# LOYAL TO COMMERCE?:

# MERCHANTS AND THE OCCUPATION OF EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA, 1862-1865

by

Noah S. Shuler

May, 2021

Director of Thesis: Gerald J. Prokopowicz, PhD

Major Department: History

This thesis comparatively analyzes the experiences and loyalties of merchants in the North Carolina towns of New Bern and Williamston during the American Civil War through the viewpoint of two individual merchants: Jacob Gooding Sr. and Cushing Biggs Hassell. The proximity of Federal occupation drastically affected the economic conditions that merchants experienced, but ultimately had little negative effect on merchant loyalties in the region. New Bern was occupied directly by Federal forced from 1862 to 1865, while Williamston remained on the frontier of Confederate territory but was plagued by repeated Federal raids. The distinctive identity, ideology, and culture of the Southern merchant class caused Confederate loyalty to prevail among merchants like Hassell and Gooding in both towns despite the promise of improved commercial self-interest offered by Federal authorities in New Bern or the destruction and damage caused by Federal raids in Williamston.

# LOYAL TO COMMERCE?:

# MERCHANTS AND THE OCCUPATION OF EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA, 1862-1865

A Thesis

Presented To the Faculty of the Department of History

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in History

by

Noah S. Shuler

May, 2021

LOYAL TO COMMERCE?:

MERCHANTS AND THE OCCUPATION OF EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA, 1862-1865

By

Noah S. Shuler

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: _____

Gerald J. Prokopowicz, JD, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____

Karin L. Zipf, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____

Donald H. Parkerson, PhD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY: _____

Christopher A. Oakley, PhD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL: _____

Paul J. Gemperline, PhD

***To Dr. D***

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. Wade G. Dudley, who encouraged me to begin this project, offered invaluable feedback, was an original committee member, and supported my historical endeavors at every turn. His immense legacy that he left to countless historians and ECU students will not soon be forgotten. It is my honor to have called him not only a mentor, but a friend.

**Acknowledgements**

In a project of this scope, there are so many people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Though my memory and space may fail me here, I thank everyone who supported me over the past several years as I completed this project.

I first thank my advisor, Dr. Gerald Prokopowicz for his invaluable advice in the planning and execution of this thesis, his mentorship, and his kind approach to teaching in all settings. I would also like to thank my committee members: Dr. Karin Zipf and Dr. Donald Parkerson. Both offered essential feedback at various stages of the project.

Several other faculty and colleagues deserve mention here for their comments on various parts of the thesis. Dr. Jonathan Reid's formative comments on early drafts of my historiography section and his excellent theoretical perspective were of immense use. Dr. David Dennard's useful feedback on Chapter 2 was a key component of revisions to the antebellum section. Program graduates Austin Croom and Kristin O'Lear both contributed helpful comments on various chapter drafts. Dr. Hal Holloman provided invaluable thoughts in the structural planning and writing process. Thomas Kirkman contributed helpful thoughts to the writing of thesis and served as a tireless sounding board and friend.

Several individuals and units at East Carolina University were of great support during my time in Greenville. I would first like to thank the Department of History and the Graduate School for their generous financial and logistical support. Ingrid Meyer, Jessica Kestler, Chiffon Fenderson, Dr. Todd Bennett, and Dr. Kathy Cox all deserve mention here for their logistical support over the years. I also thank the ECU Student Government Association for their tireless work in advocating the well-being and support of students like me. In particular, I thank Colin Johnson for his integrity, dedication, and advocacy for students at the highest levels.

In the research process, innumerable librarians, friends, and colleagues contributed to my work and must be thanked here. The library staffs at Wilson Library, Rubenstein Library, Phillips Library, the State Archives of North Carolina, Baker Library, the American Antiquarian Society, and Joyner Library were of immense assistance in finding obscure manuscripts. Of noteworthy mention was the assistance of librarians John Lawrence, Patrick Cash, and Matt Turi. I cannot thank these enough. I also thank those who supported my research travel that made this project possible - the Stupienski Family, Jonathan Glover, Morgen Truesdale, Kristin O'Lear, and Austin Croom. Matthew Anderson deserves special mention for his excellent research assistance. Conversations with Sam Newell about manuscript research problems were especially helpful and provocative. Morgen Truesdale's excellent mapmaking assistance was invaluable.

I especially thank three members of my HIST 6900 cohort - W. Trevor Freeman, Andrew C. Turner, and Corry Atkinson. Their enduring friendship, invaluable writing feedback, close camaraderie, and lasting memories have been a high point of my experience here. I owe more to these friends and colleagues than can be put into words.

Friends and mentors that supported me throughout graduate school helped me to stay sane and actually enjoy life outside history. For that blessing, I thank Sharni Brown, Nick Gilpin, Mason Childers, William Hunt, Luke Holloman, Morgan Fried, Matt Stump, Leila Faranesh, Scott Bye, Madison Valentine, Mandy Messerli, and Jeremy Glover.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank my parents Steven and Shelby Shuler. Their tireless care and support as parents throughout my life is a testament to their love, kindness, and generosity. I would not be the historian or the person I am today were it not for the love of reading and the commitment to excellence that they instilled in me.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AMHI | U. S. Army Military History Institute |
| Duke | David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University |
| ECU | East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University |
| NA | National Archives |
| NCSA | State Archives of North Carolina |
| UNC | Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill |

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography

### Introduction

During the nineteenth century, merchants formed the economic backbone of Eastern North Carolina as small business owners, serving as community leaders and providing groceries, dry goods, tools, and other essential items to wealthy planters, poor farmers, urbanites, and soldiers alike.[1] Two towns – New Bern and Williamston – shared a similar antebellum background, but during the war from 1862 to 1865, New Bern was directly occupied by United States military forces, while Williamston remained in the very edge of Confederate control. These divergent military circumstances led to strikingly different experiences for the influential merchant class, as commercial success became as dependent on a merchant's loyalty as it was on their access to goods. A case study of the experiences of two merchants – Jacob Gooding Sr. of New Bern and Cushing Biggs Hassell of Williamston – provides a narrative framework that illustrates the transformations that Federal occupation wrought on New Bern's merchant community compared to the instability and decay that the war brought to the merchants of Williamston. Despite the commercial revitalization that took place in New Bern under occupation, merchants in both towns valued their loyalty to the Confederacy more than their commercial success and resisted occupation, defying antebellum Southern stereotypes of greedy

[1] "Eastern North Carolina" is a term that describes the coastal plains of North Carolina. In this project, the term primarily refers to the geographic area surrounding the Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds. Though in some contexts the term may include reference to the Cape Fear Region of southeastern North Carolina, this project excludes discussion of that region due to its geographic and economic separation from the area of focus. As explained further in this chapter, this project focuses on two counties within Eastern North Carolina: Martin and Craven Counties. These counties serve as exemplars of the two major subregions of Eastern North Carolina defined by their proximity to the Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds, respectively (see Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the geographic context of Eastern North Carolina commerce). See also Figure 1. The merchant community of Martin County was concentrated in the town of Williamston. Likewise, the merchant community of Craven County was concentrated in the town of New Bern. Therefore, this project will focus on specific merchants in these two towns in its analysis. The use of "merchant" or "commercial" in this context is broadly construed as any individual that operated a retail store, dealt in wholesale goods, or was otherwise primarily engaged in the buying and selling, rather than manufacturing, of goods. On nineteenth century occupational terminology, see Frank K. Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture in the South 1820-1865* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 14.

merchants interested only in profit. Following Confederate defeat, loyal Confederate merchants in both towns recovered quickly after the war while retaining their sympathy for the Confederate cause. The war brought different levels of economic and social upheaval for these merchants depending on their proximity to Federal occupation of the region, but even such a radical crisis could not transform the resilient underlying ideological and cultural features of Southern merchant culture.[2]

Eastern North Carolina is a region of barrier islands, coastal plains, sounds, rivers, and inlets defined by its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. European attempts to control this region date to the infamous Lost Colony at Roanoke in the 1580s, but by the mid-nineteenth century, a sizable European population was present. Though primarily an agricultural region, a few towns (each smaller than ten thousand residents) had developed by 1860.[3] When the Civil War began, the counties of this region mobilized to defend Confederate North Carolina, but poor preparation, supply shortages, and lack of support from the Confederate government allowed most of North Carolina's coast to fall to a United States invasion by 1862. For the rest of the war, Eastern North Carolina remained a contested region that both the United States and the Confederacy attempted to control with limited success. A complex saga unfolded as Northerners occupied or threatened the towns and homes of native North Carolinians.[4]

In the historiography of the Civil War era, the Southern white middle class is often neglected in favor of focus on the planters or "common whites." However, the middle class of Eastern North Carolina towns formed a crucial and influential subset of the population. As

[2] On stereotypes of merchants, see Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 57-59.
[3] Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 338-363. For a survey of North Carolina history, see William S. Powell, *North Carolina: Through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).
[4] For the standard survey of the war in North Carolina, see John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).

historian Harry Watson notes, "A small group of merchants and professionals enjoyed close family and business ties to the planters and dominated the South's towns and cities." Those connections to the planter class and slavery made merchants in the region sympathetic to the Confederate cause, yet those connections alone failed to explain the full story of merchants' loyalties and interests. Indeed, as historian Jonathan Wells demonstrates, this broader middle class had "fundamentally different" interests and ideals than either the planters or the yeoman farmers and poor whites who were their neighbors and customers. The peculiar interests of Eastern North Carolina merchants drove their decisions and influenced their loyalties when war arrived in their towns. For most, ideological and cultural interests overruled more tangible concerns of property and profits.[5]

Few merchants in the region left substantial records, but those that remain are rich sources of information. The papers of two merchants, Cushing Biggs Hassell of Williamston and Jacob Gooding Sr. of New Bern, offer a fresh window into the merchant class of North Carolina. These two men were models of the nineteenth-century Southern merchant in the decades before the Civil War. Both learned the mercantile trade as youths working as clerks and grew their reputation, capital, and businesses over decades, eventually training their own children to follow in their steps. When the war began, they and the merchants around them faced challenging questions in balancing their divergent interests: ideology, local and national loyalties, family and

[5] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 1-12. On the term "common whites" with reference to North Carolina's lower-class white population, see Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1992). The term is roughly analogous to the more traditional "yeomanry." Quote from Harry L. Watson, "Conflict and Collaboration: Yeomen, Slaveholders, and Politics in the Antebellum South," *Social History* 10, no. 3 (1985): 273-298. Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5-18. Wells shows that the middle class made up roughly 10% of the Southern population and consisted of commercial professions like merchants, as well as artisans, doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. This thesis focuses more narrowly on the merchant sub-class of this population.

kinship concerns, and the protection of property and capital. As this thesis argues, merchants did not value immediate profit at the expense of the Confederacy.[6]

In the decades before the war, Southern merchants like Hassell and Gooding had developed a unique set of interests and concerns. Though they were slaveholding property owners, these merchants shared a distinct background and subculture that set them apart from the classic Southern planter elite. They were typically educated and often held some civic or religious office of prominence in their community, but they did not possess the same socioeconomic status as the planting class. They also were not wholly reliant on the system of chattel slavery, unlike their planter counterparts. Though not directly dependent on slavery for their business, merchants did support and value the peculiar institution and resented its Northern critics. Although merchants may have had aspirations to join the ranks of the planter elite, their interests and concerns did not always align perfectly with those of the planters.[7]

The merchant class also was distinct from the wealthier planters in other ways. Like many of the broader professional class, most merchants worked and lived in towns rather than the countryside. Most significantly, they were usually in business relationships with Northern communities and regularly traveled to Northern cities, with some being native Northerners themselves. Cushing Hassell developed close friendships with Northerners during his trips to New York over the years and married a Northern woman. This difference set merchants apart

[6] For most papers belonging to Cushing Biggs Hassell, see Cushing Biggs Hassell Papers #810, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) (hereafter cited as CBH Papers, UNC). See also Cushing Biggs Hassell Papers 1814-1926, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University (Duke); Hassell Family Papers, MS 51, Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collections and Archives, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA; Sylvester S. Hassell Papers, #321, UNC; Francis M. Manning Collection, #488, East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University (ECU). For most papers belonging to Jacob Gooding, see William L. Horner Collection: Gooding Family Papers #265-002, ECU (Hereafter cited as Gooding Family Papers). See also Whitehurst Family Papers, #617, ECU; Jacob Gooding Papers, #3, ECU.

[7] Wells, *Southern Middle Class*, 5-16. Wells argues that the Southern middle class was self-conscious in its distinction from both the planters and the yeomanry in their society and that the middle class saw the world through a unique lens, marked by aspirations of industry and progress.

from many of their neighbors, who would have more rarely left the South or even their immediate area. Though these connections to the North brought suspicion, they did not change North Carolina merchants' fundamental commitment to the Southern sectional cause.[8]

Despite these similar antebellum developments, the merchant communities' wartime experiences significantly differed in New Bern and Williamston, based on the proximity of United States forces. In New Bern, most merchants chose to flee to Confederate protection rather than risk life under occupation. Those New Bern merchants like Jacob Gooding who stayed experienced direct occupation in which Northern soldiers were in control of local policy, making the Confederate loyalties of locals a key point of suspicion and frustration. Williamston's location just on the Confederate side of the military frontier isolated merchants like Cushing Hassell and rendered them vulnerable to unpredictable raids and damage, which further radicalized their Confederate sympathies through fear and hostility.[9]

Because merchants had always depended on local credit for sales and distant credit for purchasing inventory, the economic interruptions of war did not immediately crush commerce in Eastern North Carolina. As the war progressed, however, only those merchants willing to fully support the United States occupation were able to gain access to consistent supplies for their inventories. The result was that only new Northern merchants in New Bern and other occupied towns were able to buy and sell goods. New Bern merchants with Confederate loyalties soon found their businesses suffering and were eventually expelled from the city. Merchants like

[8] See Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 1-40. Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20 September 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Sylvester Hassell, "Obituary of Martha Maria Hassell," in *Signs of the Times, and Doctrinal Advocate and Monitor* 65, no. 1 (1897): 700. On sectionalism and Southern identity in North Carolina, see Christine Rowse Flood, "The Arbiters of Compromise: Sectionalism, Unionism, and Secessionism in Maryland and North Carolina" (PhD diss. University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2015), 43-70, 120-124.

[9] On the radicalization of Confederate loyalty due to raiding, see Chapter 6. See also Jacqueline G. Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North From the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 75-77.

Cushing Hassell on the Confederate frontier were totally isolated from their traditional Northern suppliers by the loss of vital maritime shipping and the lack of land routes for trade. But despite long years of commercial disruption, Southern merchants rebuilt their businesses and their control of local commerce quickly after the war without sacrificing their ideological and cultural commitments. The core antebellum culture and values of Southern merchants, including both Hassell and Gooding, survived the years of Federal occupation in Eastern North Carolina.

## Historiographical Context

In recent years, scholars have produced numerous Civil War occupation studies, though few have focused on Southern merchants. While some have approached the issue with a broad perspective, others have applied a narrow geographic or topical focus, allowing detailed research into individual regions or communities. The two Civil War historians who have applied this lens most thoroughly in North Carolina are Wayne Durrill and Judkin Browning. The finest study of Southern merchants during this period is Frank Byrne's *Becoming Bourgeois,* which examines the late antebellum and war years across the South broadly. No work, however, has focused specifically on the merchants of North Carolina during either the antebellum period or the war.

Wayne Durrill's monograph, *War of Another Kind*, is a wartime history of the town of Plymouth during the occupation. Located in the Albemarle region of North Carolina downriver of Williamston, Plymouth faced an inner conflict that raged alongside the war itself. Durrill argues that the social stress of secession and the war precipitated a class-related guerrilla war between wealthy planters, yeoman farmers, and wage workers. The planters, initially secessionist, continued to support the Confederate cause, thereby protecting their slaves and property. The yeoman farmers were predominantly Unionist, though not exclusively, and other locals fell on both sides of the conflict. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the

intense class warfare that Durrill has found in Plymouth prevailed throughout the region. Though Durrill focuses solely on Plymouth and does not examine the lives of merchants in any detail, his subjects interacted with events in nearby Williamston and surrounding counties.[10]

While Durrill's work is a key occupation study, a more recent book on Eastern North Carolina civilians during occupation is Judkin Browning's *Shifting Loyalties.* Browning focuses on the loyalties of North Carolinians under direct United States occupation, demonstrating that their sentiments were much more flexible than previously realized. By exploring the interactions between the civilian populations of New Bern and Beaufort and their military occupiers, Browning argues that though Eastern North Carolina citizens harbored decidedly Unionist sentiments at the start of the war, the region ironically became a stronghold of embittered Confederate supporters by the conflict's end. Thus, he argues that the loyalties of civilians in this region were especially fluid. Recognizing that the expansive region of Eastern North Carolina cannot easily be studied in whole, Browning limits his research to two counties: Craven and Carteret, both centers of the United States occupation.[11]

Browning begins his analysis by surveying the historical origins of Craven and Carteret Counties through the colonial and antebellum periods. As Browning continues chronologically through the national crisis, he argues that there remained in these counties political and economic predispositions despite the distress of war. He attempts to provide a regional history through a particular lens: direct occupation. Though his argument focuses on loyalties, he addresses in passing many important social issues at work in the region, including some affecting the New

[10] Wayne K. Durrill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). The county seat of Washington County is Plymouth, North Carolina.
[11] Judkin Browning, *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). See also, Judkin Browning, "Visions of Freedom and Civilization Opening before Them," in *North Carolinians In the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction*, ed. Paul D. Escott (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 69-100.

Bern merchant community. He briefly discusses commercial issues, such as trading restrictions under occupation, but these discussions are primarily limited to the coastal town of Beaufort. No study exists that focuses on commerce in Eastern North Carolina, but Browning has provided a starting point to pursue further research in mercantile issues and loyalties.

While Durrill and Browning's works focus on North Carolina, Frank Byrne's *Becoming Bourgeois* portrays the historical development of the Southern merchant class from 1820 to 1865, exploring issues throughout the South. Byrne argues that members of the merchant class established themselves as significant and eventually dominant members of the larger Southern economy, despite the views of some historians that the South was fundamentally not a capitalist economy. His study demonstrates that the rise of merchants in the postbellum period was not a new feature of Southern society. Rather, merchants had a clear place in the antebellum economy and culture of North Carolina and the South. Byrne uses a sample of twenty-two counties across the South, including Martin County, making his work the most relevant study to a history of the Eastern North Carolina merchant class, even though he does not describe the area in any detail. He primarily relies on some of the papers of Cushing Hassell in his discussion of North Carolina but does not contextualize Hassell in the community of Williamston or its local circumstances.[12]

The present thesis aims to build on the work of these historians to demonstrate that merchants in New Bern and Williamston approached the questions of loyalty and pragmatism raised by the war in two distinct contexts. Both Browning and Durrill's research focused on areas of Eastern North Carolina that were primarily under direct Federal occupation. However, a

[12] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*. Cushing Hassell is one of the primary subjects of this thesis due to his significance to Williamston's merchant class before and during the war, as well as his voluminous extant writings. Because his papers are scattered at several repositories, Byrne only had access to a portion of them in his book. In 2004, Jonathan Wells built on the work of Byrne (then Byrne's unpublished dissertation at Ohio State) in his *Southern Middle Class*, which examined only the antebellum years. Well's framework of a Southern middle class is useful and is adopted in this thesis, although this study examines a narrower subsection of that middle class.

study of two communities that were distinguished by the proximity of United States forces reveals how occupation affected Eastern North Carolina merchants' lives, loyalties, and futures. Direct occupation brought New Bern access to shipping and capital, but the occupiers demanded total unquestionable loyalty, which few Southern merchants could give to the United States. Williamston's pro-Confederate merchants enjoyed theoretical political independence, but their military vulnerability allowed Federal raids – real and imagined – to completely halt wartime commerce and business. In the end, however, the occupation did not actually change the fundamental character or loyalties of either of these Southern merchant communities despite years of upheaval, radical political shifts, and the demand for loyalty to the Union.

During the war, many Eastern North Carolina towns had United States garrisons or nearby Confederate forces protecting them from enemy incursion; however, these communities were not uniformly occupied or defended.[13] Stephen Ash, in his analysis of the invaded Upper South, divides occupied areas into three categories: Federal-controlled garrisoned towns, "no-man's-land," and the Confederate frontier. The garrisoned towns and Confederate frontier were areas in which one side maintained firmer control, but neither opponent controlled the vast regions in between, presenting problems for analyzing these regions. This study adopts Ash's criteria for evaluating occupied areas, as it accurately describes the situation in Eastern North Carolina from 1862 until the end of the war and provides necessary geographic context.[14]

[13] For a theoretical analysis of military occupation that provides helpful historical background from a global perspective, see Eric Carlton, *Occupation: The Policies and Practice of Military Conquerors* (Savage, MD: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992). For a study of Union occupation policy, see Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[14] Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 77-79. After March 1862, New Bern remained a garrisoned town. Williamston's military position changed as the lines shifted in the region, but was on the very edge of the Confederate frontier for most of 1862-1863.

## Merchants in Eastern North Carolina, 1800-1865

Chapter 2 surveys the historical development of these merchant communities from the turn of the nineteenth century through the end of the antebellum period, examining the temporal context in which the region's merchants lived during the war.[15] In the antebellum period, merchants throughout Eastern North Carolina lived as part of a well-defined Southern middle class, relying on similar social structures and maritime shipping networks. Jacob Gooding and Cushing Hassell's lives serve as excellent examples of typical merchants in the decades leading to the Civil War.[16]

In 1860, the state was deeply divided between Unionist and pro-Confederate sentiments, but following the firing on Fort Sumter, secessionism prevailed. Suddenly cut off from the nation in which it had developed, North Carolina became part of a belligerent Confederacy preparing for war. When the Civil War began in 1861, the counties of Eastern North Carolina mobilized to defend the state, but poor preparations, supply shortages, and a distracted national government allowed the coast of North Carolina to fall to Federal invaders in 1862. By June 1862, many North Carolina communities that had chosen to secede from the United States were in its control once again, though the possibility of Confederate recapture persisted. The remaining residents of occupied towns like New Bern had to wrestle with questions of loyalty and prudence. A long military occupation ensued, but no major campaigns occurred in Eastern North Carolina for the duration of the war, as neither side committed sufficient resources to the region to significantly alter the balance of power. The military situation in the region developed in three phases, each having a distinct character.[17]

---

[15] See Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, Chapter 1.
[16] See Wells, *Southern Middle Class*, 5-18.
[17] On secession and Unionism in North Carolina, see Barton A. Myers, *Rebels Against the Confederacy: North Carolina's Unionists* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

As the sectional crisis unfolded in 1861, North Carolina transformed from the sleepy "Rip Van Winkle" state to a militarized society. Across the state, companies and regiments organized, preparing to defend their towns and the entire South against the United States. This condition continued throughout 1861 and into the spring of 1862, when the first phase of the war in North Carolina ended. Chapter 3 will examine this period of initial changes, when the Federal blockade was the primary means of interference with commerce and merchant life.[18]

In March 1862, Federal forces led by General Ambrose Burnside succeeded in capturing New Bern and the surrounding area as part of a coastal invasion, marking the start of the second phase of the war. This crucial event radically changed the political and social landscape of Eastern North Carolina. No longer could communities remain mostly unaffected by a distant war. Merchants like Jacob Gooding who stayed in New Bern and Cushing Hassell living in isolated Williamston, feared that their lives were about to drastically change. Chapter 4 examines this second phase of the war, which brought upheaval and occupation.[19]

For most North Carolinians, national bonds of loyalty to the United States dissolved in the secession crisis of 1861, but the Federal recapture of Craven County in the second phase of the war forced New Bern merchants to once again re-evaluate their loyalties, deciding whether to remain in occupied territory or abandon their property, home, and livelihood to flee to Confederate protection. Merchants tried to balance competing interests of family, property, and loyalty. All but the wealthiest merchants' entire worth was invested in property and their livelihood depended on the sale of large seasonal stocks of goods bought on credit. Thus, at the

[18] Harry L. Watson, "'Old Rip' and a New Era," in Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson, eds. *North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Documentary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 219. See Barrett, Chapters 1-5. See also James L. Gaddis Jr., *Richard Gatlin and the Confederate Defense of Eastern North Carolina* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015), Chapters 10-16.
[19] See Barrett, Chapter 5.

outset of the war, they had large supplies of goods that could not be easily transported. Merchants had to weigh their commercial reputation and assets against the potential threat of Federal rule or destruction. For most, their personal safety and ideological support of the Confederacy outweighed the risk of leaving their property profits behind. Some merchants like Jacob Gooding evacuated their families while remaining to protect their businesses.[20]

In Williamston, the threat of occupation was imminent but never became reality. For merchants, the occasional raids meant that regardless of their ideology, the Federal forces destroyed, looted, and confiscated their property repeatedly, radicalizing their fears of the Northern troops and their commitment to the Southern cause of defense. By 1862, Cushing Hassell and other merchants were unable to run their stores, but they became agents of the Confederate government in distributing aid to the families of soldiers, drawing on their antebellum logistical experience.

For New Bern, the changes of occupation were immediate and apparent. Hundreds of residents fled the town as its loss became imminent, leaving their homes, property, and friends behind. Thousands of refugees, both black and white, began flocking to the Federal headquarters at New Bern. Thousands of Northern soldiers were suddenly in and around the town, bringing with them goods and merchants of their own to fill the empty shops of the many Southern merchants who fled New Bern. These changes dramatically altered the social and political balance of New Bern and ushered in a struggle between civilian government and the military.[21]

---

[20] This project began with the hypothesis that decisions of merchant loyalty were based were primarily based on financial interests and personal security, not on commitments to abstract principles or cultural factors. However, the evidence demonstrates that Confederate loyalty and Southern identity was resilient among merchants affected by the occupation of Eastern North Carolina, often outweighing temporary commercial concerns. On the strained loyalties of Southern individuals, see Myers, *Rebels Against the Confederacy*; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*; Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

[21] See Browning, Chapters 3-4. For a discussion of the wartime refugee crisis in North Carolina, see David Silkenat, *Driven From Home: North Carolina's Civil War Refugee Crisis* (Athens: University of Georgia Press,

The initial United States invasion only secured New Bern, Beaufort, Washington, and a handful of other towns, leaving most of the rural Albemarle Region in the northeast to its own devices. Some towns in this region, like Williamston, remained within the edges of the Confederate frontier. In theory, a nearby garrison of Confederate troops protected Cushing Hassell's hometown during most of 1862. In reality, however, frontier towns such as Williamston were not securely defended against United States incursion.[22]

Federal forces at New Bern conducted a series of raids throughout 1862 and 1863 designed to penetrate the frontier and to target such isolated towns as Williamston. These raids did not attempt the capture or occupation of these locations. Rather, the raids only succeeded in pushing back Confederate forces, creating local panic, destroying and capturing supplies, and then returning to secure Federal lines. These raids did, however, keep civilians like Cushing Hassell and other merchants, particularly those near the Federal-dominated waterways, apprehensive of military threats and made Confederate authorities rethink their priorities in North Carolina's disputed frontier.[23]

By the end of 1863, the residents of occupied Eastern North Carolina had begun to accept that the Confederacy was unable to liberate the region. However, the military situation shifted once again. Early 1864 saw the first significant Confederate successes in the area since the war began. Chapter 5 explores this third and final phase of the war in the state, which was marked by a fleeting Confederate resurgence, the recapture of Plymouth, and the use of ironclads. For six months, Cushing Hassell and the merchants of Williamston were protected from further raiding by the Confederates downriver. By October 1864, however, the Confederate gains had been

2016).
[22] See Barrett, 120-130, Chapter 6-7.
[23] See Barrett, Chapter 6.

reversed, and no serious Confederate resistance in Eastern North Carolina occurred for the remainder of the war.[24]

By February 1865, the last remaining Confederate port at Wilmington fell to Federal assault. North Carolina had lost control of its entire coast. By summer 1865, the United States controlled the whole state and the entirety of the South, ending the war and beginning the harder, longer struggle over Reconstruction. United States troops remained as an occupying force throughout the state for a decade to come, but New Bern's contingent of troops left by 1868. Williamston was never occupied directly, even after the war. While its economic effects lasted for decades, the occupation of Eastern North Carolina came and went without fundamentally altering the underlying culture of the merchant class.[25]

The story of the merchants living throughout Eastern North Carolina and the war did not end with the Confederate surrender. Indeed, their reintegration into the American economy, their local communities, and the national credit system was challenging. These merchants that had for so long been prevented by flight, blockade, or disloyalty from trading freely were ready to resume trade with the Northern firms that had long partnered with them before the war. Despite years of economic disaster, destruction of property, forced or voluntary refugee status, and the successful Federal occupation, the underlying identity and interests of the white merchant class in Eastern North Carolina quickly reemerged with vigor and ambition after the war. Though the individuals they had enslaved were free, their stores damaged, and their lives disrupted, Southern merchants like Cushing Hassell were ready to get back to the business of business and to restore

[24] See Barrett, Chapters 8-12. For a more recent analysis of the Confederate resurgence in early 1864, see Hampton Newsome, *The Fight for the Old North State: The Civil War in North Carolina, January-May 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019).
[25] Barrett, Chapters 13-18; Gregory P. Downs and Scott Nesbit, Mapping Occupation: Force, Freedom, and the Army in Reconstruction, http://mappingoccupation.org, published March 2015, accessed (February 2021).

the control of Southern, property-owning, white males in North Carolina as quickly as possible. To understand these merchants' wartime experiences and loyalties more clearly, the antebellum roots of the merchant communities they lived in must first be explored in the next chapter.

## Chapter 2: Development of the Eastern North Carolina Merchant Class – 1800-1860

In 1800, Eastern North Carolina was an isolated but thriving region of the Old North State. Farms and plantations were numerous, business was on the rise, and the population was growing rapidly. Merchants like Jacob Gooding of New Bern and Cushing Hassell of Williamston formed a significant, small section of their local society. While they were not wealthy planters, these slaveholders were committed to the success of the slave-based Southern economy and to the success of slaveholding ideology. Though several major financial crises adversely affected commerce between 1800 and 1860, these Southern merchants grew their businesses and influence, even as the looming Civil War threatened to destroy all commerce and test their commitment to the South.

### Geographic Context

Towns in Eastern North Carolina developed at different rates. The towns of the Albemarle region, such as Williamston, Plymouth, and Elizabeth City, remained relatively small throughout the nineteenth century, while other towns located nearer to key transportation routes enjoyed more growth. Slightly to the south of the Albemarle Sound lies the Pamlico Sound, which connected such towns as New Bern, Washington, and Beaufort (see Figure 1). These regions developed alongside one another, but developed into distinct communities of trade, commerce, and communication.[1]

As the chief commercial center of the Pamlico region and Eastern North Carolina broadly, New Bern enjoyed circumstances that promoted healthy growth. Founded in 1710, it served as the colonial and state capital for twenty-two years. With easy access to the Trent River, Neuse River, and Pamlico Sound, New Bern was connected to both the Atlantic trade and

[1] For an introduction to the geography of North Carolina and its historical significance to the development of the state, see Powell, *North Carolina: Through Four Centuries*, 1-27.

**Figure 1: Map of Eastern North Carolina, ca. 1861**[2]


towns farther inland by maritime transportation throughout the period. In 1858, the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad connected New Bern to towns beyond its riverine network, extending all the way to Morehead City on the coast. In the Neuse River and the railroad, New Bern enjoyed two direct inland routes to transport goods to westward towns, such as Kinston, Goldsboro, and Raleigh.[3]

[2] H. Morgen Truesdale, "Eastern North Carolina, ca. 1861," digital map produced for author, 2020.
[3] Alan D. Watson, *Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina* (NC Office of Archives and History, 2004), 106-127. For historical background of New Bern, see Alan D. Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County*

In contrast to New Bern on the Pamlico Sound, no one town in the Albemarle region ever established itself as the dominant mercantile center. Plymouth emerged as perhaps the most significant commercial town by 1860 due to its strategic location near the mouth of the Roanoke River. This town became a key receiving location of seaborne trade, which was then shipped within the Albemarle region by local sub-shippers either upriver on the Roanoke to Williamston or elsewhere using the sound and other nearby rivers. The entire region benefitted from increasingly direct access to markets in Virginia through the several canals and rivers linking the maritime towns of the area to their counterparts in the Old Dominion.[4]

In either region, there were two types of towns: those with direct access to the sounds and those that were situated farther inland on one of the many rivers of the region. Towns that developed on the navigable Roanoke, Chowan, and Cashie Rivers remained dependent primarily on the Albemarle Sound routes for trade and shipping rather than more direct inland routes, as even by 1860, no railroads had penetrated the isolation of the northeastern portion of the state. Greenville, Goldsboro, and Kinston, upriver on the Tar-Pamlico and Neuse Rivers, drew less maritime trade due to navigation issues, but still supported merchandising.[5]

Williamston, in Martin County, serves as an exemplar of these river towns. Situated on the Roanoke River, Williamston depended on access to the Albemarle Sound for its trade and mercantile connections to the outside world. However, the Roanoke River itself was also a crucial pipeline for trade in local goods, crops, and fish between North Carolina and Virginia in

(New Bern, NC: Tryon Palace Commission, 1987).

[4] U.S. Census, 1860, Washington County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; Bishop and Swift to Kader Biggs, 4 January 1842, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers, PC 215, NCSA (hereafter cited as Kader Biggs Papers); E.H. Mills to Biggs and Bros., 11 April 1842, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; Bryan Maitland and Co. to Biggs and Bros., 8 June 1844, Box 4, Folder 3, Kader Biggs Papers. See Alan Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 34-36, Chapters 4-5.

[5] For a thorough history of transportation improvements prior to the Civil War, see Alan Watson, *Internal Improvements*.

the mid-nineteenth century, and Williamston merchants capitalized on that trade. Most local merchants' goods were delivered first to Plymouth before being transported upriver to Williamston.[6] Despite the advantageous direct access to Virginia goods and markets enjoyed by merchants of the Albemarle region after the establishment of interstate canals, most major trade, transportation, and capital concentrated farther south in New Bern throughout the antebellum period due to its easier access to both the Atlantic Ocean and overland shipping routes.[7]

**Antebellum Southern Merchants**

Merchants in the Old South, aside from wholesalers and commission merchants in a handful of major trading cities, tended to be storekeepers. That is, they primarily sold retail goods to local customers. Even those in larger towns focused most of their efforts on their local customers: stocking local and Northern goods, importing European items, providing a source of credit, and selling local goods on consignment. Only in the larger Southern cities – such as New Orleans, Richmond, Charleston, Norfolk, and Baltimore – did wholesale merchant suppliers succeed in considerable numbers. Indeed, most merchants in the South operated in small rural towns spread throughout the countryside.[8]

---

[6] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC; Bishop and Swift to Kader Biggs, 4 January 1842, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; E.H. Mills to Biggs and Bros., 11 April 1842, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; Bryan Maitland and Co. to Biggs and Bros., 8 June 1844, Box 4, Folder 3, Kader Biggs Papers; Misc. Bills and Receipts, 1842, Box 6, Folder 3, Kader Biggs Papers; Misc. Bills of Lading, 1841-1851, Box 10, Folder 1, Kader Biggs Papers; Bryan and Maitland to Kader Biggs, 12 October 1841, Box 4, Folder 1, Kader Biggs Papers. Other small towns in Martin County included Jamesville and Hamilton, both also situated and dependent on the Roanoke River. Further upriver were other towns, including Halifax, but at the start of the century, navigation upriver was limited sharply by fall lines and other obstructions.

[7] Alan Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 34-36, 56-97. Geographically isolated from both the Albemarle and Pamlico regions of Eastern North Carolina was the Cape Fear region, in the far southeastern part of the state. The Cape Fear River is the only river in North Carolina to empty directly into the Atlantic Ocean rather than an inland sound. This crucial difference both geographically separated this region from the rest of Eastern North Carolina and caused a booming trade to develop along the Cape Fear. Its direct access to Atlantic coastal shipping without intervening sounds and inlets accelerated the development of its commercial towns. Wilmington, near the mouth of the river, became the most populous town in North Carolina by 1860. Because of significant distinguishing factors, this project does not include substantial discussion of the Cape Fear region in either the antebellum period or during the war. Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), 338-363.

[8] See Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 1-12, Chapter 1. Wells, *Southern Middle Class*, 168.

In Southern society, wealthy planters dominated social, political, and economic circles, but they were far from the only significant class of Southerner. As historians Frank Byrne and Jonathan Wells have effectively argued, Southern merchants were a vital part of the growing Southern upper middle class. Alongside other professionals, they were respected members of local communities and had more assets and higher social status than the typical farmer, but they fell short of attaining the social prestige and wealth of the elite planter class of Southern society. As the overall population grew, so did the economy, and with it, the number of successful merchants. In almost every village in the South, at least one general store supplied local farmers and planters alike with tools, goods, and luxuries. The Southern merchant was privileged, though not usually a planter himself. Though they supported a fundamentally agrarian society, merchants were capitalists at heart.[9]

## Merchants in Antebellum North Carolina

Most merchants in Eastern North Carolina operated storehouses, or retail stores, in towns scattered throughout the region. The most common type of store, especially in the early antebellum period, was the general store. Merchants of this type sold a dizzying array of goods from clothing, groceries, and tools to liquor, furniture, and cotton. There were several general stores in each sizable town of the region. However, as the population of these towns grew, more specialized stores began selling specific types of wares. Grocery, hardware, and dry goods were common types of stores in most towns of significant size. Though established merchants usually

[9] See Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 1-12, Chapter 1. See also Wells, *Southern Middle Class*, 7-12. For a discussion of the relationship between planters and merchants in a South Carolina community, see Tom Downey, *Planting a Capitalist South: Masters, Merchants, and Manufacturers in the Southern Interior, 1790-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 1-8.

owned their stores, many younger merchants leased their storehouses from local landowners, often from other businessmen.[10]

Merchants in Eastern North Carolina primarily used water-based transportation throughout most of the nineteenth century. Schooners operating on the sounds and rivers of the region ferried imports into otherwise isolated towns. Some merchants owned one or more of these vessels, or at least had an interest in a shipping vessel. As the technology advanced, they began using steamboats to better navigate the rivers and sounds. These transportation networks were vital, as merchants' very survival depended on access to reliable shipping between their stores and their suppliers in the larger cities of the North and South.[11]

Most retail merchants acquired inventory primarily from large mercantile houses and commission merchants in the major commercial cities of Norfolk, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston. Though New York remained the largest and most influential trading center, isolated Albemarle merchants increasingly traded with Norfolk after the establishments of canals directly linking the region to Virginia. Coastal towns such as New Bern were close enough to the ocean to interact with the Atlantic trade directly.[12]

---

[10] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC; William Thomson, *Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory* (Baltimore: William Thomson, 1851); John J. Campbell, *The Southern Business Directory and General Commercial Advertiser* (Charleston, SC: Steam Power Press of Walker & James, 1854); John C. Kayser, *Commercial Directory* (Philadelphia: J.C. Kayser & Co., 1823), 19; Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 41-75; Cushing B. Hassell Inventories, 1850-51, Series 2, Oversize Volume SV-05793/9 (Folder 25), Sylvester S. Hassell Papers, #321, UNC; Miscellaneous Account Sheets, Box 4, Gooding Family Papers; Miscellaneous Financial Documents, Box 5, Folder 1, Samuel Simpson Biddle Papers, 1764-1895, Duke. For a general description of Southern stores and merchant practices in the antebellum period, see Lewis Atherton, *The Southern Country Store: 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), 38-62.

[11] Ann M. Merriman, "North Carolina Schooners, 1815-1901, and the S.R. Fowle and Son Company of Washington, North Carolina," (MA thesis, East Carolina University, 1996), 40-51.

[12] Patterson to Matthias Manly, 29 April 1839, Box 3, Folder b, Gooding Family Papers; Solomon Cherry to Kader Biggs, 2 October 1851, Box 5 Folder 3, Kader Biggs Papers; John Thurston to Kader Biggs, 3 July 1847, Box 2, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; Bryan and Co. to Miller and Biggs, 10 May 1847, Box 2, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC; Alan Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 56-97; Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 32-45, 98-102. For a discussion of a major Southern mercantile city, see Scott P. Marler, *The Merchants' Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). New Orleans and similar large cities far outclassed any commercial activity in North Carolina in terms of size, activity, and prominence. Merchants in Eastern North

Unlike the average North Carolinian, merchants routinely participated in the Atlantic trade, linking them commercially to business partners along the entire eastern seaboard of the United States.[13] North Carolina merchants commonly corresponded with other businessmen from Louisiana to Massachusetts. In the Pamlico region, merchants remained most directly linked to New York even after the Virginia canals were operational. Every spring and fall, coastal merchants or their agents traveled north to Philadelphia, New York, or some other city to purchase a new stock for their stores. These accounts were not settled during the trip, however.[14]

Merchants primarily operated on credit, many opening stores without any significant capital on hand. A sophisticated system of lending and debt linked North Carolina merchants, their Northern suppliers, and local consumers. Personal business relationships were crucial to the lending of the early 1800s, but by the 1840s, credit reporting agents visited the towns of Eastern North Carolina to evaluate these merchants' credit ratings and habits, allowing distant lenders to provide them credit.[15] If their assets, business, and reputation seemed sound, Northern

---

Carolina had substantially smaller ambitions and businesses than those in a major trading hub such as New Orleans or even a regional hub like Norfolk.

[13] For a discussion of the broader lower- and middle-class North Carolina population, see Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites*. See also Wells, *Southern Middle Class*; Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

[14] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 32-36; Bryan and Maitland to Ebenezer Pettigrew, 1 October 1835, in Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, ed. *The Pettigrew Papers* (Raleigh: NC Dept. of Archives and History, 1971), 2:263-264; William Biggs to Kader Biggs 29 April 1842, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; Joseph D. Biggs to Kader Biggs, 11 March 1845, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; John Cunningham to Kader Biggs, 9 October 1850, Box 5, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers; Solomon Cherry to Kader Biggs, 2 October 1851, Box 5, Folder 3, Kader Biggs Papers; Cushing Hassell Letter Book, May 1857-January 1863 (passim), Box 2, Folder 24, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing Hassell to Bryant Bennet, 13 February 1853, Box 1, Folder 3, Bryant Bennett Papers, 1767-1902, Duke; Lawrence Trimbly to Jacob Gooding, 22 October 1835, Box 3, Folder b, Gooding Family Papers; Stephen F. Miller Memoir, #371, pp. 1-8, ECU.

[15] See Atherton, Chapter 6. Peter Mallett, List of Merchants, 1846-1849, Box 5, Folder 40, Peter Mallett Papers, #480, UNC. A merchant himself, Mallett worked as a local credit reporting agent in Eastern North Carolina. In that capacity, he visited dozens of merchant shops to talk to their customers and clerks and to observe their business practices. Agents like him would send notes on this data to New York to be compiled for use by lenders in evaluating new borrowers' credit accounts. Mallett worked for the most significant of such credit reporting companies, R.G. Dun & Company, that collected data on most significant merchants in Eastern North Carolina from 1840 until the start of the Civil War. For a discussion of the rise of R.G. Dun & Company and the historical significance of their merchant credit reports, see Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 24-28, 43-45. For merchant credit reports from Williamston and New Bern, see North Carolina, Vols. 7 and 15, R.G. Dun & Co. credit report volumes, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA.

mercantile firms extended large lines of credit to these merchants, who in turn sold goods on credit to their local customers. In 1859, Southern merchants bought $131 million in goods from Northern firms on credit. If successful in their sales, merchants made sufficient profits to pay their creditors, but they almost always had most of their capital invested in their stock of goods.[16]

Though almost every Eastern North Carolina merchant was an adult white male, merchants had substantial interactions with women in several contexts. In a more urban setting such as New Bern, women were frequently customers in nearby stores, buying a variety of domestic goods, groceries, fine luxury items, and more. Merchant Cushing Hassell of Williamston noted in his diary the various women that were regular customers of his store.[17] Often, established merchants married in their twenties or early thirties, many times choosing to marry eligible women within the professional class.[18] After his first wife's death, Hassell spent a considerable amount of time on courting trips to other towns looking for a new woman to marry.[19]

Few merchants owned enough slaves to be considered planters, as upper middle-class Southerners. Many merchants (including both Cushing Hassell and Jacob Gooding) were

---

[16] Account Sheet of William Bryce & Co. Importers, NY with Cushing B. Hassell, 1850, Box 9, Folder c, Francis M. Manning Collection, #488, East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, ECU; Cushing B. Hassell, Contract with Northern Merchants, 8 May 1866, Box 9, Folder c, Francis M. Manning Collection, #488, ECU; Wells, *Southern Middle Class*, 224; Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 24-50.

[17] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC. It is unclear what ratio of men to women were customers of any particular merchant, as it is uncommon that a woman's name appears in the extant account books despite the likelihood of their active status as customer. Most likely, many women bought goods on the accounts of their husbands if married. On the importance of gender as a component of Southern identity alongside race and class, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-8.

[18] For a useful discussion of the family life and marriage patterns of Southern merchants, see Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, Chapter 3. Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC; Barbara M. Howard Thorn, ed. *The Heritage of Craven County, North Carolina*, Vol. 1 (Winston Salem: Eastern North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1984), 148; Genealogical Notes on Gooding-Whitehurst Family, Box 6, Folder b, Whitehurst Family Papers, #617, ECU; Stephen F. Miller Memoir, #371, pp. 1-8, ECU; Craven County Marriage Bond Abstracts, 1740-1868, NCSA, 134.

[19] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1847, Box 1, Folder 4, CBH Papers, UNC.

slaveholders, however. This attribute was by no means universal, but census records demonstrate that North Carolina merchants of both local and Northern birth enslaved substantial numbers of African Americans.[20] Slave ownership was both a source of labor and a form of status symbol in Southern society. Slavery also served as a means to create common bonds with the planter class, who were often the merchants' largest customers, as well as to reinforce merchants' solidarity with Southern society, which was sometimes questioned due to their lack of agrarian dependence. These merchants not only participated in slavery but were ideologically committed to its preservation.[21]

**Early Development 1800-1830**

At the start of the nineteenth century, most merchants in Eastern North Carolina managed small operations. The region depended on the coastal trade for most goods beyond locally grown crops. Its isolation promoted the growth of commerce. As the new state found its way through post-colonial development, the heads of old merchant firms that had traded with colonial Boston and Philadelphia, such as John Wright Stanly of New Bern, passed away and a new generation of capitalists with ties primarily to New York rose to prominence. These merchants lived through the transition from pounds to dollars and helped create the extensive network of trade and credit that existed by the mid-nineteenth century.[22]

---

[20] U.S. Census, 1820, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1830, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1840, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1840, Martin County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1850, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1850, Martin County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1850, Craven County, Slave Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1850, Martin County, Slave Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA. A sample of identified merchants (including Jacob Gooding, Alonzo T. Jenkins, and Samuel R. Street of New Bern and A.C. Williams, Theophalus Hyman, Cushing B. Hassell, and D.W. Bagley of Martin County) owned between two and twenty slaves in one or more of these census years (1820-1850).

[21] See Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 13-15, 59-63, 114-120.

[22] See Gertrude S. Carraway, *The Stanly (Stanley) Family and the Historic John Wright Stanly House* (New Bern, NC: Tryon Palace Commission, 1969). Jacob Gooding Sr. started his career as Stanly's clerk and married his daughter.

By 1823, New Bern was still the largest town in North Carolina. In addition to the many goods imported by merchants to sell in local markets, mass quantities of cotton, naval stores, and other local crops and products found their way to New Bern before being shipped out of the state. One printed directory claimed that there were fifteen active mercantile firms in the town.[23] However, printed directories prepared outside of a community rarely had comprehensive lists of firms. In this case, the directory failed to list at least nine additional merchants active in New Bern at the time.[24] With an estimated twenty-five merchants or mercantile partnerships operating in the town in 1823, New Bern had a substantially larger commercial presence then than the estimated ten stores in Williamston at the height of its antebellum growth in the 1850s.[25] New Bern developed faster and grew larger in terms of trade and population than rural Martin County in the antebellum period, due primarily to New Bern's history, status, and geographic location.

**Economic Fluctuations 1830-1850**

Merchants' lives, while usually comfortable and relatively stable, did not fulfill a dream of wealthy men idling away their days counting gold. As participants in a vast system of credit and lending, all but the most successful merchants' capital was invested in their stock of merchandise at any given time. During their annual or seasonal trips to larger cities in the North,

[23] John C. Kayser, *Commercial Directory* (Philadelphia: J.C. Kayser & Co., 1823), 19. This directory includes articles on three commercial towns in North Carolina for the use of outsiders, providing background information, commercial trends, and lists of firms.

[24] Stephen F. Miller Memoir, #371, pp. 3-10, ECU. Though Miller was recalling his 1822-1823 business acquaintances of youth at the end of his life, the personal details and family relations provided in each account make his account more credible than a contemporary directory published outside North Carolina. He clearly did not rely on the printed source, given the numerous spelling discrepancies between the two and the several merchants listed only in one of the two sources. Even combining the two lists, it is likely that at least a few other small or short-lived firms operated in New Bern around 1823. Cross verification with the 1820 Census is fruitless, because specific occupations were not recorded for individuals.

[25] U.S. Census, 1850, Martin County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; William Thomson, *Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory* (Baltimore: William Thomson, 1851); John J. Campbell, *The Southern Business Directory and General Commercial Advertiser* (Charleston, SC: Steam Power Press of Walker & James, 1854). No complete list of merchants exists for Williamston at any point in the antebellum period, and no list exists for the 1820s. By compiling data from the extant directories and the 1850 Census, an estimate of ten firms operating in Williamston is reached circa 1850.

merchants or their agents had to purchase an entire season's or year's worth of goods at a single time. They made these purchases on credit and usually sold on credit to their local customers, leading to the risk of financial collapse in the case of their customers' insolvency.[26]

Relying on easy credit, merchants in the early 1830s expanded their operations. Cushing Hassell quickly worked his way from clerk to partner in a firm to independent merchant to employer of clerks. In 1834, established New Bern merchant Jacob Gooding partnered with Calvin Morris of the nearby rural village of Trenton to open a store there run by Morris but supplied by Gooding, splitting the profits. However, Hassell and Gooding's good fortunes were tested in the years that followed. By 1840, Gooding was unable to pay for goods delivered from New York to his Trenton branch. Between the opening in Trenton and this incident, the whole nation had weathered two major financial crises.[27]

During the Panics of 1837 and 1839, Eastern North Carolina merchants felt the pain of a market in free fall. During the first panic, Jacob Gooding had several judgments against him ordering him to pay overdue debts. This example is illustrative of the merchants' fiscal vulnerability, as they were usually both creditors and debtors in this complex credit system.[28] The failure of Northern banks affected even the isolated Albemarle region acutely. In 1837,

[26] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 30-36.
[27] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC; Memorandum, 1 December 1834, Box 3, Folder i, Gooding Family Papers; NY Commissioner to Jacob Gooding, 22 July 1840, Box 3, Folder i, Gooding Family Papers.
[28] Financial Judgments, 1838, Box 4, Folder d, Gooding Family Papers. Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC; Biggs and Bros. Account Sheet with Battle and Bros. and notes, 18 May 1842, Box 6, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers. For a discussion of the destabilizing impact of the Panic of 1837 on Southern mercantile credit, see Atherton, Chapter 6. Atherton demonstrates that in effect, antebellum Southern merchants acted as credit middlemen, transferring their credit with Northern lenders to local planters and other customers through local credit policy and the sale of goods. Although local isolated farmers and planters would have struggled to find nearby sources of capital, merchant networks allowed these individuals to participate in the national credit system on a local level, thereby further entangling local economies in the national system. See also, Harold Livesay and Glenn Porter, "The Financial Role of Merchants in the Development of U.S. Manufacturing, 1815-1860," in *Explorations in Economic History* 9 (1971): 63-87.

Cushing Hassell described having incurred "great losses," particularly in naval stores and turpentine, which he had invested heavily in during the previous year of prosperity.[29] He termed the second instance of economic depression in 1839 a "revulsion," writing:

> The pressure came on again last winter in New York and embarrassment has extended over the whole country, business of all kinds nearly at a stand, and country merchants and city merchants barely holding their own. A mighty political revolution, however, has been effected and the prospect of better business will open afresh during the spring of 1841, and C. B. H.[assell] expects to share a little in the general prosperity. He has made a little money since he re-commenced with a new stock of goods, but would have made more but for dealing in naval stores whereby he has met with his old and usual fare—that of losses. He now feels determined to abandon the produce business altogether, and, in the Spring, after opening a new supply of goods, and thenceforth to sell goods for cash only.[30]

Here, Hassell hoped in the "mighty political revolution" of 1840: the election of the first Whig President of the United States.

President William Henry Harrison, unfortunately for Hassell, died soon after his inauguration, but the ostensibly pro-business Whigs nonetheless enjoyed popularity throughout much of Eastern North Carolina in 1840. Hassell's own people in Martin County voted Democrat, but the vast majority of the region resoundingly turned Whig in 1840 in response to the financial crisis.[31] The events of 1837 and 1839 clearly affected merchants drastically, and some merchants went bankrupt during this period, though no extant records show exactly which firms failed. Some merchants apparently put their hope in political changes. Most survived the

[29] Andrew J. Jalil, "A New History of Banking Panics in the United States, 1825–1929: Construction and Implications," in *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 7 (July 2015): 295-330; Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC.
[30] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC. Hassell, writing in his autobiography and journals, consistently uses the third person to refer to himself. "C.B.H." or "H" are his initials that he uses often in place of his name.
[31] Jerome M. Clubb, William H. Flanigan, and Nancy H. Zingale, *Electoral Data for Counties in the United States: Presidential and Congressional Races, 1840-1972* (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2006-11-13).

crises, but the panics continued to have effects into the new decade, the "mighty…revolution" of the Whigs notwithstanding.[32]

In the early 1840s, Eastern North Carolina merchants were still recovering from the economic turmoil of the late 1830s. Some Williamston merchants were rethinking their businesses altogether. Kader Biggs, merchant and cousin of Cushing Hassell, decided to move his enterprise north to Windsor in Bertie County in hopes of better business. His brother was decidedly convinced that competition from Plymouth to the east was too stiff, claiming, "Martin County is too poor and goods are sold at too small profits."[33] Cushing Hassell, on the other hand, was content to remain in his small town and resumed offering credit as normal to his Williamston customers after 1841.[34]

In New Bern, Jacob Gooding was still in business, but he was struggling financially. Once again in 1842, he was unable to pay a significant debt.[35] His good reputation and credit apparently survived both the panics of the 1830s and the continued downturn of the early 1840s, allowing him to avoid insolvency, but he continued to face financial difficulties on occasion. In 1847, for instance, he filed numerous suits against various delinquent debtors in the same day in response to a need for cash immediately following the Spring purchasing season, but only some of them were able to pay within months of the orders.[36]

The 1842 difficulties also affected merchants in Williamston and Windsor, as Hassell's relatives Joseph and Kader Biggs struggled to succeed after opening a new store. They quickly

[32] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC. See Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 47-60.
[33] William Biggs to Kader Biggs, 28 October 1841, Box 4, Folder 1, Kader Biggs Papers.
[34] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC; cf. Atherton, Chapter 6.
[35] Jacob Gooding, Promissory Note, 4 April 1842, Box 3, Folder i, Gooding Family Papers.
[36] Misc. Legal Proceedings, 29 March 1847, Box 3, Folder i, Gooding Family Papers; Misc. Legal Proceedings, 31 July 1847, Box 3, Folder i, Gooding Family Papers.

found that the Bank of Washington, the closest financial institution in neighboring Beaufort County, refused to accept money from the Bank of Virginia, as well as notes from Charleston, South Carolina. As Albemarle merchants, their trade with Virginia had left them with much of the worthless money on hand, and they tried throughout the spring to find someone to take their money, traveling as far as New Bern to find a bank willing to exchange it for sound currency.[37]

By the late 1840s, the economy had seemingly stabilized. Cushing Hassell and merchant D.W. Bagley of Williamston bought warehouses on the river to store their large stocks of goods. Prices were high due to international fluctuations.[38] In 1847, Hassell made major purchases and embarked upon a massive and expensive project to build a mansion for himself in Williamston that took more than a year.[39] Jacob Gooding's finances began to return to a sustainable condition. Hassell's cousin Kader Biggs prepared to move into a larger partnership in Norfolk, building on his success in North Carolina.[40] Optimism and credit had brought most merchants of the region through a difficult period of economic turmoil.

For some merchants, however, the success of the latter half of the decade was illusory. In 1850, Cushing Hassell audited his business and personal finances. His findings troubled him greatly. He discovered that he somehow owed an alarming amount of debt, with a stock of goods on hand worth nearly $20,000 bought primarily on credit. As debtor-creditors often did, he began calling in his own loans in earnest, spending much of his time attempting to get money from his existing customers.[41] The continual multi-level credit system made it difficult for

[37] Joseph D. Biggs to Kader Biggs, 21 Feb. 1842, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers;
Joseph D. Biggs to Kader Biggs, 7 March 1842, Box 4, Folder 2, Kader Biggs Papers.
[38] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC.
[39] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1847, Box 1, Folder 4, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1847-1848, Box 1, Folder 5, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1848-1850, Box 1, Folder 6, CBH Papers, UNC.
[40] Misc. Financial Records, Box 4, Gooding Family Papers; Solomon Cherry to Kader Biggs, 8 March 1851, Box 5, Folder 4, Kader Biggs Papers.
[41] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1850-1854, Box 1, Folder 7, CBH Papers, UNC; cf. Atherton, 125-129. See also

merchants throughout the decade to understand the true state of their affairs without dedicating substantial time to detailed accounting. In the following decade, Hassell would often spend hours late into the night in his counting room, paying much closer attention to his business's accounts than he had previously.[42] Throughout this period, merchants did whatever they could to improve business, from extending generous credit to stopping all credit altogether.

**The Typical Merchant in Eastern North Carolina**

Though there were significant differences between the merchant communities of New Bern and Williamston, Jacob Gooding and Cushing Hassell shared many common experiences. Though many merchants did not spend their entire lives in commercial enterprise as these two did, their experiences are illustrative of the typical merchant life in both a rural river town like Williamston and in a regional hub such as New Bern. Their career paths, education, and local involvement are strikingly similar, and they well represent their communities as examples.[43]

The career paths of the two men, though separated by distance and time, portray the experiences of a successful merchant. Both Hassell and Gooding rose from obscurity in the early nineteenth century to positions as clerks in their respective towns. After a period of apprenticeship, they both eventually opened their own independent stores using family connections for support. By the 1840s both had interests in second stores operated by a partner or clerk in another town but ended those relationships during the period of economic turbulence. As merchants, they both annually or semi-annually made the long voyage north to buy goods.[44]

---

Edward J. Balleisen, *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 1-21.

[42] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1850-1854, Box 1, Folder 7, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1854-1855, Box 1, Folder 8, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1855-1857, Box 1, Folder 9, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1857-1861, Box 1, Folder 10, CBH Papers, UNC.

[43] Though Hassell and Gooding shared much in common, there is no conclusive evidence that they ever met one another or had any mutual acquaintances.

[44] Cushing Hassell Letter Book, May 1857-January 1863 (passim), Box 2, Folder 24, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing Hassell to Bryant Bennet, 13 February 1853, Box 1, Folder 3, Bryant Bennett Papers, 1767-1902, Duke; Lawrence

Younger than Gooding, Cushing Hassell began his career in Williamston about 15 years later than his New Bern counterpart. After leaving his studies at the Williamston Academy in 1824, he took a position as clerk to a local merchant for a salary of $5 per month. He went on to take several clerking positions throughout the Albemarle region before returning to his hometown of Williamston in 1831 to open the firm of Williams and Hassell. After two such partnerships, Hassell opened his own store in 1837, which he operated for many years.[45]

Years earlier in New Bern, Jacob Gooding's career mirrored that of Hassell. Gooding began his career clerking for merchant John Wright Stanly as early as 1809. As clerk, his duties involved more than merely operating the store and keeping records. He acted as an agent of his employer, traveling to Northern cities and making purchases. In 1815, Jacob Gooding married Susan Stanly, the daughter of his employer, solidifying his social standing in the merchant community of New Bern after clerking for years. By 1820, he operated his own store on the waterfront of New Bern, remaining in business for more than four decades.[46]

Both Hassell and Gooding eventually grew their enterprises to be able to hire clerks until their sons were old enough to work as clerks in their stores. Though he had employed clerks in the past, by 1850 Jacob Gooding's two younger sons were eighteen and twenty, respectively, and were actively engaged as clerks in his store, even as the younger was finishing school.[47] By 1860, Gooding's youngest son was still working as a clerk, as was a newly acquired son-in-law,

---

Trimbly to Jacob Gooding, 22 October 1835, Box 3, Folder b, Gooding Family Papers; Stephen F. Miller Memoir, #371, pp. 1-8, ECU.

[45] Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC.

[46] J.D. Whitford, "Notes on John Wright Stanly," in *Publications of the Southern History Association* IV (Washington: Southern History Association, 1900), 471; Craven County Marriage Bond Abstracts, 1740-1868, NCSA, 134; Stephen F. Miller Memoir, #371, p. 4, ECU. Gooding married the daughter of his employer and received a waterfront inheritance from him. Jacob Gooding to Susan Stanly, 19 Jan 1815, Craven County Marriage Bond Abstracts, 1740-1868, NCSA; List of taxable property, 1828, Box 4, Folder a, Gooding Family Papers.

[47] U.S. Census, 1850, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA.

but Jacob Gooding Jr. had opened his own operation as a druggist.[48] Gooding's oldest son, Thomas T. Gooding, had clerked for his father in the 1840s before opening his own store.[49]

Gooding and Hassell were similar not only in business decisions but are in their goals. Hassell and Gooding both aspired to civic and religious office, seeking to enhance their reputations as fair, upstanding merchants. Both Hassell and Gooding invested in education by sending their children to school, and both sent at least one son to college to further their potential. They both were involved with and benefitted from the rise of internal improvements. Ultimately, both of these merchants' lives would be significantly changed by the coming of the Civil War, in which both had children or grandchildren become refugees or soldiers on the side of the Confederacy.[50]

These two merchants serve as excellent examples the Eastern North Carolina merchant experience. In the coming war, their experiences would diverge significantly due to the different military and political circumstances that prevailed in Williamston and New Bern. As of the antebellum period, however, there were few stark contrasts between the merchants of New Bern and Williamston besides the size of their communities and geographic location.

---

[48] U.S. Census, 1860, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA.
[49] Thomas T. Gooding to Mother, 15 July 1860, Box 1, Folder a, Whitehurst Family Papers, #617, ECU; Thomson, *Directory*.
[50] "N.C. Legislature," *Wilmington Journal*, 12 Jan. 1849, Wilmington, NC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1847, Box 1, Folder 4, CBH Papers, UNC; Wilson Collegiate Institute Board of Trustees Minutes, 1874-1893, Series 2, Folder 37, Sylvester S. Hassell Papers, #321, UNC; Abstract of sermons, Box 1, Cushing Biggs Hassell Papers, 1814-1926, Duke; Sylvester Hassell Commonplace Book, Box 1, Cushing Biggs Hassell Papers, 1814-1926, Duke; Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC; 1841 Craven County, NC School Children, tr. R. Allen Humphrey, 2002. Transcription of 1841 manuscripts held at NCSA; Nathan T. Gooding to Jacob Gooding, 29 June 1846, Box 3 Folder c, Gooding Family Papers. On internal improvement efforts in North Carolina, see Alan Watson, *Internal Improvements.* D.W. Bagley, Roanoke Steam Boat Company Records, 1856-1857, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, Entries for June-August, 1855-1857, Box 1, Folder 9, CBH Papers, UNC; Alan Watson, *Internal Improvements*, 125-136.

## Merchants and the Developing Sectional Crisis 1850-1860

At the start of the 1850s, there were an estimated ten stores in Williamston, while New Bern boasted well more than thirty.[51] In both areas, merchants were continuing to benefit from public and private internal improvements, an improving economy, and increased access to shipping. As the decade came to a close, Jacob Gooding Sr. was preparing for retirement, even as his son Jacob Gooding Jr. was entering the ranks of proper merchants. The younger Cushing Hassell, meanwhile, was at the height of his career and influence. At the same time, however, the United States was breaking apart at the seams. The ongoing conflict over the expansion and existence of slavery was threatening to divide the nation in two.[52]

From their very beginnings, North Carolina merchants depended on the credit and goods of their Northern suppliers. In the years before 1861, relations between the North and South deteriorated. Southern merchants continued to deal closely with Northerners throughout the 1850s, still making the seasonal voyages north to purchase goods, pay accounts, and establish new lines of credit, but their economic relationships with the North did not make them sympathetic to Northern political antagonisms. Cushing Hassell summarized his Southern view of the crisis in late 1860:

> National affairs get no better. A strong probability exists of the dissolution of the American Union. The Southern will likely separate from the northern states, on a/c of the subject of slavery. The north wishes to abolish slavery in the Union everywhere, and her people have already stolen and carried off hundreds of thousands of slaves from their masters and the Southern people are determined to submit to it no longer.[53]

---

[51] See Note 24. Thomson, *Directory*; U.S. Census, 1850, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA.

[52] For a thorough but dated introduction to the sectional crisis in North Carolina, see Joseph Carlyle Sitterson, *The Secession Movement in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939). For a more recent treatment of the sectional crisis on a national scale, see William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[53] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 14 December 1860, 1857-1861, Box 1, Folder 10, CBH Papers, UNC.

Based on this passage and others, Hassell's identification with the Confederacy was most closely linked to his slaveholding ideology. He noted the abomination of abolition – particularly the election of the "abolitionist" Abraham Lincoln – and the perceived ongoing theft of property in the form of enslaved people. As the crisis unfolded, Hassell continued to note in his diary with despair that the Union was crumbling around him at every turn. While he clearly supported the Southern cause ideologically, he feared the impending "dissolution of the American Union" and its clearly foreboding prospects for commerce.[54]

As the secession crisis continued, many Southern merchants fully expected to continue business as usual. Once the American Civil War began, however, the Northern blockade of Confederate states, including North Carolina, prevented them from doing so. The very way of life, not to mention the profits and status, that Eastern North Carolina merchants had spent a generation developing was under threat from outside force.[55] Though they knew national tensions between North and South were coming to a head in 1860 and were decidedly committed to the Southern cause, neither Gooding nor Hassell could have predicted the utter destruction of commerce, property, and social norms in their towns that the next five years would bring. In 1861, however, this destruction was still a distant threat, as Eastern North Carolina remained in Confederate hands.

[54] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 9 November and 14 December 1860, 1857-1861, Box 1, Folder 10, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 26 June 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

[55] For a discussion of merchant attitudes toward the sectional crisis of the 1850s and the secession crisis of 1861, see Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 122-132. Byrne notes that many Southern merchants' pragmatic reluctance to sever financial ties with the North conflicted with their ideological support of the South. This dichotomy of self-interest and ideological loyalty influenced the decisions of Eastern North Carolina merchants throughout the secession crisis and the shifting tides of occupation during the Civil War itself, as is shown in this thesis.

## Chapter 3: Secession, Blockade, and War – January 1861 to March 1862

Jacob Gooding and Cushing Hassell were part of a vibrant, growing merchant class in Eastern North Carolina at the start of 1861. Despite commercial success in New Bern and Williamston, however, national political tensions boiled over in the aftermath of the election of 1860, and the Southern states seceded one by one. These merchants had to balance competing interests of sectional loyalty and commercial profit. In secessionist New Bern, merchants faced growing public pressure as the secession crisis developed. For Cushing Hassell and merchants in Williamston, commerce was the highest priority only until the firing on Ft. Sumter, when a Confederate spirit gripped the town. As the United States blockaded the coast of North Carolina, merchants sought goods and profits wherever they could be had. During the first phase of the war, the strict Federal blockade and strong Southern identity of slave-holding merchants like Hassell and Gooding bred a strong loyalty to the Confederacy despite growing fears of the looming coastal invasion.

### Secession and Preparing for War: January – April 1861

As the sectional crisis intensified to a breaking point in late 1860 and 1861, merchants in Eastern North Carolina were not prepared for an extended war, nor were they expecting one. Even once the secession of Southern states began with the exit of South Carolina from the Union in December 1860, merchants throughout the South expected business to continue between the states that remained and those seceded.[1] However, Abraham Lincoln and the federal government had no intention of allowing rebellious states to continue free trade once war commenced.[2]

---

[1] See Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, Chapter 4.

[2] James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 313-316; David G. Surdam, *Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 1-8.

Unlike its brazen sister state to the south, North Carolina was slow to secede from the Union. Its citizens mostly adopted a position of waiting to see what may happen following the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860. Though some North Carolinians called for secession early in the crisis, its business class had complex commercial interests that were jeopardized by hostilities or separation. As 1861 developed, the long-unquestioned loyalty of merchants to the United States became a contentious issue. The question of secession brought all of North Carolina into an uneasy discussion of leaving the Union.[3]

Competing interests created a complex problem for merchants like Cushing Hassell or Jacob Gooding. On the one hand, merchants were financially and commercially dependent on the credit and supply system of Northern cities. The financial self-interest of merchants seemed to gravitate toward friendly relations with New York in particular, regardless of the secession question. The possibility of war threatened their supply networks. On the other hand, merchants were committed Southern slaveholders, and their wealthiest customers were the slaveholding planter elites of the surrounding area. In addition to their ideology and culture, merchants in both New Bern and Williamston had strong incentives to support the defense of slavery to maintain their commercial relationship with planters. These divided interests shaped the evolution of merchant loyalties over the course of the war, but the Southern identity and racial ideology of white merchants proved durable in divergent circumstances.[4]

In Williamston and elsewhere in North Carolina, there were divided opinions on the issue of secession in early 1861, but there was a strong sentiment that a decision should be made. In

[3] For a discussion of North Carolina Unionism in the early months of 1861, see Barton Myers, *Rebels Against the Confederacy*, Chapter 1. For a survey of events related to secession, J. Carlyle Sitterson, *The Secession Movement in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939). See also Barrett, 3-16; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 20-28.

[4] See Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 121-144. On the financial impact of secession on Northern lenders as well as their Southern trade partners, see Wells, *Southern Middle Class*, 225-227.

February 1861, the state legislature authorized a referendum on whether to hold a secession convention. In Martin County, the citizens of Williamston voted in the affirmative. Though a majority of the state's voting citizens voted against, each county elected a delegate at the original vote in case there was such a convention. Martin County elected Cushing Hassell, who had positioned himself as a man of intelligence and repute during his long service in various civic leadership roles, as its delegate to this convention. As the county and state sought to settle the issue politically, merchants began considering their loyalties and interests.[5]

Cushing Hassell and merchants across the region were extremely worried about access to Northern goods. As historian Frank Byrne puts it, "established businessmen with trade connections around the country viewed secession as a dire threat to their economic well-being." For decades, Eastern North Carolina merchants had depended on access to the Atlantic shipping network connecting them to New York. On February 11, 1861, Hassell joined other Williamston merchants at a meeting to decide on a unified course of action. At the meeting, the discussion centered on whether to continue business with the North and whether to buy any more goods while the national crisis continued. Their unanimous conclusion was to continue business and to purchase goods wherever they could be had the cheapest, so long as North Carolina remained in the Union. These merchants knew that the political pressure of secession could interfere with their businesses. However, they remained committed to their financial interests so long as they could profit without directly challenging their Southern identity, as evidenced by their unanimous commitment to buy goods "where they can get them cheapest," even from the North.[6]

---

[5] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 16 February and 8, 13 May 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; See James H. McCallum, *Martin County during the Civil War: Including a Roster of Troops from Martin County* (Williamston, NC: Enterprise Publisher. Co, 1971), Part 1. Cushing Hassell's exact position on secession as of February 1861 is unclear. He seems to have favored a reconciliation position at least in the early months of 1862, which is supported by his commercial decisions in February. See below.

[6] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 123; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11 February 1861, 1857-1861, Box 1, Folder 10, CBH Papers, UNC. For a discussion of merchant sentiment on these issues across the South, see Byrne, 121-128.

Williamston merchants put their plan into motion immediately. The day after the meeting, Cushing Hassell began compiling orders for a spring shipment. By February 15, he had mailed numerous letters to New York to order goods. Williamston merchants knew that this year was different and planned accordingly. Although Hassell and his colleagues did not yet know it, the coming blockade would prevent them from ordering another stock of spring goods from New York until 1866.[7]

While merchants in politically isolated Williamston did not yet value their Southern pride over their commercial self-interest, public sentiments in New Bern were strongly against continued trade with the North. New Bern was a center of Confederate support and military spirit in the region. By April 1861, there was vocal public pressure in New Bern for merchants to forego their seasonal trips northward to purchase new stocks of goods. Farther inland, merchants in Salisbury pledged to buy from Charleston and to boycott Northern suppliers. New Bern's most prominent newspaper called on merchants to preemptively buy goods solely from Southern suppliers despite the decades of partnership with Northern merchants.[8]

While New Bern merchants still had some goods on hand, their main supply line — from New York down the coast — was immediately threatened by the possibility of war. When President Lincoln declared a blockade of all Confederate ports on April 19, North Carolina was not among the affected states in the beginning. New Bern still had limited access to the Atlantic for trade elsewhere, as well as rail access to inland trade, but their long-standing practice was to

---

On merchant connections to New York, see Chapter 2.

[7] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11-15 February 1861, 1857-1861, Box 1, Folder 10, CBH Papers, UNC. Based on an examination of known letters and letter books, these letters are no longer extant.

[8] "Spring Goods," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 2 April 1861.

purchase goods in the North. They had to weigh their options carefully — proceed as usual with greater risk and public dissatisfaction or seek a new source of goods altogether.[9]

As merchants struggled to balance their dependence on Northern suppliers with their Southern commitments, the crucial moment of decision came when the first shots of the war were fired at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. North Carolina's public opinion quickly shifted in favor of secession. On April 15, North Carolina Governor Ellis famously refused President Lincoln's call for troops with the words, "You can get no troops from North Carolina." Ellis began the preparation of North Carolina's military forces immediately.[10] Even before the call for volunteers to defend the state issued by Governor Ellis, Eastern North Carolina had begun military preparations. Leading citizens raised funds, supplies, and volunteers to form military companies throughout the region. In New Bern and the surrounding area, numerous volunteer companies, including leading citizens and merchants, began to organize and prepare for war.[11]

Aside from questions about their Southern loyalties, merchants faced more pressing questions about the growing militarism in New Bern. Would they join the companies of volunteer soldiers forming throughout the area, or would they try to support the Confederate cause in other ways? On April 20, before North Carolina had even seceded from the Union, the merchants of the city closed their businesses at 3pm to allow a city-wide organization of the Home Guard at the local fairground.[12] Clearly the spirit of Southern nationalism sparked by the

[9] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 25 April and 18 May 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. On the Southern railroad network, see Surdam, *Northern Naval Superiority*, 72-84.
[10] See Barrett, Chapters 1-2. Quote from Governor John W. Ellis, "Reply by Governor Ellis to request by United States Secretary of War for troops from North Carolina," 15 April 1861, John Willis Ellis, Governor's Papers, NCSA. On Unionism in North Carolina, see Myers, *Rebels Against the Confederacy*. See also, Steve M. Miller, *North Carolina Unionists and the Fight Over Secession* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2019). For a survey of the social and political conditions of North Carolina in 1861, see James H. Boykin, *North Carolina in 1861* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961).
[11] Gaddis, *Confederate Defense of Eastern North Carolina*, Chapters 10-13; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 28-57.
[12] "Close the Stores!," *Newbern Daily Progress*, 20 April 1861.

events at Ft. Sumter had spread throughout the professional class of New Bern. The crucial question, however, was whether military service or the pursuit of commerce was more important.

The same Confederate fervor that shook New Bern in April 1861 came upon isolated Williamston on the banks of the Roanoke River. News arrived on April 17 of the Battle of Ft. Sumter. The immediate response of the townspeople, including local merchants, was to fire the town cannon in support of the Confederate cause. They went so far as to raise the "flag of the Southern Confederacy" on the same pole that the American flag had once flown upon.[13] Eastern North Carolina towns small and large, though far from unanimous in their desire for war, were swept up in a new Southern nationalism even before North Carolina had seceded from the Union.

In Martin County, two companies of soldiers formed within weeks, with more to follow over the course of the war. Among the ranks of these companies were members of the merchants community – friends and family alike of Cushing Hassell. They soon left for Hatteras Island to assist in the defense of the coast. New soldiers began drilling in towns across the state, preparing to defend North Carolina and the South.[14]

Older merchants found ways to support the war effort without enlisting. D.W. Bagley, another prominent merchant in the community, had become a county commissioner in the years before the war to improve his standing in the community, and he continued in that capacity during the war. From April 1861 onward, he was closely involved in raising of troops and public discussion of Martin County's defenses.[15] Cushing Hassell and his former business partner

---

[13] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 17 April 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[14] Sylvester Hassell, "Life of Elder C. B. Hassell," in Cushing B. Hassell, *History of the Church of God, from the Creation to A.D. 1885; Including Especially the History of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association* (Middletown, NY: Gilbert Beebe's Sons, 1886), 928; U.S. Census, 1860, Martin County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; Sylvester Hassell, "Obituary of Martha Maria Hassell," in *Signs of the Times, and Doctrinal Advocate and Monitor* 65, no. 1 (1897): 700. The Roanoke Guards became Company F, 7th NC Volunteers (see discussion below). See McCallum, 25-70; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 29 April 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. For a discussion of military preparations in North Carolina, see Barrett, 17-29.
[15] D.W. Bagley, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke. For a brief biographical sketch of

Joseph D. Biggs were appointed agents of the county to receive and distribute bonds, funds, and other monetary affairs related to funding for the war effort and war relief.[16] As leaders of their community, the town expected its merchants to contribute to the military moment.

With many North Carolina soldiers absent fighting in the first battles of the Civil War in Virginia, the state government turned to preparing defenses of the coastline. The Outer Banks that had so long protected the inland sounds of the state became a key military objective. Men from throughout the region, including free blacks paid by Cushing Hassell, converged to erect forts to defend the inlets and islands of the coast that controlled access to the sounds, rivers, and towns of Eastern North Carolina. These preparations later proved sorely inadequate, but they demonstrate that the people of the region were aware of the need for defense.[17]

**Summer of War: May – August 1861**

While the coast itself was secure the first months of the war, the Federal blockade was initially more devastating to merchants than any hostile land force. The United States Navy had effectively cut off North Carolina's coastal access to shipping by mid-May 1861. As historian David Surdam has demonstrated, the naval blockade of the South was extremely effective in preventing general shipping, particularly direct shipping from Northern ports. This blockade tightened even further in the spring of 1862 as United States military operations captured several major ports in the South effectively ending all shipping from traditional centers of trade with Eastern North Carolina. Merchants like Cushing Hassell, Jacob Gooding, and so many others

Bagley's life in the war years, see McCallum, 18-20.

[16] D.W. Bagley, 11 May 1861, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke.

[17] See Barrett, 30-35; Gaddis, Chapters 10-11. Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 13 May, 21 August, 10 September, and 20 December 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

who had traded primarily with Northern cities were forced to find new suppliers or stop all new purchasing of goods until some solution to the blockade could be found.[18]

Some members of the merchant class in Martin County personally embraced the defense of their state at the forefront of the mobilization effort, enlisting in one of the several companies formed in the county beginning in May 1861. Merchant L.L. Clements of Hamilton, who had been merchandising in the county for more than a decade, organized and was elected captain of the Hamilton Guards. He left his wife and young daughter with extended family and left for the defense of the coast. John Calhoun Lamb of Williamston, who had been a local merchant and hotel owner for several years, organized the Roanoke Guards and served as its first captain. These two companies formed the backbone of Martin County's early involvement in the war, serving at Forts Clark and Hatteras on the coast.[19]

Merchants did not, of course, only serve as officers, and many had family members serve in the Confederate military.[20] Two of Cushing Hassell's young sons, both experienced in the mercantile trade, also joined the Roanoke Guards under Lamb. The first, Theodore Hassell, was promoted to first sergeant, while his step-brother Benjamin Jewitt served as paymaster of the company, drawing on the clerking skills he learned working in his step-father's store.[21]

---

[18] See David G. Surdam, *Northern Naval Superiority*, 1-10, Chapter 1. Surdam shows that the blockade became increasingly effective over the course of the war. The sharp reduction in successful blockade running from 1861 to 1862 across the South is particularly relevant, as North Carolinians were only able to import goods directly through Wilmington in the far southeast of the state.

[19] McCallum, 48-50, 107-114, 136-141; U.S. Census, 1860, Martin County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30-31 August 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; D.W. Bagley, page 116, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke. The Hamilton Guards were Company G, 7th NC Volunteers. The Roanoke Guards were Company F, 7th NC Volunteers.

[20] On the strong family bonds of merchants, see Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 77-120, 145-178. On the importance of kinship networks in Southern culture, see Wells, 111-132. For examples of merchants with sons or relatives in the Confederate military, Jacob Gooding Sr., Cushing Hassell, Samuel Street, and John C. Lamb.

[21] McCallum, 48-50, 132-141; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6 September 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; *NC Troops*, 6:155-165. For service records of North Carolina enlistees including demographic details, see Louis H. Manarin, Weymouth T. Jordan, Matthew M. Brown, and Michael W. Coffey, *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*, 20 Vol. (Raleigh, NC: Dept. of Archives and History, 1966-2013) (abbreviated throughout as *NC Troops*).

Merchant John G. Hyman joined the 3rd NC Cavalry, as did fellow merchants Jackson Lowe and Eli Biggs, a close relative Cushing Hassell.[22] F.W. Moore, once a merchant and a former clerk of Cushing Hassell, served as a captain of the local militia and later led a company of men to assist in the defense of Hatteras Island. Most existing merchants, however, remained in New Bern and Williamston when the war began to continue merchandising rather than enlisting.[23]

Though the citizens of Williamston had openly supported the Confederate cause as early as mid-April 1861, the Federal blockade of the North Carolina coast took considerable time to implement, allowing trade to continue temporarily. Cushing Hassell and other merchants continued to receive shipments from the Atlantic on the Roanoke River throughout the month of April, but this old commercial lifeline soon fell silent as the blockade ordered by President Lincoln took effect.[24] By May 18, 1861, the blockade had effectively cut off the Williamston and New Bern merchant communities from the Atlantic world.[25]

Once North Carolina formally seceded on May 20, 1861, merchants had little choice but to accept their new situation. Even had they wanted to continue trade with the North illegally, doing so would have been difficult, as the network of credit that existed prior to the war broke down in 1861. As Jonathan Wells argues, "the economic ties forged between businesses in the North and the South also endured to the moment of secession and war." They endured no further, however. North Carolina merchants' interests were married to the Confederacy.[26]

---

[22] *NC Troops*, 2:229; McCallum, 163; *NC Troops*, 2:231-232; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 14 September 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[23] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 2 September 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[24] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 25 April 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. See Surdam, *Northern Naval Superiority*, 1-8.
[25] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 18 May 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[26] "Lincoln's Blockade, *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 6 August 1861. Quote from Wells, *Southern Middle Class*, 209. See also Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 22-30. Northern lenders, who had relied on credit reporting agencies like R.G. Dun & Co. to extend credit across the South since the 1830s, were suddenly in the dark. Not only did they no longer have any reliable information on the financial state of their debtors, they had no way to call in their debts. The precarious national system of credit and merchandising that depended on access to national trade, communication, and information suddenly ceased functioning. Though the large Northern firms could survive the

The infectious military spirit in Eastern North Carolina did not dissipate when fighting began. Prominent New Bern merchant S.R. Street had been operating in the city for decades, much like Jacob Gooding. Though they were both too old for military service, their sons were not. In June of 1861 as the war was beginning, Street's oldest son William J. Street enlisted as a first sergeant. The same month he had enlisted, his younger brother Samuel Street Jr. also enlisted in the same company and was wounded at Malvern Hill.[27] Jacob Gooding Jr., the only of his brothers to serve, was a prominent druggist in New Bern before the war. He, along with many of his fellow merchants, were members of the city's militia and prepared to defend it.[28] Merchant Benjamin Leecraft from nearby Beaufort tried to form a company in June 1861, though he failed to gather enough men. He only managed to form a local guard company due to Carteret County's lack of enthusiasm for the wider war.[29]

As manufacturing in the region slowed drastically, the enslaved people that merchants often hired out to local enterprises were sometimes returned. Cushing Hassell welcomed the return of several that he had hired out that year to shingle manufacturers, as he shifted much energy into the planting of corn, potatoes, and other food crops due to the war and blockade. As

temporary loss of their Southern network that formed only a fraction of their business, North Carolina merchants who depended primarily on Northern suppliers were in a substantially different situation. See Edward Neville Vose, *Seventy-five Years of the Mercantile Agency, R.G. Dun & Co., 1841-1916* (Brooklyn, NY: R.G. Dun & Co., 1916); Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 121-151.

[27] *NC Troops*, 3:471; "Street, Samuel R. (Craven County)" 10 July 1916, North Carolina, Confederate Soldiers and Widows Pension Applications, 1885-1953, NCSA; U.S. Census, 1860, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1850, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; "North Carolina Marriages, 1759-1979", database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FZY3-PJX : 14 February 2020), Wm. J. Street, 1878. William Street was promoted to Lieutenant in November 1861 and survived the war, staying with his company until its surrender at Appomattox. Both of the Street sons returned to New Bern after the war. They enlisted in Company K, 2nd NC State Troops.

[28] *NC Troops*, 19:21-31; Craven Heritage, 148. As a store owner that primarily sold goods, druggists were a type of specialized merchant.

[29] James Rumley, *The Southern Mind Under Union Rule: The Diary of James Rumley, Beaufort, North Carolina, 1862-1865*, Judkin Browning ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), 9-13; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 35-36.

the war negatively affected business, Hassell spent more and more effort in his farming, which had long been primarily supplemental. As the summer months continued, Hassell realized that the local area and his own family would need access to corn and other foodstuffs, particularly as more Martin County men joined the Confederate forces and left their farms. Hassell's motivations for increasing food production were multi-faceted. His records indicate that much of it was for his own personal supply, but part of it was for sale in his store, for distribution to the families of soldiers, or for sale to the military.[30]

Cut off from the Atlantic, merchants turned elsewhere for trade. The Albemarle region's longstanding commercial connection to Norfolk gave Williamston and the other towns of northeastern North Carolina ready access to at least one remaining commercial hub. Williamston merchants renewed their ties to family and contacts in Confederate-controlled Norfolk.[31] While it was in Confederate hands in the first phase of the war, Norfolk offered a vital market for Martin County exports (such as shingles, rags, beeswax, wine, and most importantly cotton). As the local kings of shipping, merchants had long coordinated such water-based shipping on behalf of local manufacturers and planters and continued to do so during the war.[32] Norfolk also became a source of much-needed goods for Williamston merchants, though its capacity as a source of domestic goods was tiny compared to New Orleans, New York, Charleston, or even Wilmington.[33]

---

[30] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 2 and 7 May and 14 June 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Enslaved labor was essential to Hassell's farming enterprise, though he did not operate a large plantation.
[31] Cushing B. Hassell, Letter Book, correspondence with Norfolk, 12 October 1860, Box 2, Folder 24, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6 and 29 August, 19 and 25 September, 11 November, and 2 and 4-5 December 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[32] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 4-5 December 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Hassell loaded multiple vessels for shipping exports to Norfolk during the first phase of the war. This access was cut off by the occupation from early 1862 to the end of the war.
[33] On the comparative exporting capacity of Southern cities including Norfolk in 1860, see David G. Surdam, "The Union Navy's Blockade Reconsidered," in *Naval Blockades and Seapower*, Bruce A. Elleman and S.C.M Paine, Eds. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 62. Trade with Norfolk was only available during the first phase of the war, however, and closed when Norfolk was captured by Federal forces in May 1862.

In addition to Norfolk, Williamston merchants also looked to other towns on the Eastern North Carolina sounds for goods. As the leading commercial center, New Bern still had goods in the early part of the war. In late July 1861, Cushing Hassell and his son Alonzo traveled to New Bern, a rare destination for his business interests, to procure goods. He spent five days on the trip purchasing goods at auction and from merchants in New Bern, focusing on sugar and molasses, items that were traditionally imported from elsewhere. Hassell chartered a schooner to ship the large quantity of goods back through the sounds to Williamston. Even when they arrived, some were missing, leading Hassell to believe that the captain was dishonest, but the circumstances of war prevented him from pressing the matter any further than complaining.[34]

In a typical year, Hassell would have made such a purchasing trip not to New Bern but to New York. The timing of the trip also was atypical, as his purchasing trips were usually in March.[35] Having lost access to normal trade lines, the annual pattern of trade became much more irregular for North Carolina merchants. From Hassell's description, it is clear that though new goods were scarce in Williamston due to the blockade, New Bern was still a viable center of trade for Eastern North Carolina. Other rural merchants likely traveled to New Bern to secure goods, as it was the only option in the area left once access to the Northern cities ended abruptly in 1861.[36]

Some New Bern merchants were still able to procure goods despite the blockade. Merchant Emmet Cuthbert procured new military supplies in July. Established merchant John Harrison claimed to have a new stock of goods in August 1861. The exact supplier of these

[34] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, entries 27 July to 6 August 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[35] Hassell Diary, March 3-14, 1857, Box 2, Folder 9, CBH Papers, UNC; Hassell Diary; Hassell Diary, March entries 1853, Box 2, Folder 7, CBH Papers, UNC.
[36] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, entries July-August 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Misc. Advertisements, *Newbern Daily Progress*, 1 July 1861; Misc. advertisements, *Newbern Daily Progress*, 22 January 1862.

goods is unknown. The blockade rendered contact with the North nearly impossible, but some blockade runners, smugglers, or privateers could still bring in goods from the sea, and New Bern still had access to Norfolk by water and the inland cities by rail.[37]

As the war developed elsewhere in the early summer of 1861, neither New Bern nor Williamston were under any direct threat of attack or loss, generating a sense of security in these towns.[38] Though the war remained distant, however, its effects were certainly felt in Eastern North Carolina. In August, Federal forces made the first serious attempt to gain a foothold on the coast of the state, assaulting and capturing Fort Clark and Fort Hatteras on the Outer Banks, capturing nearly two hundred soldiers from Martin County and other units, including merchants L.L. Clements and John Lamb. Still serving in the Roanoke Guards, Cushing Hassell's two sons were among those captured. When most of the two Martin County companies were captured at Hatteras Island on August 28, 1861, these merchants traveled once more to New York, but not to purchase goods from friends and creditors. They entered New York harbor as prisoners of war.[39]

**No Longer Secure: September-December 1861**

After August, it was apparent that the region was not as safe as its residents had once believed. The Outer Banks, a shield that had for centuries been a barrier between the inland

[37] J.M.F. Harrison, "New Goods" advertisement, *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 10 September 1861; Emmet Cuthbert, "Just Received" advertisement, *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 10 September 1861; Morrill, 136-137. Some of the goods available in New Bern were likely obtained from Confederate privateers operating out of the Pamlico Sound. In the early months of the blockade, some Confederate privateering vessels were able to capture passing merchant ships by using Hatteras Inlet and the Confederate works there to hide in the sounds. One of the primary motivations of the Federal expedition that captured Hatteras Island in August 1861 was the suppression of this activity. Gideon Welles to S.H. Stringham, August 10, 1861, *ORN* 6:71-72; J. Kittredge & Co. to Gideon Welles, Boston, August 7, 1861 *ORN* 6:72; Thomas O. Selfridge to Gideon Welles, August 10, 1861, *ORN* 6:72-73; Albert Kautz to Gideon Welles, 20 November 1861, *ORN* 5:744-745. For discussion of contraband, Confederate blockade running, and privateering, see Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running during the Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988). Phillip Leigh, *Trading with the Enemy: The Covert Economy During the American Civil War* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2014); Ludwell H. Johnson, "Contraband Trade during the Last Year of the Civil War," *Journal of American History* 49, no. 4 (March 1963): 635–652.

[38] Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 49-51; McCallum, 94-97.

[39] McCallum, 48-50, 132-141; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6 September 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; *NC Troops*, 6:155-165. On the Hatteras expedition, see Barrett, Chapter 4.

towns and the outer world, had now fallen. Though the United States did not immediately press farther into the area, the looming threat of invasion hung over every town on the sounds, particularly at New Bern due to its key location and railroad access to inland North Carolina. As the war dragged on, merchants, townspeople, and planters in the region began to exhibit serious alarm at the thought of invasion.[40]

Though access to the Atlantic shipping trade was lost, Williamston merchants were not totally without river-based shipping with routes to Norfolk and New Bern yet open, and they did not expect to permanently lose such access. This optimistic planning is clear in the activities of local merchants in repairing and expanding the river landing in Williamston to receive and send goods in late 1861. Cushing Hassell himself was engaged for weeks in overseeing a project to expand and improve the public wharf near warehouses owned by him and other merchants like D.W. Bagley. Though they desired to expand their commercial opportunities, their access to goods did not improve but rather declined as the war progressed.[41]

As the fall approached, Cushing Hassell continued selling goods at a reduced volume, with the vast majority of these sales on existing credit accounts. Though he continued to settle accounts and collect debts, much of the local commercial activity carried on without secured payment, much as it had before the war. After the blockade began, however, merchants themselves had more difficulty obtaining credit. Still, they could not forget their existing debts, despite the loss of contact with their Northern suppliers.[42]

---

[40] See Barrett, Chapters 3-4; Morrill, Chapter 6. Powell, *Four Centuries*, 8, 29-30; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 45-63; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6, 14, and 25 September and 4 November 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; McCallum, 48-50.

[41] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 26 September and 28 November 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

[42] Misc. Promissory Notes, Box 10, Folder 3, Kader Biggs Papers; Misc. Receipts, Box 8, Folder 1, Kader Biggs Papers; 1852 Inventory, Box 2, Folder 26, Sylvester Hassell Papers, #321, UNC; Misc. Correspondence, 1852-1853, Box 1, Folder 3, Bryant Bennett Papers, Duke.

These existing contracts began to come due for Cushing Hassell in November 1861, not at all as he expected. The Confederate government had passed the Sequestration Act of 1861 mere months before, which was intended to reduce Northern financial and property interests in the South. The act transferred ownership of all debts owed to firms or individuals in the United States to the Confederate government. Hassell and other merchants were now in the debt of their government. In Hassell's case, he owed thousands of dollars to numerous Northern firms. Unfortunately for Hassell, the eventual Confederate defeat rendered his debt payments to the Confederacy void and renewed all his antebellum debts with the original parties. In 1861, Merchants had to continue to operate with whatever goods they could find or sell using whatever credit available, while maintaining antebellum debt now owed to the Confederacy.[43]

As the end of 1861 drew near, merchants in New Bern and Williamston remained in a militarized society, though war had not yet reached their storefronts. Although they faced no property damage from the war in 1861, some merchant's stores in New Bern were converted for military use as depots under Confederate governance, much as they would be under Federal occupation.[44] In November 1861, wealthy New Bern merchant Joseph Whitty organized and commanded the last company to enlist from New Bern. Whitty had spent his youth in neighboring Jones County but had lived in New Bern since his marriage there in 1852. He would be captured during the coming invasion of Eastern North Carolina, but as a committed

[43] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 18, 21, and 25 November 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Contract with Hassell, May 8, 1866, Box 9, Folder c, Manning Papers, ECU. No contemporary total of the debt exists, but later accounts show he owed at least in excess of $7,000, likely much more. Hassell's creditors granted him extensions after the war because of their relationship, his commitment to repaying them, his wartime losses, and the fact that he had already paid the debts to the Confederate government. Cushing Hassell to John E Moore, New York, 25 July 1865, Box 9, Folder c, Manning Papers, ECU; Cushing Hassell to William Bryce, New York, 1 August 1865, Box 9, Folder c, Manning Papers, ECU; Misc. Promissory Notes, Box 9, Folder c, Manning Papers, ECU; North Carolina, Vol. 15, p. 55-75, R.G. Dun & Co. credit report volumes, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA. See also Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, Chapter 4. On the Sequestration Act, see Daniel W. Hamilton, *The Limits of Sovereignty: Property Confiscation in the Union and the Confederacy during the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 82-100.

[44] "Has Arrived," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 12 November 1861. On policy under occupation, see Chapter 4.

Confederate, he returned to service after his release.[45] The Confederate spirit and presence in the town was strong, but the public grew impatient with high prices and the loss of prosperity.

By November 1861, the citizens of New Bern were growing in unrest against the economic conditions of the war. A public meeting at the courthouse decried the wartime speculation that some unnamed merchants were engaged in, charging "exorbitant prices" for basic necessities. The resolutions passed by this meeting specifically accused these men of "aiding and abetting Lincoln" through their hoarding and price gouging. While this practice was common enough in public perception to provoke a great number of citizens, the local newspaper defended the merchant community, noting that they failed to name even one specific merchant in the meeting. The editors wrote, "we don't know who is guilty but we know many that are innocent." Therefore, it is likely that while some merchants were charging unreasonable prices, most operated without the most extreme speculation in whatever sales they were able to make.[46]

A contemporary parody of the well-known poem "Oft in the Stilly Night" was printed in the New Bern weekly paper in late November. The final stanza of "The Debtor's Lament" well captures the feeling of local citizens toward the economic situation brought on by war:

> Oh! hear the cries of woe!
> When blockade brings starvation,
> And every grocery store
> And merchant in the nation,
> Will give the lash and sell for cash,
> At three times credit prices;
> And if I choose to read the news,
> 'Tis Cash for last advices.
> Thus in the stilly night, &c.[47]

---

[45] Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 32; U.S. Census, 1860, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1850, Jones County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; *NC Troops*, 8:505. He commanded Company K, 31st NC Troops.

[46] "Speculators – Extortioners, Etc.," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 26 November 1861; "Salt for Table Use," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 17 December. In the fall of 1861, there was a salt shortage in New Bern. Locals who had it were either hoarding it or selling it in bulk at high prices. Citizens wanted it to be sold, if not at reasonable prices, at least in small quantities until more production of salt could be made locally.

[47] "The Debtor's Lament," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 26 November 1861.

The isolation of the Federal blockade, the inflated prices of available goods, and the difficulty to procure credit characterizes the feelings of New Bernians. Another stanza laments: "The claims for Cash around me; The 'ups and downs,' the duns and frowns, And thousand threats to sue me." This same poem was reprinted in other North Carolina newspapers in coming months. In the early phase of the war when goods were scarce due to the blockade and fair credit and prices were even more scarce, the reputation of New Bern merchants that they had spent years developing was their only defense against such popular unrest.[48]

As in much of the Confederacy, money in New Bern was scarce. Gold specie was nearly impossible to find, but it had not been common before the war either. As one local paper wrote, "meat is more abundant than money."[49] In December 1861, cash became even harder to find because local merchants stopped accepting Virginia money despite the fact that Norfolk (by way of the canals) was one of the few open sources of supplies to New Bern.[50]

Over the course of 1861, Cushing Hassell and Jacob Gooding saw the deep, violent political divisions of the United States lead to secession and war. Merchants' goods were running low by the end of the year. In New Bern, public unrest grew in response to both economic conditions and fears of Federal invasion. In Williamston, Cushing Hassell's store was still operable with goods to sell, and New Bern merchants still had access to some goods. But inflation, high demand, and low supply adversely affected commerce in both towns. Through the

[48] "The Debtor's Lament," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 26 November 1861; "The Debtor's Lament," *The Hillsborough Recorder,* 11 December 1861; "The Debtor's Lament," *The Hillsborough Recorder,* 25 December 1861. The poem is credited to the *Selma Reporter,* but the author or precise original publication is unknown. The reference to "duns" is likely a wordplay on the R. G. Dun & Co. credit agency.
[49] "Pork," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 17 December 1861; "Specie," *Newbern Weekly Progress,* 17 December 1861.
[50] "Why is it?," *Newbern Weekly Progress,* 24 December 1861. Currency inflation was a problem throughout the war. By the end of March 1862, Confederate currency was inflated to 1.5 times the rate of United States currency. McCallum, 14-15.

growing economic decline, merchants remained vigorously supportive of the Confederate cause and of their sons and fellow storekeepers that had joined the ranks of the Confederate military,

**Fears Growing and Business Shrinking: January-March 1862**

In January, fear of a potential Federal invasion was rampant in New Bern. The town's newspaper reported that an invasion was mere weeks away as early as January 2, 1862, calling on the local militia to drill "day and night" and condemning those who refused as traitors to home, country, and God.[51] As one Confederate soldier stationed in New Bern's defenses wrote his father, "the town is tourn up So bad that they are Afraid to buy any thing for nearly all of the women is gon up the Cunty and Some of the men we all expect thair will be A battle here Soon."[52] The citizens and consumers of New Bern, already in a wartime state, began to hear rumors of an imminent invasion of their town, leading many to leave town and those that remained to be conservative in their purchasing.

These rumors and fears were well-founded. After many months of silence on the coast, the United States finally advanced beyond its position on the Outer Banks into North Carolina itself. In January 1862, General Ambrose Burnside embarked toward North Carolina with a force of more than 10,000 men, arriving in early February. Using the vital access points captured the previous year, this force proceeded to capture Roanoke Island and demolish remaining Confederate naval resistance, permanently securing control of the sounds.[53]

The townspeople of New Bern were in a panic even before the Burnside's arrival on the coast. This panic led to a variety of reactions: some people fled the area with whatever they

[51] "Arm and Drill," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, 7 January 1862.
[52] John Wesley Williams to F.H. Williams, 22 January 1862, John Wesley Williams Papers, 1861-1863, Duke, transcript accessed via *Private Voices* at https://altchive.org/private-voices/. Spelling errors original.
[53] See Morrill, *Civil War in the Carolinas*, Chapters 10-11; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 55-58. On the 1862 Federal invasion of North Carolina, generally known as the Burnside Expedition, see also Richard A. Sauers, "General Ambrose E. Burnside's 1862 North Carolina Campaign" (PhD Diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1987). (The Pamlico and Albemarle Sounds primarily)

could carry, some prepared to actively fight or even destroy their town to prevent its capture, and still others stayed in their homes to wait and see. When the Federal fleet arrived, one officer of the 33rd NC remarked that in New Bern, "it took two extra trains to carry the people away."[54]

The Confederate forces in New Bern knew that the city's defenses were insufficient and began looking for supplements to bolster manpower. New Bern merchants such as Emmet Cuthbert, William Cleve, Nelson Whitford, S. R. Street, Stephen Street, John Bangert, Israel Disoway, John Harrison, and Jacob Gooding Jr. were longtime members of the local militia. They along with others were drafted into a special battalion of local defense troops in January 1862 due to growing fears of an imminent invasion.[55] Though they did not enlist in the military to serve in the wider war, they were prepared to fight in the defense of New Bern.

While New Bern was panicking in face of invasion, isolated Williamston was still relatively quiet. Business was depressed as sales and demand decreased further with the start of a new year. Cushing Hassell, in comparing his store's monthly sales to antebellum levels, noticed that sales were down drastically. In September 1861, he lost more than $2,000 compared to previous years, and in November he sold only $1,500 worth of goods. His retrospective marks at the end of 1861 were pessimistic, noting that sales had "fallen off very much" during the month and the entire year. In January 1862 he sold only $1,200 in goods. Even still, scarcity forced him to seek goods wherever they could be had.[56]

---

[54] J. H. Saunders to Mother, 23 January 1962, Folder 6, Joseph Hubbard Saunders Papers, #650, UNC, quoted in Barrett, 98. On the flight of citizens from New Bern, see Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 56-58. Browning demonstrates that most white natives of the city left if they were able, but acknowledges it is impossible to determine exactly who fled. Evidence in Chapter 4 demonstrates that numerous merchants remained, at least for a time, after the occupation of the city began.

[55] *NC Troops*, 19:12-31. This unit was Company B, Clark's Special Battalion (Local Defense Troops).

[56] North Carolina, Vol. 15, p. 60, R.G. Dun & Co. credit report volumes, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30 September, 30 November, and 31 December 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 31 January 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

William Weathersbee, a Mississippi native who had been active as a merchant in Williamston for several years, sold out his entire remaining stock of goods in January 1862 to his father-in-law Cushing Hassell in exchange for farmland and a house for his family. Even after leaving the mercantile profession, Weathersbee still occasionally assisted Hassell in his store, but he chose to turn to a more dependable source of sustenance. Weathersbee sought the self-sufficiency of farm life and was willing to let the wealthier and established Hassell take on the risk of wartime merchandising. Hassell too, however, was committing more and more energy to farming as the war dragged on and invasion neared.[57]

In addition to his struggling business and farming, Cushing Hassell found the war pushing him into too many other enterprises. He had taken on many roles in the antebellum period — merchant, clerk of court, Baptist minister, president of a local business association, local mail contractor, and more — and found himself compelled by his reputation to serve the public during the war. As a commissioner of the county, he was responsible for overseeing local defenses, war preparations, and provisions for soldiers' families. This last responsibility, especially, took much of his time. Because of his logistical experience as a merchant with storing, distributing, and transporting goods, he was given charge of distributing money, food, clothes, and other essentials to the families of soldiers throughout the county. These civic responsibilities took him totally away from his own business on some days, writing on New Years' Day 1862 that he was "so much engaged with public affairs as not to be able to attend to his own as it should be."[58]

---

[57] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, entries January 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; U.S. Census, 1860, Martin County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; Entry for Entry for William A. Weathersbee, Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms, compiled 1874 - 1899, documenting the period 1861 – 1865, NARA M346, NA. William A. Weathersbee should not be confused with William H. Weathersbee, a North Carolina native of the area that enlisted in Martin County's Co. F, 7th NC Volunteers and later in Co. F, 31st NC State Troops.

[58] On merchant civic involvement before the war, see Noah S. Shuler, "By Sea and By River: The Eastern North

That Hassell was consistently willing to invest so much time and energy into his civic commitments demonstrates his strong loyalty to his community and to the Confederate cause. He took no compensation from the county or the state for his relief work throughout the war. In part, his ideological commitment to the Confederacy and the service of his town was religiously motivated. As a committed Primitive Baptist minister, he perceived "a direct manifestation from God that such was his duty." His two sons who were captured at Hatteras Island also remained loyal through their months of confinement in New York as prisoners of war. They were released and returned home just as the state was under invasion, and soon sought to reenlist in the Confederate army.[59]

Though total upheaval was imminent in New Bern, those citizens and merchants who had not yet fled to the west carried on in early March 1862. The wardens of the poor were responsible for overseeing the county's poorhouse, which supported a significant number of poor whites in the years before the war. Before, during, and after the war, members of the merchant class were involved with the public poor relief. Established merchant Charles Kelly of New Bern continued operating as a warden until the last meeting of March 1862, mere days before the fall of New Bern to the Federals.[60]

By early March, the ranks of New Bern residents were thinning as Burnside's army approached. Nathan T. Gooding, son of Jacob Gooding Sr., was still working as a clerk before

---

Carolina Merchant Community, 1800-1861," unpublished conference paper, 2020 Phi Alpha Theta Biennial Conference, San Antonio, TX (2-5 January 2020). See also, Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography to 1840, Box 1, Folder 2, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Autobiography/Diary, 1840-1847, Box 1, Folder 3, CBH Papers, UNC. Quote from: Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1 January 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

[59] McCallum, 149-157; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30-31 August 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, entries February-March 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Quote from "Some reasons for staying at home," December 1864, Box 1, Folder 1, CBH Papers, UNC.

[60] U.S. Census, 1860, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; Entry for March 10, 1862, Craven County Minutes of the Wardens of the Poor, 1837-1881, NCSA (microform). Based on the large gap in records and the transfer of government to the invading force, it seems that this elected committee ceased to function during the war, leaving the problem of welfare administration to the Unionist government. On wartime poor relief in New Bern and Williamston, see Chapter 4.

the war, but he did not enlist in the army in 1861, choosing to stay with his family. When the invasion of New Bern seemed imminent, he left New Bern along with most of the Gooding extended family. Jacob Gooding Sr. and Jacob Gooding Jr. stayed in New Bern, however, choosing to face their enemy's advance and to protect their stores and property.[61] In March, Burnside's invasion forces approached New Bern itself, preparing for the battle to take this crucial city. Life would soon change for merchants like the Gooding's and their customers alike as Federal occupation began in New Bern.

## Conclusions

Though no major damage had yet come to Eastern North Carolina merchants in 1861, the United States blockade drastically limited their access to new goods. Some of them left their homes or like Jacob Gooding Jr. prepared to defend their town. New Bern, with access to goods via its railroad and occasional blockade runners, continued to exist as a commercial center in the region, though with only a shadow of its former prosperity. Hassell and other Williamston merchants, on the other hand, were forced to seek goods wherever they could be found — Norfolk, New Bern, or any other place offering goods and water transportation up the Roanoke River. As the invasion neared, commercial problems and fear grew across the region.

Once the war began, merchants faced numerous economic difficulties. The blockade of the coast drastically limited their ability to procure goods and cut them off from Northern sources of credit. Locally, demand for goods drastically decreased, due to the decrease in local population and the scarcities of war. Sales were decreased throughout most of 1861 and the start of 1862. By the end of March 1862, Cushing Hassell in Williamston had "very few goods" left

[61] U.S. Census, 1870, Baldwin County, Alabama, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA. "Alabama, Friends of Magnolia Cemetery, Funeral Books, 1911-1965," database, *FamilySearch* (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C34J-49YR-V?cc=3264362 : 8 October 2019), > image 1 of 1; Magnolia Cemetery, Mobile, Alabama.

in his store, while sales were still down.[62] Hassell himself attributed this decline in revenue to the war, writing that it was "on account of the war between North and South — which cut off the purchases and also the sales."[63]

In this first phase of the war, merchants supported the Confederacy loyally, even if they had not desired trade to stop with the North in the months before the war began. Some merchants chose to enlist because of their loyalty and desire to defend North Carolina and the South, but since the Unites States armies were distant, there was no real challenge to Confederate loyalty in Eastern North Carolina. However, this loyalty shared by Hassell, Gooding, and so many other merchants – both to Southern ideology and its very embodiment in the Confederacy – would be tested by the Federal occupation that would soon begin in Eastern North Carolina. Civilians' growing fears of an imminent Federal invasion were about to become reality.

[62] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 31 March 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Strangely, March 1862 saw a significant spike in cash sales (as opposed to credit) even over antebellum levels, indicating that there had been an influx in the availability of cash in that month for an unknown reason, possibly due to refugees fleeing through Williamston from Federal forces.
[63] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30 September 1861, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

## Chapter 4: Loyalties Tested and Commerce Destroyed – March 1862 to December 1863

After experiencing similar conditions in the first year of the war, merchants like Cushing Hassell and Jacob Gooding faced very different challenges in the war's second phase, as Federal troops turned sleepy Eastern North Carolina into a war zone. Yet the two aging men's lives and their shared concern for property, family, and conservation of antebellum culture were remarkably similar. The invasion and subsequent occupation of New Bern changed everything for Jacob Gooding and his fellow merchants within Federal lines. From demographic shifts to new access to Northern goods, the merchants of New Bern — those few that remained despite Federal occupation and the Northern newcomers to the city— actually had hope for improvement in their circumstances, if only they were willing to shift their loyalties.[1]

Throughout the second phase of the war, the Federal occupying force expanded its influence in the region, executing several overland expeditions, numerous forays up the rivers using gunboats, and intermittent raiding operations against towns on the Confederate frontier. Due to the looming possibility of raids and the scarcity of goods, much of the merchant class of isolated Williamston either fled the county or like Cushing Hassell turned to farming as their primary means of sustenance. Property destruction, official policy, and existing kinship bonds drove most merchants in both New Bern and Williamston to flee westward, abandoning their homes and towns. With Federal troops nearby, loyalty to the Union became a complex question for Gooding and Hassell alike, but their core Southern identity proved difficult to overcome.[2]

---

[1] For a discussion of this type of "shifting loyalties" throughout New Bern society, see Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*. Their loyalties had initially shifted from the United States to the Confederacy.

[2] During 1862 and 1862, Williamston was situated just on the edge of the Confederate frontier. As citizens of a frontier town, the merchants of Williamston saw their town, stores, and houses raided nearly a dozen times, resulting in a cumulative destruction of property, crippling fearfulness, and the eventual desertion of the town by most of its residents. The nearby Confederate garrison at Fort Branch theoretically offered protection but, in reality, failed to offer a significant defense of the town on any occasion. On this geographic framework, see Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 77-79.

## Burnside Arrives in Force: March to April 1862

Since February 1862, New Bern had seen General Burnside's expeditionary force move through the sounds of Eastern North Carolina. As the city lay undermanned and in panic, Burnside set out across the Pamlico Sound with more than ten thousand men from his position on the coast on March 12. The waters of the Pamlico that had brought commercial vessels to New Bern for more than a century now brought vessels of war. On March 14, the anticipation and fears of New Bern locals finally became reality, when the Federal force landed thirteen miles below the city and began its assault.[3]

Although Jacob Gooding was too old to join the fight regardless of whether he was willing, many of the city's merchants were personally involved in its defense. Gooding's own son, Jacob Gooding Jr., served alongside other merchants and professionals in a makeshift battalion of local defenders. They served with their fellow citizens in the defense of New Bern in March 1862, defending the crucial center of the Confederate line in the Battle of New Bern.[4]

It was this unit, comprised of local merchants and townspeople, that infamously gave way and fled the battle, exposing the flanks of the remaining forces. Jacob Gooding Jr. and the other merchants that fought alongside him may have been willing to defend their town, but they were not ready for the battle it would take to do so. Their unit disbanded after the battle, and they mostly remained in the city after its capture rather than serve in a larger war. They retreated to their homes but not farther. As historian Jarrett Ruminski argues, "multiple allegiances guided southerners' behavior" under occupation, including what he describes as "micro loyalties" – those to state, town, family, religion, commerce, or other non-national interests. The localism of

[3] Sauers, "General Ambrose E. Burnside's 1862 North Carolina Campaign," 287-290; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 55-58.
[4] *NC Troops*, 19:12-31; Barrett, 99-103.

Gooding Jr. and his fellow merchants, however, did not preclude their greater allegiance to the Southern cause. It reflected their priorities – their town and property first, but not at the expense of their Confederate loyalty.[5]

The sounds of artillery fire at the disastrous battle were audible to Cushing Hassell more than 60 miles away in Williamston, where the townspeople became acutely aware of their vulnerability. Used to counting goods and payments late into the night, Hassell began counting the number of Federal shells fired in the distance, troubled by the reality that faced him and his town. The day before, Hassell and his sons had walked down to his riverfront warehouse, and he commented that it may be the last time he would see his property before it would be destroyed by the "Lincolnites." With the fall of New Bern, Hassell felt this prediction growing in likelihood.[6]

After the disorderly retreat of the main Confederate line outside New Bern, Burnside's force had routed the remaining defenders with ease and moved into the city itself on March 14, 1862. Though most merchants fled from their would-be occupiers, those who remained – including Jacob Gooding Jr. and his fellow militia – relied on their connections to survive, with the looming question of their true loyalties still unclear. With the civilian government in shambles, the Federal occupying force under General Burnside took on the duties of governing the population in addition to its military objectives.[7]

Unlike the initial invasion of the Outer Banks in 1861, the Federal forces did not stop at New Bern in the weeks after its capture. They proceeded to take control of other towns and key points, including Beaufort, Washington, Fort Macon, and Elizabeth City. All these locations

---

[5] *NC Troops*, 19:12-31; Barrett, 99-103; Jarrett Ruminski, *The Limits of Loyalty: Ordinary People in Civil War Mississippi* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2017), 39.
[6] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 13 March 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Quote from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 16 March 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[7] On the initial occupation, see Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, Chapter 3.

were easily accessible from New Bern — either by boat on the sounds or by railroad. However, the United States did not have the manpower to permanently control the entire region by direct occupation. They placed garrisons in key locations during the following months: first at New Bern, then Washington, and then Plymouth to the north, which controlled the mouth of the Roanoke River.[8]

Once General Burnside's troops occupied these towns, New Bern rejoined the wider Atlantic world, but Cushing Hassell suddenly found himself on the frontier of Confederate North Carolina. Always relatively isolated, Williamston was now doubly disconnected from the world, as Federals gained control of the Roanoke River by the capture of Plymouth downriver. The Federal naval blockade that had blocked access to the Atlantic interposed its gunboats between Williamston and the sounds, cutting off all remaining shipping lanes. Suddenly, the Union was not a distant problem but a near threat to Hassell. He would soon learn just how near, but in the meantime the Federal force's immediate priority administering the occupation of key coastal towns like New Bern.

Though Jacob Gooding Sr. had essentially retired just prior to the war, he still owned a large store and goods on the New Bern waterfront in 1862. As the invasion drew near, he had taken steps to evacuate much of his family from New Bern, though he and a few close relatives remained. Advanced in years by 1862, he elected to remain in the town to protect his property, which he estimated was worth more than $18,000 at the time. However, he was not at the store when Federal troops initially entered New Bern and was therefore unable to prevent them from breaking down the door, looting his goods, and seriously damaging his property. He soon was drawn into the midst of public affairs by the arrival of an influential old friend, but at the start of

[8] See Barrett, Chapter 5; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, Chapter 3. Williamston's position along the Roanoke made the capture of Plymouth of concern to the town. Most raids on Williamston came by gunboat along the river.

occupation, he was like every other remaining New Bern merchant, waiting to see what the military government would do next.[9]

Early in the occupation, General Burnside chose the house of wealthy merchant Charles Slover for his headquarters, where it remained throughout the war. Like Gooding, Slover had been a merchant in New Bern for decades, but he predicted the conflict would come to New Bern and evacuated his family inland to High Point before the city fell, spending the whole war there. Though some modifications were made to his house to accommodate the military staff, it was largely protected from damage due to its status as headquarters. Slover took up residence there again soon after the war ended. From this new headquarters, General Burnside went about the business of occupation.[10]

One of Burnside's first acts of governance in New Bern was to appoint Vincent Colyer as Superintendent of the Poor on March 30. A native of New York, Colyer was an artist and minister who had helped found the United States Christian Commission in 1861. In his new position, he essentially took on the responsibilities held by the town's Wardens of the Poor before the war, but he also expanded them by including "Negro Affairs" in his operations. In this

[9] Jacob Gooding, Account of Damages, 1862, Box 5, Folder D, Gooding Family Papers; Edward Stanly to Captain of the Steamer *Cossack*, 28 May 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; Edward Stanly to Jacob Gooding, 4 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; J. Harvey Cricker (Company J, 25th Massachusetts), Affidavit, 22 January 1863, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; Barbara M. Howard Thorn, ed. *The Heritage of Craven County, North Carolina*, Vol. 1 (Winston Salem: Eastern North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1984), 148. This value estimate was his own for the purpose of a claim against the United States government, so it is reasonable to assume that it may be somewhat inflated. A more conservative estimate of $10,000 seems likely based on the inventory. Gooding owned several properties in and around New Bern. For a GIS reconstruction of those properties and maps of New Bern in the period, see Noah S. Shuler, "Jacob Gooding Papers," ArcGIS digital humanities project, East Carolina University, 2019.

[10] John B. Green, III, *New Bern Album* (New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1985), 54; North Carolina State Department of Archives and History, "Slover-Bradham House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972), Section 8; U.S. Census, 1860, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA. As a merchant and president of the Merchant's Bank in New Bern, Slover was very concerned about his assets, which he transferred to British banks prior to secession as a safety measure. This foresight preserved his wealth through the war despite his absence from the city.

capacity, he began administrating local schools, distributing food, and providing shelter to both poor whites and African Americans alike. Unlike the city's antebellum poor relief, he was wholly committed to the betterment of African American refugees in and around New Bern.[11]

As in other areas of the country controlled by United States forces, the provost marshal functioned as the military police for New Bern, regulating and administering affairs such as commercial regulations, discipline of troops in the city, and local police business. Col. John Kurtz, commander of the 23rd Massachusetts, took on the role of provost marshal for New Bern at the start of occupation. He attempted to establish order in the town that had just recently been gripped with panic and was still thronging with new residents after its capture. He prohibited the sale of liquor to soldiers by the sutlers and merchants of the city in an effort to maintain discipline. The town was policed by a rotation of soldiers, and merchants had to acclimate to the rule of military police.[12]

While Burnside was organizing the occupation of New Bern, Williamston remained beyond the reach of Federal control. The invasion was certainly a shock, but it was not immediately clear that citizens would have to worry. Indeed, as Cushing Hassell wrote in his journal in April 1862, "The Federal capture of the coast did not immediately shake the resolve of Williamston's Confederates."[13] Still, Hassell and his fellow merchants knew that there was a strong potential for damage. Unlike the Federal occupation that came immediately in New Bern,

---

[11] Vincent P. Colyer, *Report of the Services Rendered by the Freed People to the United States Army, in North Carolina, in the Spring of 1862, After the Battle of Newbern* (New York: G.A. Whitehorne, Printer, 1864), 6; David Silkenat, "'A Typical Negro': Gordon, Peter, Vincent Colyer, and the Story Behind Slavery's Most Famous Photograph," *American Nineteenth Century History* 15, no. 2 (2014):169–186.

[12] Joseph Barlow to Ellen Barlow, 26 June 1862, Joseph Barlow Collection, AMHI; John Kurtz to Edward Stanly, 14 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers. Barlow incorrectly spells Kurtz as "Kurtes." Kurtz resigned from the army in November 1862 and became police chief of Boston, Massachusetts in March 1863. "A brief history of the Boston, MA Police Department," Accessed November 27, 2020. https://bostonpolicemuseum.com/history.html; Roger D. Hunt, *Colonels in Blue - Union Army Colonels of the Civil War: The New England States: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont* (Atglen, PA: Schiffler Publishing, 2001), 102.

[13] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10 April 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

the people of Martin County had to wait, always wondering when they would see blue uniforms arrive to take their town and their property. With access to goods in the east diminishing day by day, Hassell bought whatever goods he could from stores in Tarboro to the west, which still had the luxury of nearby railroad access.[14] Though they survived the invasion, a long, tumultuous year awaited both Hassell and Jacob Gooding.

**Politics and Raids: May to July 1862**

In May 1862, after securing most of the more strategically valuable sites in Eastern North Carolina, the Federals began venturing farther inland and probing the Confederate frontier. On May 14, the first Federal raid of Williamston arrived by river. Williamston's position on the Roanoke that had for so long provided vital access to shipping made the town vulnerable to Federal gunboats. As he had predicted mere weeks before, Cushing Hassell's warehouse on the riverfront was one of the first targets to be raided, from which Hassell lost a substantial inventory of iron. The town's merchants also collectively operated a steamboat, which was at the time loaded with foodstuffs for sale to the Confederate government. The Federals took the boat with them, along with two African American crewmen. The soldiers told the townspeople that only public property was at risk, reassuring them that private property and slaves were not the target, but future raids would bring that promise into doubt in the minds of the town's citizens.[15]

[14] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 3-5 May 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. On railroad access, see James C. Burke, "North Carolina's First Railroads: A Study in Historical Geography," PhD diss. University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008. The vital Wilmington and Weldon Railroad passed by Tarboro.

[15] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 14 May 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Hassell had worked extensively on local steamboat operations prior to the war, traveling far to procure steamers for use on the Roanoke and serving as an officer of the Roanoke Steamboat Company. See Roanoke Steamboat Company Records, Bagley Diary, Duke. On Federal raids in Eastern North Carolina generally, see Barrett, 131-148. On Federal gunboat operations in the region during 1862, see Noah S. Shuler, "'Hazardous for our Gunboats': Early Federal Riverine Operations in North Carolina," unpublished conference paper, 2019 Phi Alpha Theta Virginia Regional Conference, Lynchburg, VA (29-30 March 2019).

When news came in the following days that Plymouth had been occupied by United States troops, Cushing Hassell and the other town commissioners began to fear that Williamston would be next as Federal forces moved upriver. The locals were more concerned about local outbreaks of smallpox and typhoid fever, however, which left some merchants bedridden and others sick even while keeping their stores open. On May 17, Williamston passed an ordinance of quarantine, preventing anyone from entering the town due to the epidemic.[16] While Williamston dealt with disease and fear of possible occupation, the citizens of New Bern were acclimating to their new circumstances.

Burnside's troops had quickly gained control of numerous towns in Eastern North Carolina. The army and its military police, however, were not equipped to fully govern the region without a Unionist civilian presence. To address this need, President Lincoln appointed former North Carolina congressman Edward Stanly as Military Governor of the state in May 1862. The grandson of New Bern merchant John Wright Stanly, Edward Stanly was a committed Unionist, but he was also a staunchly conservative Southerner who empathized with his former friends and acquaintances in New Bern, many of whom were within the merchant community. Stanly's policies, like the man himself, were openly sympathetic to the pre-war status quo of North Carolina, while the Northern military leadership had a significantly different vision for the early reconstruction of the state. When he arrived in New Bern on May 26, he began making efforts to reverse the progress of Vincent Colyer in aiding the education of blacks, which he argued was still illegal under antebellum state law. This conflict between the civilian government under Stanly and the military authorities continued over the following year.[17]

---

[16] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 17 and 19 May 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 18 and 30 June 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. The ordinance is no longer extant among known sources.

[17] See Colyer, *Report*. On the career and life of Stanly, see Norman D. Brown, *Edward Stanly: Whiggery's Tarheel*

Outside the reach of Stanly's control, the plight of Confederate soldiers' wives and families became a particular public issue in Williamston. Many were in need of food, salt, and other necessary supplies. Hassell's additional responsibilities of caring for the needs of soldiers' families took much of his time and thought. In May, he and other merchants urged local leaders to levy a new tax to carry the cost of wartime needs. Hassell oversaw the distribution of corn, money, salt, and other essentials for the families of absent or deceased soldiers. Hassell also procured coffins, collected aid money, and gave advice to the many women now acting as heads of families in Martin County.[18] In New Bern, however, control of the same sort of public aid soon became a political struggle.

In May and June 1862, Governor Stanly continued working in New Bern on behalf of local slaveholders to regain control of their chattel. Unlike the administration of General Burnside and Colyer, he began capturing "fugitive" slaves and returning them to their former masters. Jacob Gooding Sr. had been a friend of Stanly before he had left North Carolina a decade prior, and Stanly trusted Gooding and sought to assist him on several occasions. In May 1862, Gooding's slaves had allegedly secured passage on a steamer bound for New York after the blockade was lifted in New Bern. Stanly, on Gooding's behalf, ordered the captain of that vessel to return any such slaves on board.[19] From Gooding's perspective, Stanly's arrival as governor was a stroke of good fortune for his own social and financial prospects. Stanly's attempt to recover Gooding's slaves is the first extant record of communication between Stanly and

---

*"Conqueror"* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974). See also Gertrude S. Carraway, *The Stanly Family*.

[18] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 5 May 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. On the beginnings of Hassell's duties, see Chapter 3.

[19] Browning, *Shifting* Loyalties, 77; Colyer, *Report*; Edward Stanly to Captain of the Steamer *Cossack*, 28 May 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers. The relationship between Gooding and Stanly was old and complex. Gooding had been the clerk and successor to Stanly's grandfather, merchant John Wright Stanly, and was technically Edward Stanly's uncle by Gooding's first marriage to Stanly's deceased aunt.

Gooding, but they obviously rekindled their antebellum relationship, for Stanly soon drew this old merchant into the ongoing conflict over government in New Bern.[20]

Despite the immediate turmoil, destruction, and damage caused by the army's arrival, New Bern's commercial position actually improved under the occupation once order was restored. Goods began flowing into the Union-controlled parts of Eastern North Carolina during the occupation. By early June 1862, shipping had resumed between Northern ports and New Bern itself.[21] A soldier wrote from New Bern, "Business is getting to be very lively in the city. Nearly all the Stores have opened and it makes the city very much look like the northern cities, only most all the business is connected with Military matters in some way or another."[22] As local merchants and Northern newcomers began selling in the new commercial environment, the scarcities of the first phase of the war in New Bern faded. Yet in this growing economy, government relief of the poor became politically controversial.

In early June 1862, Vincent Colyer traveled to Washington to seek an audience with the President, so that he might intervene in Stanly's pro-white conservative policies as military governor. Upon Colyer's return to North Carolina, Governor Stanly stated publicly that he had been misunderstood but did not reverse his policy. As Stanly continued to vie with Vincent Colyer for control of local government aid, he devised a plan to reduce Colyer's authority. On July 4, Stanly implemented this scheme by appointing Jacob Gooding as the new Superintendent of Poor Whites.[23]

---

[20] Jacob Gooding, Account of Damages, 1862, Box 5, Folder D, Gooding Family Papers; Edward Stanly to Captain of the Steamer *Cossack*, 28 May 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; Edward Stanly to Jacob Gooding, 4 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; J. Harvey Cricker (Co. J. 25th MA), Affidavit, 22 January 1863, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; Barbara M. Howard Thorn, ed. *The Heritage of Craven County, North Carolina*, Vol. 1 (Winston Salem: Eastern North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1984), 148.
[21] Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 64.
[22] William A. Musson to "Friend Mary," 8 June 1862, James O. Brown and William A. Musson Papers, Norwich Civil War Roundtable, AMHI, quoted in Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 64.
[23] Edward Stanly to Jacob Gooding, 4 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers.

General Burnside had already made Colyer Superintendent of the Poor and Negro Affairs prior to Stanly's arrival, but Stanly saw an opportunity. By Colyer's own later admission, the 1,800 whites receiving aid made up the majority of his early efforts. Stanly then sought to relieve him of this responsibility by giving the superintendence of white aid to a middle-class, white, slave-owning merchant. In doing so, he sought to reestablish the racial status of even the poorest whites, provide a means of employment for a merchant friend whose store had been confiscated, and reduce the power of the racially progressive Colyer. Colyer resigned in protest of the Governor's activities a mere two days later on July 6, 1862 and left the state permanently.[24]

Stanly's appointment of Gooding was based on their existing friendship, their favorable interactions upon his return, and Gooding's socio-political status and Southern conservatism. Further, Gooding had decades of experience operating a mercantile store, making him a logical choice for such an operation. In his letter appointing Gooding to the position, Stanly wrote:

> Having full confidence in your integrity, capacity, and patriotism, I hereby appoint you Superintendent of the Poor Whites of Craven County. You will be provided with a store and subsistence furnished to you, with transportation. You will be allowed an assistant to aid you in discharge of your duties.[25]

Gooding began distributing supplies to poor whites of the county no later than July 14. An account from the quartermaster's department shows that large quantities of goods were furnished to Gooding daily, who, much as Colyer before him, distributed copious amounts of goods to the white dependents of the county, much more than the local wardens of the poor had ever distributed prior to the invasion.[26]

---

[24] Colyer, *Report*; David Silkenat, "A Typical Negro," 169-186.
[25] Edward Stanly to Jacob Gooding, 4 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers.
[26] U.S. Census, 1840, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1850, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; U.S. Census, 1860, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; John Kurtz to Edward Stanly, 14 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; Colyer, *Report*; J. Harvey Cricker (Co. J. 25th MA), Affidavit, 22 January 1863, Box 3,

While Gooding and Stanly struggled with the Federal military for political control of occupation, Williamston was still dealing with the local epidemic. Cushing Hassell was very sick almost the entire month of July 1862, after attempting to operate his store for several days in late June despite his fever. However, the town soon forgot the threat of disease upon news of the impending arrival of Federal troops. In the weeks leading to the raid of July 14, citizens began moving their property out of the town and fleeing to the countryside. On July 9, rumors of an imminent attack from Plymouth circulated in the town. Still bedridden, Hassell chose to remain in town, but his friend and fellow merchant D.W. Bagley managed to flee to the country with his family despite also being sick in bed. Federal soldiers ransacked Bagley's house and store, resulting in significant loss of property even though he "had secured most valuables, books, papers, etc." The soldiers plundered the homes of absent owners but did not harm the town's residents.[27]

On July 31, the Federals returned to raid the town again. Among those who fled again was D.W. Bagley, who described the pandemonium that ensued once a report came that the Federals had reached Jamesville, writing that: "In a few minutes, men women and children were flying in different directions, expecting as a matter of course we should have a fight." Hassell, believing himself to be safe if he stayed, kept his store open "until the enemy Cannon opened on the town." Even though Hassell was surprised that so little damage had been done to the town, people were on edge. The next day on August 1, the town council sent word to the Confederate government requesting the no troops whatsoever be placed in Williamston for its defense, believing that their presence would only agitate Federal raiders to further activity. Over the

Folder i, Gooding Family Papers.

[27] Bagley Building Description, 1972, Folder 1, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, Duke; D.W. Bagley, 14 July 1862, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1 July 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

following weeks, more people, merchants and others, began leaving town due to fear of raids, especially on election day. Hassell "did not believe they [Federals] would come and kept advising the people to stay at home, be quiet, and protect their property to the best of their ability," but his pleas went on deaf ears. Even churches in the area were plagued by uncharacteristically low attendance due to the prevailing fear of raids.[28]

**Raids Continue: August-December 1862**

The resignation of Vincent Colyer and the appointment of Jacob Gooding seriously harmed the African American population of New Bern. In a letter to Colyer in August 1862, one escaped slave wrote, "There are great inquiries for you by the people of color in Newbern; they are much at a loss for they have no one now to apply for comfort or satisfaction; no one that sympathizes with them as you did. Sir, I must say that if the President of the United States was dead, the Union army could not mourn his loss more than the people of Newbern do the loss of you."[29] Gooding then, in joining Stanly's government and forcing out Colyer, showed his support of the antebellum racial status quo as much as any other interest, improving the interests of white power in New Bern at the expense of African Americans in the city. Taking a position in the Federal occupation government of New Bern was no real shift in white supremacist and pro-slavery ideology for Gooding, even if he espoused loyalty to the Union.[30]

Although Gooding's position was more politically consequential, his duties were very similar to those of Cushing Hassell in Williamston. Local civilian governments needed people with business experience to effectively distribute food and other essential goods to those in need

[28] Quote from D.W. Bagley, 31 July 1862, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke. Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 31 July and 1, 6-7, and 10 August 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. For further discussion of the effects of raids on North Carolina religiosity, see Noah S. Shuler, "The Effects of the American Civil War on Religiosity in North Carolina," *The Lookout* 5 (Fall 2017): 49-68.
[29] Amos Yorke to Vincent Colyer, 27 August 1862, quoted in Colyer, *Report*, 59-60.
[30] Gooding Sr. did take the oath of loyalty in June 1862, but his willingness to claim loyalty did not prevent his integrity and loyalty from being questioned, as shown below.

during the war — whether the families of Confederate soldiers in Martin County or poor whites in occupied New Bern. Though these roles did not generate profit for either Hassell or Gooding, they ensured a position of social and economic power. Hassell's store, farm, and wealth was basically intact despite low sales and income, so he took no income for his relief efforts. Gooding's position, however, was crucial for his survival in the city. His store and goods were confiscated or destroyed in the initial invasion and his slaves fled, leaving him with limited resources. In this position, he was able to make a living while also serving the interests of the Southern social status quo.[31]

The commercial situation was bleak in Williamston by the end of August 1862, just one year after Federal troops first arrived on the coast,. As Cushing Hassell lamented: "Dull times. No sales of goods these days sufficient to pay Expenses of the family. Expenses more than profits, but Hassell considered even that much better than where the enemy had completely overrun the Country and destroyed all before them." Faced with the prospect of occupation, merchants in Williamston believed that struggle or flight would be preferable.[32] In September 1862, Hassell was so disheartened about the condition of his wharf and warehouses that he despaired of any future improvements. After news of further "audacious" behavior by occupying troops to the east, numerous slaves from the county fled east, prompting slaveholders to start moving their holdings west. Cushing Hassell himself sold his slave Henry to "dispose of him before he went off to the Yankees" after he had tried to escape twice. Hassell remained fervently

[31]"Some reasons for staying at home," December 1864, Box 1, Folder 1, CBH Papers, UNC; Edward Stanly to Jacob Gooding, 4 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers. For Gooding, however, taking his role later brought his loyalties into question. On Gooding's loyalties, see below.

[32] Quote from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 27 August 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. D.W. Bagley, 31 July 1862, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke. The repeated panics of Williamston merchants throughout Fall 1862 and 1863 at the slightest hint of Federal approach reveals their fear for their property and lives outweighed any notion of return to the Union cause.

committed to the Confederacy and the support of slavery as an institution even in these poor commercial conditions, for his beliefs were core to his self-identity as a North Carolinian.[33]

Despite their strong Confederate allegiance, the people of Williamston lived in fear on the outer edge of Confederate territory. Most townspeople typically prepared to flee at the first sign that that Federal troops were in the vicinity, which Hassell described in one incident on July 31: "many of the inhabitants fled as usual on their [Federal] approach."[34] Throughout October, whites took their slaves and headed west to the safety of the Confederate interior, to protect themselves but also especially their property. On October 8, Hassell wrote that there had begun "a constant stream of emigration from the lower [eastern] counties to the upper [western] counties - especially a great many negroes being carried up."[35] As the war continued, Williamston remained unsafe and vulnerable to raids.

While Williamston merchants lived in fear, commerce continued to grow in New Bern. In October 1862, one soldier observed the amount of sales being made on cash or credit to the soldiers, writing to his sister that New Bern was "a hard place to keep money in the city."[36] As a nearby civilian observed of the port at Beaufort the following year:

> This post being the only 'Port of Entry' in this Military District, a great deal of merchandise is imported here. Most of it is taken by railroad to New Bern direct from the vessels. The residue (except such as stops at Morehead City) is landed at Beaufort, by Yankee traders who have followed the army here, and by our own merchants. Here many people from Craven and other eastern counties come to procure supplies. The officers and soldiers of the army,

---

[33] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 16 and 18 September and 1 October 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Though initial Federal policy was neutral to the slaves in Martin County, they later actively sought to carry them to Union lines, particularly after the Emancipation Proclamation. By the end of 1863, Cushing Hassell still had in his control at least five male slaves, as evidenced by his efforts to procure them shoes. Because of the difficulties procuring goods, much of his efforts turned to agriculture during the war - producing molasses, corn, wheat, and potatoes. For these, he used the remaining slave labor he had accumulated prior to the war. Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1-8 November 1863, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.

[34] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 31 and 14 July and 13 December 1862 and 7 March and 7 April 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

[35] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 15 October 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 8 October 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC

[36] Alfred Holcomb to Emma Holcomb, 2 October 1862, Box 56, Folder 11, Alfred Holcomb Collection, transcript, AMHI.

> and the officers and marines from the United States Naval vessels that visit the harbor, contribute to swell the number of purchases. At the same time, the people of this county find here a ready market for their agricultural products, fish, and every living thing from beneath the water. From these causes a brisk trade has sprung up in Beaufort. Every store or shop in the front part of town fit to receive merchandise has been occupied by traders.[37]

Though this description was of the full resumption of trade in 1863, the beginnings of this commercial recovery commenced in 1862.

On November 3, 1862, as Cushing Hassell was returning from a trip with his wife, he encountered Confederates and hundreds of refugees on the road to Williamston fleeing a raid. Fearing for his property, Hassell pressed onward, but encountered his sons, who informed him that the Federals were searching for him. After hiding in some woods overnight with family members, he headed to the house of his son-in-law John Rogers, where he received word that his personal property was "greatly destroyed" and that his store was "almost entirely destroyed." He fled west toward Tarboro, where he found a community of other merchants, including Joseph D. Biggs and D.W. Bagley, who had in the preceding months evacuated Williamston altogether.[38]

On Hassell's return to Williamston, he surveyed the town's state. Five houses had been burned, livestock killed, horses confiscated, and all African Americans called to leave the town. Nearly a thousand persons reportedly did do. In remarking on his personal losses, Hassell wrote, "estimating his entire loss of farm, stock, provisions, furniture, clothing, and goods in store etc., he supposed $10,000 would not cover it. It couldn't be replaced for $20,000." In the coming days, he went about repairing damages to his store, but he knew that he could not recover the damage he had sustained in the November raid. Even as many other people fled the town,

---

[37] James Rumley, 17 October 1863, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 89-90.
[38] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 3-11 November 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; W. G. Bender to General Gwynn, 4 November 1862, *ORN* 1:8:188; For a discussion of the behavior of Federal troops in Williamston, see Barrett, 136-140. On refugeeism as a crisis in paternalism for Eastern North Carolina planters in neighboring Washington County during this period, see Durrill, 145-165.

Hassell in his journal described that he "commenced cleaning up store house and ware house, thinking he would again put them in the best order he could and try and remain contented at home in Williamston during the war. But this he did under full knowledge that the enemy was likely at any time to occupy Williamston and strip him of the little property he had left if such was the will of God."[39]

Hassell was certainly not the only merchant to sustain significant damage in the raid. Merchant and postmaster John R. Lanier's house and store were left in shambles. Lanier had kept merchandising in the early phase of the war, but eventually organized and commanded a company in late 1861. On August 17, 1862, however, his eldest child succumbed to fever. Lanier buried this child the following day, only to lose another later that evening. After the deaths of two of his children in the span of two days, he left the service but also left Williamston, abandoning the town and his property like so many others, in hopes of better fortune inland. This transition from soldier to wartime refugee likely did not indicate disloyalty to the Confederacy so much as a weakening of Lanier's will to fight in the face of personal tragedy.[40]

This series of actual raids was occasionally interrupted by sudden panic. For instance, Hassell recorded in December 1862 that the Federals had landed forces at Jamesville – just downriver on the Roanoke – and were advancing toward Williamston in force. The townspeople (even Hassell) began fleeing haphazardly, trying to save as many people and as much property as possible. However, within a day, they discovered that the report was false. The United States forces were busy on a raid farther south that disrupted and destroyed part of Confederate-

[39] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 12 November 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Quote 1 from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 13 November 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Quote 2 from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 17 November 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[40] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 24 and 27 November 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; D.W. Bagley, p. 146, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke; McCallum, 145; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 18 August and 4 July 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. The unit was Company H, 61st NC Troops.

controlled Kinston and cut key railroad lines, but there was no threat anywhere near Williamston. The rumors of war caused as much chaos as actual military operations in this case.[41]

By the end of 1862, Cushing Hassell felt reduced to "selling some odds and ends left by the abolition invaders." He actually considered the destruction and theft of his goods by locally stationed Confederate pickets to be more despicable than the damage done by Federals, though he did not hold their destruction of his property and local public property against the Confederacy as a whole. The few merchants left in the town were reduced to selling what little goods they had, planting food crops, and collecting debts.[42]

**Emancipation and Isolation: January-February 1863**

In the early 1863, changes in government policy and temperament altered the conditions in New Bern. In response to President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, Edward Stanly resigned as Military Governor in protest, which became effective in March. The exodus of Stanly in the wake of disagreements with the Lincoln administration proved unfortunate for the interests of Jacob Gooding Sr., as he lost his protection, influence, and government position.[43]

Gooding's loyalty was multi-faceted. He remained in New Bern throughout each change of power, actively participating in the wartime occupation government while Governor Stanly was in office. Yet, he was not above suspicion of having Confederate loyalties. Indeed, he very likely supported the Confederate cause in theory and spirit. He had been a North Carolinian his entire life and had ties to the prominent families of historic New Bern. He had been a

[41] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 13-14 December 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[42] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 23-24 and 31 December 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 13-19 January 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[43] Browning, *Shifting* Loyalties, 167.

slaveholder for decades, and he had relatives fighting for the Confederacy. He maintained publicly against all claims to the contrary, however, that he was a loyal Unionist.[44]

When Gooding began his duties as Superintendent of Poor Whites, the Federal army did not readily accept his public position, despite his appointment by Governor Stanly. Less than two weeks after Gooding's appointment, Provost Marshal Kurtz received word that a woman who lived outside the city had received supplies from Gooding. While not unusual in itself, the woman rented her house as quarters to the army for pay, implying that Gooding was not carefully administering government provisions only to the poor. Though it may have been an oversight, other evidence suggests that Gooding's operation was not at all interested in frugal administration of his public charge.[45]

By January 1863, Gooding's loyalty was in serious doubt. A Massachusetts soldier swore an affidavit charging the entire Gooding operation with corruption and Confederate loyalty. The man had been assigned to the commissary in 1862 and had delivered massive quantities of foodstuffs and goods to Gooding's store daily from the central stores of the army for distribution to the poor. He claimed that Gooding's chief clerk openly expressed that the amount taken by whites was irrelevant, given the supposedly imminent Confederate recapture of the city. The clerk clearly was still loyal to the Confederacy on some level, given the content of his remarks. Since Gooding had worked as a merchant for years, employing numerous clerks, it is unlikely that he would tolerate such behavior if he was truly loyal to the Union only. The soldier further alleged that Gooding accepted Confederate money for goods even in occupied New Bern.[46]

---

[44] Edward Stanly, Safeguard order and note, 20 December 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers.
[45] John Kurtz to Edward Stanly, 14 July 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers.
[46] J. Harvey Cricker (Co. J. 25th MA), Affidavit, 22 January 1863, Box 3, Folder i, Gooding Family Papers. The identity of this clerk is unknown, but it is likely that he was a member of the commercial community before the invasion. Although Gooding was accused of accepting Confederate money, Stanly had given him the liberty of accepting any money if the individual did not have "current" money, so such behavior may not have been disloyal in Gooding's mind.

At the start of the occupation, the army had confiscated Gooding's store for use as a supply depot. Though Gooding found a position in the civilian government and claimed loyalty, he continually struggled to receive compensatory payment for several of his properties that were occupied by the Federal government in New Bern. As demonstrated in correspondence between Federal quartermasters and Gooding, he repeatedly made requests in 1863 and 1864 for payment, first using his influence with Governor Stanly as leverage. Though the army agreed to pay monthly rent to Gooding, they were extremely slow in doing so, sometimes paying nearly a year late. The military's reticence to pay may be due to legitimate inability, but it is just as likely that local administrators were reluctant to pay a reputed Confederate sympathizer.[47]

Despite the claims against Gooding's loyalty to the Union, Governor Stanly swore that Gooding had taken the oath of allegiance before him in June 1862, even though other merchants and his own son refused to swear loyalty to the United States during the occupation. Stanly issued a safeguard order to Gooding in December 1862, which theoretically required any United States personnel to protect Gooding's life and property. Gooding's loyalty, much like that of Governor Stanly, was seriously questioned by Federal troops in New Bern.[48] While Southern conservatives Gooding and Stanly navigated the fallout of new Federal emancipation policy in New Bern, Cushing Hassell looked forward to a new year in his isolated town.

After a hard year of repeated raids, Hassell and the merchants left in Williamston hoped for better outcomes in 1863 but were sorely disappointed. At the end of the 1862, Cushing

[47] Edward Stanly to Capt. James C. Slaght, Assistant Quartermaster, 23 January 1863, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers; Edward Stanly to James C. Slaght, 27 March 1863, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers.
[48] Edward Stanly, Safeguard order and note, 20 December 1862, Box 3, Folder c, Gooding Family Papers. For a discussion of Stanly and public opinion, see Brown, *Edward Stanly*. Stanly found himself with few allies in New Bern, either being too conservatively Southern or too committed to the Union cause for anyone to support, apparently with the exception of Gooding and other pragmatic citizens for whom the relationship between ideology and circumstance was less clear. For a discussion of Stanley and abuse of the oath of allegiance, see Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 152-153.

Hassell noted in his journal that he had high hopes for Confederate victory in the coming year, and with good reason. Not only were those hopes dampened by major Confederate defeats in 1863 at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, but the military situation in Eastern North Carolina did not improve the fate of Williamston. Hassell's own efforts in January and February were spent in settling debts and "selling a little Iron or something left by the Yankee raid, once in a while from day to day."[49]

Soon, another raid brought more damage and instability to local merchants. On February 13, a gunboat arrived at the Williamston wharf with around 100 federals, taking possession of the town easily. They burned to the ground the hotel of Hassell's good friend and local merchant Lt. Col. John C. Lamb of the 17th NC, where soldiers had on occasion been housed when ill. Lamb was not present, since he and his merchant brother Wilson Lamb were serving in the Confederate army. Federal troops also plundered the home of one of the town's longstanding merchants, Amalek C. Williams, and took his horse. During the initial shelling of the town's defense pickets, one projectile damaged Cushing Hassell's river warehouse even further. In the coming months, he had it disassembled to protect the structure from more damage. The raid further contributed to the town's uneasiness, as sales remained small and two more false alarms of Federal attack came in the next two weeks. Even if merchants in Williamston had had goods to sell, their entire customer base was on edge.[50]

[49] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 31 December 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, Entries for January-February 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Quote from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11 February 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[50] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 13 February, 30-31 March, and 16 and 20 February 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Amalek C. Williams is known in most extant sources as "A.C. Williams."

## Loyalties Tested: April-July 1863

Along with merchandising and farming, Hassell kept busy in public service to his community and the state government. The previous summer, he had declined some responsibilities because he felt "pretty much worked down already in the service of the volunteers and families of the county."[51] Throughout this phase of the war, he was acting as the functional postmaster, with his shop as the post office. He was reappointed clerk of court, and he spent much time in that endeavor. In April, he was appointed by the Confederate congress as a commissioner to assess the price of produce purchased by the army, and he was appointed by the county to receive state funds for soldiers' families, likely because he was one of a few townspeople with a safe and a strong reputation for honesty.[52]

The raids continued, eroding the commercial situation in Williamston. On April 23, a Federal gunboat visited Williamston, marking the seventh incursion since the state was invaded. The contingent of Federals broke open Cushing Hassell's remaining warehouse to "examine" the contents but did no further damage to the town. A cavalry raid on May 27, which was repelled by Confederate pickets, caused further panic in the town but did no real damage to any property. The cumulative effect of the raids of 1862-1863, however, was to devastate all commerce in Williamston save agricultural production.

Williamston was an agricultural community, and most merchants owned land around the town. Cushing Hassell, along with his sons and slaves, spent a great deal of effort over the course of 1863 in planting, harvesting, and storing food crops. By the end of May 1863, Cushing Hassell was "attending…principally to his farm."[53] Hassell was not the only one who turned to

[51] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 18 August 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[52] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6 and 14 April and 18 March 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 27 November and 10 December 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[53] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30 May 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

farming. His son-in-law John Rogers was also farming wheat that summer. His brother-in-law and former partner, Joseph D. Biggs, was having wheat farmed on his Martin County property, though Biggs himself had evacuated to Nash County. Hassell's cousin Kader Biggs, a merchant from the area who had gone to sell goods in Norfolk before the war, returned after the capture of that city by the United States and bought a farm from retired merchant Henry Williams, Hassell's former partner. The remaining slaves of Williamston's merchants were repeatedly loaned around to assist in farming operations.[54]

As Hassell turned to farming in May 1863, the provost marshal of New Bern began expelling local citizens if they refused to take the oath of allegiance. As Jarrett Ruminski argues, "especially in territories with occupying forces, a refusal to demonstrate loyalty could lead to presumptions of disloyalty." This was certainly true in Eastern North Carolina. Among those citizens in the region who remained loyal to the Confederacy in both word and deed, the oath of allegiance was "a most disgusting subject." James Rumley of Beaufort remarked that "Many have suffered inconveniences, privations and losses, rather than take the detestable oath."[55] After a year of Union rule, these merchants and other citizens were forced to leave home and town to head west because they refused to take the oath. One such merchant from Morehead City took "no small quantity of merchandise to aid and comfort the Confederates."[56]

Jacob Gooding Sr. had taken the oath of allegiance in the early months of the occupation, prior to his appointment as Superintendent of the Poor Whites, but his remaining family was not

[54] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, Entries May-June 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[55] Ruminski, *Limits of Loyalty*, 63; James Rumley, 25 March 1863, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 63. While Ruminski argues that in Mississippi, citizens rarely shared the dichotomous view of loyalty required by both Union and Confederate policy (he describes a "dualistic conception of allegiance" that prevailed among citizens who were disloyal or loyal to both sides), merchants in North Carolina like Jacob Gooding Jr. seem to have held firm to a clearly distinguishable Confederate loyalty, proven by their flight or unwillingness to take the oath if they stayed in occupied territory.
[56] James Rumley, 13 May 1863, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 67.

so eager to swear loyalty to the United States. Although his father was an appointed member of the occupation government, Jacob Gooding Jr. was among those New Bern merchants who refused to take the oath despite being expelled from their homes. Also among those merchants that were expelled for refusing to take the oath in New Bern were longtime slaveholder and wealthy merchant Samuel R. Street, along with merchants Lacey Phillips, Major Phillips, and J. Disoway. Jacob Gooding Jr. and the rest headed west for Confederate lines.[57]

This group of sixty-eight refugees from New Bern arrived in Kinston in late May 1863. Among them were at least five merchants who had operated in New Bern in the years prior to the war, along with their families. According to Confederate sources, because "they were true to their country, and refused to take the oath of allegiance," they were "driven out of Newbern by the Yankee scoundrels who hold that place" and left to fend for themselves.[58] Despite pressure from the military government and the economic benefits of swearing the oath of allegiance, these merchants like so many others were truly committed to the Confederate cause. They chose to remain in occupied New Bern to protect their property and their homes, but they were not willing to sacrifice their loyalty even nominally to do so. Their Southern identity, slaveholding ideology, and their negative experience during occupation all drove them to accept expulsion from their town rather than take the oath. As a reward for his continued loyalty, Jacob Gooding Jr. received a small thanks from the state in a $137 (CS) payment for medicine he had supplied to

[57] "The Victims of Yankee Brutality," *The Evening Bulletin*, 22 May 1863. One of S.R. Street's sons was an officer in the 2nd North Carolina along with his brother, strongly influencing his refusal to take the oath of allegiance. *NC Troops*, 3:471; U.S. Census, 1860, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA.
[58] "The Victims of Yankee Brutality," *The Evening Bulletin*, 22 May 1863. For a further discussion of the expulsion of those who refused to take the oath, see Browning, Shifting Loyalties, 158. New Bern was not the only town that had a new policy of zero tolerance for those who refused to take the oath. All occupied towns began enforcing this measure. Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 25 April 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. See also Durrill, *War of Another Kind*.

Confederate troops back in 1861. Such a small sum did little for a man who had lost his home and business as a refugee from New Bern.[59]

These men were not the only merchants in the area to feel the effects of questioned loyalty. Commercial partnerships of mixed loyalty had particular difficulties if one member had fled but retained a stake in the company. Four merchants in Carteret County operated a large steam mill during the war until its destruction. As James Rumley describes in his diary entry for May 13, 1863:

> The steam mill in Beaufort, belonging to Mess. Perry and Co., was almost entirely destroyed by fire on the night of the 2nd inst. It was doubtless the work of an incendiary. The Yankee army had been in the habit of taking whatever they wanted from the mill, in the shape of lumber, tools, &c. But not satisfied with this, after the mill was burnt, the asst. Quarter Master seizes all the machinery, bricks, timber, &c, that survived the fire, worth about $1500, for, (as he says) government use, and on the ground that one of the owners (whose interest is only one fourth) is in the Confederate lines and supposed to be aiding the 'rebels.'…they wantonly disregard the law concerning partnerships, and rob the whole company to punish one partner.

The army seems to have used the pretense of Confederate sympathy, regardless of the other owners' professed loyalties, to justify the action.[60] Faced with the questioning of even those who had taken the oath, it is no surprise that committed Confederate merchants were driven out.

As they were forced westward, New Bern's commercial economy was expanding. Since the blockade no longer affected occupied towns directly, the merchant community there once again had ready access to the Atlantic shipping network. However, the merchant community was no longer a group of Southern merchants but rather was mainly "Yankee traders" who followed the occupying forces to the region. This influx of new merchants was especially apparent in New Bern. One of the most striking effects of the fall of New Bern was the mass influx of

[59] "Comptroller's Report," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, 22 January 1864.
[60] James Rumley, 13 May 1863, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 67-68.

Northern soldiers and sailors. Suddenly, the small, frail, partially abandoned city of wartime New Bern was filled and surrounded by Yankees in an unprecedented way. No other place in Eastern North Carolina saw such a concentration of outside invaders. Merchants had a new class of customer, antagonist, and competitor: the Northerner.[61]

As soon as Federal forces arrived, the sutlers that followed the army came behind, ready to capitalize on the conflict and occupation by selling goods to troops.[62] One such dealer was Charles Hunt.[63] Hunt was a Massachusetts infantry captain but had worked as a clerk before the war. He functioned as the sutler of the 44th Massachusetts while they were in North Carolina, taking on his own clerk. Hunt eventually opened a store as a general merchant on South Front Street with Wallace Ames after the regiment's service ended in July 1863. Hunt and Ames were but two of the many Northern merchants who, finding commercial opportunity in New Bern, occupied the stores of the city's former merchants. Charles C. Lawrence, also of the 44th Massachusetts, remained in New Bern to pursue business and love, marrying a local woman.[64]

Charles Perkins, a lieutenant of the 3rd Massachusetts, along with his brother Lucien, remained in New Bern after their enlistments ended in June 1863. The two opened a store at the corner of Broad and Middle Streets, where they successfully continued for more than a year.

---

[61] Quote from James Rumley, 17 October 1863, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 89-90; Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, Chapter 3.

[62] Sutlers were travelling merchants who followed the army with provisions and goods, generally each following a regiment. In New Bern, the line between sutler and traditional retail merchant blurred as some occupied abandoned storefronts. On sutlers in the Civil War, see Francis A. Lord, *Civil War Sutlers and Their Wares* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969). Lord provides a thorough account of sutlers and identifies numerous individual sutlers, though none relevant to this thesis. See also Donald P. Spear, "The Sutler in the Union Army," Civil War History 16, no. 2 (1970):121-138.

[63] James B. Gardner, *Massachusetts Memorial to Her Soldiers and Sailors Who Died in the Department of No. Carolina 1861-1865* (Boston: Gardner and Taplin, 1909), 78. Hunt was a clerk for his family in Boston before enlisting. He organized and commanded Company G, 44th Massachusetts Infantry from September 1862 to August 1863. He returned to Boston as a merchant after the war. W. S. Benjamin, *The great epidemic in New Berne and vicinity, September and October, 1864* (New Bern: Geo. Mills Joy, 1865), 16; "Captain Charles Hunt," *The Boston Transcript*, 27 January 1925. See also James B. Gardner, *Record of the Service of the Forty-Fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Militia in North Carolina August 1862 to May 1863* (Boston: 1887).

[64] Benjamin, *Epidemic*, 25.

They could have returned home with their regiment, and indeed they did visit family in Massachusetts occasionally, but they chose to capitalize on the commercial opportunities provided them by the circumstances of war in a town like New Bern.[65] F. W. Beers opened a bookstore on Pollock Street, selling Northern newspapers, books, paper, and military publications to the soldiers and citizens of New Bern.[66]

Not all the Southern merchants who fled occupied New Bern settled elsewhere immediately. Edward Hurtt, a New Bern entrepreneur who had made an attempt as a merchant in the 1850s, turned up as a Confederate blockade runner in the summer of 1863. He was captured by the Federal blockaders off the coast near Beaufort along with other locals despite the ship having come from Wilmington, its port still controlled by the Confederacy.[67] This turn of events suggests that some of the New Bern merchant community may have fled South to Wilmington, which remained in Confederate control until the final months of the war.[68]

**Destruction Again: July to December 1863**

Though Williamston had not sustained heavy damage since November 1862, its luck changed in July 1863, along with that of the Confederacy itself. On July 6, a sizable force of four Federal gunboats with accompanying infantry approached the town. Hassell's son Theodore, now a lieutenant in the 17th NC, held off the landing with a small contingent of men to cover a Confederate retreat across the Roanoke, but as Cushing Hassell himself noted, the town "paid pretty dear" a price to protect the few soldiers in the area. Nearly all the citizens fled

[65] Benjamin, *Epidemic*, 18-19.
[66] Green, *New Bern Album*, 63.
[67] James Rumley, 26 July 1863, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 83.
[68] On Wilmington during the war see, Richard Everett Wood, "Port Town at War: Wilmington, North Carolina, 1860-1865," PhD diss., Florida State University, 1976. On blockade running in Wilmington, see William N. Still Jr., "A Naval Sieve: The Union Blockade in the Civil War," *Naval War College Review* 36, No. 3 (1983): 38-45. There is no conclusive evidence of refugee New Bern merchants engaging in business at Wilmington, but it would have been an attractive commercial center within Confederate North Carolina.

upon the approach of Federal troops. Some 150 shells were fired into the town by the gunboats, seriously damaging several buildings. Several houses were burned, and Cushing Hassell's home was directly hit by artillery fire. In the aftermath of this most recent raid, the women of the town reportedly determined to abandon it entirely.[69]

At the end of July, Hassell described the town as entirely "ruined." Its citizens were in a state of total panic after rumors of a raid on Greenville and Rocky Mount, fearing Williamston would be raided again. As Hassell described, there were "people still carrying away some things from town. Moving off into the country - constant commotion about the 'Yankees coming,' the war, etc." Multiple false alarms caused people to flee their homes, but in the end, a lone Federal gunboat tried to land troops near town on July 29 for a surprise attack. After Confederate defenders responded, this tenth Federal visit to Williamston ended without significant conflict.[70]

Though Hassell and others who stayed faced hardships, even the merchants who fled Williamston westward were not totally safe from Federal raids. Longtime Williamston merchant D.W. Bagley, who had moved to Nash County in 1862, had an interesting encounter with soldiers of the 3rd NY Cavalry on July 20. After being threatened by them, they discussed their mutual knowledge of New York City, including the draft riots that had happened there, and the soldiers moved along without any further harassment of Bagley's property. Despite some injuries and local damage, he was thankful that "they did nothing farther to us, being a good proportion particularly after all we have had to suffer before at Williamston." He remarked on the result of the raid that "They adopted their old system of plunder, except they did not have good

[69] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6-7 July 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. On Confederate losses elsewhere in 1863, see McPherson, 626-689.
[70] Quote 1 from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 2 August 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, Entries for July 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Quote 2 from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 24 July 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. See also D.W. Bagley, 20 July 1863, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke.; D.W. Bagley, 4 August 1863, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke.

transportation as they did in Martin last November." Even though he still saw this rare incursion, he found a greater sense of security than any of those merchants who remained in Williamston.[71]

Although Federal troops did not harass Williamston for the rest of 1863, the damage to the town's property, prosperity, and collective sense of security was lasting. Despite these events, however, the merchants of Williamston remained fervently loyal to the Confederacy. D.W. Bagley reflected in August 1863: "Reunion I see openly hinted at by some…Oh How can such principals find advocates? I truly and fervently hope that no such Union will ever be made with them and us again. I had rather see all sunk into a dead sea than again be reunited with that Yankee fanatical race."[72] On numerous occasions, Hassell and his wife brought food to passing companies of soldiers, likely increasing his standing with them in hopes of future sales, but also out of genuine belief in the cause.[73] Some merchants sought safety elsewhere. Merchant F.W. Moore moved to Tarboro to escape the continual raids on his hometown of Williamston. Unlike more wealthy merchants like D.W. Bagley, he was not able to secure property there, and so lived at a local hotel during 1863.[74]

The tenor of the town had changed by the end of summer 1863. Though Hassell was busy repairing damage to his warehouse, house, and the local mill, his former confidence was shaken. He began preparing his furniture to be shipped out of Williamston out of fear that the town would be burned totally by the Federals, believing that their actions had become "more and

[71] D.W. Bagley, 20 July 1863, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke. On the July 1863 raid on Tarboro known as Potter's Raid, see Barrett, 164-165. See also David A. Norris, "'The Yankees Have Been Here!':The Story of Brig. Gen. Edward E. Potter's Raid on Greenville, Tarboro, and Rocky Mount, July 19-23, 1863," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 73, no. 1 (January 1996): 1-27.
[72] D.W. Bagley, 4 August 1863, Volume 3, Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864, Duke.
[73] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 12 June 1862 and 22 September 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.
[74] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30 November 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. Moore did secure employment with the Confederate government as a financial agent later in the war.

more cruel and despotic."[75] In late September, Cushing Hassell "walked to the river, viewed the ruined town once more. The place looked worse and worse as buildings, fences, etc. became more and more deserted and more and more decayed."[76]

There was little commerce left to do in Williamston by the close of 1863. Inflation was high, and most merchants had left the town altogether. In December, Hassell took an inventory of his store. He found only "remnants of casting, hardware, etc. left by the Yankee raid in Nov. 1862." Once worth nearly $20,000, his stock had been reduced to a mere $300 worth of goods.[77] Unable to procure more goods, he was occupied with other affairs, with "most of his time given to soldiers' families and the public in general — day after day."[78] After nearly two years of raids and public fear, Cushing Hassell and the merchants of Williamston were filled with doubt.

By the end of 1863, Jacob Gooding Sr. had lost the protection of Governor Stanly. With the one defender of Gooding's loyalty gone, he also lost his post as Superintendent of the Poor. In May 1863, his son Jacob Gooding Jr. along with other remaining colleagues were forced out of the city after refusing to take the oath of allegiance. In a city that demanded loyalty, new Northern merchants had taken hold of the entire commercial economy and community of New Bern. With the blockade lifted, goods and money flowed freely in the town, but none of its antebellum merchants remained open for business.

---

[75] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10 and 13 August 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Quote from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 7 August 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC. This state of fear characterized the surrounding area also, not merely Williamston. In October 1863, a major Primitive Baptist association meeting was canceled due to fear of raid, and church attendance was low in many congregations throughout the region, with one church disassembling their meeting house out of fear of destruction. Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 3 October 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6 November 1863, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC. See also Noah S. Shuler, "The Effects of the American Civil War on Religiosity in North Carolina," *The Lookout* 5 (Fall 2017): 49-68.

[76] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20 September 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

[77] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10 December 1863, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC. The amount of $300 was reached using the pre-war standard of prices. At inflated wartime rates, he had around $1,000 worth of goods. Based on Hassell's estimates, inflation was at over 300% antebellum rates.

[78] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 24 December 1863, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.

## Conclusions

The circumstances of merchants in New Bern and Williamston diverged quickly in March 1862. In New Bern, shipping resumed once the blockade ended, but local merchants flooded away from the town toward Confederate lines before the Federals even arrived. Though occupation restored order and commerce in the garrisoned towns, the presence of Federal troops in the region destabilized Williamston and the Confederate frontier. For these Confederate merchants, their loyalty to ideology and fear of Union rule triumphed over their circumstantial interests. However, the coming of 1864 brought with it new, vain hopes for Confederate recapture of the region and a newfound stability in remote Williamston.

## Chapter 5: Resurgence, Recovery, and Regression – 1864-1865

The beginning of 1864 marked the start of a new phase of the war in Eastern North Carolina, one that looked promising for the Confederacy. Despite high Confederate military hopes, Cushing Hassell and merchants on the Confederate frontier were pessimistic, seeing no hope in sight for the restoration of commerce. In occupied New Bern, Northern merchants continued operating as they had in 1863 with a continuing prosperity, while Jacob Gooding and other native Southerners struggled in the post-Stanly climate of the city – displaced in their own town. As the war progressed into its final months in 1865, the utter collapse of the Confederacy brought death and defeat to Hassell and Williamston but also offered the hope of renewed business in the post-war economy. In New Bern, the changes wrought by years of occupation posed significant challenges both to Gooding and returning Southern merchants, as well as to the Northern merchants who had taken their places. For both Williamston and New Bern, the end of the war drastically changed commercial conditions for merchants, but as Confederate merchants reintegrated into the post-war economy, their persistent loyalty to the Confederacy produced solidarity with the post-war climate in the cultural and political regression to antebellum Southern norms that came in the years following the war.

### The Dawn of a New Year: January 1864

On New Year's Day 1864, Cushing Biggs Hassell took time out of his busy day to reflect on the war and the coming year. Typically an optimist who placed great confidence in his God's providential hand, on this day Hassell foretold a dark year for his state, writing:

> The Morning was ushered in with rain, wind, and warm weather - indicative of a year of gloom for North Carolina and the Confederate States of America. He felt that this would be the gloomiest year of the war, after which, the nation being punished for its sins, would revive a little.[1]

[1] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1 January 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC. As in all his diary entries, he speaks of himself in the third person.

His pessimism about "the dreadful war" was based in part on the occupation of Eastern North Carolina and the wider South, which was "to a great extent overrun by the Northern invaders."[2]

Indeed, Hassell was not the only Williamston citizen who felt despair at their condition. Henry P. Gibson lamented the same conditions in a letter just weeks after Hassell, writing:

> It is a hard thing to do for many to get bread down here.…There is nothing new but the first of a new year, and in the commencement it is dreary and dull, and the prospects for peace and prosperity look much more gloomy than ever. We are along here in what I call the Yankee lines, and no prospect of being out of them soon.[3]

Food was scarce, and the Federal army was a constant threat. In addition to the strain of occupation and the continual raids that Hassell and his town had survived over the past two years, Williamston's commerce was all but totally destroyed, and the town was beginning to struggle for want of food. A "year of gloom" was hardly an overstatement for the condition of the town, but there remained some hope for Williamston and the Confederates of the region.[4]

In late January, Gen. Robert E. Lee reconsidered the military position in North Carolina and decided that the time was right for an offensive, sending Gen. George Picket with a detached force. Upon considering possible targets in February 1864, Pickett looked once again to the town of New Bern as a tempting prize. The town had been securely held by Federal forces for two years as regional headquarters, but Confederates believed recapture was possible.[5]

Within the occupied city of New Bern, the war seemed distant, and goods flowed freely at the start of 1864 for the Northern occupiers. The town's commercial economy was thriving, with dozens of merchants receiving goods regularly from their Northern suppliers, much as

---

[2] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 7 January 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.
[3] Henry P. Gibson to J.W. Smith, 13 January 1864, published in *Williamston Enterprise*, 19 August 1941, quoted in Barrett, 202n. Williamston was not yet in Federal control, but Confederate presence was weak.
[4] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1 January 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.
[5] Hampton Newsome, *Fight for the Old North State: The Civil War in North Carolina, January-May 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019), 57-67. Newsome provides a detailed analysis of the military actions of January-May 1864 in Eastern North Carolina.

before the war. However, only a tiny handful of the merchants succeeding in New Bern were among those who had been there before the occupation.[6]

As Northern storeowners, entrepreneurs, and former soldiers owned and operated the former stores and shopfronts of the merchant class in New Bern, Jacob Gooding was living quietly trying to collect rent from the government, no longer selling merchandise since his store had been ransacked and occupied in 1862. Nor was he administering relief, since he had lost his appointment after Gov. Stanly left New Bern. For the handful of Southern merchants like Gooding left in the city, the war seemed to drag on dimly, but Northerners celebrated prosperity with advertisements, sales, and goods.[7]

Not only was the town prospering, but it was also well-defended. When the soldiers of New Bern were not out on occasional raids against towns like Williamston, Gen. John G. Foster had focused much of their energy over the past two years on the construction of defensive works and outposts surrounding the town. These defenses had easily repelled a Confederate attempt to retake the city the previous spring. As the Confederates in North Carolina began to move toward New Bern, they were moving toward the second-most defended position in the state.[8]

Pickett's assault on the town lasted from February 1 to February 3. It was a total failure. While the Confederate forces never made it to the town itself, the town's volunteer fire

[6] Due to the nature and incompleteness of mercantile records, it is impossible to detail any complete list of merchants (by any definition) operating at any particular point of the war. I have compiled a list of merchants known to be active at the start of 1864 in New Bern from Newspaper advertisements and other sources and eliminated many merchants who were known to be elsewhere at the time, but there almost certainly were others operating stores that are not present in the extant records. It is impossible to say with precision, therefore, exactly how many merchants in occupied New Bern remained from before the invasion. The number seems to be incredibly small, with R. Berry being one of only a handful of such individuals that can be potentially identified. Gooding Sr. was in the city, though not operating a business. See primarily *New Berne Times*, 9, 16, and 23 January 1864 issues.
[7] Capt. McMaster to Jacob Gooding Sr., 23 July 1864, Box 3, Folder D, Gooding Family Papers. On Northern merchant prosperity, see January issues of the *New Berne Times*.
[8] On the defenses at New Bern, see Newsome, Chapters 1-5. The most defended position in North Carolina was Confederate-controlled Wilmington, which remained an active port despite the blockade and efforts to capture it. On Wilmington, see Wood, "Port Town at War."

department was called into service to temporarily relieve the 17th Massachusetts regiment from provost marshal duty so that the troops could man defensive works. The fire department's leadership and ranks were largely made up of merchants during this period, most of them now Northerners. Their membership in the department was likely motivated by a mix of civic pride, duty, and desire to prevent fire – and therefore prevent destruction of their stores and property.[9]

The failure of Pickett's assault on New Bern led to a change in the Confederate command in Eastern North Carolina, with Robert F. Hoke taking over. While New Bern felt no major repercussions from the February attack, Confederates began eyeing less secure positions in the east. While the Federals prepared defenses, Hoke prepared his troops for a joint operation that relied on the Confederates' one advantage – ironclads. Having spent years in secret constructing gunboats upriver on the Roanoke and other rivers, the Confederates were almost ready to unleash the *CSS Albemarle* on Plymouth, but that assault would have to wait.[10]

**Life Continues as Before: February-April 1864**

As Hoke's Confederates continued to scheme while camped at Kinston, Cushing Hassell and Williamston remained unaffected by changes in the war's military details. On February 10, he wrote that ""Nearly all of H[assell]'s time from day to day, week to week, month to month and year to year especially since the abolition war was devoted to the soldiers' families and the public in general, and likely to continue." With his mercantile business and entire stock of goods destroyed by raids the previous year, his energies were wholly dedicated to public affairs according to his account.[11]

[9] *New Berne Times*, 6 February 1864; *New Berne Times*, 16 January 1864. On the Confederate failure at New Bern, see Newsome, Part 3.
[10] See Newsome, Chapters 14-16.
[11] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10 February 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.

In reality, he had another major occupation, which was farming. While in February he may have not been focused on that enterprise, his farming operation was crucial to his family's survival and to his continued life. His farm, however, was almost entirely operated by his ten enslaved persons most days, which was precisely why Hassell could spend so much time on other affairs.[12] Ever the paternalist, Hassell thought quite highly of his treatment of his "servants." In a rare excursive diary entry the following year, he thought back on how he had treated them:

> He had ever since he had a family endeavored to keep his servants in doors in rainy or bad weather. Neither did he work them in the night except it was by accident. Neither did he allowance them in victuals, but gave them as much as the wanted to eat from his own kitchen and had it cooked for them by his own cook. He also endeavored yearly to give them three good suits of clothes per year and often did more than that, but the progress of the war had put it out of his power to do as well by them as he wished. He made up his mind and so told them in the commencement of the war that he would keep them at home - not hire them out - or send them up the country or sell them; that if they would stick to him and do their duty they could be supported and be happier than to leave him.[13]

This description likely echoed the attitude most of Williamston's merchants toward those they held in bondage. While Hassell and his sons worked in the fields themselves during the heaviest periods of labor, most activities were carried on by African Americans. Like most merchants, Hassell did not have many people enslaved, but his profit-driven mindset, white-supremacist ideology, and actions consciously mirrored that of the slaveholding planter class that he had sold goods to for so many years.[14]

---

[12] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10 May 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[13] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 28 February 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[14] On the shared ideology and conflicting interests of merchants and planters, see Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 59-61. Byrne notes that the two groups were "unified around the inviolability of slavery and the necessity for racial control in the South" despite class-based differences and conflicts.

The enslaved themselves did not think quite so highly of Hassell's treatment as he himself did. Three men had escaped and fled to protection in Federal lines over the course of the war, thinking that they would "be happier" "to leave him" than to "do their duty." Hassell, in his paternalistic outlook, had trusted a man named Sam despite previous attempted escapes and sent him off alone with a horse and cart to return with a load of crops. Return, he did not. Neither did David, who he had sent to work on the Confederate works at Fort Branch near Hamilton. Of course, Hassell's patience was not as kind as he made out, selling a woman named Harriett and her child inland after she continually resisted and would not let his whip change her attitude. Even while noting that sale with regret for her, he believed that continued enslavement elsewhere would "be better for her than to send her to the Yankees."[15]

During February and March 1864 Cushing Hassell focused on leading relief efforts for the families of Confederate soldiers and on the sale and administration of Confederate war bonds. Some days he delivered corn and meat to families or was in his store to answer requests for aid, while others he was busy with paperwork and meeting with the other relief commissioners. He was busily engaged with public service in Williamston, strongly believing he was duty-bound to his community to stay and engage in this work rather than flee as a refugee since no one else would. While this was motivated in part by genuine care for the white residents of his county, it also betrays Hassell's subtly elitist attitude, believing himself bound to help those of lower economic and social class because of their inability.[16]

[15] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 15 and 20 March 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 28 February 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 21 November 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 6 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 3 and 28 February 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.

[16] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, Entries February-March 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC; "Some reasons for staying at home," December 1864, Box 1, Folder 1, CBH Papers, UNC.

Former Williamston merchant F.W. Moore often came and visited with Hassell, partly out of a sense of community that existed among the merchants in town. Many years before, Moore had been Hassell's clerk, and Hassell had once sold him one of his stores. Moore had moved west to the safer town of Tarboro, linked by the railroad to the Confederate interior. Though he did not find property there, he found a job to make use of his financial experience – as Confederate tax collector for the region. When he visited Williamston, he found in Hassell a friend and a residence to operate out of, though Hassell did not always appreciate the imposition. As Hassell and Williamston merchants continued focusing on farming and providing food and relief to the poor, New Bern remained in a period of quiet but vibrant prosperity. Federally occupied Plymouth, however, was about to experience major change.[17]

**Resistance on the Roanoke: April 1864**

On April 18, Cushing Hassell was busy working at his Williamston office, administering relief to soldiers' families in Martin County, when people in town began discussing a gunboat on the river. The town felt relatively safe, as a Confederate land force had passed through toward Plymouth two days before. For years, word of a gunboat would have sent panic through the town, because Federal gunboats were coming upriver to raid the town. On this day, however, there was a gunboat steaming *downriver*, having never passed the town before. The CSS *Albemarle* was finally headed into action against Federal domination of the Roanoke River.[18]

The Confederate assault on Plymouth was a rare successful joint operation, pairing Hoke's assault with the *Albemarle'*s disruption of the Federal gunboats. On the morning of April

[17] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11 March and 11 April 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 25 November 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[18] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 16-18 April 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC. On the CSS *Albemarle*, see Robert Garrison Elliott, *Ironclad of the Roanoke: Gilbert Elliott's Albemarle* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Pub. Co, 1994)*;* John W. Hinds, *The Hunt for the Albemarle: Anatomy of a Gunboat War* (Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 2001).

20, the Federal forces surrendered the town to Hoke, cutting off Federal access to the Roanoke River for the first time in years. For the next six months, Williamston was no longer on the edge of the Confederate frontier. With Plymouth securely in Confederate hands and the CSS *Albemarle* in control of the Roanoke River, the United States forces had no reason, opportunity, or means to reach Williamston. Finally safe from fear of raids, the town's merchants began to regain a sense of safety and community.[19]

Cushing Hassell was elated by news of the Confederate recapture. Just a few short months before, he had predicted doom and gloom for his state, but the seeming turnaround at Plymouth brought exciting hopes. He wrote: "Immense quantities of stores and goods were taken by the fall of the place. People now breathed more freely and a probability now existed that the ruthless invaders would be driven from Washington and Newbern and every other part of the state of North Carolina."[20] Breathing "more freely," he sent several family members, including former merchant and son-in-law William Weathersbee, the very next day on "an expedition to Plymouth to purchase goods."[21]

For Hassell and much of Martin County, the Confederate success brought an opportunity to see family and friends in the 17th NC, which joined the forces at Plymouth with the rest of Gen. James G. Martin's brigade. Formed in 1862, the regiment was originally comprised mostly of Martin County men, led in part by Lt. Col. John C. Lamb, a longtime Williamston merchant who had visited Hassell and other friends earlier in April. Hassell's two sons in the service, Lt.

[19] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20 April 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC. See Newsome, Part 5.
[20] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20 April 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.
[21] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 21 April 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.

Theodore Hassell and stepson Benjamin Jewitt were both in the 17th and stopped to see their father on their way to Plymouth, inviting General Martin to dine at the Hassell home.[22]

Despite being safe from raids, Hassell's duties as a commissioner for the relief of soldier's families consumed his time and his energy, as food was scarce and new goods were nowhere to be found. Cushing Hassell, as one of the few remaining businessmen and public officials in the town, found himself even more occupied with the outcries of the local citizens. On April 14, he recorded in his diary that he was "attending to [his] farm a little and to soldiers' families a great deal — a loud cry for bread."[23] The scarcity of food, money, and crops in Williamston was taking a heavy toll on the townspeople, especially on the families of soldiers absent while serving in the military or those killed. As a commissioner for relief, he regularly borrowed money from local planters or secured crops on credit, sometimes in amounts greater than $10,000 at a time. He spent much of the spring and summer locating and transporting corn and meat from farms in surrounding counties to Williamston for distribution.[24]

**The Last Summer: May-August 1864**

At the start of May 1864, life for merchants in New Bern was business as usual. Unlike the twists of fate that Williamston experienced with raids, scarcities, and the capture of Plymouth, New Bern merchants through most of 1864 enjoyed stable conditions. From May 3 to May 6, the security of the city was uncertain as Confederates under Hoke made another attempt

[22] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 7 and 25 April 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC. On the 17th NC, see McCallum, 51-75.
[23] Most days of the week throughout 1864 he was engaged with the families of soldiers in relief efforts of some kind, except when traveling or sick. Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1864, Box 2, Folder 12-13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 14 April 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.
[24] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 28 May 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, entries April-July 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.

on the city, but they were soon needed elsewhere and gave up the assault, leaving the city still secure in Federal control.[25]

As the Confederates withdrew, merchants in New Bern remained optimistic. New stores continued to open as new opportunities for trade appeared, and others closed. William C. Hamilton, a successful Northern merchant who came to New Bern after the invasion as a sutler, operated a large wholesale and retail store just one block west of Jacob Gooding's old store, selling goods primarily to merchants and sutlers in the city. Just before the Confederate attack, Hamilton's store was burglarized in the dead of night, and he lost a significant amount of goods. Still, the two men involved were caught and did not make off with enough to damage his trade. The population of New Bern was much larger than before the war, yet open crime was still rare in a city firmly controlled by military police.[26]

Merchants in New Bern continued much as they had, with the same restrictions on trade that had been in place since 1863. The primary restriction, as Jacob Gooding Jr. had so sharply discovered the prior year, was that all merchants in the city had to file an oath of loyalty with the Treasury Department to sell, ship, or receive any goods, all of which had to pass through the one approved port at Beaufort and then travel by rail to New Bern. Federals controlled the city thoroughly, with no disloyalty tolerated in New Bern and only "loyal persons" being assisted or provided the necessary papers to conduct business. By May 1864, the active merchants of New Bern were loyal to the United States, at least in public.[27]

---

[25] On Hoke's May attempt on New Bern, see Newsome, 295-314. See also Barrett, 213-225.
[26] *New Berne Times*, 9 January 1864; "Burglary," *New Berne Times*, 4 May 1864; "A Change," *New Berne Times*, 15 December 1864. Hamilton's store was located on the corner of S. Front and Middle streets. For a GIS reconstruction of New Bern in the period that shows the property of Gooding, see Noah S. Shuler, "Jacob Gooding Papers," 2019.
[27] "Important to Merchants, Traders and Purchasers of Products," *New Berne Times*, 4 May 1864. On the expulsion of Jacob Gooding Jr. and the oath of loyalty, see Chapter 4.

Jacob Gooding Sr., no longer able to buy or sell merchandise, tried to collect what money he could from the government in the summer of 1864. Since his store had been taken by use of the army quartermaster in 1862, Gooding had tried to collect rent from the United States for the building's use. The quartermaster in New Bern agreed to pay him twenty dollars per month, yet according to Gooding's records, only during the period of July 1863 to November 1864 was rent ever paid by the government, and only after repeated efforts by Gooding. The quartermasters of New Bern did issue him funds for the bulk of 1864, but by 1865 he once again was having to ask for the payment of rent.[28]

Meanwhile in Williamston, Confederate military affairs separated merchants from their loved ones once again. Though Williamston merchants in the 17th NC had been able to visit family in April, they left North Carolina to rejoin operations in Virginia in May immediately after the second failed attempt on New Bern. Lt. Colonel Lamb, one of Williamston's most prominent merchants, did not survive the fighting in Virginia. When Cushing Hassell returned home after his trip through Edgecombe County, he found that Lamb's body had been returned to Williamston. The town's remaining merchants gathered to bury one of their own. Lamb's uncle, merchant Amalek C. Williams, volunteered his burial ground for the service, which Cushing Hassell presided over as a minister. This death was but one example of the family losses that merchants felt in Williamston.[29]

In July 1864, Confederate authorities were in great need of recruits and conscripts. On July 20, Cushing Hassell entered town to find that a Confederate enrolling officer had arrived to

[28] Captain McMaster, Quartermaster to Jacob Gooding, 23 July 1864, Box 3, Folder D, Gooding Family Papers; Captain William Holden, Quartermaster to Jacob Gooding Sr., 28 November 1864, Box 3, Folder D, Gooding Family Papers; Jacob Gooding, Account of Damages, 1862 (amended 1865), Box 5, Folder D, Gooding Family Papers.
[29] Newsome, 312-315; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 31 May 1864, 1863-1864, Box 2, Folder 12, CBH Papers, UNC.

register men for the draft. Hassell, a loyal Confederate, discovered further that his store in town, no longer holding goods but still a center of his relief operation, would now be occupied as the headquarters for local conscription efforts. Hassell did not complain about this, as his sons were in the service and he supported the cause. He remarked with disappointment the few men able to be registered and sent to "strengthen the army" due to the high number of exemptions. Hassell's own son Sylvester, however, had avoided conscription or service for three years, able to secure medical exemptions on numerous occasions with the help of his father.[30]

In August, Hassell focused on his attention on public affairs and politics at a critical point in the war. State and local elections were held in August, with pro-war Governor Vance and his supporters winning with strong margins. Hassell hoped that peace candidates would prevail at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, and they did in the nomination of George McClellan for the presidency. Though Hassell may have hoped for Democratic victory in November, he did not expect that to be the case. Indeed, Hassell's hopes of a peace candidate winning the presidency in the national election failed. President Lincoln won reelection, but North Carolina merchants like Hassell and Gooding had more pressing concerns than a distant election.[31]

**Harder Times Ahead: September-December 1864**

In September and October of 1864, Eastern North Carolina was plagued by an epidemic of yellow fever that crippled New Bern and Beaufort. The commercial community felt the effects of this public health crisis acutely. As one eyewitness described New Bern, "By the 10th of October the city was well nigh vacated. Nearly all places of business closed." Only eight

[30] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 19-22 July and 25 August 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[31] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 29 August 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. On North Carolina legislature elections in Eastern North Carolina 1864, see Durrill, 211-228. See also Barrett, 242-243.

stores remained open in the entire town of New Bern, as some merchants did not evacuate or close despite the public health crisis.[32]

Merchant Luther Holmes, formerly of the 44th Massachusetts, served his nine month enlistment and remained in New Bern in 1863 rather than return home to Boston. He first worked as a clerk under Charles Hunt, who had been sutler of the same regiment, and later his business partner R. Wallace Ames until sometime in 1864 when Holmes began renting a building at the corner of South Front and Craven Streets and began merchandising independently. He kept his store open well into October and died of yellow fever as a result. After his death, he was remembered by another resident:

> He had been a faithful and devoted clerk throughout his long apprenticeship, and by a strict frugality and industry amassed a sufficient sum to place himself on a footing with the merchants of this city. He was the example of a self made man, and pursues a steady career, full of lofty aim, and characterized by the most undeviating rectitude.[33]

W.W. Smith, clerk to Ames after Holmes left the store, survived almost to the end of the month while keeping Ames' store open, but also succumbed to the scourge. By the end of October 1864, commerce was at a standstill. There could not have been more than four stores open in all of the town, and more than one thousand civilians and many merchants had died of the disease.[34]

While the fever ravaged New Bern, Williamston would soon receive terrible news as well. Though the town had been protected from Federal raids for months by October 1864, food was still scarce and commerce nonexistent. Even the relief efforts led by Hassell and the district commissioners to provide food for the families of soldiers stopped by the beginning of

[32] W. S. Benjamin, *The great epidemic in New Berne and vicinity, September and October, 1864* (New Bern: Geo. Mills Joy, 1865), 10.
[33] W. S. Benjamin, *The great epidemic*, 16.
[34] W. S. Benjamin, *The great epidemic*, 16, 30; James Rumley, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 148-155.

September. Hassell and the others had no food to give, though they continued to distribute money in the hopes that the families could find food to buy.[35]

Hassell and other merchants were not spared the hunger themselves. After years of having goods, they now had no food. He wrote in mid-September that he "had not ate any meat for some time, (that is hog meat) and did not expect to until more pork was raised. What little he had, he reserved for his servants, especially the negro men who labored in the field and woods for the support of the family."[36] In October, a group of merchants gathered to eat together for the first time in some while, as several had chosen to flee to "refugee homes" farther inland. Hassell hosted them in his home for a few days, yet they had "little to eat." Though spared the yellow fever that hit New Bern, Hassell's family and town had been also plagued by sickness throughout the preceding summer months. The town's gloomy but peaceful time was soon to be at an end.[37]

On October 30, Cushing Hassell received word that the ironclad CSS *Albemarle* defending the Roanoke River had been sunk three days earlier by the Federal forces and that Plymouth had been reoccupied by the United States. He knew then that the long respite Williamston had received from Federal raiding would soon be over. Much as when Plymouth had been captured in 1862, the town soon was in a state of utter panic.[38]

On November 1, there was "quite an excitement…about Williamston" as people were "moving off many things" into the country for safety. Cushing Hassell, who had long avoided

---

[35] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1-2 September 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[36] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 14 September 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. "Servants" refers to enslaved African Americans.
[37] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10-12 October 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. Merchants at this gathering included Hassell, D.W. Bagley, F.W. Moore, L.L. Clements, and Joseph D. Biggs, all longtime members of the local commercial community.
[38] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 31 October and 1 November 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. On the conditions in Plymouth during the period of Confederate control in 1864, see Durrill, 211-228. Durrill maintains accurately that Plymouth never commercially recovered from the occupation and lost its status as a significant commercial port in the Albemarle region.

rash panics, was among those sending off his papers and clothing to safety. As Confederate forces retreated through the area from Plymouth, he personally located the commander, General Laurence S. Baker, to plead with him to not use Williamston as any sort of depot or headquarters so that the town might be spared from "shelling by the Yankee gunboats." Baker, far more concerned with his rapid retreat, agreed to this request.[39]

Hassell was somewhat relieved by this news and did not evacuate any more property, but the town of Williamston was not. In the following days, locals continued "moving off their things and some of them their persons." Some of Hassell's family, including merchant son-in-law William Weathersbee, began moving to the country, although Hassell and his wife determined that they would not leave, no matter what happens.[40] The respite from raiding that Williamston had felt for most of 1864 was over, and Hassell knew it.

His decision to stay in Williamston – not just in late 1864 but throughout the war – was multifaceted. In December, he reflected on the reasons he remained. Hassell only saw two options for himself: to flee westward as a refugee or to stay in Williamston. His strong Confederate loyalty even in the face of Federal presence kept him from considering any option of defection to the Union. His two chief reasons for staying were the expense of moving westward and the great risk to his valuable property. He also was motivated by a powerful sense of civic duty to his community. He worried that if he did not stay, there would be no one to care for the families of Confederate soldiers or to advise the town's citizens when Federal troops

[39] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1 November 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. From June 1864, Baker was in command of the Second North Carolina Military District, headquartered at Goldsboro, which contained the eastern region's outposts. See Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959 (2013 Edition)), 14-15. See also Paul Branch, "Baker, Laurence Simmons," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*. https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/baker-laurence-simmons

[40] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 2-3 November and 10 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.

approached.[41] Faced with a return to the gloomier conditions that had prevailed in 1863, Hassell held out hope and continued administering relief to those in need. He had long hoped that the United States election of 1864 would produce a revolution in the North to end the war. These hopes, of course, were vain. The town's fears were soon more than theory. Within two weeks of Plymouth's reoccupation, word came of gunboats steaming toward Williamston. Some were false alarms of activity farther downriver, but Federal soldiers soon arrived in town.[42]

When those soldiers arrived, Hassell faced difficult decisions. On December 10, some 2,000 men in blue reached the town, quartering in the fields of Cushing Hassell's former commercial partner, the absentee Joseph D. Biggs. A squad of them led by one officer reached Hassell's house at dusk, navigating by torchlight. The men demanded money, threatening to set the torches to the house itself if Hassell or his family resisted. His two sons in the Confederate service were at home on sick leave but had fled the town for fear of capture earlier in the day. Having little choice, Hassell offered what money he had on hand at home: about $600 in Confederate currency belonging to the county government for public relief and about $4 of specie. The young lieutenant in command returned the money, but he demanded a pledge from Hassell that he would aid and not persecute Unionists or Federal soldiers. As quickly as they appeared, the squad was gone into the night.[43]

Unlike most gunboat raids, this Federal force did not immediately leave the area. When the sun rose on Williamston the next morning, the troops were still nearby. The Federal

[41] "Some reasons for staying at home," December 1864, Box 1, Folder 1, CBH Papers, UNC. This memo is undated but was marked by the author as being written in December 1864. Archivists have marked it as "undated memo – 1866?," but it is most likely from 1864 as marked. It does not reference any events that occurred later than December 1864, and its contents seem to reflect Hassell's conditions and mindset in the aftermath of the Federal recapture of Plymouth. In total, Hassell lists sixteen reasons he stayed.
[42] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 2-8, 13-14, and 17-18 November 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[43] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 9-11 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.

commanders came to Hassell's home to interrogate him on the river's defenses. The Confederates had long ago placed explosive devices, or "torpedoes," in the river as a defensive measure against gunboats, but Hassell did not know where, nor would he have revealed that information. The young lieutenant who had threatened to burn his house the night before returned to apologize to the Hassell family, promising any protection he could offer them from threats on account "of their standing" in the community. The force moved west from Williamston toward Hamilton that day.[44]

Unfortunately for Hassell, the lieutenant could offer little actual protection. On their return march the next day on December 12, a squad of cavalry entered the town, plundering several homes including that of Cushing Hassell. They searched his house for money and valuables, claiming to be looking for enemy soldiers. The cavalrymen made off with tools, chickens, potatoes, and other items, but Hassell escaped bodily harm.[45]

The Federal force was headed to Fort Branch on the banks of the Roanoke River above Williamston, near Hamilton. This joint operation was to include gunboats, which is why the army was so eager to discover from Hassell the locations of torpedoes. The naval force removed nearly one hundred of them from the river, yet still several boats sank. Though the land forces had initial success, they were pushed back toward Plymouth because the gunboats struggled to make it upriver. It would be several days later when the gunboats finally passed Williamston. Hassell believed the town would be shelled, so he sent his children to the country and he and his wife kept watch, but no shelling came as Williamston was not the target.[46]

---

[44] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11-12 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[45] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11-19 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[46] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11-17 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; "Torpedoes," *New Berne* Times, 7 January 1865. For a Federal account of the land operation, see William P. Derby, *Bearing arms in the Twenty-seventh Massachusetts regiment of volunteer infantry during the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Boston: Wright & Potter Co., 1883), 446-460.

With Federal forces in command of the area, the remaining townspeople made themselves scarce. On December 20, Hassell took stock of the deserted town, noting that only four white males were left in the place. Though he stayed in town, even Cushing Hassell was unable to be productive, writing that in the town, "not much regular work [was] done because of proximity of the enemy." As Christmas approached, rumors that the Federals were abandoning the expedition reached town, leading some to return and some normal business to resume.[47]

On Christmas Day 1864, Hassell once again was struck by the gloom that he saw in his circumstances. Unlike in occupied New Bern, uncertainty hung in the air and goods were nowhere to be found. He wrote: "Christmas Day and a gloomy one. Enemy below in his boats and on land, but his whereabouts not exactly known." That day, his former partner Joseph D. Biggs visited town from his wartime residence farther inland to see his house and to "save what was left by the enemy" after they had used it as a campground on their visit two weeks prior. Despite Confederate hopes after the capture of Plymouth, the end of 1864 was just as gloomy as its start for Cushing Hassell.[48]

As the year closed in New Bern, there was unrest in the city's merchants as a crime spree hit the city in the night. On December 15, unknown arsonists attempted to burn down a store in the main commercial district on South Front Street but were foiled by a citizen who noticed the smoke in time for the merchant-led fire department to deal with the flames. The tomb of Matthew Outten, merchant and former clerk to Jacob Gooding, was vandalized in a local graveyard. Several nighttime burglaries were reported in stores across town. The cellar under the store of W.L. Poalk and West was robbed. During the day, reports of pickpocketing in stores along Craven Street worried both merchants and customers. William C. Hamilton, who had been

[47] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20-25 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[48] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 25 December 1864, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.

burglarized months before, took the opportunity to finally retire, selling his store to another enterprising company of merchants in favor of more peaceful life.[49]

While the *New Berne Times* called for increased night patrols and for the criminals to be dealt with by "a cold dose of lead," the agents of the local Treasury Department were more interested in crime perpetrated by merchants themselves. Though the requirement of the oath of allegiance had been in effect for years, still new "supply stores" and other enterprises popped up that attempted to operate without license or clearly affirmed loyalty. The treasury agents also demanded that clerks and employees of every store take the oath, which many failed to do properly. As Confederate deserters poured into New Bern at the end of 1864, it is likely that much of the crime and increased scrutiny of loyalty stemmed from internal tensions between political and socio-economic groups. Still other merchants, though supposedly few, were once again engaging in "extortion," price gouging, and other profiteering much to the outrage of residents. Though the year had been one of profit and success for most merchants, 1864 closed in a time of increased tension and uncertainty in New Bern.[50]

**The Beginning of the End: Early 1865**

In January 1865, the Confederacy was in a crisis, especially in North Carolina. The Federal forces at New Bern had held out through 1864 and had recaptured the lost posts in the east at Plymouth and Washington. A Federal expedition against Fort Fisher was underway, which succeeded on January 15 and closed access to Wilmington, the Confederacy's last Atlantic port. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman's army was marching through South Carolina toward the

[49] "Incendiaries around," *New Berne Times,* 24 December 1864; "An Outrage," *New Berne Times,* 24 December 1864; "Broken Open," *New Berne Times,* 24 December 1864; "Burglaries," *New Berne Times,* 24 December 1864; "Pickpockets Abound," *New Berne Times,* 24 December 1864; "A Change," *New Berne Times,* 15 December 1864.
[50] "To Parties Purchasing or Selling Without Authority," *New Berne Times,* 24 December 1864; "The New Local Rules of the Sixth Treasury Agency," *New Berne Times,* 15 December 1864; "Extortion and Extortioners," *New Berne Times,* 24 December 1864.

southern border of the Old North State itself. To the north, the military situation in Virginia was bleak. For Cushing Hassell in Williamston, his enthusiasm for the war was waning though his ideological commitments and national loyalty remained firm. He began looking to the future.[51]

On January 17, Confederate soldiers from Fort Branch came downriver to Williamston in search of canoes to aid them in crossing the Roanoke. They made off with numerous canoes belonging to poor fishermen who depended on them for their trade. Cushing Hassell, hearing word of this, counted himself quite lucky that his canoe, which his enslaved workers regularly used to fish for him, had been missed so far. He quickly sent men down to the river to drag it back to his house for safe keeping. Though he supported the Confederate cause, he was in no mood to sacrifice even one further piece of property to a war that had destroyed his business and stock of goods, taken his sons into combat, caused his friends to flee town, and had on several occasions resulted in the loss of his personal property to soldiers on both sides of the conflict.[52]

Even as he received word the next day that Fort Fisher had fallen, he continued working for the relief of local citizens. This responsibility was weighing him down heavily by 1865. On January 25, he wrote that he was "overwhelmed with" people wanting relief, food, aid in legal affairs, and money. Day by day he was flooded with "many persons calling on" him for such things. The news from Fort Fisher also troubled him. His son Theodore was with the 17th NC regiment, which in December 1864 had been dispatched to the defenses there and was in late January retreating above Wilmington. As Hassell looked for news of his son, he found little, worrying him greatly.[53]

---

[51] On Federal gains in North Carolina in 1864, see Barrett 213-231. On the capture of Fort Fisher see Barrett, 262-284. On Sherman's approach, see Barrett, 285; Campbell, *When Sherman Marched*, 75-105. On the military condition of the Confederacy at the start of 1865, see McPherson, 807-830.
[52] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 17 January 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[53] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 18-20 and 25 January 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; McCallum, 53-55.

Cushing Hassell had good reason to be worried. In February, he continued farming and relief operations as his hopes for a positive end of the war lessened. Based on Jefferson Davis's report to the Confederate nation on the failure of the peace commission at Fort Monroe, Hassell believed that no mercy would be had from President Lincoln and that chances for peace were slim. Later in February, Hassell feared the news of Sherman's march through South Carolina "with a large army," presumably headed toward Goldsboro. At the same time, he finally heard of the fall of Wilmington itself, though also of his son's safety.[54]

As March 1865 began, Hassell had resigned himself to the failure of the Confederacy in Martin County. He killed his last five ready hogs, which did not produce half the meat he expected to need for the season to feed his family and the enslaved people still in his control. Though the war had not yet ended, Hassell began sending for property that he had sent to friends in the country during the war for safekeeping.[55] He wrote that:

> [He] had by this time concluded - the enemy would not burn his house either with their shells or torches as they had attempted both and not succeeded - he judged he would be spared that misfortune. Things now indicated a curtailment of Confederate lines in Martin and an advance of the Federal lines so as to include Williamston and vicinity and in such a case H[assell] believed his clothing etc. that had been sent to the country would be safer in his own house than elsewhere.[56]

Though tested by the increased presence and control of Federal troops, Hassell's loyalty remained strongly to the Confederacy. His stepson Benjamin Jewitt, who had been traveling due to poor health, returned home after failing to find passage to Bermuda, but he arrived just in time for more bad news.[57]

---

[54] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10 and 22-23 February 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[55] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1-2 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[56] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 3 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[57] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 3 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. As Ruminski has shown, the presence of occupying troops creates a multitude of sometimes conflicting loyalties, but for Hassell, Confederate national loyalty remained strong despite repeated strains. See Ruminski, *Limits of Loyalty*, 38-72.

The day after his acknowledgement of Federal control in Williamston was March 4, President Lincoln's second inauguration day. Hassell had long despised Lincoln and thought him an abolitionist tyrant, but on the occasion of the inauguration, he reflected on Lincoln's fate in ominous foreshadowing. He wrote of the president, "He is such a perfect despot over his own people North that it would not be surprised to learn that some of them had killed him this very day. He is running a great career of iniquity at any rate and it is likely to come to an awful end." As he continued farming, fishing, and overseeing relief operations, he received no such news in the next days, but he did get news of a different death – that of his son, Lt. Theodore Hassell.[58]

After surviving capture at Hatteras Island in 1861, years of fighting in Virginia and North Carolina, and the fall of Fort Fisher, Cushing Hassell's elder son fell to artillery fire near Kinston in March. In his private obituary of his son, Hassell expressed the unfulfilled desires of a merchant for his son: "He was well educated and qualified for almost any kind of business." The loss shook Hassell to his core, as he felt compelled to continue "attending to soldiers' families, with a heart ready to burst with grief at the loss of his precious son Theodore." The heartbreak felt by so many other merchants and persons on both sides of the war was felt for the first time by Cushing Hassell on March 11, 1865.[59]

Hassell and his town pressed onward. On March 27, he went out to the house of absent merchant Joseph D. Biggs to see about an accurate report that Confederate soldiers had ransacked Biggs' library to rip out blank paper for their own use, greatly damaging his property. He had been at the property a week before to re-bury a Federal soldier that had been unearthed

[58] Quote from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 4 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 5-8 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[59] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 11-13 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.

by animals. Unbeknownst to Hassell, he would return to the property a few days later on March 30, this time at gunpoint.[60]

On that day, a few hundred Federal troops under the command of Col. Jones Frankle, commander at Plymouth, arrived outside Williamston and camped at the Biggs estate. Mounted troops rode into town that morning and found Hassell, arrested him, and brought him back to the Biggs house for interrogation. Frankle was looking for information on a local man, alleged to be John L. Knight, who had removed the Federal soldier's body that Hassell had tended to weeks before from the local graveyard and dumped him in a field. Hassell, after answering their questions, was released unharmed, but his earlier pronouncement that the Union was in control of Williamston was proven correct. With the war ongoing, he did not swear an oath of loyalty in front of Frankle that day despite the pressure of arrest and interrogation, though he would soon do so.[61]

In April, Hassell spent a week preparing a report with the assistance of his stepson Benjamin to the county court on the relief operations he had conducted for the previous year. His report detailed his operations as having distributed more than $50,000 (Confederate) to soldiers' families in the year 1864-1865. The vast sums recorded reflect the amount of effort Hassell and his fellow commissioners expended on the project. He continued the operation through April, but upon the collapse of the Confederate government, money was no longer available. Indeed, whatever money the county had was now worthless, even to Confederate supporters, as Hassell soon discovered. His period of loyal service to the Confederacy had come to a close, with his nation bankrupt and defeated.[62]

---

[60] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 27, 18, and 30 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[61] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30 March 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC
[62] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10, 18, and 28 April 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. The report is no longer extant.

## New Bern in 1865

As the end of the war neared in early 1865, New Bern's commerce was growing more and more lively. Would-be merchants opened new stores regularly in the town, obtaining goods from New York on credit just as so many men had before the war. In February 1865, Dr. Henry J. Menninger, formerly a surgeon of the 2nd NC Union Volunteers posted in New Bern, opened the old drug store of Jacob Gooding Jr. in New Bern that the younger Gooding had abandoned when he was forced out of town in 1863. Menninger then traveled to New York to purchase a stock of medicines and other goods to sell. A native of Germany, Menninger used his experience in the army to propel his career not only as a doctor, but then as a druggist in New Bern and as founder after the war of the *New Bern Republican*. In 1868, he won election as Secretary of State of North Carolina, and after several years of political service, he moved to Brooklyn where he opened another drug store and continued a successful career. Menninger is an excellent example of the kind of opportunity that existed for enterprising merchants in New Bern in 1865, particularly those with military experience.[63]

As more of Eastern North Carolina fell into Federal control, families that had been long separated by the lines were able to reunite. Jacob Gooding received a letter in early April informing him of good news. His son Jacob Gooding Jr. and his family were safe. His family remained in Kinston despite the Federal advances and were headed toward New Bern to reunite with the elder Gooding. Gooding Jr. himself was at Goldsboro still in the 67th NC regiment when that town was evacuated in front of General Sherman's approach. Jacob Gooding, who had stayed behind in New Bern for so long, was finally to be reunited with at least some of his

[63] *New Berne Times*, 28 February 1865; *New Berne Times*, 14 February 1865; Menninger Obituary, *The Alexander County Journal* (Taylorsville, NC), 12 September 1889. On the expulsion of Jacob Gooding Jr. from New Bern, see Chapter 4.

family.[64] Over the coming months, more refugees and absent merchants returned to the city. By the end of May, nearly all of the refugees from New Bern had returned home, fundamentally changing the political and social character of New Bern once again.[65]

When the war ended and the town's former Confederates were able to return, even more new stores opened in New Bern. Though credit was readily available from Northern suppliers and demand for goods was high, success was not guaranteed. Former Confederate soldiers who had the credit and the idea tried to open stores, but many failed. In the wake of war, the economy was volatile in New Bern, and even experienced merchants struggled to succeed in the new environment. Of the numerous new stores that opened in 1865, most had closed or gone bankrupt by 1866.[66]

The influx of former New Bern residents, former Confederates, and other Southern citizens into the town at the close of hostilities radically altered the political climate in New Bern. During the wartime occupation, loyalty to the Union had been an asset for merchants trying to operate in the city. Not only was the oath required to buy or sell goods, but most customers were also supporters or soldiers of the United States. As the culture of New Bern regressed to its pre-occupation loyalties, however, merchants who had supported the Union fell out of favor, while loyal Confederates succeeded. Historian Judkin Browning effectively demonstrates that in Craven and Carteret Counties, prominent Unionists failed in their businesses over the coming years, while prominent Confederate merchants – new or experienced – fared

[64] Israel Disoway to Jacob Gooding Sr., 31 March 1865, Box 1, Folder a, Whitehurst Family Papers, #617, ECU.
[65] Rumley, 20 May 1865, *Southern Mind Under Union Rule*, 176.
[66] North Carolina, Vol. 7, pp. 50-145, R.G. Dun & Co. credit report volumes, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA.

better. Post-war New Bern developed a very different merchant community as Northerners returned to their antebellum towns and Confederate New Bern natives returned home.[67]

**Post-War Williamston: Hassell Recovers**

The end of the war affected commerce in Williamston quite differently, as no Northern merchants had taken up residence and trade had been dead in the town for years. In May 1865, the changes effected in Williamston by United States victory became apparent for Hassell and other merchants. African Americans, who had spent their entire lives in slavery and had been worked by Hassell for years, were finally free according to the law. After reflecting for a week, they initially accepted Hassell's offer of staying on through the end of 1865 in exchange for housing and food, though they did not stay nearly so long after seeing how little things had changed.[68] Confederate relief efforts waned, and the surviving soldiers returned home to rejoin the town's economy and local agriculture. The United States was once again in control of Martin County for good.[69]

No longer kept from business by the war and blockade, merchants in Williamston soon began looking to resume their long-neglected business. Hassell began taking inventory of what he had remaining in his warehouse, which totaled about 200,000 wooden shingles and 25,000 staves that he had accumulated before the war. He had begun the war with more than twice that amount, but Confederate pickets had used his supply for firewood for years. He endeavored to seek a market to ship these goods or to sell them, as there was no demand in Williamston itself.[70]

---

[67] See Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 172-182.
[68] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 16 and 22 May 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20 September 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[69] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 26 April 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[70] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 23 May 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 4 February 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. Hassell complained about Confederate soldiers destroying his property throughout the war.

Hassell soon found new opportunities for business, but he also found it necessary to reevaluate his loyalty. His stepson Benjamin Jewitt was a New York native, and in May, he planned a visit to reconnect with family there. Hassell instructed him to deliver correspondence and greetings to Hassell's merchant connections in New York. On May 30, he escorted Jewitt to Plymouth to leave on his trip, but also to see about commercial opportunity in that town. He wrote of the trip to Plymouth: "The war was ended and the restrictions of the military post [illegible] removed. H[assell] went chiefly to see about selling or shipping what staves and shingles he had on hand, as this w[as] about all he had left to aid in his support." After years of war, he found no such buyers in Plymouth, but what he did encounter was a visit with Colonel Frankle, who demanded that he and the Williamston residents with him take the oath of allegiance to the United States while he was there, which he did. After four years of hostility and depredations, Hassell had once more sworn allegiance to his nation.[71]

Though he found no buyers immediately in Plymouth, he soon received better news. The very next day, May 30, the steamboat *Clarion* arrived from Norfolk with passengers and freight – the first boat to arrive in Williamston for trade since the fall of Plymouth in 1862. On board was Hassell's young cousin Joseph J. Biggs, an aspiring member of the Biggs-Hassell merchant family. He brought with him a full stock of goods from Norfolk and offered a proposition to Hassell. In exchange for a share in the enterprise, J.J. Biggs wanted Hassell's assistance in running a store in Williamston, the physical space of Hassell's own store, and free lodging in his home. Faced with an offer he could not refuse, Hassell gladly accepted and set about transporting the goods from the river to his store and beginning the process of unpacking and pricing them for sale.[72]

[71] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 23 and 30 May 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[72] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 30-31 May 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.

Over the month of June, Hassell and his sons ran the Biggs store alongside their cousin, selling both retail goods to those with money and selling large amounts of goods to other merchants in town who had not yet found an external supplier. Stores were reopening across town for the first time in years, and goods were flowing freely. The steamboat that brought the first load began operating a weekly schedule between Norfolk and Williamston, allowing Hassell to ship his shingles and to receive goods in his new joint store. He began to rebuild his capital and his standing in the merchant community as an expert businessman, as there bloomed a "revival of business in Williamston."[73]

On June 15, his stepson Benjamin returned from New York with good news from Hassell's "old merchants in the city… encouraging him to go into business again." A few weeks later an agent from a New York mercantile firm arrived to discuss the resumption of trade with Williamston. By July 11, Hassell was making plans for a purchasing trip to New York City, the first since before the long war had begun. He left on July 13, returning nearly a month later with high hopes of commerce. While in New York, he visited with old friends, deferred his existing debts for another year, and bought a stock of goods worth more than $10,000 on ninety-day credit, anticipating fast returns on his investment.[74]

When Cushing Hassell returned to Williamston, he bought out the remaining goods of J.J. Biggs, who was returning to Norfolk. He set about making his store ready to sell his own goods once again, and sell goods he did. In the next two weeks, he made nearly $3,000 in sales and profits continued over the month of September. By the end of October, he had sold more than the cost of his initial purchase in New York and still had goods left over. Hassell had his own

[73] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 1-7 and 12-15 June 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC. Quote from Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 10 June 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.
[74] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 15 June and 1-11 July 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20 September 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC.

"revival of business that fall," as did other merchants who returned to Williamston or began merchandising for the first time. Over the course of 1865 and 1866, several new firms started in Williamston. While not all these new businesses survived Reconstruction, there was a promising start for the rebuilding of commerce in Williamston at the war's end.[75]

## Conclusion

The final phase of the Civil War brought shifting hopes for merchants in Eastern North Carolina. Cushing Hassell saw his town made safe once again with the Confederate resurgence at Plymouth, but after its fall, he once again was at the mercy of Federal raiding parties and eventually found himself within United States lines. The strain and losses of a long, destructive war in Martin County diminished his enthusiasm for the war, though he did not abandon his loyalty to the Confederacy. The end of hostilities brought great opportunity and success for his business and his person. In New Bern, Jacob Gooding eked out a meager income in gathering rent payments but was finally reunited with his family and his store at the war's end. The Northern merchants that supplanted the town's merchant community enjoyed great prosperity and opportunity throughout 1864-1865, though an epidemic, rampant crime, and shifting commercial fortunes created difficulties. They, however, did not fare well at the war's end, as demographic shifts brought by the end of war fundamentally changed the character of the merchant community once again. After a long occupation, individuals holding pro-Confederate ideology regained social and commercial control of New Bern, if not political control. Four long years of war had brought shifts for Gooding, Hassell, and their fellow merchants, but in the end, few changes lasted beyond 1865.

[75] Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 20 September and 31 October 1865, 1864-1866, Box 2, Folder 13, CBH Papers, UNC; North Carolina, Vol. 15, pp. 59-93, R.G. Dun & Co. credit report volumes, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA. Joseph J. Biggs returned to Norfolk with their mutual relative Kader Biggs, opening a commission merchant enterprise there which continued after the war.

The staunch Confederate loyalty of merchants like Hassell and Jacob Gooding Jr. served them well in Reconstruction. For Hassell, his years of public service within the Confederacy did not harm him in the post-war environment. Indeed, his Northern creditors even acknowledged after the war that "he had no control" over his "heavy losses" during the war and granted him generous extensions on antebellum debts. Retired, Gooding maintained his positions of social respect in the Episcopal church despite his taking the oath, and his son Jacob Gooding Jr. reentered the mercantile trade in New Bern, as did other former loyal Confederates.[76]

[76] Contract with Northern Merchants, 8 May 1866, Box 9, Folder c, Francis M. Manning Collection, #488, ECU; "Election of Vestry," *New Berne Times*, 15 April 1873; U.S. Census, 1870, Craven County, Population Schedule, Manuscript Census Returns, NA; *New Bern Republican*, 1 October 1868.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

During the Federal occupation of North Carolina from 1862 to 1865, the contrast between the experiences of merchants in Williamston and New Bern became evident. Occupation saved New Bern's economy from blockade and decay but drove its antebellum merchant class out of the city or out of business. For the merchants like Cushing Hassell who remained in Williamston throughout the war, economic conditions degraded in response to continual raids and public fear. The war brought financial and personal disaster to the merchant class of the region, yet even in fiscal crisis their loyalty proved not to be to commerce, which improved for Union merchants. Rather, these white merchants – Jacob Gooding and Cushing Hassell alike – shared a staunchly and uniquely Southern identity and ideology: one that was committed to maintaining slavery and the sectional character of the South. Though merchants in New Bern and Williamston faced strikingly different circumstances and pressures during occupation, their shared commitment to antebellum Southern culture outweighed temporary commercial concerns.

The loyalties of North Carolina merchants were not simple. Culture intersected with commerce to create a complex web of identities, interests, concerns, and motivators. In the decades leading to the Civil War, merchants in Williamston and New Bern alike did not have to seriously question their national or sectional identity. They maintained long friendships and partnerships with merchants in Northern cities like New York, partnerships which provided them easy credit, goods, and profit. Yet, their wealthiest customers were the planter elites of Eastern North Carolina, who had long dominated the politics and culture of the region. Though not members of this elite class, merchants like Hassell and Gooding were slaveholders and committed to the protection of their property – goods and persons alike. As longtime participants in the capitalist system of trade between North Carolina and the wider world, merchants were

loyal to commerce. However, this loyalty was not supreme – it was a conditional commitment to commerce. When forced to act, merchants valued their Southern identity over commerce, usually by choosing Confederate loyalty.

As the secession crisis reached a crucial moment in early 1861, merchants' actions showed that they did not all analyze the question of secession identically. In New Bern, growing public pressure encouraged merchants to support militarism and to distance themselves from the North. Hassell and every other merchant in Williamston, however, was not willing to break commercial ties to New York over secession in February 1861, conditionally choosing commercial success and livelihood over political concerns. Their approach changed after the firing on Fort Sumter, even before North Carolina seceded. However, they were not interested in abandoning long partnerships because of slavery, secession, or war unless they felt forced to do so. Indeed, Hassell himself renewed his Northern friendships after the war in the interest of profit. It was the military pressure of the United States – first by blockade in 1861 and then by occupation in 1862 – that kept merchants from valuing commerce first.

Throughout the first phase of the war, the Federal blockade suppressed the economy of Eastern North Carolina, even as the state's Confederate fervor grew. Some merchants enlisted, but most like Hassell just sought goods whenever they could be bought or sold. As fears grew in New Bern of the pending invasion, many merchants prepared to flee the city altogether, seeking safety in Confederate lines and sacrificing their stores and trade temporarily.

March 1862 brought divergent problems for Williamston and New Bern. Burnside's troops reached New Bern and proceeded to occupy the city, impose martial law, and take control of surrounding towns. Federal reach did not extend, however, to Williamston just sixty miles northwest, though Cushing Hassell could hear the artillery at New Bern. Some merchants like

Jacob Gooding Jr. and S.R. Street fought in the city's defense but chose to not flee the city. They attempted to remain openly loyal to Confederate ideals while staying in their town, balancing their interests in property and prosperity with ideological and family concerns. Over the first year of occupation, however, this approach proved to be impossible in New Bern. When Federal policy hardened after the resignation of Governor Stanly, the military demanded these merchants take the oath of allegiance. Though their loyalty was to their city first while fighting only in its defense and their commerce second under occupation, their ideological commitment to the Confederacy proved unshakable when faced with expulsion.

The struggle of Edward Stanly and Jacob Gooding Sr. against the military government in 1862 and 1863 illustrates the underlying political and racial tensions in New Bern for merchants, soldiers, and the governor himself. The fundamental question was this: would the antebellum status quo, which favored white Southern merchant interests and slavery, be the standard for policy? For Gooding, his Southern identity and desire to protect his property led him to stay in the city and to serve in the Stanly administration. In allying with Stanly to exclude African Americans from public relief operations, he accepted Union rule but did not reject the Southern cause for which the Confederacy fought. Given the repeated allegations of disloyalty against him, he clearly was no principled Unionist. For Gooding Sr., taking the oath of allegiance was a means to an end in the advancement of his own safety and white rule in the city, but for his son Jacob Gooding Jr. and other New Bern merchants, such a shift in loyalty was unthinkable.

The second phase of the war allowed a commercial revitalization of New Bern that never occurred in remote Williamston, which continued to be plagued by raids and destitution. Williamston merchants at the start of the invasion feared Federal occupation, thinking that their town would be next once Plymouth was captured. However, Williamston was never occupied

directly, with Federal presence never lasting more than a day or so at a time. The uncertainty and instability created by the series of Federal raiding parties that harassed Williamston led its merchants to hate the Union cause even more vehemently. They saw their town, homes, stores, goods, and chattel trampled or stolen repeatedly while the Confederacy remained powerless or unwilling to protect them. By the end of 1863, few people were even left in the town, and merchants had no goods to sell anyway. Still, however, Hassell and the other merchants of Martin County remained loyal, despite their circumstances.

Indeed, the destructive nature of the raiding activity of 1862 and 1863 actually radicalized Williamston merchants against the Union cause despite the continued failure of the Confederacy to protect their interests and property. Historian Jacqueline Glass Campbell has similarly argued that the raiding and pillaging of Federal troops in other parts of North Carolina during Sherman's March in 1865 radicalized them against the Union cause. She notes: "Ironically, civilians did not protest the loss of life on the battlefield. But Union depredations and wanton destruction of personal possessions and livestock seemed reprehensible acts that breached the accepted ethics of traditional warfare." This civilian perception was true and evident among Hassell, Bagley, and other Williamston merchants as their town and possessions were plunged into "ruin" by the Federal raiders.[1]

While they had feared occupation or capture in the beginning, the ongoing and seemingly endless destruction of Hassell's town by periodic raids embittered him and other Williamston residents against the "Lincolnites," as he often disparagingly referred to the Federal forces. While the occupation of New Bern created "confirmed Confederates" by the end of the war according to historian Judkin Browning, the experience of civilians like Hassell on the

[1] Quote 1: Campbell, *When Sherman Marched*, 76-77; Quote 2: Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 2 August 1863, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC.

Confederate frontier created radicalized sentiments against the Union cause much more quickly. The endless raids and rumors of raids in 1862 and 1863 created a culture of bitter fear and hostility among a population that, while pro-Confederate, did not enjoy the luxury of Confederate protection.[2]

As 1864 came, Confederate hopes resurged in Williamston as the front lines moved east. But within six months, their vulnerability had resumed, leaving them open to further panic and Federal incursions. New Bern easily weathered two failed Confederate assaults, though the epidemic of 1864 shut down the economy for a time. As the war neared an end, the hopes of loyal Confederate merchants were bleak. Jacob Gooding Jr., by then serving in the Confederate army, was not even present to see his father's meager residence in their hometown in the war's final years. However, the end of the war brought renewed economic opportunity, though merchants like Hassell were forced to finally accept United States rule at least nominally before they were able to renew trade. This renewed business, though, restored the merchant communities of these two towns, with Northern influence on commerce in Eastern North Carolina soon returning to its antebellum state. Northerners once again acted as the suppliers of credit and goods rather than as local competitors to North Carolina merchants.

For Southern merchants in Eastern North Carolina, location and experience did not substantially determine their loyalty. Whether Federal troops were in their city or only threatened it with occasional raiding parties, merchants remained committed to the Confederate cause. Commerce, profit, and access to goods were secondary interests to their strong white

[2] Quote 1: Cushing B. Hassell, Diary, 16 March 1862, 1861-1863, Box 1, Folder 11, CBH Papers, UNC; Quote 2: Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 180. Browning argues that "conditional Confederates" became "confirmed Confederates" through the experience of occupation (p. 180). While this is certainly accurate on the whole, the merchant population of New Bern and Williamston were confirmed in their Confederacy far earlier than the end of the war. Rather, the experience of occupation merely strengthened their existing loyalties despite their circumstances.

Southern identity, white supremacy, and Confederate sympathy. This enduring ideological makeup also lasted beyond the war.

The United States won the war, and Republicans temporarily established political control of North Carolina with the support of the newly enfranchised African American population. But the underlying ideology and loyalties of white Southern merchants were not changed by the Federal occupation, even though the war was for them the most cataclysmic economic disaster of the nineteenth century. Though merchants like Hassell and Gooding certainly valued commerce and profit, their loyalties ultimately laid elsewhere. In the crucible of occupation, they consistently placed their loyalty to Southern identity, political beliefs, racial ideology, whiteness, and familial connections over their temporary financial or commercial interests.

For those who survived the war, this loyalty paid off. Merchants across the South returned to their way of life before the war. Merchants like Hassell and Gooding renewed their contact with Northern partners, even as Northern merchants were driven out of business in New Bern by returning Confederates. Jacob Gooding Jr., whose store was occupied by Northern traders during the war, regained control and reopened his business, even holding political office after the war. In the coming years as the Southern economy recovered, white merchants became powerful holders of capital that actively maintained the racial class structure in the late nineteenth century. Sometimes the only source of credit in post-war communities, North Carolina merchants wielded an incredible leverage over farmers, white and African American alike. These merchants emerged from the Civil War with economic opportunity and deeply rooted white Southern ideology that helped them to establish political, economic, and racial hegemony in their communities.[3]

[3] Byrne, *Becoming Bourgeois*, 12, 206-208. Byrne argues that merchants "recovered their antebellum economic standing" before other classes. This recovery equipped them to become a crucial, even stereotypical, part of New

The core commercial character of the communities of Williamston and New Bern did not change in the coming decades. By 1900, the same proportion existed between the two town's number of stores, and the same political control continued. In Williamston, merchants continued to be among the leading figures in control of the town. In New Bern, despite the desires of white merchants and citizens, the many African Americans who had found shelter during the war gained political and economic standing in the town. White merchants in New Bern, former slaveholders so long committed to slavery and appalled at the racial revolution wrought in Reconstruction, were likely among the Democratic white resistance to black political power that finally succeeded in 1900 in disenfranchising African Americans in North Carolina. Elsewhere in North Carolina, merchants were among the ranks of Red Shirts, often supplying such white vigilantes with the very weapons used to intimidate and do violence to African Americans. Some of these merchants even advertised their affiliation with white supremacy as a selling point. The occupation of the North Carolina, though it brought freedom to the enslaved, did not achieve a total social or racial revolution, and as property-holding white men of privilege, merchants were often the very people making sure such a revolution could not succeed.[4]

For three long years, local merchants in Eastern North Carolina saw their towns invaded, occupied, or ransacked by a Northern army that militantly opposed their ideals. Though the United States ostensibly offered wartime prosperity in exchange for loyalty, Southern merchants

South communities. Browning, *Shifting Loyalties*, 180; Lala Carr Steelman, *The North Carolina Farmers' Alliance: A Political History, 1887-1893* (Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Publications, 1985), 2-3. On merchants after Reconstruction, see Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81-103. See also Thomas D. Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows: The Southern Country Store* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964); Thomas D. Clark, "The Post-Civil War Economy in the South," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 55 (June 1966): 424-433.

[4] Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 82, 91; Karen E. Medlin, "Reclaming First-Class Citizenship: The African-American Struggle and Mobilization for Political Rights in New Bern, North Carolina" (MA thesis, North Carolina State University, 2007), 11-18; Clark, *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows*, 42-43.

in New Bern and Williamston were not interested in such a trade. By the end of the war, years of raids, instability, and property destruction had embittered Williamston merchants like Cushing Hassell and his family toward the Union cause. The New Bern merchant class of the antebellum period had almost all left the city by 1863, fleeing to Confederate lines. When forced to only choose one, white Southern merchants in New Bern and Williamston consistently chose loyalty to the Confederacy over their loyalty to commerce. In the end, this constancy helped them regain their prosperous position in the post-war climate, indeed often gaining status and economic power after the war while maintaining their commitment to white supremacy.

# Bibliography

## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AMHI | U. S. Army Military History Institute |
| Duke | David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University |
| ECU | East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University |
| NA | National Archives |
| NCSA | State Archives of North Carolina |
| UNC | Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill |

## Primary Sources

### Manuscript Collections

American Antiquarian Society Archives, Worcester, Massachusetts, USA.

Civil War Collection, 1861-1868
Horace James Correspondence, 1852-1870
Samuel E. Staples Papers, 1849-1900
Thomas McLin Letter Book, 1832-1861
William Willoughby Augustus Papers, 1861-1864

Baker Library Special Collections, Harvard Business School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

R.G. Dun & Company Credit Report Volumes, 1840-1895

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA. (Abbreviated as Duke)

Cushing Biggs Hassell Papers, 1814-1926
Bryant Bennett Papers, 1767-1902
Fowler Family Papers, 1779-1870
Joseph Brickell Papers, 1810-1829
B.G. Bentley Papers, 1830-1836
George A. Root Papers 1863-1865
Thomas William Hall Papers, 1809-1894
A.J. Hardy and William B. King Letter Book, 1834-1843
Samuel Simpson Biddle Papers, 1764-1895
Docton Warren Bagley Diary, 1856-1864
Stephen Elliott Papers, 1808-1863

William B. Grant Broadside, 1858
John Wesley Williams Papers, 1861-1863, transcripts accessed via *Private Voices* at https://altchive.org/private-voices/

East Carolina Manuscript Collection, J. Y. Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA. (Abbreviated as ECU)

Francis M. Manning Collection, #488
Hardison Family Papers, #767
Heath Family Papers, #276
Jacob Gooding Papers, #3
Stephen F. Miller Memoir, #371
Whitehurst Family Papers, #617
William L. Horner Collection: Gooding Family Papers, #265-002 (abbreviated as "Gooding Family Papers")

National Archives, Washington, D.C., USA. (Abbreviated as NA)

Manuscript Census Returns, Fourth Census of the United States, 1820, Population Schedule, National Archives Microfilm Series M-33.
Manuscript Census Returns, Fifth Census of the United States, 1830, Population Schedule, National Archives Microfilm Series M-19.
Manuscript Census Returns, Sixth Census of the United States, 1840, Population Schedule, National Archives Microfilm Series M-704.
Manuscript Census Returns, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Population, Slave, and Social Statistics Schedules, National Archives Microfilm Series M-432.
Manuscript Census Returns, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Population Schedule, National Archives Microfilm Series M-653.
Manuscript Census Returns, Ninth Census of the United States, 1870, Population Schedule, National Archives Microfilm Series M-593.
Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms, compiled 1874 - 1899, documenting the period 1861-1865, National Archives Microfilm Series M-346.

New Bern-Craven County Public Library, New Bern, North Carolina, USA.

Henry Clay Whitehurst Family Bible
John Carruthers Stanly Family Bible

Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, USA.

Charles A. Barker Papers, 1861-1864
Charles W. Brooks Diary, 1864
W.F. Chapple Diaries, 1861-1863

Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA. (Abbreviated as UNC)

Bertie County (N.C.) Account Books, #1758-z
Cushing Biggs Hassell Papers, #810 (abbreviated as “CBH Papers, UNC”)
F. F. Long Ledger, #3628-z
Joseph Hubbard Saunders Papers, #650
Joy and Metcalf Records, #4738-z
Lamb Family Papers, #1481-z
Matilda Lamb Morton's "Memories of the War Between the States," #2467-z
McGee Family papers, #4733
Mercer Family Papers, #2990-z
Miscellaneous Southern Business Letters #3739
New Bern Occupation Papers #1993-z
Williamston (N.C.) Night Watch Reports, #3422-z
Peter Mallett Papers, #480
Sylvester S. Hassell Papers, #321
William Bagley Letter Books #863-z

State Archives of North Carolina, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. (Abbreviated as NCSA)

Asa Biggs Journal, P 165
Asa Biggs Papers, PC 110
Craven County Marriage Bond Abstracts, 1740-1868
Craven County Minutes of the Wardens of the Poor, 1837-1881
Craven County Records of Ships and Merchants, 1770-1858
J. Edwin West Account Book, PC AB 84
John Fanning Burgwyn Diary and Papers, PC 564
John Willis Ellis, Governor’s Papers
Kader Biggs Papers, PC 215 (abbreviated as “Kader Biggs Papers”)
Kinsey Papers, PC 1271
Larkin S. Kendrick Papers, PC 1921
Martin County Will Books
Merchants’ Bank of New Bern Records, P 45
North Carolina, Confederate Soldiers and Widows Pension Applications, 1885-1953
Parish Register, Christ’s Church New Bern
Parish Register, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Beaufort
Simpson and Biddle Family Papers, PC 1533

U. S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, USA. (Abbreviated as AMHI)

Alfred Holcomb Collection, transcripts accessed via *Private Voices* at https://altchive.org/private-voices/
Joseph Barlow Collection, transcripts accessed via *Private Voices* at https://altchive.org/private-voices/

Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Special Collections and Archives, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA.

Hassell Family Papers, MS 51

**Published Sources**

Benjamin, W.S. *The great epidemic in New Berne and vicinity, September and October, 1864 By one who passed through it*. New Berne, NC: Geo. Mills Joy, 1865.

Berlin, Ira. *The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: The Upper South*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Campbell, John J. *The Southern Business Directory and General Commercial Advertiser*. Charleston, SC: Steam Power Press of Walker & James, 1854.

Colyer, Vincent P. *Report of the Services Rendered by the Freed People to the United States Army, in North Carolina, in the Spring of 1862, After the Battle of Newbern*. New York: G.A. Whitehorne, Printer, 1864.

Day, David L. *My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Mass. Volunteer Infantry with Burnside's Coastal Division; 18th Army Corps and the Army of the James.* Milford, MA: King & Billings, Printers, 1884.

Derby, William P. *Bearing arms in the Twenty-seventh Massachusetts regiment of volunteer infantry during the Civil War, 1861-1865*. Boston: Wright & Potter Co., 1883.

Edmondston, Catherine Devereux. *Journal of a Secesh Lady: The Diary of Catherine Ann Devereux Edmondston, 1860-1866*. Beth G. Crabtree, and James Welch Patton, Eds. Raleigh: NC Division of Archives and History, 1979.

Gardner, James B. *Massachusetts Memorial to Her Soldiers and Sailors Who Died in the Department of No. Carolina 1861-1865*. Boston: Gardner and Taplin, 1909. http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/16816

------. *Record of the Service of the Forty-Fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Militia in North Carolina August 1862 to May 1863*. Boston: 1887. https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/text/13770

Hassell, Cushing B. *History of the Church of God, from the Creation to A.D. 1885; Including Especially the History of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association.* Middletown, NY: Gilbert Beebe's Sons, 1886.

Hassell, Sylvester. "Obituary of Martha Maria Hassell." in *Signs of the Times, and Doctrinal Advocate and Monitor* 65, no. 1 (1897):700.

Hedrick, John A. *Letters from a North Carolina Unionist: John A. Hedrick to Benjamin S. Hedrick, 1862-1865*. Edited by Judkin Browning and Michael Thomas Smith. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2001.

*Journal of the Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of North Carolina*. Fayetteville, NC: Edward J. Hale, 1834.

*Journal of the Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of North Carolina*. Fayetteville, NC: Edward J. Hale, 1836.

*Journal of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of North Carolina*. Fayetteville, NC: Edward J. Hale, 1840.

Kayser, John C. *Commercial Directory*. Philadelphia: J.C. Kayser & Co., 1823.

Kennedy, Joseph C.G. *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864.

Lemmon, Sarah McCulloh, ed. *The Pettigrew Papers*. Raleigh: State Dept. of Archives and History, 1971.

Manarin, Louis H., Weymouth T. Jordan, Matthew M. Brown, and Michael W. Coffey. *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*. Raleigh: State Dept. of Archives and History, 1966. (abbreviated as *NC Troops*)

Mills, Gary B. *Southern Loyalists in the Civil War: The Southern Claims Commission*. Baltimore: Genealogical Pubishing Company, 1994.

*Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ancient York Masons of North Carolina.* Raleigh: T. Loring, Office of the North Carolina Standard, 1840.

Rumley, James. *The Southern Mind Under Union Rule: The Diary of James Rumley, Beaufort, North Carolina, 1862-1865*. Edited by Judkin Browning. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009.

Rush, Richard et al., eds. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion.* 31 vols. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927. (Abbreviated as *ORN*)

*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.* 128 vols. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901. (Abbreviated as *ORA*)

Thomson, William. *Thomson's Mercantile and Professional Directory*. Baltimore: William Thomson, 1851.

Whitford, J.D. "Notes on John Wright Stanly." in *Publications of the Southern History Association* IV. Washington: Southern History Association, 1900.

Whitford, Vera H. Ed. *Whitford*. 1972.

Wilson, Leonard. *Makers of America: Biographies of Leading Men and Women*. Vol. 3. Washington, DC: B.F. Johnson, Inc., 1917.

Vance, Zebulon B. *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*. Frontis W. Johnston, Ed. Vol. 1, 1843-1862. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1963.

Vandiver, Frank E. Ed. *Confederate Blockade Running through Bermuda, 1861-1865: Letters and Cargo Manifests*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1947.

**Newspapers**

Democratic Banner (Williamston, NC)
Newbern Daily Progress (New Bern, NC)
Newbern Journal of Commerce (New Bern, NC)
Newbern Weekly Progress (New Bern, NC)
Newbernian (New Bern, NC)
New Bern Commercial (New Bern, NC)
New Bern Republican (New Bern, NC)
New Berne Weekly Journal (New Bern, NC)
Raleigh Register (Raleigh, NC)
Selma Reporter (Selma, AL)
Semi-Weekly Standard (Raleigh, NC)
Tarboro Mercury (Tarboro, NC)
Tarboro Press (Tarboro, NC)
The Alexander County Journal (Taylorsville, NC)
The Boston Transcript (Boston, MA)
The Daily Dispatch (Richmond, VA)
The Daily Review (Wilmington, NC)
The Enterprise (Williamston, NC)
The Evening Bulletin (Charlotte, NC)
The Hillsborough Recorder (Hillsborough, NC)
The New Berne Times (New Bern, NC)
The Newbernian (New Bern, NC)
The Weekly Era (Raleigh, NC)
The Western Democrat (Charlotte, NC)
Williamston Mercury (Williamston, NC)
Wilmington Journal (Wilmington, NC)
Windsor Herald and Bertie County Register (Windsor, NC)

**Databases, Digital and Other Sources**

"Alabama, Friends of Magnolia Cemetery, Funeral Books, 1911-1965." Database. *FamilySearch*. https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/3264362

Clubb, Jerome M., William H. Flanigan and Nancy H. Zingale. "Electoral Data for Counties in the United States: Presidential and Congressional Races, 1840-1972." Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2006. https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR08611.v1

Humphrey, R. Allen, Tr. 1841 Craven County, NC School Children. 2002. Transcription of 1841 manuscripts held at NCSA.

"North Carolina Marriages, 1759-1979." Database. *FamilySearch*. Based on NCSA Microform. https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1675514

**Secondary Sources**

**Monographs**

Ash, Stephen V. *When the Yankees Came.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

------. *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.

Ashworth, John. *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic*. Vol. 2. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Atherton, Lewis E. *The Southern Country Store, 1800-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949.

Ayers, Edward L. *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Barrett, John Gilchrist. *The Civil War In North Carolina.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975.

Balleisen, Edward J. *Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Blassingame, John W. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Boykin, James H. *North Carolina in 1861*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1961.

Bradley, Mark L. *Bluecoats & Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians In Reconstruction North Carolina*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009.

Brown, Norman D. *Edward Stanly: Whiggery's Tarheel "Conqueror."* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974.

Browning, Judkin. *Shifting Loyalties: The Union Occupation of Eastern North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Byrne, Frank J. *Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture In the South, 1820-1865*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2006.

Campbell, Jacqueline G. *When Sherman Marched North From the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Campbell, Stanley W. *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970.

Carlton, Eric. *Occupation: The Policies and Practice of Military Conquerors*. Savage, MD: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992.

Caraway, Gertrude S. *Crown of Life: History of Christ Church, New Bern, N.C. 1715-1940.* New Bern, NC: 1940.

------. *Years of Light; History of St. John's Lodge, no. 3, A.F. & A.M., New Bern, North Carolina, 1772-1944*. New Bern, NC: Owen G. Dunn Company, 1944.

------. *The Stanly (Stanley) Family and the Historic John Wright Stanly House.* New Bern, NC: Tryon Palace Commission, 1969.

Cecelski, David S. *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom In Maritime North Carolina.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Cecil-Fronsman, Bill. *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1992.

Clark, Thomas D. *Pills, Petticoats, and Plows: The Southern Country Store.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964.

Click, Patricia Catherine. *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Cochran, Hamilton. *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977.

Conser Jr., Walter H. and Robert J. Cain. *Presbyterians in North Carolina: Race, Politics, and Religious Identity in Historical Perspective.* Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2012.

Crofts, Daniel W. *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Downey, Tom. *Planting a Capitalist South: Masters, Merchants, and Manufacturers In the Southern Interior, 1790-1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006.

Durrill, Wayne K. *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community In the Great Rebellion.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Elliott, Robert Garrison. *Ironclad of the Roanoke: Gilbert Elliott's Albemarle*. Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Pub. Co, 1994.

Escott, Paul D. *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South In the American Civil War.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Freehling, William W. *The Road to Disunion: Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

------. *The Road to Disunion: Volume II: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Gaddis, James L. *Richard Gatlin and the Confederate Defense of Eastern North Carolina.* Charleston: The History Press, 2015.

Gallman, J. Matthew. *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia during the Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Green, III, John B. *New Bern Album*. New Bern: Tryon Palace Commission, 1985.

Grimsley, Mark. *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Hamilton, Daniel W. *The Limits of Sovereignty: Property Confiscation in the Union and the Confederacy during the Civil War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Hinds, John W. *The Hunt for the Albemarle: Anatomy of a Gunboat War*. Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 2001.

Holt, Michael F. *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Hunt, Roger D. *Colonels in Blue - Union Army Colonels of the Civil War: The New England States: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont*. Atglen, PA: Schiffler Publishing, 2001.

Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery 1619-1877*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.

Kruman, Marc W. *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

Lang, Andrew F. *In the Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017.

Leigh, Phillip. *Trading with the Enemy: The Covert Economy During the American Civil War*. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2014.

Levy, Jonathan. *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Link, William A. *North Carolina: Change and Tradition in a Southern State*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2009.

Lord, Francis A. *Civil War Sutlers and Their Wares*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969.

Luskey, Brian. *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America.* New York: NYU Press, 2010.

Manning, Francis M. and W. H. Booker. *Religion and Education in Martin County, 1774-1974: Indexed*. Williamston, NC: Enterprise Pub. Co, 1974.

Marler, Scott P. *The Merchants' Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Matthews, Donald G. *Religion in the Old South*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

McCallum, James H. *Martin County during the Civil War: Including a Roster of Troops from Martin County*. Williamston, NC: Enterprise Publisher. Co, 1971.

McCurry, Stephanie. *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

McKean, Brenda Chambers. *Blood and War at My Doorstep: North Carolina Civilians in the War Between the States*. 2 vols. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corp, 2011.

McPherson, James. *Battle Cry of Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Miller, Steve M. *North Carolina Unionists and the Fight Over Secession*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2019.

Morrill, Dan. *Civil War in the Carolinas*. Mt. Pleasant, SC: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 2002.

Myers, Barton A. *Rebels Against the Confederacy: North Carolina's Unionists*. New York NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Nelson, Scott Reynolds and Carol Sheriff. *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America's Civil War, 1854-1877*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Newsome, Hampton. *The Fight for the Old North State: The Civil War in North Carolina, January-May 1864.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019

O'Brien, Patrick. *The Economic Effects of the American Civil War.* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988.

Pegg, Herbert Dale. *The Whig Party in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill, N. C: Colonial Press, 1968.

Powell, William S. *North Carolina: Through Four Centuries*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

------. *North Carolina Gazetteer*. 1st ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Porter, Glenn and Harold C. Livesay. *Merchants and Manufacturing: Studies in the Changing Structure of Nineteenth Century Marketing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971.

Rable, George C. *God's Almost Chosen Peoples.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Roberson, Elizabeth W. *Our Legacy from the Past: A History of the First United Methodist Church of Williamston, North Carolina*. 1988.

Ruminski, Jarrett. *The Limits of Loyalty: Ordinary People in Civil War Mississippi*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2017.

Silkenat, David. *Driven From Home: North Carolina's Civil War Refugee Crisis.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016.

------. *Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, & Debt In Civil War Era North Carolina.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Sitterson, J. Carlyle. *The Secession Movement in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939.

Surdam, David G. *Northern Naval Superiority and the Economics of the American Civil War*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001.

Steelman, Lala Carr. *The North Carolina Farmers' Alliance: A Political History, 1887-1893*. Greenville, NC: East Carolina University Publications, 1985.

Thorn, Barbara M. Howard, ed. *The Heritage of Craven County, North Carolina*. Vol. 1. Winston Salem: Eastern North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1984.

Trotter, William R. *Ironclads and Columbiads: The Coast*. Winston-Salem, NC: J.F. Blair, 1989.

Vose, Edward Neville. *Seventy-five Years of the Mercantile Agency, R.G. Dun & Co., 1841-1916.* Brooklyn, NY: R.G. Dun & Co., 1916.

Warner, Ezra J. *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959 (2013 Edition).

Watson, Alan D. *A History of New Bern and Craven County*. New Bern, NC: Tryon Palace Commission, 1987.

------. *Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina*. NC Office of Archives and History, 2002.

Watson, Harry L. *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.

Wells, Jonathan Daniel. *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861.* Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Wise, Stephen R. *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running during the Civil War*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.

Young, Linda. *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia and Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

**Edited Collections**

Butler, Lindley S. and Alan D. Watson, eds. *North Carolina Experience: An Interpretive and Documentary History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Elleman, Bruce A. and S.C.M. Paine, eds. *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-strategies, 1805-2005*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Escott, Paul D., ed. *North Carolinians In the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Slap, Andrew L. and Frank Towers, eds. *Confederate Cities: The Urban South During the Civil War Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Wells, Jonathan Daniel and Jennifer P. Green, eds. *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011.

**Dissertations and Theses**

Ash, Stephen V. "Civil War, Black Freedom, and Social Change in the Upper South: Middle Tennessee, 1860-1870." PhD diss. The University of Tennessee, 1983.

Auman, William T. "Neighbor Against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War In the Central Counties of Confederate North Carolina." PhD diss. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1988.

Burke, James C. "North Carolina's First Railroads, A Study in Historical Geography." PhD diss. University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008.

Byrne, Frank J. "Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture in the Antebellum and Confederate South." PhD diss. The Ohio State University, 2000.

Crews, Coletta A. "Wayne County, North Carolina: A Place and a People: 1860-1880." MA thesis, East Carolina University, 1995.

Medlin, Karen E. "Reclaming First-Class Citizenship: The African-American Struggle And Mobilization For Political Rights In New Bern, North Carolina." MA thesis, North Carolina State University, 2007.

Merriman, Ann M. "North Carolina Schooners, 1815-1901, and the S.R. Fowle and Son Company of Washington, North Carolina." MA thesis, East Carolina University, 1996.

Price, Franklin H. "Conflict and Commerce: Maritime Archaeological Site Distribution as Cultural Change on the Roanoke River, North Carolina." MA thesis, East Carolina University, 2006.

Flood, Christine Rowse. "The Arbiters of Compromise: Sectionalism, Unionism, and Secessionism in Maryland and North Carolina." PhD diss. University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2015.

Sauers, Richard A. "General Ambrose E. Burnside's 1862 North Carolina Campaign." PhD diss. Pennsylvania State University, 1987.

Wood, Richard E. "Port Town at War: Wilmington, North Carolina, 1860-1865." PhD diss. Florida State University, 1976.

**Articles and Papers**

Clark, Thomas D. “The Post-Civil War Economy in the South.” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 55 (June 1966): 424-433.

Escott, Paul D. "Poverty and Governmental Aid for the Poor in Confederate North Carolina." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (Oct. 1984): 462-480.

Escott, Paul D. and Jeffrey J. Crow. “The Social Order and Violent Disorder: An Analysis of North Carolina in the Revolution and the Civil War.” *The Journal of Southern History* 52 (Aug. 1986): 373-402.

Honey, Michael K. "The War Within the Confederacy: White Unionists of North Carolina." *Prologue* 18 (Summer 1986): 86-88.

Jalil, Andrew J. “A New History of Banking Panics in the United States, 1825–1929: Construction and Implications.” *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 7 (July 2015): 295-330.

Johnson, Ludwell H. “Contraband Trade during the Last Year of the Civil War.” *Journal of American History* 49, No. 4 (March 1963): 635–652.

Livesay, Harold and Glenn Porter. “The Financial Role of Merchants in the Development of U.S. Manufacturing, 1815-1860.” *Explorations in Economic History* 9 (1971): 63-87.

Olson, Christopher. "The Curlew: The Life and Death of a North Carolina Steamboat, 1856-1862." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (2006): 139-64.

Norris, David A. “’The Yankees Have Been Here!’:The Story of Brig. Gen. Edward E. Potter's Raid on Greenville, Tarboro, and Rocky Mount, July 19-23, 1863.” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 73, no. 1. (January 1996): 1-27.

Rice, Phillip M. “The Early Development of the Roanoke Waterway — A Study in Interstate Relations.” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 31, no. 1 (1954): 50-74.

Schweninger, Loren. "John Carruthers Stanly and the Anomaly of Black Slaveholding." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 67 (April 1990):159-92.

Shuler, Noah S. “By Sea and By River: The Eastern North Carolina Merchant Community, 1800-1861." unpublished conference paper, 2020 Phi Alpha Theta Biennial Conference, San Antonio, TX (2-5 January 2020).

------. "'Hazardous for our Gunboats': Early Federal Riverine Operations in North Carolina." unpublished conference paper, 2019 Phi Alpha Theta Virginia Regional Conference, Lynchburg, VA (29-30 March 2019).

------. "The Effects of the American Civil War on Religiosity in North Carolina." *The Lookout* 5 (Fall 2017): 49-68.

Silkenat, David. "'A Typical Negro': Gordon, Peter, Vincent Colyer, and the Story Behind Slavery's Most Famous Photograph." *American Nineteenth Century History*. 15, no. 2 (2014): 169–186.

Spear, Donald P. "The Sutler in the Union Army." *Civil War History* 16, no. 2 (1970): 121-138.

Still, William N. "A Naval Sieve: The Union Blockade in the Civil War." *Naval War College Review* 36, No. 3 (1983): 38-45.

Watson, Harry L. "Conflict and Collaboration: Yeomen, Slaveholders, and Politics in the Antebellum South." *Social History* 10, no. 3 (1985): 273-298.

**Digital and Other Sources**

"A brief history of the Boston, MA Police Department." Boston Police Museum. Accessed November 27, 2020. https://bostonpolicemuseum.com/history.html;

Butchko, Thomas R. "Williamston Commercial Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994.

------. "Williamston Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2001.

Downs, Gregory P. and Scott Nesbit. Mapping Occupation: Force, Freedom, and the Army in Reconstruction. http://mappingoccupation.org, published March 2015, accessed (February 2021).

*North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*. Raleigh: Copyright & Digital Scholarship Center, North Carolina State University Libraries.

North Carolina State Department of Archives and History. "Slover-Bradham House." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972.

Penne Smith Sandbeck & Associates. "Spring Green Primitive Baptist Church." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2004.

Powell, William S. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*. 6 Vol. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979-1996.

Runyan, Timothy, et. al. “Ocracoke Shipwreck Database and Remote Sensing Survey Final Report.” NOAA, East Carolina University, 2005.

Shuler, Noah S. “Jacob Gooding Papers.” ArcGIS digital humanities project, East Carolina University, 2019. https://ecu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=6a3f876b90de48e8a942e1469da87f83

Truesdale, H. Morgen “Eastern North Carolina, ca. 1861.” digital map produced for author, 2020.