes a fifteen-year period of that history from 1861 to 1876 with a focus on the presence of slavery and, ultimately, white supremacy, arguably when such peaked and guided many of the actions of white citizens. Most importantly, this project features the creation of a digital museum exhibition, utilizing interpretation theory and relevant literature to explain the creation of an online exhibit. The exhibit first provides an overview of the actions of the many Confederate units raised in the county and then notable units from neighboring counties that also included Nacogdocheans. The exhibit then features the years of Reconstruction with a focus on Federal soldier presence in the county as well as the activities of the Freedmen's Bureau and their relationship with the citizens (both black and white).

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INTRODUCTION

Slavery, racism, and white supremacy are realities that have been present in the Southern United States from the very beginning of the nation's existence. Yet, the history of the so-called "peculiar institution" of slavery on the North American continent stretches back four centuries to 1619 when the first Africans arrived in bondage from their homeland, long before the very idea of the United States even existed. Although the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolished slavery in the United States in 1865, racism and white supremacy continued to fester in the South and have survived into the modern day. This public history project and corresponding online exhibition intend to highlight the presence of these realities in Nacogdoches County during the fifteen-year period of 1861 to 1876, a time when they were arguably at their apex in Southern society and present them within the microcosm of a county that has existed since the idea of Texas came into existence.

While Mexican Texas and slavery before the Texas Revolution are beyond the scope of this project, it is important to mention Mexico's hostility to slavery while Texas was under its thumb. That said, the story is complex and nuanced. But here is the short version. After Mexican Independence from Spain in 1821, Texas was a part of Mexico's northern state of Coahuila y Tejas (modern eastern Texas). The area was sparsely

populated, however, and dominated by indigenous tribes—especially the mighty Comanche Empire—who sought to reclaim and control the land. So, to combat this, by the early 1820s Mexico allowed some American immigration into the area with hopes that these migrants would help stop the region from falling under Comanche rule. To entice the Americans, Mexico offered cheap land grants and, in 1823, Stephen F. Austin came with 300 families into East Texas, and others soon followed.

In exchange for cheap land, the new inhabitants agreed to speak Spanish, convert to Catholicism, become Mexican citizens, and abstain from keeping slaves. But the American immigrants were not so good at holding up their end of the deal. With little oversight from a faraway Mexican government, few American immigrants obeyed the rules and remained Protestant, spoke English, and held slaves. Indeed, as the cotton market famously boomed in the Southern United States at the time, the cheap Mexican land grants attracted droves of American cotton farmers who brought along slaves. So many came, in fact, that by 1829 about 20,000 Americans had settled in the region, heightening Mexican fears that they would lose the area not to the Comanche, but rather to the Americans.

In 1830 Mexico attempted to thwart continued American settlement into Coahuila y Tejas by banning any further immigration and slavery. It did not work. In the first instance of meaningful illegal border crossings between Mexico and America, the Americans kept coming—and with them more slaves. As Mexican relations with the American migrants worsened, Mexican President Santa Anna repealed the 1824 Mexican

Constitution in 1835, effectively repealing the right of Mexican states to govern themselves. The results were explosive and lead to the Texas Revolution. Again, while the story of events leading to the Texas Revolution is a bit more complex than mentioned already, the important thing to note here is that even before Texas Independence in 1836 about 5,000 slaves already labored in the region. Then, after gaining independence, slavery rapidly expanded. The Republic's 1836 Constitution also gave wide protections to slaveholders, while at the same time banishing all free blacks from the state.[1]

Slavery only continued to accelerate after the United States annexed Texas as the 28th state in 1845, with the population of enslaved peoples of African descent growing from 30,000 in late 1845 to approximately 182,566 in 1860. While most of the slaves in Texas came from elsewhere in the United States with their owners, some came through the domestic slave trade out of Houston and Galveston. Some, as many as 2,000 according to some estimates, came through the illegal trade from 1835 to 1865. While ninety-five percent of the white Texas population at this time did not own slaves, the state's entire economy hinged on large plantations worked by slaves who produced cotton, sugar, and other foodstuffs on a large scale.[2] Not surprisingly, the citizens of Texas, not to mention the citizens of Nacogdoches County, voted for secession and

[1] Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 50. It should be noted that even while belonging to Mexico, slavery was still allowed to exist in Texas before abolition came in 1829 despite disapproval from Mexican leaders.
[2] Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery*, 51-55.

contributed men to fight for the Confederacy once the Civil War broke out. Those who went off and fought, whether they acknowledge such or not and regardless of their individual motivations, made themselves part of a struggle to keep the institution of slavery and white supremacy alive in the South.

The end of the war brought emancipation for freed slaves, but many white citizens were not keen on this and resisted Reconstruction efforts in any way they could, either through direct means such as racial violence, or through the enforcement of "Black Codes" and later "Jim Crow Laws" as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.

According to historians James and Lois Horton in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory,* most Americans know very little about slavery in the United States. In fact, some have viewed it as a benevolent institution. According to this narrative, slavery helped "tutor" those in bondage, teaching slaves how to act "civilized." Further, while admitting some white slave holders committed atrocities, most slaves had been treated well. Others of course see slavery for what it was: an oppressive evil that broke African Americans and robbed them of their natural identities.[3] Either way, when one thinks of slavery in America, they often connect it to the nineteenth century and the Civil War.

While the subject of slavery is often an uncomfortable one, at least for many white people, it is necessary to address it to better understand that these horrendous

[3] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, eds., *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 5-6.

attitudes (i.e., white supremacist beliefs) were considered the norm and to learn from them. One's instinct might say to be neutral when presenting this kind of subject matter for an audience but, based on the authoritative historical literature and primary sources, I do not believe that is an appropriate response when interpreting material such as this. Regardless of how Americans today feel about this era, it cannot be denied that Nacogdoches County and its citizens, at least the white ones, actively played a part in the subjugation of African Americans during this time and continued to do so during Reconstruction. The bigotry and violence so emblematic of this period continued after Reconstruction, unfortunately, and into the modern day, either through direct racial violence, or indirectly through other means such as over policing and police brutality, lynching, gerrymandering, redlining, or other intimidation tactics. In other words, the Civil War and Reconstruction era in Nacogdoches history is but part of a longer history of racism and subjugation of African Americans in the area.

The online exhibition attempts to show this. It is split into three parts. Part one presents a brief overview of life in Nacogdoches County before the war, describing general (white) life, and serves as a prologue for how those living in Nacogdoches felt about the major issues leading up to secession and why they voted the way they did. Part two, the longest of the three, focuses on the Civil War, detailing the involvement of men from the county who enlisted and, ultimately, defended slavery. Specifics include a basic road map of the travels of the various companies, providing names when possible, especially where the more notable historical inhabitants of Nacogdoches County are

concerned, and detailing the ultimate fates of each company, and the men in them (where possible). Part three details the eleven-year period of 1865 to 1876, focusing on the efforts of federal Reconstruction and the Freedmen's Bureau in the county and the changes they brought to local society, both good and ill. Important here are the ways in which white Nacogdocheans attempted to undermine the work of the Freedmen's Bureau on behalf of African Americans.

As for the written portion of this project beyond the exhibition (though they mirror each other), the first chapter highlights society in Nacogdoches County before the war. It then delves into as much detail as possible concerning each military unit raised in the county, noting some of the more famous individuals who served in them while also examining some of the more notable units that formed in the neighboring counties and in which men from Nacogdoches County also enlisted. The chapter also examines life in Nacogdoches County while these men were off fighting, mainly highlighting how the citizens lived, what hardships they faced, and any temporary or permanent changes the war brought to the county.

Chapter two continues the historical narrative and research anchoring my exhibition by examining the eleven-year period from 1865 to 1876 in Nacogdoches County and covers the changes Reconstruction wrought. This includes both the changes in governance as well as the presence of federal soldiers. In addition, a focus on the activities of the Freedmen's Bureau in Nacogdoches County and the challenges that its

agents faced daily further paints a fuller picture of life in Nacogdoches County at the time.

Chapter three is a review of relevant public history and museum sources. For clarification, this chapter is meant to both highlight my understanding and mastery of the relevant public history and museum literature as well as to make clear the ways in which I used these during the creation of the exhibition. This includes discussions of exhibition planning, interpretation (especially aiming at making this exhibit about a nationwide conflict and bringing it into a local setting), design (including layout, individual pieces of the exhibits, labels, etc.), and, most importantly, creating the exhibition in a digital setting.

The conclusion recounts briefly the scope and findings drawn out in the project, while also offering my reflections on the project overall as a training experience for an aspiring public historian. Moreover, my experiences and conclusions mapped out here can hopefully serve as a springboard for any future exhibitions that aim to be on a local level or concerning the same general topics.

CHAPTER ONE

Texas and Nacogdoches County during the War

Nacogdoches County, similar to so many other counties in the antebellum South, relied on farming and, as a whole, did well from an economic standpoint. In 1858, for example, approximately 38,221 acres of land in the county were under cultivation. Of these, corn planting took up 20,038 acres, 11,823 acres went to plant cotton, 1,589 acres for wheat, fourteen acres for sugar, and 5,257 acres for various other crops. So while King Cotton was present, local farmers also grew and sold corn, wheat, sugar, and other vegetables. Stock farming (i.e., breeding/using livestock) also occurred, though to a lesser degree than crop raising. In 1860, for instance, 2,557 total horses held a total value of $22,512 in the county, while 11,633 head of cattle were valued at $86,541, and 363 sheep valued at $1,256. Hogs were also present in the county, but their number was so numerous and their value so low that no listing of their exact value was ever made.[4] There were, of course, slaves on many of these farms as well, with the 1860 census revealing a total of 364 slaveholders present, with most owning fewer than ten. Still, three men in the county owned more than thirty slaves. John J. Hayter, for instance, owned 140 slaves and was the

[4]James Gallaway Partin, "A History of Nacogdoches and Nacogdoches County, Texas to 1877" (master's thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1968), 250-51.

largest slave owner in the county during the previous two censuses. M.G. Whitaker ranked second with thirty-seven slaves, and Edward Brown ranked third with thirty-five slaves.[5]

By voting for secession and contributing soldiers to the Civil War, the citizens of Nacogdoches County made it clear that they were overwhelmingly content to maintain the status quo of white supremacy over the enslaved African American population since it had made many of them very wealthy and contributed to the economy.

Politically, the county leaned strongly Democratic. For clarification, it must be understood that we cannot confuse the Democratic Party of this era with more modern times, especially following Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s or Lyndon Johnson's Great Society of the 1960s, with nothing to be said of presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. That said, in general terms, Democrats leading up to the Civil War and dating back to Thomas Jefferson were staunchly anti-statist in their rhetoric (i.e., they held that the federal government was largely an illegitimate and even maladaptive arbiter of national policies). The Democratic Party earned over seventy percent of the total votes cast in the 1848, 1852, and 1856 elections in Nacogdoches County. Meanwhile, the Whig Party (who were far more supportive of government involvement in the nation's socio-economic affairs) received a sizable remainder of the votes, while no votes were cast for the newly formed Republican Party. A split in the Democratic Party, however, deeply affected the county (and the nation) by 1860.

[5] Partin, "A History of Nacogdoches and Nacogdoches County, Texas to 1877," 253.

For context, the election of 1860 was certainly one of the most pivotal presidential elections in American history. It pitted the Republican nominee Abraham Lincoln against Northern Democratic Party nominee Senator Stephen Douglas, Southern Democratic Party nominee John Breckinridge**,** and Constitutional Union Party nominee John Bell.

While many of the issues at stake were nuanced and important, the main issue of the election was undeniably slavery and so-called states' rights. Lincoln and the newly formed Republican Party adopted a moderate stance on slavery and stood against its expansion (although, yes, some wanted the so-called peculiar institution abolished altogether). Meanwhile, nationally, the Democrats spilt, divided on the issue of slavery. Southern Democrats thought slavery should be expanded but many Northern Democrats opposed the idea. In this context, states' rights were also intensely debated. Specifically, Southern Democrats felt states had the right to govern themselves while Northern Democrats loosely supported the Union and a national government. Northern Democrat Stephen Douglas eventually emerged as the frontrunner, but Southern Democrats refused to support him because he would not adopt a pro-slavery platform. As such, Southern Democrats nominated Breckinridge, who was a supporter of slavery and states' rights, to represent them in the election. Finally, the Constitutional Union Party was mainly made up of disgruntled Democrats and former Whigs. They eventually held their first convention and nominated John Bell, a slaveholder from Tennessee, as their nominee. In the end, the Constitutional Union Party claimed to be the party of law but took no official

position on slavery or states' rights, while promising to defend the Constitution and the Union.

About sixty-seven percent of the voters in Nacogdoches County cast their vote for Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge, with about thirty-three percent giving their vote to John Bell of the Constitution Party. This sizable minority vote for Bell was significant as Nacogdoches County was only one of four counties in East Texas that voted so highly for Bell. The other counties were Angelina, Red River, and Harrison.[6]

After the election of Abraham Lincoln, the Texas legislature issued a call for the election of delegates to attend a state convention to vote on secession. The legislature did this over the protests of Texas Governor Sam Houston, however. That said, the three delegates elected from East Texas were William Clark Jr., a lawyer and state legislature representative, J. N. Fall, a doctor from Chireno and state senator, and Haden H. Edwards, a Nacogdoches merchant and son of the leader of the earlier Fredonian Rebellion. These men, and the other delegates, drew up an ordinance of secession to explain "the causes which impel the State of Texas to secede from the Federal Union" and submitted it to voters in the county on February 23, 1861.

The secession ordinance, of course, went on to explain that Texas had entered the Union "as one of the co-equal States." Indeed, the delegates reminded everyone, "Texas abandoned her separate national existence and consented to become one of the

[6] James G. Partin et al., *Nacogdoches: The History of Texas' Oldest City* (Lufkin, TX: Best of East Texas Publishers, 1995), 102.

Confederated States [i.e., United States] to promote her welfare, insure domestic tranquility and secure more substantially the blessings of peace and liberty to her people." They then got to the point. They bluntly stated, "She [Texas] was received as a commonwealth holding, maintaining and protecting the institution known as negro slavery—the servitude of the African to the white race within her limits—a relation that had existed from the first settlement of her wilderness by the white race, and which her people intended should exist in all future time." Nevertheless, the delegates now feared, "The controlling majority of the Federal Government" had acquired "sufficient power in the common government to use it as a means of destroying the institutions of Texas and her sister slave-holding States." As such, because of the Northern "demand [for] the abolition of negro slavery . . ., the recognition of political equality between the white and the negro races, and [to] avow their determination to press on their crusade against us, so long as a negro slave remains in these States," the delegates declared theirs was "an ordinance dissolving all political connection with the government of the United States of America and the people thereof and confidently appeal to the intelligence and patriotism of the freeman of Texas to ratify the same at the ballot box, on the 23rd day of the present month."[7]

[7] For quotes, see "An Ordinance: To dissolve the union between the State of Texas and the other States, united under the compact styled 'The Constitution of the United States of America,' adopted in Convention, at Austin City, the first day of February, A.D. 1861.," accessed via the Texas State Library and Archives Commission online at https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ref/abouttx/secession/1feb1861.html.

So, in Nacogdoches County, on February 23, 1861, an overwhelming vote of 317 in favor of secession (77%) bested the ninety-four not in favor (23%). Interestingly, despite the vast approval and mirroring the statewide percentages of 76% for and 26% against secession, Nacogdoches County was still one of eleven counties in East Texas that saw more than ten percent of the vote go against seceding. There is no discernible trend, but possible explanations for anti-secession votes in Nacogdoches County may be because of a large Mexican population (most of whom owned no slaves) living in the county and its proximity to Angelina County, which saw 57% vote against secession. In contrast, most of the pro-secession votes in Nacogdoches County came from those who relied on slavery and the bondage of their fellow human beings for their continued livelihoods.[8]

Texas Military: The Big Picture

Texas was formally admitted to the Confederacy on March 1, 1861. Following Confederate belligerence at Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for volunteers in the U.S., Texas was called upon to give 3,000 Confederate troops initially and, later, 5,000 more. The following winter, the legislature divided the state into thirty-three "brigade districts" and all able-bodied men between eighteen and fifty years of age, with some exceptions, were to be enrolled in companies that the Confederacy could call upon as needed. On April 16, 1862, all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five not already in active

[8] Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches,* 255-57.

service were called up by the Confederate "conscript law." The Confederate government repeatedly extended the age limit until they had almost no men left to fight. In total, 50,000 to 65,000 Texans saw Confederate military service.[9]

Confederate Regiments from Nacogdoches County: A Brief Overview

According to Carolyn Reeves Ericson's directory in *The People of Nacogdoches County in the Civil War*, the total number of Confederate veterans from Nacogdoches County numbered no more than 1,500 men. Further, Muster Roll #394 from the State Archives lists a total of thirteen companies of volunteers from the county as of March 1862, comprising about 1,000 to 1,500 men in total. The rest of Ericson's estimate includes those who enlisted after this date or enlisted in surrounding counties and states.[10] Whatever the case, 1,000 Nacogdoches County Confederate Veterans would represent about 16.9% of the total 1860 white population in the county (5,930), 53.1% of the total white male population aged over 15 (1,881), and about 65% of the white male population aged 15 to 50 (1,532). If it were 1,500 veterans, then such would represent about 25% of the total white county population and 98% of those aged 15 to 50. In other words, white men in Nacogdoches County overwhelmingly served the Confederacy and the cause of white supremacy.[11] That being said, the actions of the various regiments that the men

[9] Charles William Ramsdell, *Reconstruction in Texas* (Gloucester, MA: Columbia University Press, 1964), 21-23.
[10] Carolyn Reeves Ericson, *The People of Nacogdoches County in the Civil War* (Lufkin, TX: Pineywood Printing, 1980), xi.
[11] *Table 31, Texas,* of *The Population of the United States in 1860, Compiled by the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the*

from Nacogdoches County served in is not the main focus of this project, telling the entire story of each regiment and their actions throughout the course of the war would contain enough information to serve as a project in its own right. As such, I will strive to keep the information on each regiment brief and brisk to avoid the risk of continuously rambling and drawing attention away from the reason why these men went to war in the first place and in the numbers that they did: to fight for their state and, by extension, its white supremacist way of life.

Protecting The Home Front

Not all the men who served the Confederacy went off to war or even left Texas. For instance, a company organized on July 13, 1861, by order of B. F. Benton in Nacogdoches, came together for "home protection." The company, under the command of Captain James Hart, had approximately 102 men. Nevertheless, many of these men would later serve in other units. By March of 1862, in fact, it is estimated that at least 718 men from Nacogdoches County served the Confederacy either as State Troops or in the Confederate Army itself.[12] In other words, this is about 12.1% of the total 1860 white population (5,930), 38.2% of the total white male population aged over 15, and about 47% of the white male population aged 15 to 50.[13]

Interior, By Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Superintendent of the Census (Washington, D.C., 1864), 474-75 (also accessible online via the U.S. Census Bureau at https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-34.pdf).

[12] Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches,* 258-59.

[13] Table 31, Texas, of The Population of the United States in 1860, Compiled by the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the

An article from the Nacogdoches *Daily Sentinel* dated December 11, 1923, shared the entire muster roll of a Linn Flatt Company and further helps us understand who served the Confederacy and in what numbers. The men in the Linn Flatt Company were enlisted for twelve months and ordered to provide defense for the Texas coast. Another article from the *Daily Sentinel* dated seven years later gave the roster for a volunteer militia raised for home protection. According to Ericson, this group consisted of those mostly too old or too feeble to serve anywhere else.[14]

Frederick Voigt and the Eighth Regiment

The same day the secession ordinance took effect in Texas, a man named Frederick Voigt helped organize a company of sixty riflemen in Nacogdoches County for the Confederacy, though these men did not have any weapons. Voigt was just one of the more notable men from Nacogdoches County who would serve in and survive the war. Moreover, records seem to indicate that his sixty "riflemen" served as the foundation of a company of infantrymen under the command of Captain James R. Arnold and who were mustered into the Texas militia on May 13, 1861 by B. F. Benton.

By that time, the riflemen company had grown to ninety men and twelve officers who had enlisted for a year; many of these men would later serve in other units as well. Whatever the case, Voigt himself eventually became part of the Eighth Regiment of the

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Interior, By Joseph C. G. Kennedy, Superintendent of the Census (Washington, D.C., 1864), 474-75 (also accessible online via the U.S. Census Bureau at https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-34.pdf).

[14] Ericson, *The People of Nacogdoches*, xii.

Nacogdoches volunteers. He rose to the rank of Captain of Company B after serving as acting and then full adjutant and then 1st lieutenant.[15]

Voigt's experiences during his travels outside Texas to Arkansas and Louisiana are documented in various letters he sent home to his first wife Elizabeth. Similar to other regiments, some disorganization of orders plagued them, along with sickness and fundraising. For instance, in his first letter to Elizabeth, dated February 10, 1862, Voigt mentioned that his regiment had recently camped to the southwest of Nacogdoches in Hempstead, Texas, at Camp Herbert. He had been the acting adjutant for the previous ten days and told his wife how both he and the men were in good spirits and were firm believers in the Southern cause to maintain slavery. The next letter, dated March 27, stated that the roughly two thousand men in the regiment, with about half being made up of cavalry, had not been paid yet. Less than a month later, about half of the entire regiment went home on a furlough, leaving Voigt and a man named only as "Captain Clark" in Hempstead to, in Voigt's own words, "draw money for the company." By this time, Voigt and the others in the regiment were clearly fed up with apparent disorganization of the orders they received; by late April the regiment was apparently supposed to return to Nacogdoches to regroup before setting out for Tennessee.[16]

[15]Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches*, 103.
[16] Correspondence from Frederick Voigt to Elizabeth Voigt, 15 June 1862, A.0117 Box 1, Folder 1, Frederick Voigt Letters, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas (hereafter simply refered to as ETRC).

At some point Voigt's regiment received new orders. His next batch of letters home came in August of 1862, by which point he had been ordered to Washington, Arkansas. By this time Voigt's regiment had joined up with two others, with the lines of soldiers and wagon trains stretching to three miles in length. Upon arrival, the regiment was ordered to Little Rock. During this time, Voigt made it clear that he was still proud of his regiment.[17]

Despite the high spirits, the reality was far from pristine. In an undated letter from a "camp near Tyler, Texas," likely written sometime between April and August, Voigt informs his wife that sickness had become rampant within the ranks and, as a result, they had been moved to Tyler. Of the now 1,100 men in the regiment, roughly three hundred of them had become sick either with a fever or the measles. The hospitals were severely overcrowded as well, with the number of deaths described as "great." Indeed, nine men had died in the hospital over two days, not counting those who may have died from being unable to gain access to the hospital. Despite such woes, Voigt's regiment recovered and reached Arkansas by the end of the month and neared their destination by August 22. He said that they were marching roughly ten to fifteen miles a day and were about 140 miles from Little Rock, where Voigt claimed they would finally be "near the enemy." The rest of the year proved uneventful, however, with Voigt hearing "many rumours [sic]" about

[17]Correspondence from Frederick Voigt to Elizabeth Voigt, 15 June 1862, A.0117 Box 1, Folder 2, Frederick Voigt Letters, ETRC.

potential engagements but none proving reliable. During this time he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant after the previous one resigned.[18]

Voigt got his first taste of battle in January 1863 at the Battle of Arkansas Post (it is also known as the Battle of Fort Hindman), which was part of the Union's Vicksburg Campaign. Although victory went to the Union, they moved no closer to their goal. Voigt explains that there had been about 7,000 Texans present at the battle, and that two of his friends, "Hancock" and "Bruton," were among those taken prisoner and were later transported to Camp Douglass, Illinois. A month after Arkansas Port, Voigt noted the difficulties of getting any kind of washing done as soap also became ever harder to obtain, saying "we are the blackest looking set of men imaginable." The beef supply the regiment had brought with them also began to spoil, and purchasing food from local businesses was expensive. Sometimes they simply had next to nothing other than cornbread and coffee.[19]

Later in the year Voigt was promoted from Lieutenant to Captain of the company while also still serving as Adjutant of the 12th regiment. As 1863 wore on, Voigt came to believe peace near impossible and that war would continue "for years." [20] By July, more engagements occurred, but Voigt did not say where or when these happened. By this

[18] Correspondence from Frederick Voigt to Elizabeth Voigt, 15 June 1862, A.0117 Box 1, Folder 2, Frederick Voigt Letters, ETRC.
[19]Correspondence from Frederick Voigt to Elizabeth Voigt, 15 June 1862, A.0117 Box 1, Folder 4, Frederick Voigt Letters, ETRC.
[20] Correspondence from Frederick Voigt to Elizabeth Voigt, 15 June 1862, A.0117 Box 1, Folder 5, Frederick Voigt Letters, ETRC.

time, wear and tear was taking a toll. Out of a regiment of now 900 men, only about 250 were fully fit for active duty as Voigt became "perfectly sick" of serving the Confederacy as a soldier.

The letters Voigt sent home to his wife go no further than December of 1863, so the exact date that Voigt returned to Nacogdoches is unknown. After the war, he became a state senator for the Nacogdoches district in 1866. He was also the editor for *The Nacogdoches Chronicle* from 1866 to 1868. He became a member of the Christ Episcopal Church and in 1870 he was the Sunday School Superintendent. In 1874, he became the State Librarian Superintendent of State Capitol grounds and state property in Austin. Voigt died in 1880 when he drowned in the Angelina River while traveling home to Nacogdoches. He is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Nacogdoches.

William Clark, Dr. Donnell Bone, and the 12th Texas Infantry

Nacogdoches County men, despite rough conditions, were clearly willing to serve the Confederacy and a considerable number of these men saw service outside of Texas. Some county residents found themselves in Captain William Clark's Company G, a part of Colonel Overton Young's 12th Texas Infantry who served in Louisiana and Arkansas. This regiment, sometimes incorrectly referred to as the Eighth Texas Infantry, was mustered into Confederate service in Waco, Texas in early 1862.

Captain William Clark, born in Georgia in November of 1828, moved to Texas with his family in 1835, growing up in Sabine County. Prior to his Civil War service, he served in the Second Texas Mounted Volunteers in the Mexican-American War,

participating in the battle of Monterrey. After that war he passed the bar in Shelby County in 1852 and practiced law. He permanently settled in Nacogdoches County two years later and represented Nacogdoches County in the House of the Eighth legislature from 1859 to 1861. When Sam Houston called the Texas legislature into a special session in 1861, Clark initially voted against calling a Secession Convention but voted in favor of secession after being elected to that same convention. While initially serving as a Captain, Clark eventually saw promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. Clark ultimately survived the war and returned to practicing law, serving as a County Attorney and with the Houston, East and West Texas Railway. He died on January 6, 1884 and is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Nacogdoches.[21]

Another man hailing from Nacogdoches in the 12th was Doctor Robert Donnell Bone. Born in Tennessee in 1832, Bone came to Nacogdoches County in 1841 with his mother and stepfather. He enrolled at University at Nashville Medical School (which later became Vanderbilt University) in 1854 and returned to Douglass, Texas, to practice medicine after graduating in 1858. After the war broke out, he was appointed to serve the 12th as its Assistant Surgeon. He took to his duties eagerly despite facing inadequate provisions, the boring routine of camp life, and often having to take over the duties of the head doctor whenever he was not present. The main illnesses he faced during this time were "The Fever", dysentery, measles and exposure to the elements. Despite the initial

[21]Memorial and Genealogical Record of Texas (East) (Chicago: Goodspeed, 1895; rpt., Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1982).

eagerness, stress oftentimes got to Bone, in a letter to his wife Minerva dated January 26, 1862, he would say "the duties of the position are very onerous and embrace more responsibility than I care to shoulder. I had rather be Assistant Surgeon than Chief Surgeon because I will have more practice and less responsibility."[22] Bone himself would not see any serious fighting, and he resigned his commission on March 7, 1863, returning to Douglass, Texas to practice medicine.

In addition to fighting in Louisiana and Arkansas, Company G also took part in several battles of the Union's Red River Campaign along the Red River in Louisiana and Arkansas from March to May of 1864. The Union campaign had been authorized by President Lincoln with the goal of taking Shreveport, Louisiana, which at that time served as the temporary capital of Confederate Louisiana. The city was a major supply depot as well and served as a potential gateway for the Union into Texas. Despite these lofty goals, the campaign ultimately ended in victory for the Confederacy.[23]

For their part, Clark's Company G took part in the battle at Mansfield, LA on April 8, 1864, which ended in a Confederate victory despite being heavily outnumbered. The very next day the battle of Pleasant Hill occurred. Both sides had been reinforced during the night, and this time they were more evenly matched, with about 12,000 men

[22] Correspondence from Dr. Bone to Minerva Bone, 26 January 1862, A9, Box 1, Folder 12, Bone Family Papers, ETRC.
[23] John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*. Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991). 378.

apiece. Unlike the previous day, this battle proved to be a tactical victory for the Union.[24] Another battle the regiment was involved in occurred at Jenkins' Ferry near Little Rock on April 30, 1864, which was the last major battle of the Arkansas portion of the Red River Campaign. The battle proved to only be a pyrrhic victory for the Union, however, losing large amounts of men, wagons, and supplies. During the retreat, many Confederate snipers were able to take potshots at them to boot.[25]

After the campaign, Clark's regiment spent the summer of that year in Central Arkansas before being ordered back to Marshall, Texas and later marched to Hempstead in spring 1865. It was in Hempstead, however, that General Edmund Kirby Smith surrendered the regiment on May 23, 1865.[26]

Henry Raguet and the 4th Texas Cavalry

Company H of the 4th Texas Cavalry also included Nacogdoches residents. Their other names include the Fourth Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers, and Reily's Cavalry Regiment, and they served under the command of Major Henry W. Raguet. Raguet was born to his namesake and War of 1812 veteran Henry Raguet in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1824. After the failure of his mercantile business, the elder Henry traveled to New Orleans where he met Sam Houston, who then encouraged him to settle in

[24] Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana*. 39.
[25] Derek Allen Clements "Engagement at Jenkins' Ferry" Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed July 13, 2021. https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/engagement-at-jenkins-ferry-1136/.
[26] Joseph H. Crute, Jr., *Units of the Confederate States Army* (Midlothian, Virgina: Derwent, 1987), 331.

Nacogdoches, which Raquet did with his family a year later. When the Civil War began, the younger Henry Raguet initially enlisted as a Private before earning the rank of Lieutenant and then Captain in Company H, before then climbing to the ranks of Major on August 23, 1861.[27]

As for combat, Raguet suffered a leg wound at the Battle of Valverde during the ill-fated Confederate Sibley Campaign to take the New Mexico Territory from the Union on February 20, 1862. Launching from Texas, the Confederacy hoped to move north into the New Mexico Territory and from there make their way toward the Colorado gold mining camps and eventually travel west to the Pacific Coast to take seaports at Los Angeles and San Diego. To do this, however, the Confederates needed to take the aptly named Fort Union, a Union supply center in northeastern New Mexico Territory. This objective resulted first in the Battle of Valverde on February 21, 1862, a Confederate victory, and the Battle of Glorieta Pass just over a month later on March 26, 1862, a strategic victory for the Union. It was here that Raguet was mortally wounded. Later attempts to attack Fort Union proved no better and the Confederates slowly withdrew from the territory. As a result, the Union retained control of the American Southwest for the rest of the Civil War. As for Raguet, his remains were taken to Santa Fe by his

[27] Nacogdoches County Genealogical Society, *Nacogdoches County Families* (Dallas: Curtis, 1985), 25.

brother and laid to rest in Odd Fellows Cemetery with full military honors. A marker in his honor was also erected in Oak Grove Cemetery in Nacogdoches.[28]

The Fourth is Reassigned

After the failed Sibley Campaign, the Fourth Regiment was reassigned to Tom Green's cavalry brigade. Tom Green, born in Virginia in 1814, came to Texas in 1835 to fight in the Texas Revolution where he helped operate the Twin Sisters cannons at the Battle of San Jacinto. He then served during the Mexican-American War as he commanded a company of Texas Rangers in La Grange as part of the First Texas Regiment of Mounted Riflemen. When the Civil War broke out, he was elected as Colonel to the Fifth Texas Volunteer Cavalry and served in the Sibley Campaign before returning to San Antonio.[29] After a brief period of rest and rearmament, the Fourth Regiment fought in the Battle of Galveston on January 1, 1863, which ultimately proved to be a victory for the Confederacy as they continued to hold Galveston for the rest of the war.[30]

For the rest of 1863, the Fourth Regiment then aided in the defense of Southern Louisiana. Most of the battles during this period resulted in defeat. These included action at Fort Bisland in St. Mary's Parish on April 12 and 13, Irish Bend the next day on April

[28] Nacogdoches Genealogical Society. *Nacogdoches County Families*, 27
[29] Odie B. Faulk, *General Tom Green: Fightin' Texan* (Waco: Texian Press, 1963), 45-7.
[30] Charles C. Cumberland, "The Confederate Loss and Recapture of Galveston, 1862–1863," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (October 1947), 109-30, accessed August 3, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/30236128.pdf.

14, and the Battle of Brashear City (present-day Morgan City).[31] A week later, defeat came yet again as the Confederates failed to take the Union Fort Butler during the Second Battle of Donaldsonville on June 28, 1863.

This string of defeats finally came to an end at the Battle of Cox's Plantation (also known as Kock's Plantation) on July 12 and 13. The regiment helped retain Confederate control of much of the Acadiana region of Southern Louisiana as a result.[32] This was followed by more victories in Louisiana with an overwhelming Confederate win at Stirling's Plantation (also known as the Battle of Fordoche Bridge) on September 29 and Bayou Bourbeux (also known as the Battle of Grand Coteau) on November 3. The following year, in 1864, the regiment became part of Major General Richard Taylor's army, who was opposing Major General Nathaniel P. Banks's Red River Campaign and was heavily engaged in Louisiana at Mansfield on April 8, 1864 and Pleasant Hill on April 9, 1864. The regiment ultimately was defeated and surrendered with Lt. General Edmund Kirby Smith at Shreveport, Louisiana on May 26, 1865, three days after Clark's 12th Texas Infantry.[33]

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[31] Martin Hardwick Hall, *Sibley's New Mexico Campaign* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960); and "The Battle of Brashear City," *The American Civil War*, accessed July 16, 2021, https://www.mycivilwar.com/battles/630623.html.
[32] "Kock's Plantation" *Battle Detail*, accessed July 20, 2021, https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-battles-detail.htm?battleCode=LA015
[33] "Kock's Plantation" *Battle Detail.*

Sebron M. Noble, Hardy H. White, and the 17th Texas Cavalry

Two other Nacogdoches companies that served in the Confederate Army were Sebron M. Noble's Company A and Hardy N. White's Company H of the 17th Texas Cavalry. Noble was initially a Major but later promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, while White was not an officer. These companies were both organized in the spring and early summer of 1862 and mustered into service in the Confederate Army on March 15, 1862. Union forces captured most of the regiment in January 1863 at the Battle of Arkansas Post (also known as Battle of Fort Hindman) and most of the Nacogdocheans were sent to union prison camps at Fort Douglas and Alton, Illinois in early 1863. White's Company H, however, was assigned to the prison camp in Little Rock at the time of capture. They were later released and consolidated into the 18th Texas Cavalry and made part of the Army of Tennessee.[34] This new regiment took part in more than thirty engagements and battles. Its most notable battles and campaigns were Chickamauga on September 19-20, 1863; the siege of Chattanooga from September to November 1863, a Union victory that opened the Deep South to future invasions; the Atlanta campaign from May to September 1864; Jonesboro from August 31 to September 1, 1864; Franklin on November 30, 1864; Nashville on December 15-16, 1864; the Carolinas campaign from February to April 1865; and Bentonville on March 19-21, 1865. The Eighteenth Texas Cavalry suffered heavy casualties throughout the war and probably fewer than 125

[34] Joseph H. Crute, Jr., *Units of the Confederate States Army* (Midlothian, Virginia: Derwent, 1987), 334.

enlisted men and officers were present at the regiment's surrender on April 26, 1865, at Bennett's House, Durham Station, in North Carolina.

These men later served at the Battle of Lookout Mountain, another decisive Union victory.[35] They also attempted to oppose William Sherman's famed, devastating "March to the Sea" and helped to cover the retreat of John B. Hood's army from Nashville. Noble was killed at the Battle of Mansfield, Louisiana on April 8, 1864.[36]

B.F. Benton and Hood's Texas Brigade

B. F. Benton's company did not form in Nacogdoches County but rather in neighboring San Augustine County in the spring of 1861. Yet, many citizens of Nacogdoches County still found themselves a part of it. Benton's company is worth mentioning because it has the rare distinction of being part of one of the three Texas Brigades to fight in the Eastern Theater, an area that was made up of the states of Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and the coastal fortifications and seaports of North Carolina (the interior of North Carolina is considered part of the Western Theater).[37] The 114 initial members of the company

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[35] "Hamilton County and City of Chattanooga, TN,Nov 23-25, 1863," American Battlefield Trust, accessed July 16, 2021, https://www.battlefields.org/learn/civil-war/battles/chattanooga; and "American Battlefield Trust's map of the Battle of Lookout Mountain," American Battlefield Trust, accessed July 17, 2021. https://www.battlefields.org/learn/maps/chattanooga-battle-lookout-mountain-november-24-1863.

[36] Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches,* 260,

[37] Harold B. Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade: A Compendium* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Jr. College Press, 1977), 38.

departed from San Augustine with "every kind of gun" and made their way to Richmond, Virginia. Upon arrival, this company of volunteers became Company K of the 1st Texas Division in Confederate General Jon Bell Hood's Brigade (which then became a part of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia), eventually earning the nickname "Texas Invincibles." They were just one of an initial ten companies in their division, though two more were added later.[38] They began to see combat in 1862. The brigade, in fact, was involved in every major battle engaged in by the Army of Northern Virginia except Chancellorsville. The campaign took a heavy toll on the brigade as a whole, however, and there was frequently little or nothing to eat. Many of the original members of Company K were ultimately injured, killed, or had contracted diseases such as smallpox. [39]

The following year, in 1863, the company once again fought in a major battle of the Civil War, the Battle of Chickamauga, fought on September 18-20, 1863, which ended the Union offensive into southeastern Tennessee and northwestern Georgia. The entire brigade suffered heavy losses and, afterward, out of the original 114 men who had volunteered in San Augustine, there were only five or so left who were in any condition to fight. The last two significant battles this company took part in were the inconclusive Battle in the Wilderness during May 5-7, 1864, where they fought beside Robert E. Lee

[38]Simpson, *Hood's Texas Brigade*, 72.
[39]Orlando T. Hanks, *History of Captain B.F. Benton's Company, Hood's Texas Brigade (*Austin, TX: Morrison Books, 1984), 15.

at the Siege of Petersburg, where trench warfare was common.[40] Interestingly, fourteen individuals of this company were with Lee when he surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, though it is unknown if they were from Nacogdoches County.[41]

Life at home

While the men of Nacogdoches County were fighting across the South, the family and friends they left behind experienced the war in their own way. The citizens of Nacogdoches County and the rest of Texas were fortunate that they did not suffer to the extent of many of their fellow Southerners elsewhere in the Confederacy. Citizens of Nacogdoches County, and the rest of eastern Texas, however, endured poor traveling conditions, a housing shortage brought on by many refugees, as well as shortages of many common commodities from coffee to cloth and shoes. Texans made the most of the situation, however, and used substitutes for items in short supply. More common examples include using berries for items ranging from ink to quinine.[42]

According to the historian Ralph A. Wooster in his essay "Life in Civil War East Texas," transportation—already scant—was hit the hardest. Fighting stopped all railroad construction for seven years, for instance, and difficulties in maintaining the few railway vehicles around caused many of the also too few lines to be abandoned entirely. This, in turn, made all rail lines in Texas suffer financial losses during the war. Stagecoaches, on

[40] Hanks, *History of Captain B.F. Benton's Company*, 32.
[41]Joseph Benjamin Polley, *Hood's Texas Brigade: Its Marches, Its Battles, Its Achievements* (Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop Press, 1988), 345-47.
[42]Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches*, 261.

the other hand, continued to operate across the state but did so frequently overcrowded and behind schedule. Accommodations for travelers suffered as well. [43]

Despite these shortages and hardships, the war managed to stimulate some industry in East Texas. Homes across Nacogdoches County became workshops for families to make items for themselves and the Confederate war effort. One example of this can be found with the Starr family when they lived in Nacogdoches. James Harper Starr, former treasurer for the Republic of Texas, had gathered an entire wagonload of supplies for Captain W. L. Alexander's company, in which his son, Frank, served as a member (which took part in the New Mexico Campaign). During the War, John N. Craven described Starr's house as follows:

The Starr home was turned into a workshop during the war: even in the living rooms the piano was pushed aside to make room for spinning wheels and loom. All members of the household could work at spinning thread, whereas only Mrs. Starr and her daughter, Pamela Raguet, knew how to operate the loom. It was only with difficulty that either the loom or carding combs could be secure. The Starr home produced many a blanket and suit of clothes for Confederate soldiers. Long before the struggle ended, the master of the house dressed in a raw-cotton suit made in his own home.[44] In addition to what is mentioned above, Starr

[43]Ralph A. Wooster, "Life in Civil War East Texas," *East Texas Historical Journal* 3, no.2 (October 1955): 94-96.
[44]John N. Craven, *James Harper Starr, Financier of the Republic of Texas* (Austin, 1950), 129.

also served as a Confederate official during the war, being appointed as one after the Confederate government passed the 1861 Sequestration Act, authorizing the seizure of Northern property in direct retaliation for the First Confiscation Act that had been passed by the Union on August 6, 1861. Like the Sequestration Act, it allowed for the seizure of any property that might support the Confederate War effort, including slaves. In fact, thanks to the efforts of SFA archivist Kyle Ainsworth and his Texas Runaway Slave Project, while not having information on all 2,539 slaves that lived in the county at that time according to the federal census done the previous year, we do get a snapshot of its continued presence in the region and, really the continued resistance efforts of defiant slaves who ran away at this time, on the one hand, and the continued commitment to slavery by anxious whites in the region on the other hand (or at least for those who decided to place an ad for their runaway slave in a newspaper). For example, of the four ads and related reports found by Ainsworth that date to the Civil War era, one example indicates that an actual slave rebellion nearly took place in Nacogdoches just months after the formation of the Confederacy and the first shots fired at Fort Sumter in the summer of 1861:

> Threatened Insurrection. We learn from the Nacogdoches Chronicle, of July 23rd, the particulars of a threatened insurrection, which was fortunately frustrated in time. It seems that three runaway negroes, a day or two previous to the issue of the paper, were captured. An examination

of the runaways was had by a committee of gentlemen appointed for that purpose. They were examined separately, and the tale told by each corroborated the others. They divulged important and startling information. There was a plot which had for its object a general insurrection of the entire negro population of the county, the burning of the town of Nacogdoches, and the murdering of her people. They implicated some 20 odd negroes and two white men. The white men were at the bottom of the plot. They were to furnish arms to be used in the indiscriminate slaughter of the people. One of the negroes testified that the "light-wood" for the burning had already been prepared. The two white men live in the south-west corner of San Augustine County. Their names are Sam Steadam and Bill Malone. Steadam was arrested, and was in safe keeping. There was to be a meeting of citizens on the 23rd to determine the fate of Steadam. The discovery of the plot was fortuitous and has saved we know not what the horror. Should not all our citizens everywhere be on the alert? There is often danger when we dream not of it."[45]

[45] *Texas Patriot* (Gilmer, TX), August 2, 1861, p.2, accessed online at the Texas Runaway Slave Project at https://digital.sfasu.edu/digital/collection/RSP/id/7615/rec/8.

As for Starr, he served as a Confederate official until 1864, when he was made Confederate agent for the postal service west of the Mississippi River. He served in that role until the war ended the next year.[46]

Besides home industries, major industries such as salt works, ordinance works, and iron foundries continued during the war. There were eight different ironworks in East Texas during the war, for example, and one of them was in Nacogdoches County. Yet, the total amount of iron produced was negligible and the foundry ceased being used by the time the war ended.

Despite the modest amount of industry, the war ultimately harmed the economy of the county. The amount of taxable property in the county steadily declined until reaching approximately $2,435,550 in 1863. While that amount may seem significant, the amount the year before was reported to be over $500,000 higher. The value of slaves also suffered. Their total value is estimated to have fallen by $300,000 between 1860 and1863. Still, the population of slaves in the county grew by almost one hundred.[47]

As the end of the war loomed, with military operations continually resulting in defeat, life in East Texas became increasingly anxious. Newspaper editorials still urged citizens to hold firm, and Confederate Generals told their men to remain disciplined and to stand by them. Yet, when news of Lee's defeat came in April of 1865, the idea of continuing the war seemed pointless. Inevitably, discipline broke down and, on May 15,

[46] Craven, *James Harper Starr*, 130.
[47] Craven, *James Harper Starr*, 263.

soldiers in Galveston mutinied and other garrisons along the coast showed complete disregard for authority (this may have included the Linn Flatt Company, but it is unclear). By that point the roads were full of Confederate deserters whose only goal was returning home. On June 2, General Edmund Kirby boarded a Union ship in Galveston and signed terms of surrender. The Civil War in Texas was now over. But the long years of Reconstruction lay ahead.[48] They would bring forth to Nacogdoches County and Texas at large changes that were unprecedented in the South.

[48] Wooster, "Life in Civil War East Texas," 98-99.

CHAPTER TWO

Reconstruction and the Freedmen's Bureau

After the Civil War ended in the Confederacy's defeat, Texas faced financial ruin, being eight million in debt and losing forty million in taxes paid to the former Confederacy.[49] In addition to these financial issues, other changes swept the region as Reconstruction got underway in the South. Political, social, and economic issues produced by the war in one way or another now had to be handled. Times were hard in Nacogdoches County and the typical outlook grew grimmer. Many businesses came to an end and those that remained could barely supply the necessities. Soldiers who were able to return home to their farms often had trouble producing enough to make ends meet.[50] In addition, the white citizens of Nacogdoches County remained committed to the idea of their supremacy despite slavery being eradicated. This fact reveals itself when we examine the citizens' resistance to the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau as well as white on black racial violence that occurred all over the county during the Reconstruction years, and various laws put into place to enforce segregation upon the black population in order

[49]Merle Durham, *The Lone Star State Divided: Texans and The Civil War* (Dallas: Hendrick-Long Publishing Co., 1994), 215.
[50]Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches*, 264.

for the white population to preserve at least some resemblance of the white supremacist status quo that existed before the war.

In other words, the old, racist, and often inhumane way of living that many whites enjoyed had seemingly been stripped away from them, but they were not about to simply let things be. Indeed, as reported by Gary Borders, former editor of the *Daily Sentinel* who poured over the contents of the newspapers during Reconstruction, "At least twenty cases in Nacogdoches County from 1865 to 1869 involved acts of violence between former slave owners and freedmen, and in nearly all cases the whites were believed to be the offending party, though it was rare that anyone was convicted."[51]

Reconstruction in Texas: The Big Picture

On June 17, 1865 Reconstruction officially began in Texas as President Andrew Johnson announced his appointment of Andrew J. Hamilton as provisional governor for the state. Hamilton, a Texan and Unionist politician, heralded from Alabama before he came to Texas in 1847. He served as the state's Attorney General in 1850 for a short stint before he was elected, first, to the Texas House of Representatives (1850-53) and, then, to the U.S. House from Texas's second district in 1859. Hamilton had been against secession but remained in Texas until 1862 under threat of arrest by the military, escaping to Mexico and finding his way to New Orleans before joining the Union army.

[51] Gary Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches: Murder, Race, Politics, and Polemics in Texas's Oldest Town, 1870-1916* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 41.

When Hamilton arrived in Austin, he discovered that he had his work cut out for him. The treasury had been looted, various department positions were unfilled, the capitol itself had no roof, and much of the interior had been exposed or damaged for quite some time. The governor and many of his cohorts were also questioning the loyalty of many Texans. A belief persisted among former slaveholders about the idea of being compensated for the loss of their slaves. Thus, many civilians hesitated to take the required amnesty oath because of their belief it would somehow prevent that compensation. The idea of emancipation coming gradually rather than all at once swirled as well. In some of the more rural areas, in fact, some people even thought they could keep newly freed people in bondage and cruelly punish any who tried to exercise their new freedom.[52]

Hamilton ultimately wanted to take all necessary steps to restore civil authority and guarantee a loyal, Republican-controlled government. Such goals would not come easy, however. The community and old status quo that had been in place in Texas before the Civil War had been uprooted but not entirely eradicated. Because of this, any changes in both government and Texan society met substantial resistance. The white citizens in Nacogdoches County proved to be no exception.

While racism, white supremacy, and general anti-authoritarianism certainly played a role in many Texans' lack of enthusiasm for change, remember also that Texas

[52]Ramsdell, *Reconstruction in Texas*, 55-63.

escaped most of the devastation that states in the Deep South had endured. As a result, the Lone Star State seemed stable by comparison. The main factor was the state's geographical position in the far western end of the Confederacy and the physical distance from the major theaters of war on the Mississippi River's eastern side. Yet, the war undoubtedly affected the lives of many individual citizens and their families. In his book, *Texas after the Civil War: The Struggle of Reconstruction*, historian Carl H. Moneyhon, assuming Texas suffered similar casualty rates as other states and the same amount of men endured wounds, disease or captivity, estimates that Texas contributed as much as 90,000 soldiers to the Confederate war effort and that as many as 19,000 may have died. Though many survived, the visible and nonvisible effects of war undoubtedly lingered for years afterward.

In 1865, Texas was stable from an economic standpoint relative to the other former Confederate states. The two primary aspects of the state's economy, stock farming and cotton, were still intact in 1865 with relatively few setbacks. Despite losing access to their eastern market during the war and having this compounded by a drought that began in 1862 and lasted through the course of the war, local livestock markets remained profitable, and ranchers could take advantage of selling through Mexico. According to the census of 1860, Texans owned 2,761,736 head of cattle. These cattle and their byproducts brought profits of $4,835,284 that same year. By 1865, according to the *Texas Almanac*, the total amount of cattle in the state had grown by nearly half a million, and prices were high after the war, so the future of ranching looked bright.

Alongside ranching, planting and cultivating crops was a more prominent part of economic life in antebellum Texas. Farmers grew corn primarily for their consumption but to also feed their livestock. Grains such as rye, oats, and wheat mainly went to market in Shreveport. Nevertheless, the one primary cash crop was cotton, which had brought in roughly $19,000,000 in 1859. Cotton also had virtually no limitations on where it could be cultivated.[53]

Manufacturing likewise looked promising during the end of the war. In the antebellum period it was only a tiny part of the Texas economy and only four companies could be considered highly mechanized. More prominent manufacturers expanded during the war and experienced somewhat of a boom thanks to the Confederate government's encouragement both at the state and national levels. These manufacturers made textiles, hats, uniforms, and similar paraphernalia, powder, and weapons. Despite the success, many factories did not last beyond the surrender of the Confederacy. After the war, many of these factories were ransacked by soldiers returning home or local civilians. Still, many smaller manufacturers were able to recover from this quickly because they did not rely on heavy machinery and could pick up where they left off when soldiers returned from the war. Many of these businesses that had ties to agriculture similarly had an optimistic future despite losing the war.

[53]Carl H. Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil War: The Struggle of Reconstruction* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 8-10.

Other areas of the economy were not as fortunate. Businesses, both wholesale and retail, fell on hard times during the war due to a diminished demand for goods and local purchasing power. This occurred even though trade continued in Texas. New trade routes, in fact, had to be utilized due to a blockade on Texas' ports. Commerce that had once moved through Louisiana or Galveston instead moved through Mexico. Galveston was the port city hit hardest by this change. Many businessmen left the town and fled to the mainland when it was occupied by Union forces and did not return until after the war. By 1865, however, things looked promising. Many of the old businesses were reopened alongside new ones.[54]

Texans and their views on how society worked had not been disrupted very much by the war. But new potential divisions in society led to questions about class identity that had not previously. Many more impoverished Texans were resistant to being conscripted for the war effort. They, similar to other poor people across the South, saw it as "a rich man's war and a poor man's fight."[55] Some of these men were arrested and forced into service anyway, while others fled their homes and often came together as outlaws. These men were especially prominent in East Texas, the area along the Red River boundary, and Indian Territory.

[54]Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil War*,12-13.
[55]Moneyhon, *Texas after the Civil War*, 15.

Federal Military Presence in Texas

Another change brought to the state following the war was the presence of Federal troops, who began arriving in May 1865. Their commanders believed their mandate was to guarantee a loyal state government and to protect the rights of the newly freed slaves, at least partially. They also thought that the army had to retain control of the state until the federal government was "satisfied that a loyal sentiment prevails in at least a majority of the inhabitants." The idea of living under a civil government supervised by the military was something many Texans found objectionable, a feeling that stemmed both from the American and Texas revolutions. Despite initial fears, however, rapid demobilization by the army in the first year reduced the total number of soldiers from 51,000 to 3,000—most of the soldiers who remained were stationed on the frontier.[56]

In his book, *The Army in Texas during Reconstruction, 1865-1870,* historian William L. Richter divides the army's presence in Texas and the state's Reconstruction into three periods. The first period covered the eighteen months from May 1865 when General Philip Sheridan assumed command to December of 1866 when General Charles Griffin took over Sheridan's orders. This period is sometimes referred to as Presidential Reconstruction. The second period encompasses Griffin's time as commander of the District of Texas during the first nine months of 1867 when Congressional Reconstruction began. The third period, as described by Richter, covers the Command of

[56] Moneyhon, *Texas After the Civil War*, 17.

General Joseph R. Reynolds and culminates in the election of a loyal government and the readmission of Texas into the Union. [57]

Reconstruction and Federal Military Presence in Nacogdoches County

At the beginning of Reconstruction, Texas came under the Fifth Military District's administration and occupied by Federal soldiers. One of the units in Nacogdoches County was Company I of the 15th United States Infantry, under the command of First Lieutenant Asher C. Taylor. Later on, Company A of the 6th United States Cavalry came to Nacogdoches under the command of Brevet Colonel J. Conrad. For the duration of their stay, the officers were headquartered at the Old University Building.[58] These soldiers were not welcome. Most of the soldiers had set up white tents and quartermasters' wagons along Banita Creek to the west of Nacogdoches, and the sounds of their drums in the morning and evening served as reminders of defeat. Indeed, it is not hard to imagine that the Blue uniforms that were now showing up in town more than likely served as a significant irritant to the (white) townspeople.[59]

The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas and Nacogdoches County

The most significant change across the state was the end of slavery. The labor system had changed as millions of dollars in assets (in the form of the slaves) vanished practically overnight. As a result, a redefinition of the relationship between blacks and

[57]William L. Richter, *The Army in Texas during Reconstruction, 1865-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 187.
[58]Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches,* 264.
[59] Partin, *A History of Nacogdoches,* 266.

whites took place. Following the war, newly freed slaves were hopeful for the future. They desired to gain complete control over their lives, including control over their education, labor, and families. They could, in theory at least, accomplish this with the assistance of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, more commonly referred to today as the Freedmen's Bureau. This organization was to supervise and expedite the process of the former slaves officially becoming freedmen, provide relief for them and loyal white refugees, and administer public and private lands that had belonged to Southerners who remained unpardoned after the end of the war. Set up under the War Department, the Bureau was run in a military style. Most of the staff also had military experience.[60]

Along with underestimating the needs of freedmen and the lack of funds it received from the government, the militarist organization ultimately created more problems for the Bureau. The Bureau existed nationally from March of 1865 until summer 1872, though originally planned to last just one year. The Bureau ceased operations in Texas, however, in 1870. From the beginning, the Bureau faced obstacles in Texas. Chief among these was the state's size, along with poor transportation and communication infrastructure, and the hostility Bureau agents faced from many white Texans in response to their efforts to aid newly freed slaves.

[60]William L. Richter, *Overreached on All Sides: The Freedmen's Bureau Administrators in Texas, 1865-1868* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 4-5.

These white Texans were not content to simply voice their opposition to these new developments. Blacks were attacked on a regular basis in what James M. Smallwood describes as "a one-sided guerilla war".[61] This violence was born from the hostility that local whites felt towards the occupying forces, and they attacked freedmen and freedwomen for almost any reasons they could fathom, from not removing one's hat fast enough, to daring to look at a white woman. Whatever the reasons may have been stated to be, the actual reason was an attempt by white citizens to continue their domination over the newly freed slaves.[62]

Due to Texas' size and other areas of the state being given higher priority either because of violence or a higher concentration of former slaves, the Bureau did not reach Deep East Texas and, by extension, Nacogdoches County until the spring of 1867. The Bureau office closest to Nacogdoches County initially popped up in Marshall in nearby Harrison County. When more direct help eventually arrived, Nacogdoches became the fiftieth subdistrict headquarters for the Bureau in Texas. This district encompassed not just Nacogdoches County but also the entirety of the neighboring Angelina County and the Southern part of Cherokee County. During this time of transition and change, the white population of Nacogdoches County grew alarmed by the societal changes occurring around them, and the lack of any kind of guidance only exacerbated the alarm.

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[61] James M. Smallwood, *Time of Hope, Time of Despair: Black Texans during Reconstruction* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1981), 32.
[62] Borders, *A Hanging in Nacogdoches,* 13.

Community leaders in Nacogdoches signed a petition in response to these changes and brought it before the Bureau. The petition asked the Bureau that "Freedmen of this section of this state be informed of their exact civil status" and stress the importance of finding proper employment with the white race.[63] This idea of "proper employment" could relate to the fact that, having earned their freedom, the former slaves had a choice to make: to stay or to go. Many chose to stay due their lack of any education or possessions, or for the hope of reuniting with loved ones who had been sold to other slaveholders years earlier. Some 75,000 freedmen left Texas, however, creating a labor shortage at the precise moment many of their former owners sought to begin rebuilding the state's economy.[64]

Edwin Onley Gibson became the first post commander stationed in Nacogdoches on May 13, 1867. Originally from New York, Gibson had served in the Union Army during the war and began renting an office from Frederick Voigt for twelve dollars a month soon after arriving in Nacogdoches. Bureau agents in Nacogdoches County faced many of the same challenges that agents elsewhere in Texas and the rest of the South also faced: conflicts between freedmen and white citizens; a lack of essential supplies and support from civil authorities; and constant threats of violence. Most of the cases that Gibson dealt with were disputes and crimes committed between whites and Freedmen.

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[63] Jacy D. King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau Agents of Deep East Texas," (master's thesis, Stephen F. Austin State University, 2018) 25.
[64] King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau," 24.

When Gibson made his first report for the Bureau headquarters in July of 1867, he mentioned several cases that had occurred months before, but due to the lack of the Bureau's presence in Nacogdoches County, they had gone unreported or investigated.

One case had occurred just before Christmas the year before. A Freedman named John Wolfe had been murdered in Cherokee County and his body was found in the Angelina River bound at the arms and legs and a bullet in his head. According to his mother, Julia Ann Wolfe, just before the murder of her son, she had been approached by two white citizens in Linwood, Robert Diamond and George McGee, who asked her for John's whereabouts (who had left for Shreveport). These two men then forced Julia into a nearby blacksmith's shed, stripped her almost wholly nude, and took turns to whip her with a saw until "the blood ran down like water." The only reason for this assault was because Julia "failed to inform them" of John's traveling. The exact motive they had for wanting to murder John, however, was never made clear, but witnesses later stated that Diamond came to the home of a man named William Evans, whom James Wolfe and other Freedmen were looking to contract with for work. Diamond and other white citizens he came with called John out and led him into the woods in the river's direction. The witnesses then heard shots a short time later. Diamond was eventually arrested for the murder of John Wolfe but later escaped confinement. This was just one of many

white-on-black violence cases in the immediate years following the end of the Civil War.[65]

Not all cases Gibson and his fellow agents heard included Freedmen. The government also gave the Bureau the ability to listen to cases that were between white citizens whenever assault or intimidation due to political reasons occurred. Everyday Nacogdoches County citizens who supported the Democratic Party loathed their Republican supporting neighbors, also known as scalawags, and tensions often came to a head. One example is when a resident of Nacogdoches named William Burroughs shot another white man, James M. Hazlett. The only reason given for the shooting is that Hazlett was "uttering Union sentiments." Hazlett had served in the Union Army during the war, so it can reasonably be assumed that he was already unpopular with Burroughs and other citizens.[66]

Along with cases that had occurred before his arrival, Gibson had his hands full once his job began in earnest. A few examples of Gibson's numerous incidents in the spring and summer of 1867 include a Freedman named Augustus and his unnamed wife. A merchant shot them in Melrose for refusing to buy anything from his store. The merchant received a bond of $2,000. In Linn Flatt, a Freedman named Nathan Hudson was shot in the arm by a Mr. Blackwell, seemingly without provocation. Quite often Gibson could not make any arrests because, according to him, those who were wanted

[65] King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 27.
[66] King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 28.

"laid low" when the soldiers were around. Even if an arrest occurred, those apprehended sometimes escaped, as was the case with Hosea Montes, who murdered a freedman known as Elijah. There were also at least three homicides during Gibson's last eighteen months, where no progress was made in the cases.[67] Gibson's time in Nacogdoches County came to an end on September 2, 1867. He had been reassigned to Tyler, Texas, replaced by Pennsylvania native Thomas M. K. Smith.

Smith, as with Gibson, served in the military and had been captured by Confederates in the Civil War and imprisoned at Andersonville. In his first report to the Bureau, Smith handled the case of a freedman named Jordan King, a unique case because it involved a conflict between two freedmen. King had been accused of murdering his half-brother, Isaac, during an argument over salted pork. The argument turned violent, with both men brandishing weapons. During the commotion, Isaac was stabbed several times while Jordan received several blows to the head. Isaac survived after the actual encounter but later died from both a fever and cough. Also, Jordan later assaulted his sister due to his belief that she abused their mother. He avoided arrest on both occasions.[68]

During Smith's tenure, he also noted that some criminals listed during the Gibson era remained at large. Criminals could do this by hiding in the thickest parts of the Piney Woods or being hidden by family and friends sympathetic to them. Smith and other

[67] King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 28.
[68] King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 30.

agents repeatedly requested horses to aid them in apprehending them, but horses and funds to get them were in short supply during this time, and these requests were often left unanswered. Alongside logistical issues faced by the agents, race relations were not improving. By November of 1867 Smith and others noted that opinions of freedmen were getting worse with each passing day despite the presence of seventy-seven soldiers stationed in Nacogdoches. In the more remote parts of the county, many freedmen were also still too afraid to approach the Bureau for assistance.[69]

Many freedmen worked as sharecroppers, even for the same people who had once enslaved them. When the crop required it, black laborers worked diligently and rested when the crop did not need it. This was wrongly described by many planters who had contracted them as laziness because (at least rhetorically) it differed from their so-called Protestant work ethic of constantly working the land. Crop failure only worsened things. The 1867 corn crop in Nacogdoches was exceptional, but the cotton crop failed due to an infestation of worms.[70] Crop failure was an issue that would strain race relations not only in Nacogdoches County but across the entire South as well.

In January of 1868 James F. Grimes succeeded Smith as post commander at the Bureau in Nacogdoches. Smith had received new orders to go to Marshall, however, where the situation was more volatile than in Nacogdoches. Grimes would only serve in the position for two months, but he stayed busy. Similar to other commanders in the

[69] King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 35.
[70] King, "The Challenges Faced by the Freedmen's Bureau," 31-34.

South, Grimes was met with daily complaints from all varieties of citizens. A common sight in his office was a man from Melrose named Blackstone Hardeman, a member of a prominent family in Nacogdoches. He had served in the Confederacy during the war. In January alone, Hardeman appeared in the Bureau records four separate times. He had issues with a black farmer named Nathan Blackwell and his wife Amanda (it is not chronicled if they were slaves at some point in the past, but the assumption is not out of the question given the few numbers of free blacks in the region before the Civil War). Hardeman was noted to have threatened the lives of both of them on multiple occasions and even shot at them. For these instances, Hardeman was fined a total of $45.[71] This was just one instance during Grimes' tenure where threats to take someone's life ended with only a fine. That was not the only form of injustice in the county either, and Colonel Grimes was very aware of this. An assault case he handled involved two individuals named Mr. Wright and Benjamin Scogins, who beat an African American man named Ed Edwards while he was attempting to stop two other unnamed freedmen from fighting. The scuffle attracted a crowd of whites who had "pistols, knives, and clubs to threaten freedmen."[72] Despite being beaten, Grimes noticed that Edwards still went to a grand jury to stand trial for assault with intent to kill.

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[71] Report to Bureau from T. M. K. Smith, November 30, 1867, "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Assistant Commissioner, 1865-1872," images, FamilySearch, https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9TZ-84ST-4?cc=2427901&wc=73QQXYB%3A1513612102%2C1513617301, accessed March, 3, 2021.

[72] King, "The Challenges faced by the Freedmen's Bureau," 36.

Meanwhile, his two attackers remained free. In the face of all this injustice, Grimes worried that if the federal soldiers left the county, things would only get worse.[73] On March 4, 1868, after only having the job for two months, Grimes handed the post commander position to Alexander Ferguson, a man who had served in the county as a Bureau clerk the previous nine months. He had been hired to help with the massive amounts of paperwork that the district administrators had to handle. This was common throughout the South. [74]

Ferguson was unfamiliar with the culture of East Texas when he arrived in Nacogdoches County. It is not clear if he served during the Civil War like his predecessors. The records show, however, that many county citizens addressed him as "Captain Ferguson" when sending him letters; he is only addressed as "Mr. Alexander Ferguson'' when corresponding with the Bureau. He served in Nacogdoches County for eighteen months, eight as a clerk, and then as an agent for the subdistrict. His tenure was unusually long. Indeed, most agents were dismissed from their positions after only a few months due to flaws in their character (such as incompetence or drunkenness) or were

[73] Report to Bureau from James M. Grimes, March 3rd, 1868, "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Assistant Commissioner, 1865-1872," images, FamilySearch(https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9TZ-DXSS?cc=2427901&wc=73QQXB5%3A1513612102%2C1513618501) accessed March 3,2021.
[74] Richter, *Overreached on All Sides*, 297.

relocated to areas of the state that were more hostile and therefore required more attention. The latter being the case with Ferguson's three immediate predecessors.[75]

Regardless of his life before becoming a Bureau agent, Ferguson's tenure in Nacogdoches was arguably the most difficult compared to his predecessors. Grimes stayed with Ferguson for a month after relinquishing the job and they both dealt with the aftermath of their office being vandalized in late April. The morning after the crime, the two worked to reacquire the various government documents that had been strewn out in the streets. Alongside the day-to-day burdens faced by Ferguson and his fellow agents across the South, items necessary for successful agents were often in short supply or absent. For example, the government did not provide horses to sub-assistant commissioners; in many cases, the agents had to provide their own. For Ferguson, things were no different. He often relied on help from the locals for additions to his corn and wood supply. He also had to repeatedly request more stationery to complete the amount of paperwork required of him by his superiors.[76]

During Ferguson's tenure and his predecessors, the Bureau's relationship with the court system was complicated, and often they overlapped one another. As Diane Neal and Thomas W. Kremm explain in their article "What Shall We Do With the Negro?," "Civil courts asserted the right to try all criminal cases. The United States Army insisted on trying cases involving soldiers or other federal officials, and the Bureau claimed

[75] King, "The Challenges faced by the Freedmen's Bureau," 37-8.
[76] King, "The Challenges faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 39.

jurisdiction in cases involving African Americans. ”The Bureau agents often clashed with civil authorities because they lacked a “working knowledge of the technical points of the law.” In 1867, the Fifth Military District commander, Winfield Scott Hancock, ordered the Bureau to scale back and eventually stop all of the Bureau’s court proceedings and to hand cases over to the civil authorities.[77]

Ferguson typically spent his tenure resolving non-violent disagreements either within the freedmen communities or between freedmen and planters. Most cases of this variety had to do with contract violations, non-payment of any goods and services, or damage that had been done to crops. Also, Ferguson dealt with cases of fraud and seizure of property on several occasions. Horses and cow killings and hog theft also occurred frequently in the district. He also replied to letters that were constantly arriving. One example is a letter that came from local planters who asked what they should do about freedmen who were not chopping wood as they had been told.[78]

One of the more common issues occurring between planters and freedmen all over the South involved questions regarding the legalities surrounding apprenticeships. After freedom came, many African Americans continued to suffer. Plantation owners, fearing the loss of their workforce, panicked and worked to minimize any further losses they

[77] Diane Neal and Thomas W. Kremm, "What Shall We Do With the Negro?” The Freedmen's Bureau in Texas," *East Texas Historical Journal* 27, no. 2(1989): 25.
[78]Letter from Mr. Garrett to Alexander Ferguson, October 5, 1868. "Texas, Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1870," images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89MX-Q9H9-R?cc=1989155&wc=94K7-SPK%3A266076901%2C266080401: 22 May 2014), accessed March 4, 2021.

faced and sought help from civil courts to apprentice orphaned African American children. At least, in theory, this benefitted both parties. The planters would see to the upbringing of the orphaned children and, in return, the children, in theory at least, would receive the benefits of an apprenticeship. That said, former plantation owners often took advantage of this arrangement, unsurprisingly using the children as free labor and providing them with next to no benefits. The Texas legislature even made this system part of the Black Codes passed in 1866, thereby keeping many freedmen in a state closely resembling slavery.[79]

Many parents in Nacogdoches County flooded Ferguson's office in response, seeking his assistance in getting their children back, claiming they had either been kidnapped or illegally apprenticed. A case from May 1868 that Ferguson handled came from a freedman named Willis asking for his children's return from someone named S. M. McGaughy, a former slaveholder from Alto who seemed willing to return Willis's children. Yet, Ferguson shamefully wrote to McGaughy and insisted the children remain with him "until the court ruled otherwise."[80] The legal situation in the South as far as the Bureau was concerned was a tricky one, to say the least, and Ferguson insisted that the Bureau did not have the right to handle apprenticeships, saying instead that such remained the jurisdiction of the civil courts.[81] Despite not having the rights, the Bureau

[79] Richter. *Overreached on All Sides*, 42-43.
[80] King, "The Challenges faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 42.
[81] King, "The Challenges faced by the Freedmen's Bureau", 42.

still often assisted in cases of this manner until assistant commissioner Joseph J. Reynolds alerted the agents that they needed to give more authority to the courts at the state level, thereby reducing the Bureau's overall power.[82]

March and April of 1868 proved stressful for Agent Ferguson. Most of the work entailed the assignment of contracts. Many planters were reluctant to plant cotton due to the crop's failure the previous season and instead focused on growing corn. While doing this, Ferguson took note that neighboring Angelina and Cherokee counties were not issuing any contracts due to county citizens' belief that the Bureau would cease to exist by July. Not issuing contracts was a way to get out of paying freedmen their fair share of any profits earned off the crops.[83]

April of 1868 proved to be much more violent for freedmen. Most knew that federal soldiers stationed in Nacogdoches were due to leave soon and, as such, many locals took advantage of this. Criminals who had previously fled from the town began lurking back. Ferguson noted that these criminals were not afraid of either the federal soldiers or the civil authorities. He had no power to arrest them and the sheriff, Richard Orton, also seemed powerless against the more violent lawbreakers despite all the effort he put into helping Ferguson as much as he could. During this time Ferguson also

[82]Richter, *Overreached on All Sides*, 219-220.
[83]Report to Bureau from Alexander Ferguson, March 31, 1868. "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Assistant Commissioner, 1865-1872," images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9TZ-DZ43?cc=2427901&wc=73QQXB4%3A1513612102%2C1513617601), accessed March 5, 2021.

received threats. He received four written threats under his door in quick succession, warning him to leave town. Ferguson addressed the citizens directly, telling them that if they had any complaints to bring them to him. He also requested to have his office moved to Douglas, fifteen miles from Nacogdoches, so he could "get along better and more quietly." The Bureau never granted this request.[84]

As spring continued, Ferguson had to deal with cases of fraud, murder, and terrorism, all of which were on the rise. One case where all three of these crimes were involved concerned the Muckelroy family, who were white. Locals had warned a local merchant Jesse Muckelroy that his wife would become a widow soon if he did not "quit Nacogdoches forever." Muckelroy was accused of dealing with "Yankees," which made him a villain in his fellow citizens' eyes. He had been terrorized before for the same reason by the same group of people who told him they would not "fail the next time we try to burn you out." Moreover, Muckelroy's father, Captain David Muckelroy, was investigated in a separate affair by Ferguson for allegedly buying freedmen's votes when he ran for local office. Upon further investigation, these accusations proved false (the allegations came from freedmen who claimed a local freedmen preacher had come up with the idea). In addition to these, Alexander Muckelroy, son of Captain David and

[84]Ferguson to Col. Extrach, April 21, 1868, Roll 11, Letters Received. "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Assistant Commissioner, 1865-1872," images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9TZ-CVPS?cc=2427901&wc=73QQXB7%3A1513612102%2C1513624257) accessed March, 5, 2021).

younger brother to Jesse, murdered Freedman W. H. Casper "in cold blood" and was only punished by having a bond placed on him.[85] These events and their outcomes showed what many Southerners thought of the Bureau and its mission. One brother was harassed for associating with the Bureau while the other committed murder and only received a punishment comparable to a slap on the wrist.

By May, Ferguson was alone at his post. As the time drew near for the 1868 presidential election, he believed that Republican war-hero Ulysses S. Grant would win the White House. Even so, he felt attitudes towards the freedmen by local whites had taken a turn for the worse. He had noticed that those in the planter class had cheated African American citizens every chance they had. Ferguson also believed that his office's future would be in jeopardy if the Republicans won the election; this was despite Ferguson being hopeful for this outcome. By this time, Ferguson and other Texas agents were constantly requesting more troops to their districts to deal with the issues they faced. These requests, however, were frequently left unanswered. Historian William Richter noted that made clear "the inadequacy of policies and paucity of results of the bureau's operations."[86] Ferguson's worries were ultimately proven to be correct. After

[85]Ferguson to Lt. J.P. Richardson, April 15, 1868 & May 1, 1868, Roll 11, Letters Received. "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Assistant Commissioner, 1865-1872," images, FamilySearch(https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9TZCVPS?cc=2427901&wc=73QQ-XB7%3513612102%2C1513624257), accessed March, 10 2021.
[86]Richter, *Overreached on All Sides*, 157.

the election, racial tensions only worsened and angry whites swore to control the freedmen and dispose of the "Loyal Leaguers."[87]

December of 1868 proved to be a violent time in the county as well. Among them were at least five murders, various freedmen going missing, and other crimes committed as news spread of the Bureau leaving soon and the white population became more emboldened.[88]

Despite the overall goal, the Bureau had set Alexander Ferguson and the freedmen of his subdistrict up for failure. With proper support, troops, and supplies, Ferguson and the previous agents could have implemented their administration's policies more successfully. Without these necessities being provided by the organization, however, the agents faced violence, confusion, and disappointment during their respective tenures. These failures helped paved the way for a society divided by race, with whites at the top, and blacks below. Groups such as the United Daughters of the Confederacy helped promote the "Lost Cause", the idea that the Civil War was ulitmately a justifed and honorable struggle with the ultimate goal of preserving Confederate culture

[87]Report to Bureau from Alexander Ferguson, November 30, 1868. "United States, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Assistant Commissioner, 1865-1872," images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9TZ-8VWP?cc=2427901&wc=73QQXBZ%3A1513612102%2C1513618101) accessed Spring 2021.

[88] Barry A. Crouch, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Texans* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1992), 39.

and maintaining white supremacist attitudes across the south; the lasting effects of with are still being dealt with today.

CHAPTER THREE

Best Museum Practices and My Reflections

What exactly does public history, a field that is highly diverse, mean? According to the National Council on Public History, two definitions are easily apparent. First, it is history that takes place "beyond the walls of the traditional classroom" and that can be "applied to real world issues." In addition, and perhaps more importantly, public history is about having a public audience and oftentimes comes about from a collaboration between the public and historians (i.e., a shared authority).[89] With this in mind, it is only logical that museums and their exhibitions are part of public history's bread and butter. Laying one's eyes on physical artifacts or hearing recordings of events or testimonies can often have more of an impact than simply reading about something in a book or listening to it in a lecture. According to David Dean in *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice,* allowing members of the public to view actual objects can stimulate both their curiosity and interest, which could help develop into long-term "personal growth and enrichment.[90] A book may inspire the reader's imagination, but physical artifacts can act almost like a window into the past and make the subject matter feel more personal and natural.

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[89] "About the Field," National Council on Public History, accessed September 12, 2021, https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/.
[90] David Dean, *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 6.

Museums allow for all kinds of ideas, even those that are more controversial, to be expressed in a non-confrontational way.[91]

It takes more than simply putting an object or video on display to make oneself a public historian, however. This line of work also involves interacitng with the public whenever possible, and also finding ways to share authority while also continuing to strive to both educate and entertain. Some interpretive methods and practices have been tested and refined over time to ensure the best possible opportunities to educate and entertain visitors. Using the proper techniques is doubly essential when addressing a period such as the Civil War and the more controversial topics that inevitably come with it, such as slavery and the Lost Cause mythos that denies slavery's centrality in sparking the war. Julia Rose, for instance, recounts in *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* about a time when a group of students from a local Catholic school visited the Magnolia Mound Plantation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and their teacher took a moment to pray for the souls of slaves who had at one point lived and worked on the plantation. Through this prayer for strength, blessings, understanding, and goodness, the teacher demonstrated to the students that history was "real, personal, and available to them as a tool for living."[92] This can be attributed to the fact that the public places more

[91] Dean, *Museum Exhibition*, 7.
[92] Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 2.

trust in history that they learn in museum settings than any other kind of source.[93] There are two main reasons for this. The first reason being people who visit museums have the impression that museum interpretation has resulted from experts pooling findings from their research. Second, as mentioned earlier, in a museum, people can directly interact with objects from the past. Doing this can allow audience members to compare an exhibit with what they may already know about the subject matter.

Interpreting basics and theory

Creating exhibitions, from an initial idea to finally putting the interpretation on display, can be long and frustrating, but it can also be extremely rewarding once completed. This is especially true when creating exhibitions that interpret complex histories and put them into a local setting. There is an abundance of sources out there that can help guide public historians and navigate a field that is continually diversifying and allow them to not only both educate and entertain visitors but to also ensure what museum interpretive experts Barry and Gail Lord call an "affective experience," or, in other words, an experience that, once concluded, leaves the visitor sufficiently entertained and educated.[94]

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[93] Cherstin M. Lyon, Elizabeth M. Nix and Rebecca K Shrum, *Introduction to Public History: Interpreting the Past, Engaging Audiences* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 5.
[94] Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord, eds. *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2001), 11.

The planning of this exhibition proved to be challenging almost from the outset. Once I knew precisely what I wanted to do and received advice from my committee on my focus, trying to decide what to include and how to best interpret it were questions that I continually asked myself throughout the entire process from start to finish. Perhaps the one thing that surprised me was the sheer amount of research and digging required to effectively create a meaningful historical narrative worthy of being displayed for the public.

Despite the challenge, established guidelines and processes in the public history, interpretive, and other relevant literature helped light my path. David Dean's project model, for instance, in *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice* served me well while creating what ultimately became my digital exhibit (more on that below). The four phases of the model are as follows: conceptual; development; functional; and assessment.[95]

The *conceptual* phase starts with an idea, which could come from multiple sources, such as current events, community leaders, educators or staff and volunteers. Nevertheless, not every idea can make it into an exhibit. Beverly Serrell thus outlines what she calls the "Big Idea" in *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* as "a sentence—a statement—of what the exhibition is about . . . that identifies a subject, an action (the verb), and a consequence ("so what?")."[96] In my exhibit the big idea is that

[95] Dean, *Museum Exhibition*, 9.
[96] Beverly Serrell,. *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach. Second Edition*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 7.

while every citizen in Nacogdoches County knows about the Civil War, most of them probably do not know the story on a local level. By understanding a national event such as the Civil War on the local level, we can potentially inspire change aimed at improving race relations and right wrongs that are still part of the landscape and acting as a legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

The *development* phase is next, which comprises obtaining resources, creating, and presenting the exhibit to the public. These first two phases are my main focus, while the last two phases, *functional* and *assessment*, emphasize how the public reacts to the final exhibit and whether or not it achieved its main goal. Since I hope to donate this virtual exhibit to the Old University Building upon completion, they will be able to complete these last two phases to determine its success.

The conceptual phase itself starts with developing ideas that can meet the needs and wants of museum visitors while also staying true to the museum's mission. Ideas can come from many sources and can be presented in all manner of ways. Yet, there must be a vetting process during this phase, something that can differ between institutions, and must come from what Dean calls "a well-defined sub-set of public-oriented criteria, rather than on personal biases."[97] Historians Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig additionally list two principles to consider in order to effectively accomplish this. First, aspiring exhibition designers must think about the community instead of the total number

[97] Dean, *Museum Exhibition*, 11.

of visitors. Second, they must remain flexible and focused on their approach to their exhibit, and be able to rethink things if they notice that a significant number of visitors are not part of their intended audience.[98]

Almost from the beginning of this process the primary target audience I have had in mind has been the citizens of Nacogdoches County interested in local history, especially teachers and students. The desire to reach this audience made the idea of creating this exhibit for the Old University Building easy, as the primary mission of the Nacogdoches Federation of Women's Clubs, which owns the Old University Building, is to keep the building restored and maintained, but also serve as a "living monument to the value Nacogdoches citizens have always placed on education."[99] Moreover, the exhibit can also apply to others, among them Civil War aficionados, people interested in the Freedmen's Bureau, or those interested in the Reconstruction era. But, no matter the background, or how vast or small their prior knowledge, every visitor, for the most part at least, wants to be both educated and entertained by their visit.[100] I do not doubt that my exhibit will meet the former, and while I know I will be unable to please everyone, I also believe my exhibit will also succeed in meeting the latter.

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[98] Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gather, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 143.
[99] "Our History," Old Nacogdoches University Building, accessed February 20, 2022, http://olduniversitybuilding.com/history-2/.
[100] Lyon, Nix and Shrum, *Introduction to Public History*, 113.

Next, during the development phase, after deciding to develop your ideas into an exhibition, they need to be translated into actions that move towards one or more achievable goals. Most of the time and energy during this phase will go towards product-related goals, but management duties will also be essential to fully realize the exhibition. Product-oriented goals include providing scholarly information, selecting appropriate collection artifacts, guiding interpretive planning and presentation, making sure educational needs are met, and finally translating it all into visual form. The management side needs someone to oversee planning and resources, encourage communication, and act as a mediator when any issues may arise. The end goal of this second phase is to have a completed exhibition that is open to the public that is of desirable quality and scope and to have accomplished this with the development of three separate things, an exhibition plan, an educational plan, and a promotional plan.[101]

Doing all this on my own was an arduous process but I believe I have been able to effectively accomplish all that is required in this phase. Creating my exhibition plan proved to be the most simple and straightforward. From the beginning, my main goal was to chronicle the story of Nacogdoches County in the Civil War and Reconstruction. Writing the storyline for the exhibit also came easily. I know there is more to the Civil War (and then Reconstruction) than what happened during the years of active warfare and, as such, I planned to only have that be one part in a story with multiple parts.

[101]Dean, *Museum Exhibition*, 11-15.

In order to take the storyline I had created and effectively interpret it for an audience, I looked to the underlying principles of interpretation itself, put forth by Freeman Tilden in his book *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Though these principles originally had national parks in mind, they remain relevant to any other historic site, municipal or state park, so museum. These six principles are:[102]

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile
2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is to some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase

[102] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 17-18.

6. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

My educational plan was similarly straightforward, at least in concept. I knew that, from a pedagogical standpoint, my approach would have to be carefully thought out due to the difficult nature of what I am interpreting. After much thought, I decided to utilize a learning strategy designed by historian Julia Rose, which she calls "Commemorative Museum Pedagogy" (often abbreviated as CMP). In her own words, CMP is "a sensitive and workable approach" that historians can take when interpreting difficult histories.[103]

There are five elements that make a viable CMP; they are:

1. Recognition of a history as a difficult history. The critical assessment of the impact of the historical event(s) had on people and what the history potentially means to present-day learners.
2. Allowance for the dynamics of the 5Rs (Reception, Resistance, Repetition, Reflection, Reconsideration). Recognize learners' learning crises and learners' abilities to work through their losses in learning

[103] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 169.

3. Use of the three building blocks to develop ethical representations: The Face, The Real, and the Narrative. Emphasize the personhood of the historical individuals and an interpretation baseline from which stories and dialogs can stem.
4. Provision for safe and respectful environments in which learners can engage in learning difficult histories, conditions that allow for ongoing dialogs, learners' growing self-awareness through introspective and reflective considerations, emotional support, emotional and intellectual resources, and boundaries to protect learnings from accusations, implicating rhetoric, and from excessive shock.
5. Institutional and history workers' commitments to the challenges to interpreting difficult histories. Commitments include authentic concern and interest in the history to avoid voyeuristic spectacles and exploitative representations, and commitments to do social good and to be empathetic to the historical Others and present-day learners. The commitments that are needed come from the range of history workers who will support, develop, deliver, sustain, and evaluate the historical interpretation.

Following each of these elements allowed me to have a plan to educate my museum visitors in an effective way, without potentially coming off as brash or exploitive, and doing so while keeping Tilden's principles in mind will result in an exhibition that is both educational and interpretive.

Designing the exhibition, once I settled on doing it digitally, also proved to be relatively easy as it saved me from the issue of trying to find physical objects to potentially get on loan from other institutions. As such, I knew the vast majority of the exhibition would now rely on images and the written word. Serrell's *Exhibit Labels* proved to be of great help for this section, especially with making the exhibit flow naturally and having the words "speak" to the visitor in a way that a person of any age could easily understand.[104]

Interpreting Difficult History

Local history and its memory can also be very significant to a community. In fact, according to David E. Kyvig, Myron A. Mary, and Larry Cebula in *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, "It is the nearby past that most often connects people to history."[105] While an overall history of the Civil War, something that is shared among every American who is alive today, can give a phenomenal picture of the main issues of the conflicts and its lasting effects, some of which are still being felt, it runs the risk of distorting and perhaps completely erasing the more personal experiences of those who experienced the effects of the Civil War first hand, both on the battlefield and at home. But, interpreting the Civil War (and Reconstruction) on a local level is a different ballgame, but one of arguably equal importance.

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[104] Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 122, 148.
[105] David E. Kyvig, Myron A. Marty and Larry Cebula, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You,* 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 4.

Carol Kammen gives many reasons as to why local history has been important in her book *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What It Means*. These reasons include showing the degree of culture that an area had so the communities therein would not be thought of as backward, writing history as a form of competition with a neighboring community, a desire to "rescue materials from fast-gathering oblivion" and, perhaps most importantly, writing a local history to serve as something that both instructs and inspires locals, especially those in their youth.[106] By bringing attention to what happened in particular communities, historians can clarify finer details of a broader picture, and the locals can be proud of what constitutes "their contribution" to the narrative.[107]

This love of a collective history is highly prevalent in Texas, with native Texans seeing their home as "unique" and taking pride in what happened at the Battle of the Alamo, or how Texas was an independent republic for a short time in its life. This "Texas Myth" and the ideas of what it means to be a "true" Texan, in essence being a self-reliant individual who takes advantage of the opportunities given to them, only amplify the pride that Texans have in their state and themselves.[108] Most Texans did not learn these things from reading the most recent historical scholarship; instead, it was taught to them in

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[106] Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it means*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1995), 13-17.
[107] Kyig, Marty, and Cebula, *Nearby History*, 6.
[108] Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner, eds. *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas*, (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 272-73.

public schools, they saw it depicted on television or in movies, or they visited the physical locations and learned about it from what was on display. They more or less had "grown up" with the stories.[109]

While these can be framed as "happy" moments in the state's history, there are various, less happy historical moments that are just as, if not more, important than the former. The Civil War and Reconstruction are arguably the most significant periods for Texas and the Southern United States. This ear is full of a complicated history that experts still endeavor to interpret in a meaningful way. This period is perhaps the most hotly contested history between Americans due to differences in what Maurice Halbwachs calls "collective memory," which he describes as "a socially constructed notion that draws strength from a coherent body of people."[110] Randolph Campbell likewise describes memory as "a difficult, and in some respects, threatening concept" and that memory is "inseparably entangled with history."[111]

This period can be broadly split into two main different collective memories, North and South. Northern states may remember the Civil War as a struggle to hold

[109] Cantrell and Turner, eds. *Lone Star Pasts,* 1. The example given here is then Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick, who invoked the story of the Alamo after fifty-one Democrats fled to Oklahoma to prevent a quorum in order to defeat a controversial redistricting bill. Craddick's own words were "At the Alamo when Travis drew a line in the dirt, inviting those who wanted to leave, only one man, Moses Rose, climbed over the wall and fled, it's not a disgrace to stand and fight, but it is a disgrace to run and hide."
[110]Kyig, Marty, and Cebula, *Nearby History,* 18.
[111] Cantrell and Turner, eds. *Lone Star Pasts,* 273.

together a nation that was fracturing over the issue of slavery, while the Southern states instead remember the war as a valiant struggle for the defense of "states' rights" that were in danger of being infringed upon by an overreaching federal government. Though the war ended in defeat, the South was able to survive and "redeem" themselves during Reconstruction despite the changes that the so-called Yankees and Carpetbaggers tried to force upon them.

This latter idea often either downplays or overlooks the question of slavery and white supremacy. Yet, both are an important part of understanding American history. The economy in the early years of the country was built on the crops harvested by slaves; by 1860, the roughly four million slaves in the country were estimated to be valued by $3 billion by more conservative estimates. Slavery also continues to be connected to race relations in the twenty-first century. Policies that expose racism still in many ways ingrained into American society continue to aggravate Americans who are both black and white. In addition to the war, the "Lost Cause" narrative began to circulate during the years after the war. This narrative claims that the Confederate cause was a heroic one that was worth fighting for despite the Union victory since it was to defend so-called states' rights. These beliefs were, according to historian Karen L. Cox in *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*, "based on a hierarchy of race and class" and it painted the Old South as "a place where a benevolent planter class worked in harmony with its faithful and contented labor." The two major symbols of the Lost Cause that are still around today are monuments to

Confederate leaders, and the flags bearing the "stars and bars."[112] The presence of these flags, monuments, and core beliefs of the Lost Cause have only succeeded in straining race relations. In essence, the sting of slavery and how it elevated a few white slave owners into positions of power over millions of people still play a role in shaping American society.[113]

With this in mind it is clear that the time period of my exhibition is seen by some as being "difficult," but what exactly makes it that way? Julia Rose broadly defines difficult histories as full "of oppression, violence, and trauma."[114]Addressing any area of history that is "difficult" is no easy task. They are often at odds with longstanding collective memories of how the histories themselves unfolded.

Interpreting these histories is difficult in part because of the various risks that come with them. These risks vary and can be either personal or political in nature. On the political side, choosing to interpret difficult histories that could potentially challenge popular political viewpoints, or a long-accepted status quo, can damage an institution's funding and support for the near future, it could also potentially sway public opinions on current issues, for good or ill.[115]

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[112] Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and The Preservation of Confederate Culture*,(Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003). 1-2.
[113] Horton, *Slavery and Public History*, 3-4.
[114] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 28.
[115] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 34.

The personal risks that historians must be aware of when interpreting difficult histories are numerous and failing to do an adequate job at taking these risks into account. For example, museum visitors may choose to simply not read any interpretation, and actively avoid difficult knowledge, psychoanalyst Shoshana Felman calls this "Persistent Ignorance." Doing this allows the learner to believe the history either did not happen or does not matter to them, which can then lead to apathy, and the potential of the interpretation is lost upon the learner. Another risk of interpreting difficult histories are the potentially traumatizing effects they can have on visitors. Accounts of human suffering can be stressful to learn about, especially to visitors who suffer from PTSD. Yet another risk is visitors feeling guilty or ashamed of difficult histories, believing they are somehow responsible for it. Educational psychoanalyst Sharon Todd describes three types of guilt that are most often expressed. The first type of guilt is when a learner feels like part of the difficult history is "their fault." The second type is similar to survivor's guilt in which learners might feel like they deserve to suffer the same things that those in the difficult histories suffered. The third type manifests itself as anger. More specifically, anger at being made to feel guilty. Other risks that Rose mentions include the overall safety of the institution, and potentially not knowing your visitors.[116]

Safety needs to always be considered, not just in the physical sense, but also in the emotional sense. Being inadequate in the former can potentially lead to bodily injury

[116] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 35-38.

or even death, while being inadequate in the latter can inspire hate groups of various kinds if the difficult history is political in nature. On the other hand, failure to meet the expectations visitors have raises the risks of any potential interest in difficult histories that historians may interpret in the future.[117]

Despite these risks, there are a range of benefits of effectively interpreting these histories. While obviously serving as a commemoration and a form of remembrance, difficult histories can also advocate for social justice, produce hope, and offer what Rose refers to as "Pedagogical Reparations," which can improve the nation's awareness of particular histories, recognize their significance, and inspire both learning and advocacy to prevent similar events from happening again.[118]

To help make sure these benefits are effectively received by visitors, there are tools that historians can use to effectively address and interpret any difficult histories. The interpretation of difficult histories is itself a tool that historians can use when educating the public about past tragedies and is often done in response to the call of "Never forget!" By utilizing this tool, historians ask museum visitors to not only learn the knowledge offered by the interpretation, but to make it matter. Another tool that Rose describes is memory work, which allows people to question histories they are familiar with and ask themselves what voices are not being heard in the mainstream historical narrative. In addition, memory work can be therapeutic for individuals are struggling to

[117] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 36-45.
[118] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 52-57.

live with difficult memories associated with difficult histories. Memory work can also be at play whenever museum visitors and historians are searching for either truth or moral identification and can either validate or change what they believe.[119] A third tool that historians can use is what is called perpetual recirculation. It is similar to memory work in how it can be used to honor the memory of those who suffered the injustices in any given difficult history. By preserving collections related to the events in question, historians can ensure that the stories depicted will stay within the public consciousness.[120]

Accounting for all the above risks proved to be challenging. But through the usage of CMP, I believe I have, to the best of my abilities, accounted for the risks mentioned above. To avoid any "persistent ignorance," I make it clear right from the beginning that the history of the Civil War affects every American alive today, whether or not they realize it, and that even though the events being interpreted occurred more than a century ago, they can still learn from it. In the same paragraph I also mention that while both tolerating and even encouraging the presence of slavery in daily life, being willing to go to war to protect it, and resisting efforts by the Freedmen's Bureau to ensure equal treatment for blacks during this period was a trying time in our nation's history, the visitors themselves are not in any way responsible for those events. To minimize the risk of trauma, I have avoided going into too specific detail regarding the battles of the

[119] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 58-61.
[120] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 49-50.

soldiers during the war as well as the experiences faced by the freedmen and Bureau agents during Reconstruction.

Interpreting Digitally

The most significant unexpected challenge was something that not only seemed to affect every decision I took during this process but also affected the entire world, the Coronavirus pandemic. This virus limited mobility and forced many places to close, thereby limiting opportunities for acquisition and in-depth research of both primary and secondary sources in the early days of creating this exhibition. In addition to this, the uncertainty of exactly when things would begin to return to a sense of normalcy forced me to continually change my planned timeline for creating the exhibition and to be more creative in considering how to display it upon completion.

Initially, my plan was to create a physical exhibition and put it on display at the Old University Building located in Nacogdoches, which is run by the Nacogdoches Federation of Women. It is the only building currently in Nacogdoches that stood during the time of the Civil War.

Cooperating with members of the public while interpreting past historical events and time periods is something that a public historian can expect to do on a regular basis so naturally this seemed like the ideal path to take. But COVID-19 made this nearly impossible due to the health concerns. This not only hampered my efforts to communicate with the Nacogdoches Federation of Women but also effectively stopped

any possibility of acquiring artifacts on loan from other institutions to add to the exhibition.

When faced with adversity, however, professionals adapt and find a way to overcome it. As the possibility of a physical exhibition became less likely, the idea of doing it digitally seemed a practical way to move forward. This of course presented new challenges not previously considered. Primarily, I would not be able to acquire any physical artifacts that, as noted in the beginning of this chapter, help the viewer form a more personal and natural connection with the subject matter. I would instead have to make this connection with the other aspects of the exhibition, primarily the wording, the photographs, and the local setting.

In *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* historians Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig pose the question "in what ways can digital media and digital networks allow us to do our jobs as historians better?"[121] In many ways the internet has become a blessing for museums, more so for smaller institutions that may not have adequate resources or funding. Digital exhibitions can reach more people and can, in theory at least, be accessed by anybody from anywhere. The recent pandemic has shown that digital exhibitions cannot continue to simply be utilized for supplementary purposes for physical exhibitions. As the twenty-first century

[121] Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, "Introduction," Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web, accessed July 7, 2021, https://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/introduction/.

becomes more digital, it is only logical that museums of all sizes take advantage of digital exhibitions to stay relevant to members of the public. Many museums, especially smaller ones, were initially hesitant to incorporate digital exhibitions out of a fear that visitors would no longer visit in person if they could just access everything electronically. Still, if museums create digital exhibitions that work alongside physical exhibits and not just stand on their own, research shows that the institutions will be able to reach an even wider audience rather than losing patrons.[122] Despite the differences between physical and digital exhibitions and the unique challenges presented by each, the planning process is essentially the same.

There are various benefits, especially for a place such as the Old University Building, in creating digital exhibits. Cohen and Rosenzweig mention four qualities of digital media that they call "quantitative advantages": storage capacity; accessibility; flexibility; and diversity.[123] The Old University Building does not have any room to expand their current physical exhibits, and what space they do have reserved for rotating exhibits is rather small. A digital exhibit requires no physical space and can be as large or small as the institution desires. This would be a viable option for the Old University building based on just the first advantage since their space is limited and their budget is

[122] Aleksandr Gelfand, "If We Build It (and Promote It) They Will Come: History of Analog and Digital Exhibits in Archival Repositories," *Journal of Archival Organization* 11 (2013): 66.
[123] Cohen and Rosenzweig, *Digital History*, 6.

likewise small. Also, due to the way Weebly is set up, the staff of the building will be able to edit the website as needed, making management relatively simple.

In addition to being a good option for saving on physical space, digital exhibitions also give visitors and researchers additional accessibility. The collections of many museums and archives are quite extensive and many artifacts are missed or completely unseen by visitors. These same artifacts or documents may also be too fragile and delicate to be displayed in a traditional fashion. Electronic exhibits also lend themselves more to different types of media, such as audio and video files, that are less likely to be incorporated in traditional physical exhibits in smaller museums. This accessibility of digital exhibits also helps generate more interest in the institution. The Old University Building is a small building and can often be overlooked by people who regularly visit or even live in Nacogdoches. Digital media also allows historians to be more flexible when crafting an exhibition since it can take on many different forms, such as text, images, sounds, and moving pictures. These forms can also be utilized at the same time. This flexibility in turn leads to more diversity since the World Wide Web is more open to a global audience of both historians and history aficionados than any other medium that has come before.[124] Since public history is about sharing authority, the option to give feedback to digital exhibitions can be a boon for historians. An example of this kind of setup can be seen in the *Writing History in the Digital Age* project undertaken by the

[124] Tim Grove, "History Bytes: Online Exhibits," *History News* 59, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 5.

University of Michigan's library. While the book was being written, the entire process was made transparent and open-source, with the ability for readers to leave comments on individual chapters.[125] While writing a book is different than creating an entire exhibit, the idea of transparency with the public and willingness to listen to their feedback can benefit both parties.

In addition to these quantitative advantages, there are also qualities of digital media referred to as "expressive qualities" that are unique to the medium. The first of these qualities is manipulability; with modern electronic tools, it is possible to find things that past historians missed via manipulation, primarily through searching for certain strings of words within vast amounts of texts in databases such as JSTOR. A second, and arguably more important expressive quality, is the interactivity of digital media. Unlike older forms of media such as television, the internet is a two-way medium, where each "point of consumption can also be a point of production" and enables various kinds of dialogue between various kinds of people—among professionals, between professionals and amateurs, between teachers and students, among students, or even between people simply looking back fondly on the past. These were possible before the advent of digital media, of course, but nowadays this is not only simpler but has the potential to be more affluent than ever before. This is possible thanks to many historical websites allowing visitors to give feedback. This can be of great benefit for public historians since it gives

[125] Thomas Cauvin, *Public History: A Textbook of Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2016) 123.

them ways to "share authority" with their audience, which is something they are always looking for ways to do. Sharing authority, I believe, also allows for the opportunity for the audience and the historians to "teach each other". Dean Something as simple as having a box placed at the end of an exhibition for visitors to place written comments or suggestions into has the potential to go a long way in the sharing of authority between the public and the historians. This simple yet effective method is why I have added an area for website visitors to add comments at the bottom of the "conclusion" slide. This allows visitors to not only critique the exhibit as a whole, but to suggest adding information that possibly could have been overlooked or fleshing out current information.

Dean writes that "the museological motivation for exhibiting is to provide the objects and information for learning to occur."[126] There are of course various theories that can be applied to the exhibit to ensure the learning occurs in an effective and meaningful way. Some theories have been around for decades and some are only just beginning to take shape. A more recent idea designed around learning in the digital age and promoted by UT Arlington professor George Siemens and computer researcher Stephen Downes that is centered around the use of technology in a learning environment. In short, it is characterized as something that "offers an educator a model or mental representation of something that cannot be observed or experienced directly" In addition to this it can also as a tool to enhance other, more established learning theories such as behaviorism or

[126] Dean, *Museum Exhibition*, 2.

constructivism. [127] When combined with CMP, the results could potentially reach new heights and have a positive effect on visitors.

Two final expressive qualities are the hypertextuality and nonlinearity of digital media, which is "the ease of moving through narratives or data in undirected and multiple ways." In essence, hypertext allows large quantities of information to move around freely, and nonlinearity allows users to disseminate the information they find in any way they see as appropriate.[128] When combined with the "chunks instead of layers" approach mentioned by Beverly Serrell in *Exhibit Labels*, that is text and illustrations that are designed to be read in no particular order, moving forward and back through the exhibit should be a fairly easy task.[129] Accomplishing this for my website was fairly easy due to how straightforward and relatively small it is. There are two layers to how I made sure these were effectively incorporated. First, I utilized a drop-down menu in order to navigate back and forth between slides at the push of a button, while visitors will ideally start at the beginning and read each slide sequentially, they can read them in any order they desire, and still understand the message. Second, each slide, perhaps with the exception of the introduction and the conclusion, is written in such a way that the captions in each section can be read in any particular order.

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[127] Betsy Duke, Ginger Harper, and Mark Johnston, "Connectivism as a Digital Age Learning Theory - HETL," 2013, accessed March 13, 2022, https://www.hetl.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/HETLReview2013SpecialIssueArticle1.pdf.
[128] Cohen and Rosenzweig. *Digital History*, 6-8.
[129] Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 155-56.

Admittedly some disadvantages arise with a digital exhibit despite the many potential positives. One such disadvantage is that technology often becomes obsolete as time passes, which drives up the cost of storing it. A prime example is made by Daniel Cohen in *The Public History Reader* in which he discusses the relatively short time that has passed between data being stored on floppy disks, then CDs, and now on flash drives. Oftentimes, there are only a few copies of that data just sitting on obsolete tech.[130] To solve this problem, more and more institutions are taking advantage of cloud storage to archive their digital collections. Another disadvantage is the possibility of corruption, damage, or total loss of electronic files. Museums can be prepared for this with "a disaster recovery plan that details the process of recovering data and information technology systems (both hardware and software) after a natural or man-made disaster" and by maintaining regular backups of digital files. Having backups to the backups can also be helpful.[131]

Digital exhibits may also estrange patrons that are older or not as technically savvy as others.[132] To counteract this, museums need to always consider their audience when crafting exhibits. David Dean puts it perfectly as to why this is necessary, saying that visitors will "react negatively to an environment in which he or she is not physically

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[130] Daniel Cohen, "The Future of Preserving the Past*,"* in *The Public History Reader*, ed. Hilda Kean and Paul Martin (New York: Routledge, 2013), 220.
[131] Edward M. Corrado and Heather Lea Moulaison, *Digital Preservation for Libraries, Archives, and Museums* (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 4,
[132] Cohen, *The Future of Preserving the Past,* 216.

or intellectually comfortable."[133] A digital exhibit that is easy to navigate and explore will have a wider range of appeal to visitors regardless of their technical skill. We can accomplish this by utilizing the tenets of universal design.[134] Since my exhibit is entirely digital and navigation only requires clicking between tabs to navigate through it, patrons with any level of technical skill should be able to easily approach the exhibit and understand the flow of what is going on. A good example of a digital exhibit that I have used as a guide for making mine easily navigable is the Smithsonian's exhibit *Reckoning with Remembrance: History, Injustice, and the Murder of Emmett Till.* At the top of each page there is a tab with the table of contents for the exhibit, making going forward or backwards as easy as scrolling back up to the top of the page.[135]

While designing my website, my main goal was to highlight Nacogdoches County's history from 1861 to 1876 with, of course, a focus on the Civil War, Reconstruction, and, underscoring both of those, the legacies of white supremacy. To do this, I divided it into three separate sections, before, during, and after the war. Each

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[133] Dean, *Museum Exhibition*, 29.

[134] Valerie Fletcher, Betty Siegel, and Ray Bloomer, "Going Beyond: What Does Universal Design Look Like?" American Alliance of Museums, October 1, 2010, accessed September 1, 2021, https://www.aam-us.org/2010/10/01/what-does-universal-design-look-like/.

[135] "Reckoning with Remembrance: History, Injustice, and the Murder of Emmett Till," National Museum of American History, February 18, 2022, accessed February 42, 2022, https://americanhistory.si.edu/reckoning-with-remembrance?utm_source=si.edu&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=exhibitions.

section tells their own stories that intertwine with each other to form a single cohesive narrative that is, ideally, both engaging and easy to follow.

For the first section, my goal was to create as clear a picture as possible of what life for the average citizen in Nacogdoches County was like and how that might have influenced their political opinions, highlighting again how racial attitudes and norms (e.g., slavery and white supremacy) played a vital role. Indeed, the one thing that was prevalent across the county was agriculture. Just like the rest of the South, cotton was a primary crop, though other crops and farm animals were also raised, that grew off the backs of slave labor. To help drive home this point I wanted to show just how many people owned slaves in the county as recorded in the 1860 census. While slavery was not prevalent in the county as elsewhere in the Deep South (e.g., Alabama), it was still present, and so were the attitudes that came with it, and I wanted to make that clear. I had the same goal with explaining the politics in the county. Nacogdoches County was strongly Democratic, pro-slavery, and the votes confirmed such.

The second section of the exhibit focuses more on the military aspect of the war and how Nacogdoches County contributed to it. The total amount of information I uncovered during this portion of my research was enormous so I knew almost immediately I would have to find a way to scale it back to justify putting it all into my exhibit without overwhelming everything else (i.e., the extent to which white Nacogdocheans went to defend racial injustice, in this case slavery). That said, so as not

to get too lost in the names of regiments, units, and their movements, I decided to use a photograph to represent each specific regiment or company (e.g., the flags they used, or in the case of Linn Flatt Company, a newspaper clipping of their muster roll). At the same time, to satisfy the curiosity of anyone who may want more details on specific units, I provided a link to documents written by me that provide an overview of each military unit in more detail. I took the same approach when discussing more notable, well-known citizens from the county such as Frederick Voigt; trying to find middle ground between interpreting the events they were involved in both during and after the war, and doing so while keeping the total amount of words for each individual to a minimum.

To round out this section I focused on what life was like in the county back at home, detailing both positives and negatives that the citizens faced. While this section, at first glance, might seem like the odd man out from the other two sections by taking the story out of Nacogdoches County and to other places in the South, ending the section focusing first on notable individuals whose names are still known today and then on normal life back in Nacogdoches county keeps it tethered. Also, it is my hope that this section fosters a sense of closeness to the battles of the Civil War simply by knowing that someone who once lived in Nacogdoches County witnessed them firsthand. This sense of closeness can result from what Rose calls “multidimensional representations”. This kind of representation acknowledges the personhood of historical individuals and groups and shows their “humanness” through their relationships with the people and society around

them.[136] It was my goal to create as many of these representations as possible throughout my exhibition, from the more well know individuals like Frederick Voigt to the various post commanders employed by the Freedmen's Bureau.

The third section can, in some ways, be described as a combination of the previous two. Not only does it detail the changes that came to everyday life with emancipation, Reconstruction, and the arrival of the Freedmen's Bureau, it also, ideally, helps foster a sense of closeness to these historical events since it examines specifically what happened in the county. I felt the best way to interpret this section was to split it into subsections, separating Reconstruction itself from the Freedmen's Bureau, and give a detailed summary while avoiding going into too much detail. That way, I could, like in the second section, avoid overwhelming one panel with too much information and potentially lose the reader's attention. My reasons for dividing the sections this way was guided by my desire to keep the exhibit sequenced, which I thought was the best way to keep my audience engaged, which of course is one of my primary goals with this exhibition.

Finally, in the conclusion, I tied what happened during that era with the renewed protests for racial justice that started occurring after the murder of George Floyd. I did this because the scholarship on the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the aftermath of both have been revised on multiple occasions throughout the years, and they remain one of the

[136] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History*, 102.

more hotly contested areas of American history. The lasting effects of this era are still being felt in many areas and they will perhaps always be felt to a certain degree. I also believe that seeds of change can be planted through education, either in the classroom or, in my case, in museums. By creating this exhibition, I can help do my part to hopefully help the citizens of Nacogdoches County better understand the more controversial times their home has seen, learn from it, and come out the other side a better person overall.

Reflections

Working on this project from its early inception through its conclusion has proven to be invigorating, frustrating, and, ultimately, enlightening. I knew it would be an undertaking unlike anything I have previously done before. But I was at times still flabbergasted at just how much time, effort, and research was required and how often I had to think on my feet to meet goals that I set for myself while working on this project. Perhaps even more amazing, to myself at least, is that through it all, I have managed to pull it off despite various setbacks caused by a pandemic, living several hours from campus, and also holding down a job.

This entire experience has taught me a lot. First, I have found a way to effectively pace myself without feeling burned out, something that plagued me early on during this process. And with time I'm sure I can improve how I pace myself in order to meet deadlines that either I or a potential employer set for me. The experience has also taught me to think more like a public historian, meaning I can now ask myself "what risks does

this particular time period come with?" and "how can I interpret this in order to have a positive effect on the most people?" In other words, I now can not only adequately research and gain knowledge for myself, but I can also find ways to share this knowledge with a general audience in a way that is meaningful. But above all, this experience has taught me how to efficiently handle immense loads of research, process it all, and turn it into a finished product. Things that will no doubt serve me well in a public history career

CONCLUSION

In the words of David E. Kyvig, Myron A. Mary, and Larry Cebula in *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*, "It is the nearby past that most often connects people to history."[137] This statement rings true in my case; I have always enjoyed listening to stories of both major and local historical events as seen through the eyes of my parents and older relatives. I believed that hearing it from them provided a unique lens to examine the events from that I wouldn't be able to hear anywhere else, and I was able to foster a love of what I considered to be "my" history. While listening to these stories and comparing them to what I heard in school and read in books, I began to realize that there were shortcomings in the overall narrative, especially the histories that didn't necessarily inspire a sense of pride.

Remembering our nation's past, no matter how grim or uncomfortable parts of it may seem, is important. Remembering something like racial tensions and violence, which have been present for the entire history of the United States in one form or another makes it even more important. For decades, interpretations of the Civil War such as the Lost Cause uplifted one group of people, while pushing other groups either to the fringes of

[137] Kyvig, Marty, and Cebula, *Nearby History*, 4.

the narrative or out of it altogether. Doing this results in a history that is incomplete (and injurious).[138] Through the efforts of public historians telling the entire story and advocating for the sharing of authority, it is my hope that in the long run we can move to a better future where long-standing tensions can finally cool, and every historical player can be sufficiently represented and their actions can be interpreted just as sufficiently.

There are, I believe, three things to consider the most when addressing historical shortcomings. The first thing is simple, make sure the entire story of what you are addressing is told. It should be clarified that I do not mean you should include every single detail that you can find, rather you should examine your narrative and see what gaps need to be filled, edited, or expanded. Second, you should always strive to tell the truth, and do so while knowing your audience and being aware of the risks that you may contend with if what you are interpreting is considered "difficult history." Finally, I believe we should always advocate for change that will rectify any shortcomings. While some would argue that doing this constitutes either "changing" or "destroying" history, in actuality this kind of changes would make the official narrative more complete and nuanced.

[138] For a more recent in-depth example of this phenomenon see, Karen L. Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

Ensuring that the history is complete and approaching the exhibition from a pedagogical standpoint serve as the bedrock for the success of this exhibition. Besides showing that I have what it takes to be successful in a career in public history, there are two things that I hope I have accomplished with this exhibition. First, I hope that I have helped make the picture of Nacogdoches County's involvement in the Civil War and its experiences during the changes brought by Reconstruction more clear and overall easier to understand for the casual observer. Second, by making the information acquired during my research centered around the learner, my hope is that I will be able to reach not only adults, but also students. Especially the students because one day it will be them who are interpreting the history of the United States at every level between local and national. Of course, the history of the Civil War is not the only narrative that can be considered "incomplete," there are undoubtedly blind spots in every major historical narrative of not only this country, but other countries as well. By doing my part to ensure this narrative is more balanced and nuanced, I hopefully can inspire those who enjoy history to also strive for fixing shortcomings in historical narratives in their communities and the country as a whole.

In addition to inspiring others to find holes in historical narratives and fill them to the best of their abilities, I am also hopeful that this exhibition can act as inspiration for future research ideas, both professional and amateur.. I encountered a veritable treasure trove of information during the course of my research, and different kinds of projects

could easily be completed with the same information that I found. As an example, I mentioned back in chapter one that the amount of information I discovered regarding those who served in the Confederate army would sufficient enough to warrant its own exhibition. While that would be quite an undertaking, that information could also be helpful on a smaller scale. People who are researching their family history could make use of this information if they knew they had a relative who served in the Confederate forces and lived in Nacogdoches County but did not know the specifics of their service, knowing the units that were raised in and around the county would be helpful in being able to fill that gap in their research. The same can also be done for those who are descendants of Freedmen.

While being potentially beneficial to family researchers, this exhibition can also potentially be helpful to students researching area during this time period and the significant individuals who lived through it. There are multiple individuals that are named in this project, and those doing research on Confederate veterans such as Frederick Voigt or Bureau agents like Alexander Ferguson would benefit from viewing this exhibition. At the very least this exhibition could be the first step down the proverbial rabbit hole of research for some, or perhaps it can be a goldmine for others. No matter which it is, this exhibit, at its heart, is an educational look into the past, and an examination of how things were before, during, and after the war.

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