
The War in Words: Union and Confederate Civil War Military Camp Newspapers in Western Virginia

Stewart Plein

Surviving issues of Civil War military camp newspapers are few and far between, but the news they printed is still valuable to us today. As troops entered a town, if there were newspapermen among the regiment—and from the number and variety of papers printed there often were¹—they took it upon themselves to take over the local press and use it to print their own newspaper.² The press may have been abandoned by fleeing residents, it may have been confiscated by troops,³ or the unit may have carried a portable press,⁴ but in any case, the rare survivors of Civil War news often reflect the movement of troops, the availability of soldiers skilled as newspapermen, and the proximity of a usable press.

A Union soldier once asked, “Does not a newspaper follow a Yankee march everywhere?”⁵ It certainly seemed that way. More than fifteen Civil War military camp newspapers were published on confiscated presses for army units on active duty in western Virginia. The names of these regimental publications point to their loyalties: the *American Union*, the *Yankee*, the *Knapsack*, the *Old Flag*, and the *Wandering Soldier*, all Union newspapers. The only Confederate military camp newspaper printed in what became West Virginia was the *Guerilla*.

Military camp newspapers are invaluable for several reasons. They document the movement of both Union and Confederate troops within western Virginia, the struggle of the western counties for independence from Virginia, and the constant need to support and bolster troop morale. Though a number of camp newspapers were printed in various locations throughout the war, they were never common. The few copies that survive are extremely valuable for their reports of daily camp life, including religious meetings and other popular forms of entertainment enjoyed by soldiers in camp, as well as battle reports, politics, and local news.

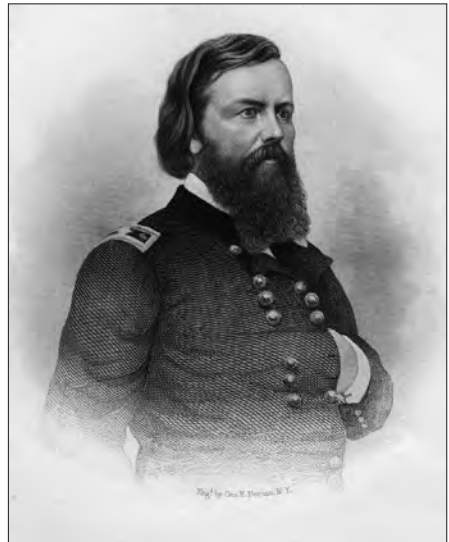
A rarely examined primary resource, camp newspapers recorded the events of the Civil War and the daily lives of soldiers in their own words. As far back as the 1930s, some scholars began to look at “soldier” newspapers,

examining them for their ingenuity and their records of soldiers' experiences in battle and at rest. Over the years, the few scholars who have worked diligently to study camp newspapers have also sought to record a list of the papers extant throughout the United States. These scholarly efforts have located approximately three hundred camp papers; unfortunately, these lists have been lost, are unknown, or have not been located. Only one list remains extant,⁶ and it provides a valuable resource for the number and variety of surviving examples of soldier newspapers.

This article looks at the surviving issues of two Civil War military camp newspapers that were published by occupation forces in western Virginia. Two camp newspapers—one Union and one Confederate—are among the survivors of western Virginia campaigns that were printed by successive occupying forces in Charleston, Virginia (West Virginia after 1863). Both newspapers reveal the life of citizens and soldiers under occupation. The *Guerilla*, a Confederate newspaper published by the Associate Printers of the Confederate Army, and the *Knapsack*, a Union newspaper published by the 5th Virginia Volunteer Infantry.⁷ Both publications continued the battle, not just on the field, but also on the printed page.

The Battle for Charleston

In the heat of late August 1862, a daring and wildly successful Confederate raid on the Union supply depot at Catlett's Station in northern Virginia earned the Confederacy a handful of Federal troops as prisoners and a supply cache. This raid proved most embarrassing for Union Maj. Gen. John Pope because the most important item captured during the raid was one that would give the Confederacy an unexpected insight into the Union's upcoming movements: his personal dispatch book. While the loss of his uniform, horses, and money was embarrassing enough, the loss of the dispatch book meant that Rebel forces now controlled what Pope described in his report as "information of great importance."⁸



Union Maj. Gen. John Pope (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries).

Lightburn encouraged Unionist citizens to flee the area in expectation of the coming contest. The fighting, much of which took place within the city itself, is now known as the Battle of Charleston.¹⁰ Lightburn was forced to retreat, and much of the downtown area was burned when Confederates fired hot projectiles that ignited whatever they hit.¹¹ Lightburn, who grew up with Confederate Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson in Lewis County,¹² now handed control of his home region to General Loring’s forces. Loring now occupied Charleston and his control of the area stretched across the Kanawha Valley.

Confederate Occupation

The Confederates’ Newspaper

Once Confederates settled into the occupation, they soon requisitioned the printing office of the *Kanawha Valley Star*; a weekly newspaper, and printed, as their first order of business, a proclamation. Printed in the form of a broadside and signed by Loring, this proclamation informed the residents of Charleston that they would receive no threat from the occupation forces unless they continued to support the restored government in Wheeling, Virginia (West Virginia the following year).¹³ This proclamation established the *Guerilla*’s goals: keeping Charleston citizens informed for the duration and promoting the occupying forces as liberators rather than occupiers. The newspaper sold for ten cents a copy or fifty cents a week. The edition (volume 1, number 2,) pictured on page 26, is dated September 29, 1862. A single sheet of paper, twelve inches by eighteen inches, folded once, provided four pages for news.

While Union camp papers gave publication credit to the regiment, the *Guerilla* credited its publication to the Associate Printers, most likely an early forerunner of the Press Association of the Confederate States of America, a cooperative news agency whose task was to gather and disseminate news concerning Confederate interests to both town and camp newspapers.

The contents of the *Guerilla* for the September 29, 1862, issue included what would have been standard fare for camp newspapers, whether Union or Confederate: a heartbreaking poem on soldier life; the disclosure of the failure of the news to arrive via the subscribed service, either the Associated Press,¹⁴ often relied upon by the Union, or the Confederate Associate Printers¹⁵ (as stated by the *Guerilla*: “owing to the non-arrival of the mail, up to the hour of going to press, we are without the latest Eastern news”); politics; general orders; and reports from the field. Specifically, this issue contained news related to the Confederate occupation forces, including a

morale-boosting¹⁶ notice of the successful occupation of Charleston and the Kanawha Valley. The paper proclaimed,

The North seems fully aware of the great loss they have sustained in having to give up the Kanawha, and are free to acknowledge the great importance of its acquisition to our cause. They are bitter against their government for having withdrawn the troops, and acknowledge that we have destroyed in a week what took millions of money and an army of fifteen or twenty thousand men fifteen months to accomplish. They seem to have no hopes of attempting to retake it this season, at least, as they are now in need of every available man in Kentucky and Maryland; but, let them come when and in what force they please, we have no fears but that they would be made to reenact in full style the Lightburn double quick.¹⁷

Additional news included the announcement of a meeting to establish a fair price for salt; a notice of soldiers' deaths in the September 10 battle at Fayette(ville), Virginia; documentation of the names of those lost in the battle; and a statement that death notices would be sent to Richmond for publication. Other war-related news included an announcement that Thomas Morris had been appointed brigadier general in the Confederate Army and would preside over western Virginia, as well as general orders issued by Loring and others.

The basic outline of the Confederate occupation agenda can also be determined from the *Guerilla's* pages. That agenda consisted of three major goals: claiming territory, assuring local businesses that Confederate money was good,¹⁸ and encouraging Unionists to defect to the Confederate cause. Unfortunately for the Confederates, these goals were easier to print than to obtain.

The first goal, to claim territory, was announced in a published proclamation. General Loring stated the army's desire

to rescue the people from the despotism of the counterfeit State Government imposed upon you by Northern bayonets, and to restore the country once more to its natural allegiance to the State. We fight for peace and the possession of our own territory.¹⁹

In other words, Unionist Virginians were encouraged to defect to their Confederate counterparts.²⁰ When Loring called the government "counterfeit," he referred to the Restored or Reorganized Government of

Virginia, established July 1, 1861. In essence, this body made it possible to re-establish the government functions of the state of Virginia as part of the Union in order to pave the way for the creation of the state of West Virginia.²¹

The second item on the agenda concerned the acceptance of Confederate dollars. At the outset of the war, Confederate dollars were on par with gold. However, as the war continued, inflation rates caused the Confederate dollar to decline in value. Understandably, local merchants in Charleston were reluctant to accept Confederate dollars, despite Loring's urging that they open their stores to the Confederate soldiers. According to the *Guerilla*,

The streets of Charleston are becoming gay. A great many merchants have re-opened their stores to the public. Others, however, still keep themselves and their goods shut up in the dark, because they have some scruples about taking Confederate money, etc. We hope they will soon come to their senses, and show that they appreciate their deliverance from Northern vandals, by immediately opening their stores and offering goods at the same rate they sold to Yankees.

Failure to attain the third goal was a disappointment to Loring for several reasons. The Confederate occupation of Charleston was a welcome assignment for soldiers of the 22nd Virginia, many of whom had lived in the area and were eager to return home after a year away. Since many of Loring's forces hailed from the region, he anticipated a groundswell of support for the occupation and hoped to recruit five thousand new soldiers. His hopes went unrealized, however, since there was no one left to recruit. Local Kanawhans as well as Unionists had fled rather than face Confederate conscription. This situation became a topic under the heading, "Exodus From Kanawha," for the *Guerilla*, which reported,

During the past few days the Kanawha and Ohio rivers, between this point and Gauley, have been full of flatboats, batteaux, skiffs, rafts, and all manner of buoyant conveyance, laden with families of Unionists who find themselves compelled to flee on the approach of the Confederate army, fearing the rebel General will carry into execution his recently made threat to hang every citizen "Yankee" he found in the Kanawha Valley²²

Loring Ignores His Orders

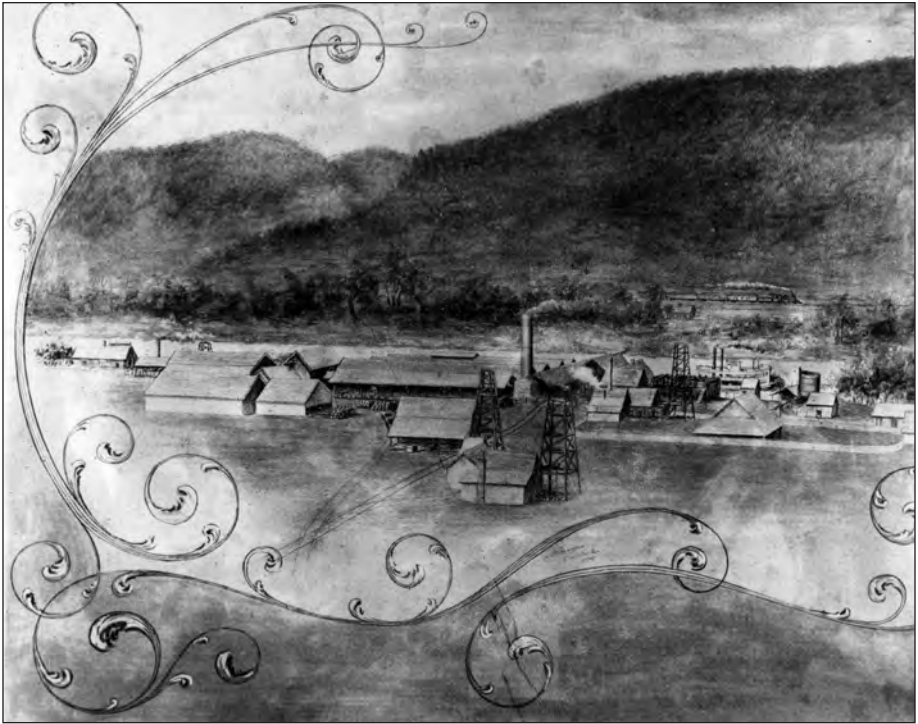
Loring, never reluctant to engage in disputes with his superiors, could be a stubborn man, a trait that rose to the surface in Charleston. Secretary Randolph had originally planned for Loring to take the valley and then move to join Gen. Robert E. Lee in western Maryland. Loring, however, felt that this plan left him too exposed and suggested that his best move was to stay in Charleston to safeguard the Kanawha Salines.

This region outside Charleston offered a valuable commodity to soldiers and civilians alike: salt. Desperately needed during the Civil War, salt helped to preserve food, especially meat, and the region around Charleston was a major antebellum source. Known as the Kanawha Salines, this area was one of the largest in Virginia actively engaged in salt production. The salt fields lay along both banks of the Kanawha River until the waters reached Charleston, a distance of approximately ten miles.

As early as 1808, the Kanawha Salines were put to production, and a salt-making and refining industry was developed by Joseph and David Ruffner, who drilled for brine and established furnaces to process it. The area, particularly around present-day Malden, West Virginia,²³ where the salinity reached a high point, would develop into an important resource for the meat packing industry. By 1815, furnaces dotted the landscape, leading to the development of the area as one of the great salt manufacturing regions



Early drawing of salt works in the Kanawha Valley (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries)



Kanawha Salines Salt Manufacturing (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries)

in the United States, as the use of salt to pack meat for shipment ensured it would arrive at destinations in good condition.

The Confederacy was desperate for salt, and Loring believed that maintaining control over the salt reserves was more important.²⁴ He decided to stay put, and as a major general, he felt that he could ignore Randolph's orders. However, making the salt industry operative again was not an easy undertaking. Loring found the salt works intact but damaged by a flood in September 1861. No enslaved people could be found for the labor needed since they had either fled with their owners or escaped. Despite these setbacks, Loring was able to make the salt works functional again and was soon producing enough salt to help supply the Confederacy.²⁵

Merchants Continue to Resist Taking Confederate Money

Local business owners continued to refuse Confederate dollars in payment, and when they were compelled to accept the currency, they raised prices.²⁶ Business owners, for the most part, accepted only Federal currency, which Loring had in limited supply. With all of the challenges the occupiers faced, the refusal to accept Confederate money was one of the deepest cuts

to Loring and his troops. He entered Charleston believing his men would be welcomed home; instead, the Confederate forces found support lacking.²⁷

In sum, the *Guerilla* was printed as a mouthpiece for the commanding presence of General Loring. Through the publication of proclamations, general orders, and an array of solicitations and downright threats to the citizenry of Charleston, Loring saw his expectations for submission thwarted at every turn. Following the fiery advance of Confederate troops upon their city, many residents had fled to avoid conscription, dominance, or enslavement, while those who had remained stood their ground; refused to accept Confederate currency, with a few minor concessions; and generally failed to comply with Loring's desires, despite his assurances early on that the Confederate forces were liberators, not occupiers.

Contents of Surviving Issues of the Guerilla

The Confederate occupation of Charleston in September and October of 1862 lasted a mere six weeks before the Union regained control of the area. However brief their occupation, the Confederates managed to produce the *Guerilla*, which, according to its masthead, was "Devoted to Southern Rights and Institutions" and "Published Every Afternoon." Despite the fact that it was a product of the war, the *Guerilla* also has the distinction of being the first daily paper published in Charleston.²⁸ Surviving issues are extremely rare. Only six are definitely known to have been printed between September 27 and October 8, 1862, with the possibility that three more may have been produced. Only two issues survive of the possible nine that were published.

The two surviving issues of the *Guerilla* are dated September 29 and October 3, 1862. The first column of both issues contains poetry. The poem "Lines on the March," author unknown, is dated September 26, Charleston, and contains the heading, "For the *Guerilla*"; it appears in the September 29 issue. This poem must have struck a chord with readers since it describes a soldier's travails:

All day long with his heavy load,
Weary and sore, in the mountain road,
And over the desolate plain;
All day long through the crusted mud,
Over the snow, and through the flood.
Marking his way with a track of blood, he followed the winding train.²⁹

The October 3 issue called attention to Yankee losses, reporting on the wounding of several generals in Western Maryland, among them Joseph

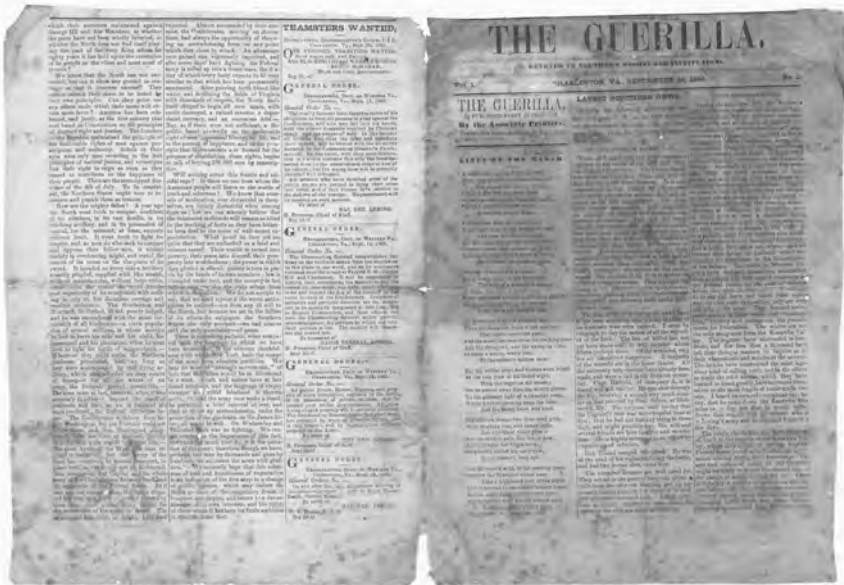
Hooker, John Sedgwick, Isaac Rodman, Israel Richardson, George Hartsuff, Michael Dana, Max Weber, Thomas Meagher, and Abram Duryeé,³⁰ with one, Brig. Gen. Joseph King Fenno Mansfield, killed in action. Praise from Loring also appeared as a general order on the “brilliant march from the southwest to this place in one week, and on the successive victories at Fayette C. H. [Court House], Cotton Hill and Charleston.”³¹

The *Guerilla* reprinted a dispatch from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* covering the massive Union loss at Harpers Ferry, Virginia:

By this surrender—it cannot be called a capture—the rebels took fourteen thousand five hundred men, one hundred tuns [sic] of ammunition, rations for fourteen thousand men for twenty days, fifty-seven guns, . . . fourteen thousand stand of arms and four batteries of field artillery.

An entire column on page four of the *Guerilla* provided an account of the scene after the surrender at Harpers Ferry.³²

Two items in the October 3 issue were repeated from the September 29 issue. The first was a notice of the “non-arrival of mail.” The second, an announcement of the establishment of a “Flying Battery”³³ for the aid of Brig. Gen. Albert G. Jenkins’s cavalry brigade, including a call for recruits with the admonition, “No half-asleep men need apply!” (Emphasis included in original.)



September 29, 1862, issue of the *Guerilla* (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries)

This collection of reports and dispatches regarding Confederate victories was designed not just to inform, but also to boost the morale of the troops. Coupled with soldier contributions, such as the poetic odes to the travails of a soldier's daily life, the *Guerilla* recognized the life of a soldier in camp and the sacrifices he endured while bolstering his morale with a recount of military successes. Under the influence of Gen. Loring, the *Guerilla* was designed for two audiences: first, to inform the citizens of occupation expectations and, second, to recognize the sacrifices made by the soldiers as well as to inform and celebrate their accomplishments.

Union Occupation

As Federal forces neared Charleston with plans to retake the Kanawha Valley, Loring was forced to retreat, beginning October 9, 1862.³⁴ Though the occupation of Charleston was never meant to be lengthy—as mentioned above, Randolph's goal from the beginning was for Loring to meet Gen. Robert E. Lee in Maryland—Confederate control of the region lasted only six weeks. Randolph's belief that Union forces would be unable to reclaim the Kanawha Valley was shattered when troops began closing in with plans to retake the valley. Following through with his original plan, Randolph redirected Loring to move northward toward Pennsylvania, where he was to support General Lee. That plan collapsed when “Loring interpreted the Confederate need for salt to outweigh his orders from Randolph.”³⁵ But now the time had come to depart, and Loring was compelled to leave the Kanawha Valley and its rich stores of salt.

The October 3, 1862, issue of the *Guerilla* may have been the last one printed since by October 5, Loring was aware of the approaching Federal forces. On October 7, he wrote to Randolph, informing him that he had received a letter from General Lee on October 4, written on September 25, recommending that Loring attack the railroad at Fairmont and join Lee in Pennsylvania. Loring disagreed with Lee's plan and offered his own: to fall back to Lewisburg, move on to Monterey, and join Lee in Pennsylvania from that direction. Believing the Kanawha could not be held, Loring stated in his response to the general that he would follow his own plans unless otherwise ordered.³⁶ Facing a recalcitrant citizenry and the advancement of Federal troops, Loring was forced to give up the valued prize of the Kanawha Salines, abandon the city, and move ahead to support Lee.

Federal forces once again moved into the area after the admission of West Virginia into the Union on June 20, 1863. That fall, soldiers of the Union's 5th Virginia Infantry found themselves stationed in the tiny town of Gauley Bridge.³⁷ The Union occupation proved to be fairly calm. Though

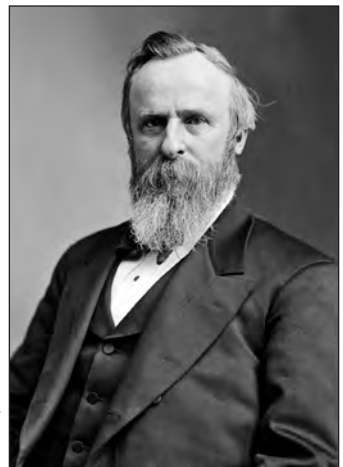


Camp Reynolds served the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry, commanded by Col. Rutherford B. Hayes and Lt. William McKinley both of whom became U.S. presidents (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries).

Rebel skirmishes and engagements were sometimes near, the occupation of Gauley Bridge was quiet enough for the wife and children of future U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes, who commanded the occupying troops, to visit for extended periods of time.³⁸ Another future U.S. president, William McKinley Jr., was also part of the Union occupation.³⁹



Left: William McKinley (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries)



Right: Rutherford B. Hayes (Good Free Photos, <http://www.goodfreephotos.com>)

Union Soldiers Produce the Knapsack

With time on their hands, the men promptly set about establishing a regimental newspaper. Having formed the Fifth Virginia Publishing Association, they soon began issuing copies of the four-page *Knapsack* ⁴⁰ every Thursday morning at five cents a copy, fifteen cents a month. The *Knapsack* held an active and widely distributed subscriber base for its short duration. Although only published for a few months, it illuminated much about soldier life and the politics of war.

The paper was far-reaching and gained recognition within the pages of the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, an early newspaper of note in West Virginia that described the *Knapsack* as a “spicy little sheet.”⁴¹ In addition, the *Pomeroy Telegraph* (Ohio) printed the following about the *Knapsack*:

[I]t is not, as some might be led to suppose[,] a mere vehicle of fun for the momentary amusement of the boys, but will be, if continued in the spirit of the present number, a real source of improvement to the regiment We wish it abundant success.⁴²

The first issue of the *Knapsack* bore the motto, “Fear not death, men, but fear dishonor.”⁴³ The purpose of the Union paper was lofty and far-reaching. As stated in the first issue, dated September 3, 1863, under the title “Salutatory”:

More than anything else, the paper will see to the military, moral and intellectual interests of the regiment; it will seek to improve the mind, and throw out such hints and advice that will make it of general interest to every one of us, not only while its publication lasts, but hereafter, when the war is over, and when we have returned to our homes, to our families and friends; we can then turn over its leaves and read, with pleasure and happy recollections, to an eager listening circle of contented and joyous faces, the history of our *regiment*, and the incidents transpired when we were members of it [emphasis included in original].⁴⁴

Indeed, the *Knapsack* followed through on at least one of these goals: a serialized history of the regiment was published in every issue.

The September 17, 1863, issue reported on the *Knapsack*’s subscription and circulation. The information was posted in the “Local Column” under the heading “Subscribe”:

In subscribing by the month, our readers will get the paper cheaper as per single copy, the price being 15 cents a month for one copy.

The Orderly Sergeants of the different companies are requested to act as agents and receive subscriptions inside of their companies at the above rates.⁴⁵

Additionally, a circulation report in the "Local Column" boasted of eight hundred subscribers, with continual increases. Although an official regimental total is not known, the number of subscribers this early in the



The Knapsack (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries)

occupation is significant, showing how important the newspaper was in the daily life of the soldier as a source of both news and entertainment.

Subscriptions also extended beyond camp. The September 24, 1863, issue reported that the paper was read aloud in the streets of Cannelton, West Virginia, a distance of thirty miles from Gauley Bridge. A follow-up in the October 1, 1863, issue stated that “twenty more new subscribers” from Cannelton had been added, bringing the total to fifty.

The format of the *Knapsack* is of interest, especially in comparison to the *Guerilla*. The *Knapsack* was printed on a single sheet of paper, folded in half, making it comparable to a folio in size. It measured sixteen inches high by nine inches wide, and the edges of the paper remained untrimmed, possibly due to being printed on a small, tabletop, portable press⁴⁶ operated by the soldiers in camp. The *Knapsack* also differed from the *Guerilla* in the size of paper each used. It also described itself differently:

The Knapsack: this is a very common name . . . yet be it remembered that the faithful knapsack has always brought a blessing and a comfort to its companions. May the Knapsack of the 5th prove equally true on its mission.⁴⁷

Following its initial review of the paper, the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* continued to report news gleaned from the pages of the *Knapsack*, in essence making it a conduit to civilian papers sympathetic to the Union. More than half a dozen reports appeared in the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* on a variety of subjects, including politics (the *Knapsack* was pro-Brough, a staunch Unionist, in the Ohio gubernatorial race running against Vallandigham, a copperhead known for his criticism of Lincoln); the beauty of the local scenery (“The ‘Hawk’s Nest,’ eight miles from camp, up New River, is a . . . stupendous pile of rocks at a short bend in the river”); entertainment (“The boys of Simmons’ battery have been enjoying themselves by dancing in the open air, these pleasant moonlight nights”); munitions (“James S. Ward of Co. G, 5th Virginia Infantry, exhibited to us a few evenings since . . . a rifle ball made of brass, several thousand of which he captured last week while on a scout”); poetry (“Ode to Disloyalty.— We have received a rather clever thing in the way of a poem under this title, but it is too long to prove of general interest, and we must decline it”); and deserters (“Deserters from the rebel army, especially Lee’s and Longstreet’s corps, are pouring into camp daily, a dozen at a time, sometimes. They say that they are tired of the war, and express a willingness to ‘give up,’ before coming in sight of the last ditch”).⁴⁸

It was difficult enough to receive current news via telegraph, but the editors of the *Knapsack*, 1st Lt. William Shelling⁴⁹ and Sgt. Maj. James G. Downtain, who served as both treasurer and editor, also found themselves combatting camp rumors. In the September 10, 1863, issue, they addressed rumors regarding extra pay for publishing the newspaper. The paper printed the following announcement under the title “A Great Mistake”:

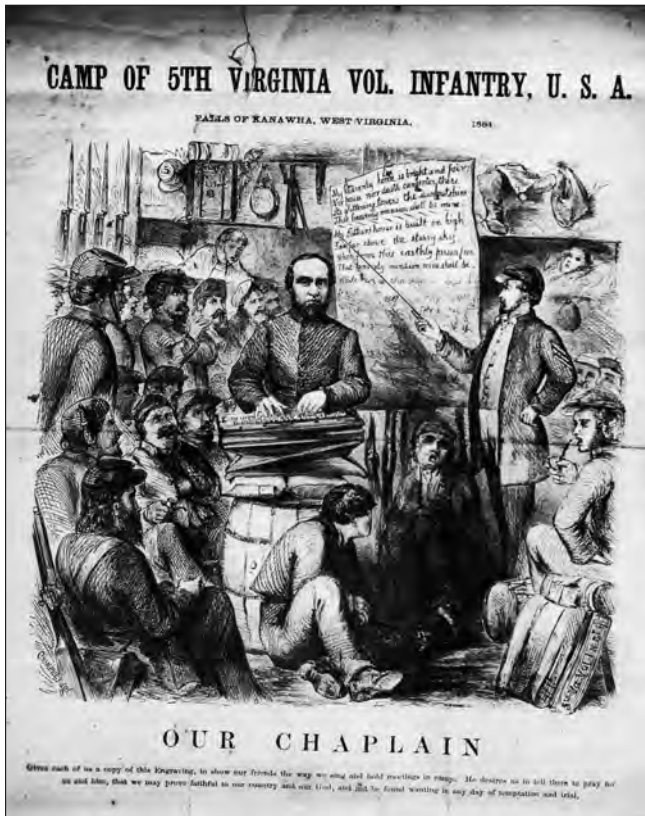
It is whispered by the “boys” by some “unreliable gentlemen” that the Fifth Va. Publ. Association issues the “Knapsack” for the purpose of making money out of its publication. This is not correct, as it will take a long time, if, indeed, not the entire time until the regiment is discharged, ere the proceeds of the paper yield sufficient money to pay for the press, types, and the running expenses. Neither editors nor printers receive anything whatever for their services, they having rendered them gratuitously. We though[t] we [should] mention this fact so that there be an understanding in the matter.⁵⁰

The same issue posted a column titled “Latest By Telegraph!! Special Dispatches to The Knapsack,” reporting news of the Army of the Potomac skirmishing across the Rappahannock on the “extreme right flank.” Other news reported an “ambuscade” perpetrated on a scouting party of the Ohio 6th, while returning to Federal lines, with thirty soldiers, killed, wounded, or captured. Perhaps most interesting from this report is the story of a deserter from Battery I, 4th New York Artillery, “disguised in [a] Lt. Col’s uniform,” who brazenly stole two horses, “mounted a companion villain on one side as his orderly,” then rode together through the infantry lines in their escape. The October 1, 1863, issue’s headline in this column, “Female Bread Riot at Mobile,” with the dateline Washington, September 28, reported that “there was a female bread riot at Mobile on the 14th. The Governor ordered the 17th Ala. reg’t. to put down the disturbance, but they refused. The Mobile Cadets essayed it but were forced to fly by the women.”⁵¹

In a regular, and often extensive column, “Medical Department,” Dr. Daniel Mayer, editor and the regiment’s assistant surgeon, addressed important issues, such as care for the feet, “poisoned” wounds, and a recipe for “an excellent hair wash.” Other medical news for the soldiers included a blurb announcing that increased consumption of blackberries among the troops since their return to Virginia saved the government “nearly a million of dollars” in medical and hospital stores.

An engraving, now among the holdings of West Virginia University, illustrates an important facet of the October 8, 1863, issue, which reported

on the “schedule of religious services.” A wave of religious fervor known as “The Great Revival” swept the country during the Civil War, rising to its highpoint during the last years of the conflict, notably 1863–1864.⁵² Revivals served both Northern and Southern forces as a much-anticipated form of social activity—and perhaps even as a form of entertainment—since services contained sermons at a time when speeches, lectures, and orations were popular and were accompanied by music performed by soldiers in camp.⁵³ The 1864 engraving of the camp of 5th Virginia Volunteer Infantry portrays the soldiers singing, playing music, and holding a religious service. “Our Chaplain Gives each of us a copy of this engraving,”⁵⁴ the *Knapsack* reported, “to show our friends the way we sing and hold meetings in camp. He desires us to tell them to pray for us and him, that we may prove faithful to our country and our God, and not be found wanting in any day of temptation and trial.”⁵⁵



Engraving of the 5th Virginia Volunteer Infantry holding a religious service in camp (West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries)

Beyond reports of religious services, the pages of the *Knapsack* were filled with announcements about the good conduct of the men. Calling themselves and their comrades “sons of temperance,” the *Knapsack* editors proudly stated that “there hasn’t been a pint of whiskey within camp or within twenty miles of it . . . for ever so long,” and as a result of the men’s sobriety, “there has been no guard-house for two months.”⁵⁶

This good conduct was marred by one continuing problem: the men were notoriously profligate users of foul language. Although the use of profanity may have been expected as a daily fixture in a soldier’s life, the publishers of the *Knapsack* frowned upon it. On the subject, the newspaper stated,

[I]t would be well for those persons addicted to this ungentlemanly habit to consider one moment this fact, that at some time they will again return to civil life, and be seeking the society of ladies; then they will find it difficult indeed to abstain from the vulgar habit of swearing, and we presume no gentleman would like a reprimand or be sneered at on account of giving way to a habit.⁵⁷

Conclusion

By examining these two occupation newspapers, inhabiting the same general area, we can see differences in the goals of each paper, given their circumstances. While the goal presented by the Confederate *Guerilla* was to regain control of the area through force and submission, the goal of the Federally issued *Knapsack* was to maintain the life and health of the soldier by reporting soldier activities and social life through a variety of columns that worked to ensure their health; instruct them on manners and deportment; and recount spiritual and moral accomplishments such as high attendances for religious events and an abstinence of alcohol, while also chastising the “boys” for swearing, even in camp. The *Knapsack*, from the beginning, strived to preserve the troop’s military history while preparing soldiers to re-enter life after the war’s end. In addition, by increasing the subscriber base to neighboring communities and submitting articles and updates to local newspapers, the *Knapsack* was, in effect, re-inserting the idea of Union to the region at large. The goal of the *Knapsack* was not of the moment, like that of the *Guerilla*, but one with an eye to the future, to a restored Union and a return to family life.

As evidenced by these Civil War military camp newspapers printed in western Virginia,⁵⁸ the urge to tell the story of the regiment; to share the events of the soldiers’ daily camp life; to relieve the tedium of the long, slow hours; and to lessen the tension of battle was great indeed. In their

efforts to inform the troops as well as the local community, these papers relied on the official reporting of general orders, original content submitted by soldiers, and news supplied by associated services and the civilian press.

Camp newspapers as a whole shared common goals. Within their pages, they aspired to encourage a sense of pride in the regiment; to improve morale; to provide, in some cases, propaganda or at least promote positive relations to those in occupied territory; to provide a legacy of service; and to preserve the memories of those who fought. Camp papers also served as an official reporting organ of the government, a platform to criticize the enemy, and a means to memorialize the dead and minimize losses.

Although both the *Guerilla* and the *Knapsack* shared the common ground of support for the troops and a record of service, they also followed divergent paths. An examination of these two camp newspapers, printed by two occupying forces, reveals a difference in tone. A certain degree of tension, disappointment, and frustration is evident within the pages of the *Guerilla*, whose attempts at persuasion and propaganda were clear efforts to win over the local populace.

In contrast, the longer and peaceful duration of the occupying Union forces gave the *Knapsack* a totally different perspective on camp life. With no engagements on the horizon, soldiers had time to explore local scenery, attend religious services, and partake of leisure activities such as playing music and dancing. The *Knapsack's* tone reveals more of the daily life in camp and less about local citizens.

Methods of production and printing also differed between the two papers, although both followed what has been described by scholars as the common means of printing by forces, either by using a confiscated or abandoned press or a portable press.⁵⁹ The *Guerilla* was printed on the confiscated press of the *Kanawha Valley Star*,⁶⁰ while the *Knapsack* was printed on a portable press that could be packed to move with troops at a moment's notice and set up in any camp. These methods show valuable insights into the papers themselves. Confederate printing of the *Guerilla* was reliant on a captured or confiscated local press. The Union press was mobile, yet it lent a degree of permanence as a paper explicitly designed for the soldiers. In addition, outfitting a regiment with a portable press shows a level of commitment by the Union to keep soldiers informed, while the availability of a town press was more of a random event.

While an analysis of these papers is limited by the surviving issues, it is important to study them as evidence of life in camp as well as firsthand reporting of battles. These publications form part of the documentary evidence of the war in the region and the events leading up to the creation of

a state. These scarce and valuable resources shed light on an important but often-neglected side of army life in an often-overlooked theatre of the war.

With these points in mind, West Virginia University has committed to digitizing these rare survivors due to their crucial importance in understanding the history of the Civil War in western Virginia and the birth of the state of West Virginia. The university's West Virginia and Regional History Center owns, in its archives, nearly a dozen newspapers, either the original paper copy, microfilm, or photocopy of the eighteen camp newspapers that were published in western Virginia. A National Endowment for the Humanities National Digital Newspaper Project grant, in partnership with the Library of Congress, provides the funding necessary for digitization of these and other historic West Virginia newspapers to make them available on *chroniclingamerica.loc.gov*. The surviving issues of the *Guerilla* and the October 8, 1863, issue of the *Knapsack*, which are currently available, provide a first-hand perspective on the soldiers who fought in the Civil War.

Endnotes

1. Earle Lutz reported that he had compiled a list of 260 camp newspapers. See Lutz, "Soldier Newspapers of the Civil War," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 46, no. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 4th quarter, 1952): 373-386, www.jstor.org/stable/24298547. Walter E. Eberhard stated that he had compiled a list of 175 camp newspapers. See Eberhard, "Editors in Uniform: The Historiography of Civil War Soldier Newspapers," presented at the Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression, November 10, 2006.
2. Comrade William Williams, Company F, 5th Pennsylvania Reserves, Catawissa, Pennsylvania, wrote that in July 1861, his regiment had taken possession of the office of the *Piedmont Independent* (West Virginia) and had issued a newspaper from it called the *Pennsylvania Reserves* (National Tribune (Washington, D.C.), April 17, 1884, 8, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82016187/1884-04-17/ed-1/seq-8/).
3. Although scholarship on camp newspapers is sparse, scholars Bell I. Wiley, Earle Lutz, Ford Risley, David Kasner, and Chandra Manning all concurred on the method of press takeovers.
4. See note 46 for a description of the portable press.
5. Augustine Joseph Hickey Duganne, *Camps and Prisons: Twenty Months in the Department of the Gulf*, chapter 36, 338, Google Books, books.google.com/books?id=ur-EMGtqf_8C&pg=PA338&lpg=PA338&dq=%E2%80%9CDoes+not+a+newspaper+follow+a+Yankee+march+everywhere?%E2%80%9D&source=bl&ots=k_H19AZim6&sig=nyqI-rzs7vPLF1VR30xFxoXxMU4&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiqrPH-u4bfAhUE0FkKHcxbBaIQ6AEwAnoECAAQ#v=onepage&q=%E2%80%9CDoes%20not%20a%20newspaper%20follow%20a%20Yankee%20march%20everywhere%3F%E2%80%9D&f=false. This phrase has been used often by a number of researchers, including Zac Cowser, "'A Very Spicy Little Sheet': *The Knapsack*, A Soldiers' Newspaper and the Politics of War," Civil Discourse blog post, March 07, 2016, www.civildiscourse-historyblog.com/blog/2016/3/7/a-very-spicy-little-sheet-the-knapsack-a-soldiers-newspaper-and-the-politics-of-war; Christy Perry Tuohy, "Does not a newspaper follow a Yankee march everywhere?" Panther Mountain blog post, n.d., panthermt.com/?p=325.
6. Over time, several scholars have attempted to compile lists of soldier papers, e.g., Lutz, "Soldier Newspapers," and Eberhard, "Editors in Uniform." Both of these lists have been lost or are

unrecoverable. The only extant list of camp newspapers available today, other than Lutz's list of Illinois camp papers in his article, "The Stars and Stripes of Illinois Boys in Blue," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1908–1984) 46, no. 2 (summer, 1953): 132–141, is the list compiled by Chandra Manning in "What This Cruel War Was Over: Why Union and Confederate Soldiers Thought They Were Fighting the Civil War," Ph.D. dissertation, May 2002, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

7. While it is confusing, the 5th Virginia Volunteer Infantry is Union, not Confederate. The 5th Virginia would become the 5th West Virginia Infantry. For the purposes of this article, the wording "5th Virginia Volunteer Infantry" will be used since the *Knapsack* masthead states it was published by the 5th Virginia Volunteer Infantry during the newspaper's entire run in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia.
8. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (O.R.) 19, part 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), 1060, digitized text hosted by Cornell and Hathi Trust, *collections.library.cornell.edu/moanew/waro.html*.
9. O.R., series 1, vol. 19, part 2, 1069. See also the *Guerilla* camp newspaper essay by Zac Cowser (Chronicling America, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85059834/); and Scott Alexander MacKenzie, "The Civil War in Kanawha County, West Virginia 1860–1865," master's thesis, July 2007, Department of History, University of Calgary, Canada.
10. The battle for control of Charleston, Virginia, September 13, 1862, has largely been overshadowed. Eclipsed by the horrific losses at Antietam on September 17, just a few days later, the conflict between Union Col. A. J. Lightburn and Confederate Maj. Gen. William Wing Loring for the contested lands and valuable resources of the Kanawha Valley has lacked scholarly consideration for the important role the battle and its aftermath played in re-shaping the state of Virginia and the birth of West Virginia. This clash was largely between native western Virginians. Lightburn, from Lewis County, had little military experience. Loring, from North Carolina, had a long and deep military background. He was considered the consummate soldier, and he brought with him a significant number of troops who hailed from the western region of the state. Lightburn was tasked with holding onto lands he knew well. For Loring's troops, taking the Kanawha Valley would be considered a sort of homecoming. Following the Battle of Charleston, both Federal and Confederate forces alternately held the area. First were Loring's Confederate troops, who held Charleston and the Kanawha Valley in the fall of 1862. After Loring's forces were called to support Gen. Robert E. Lee in Maryland, Federal troops moved back into the Kanawha Valley and occupied the area after West Virginia became a Union state on June 20, 1863. Each occupation force printed its own newspaper and each recorded the events of its occupation within its newspaper's pages. See also Billy Joe Peyton, "Battle of Charleston," *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, January 8, 2015, www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/2425.
11. Roy Bird Cook, "The Civil War Comes to Charleston," *West Virginia History*, 153–167, www.wvculture.org/history/journal_wvh/wvh23-1.html.
12. Tim McKinney, "Joseph A. J. Lightburn," *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia*, last revised December 7, 2015, www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/1382.
13. David J. Emmick, *The Amick Partisan Rangers* (New York, Lincoln, Shanghai: iUniverse Inc., 2007), 337–340. In the section "The Confederate Newspaper called the *Guerilla*," Emmick included the proclamation in its entirety on page 340.
14. Ford Risley, *Civil War Journalism*, www.essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com/civil-war-journalism.html. Risley stated that the Associated Press stationed correspondents at various locations to cover events. Northern newspapers heavily relied upon these telegraphed columns.
15. According to Risley, telegraphic news sources available to Southern newspapers went through a variety of iterations before the founding of the Press Association of the Confederate States of America. See also Risley, "The Confederate Press Association: Cooperative News Reporting of the War," *Civil War History* 47, no. 3 (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2001): 222–239.

- Risley reported that the Confederacy struggled to find the means of acquiring news; hence, there were various attempts operating under different names prior to the establishment of the Press Association of the Confederate States of America in 1863.
16. For a discussion of Confederate morale, see J. Cutler Andrews, "The Confederate Press and Public Morale," *The Journal of Southern History* 32, no. 4 (November 1966): 445–465. Andrews said that scholars concur that morale was at its highest at the outset of the war and dropped precipitously following the summer of 1863.
 17. *Guerilla*, September 29, 1862, Chronicling America, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85059834/1862-09-29/ed-1/seq-1/.
 18. "The money issued by the Confederate Government is secure; and it is receivable in payment of public dues, and convertible into Eight percent Bonds. Citizens owe it to the Country to receive it in trade; it will therefore be regarded as good in payment for supplies purchased for the army. . . . MAJ. GEN. LORING" ("General Order. Headquarters, Dept. of Western Va., Charleston, Va., Sept. 24, 1862," *Guerilla*, October 3, 1862, 3).
 19. Emmick, *The Amick Partisan Rangers*, 337–340.
 20. Confederate presses sought to induce Unionists to "climb on the band wagon" (Andrews, "The Confederate Press and Public Morale," 445–465, particularly see 448).
 21. Kenneth R. Bailey, "Reorganized Government of Virginia," *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia* (August 25, 2015), www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/62.
 22. *Guerilla*, September 29, 1862.
 23. "Our History," *J. Q. Dickinson Salt Works*, 2016, www.jqdsalt.com/our-story/.
 24. MacKenzie, "The Civil War in Kanawha County," 78–89. Mackenzie quoted a letter written by Loring to Randolph, although he did not provide a citation for it, in which Loring said: "In this valley there are large amounts of salt, corn and coal-oil, which should either be consumed by our armies or carried into the confederacy. From this base too, with my cavalry under efficient leadership of General Jenkins, I think I can reclaim all of the western part of the state during the autumn."
 25. MacKenzie, "The Civil War in Kanawha County," 78–89.
 26. It is little wonder that businessmen in Charleston refused to accept Confederate currency. The September 17, 1863, issue of the *Knapsack* reported that the Confederate "dollar" was worth six cents on the gold dollar. In addition, the Richmond *Examiner* reported that even President Davis wanted two thousand dollars of his salary paid to him in Federal gold (William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr., eds., *Virginia at War, 1864* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 46).
 27. MacKenzie, "The Civil War in Kanawha County," 78–89.
 28. Roy Bird Cook, "The Civil War Comes to Charleston." *West Virginia History* 23, no. 2 (January 1962): 153–167, www.wvculture.org/history/journal_vvh/vvh23-1.html.
 29. *Guerilla*, September 29, 1862.
 30. All of the commanders mentioned in this brief notice in the October 3, 1862, issue of the *Guerilla* (Chronicling America: chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85059834/1862-10-03/ed-1/seq-1/) were wounded in the Battle of Antietam. Mansfield died the next day, Sedgwick was hit three times during the battle, and Meagher was injured and believed wounded when his horse was shot from under him. Presumably, the spelling of Rodman as Rodmad in the *Guerilla* was a typographical error, as was also the case with Duryea, which should have been Duryée (National Park Service, www.nps.gov/anti/learn/historyculture/6generals.htm).
 31. *Guerilla*, October 3, 1862.
 32. *Guerilla*, October 3, 1862.
 33. A "Flying Battery" refers to the maneuvering of two or more horse-drawn cannons by crossing the battlefield, stopping, firing, and then moving or "limbering" up the field, giving the impression of more guns than were actually available or in use (Civil War Trust Glossary of Civil War Terms, www.civilwar.org/glossary-civil-war-terms).
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34. Lowry, *The Battle of Charleston*, 315.
35. MacKenzie, "The Civil War in Kanawha County," 78–89.
36. Lowry, *The Battle of Charleston*, 297–300.
37. After Loring's troops left, Charleston and the surrounding area were unoccupied until Federal troops moved back into the area after West Virginia was admitted to the Union.
38. Hayes wrote to his uncle from Camp Reynolds, Virginia, on February 24, 1863:
DEAR UNCLE: --We are all well. Lucy and the boys enjoy camp life and keep healthy. . . . Two of our companies have gone down the river to Charleston preparatory to moving the Twenty-third there. We expect to follow in two or three weeks. We care nothing about the change. It brings us into easier communication with home and has other advantages. We shall possibly remain there the whole spring. If so, after weather settles in May, it will be a pleasant trip for you to visit us if you can spare time. I have no idea when Lucy will return home. The boys are doing well here. Sincerely, R. B. HAYES
See Charles Richard Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes: Nineteenth President of the United States 2, 1861* (Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1922), Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Library and Museums, resources.ohiohistory.org/hayes/results.php.
39. Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*.
40. West Virginia University holds the October 8, 1863, issue (vol. 1, no. 6). The university also owns one issue of the *Knapsack* in the original hard copy. The Library of Virginia in Richmond has a six-issue run in its holdings.
41. *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* (Wheeling, West Virginia), September 11, 1863, 3, Chronicling America, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026845/1863-10-08/ed-1/seq-3/.
42. Printed in the *Knapsack*, October 8, 1863, 2, Chronicling America, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85059623/1863-10-08/ed-1/seq-1/.
43. *Knapsack*, October 8, 1863.
44. *Knapsack*, October 8, 1863.
45. *Knapsack*, September 17, 1863, 3, Library of Virginia, Richmond.
46. The portable press used to print the *Knapsack* was most likely Adams's "Cottage" Press. See the article on Civil War field printing, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, americanhistory.si.edu/exhibitions/civil-war-field-printing.
47. *Knapsack*, September 10, 1863, 4, Library of Virginia.
48. *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, September 11, 1863, 3.
49. According to the National Park Service website on soldier details, the spelling is actually Schelling (www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers.htm?submitted=1&firstName=william&lastName=schelling&stateCode=WV&warSideCode=U&battleUnitName=).
50. *Knapsack*, September 10, 1893.
51. For an excellent overview of the women's bread riot, see Ted Tunnel, "A Patriotic Press: Virginia's Confederate Newspapers, 1861–1865," *Virginia at War, 1864*, Davis and Robertson, eds., 35–50.
52. Mark Summers, "The Great Harvest: Revival in the Confederate Army during the Civil War," *Religion & Liberty* 21, no. 3 (September 28, 2011), acton.org/great-harvest-revival-confederate-army-during-civil-war. See also Gordon Leidner, "Religious Revival in Civil War Armies," Great American History, www.greatamericanhistory.net/revival.htm.
53. *The Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* reported from the *Knapsack* that there were "good players" in camp, including soldiers who played the violin and violincello (*Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, October 8, 1863, 1, Chronicling America, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026844/).

54. Roy Bird Cook Papers, Archives and Manuscripts 1561, West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries, Morgantown.
55. *Knapsack*, October 8, 1863, 3.
56. "Local Column," *Knapsack*, October 8, 1863, 3.
57. *Knapsack*, October 8, 1863, 4.
58. Delf Norona and Charles Shetler recorded eighteen Civil War military camp newspapers printed in western Virginia (Norona, ed., and Norona and Shetler, compilers, *West Virginia Imprints 1790–1863* (Moundsville: West Virginia Library Association, 1958).

About the Author: A native of Abingdon, Virginia, Stewart Plein is the curator of rare books and printed resources and the Appalachian bibliographer for the West Virginia and Regional History Center at West Virginia University. Her research and publishing interests include West Virginia history and Appalachian studies, and among her forthcoming publications are a book chapter in an eco-critical anthology, *Appalachian Nature, Appalachian Environment* (West Virginia University Press) and an article in the online journal, the *Appalachian Curator*.