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Library Research

Desertion in the Union Army 1861-1866

April 7, 2014

Desertion ran rampant during the American Civil War. In a war that would bring the end to the institution of slavery, little attention is often given to the droves of men who deserted the army dedicated to preserving the Union and setting other men free. In the conventional telling of Civil War history, the tale of deserters is often glossed over. I had very little background knowledge on this particular group when I began my research project on Desertion in the Union Army, and I was rather apprehensive.

I learned that Pennsylvania was actually a hot spot for deserters. The state also sent the second most men to the army during the war, second to New York, meaning proportionately Pennsylvania could have experienced an immense number of desertions. For these reasons, Pennsylvania became the focus of my study. I hoped that by examining the trends in the state itself I could make inferences for the desertion throughout the Union overall.

At this point I started to focus on the response to desertion, and began examining local Pennsylvanian newspapers from the time of the Civil War.

Library. My most helpful source, and the most frequently referenced throughout my research, was *The War of Rebellion* series. This is a huge compilation of all of the documents from the Civil War, full of first-hand accounts, records, and reports. If I needed to check anything that I came across in one of the newspaper articles, I could find it here. To tap into secondary sources I