

WEAPONS OF THE CIVIL WAR

In April 1861, the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, a Federal fort in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, ignited the Civil War. Within a day after Union troops surrendered the fort, President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops to quell the “great rebellion.” Within every state, citizens had to choose sides and stand with either the Union or Confederacy. With the start of military campaigns in 1862, the carnage grew on a scale that was unprecedented in American history. In two days of fighting at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee, more than 20,000 men were wounded or killed, a grim precedent that would quickly be surpassed as the war continued to escalate. Month after month the massive armies collided all over the South, leaving in their wake tens of thousands of casualties with horrific wounds.

BOWIE KNIFE

When the Civil War began, many soldiers, especially in the Confederacy, had to provide their own arms. The Bowie knife, named after Texas Revolutionary Jim Bowie, was a very common part of that armament. The popularity of the famous weapon can be well understood when we see the diversity of its usefulness. One historian described the tool as being “...long enough to use as a sword, sharp enough to use as a razor, wide enough to use as a paddle, and heavy enough to use as a hatchet.” While widely used by soldiers on both sides of the war, the Bowie knife was especially popular among Confederate soldiers. As the war progressed, the bayonet took the place of the iconic knife; and by the end of the Civil War, it was no longer widely used.



RIFLE

Model 1861 Richmond Rifle Musket: The Confederate Army was equipped with a wide variety of firearms over the course of the war. At the outset of 1862, troops were armed with anything from retooled military guns, some dating back to before the American Revolution, to retooled hunting rifles, small batches of state-made weapons, and even imports from England, France, and other European countries. In April 1861, when the state of Virginia voted to secede from the Union, the state quickly seized a large US Army arsenal at Harper's Ferry which was the manufacturing site for the .58 caliber Model 1855 rifle. More than 60,000 of these guns were manufactured, making it one of the few firearms made by the Confederacy.

U.S. Model 1861 Springfield Rifle Musket: This was the most common and perhaps the most popular firearm issued to Union infantrymen, primary because it was reliable on the field, and noticeably lighter than similar muzzle-loading muskets imported from Europe. Made of burnished steel, with an American black walnut stock, the .58 caliber Model 1861 weighed about nine pounds without the bayonet. Altogether, over 1.5 million Springfield-model firearms were produced. At the end of the war, volunteers leaving the service were allowed to purchase their rifles from the government for six dollars each.



ARTILLERY

While artillery had shown its effectiveness in many previous conflicts, it was in the Civil War that it proved its value on the modern battlefield. Although historians suggest that cannon fire accounted for less than 10% of overall casualties, letters, diaries, and military reports make much of the shock factor associated with the presence of artillery. The most common artillery used in the field was the 12-pounder Napoleon, a highly maneuverable field piece with a range of about 1,600 yards. The Union purchased more than 4,000 units of light artillery to help the infantry and cavalry troops fight the enemy. The Confederacy acquired about 2,000 light artillery pieces, many captured from the Union. The Confederacy was importing artillery pieces from sympathetic powers in Europe, of which may have arrived through Baghdad and Matamoros.



MINIÉ BALL

During the Civil War new type of bullet was first widely used in the United States. Named after its French inventor Claude-Étienne Minié, the Minié ball's main feature was a hollow base designed to expand in the barrel upon firing. “The force of a mini ball or piece of shell striking any solid portion to a person is astonishing; it comes like a blow from a sledge hammer, and the recipient finds himself sprawling on the ground before he is conscious of being hit; then he feels about for the wound, the benumbing blow deadening sensation for a few moments. Unless struck in the head or about the heart, men mortally wounded live some time, often in great pain, and toss about upon the ground.” History of the 35th Massachusetts Volunteers, p. 48.



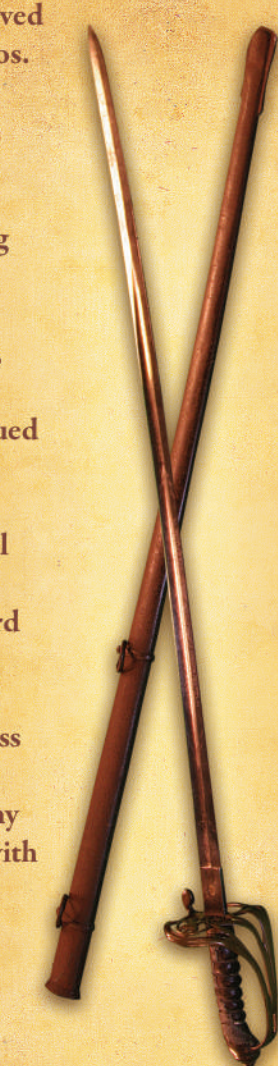
SPURS/CAVALRY

Horses had many uses in war. They were required to pull the enormous weight of cannons and ammunition; on average, each horse pulled about 700 pounds. Each gun in a battery used two six-horse teams. The large number of horses posed a logistical challenge for the artillery, because they had to be fed, maintained, and replaced when worn out or injured. Artillery horses were generally selected second from the pool of high quality animals; cavalry mounts were the best horses.



SABER

The 1840 saber was used during the Mexican-American War by the US Cavalry. When production was halted in 1858, over 23,700 had been made. During the Civil War it continued to be issued to Union Cavalry. Many were also used by the Confederacy including General Nathan Bedford Forrest who had both edges of his sword sharpened to increase combat effectiveness. Later in the Civil War, cavalry charges became less common and the cavalry took on the role of skirmishers. Many soldiers replaced their sabers with extra revolvers, or left it in the saddle while fighting on foot.



BAYONET

When properly locked onto the end of a musket barrel, the 18”-long socket bayonet was a fearsome weapon, designed to inspire dread in the enemy. Many soldiers were trained in a specific bayonet drill, but troops rarely used them in combat. They were more likely to be fixed to enable soldiers to stack arms and lock them together tepee-style when resting during a march. In camp, bayonets were often used as skewers to roast meat over the fire, or as candleholders.

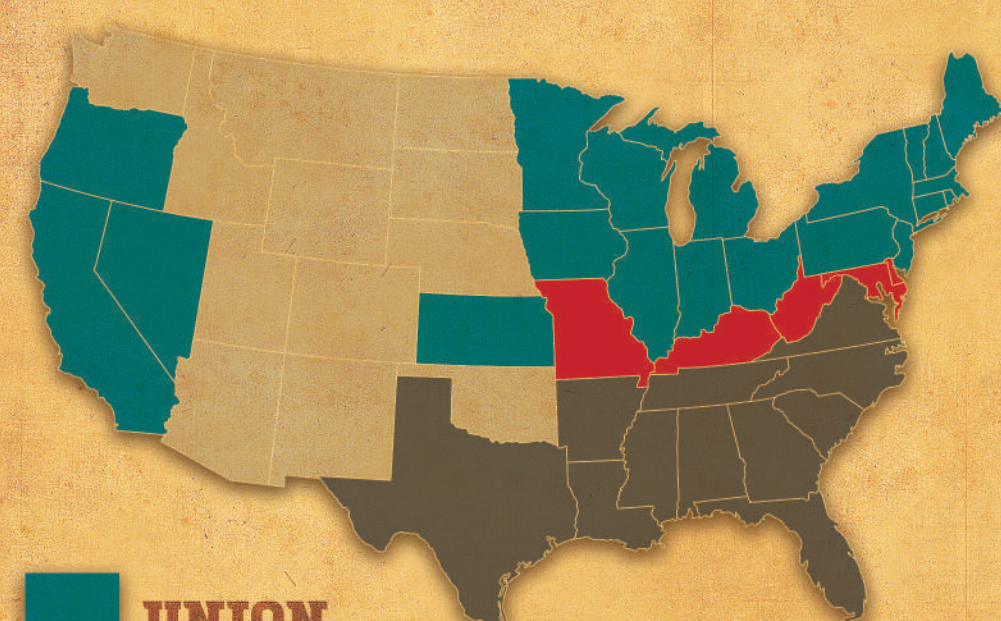


PISTOL

In November 1846, the Texas Ranger Captain Samuel Hamilton Walker opened negotiations with Samuel Colt for the production of 1,000 improved revolvers. Familiar with the shortcomings of the current Colt Paterson model, Walker specified a substantial new design incorporating a fixed trigger with guard and a loading lever beneath the nine-inch barrel. This became the archetype for pistols used in the Civil War, the most popular of which were the Colt Model 1851 Navy and the Colt Model 1860 New Army, both of which were manufactured by the hundreds of thousands during the war.



CASUALTIES



Total Union Casualties
642,427

Total Confederate Casualties
483,026

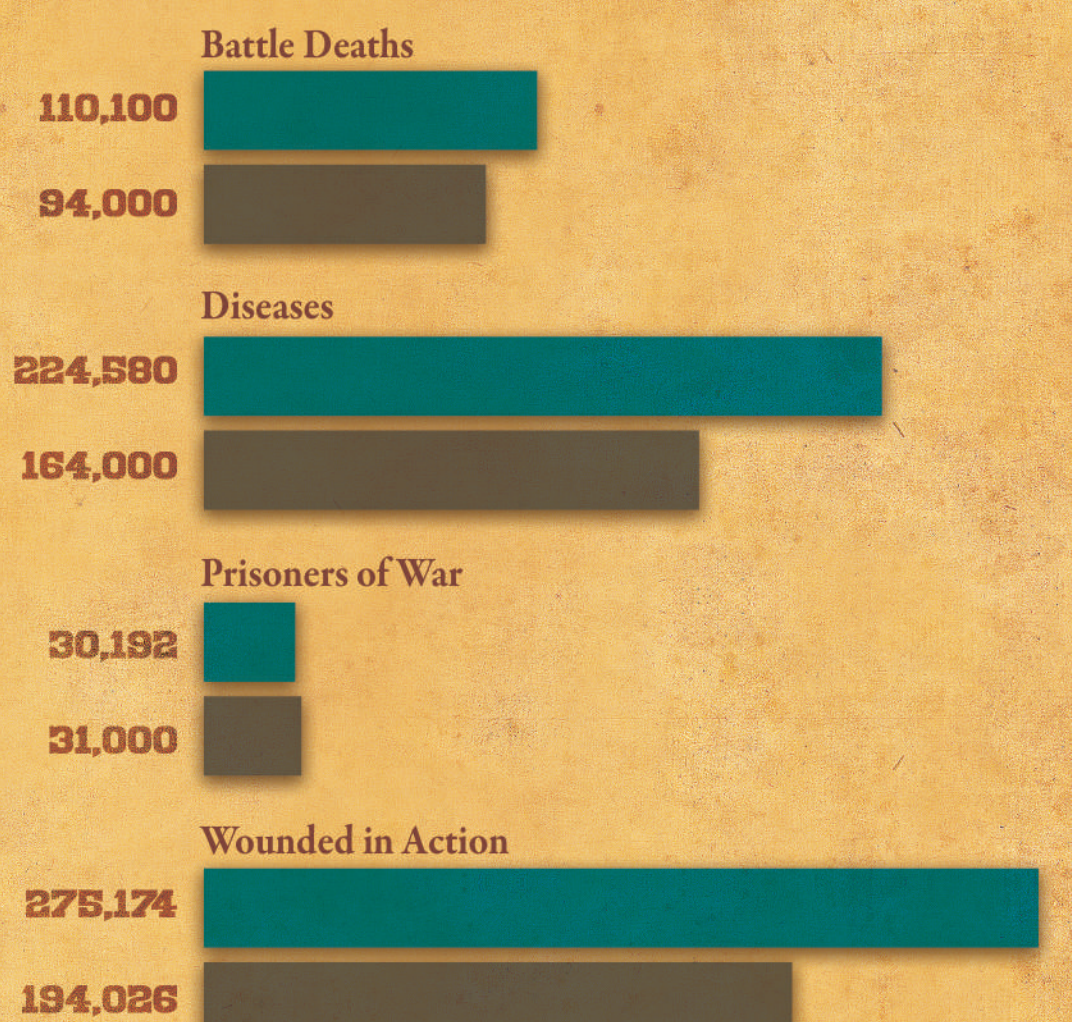
Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri were called Border States.

COMPARING THE UNION & THE CONFEDERACY

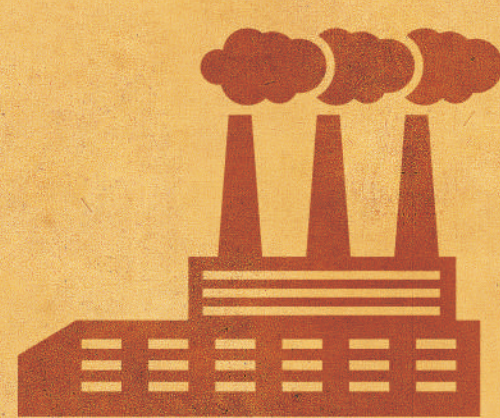
“While both the North and the South were inexperienced, ill-equipped, and unprepared to fight a protracted war, the North had numerical and material advantages over the South before the Civil War began, including greater industrial capacity, a transportation network that integrated more than 20,000 miles of railroad track, canals and macadamized roads, and a population of 22 million that was augmented by a steady influx of immigrants. The South, in comparison, had only 9,000 miles of inefficient, deteriorating railroad track and an 1860 population of just over 9 million people, 38.7% of whom were slaves. In addition, the southern economy was based on agriculture (cotton, tobacco, and sugarcane) and used slave labor to produce those commodities. Unlike plantation owners who grew cash crops, most southern farmers were subsistence-based.

With so many adult men engaged in fighting away from home, the South did not have the manpower needed to produce sufficient foodstuffs and was unable to feed its military and civilian population causing severe hardship. What the South lacked in resources, they hoped to obtain from Europe; but the Union blockade effectively closed southern seaports. While the South had the raw ingredients necessary to support their military, the Confederates lacked the strategic organization and decisive political and military leadership to plan, coordinate and maintain the fight. This combination of factors resulted in the Confederacy's inability to sustain a prolonged war effort.”

Project Gutenberg's The Civil War Centennial Handbook



NPS.gov



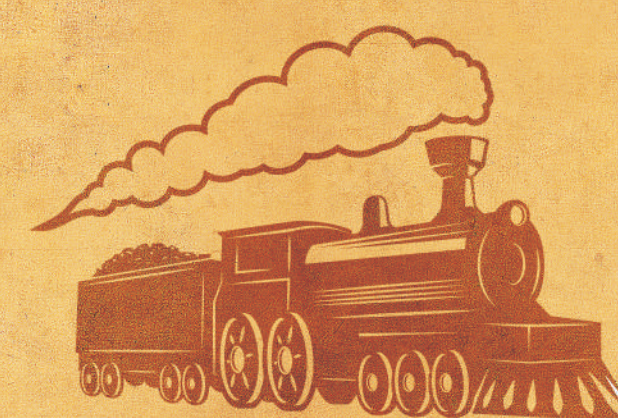
FACTORIES

Union	Confederate	Border States
101,000	21,000	9,000



FACTORY WORKERS

Union	Confederate	Border States
1.1 MM	111,000	70,000



MILES OF RAILROAD

Union	Confederate	Border States
20,000	9,000	1,700

VOICES OF THE CIVIL WAR

“It was no longer alone the boom of the batteries, but a rattle of musketry—at first like pattering drops upon a roof; then a roll, crash, roar, and rush, like a mighty ocean billow upon the shore, chafing the pebbles, wave on wave, with deep and heavy explosions of the batteries, like the crashing of the thunderbolts.”

—Charles Carleton Coffin
Army Correspondent

“The third shell struck and killed my horse and bursting, blew him to pieces, knocked me down, of course, and tore off my right arm...”

—Pvt. Ezra E. Stickley
Company A, 5th Virginia Infantry
“Wounded at Sharpsburg,” Confederate Veteran Magazine,
Vol XXV, No. 9, September 1917, p. 400.

“Sometimes a shell would burst just over our heads, scattering the fragments among us.”

—Lt. Thomas H. Evans
12th U.S. Infantry

“Under the dark shade of a towering oak near the Dunker Church lay the lifeless form of a drummer boy, apparently not more than 17 years of age, flaxen hair and eyes of blue and form of delicate mould. As I approached him I stooped down and as I did so I perceived a bloody mark upon his forehead...It showed where the leaden messenger of death had produced the wound that caused his death. His lips were compressed, his eyes half open, a bright smile played upon his countenance. By his side lay his tenor drum, never to be tapped again.”

—Pvt. J. D. Hicks
Company K, 125th Pennsylvania Volunteers John P. Smith
“History of the Antietam Fight,” in Scrapbook of J. P. Smith

Poster design and development by Jose R. Perez. Photography by Rolando N. Gonzalez. Layout by Daniel Cardenas and The Studio @ UTRGV