

# Southern Women in the Civil War

## Unionist Women: Subversion

White Unionists lived scattered throughout the Confederacy, often congregated in communities of like-minded kin and neighbors. Some white Union families sent men to fight in the Union Army. Every Confederate state, except South Carolina, raised at least one regiment of troops for the Union army. Other white Unionists found it impossible to escape Confederate conscription, and either suffered through military service or deserted. All white Unionists paid for their political sentiments in the form of harassment from their Confederate neighbors as well as their state and national governments. Both the Confederate government and state governments sent out military parties to force men in Union areas into the Confederate Army and to root out deserters.

Unionist Women assumed crucial roles in sheltering their male relatives and supporting their families, although Confederate military units were not above threatening and harassing women. The testimony of the women of Walker County, Alabama, is representative of Union women's experience in the South. Located in the heart of the state, Walker County was home to a community of strong Union supporters. The men evaded Confederate military service or deserted, came home, and either made their way to the Union Army or hid in the woods. "Ly-outs," as they were called, relied on their womenfolk to avoid capture by neighbors aligned with the Confederacy and the Confederate Guard which patrolled the area looking for deserters. They told their stories to the Southern Claims Commission, the federal agency set up after the Civil War to reimburse Unionists for property taken by the federal army. In their depositions, women voiced strong Union sentiments, which they have embellished to buttress their claims. Their actions, nonetheless, suggest the strength of their political convictions.

To provide a sense of the problems caused by deserters, we offer an order issued by Confederate General John Morgan Hunt. Like General Butler's order dealing with the slaveholding women of New Orleans, Hunt's order suggests the magnitude of the threat Union women posed to the Confederate war effort as they helped soldiers slip away from their units.

Unlike elite white women, Union women had neither the skills nor the time to leave lengthy, introspective accounts. The evidence of their role in the War comes second hand, filtered through third parties. Keep that in mind when reading the material and consider how the context shaped what these women said and how they are portrayed in these documents.

Perhaps the largest block of Unionists in the South was enslaved African American men and women. These southerners identified closely with the Union from the outset, but they defined the war aims more expansively than did the nation's political leaders. They saw the Civil War as a battle against slavery. By contrast, President Abraham Lincoln went into the war promising to maintain slavery where it already existed. Given their numbers and the importance of their labor to the Confederacy, enslaved African Americans did have some leverage in the conflict. They used that leverage to push their own agenda, by doing whatever they could to undermine the institution of slavery. African Americans deserted plantations and made their way to Union lines. Men worked for or fought in the Union Army. Many stayed behind when their owners fled from the advancing Union Army. Some took over the plantations, seeing the land, tools, supplies, and livestock that had been acquired through their labor as their own. (Those plans were soon foiled by federal policy, which leased the land and ordered former slaves to work as hired labor.)

African Americans' efforts played a significant role in destabilizing slavery and, by extension, the Confederacy. As recent historians have shown, Union officials were quick to realize the strategic importance of African Americans' actions and began to encourage them. The eventual result moved the Union officially to embrace emancipation, although the development of that policy was uneven. Military commanders were, at first, supposed to return enslaved African Americans to their owners. Federal policy was soon changed to allow refugees to remain behind Union lines, but it did not establish their freedom. The Emancipation Proclamation freed only slaves

still in Confederate territory. Slavery was not abolished until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, in 1865. This slow evolution underscores the dynamic interplay—between the actions of African Americans and the decisions of federal officials—that shaped federal policy in regards to slavery. In this way, African Americans decisively shaped the course of the Union war effort.

Until recently, historians focused on the experiences of African American men, arguing that it was men who left the plantation to go to Union lines and join the Union Army. The documentation left by the Union Army and the various federal agencies involved in the war effort emphasize men, not women. As a result, historians tended to assume that women generally stayed put and waited things out. New scholarship, however, has underscored women's active involvement in the Civil War. They, too, fled to Union lines. Although they could not fight, they followed the Union Army and assisted the Union effort in refugee camps. When they stayed at home, they did what they could to hasten slavery's demise.

To see how enslaved women shaped the course and outcome of the War, you must read the accompanying documents carefully because women appear only fleetingly in them. In the photos, you literally have to look closely to see them. The testimony of federal officials in Maryland and North Carolina, which describe the situation in refugee camps, does make it clear that women were there. The complaint from Louisiana planters presents a very different, much more negative reading of the situation. Indirectly, however, their complaints suggest the strategic importance of African Americans' actions.

For more on the role of African Americans in the Civil War, visit *The Making of African American Identity, Volume 1, 1500-1865*, a teaching anthology of primary texts from the National Humanities Center, at <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm>.

On slaves in the Civil War: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/emancipation/text5/text5read.htm>.

On African Americans as soldiers: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/emancipation/text6/text6read.htm> and <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/identity/text7/text7read.htm>

### **Discussion Questions for Readings on Unionist Women**

- What did white Union women in Walker County do to support the Union effort?
- How do the women of Walker County express their Union sentiments?
- Do the documents give you any ideas about why they would be Union supporters?
- Do the documents give you any idea of how these women identified their roles as women?
- How does General Hunt describe deserters? How does that differ from the way in which Walker County women describe the men in their communities? How do you explain the differences?
- What does General Hunt's order say about how such women might have affected the Confederate war effort?

## **Claims for Reimbursement, Southern Claims Commission**

**Elizabeth Alvis, Walker County, Alabama, 2337, Southern Claims Commission, Allowed Claims, RG 217, National Archives.**

By the time Alvis filed her claim in the 1870s, she was a widow. Two of her sons and two of her brothers fought in the Union Army. Although her husband was a Unionist, he was too sick and old to fight. She claimed reimbursement for one yoke of oxen and one rifle, and received seventy-five dollars from the Southern Claims Commission.

Elizabeth Alvis: "I was threatened. In the month October 1863 by some soldiers calling themselves Texian Rangers, came to our house and threatened to burn everything that we had and to hang my husband, and kill

my sons. Two of my sons were in the Yankee army and one of them was at home, and they were determined to kill him. But my sons managed to keep out of the way and they did not get him. My husband was a weakly man, and [word illegible] able to sit up a part of the time, and he died on February 1871. He had the consumption. My husband was a true union man.”

James Wesley: neighbor, age 53, farmer; “She was known as a loyal woman by all the loyal men in this section of the country, and her husband was a true union man to his death.”; “I do not suppose she gave any money to aid the Union cause, but she done better than to give money. She raised two sons, who served in the union army all the time.”

J.L. Romain: “I heard claimant say frequently that she had two sons in the Union army, and that she wished she had a dozen sons to put in the Union Army. . . . While I was out in woods to keep away from the rebels, and she knew where I was, she had a signal, which was a white cloth, that she hung out if there was any danger, and if the cloth was not at a certain place I could venture to the house and get something to eat and all the information she had to give me, and she done the same thing with many others. She done all she could to get young men to enlist in the union army. There was two men from the first Ala cavalry came into the county here to enlist some union boys that were in this section of the county. She done all to help them. They had to keep themselves hid in the woods, and she would go and see the union boys and tell them where to go there to enlist.”

**Sarah F. Keeton, Walker County, Alabama, 11,636, Southern Claims Commission, Allowed Claims, RG 217, National Archives.**

Sarah Keeton, who never married, lived with her father until his death in 1863 and then moved in with her brother-in-law. She claims reimbursement for a horse, which was the only property left to her by her father. The Southern Claims Commission granted her \$125 for the horse.

Sarah Keeton: “I have not taken any oath being a woman there was none required of me . . . . I had no property taken by the Rebels. . . . I was threatened by the rebels that if I did not quit cooking and furnishing the Union soldiers with provisions that they would destroy every thing I possessed. . . . I have at various times watched for the rebel cavalry, while Union soldiers was at our house, getting them some provision and I gave them all the assistance I could. . . . I had one Brother in the rebel army but he was forced out by the conscripts, I had some cousins in the Union Army, Robt Townley and others. . . . sympathized for the Union all the time and my feelings and language was for it as long as I dared to express my self. Of course I was not allowed a vote, if I had been I should have cast it in favor of the Union and after the state sessed [sic] I still adhered to the Union all the time. . . .”

P.P. Pike, her brother in law: “I have known claimant about 40 years and have been intimate with her all the time. I live near claimant and I saw her often in time of the war and I know if there was a Union woman in the South she was one of that number. Claimant was both privately and publicly known as a woman that favor the cause of the Union all she could, claimant was a woman of no family but herself, and she lived near me in time of the war and I know that she aided and assisted Union men all she could. She said she was opposed to the war on the part of the South and her advice was to the young men of the county never to go into the rebellion and if forced to leave their homes to go north and join the Union army for said she, I am not in favor of the secession of the Southern States with all the evil consequences that was shure [sic] to follow, and she believed that they were wrong and she hoped that they would be subjugated. I know that claimant [sic] never owned any confederate bond nor gave aid nor comfort thereto, and I know that she aided all men when called upon as far as she was able in getting through to the Union Army. I know she was at various times with and in presence of Union soldiers for several of her neighbors belonged to the Union Army and when at home on scouts she would bear any earand [sic] for them they required her to do, she being a woman would not be molested by the rebel cavalry. If her action had been known to the rebels she could not remained hire [sic] under southern independence.”

George H. McDade: At the time of the war, she lived in a “settlement where there were a great many men laying out to evade the conscript also near several families whose husbands were in the Union Army and I am

satisfied that cliament [sic] could with case [have] made the report to the cavalry and had them all captured immediately. She had all opportunities to have done so, but she was too faithful to the Union cause, and too much opposed to the operations of the rebel to do so, any of the Union boys who belonged to the Union Army [were] in no fear about being interrupted on her account but would call on her for assistance. . . .”

**Johnson Guttery, Walker County, Alabama, 20,130, Southern Claims Commission, Allowed Claims, RG 217, National Archives.**

Johnson Guttery was a Unionist with three sons, a grandson, and a son-in-law who fought in the Union Army. When the Union Army came to his house, he had fled to Nashville Tennessee, then occupied by the Union Army, because of threats to his life and property. As he testified, “I can’t say my property was confiscated. It was taken by low down Rebels & for their own use, as I think and because I was an enemy to the Rebell cause. . . . I was browbeaten and threatened to be hanged, driven from my home. . . .”

Guttery’s wife, Mary, and daughter, Sarah, were there when the Union Army took their provisions. Sarah’s testimony duplicated that of her mother.

Mary Guttery: “When the troops were taking our stuff, I said to them, that my Husband was in the Union Army, my sons and sons in law & grand son, that they ought not take all I had, they replied [sic] they need it for the use of the army and were obliged to take it, that I would get pay for it, that they were going to smash up the Rebellion. I told them to go ahead, take all they could find, that they needed that I was sorry I didn’t have more for them to take, that the Rebbs had run off my husband and children, and had kept me robed [sic] until I had nothing hardly for them to take . . .”

**General Order, Number 2, John Morgan Hunt, Confederate Army,  
Arlington, Virginia, against deserters**

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/impls/morgord/morgord.html>

HD. QRS. DEPT. W. VA. & EAST TENN.,

ABINGDON, VA., June 25th, 1864.

GENERAL ORDER, No. 2.

1. The Brig. Gen. Commanding is informed of the disgraceful manner in which straggling soldiers, deserters, absentees, and parties grouped together under the name and guise of “Independent Scouts,” have been depredating upon the private rights and property of peaceful citizens of the Confederate States—and desiring to rid the service of the cowardly miscreants, who are skulking from the presence of the enemy, and who take advantage of the unsettled condition of the laws, to abuse and prey upon the families of brave men who are now absent battling for their country, it is therefore ordered,

1st. All authorities granted to form organizations of “Independent Scouts,” are hereby revoked. The officers commanding companies of this character, will report with them at once to these Headquarters. Those who fail to do so, will be proceeded against the same as for desertion—and all officers of the Department are authorized and commanded, to arrest them as soon as a reasonable time has elapsed, and they have neglected to report as indicated in this order.

2d. It is made the duty of every Commanding Officer in the Department, to arrest and send to these Headquarters, under guard, every officer or soldier who may be found absent from his command, without the regular leave in writing, prescribed by Regulations and General Orders.

II. The soldier who will not remain at his post, and who is not obedient to the orders of his superiors, is a worthless encumbrance, and where such men have committed larcenies and outrages upon the private property of

citizens—the Brig. Gen. Commanding desires, when it is practicable, to turn them over for proper disposition, to the civil authorities—believing that they can render more service to the country in the workshops of our prisons, than it is possible to derive from them as soldiers in the field—and he calls upon all good citizens to aid and assist him in bringing these malefactors to justice. Whenever the name and command of one of these lawless marauders can be ascertained, and the citizen will forward a statement of the offence committed, with a report of the witnesses, the General Commanding will use every endeavor to have them brought to a speedy trial.

III. The Comdg. Officer of each mounted encampment, will send out daily scouts, with instructions to search the country for all stragglers and deserters—and where it comes to their knowledge that the parties arrested have been offending against the laws of the land, they will investigate the facts thoroughly, and forward a statement of their cases with the prisoners to these Headquarters;—where the soldier has been guilty of absence without leave or desertion, and the fact can be ascertained, he must be forwarded to these Headquarters for immediate trial.

IV. All Officers, of whatsoever grade, are charged with the discipline of their respective commands—and where a Commanding Officer is called upon for protection to the private rights of a citizen against the depredations of any soldier of his Command, he will grant it immediately, and if he fail to give it, proceedings will be instituted against him for neglect of duty and violation of this order.

By command of  
BRIG. GEN. MORGAN,  
J. L. SANDFORD, A.A.G.

## **Testimony by the Superintendent of Contrabands at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission**

[Fortress Monroe, Va.] May 9, 1863.

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Question: How many of the people called contrabands, have come under your observation?

Answer: Some 10,000 have come under our control, to be fed in part, and clothed in part, but I cannot speak accurately in regard to the number. This is the rendezvous. They come here from all about, from Richmond and 200 miles off in North Carolina. There was one gang that started from Richmond 23 strong and only 3 got through.

....

Q: In your opinion, is there any communication between the refugees and the black men still in slavery?

A: Yes Sir, we have had men here who have gone back 200 miles.

Q: In your opinion would a change in our policy which would cause them to be treated with fairness, their wages punctually paid and employment furnished them in the army, become known and would it have any effect upon others in slavery?

A: Yes—Thousands upon Thousands. I went to Suffolk a short time ago to enquire into the state of things there—for I found I could not get any foot hold to make things work there, through the Commanding General, and I went to the Provost Marshall and all hands—and the colored people actually sent a deputation to me one morning before I was up to know if we put black men in irons and sent them off to Cuba to be sold or set them at work and put balls on their legs and whipped them, just as in slavery; because that was the story up there, and they were frightened and didn't know what to do. When I got at the feelings of these people I found they were not afraid of the slaveholders. They said there was nobody on the plantations but women and they were not afraid of them. One woman came through 200 miles in Men's clothes. The most valuable information we recieved in regard

to the Merrimack and the operations of the rebels came from the colored people and they got no credit for it. I found hundreds who had left their wives and families behind. I asked them "Why did you come away and leave them there?" and I found they had heard these stories, and wanted to come and see how it was. "I am going back again after my wife" some of them have said. "When I have earned a little money" "What as far as that?" "Yes" and I have had them come to me to borrow money, or to get their pay, if they had earned a months wages, and to get passes. "I am going for my family" they say. "Are you not afraid to risk it?" "No I know the Way" Colored men will help colored men and they will work along the by paths and get through. In that way I have known quite a number who have gone up from time to time in the neighborhood of Richmond and several have brought back their families; some I have never heard from.

As I was saying they do not feel afraid now. The white people have nearly all gone, the blood hounds are not there now to hunt them and they are not afraid, before they were afraid to stir. There are hundreds of negroes at Williamsburgh with their families working for nothing. They would not get pay here and they had rather stay where they are. "We are not afraid of being carried back" a great many have told us and "if we are, we can get away again." Now that they are getting their eyes open they are coming in. Fifty came this morning from Yorktown who followed Stoneman's Cavalry when they returned from their raid. The officers reported to their Quartermaster that they had so many horses and fifty or sixty negroes. "What did you bring them for?" "Why they followed us and we could not stop them." I asked one of the men about it and he said they would leave their work in the field as soon as they found the Soldiers were Union men and follow them sometimes without hat or coat. They would take best horse they could get and every where they rode they would take fresh horses, leave the old ones and follow on and so they came in.

I have questioned a great many of them and they do not feel much afraid; and there are a great many courageous fellows who have come from long distances in rebeldom. Some men who came here from North Carolina, knew all about the [Emancipation] Proclamation and they started on the belief in it; but they had heard these stories and they wanted to know how it was. Well, I gave them the evidence and I have no doubt their friends will hear of it. Within the last two or three months the rebel guards have been doubled on the line and the officers and privates of the 99th New York between Norfolk and Suffolk have caught hundreds of fugitives and got pay for them.

Q: Do I understand you to say that a great many who have escaped have been sent back?

A: Yes Sir, The masters will come in to Suffolk in the day time and with the help of some of the 99th carry off their fugitives and by and by smuggle them across the lines and the soldier will get his \$20 or \$50.

## **Former Superintendent of the Poor in the Department of North Carolina to the Chairman of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission**

New-York May 25th 1863.

Hon Rob Dale Owen

Agreeably to your request, I give you a brief report of the freed blacks in the department of North Carolina during the time they were under my charge. I received my appointment a few days after the taking of Newbern.

. . . .

My first order from Genl Burnside under this appointment, was to employ as many negro men as I could get up to the number of five thousand to offer them eight dollers a month. One ration of clothes. They were to work on the building of forts. This order remained standing on my books up to the day I left the Departement with General, July 6th without our ever being able to fill it. Up to the time I left there were not over twenty five

hundred able bodied men within our lines, so that it will be readily understood why the negroes were mover [never] a burden on our hands.

The truth was we never could get enough of them, and although for a little while there were a few more at Roanoke Island then were wanted there—after the cost [fort?] was completed.

They were brought to Newbern as it was known. There were all in the department 10.000. of them 2500 were men 2500 women and Children. They were at the following places.

At Newbern and vicinity 7.500.

At Roanoke Island and posts adjacent 1.000.

At Washington, Hatteras, Carolina and Beaufort 1.500.

In the four months that I had charge of them, the men built three first class earth work forts; Fort Totten at Newbern, a large work. Fort Burnside on the upper end of Roanok [Il-] & [Fort?] at Washington N.C. These three forts were our chief reliance for defence against the rebels in case of an attack. Have since been sucesfully used for that purpose by our forces under Major Genl Foster.

The negroes loaded and discharged cargoes for about three hunderd vessels. served regularly as crews on about forty steamers. and acted as permanent gangs of laborers in all the Quatermasters. Commissary and Ord-nance offices of the department.

A number of the men were good carpenters. blacksmiths coopers &c. and did effective work in their [. . .] at bridge building ship joining &c. The large railroad bridge across the Trent was built chiefly by them. as was also the bridge across Bateholors & other creeks. & the docks at Roanoke Island & elsewhere. Upwards of fifty volun-teers of the best & most courageous were kept constantly employed on the perilous. but most important duty of spies. scouts and guides. In the work they were invaluable and almost indispensable. They frequently went from thirty to three hundred miles within the enemy's lines; visiting his principle camps and most important posts and bringing us back important reliable information.

They visited Kingston Goldsboro. Trenton Onslow Swansboro, Tarboro of points on the Roanoke river; after these errands barely escaping with their lives. They were pursued on several occasions by blood hounds two or three of them were taken prisoners; one of these was shot; the fate of the others not known. The pay they received for this work was small but satisfactory. They seemed to think their lives were well spent, if necessary in giving rest, security, and success, to the Union troops, whom they regarded as their deliverers. They usually knelt in solemn prayer before they left, & on their return, from that hazardous duty.

. . . .

The women and children supported themselves with but little aid from the government by washing, iron-ing, cooking, making pies, cakes &c. for the troops. The few women that were employed by the government in the hospitals received 4\$ a month, clothes and one ration.

Those in the neighborhood of Newbern were ordered to report at my office as soon as they arrived within our lines. They obtained quarters in the out-houses, kitchens and poorer classes of dwellings, deserted by the citizens on the taking of Newbern. They attended our free schools & churches regularly and with great earnest-ness. They were peaceable, orderly, cleanly, & industrious. There was seldom a quarrel known among them. They consider it a duty to work for the U.S. government & though they could in many cases have made more money at other conditions; there was a public opinion among them that tabooed any one that refuses to work for the Government. The churches & schools established for their benefit, with no cost to the government, were of great value in building up this public opinion among them.

As I have previously related, that the men frequently led foraging parties, to places where supplies neces-sary for the department were obtained. In this way boat-loads of prime and oak wood for the hospitals. Govern-ment officers. a steam boat load of cotton bales for the protection of the gunboats and with forage for the same, number of horses and mules for the Quarter Master Department. Small sheep were obtained at no other cost than the small wages of the men. Without doubt property far exceeding in value all that was ever paid to the blacks,

was thus obtained for the Government. Under my appointment as Superintendent of the Poor, from Major Genl. Burnside. I had to attend to the suffering poor whites as well as blacks. There were 18.00 men, women, & children of the poor whites. who felt compelled to call for provisions at my office.

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On an average in most articles of *sixteen* times as much, was called for by the poor whites, as was wanted by the poor blacks.

Work was offered to both. to the whites 12.\$ month

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ Blacks \$8. ~ ~ ~ ~

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Vincent Colyer

## Louisiana Planters to the Commander of the Department of the Gulf

[Terrebonne Parish, La.] Jany 14th 1862 [1863]–

General, The undersigned, comtee, appointed by the citizens of the Parish of Terre Bonne–La– to lay before you the deplorable condition of their once flourishing & happy Parish–

Respectfully reprisent–that–nine tenths of all the horses, saddles & bridles & at least two thirds of all the mules, carts, wagons & harness necessary to carry on the plantations have been seized by the U.S. (to say nothing of cattle, hogs, sheep poultry & other things necessary to support our families & negroes) consequently many planters are not able to haul necessary supplies from the depots nor will they be able to dilever at depots & landings the Sugar & molasses now in their Sugar-Houses–neither will they be able to cultivate their crops this year– Large quantities of corn necessary for the use of the planters their negroes & teams remain in the fields, & without carts teams & harness must so remain & be entirely lost– That–many of the negroes led astray by designing persons, believe that the plantations & everything on them belong to them, the negroes– They quit work, go & come when they see fit–Ride off at night the mules that have been at work all day– Fences are pulled down gates & bars are left open– Cattle, & sheep hogs & poultry are killed or carried off & sold– Negroes in numbers from one plantation to an other at all hours night & day– They travel on the rail road– They congregate in large numbers on deserted plantations– All these things are done against the will & in defiance of the orders of their masters.– In Some instances negro Soldiers partially armed have been allowed to visit the plantations from which they inlisted– In a word we are in a State of anarchy.– The time has come when preperations for planting & cultivating the crops of 1863 should be made.– But without teams, & the ability to command the labour of our negroes, nothing can be done.– Unless a full crop of corn can be grown this year Starvation Stares us in the face– In the rear of famine march insurrection & pestilence–

General–We ask relief from our present evils & security for the future.– To obtain these ends, we respectfully suggest–That–To each planter be restored not less than half of all the team, carts, wagons & harness, that he has heretofore used in the cultivation of his plantation, & that they be secured to him to be used in the cultivation of his plantation or plantations if he has more than one– That no person be allowed to hire or employ in any way a negro or colored person without the written permission of his or her owner or the known agent of the owner– Which written permission the party employing or hiring a negro or colored person must be able to produce when called on in justification of himself– Some plan should be adopted to compell negroes hired to remain & complete their contracts– This object would be furthered by arresting & returning to their owners or employers all negroes absenting themselves without leave of their owners or employers.– Negroes should not be allowed to enter the lines of encampment without passes from their owner or employer– Those who do so should be promptly



expelled—otherwise the foregoing suggestions will be fruitless.— Furnishing negroes or colored persons in any way with any kind of intoxicating liquor or drink should be strictly prohibited— On some places the negroes have refused to work on any terms— We ask such power & authority as will enable us to preserve order & compel the negroes to work so as to make the crops necessary for the support of our families & of the negroes themselves.—

To make a crop of 1.000— Hoags of Sugar & 2000— barrels of Molasses requires the labour of 150— hands & an outlay of some \$25.000— in money—Too large a sum to risk on an uncertainty— Hence it is all important that we should have undoubted security for the future use of the labour of our negroes, our teams, carts, etc— Without this security for at least twelve months, we fear not attempt will be made this year (1863) to grow either corn or cane in the Parish of Terre Bonne.— Without bread the negroes must Starve, revolt & become a heavy charge on the Govt. of the U.S., while disease will decimate their ranks.— But by a prompt & decided course, requiring obedience & work from our Slaves the Govt. may save the country & especially the poor negroes from Such dire calamities.—

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|-----------------|-----------------|
| W. J. Minor     | Andrew McCollam |
| Frs E Robertson | T. Gibson       |

W. J. Minor et al. to Major Genl. Banks, 14 Jan. 1862 [1863], M-108 1863, Letters Received, ser. 1920, Civil Affairs, Department of the Gulf, U.S. Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393 Pt. 1, National Archives.

Each signature is in a different handwriting; the petition is in that of Minor. Appended are three virtually identical documents, each dated January 8, 1863, and signed by various “Citizens” of Terrebonne Parish (about 170 in all), delegating Minor, Robertson, McCollam, Gibson, and one John M. Pelton to represent “the condition of things in this Parish & indeavour to obtain some amelioration of our grievances so as to justify us in attempting to grow our usual crops, which it would be unwise in us to attempt to do, under, existing circumstances.”