

This article is protected by copyright, East Tennessee Historical Society. It is available online for study, scholarship, and research use only.

Suggested Citation:

Morgan, Danielle. "From Old South to New South: Seeds of Industrialization for Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1863-1877." *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 86 (2014): 18-40.

From Old South to New South:

Seeds of Industrialization for Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1863-1877

By Danielle Morgan*



In the monumental book *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (1955), C. Vann Woodward described the industrial landscape of the postwar South. He explained: "Under the plume of the smokestack and the shadow of the blast furnace grew the New South." Influential politician William Gibbs McAdoo recalled that his boyhood hometown of Chattanooga had a "reddish look" to it, but by the 1880s soot and coal dust had replaced the red clay haze in towns like Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Atlanta. The industrialization of southern towns after the Civil War happened quickly and because of several factors. Woodward elaborated on these reasons saying: "The black mouths of the mines, like magnets, drew in the population—sallow whites from the hill country, black boys from the cotton belt, speculators from the ends of the earth."¹

Chattanooga was an ideal location for postwar investment and industrialization. The entire state of Tennessee was a pivotal battleground during the Civil War, with Union regiments occupying the eastern parts of the state and a significant Union force moving through Middle Tennessee toward Chattanooga. By November 1863, following several critical battles, the Union Army secured Chattanooga and began a lengthy occupation. The sustained presence turned the city into an important supply and transportation center for Union troops leading campaigns into the Deep South. Union occupation brought freedom for thousands of African American slaves and also brought security for thousands of free blacks who

* The author is a graduate of Siena College with a B.A. in history. Her research interests are centered on the rebuilding of the South during Reconstruction. She currently lives in Boston.

¹ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), 135; William Gibbs McAdoo, *Crowded Years: The Reminiscences of William G. McAdoo* (Boston, 1931), 32.



were pre
The pre
and eco
Tw
entrepr
African
and mo
latter co
pejorati
identifi
contrib
applying
the city
finances
helped
Americ
econom
ambition
were the
and the
society.

Ear
welcom
twentier
historie
advanta
was a sta
a produ
to redee
connect
self-gove
challeng
Reconst

Du
of the c

² Tim E
Ezzell,
West (1

³ Eric F

⁴ Charle
Chatta

⁵ Bruce
(Charle
Dunnir

were previously persecuted and intimidated by local southern sympathizers. The presence of Union troops laid much of the groundwork for the social and economic rebuilding that began as the Civil War was ending.²

Two major groups led the rebuilding of Chattanooga: northern entrepreneurs, more commonly referred to as "carpetbaggers"; and the African American community. The former provided the intellect, ambition, and money needed to create businesses that employed thousands, while the latter comprised the labor force. The term carpetbagger is used, not as a pejorative term, but as a means of staying consistent with how they have been identified previously in studies of the Reconstruction era.³ Carpetbaggers contributed to the prosperity of Chattanooga during postwar years by applying their entrepreneurship and previous experience to industrialize the city. Self-interest was the primary motivation, but their ambition and finances used to establish foundries, mills, and other types of businesses, helped Chattanooga rise from the ruins of war. An estimated 3,000 African American workers provided the cheap manual labor to keep the industries economically viable.⁴ Although the carpetbagger's business prowess and ambition were vital, the contributions of the African American community were the backbone to rebuilding Chattanooga. Their work was demanding and they endured racial oppression and hardships in postwar southern society.

Early studies of Reconstruction asserted that carpetbaggers were neither welcomed nor appreciated in the postwar South. Beginning in the early twentieth century, William Dunning and his graduate students published histories that portrayed carpetbaggers as nothing more than exploiting, advantageous, disrespecting, and self-serving white northern men. Dunning was a staunch Democrat and his negative portrayal of the carpetbaggers was a product of his political affiliation and the determination of the Democrats to redeem the South. He believed that the failure of Reconstruction was connected to the inability of unintelligent African Americans to effectively self-govern and the exploitation of the South by northern whites. Historians challenged this interpretation, but it remained the dominant view of Reconstruction until the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.⁵

Due to its geographic location, the character of its people, and the nature of the conflict that engulfed the city, Chattanooga recorded an especially

² Tim Ezzell, *Chattanooga, 1865-1900: A City Set Down in Dixie* (Knoxville, 2013), 2-4; Tim Ezzell, "Chattanooga," in *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West (Nashville, 1998), 139-40.

³ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988), 23.

⁴ Charles Stuart McGehee "Wake of the Flood: a Southern City in the Civil War, Chattanooga, 1838-1873" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1985), 176.

⁵ Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville, 2007), 24-35. See, John David Smith and J. Vincent Lowery, eds., *The Dunning School: Historians, Race, and the Meaning of Reconstruction* (Lexington, KY, 2013).

location of the city was Georgia border, straddling s in an extensive railway n states. It was this major forces view the city as the Union advancement, and stwar investors recognized the economic potential of the water and rails that flowed into Chattanooga, as well as the large mineral deposits in the nearby mountain ranges.

Although located in a southern state, sympathies within Chattanooga were strongly divided. Tennessee was the last state to join the Confederacy which signified some resistance to joining its rebel neighbors. Within the state, the majority living in East Tennessee opposed secession and petitioned to form a separate Union-aligned municipal. Those who lived in Chattanooga supported secession, while those in the nearby rural communities preached Union loyalty.⁷ During for their loyalty to the ent local businessmen th African Americans

At the end of the Civil War, Chattanooga's major railways were effectively dismantled. Buildings and the businesses they housed were destroyed during the campaign amounting to a great loss of money and jobs for local residents. Because of significant northern investment, Chattanooga rebounded and in roughly two decades the city grew into a thriving industrial center of the New South. This study examines the dramatic transformation of Chattanooga from a devastated landscape to a lynchpin in the industrial New South, with a particular focus on the joint contributions of northern carpetbaggers and the African American community.

Prior to the Civil War, Chattanooga was a recognized transportation hub. The city was a vital railway junction with north and south lines from Knoxville and Nashville running through to Atlanta, and lateral lines connecting Charleston with Mississippi. Its railways were a major source of investment for Chattanooga bankers who built rails with credit from South Carolina and Georgia. With railroads, the city had greater access to economic opportunities. By 1860, Chattanooga was growing into a medium sized commercial city with important industrial connections.

Demographically, Chattanooga was relatively diverse prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Located in the heartland of the Confederacy, its residents were divided by race, occupation, and sympathies. The city's estimated population of around 5,000 included a growing number of African Americans, both enslaved and free. In the city's center lived its wealthiest, white, elite men who participated in local government and controlled most of the city's finances. They were predominantly Democrats, and when faced with secession, they favored joining the Confederacy.⁸

Justification for secession stemmed from their connection with the southern plantation economy and culture, even though Chattanooga was not a major slaveholding city. In fact, only one white male in ten owned slaves, and typically each master held less than five slaves.⁹ Other reasons for secession were purely economic. Many wealthy merchants in town believed that breaking economic ties to the North would promote domestic sales and increase their own fortunes. They also saw the war itself as a fast and efficient way to make money off the "new iron interest which the war was calculated to foster to an extraordinary degree."¹⁰

In the area that surrounded Chattanooga, farmers and those in small communities supported the Union and opposed secession. These farmers had low incomes and detested the city's wealthy merchants and slave owners. They viewed the Union as a conservative force that would secure their property rights. When President Lincoln called for troops on April 15, 1861, however, the politicians representing the area pushed for secession. On June

⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁹ Ibid., 250.

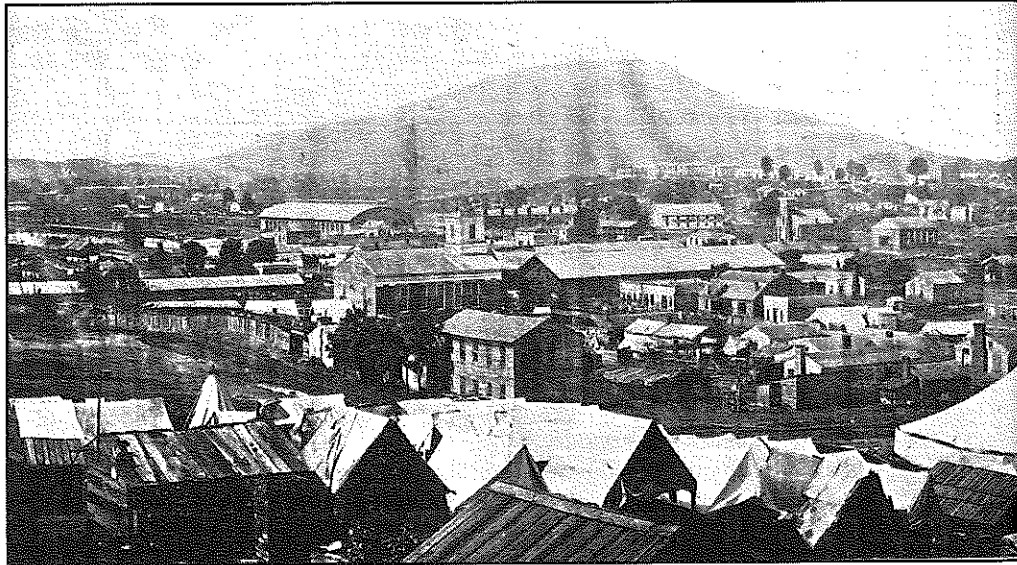
¹⁰ Chattanooga Gazette, September 13, 1864.

Chattanooga (Chicago, 1994), 7.

8, 1861, Tennessee became the last state to secede from the Union and join the Confederacy.¹¹

During the first years of the Civil War, Chattanooga was a Confederate town. The city experienced little military intrusion until fall 1863 when Union General William Rosecrans and his Army of the Cumberland invaded East Tennessee. Union forces pushed the Confederates as far south as Chickamauga, Georgia. However, a costly defeat there in September 1863 sent the Union Army back to Chattanooga. Led by General Braxton Bragg, the Confederates surrounded the city and besieged it for nearly two months. During this time, journalist Francis Lynde observed, "tents are pitched like mushrooms in the flower beds, trees have turned to ashes, gardens are nothing better than mule-pens, shot and shell have left a token here and there."¹² The presence of 40,000 soldiers from the Army of the Cumberland in the city resulted in shortages and destruction of property. Soldiers foraged for food in the countryside and built huts out of mud and timber while they waited for enforcements. The latter activity earned them the nickname "beavers in blue" by the rebels.¹³

In October 1863, Union forces led by General Ulysses S. Grant arrived in Chattanooga and broke Confederate lines. Union General George Thomas



The town of Chattanooga, with Lookout Mountain in the distance, was controlled by Confederate forces until Union occupation in late 1863. H.V. Boynton, *The National Military Park: Chickamauga—Chattanooga, An Historical Guide* (Cincinnati, 1895), 91.

¹¹ Gilbert E. Govan, *The Chattanooga Country, 1540-1951* (Chapel Hill, 1963) 178-81.

¹² Francis Lynde, "Historic and Picturesque Chattanooga," *The Southern Magazine* 5 (March 1895): 526.

¹³ Govan, *Chattanooga Country*, 235.



replaced Rosecrans as
from General William
Grant recruited an e
outnumbered, the re
battles of Lookout M
1863, the Army of th
the surrounding area.

The arrival of th
sympathizers in tow
who could not prove
away, and many soug
daughter of Judge Ro
boxcar, traveling first
Alabama. Fleeing Co
Hooke recorded in
no knowing what is
as the Army of the
sympathizers as cook

Prominent age
businesses, such as th
Damage to the railr
including the Wills
departure of the pr
significant loss of ec
of businesses also m
which resulted in th
the early 1860s.¹⁶

In the wake of
American men, wo
freedmen hailed fr
occupation also dre
brought free black
blacks made up o
Chattanooga as fre

The hundreds
settled in an area d
bank of the Tennes

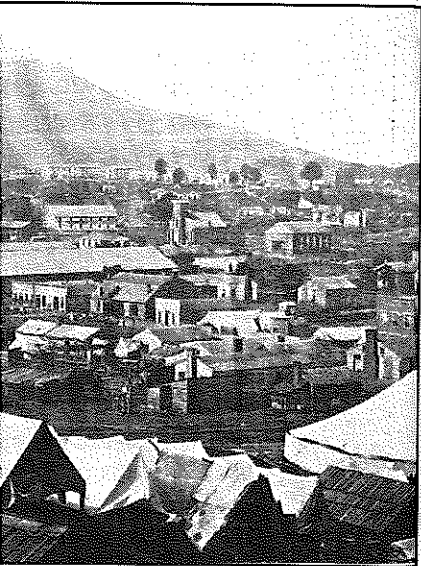
¹⁴ Cozzens, *Shipwreck o*

¹⁵ Raymond E. Evans,
1863-1864: *The Diar*

¹⁶ Gilbert E. Govan ar
The Journal of Southe

¹⁷ McGehee, "Wake o

le from the Union and join
 Chattanooga was a Confederate
 division until fall 1863 when
 Army of the Cumberland
 the Confederates as far south
 at there in September 1863
 by General Braxton Bragg,
 ed it for nearly two months.
 ved, "tents are pitched like
 ned to ashes, gardens are
 have left a token here and
 e Army of the Cumberland
 f property. Soldiers foraged
 of mud and timber while
 earned them the nickname
 Ulysses S. Grant arrived in
 n General George Thomas



the distance, was controlled by
 T. Boynton, *The National Military*
Review (Cincinnati, 1895), 91.

Chapel Hill, 1963) 178-81.
The Southern Magazine 5 (March

replaced Rosecrans as commander, and Grant called upon reinforcements from General William T. Sherman and his Mississippi divisions. In addition, Grant recruited an entire corps from the Army of the Potomac. Heavily outnumbered, the rebels were overwhelmed by the Union Army at the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. On November 25, 1863, the Army of the Cumberland took full control of Chattanooga and the surrounding area.¹⁴

The arrival of the Union Army led to the departure of Confederate sympathizers in town. Thomas' troops deported individuals and families who could not prove Union loyalty. Those deemed treacherous were sent away, and many sought refuge 120 miles south in Atlanta. Josephine Hooke, daughter of Judge Robert Hooke, fled the city with her family and lived in a boxcar, traveling first to Atlanta, and then forced by Sherman's invasion into Alabama. Fleeing Confederates were afraid of being persecuted or captured. Hooke recorded in her diary this fear and uncertainty saying: "There is no knowing what is to become of us."¹⁵ Not all were deported, however, as the Army of the Cumberland found use for many female Confederate sympathizers as cooks and nurses for the Union troops.

Prominent agents, bankers, and merchants also fled. Many vital businesses, such as the Bank of Chattanooga, disappeared with their owners. Damage to the railroads led to the closure of several important industries including the Wills Valley Railroad and many of the town's foundries. The departure of the pro-Confederate residents of Chattanooga resulted in a significant loss of economic power, leaving the city few industries. Closure of businesses also meant that workers left the city to pursue work elsewhere, which resulted in the loss of about half of Chattanooga's population during the early 1860s.¹⁶

In the wake of the outmigration of people, a large number of African American men, women, and children moved into Chattanooga. These freedmen hailed from neighboring towns, counties, and states. Union occupation also drew free blacks to the city. The presence of Union soldiers brought free blacks a greater sense of security and economic liberty. Free blacks made up only a fraction of the African American community in Chattanooga as freedmen comprised the majority.¹⁷

The hundreds of incoming African American individuals and families settled in an area designated by the Army of the Cumberland on the north bank of the Tennessee River. It was customary for Union forces to establish

¹⁴ Cozzens, *Shipwreck of their Hopes*, 206-208.

¹⁵ Raymond E. Evans, Josephine Hooke, and David Scott, *Chattanooga Refugees from War, 1863-1864: The Diary of Miss Josephine H. Hooke* (Signal Mountain, TN, 2011), 2-23.

¹⁶ Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, "Chattanooga Under Military Occupation," *The Journal of Southern History* 17 (February 1951): 23-47.

¹⁷ McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 180.

these camps for African Americans to live, and so the site in Chattanooga was nicknamed "camp contraband" by both its residents and the soldiers. The camp was comprised of tents and mud huts. When John Trowbridge, a children's author from New York, toured Chattanooga in 1865, he was appalled by the living conditions there. Each hut was constructed using sticks, mud, and brick. He observed the size to be "not much more than a dozen square feet"¹⁸ These crude structures typically housed families of two or more. The subpar housing illuminated the difficult social and economic conditions of the African American community in Chattanooga. It is important to note that Trowbridge's visit occurred in 1865, two years after occupation began, suggesting that the first structures built in the camp were of even lesser quality.

Work for African Americans was scarce in Chattanooga as many of the city's industries were destroyed and top businessmen driven from town. Freedmen also lacked desired or professional skills and education to qualify for the few available jobs. Those with specialized skills, usually free blacks, worked as barbers, firemen, postal clerks, and pressmen for the re-established *Chattanooga Gazette*.¹⁹ African Americans who did not have marketable skills were employed by the Army of the Cumberland as servants, cooks, and orderlies. The most noteworthy work of the freedmen for the Army was clearing, cleaning, and burying of the thousands of dead bodies. When Trowbridge visited in 1865, he documented the procedure in which the deceased were found and procured. He observed 217 African American men participating in the search for bodies on the nearby battlefield. It was common for fellow soldiers to bury their friends where they fell after battle, so the men dug up and reinterred bodies that had been hastily buried. Trowbridge witnessed a line of 100 African American men, covering nearly 500 yards, walk slowly through the woods and gather human remains. African Americans were also the prime laborers of Chattanooga's National Cemetery, commissioned by Union General George Thomas following the battles at Chattanooga.²⁰

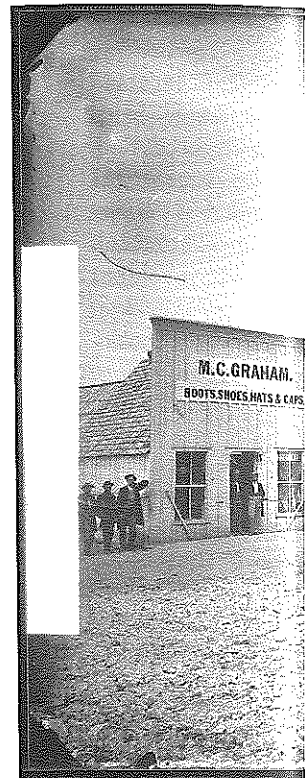
Sutlers, who arrived at the beginning of Union occupation, competed economically with African Americans. Sutlers were business vagabonds who traveled just behind troops. They sold provisions, services, and other merchandise to soldiers and locals, often taking advantage of their customers with overpriced items. They forged business relationships with the armies they followed which left little room for the freedmen to sell goods to troops.²¹

¹⁸ John T. Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities* (Hartford, CT, 1866), 253.

¹⁹ McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 135.

²⁰ Trowbridge, *The South*, 260, 266.

²¹ John D. Billings, *Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life* (Chicago, 1960), 242-46.



During Union occupation, African Americans sold their goods to soldiers. 1860-1865, Matthew Graham, Office of the Chief of Ordnance

The Army of the Cumberland occupied Chattanooga as a supply base for their subsequent invasion of Georgia. They stored military provisions in the city for soldiers. On a daily basis, soldiers in full uniform. African American community members for the Army's "Rules and Regulations" stated that African Americans were crossing the river, over the mountains.

Union officers followed the troops and followed them into the Union Army.

²² *Chattanooga Daily Gazette*



the site in Chattanooga
idents and the soldiers.
When John Trowbridge,
Chattanooga in 1865, he was
was constructed using
'not much more than a
housed families of two
ult social and economic
in Chattanooga. It is
in 1865, two years after
built in the camp were

Chattanooga as many of
men driven from town.
nd education to qualify
ills, usually free blacks,
en for the re-established
not have marketable
nd as servants, cooks,
eedmen for the Army
of dead bodies. When
cedure in which the
17 African American
arby battlefield. It was
re they fell after battle,
l been hastily buried.
men, covering nearly
her human remains.
Chattanooga's National
Thomas following the

occupation, competed
business vagabonds
s, services, and other
age of their customers
ships with the armies
sell goods to troops.²¹

²¹ *Cities* (Hartford, CT,

Life (Chicago, 1960), 242.



During Union occupation of Chattanooga, sutlers built makeshift store fronts and sold their goods to soldiers and residents. "Sutler's Row," Chattanooga, Tennessee, ca. 1860-1865, Matthew Brady Civil War Photographs, Record Group 11, Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

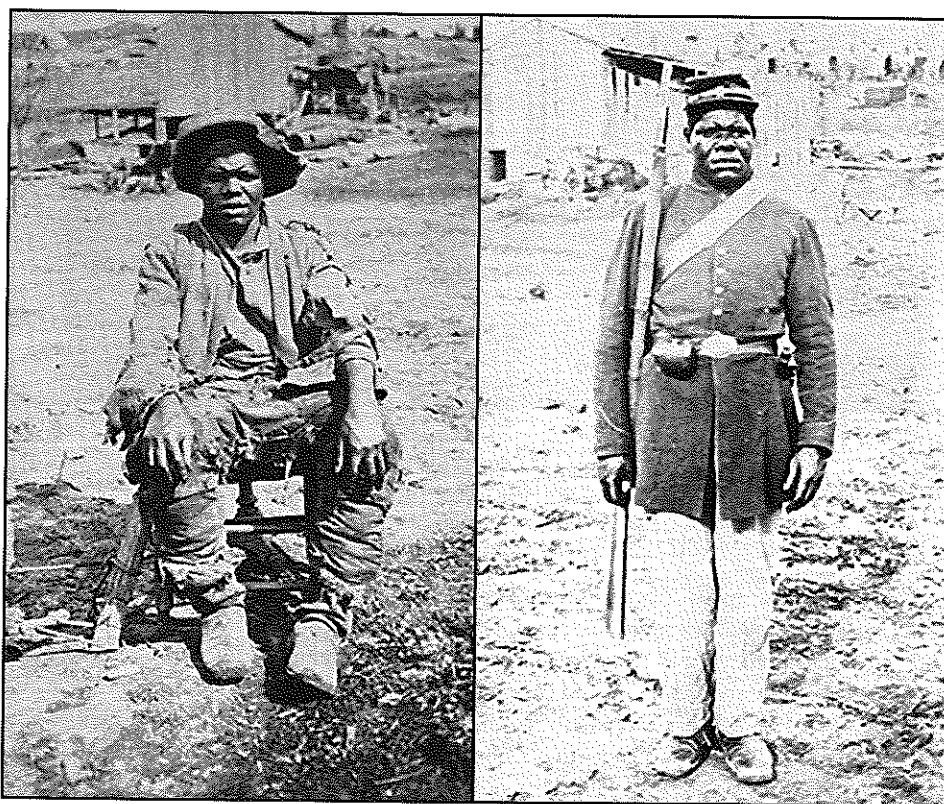
The Army of the Cumberland's quartermaster corps prepared Chattanooga as a supply base for General William T. Sherman's division and their subsequent invasion into Georgia. They built temporary warehouses to store military provisions and converted nearby farmland into encampments for soldiers. On a daily basis, soldiers marched through the town armed and in full uniform. To further secure the town, they contained the African American community along the north shore of the Tennessee River. The Army's "Rules and Regulations," published in the *Chattanooga Daily Gazette*, stated that African Americans in camp contraband were prohibited from crossing the river, owning guns, and consuming alcohol.²²

Union officers understood the value and advantage of acquiring more troops and followed Lincoln's 1863 decree to muster African American men into the Union Army. During the occupation, Union officers recruited the

²² *Chattanooga Daily Gazette*, December 26, 1864.

First Colored Brigade of the Army of the Cumberland. Five regiments of the United States Colored Troops (USCT), the 14th, 16th, 42nd, 44th, and 101st, formed in Chattanooga. Although enlisted as soldiers, few saw battle and most were assigned as laborers and teamsters.²³

Initially, many African Americans rejoiced when the Army of the Cumberland established military occupation in Chattanooga, but the pro-slavery attitude of many of the troops created a tense social environment. The Army of the Cumberland was comprised of Midwestern soldiers many of whom rejected the idea of social equality and rights for African Americans. Their motivation for fighting was largely to preserve the Union,



Hubbard Pryor, a slave from Polk County, Georgia, escaped and fled to Chattanooga to enlist in the 44th United States Colored Troops. On the left Pryor is pictured before enlistment and on the right after enlistment. "Private Hubbard Pryor Before Enlistment" and "Private Hubbard Pryor After Enlistment" all from Letters Received, 1863-1888 Series, Record Group 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²³ Stuart C. McGehee, "Military Origins of the New South: The Army of the Cumberland and Chattanooga's Freedmen," *Civil War History* 34 (December 1988): 323-43.

and as one veteran
free the 'nigger.'"²⁴ T
African Americans l
the African Americ
were given shovels in
of tasks such as paw
Because the regimen
and not on the batt
for their inactive dut
soldiers extended to
while African Ameri

The Union Arr
women and childre
maids for the gener
difficult to follow, b
children to enroll i
effectiveness of the
as many of the wom
and mothers.

While the livin
residents governed
settlement, mostly c
under supervision
the Freedmen's Bu
postwar society. Be
city, the Freedmen
only five such offic
community create
assisted with emplo
rations delivered.

Under superv
elected their own p
conduct their own
to participate, wer
African American
Captain L.B. Luca
that their decisio
in favor of their o
eagerness towards
own affairs. In 186

²⁴ Matthew H. Jamison

²⁵ McGehee, "Military

²⁶ Trowbridge, *The Sou*



Cumberland. Five regiments of the 14th, 16th, 42nd, 44th, and 45th regiments of African American soldiers, few saw battle.

When the Army of the Cumberland was in Chattanooga, but the presence of African American soldiers created a tense social environment. The presence of Midwestern soldiers and their attitudes towards the equality and rights for African Americans largely to preserve the Union,



Hubbard Pryor and others who fled to Chattanooga. On the left Pryor is pictured. Private Hubbard Pryor Before the War. All from Letters Received, Adjutant General's Office, Washington, D.C.

The Army of the Cumberland (Cumberland 1988): 323-43.

and as one veteran later put it, they "scorned the thought of fighting to free the 'nigger.'"²⁴ The white soldiers' prejudice against the estimated 3,000 African Americans living in Chattanooga created unbearable hardships for the African American community. African American men fit for combat were given shovels instead of muskets and their "military training" consisted of tasks such as paving roads, laying railroad tracks, and building bridges. Because the regiments of the USCT were located mostly in the city limits and not on the battlefield, there were reports of harassment by the officers for their inactive duty. The mistreatment of Chattanooga's African American soldiers extended to their pay as well. White soldiers earned \$16.00 each month, while African Americans received only \$8.00, often for identical work.²⁵

The Union Army's "Rules and Regulations" required African American women and children to work. Many women were employed as cooks and maids for the generals and quartermasters. The work of children was more difficult to follow, but likely this order required school age African American children to enroll in schools established by the Freedmen's Bureau. The effectiveness of the order for women and children to work remains unclear, as many of the women who Trowbridge met in 1865 were stay-at-home wives and mothers.

While the living conditions in camp contraband were primitive, the residents governed their community. The principle African American settlement, mostly comprised of freedmen, organized its own administration under supervision of the Freedmen's Bureau. Established in March 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau was designed to help African Americans adjust to postwar society. Because of the large number of African Americans in the city, the Freedmen's Bureau established an office in Chattanooga, one of only five such offices in Tennessee. The agency helped the African American community create an identity, provided funding for schools and teachers, assisted with employment, and worked to make sure wages were fair and rations delivered.

Under supervision of an agent, the residents of camp contraband elected their own president and council to oversee community affairs and conduct their own court trials. These men, since women were not allowed to participate, were elected from the camp and earned respect within the African American community. Trowbridge spoke to the Bureau's agent, Captain L.B. Lucas, about the nature of the courts in the camp. He stated that their decisions were nearly always wise, just, and showed no prejudice in favor of their own color.²⁶ The members of camp contraband showed eagerness towards civic roles and were highly motivated to control their own affairs. In 1867, Esquire Flowers was elected as the city's first African

²⁴ Matthew H. Jamison, *Recollections of Pioneer and Army Life* (Kansas City, 1911), 197.

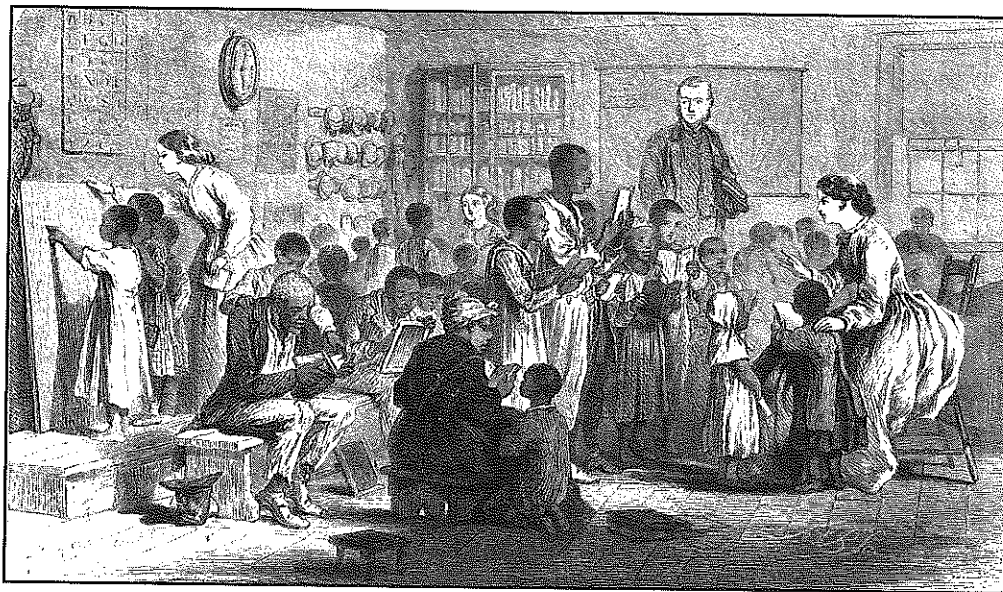
²⁵ McGehee, "Military Origins," 343.

²⁶ Trowbridge, *The South*, 252.

American county clerk. Other notable leaders included C.P. Letcher as the first African American elected to the Board of Alderman in 1868 followed by Glenn Shaw in 1870.²⁷

One goal of the Freedmen's Bureau was to educate African Americans. The Howard School, established in 1865 and named after Union General Oliver Otis Howard, was the city's first all-black school. In Chattanooga, 600 children and some adults attended the school at a price of \$1.00 a month for each student.²⁸ Trowbridge observed that the freedmen were much more eager to attend classes than the students going to schools set up for poor whites and refugees. A school superintendent he spoke with agreed, saying "the colored people are far more zealous in the cause of education than the whites. They will starve themselves or go without clothes, in order to send their children to school."²⁹

The spirit of African Americans far outshined that of any other community. Despite living in houses constructed of mud, significantly lower wages, and overall restricted social conditions, officers and fellow soldiers remarked on their resilience and optimistic attitude. Commissioner for the organization of African American troops in East Tennessee, Major George



Educating African American children and their parents with basic skills was a major objective of the Freedmen's Bureau. John T. Trowbridge, The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities (Hartford, CT, 1866), 338.

²⁷ Rita L. Hubbard, *African Americans of Chattanooga: A History of Unsung Heroes*. (Charleston, SC, 2007), 23-24.

²⁸ Jordan T. Weymouth, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 11 (1939): 47-61.

²⁹ Trowbridge, *The South*, 251.

L. Stearns co
the American
the negro is i
cheerfulness,
his capacity to
worked for th
rights, but he
Chattanooga.
whites speaks

The Arm
of Chattanooc
area and und
war drew to a
victory at Ch
Nathan Bedf
launched raic
to arson, thef

Union o
of the Cumber
of troops dep
industrialize
ambitious an
during its occ
that 20,000
and social op
Cumberland
Following the
returned in fo
for veteran U
from town an
their busines
war, Union w
auctions.³⁰ In
held such co
war with no
with eager ne

In Chat

³⁰ Excerpts from
Commissioner
Adjutant Ge

³¹ Chattanooga

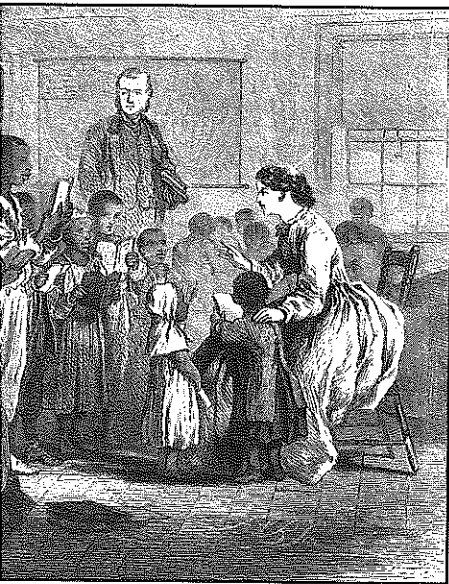
³² Robert Some

³³ McGehee, "V

ders included C.P. Letcher as the
rd of Alderman in 1868 followed

was to educate African Americans.
and named after Union General
black school. In Chattanooga, 600
hool at a price of \$1.00 a month
at the freedmen were much more
going to schools set up for poor
dent he spoke with agreed, saying
n the cause of education than the
without clothes, in order to send

ur outshined that of any other
ructed of mud, significantly lower
ions, officers and fellow soldiers
c attitude. Commissioner for the
n East Tennessee, Major George



parents with basic skills was a major
bridge, *The South: A Tour of Its*
ford, CT, 1866), 338.

A History of Unsung Heroes. (Charleston,
Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical*

L. Stearns conveyed the worth of enlisting freedmen in testimony before the American Freedmen's inquiry commission. He stated: "The value of the negro is in his enthusiasm, which far exceeds that of the white; in his cheerfulness, which is to be seen everywhere, especially under privation; in his capacity to bear hardships, and in his capacity for discipline."³⁰ Stearns worked for the Freedmen's Bureau and advocated for African American rights, but he offered a rare statement of praise for African Americans in Chattanooga. His comparison of African American laborers and soldiers to whites speaks of the freedmen's unfailing determination to succeed.

The Army of the Cumberland faced hardships during the occupation of Chattanooga. Soldiers were mindful of Confederate sympathizers in the area and understood that Unionists were unwelcome in the South. As the war drew to a close, Confederates who were driven out following the Union's victory at Chattanooga returned. In December 1864, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, later a prominent member of the Ku Klux Klan, launched raids in the Chattanooga countryside. These raids were connected to arson, thefts, and murders.³¹

Union occupation officially ceased on October 7, 1865, when the Army of the Cumberland established a civil government. As the large number of troops departed, motivated leaders with the knowledge and ability to industrialize the war torn city emerged. Many of these leaders were the ambitious and intelligent army officers who filled Chattanooga's streets during its occupation. One year following Lee's surrender, it was estimated that 20,000 Union veterans migrated to the South for political, financial, and social opportunities.³² Soldiers who had served in the Army of the Cumberland recognized the iron and coal riches of the Chattanooga Valley. Following the end of their appointments, many either stayed in the city or returned in following years with their families and belongings. One advantage for veteran Union officers was the departure of the antebellum elite. Driven from town and unable to pay taxes, these once wealthy leaders abandoned their businesses such as water works, saw mills, and rolling mills. After the war, Union veterans bought many of the city's valuable properties at public auctions.³³ In a great act of irony, Chattanooga's antebellum community who held such confidence the war would bring them fortune emerged from the war with no assets and their once thriving city was destroyed and crawling with eager northern capitalists.

In Chattanooga, carpetbaggers from the North were welcome. An

³⁰ Excerpts from testimony of George L. Stearns before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, (November 23, 1863), filed with O-328 1863, Letters Received, series 12, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³¹ *Chattanooga Daily Gazette*, December 17, 1864.

³² Robert Somers, *The Southern States Since the War: 1870-1871* (New York, 1871), 24.

³³ McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 146-47.

1868 advertisement in Chattanooga's prominent *Daily Republican* rebutted Dunning's claim saying: "WANTED IMMEDIATELY ANY NUMBER OF CARPET-BAGGERS TO COME TO CHATTANOOGA AND SETTLE." The headline was followed by a short description in which the editor stated "The people of Chattanooga, no longer wishing to stay in the background . . . extend a general invitation to all carpet-baggers to leave the bleak winds of the North and come to Chattanooga." Staunch Unionists, who were in Chattanooga during the military occupation, understood the advantages of bringing northern capital to the South. In a humorous disclaimer, the advertisement for northerners concluded with the line, "those having capital, brains, and muscle preferred."³⁴

One of the most notable investors in Chattanooga after the war was Union General John T. Wilder. Originally from New York, Wilder moved to Ohio and then Indiana where he established a successful foundry. At the plant, he designed hydraulic machinery, created patents, and sold equipment to mills in surrounding towns and counties. By 1861, he employed nearly one-hundred men, but the outbreak of war called him to duty. A family history of military service led Wilder to enlist. His great-grandfather lost a leg at the Battle of Bunker Hill during the American Revolution, and his father fought in the War of 1812.³⁵ However, his views on slavery ultimately drew him to fight. In a letter written to his wife during the war, Wilder remarked "I could not have courage enough to hold up my head, and remain at home, while the bleeding heart of my Fatherland was being trampled upon by cowardly ruffians."³⁶ Referring to the Confederates enslavement and treatment of African Americans, Wilder's opposition to slavery was apparent.

Wilder recognized the importance of African American laborers in Chattanooga. One of his soldiers reported that he once said: "The negroes are our best friends."³⁷ Wilder did not favor equality for African Americans, instead he believed that the African American community was extremely beneficial to the Army's work. African Americans were paid much less than white soldiers and performed most of the manual labor. Even though he opposed slavery, Wilder was close friends with Nathan Bedford Forrest, a slave trader before the Civil War and after the war a notorious Ku Klux Klan member. In the 1870s, he traveled to Washington, D.C. to defend Forrest in front of President Grant.³⁸

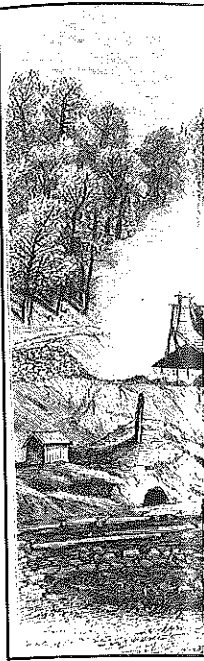
³⁴ Quotes from *Chattanooga Daily Republican*, December 8, 1868.

³⁵ Samuel Cole Williams, *General John T. Wilder, Commander of the Lightning Brigade* (Bloomington, 1936), 34.

³⁶ Letter from John T. Wilder to wife, Martha "Pet" Wilder, June 14, 1863, John T. Wilder Papers, Special Collections, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

³⁷ *Annals of the Army of the Cumberland* (Philadelphia, 1864), 233-37.

³⁸ Steven Cox, "Chattanooga Was His Town: The Life of General John T. Wilder," *Chattanooga Regional Historical Quarterly* 7 (2004): 2-11.



After the
incorporat
County ne
resulted
Journeys i
Alabama,
V

Dur
Army. He
became c
of major
he achiev
fever, ho
service. V

An
recogniz
Armed w
Chattan
explored
deposits
hundred
Tennesse

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Daily Republican rebutted
ELY ANY NUMBER OF
OOGA AND SETTLE.”
n which the editor stated
o stay in the background
to leave the bleak winds
Unionists, who were in
derstood the advantages
umorous disclaimer, the
ne, “those having capital,

nooga after the war was
New York, Wilder moved
successful foundry. At the
ents, and sold equipment
he employed nearly one-
to duty. A family history
andfather lost a leg at the
on, and his father fought
y ultimately drew him to
Wilder remarked “I could
d remain at home, while
mpled upon by cowardly
ment and treatment of
was apparent.

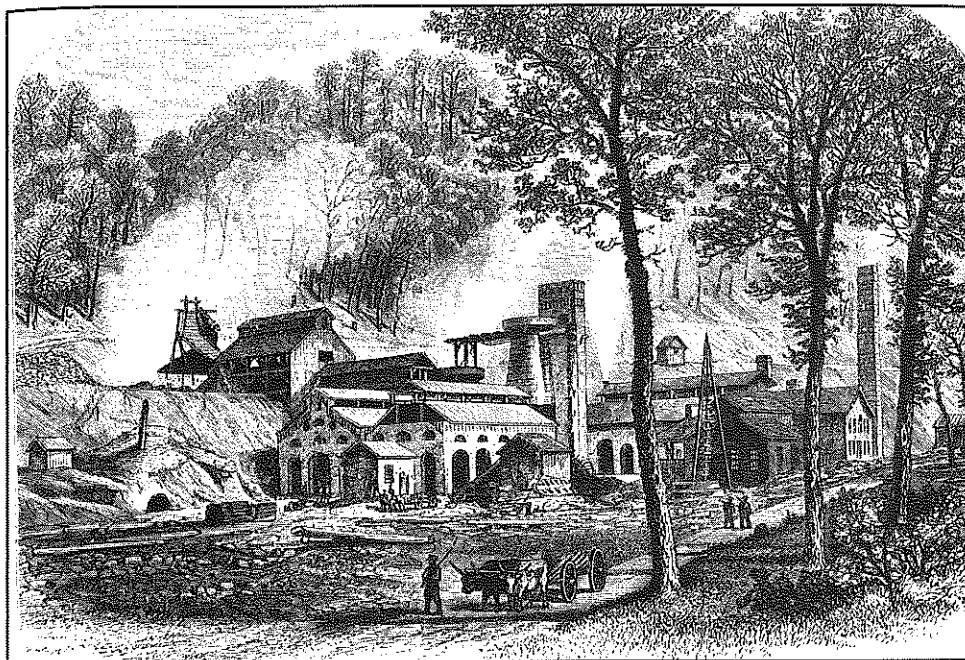
n American laborers in
once said: “The negroes
y for African Americans,
mmunity was extremely
ere paid much less than
labor. Even though he
than Bedford Forrest, a
notorious Ku Klux Klan
O.C. to defend Forrest in

Lightning Brigade

14, 1863, John T. Wilder
nooga.

37.

al John T. Wilder,”



*After the Civil War, John T. Wilder, W.A. Rockwood, and Hiram S. Chamberlain incorporated the Roane Iron Company. They constructed two blast furnaces in Roane County near the iron ore and coal resources of Walden's Ridge. This industrial activity resulted in the town of Rockwood. Edward King, *The Great South: A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland* (Hartford, CT, 1875), 533.*

During the Civil War, Wilder rose quickly in the ranks of the Union Army. He was first elected captain on his second day of service and later he became colonel of the 17th Indiana infantry, completely skipping the rank of major. The biggest promotion he received was brigadier general which he achieved just three years after enlisting. Persistent dysentery and typhoid fever, however, forced him to retire in 1864. At the time he left military service, Wilder was stationed in Chattanooga.³⁹

An experienced entrepreneur and successful business owner, Wilder recognized the mining potential in the mountains of East Tennessee. Armed with a book on Tennessee geology, he traveled on horseback around Chattanooga and north to Cumberland Gap. During his travels Wilder explored the mountains and examined their abundant iron ore and coal deposits. The discovery of such rich minerals convinced him to buy nine hundred acres of land near what is now Rockwood, Tennessee, near the Tennessee River. On June 18, 1867, he chartered the Roane Iron Company.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

The new company was the first of its kind in Tennessee. The mines at Rockwood were only the beginning of the company's assets. Wilder also secured thousands of acres of land across Middle Tennessee. To complete the circle of production, Wilder wanted a mill. Chattanooga had access to the Tennessee River, his mines, and the iron works. Also, the city had an African American labor force of nearly 3,000.⁴¹

In 1869, Wilder purchased the Southwestern Iron Company, a rolling mill in Chattanooga, and 145 acres of surrounding land for \$225,000. Wilder needed a rolling mill to manufacture the pig iron from his furnaces at Rockwood.⁴² After purchasing the mill and adjacent land, Wilder divided and sold off the land he did not utilize. Once revenue from the land was calculated with the total bill, the actual price Wilder paid for the mill amounted to only \$12,000. He established the headquarters of the Roane Iron Company in Chattanooga.⁴³

Wilder was not the sole owner of the Roane Iron Company. Before he purchased the land, he convinced his war time friend, Hiram S. Chamberlain, to invest in the company with him. An Ohio native, Chamberlain previously served as captain and assistant quartermaster for the Army of the Cumberland during the occupation of Knoxville. At the end of the war, Chamberlain remained in the city and invested in an abandoned Confederate iron foundry. In 1868, he and three other ex-Union officers opened the Knoxville Iron Company. The success of the business influenced Chamberlain's decision to partner with Wilder on the purchase of the iron mill in Chattanooga. Chamberlain served as general manager, vice president, and eventually president of the company⁴⁴

Chamberlain and Wilder employed many Army of the Cumberland veteran officers including Henry Clay Evans and William Rathburn. Evans mustered out of Wisconsin late in the war and was quartermaster in Chattanooga when Lee surrendered. Evans returned home to Wisconsin when military occupation ended, only to move back to Chattanooga five years later. His first job in the city was at Wasson Car Works Company, but after two years he joined Wilder and Chamberlain. During the next forty-four years, Evans served as secretary, treasurer, vice-president, general manager, and president of the Roane Iron Company.

William Rathburn was another northern capitalist who sought economic opportunities in the postwar South. Originally a banker from Ohio, he served as a payroll officer in Chattanooga during Union occupation. It was rumored

⁴¹ Ibid., 11.

⁴² William H. Moore, "Preoccupied Paternalism: The Roane Iron Company in Her Company Town," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 39 (1967): 56-60.

⁴³ Robert Somers, *The Southern States Since the War: 1870-1871* (New York, 1871), 106.

⁴⁴ Hiram Sanborn Chamberlain, *An Historical Sketch and Description of the First National Bank, Chattanooga, Fifty Years: 1865-1915* (Chattanooga, 1915).



Ad
I
Chattano
(C

that Ra
to move
was great
wartime
Rathbur
family to
following
his serv
a profes
in finan
The First
Chattano
president
ex-Union
as vice p
his experi
backgrou
in severa
Roane Ir

The
exemplifi
to Chatta
previous
largest en
Chattano
percent o
also manu
inspired o
The Cha
Machine

⁴⁵ Zella Arr
1940), 2.

⁴⁶ 1870 Ce

⁴⁷ Cox, "C

Tennessee. The mines
any's assets. Wilder also
ennessee. To complete the
nooga had access to the
the city had an African

Iron Company, a rolling
ng land for \$225,000.
iron from his furnaces
nt land, Wilder divided
ne from the land was
lder paid for the mill
quarters of the Roane

Iron Company. Before
ime friend, Hiram S.
im. An Ohio native,
stant quartermaster for
of Knoxville. At the end
ested in an abandoned
ther ex-Union officers
the business influenced
e purchase of the iron
anager, vice president,

ny of the Cumberland
d William Rathburn.
d was quartermaster in
d home to Wisconsin
k to Chattanooga five
Car Works Company,
lain. During the next
vice-president, general

t who sought economic
r from Ohio, he served
pation. It was rumored

Company in Her
s 39 (1967): 56-60.
w York, 1871), 106.
n of the First National Bank,

Advertisement for the Roane
Iron Company. Parham's
Chattanooga City Directory, 1871
(Chattanooga, 1871), 112.

that Rathburn's decision
to move back to Tennessee
was greatly influenced by his
wartime friend John Wilder.
Rathburn relocated his
family to the city immediately
following the conclusion of
his service in 1865. With
a professional background
in finance, he established
The First National Bank in
Chattanooga. He served as
president and recruited fellow
ex-Union officer T.R Stanley
as vice president. Because of
his experience and professional
background Rathburn worked
in several positions for the
Roane Iron Company.⁴⁵

The Roane Iron Company
exemplified the kind of industry that northern carpetbaggers brought
to Chattanooga. The size, scale of operations, and products were unlike
previous industrial endeavors. In 1870, the company was Chattanooga's
largest employer, with nearly six hundred laborers, black and white.
Chattanooga's population in 1870 was roughly 8,000, which meant that 7.5
percent of the city worked for the Roane Iron Company.⁴⁶ Wilder's business
also manufactured the first coke-fired pig iron in the South. His success also
inspired other companies to form, such as The Vulcan Iron and Rail Works,
The Chattanooga Iron Company, Providence Steel Works, and Enterprise
Machine Works.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Zella Armstrong, *History of Hamilton County and Chattanooga, Tennessee* (Chattanooga,
1940), 2:128.

⁴⁶ 1870 Census, Hamilton County, Tennessee.

⁴⁷ Cox, "Chattanooga was His Town," 11; Govan, *The Chattanooga Country*, 296.

S. ROTSCCHILD & CO., Kentucky Store.

112 'PARHAM'S CHATTANOOGA CITY DIRECTORY.

W. P. RATHBURN, President, W. O. ROCKWOOD, Treasurer.
H. S. OLANBELL, Vice Pres't, WILLARD ABBOTT, Secretary,
E. T. WILDER, Gen'l Superintending.

ROANE
IRON COMPANY,
MANUFACTURERS OF
RAILROAD
AND
PIG IRON,
CHATTANOOGA, TENN.

ROLLING MILL,
CHATTANOOGA, TENN.

BLAST FURNACE,
ROCKWOOD, TENN.

Go to the Kentucky Store for Dry Goods, Boots and Shoes, Corner 7th and Market Streets

In addition to iron manufacturing, railroads were a profitable enterprise in postwar Chattanooga. John C. Stanton was a famous yet controversial character of Chattanooga's economic past. Unlike the previously mentioned carpetbaggers, he was not a Union veteran nor did he work for Roane Iron Company, although he did invest in its stock in later years. Instead, Stanton's interests laid in the railroad industry. A New Hampshire native, Stanton and his brother, D.M. Stanton, moved from Massachusetts to Alabama following the war to invest in southern railroads. In 1868 he purchased the Wills Valley Railroad, which was intended to connect Chattanooga and north central Alabama. Bonds for the subscription to the stock of the railroad, made by the businessmen of Chattanooga before the war, were still outstanding. The city of Chattanooga owed \$35,000 to the owners of the bonds for the unfinished railroad, and tried as they might, politicians, were unable to relieve the city from the costly burden of the line. Their attempts ranged from levying new taxes on the citizens to help pay off the bonds, to offering ownership of the line in return for debt relief. Stanton and his brother became heroes of Chattanooga when they bought the financially unstable company. In 1868, they merged the railroad with Stanton's other company, the Northeast and Southwest Alabama Railroad Company, and together they formed the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad. Stanton appointed himself president of the new company.⁴⁸

The merger lifted the monetary burden off the people of Chattanooga. Stanton helped the city financially and promised a significant terminal for the railroad in Chattanooga. He used a majority of the loans he acquired from Alabama legislature to build the costly addition to Chattanooga, which he saw as an emerging center of industry. On acres of land just south of the city, Stanton commissioned car shops, a freight station, an office building, and a depot. He even built a luxurious hotel, aptly named the "Stanton House," and a post office. The new area of the city quickly became known as "Stanton Town." Similar to Wilder and others, Stanton's investments brought wealth and prosperity to Chattanooga.

In 1870, the Roane Iron Company and the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad were the two biggest companies and employers in Chattanooga. In fact, the businesses worked closely to ensure their control of the city's industrial output. Stanton attempted to purchase Wilder's mill, but was unsuccessful. Instead, he spent \$200,000 of his Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad loan and bought stock in Roane Iron Company. The amount of money was just enough stock to grant him a seat on the board of directors of Wilder's company. William Rathburn and Henry Clay Evans were also on the boards of both companies. The two companies benefitted from each other in terms of actual material. The pig iron produced by Wilder's mill was the main supplier of the cars and rails for Stanton's railroad. Further, the

⁴⁸ Ezzell, *Chattanooga*, 8-9; Armstrong, *Hamilton County and Chattanooga*, 2:186.



railroad
by Wilder

Al
on har
the Ala
his bus
shady c
a hero
destroy
the un
its fina
during
Many
for sev
over th

C
northe
way W
capital
used i
crooke

U
invest
how e
North
for a p
for th
for car
Chatt
econo
the ne

C
carpet
Colo
paire
of Ch
Amer
Army
roads
cease
unen

⁴⁹ Mc
⁵⁰ Ala

railroad aided in the distribution of other boxcars and rails manufactured by Wilder throughout Alabama.⁴⁹

Although prosperous for a few years, Stanton and his businesses fell on hard times. In 1871, he was unable to pay interest due on the bonds for the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad. It was soon discovered nearly all his business ventures, including the railroad, were built on credit. Stanton's shady dealings destroyed him financially, but he continued to be revered as a hero in Chattanooga for his efforts. For almost four years he built up a destroyed section of Chattanooga, provided work for laborers, completed the unfinished Wills Valley Railroad, and temporarily relieved the city of its financial burden. His shaky business practices were not uncommon during Reconstruction when business regulation laws were nonexistent. Many Chattanoogans forgave him, and Stanton remained in Chattanooga for several years following the scandal. The state of Alabama eventually took over the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad.⁵⁰

Compared to his fellow carpetbaggers, Stanton was a different type of northern capitalist. Stanton did not use the South's resources in the same way Wilder and Chamberlain had. Instead of building industries with his capital, he manipulated millions of dollars from the state of Alabama and used it to rebuild Chattanooga. Even though his business practices were crooked, the city ultimately benefited from Stanton's industrial investments.

Unlike Wilder, Chamberlain, and Stanton, Rathburn had no capital to invest and arrived with barely anything to his name. His success demonstrated how even those who were not already wealthy prospered in Chattanooga. Northerners of various economic means arrived in Chattanooga looking for a profit, and many of them found great wealth. Chattanooga was a place for the rich and poor to gain from the losses of war. While this was true for carpetbaggers, African Americans had little chance of gaining wealth in Chattanooga. African Americans arrived poor and remained socially and economically oppressed for the next several decades, all the while providing the necessary labor to the new industries.

Collaboration between the African American community and carpetbaggers in Chattanooga began with the creation of the United States Colored Troops during the city's military occupation. This partnership paired the African American community with the future industrialists of Chattanooga. Union officers and quartermasters found eager African American men to complete the Army's most difficult work. Officers in the Army of the Cumberland assigned African Americans jobs such as paving roads, clearing battlefields, and building bridges. When military occupation ceased in 1865, many in the African American community became unemployed.

⁴⁹ McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 216.

⁵⁰ Alan A. Walker, *Railroads of Chattanooga* (Chicago, 2003), 50-54.



The Freedmen's Bureau office in Chattanooga arranged contracts between African Americans and various employers. Under control of former USCT officer N.B Lucas, the Bureau was given a monetary incentive by state commissioner Clinton Fisk. Initially, the Bureau's Chattanooga office had no funding, but in an attempt to increase work for the freedmen, Fisk gave \$0.50 to the office for each signed contract. Instead of finding work locally for the freedmen, the office in Chattanooga dispersed African American workers throughout the Southeast. Between the financial incentive to sign contracts and the out-of-state jobs, many in the African American community associated the Freedmen's Bureau with corruption and deportation. Food rations and medicine for camp contraband ended because the state found those programs too expensive. Also, many white citizens did not support such services for African Americans. Economic and industrial interests far outweighed the city's commitment to helping its African American community.

The Freedmen's Bureau, with its poor funding from the federal government and its lack of support from local whites, failed in assisting the African American community in Chattanooga. One Union officer observed in early 1865: "It may well be doubted that their condition is much improved by obtaining their freedom."⁵¹ Jobs for African Americans appeared with the establishment of major companies like the Roane Iron Company and the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad. The men who brought these industries to Chattanooga, however, were not interested in including the African American community in the white power structure.

The carpetbaggers in Chattanooga used race as a way to control their businesses. Company owners pitted African American laborers against white laborers in order to keep their costs down. The prospect of white laborers joining forces with African American workhands scared the northerners. If interracial unions formed, they could demand higher wages and better work conditions. To prevent this alliance, owners of Chattanooga's biggest companies continuously fired and rehired groups of black and white laborers. When the white labor force rioted or threatened a strike, company owners replaced them with African American laborers. As a response, white laborers agreed to come back and work in their previous and unchanged conditions, and often the companies fired the replacement African American workers.⁵² As an example of this cycle, John Stanton once threatened to bring in a Chinese labor force when both black and white workers protested their treatment and conditions. As general manager of the Roane Iron Company, Henry Clay Evans bluntly explained that, "there is no contest between labor and capital, and those who seek to produce such a contest are the worst

⁵¹ Lyman W. Ayer to M.E Strieby, February 18, 1865, Tennessee file, American Missionary Association Archives, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans.

⁵² Govan, *The Chattanooga Country*, 232.



foes to both lab
and it was this
divides in the c

The carp
sometimes Asia
hardest. The m
Americans wor
men comprised
white men rep
1870 census list
workers. A close
same findings.
such as superin
were all occupi
listed as having
African Americ
numbers reflect
skilled jobs at R
Union veterans
American contr

Owners of
understood the
numbers. Becau
managers fired
fall of iron pric
in the African
African Americ
or different wo
alternative jobs,
in postwar Chat

Unskilled
demanding, and
African Americ
wage discrimina
unskilled work
skilled workers,
working for Sta
example of this
living in Chatta

⁵³ McGehee, "Wak

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵⁵ 1870 Census, Ha

⁵⁶ McGehee, "Wak

foes to both labor and capital."⁵³ Often, blacks and whites fought for work and it was this business tactic that kept labor costs low and reinforced racial divides in the city.⁵⁴

The carpetbagger business leaders exploited white, black, and sometimes Asian labor, but the African American community was hit the hardest. The majority of unskilled and heavy labor was done by African Americans working in blast furnaces throughout the city. In 1870, black men comprised 56 percent of the unskilled labor force in Chattanooga while white men represented only 15 percent. In terms of skilled workers, the 1870 census listed 572 skilled white workers with only 169 African American workers. A closer look at the Roane Iron Company's workforce presents the same findings. In an 1870 census of Wilder's company, skilled positions such as superintendent, secretary, clerk, pattern maker, boiler, and heater were all occupied by white men. Only four African American men were listed as having a skilled job and they were all firemen. The remaining 46 African American men on the list worked as laborers. The difference in numbers reflected how race determined opportunity. All managerial and skilled jobs at Roane Iron Company were given to northern men with ties to Union veterans while the majority of unskilled labor came from the African American community.⁵⁵

Owners of major companies in Chattanooga, such as Chamberlain, understood the benefits of having a low skilled labor force in such high numbers. Because iron prices were not fixed and fluctuated seasonally, managers fired and rehired as needs changed. The unpredictable rise and fall of iron prices and subsequent instability of employment instilled fear in the African American work force. Vulnerable and financially insecure, African Americans were reluctant and discouraged to demand better wages or different work. Coupled with the unwillingness of the owners to offer alternative jobs, African Americans were socially and economically immobile in postwar Chattanooga.⁵⁶

Unskilled work for African Americans laborers was strenuous and demanding, and they were poorly compensated. Under military occupation, African American workers received half of what white soldiers earned. This wage discrimination continued into the postwar period. Wilder paid his unskilled workers, mostly African Americans, \$1 per day in 1870 while skilled workers, mostly whites, were paid up to \$5 per day. African Americans working for Stanton fared slightly better, earning \$1.75 per day. As an example of this economic disparity, in 1870, an African American worker living in Chattanooga made \$40 a month, barely enough to afford a small

⁵³ McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 134-35.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵⁵ 1870 Census, Hamilton County, Tennessee.

⁵⁶ McGehee, "Wake of the Flood," 222.



house on the riverbank. At the same time, Stanton commissioned work for a large mansion atop nearby Cameron hill overlooking his "Stanton Town."⁵⁷

The denial of skilled training or work for Chattanooga's African Americans combined with low incomes affected their living conditions. Unable to acquire appropriate wages, the African American community improved little from its days at camp contraband. Stanton and Wilder built company cottages for some of their workers. Those residents were paid with company credit, and accumulated interest between paydays. This business practice was common in the northern industrial cities, but in the South it was viewed as another form of sharecropping. While some white skilled workers could afford these homes, most in the African American community were economically unable to secure company housing. With limited transportation, African American workers built homes near their work sites, usually in industrial, unkempt, and polluted areas of Chattanooga, where malaria and other diseases were common. The mortality rate in African American communities in Chattanooga was twice that of white sections in town.⁵⁸

Outside harassment also threatened the African American community. During Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan emerged as a terrorist organization. They scoured southern cities, verbally harassing and physically assaulting carpetbaggers, African Americans, and anyone associated with the Republican Party. Founded in Pulaski, Tennessee, 130 miles west of Chattanooga, the Klan was a real and threatening presence for Chattanooga, especially African Americans.⁵⁹

In Chattanooga and other southern cities, leaders enforced a series of laws called black codes, which restricted social, economic, and political opportunities for African Americans. These laws stripped many of the rights that African Americans gained during Reconstruction. Black codes granted African Americans the right to marry, but denied them many civil liberties including the right to testify against whites and sit on juries. M.H. Church of the Freedmen's Bureau wrote of the African American situation in the legal system saying, "they are imprisoned on frivolous charges unsupported by reliable testimony, although allowed to testify, their evidence amounts to nothing against a white man."⁶⁰ The racial attitudes in Chattanooga following the war were strong enough to keep the African American community oppressed but lenient enough to allow them to continue to live in the city and work for the wealthy business owners.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 225

⁵⁸ Alruthus Ambush Taylor, *The Negro in Tennessee, 1850-1880* (Washington D.C., 1941), 142-44.

⁵⁹ *Chattanooga Daily Republican*, June 24, 1866.

⁶⁰ M.H. Church to S.W. Groesbeck, November 6, 1866, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, National Archives Microfilm Publication, M999, reel 34, National Archives.



North
John Wil
came to
shared p
their live
city. The
devastate
destroyed
infrastruc
reshaped
destructio
subsequ
dismantle
railroads
city's eco
military
sympathi
African
sought r
the war,
and north
Chattano
and pow
massive
during t
populatio
with only
reported
Civil War
demogra
of its ne
to rise fr
The
combini
backing
by entre
and pro
business
ambition
on a rel
labor m

⁶¹ Howar
95-96.

commissioned work for
ing his "Stanton Town."⁵⁷
Chattanooga's African
their living conditions.
an American community
Stanton and Wilder built
residents were paid with
a paydays. This business
es, but in the South it was
me white skilled workers
merican community were
ch limited transportation,
it work sites, usually in
tanooga, where malaria
ate in African American
e sections in town.⁵⁸
n American community.
is a terrorist organization.
nd physically assaulting
ated with the Republican
rest of Chattanooga, the
 Chattanoogaans, especially

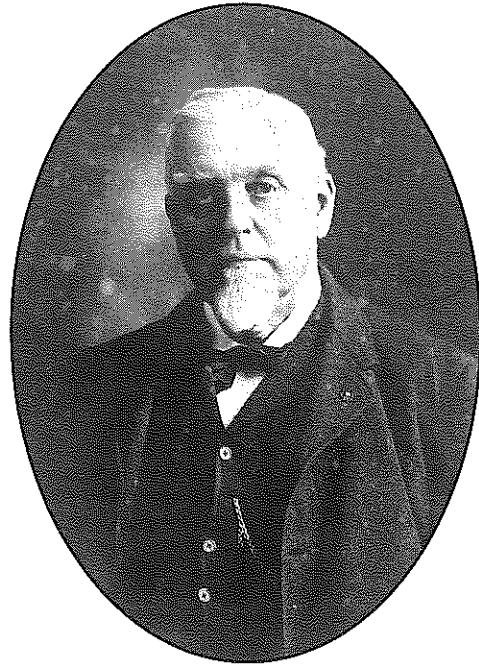
eaders enforced a series
economic, and political
ripped many of the rights
ion. Black codes granted
hem many civil liberties
on juries. M.H. Church
merican situation in the
ous charges unsupported
eir evidence amounts to
n Chattanooga following
an American community
ntinue to live in the city

(Washington D.C., 1941), 142-

ls of the Assistant
s, Freedmen, and Abandoned
M999, reel 34, National

Northern investors, like John Wilder, and eager freedmen came to Chattanooga with the shared purpose of improving their lives and rebuilding the city. The Chattanooga campaign devastated the city's landscape, destroyed its institutions and infrastructure, and completely reshaped its demographics. The destruction of the war and the subsequent military occupation dismantled Chattanooga's banks, railroads, and businesses—the city's economic engines. During military occupation, Confederate sympathizers fled, and a new African American community sought refuge in the city. After the war, many Union veterans and northern capitalists moved to Chattanooga in search of fortune and power. As evidence of this massive influx of new residents, during the 1860s Chattanooga's population increased 105 percent, with only 7 in 100 residents in 1870 reported living there before the Civil War. This drastic alteration in demographics and the collaboration of its new residents allowed the city to rise from the ruins of war through economic development.⁶¹

The postwar industrialization of Chattanooga can be traced to the combined efforts of the African American community and the financial backing of carpetbaggers. Northern capital and business knowledge provided by entrepreneurs like John Wilder and John Stanton brought great wealth and prosperity to the city. These carpetbaggers created and led numerous business ventures, including foundries and railroads. Their intellect and ambition for industrial development was impressive, but their success hinged on a reliable and determined labor force. African Americans provided the labor needed to operate railroads, foundries, mills, and other postwar



John Thomas Wilder was a Union brigadier general during the Civil War, with the majority of his service in Tennessee. After the war he settled in Tennessee and founded several industrial enterprises including the Roane Iron Company. A businessman and entrepreneur he centered his industrial operations in Chattanooga in order to have access to a large African American labor pool. "John Thomas Wilder," ca. 1905, John Lee Collection, Tennessee Technological University Special Collections.

⁶¹ Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1900* (New York, 1978), 95-96.

industries. As an example of this business relationship, the Roane Iron Company, Chattanooga's largest employer and most successful business during Reconstruction, placed its headquarters in the city to be insured of ready access to a strong labor force.

The African American community of postwar Chattanooga worked long hours for low wages under strenuous conditions, all while combating racial prejudice and discrimination by many of the city's white inhabitants. Their position in Chattanooga's society was merely for the benefit of their labor. The city's economy and institutions would not have been reestablished if it was not for the African American community. In the larger perspective, African American laborers were a significant part of the transition of southern cities into industrial centers. In the process of building a New South, however, African Americans lost many of the rights that they gained during Reconstruction.



A
Tennes
an out
South
country
with po
had gra
making
postwar
Republ
given E
W
William
elite ha
preside
from se
East Te
knowin
with Ea
to Nort

A Kne
Atlant
Recon
and cr
Univer

Elmer
The Le
Develop