WHY THEY SERVED:

INVESTIGATING THE ENLISTMENT, SUSTAINING, AND COMBAT
MOTIVATIONS OF CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS FROM NEW JERSEY

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Investigating the Enlistment, Sustaining, and Combat Motivations of Civil War Soldiers from New Jersey

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This paper expands upon theories presented by John A. Lynn in *Bayonets of the Republic* and James McPherson in *For Cause and Comrades*, which focus on soldiers’ initial, sustaining, and combat motivations. These authors argue that a soldier’s motivations can be divided into categories focusing on why the soldier enlisted, why they continued to serve, and the choice to engage in combat. Previous authors have created a general study of soldiers, and this trend is slowly being applied to Civil War soldiers. For my discussion, I have narrowed the focus to Civil War soldiers in New Jersey while still maintaining the overall framework set forth by Lynn and McPherson. In doing so I hope to expand the narrative and produce a more inclusive discussion of motivations. Specifically I investigate the cornerstones of the motivation discussion: the cause and comrades, while also making the critical inclusions of economics, personal interest, religion, and a desire for adventure.
To explore these motivational influences I grounded my research in the writings, predominantly letters, of Civil War soldiers. Supplementing this is other contemporary sources such as newspapers, the 1860 census, and the New Jersey Adjutant-General’s report, among others. Using these sources, supplemented by modern historical works, I have provided a more comprehensive overview of Civil War soldiers in New Jersey.

By localizing my discussion in New Jersey, I have produced a somewhat different result compared to the more generalized histories. While the cause and comrades feature prominently in a New Jersey soldier’s motivations, economics and personal gain also have a strong influence. In addition, a desire for adventure and religion also play a subordinate role. Perhaps the most interesting result is the strange relationship with slavery within the state. Many soldiers seem to have been indifferent towards the issues of slavery and emancipation, yet there is also evidence that others were willing to serve in the U.S.C.T. alongside Black soldiers. My research shows a complexity of motivations influence the Civil War soldier, all of which played a role in their decision-making. This research clearly shows that there is a strong need for a more complex and detailed discussion of Civil War soldiers.
PREFACE

This project grew out of a smaller research project focused on the 13\textsuperscript{th} New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, which continues to feature prominently in this paper. I chose the selected topic because I felt it was a deficient area in Civil War Era studies. My goal from the outset was to test the viability of larger research into the area of soldiers’ motivations and to see if an expanded investigation of motivational categories would be feasible. Originally, I wanted to specifically target soldiers from the distinct early, middle, and late periods of the war. In addition, I had hoped to provide juxtaposition between the urban, Democratic, and rural, Republican areas of the state. Unfortunately, the sources available prohibited this and I felt that the resulting paper would have been too unclear and generalized. Instead, I chose to study a small cross section of individuals in greater detail.

I selected the individual soldiers because of their disparate backgrounds and wartime experiences, as well as the depth of their archival resources. This paper could have easily contained a different cross section of New Jersey soldiers. I believe, however, that the results would have been similar regardless of the soldiers selected. There is a wealth of other archival sources located through the state that have hitherto been neglected by many historians. New Jersey’s legacy in the Civil War remains amorphous, and is in need of more historical inquiry.

\textit{A note on sources:} I have rendered all direct quotation in their original syntax but have corrected spelling for readability. All exceptions are noted in the text. All emphasis is original unless otherwise noted.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To reach this point I owe many people many thanks; from high school all the way to graduate school I have been surrounded by teachers and peers that have greatly influenced my academic development. I lack the space to list all of these individuals and institutions, so I will resort to a general and heartfelt thank you, and hope they know how important they were. Specifically I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Federated Department of History at Rutgers-Newark and New Jersey Institute of Technology. Particularly my tireless thesis adviser Professor Clement Price, the Graduate Program Director Professor Karen Caplan, Professor Gautham Rao for his tutelage and advice, and the Department Administrator par excellence Christina Strasburger for her unrelenting dedication to the department and its students. Also, I must thank my fellow students who offered their advice and sympathetic ear. In addition, the staffs of Special Collections at Rutgers University’s Alexander Library, the New Jersey Historical Society, and New Jersey State Archives were invaluable for their assistance. Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my friends, family, and particularly my parents, without whom this long endeavor would not have been possible.

Kellen Allen
Cream Ridge, New Jersey
May 2013
To those whose stories lie within

Will no one tell me what she sings?--
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;--
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

- Wordsworth, *The Solitary Reaper*
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INTRODUCTION

Combat and warfare have been part of human history since time immemorial, yet understanding the individual combatants has received little effort. Traditionally the study of warfare focuses on battles, particularly major or decisive battles, campaigns, leaders, and heroes. Understanding these elements is both critical and important yet falls short of telling the whole story of combat. Without soldiers there would be no war, therefore it is equally important to understand why the average soldier decided to risk their life in combat.

It is impossible to argue that warfare is not an inherently dangerous event, and soldiering a potentially lethal or debilitating profession. To a detached observer these risks would be a deterrent to anyone voluntarily enlisting as a soldier. Because of this, understanding the soldier is that much more important. Volunteer soldiers must feel a motivation strong enough to outweigh the potential risks in favor of potential rewards. Understanding this balance is far from simple, however, because these motivations are often complex and abstract. These motivations can range from the highly abstract “cause” to the more tangible economics and material gain.

Understanding soldiers’ motivations is a combination of psychology, sociology, and history; because of this, any historical investigation is an inherently imprecise endeavor. It is necessary to rely on interpreting the source material for meaning, which results in a potentially wide range of interpretations. This is not to say, however, that such research is impossible, impracticable, or unnecessary; the contrary is true. By understanding the motivations of soldiers, it is possibly to greatly advance our understanding of military history and warfare itself.
A soldier’s motivations for enlisting and fighting are both universal and unique to their culture. There are certain motivations that transcend both time and location, such as self-defense and material gain, while others are unique to the culture, or even the conflict. Because of this, some studies are better suited for general investigations of the culture of combat, while others are more applicable to specific wars.¹ This paper will apply a combination of both types of research to the soldier of the American Civil War.

Motivations can be classified into three large categories: initial, sustaining, and combat.² Initial motivations revolve around the decision to enlist or participate in the conflict. Sustaining motivations concern a soldier’s decision to stay in the military. Combat motivations are more complex than the previous two, and focus on a soldier’s willingness to risk their life in the dangers of combat.

The Civil War was the United States’ crucible, testing whether or not the great democratic experiment could endure. In many ways the American Civil War was as unique as the country that spawned it; a complex mixture of culture, politics, economics, and religion. Additionally it falls into the category of a revolution, or civil war, which usually focus on social change rather than material or territorial gains. These wars are usually far more complex than the later; and this is evident in the soldiers who participated.

In many ways, the Civil War was the first modern war, wedged between the linear tactics of the Napoleonic Wars and the quagmire of the First World War. In the

¹ Two examples of this are John A. Lynn’s Battle and James McPherson’s For Cause and Comrades. (See historiography section).

Nineteenth Century the world was changing rapidly, more so than it had ever done in human history. The Civil War was a collision of tactics and technology. Tactically the Civil War was trapped in the eighteenth century with linear tactics and volley fire; technologically the war benefitted from the rapid advances of the nineteenth century; the result was a casualty rate and devastation on an unprecedented scale. Soldiers were exposed to not only the horrors of a modern battlefield with rifled muskets and artillery, the minie ball, repeating weapons, and shrapnel shells, but also the diseases that follow large armies, compounded by a lagging deficiency in medical science.

Estimates state that 750,000 soldiers died during the Civil War, more American lives than the rest of the country’s wars combined. The vast majority of these were lost not on the battlefield, but from diseases such as dysentery, cholera, and typhoid fever. In addition to death, soldiers faced debilitating wounds or being crippled; Civil War medicine was primitive at best and amputation commonplace. These factors make participation in the war even more interesting and important to understand.

Some would argue that the Civil War was about State’s Rights, others about the extent of the Federal Government; and permeating throughout was the constant specter of slavery. To deny slavery’s role in the Civil War is both illogical and historical fiction. Although this paper will discuss other motivations, slavery is ever-present, which cannot be forgotten. This is especially true even though slavery, and emancipation, did not feature prominently in the minds of New Jersey soldiers. Slavery may not be the direct

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motivation for many soldiers’ decision to participate in the war, but its role in the war is still critical to remember.

In terms of soldiers’ motivations the most discussed historically with regard to the Civil War is “the cause.” This is due, in part, to the cause being difficult to discern, different for both North and South, and changing during the course of the war. In 1861, the cause was relatively straightforward; the South wished to dissolve their participation in the Union to protect the institution of slavery while the North sought to preserve the Union and end the rebellion. While seemingly simple even at this early stage, the cause becomes opaque as the war progressed. The majority of the Southern army was comprised of non-slaveholders, or small-scale, non-plantation slaveholders. What caused these men to fight for an institution that, at best, did not benefit them, and at worse, excluded them, is a critical question. Unlike the North, the Rebel cause would not change dramatically throughout the course of the war.

The North had more direct aims in 1861. While abolition was certainly present, the rallying cry initially was the preservation of the Union; even President Lincoln did not consider emancipation as a legal or viable action. In September of 1862, things would change for the North with the issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. With the Proclamation the explicit war aims of the Union were no longer to simply end the rebellion and return the nation to its prewar state, instead the war was now explicitly to end slavery. After 1862, Union victory now meant a radical social and economic change for the entire country, a daunting prospect for the average citizen. It is important

4 Small scale, in this regard, is a few household slaves or a few slaves to assist in labor, not the large cash-crop plantation holders.
to remember that most Northern citizens did not embrace emancipation; in fact, northern racism was almost as pervasive as its counterpart in the South.

Critical to understanding this phenomenon is the distinction between Civil and Natural rights. Many northerners may have supported abolition, thus agreeing that Blacks shared the same Natural rights as Whites to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (as defined by the Founders). Despite this many did not support the granting of Civil Rights such as citizenship and the vote. This is a critical distinction and illustrates how abolitionism and equality were not mutually inclusive. Understanding how the northern soldier adapted to and accepted this shift in cause, within the framework of Natural and Civil Rights, is critical to understanding the entire war.

Comrades, and camaraderie, also feature prominently in the discussion of soldiers’ motivations. In any war, fighting for the man next to you is an important part of any soldier’s decision to risk their lives. This is especially true when applied to the Civil War because of localized recruitment; meaning that the next soldier in line was an acquaintance, neighbor, friend, or family member not a stranger brought together by mutual enlistment. Both sides shared this common practice, creating a much stronger bond between soldiers than seen in previous armies in the United States and Europe.

Because of localized enlistments, men could feel pressured to mirror the actions of other locals, tipping the scales in favor of enlistment. In addition, there were potential negative consequences for those who did not enlist while others did; a difficult stigma to avoid when the individual is known locally. This feeling of obligation seems to be prevalent throughout the war; stories of entire towns enlisting en masse are common. Comrades also influenced a soldier’s combat motivation; specifically in the risks taken
and as a deterrent from desertion and “shirking.” As a motivation, comrades played a vital role in all three motivational categories, making it both highly complex and important to understanding the soldier.

Economics also played a key role in a soldier’s initial and sustaining motivations. Historians have debated the role of economics during the Civil War, primarily because pay was poor and infrequent for both armies. Despite this, I believe that economics played a more critical role in a soldier’s motivations, especially in the North where large bounties for enlistments prevailed. The argument that the infrequency and poor pay rendered economics a trivial motivation is fundamentally flawed. A soldier’s absence would have created an economic burden for their family; the incentives of pay and bounties would have helped offset this. If a soldier’s enlistment were going to cause economic hardships for the family then many would not have enlisted. In addition, the slowness of pay did not influence the gross income that a soldier would have earned. The primary concern would have been the total income earned, with the frequency of pay occupying only a subordinate concern. Because of this economics must have played a role in motivating soldiers, if not positively than at the very least it did not discourage participation.

Personal gain and a desire for adventure also contributed to a soldier’s motivation to participate in the war. Unlike economics, this gain was non-material; instead, it was a desire for social capital or recognition. During the Civil War, the military was a vehicle for social advancement, especially for officers. Promotion was generally merit based or

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5 There is a key distinction between desertion and shirking; desertion is a soldier’s decision to permanently or protractedly remove themselves from the military while shirking is the avoidance of combat and thus only a temporary decision.
political, two important aspects in judging social standing. In combination with this was a desire for recognition through battlefield distinction and, at times, heroics. Throughout the war, there was a constant undertone of masculine obligation; attaining honor and glory in the military was part of this.

A desire for adventure or a departure from normal life also motivated Civil War soldiers. On the surface, this seems like a strange motivation, but a unique set of circumstances present in the late Nineteenth Century made it possible. A romanticized notion of warfare, general naivety with what a full-scale modern war entailed, and increasing globalization through technology all contributed to common citizens wanting to leave their localized sphere of experience and “see the world.” The military provided an easy way to do this, and paid for it as well. This is especially true in 1861 when the horrors of war were still unknown and the prediction was for a short and bloodless war.

Discussions of motivations must separate combat from initial and sustaining motivations because of the uniqueness of the combat experience. When danger was imminent, lofty ideals and the cause largely fade away to the more terrestrial self-preservation and concern for the next man in line. It is important to understand the distinctions and differences as well as the similarities between initial, sustaining, and combat motivations. While a certain level of overlap exists, combat alters many initial and sustaining motivations into a new, distinct, entity.

Personal reasons prove to be the broadest category of combat motivations. These range from self-preservation to obligation and duty and to honor and glory. Self-interest and self-preservation are the two most obvious motivations. This is a kill-or-be-killed mentality that is simple human nature. In addition, the avoidance of danger is also
important to include. Fear is a natural reaction to mortal danger and even the best soldiers would find reasons to avoid direct combat, ranging from “shirking” to volunteering for safer assignments. For some soldiers this is a temporary motivation, lasting for a single battle or engagement, while for others it is a constant objective any time danger is imminent.

Obligation and duty also feature prominently in personal combat motivations. Many felt that enlistment, regardless of the motivation, or manner of enlistment, obligated a soldier to do his duty to the best of their ability. A certain level of pragmatism and resignation in this motivation that is alien to a civilian, yet important to understand. Enlistees knew that combat was a reality for a soldier, and inevitably, they would have to endure it. This is especially important for mid to late war enlistees who knew how costly and terrible a Civil War battle was, yet chose to participate anyway.

Deterrence and coercion were also important motivating factors in combat. It is easy to overlook negative motivations yet it is important to include them in any discussion. Once enlisted soldiers were required to follow orders, failure to do so could have dire consequences. Discipline during the Civil War was both a major issue and far more lax than in other American conflicts, yet failure to follow orders could still result in imprisonment or corporal punishment. A soldier who avoided combat was in danger of capital punishment for desertion or cowardice. These measures could prove an important motivation to keep soldiers in combat.

Religion is also an element that played a role in combat motivations. The United States in the Nineteenth Century was a highly evangelical and religious society, this lead to the framing of the Civil War in the language of a crusade, especially for northern
abolitionists. Union soldiers, however, did not assume the role of crusader or zealot except in extreme cases; instead, religion provided a more passive motivation for the soldier. Instead, much of this motivation revolves around death, and specifically death in battle. Soldiers were willing to face combat because of a pragmatic and romanticized view of death.

The above motivations can generally be applied to all Civil War soldiers. Traditional discussions of Civil War soldiers organize themselves geographically, by North and South, or combine all soldiers in one discussion. Often this results in a more generalized treatment of soldiers’ motivations. The diversity of the United States makes this an ineffectual way to understand soldiers, especially given the deep factional differences between North and South. While there are similarities in the motivations these differences are distinctive enough to warrant a more specialized approach. Therefore, this paper will not only differentiate between North and South, but also focus on a single state: New Jersey.

Excluding other Northern states enables a more detailed discussion of soldiers. It is difficult to combine soldiers from diverse backgrounds when attempting to understand motivations. How can a comparison between a soldier from urban New York and an immigrant farmer settled on the “border” in Kentucky, or the extreme example of a free Black soldier from New England compared to a fervent racist from Illinois, be effective? All fought for the same Union and under the same flag, yet each had radically different motivations. Because of this, a more localized approach yields better historical results.

New Jersey is unique among its northern counterparts, at times appearing closer to a southern state than its geographic neighbors. Fiercely democratic New Jersey was the
only northern state to not favor Abraham Lincoln in both the 1860 and 1864 elections, supporting Stephen Douglas and George McClellan respectively. Despite a lack of support for Lincoln, the state fully supported the war, classifying it as a “War Democrat” state rather than a “Peace Democrat,” or Copperhead, state. Republicans gained ground in the state throughout the war, supported by the strong Republican rural and southern counties; clearly demonstrating the polarized political climate in the state. New Jersey’s checkered relationship with slavery also makes it distinctive amongst northern states. Despite abolishing slavery in 1804, there were still eighteen slaves in New Jersey when the Civil War began. By comparison, the state of New York abolished all slaves in 1827 and gradual emancipation in Pennsylvania had run its course by 1847. Furthermore, there were 1,708 slaves in the border state of Delaware in 1860.

The geography of New Jersey created a dichotomy of urban industrial and rural areas. Cities like Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Hoboken, New Brunswick, Trenton, and Camden greatly benefited from waterways and close proximity to the two largest cities in the nation: New York and Philadelphia. These urban areas all had close ties to industry, shipping, and manufacturing. Outside this zone, however, were large tracts of fertile farmland, pasture, and wilderness earning New Jersey its reputation as the “Garden State.”

In total New Jersey furnished 88,305 men to the war effort, 10,000 more than required by the Federal government, of these, 6,300 died in service, from all causes:

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7. Ibid., 45.
roughly a fourteen percent casualty rate.\textsuperscript{8} When compared to the total military age male population in the state, 148,481 men, these numbers become truly astounding.\textsuperscript{9} Because of the commitment to service present in the state New Jersey never had to institute a statewide draft to meet its quota, like its neighbor New York.\textsuperscript{10} In addition, because of the manufacturing facilities in the state and the strength of the state government, New Jersey soldiers were some of the best equipped in the Union, with reports of a lack of equipment an extreme rarity.

New Jersey proves to be an extremely interesting state for investigation. The diversity in the state provides an important influence on soldiers’ initial, sustaining, and combat motivations. Because of this New Jersey provides a microcosmic view of the Union, to understand motivations in New Jersey is to better understand motivations across the North.

By exploring the soldier, it is possible to achieve a richer understanding of the Civil War. Understanding initial, sustaining, and combat motivations presents the human stories of the conflict, enabling a more complete narrative the Civil War. Without the soldier, there would be no war. By understanding the individual soldier, it is possible to investigate why the war was fought, and why it was so costly.

\textsuperscript{8} Record of Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Civil War, 1861-1865 (Trenton, New Jersey: New Jersey Adjutant-General’s Office, 1876), 1:7.

\textsuperscript{9} 1860 Census, 312; To come to this conclusion I have combined all males, White and Black, aged 10 to 40 years. As a note, the 88,305 should include reenlistments, although this is not explicitly clear in the report. In addition, enlistments were not restricted to New Jersey residents and a certain amount of “foreign” enlistees did enlist in New Jersey. On the contrary, however, this number also includes New Jersey citizens who enlisted in other states regiments. Despite this, however, it is still a huge portion of the population committed to service.

\textsuperscript{10} Individual Counties in New Jersey would use the draft to procure their quotas but the State government never had to employ the draft to meet quotas.
HISTORIOGRAPHY

The focus of military history has traditionally been battles, campaigns, and generals; often overlooking the common soldier as simply a necessary tool of war. Historians know more, generally speaking, about soldiers’ arms, diet, and uniform than the soldier themselves. The history of warfare has often ignored the individual soldier, generally relegating them to the casualty list: 47,000 at Waterloo, 51,000 at Gettysburg, 1,000,000 at the Somme. While the cost of warfare is tragic, the larger tragedy is that these voices are mostly silent in the historical record. Recently the individual soldier has received more emphasis, usually through stories of heroism or suffering, yet historians dedicate little effort to understanding the most fundamental of questions: why. Usually the focus of this question is three basic subsidiaries: why did a soldier join the army, why did they stay in the army, and why did they risk their life? Understanding what motivated soldiers is an important new direction in historiography that will greatly enrich and expand our understanding of warfare.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to begin with James McPherson’s *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*. McPherson is not the first, and hopefully will not be the last, to investigate soldiers’ motivations; yet he is the most prominent and exhaustive when dealing with the American Civil War, and therefore must be discussed in detail first. *For Cause and Comrades* discusses Civil War soldiers from both armies and every state by dividing their motivations into three categories: *initial, sustaining,* and *combat*.1 McPherson borrows this theory from John A. Lynn (see below) and explains “the first consists of the reasons why men enlisted; the

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second concerns the factors that kept them in the army and kept the army in existence over time; and the third focuses on what nerved them to face extreme danger in battle.”\(^2\) This theory as defined by McPherson provides the cornerstone for continued investigation of the Civil War soldier; this paper included.

McPherson focuses on individuals, using primary sources, mostly letters and diaries, to tell their stories. In this approach, McPherson does not separate soldiers by allegiance, state, or unit instead opting to organize the chapters by theme. While this approach does make the book flow thematically, it presents a critical issue of organization. McPherson assumes that a soldier from rural Georgia is influenced by the same motivations as one from urban Boston. This creates a generalization that impedes the overall effectiveness of the book.\(^3\) Unfortunately, this is evidentiary of the uncharted territory McPherson has ventured into, it is necessary for him to write a general study simply because, at the time of publication, no existing work focused on the American Civil War soldier. McPherson presents a good beginning for the study of individual soldiers’ motivations, however later works should become more focused; accepting that not all soldiers in the Civil War shared the same influences and motivations.

Organization aside, *For Cause and Comrades* presents a new perspective on the Civil War soldier. McPherson’s research is rooted in the necessary primary sources and is exhaustive in its scope. In addition, McPherson takes a scientific approach to his sources, reporting his sample size as compared to actual statistics while including appendices

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) I also have issue with McPherson’s decision to abandon soldier’s names, instead identifying them by rank and unit. While this is more a stylistic choice than a practical one, it dehumanizes a humanizing endeavor.
detailing his source work. This is somewhat odd for a historian, and exemplifies how the investigation of soldiers blurs the lines between history, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. This interdisciplinary approach grants the book substantial weight and shows how important transdiscipline historical investigation will be in the future.

In terms of subject material, McPherson dedicates his work to his titular theme: the cause and comrades. “The Cause” generates a great deal of interest in Civil War Era studies, and rightly so, because of its complexity and ambiguity. McPherson does due diligence in investigating the varying causes soldiers’ ascribed to, and how this influenced their motivations. This could run the gambit from glory and zeal, to emancipation, religion, the preservation of the Union, and state’s rights. In addition to discussing the cause, camaraderie also plays a role in the book. This discussion mostly focuses on how a soldier’s comrades kept them in the battle line, and how soldiers viewed desertion and “shirking” as the ultimate dishonor. There is an understandable connection between camaraderie and combat and McPherson illustrates this well. *For Cause and Comrades* is ultimately about exactly what the title predicts it will be, and rightly so; the cause and comrades were two of the strongest motivations present in the Civil War soldier.

Following McPherson’s *For Cause and Comrades* by a decade is Chandra Manning’s book *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War*. While there were other books written between McPherson’s and Manning’s that investigated the Civil War soldier, none can compare to Manning’s in depth research on soldiers’ views of slavery. Where McPherson took a generalist approach to soldiers’ motivations Manning focuses on the single most important, and controversial, motivation
of the Civil War: slavery. By focusing on slavery, Manning cuts to the heart of the issue and embraces the new trend in Civil War Era studies: directly engaging with slavery as the core issue of the Civil War instead of the traditional passivity employed by other historians.

Slavery’s role in the Civil War is undeniable, yet the complexity of the issue creates a vast amount of differing opinions and debate in the historical community; Manning attempts to satisfy this with an equally complex discussion of soldiers’ perception of slavery. To this endeavor, Manning includes soldiers from both sides tackling the twin pillars of slavery in the Civil War: southern non-slaveholder participation and northern apathy and racism. Manning summarizes her perspective well saying:

This book departs from other books about Civil War soldiers because it places its primary focus on what soldiers though about slavery. It does so because soldiers themselves did so. Rather than discussing slavery as one among many topics that soldiers addressed during the war, this book rescues slavery from the periphery of soldiers’ mental worlds, where subsequent generations have tried to relegate it, and returns slavery to its rightful place at the center of soldiers’ views of the struggle.4

As a motivation slavery assumes a central role to Civil War soldiers, albeit underlying at times, exemplifying its importance to the war and the entire Civil War Era.5

Underlying the discussion of slavery is a subtle commentary on religion in the mid nineteenth-century United States. Religion, like slavery, is often absent from the historical narrative despite its importance and pervasiveness in society at the time. It is

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5 Manning, however, does not give the state of New Jersey much attention in her discussion (see her source notes). This is an important factor for the rest of this paper.
important to realize that many Americans during the Civil War placed both the war and slavery in a religious context; both as a justification for slavery and for the bloodletting visited upon the nation for condoning it. Therefore Manning forges ahead on two fronts of Civil War Era historiography: slavery and religion.

Manning, like McPherson, bases her discussion in the letters and journals of soldiers. She uses these sources to construct her discussion of slavery, effectively using historical context and the soldiers’ own words to prove how critical slavery was to the war and soldiers on both sides. The use of historical narrative to accompany the personal accounts is unique to Manning’s book; typical books present the soldiers’ accounts without context, placing the impetus on the reader to put them into temporal context. Combining both the history and the soldiers’ writings creates a much more powerful narrative and transforms *What This Cruel War Was Over* from a good book, to the model for future works.

While McPherson and Manning stand as the cornerstones for investigating soldiers’ motivations there are other similar works that contribute to the subfield within Civil War Era studies. One such book is Reid Mitchell’s *Civil War Soldiers*, written roughly a decade before *For Cause and Comrades*. While *Civil War Soldiers* uses similar sources as its successor, *For Cause and Comrades*, Mitchell chooses to focus on a different aspect of the soldier: their perception of the conflict. Within this discussion soldiers’ motivations come through, but in a less explicit way than McPherson and Manning.

Mitchell focuses on soldiers’ perception of the war, what it was fought over, and how they conceptualized their enemy. The focus of this discussion is not why soldiers
chose to enlist or fight, but how they saw the war and understood the conflict. Instead of focusing on soldiers, Mitchell focuses on the war. Often the Civil War is reduced to simplistic terms revolving around slavery and states-rights. *Civil War Soldiers* seeks to complicate this discussion by looking at the soldiers perceived the war. In essence, Mitchell defines what “the cause” really was to the millions of soldiers, North and South, who fought and died over the course of four long years of conflict. Because of this *Civil War Soldiers* is an important predecessor to later works in the field; adding complexity to the historiography by using the soldier as a medium.

Similar to McPherson, Manning and Mitchell is Randall C. Jimerson’s book *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought during the Sectional Conflict*. Despite being contemporaneous to Mitchell’s *Civil War Soldiers* Jimerson’s discussion has not held up as well over time, yet is still an important predecessor to modern investigations of soldiers. Jimerson, like Mitchell, also focuses on soldiers’ perception of the war, slavery, and the enemy. Again, this is a discussion of perception not motivation and explores how soldiers conceptualized the myriad of topics concerning the war. Importantly Jimerson includes a discussion of Black soldiers and slaves, which includes some Black sources in the discussion. While this discussion is not as in depth as would be desired, limited to only two chapters, it does show that a study of Blacks in the Civil War, soldiers, freemen and slaves, can be conducted effectively, and therefore needs to receive future historiographical attention.

McPherson, Manning, Mitchell and Jimerson, despite having varying subject material, all produced groundbreaking investigations of the soldier. These four books go beyond simply explaining what the Civil War soldier was, instead exploring who they
were. This is a critical difference and important shift in Civil War historiography. All too often military history focuses on what happened rather than why; understanding the soldier helps to fundamentally understand the war. In the effort, all four authors rely heavily on soldiers’ own writings: primarily letters and diaries, which provide an unedited, genuine, glimpse into the soldiers’ thinking. The use of these sources is as important as the subject material. While the historian will always have to interpret historical sources, using soldiers’ own words allows for the highest level of veracity that is historically possible.

In the historiographical discussion of soldiers, it is also important to include John A. Lynn, despite his more general focus and lack of specific interest in the American Civil War. In the historiographical timeline, Lynn first publishes in 1996, the year before For Cause and Comrades, and has continued until his latest publication in 2003. Lynn primarily focuses on the French army of the Ancient Régime and the French Republic. His first book The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791-94 begins his engagement with the topic of soldiers’ motivations. Bayonets of the Republic is a critical addition because it establishes the framework used by successive works to investigate soldiers’ motivations, this paper included. Despite focusing on a different war and time period Bayonets of the Republic forms the foundation for all later works that focus on the theme of soldiers’ motivations. Lynn continues his investigation of soldiers in his latest book Battle: A History of Combat and Culture to outstanding effect.

While McPherson credits Lynn for contributing to his analysis of the soldier, his most important contribution to the field is Battle. The book details two millennia of the
culture of combat from many different civilizations. Unlike the previous authors discussed *Battle* does not engage with the soldier, instead if focuses on the larger culture that influenced both soldiers and warfare. This is an important addition to the historiography because it provides larger context for any discussions within military history. The book allows historians to grasp why generals throughout the American Civil War felt it prudent to array their armies in opposing lines of battle until one side remained, a decision that greatly contributed to the appalling casualty rate seen throughout the war. To Lynn this decision has its roots in ancient Greek Hoplitic warfare, which followed the same essential principles as their Nineteenth Century counterparts. This illustrates the theories that dominated Western military culture. Lynn’s discussion is greatly applicable to any investigation of the American Civil War and the context provided greatly enriches the exploration of soldiers’ motivations.

John Keegan’s book *The Face of Battle* also provides an important addition to the discussion of the soldier⁶. Keegan is perhaps the furthest in both subject matter and publication date from the other authors, yet he delivers the initial shift, with commentary included, in military history towards investigating the soldier. *The Face of Battle* focuses on three key battles, Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme, providing both the historical context and description of the soldiers’ experience in battle. Keegan does not delve into motivation, or the larger cultural influences, instead his focus is on battle itself and what it is to be a soldier. This allows the historian to grasp, even in the smallest degree, what a battle is like even though the greatest majority has never, and will never, experience war.

⁶ Keegan also wrote a military history of the Civil War in 2009; however, I have excluded this from my discussion because of the mixed reviews it received and somewhat divergent discussion.
first hand. Through this example, it is possible to gain a further understanding, and
greater context, for understanding the soldier.

Keegan also provides an important historiographical section on military history,
its strengths and deficiencies, and necessary direction. Despite being forty years old, this
initial chapter is still applicable today and highly informative. The other authors
described above have adhered to Keegan’s recommendations, creating a new trend in
military history that focuses on the soldier’s experience while also including the battle,
campaign, and generals that predominated previously. This exemplifies Keegan’s
importance to the field as a whole.

There are two additional authors worth mentioning concerning the history of the
Civil War soldier. Bell Irving Wiley wrote a pair of books that opened the door for the
“bottom up” approach to Civil War Era soldiers. These books The Life of Billy Yank: The
Common Soldier of the Union and The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the
Confederacy focused on telling the personal stories of soldiers. In the historiography of
the Civil War soldier, Wiley has the honor of being the first truly academic work centered
around the personal accounts and stories of soldiers, breaking with the tradition of
focusing solely on great men, battles, and campaigns. Wiley’s approach was
revolutionary for its time and continues to influence historians today.

James I. Robertson, Jr. continues Wiley’s work in his book Soldiers Blue and
Gray. Robertson’s book tells the story of soldiers in their own words, through all the
aspects of army life, not just combat. The book humanizes the soldier, showing both their
hardship and leisure, while also telling the story of the war. Robertson proves that a study
of even the mundane aspects of the soldiering life can be enlightening and highly relevant to any discussion of the soldier.

The sources discussed represent the leading examples of the historiography of the soldier. Each book takes a different approach, with different subject material, yet the overarching discussion is still the same. The overall goal is to expand the previously neglected discussion of the soldier. Before this new trend emerged military history focused on battles, campaigns, and generals. This old-guard style of history answered many questions about what happened yet avoided the much more complex and often controversial question of why. Because warfare and conflict predominate much of the historical narrative this seems somewhat curious.

The historiographical shift in favor of the soldier began with historians of the Nineteenth Century. This is not a coincidence; many of the wars of the Nineteenth Century had their roots in complex social issues, especially the Napoleonic Wars and American Civil War. As a result, the motivations of the soldier became much more complex. In addition, literacy among the average citizenry greatly increased, especially in the United States, which resulted in a greater availability of primary sources. This combination resulted in the nineteenth century soldier emerging as a prime candidate for historical investigation.

By turning these advantages towards the American Civil War, historians have uncovered a rich and profound subfield. The Civil War was one of the most important episodes in American history; therefore understanding the Civil War soldier is critical to understanding the history of the United States. Civil War soldiers reveal themselves as complex individuals, with their own thoughts, opinions, fears, and hopes. In researching
them, it is possible to humanize a complex and terrible conflict that destroyed the United States.

Studying the Civil War soldier helps reveal the complex motivations that compelled the soldiers, and the nation, to war in 1860. Each individual had their own motivations for enlisting, staying in the military and risking life and limb in combat. These motivations are highly diverse and complex, as revealed by the authors discussed. By understanding the motivations of soldiers, it is possible to greatly increase our understanding of the American Civil War. Too often, individual soldiers are neglected in favor of generals, battles, and campaigns; it is important for new Civil War scholarship to include the soldier so that we can better understand not only what happened during the war, but also why such a critical and devastating conflict occurred.

There are three final sources that stand independently from the above historiographical discussion, yet must be included in the discussion. These are the “classic” military theorists Carl von Clausewitz, Antoine-Henri Jomini, and Flavius Vegetius Renatus.7 It is important to include these classic theorists because Civil War soldiers and officers read and studied them. This provides an important insight into Civil War military theory, specifically the contemporary view of the ideal soldier.

Of the three authors, contemporaries viewed Jomini as the best theorist, and West Point included him in its standard curriculum. Clausewitz had a wider popular appeal, and has achieved greater prominence over time due to his military-political strategy. Vegetius received attention because of the classic revival that was deeply entrenched in

7 Clausewitz and Jomini are both Napoleonic era theorists who saw combat in the Napoleonic Wars. Vegetius is Fourth Century (Late Roman Empire) writer.
American thought, and because he was considered the foremost Roman military theorists.

These three classic authors provided an important insight into Civil War military theory and help provide context for the discussion of soldiers’ motivations.
PART I: INITIAL AND SUSTAINING MOTIVATIONS

CHAPTER 1: THE CAUSE

When discussing Civil War soldiers’ initial and sustaining motivations “the cause” is an important starting point. “The cause” can be somewhat difficult to define, yet falls into two large categories. The first is patriotism, under which is preservation of the Union, a distinction that often was not distinguished by Civil War soldiers, and the second, which revolves around slavery and includes the subordinate issues of abolition, and racial equality. While it proves easier for an academic discussion to separate these categories, it is important to remember that a soldier in the Civil War combined them and gave weight to each differently.

It is possible to define patriotism as an individual’s feelings of duty, devotion, or obligation to their country. Preservation of the Union, while closely tied to patriotism, is subtly different. Where patriotism can exist before, during, or after the war, preservation of the Union is unique to the conflict. In addition, preservation of the Union also carries a certain degree of political, specifically Democratic, connotation. Slavery proves to be the most elusive and amorphous of the causes, definitions can range from abolition to full civil equality between the races. It is important to remember, however, that abolition did not always mean equality, both politically and socially; in many cases, it clearly does not. In addition, there was extensive debate over the means of abolition, whether it is gradual emancipation, natural emancipation through limiting the expanse of slavery, or immediate emancipation.\(^1\) It is imperative to highlight that many soldiers shifted their

\(^1\) I classify natural emancipation as the notion that if slavery’s expansion into the territories was halted that the institution would slowly and naturally (i.e. without government intervention) die out. Importantly this is Abraham Lincoln’s initial point of view.
definitions of the cause, especially with their views toward slavery, as the war progressed and the expressed military aims of the government changed.

In the North, a sense of patriotic duty and obligation persisted throughout the entire Civil War, but was strongest during the Secession Crisis and early months of the war. As the war progressed, and the violence and death toll became more apparent, the patriotic mentality of many of the soldiers diminished. As the cost of the war rose, the patriotic rhetoric gave way to debates over whether or not the price was too much to pay.

When discussing patriotism one of the most interesting cases is Albert O. Cheney from Newark, New Jersey who enlisted as a Private and eventually rose to the rank of Captain. Cheney enlisted in early 1861 in the Fifth Regiment, New York volunteers seemingly fervent in his patriotic convictions. In a letter to his sister he stated, “I am ready to fight for my country and help . . . the Stars and Stripes and if I should fall it will be in a good cause.” It is important to note that Cheney’s decision to enlist in a New York regiment is also indicative of his motivations. In New Jersey the initial wave of recruitments were centralized in Trenton, it was most likely easier and quicker (and, importantly, legal) for Cheney to simply cross the river and enlist in New York. The 13th

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2 Initially, Cheney enlisted in the 5th Regiment of New York Infantry, then as a regular army hospital steward, and finally was commissioned in the 127th U.S. Colored Troops, first as a Lieutenant then Captain. As a note the entry in the New Jersey Historical Society (MG 1534) lists Cheney as a “colored Union soldier,” this is, unfortunately, impossible based off his enlistment date in 1861 and commissioning in 1864. Black men were ineligible for service until after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect in January 1863 (exceptions do exists but these are predominantly in Southern territory). In addition, Black officers were incredibly rare, and no record of Albert Cheney exists among these men.


4 Albert O. Cheney, to his sister Mary L. French, undated [late April or early May 1861], letter beginning “My dear sister Mary,” Albert O. Cheney Letters (Call number: MG 1534), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
New Jersey, founded in midsummer 1862, would be the first northern New Jersey regiment raised. It would seem that his eagerness to enlist led him to New York. This patriotic sentiment seen in Cheney was common for early war volunteers and was pervasive throughout 1861.

Cheney is important because his patriotic fervor did not wane after 1861, in fact he went on to serve throughout all four years of the war. In a letter to his sisters from September 1864 he writes, “I had got tired of being in the hospital [as a steward] and made up my mind to stand [for commissioning in the U.S.C.T.].” The fact that Cheney presumably volunteered to serve as a hospital steward after his first stint in the army is also indicative of his motivations. In the same letter he continues, “I considered that I was not doing much for my country while a hospital steward.” Despite Cheney arguing that he was not doing much for his country, his patriotic devotion is clearly evident; he spent the entire war in the service of his country. By first enlisting with the 5th New York, then as a hospital steward, and finally as an officer in the 127th U.S.C.T. Cheney clearly shows the strength of the patriotic motivation. Albert Cheney survived all of his service and returned to civilian life.

While Albert Cheney is a leading example of patriotic motivations, there are other, less feverous, but no less important, examples. Edward H. Albertson, a Private in the 31st New Jersey Volunteers, enlisted on September 3, 1862 as a nine month volunteer. Soon after his enlistment, he writes his sister, “to tell you the truth I am not homesick – that is I

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6 Ibid.

7 Record of Officers and Men, 1:953.
am not sorry that I volunteered."\(^8\) Later that year after coming down with a minor bout of sickness and being sent to a military hospital, Albertson’s conviction is no less clear. In another letter, he tells his sister not to worry about battles or sickness and writes, “I am serving my country and if I should die it will be in a good cause.”\(^9\) Albertson felt motivated enough by his patriotism to answer the call for service, but this did not mean that he was in favor of the death and destruction caused by the war.

In September of 1863, with the election looming, Albertson provides an important glimpse into both his politics and his motivations. Albertson, apparently an adamant War Democrat, writes in a letter to his parents, “Our regiment went Democrat [for president] and most of the Northern states did so. Now the war is soon to be settled if we are to believe some of the Democratic politicians. So I hope it may but not until it can be permanently.”\(^10\) This statement is important because it shows the political climate in New Jersey.

It is important to define New Jersey as a War Democrat state and not a Copperhead or Peace Democrat supporter like the majority of the northern Democratic Party. War Democrats generally supported Lincoln (though not for a second term in this instance) and the war, but generally advocated “the Union as it was” in an effort to end

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8 Edward H. Albertson, to his sister [Ell], [September or October] 1862, letter beginning “Well Ell I suppose you are,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

9 Edward H. Albertson, to his sister [Ell], December 13, 1862 [continued December 14, 1862 on the same page], letter beginning “Saturday afternoon, Dear Sister,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

10 Edward H. Albertson, to his parents, September 9, 1863, letter beginning “Dear father and mother,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; This statement is, of course, inaccurate since Abraham Lincoln won his second term. It is an interesting insight into both the inaccuracy and sluggishness of news reaching the troops during the war as well as an example of soldiers’ deep political interest.
the war sooner and stop the bloodshed. It is possible to see these sentiments in Albertson’s letter, he would like a speedy conclusion to the war, but only if it decided the question permanently. Albertson is willing to serve and risk his life now so that other generations will not have to. In another letter, he even supports the draft and the military response to draft dodging and desertions by saying, “military law is severe and perhaps hard on some but that is better than another generation should suffer.”

It is clear from Albertson’s convictions that he is willing to bear the burden of war for the betterment of the country, and so that later generations will not have to, out of a sense of duty and patriotism.

Albertson’s decision to serve for nine months should also be seen as a patriotic decision and not as a means to avoid the draft or a longer enlistment. In his letters, it is clear that Albertson would serve longer if he could, but the necessities of farm life and a desire to help his parents demanded his nine-month enlistment. In the end, a lack of patriotism did not keep him from longer service; instead, it was economics (see below). Edward Albertson would survive his enlistment and mustered out on June 24, 1863.

Joseph E. Crowell also provides a few key insights into the patriotism of Civil War soldiers in his memoir: The Young Volunteer. Initially Crowell provides a key

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11 Edward H. Albertson, to his parents, March 24, 1863, letter beginning “I received a letter from father,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

12 Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey, passim; For a more detailed discussion see below.

13 Record of Officers and Men, 1:953.

14 Joseph Crowell’s memoirs can be difficult to use because of their compilation years after the war and publication. The major argument against The Young Volunteer is that parts were altered or embellished in order to increase its readability. Despite this, many of the names and events in the memoir can be verified in the historical record, and Joseph Crowell does appear in the Record of Officers and Men.
insight into the motivational feelings expressed by soldiers through the country in 1862 by stating:

the first rush to arms, in 1861, had been spontaneous... The ambitious, impulsive youths who are ever on the watch for adventure, constituted the first spontaneous outpouring of robust young patriots, but in ’62 it was different. Things had become serious. The people of the country had suddenly awaked to a realization of the fact that they had a read war on hand.15

This shift is important to note; as the war progressed, patriotic fervor lessened, leading to the institution of the draft to supplement the manpower deficiencies caused by the high casualty rate. Despite this, however, patriotism persisted as a strong motivation for enlistment. In support of this Crowell uses his company commander, Hugh Irish, as an example stating, “he became convinced that it was his duty to go to war. Mr. Irish was one of the men who entered the service out of pure loyalty and patriotism. In his case the motive was unquestionable.”16 Captain Irish’s patriotism came with a price; he was the first man from the newly raised 13th New Jersey killed on September 17, 1862 at the battle of Antietam; twenty-seven days after he enlisted.17

There is another soldier to include in the patriotic motivation discussion: George J. Van Arsdale. Van Arsdale enlisted on August 8, 1862 in the 13th New Jersey Volunteers, little over a month later he would see his first action at Antietam. In January of 1863, Van Arsdale penned a poem entitled “A Soldier to his Mother” in it he expressed his patriotism stating,

in the appropriate places. Therefore, I have decided to use the memoir under scrutiny and for its general information and themes rather than specific evidence.

15 Crowell, Young Volunteer, 2

16 Ibid., 4.

17 Record of Officers and Men, 1:657
And my heart is still in keeping,
With my country’s glorious cause,
And until it ceases beating,
Will defend her flag and laws.\(^{18}\)

It is important to remember that this is a very intimate letter between a son and his mother, not meant for larger publication or distribution. Van Arsdale’s patriotic motivations are clear in this poem, emphasizing the importance of patriotism and the cause in motivating Civil War soldiers to take up arms. George Van Arsdale was mortally wounded on May 3, 1863 at the battle of Chancellorsville.\(^{19}\) He died, true to his word, behind enemy lines on May 8; initially only his testament was retrieved and sent home to his parents, it is unclear if his body ever returned home.\(^{20}\)

Also relevant to the patriotic motivation discussion is the inclusion of those men who did not volunteer for service. While New Jersey never instituted a statewide draft, some counties resorted to the draft to make up their quotas. An example of this is Franklin Jones, a draftee in the 10\(^{th}\) New Jersey Volunteers. Draftees are often excluded from any patriotic discussion because of the stigma that later was attributed to the Vietnam era draft. This is not the case with many Civil War draftees, who did not enlist

\(^{18}\) George Van Arsdale, “A Soldier to His Mother,” January 24, 1863, poem written for his mother and attached to letter dated April 4, 1863 [copy of original], Van Arsdale Family papers (Call number: 199), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

\(^{19}\) Record of Officers and Men, 1:642

\(^{20}\) George A. Beardsley [Cpt. commanding Co. D, 13\(^{th}\) NJ], to William H. Van Arsdale, May 15, 1863, letter from George Van Arsdale’s company commander to his brother reporting his death [copy of original], Van Arsdale Family papers (Call number: 199), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; Theodore R. Beck, to Abram VanArnsdale [this is how the letter is addressed, the name is a mistake], May 15, 1863, letter from the regimental chaplain to George Van Arsdale’s brother [copy of original], Van Arsdale Family papers (Call number: 199), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; George J. Van Arsdale’s headstone is in the cemetery of the Peapack Reformed Church in Peapack, New Jersey. It is unclear whether or not the family erected a stone over an empty casket or if the body was returned home. Given that Van Arsdale died in Confederate hands, and the Union defeat at Chancellorsville, it may be unlikely that he ever made it home.
for various reasons; for Jones it is clear that economics played a role in his decision not to enlist (see below).

Despite a reluctance to serve, it is important to point out that Jones, once called, faithfully remained in service. Desertions plagued Civil War armies and Jones could have easily walked away from the trenches of Petersburg and returned home, he did not, and this illustrates a certain level of patriotism that is often overlooked. In nearly every letter home Jones’ expresses his dislike for military life and a strong desire to return to his wife and children, who he missed intensely. This sentiment intensifies and exemplifies the strength of the Jones’ patriotism. Jones remained at his post until contracting chronic Dysentery, which he died from on May 19, 1865, over a month after Lee surrendered at Appomattox, and ten days after President Johnson declared the rebellion over. Franklin Jones clearly maintained a patriotic sustaining motivation, even if he did not possess it initially; it is therefore fitting to note that Jones is buried at Arlington National Cemetery: grave 12,412.

The abolitionist, or anti-slavery, cause is more difficult to discern, especially in soldiers from New Jersey. A few different factors influence this. Primarily is New Jersey’s complicated relationship with slavery; exemplified in the fact that the state still had “involuntary servants” in 1860. In addition, many New Jersey soldiers harbored the

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21 Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey, passim.

22 Rev. Theodore Bancroft, to Ruhamah Jones, May 19, 1865, letter from the priest who administered Last Rights to Franklin Jones to his wife informing her of his death, letter beginning “Mrs. Franklin Jones,” Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

23 Record of Officers and Men, 2:1744.
latent racism that was prevalent in the North, especially those in the urban areas where emancipation would create more competition for jobs. Finally, because of the relatively large free Black population in the state many New Jersey soldiers did not think much of their encounters, nor were they surprised when the Emancipation Proclamation was announced.

One of the better examples of New Jersey soldiers’ relationship to slavery is Charles A. Hopkins, who originally enlisted in the 8th New York State Militia (Washington Greys) then obtained a commission as regimental Adjutant, and later Captain (with a Brevet to Major at the end of the war), in the 13th New Jersey.\(^{25}\) Apparently Hopkins, ever hungry for advancement (see below), contemplated joining a U.S.C.T. regiment in an attempt to earn a commission. His mother strongly objected to such a move, prompting Hopkins to reply to her saying, “your letters of objections, but not objectionable letter, was received a day or two ago. I know that your dislike to my propositions aroused solely from your fears of my safety. Do not let them trouble you.”\(^{26}\) While it is clear that Hopkins’ mother was concerned about his safety, presumably because of the Confederate policy of summarily executing Black soldiers and their officers, there seems to be undertones of a racial motive.

As the letter continues this becomes even more apparent when Hopkins writes, “you object to my associating with Negros, we do not associate with our White

\(^{24}\) 1860 Census, 313.

\(^{25}\) Record of Officers and Men, 1:628, 2:657, 2:1712.

\(^{26}\) Charles A. Hopkins, to his mother, June 9, 1863, letter to his mother beginning “Dear mother,” Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
Privates.”\textsuperscript{27} Evident in this statement is the prevailing assumption that the two races should not mix, regardless of questions of emancipation or equality. It must also be noted, however, that Hopkins strongest statement in his letter reads simply, “If it is the will of Providence that I shall lose my life in this struggles the catastrophe will not be accelerated by going in a Negro regiment.”\textsuperscript{28} Hopkins seems to be indifferent about commanding Black soldiers, even if his mother is not.

The generational differences exposed in the exchange between Hopkins and his mother is important. While he may not harbor the latent racism seemingly apparent in his mother, Hopkins still seems to maintain a certain degree of racial prejudice. It is also important to remember that many in the North favored emancipation but not equality. While Hopkins says nothing about slavery, it is apparent that he does not support equality between the races. Another of Hopkins’ letters provides evidence of this when he writes,

\begin{quote}
I have been laughing till my sides ached at a couple of young contrabands going through the manual of arms. One of them while drilling the other and showing him how to hold his head up by chucking him under the chin got a rap over the head that floored him with the remark ‘no N***r capin’ goine to knock my teef out (spelling original).’\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

This episode, with all its minstrel show comparisons, emphasizes this notion of inequality and latent racism that was pervasive in the Union army.

Joseph Crowell’s memoirs provide a similar episode. While on duty as a picket near Chancellorsville, Crowell stumbled upon a family of (presumably) former slaves. Crowell writes the exchange in a language thick with racist connotations and bears a stark

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Charles A. Hopkins, to his mother, August 21, 1863, letter to his mother beginning “Dear mother,” Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
resemblance to the stereotypical minstrel show.\textsuperscript{30} In addition to the racist vernacular Crowell is quick to procure a meal from the family, abusing their surprise at his appearance, and, presumably, his arms. After startling the slave woman, who is described as the stereotypical “mammy,” while cooking for her husband Crowell records the exchange as follows, “‘What’s the matter with you anyhow? I am not the devil. I am not going to ‘tote’ you off to the fire and brimstone. What I want is some of that flapjack. And put the coffee on again. The best you can do if you don’t want to be carried off is to get that supper ready again.’”\textsuperscript{31} From this episode Crowell’s latent racism and belief in racial inequality is clear. Even if Crowell invented this incident years after the fact it provides an insight into his own beliefs and opinions and produced in his writing.

Despite the evidence of racism and sentiments of racial inequality, there are some examples of New Jersey soldiers’ positive opinions toward the issue of slavery and race. First and foremost are the examples of those who served with the U.S.C.T. Albert Cheney readily volunteered for service with Black troops and Charles Hopkins contemplated it (both discussed above). If these men had harbored strong inequality convictions, they would not have accepted Black soldiers participation in the war. The fact that both men did support Black service provides an important insight, that while New Jersey may not be home to the fervent abolitionists of New England; it was softening on the issues of race.

With regard to the Emancipation Proclamation, there is little mention in the writings of New Jersey soldiers, yet this silence can still provide some insight. First, it is

\textsuperscript{30} Crowell, \textit{Young Volunteer}, 335-343.

\textsuperscript{31} Crowell, \textit{Young Volunteer}, 341.
important to remember that the Emancipation Proclamation did not promise social and political equality. Many of the soldiers were well informed politically, more so than the average population today, and would have realized this distinction. In addition, the Emancipation Proclamation, quite literally, had no impact on the state of New Jersey and the soldiers from the state would not have seen a direct change in their home lives. Despite this conspicuous silence, the issues of slavery and race still must be included in a discussion of New Jersey soldiers’ motivations.

While the cause may be difficult to define, it appears that, at least in soldiers from New Jersey, patriotism and preservation of the Union were far stronger motivations than slavery or racial equality. A conspicuous silence exists regarding slavery and the Emancipation Proclamation in the writings of New Jersey soldiers that, while explainable, can provide key insight into why these motivations received less weight than in other states. A New York Times article from September 23, 1862, soon after Lincoln announced the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, provides a revealing summation, it reads, “The fact that the President’s Emancipation Proclamation has caused less excitement here than was anticipated, may be regarded as evidence that all other question have become trifling besides the great question of saving the Government.”

CHAPTER 2: ECONOMICS

The historical record has consistently neglected economics as a motivation for soldiers, yet it proves to be an important factor in a soldier’s decision to enlist and stay in the military. There are a few different elements to the economic motivation argument. The two main factors are pay and bounties, both of which make up the largest share of what a soldier would earn for his service, and therefore would offset his absence from home. When a soldier left for the war, he removed his contribution to the family in terms of wages, labor, or both. In the nineteenth century families were much closer economically than they are today, this is an important element to remember within the economics argument. Unmarried young men would still live at home, or at least contribute their earnings or labor to the household. This is especially true in rural areas reliant on farm labor where the absence of one member of the family could make or break a season.

Subsidiary to pay and bounties are benefits and pensions. These secondary factors would influence a soldier to a lesser degree, but are also important to include in the discussion of economics. The definition of benefits is military room and board as well as healthcare; specifically expenses that the soldier would no longer be responsible for out of their own pocket. Clothing, importantly, was not included in this category and many Civil War soldiers were responsible for paying for or furnishing their own uniforms and clothing. In addition, many supplemented their military rations by purchasing from the sutlers that were persistent in any camp. Pensions applied mostly to married men but also were applicable to those disabled by the war. They offered a way to counter the risks taken in service by ensuring those injured, and the dependents of those killed, would be
cared for despite a permanent loss. In purely economic terms, a pension is a way to ensure compensation for a loss of income through death or serious injury.

Pay for Civil War soldiers was notoriously low and slow, despite this, however, many still relied on sending a portion of their wages home. Historians often emphasize the sluggishness of the government in paying its soldiers, which is undeniable, however many soldiers were more annoyed than enraged at the slow paymaster. In many cases, soldiers would ask for money from home, which they would then pay back, with extra, once they were paid. Soldiers also seemed to focus on the larger picture; despite not receiving regular pay they still expected, and earned, the same total amount for their service. A Union Private received thirteen dollars a month, 156 dollars a year, until the government raised wages to sixteen dollars a month, 192 dollars a year, in June of 1864; officers and noncommissioned officers, of course, received more.

It is important to place the economic motivation discussion into proper historical context. Parts of New Jersey suffered greatly because of southern secession, particularly in the urban areas that were reliant on the southern market for their manufactured goods and shipping. According to a government report, the average “laborer” from New Jersey made a dollar per day, or twenty dollars per month.1 While this is markedly lower than the thirteen dollars a Union soldier earned there are reasons for this. A soldier did not need to worry about lodging, food, or medical expenses; resulting in a soldier retaining a higher percentage their pay.

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Supplementing a soldier’s pay were the bounties offered by the states as an enlistment incentive. In New Jersey individual counties, rather than the state, were in charge of setting and distributing the bounties. Despite this New Jersey offered some of the highest bounties in the Union, indicative more of the higher average wage in the state than the difficulties in recruitment. In the Adjutant General’s report, counties in New Jersey paid an estimated twenty-three million dollars in local bounties (equivalent to 5,792,253,523 in 2012). To supplement local county bounties the state offered a flat state pay of two dollars per month for a single man and six dollars per month to families of soldiers. This increased a Private’s pay nearer to the state average wage. Taken all together; monthly pay, enlistment bounty, state supplementary pay, and factoring in a lack of lodging, food, and medical expenses a New Jersey Private’s monthly salary would have been very close to his civilian wage. Combining this context with the writings of individual soldiers, the argument that economics did not play a motivational role is difficult to maintain.

Edward Albertson provides an important study of the question of economic motivations. Albertson was a farmer from Warren County when he enlisted at age twenty-two. His letters are full of inquiries and concerns about the family farm, where he still worked (it appears he was still unmarried). In a letter to his sister he writes, “I hope that father and Jay [I assume this is his brother] will . . . get along until I get back and use

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2 Record of Officers and Men, 1:7; inflation figures are based off the Consumer Price Index and were calculated using the calculator provided at: http://www.westegg.com/inflation/.

3 Ibid.

4 September 3, 1862, Certificate of Military Enrollment, Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
what money I send home to hire with if wanted.”⁵ This reveals two factors: that Albertson’s absence caused a labor shortage on the family farm, and that the money he earned was supposed to compensate for his absence. In December he reinforces this notion in a letter to his father saying, “you and Jay must not work too hard if you can hire any at all as I will give my wages (if I get any) to pay the hire.”⁶ Albertson is clearly willing, and expecting, to use his military wages to cover his absence at home.

In addition to providing insight into the importance of military pay, Albertson also gives a brief glimpse into the bounty system and incentives. In a letter to his parents from March 24, 1863 he writes, “there are encouragements for men to reenlist 50$ for one or 100$ for two years besides the other bounty and pay.”⁷ Because Albertson was a “nine month man,” it is clear he was a target to extend his enlistment. These large bounties for reenlistment must have been attractive for a man who made thirteen dollars a month. In addition, Albertson seems to be testing his parents for their response as to whether or not he should stay in the service. If Albertson had chosen to reenlist, which he did not, the bounty would have increased his monthly pay by a third, a significant increase.

In juxtaposition to Edward Albertson is Charles Hopkins. Unlike Albertson Hopkins comes from a wealthier middle class family. His family seems to have owned a

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⁵ Edward H. Albertson, to his sister [Ell], [September or October] 1862, letter beginning “Well Ell I suppose you are,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

⁶ Edward H. Albertson, to his father, December 21, 1862, letter beginning “Dear father,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

⁷ Edward H. Albertson, to his parents, March 24, 1863, letter beginning “I received a letter from father,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
store where he worked before enlisting.\textsuperscript{8} Once he earns a commission in the 13\textsuperscript{th} New Jersey Hopkins consistently asks for money from his parents so he can purchase the trappings of a gentlemanly officer and to make his life in the army more comfortable.\textsuperscript{9} Of particular importance to Hopkins was a pair of riding boots and, what he considered to be, adequate food (officers often bought their own victuals to avoid army rations).\textsuperscript{10} After Hopkins was finally paid (the paymaster was no faster for officers), he was sure to repay his parents plus interest.\textsuperscript{11} In Hopkins’ example, his absence was apparently not a major hardship for his family, despite this he still is sure to send money home.

Franklin Jones provides an example of the importance of economics and pensions to a soldier and his family. Jones was drafted, so neither economics, nor any other factor, played a role in his enlistment. As a poor farmer from southern New Jersey with a wife and six children (his youngest was born while he was in service), economics were probably a strong motivation not to go to war.\textsuperscript{12} Despite this, Jones dutifully served and was sure to send money home to help his struggling wife, who had to cash bonds while

\begin{thebibliography}{12}
\bibitem{8} Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, passim.
\bibitem{9} Charles Hopkins, to his father Samuel A. Hopkins, November 26, 1862, letter beginning “Dear father,” Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; Charles Hopkins, to his mother, November 23, 1862, letter beginning “Dear mother,” Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
\bibitem{10} Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, passim.
\bibitem{11} Ibid.
\bibitem{12} Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey, passim; Pension Form #109383, Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
\end{thebibliography}
she waited for the irregular military pay. In one letter, Jones specifically forwards ten dollars home to his wife, most of his monthly pay. He also makes the remark that “this is a good place for gambling but they can’t get me to gamble for anything.” From Jones’ disdain shows that he felt gambling to be a waste of money, which was better used elsewhere.

When Franklin Jones died on May 19, 1865, he left behind seven dependents. The army ensured his widow a pension of eight dollars a month, later raised to twelve in 1886, for life and an additional two dollars a month for each child until they reached the age of sixteen. This provided his wife, Ruhamah, with a supplement that was equal to, or more than, her husband’s military pay. It is unclear whether or not she was able to subsist off this pay, or what kind of hardships befell the family.

When all the evidence is considered, it is clear that economics played a role in the initial and sustaining motivations of New Jersey soldiers. While it is difficult to argue that economics were the primary motivational force it is clear that it was an important subordinate motivation to the soldiers. If volunteering, or serving, were to cause undue financial difficulty on a soldier or his family, both recruitments and desertions would have been drastically effected. By delving deeper into the raw economics it is clear that a soldier from New Jersey would make about the same wage he did in civilian life, or that

13 Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey, passim.

14 Franklin Jones, to his wife and children, March 18, 1865, letter beginning “my dear wife and children,” Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

15 Franklin Jones, to his wife, March 10, 1865, letter beginning “my dear wife,” Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

16 Pension Form #109383, Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
any difference was less drastic than many historians have argued. To simply argue that a
Private’s pay of thirteen dollars was drastically less than the twenty-dollar state average
is to oversimplify a highly complex issue. It is clear from the raw data and the testimony
of soldiers that economics were important to every soldier and that many were dedicated,
or obligated, to supporting those on the home front.
CHAPTER 3: PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT

Similar to economics, personal advancement has not received the necessary investigation from historians. First, it is important to define what is meant by personal advancement before launching into a detailed discussion. Both before, and after, the Civil War the United States military was not seen as a means to advance socially, except for those select few officers who attended the military academies. The antebellum and postwar perception of the army was, much in the European vein, that it was the realm of immigrants and degenerates with nowhere else to turn. This sentimentality changed radically during the Civil War, when the U.S. Army was no longer a tiny organization dedicated to border patrol and securing the frontier from unruly Natives. During the war, a man could increase his station and prominence through distinction, especially in combat, and promotions.

Because the vast majority of soldiers in the Civil War fell under the “Volunteer Army” classification, not to be confused with the regular United States Army, a looser set of rules regarding promotion and command were in place. At the outbreak of war, the U.S. government was woefully unprepared for the coming conflict, the need for troops resulted in an *ad hoc* system forming to meet the need. Indicative of this is the scrambling for political patronage commissions, especially in the Army of the Potomac, and the ability for wealthy or prominent individuals to raise and equip their own private units, which were subsequently accepted into federal service with the founder in command.¹ It was entirely possible receive a Brigadier General’s commission, and all its

¹ There are multiple examples of this but perhaps most extreme is Dan Sickles, who raised a number of regiments and subsequently received a general’s commission. Sickles had no military
accompanying social benefits and prestige, with no military training or competence whatsoever. The term “amateur’s war” is an understatement.

In New Jersey, this was no different, as can be seen in the writing of soldiers from the state. Again, Charles Hopkins provides a good example of the personal ambition present in soldiers. Initially enlisting as a Private, Hopkins was able to secure himself a commission, albeit a “desk job” as regimental adjutant, in the 13th New Jersey.\(^2\) Given Hopkins’ letters it is clear that he was greatly concerned, borderline obsessed, with promotions; from this, it is possible to conclude that he campaigned extensively to secure his commission in the 13th.\(^3\) This is further evidenced by his continuing to campaign for promotion while in the regiment. Hopkins writes to his father to ask local politicians and leading members of the community to advocate on his behalf.\(^4\) This reveals two key elements, first that Hopkins was hungry to advance himself further, and second that doing so was possible through social and political channels, not simply through military merit.

The ultimate goal for Hopkins was a combat command; he would have preferred a Lieutenant Colonel position but settled for company command.\(^5\) It is also clear in

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\(^2\) I will point out that the regimental Adjutant, as well as other “noncombat” and “desk jobs” such as regimental Quartermaster, and Chaplain, were still exposed to enemy fire. While the Adjutant was responsible for keeping the books out of combat, in combat they were often used as a messenger (usually meaning they were mounted and thus a prime target).

\(^3\) Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, passim.

\(^4\) Charles Hopkins, to his father Samuel A. Hopkins, December 19, 1863, Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
Hopkins letters that he felt constant competition for the positions made available through resignations, wounds, and deaths.\(^6\) Hopkins complains numerous times to his family that he felt overlooked for promotion and threatened to resign if he did not receive one (this seems to be private blustering, Hopkins never resigns).\(^7\)

By the end of the war Hopkins desire for personal advancement is clear. He was able to secure his command position, as Captain of Company K, in January of 1863. After this promotion, though, Hopkins seemingly changes his strategy. As a company commander he receives distinction for his abilities and martial acumen; at the end of the war he received the brevet rank of Major for “gallant and distinguished services in the field;” he was the only officer at his grade from the battle hardened 13\(^{th}\) New Jersey to receive such distinction.\(^8\) When Hopkins enlisted as a Private in the 8\(^{th}\) New York Militia (Washington Greys) in 1861 he was only twenty years old.\(^9\) By his twenty-fifth birthday at wars end he had been promoted all the way to Major, clear evidence of both Hopkins desire for personal advancement and abilities as a soldier.

Joseph Crowell presents another example of a soldier who was motivated by personal advancement. Unlike Hopkins, Crowell presents an example of sustaining personal advancement motivations, rather than initial. It is obvious from Crowell’s

\(^{5}\) Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, passim; see also the discussion of Hopkins’ potentially joining the U.S.C.T.

\(^{6}\) Ibid.

\(^{7}\) Ibid.

\(^{8}\) Record of Officers and Men, 2:1712.

\(^{9}\) Charles Hopkins, to his sister Helen A. Hopkins, August 13, 1863, Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
memoir that he did not enlist out of any particular motivation; rather he was swept up in the moment, he reports, “I had scarcely signed before I began to feel sorry.”\textsuperscript{10} Despite this initial sentiment, Crowell would continue in the service until 1866, primarily out of a desire for personal advancement.

Crowell enlisted on August 18, 1862 and served until the Battle of Chancellorsville, where he was wounded multiple times, the most serious of which mangled his left hand and necessitated the amputation of the little finger.\textsuperscript{11} This relatively minor wound, like so many others in the Civil War, later became gangrenous and threatened both Crowell’s life and the rest of his hand.\textsuperscript{12} A professional surgeon was able to save the hand, and Crowell made a full recovery. This effectively ended his regular service, and might have earned him a discharge, but the minor severity of Crowell’s wound, and the government’s need for relatively able-bodied men, earned him a transfer to the Invalid (Veteran Reserve) Corps.\textsuperscript{13} At this time, roughly July 1863, the manpower needs of the government were so great that disabled, but not severely disabled, wounded would be retained in the service and employed in support and garrison roles.\textsuperscript{14}

This is the point where Crowell’s personal ambitions arose. After being informed the Veteran Reserve Corps was selecting sixteen men to act as Lieutenants, Crowell made up his mind to take the examinations and try to earn his commission.\textsuperscript{15} As a note,

\textsuperscript{10} Crowell, \textit{Young Volunteer}, 4.
\textsuperscript{11} Crowell, \textit{Young Volunteer}, 384-392.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 406-409.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 429.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 431.
Crowell needed, and received, the recommendations of his former company commander, Charles Hopkins (the same who is discussed in this paper), Crowell reports, “the recommendation he sent was of the strongest possible character.”\textsuperscript{16} This recommendation, coupled with Crowell’s own strength at the examination, earned him his commission as a Lieutenant in the Veteran Reserve Corps.\textsuperscript{17} This clearly shows that Crowell’s desire for personal gain fueled his aspiration to stand for a Lieutenant’s commission. Crowell also spent his full enlistment in the service, unlike many of his counterparts who mustered out when the war ended, and was discharged in 1866.\textsuperscript{18}

In addition to positive personal gain motivations, there are also instances of negative manifestations. Reputation was incredibly important to Civil War soldiers, especially officers, and any affronts to a man’s integrity could cause serious repercussions. Indicative of this are a series of Courts Martial charges issued by Captain George A. Beardsley of the 13\textsuperscript{th} New Jersey.\textsuperscript{19} The documents are from May of 1863, and pertain to the regiment’s involvement in the battle of Chancellorsville.\textsuperscript{20} Charges were issued against Captain David A. Ryerson, commander of Company C, and Lieutenant William G. Cunningham, of Company H, for “insubordination for circulating

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 433
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 439-446.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Record of Officers and Men, 2:1461.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Why Beardsley is the author and presider of these documents is somewhat of a mystery to me. While he would eventually rise to the rank of Major at the date of issuance, he was still a Captain and commander of Co. D. It is possible that he was ordered to preside over the Court Martial or was the person who brought the charges.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} George A. Beardsley, Charges and Specifications (Courts Martial) [2 documents], May 16, 1863, Thirteenth New Jersey Volunteers manuscript collection (Call number: 819), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
\end{itemize}
inflammatory letters” and “conduct unbecoming of an officer.”21 It seems that Ryerson and Cunningham were unhappy with the regiment’s handling at the battle of Chancellorsville, where it suffered greatly, and circulated a petition condemning Colonel Carmen’s leadership of the regiment.22 In Captain Ryerson’s charges are two key pieces of information, first that he was charged with “conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman (emphasis original)” and even went so far as to refuse to salute Colonel Carmen during a dress parade.23 While the charges of insubordination and conduct unbecoming an officer are harmful, there was another charged leveled against Ryerson and Cunningham that was far more damaging.

Second both Ryerson and Cunningham were charged with making statements “calculated to injure the reputation and wound the feelings of the family of an officer [George G. Whitfield] who was killed in the recent action at Chancellorsville.”24 This charge is what most likely caused the formal Court Martial and was the conduct considered so unbecoming. Unfortunately, the records do not preserve the exact statements. Despite being brought up on charges, the verdict is also not reported, and was likely a formal reprimand, since both officers continued to serve. William Cunningham became regimental Adjutant in August of 1863 and resigned his commission on

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21 Ibid.; Record of Officers and Men, 1:639, 1:651.

22 George A. Beardsley, Charges and Specifications (Courts Martial) [2 documents], May 16, 1863, Thirteenth New Jersey Volunteers manuscript collection (Call number: 819), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; 3rd Brigade (Ruger), 1st Division (Williams), XII Corps (Slocum), of which the 13th NJ belonged, bore the brunt of the Rebel assault during the battle. Chancellorsville was the bloodiest battle of the entire war for the 13th; they suffered 141 casualties (see Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 436).

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.; Record of Officers and Men, 1:629; 2nd Lieutenant George G. Whitfield of Company A was the only officer killed (mortally wounded) during the battle and must be the officer referenced, but not named, in the document.
September 30, 1864. David Ryerson received a promotion to Major in April of 1864 and resigned on July 16, 1864; he was awarded a brevet Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel on March 13, 1865.

These Courts Martial documents reveal how important personal image was to a Civil War soldier, especially an officer. It is clear that there was some sort of division in the regiment following Chancellorsville, and that a clash of personalities had erupted. Of the two officers charged, it is clear that Ryerson’s reputation was undamaged, Cunningham, on the other hand, seems to have suffered somewhat from his involvement. Despite the lack of significant damage to either officer’s reputation, this episode clearly shows the importance of personal image during the Civil War Era.

Hopkins and Crowell provide the most obvious examples of soldiers who were motivated by personal advancement during their time in service. Whereas Hopkins seems to have been motivated by personal advancement from his enlistment onwards, Crowell seems to have developed the motivation as the war progressed, especially since his wounds would have affected his ability to gain employment. Both men provide important insights into how personal advancement motivated Civil War soldiers. Neither seems to be directly influenced by the monetary advantages that would come with promotions, both seem to be more concerned with the social standing and prestige that accompanied a commission.

The Courts Martial documents show a different side of the personal advancement discussion. While not directly linked to a soldier’s personal advancement motivation they

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25 Record of Officers and Men, 1:628.
26 Ibid.
illustrate how important image was to the Civil War soldier. This supports the deduction that personal advancement was an important motivator for Civil War soldiers, by showing how a reputation could suffer damage and how personal advancement could be curtailed by improper action. In total, all three examples show how intricately woven personal advancement, image, and reputation were into the lives and actions of Civil War Soldiers.
CHAPTER 4: ADVENTURE

A desire for adventure, and to escape the mundane life of a civilian, also influenced Civil War Soldiers. At first, adventure as a motivation might seem somewhat far-fetched, but both the conditions in the mid Nineteenth Century and the soldiers’ own writing tell a different story. An adventurous nature and wanderlust are common in every young man, and Civil War soldiers were no different. In addition, the United States had remained insulated from the horrors of the Napoleonic Wars. Up until the Civil War, all the conflicts fought on North American soil were relatively small, with little loss of life or damage; this led to a general misconception that the Civil War would be no different.\(^1\) Because of this the war seemed like a grand adventure and a chance to see what was over the proverbial horizon, all while getting paid to do so. To many young men this was irresistible.

Prior to the technological explosion of the early 1800s life in the United States (as well as the rest of the world) was, as it had been for hundreds of years, a localized existence. Many lived and died in the same small towns and villages where their parents and grandparents had. Mobility was a rarity. This began to change by the 1820s and 30s when technology began to broaden horizons. The advent of the telegraph and railroad provided the cornerstone for the infantile stages of what is now called “globalization.” What began slowly in the early part of the century had exploded by 1850 with the opening of new lands in the West and the all-important discoveries of gold and silver. Westward expansion necessitated this phenomenon. By 1860, it was possible to take a train from Boston to New Orleans, Charleston to Chicago, shortening a trip of weeks to a

\(^1\) As a point of reference, the American Revolution resulted in roughly 50,000 American casualties, roughly the same amount inflicted in three days at Gettysburg.
matter of days. In addition, the telegraph that ran along the railroad lines cut the time for the transference of information, particularly news, to almost instantaneous.

The United States at the outbreak of war was very different than it was only fifty years earlier. This narrowing of horizons opened up many men’s worldviews and increased the overall desire to travel far afield. These factors cannot be ignored when discussing a desire for adventure as a motivation in Civil War soldiers and provides important context when focusing on their writings.

In addition to a shrinking worldview, it is important to include the military inexperience of the United States at the time of the war, and romanticism of the era. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the United States’ army numbered only sixteen-thousand men, and was relegated to border patrol and fighting Natives. When the war began many felt that the war would only last a few months, with casualty rates similar to those experienced during the American Revolution. Few had taken note of the scale, and the cost, of the Napoleonic Wars, or the radical changes in military technology that had occurred since.

Even after the casualty rate began to mount, and no end to the war was in sight, the American public remained insulated from the horrors of a battlefield, or the field hospital. It was only once Matthew Brady presented the first photographs of battlefields to the American public, and men began to return home from service, both wounded and unwounded, that these preconceptions finally began to change. By 1864, these factors contributed to markedly lowered recruitment rates; concurrent with this appears to be the disappearance of adventure as a motivation.
George Van Arsdale, soon after his enlistment, presents an interesting and moving account of the days after the battle of Antietam; his first combat experience. Van Arsdale enlisted on August 8, 1862 and was in combat a month later on September 17 at Antietam. These dates are important because Van Arsdale is still a new recruit by the time of Antietam, and therefore the novelty of army life had not worn off, even after participating in and witnessing the bloodiest single day in United States history.

In a letter to his sister Van Arsdale reports his experience, “the second day after the battle we . . . had to cross the battlefield again and I hope I never may witness such a sight again . . . any one that went for pleasure in the 13th regiment got heated over this many [dead] although I have enjoyed myself very much too.”\(^2\) This polar opposite of emotions, all in one breath, is difficult for the modern reader to come to grips with; however, it provides important insight into Van Arsdale’s motivations.

First is the notion that some in the regiment enlisted “for pleasure.” From this, it is possible to infer that adventure was on the minds of some members of the regiment. Van Arsdale’s classification of “pleasure” can be translated as a desire for excitement, adventure, or a lifestyle change. Second is Van Arsdale’s own statement that despite the horrors of battle, and its aftermath, he is still enjoying himself. It may be difficult to understand why a soldier would enjoy himself in the service; military life was characterized by its discomfort, hardship, and danger. To understand this, context is important. Van Arsdale was a young man, twenty-two years old, and had grown up in

\(^2\) George J. Van Arsdale, to his sister, September 22, 1863, letter to his sister beginning “Dear sister,” Van Arsdale Family papers (Call number: 199), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
Somerset and Newark.\(^3\) For a young man, who spent his entire life in the same general area, the army would have presented a unique opportunity to travel and experience a grand adventure. Van Arsdale is clearly intrigued by the novelties he encounters in his military life, and the carnage of the battlefield is no different. It would appear that Van Arsdale was eager to experience life, and the military provided a way for him to do so.

Edward Albertson also echoes Van Arsdale’s desire for adventure. After the battle of Chancellorsville, Albertson wrote home to his sister explaining, “If you want to know how war looks get a ‘Harpers’ or ‘Frank Leslie’ and you can form some idea how a battle looks. . . . but one wants to be there to appreciate the thing [emphasis original].”\(^4\) In the same letter he laments, “I hardly think that this brigade will ever get in a fight.”\(^5\) From this, it would appear that the adventure of the army and battle enticed Albertson to enlist. His disappointment of not being engaged at Chancellorsville, despite the dangers, is obvious. It is clear that there was a direct correlation in soldiers’ minds between enlisting and battle; and that part of the reason for enlistment was to experience a battle first hand.

Compounding Albertson’s feelings was his brother Nells, who fought, and received a wound at Chancellorsville.\(^6\) Albertson seems to be very jealous of his brother’s

\(^3\) Discharge Paper, dated May 8, 1863, Discharge Paper for George J. Van Arsdale after his death at Chancellorsville, Thirteenth New Jersey Volunteers manuscript collection (Call number: 819), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

\(^4\) Edward H. Albertson, to his sister, May 17, 1863, letter beginning “Dear sister,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; Harpers and Frank Leslie are both “illustrated newspapers” from the era famous for their engravings and photographs.

\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey, passim; I had difficulty determining who “Nells” was with absolute certainty. Based off passing references in Edward Albertson’s letters it would appear Nells was Isaiah N.
military career, and at his wounding, which he fully recovered from and later rejoined his unit. Nells achieved the adventure that Edward craved; he experienced a battle, fought bravery, was wounded, and would receive multiple promotions for his service. In many ways, Nells represented the stereotype of military adventure and Edward’s jealousy indicates how adventure could be a strong motivation for a soldier.

While a desire for adventure may not appear to be a motivator for Civil War soldiers at first, upon further investigation its presence can be revealed. Given the historical context, the shrinking worldview, misconceptions of modern warfare, and romanticism laid the groundwork for adventure to play an active role in motivating soldiers to participate in the war. Without these previously established notions, adventure might have played a much lesser role, or none at all, evidenced by its decline later in the war.

The soldiers’ writing also confirms the importance of adventure in their lives and decision to join the military. Military life, especially combat, provide a complex duality to many soldiers. In Van Arsdale’s letters there is evidence of this; both the excitement of the adventure from joining the army, and the horror and disgust of the battlefield. War is a complex experience, long stretches of extreme boredom punctuated by periods of chaos and terror, but it is nonetheless an exciting and irregular ordeal. Because of this, a desire for adventure must be included in the discussion of soldiers’ initial and sustaining motivations. Adventure may not have been the strongest motivator for many soldiers but it still must be included because of the role it played in many of their lives.

Albertson, Corporal (later 1st Sergeant with a brevet 2nd Lieutenant) in Company D of the 11th New Jersey Regiment. The 11th was heavily engaged at Chancellorsville as part of III (Sickles) Corps.
CHAPTER 5: COMRADES (PART 1)

The final element in the discussion of initial and sustaining motivations is comrades, specifically how other individuals influenced a soldier’s decision to join and remain in the military. This discussion necessitates dividing the comrades’ motivation into two parts, first with regard to initial and sustaining motivations, and second in relation to combat motivations. While there are some similarities, there are key nuances that are important to separate.

In the initial and sustaining motivation category the comrades argument comes in the form of pressure, localized pressure from the civilian populace and pressure from peers, either those who were also enlisting, or already in service. Because recruitment was localized in the Civil War, usually by company, but sometimes entire regiments were raised in the same area, members of the same community would serve in the same unit. The only slight deviation in this was for replacements, but even these men were assigned to units from the same state. Therefore a soldier would be enlisting and serving with friends, relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances; meaning that there was a large amount of social pressure to both join and stay in service.

To begin it is important to verify this interconnectivity within individual units, and the army as a whole. The best example of this is William Bartlett Sr., and his son William Bartlett Jr. The Bartlett’s, both English immigrants and tailors from Newark aged forty-eight and twenty-five respectively, enlisted in the 13th New Jersey during its initial founding. Most interesting are their enlistment dates, William Jr. enlisted on

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1 Enlistment document, dated August 2, 1862, Enlistment document for William Bartlett Jr., Thirteenth New Jersey Volunteers manuscript collection (Call number: 819), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; Enlistment document, dated August 4, 1862, Enlistment document for
August 2, 1862 and his father followed on August 4.\textsuperscript{2} It is difficult to understand why a father would follow his adult son to war, but there may be some evidence in William Sr.’s discharge papers. He was discharged on December 28, 1862 due to “chronic diarrhea, old age, deficiency of teeth, and general disability.”\textsuperscript{3} There is no clear answer to why William Sr. followed his son to war, but it is entirely possible he did so to try to watch over and protect him. Unfortunately for the Bartletts, William Jr. would be killed in action on May 3, 1863 at the battle of Chancellorsville.\textsuperscript{4}

The Bartlett’s story illustrates how close connections could be during the Civil War, both men not only served in the same regiment, but also in the same company.\textsuperscript{5} In the modern military, there are explicit regulations to prevent close relations from serving together. If a father and son could serve together, it is conceivable that other connections, both direct relations and friends and acquaintances, could easily exist.

An example of this is in Joseph Crowell’s memoirs. When Crowell enlists, he does so out of an impulsive, spur of the moment, decision, one he instantly regretted. Despite this he reports, “the sight of so many of my friends and companions around me soon dissipated that feeling.”\textsuperscript{6} While it is not apparent what affect these men had on his

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William Bartlett Sr., Thirteenth New Jersey Volunteers manuscript collection (Call number: 819), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
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\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{3} Discharge document, dated December 28, 1862, Discharge document for William Bartlett Sr., Thirteenth New Jersey Volunteers manuscript collection (Call number: 819), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
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\textsuperscript{4} Record of Officers and Men, 1:642; For William Sr. see 1:641.
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\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{6} Crowell, Young Volunteer, 4.
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enlistment, (they were immediately present after all) it does emphasize the connectivity within Civil War regiments. Crowell also provides insight into the localized recruitment practices and provides a key addition to the comrades discussion. He says, “Not more than two companies were from one place, so that to a great degree the men were strangers to each other. The extend of friendship from previous acquaintance was consequently limited, but nine or ten hundred men who were thus brought together soon, became quite well acquainted with each other.”

Crowell’s supposition that previous acquaintances were limited needs to be placed into context; there were only two companies from Crowell’s hometown of Patterson, yet this amounted to nearly two hundred men: hardly “limiting.” In addition, Crowell’s statement that new friendships and acquaintances formed quickly is also important. Not only would this have influenced sustaining motivations, but also it was highly probably that third party connections at home were likely. Despite Crowell stating that no two companies were from the same place, the geographic distances were not great; the 13th recruited from Newark and the local population centers surrounding the city such as Patterson, Jersey City and the Oranges.

George Van Arsdale corroborates the connectivity between soldiers in his letters. Importantly, however, Van Arsdale illustrates the connectivity between soldiers outside of his parent unit, an important factor when considering the comrades motivation. He writes about trying to secure a pass to visit friends in another nearby regiment.

Additionally he expresses his thankfulness that another friend is finding military life

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7 Ibid., 18.

8 Ibid.

9 George J. Van Arsdale, to his sister, March 27, 1863, letter to his sister beginning “My dear sister,” Van Arsdale Family papers (Call number: 199), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.
comfortable and is “contented” with his decision to enlist.\textsuperscript{10} This highlights how important relations were in other units, and how despite being away at war connections from home were still highly relevant.

Adding to this evidence is Albert Cheney during his time in the 5\textsuperscript{th} New York. In a letter to his sister, he discusses other recruits that he knows from Orange also joining the regiment.\textsuperscript{11} What is important in this example is that Cheney is encountering men he knows in a regiment that was not even raised in his home state. Therefore, it is entirely possible that soldiers would serve with, or encounter during their service, other soldiers whom they knew or had common acquaintances. Despite the Union army swelling to huge proportions during the war, these examples illustrate how small the world could potentially be.

Given the personal connections prevalent throughout the Union army, and the localized nature of recruitments, it is clear that a soldier’s comrades did play a role in both initial and sustaining motivations. Historians have long acknowledged this connectivity, with the “brother against brother” trope finding common usage. Often this discussion falls short of how important comrades were in motivating enlistments. When entire communities enlisted \textit{en mass}, often in the same unit, the pressures to do so must have been overwhelming. This is compounded with the stigma of cowardice or dereliction of duty that could easily be leveled at those who did not enlist and failed to

\textsuperscript{10} George J. Van Arsdale, to his sister, April 23, 1863, letter to his sister beginning “Dear sister,” Van Arsdale Family papers (Call number: 199), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

\textsuperscript{11} Albert O. Cheney, to his sister Mary L. French of West Avon, Connecticut, July 22, 1861, letter beginning “Dear Sister,” Albert O. Cheney Letters (Call number: MG 1534), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
have a good reason not to do so. In many ways the comrades motivation is closely tied to the discussion of the cause, particularly patriotism.

Comrades also directly influenced a soldier’s decision to stay in the service. The Civil War was plagued with desertions, more so than any other American conflict. Many factors influenced this; an “unprofessional” volunteer army, inadequate military discipline, and poor conditions and pay. Because of this, it is important to include the sustaining influence of comrades on Civil War soldiers. When a soldier served with people who knew him, and thus knew his friends and relations at home, the home front would have received word of any dereliction of duty swiftly. This could have potentially dire consequences for any individual.¹²

Important to this discussion is the fact that many deserters returned to service after a respite. Furloughs were notoriously difficult to secure, especially as the war progressed (ironically due to the desertion issues), and some soldiers simply needed a break from military life. There was no conception of “R&R” or rotating units away from the front that exist now in the modern army, instead Civil War units could expect constant activity during their entire term of enlistment. In some of these cases, it is possible that pressure from those at home motivated deserters to return to service.

As can be seen from the sources the connectivity between soldiers and the importance of comrades is readily apparent. Unfortunately, however, explicit examples of soldiers being directly motivated to enlist or stay in the service are difficulty to come by. This is largely due to the latent nature of the comrades motivation. While many soldiers

¹² I should note that there was no real system in place for catching deserters (once they escaped the immediate location of the army) so the threat of prosecution was relatively low. If caught by the military, however, the penalty of death could be imposed.
were motivated by their comrades few felt it necessary, and logically so, to write home about the influence. This does not mean it did not exist, and tantalizing glimpses surface in the primary sources that survive. The Bartletts are prime examples of being able to draw inferences, but not absolutely conclusive facts, from clear examples of interconnectivity between comrades in the Union army. Ultimately, comrades must be included as a strong initial and sustaining motivation for Union soldiers, despite the shortcomings of the source material.
PART II: COMBAT MOTIVATIONS

CHAPTER 6: COMRADES (PART 2)

Combat, and the motivations that influence it, proves to be a highly complex and difficult subject to investigate. Many soldiers were unable, or unwilling, to articulate their experiences in combat. Because of this, sources can be somewhat difficult to uncover. Nevertheless, there is evidence of multiple motivations that compelled Civil War soldiers to risk life and limb by participating in combat. It is even difficult for those who have not experienced combat to relate or understand the experiences of Civil War soldiers.

Compounding this is the extreme violence and carnage of a Civil War battlefield; an experience that none today, even combat veterans, could relate to.

The Civil War battlefield was a veritable hell on earth. A combination of modern technology, antiquated tactics, inexperienced commanders, and large armies produced a terrifyingly costly conflict. Placing this into context is important to understanding combat motivations. Tactically the Civil War was fought in 1800; a general from the Napoleonic Wars, or even the American Revolution, would have recognized many of the battlefield strategies employed. Technologically, however, the war was fought in 1900. Rifled artillery was constrained only by line of sight, and exploding shrapnel shells wreaked havoc on close-order infantry formations. In the American Revolution the effective range of a standard issue Brown Bess musket was fifty to one-hundred yards, in the Civil War a model 1861 Springfield rifle could accurately hit a target at four hundred yards. The addition of the Minié ball increased accuracy and shattered bone on impact, resulting in the huge numbers of amputations performed during the war.
This combination of tactics and weapons produced casualties on a massive scale, one that both the North and South were ill prepared to deal with. The system for collecting wounded and burying dead was *ad hoc* at best; resulting in wounded lying where the fell for days, and the dead for weeks. Combined with this was the shattered materiel of war that also littered the battlefield. Estimates show that for every man killed or wounded six horses also fell victim. Taken all together a Civil War battle resulted in destruction on an unprecedented scale.

Also important to understand is the sheer scale of the conflict. To do so the 13th New Jersey again provides an excellent example. At the battle of Antietam, which took place a month after the 13th was formed, the Union army massed 75,000 men around the small town of Sharpsburg, Maryland (not all would be engaged). The population of Newark, the largest city in the state, was only 71,941 men, women, and children in 1860.\(^1\) Adding the roughly 40,000 Confederates to the equation makes this comparison that much more striking. Many of the men in the Union army had never experience so many people in the same place at the same time; and Antietam was not the largest battle by far. Considering that these men were gathered for the explicit purpose of killing each other proves daunting. Taken as a whole it is understandable why both contemporaries and modern historians have difficulty defining combat in the Civil War.

Comrades provided the largest, and most immediate, source of motivation in combat. The old adage “fighting for the man next to you” is highly applicable to the Civil War. Close order drill and localized recruitment meant that the man next to you was not a stranger. Of all the sources, Joseph Crowell presents the only consistent and detailed

\(^1\) 1860 Census, 315.
account of combat. He also is sure to note when friends and comrades were killed or wounded.

The first of these is both the best example and most moving. Captain Hugh Irish, commander of Company K, 13th New Jersey, who has been previously discussed, was the first battlefield death that Crowell witnessed directly. He was also a friend. Crowell writes, “And thus died one of the bravest, kindest-hearted men that ever lived. Thus died my old friend, my old employer.” 2 So grievous was the loss of Captain Irish to the men of the 13th that, years later, when designing their monument for the Antietam battlefield they placed his likeness atop it. 3 The death of Irish seems to be particularly jarring for Crowell; it can be argued that a combination of Irish being the first man he saw killed and the relationship between the two caused this.

Crowell also relates the deaths or wounding of his other friends and acquaintances, although not with the degree of gravity he ascribes Irish. 4 In addition, Crowell also dutifully chronicles the stories of his other friends and comrades. It should be noted that Crowell is writing years after the fact, and still does his best to remember the men he fought with, especially those killed and wounded. This highlights the importance of comrades to the Civil War soldier.

In addition, Crowell also points out the reciprocal side of the comrades motivation. If a soldier failed to do their duty, their comrades would look upon them with disdain. This could be shirking, desertion, or simple cowardice. There was a great expectation

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2 Crowell, Young Volunteer, 122.

3 Irish also had his picture taken before he left for the war. It is particularly haunting to see his youth (he was 30) and military bearing. For those interested a simple Google search should easily produce it.

4 Crowell, Young Volunteer, 124, 386-387.
among Civil War soldiers that risk should be shared equally; if the members of the unit were still in the fight then all members were expected to stand with their comrades.

Crowell illustrates this sentiment in his memoir, he says:

The worst penalty suffered by a deserter was what might be called the social ostracism to which he was subjected on his return to his regiment. He was ignored, disrespected, and treated with contempt generally in a way that was unbearable. . . . If I deserted I would a thousand times rather be shot than go back to the regiment.5

Social justice, and to a certain degree Groupthink, were important elements in Civil War discipline. More important here is the point that a deserter would be failing in his duty to his comrades; no mentions of military law or “the cause” are made, only his fellow soldiers.

Supporting this is Crowell’s description of John Ick’s (Icke) conduct at the battle of Antietam.6 Ick seemingly shirked during the morning engagement, running off from the regiment and hiding behind a tree.7 Sergeant Henry (Hank) Van Orden found Ick and “gave him a kick and told him to come back to the company. Ick said that he had had enough of the slaughter-house business and was going home. But Hank made him come along.”8 Continuing the episode Crowell inquired as to whether or not he participated in the rest of the day’s fighting to which was replied, “Yes . . . he stood up to the rack like a major. He seemed to have got over his panic of the morning.”9 This is a clear example of

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5 Crowell, Young Volunteer, 92.

6 I should note that Crowell’s spelling of John Ick is incorrect. The Record of Officers and Men reports his last name as Icke. I have preserved the spelling as Crowell presents it.

7 Crowell, Young Volunteer, 131-132.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.
a comrade, quite literally by means of his boot, encouraging a fellow soldier into battle. Ick was not ostracized for his behavior, it was his first combat after all, but it is an important piece of evidence for how comrades could motivate soldiers in combat.

In combat, this produced a dedication and camaraderie that bound men together. Ultimately, this camaraderie played a crucial role in keeping men in the ranks and motivated them to take the ultimate risk of combat. Like the initial and sustaining version of the comrades motivation this could be both positive and negative. On the positive side, comrades gave soldiers an immediate source of inspiration and dedication. In addition, unit cohesiveness and morale helped keep men in the ranks. On the negative side of the discussion, dereliction of duty would have met with consternation and ostracism from a soldier’s comrades. Combined comrades played a major role in motivating soldiers in combat, perhaps more so, and in a more nuanced way, than has been previously considered.
CHAPTER 7: PERSONAL REASONS

In addition to comrades, many soldiers were motivated by personal reasons in combat, which could include a wide range of subcategories. Similar to its counterpart in the initial and sustaining classification, a soldier’s own personal interest could play a role in motivating him into battle. There are three key areas within this motivation: the first being a desire for personal advancement through distinction on the battlefield, or because of one’s own convictions, the second concerns survival and self-preservation, and the third involves deterrence and a fear of reprisal.

Like the discussion above in Chapter 3 a soldier who distinguished himself in the military, especially in combat, could expect increased social standing and distinction. For many this led them to try to achieve heroics or distinction in combat, often taking excessive risk in the process. At times this motivation was deliberate and at others was unintentional, and a by-product of unintended actions.

A clear example of how distinguishing one-self in combat could be a strong motivation comes from Captain Beardsley’s papers. Division command asks Beardsley for, and provides, a “list of officers and men worthy of favorable mention for coolness and efficiency on the battlefield of Chancellorsville.”¹ Beardsley lists seventeen officers and men (of which now Second Lieutenant Herber Wells is one) for commendation. From this, it is possible to extrapolate that some of these men, both intentionally and unintentionally, distinguished themselves for the expressed purpose of personal

¹ Captain George Beardsley, May 13, 1863, letter complying with circular from division headquarters, Thirteenth New Jersey Volunteers manuscript collection (Call number: 819), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
advancement. At the very least, it shows that personal gain and distinction was a possible motivational force for soldiers.

Heroism provides a difficult element in the personal gain motivational category. It would be difficult to find the individual who performed their heroic actions for the explicit purpose of bettering their own lot, although rare cases do exist, however it is still an element that must be considered. Because of the distinction given to heroic actions by comrades and the public, while many men did not perform their actions for the explicit purpose of personal gain, they did accept the distinction and accolades that followed.

Edward Albertson’s brother Nells is a good example of this. From Edward’s letters it is clear that Nells served bravely at the battle of Chancellorsville, and received a wound in the leg as a result. Edward is clearly jealous of his brother’s experience and prominence, yet there is potentially more behind his comments. After Chancellorsville, Nells’ carrier seems to have taken off. A Corporal at Chancellorsville in May of 1863, he was promoted to Sergeant in September of 1864, then 1st Sergeant in January of 1865, and ended the war with a brevet Second Lieutenant’s commission. It is possible that Nells stepped into the role earned at Chancellorsville, embracing his heroic status and using it to his advantage.

Survival and self-interest is an important element in the personal motivation category. Often ignored, it is important to remember that, in combat, soldiers were fundamentally motivated to survive. This may not have caused a soldier to participate in

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2 Edward H. Albertson, to his sister, May 17, 1863, letter beginning “Dear sister,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; Edward H. Albertson, to unknown recipient, May 5, 1863, letter beginning “I thought that I would note down a few incidents,” Albertson Family (Warren County) collection (Call number: MG 691), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

3 Record of Officers and Men, 1:555.
combat, but certainly kept many in the ranks. In essence, this argues that a soldier would have considered that his best chance for survival was to remain with his unit and rely on himself, and his comrades. The best way to ensure self-preservation is to actively eliminate potential threats and avoid extreme hazards.

The desire for self-preservation and survival can result in two extremes, heroism and cowardice. In some cases, extreme danger can result in an individual resorting to reckless action, what observers identify as heroism, in order to protect themselves. Conversely, the dangers of combat can also prove to be too harrowing for an individual, and result in their decision to remove themselves from the situation, what the military classifies as desertion. In the Civil War both extremes were frequent occurrences, and the secondary source material is full of examples.

Somewhat related to the desire for self-preservation is the peculiar desire to participate in a battle and experience combat. This is similar to the desire for adventure discussed in Chapter Four, yet can be applied specifically to combat. The preceding chapter shows that many Civil War soldiers actually wanted to experience combat, or “see the elephant” as the contemporary idiom went, regardless of the dangers.4 To a civilian reader this may seem incredibly strange, yet is consistent for soldiers across conflicts. The desire to participate in combat can be seen as the pinnacle purpose of joining the military in many soldiers’ eyes and should be remembered and included in soldiers’ motivations.

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4 The phrase “seeing the elephant” seems to have come to the United States by way of Great Britain the early Nineteenth Century. By the Civil War it was quite common and would have been easily recognized.
Deterrents, specifically the Articles of War and Lieber Code (later the Uniform Code of Military Justice), are important to include in the overall discussion of combat motivations and fit best, though not perfectly, under the category of personal reasons. Every army employs deterrents to ensure its soldiers follow orders and fight. In the Civil War, this manifested, as in many other conflicts, in strict military discipline regarding dereliction of duty and desertion. If a soldier failed to follow orders in combat, they were liable to face Courts Martial, and could face the death penalty. While many convicted deserters received pardons, or avoided execution, some misfortunate soldiers did face the firing squad.

Joseph Crowell’s memoir provides another example of military law used as a deterrent. Crowell, and his entire division, were forced to watch the execution of three deserters, including a man from his own regiment. The effect of watching these executions is clear in Crowell’s writing, as well as the deterrent they provided to his fellow soldiers. While positive personal reasons undoubtedly contributed to soldiers’ combat motivations, these examples show that deterrence can be an important element in motivating soldiers to face combat.

Personal reasons prove to be an elusive combat motivation for the Civil War soldier, despite this, however, they remain important to the overall discussion of motivations. Personal reasons clearly influenced soldiers in combat, yet they do not record or report this in their writings with any frequency. By making inferences from

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5 The Lieber Code is also known as the “Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field” and was enacted in 1863.

6 Crowell, Young Volunteer, 224-236; for a more detailed discussion of desertions see Chapter 8.

7 Ibid.
other examples, it is clear that personal gain and self-interest or survival all played a role in motivating a soldier. In addition, the deterrent factor is important to include in this discussion, and also played a role in a soldier’s personal reasons for fighting. Including these elements is critical to providing insight into the shielded realm of combat.
CHAPTER 8: DESERTIONS

Similar to the discussion of personal reasons as combat motivations is the investigation of desertions. When a soldier decided to desert the service it represented the ultimate antithesis of his motivations; the breaking point at which the motivational forces failed to maintain a desire to stay in the service. Ultimately, this is often directly related to combat, or more specifically to the risks involved with military service. In the Civil War, desertion was endemic, affecting every unit in every theater throughout the war. Civil War desertions can be broken into two categories, those in close proximity to combat, and those that are further removed.

Many desertions occurred immediately before, during, or after combat. This proximity to combat indicates a clear correlation between the soldier’s decision to abandon the military and the rigors and stress of combat. The records show there is a clear increase in desertions surrounding combat, especially major battles. Supporting this are the records of the 13\textsuperscript{th} New Jersey surrounding the battle of Antietam. Because the 13\textsuperscript{th} was a newly recruited regiment its members had not experienced combat before the battle, thus it provides a good example of combat directly influencing desertions.

On September 17, 1862, the day of the battle, twelve men deserted from the ranks of the 13\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{1} In the following months (until January 1, 1862) an additional thirty-three men would also desert.\textsuperscript{2} These forty-five men represent a quarter of the total desertions, 178, suffered by the regiment.\textsuperscript{3} Given these numbers, it is clear that the battle of Antietam

\textsuperscript{1} Record of Officers and Men, passim 1:542-661.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 1:661.
represented a significant event that caused a disproportionate number of desertions in the newly formed regiment. When compared to the other significant action that the regiment was involved in, Chancellorsville, there is clearly far fewer desertions when compared to Antietam. From this, it is clear that many desertions occurred because of the imminent danger of combat, or because of combat. This indicates the strength of combat as a demotivational force for the Civil War soldier.

Other desertions occurred more distantly from combat, yet these are still relevant to the overall discussion. While combat did not influence these desertions as much as their counterparts, combat still played a role in the decision to desert. Without the threat of combat looming desertion rates were markedly lower, yet still present. Other forces such as a desire to return home, disenfranchisement with military life, length of service, or the changing cause all could have influenced a soldier. In addition, it appears that many soldiers deserted after hospital stays for wounds or illness, adding another factor into the growing list. These types of desertions seem to occur after a longer length of time in the service, and after a soldier had seen action. Because of this combat must have some degree of influence, even if it was not the strongest.

Ultimately, combat was a foreign experience to every soldier, one that could not be explained or rationalized without experiencing it. Because of this combat provides the greatest stress to a soldier’s motivations and for some this stress proved greater than their motivations. Combat proves to be such a strong force that even its potential is enough to cause some soldiers to desert, even before experiencing it. When discussing motivations

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4 Record of Officers and Men, passim 1:542-661.

5 Hospitals seem to also have been easy places to desert from because of the laxity in security. Many soldiers were able to desert *en route* from the hospital to their unit.
it must be remembered that there are two sides in action: positive motivations and negative motivations. While this paper predominantly discusses positive motivations, it is important to remember this balance. Because of this, desertion rates function as a barometer for how strong a soldier’s positive motivations are by illustrating how a desire to serve had eroded to the point where a soldier decided to remove himself from the service.
CHAPTER 9: RELIGION

The influence of religion on Civil War soldiers is often overlooked because of its complexity and its potential divisiveness. Religion in the 1860s was quite different than it is today. In many cases, it was less organized and formalized yet more widely accepted. The vast majority of Civil War soldiers were religious, even if they did not formally ascribe to one denomination or attend regular services. Reinforcing this notion is the war occurring on the heels of the Second Great Awakening, adding even greater strength to soldiers’ religiosity.

Indicative of this new religiosity are two famous, yet somewhat opposite, sources: the Battle Hymn of the Republic and Abraham Lincoln. The Battle Hymn of the Republic, set to the tune of the abolitionist anthem John Brown’s Body in late 1861, is arguably the most popular song of the Civil War Era and reflects the religious nature of the nation. The song contains such verses as:

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps
His day is marching on.¹

The combination of martial themes with the religious exemplifies the duality present throughout the war.

Abraham Lincoln also illustrates the religiousness of the period in many of his speeches, yet the most pertinent is his Second Inaugural Address. The address, delivered on March 4, 1865 catches the feelings of a nation after four years of bloody war. Lincoln’s lengthy discussion of the Divine highlights the paradox of the war:

¹ Julia Ward Howe, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* (verse two).
Both [sides] read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. . . . Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."  

It is clear from Lincoln’s words, and the length he devotes to the subject, that religion was a key factor throughout the war. Because of the death and carnage produced by the war, many turned to religion to explain why such things occurred. This is indicative of the pragmatic notion that “God wills it” pervasive in both the nation and soldiers. For a soldier divine will plays an important role in their combat motivations, while also influencing their initial and sustaining motivations. The above examples of the strength of religion during the war support this.

There are a few examples of the religious fervor of Civil War soldiers in the primary source material. Charles Hopkins received a Bible soon after he enlisted and pledged to “read it at every opportunity.”  

George Vanarsdale’s personal testament was one of the few items recovered from his body after his mortal wounding at Chancellorsville. These examples show how important the Bible was to Civil War

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2 Abraham Lincoln, *Second Inaugural Address*.

3 Charles Hopkins, May 4, 1861, Charles A. Hopkins papers (Call number: 165), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

4 George A. Beardsley [Cpt. commanding Co. D, 13th NJ], to William H. Van Arsdale, May 15, 1863, letter from George Van Arsdale’s company commander to his brother reporting his death [copy of original], Van Arsdale Family papers (Call number: 199), Special Collections, Rutgers University Archives, Archibald S. Alexander Library, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; Theodore R.
soldiers and their families; many times a soldier’s personal Bible was one of the few items that made it home, even when his body did not. Albert Cheney also provides insight into religion during the war when he attends church in Baltimore soon after enlisting. The experience proved disappointing, however, when he discovered the congregation was “most all secessionists.”\(^5\) These examples clearly show how important religion was to Civil War soldiers. There is another, more explicit, example of religiousness in Civil War soldiers in Franklin Jones.

Franklin Jones seems to have been one of the more religious soldiers, and his writings provide a critical insight into religion during the war. Jones carried his personal pocket Bible, presented to him by his sister Elizabeth in 1845, with him up until his death in 1865.\(^6\) In addition, his wife sent him a book of verses, he responded to her by writing, “darling I found great pleasure in reading that book you gave to me yesterday. I opened at the chapter of first Corinthians and read until my eyes ached.”\(^7\) This statement clearly shows how important religion was to Jones and the joy he found in reading scripture. Combined with his Bible, which he carried for twenty years, it is clear that religion played an important part of Jones’ life.

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\(^5\) Albert O. Cheney, to his sister, September 6, 1861, letter beginning “Dear Sister,” Albert O. Cheney Letters (Call number: MG 1534), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

\(^6\) Franklin Jones personal Bible, Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; Franklin Jones death certificate enumerating his possessions at time of death, Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey; Jones’ Bible still survives today and can be found in his collection in the New Jersey Historical Society.

\(^7\) Franklin Jones, to his wife, November 30, 1864, letter beginning “dear wife,” Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
In terms of combat motivations, religion plays a complicated role. A soldier’s devoutness often instilled a degree of pragmatism towards combat framed in the language of divine will. For many, this meant that the fear and danger of combat were lessened because it was out of the control of the individual. Many of the soldiers’ writings refer to this divine will, and how they avoided death and injury through the will of God. This pragmatism is important to remember when considering Civil War soldiers’ combat motivations. Soldiers would be more willing to participate in combat because divine will decided their fate according to a divine plan.

The concept of death should also be included in a discussion of religion as a combat motivation. Death was much more familiar and intimate to the Civil War soldier than to the modern observer. Higher mortality and illness rates resulted in an exposure to death and suffering that was much greater than today. This familiarity with death made its acceptance easier for Civil War soldiers. Many contemporary sources reference death as something similar to an “eternal sleep,” couching it in peaceful and benign terms. Death in combat was no different, with the soldier often portrayed as simply “falling asleep.” The letter informing Franklin Jones’ wife of his death provides a clear example of this. In the letter, a Reverend Bancroft writes that he “found him falling gently asleep just as a child.”

It is highly unlikely that Jones death from chronic dysentery was as reported yet this language is still employed to lessen the impact. This sentiment combined with strong religious devotion also helped provide a motivation to engage in combat.

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8 Rev. Theodore Bancroft, to Ruhamah Jones, May 19, 1865, letter from the priest who administered Last Rights to Franklin Jones to his wife informing her of his death, letter beginning “Mrs. Franklin Jones,” Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.
Religious pragmatism played an integral role in motivating soldiers in combat. The widespread religious sentiment present in the Nineteenth Century combined with this pragmatism and a romanticized and desensitized conceptualization of death and suffering to contribute to motivating Civil War soldiers. The difficulty in identifying a soldier’s religious convictions and its connotations make it an avoided subject, yet it is clearly an important element in the discussion of motivations. While few soldiers used religion as the primary motivation in combat, despite many references to the war as an “abolitionist crusade,” religion does latently influence a soldier’s decisions. Because of the importance of religion during the Civil War, it is important to evaluate its impact on individual soldiers.
“The cause” as a combat motivation functions somewhat differently than its counterpart in the initial and sustaining motivational category. In combat, the broader, more abstract, causes give way to more simple, tangible, concepts. Primarily this revolves around a general belief in the cause that is strong enough to fight for. In addition, a hatred of the enemy is always an important element in combat. Combined, these two elements provide the foundation for a soldier’s combat motivation.

Like the other combat motivations, the cause can be difficult to identify in Civil War soldiers’ writings. Many write of how they are willing to give their lives for their country, echoing the sentiment of Horace’s timeless phrase: *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. This sentiment is applicable to any version of the cause, from abolition to preservation of the Union. Understanding this is critical because it provides a connection between a soldier’s initial and sustaining motivations and his combat motivations. Ultimately, when a soldier decides to join the military they are expressing their willingness to die for the cause that motivated them.

Civil War soldiers saw combat as part of their patriotic duty. Separating combat from military service would have been strange to them. Because of this many of the same motivations present in the initial and sustaining discussion can also be applied to combat. When enlisting, soldiers in the Civil War knew that they would face combat, their willingness to enlist echoes a willingness to experience combat.

In combat, a soldier’s devotion to the cause can therefore be directly related to their decision to participate. While it may be difficult to find explicit evidence of the cause motivating a soldier beyond their passing reference to “die for their country,” or in
a “good cause,” this relationship can be used as inferred evidence. Therefore, the cause proves to be a highly important motivator for the Civil War soldier, and one that seems to have formed the foundation of the combat motivations. There is another aspect of the cause that is also important to include: the conceptualization of the enemy.

Hatred, or dehumanization, of the enemy is present in any war and is used to facilitate combat motivations. In the Civil War, this is no different, yet there are some key differences that need to be included. The nature of a civil war is the first of these, specifically that both sides shared a common history, society, language, and beliefs. This made instilling a hatred of the enemy problematic because of this familiarity. There are many examples of fraternization between soldiers, shared acts of compassion, and remaining vestiges of their common kinship; however this is not unique to the Civil War and can be found in many, but not all, wars. Because of this a concept of a “brothers war” or that the opponent was “never quite the enemy” have prevailed in the historiography. In many cases this seems to be overstated and a product of the Lost Cause mentality and Revisionist History. While there was a shared sense of camaraderie between the belligerents, they were still willing to kill each other on a massive scale.

In the Civil War, hatred of the enemy was present, although not the burning hatred seen in the Pacific theater of World War Two or in the Vietnam War. Throughout the war Northern soldiers conceptualized Southern soldiers as “traitors” and “rebels.” In doing so, they conceptualized enemy soldiers as a hated enemy, subject to the penalty of death for their crimes against the nation. This created an unequal relationship; whereas Northern men were soldiers, Southerners were rebels and traitors. Doing so provided justification, and lessened the stigma, of killing the enemy.
An example of this can be seen in Franklin Jones’ letter where he states that “the Johns though that they would surprise us but they met a warm reception.” ¹ This statement lacks the burning hatred seen in other conflicts yet still shows a clear disdain for the enemy and a willingness to kill. Continuing this trend is Albert Cheney who writes, “the opinion is that the rebels will attempt to make a break through our lines, if they do it will be a sorry day for them.” ² Again, this echoes the passive sentiments seen in Jones’ writing. Both men are willing to do what is necessary, specifically killing the enemy, in order to win the war. A latent hatred of the enemy, for starting the war and crimes against the nation, is clear.

Including a hatred of the enemy as a combat motivation is critical to the overall discussion. Despite many historians framing the Civil War as a war “between friends” or a “brother’s war” it is important to consider that in combat these men were still attempting, and willing, to kill each other. A certain level of hatred must be present in combat in order to willingly kill another human being; the Civil War is no different. From the soldiers’ writings this willingness to kill the enemy, and a certain degree of hatred for them, is apparent. Combined with fighting for the cause these elements provide an important element of a soldier’s combat motivations.

¹ Franklin Jones, to his family, February 3, 1865, letter beginning “my dear wife and children,” Franklin Jones collection (Call number: MG 373), New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey.

CONCLUSION

The Civil War soldier, like any human being, proves to be a highly complex individual. A combination of initial, sustaining, and combat motivations, some stronger than others, are uniquely present in each soldier. These motivations directly influenced each soldier’s decision to enlist, stay in the military, and risk combat. It is important to increase the complexity of the discussion surrounding soldiers’ motivations. In order to do so a more localized approach is more suitable than the traditional, more general, discussions. Focusing on New Jersey produces a unique, and more nuanced, investigation of Civil War soldiers. In doing so, it is possible to see trends that are both unique to the state and broadly applicable.

Traditionally the two strongest motivations, and often the only motivations discussed, were “the cause” and comrades, however, there are more elements that must be considered in the discussion of motivations. In addition, clearly defining which cause influenced the soldier is critically important. The American Civil War presents a unique difficulty in this regard because of the shifting nature of the cause throughout the war.

The cause presents one of the strongest motivations for a Civil War soldier across all three categories of initial, sustaining, and combat motivations. For soldiers in New Jersey the cause seems to be predominated by a desire to serve their country and preserve the Union. Many saw it as their patriotic duty and obligation to serve. Even after the Emancipation Proclamation, patriotism and the preservation of the Union prove to be the prevailing motivation.

New Jersey soldiers are conspicuously silent about abolition once it became an explicit war aim. This could be evidence of latent Northern racism, or political
ambivalence. Despite this, however, many were still willing to serve in the U.S.C.T., or alongside Black soldiers. This leaves the issue of New Jersey soldiers’ opinions on race somewhat ambiguous and in need of a more in-depth investigation.

Comrades present the most tangible motivational evidence, and spans the full spectrum of initial, sustaining, and combat categories. This discussion expands comrades beyond the immediate combat companions of a soldier, to include friends, family, and acquaintances on the home front. These people were integral in motivating a Civil War soldier. Pressure, both from fellow enlistees and soldiers and civilians, helped entice enlistees, as well as keep soldiers in the service. In addition “fighting for the man next to you” also was integral to Civil War soldiers’ combat motivations. Comrades, as a motivation, transcends political, social, or economic influences. The result is a widely influential motivation.

Economics also played an important role in motivating soldiers from New Jersey, more so than in other states. High enlistment bounties, economic concerns, and the soldiers’ own testimonials all illustrate this. It is clear that the economic benefits of enlistment must outweigh the soldier’s absence and loss of income. While many soldiers were enticed by the pay and bounties others limited, or excluded, their service because of the economic hardships that would result from their enlistment. In addition, by factoring together base pay, enlistment bounties, state bonuses and other benefits the total amount is much closer to the average wage; debunking the myth that Civil War soldiers received poor pay. Furthermore, the notion that slow military pay was detrimental to initial and sustaining motivations must be reevaluated. It is clear that economics played an important role in motivation Civil War soldiers.
A soldier’s own personal gain is also a critical motivator, both in initial and sustaining, as well as combat motivations. During the Civil War, the military was an ideal place to advance one's social or political standing. This could be attained through promotion or distinguished service. While combat was the primary way for a soldier to achieve this distinction, there were other ways for soldiers to advance themselves. Advocating, or applying, for promotion, usually through political channels, was common throughout the war. Because of this, personal advancement clearly motivated soldiers. While this was not as strong of a motivation as the cause, comrades, or economics it is an important element to include in a discussion of motivations.

Adventure is often overlooked as a motivation, yet must be included in the list of motivations. In any war a desire for experiences and a change from the mundane draws young men to military service; the Civil War was no different. The soldiers’ own writings show how the military was seen as an exciting adventure. Combat was also an exciting prospect for the Civil War soldier, despite the threat it posed. The desire for adventure is an important subordinate element within the larger discussion of motivations.

Finally, religion is another important, yet often overlooked, motivation. The Nineteenth Century saw an evangelical revival that resulted in the Second Great Awakening. This reflected itself in the soldiers of the American Civil War. The result was a level of pragmatism that facilitated soldiers’ combat motivations. This pragmatism is also evident in the notion that the war was divine retribution for the sins of slavery. In addition, the abolitionist cause was often couched in the rhetoric of a crusade, increasing the influence of religion in the war. Lincoln’s Second Inaugural is, perhaps, the most
overt example of this religiosity and exemplifies how religion should be included in the overall narrative of the war.

It is clear that a wide range of initial, sustaining, and combat motivations influenced each Civil War soldier. In New Jersey the cause, specifically the preservation of the Union, and comrades present the strongest of the motivations across all three categories. Economics also features prominently in soldiers’ decision-making. Subordinate to these three are personal reasons, a desire for adventure, and religion. While each soldier was influenced by different motivations, with different strengths, this general hierarchy is still apparent.

Because of the diversity present within the United States, combining all soldiers into one general discussion proves problematic. Narrowing the scope to the state level helps provide a more complex study of the Civil War soldier. New Jersey is of particular interest because of the diversity present throughout the state, which is reflected in the soldiers. While many of the motivations could be applied across the Union, each locality is subject to different emphasis, by using a localized approach this emphasis can be identified and explored. Creating a more detailed, local, account of Civil War soldiers is critical to understanding the larger narrative of the war.

New Jersey makes up only a small part of a much larger Union. This investigation has revealed some key insights into both the soldier from New Jersey and the larger, general, discussion of Civil War soldiers. It has also revealed, however, areas in need of further investigation. While this paper has provided a survey of New Jersey soldiers, it was unable to devote great detail to specific areas.
First and foremost of these is the issue of slavery within the state. While it is clear that New Jersey soldiers did not give the issues of slavery and emancipation much thought, it is critical to understand why this happened in greater detail. Because of New Jersey’s peculiar relationship with slavery, it is important to understand how the issues of slavery, emancipation, race and equality functioned in the North. Adding complexity to one of the seminal issues in all of United States history, slavery, is critical to understanding not only the Civil War, but also all of American history. Concurrent with this discussion is the role of Black soldiers in the state, while this paper has revealed some levels of connection between White New Jersey soldiers and the U.S.C.T. it did not delve into the thousands of Black soldiers from the state. Understanding Black soldiers motivations would add the requisite diversity needed to create a full narrative of the Civil War.

Secondly is the investigation of immigrants in the Union army, specifically the Irish and Germans that made up large portions of the Union forces. Understanding what motivated these men to fight for a foreign flag and cause is critically important to fully understanding the Civil War. In New Jersey there seems to have been a strong German, English, and Irish presence within the state’s ranks. It is unclear whether these immigrants were new arrivals or longtime residents. By investigating the immigrant question and understanding their motivations, it is possible to achieve a greater understanding of soldiers’ motivations. If we can discern why a foreigner would be willing to fight in an American civil war we can thereby better understand why citizens would participate.
Thirdly is the larger question of Military History theory. While better understanding the soldier is necessary throughout the discipline of Military History the question of approach arises. The localized approach used in this paper, and that should be applied throughout Civil War Era studies, may prove more difficult when applied to other conflicts. In wars that do not employ localized recruitment it is difficult to narrow the soldiers into more manageable categories to avoid overgeneralization. Developing a means to reveal the voice of the common soldier in conflicts such as the World Wars remains to be seen, yet is no less important that the discussion of Civil War soldiers. It is critical to include the soldier’s voice in the future of military history.

The larger implication of this discussion is that the soldier becomes a far more complex individual. This complexity is necessary because it includes the all-important element of human nature. Too often soldiers are treated as robotic killing machines, devoid of human emotions and motives. In addition, wars are seen as political struggles with profound causes. We cannot forget that without the soldier’s participation wars become very difficult, if not impossible, to carry out. Because of this, understanding why soldiers, even those soldiers who were drafted, participated produces one of the clearest insights into the nature of war itself.

The American Civil War is the greatest crucible experienced by the United States, yet is only one of many brutal and bloody conflicts visited upon humanity. Understanding the Civil War is critical to understanding American history, but understanding the soldier is critical to understanding history in its entirety. The difficulty of understanding war, and the soldier, should not discourage its study, but should instead encourage it. Perhaps
Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., himself a Union veteran, can provide the best closing for this overall discussion of soldiers when he says:

As for us, our days of combat are over. Our Swords are rust. Our guns will thunder no more. The vultures that once wheeled over our heads must be buried with their prey. Whatever of glory must be won in the council or the closet, never again in the field. I do not repine. We have shared the incommunicable experiences of war; we have felt, we still feel, the passion of life to its top.¹

¹ Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., “The Soldier’s Faith” (Memorial Day address), May 30 1895.
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