

**“He Says He Was a Union Man”: Sherman’s March
and the Civilians of the Rivers Bridge Vicinity**

Text of an Address by Dr. Eric W. Plaag,

at the Rivers Bridge State Historic Site Visitor’s Center, Erhardt, SC,

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Good afternoon. I am Eric Plaag, a historian and preservationist who has been chasing General Sherman across the swamps and sandhills of South Carolina for much of the past five years. It was in late 2009 that I first proposed to Steve Smith at the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology that South Carolina badly needed a statewide Sherman’s March commemoration project. In time, that proposal eventually coalesced into a two-year American Battlefield Protection Program grant to identify and map sites associated with Sherman’s March in South Carolina. Over the next three years, I tromped around in the footprints of Sherman’s men, often carrying a GPS device in my hand and an antenna on my back, identifying nearly 400 sites associated with the march, including campsites, skirmish sites, earthworks, and destroyed or ransacked residences, institutions, businesses, and other resources, the vast majority of them either lost to history or never previously identified. Curiously, one of the sites intentionally NOT included in that project to any great detail was the Rivers Bridge site, since it had previously been studied and reported on in great detail.

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With that in mind, I want to be clear from the beginning that you will not get from me an exhaustive account of the Battle of Rivers Bridge, a discussion of military strategy and tactics, or an analysis of surviving fortifications here. I will leave that to Dan Bell and Steve Smith, who have far more expertise on that particular topic than I do. What I am here to tell you about is the various kinds of tools and resources I employed in hunting down Sherman sites throughout South Carolina and what, in particular, that process has told us about the civilians who lived near Rivers Bridge and what they experienced during the four days when Sherman's men were in the vicinity.

To accomplish the task that confronted me, I first had to know as much as I possibly could about the official version of the march. Some of this material came to me through the published volumes of the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, as well as several maps that appear in the *Official Military Atlas of the Civil War*. To aid in locating places whose names have long ago fallen off the map, I gathered dozens of published maps from both before and after the conflict. Relic hunters were also an occasional source of information, and people like my friend Fred York led me to intriguing sites that are not documented in any official accounts but whose physical evidence, both above and below ground, makes clear that something unusual occurred there. Similarly, local historians like my friend Lawton Clarke O'Cain shared with me the stories and evidence they've been gathering from local families and private repositories for the past sixty years. Simultaneously, I

began collecting hundreds of published and manuscript soldier and civilian accounts of the campaign in South Carolina, privileging accounts recorded either during or immediately after the campaign events as being more reliable than those published years or even decades later as memoirs and regimental histories. As with any historical source, these private accounts often must be carefully analyzed and the motivations of their authors weighed to determine their veracity. We will return to some of the information contained in these accounts—and what it tells us about the civilian experiences of local residents—in a few moments.

Far and away the most valuable source of information, though, was a serendipitous discovery I made while visiting the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. The staff at SCIAA was, I think it's fair to say, less than optimistic that a trip there would yield much; I remember Steve telling me, in fact, "We already have all of their Civil War maps from previous projects." And to his credit, all of the relevant maps listed in the digital catalog of the National Archives were indeed already in hand at SCIAA. Combined with historic topographic maps, the 1825 maps from Robert Mills's *Atlas*, and a handful of other nineteenth century maps, we probably could have made some decent headway with our project. But I wanted to go to the National Archives anyway, and again to his credit, Steve let me. Once there, I employed a strategy that I learned many years ago regarding archival collections in a digital age. I asked to see the card catalog.

The archivists looked askance at this request, of course. “We have a digital catalog, sir,” I was told. I asked again, and the senior cartographic archivist intervened, then pulled from a dusty shelf a large shoebox of index cards that he said was the closest thing to an old card catalog for their maps. My hunch was right. In quick order I found three enormous collections of hand drawn campaign maps that would forever change the project and what we know about Sherman’s March. Long forgotten in the bowels of the National Archives, these maps had probably not been seen much by recent Civil War historians; indeed, the senior archivist said to me, “I’ve been here 30 years, and I’ve never seen these.”

Before we get to those maps and what they do for us, I need to give you the two-minute rundown on why Sherman’s men would make their way to Rivers Bridge in the first place. Following the capture of Savannah in December 1864, William Tecumseh Sherman played his cards close to his vest about where he might go next. Many Confederates thought that he would move on Charleston in order to finally break the siege there, while others suspected that he would double back on Augusta, destroying the railroad as he went, in order to disrupt Confederate supply lines. Few knew that his goal was and always had been Columbia, where he intended to destroy this important rail center while also punishing the residents of the southern capital that had initiated secession and thus break whatever will the Confederacy still retained for fighting. To conceal this goal, Sherman split his four corps into two wings. The right wing—comprised of the 15th and 17th Army Corps, which you see here in orange and red, respectively—moved primarily by transport to Beaufort,

then headed inland toward Pocotaligo by the end of January, creating the illusion that it might move up the coast road toward Charleston. Meanwhile, the majority of his left wing—comprised of the 14th and 20th Army Corps and Kilpatrick's cavalry, which you see here in green, purple, and dashed orange, respectively—moved up the west side of the Savannah River to Sister's Ferry, where it waited for flood waters to fall before effecting a crossing in early February, thus creating the illusion that this combined force might move on Augusta.

By early February, the right wing had begun its move toward its real objective at Columbia, and Sherman knew that his first great obstacle would be the series of fortifications that Confederate forces had built behind the Salkehatchie River, a wide, swampy morass that was now flood-choked from the recent heavy rains, at the Buford's Bridge, Rivers Bridge, and Broxton's Bridge crossings. As the 17th AC moved up the southwest side of the Salkehatchie, Sherman directed his 15th AC slightly inland, following a route to the northeast of and roughly paralleling the Coosawhatchie River and Swamp. Along the way they fought a running fight punctuated by several hot skirmishes, most notably at Hickory Hill, Whippy Swamp Creek, and Duck Branch, with Confederate forces typically holding a small, makeshift obstacle in the roadway, firing some shots, then fleeing as the bulk of Union forces moved into position. As the 17th AC made its way up the Salkehatchie, the 15th AC, in fact, fell slightly behind, only having reached Duck Branch by the time the 17th AC was in position opposite Rivers Bridge. It was not until February 4, after the 17th AC had secured Rivers Bridge, that Major General John Logan, commanding

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the 15th AC, finally moved troops toward Buford's Bridge, where his First Division found the Confederate fortifications there abandoned without a fight.

Perhaps the most underrated fight of this stage of the campaign occurred on February 2, nearly simultaneous to the beginning of the action at Rivers Bridge. Brigadier General Manning Force's Third Division of the 17th AC had been directed to take the left road at Whippy Swamp toward a place marked as Anglesey's Post Office on their various maps, with the intent of opening the road for the 15th AC. Unfortunately, Anglesey's Post Office had been defunct for a number of years, and the northern phonetic pronunciation of the location was muddled in comparison to how locals understood the name, resulting in confusion for Force's troops in locating it. Nevertheless, at the crossing of Jackson's Branch, where a mill owned by William Ransome Barker was located, Force's men were able to secure the crossing without seeing the bridge destroyed, but then fought throughout the night to hold the bridge and drive off a considerable body of Confederate cavalry on the opposite side. Little did they know that Anglesey's Post Office was now the small village that had built up around Ransome Barker's plantation, Sycamore, on the north side of Jackson's Branch.

Meanwhile, that same night, the bulk of the 17th AC moved into position at Broxton's and Rivers Bridges and began the difficult, 36-hour task of driving the Confederates from their heavily fortified positions, a task that required a brazen and some say reckless attempt to corduroy through the swamp as a flanking maneuver while

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under cover of Union sharpshooters who advanced through the swamp and allowed themselves to be pinned down within yards of the Confederate fortifications as a distraction. Over the next three days, as Union soldiers not immediately involved in the fight either rested or tried to dry off from being in the swamp for hours at a time, various foraging teams, organized and directed by officers, visited many of the farms on the south side of the Salkehatchie. Once the fight was over, foraging expanded to the north side of the river, with teams fanning out in wide swaths to gather what they could. We'll explore more on that in a moment.

Before I tell you about those three collections of maps, it's important that you understand what kinds of maps we did have to work with before that visit to the National Archives. You have already seen some of the examples, a variety of small-scale maps that offer the names of major bodies of water, villages, and occasionally a noteworthy residence. One of those maps, shown here, is a detail shot from an 1865 version of the map entitled *Military Department of the South Embracing Portions of George and South Carolina, Compiled and Engraved in the Engineer Bureau War Department*. There are several versions of this map for the southeast, and this particular version is especially detailed for the area surrounding Rivers Bridge. Note that it contains known post offices, waterways, roads, and occasionally the names of significant residents. Note also, though, that Broxton's Bridge is not listed on this map (although the crossing is there), nor is Barker's Mill mentioned. This level of detail was what the Union forces were typically working with as they planned their movements, and it was not uncommon for divisions, and sometimes an entire corps,

to become lost as they tried to navigate through a landscape whose place names no longer matched up with what was on their dated maps. In addition, I also had access to poorly scaled (and often inaccurate) campaign maps showing the route of the 20th Army Corps with similar levels of detail regarding residents and landmarks; these maps were prepared while the campaign progressed and later edited for publication. For the record, no actual campaign field maps, aside from a very small-scale daily mileage map, appear to survive for the movements of the 14th Army Corps and Kilpatrick's cavalry.

The three collections at the National Archives changed things for my work on the Sherman mapping project dramatically, though. The first collection consists of daily march maps for the 15th Army Corps, showing their progress and the routes of their march, along with various campsites, landmarks, residences, fortifications, and skirmish locations noted as they were discovered in the field. So, for example, we can see the command headquarters on February 2 and 3 down here at Owen's Crossroads, a splitting of the forces of the 15th AC, the progression to Barker's Mill (here denoted as Barber's Mills), with a fortification on the north side of the mill pond, and the campsite of the command on February 4, just south of Buford's Bridge. The mapmaker is not known, and while he is generally accurate in showing both distance and direction fairly accurately, his scale occasionally wanders, and in some instances he just gives up on mapping for the day, creating gaps in the overall route. In all, there are 18 maps covering the 15th AC's movements in South Carolina, although the maps from February 12 to 20 are missing and presumed lost.

The second map group consists of 41 hand-drawn daily march maps for the 17th Army Corps, also showing their march routes along with various campsites, landmarks, residences, fortifications, and skirmish locations noted as they were discovered in the field. As with the first collection, their creator is not known, but the fact that he was working with scaled paper means that his representation of distances is often—though not always—more reliable. I am especially fond of the fact that he occasionally admits destruction carried out by the men of the 17th AC by indicating the word “burned” near a mill, cotton gin, residence, or other resource that the army has torched. In this example, showing the 17th AC’s crossing of the Saluda and Broad Rivers west of Columbia, one sees that the level of detail allows us to know precisely where the pontoons were located in relationship to the destroyed bridges. In the case of the Saluda, we know that the crossing occurred downriver from the burned bridge, not upriver as was portrayed in some artist renditions of the event. Similarly, the upriver pontoons shown on the Broad River allowed us to find rocks in the river that still bear the metal pontoon anchors that were driven into rocks. Unfortunately, these maps survive only for the section of the march from Sandy Run (February 14) until the 17th AC reached Bennettsville in early March. Any earlier maps are presumed lost.

The last set of maps from the National Archives was far and away the most valuable, consisting of 42 highly detailed and immaculately accurate surveys of the daily movements of the command of the Army Department of the Tennessee, often

accompanied by ancillary maps showing the routes of elements of both the 15th and 17th ACs. Much of our knowledge of the area and residents surrounding Rivers Bridge is attributable to four maps from this set, including the one you see here. Most of the main maps in this set function as this one does, consisting of multiple lines of march from point A to B, then B to C, etc., crowded onto a single but very large sheet of paper. On this cropped view of a much larger map, we see the ADT's movement along the south side of the Salkehatchie, from Point B through Williams Corner (opposite of which were the fortifications at Broxton's Bridge that Union troops chose to avoid almost entirely, aside from slight skirmishing), then up the river to Point C, just south of Jenny's Corner. The large B just to the northwest of that references survey map B, which should not be confused with directional point B referenced earlier.

So, how, precisely, were these maps valuable to me in this project, and how did I use them? Well, I wish I could say that it was as easy as doing direct overlays of modern day aerials with these maps, but there are scaling and topographical issues—too complicated for discussion here today—that make such an easy alignment an inexact science. Instead, what I often did is use a combination of several maps at a time—one of the detailed campaign maps, a small scale map of the period showing primary roads, historic topographic maps, a modern road atlas, and aerials from Google maps to follow the routes drawn by our mapmakers. Yes, sometimes the road would disappear into a swamp, and I would struggle to pick it back up again.

But much more often this combination of efforts would yield discoveries that, when confirmed with GPS data, sometimes blew my mind and changed my perceptions.

One such example involves the approach to Broxton's Bridge. On the left in this image, you see the detailed drawing from the ADT of the road configuration at Williams Corner, immediately opposite the Broxton's Bridge fortifications. On the right is the modern road crossing of US Hwy 601 over the Salkehatchie. At first glance, nothing seems to be even remotely similar here anymore, but by zooming in on the satellite images, I was able to pick up the faintest evidence of the old road traces. Then, when finally on the ground in the area, I found the old road trace moving through Williams Corner and down to the causeway across the swamp. I had already visited Broxton Bridge Plantation earlier that day and taken GPS points at the end of the causeway that Bart Chassereau and the rest of the staff have built out into the swamp, and I was curious to see how things might line up with that interpretation. Some historians have been suspect of Bart's interpretations at Broxton Bridge, and I have even heard one or two dismissively call his rebuilt causeway portion "a fantasy." But here's the truth: When I took a GPS point at the end of the west causeway on that old road trace I had found, then projected a GPS point directly out into the swamp along the route of the causeway whose cut and bridge pilings were still clearly visible in the swamp, all three points—the one at Bart's causeway and the two on my side of the river—aligned perfectly. Clearly, Bart is doing something right over there at Broxton's Bridge.

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In some cases, the makers of these ADT maps, whose names were Weld and Griswold, sometimes felt compelled to create very detailed maps of fortifications or other features worthy of commentary. The approach to the Confederate fortifications at Rivers Bridge was one of these worthy exceptions, and it is from this map that Dan Bell and the other folks here at Rivers Bridge State Historic Site have gathered much of their information about the battlefield and its fortifications. Here you can see the causeway across the swamp as it originally existed, the Confederate fortifications, and the corduroy road carved through the swamp by Union forces in order to flank the Confederate position. Unfortunately, some of Weld and Griswold's maps are known to be missing, some of them SINCE being accessioned into the National Archives. For example, a detailed drawing of the layout of the City of Columbia is indexed on the cards at the National Archives but is missing and presumed stolen. In other cases, the maps themselves reference survey maps that are not indexed at the National Archives and are presumed lost.

My favorite map in the bunch, though, is this survey of the area to the south and west of the Salkehatchie, detailing the residences and other landmarks in a triangular swath from Rivers Bridge west to Barker's Mill, then north to Buford's Bridge. I love it because it allows me to take all of those soldier and civilian accounts and begin putting physical place to description in a way that I could not before.

And so let's talk about those soldier and civilian accounts. It is a curious thing that the official reports from the 17th AC are especially few in number compared to those

from the other corps and especially silent about the interactions the soldiers of the 17th had with local residents. We know from Sherman's memoirs that he remained with the 15th AC during this period, and while she was not there to see it—her father having taken her along with her mother and sisters north to Prosperity, SC, to presumed safety—Pauline Barker Riley's assertion that Sherman himself camped at Sycamore before having his men burn the house and plantation buildings the next day is not at all implausible. Sherman, though, is silent on where he camped between Duck Branch and Orangeburg, although he acknowledges that he was at Buford's Bridge on February 5.

That said, there are numerous private accounts from soldiers in both the 15th and 17th ACs that tell us something of their interactions with civilians. For starters, despite the commonly held misperception that local residents had abandoned the area below the Salkehatchie, some civilians were still at home and sometimes ended up in the middle of combat. As Colonel Oscar Jackson and fellow soldiers in the 63rd Ohio made their way toward Rivers Bridge on February 2, for example, his regiment encountered Confederates making "quite a stand behind a house. On driving them away, we found that the house contained women and children, fortunately unhurt, but the house and porch were pretty well riddled with bullets." John Hill Ferguson, a young soldier in the Tenth Illinois Infantry, tells us that he went out foraging on February 4, finding large quantities of "every thing we wanted. Every farm house has wagon loads of nice, dry, salted meat. Found plenty of meal, flower, sugar, and molasses. Brought in several wagons loaded with pork besides what the boys

carried.” Ferguson also admitted that he and his fellow soldiers then set fire to a large barn and a cotton gin at the farm they had ransacked. The old woman at the farm then came out of the house, fell to the ground, and began praying. “Some of the boys told her not to take it hard,” Ferguson wrote in his diary. “That was nothing to what we done in some places.”

This level of destruction and looting was common. On February 4, as Colonel Jackson’s regiment burned a cotton house in compliance with an order Jackson attributed to Sherman and explained as “when we are opposed, we destroy everything,” Jackson and his fellow troops were delighted to see the burning barn explode, prompting cheers of “Hurrah for Lincoln!” Two days later, as his fellow soldiers lay in camp, Jackson accompanied a forage train to visit “a wealthy planter’s ground. He had hid much stuff in his garden, which the boys dug up....Among other things ‘Cooney’ got a box with rebel money, bonds, and silver.” Sadly for Cooney, the silver proved too much to carry with the hams, flour, and other food items he had found. Other Union soldiers lamented such behavior. Allen Morgan Geer of the 20th Illinois fought at Barker’s Mill with the rest of his Third Division on Feb. 2, then encamped at a “thrifty plantation” near Rivers Bridge on Feb. 3. The next day Geer recorded that an “old rebel’s family” had been burned out. “A true soldier would scorn the deed,” he added.

In addition, local civilians—men in particular—were often taken into custody as prisoners when found by Sherman’s men, whether or not they were armed. Corporal

Charles E. Smith of the 32nd Ohio recorded a particularly surprising story on February 5 regarding the discovery of four men (later confirmed to be Confederate soldiers) and five women—most of them wives of the men—hiding in the swamp several miles from Rivers Bridge. Shortly thereafter, a prominent local planter was also found hiding in the woods. All five men were taken away as prisoners while the women were turned loose to return to their homes. A similar fate awaited fifteen-year-old John D. Jenny, the man who would one day donate much of the battlefield land here at Rivers Bridge, who was captured on February 3 about a mile from Rivers Bridge while grazing his mother's cow. Unlike the men found two days later, though, Jenny was permitted to return home to his mother despite refusing to divulge the location of any hidden food or valuables.

One important and often overlooked source of information is the claims filed with and heard by the Southern Claims Commission between 1871 and 1880. Claimants in these cases alleged that they had remained loyal to the Union during the war and suffered losses at the hands of Union troops. For obvious reasons, they must be regarded with some skepticism, and the claimants' motivations must be weighed carefully when drawing conclusions from them. The vast majority of these claims were rejected—either by being barred from proceeding or by being disallowed after being fully heard—often for reasons of uncertain loyalty, lack of evidence for the alleged losses, or simply the commissioner's personal opinion as to whether the claimant was believable. Even while being cautious about the veracity of the claim itself, the claims and their evidence can nevertheless tell us something that might be

helpful. The widow Elizabeth Platts, for example, who lived within a stone's throw of Sherman's command headquarters near Jenny's Corner in the area shaded in red, claimed that Union troops removed six horses, five mules, 60 cattle, 30 sheep, 76 hogs, 18 geese, 46 fowls, and very large quantities of corn, rice, fodder, honey, sugar, and bacon from her farm, with a value of \$8,579. Her claims are not unreasonable, given the substantial value listed for her husband's property in the 1860 Census, which included 46 slaves. Nevertheless, the Commissioners did not find her testimony or that of her witnesses very compelling, concluding, "When a woman is the claimant, it is usually difficult to find much proof of loyalty beyond the decided expression of her feelings and wishes;...but the tame and pointless conversation of this woman is far from showing 'adherence to the cause and Government of the United States.'"

In spite of the doubts of the commissioners, many of those who lived on the farms surrounding the Salkehatchie swamps near Rivers Bridge were known to be staunch Unionists in the years leading up to the war. As one resident, Vincent S. Croft, explained it in 1874, "In those times no man dared to show himself an active Union man in this section of Country. There were many Union men in this immediate neighbourhood, but it would not have been well for a man to express himself in public....Was myself a Union man before and during the war, never owned slaves and had no sympathies with the Rebellion." Despite their Union sentiments, though, these residents suffered in very similar ways to those with Confederate sympathies.

Abraham Chassereau, a Unionist farmer whose home was located less than two miles from Rivers Bridge and within earshot of Sherman's headquarters at Jenny's Corner, was another of the victims of organized Union foraging during the build-up to the battle at Rivers Bridge. His losses did not come at the hands of mere bummers or straggler soldiers. In his Southern Claims Commission case, Chassereau enumerated his losses on February 4, 1865, at \$2,876.50, the taking of which he insisted he personally witnessed, including "my corn, fodder, rice, potatoes, bacon, lard, flour, hogs, one mule, two horses, fowls, and cattle." When he complained to Union officers of the 17th Army Corps, protesting that he was himself a Unionist who had opposed both secession and the war, those officers dismissed him, saying that they "had to take the property to feed their soldiers with." Chassereau described the looting as a deliberate, calculated process involving soldiers bringing "army wagons into my yard," then taking "a whole half day hauling, two wagons being loaded at the time" for the removal of his corn alone, but he could not "say how many loads they made." The amount of property removed from Chassereau's farm, if accurate, is staggering. Chassereau claimed that the troops confiscated 600 bushels of corn, 6000 pounds of fodder, seven bushels of rice, 50 bushels of potatoes, 1000 pounds of bacon, 35 pounds of lard, two barrels of flour, 85 hogs, a mule, an old mare, a bay horse, 52 fowls, and 23 cattle. Curiously, Chassereau mentioned in his claim that the soldiers left 29 hog, two dry cows, and three bushels of corn with him, a point which surely must have counted in favor of his veracity. Initially, investigators were persuaded by Chassereau's case. J. P. M. Epping, the Special Commissioner who

heard Chassereau's testimony and emphasized that "his testimony I believe...can be relied upon, as he bears an unexceptionable character among his neighbours for honesty and integrity," described Chassereau as "illiterate like his neighbours in the Swamp region" and noted that Chassereau "is one of the selfworking class of farmers who never owned slaves and consequently had no interest in the slaveholders rebellion." Although two of Chassereau's neighbors testified to his losses and his loyalty, the main body of the Commissioners of Claims ultimately disallowed Chassereau's claim, noting, "He says he was a Union man. His witnesses think he was and say he was so reputed. This may all be true. But what was the standard of Unionism in S. C. as these witnesses understood it? The facts proved do not show loyal adherence to the Union cause, and the claim is disallowed."

Some Unionists in the vicinity of Rivers Bridge were able to prove their claims, and in doing so demonstrated the difficult life Unionists faced during the war. One witness to the claim of Charles Brandt, for example, explained Brandt's challenges: "He made himself very odious here by vindicating the Union cause. But I always liked him and advised him to keep cool and his mouth shut, or the people would hang him and confiscate what he had, for if he got into trouble he would not have a friend in the neighborhood." Brandt, who lived near present-day Sycamore but whose home is not identified by name on the army maps, saw Union soldiers carry off 800 pounds of bacon, 100 pounds of lard, a horse, a mule, four cattle, 35 chickens, and various food staples in his only wagon. Brandt was a farmer of German origin, apparently somewhat poor but in possession of 236 acres, 70 of

them in cultivation, who claimed that he raised or made everything that he had at home. Based on witness testimony in his claim regarding the location of his house—two miles north of Barker’s Mill and three miles from Rivers Bridge, but on the south side of the Salkehatchie—I suspect he was located in this cluster of unmarked homes here.

Having been too old for service (the 1860 Census indicates his age as 45), Brandt stayed close to home supporting his wife, two young daughters, and a newborn son who would not survive the war. When troops from the 17th Army Corps arrived at his farm, demanding all that he had, Brandt’s wife Lydia pleaded with them to leave something, given the time of year and the devastation taking place all around them. Officers and enlisted men alike ignored her pleas, though, claiming that “Uncle Sam always would pay his debts to Union men in this war.”

One of the intriguing elements of Brandt’s claim is the other alleged Unionists that can be identified through witness testimony. Jacob Kinard, who lived a mile from Brandt and had adjoining fields with him, indicated in his testimony that they agreed to stand by the Union throughout the war. As Kinard explained, the local community “consists mostly of German people and we—all our people—are farmers, and live at home, make our living, and preferred peace and harmony at home and abroad. Charles Brandt, myself, and many others were of this way of thinking and acted accordingly.” Kinard then went on to name George Deer, Richard Brandt, Georg Brandt, George Jenny, George Priester, Daniel All, and Washington

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Weekly as others in the neighborhood who opposed the war and were Unionist in sentiment, but who nevertheless kept quiet because of the superior numbers of secessionists in the area who surrounded this small German community. George Jenny is a particularly intriguing mention, since we know that he had sons who served the Confederacy. Though Kinard does not explain the consequences for him personally, he confirmed that he recognized Brandt's items loaded in Brandt's cart when the federal soldiers moved on to Kinard's house to ransack his own premises. Nevertheless, Kinard admitted that the insistence of Brandt, Kinard, and others on their loyalty to the Union meant only that "they were dealt more mildly with" by the Union soldiers.

Similarly, Brandt's daughter Laura, who was fifteen when Sherman's men passed through, indicated in her testimony, "There were not many Union people here, though our neighborhood was pretty well settled with them." She also noted the "cleverness" of the officers who visited Brandt's house, saying, "They spared Father's houses, fences, corn fodder, and everything except the above articles, which they told father our national government would pay for as soon as the struggle for the Union was over." Testimony from both Laura and Brandt's wife Lydia suggested that the officers actually stayed briefly at their home. For his trouble, Brandt was awarded \$470 of the \$980 he claimed.

Though we know that they testified as witnesses on Brandt's behalf and that they were mentioned as also being Unionists by Kinard, unfortunately, the testimony of

both George Priester and Washington Weekly does not survive. Assuming that the claims of loyalty were accurate, though, we know that mere loyalty did not assure that someone's property would be spared destruction. Washington Kearsse Weekly's house, residence of the 60-year-old farmer and his wife Caty, is clearly marked as having been burned by Union troops on the campaign maps.

Similarly, George Priester, whose home was probably located just above the William Williams property along the road from Barker's Mill to Buford's Bridge, and who Kinard identified as another Unionist, claimed to have lost a substantial amount of farm equipment, livestock, and agricultural material to officer-directed pillage, including eighteen cattle, eight horses, 35 hogs, 21 sheep, several dozen fowl, 1000 pounds of bacon, 5000 pounds of fodder and 500 bushels of corn, amounting to more than \$3,840 in claimed damages. The commissioners in his case, however, were not convinced and actually refused—against the requirements of the laws governing the claims commission—to even hear his testimony, the investigating commissioner claiming that a neighbor had told him that Priester “had always been a bitter rebel, cursed the Union, etc., etc.”

Such losses were common and were repeated throughout the line of Sherman's march through the state. Union soldier accounts offer differing rationales for the destruction of personal property. At Robertville, which was burned in its entirety on February 4, long after having been occupied by several waves of Union soldiers beginning on January 29, one Union soldier explained that the destruction was

justified on account of a soldier of his regiment being killed by a torpedo, or early form of landmine, that morning. Other soldiers claimed that resistance by local residents was cause for destruction of personal property, while some claimed that abandoned homes had the intriguing capacity to “induce” the soldiers to ransack and destroy. In official reports, Union officers denied that any such orders for destruction of personal property had ever been given, and yet the private correspondence and diaries of Union soldiers, officer and enlisted alike, are rife with claims that much of the destruction was authorized or at the very least tacitly encouraged.

Much has been written about the military components of the campaign, but my work is now focused on telling in great detail the story of the march on a micro level, in documenting both quantitatively and qualitatively the ways in which Sherman’s March affected the civilians of South Carolina. Yes, there are books filled with horror stories, many of them wildly exaggerated or not altogether believable. My work—relying as it does on a combination of historic maps, GIS mapping, and eyewitness testimony—is intended to contextualize the march as a whole and give localities a better means for understanding how the march directly affected their historic residents. Good history reaches out to us on that level, telling us stories that we can grasp and understand on a local level, even if the event is a global one. Thanks for your interest in understanding exactly how I aim to do that.

Some notes on the text of this presentation: To assist the author visually during his presentation, the author eliminated some ellipses (representing gaps in original quoted material) that would otherwise appear in a scholarly format and corrected some spelling and usage issues from original

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material for clarity. Because this text was delivered as a speech, the customary footnotes and source citations do not accompany the quoted material and are not inserted here. Finally, the presentation incorporated a PowerPoint presentation with approximately 25 slides showing artistic renderings of the march and numerous maps (and map excerpts) of the campaign. These images are not reproduced here due to limitations on use imposed by the rights holders of these images. Efforts are currently underway by Carolina Historical Consulting, LLC, to create a website that will provide free public access and downloads to the various National Archives maps referenced in this presentation.