The Bass Grays: An Economic, Social, and Demographic Profile of Company D, Seventh Texas Infantry

Andrew F. Lang

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Advancing toward the small town Raymond, Mississippi, in the mid-morning hours of May 12, 1863, the Seventh Texas Infantry Regiment, expecting to find only a few Union regiments, mistakenly happened upon Major General James B. McPherson's XXVII Corps. Several Yankee units subsequently ambushed the surprised Texans, and although the Lone Star boys expended all of their ammunition, the Union soldiers poured a deadly fire on the unsuspecting Texans. One of the shocked soldiers remembered that the fight at Raymond was "the most disastrous battle in which I ever took part." The Seventh Texas, in its most costly engagement of the Civil War, suffered nearly 160 casualties, 22 of whom were killed in action.

This study attempts to illustrate the economic, social, and demographic nature of one of the Seventh Texas's units, Company D, also known as the Bass Grays. Companies were the smallest components of both the Union and Confederate armies, and generally consisted of approximately one hundred men. This small number allows the historian to incorporate a detailed study based on every man in the unit. Historians have tended to neglect company-level studies and have instead focused on the economic-social nature of larger units such as the regiment, brigade, and division. Although company-level studies are not representative of the entire Confederate fighting force, they do provide an intimate grassroots understanding of where the average southern soldier in a particular company came from and what his place was within local and county society. More importantly, such studies provide a first-hand discernment of the relationships that companies had with their individual communities on the home front, and how it was the community, in and of itself, that primarily reflected the economic-social nature of a company.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following questions regarding the Bass Grays: First, what was the overall economic-social structure of the company in terms of age, martial status, birth origins, 

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pre-war professions, wealth, and slaveholding? Based on these factors, is it possible to determine why these specific individuals volunteered for Confederate service? Second, did officers possess different social and economic characteristics from non-officers? More specifically, what factors allowed certain individuals to be elected or promoted to the officer corps? Third, what was the war's impact on the company, and was the unit representative of the contemporary Civil War-era adage that the conflict was a "rich man's war, but a poor man's fight?"

Amidst the hundreds of Texas companies that fought in the Civil War, it would appear to be a nearly futile exercise in choosing just one for study. Several factors determined which unit would be analyzed, and the foremost reason the Bass Grays were selected was due to their connection with Harrison County. Located in the eastern part of the state on the Louisiana border, Harrison was among Texas's most "southern" counties. In 1860, the county contained Texas's largest slave population, over 90 percent of the white household heads claimed southern birth, and in 1861, the citizens of Harrison County zealously voted in favor of Texas's secession by a margin of 866 to 44. Finally, historians have paid little attention to the economic and social aspects of the Bass Grays' regiment, the Seventh Texas Infantry. A study addressing a microcosmic portion of the regiment could, perhaps, lead to a further understanding of the unit as well as a deeper knowledge of the diverse nature of Texas's Civil War soldiers.

In the late spring and early summer of 1861, a group of white Harrison County males formed a small drill company and referred to the unit as the Bass Grays. The company was named in honor of its first captain, Frederick S. Bass, a local leader in the community and president of nearby Marshall University. The company's primary purpose was to protect the county's citizens against "Yankee agitators [in] fomenting a slave rebellion." As war fever spread, many of Harrison County's young men volunteered to join the unit, and as a result the city contributed another company, the Marshall Guards. Bass became the captain of the new unit, which would eventually distinguish itself in the eastern theater as a part of Hood's Texas Brigade. Bass's absence allowed Kkleber Miller (K. M.) Van Zandt, a Marshall lawyer, to be elected as the Bass Grays' first official commander under Confederate service.

In July 1861, John Gregg, a former delegate to the Texas secession convention and member of the Provisional Confederate Congress, called for men across the Lone Star State to enlist in companies that would serve under
his command. Members of the Bass Grays joined hundreds of volunteers from fifteen East Texas counties who eventually formed Colonel Gregg's Seventh Texas Infantry Regiment. In September and October, a total of ten companies assembled in Marshall, mustered into Confederate service, and departed from Texas to join Albert Sidney Johnston's army in Kentucky.

Originally enlisting for "three years or the war," the Bass Grays, officially Company D of the Seventh Texas Infantry, primarily remained in the western theater, and first saw action at Fort Donelson in February 1862. The Confederate surrender at Donelson directly resulted in the Seventh Texas's (as well as the Bass Grays') transport to Camp Douglas, Illinois, where the men spent the next seven months as prisoners of war. After their release in August and September 1862, confederate command sent the Seventh Texas to Port Hudson, Louisiana, whereupon the regiment recruited more men and reorganized its ranks. Following an idle fall and winter, the Seventh Texas participated in the Vicksburg Campaign, and in May 1863, suffered heavy casualties at Raymond, Mississippi. After another surrender and exchange following the collapse of Vicksburg, the Texans subsequently fought at Chickamauga and Chattanooga in the latter part of 1863. In the following year, the Seventh Texas participated in the Atlanta and Tennessee Campaigns, fought in the Carolinas Campaign in early 1865, and finally surrendered as a part of Joseph E. Johnston's army at Bentonville, North Carolina. As part of the Seventh Texas Infantry, the Bass Grays experienced and engaged in some of the Civil War's fiercest fighting.

The Compiled Service Records and 1860 Manuscript Census were the fundamental sources in collecting the war-time experiences and economic-social status regarding the 122 men who served in the Bass Grays. Sources indicated that the company's men were relatively young. At the beginning of their military service, the average age of a soldier in the company was 23.5 years old, and just over thirty five percent were still teenagers (13-19 years old). The majority of the men, 48.6 percent, were in their twenties (20-29), while only 16.3 percent were over thirty years old. The Bass Grays were representative of the Texans who volunteered early in the war because those men were also generally younger. For example, the average age of the men in the Third Texas Cavalry, organized in February 1861, was twenty-three. The Bass Grays, however, had a small percentage of men who volunteered later in the war, either in 1862 or 1863, who were generally older (average age of 25.3 years old) than those who originally signed-up in 1861. Such a characteristic was similar for Texas units that organized later in the war. Finally, the Bass Grays compared consistently
with the average age in the Confederate army as a whole; historian Bell I. Wiley found that nearly four-fifths of all southern soldiers ranged between eighteen and twenty-nine years old (see Table 1).⁸

The overwhelmingly young nature of the Bass Grays also corresponded to the small percentage of men who were heads of households.⁹ Only 21.6 percent of the men were married, and a much larger proportion, 78.4 percent, were either single or still lived with their families. In the Twelfth Missouri Infantry, a Union regiment also organized in late 1861, married men constituted only 9.3 percent of the original volunteers. It is evident that 1861 volunteers were younger and did not head a household. The Bass Grays were representative of families who could more easily afford to send their sons, brothers, and in some cases husbands to war in the early months of the conflict, as the majority of these individuals did not carry the major responsibilities of household heads. Consequently, of the older men in the Bass Grays who volunteered in either 1862 or 1863, slightly more than one-third were married and a household head. Finally, in Harrison County only 35 percent of the community’s volunteers were married, thus strengthening the interpretation that in terms of age and household status, the Bass Grays were somewhat similar to the county’s soldier population as a whole.¹⁰

Antebellum East Texas society, and more specifically Harrison County, drew primarily from individuals born in the Lower South. Nearly fifty-two percent in East Texans were born in the Lower South, while only 41.1 percent of the region had Upper South origins. In Harrison County, forty-seven percent of the population claimed Lower South origins, while forty-three percent hailed from the Upper South.¹¹ Nearly two-thirds (sixty three percent) of Harrison County’s Confederate volunteers were originally from the Deep South, as were the majority of the Bass Grays. Over half (fifty-nine percent) of the company’s men were originally born in the lower southern states, and men from Alabama and Georgia single-handedly accounted for nearly thirty-seven percent of the entire unit. Slightly more than one-quarter (twenty-six percent) of the company claimed Upper South origins, with Tennessee and North Carolina alone accounting for 20.3 percent. Finally, four percent of the Bass Grays came from northern origins, whereas 11 percent were originally born in Europe.

In spite of the differences in age and marital status among those units that were organized in either 1861 or 1862, it is reasonable to conclude that Texans originally from the Lower South were more likely to volunteer throughout the war. Their ideological motivations derived
equally from their birth origins and subsequently corresponded to the larger political climate. It is no wonder that large numbers of men from the Lower South volunteered early and often, as their native states were the first to secede from the Union. Influence from the Lower South dominated the Bass Grays, and possibly provided a contributing factor to the unit’s early organization into Confederate service.\textsuperscript{12}

Up to this point, a survey of the Bass Grays in terms of age, marital status, and birth origins reveals a somewhat comparable pattern relative to antebellum Harrison County and East Texas society, as well as to those individuals who volunteered for war in 1861. Considering that the Bass Grays were fairly typical of Harrison County society under such terms, it would be appropriate to assume that the unit would also be representative of the county’s most robust characteristics of a large slaveholding, agriculturally-dominant community. But such a characterization would be inherently misleading since the vast majority of the company was not involved in agricultural occupations, held very few slaves, and lived middle-class economic lifestyles.

An inspection of the company’s pre-war professions revealed that only twenty-three percent of the Bass Grays engaged in any sort of agricultural or farming enterprise. Conversely, 44.6 percent of the company worked in non-agricultural occupations, including lawyers, students, merchants, a printer, barber, county clerk, and tavern keeper. The Seventh Texas Infantry was also composed of men who, for the most part, were not involved in agriculture. The Bass Grays’ occupations, and for that matter the professions of the entire Seventh Texas, presented an interesting variation from most of the Lone Star State’s Confederate volunteers. Historian Richard Lowe noted that “the more rural and undeveloped nature of Texas” during the antebellum period helped to explain why a majority of Texas units included men who were largely farmers and those involved in agriculture. The Bass Grays, however, simply did not fit this characterization (see Table 2).\textsuperscript{13}

The men’s place of residence offers the most convincing evidence on occupational patterns in the company. The vast majority of the Bass Grays lived in Marshall, Texas’s fourth largest city in 1860. The city was the commercial center for Harrison County, as well as East Texas, during the late antebellum period, and in spite of it being a predominately agricultural county, those who lived in Marshall were primarily involved in non-agricultural pursuits. Members of the Bass Grays came from this “urban” population, and in terms of profession, vastly differed from their
fellow Harrison County volunteers. For example, the majority of men in the Texas Hunters, Company A of the Third Texas Cavalry, were more occupationally-representative of the county's volunteers as a whole; they largely lived in the rural eastern portion of Harrison County and principally worked in agricultural occupations.  

The nature of the Bass Grays' occupational patterns also corresponded with the company's largely middle-class economic structure. Slightly more than twenty-four percent of the unit were considered "poor" (wealth measured at less than $500), 52.7 percent claimed middle-class status (wealth measured between $500 and $19,999), while the wealthy class (wealth measured at $20,000 or more) comprised only twenty-three percent of the company. The company's median wealth was $8,050, one-quarter greater than the 1860 mean for the entire state of Texas, placing the overall unit decidedly in the middle class category. Such figures also illustrate how the company's overall economic structure was representative of antebellum Texas, in that, regardless of a growing middle-class, large disparities of wealth blanketed the economic spectrum. For example, the wealthiest twenty-three percent of the company owned 72.4 percent of the unit's entire wealth. The Bass Grays' wealthholding patterns, however, were relative to the inequalities found in significantly larger Texas units (see Table 3).  

Similar to wealthholding, slaveholding among the company's men also presented significant inequalities. K. M. Van Zandt, the Bass Grays' first captain, estimated that as many as seventy-five percent of his men did not own slaves. In reality, 62.2 percent of the company either owned slaves or resided with slaveholding families. More precisely, the planter class (those individuals who owned twenty or more slaves) constituted 14.9 percent of the company and owned 363, or fifty-nine percent, of all slaves held by unit members. On the contrary, those who owned twenty slaves or less comprised 85.1 percent of the slave owning men in the company and owned forty-one percent of the unit's slaves. More importantly, the individuals who owned nine slaves or fewer constituted 71.6 percent of the company, while 56.7 percent of the Bass Grays owned no more than four slaves. The entirety of these slaveholding figures lead to an important conclusion: although a majority of the unit as a whole owned slaves, on an individual basis, very few of the Bass Grays held a significant number of bondsmen. Therefore, it is more appropriate to characterize the Bass Grays as a unit primarily composed of men who were more likely to own either a minuscule number of slaves or no slaves at all (see Table 4).  

In spite of the large number of men who owned few slaves, slavery in and of itself provided the Bass Grays with a strong motivation to
volunteer for Confederate duty in the summer and fall of 1861. In an attempt to portray his company as a unit made largely of non-slaveholders, K. M. Van Zandt noted that “slavery was not the cause of the war. War came because the North was getting too strong [and] ... to show that it was not slavery that caused the war ... the majority of [my men] had no interest in the question. It was the invasion by the North that fired the South.” Van Zandt clearly did not take into account the fact that slavery was ingrained in the antebellum way of life, and southerners, whether they owned slaves or not, were all directly tied to the peculiar institution’s services. For example, one of Van Zandt’s own men, Private Quentin D. Horr, originally born in Ohio and who did not own any slaves, implored the citizens of Harrison County for “fifty Negro men aged from eighteen to fifty years, to be [used] as cooks and teamsters” for the Seventh Texas. Horr’s request only applied to “those [persons] having Negroes that they can spare,” in order to restore “the health of the patriotic soldiers who have so nobly offered themselves in this struggle, for those institutions so dear to us.” The leading institution, of course, that was most dear to southerners, and especially the citizens of Harrison County, was slavery.

Taking into account that on an individual basis most of the Bass Grays were not involved in agriculture and owned few slaves, might lead to the assumption that these specific individuals had little economic or social stake in the slavery’s future. That would be a false conclusion for two fundamental reasons. First, Harrison County’s wealthy slave holders relied heavily upon the occupation services of the majority of the Bass Gray’s soldiers. It is quite possible that the most significant clients of the company’s merchants, lawyers, doctors, and mechanics, indeed were wealthy slaveholders. Therefore, a threat to the institution of slavery would surely affect those who worked in the urban professions. Second, the Bass Grays, citizens of Harrison County. (as well as all southerners), had a social stake in the future of slavery. In the event that slavery became extinct, southerners would be forced to share equality with a supposed inferior race. With slavery intact, the society that the Bass Grays cherished and needed would remain stable. In 1861, J. D. B. De Bow, editor of _De Bow’s Review_, asserted a similar notion. He argued that “non-slaveholders are either urban or rural, including ... merchants, traders, mechanics, [and] laborers ... in the town’s and cities,” and as a result, “the non-slaveholder of the South preserves the status of the white man, and is not regarded as an inferior.”

Examination of the Bass Grays’ social and economic characteristics and the motivations that direct resulted revealed that the average soldier was in his early twenties, a native of the Lower South, and more likely to be a single, non-household head. Moreover, a typical member of the Bass
Grays was the middle-class, employed in non-agricultural professions, and thereby owned few slaves. The motivation to protect slavery was quite possibly a central element in the psychological impulse to volunteer at the outset of the war.

Outside of enlisted soldiers, any thorough examination of the Bass Gray's must include the officers corps, their political power, and the factors behind their election to such positions. Historian Randolph B. Campbell noted that in antebellum Harrison County, “wealthy planters provided leadership on all important public matters.” While this statement is certainly true, the Bass Grays, as a microcosmic portion of the county, proved markedly different. The company’s small percentage of planters, who owned most of the unit’s wealth and slaves, held very few leadership positions in the company’s officer corps, principally due to the relationship members of the Bass Grays shared with their community in Marshall.

Public elections determined the Bass Gray’s officers, usually presided over by Harrison County’s Chief Justice, George Lane. Numerous scholars have noted that such elections were politically necessary because Confederate soldiers strongly believed in the right to elect their commanders. Moreover, historian James M. McPherson noted that due to the “American tradition,” Civil War-era soldiers “voted for Congressmen and governors; why should they not vote for captains and colonels?” The company’s men surely viewed officer election as an essential practice because they desired individuals who were proven leaders rather than wealthy slaveholders.

By the end of the war a total of eight men had served as the company’s officers. These individuals were, on average, 25.5 years old, generally the head of a household, and likely born in the Upper South. Wealthholding among the officer corps mirrored the unit’s general middle-class nature; six officers came from the middle-class, while only one officer represented the wealthy class. The officer corps’ median worth was $9,640, while the median wealth among non-officers was $6,270. Although the company’s officers were generally wealthier than non-officers, they did not rise to the level of the planter class.

While material wealth was not a primary factor to officer election, slaveholding also revealed similar patterns. The Bass Grays’ officers held few slaves. The officers’ mean number of slaves was fifteen, but one must take into account the fact that Second Lieutenant A. G. Adams came from a family who owned seventy-five slaves, the most out of any member of the company. Therefore, the median number of slaves held by the unit’s officers was five, and thus provided a more realistic calculation.
officers' generally owned no more slaves than the men they commanded.\textsuperscript{22}

The preceding characterizations certainly revealed that the vast majority of the Bass Grays' officers were not representative of Harrison County's slaveholding class. Furthermore, these officers made no attempt to depict themselves as such individuals. Lieutenant Colonel Jeremiah M. Clough, who had a total wealth of $17,700 and owned three slaves, wrote that "one might think ... my office would pay me something out of which I could meet my expenses at home." Clough and his fellow officers economic worth placed them solidly in the middle-class, a conception counter to what scholars have found in other Texas units and even across different parts of the Confederacy. Historian Douglas Hale noted that a distinct correlation existed between wealthy economic class and positions of command in the Third Texas Cavalry. Historian Fred Arthur Bailey asserted that in Tennessee "the attainment of rank ... [was] determined by class distinctions." However, the Bass Grays' enlisted men were not willing to grant the unit's wealthy slaveholders with the opportunities to lead their unit. Rather, the company's men wanted their officers to possess, first and foremost, strong leadership qualities.\textsuperscript{23}

Historian BeH I. Wiley found that the ability to lead men far outweighed wealth and slaveholding status, and also remarked that Confederate soldiers often preferred officers who were not "guilty of putting on airs." K. M. Van Zandt had such a notion. Several weeks after he was elected as the Bass Grays' first captain, Van Zandt expressed the desire that even his superiors had to be exceptional leaders. "Should there be no efficient person for that purpose [to lead the regiment]," Van Zandt insisted, "I will not remain here longer than six or eight days." Potential officers in the Bass Grays, as well as the Seventh Texas, had to have already proven themselves as leading members of their community in order to be considered for election.\textsuperscript{24}

The Bass Grays' officers not only reflected the occupational nature of the company, but also Marshall society as a whole. Every officer except one was either a prominent merchant or lawyer in Marshall prior to the Civil War. The company's merchants, for example, were some of the leading businessmen in the community. First Lieutenant and later Captain Charles E. Talley, for instance, was a partner with William Bradfield, one of the town's wealthiest merchants. "Bradfield and Talley," as their business was known, "sold a broad array of goods to the public," including hardware, clothing, staple goods, fabric, and perfume. In the years immediately preceding the war, large advertisements for Bradfield and Talley's store
were placed in almost every issue of Harrison County's leading newspaper, the Marshall *Texas Republican*. Talley was well known within Marshall, as well as by his company's men, and he most likely benefited from being associated with such an important business organization. The company's enlisted men were more likely to elect an individual with whom they worked, socialized, and associated with during everyday life on the home front.  

Although professional occupation was a contributing factor, public leadership in antebellum Harrison County played the most significant role in the election of officers. Nearly half of the company's officers were considered to be those "who occupied positions of influence and political leadership" in the community. K. M. Van Zandt was probably the leading individual among the entire company who commanded public influence and name recognition. Many considered his father, Isaac Van Zandt, who named the town of Marshall, to be the founder of the community. K. M. Van Zandt, who undoubtedly benefited from his father's name, also helped found the Christian Church in Harrison County, and was also a notable local attorney. Furthermore, Van Zandt attended organizational meetings of the Democratic Party in 1859 as well as meetings to address the sectional crisis in 1860.

Several of the company's other officers had attained similar levels of public influence. For example, Lieutenant Colonel J. M. Clough was a lawyer, Harrison County's District Attorney, and, like Van Zandt, he had attended the organizational meetings of the Democratic Party in 1859. Third Lieutenant Lucien Woodson's father held public office in Harrison County, which presumably aided the younger Woodson in achieving status in the Bass Grays' officer corps.

Such examples give further credence to the notion that urban occupations, combined with a significant level of public influence and leadership, greatly contributed to an individual's opportunity to be elected as a company officer. As such, a distinct correlation existed between public leadership before the war and officer status during the war. Wealthy slaveholders—traditionally dominant in Harrison County's political and societal affairs—simply were not represented in the unit's officer corps. Professional occupation, name recognition, and especially public leadership qualities, rather than wealthholding and slaveholding, earned certain men the right to be elected as officers. The fact that the Bass Grays' officers were not wealthy slaveholders does not mean they were any less supportive of secession. J. M. Clough, a New Hampshire native
and owner of only three slaves, denounced Abraham Lincoln’s election and was a member of a Harrison County committee that declared that the Republican party threatened slavery, and even proposed a convention to consider secession. K. M. Van Zandt also blamed Lincoln for inciting a “wicked, fratricidal war.” Such language naturally reflected Marshall’s unanimous precinct vote in favor of disunion. Bell I. Wiley observed that such actions and words were common among the “fire-eating element, made largely of county editors, preachers, lawyers, and politicians-on-the-make,” as these individuals were often the “most vocal and eloquent.” Wiley essentially described the very nature of the men who commanded the Bass Grays. The election of company officers, reflected both the community’s as well as the enlisted men’s political attitudes. Officers represented the overall nature of the unit, especially in terms of non-agricultural occupations and economic status. Middle class enlisted men and non-officers elected and fought alongside officers from a similar class.  

The final characterization regarding officer status is that of officer mobility within the ranks. Simply put, what were the factors that allowed officers to be promoted during the war? In the spring of 1862, the vast majority of Confederate units underwent significant reorganizations in response to the Southern government’s passage of the Conscription Act. The act allowed for new elections of officers, and as a result, the social and economic structure of officer corps’ across the South drastically changed. 

Due to its imprisonment at Camp Douglas in the spring and summer of 1862, the Seventh Texas Infantry, and consequently the Bass Grays, were not directly affected by the Conscription Act. Therefore, following its release in August and September of 1862, the unit underwent minimal reorganizations throughout the remainder of the war. Death in battle or resignation usually determined Bass Gray reorganization and promotion, but for the most part, the officer corps underwent no drastic structural change. Promotions or new elections hardly affected the overall social and economic components of the Bass Grays’ officer corps. For example, when Captain K. M. Van Zandt became a regimental major, the officers below him simply moved up in rank. Moreover, the men who were originally privates, and were later appointed to the officer corps, generally shared the same social and economic traits as the originally elected officers: mid-twenties, middle-class economic status, ownership of few slaves, and most significant, a community leader on the home front. Such trends provide further wealthier slaveholding did not determine officer, and class divisions rarely existed between officers and the men.
they commanded. 30

After the Seventh Texas Infantry was released from Camp Douglas and exchanged at Vicksburg, Mississippi, in August 1862, the Confederate Secretary of War declared the regimental positions of lieutenant colonel and major open. Captain William Moody of Company G and K. M. Van Zandt were chosen to decide between themselves who should assume which position, as a “result of our records at Fort Donelson.” Moody advised Van Zandt that since “you and I are of equal rank [we] must determine seniority by lot.” On the behest of the Secretary of War, both men drew straws and “Captain Moody drew the appointment as lieutenant colonel.” Both Moody and Van Zandt were of moderate means; however, it was their record on the battlefield, and a stroke of luck, that afforded their promotions in the regiment.31

A detailed examination of the Bass Grays’ overall social and economic structure, as well as the dynamics that were involved in electing officers, has revealed that the majority of the company was of the non-agricultural, middle-class sector in Harrison County. The remaining issue regarding the nature of the company is an assessment of the war’s personal impact on the Bass Grays. More specifically, was the unit representative of the contemporary complaint that the Civil War was a “rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight?”

Among the nineteen skirmishes, battles, and campaigns that the Bass Grays participated, the most costly were Fort Donelson, Raymond, Mississippi, and Chickamauga. Nearly three-fourths (seventy three percent) of the unit’s entire casualties (killed, wounded, missing, or captured) occurred as a result of the three engagements. The entire Seventh Texas Infantry of 306 soldiers went into Raymond, Mississippi, and left the battlefield with only 148 men. The Bass Grays alone lost fifteen wounded and six killed at the same fight. Private Thomas W. Johnson, for instance, was hit “through the muscles of both thighs,” and somehow managed to survive. 32 In terms of casualties, Raymond reflected the company’s most traumatic combat experience. On an individual basis, however, Fort Donelson and Chickamauga were just as gruesome. In the defense of Donelson, Lieutenant Colonel J. M. Clough was “shot through the head with a Minie ball . . . while gallantly leading his men in a desperate charge,” whereas on the Chickamauga battlefield, eighteen-year-old Private Josiah P. Alford suffered an amputation of his left leg without the benefit of anesthesia. 33
On a larger scale, in terms of the war's overall impact on the company, the Bass Grays were not representative of the contemporary cliché that the conflict was a "rich man's war, but a poor man's fight." Of the forty-nine members in the company who suffered at least one casualty throughout the war, thirty-nine percent fell to in the poor class, while the middle and wealthy classes combined for seventy-six percent of the unit's total casualties. Overall, the unit contained slightly more poor members than wealthy individuals, yet the wealthy class had a higher casualty rate. The poor and downtrodden simply did not suffer at higher rates than wealthier and more privileged groups. As a proportion of the company's overall casualties, middle-class and wealthy men were killed and wounded at equal-to-higher rates than those in the lower class.34

Birth origins, age, and marital status, also contributed to who was more likely to suffer a casualty. Men born in the Lower South accounted for over one-third (thirty-nine percent) of the unit's casualties, while those who claimed Upper South, northern, or European roots combined for slightly more than twenty percent of the company's casualties. Additionally, men who were killed, wounded, or missing tended to be slightly older (twenty-five years old) than the average age of the company in general (twenty-three years old). Moreover, slightly more than ten percent of the unit's casualties were either married or the head of a household. Richard Lowe found that in Walker's Texas Division, "married men and men who had households to support were . . . less likely to expose themselves recklessly in battle than men without such responsibilities." Lowe's characterization seemed to be a consistent occurrence with the Bass Grays as well (see Tables 5).35

This examination of the Bass Grays, Company D of the Seventh Texas Infantry, recognizes that company-level studies are not intended to make broad generalizations concerning large portions of society or the Confederate Army. As previously noted, historians have found that the majority of the southern fighting force was made largely of men with rural farming backgrounds and initially commanded by individuals who were generally of the upper-economic slaveholding classes. Microcosmic inspections such as this study do have the potential to reveal the small percentage of Confederates who differed from their fellow southerners in terms of economic and social status.

Focusing on a segment of Harrison County's Civil War volunteers uncovered how the Bass Grays were inherently different from their fellow citizens in Harrison County. Although the company contained a small
number of wealthy slaveholders, such individuals did not dominate the unit’s overall social and economic structure, a notion that seemed almost antithetical to antebellum East Texas society. For the most part, the Bass Grays were typically of moderate means and were more likely to elect leaders who were of the same status as the majority of those in the unit. This trend seemed to depart somewhat from the tendencies of citizens in antebellum Harrison County who favored the community’s small percentage of wealthy slaveholders to govern and lead. Instead, members of Company D preferred to be led by men who were already proven leaders.

Perhaps the most pressing unresolved issue beyond the scope of this study is the extent to which the Bass Grays compared with their fellow companies in the larger Seventh Texas Infantry. Historian James L. Newsom hinted that the regiment as a whole resembled the overall nature of the Bass Grays; however, a systematic and detailed analysis concerning the regiment’s economic, social, and demographic elements has yet to be addressed. Examining the Seventh Regiment in a manner similar to this analysis of the Bass Grays could notably influence Texas Civil War history because of the insinuated idea of how the regiment’s culture intertwined with its various companies. For now at least, a thorough study over a smaller component of the Seventh Texas contributes to the overall understanding of why men fought in the Civil War, where they came from at a grass-roots level, and how soldiers shared a deeply-rooted and committed relationship with their community on the home front.  

### Table 1- Bass Grays’ Age Distribution in 1861

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>48.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>10.8</td>
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<td>40 or older</td>
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</table>

Source: Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1.
Table 2- Bass Grays’ Occupations and Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage of Company</th>
<th>Percentage of Walker's Texas Division</th>
<th>Percentage of Texas Households</th>
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<td>Agriculture</td>
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<td>Unskilled Labor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Labor</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Official</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Agricultural Occupations</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3- Bass Grays’ Distribution of Wealth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dollar Value</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-249</th>
<th>250-499</th>
<th>500-999</th>
<th>1,000-4,999</th>
<th>5,000-9,999</th>
<th>10,000-19,999</th>
<th>20,000-49,999</th>
<th>50,000+</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1.

Table 4- Bass Grays’ Slave Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Slaves</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>5-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20 - 29</th>
<th>30-49</th>
<th>50+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Company</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 2.
Distributions adopted in part from Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 44.
Table 5 - The Impact of War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Served without any sickness or wound</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed in action</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounded</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died of wounds</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died of sickness or disease</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharged, resigned, or transferred</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners of war**</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown or other</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casualty Characteristics***</th>
<th>Percentage of Casualties</th>
<th>Percentage of Entire Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor ($0-499)</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-Class ($500-19,999)</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy ($20,000+)</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>25.0 years old</td>
<td>23.5 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower South Origins</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper South Origins</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Born</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Born</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some members of the company endured more than one casualty and were counted as such. Therefore, the percentage is greater than 100 percent.

**This number does not include those who surrendered at Fort Donelson, as every member of the unit was taken as a prisoner of war. The number takes into account only those who were POWs on more than one occasion after Fort Donelson.

***Casualty defined as killed, wounded, missing, or captured. Sources: Compiled Service Records, Reels 315-320; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1.


Grays.


7Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Texas, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Microfilm M323), reels 315-320—hereafter cited as Compiled Service Records, with appropriate reel number, and soldier file. Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, Schedule 1 (Free Population) and Schedule 2 (Slave Population). Hereafter cited as Eighth Census, 1860, Schedules 1 or 2. Marshall Texas Republican, October 12, 1861, provides an original roster of Company D. Of the 122 men in the Bass Grays, 74 were located in the 1860 Census. This represented 61 percent of the entire company, and data from these men were placed in a database for statistical analysis (see footnote 1). Locating only a certain portion of men in a census-based study is common. See Richard Lowe, “The Freedmen’s Bureau and Local Leadership in Virginia,” *Journal of Southern History* 64 (August, 1998), 456-57. Lowe found only 52.4 percent of men for his study and identifies other historians who similar samples.

8Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1; Douglas Hale, *The Third Texas Cavalry in the Civil War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 44; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 19-21; Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1943), 330-31. Only twelve of the Bass Grays, out of the seventy-four listed in the census, volunteered in either 1862 or 1863. The ages were calculated based on how old the men were in 1861.

9In this study the sixteen men who were married were also household heads. Therefore, the terms “married” and “household head” are used interchangeably to mean the same thing.

10Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1; Earl J. Hess, “The 12th MisColonel of the Seventh Texas Regiment and is included in the study. Non-commissioned officers are not counted as they had little to no command authority. souri Infantry: A Socio-Military Profile of a Union Regiment,” *Missouri Historical Review* 76 (October, 1981), 62; Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 21; Campbell, “Fighting for the Confederacy,” 35.

11Randolph B. Campbell and Richard G. Lowe, *Wealth and Power in Antebellum Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press,
1977), 29, defined the Lower South as Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. The Upper South was defined as Delaware, Washington, D.C., Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 29, found that in 1860 41.1 percent of all Texans were born in the Upper South, whereas 36.0 percent were born in the Lower South. Campbell, *Southern Community in Crisis*, 26.

Similar ideas are found in Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 22, and James M. McPherson, *What They Fought For*, 1861-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 16.

Lowe, *Walker’s Texas Division*, 23; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1; Newsom, “Intrepid Gray Warriors,” 11. Johansson, *Peculiar Honor*, 18-19, found that 75.3 percent of men in the 28th Texas Cavalry were farmers. Hale, “Third Texas Cavalry,” 22, discovered that 59 percent of men in the Third Texas Cavalry were farmers. Although 32 percent of the Bass Grays’ occupations were not listed in the census, it is doubtful that every one of the unknown professions was agriculturally related.


Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1. Randolph B. Campbell and Richard G. Lowe, “Wealthholding and Political Power in Antebellum Texas,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 79 (July, 1975), 27, listed Texas’s average wealth in 1860 as $6,393. Wealth is defined as the sum of real and personal property. The purpose of taking the company’s median wealth was due to the skewed nature of the company’s mean wealth. If the mean were calculated, it would reveal a wealth of $16,111 with a standard deviation of $23,750. This is due to having so few men to calculate combined with the large disparities in wealth amounts.

Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1. Wealth measurements were taken from Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 46. Campbell and Lowe found that 25.1 percent of all Texans were poor, 67.8 percent were middle-class, and 7.1 percent were wealthy. Brooks, “Social and Cultural Dynamics,” 538-39, using Campbell and Lowe's wealth definitions, found that Hood’s Texas Brigade possessed 31.3 percent of poor
men, 58.2 percent in the middle-class, and 10.6 percent of men in the wealthy class. Richard G. Lowe and Randolph B. Campbell, *Planters and Plain Folk: Agriculture in Antebellum Texas* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1987), 107-14. If a member of the Bass Grays was not a household head, his father's wealth was recorded.

17Van Zandt, *Force without Fanfare*, 79; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 2.; Campbell and Lowe, *Wealth and Power*, 44, found that in 1860 nearly three-fourths of Texans did not own slaves. Studies on larger Texas units produced similar findings. Lowe, *Walker's Texas Division*, 25, found that just over 20 percent of the men in the Texas Division owned slaves, while Brooks, Hood's Texas Brigade, 541, found that on average, three-quarters of the men in the First, Fourth, and Fifth Texas Infantries were non-slaveholders. Conversely, Hale, Third Texas Cavalry, 40, found that upwards of 60 percent of horsemen in the Third Cavalry owned slaves. The Texas Hunters from Harrison County possessed 76 percent slaveholders within the ranks. If a man was not a household head, his father's slaveholding was recorded.


21Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 2.

22Jeremiah M. Clough to his mother, January 12, 1862, Civil War Letters of Khleber Miller Van Zandt, Seventh Texas Infantry File,


Campbell, *Southern Community in Crisis*, 79-80; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1. For examples of Bradfield and Talley’s advertisements see, Marshall, *Texas Republican*, January 7, April 21, May 19, December 29, 1860. William Bradfield was too old to serve in the military; however, his son, John A. Bradfield enlisted in the Bass Grays in 1863 at age seventeen, was severely wounded at Raymond, Mississippi, and finally sent home because of his injuries.


Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1; Newsom, “Intrepid Gray Warriors,” 12; Campbell, “Planters and Plain Folk,” 395, 398; Marshall, *Texas Republican*, August 6, October 8, 15, 1859 and April 21, August 11, 1860.


For a detailed account of the Conscription Act of 1862, see, Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1924). See also, McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 429-31. For examples of the officers who were elected to replace original officers, see, Brooks, “Social and Cultural Dynamics,” 542, and Hale, Third Texas Cavalry, 41.


Van Zandt, *Force without Fanfare*, 95-97; W. H. Moody to Dear Captain, November 23, 1862, Van Zandt Letters, Seventh Texas Infantry File, SCRC.

31 John S. Bigham to Mrs. L. V. Clough, February 19, 1862, Van Zandt Letters, Seventh Texas Infantry File, SCRC; Campbell, "Fighting for the Confederacy," 22.

32 Compiled Service Records, Reels 315-320; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1. Some members of the unit accounted for more than one casualty, thus, the total percentage was greater than 100 percent.

33 Lowe, Walker's Texas Division, 265; Compiled Service Records, Reels 315-320; Eighth Census, 1860, Schedule 1. Newsom, “Intrepid Gray Warriors,” 7-11, presented overall generalizations of the Seventh Texas’s economic-social status. A detailed breakdown of the relationships that each company had with their home counties is not evident, nor is the comparison on how the Seventh Texas fit into the larger Confederate Army’s economic-social structure. See the end of footnote 3.