
Hoosier Women and the Civil War Home Front

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In recent years there has been a growing interest among historians in the experiences of women during the American Civil War. A number of works on southern women have examined the impact of the war upon the daily lives of planter- and yeoman-class women and the roles played by them in both supporting and undermining the Confederate war effort. Most of the studies of northern women have focused on those who served in hospitals or in various relief agencies.¹

This article seeks to add to this growing branch of Civil War and women's history by analyzing the experiences of Hoosier women who remained at home. Through a study of the fifteen west-central Indiana counties that constituted the Seventh and Eighth congressional districts, this article addresses two key questions: to what degree did the war force married women into traditionally male roles; and why did women venture so far into the public sphere during the war and then retreat from it after Appomattox.²

The vast majority of women in antebellum west-central Indiana lived rural lives. In 1860, the region contained only two cities, Lafayette (population 9,387) and Terre Haute (population 8,594), and two towns, Greencastle and Crawfordsville, that were large enough to be defined as cities during the war. These places combined contained only 9.1 percent of the region's population in 1860. Even

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¹Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996); George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana, Ill., 1989); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York, 1992); Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War* (New York, 1994); Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (1966; Lincoln, Neb., 1994); Peggy Brase Seigel, "She Went to War: Indiana Women Nurses in the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXVI (March 1990), 1-27; and Jeanie Attie, *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1998).

²In 1860, the eight counties of the Seventh Congressional District were Clay, Greene, Owen, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo, while the seven counties of the Eighth Congressional District were Boone, Carroll, Clinton, Fountain, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, and Warren.

adding the region's eleven towns of 500 or more, the combined population still only represented about 13.4 percent of the population. Even in the two counties containing Lafayette and Terre Haute most people lived in a rural or small-town setting.³

Typical of most of the region, Parke County was predominantly rural with a few large towns and contained both Democratic and Republican townships.⁴ Most of the women were young; about half of them were between 18 and 30. Most were married, and most lived in a household headed either by their husbands or their fathers. Most female-headed households either contained an adult male or were located near adult male relatives. Men also rarely lived in a household without women. Even most young, single males lived either at home, with an employer, or with a married brother.⁵

Very few women were involved in any kind of occupation outside the home. Most of the women who were employed worked in domestic fields such as sewing or as house servants. In the townships surveyed, only thirteen women worked at occupations not closely associated with housework; one worked in a factory and twelve in teaching. All but one of the women listing an occupation were single or widowed. The women who were occupied outside their homes made up 2.5 percent of adult females.⁶

Female literacy rates suggest that most women in west-central Indiana had some education. Although most of the women surveyed were listed as being literate, female literacy varied widely from township to township and appears to be associated with political affiliations. In Penn Township (Parke County), in which more than nine of ten voters were Republicans, all of the adult women were literate. In Jackson, the county's banner Democratic township, 44.3 percent of the women were illiterate, the highest rate in the county. While Jackson's figure is unusually high, some other heavily Democratic townships in the region also exhibited high female illiteracy. In Sullivan

³U.S. *Eighth Census, 1860*: Vol. I, *Population*; U.S., *Ninth Census, 1870*: Vol. I, *Population*. See Thomas E. Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies in the Civil War Era: West-Central Indiana, 1860-1866" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1991), 1-66, 91-124; Gregory S. Rose, "Hoosier Origins: The Nativity of Indiana's United States-Born Population in 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXXI (September 1985), 201-32; and Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Connie A. McBirney, eds., *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience* (Indianapolis, 1996).

⁴On nineteenth-century rural midwestern women see John Mack Faragher, "History from the Inside-Out: Writing the History of Women in Rural America," *American Quarterly*, XXXIII (Winter 1981), 537-57; Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, Conn., 1986); Susan E. Gray, *Yankee West: Community Life in the Michigan Frontier* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996); and Logan Esarey, *The Indiana Home* (1943; Bloomington, Ind., 1992).

⁵Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies," 66-67.

⁶On rural women see Gray, *Yankee West*, 109-10; Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven, Conn., 1986); and Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1991).

**Percentage of Married, Single, and Widowed Women Aged
18-59 in the Eight Townships of Parke County in 1860***

Age Group	N	% Married	% Single	% Widowed
18-19	180	33.0	66.6	0.0
20-24	485	60.0	40.0	0.0
25-29	365	82.2	16.2	1.6
30-34	333	89.2	8.7	2.1
35-39	191	88.5	4.7	6.8
40-44	190	79.5	9.5	11.1
45-49	121	81.0	2.5	16.5
50-54	122	73.0	1.6	25.4
55-59	85	64.7	5.9	29.4

*Source: U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedule 1 for Parke County, Indiana.

County, for example, Cass and Jefferson townships, in which more than eight of ten voters were Democrats, had female illiteracy rates of 31.4 percent and 19.7 percent, respectively.⁷

Civil War letters provide much information about the routines of everyday rural life in Indiana. Much of that rhythm was set by the seasons and the agricultural events that punctuated them. The labor of most farm men and women was divided by gender. Men handled the cash crops, larger farm animals, construction of buildings and fences, and important market transactions. Women handled cooking, gardening, sewing, washing clothes, nursing the sick, and food processing. Mothers did most of the day-to-day child care, while fathers often helped establish the rules and values by which the children were raised.⁸

A sense of how immutable gender roles seemed to be can be found in some of the letters soldiers wrote home. It is clear that many had never engaged in "women's work" before. They sometimes expressed surprise when they learned how to sew, wash clothes, and cook. Typical of such comments were those of Samuel Mattox of rural Vigo County, who told his wife, Ann, "I am getting to be very thrifty. I have learnt how to take care of myself. . . . I do all my washing and am getting to be a pretty good cook. So you see, if I ever get home, I will be a pretty good female."⁹

⁷U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedule 1 for Parke County, Indiana; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedule 1 for Sullivan County, Indiana.

⁸On rural networks see Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 96-118, 150-55.

⁹Samuel Mattox to Ann Mattox, March 17, 1863, *Diary and Civil War Letters and Diary of Samuel H. Mattox*, typescript (Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute, Ind.), hereafter cited as *Mattox Letters*.

Women also played their conventional roles in urban areas as well. The region's cities had significant numbers of men living outside of a household. Most women with occupations provided services normally done by wives. In Terre Haute, for instance, the most common kinds of women's occupations were seamstress, boarding house operator, laundress, domestic, cook, and prostitute. There were only a few women pursuing other occupations, such as manufacturing and teaching. In Terre Haute, the manuscript manufacturing census lists some 617 male manufacturing workers, but only 11 female workers. Of the 11, 9 worked in three small boot and shoe manufactures, and 2 were part of a small clothing concern that employed 4 males. Similarly, in Crawfordsville, there were 360 male manufacturing employees, but only 2 female workers, one working for a blacksmith, the other for a small wheat milling operation.¹⁰

One of the reasons women lived with adult males seems to have been that men thought that women needed to be protected. The view that women lacked the will, strength, aggression, and rationality that men were believed to possess and thus were unsuited for the rough and tumble world was conveyed to women in many ways, both subtle and otherwise. It was imbedded in the language of male orators such as Congressman Godlove Orth, who asked, "Will it be said that in the midst of our present troubles we are too weak to assert our rights, or too effeminate to maintain them?" Soldiers wrote home about the practice in the army of forcing men who deserted to wear dresses and parade in front of their fellow soldiers. Stereotypes were also expressed and reinforced in numerous short items that appeared in the region's newspapers. This material routinely pushed the view that women were silly, gullible, irrational, and weak, as in the following typical sample: "Do try and talk a little common sense," said a young lady to her visitor. 'Oh! but wouldn't that be taking an unfair advantage of you?' was the reply."¹¹

Fathers shielded their daughters from the public world and advised them on how to act in a proper, ladylike manner. Judge Elisha Huntington's letters to his college-aged daughter and son are an excellent example of this. The letters to the son are filled with discussions of politics, war, current events, and admonitions to pursue sobriety, thrift, and other standard Victorian values for men. These elements are almost entirely absent from the letters he wrote to his daughter. Instead, they are filled with affectionate passages and advice on how to become what was seen as an ideal woman. In one letter he told Marie, "never volunteer your opinions about matters which

¹⁰U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, Population Schedules 1 and 5 for Vigo County, Indiana; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, Population Schedule for Montgomery County, Indiana.

¹¹Crawfordsville *Journal*, February 16, 1865; Samuel Mattox to Ann Mattox, January 14, 1863, Mattox Letters; Greencastle *Indiana Press*, November 6, 1858.

are the subject of conversation among others, unless your opinions are invited, and never interpose your views, while others are conversing. It is very graceful in a young girl to be a good listener rather than a ready talker."¹²

While for most of the region's women daily tasks left little time for leisure, especially outside the home, the wives and single adult daughters of elite families lived in a very different world. They had much more leisure time, were much more likely to have a substantial education, had much more access to literature, newspapers, national magazines, and other sources of information about the outside world, and were much more likely to travel to major cities. They were also the ones who had time and opportunity to attend lyceums, society balls, and other social functions.¹³

In fact, there were growing educational opportunities for the daughters of the region's wealthy in the years before the Civil War. Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a Catholic college for women in northwestern Vigo County, attracted young women from both Protestant and Catholic families. The Terre Haute Female College also attracted a number of young women and was held in high regard in west-central Indiana. There were also female academies at Crawfordsville and Greencastle.¹⁴

Elite women were more likely than others to enter the public sphere as officers in temperance and other reform organizations. They were also more likely to organize and attend plays, pageants, parties, lyceums, and other social and educational events in the region's cities and larger towns.

The Civil War brought an unprecedented intrusion of outside events into the lives of the women of west-central Indiana. The firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops caused great excitement in the region. Hundreds of local men flocked to recruiters

¹²Elisha Huntington to Marie Huntington, January 22, 1861, Elisha M. Huntington Letters (Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington).

¹³Charles Roll, *Colonel Dick Thompson: The Persistent Whig* (Indiana Historical Collections, Vol. XXX; Indianapolis, 1948), 116-37. For examples of the papers of elite families in this region see John Clifford Ross Papers (Vigo County Public Library Archives, Terre Haute, Ind.); Abbott Memorial Collection (Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine); Hovey Manuscript Collection (Robert T. Ramsey, Jr., Archival Center, Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Ind.); Harbert Collection (Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.); John Given Davis Papers (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis); and Nathaniel Preston Papers (Indiana State Library, Indianapolis).

¹⁴On the Terre Haute Female College see S. B. Gookins, *1880 History of Vigo County, Indiana* (1880; Knightstown, Ind., 1977), 133; and Rockville *Parke County Republican*, April 7, 1859. On Indiana colleges see James Insley Osborne and Theodore Gregory Gronert, *Wabash College: The First Hundred Years, 1832-1932* (Crawfordsville, Ind., 1932); George B. Manhart, *DePauw through the Years* (2 vols., Greencastle, Ind., 1962), I, 75-80; Eugenia Logan, *History of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods* (3 vols., Terre Haute, Ind., 1978); Mary Theodosia Mug, ed., *Journals and Letters of Mother Theodore Guerin: Foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana* (Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind., 1937).

to volunteer for service, leading women like Eliza Doggy of Greencastle to comment that "we are almost manless."¹⁵

Yet the majority of volunteers were young single males. Among the men of the Eleventh Indiana Regiment of Volunteers, which was formed in Vigo County at the beginning of the war, only 29.4 percent were listed in the 1860 census. Of those privates who were in the census, 90.5 percent were single. The men of the Eleventh Indiana Cavalry (126th Indiana Regiment of Volunteers), recruited in Vigo County after the September 1863 federal draft call, displayed a profile similar to that of men who joined earlier. Only some 29.9 percent could be located in the 1860 census, and of these men some 75 percent were single.¹⁶

In his study of Concord, Massachusetts, W. J. Rorabaugh finds that the recruits who were not in the census had characteristics similar to those who were. The same is probably true in these Hoosier units. While there must have been some married men among those not in the census, the fact that 35.6 percent were 21 or younger means that most were probably single. The figures for Vigo County suggest that around a third of the recruits were probably married.¹⁷

Penn Township's (Parke County) large number of volunteers attracted attention and praise in the press since Penn, the banner Republican township in the Seventh Congressional District, provided more volunteers before the advent of the draft than the district's two most Democratic townships (Jefferson and Cass, Sullivan County) combined, despite having a smaller population than either of these townships and a significant number of conscientious objectors. In the three draft calls of February 1, March 14, and July 18, 1864, Penn provided a surplus of nineteen over its quota, which was more than the

¹⁵Eliza Doggy to [Mrs. Embree], July 30, 1862, Lucius C. Embree Papers (Indiana State Library, Indianapolis); Thomas E. Rodgers, "Republicans and Drifters: Political Affiliation and Union Army Volunteers in West-Central Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XCII (December 1996), 321-45; Joseph A. Parsons, Jr., "Indiana and the Call for Volunteers, April, 1861," *ibid.*, LIV (March 1958), 1-23; Ward Baker, "Mishawaka and Its Volunteers, Fort Sumter through 1861," *ibid.*, LVI (June 1960), 123-52; and Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis, 1965), 124-42.

¹⁶Manuscript muster roll, Eleventh Indiana Cavalry, Archives Division (Indiana State Library, Indianapolis); U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, population schedule 1 for Vigo County, Indiana. Wilbur D. Jones, Jr., *Giants in the Cornfield: The 27th Indiana Infantry* (Shippensburg, Penn., 1997), 206. See also Emily J. Harris, "Sons and Soldiers: Deerfield, Massachusetts, and the Civil War," *Civil War History*, XXX (June 1984), 157-71; and Martin Crawford, "Confederate Volunteering and Enlistment in Ashe County, North Carolina, 1861-1862," *ibid.*, XXXVII (March 1991), 29-50.

¹⁷W. J. Rorabaugh, "Who Fought for the North in the Civil War? Concord, Massachusetts, Enlistments," *Journal of American History*, LXXIII (December 1986), 695-701. On population turnover in the Midwest see Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana, Ill., 1978); Rebecca A. Shepherd, "Restless Americans: The Geographic Mobility of Farm Laborers in the Midwest, 1850-1870," *Ohio History*, LXXXIX (Winter 1980), 25-45; and Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies," 61-63, 98-99.

surplus provided by all of the townships of Sullivan County combined. If there had been a place in the region where large numbers of married men enlisted it would have been Penn.¹⁸

Despite the number of volunteers from Penn, very few married men enlisted. Only 9 out of 104 married men who were of military age enlisted before the first draft. Of the married men over the age of 45, one enlisted before the first draft. Even with the draft few married men joined. Four more men under 45, and none over 45, enlisted after the advent of the draft. In total 12.5 percent (13 of 104) of Penn's married men 45 and under served in the military.¹⁹

Biographies appearing in county histories also suggest that most of the men who served were single. Of some 1,185 men of prime military age (born between 1826 and 1846) living in the region, 608 were married and 577 single. Of the married men, only 25.5 percent served in the military at any time during the conflict, while 51.6 percent of the single males served. Although some of the married men who served joined early in the war and spent three or more years in the military, many others joined for shorter periods, such as three months. Not only did relatively few married men serve, but many of those who did were at home for most of the war. While men in local histories are not a cross-section of the community, the numbers are significant.²⁰

No doubt economic factors played a large role in discouraging married men from volunteering. Most married men were farmers who could not go to war without putting their families through economic hardship and risking the loss of their farms.²¹ Political affiliation, however, was another major factor in determining whether married men volunteered. The enlistment of a few highly visible Democratic leaders and the large number of volunteers in the first year of the war gives the impression that there was substantial bipartisan support at first. However, relatively few of the Democrats of the region joined the army, while large numbers of Republicans enlisted.

Among the married men who appear in county histories, 162 were Democrats and 282 were Republicans. Some 37.9 percent of the

¹⁸Rockville *Parke County Republican*, August 6, 1862; Rodgers, "Republicans and Drifters," 333; and W. H. H. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana* (8 vols., Indianapolis, 1865–1869), I, 202–204.

¹⁹U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, Population Schedule 1, Parke County, Indiana.

²⁰The men came from Clay, Clinton, Fountain, Greene, Owen, Parke, Sullivan, Tippecanoe, and Warren counties. For biographies see Charles Blanchard, ed., *Counties of Clay and Owen, Indiana: Historical and Biographical* (Chicago, 1884); J. H. Binford, *History of Greene and Sullivan Counties, Indiana* (Chicago, 1884); J. H. Beadle, *1880 History of Parke County, Indiana* (1880; Knightstown, Ind., 1977); *Counties of Warren, Benton, Jasper and Newton, Indiana: Historical and Biographical* (Chicago, 1883); *Biographical Record and Portrait Album of Tippecanoe County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1888); *History of Clinton County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1886); and H. W. Beckwith, *History of Fountain County* (Chicago, 1881).

²¹James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York, 1997), 134–40.

Republican married men served, while 8 percent of the married Democrats enlisted during the war. A similar political profile existed among the single men whose party affiliation could be identified. Some 64.7 percent of the single Republican males enlisted, while only 31 percent of the single Democrats did so. Likewise, in heavily Democratic Jefferson Township just 1.4 percent of married men 45 or younger volunteered. In Republican Penn Township 8.7 percent of married men did so.²²

How was it possible for so many men to avoid military service even after drafts were implemented, especially when standard works estimate that two-thirds of military-aged males served? Few drafts were held in west-central Indiana, because most counties, cities, and townships raised bounties to pay men to fill their quotas. Even when a draft was held, most of those drafted did not serve because they hired a substitute, paid a commutation fee, or, most commonly, failed the physical. Even a man of modest means could find ways of obtaining the \$300 for a commutation fee or the larger sums often paid for a substitute. In Tippecanoe County, for instance, the Fairfield Township Draft Association, for a membership cost of \$50, would pay to keep the member out of the army. Also, many estimates of how many men served are too large because they are based on static population figures that do not account for growth.²³

These findings suggest that the vast majority of married women in this region had their husbands at home throughout the war, and that the families most likely to be disrupted by absences were Republican. Doggy's complaint about the area's manlessness refers to the young men in her pro-Union circle of friends, not to the general conditions of her county. Obviously, some Democrats did serve, but for the region's Democratic population the hardships women and families suffered were not nearly so great as those of Republicans.

Still the fact remains that some husbands and possibly a majority of single males did serve for some time in the military. Did the absence of so many men lead to women conducting farm work and other traditionally male tasks? The available literary evidence suggests that for the women of west-central Indiana the answer is no. It appears to have been rare for a woman to do male tasks on the farm or leave their gender-defined economic roles.

Rural Hoosiers responded to the domestic problems created by enlistments with the same kind of neighborhood and extended-kin support that they used before the war. It was common for husbands to

²²U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, Population Schedule 1, Sullivan County, Indiana; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860, Militia Enrollment, Sullivan County, Indiana.

²³Fairfield Township Draft Association, box 1, Military Collection (Tippecanoe County Historical Society, Lafayette, Ind.). On the draft see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988), 491-94, 600-11; and James W. Geary, *We Need Men: The Union Draft in the Civil War* (DeKalb, Ill., 1991).

be incapacitated for long periods by illness or to be away from home for months on trips. In the early 1850s a number of men left home for periods ranging from several months to a few years to prospect in the California gold fields.²⁴ One way to compensate for the lack of labor was cooperation.

When Silas Dooley of Parke County faced a harvest time with two of his sons gone, he and his remaining son cooperated with a neighbor and his son to bring the harvests in. While Basil Jewell was in the army, his wife did not have to handle major marketplace transactions because his father took care of them. Many soldiers, such as Samuel Mattox of Vigo County and Isaiah Hutchison of Montgomery County, virtually micromanaged their farms from the front, sending a steady flow of letters to their wives with specific instructions on various matters. Some fathers, such as Jewell, issued advice and rules from the front to both their wives and children on how their children were to behave and be taught. Even when a soldier was killed, kin and neighbors rallied to support the widow until she remarried. When Sarah A. Dooley's son died in the army, she told another of her children that her son's widow had the resources and friends necessary to get along without undue hardship.²⁵

Despite the war's demands, male farm laborers were still available to harvest cash crops. Jewell, for example, hired men to harvest the wheat crop he had planted before leaving home. Since wheat was a cash crop, his wife either could pay the workers out of the money the commodity generated or she could give them a percentage of the crop. Another alternative for a soldier was to rent out part or all of his farm and use the rent revenue to support his wife and children. Other activities, such as chopping firewood for the home, could be hired out and paid for either by the military allotment the husband sent home or by the support payments local government supplied in some areas. Samuel Mattox, for instance, had a neighborhood boy move in with his family during the winter in order to attend to cutting firewood and other typically male tasks.

Labor was available not only because a number of young men did not serve but also because not all young men who enlisted were gone for the duration. Barton Dooley, for example, joined short-term enlistment units three different times, served in the local Home Guard unit, provided farm labor on three different farms, and worked in a sorghum factory in Parke County during the war.

How well urban women fared during the war is more difficult to determine. Many of the surviving letters written by city women are from wives of army officers who had been well-to-do lawyers, doc-

²⁴Anne Bruner Eales, "Paoli and Placerville: Correspondence of a Hoosier in the Gold Rush," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XCV (March 1999), 15-30.

²⁵Sarah A. Dooley to Rufus Dooley, August 1864, Rufus Dooley Papers (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis), hereafter cited as Dooley Papers.

tors, or businessmen before the war. These letters tended to be filled with romantic passages, gossip about the local social scene, and politics. Rarely did they mention either economic difficulties or the disruption of normal gender routines. As with rural families, husbands sent home a range of instructions and often had male kinfolk available to handle special problems. Bernard Schermerhorn, for instance, sent instructions to his wife about running the household, rearing the children, supporting his widowed mother, and educating his college-aged sister. His uncle and a male friend also performed various tasks for his family in his absence. Aden Cavins sent detailed instructions to his wife on the rearing of their children. Some elite men relied on banking and business associates to attend to many of the economic needs of their wives and families, as did Mahlon Manson of Crawfordsville. An officer's wife, such as Cavin's wife, Matilda, also had the advantage of visiting her husband at the front and living with him for some time during winter quarters.

Although there is very little information about the wives of poorer, unskilled urban workers, circumstantial evidence suggests that the war was particularly hard on this small part of the region's female population. These women often did not have the same kind of networks available to them as did rural and more prosperous women. Instead they relied upon the public welfare provided to dependents of soldiers by local governments and by acts of private charity. One of the most common forms of supporting them in many large towns and cities was a grand parade of farm wagons coming into town loaded with firewood and food items for poor urban soldiers' families. In one instance in 1864, some fifty-two loaded wagons paraded through the streets of Crawfordsville.²⁶

Such relief efforts were necessary, in part, because even town-dwelling women had few opportunities for employment outside the home. The region's small manufacturing sector overwhelmingly employed men. Even in Terre Haute and Lafayette, the largest business and banking concerns were small-scale affairs often operated by two partners and maybe a few male clerks. When a few women were hired as printers in Lafayette, it was extraordinary enough to warrant a newspaper article. Some women may have taken in washing, but few women sought employment outside the home. Most poorer town-dwelling wives stayed home and lived on money sent by their husbands, charity, and local government welfare.²⁷

Although some women may have engaged in extensive market transactions, plowed fields, chopped firewood, taken factory jobs, and

²⁶Crawfordsville *Journal*, January 21, 1864; Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana*, 348-49, 354-62, Appendix, 75-88; and Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 178-79.

²⁷Rockville *Parke County Republican*, June 29, 1864. Donald E. Carmony, "Jacob W. Bartmess Civil War Letters," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LII (March 1956), 49-74; *ibid.*, LII (June 1956), 157-86.

done some other traditionally male tasks, such women were the exceptions. Kin and neighborhood networks, private charity, soldiers' pay, hired labor, and local government welfare allowed normal divisions of labor to be maintained during the war.

One thing that did change, however, was the level of participation of women in public affairs. The fluidity of the borders between the public and the private spheres makes a clear definition of the terms difficult. Nevertheless, there was in west-central Indiana a distinctive male-dominated public arena very much like the one John Mack Faragher finds in mid-nineteenth-century central Illinois.²⁸ This public sphere included such activities as voting, officeholding and adjudicating, serving on juries, participating in political conventions and rallies, conducting formal market exchanges, serving in the military, taking vigilante action, public fighting, participating in reform organizations, engaging in political debates, making political speeches, and writing political essays and editorials. Before the war, women's minor forays into these areas were sanctioned by the belief of many that women were morally superior to men. Women's moral acumen seemed to justify their organizing, speechmaking, and other activities associated with moral reforms such as temperance and organized charity.²⁹ During the war these female realms in the public sphere were significantly expanded as women engaged in a variety of activities that aided the Union cause and provided for the material needs of soldiers and their families.

The most common women's activities on the home front were the Ladies' Aid Societies. After Governor Oliver P. Morton requested the creation of these societies in October 1861, the counties of west-central Indiana responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm. In some counties, such as Sullivan, more than a year passed before an organization was created. Other counties, such as Parke and Warren, quickly created a county-level society and many township and community societies. In some counties all of the officers of the Ladies' Aid organizations were women, while in others both men and women held leadership positions.³⁰

²⁸Faragher, *Sugar Creek*, 105-18, 151-55; and Faragher, "History from the Inside-Out," 549-51. On the separation of spheres see Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, LXXV (June 1988), 9-39; Nancy Isenberg, *Sex & Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998), 41-74; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York, 1985), 53-76, 109-28; Bari Watkins, "Woman's World in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly*, XXXI (Spring 1979), 116-27.

²⁹Rockville *Parke County Republican*, February 10, 21, April 2, June 2, 1859; Terre Haute *Wabash Express*, January 26, 1859; Williamsport *Warren Republican*, April 9, 1860; and Social Sewing Society [Greene County] Records (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis).

³⁰Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of Indiana*, I, 318-19.

The main task of these societies was to provide bandages, clothing, food items, and anything else that might be of use to Hoosier soldiers. These items were usually shipped either to the troops or to military hospitals through the state sanitary commission. Newspapers in the region published lists of the donations the local societies were sending to the front. Many of the goods shipped by the societies were the same things being sent by individual women to their loved ones. In fact, the societies provided clothing and food for those young, single transient men who had no relatives and no long-term ties.³¹

In addition to sending needed materials, women conducted a wide variety of fundraising activities for the soldiers and their families. Sanitary fairs are the most well-known, but women found other inventive ways to raise money as well. In many towns before the war, the women of leading families had produced plays, pageants, and other public entertainments and did the same during the war to raise money for the soldiers. In Crawfordsville, for instance, women mounted an elaborate play in which some eighty children were dressed as famous historical figures and some twenty young women portrayed various countries. The young ladies explained to the goddess of liberty why the nation they symbolized was a free country.³²

Women also engaged in activities designed to encourage both enlistments and the resolve of those who had already joined. Women often provided patriotic songs, speeches, and poems at rallies to encourage recruitment and public support for the war. They attended ceremonies marking the departure of their men for the front and often presented a flag made by local women to the troops. They also welcomed home returning troops and provided food for such ceremonies.³³

West-central Indiana did not have any large, permanent hospital facilities in which local women could serve as nurses such as those in Indianapolis and some cities along the Ohio River. However, when temporary military medical emergencies arose, the region's women were ready to act. Both Terre Haute and Lafayette became the temporary homes of Confederate prisoners in 1862 while prison facilities in Indianapolis were completed. The women in these two cities quickly volunteered to provide nursing for sick and wounded enemy

³¹*Ibid.*, I, 314-72; and Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 175-79; Rockville *Parke County Republican*, February 25, March 19, April 9, June 11, 1862, July 19, November 25, December 23, 1863, June 5, August 3, September 14, December 14, 1864; *Worthington White River Gazette*, October 24, November 7, 1861, January 8, 1862; *Crawfordsville Journal*, August 25, October 13, 1864; *Putnam Republican Banner*, December 12, 1861; *Sullivan Democrat*, December 3, 1863; and *Terre Haute Wabash Express*, April 20, 1864.

³²Lizzie Boynton to William Harbert, November 28, 1863, Harbert Collection.

³³Boynton to Harbert, February 12, 1864, *ibid.*; *Crawfordsville Review*, February 25, September 22, 1864; *Terre Haute Wabash Weekly*, July 13, 1864; Rockville *Parke County Republican*, August 6, 1862; Louise C. Manning, "Presentation of Flag to 43rd Regiment at Evansville, 1861," typescript, Civil War folder, Miscellaneous Papers (Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute, Ind.).



CIVIL WAR ERA FASHIONS

Reproduced from *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*,
LXIV (January, 1862), 21.

soldiers. Similarly, when a measles epidemic broke out at a temporary camp in Gosport (Owen County), the soldiers were moved to nearby local homes for care.³⁴

Some women engaged in political disputes over the use of butternut pins, which were a symbol of Democratic defiance of Lincoln and the Union cause. In one instance a fight broke out between students at the Terre Haute Female Academy when a Republican woman tried to remove a pin from a Democratic woman's clothing. Some women observers, such as Nettie Lord of Terre Haute, publicly defended butternut-pin fights. Lord's poem on this subject ended:

If a Lady tears the emblem
From the bosom false that wear,
And perchance, for greater emphasis
A stray lock or so of hair,
Should a writer, who is "loyal"
Take the Female Rebels' side,
And expect a Union Lady
By this judgement to abide?³⁵

Democrats condemned women who intruded on the male preserve of physical violence, proclaiming that such women had "unsexed" themselves.³⁶ But Republican men, although not approving unwomanly behavior, admired the patriotism evident in the women's unusual behavior.

The participation of women in public political activities expanded dramatically during the war. Before the conflict it was common for both major parties to have women attend various political functions, especially family-oriented events like party barbecues.³⁷ Whigs and their Republican successors, however, were more likely to allow women to speak in public on political and reform topics than were Democrats. For example, Almira Harrah, a Greene County Whig and later Republican, was one of the speakers at a public debate on the rights of women at the Worthington lyceum in the mid-1840s. Other Republican women gave temperance lectures, served as officers in temperance societies that included both men and women, and pub-

³⁴Roll, *Colonel Dick Thompson*, 189; Donald L. Parman, ed., *Window to a Changed World: The Personal Memoirs of William Graham* (Indianapolis, 1998), 120, 122.

³⁵Newspaper clippings, John Blinn Album (Vigo County Historical Society, Terre Haute, Ind.); Milton A. Bailey to Ann Sturtivant, June 31, 1863, Ann Sturtivant Collection (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis).

³⁶Sullivan *Democrat*, June 11, 1863.

³⁷Donald E. Thompson and Martha Cantrell, eds., *Journal Kept by Ella Sloan* (Crawfordsville, Ind., 1978), 3-4; Lafayette *Journal*, October 8, 1860; Terre Haute *Journal*, October 8, 1852; Harrison Burns, *Personal Recollections* (Indianapolis, 1975), 65; William H. Wiley, "Our Neighborhood in the Civil War," manuscript of speech, Folder 3, series 5, Terre Haute Literary Club Papers (Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute, Ind.); and Wiley, "The Bringing-Up of William H. Wiley," typescript, 1906, *ibid.*

lished poems in local papers.³⁸ While Democratic women posed on floats in political parades and wore party symbols, such as the wartime butternut pins, they generally did not address male voters either as orators or as editorial writers. One Sullivan County Democrat commented on the speech of a female reformer: "the case is so desperate that they have got to bringing female speakers—for Mrs. Carrie Filkens Bush actually made a Republican speech in the court-house the other evening"³⁹

During the war the public roles of Republican women expanded significantly, while those of Democratic women remained virtually nonexistent. A number of local women made public speeches and published prose and poetry on the war and other issues of the day. In 1862 three young Parke County women gave speeches on the war, the texts of which were then published in the local newspaper. Lizzie Boynton of Montgomery County and Mary Jerome of Parke County also published prowar poems in Republican newspapers.⁴⁰

By providing women with a forum, the Republican party allowed them to go beyond accepted limits and to participate in the political dialogue over the war. In mid-nineteenth-century Indiana, political speakers and writers did a great deal to mold the attitudes of voters. Public speakers made connections between the cultural values of the audience and the party's positions on the issues of the day. Thus allowing women to publish or speak in public gave them a role in forming the opinions of male voters.⁴¹

Public charitable and political activities by women were only the visible tip of a large iceberg of similar activities being carried on in private life by thousands of Hoosier women. Civil War letters reveal that virtually all women, whether Democratic or Republican, whether rich or of modest means, were engaged in sewing and knitting clothes for their soldier relatives and friends and in preparing and sending all kinds of food, writing paper, and other needs to them. From Matilda Cavins, wife of a well-to-do lawyer, to Sarah Dooley, a Republican farmer's wife, to the wife and grown daughter of Democrat J. W. Smith, women attempted to help their men.

In addition to sending provisions, Republican women sought to encourage enlistments and boost the morale of their soldier husbands and sons in private just as some of them did in their public speeches. Many young women refused to associate with men eligible for ser-

³⁸Binford, *History of Greene and Sullivan Counties*, 230; Williamsport *Warren Republican*, April 12, 1860; Rockville *Parke County Republican*, May 26, June 2, 1859; and Almira Maria Harrah Papers, M 131 (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis).

³⁹Vincennes *Western Sun*, September 15, 1860.

⁴⁰Rockville *Parke County Republican*, May 28, August 6, 13, 1862, April 8, July 3, 1863; Crawfordsville *Journal*, February 25, 1864; Terre Haute *Wabash Express*, February 10, 1864.

⁴¹Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies," 153-70.

vice who did not enlist. When a man did join the army, he was often deluged with letters from female relatives and friends encouraging him to maintain a high standard of personal morality. Rufus Dooley received a steady flow of such letters from his mother urging him to do his duty, praising the cause in which he was enlisted, and imploring him to maintain his moral standards. Her letters were reinforced by those of an array of young female relatives and neighborhood friends. In addition, at least one young woman who was not a relative or friend wrote to Dooley to propose a correspondence. This patriotic woman, who was already corresponding with twenty other soldiers, wanted to write encouraging letters to him too.⁴²

Virtually all of the women who were involved in public activities were Republican. The author failed to find any examples of Democratic women making political speeches about the war or the Lincoln administration, nor could I find any examples of Democratic women publishing prose or poetry on the war. In addition, there are no known examples of Democratic women urging men to join the army, presenting flags, or refusing to associate with men who did not enlist.⁴³ This lack of female Democratic support for the war was noted at the time. Mary Sutton of Parke County observed in 1863:

Frankly Banta and Mrs Evans went round three or four weeks ago to get the ladies to th[r]ow in money to get a flag for the howard [township] guards[.] we all helped alittle [sic] but the copperheads, but they made up enough to get the flag with out their help. the copperhead[s] came to mr Rhineharts to see the flag presented[.] they said the flag was such a poor one[.] you know the stars and stripes don't suit the copperheads taste.⁴⁴

One of the most conspicuous differences between Republican and Democratic female activities concerns the Ladies' Aid Societies. While women of both parties individually sent things to their loved ones in the army, most of the women engaged in aid societies were Republicans. In heavily Republican Parke County, of the eighteen officials who could be associated with a party, seventeen were Republicans. Sullivan County, where three-fourths of the voters were Democrats, had six female officers, four of whom were Republicans. In Greene, a predominantly Democratic county with a large Republican minority, fourteen of seventeen women members were Repub-

⁴²Mollie Campbell to Rufus Dooley, September 25, 1862, Dooley Papers; Mary Sutton to Rufus Dooley, September 27, 1862, March 6, 1863, *ibid.*; Sarah Dooley to Rufus Dooley, July 11, 1863, June 3, 1864, *ibid.*; Sallie E. Jinkins to Rufus Dooley, October 26, 1864, *ibid.*; Laura P. Adams to Rufus Dooley, October 19, 1864, *ibid.*; Rockville *Parke County Republican*, June 8, 1864; Thomas F. Miller, "To the Girls of Park[e] County," typescript, Civil War Letters, Diaries, etc., Folder (Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute, Ind.).

⁴³A possible exception to this generalization is a war-related poem that may have been written by a Fountain County Democratic woman and that appeared in the Covington *People's Friend*, December 3, 1862.

⁴⁴Sutton to Rufus Dooley, May 19, 1863, Dooley Papers.

licans. In Vigo County, which had a small Republican majority, all four of the county society's female officers were Republicans.⁴⁵

Part of the reason why so few Democratic women participated in aid societies was that most Democrats did not support Republican wartime policies. The aid societies, flag ceremonies, and other functions were public, organized activities designed to support the Union cause as defined by Morton and Lincoln. When Ezra Bowlus, a Warren County Democrat, joined the army as a drummer, his wife accused her husband of loving his drum more than he did her. Martha Jane Smith, a Democrat from Hendricks County, made forceful statements of standard party views on the war. She wrote to her soldier brother,

"Oh Ben you was so silly for going into this awful war. . . . It is outrageous scandalous and ridiculous how this war is carried on and it never will be any better until you have new officers and we have a new president elected[.] Oh that the Abolitions would give right up and Democracy get the reins[.] Our paper say would not be more than six months until this war would be settled."

In the same letter she urged her brother to cooperate with their father's plan to get him out of the army.⁴⁶

The different levels of women's participation in public debates reflected the political ideologies of the two parties, which in turn embodied many of the cultural views and values shared by each party's constituencies.⁴⁷ Most of the area's Democrats believed that all citizens were equal but that only those who possessed the attributes of a free man should be admitted to citizenship. For Democrats a free man had to have the will to fight to defend his freedoms. Democrats believed that neither women nor male blacks possessed the masculine characteristics that were necessary for citizenship. Democratic males would not countenance any kind of half-citizenship status: a person either had the will of a free man, or he did not; a person was either a complete and equal citizen, or he was not a citizen at all.⁴⁸

In contrast, Republican males thought that women had some limited public roles to play. Republicans thought that a free man had obtained self-control through a long process of character building aided by religion, formal education, and other forms of discipline. Although Republicans shared some Democratic ideas of feminine weakness, they also saw women as particularly strong in ways that fit into their

⁴⁵Binford, *History of Greene and Sullivan Counties*, 180-81, 602-603; Henry C. Bradsby, *History of Vigo County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1891), 585; Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies," 214-15.

⁴⁶Ezra Bowlus to Susan Bowlus, June 14, 1862, January 30, February 11, 1864, Ezra Bowlus Papers (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis); M. J. Smith to B. W. Smith, November 22, 1862, M. J. Smith Letters (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis).

⁴⁷On Hoosier War Democrats see Rodgers, "Northern Political Ideologies," 432-45.

⁴⁸On Democratic ideology see Thomas E. Rodgers, "Liberty, Will, and Violence: The Political Ideology of the Democrats of West-Central Indiana during the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XCII (June 1996), 133-59.

stereotype of women as morally superior and naturally nurturing. The strengths Republicans attributed to women along with their definition of free men made it easy for them to sanction political roles for women, including public roles in reform societies and moral campaigns and private roles developing the character of husbands and sons.⁴⁹

Republican men readily admitted the importance of women to moral development. Republican editors in the region ran a number of stories and editorials emphasizing the importance of the moral impact women had on society. Individual Republican men also noted the personal influence of their wives. William H. Crowder, a Republican from Sullivan County, wrote in one of his many letters to his wife that much of what was good in him was "owing to the teachings and controlling influences of his 'Angel in Calico' Juliet."⁵⁰ Thus different ideologies of manhood and liberty led the members of the two parties to have different views on women's roles in the public sphere and resulted in differing wartime experiences for Hoosier women.

For Republican women, entering the political arena to support the war effort was simply an extension of their peacetime reform activities, just as helping soldiers and their families was an extension of the help they had given to kinfolk and neighbors before the war. Urging men to save the Union by doing their patriotic duty replicated prewar efforts to encourage better, more moral male citizens. While their wartime activities were similar to prewar ones, they were, nevertheless, on a much larger scale. Did their wartime experiences awaken a desire in women to have an even larger and more permanent part to play in public life? An answer to this question can be found in the beliefs and attitudes of two west-central Indiana women who left a significant literary record.

The war made a substantial intrusion into Sarah Dooley's life. Three of her four sons served in the army; one was killed. Her husband, Silas, and two sons also served in Home Guard units, at least two of which held drills at her home. She attended various public rallies and celebrations, was involved in charitable activities, and provided a steady stream of letters to her soldier sons, which provide a good sense of what she did during the conflict.⁵¹

⁴⁹On women and Victorian middle-class values see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly*, XVIII (Summer 1966), 151-74; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, Conn., 1977); John Mack Faragher, *Women and Men on the Overland Trail* (New Haven, Conn., 1986), 110-43; and Daniel Walker Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," *American Quarterly*, XXVII (December 1975), 507-32.

⁵⁰Rockville *Parke County Republican*, October 14, 1858, January 27, 1859; Williamsport *Warren Republican*, March 22, 1860, March 10, 1864; Greencastle *Putnam Republican Banner*, August 19, 1869; Robert H. Crowder to Juliet Crowder, April 18, 1865, Robert H. Crowder Papers (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis).

⁵¹*Portrait and Biographical Record of Montgomery, Parke and Fountain Counties, Indiana* (Chicago, 1893), 388; Dooley Papers; U.S., Eighth Census, 1860,

The military and Home Guard service of the Dooley males did not force Sarah Dooley into traditionally male work. Her daily routine remained much the same as it had always been. What did expand, however, was her part in molding the character of her sons. While her husband occasionally wrote moral and patriotic instructions, it was Sarah who did most of the teaching and preaching. She was very well informed on the issues involved in the war. Her letters reveal that she regularly read the local newspaper accounts of the war and attended Republican rallies and other public events. They also show that she was well informed on what people in her neighborhood thought and that she talked to returned military officers to learn their views. She betrayed no hesitancy in speaking her mind on political and religious subjects, even when her views were different from those of her husband.

Sarah's letters reflect a Republican point of view. She expressed maternal affection for her sons, but this, as was often the case in male Republican letters as well, was almost invariably linked to demands that they exercise Christian self-control and do their duty to the nation. In 1861, for instance, she wrote to her son Rufus:

it was hard for me to give you up but I will try to submit and be reckonsiled as well as I can feeling it the duty of every man to defend there country and maintain there rites I would be happy to think I had a son that was brave enough to bear the temptations of this wicked world and brave the dangers of war don't forget the book I gave you when you went away read what I wrote in it and practice it and my prayers will ever be for you my Son⁵²

Sarah Dooley's letters include numerous passages in which she comments on the war ("this glorious cause of justice and liberty"), its meaning, and its importance. She comments on a range of political issues including what she saw as the disloyalty of Daniel W. Voorhees, the Democratic congressman from the Seventh district, and his followers ("the rebels in the north"), and the fairness of offering bounties to encourage enlistments. On bounties she stated, "no honest man will vote for it, it is too unjust when a man has done as much as your pap and various others then be taxed to hire men to fight for these cowards of a buternuts it wont do[.]" Although her opinions were typical of the region's Republicans, she appears to have formed them herself.⁵³

For Dooley the war was fundamentally about order, because order tied national events to those of her region, locality, and family. Most of the Republicans of west-central Indiana saw the prima-

Population Schedule 1, Parke County, Indiana; Anita Short and Ruth Bowers, *Preble County, Ohio, Marriage Records* (n.p., 1994); A. A. Graham, *History of Preble County, Ohio, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches* (Cleveland, 1881), 176-77; A. T. Andreas, *Atlas Map of Parke County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1874).

⁵²Sarah A. Dooley to Rufus Dooley, July 13, 1861, Dooley Papers.

⁵³Sarah A. Dooley to Rufus Dooley, April 11, May 9, 1863, March 10, 1865, and Sarah A. Dooley to Atelus Dooley, June 24, 1864, *ibid.*

ry issue of the war as the preservation of the government, which, in their minds, was the guarantor of freedom. To Dooley and many others, secession was caused by men who had not developed sufficient character to restrain their passions. Secession was a wild revolt against laws, majority rule, and governmental orders, all of which were necessary for true freedom. Dooley continually preached in her letters that one must submit to God's laws and to the laws of the government; rebellion only leads to self-destruction.⁵⁴

In her view, west-central Indiana Democrats were, like the secessionists, passionate men whose rebellion against Morton and Lincoln could lead to the destruction of themselves and the state. In her fear and dislike of local Democrats she chronicled their acts of violence in Parke, denounced their positions, and angrily complained about how they would not join the army. Just as Confederates were a threat to the nation and its freedoms, so too were Democrats.

Because Dooley blamed secession and disloyalty on the failure of individual men to develop self-control, character, and Christian morals, she combatted these flaws within the members of her family. It was not enough for her sons to fight the Confederates; they must fight their own passions as well. She, like most Republican women, had a great fear of the evils of camp life: gambling, drunkenness, and fornication. Her exhortations to her sons to live moral lives in the army were relentless and, ultimately, successful. After drinking for a while, Rufus and Atelus joined a unit temperance society. The society's resolutions and roster were published in the *Rockville Parke County Republican* for the edification of the entire community.⁵⁵ It was undoubtedly one of Sarah Dooley's proudest moments.

Dooley's views were strongly supported by a number of other female relatives and neighborhood girls who preached the same message in numerous letters to Rufus. These women felt that they were in a great contest for order and freedom that would effect the course of history. So important was the cause that Dooley often repeated to her son that "I would rather . . . hear my son was slain in battle than to have him return to my armes a deserter[.]" When she talked of sending her boys to war and possible death, she drew upon religious imagery,

⁵⁴Thomas E. Rodgers, "Dupes and Demagogues: Caroline Krout's Narrative of Democratic Disloyalty during the Civil War," *The Historian*, LXI (Spring 1999), 621-38.

⁵⁵*Rockville Parke County Republican*, June 1, 1864; Barton Dooley to Rufus Dooley, March 6, 1865, Dooley Papers; Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York, 1987), 84-110; Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (New York, 1993), 71-113; and Mitchell, "The Northern Soldier and His Community," in *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays*, ed. Maris A. Vinovskis (New York, 1990), 78-92.

if it is his will that you should be spared . . . Oh how thankful I will be but if it is his will that I should never see my Soldier boy any more I give him to the Lord and laid him on the alter of his country and he will do what is rite and I will try to submit to his will.⁵⁶

Many others used the imagery of religious sacrifice during the war as well.

In west-central Indiana most Republican women believed that if the great American experiment in democracy was to be saved, they would have to fight on multiple levels: on the battlefield against the Confederacy, at the ballot box against the Democrats, and in the hearts and minds of their men against uncontrolled passions. On each of these fronts Republican women's efforts had to be mediated through men, but this did nothing to lessen the fervency with which women pursued their goals. Republican ideology helped motivate women to take action because while it provided them with opportunities to speak in public and to play roles in reform, it also instilled within women the self-confidence that allowed them to believe that they could perform public roles.⁵⁷

Understanding Hoosier women's sources of self-confidence during and after the Civil War is important. Sarah Dooley and other Republican women could pursue their wartime roles with such boldness because of the cultural and religious values of Republican ideology. This same ideology, however, also limited most Republican women by defining the boundaries of their authority. They were restrained not only by legal impediments and social conventions, but also by the source of their self-confidence. This point helps to explain why most women who had done so much during the war had no public role after it ended. The war, if anything, made women even more committed to the cultural and ideological values they shared with their men, including the ones that defined gender roles. Most Republican women wanted to save what had existed before the war, not challenge the gender status quo.

Although the majority of the region's women relinquished their wartime roles, there was a very small group of women in west-central Indiana who, after the war, began to push for greater women's rights, especially the right to vote. Most of these women were Republican, but they differed from other Republican women by having a different source of self-confidence; a source similar to the one used by prewar suffragists of the Northeast. One such woman was Lizzie Boynton of Montgomery County.

The daughter of an affluent Crawfordsville merchant, Boynton received a good education at the Terre Haute Female College and an

⁵⁶Sarah A. Dooley to Rufus Dooley, June 6, 1862, March 11, 1863, Dooley Papers.

⁵⁷See Jean V. Matthews, "Consciousness of Self and Consciousness of Sex in Antebellum Feminism," *Signs*, V (Spring 1993), 61-78.

Ohio institution. Her family's money provided her with the time and the opportunity for reading and socializing that was rare in the experiences of Hoosier women. Her writings and letters are filled with literary allusions, discussions of the books she was reading and the lectures she attended, and other evidence of a broad awareness of the world beyond Indiana and the Midwest.⁵⁸

Boynton's public activities suggest that she was a remarkably self-confident and assertive, as well as patriotic, young woman. She published poems on the war in local Republican newspapers; planned, organized, and starred in a pageant; made a public address to returning soldiers; and in 1864 she was one of the young women who offered to do the work of Crawfordsville men who would enlist for three months' service.⁵⁹ In an essay she wrote in 1867 for *The Wabash*, the literary magazine published by the all-male student body of Wabash College, she blasted the Wabash students for thinking that women did not have intellectual abilities equal to their own and for not courting and marrying intelligent women. Frustrated at not having her thoughts and abilities taken seriously, Boynton threw out a challenge:

The writer of this article does not remember ever to have received a word of encouragement or advice in regard to her education from an *unmarried* man. No student of "Wabash" ever mentioned the ennobling powers of the "classics," or the wonderful revelations of God beheld in the study of astronomy or geology. No one ever asked me if I was interested myself in the progress of our glorious government. Not one! Some . . . have essayed to question me in regard to bread-making—(which question rendered their cake all dough forever after, so far as your humble servant was concerned.)⁶⁰

If Boynton's writings and actions show great self-assurance, her private letters show another aspect of this young Hoosier. A major theme in her wartime letters to William Harbert, the man she would eventually marry, is her uncertainty about whether she was living up to the standards of a "true woman."⁶¹ On the one hand, she felt that she must write cheerful, reassuring letters to her man at the front. But on the other hand, she cannot help pouring out her angst about her own identity, whether Harbert really loves her, and whether she is loyal enough to the Union cause.

Boynton's writings demonstrate an unusual degree of self-awareness and an acute appreciation of the fact that her substantial intellectual talents could be exercised in very few ways. Whatever

⁵⁸Lizzie Boynton Harbert, *Out of Her Sphere* (Des Moines, Iowa, 1871); Jean Thompson, "Elizabeth Morrison Boynton Harbert," in *Family Histories, Montgomery County, Indiana, 1823–1898*, (Paducah, Ky., 1989), 183–84; Robert H. Walker, *Reform in America: The Continuing Frontier* (Lexington, Ky., 1985), 113–15; Lizzie Boynton, "Shadows Versus Sunbeams," *Wabash Magazine*, V (May 1864), 209–10; Boynton, "Encouragement," *ibid.*, 29–32; and *Terre Haute Wabash Express*, February 10, 1864.

⁵⁹Crawfordsville *Journal*, May 5, 1864; and Lizzie Boynton to Will Harbert, April 27, 1864, Harbert Collection.

⁶⁰Boynton, "Encouragement," 30–31. Emphasis is in the original.

⁶¹Lizzie Boynton to Will Harbert, December 11, 1862, Harbert Collection.

uncertainties Boynton's self-awareness may have engendered, she was certain of her intellectual abilities and their parity with those of the men she knew. Like other suffrage leaders both before and after the war, her confidence came from a sense of intellectual equality rather than from Republican ideology.

Although Boynton was vehemently in favor of the Union cause, she defined it differently than did Sarah Dooley and most other Hoosier women, who saw the war primarily as a crisis of order. For Boynton slavery was of central importance. Although she did occasionally comment on order, she wrote her most impassioned political passages on the necessity for emancipation. Only when the "terrible evil" of slavery was ended, she wrote, "may an american feel that he lives in a free country. God speed that day."⁶²

While Boynton occupied herself by supporting abolitionism and the Union cause, she continued to look for more permanent outlets for her talents. After the war she became an enthusiastic supporter of the national women's rights movement because it held that women were the equals of men and should have the right to do whatever their abilities permitted them to do. Boynton's desires for education are spelled out in her 1871 novel, *Beyond Her Sphere*. The book's heroine, modeled on the author, is a talented young girl who, frustrated by the limits society has put upon her, comes to see women's rights as the means to change the world to accommodate women like her. Indeed, Boynton repeatedly interrupts the flow of her story to preach to her readers on the need to abandon old beliefs.

By 1869 Boynton was one of the few suffrage leaders from west-central Indiana. In that year, with the aid and counsel of women's rights crusader Mary Livermore, she organized a women's rights convention at Crawfordsville. Although the local Republican newspaper was supportive, most other Republican papers in the region did not back the idea of woman suffrage. The local Democratic newspaper blasted the proceedings as "a ridiculous affair," Livermore as a "he woman," and the men who participated as "male fools." It proclaimed that Livermore's teachings "would destroy all that is beautiful, pure and virtuous in women." Boynton and her fellow suffragists were a distinct minority in a state (and nation) where most were either hostile or apathetic to their cause.⁶³

⁶²Lizzie Boynton to Will Harbert, February 25, 1864, *ibid.* On women's rights see Pat Creech Scholten, "A Public 'Jollification': The 1859 Women's Rights Petition before the Indiana Legislature," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXII (December 1976), 347-59; Jane Stephens, "May Wright Sewall: An Indiana Reformer," *ibid.*, LXXVIII (December 1982), 273-95.

⁶³Mary Livermore to Lizzie Boynton, April 4, August 14, 1869, Harbert Collection; Crawfordsville *Journal*, July 29, August 5, 12, 19, September 2, 30, 1869; Terre Haute *Wabash Express*, September 22, 1869; Crawfordsville *Review*, September 25, 1869.

In 1862, a Crawfordsville woman wrote to a female friend in Attica of the sacrifices endured by many Hoosier women. "The horrors of war can never be depicted—the broken hearted, insane mothers and wives can never come in the pages of history and in the columns of newspapers when the 'list of killed and wounded' is made up for the public."⁶⁴ Of Indiana's volunteers 25,028 died during the war, and many thousands more were wounded. Even the families of those who returned alive suffered many anxious days, especially in the period between the newspaper reports of a major battle and the arrival of letters from the front. Despite the emotional disruption created by the war, the conflict did not seriously disrupt gender routines. The war presented no significant opportunity for Democratic women to enter the public sphere. A substantial number of Republican women participated in the public sphere to an unprecedented degree, but they seem to have done so out of patriotic zeal, not rebellion against their conventional roles. With the exception of a very small minority of women who engaged in the suffrage movement, most Republican women returned to the kinds of public roles they had played before the war.

John Mack Faragher finds that, in mid-nineteenth-century Illinois, what incipient feminist consciousness existed was confined to a small number of urban women, and that widespread "women's self-assertion" only began with the dramatic economic changes of the late nineteenth century. The same appears to have been true of women in Indiana. The Civil War was not a watershed for the women of west-central Indiana. The kind of male-female economic interdependency that existed in the region before the war continued to reinforce gender roles until the end of the nineteenth century. The socioeconomic transformations created by turn-of-the-century industrialization and urbanization allowed major changes to take place in the everyday lives and routines of large numbers of Hoosier women. These changes, in turn, set the stage for an expansion of women's civil rights.⁶⁵

⁶⁴E. Miller to Amanda Hanna, March 2, 1862, Robert Barlow Hanna Papers (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis). Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁵Faragher, "History from the Inside-Out," 537-57. On women's rights in Indiana in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries see Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920* (Indianapolis, 1968), 18-19, 498-502.