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Female Soldiers and Spies Undercover: Altering the Expectations of Women During the United States Civil War

The United States Civil War is remembered as a war of brother fighting brother. During the mid-nineteenth century, a man's duty was to enlist and fight in the war and a woman's duty was to stay home and take care of the family while her husband was away off fight. Men made up a large portion of the soldiers that went to war, there were also many cases of women dressing as men in order to fight or even women working as spies to aid either side of the war. It was not socially acceptable for women to be this involved to that extent in the Civil War yet, contributions made by these trailblazing women helped promote changes in the United States for future female generations. Cordelia Scales, a Southern woman who wished to join the fight expressed, "It seems so hard that we who have the wills of men should be denied from engaging in this great struggle for liberty just because we are ladies."¹ The Civil War tends to highlight the accomplishments and strides that many men were making. It is also important to note some of the women that were making contributions on the battlefields as well. During the United States Civil War, while many women are remembered as being supportive of their fathers, husbands, brothers, or other men in their life in their fight of the war by stepping up on the home front to support the family, there were a handful of women that felt they could contribute to the war effort like the men. The exact number is difficult to pinpoint, but between 500 and 1000 women dressed as men and adopted a male alias in order to fight in the war.² Of these women

¹ D. & Cook Blanton, Lauren M. *They Fought like Demons : Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, (2003, First Vintage Civil War library ed. New York: Vintage), 25.

² Lisa Tendrich Frank, *Women in the American Civil War*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 23.

that chose to participate in battle, only about 10% made it out of the war without their original female gender being revealed.³ This also means that the other 90% of female combatants either died during or right after the war ended or lived the rest of their life under their male alias, never revealing their female identity to those around them. Those who could prove that they were female combatants averaged a 14% higher promotion rate than their male counterparts.⁴ While some female combatants did benefit from revealing their original female identity, many did not have as positive of a response. Despite this contradictory point, the role women were able to play within society was continuing to change and ameliorate.

During the United States Civil War, women took on many jobs and roles. Some women were working in the camps, alongside their husbands who were fighting in the war, as nurses and laundresses.⁵ Other women took on roles that went against the social norms of the time, working as soldiers and spies. Other women stayed away from the battlefields and fulfilled the traditional role of caretaker, by taking over family businesses and farms that were left the male family members when they went off to war as well as continuing to take care of family members that did not go off to fight.⁶ Many women stepped up to help and contribute to the war effort and keep the country afloat, while it was fighting itself. In the early days of the war, newspapers started stressing the need for women to help contribute to the war by sewing uniforms and putting together packages that would be sent to soldiers.⁷ Newspaper articles would write about the importance of women helping on the home front however they could. One newspaper article

³ Lisa Tendrich Frank, *Women in the American Civil War*, 24.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1966), 65.

⁶ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades*, 65.

⁷ Alice Fahs, "The Feminized War", In *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865*, 120-49, (University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 132.

talks about an “army of knitters” that came about because of the number of women that worked to make sure soldiers had the necessary uniforms, blankets, and other such supplies while on the front lines.⁸ Using this kind of military language was done in order to make women feel like they were contributing to the war effort from home.

With so many men leaving to go fight in the war, women were left to fend for themselves. During the nineteenth century, women did not attend many places or events without the accompaniment of a man. Because of this, when so many men went to fight in the war, many women were unable to attend social events because their boyfriend or husband was busy fighting in the war. The shortage of men also affected the social activities in the evening because, “In cities there was a greater variety of entertainment, yet because “nice ladies” did not venture out at night without male protection, many were denied the privilege of attending evening affairs.”⁹ This idea of “nice ladies” not leaving their homes without male protection also said something about the women who did choose to leave their homes without a man as well.

While sewing uniforms and blankets helped some women feel like they were contributing to the war, other women chose to fight. Jennie Hodgers is a prime example of a someone who did not want to live the traditional female lifestyle or the public scrutiny of being a female soldier. Jennie Hodgers traveled to America as a stowaway from Ireland and adopted the male alias of Albert Cashier, in order to live on her own and be able to find work.¹⁰ Hodgers joined the 95th Illinois Regiment and served for three years and fought in over forty battles and

⁸ “Stockings and Mittens,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Jan 11, 1862, p.30; “The Army of the Knitters.” *Arthur’s Home Magazine*, 19 (Jan. 1862), 61.

⁹ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades*, 251.

¹⁰ D. & Cook Blanton, Lauren M. *They Fought like Demons : Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, 170.

skirmishes, including Vicksburg, the Red River Campaign, and battles at Kennesaw Mountain.¹¹ Because Hodgers had adopted and conformed to this male alias before the start of the war, she was already in routine and comfortable with this identity.

Life after the end of the war for many female soldiers was not welcoming. Women who dressed as men in order to fight were usually viewed as “mentally unbalanced or immoral”.¹² When many female soldiers made their experiences participating in the war public, they faced unfavorable treatment and press. Hodgers, afraid that this might affect her, chose to retain her male alias. Some historians believe that it was because she already had an established life with her male alias, which would make life easier for the illiterate Irish immigrant to find a job or place to live, while others believe that Hodgers was a transgender man.¹³ Choosing to retain her male alias shows some of the prejudices against women and the differences in gender roles during this time, such as not being able to own property or provide for their family with a job outside of the home.

Despite trying to live the rest of her life via her male alias, Hodgers' original female identity was discovered. In 1911, Hodgers' leg was fractured after being backed over by a car driven by, Illinois state senator, Ira Lish.¹⁴ The town doctor was called and while setting her broken thigh, Hodgers' sex was discovered. Because Hodgers' leg was not set right, it never properly healed, causing her to live the rest of her life with the broken leg.¹⁵ Because Lish held a powerful position in the government, Lish was able to get Hodgers into the Soldiers' and Sailors'

¹¹ Richard Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefield*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 204.

¹² Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades*, 79.

¹³ D. & Cook Blanton, Lauren M. *They Fought like Demons : Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, 170.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Home that would help the disabled veteran get the care she needed.¹⁶ After moving in the home, Hodgers' mental state began to deteriorate. Because of this, doctors in the home where Hodgers had been living for two years, decided to rule her insane. Around this same time, the truth about Hodgers' sex was made public and she was ruled insane for living under her male alias, while being a female by birth. While living at the state mental hospital, Hodgers was put in the woman's ward and forced to wear a dress, much to her dislike.¹⁷ Hodgers died at the state hospital in 1915, a Union veteran with a double identity.¹⁸ Hodgers work to retain her male alias for the rest of her life slipped away from her because she required medical attention. Without this accident, Hodgers could have lived the rest of her life successfully under her alias.

Jennie Hodgers, alias, Albert Cashier's story is one that represents many ideas during and after the United States Civil War. Hodgers was an immigrant who came to the United States in order to start a new life and find work that would not have been accessible in her home country of Ireland because she was a woman. Hodgers also defied social norms by making the decision to join the army working as a female soldier during the Civil War, without anyone finding out until after the war.¹⁹ Hodgers continued to test gender norms in more than one way by retaining her male alias, even after the war had ended. Whether she did it would be easier to find jobs and a place to live, or because she was a transgender man, is something that will continue to be debated between historians. Hodgers' experience in the mid-nineteenth century is one that was very unique, making it difficult for others living during this time to comprehend what it was she did, keeping her male alias for almost the rest of her life.

¹⁶D. & Cook Blanton, Lauren M. *They Fought like Demons : Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, 171.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 170.

By looking at the experience of Jennie Hodgers, alias Albert Cashier, it becomes a bit clearer what social realm women fit into and what rights or opportunities to work were recognized for women. While women that chose to work outside of the home had limited options in terms of professions, many profiles of the women that will be discussed did not attain jobs that fit into those categories. With that in mind, jobs outside the home became more desirable for some women and did not stop these women from conforming to the belief that a woman was to stay in the home.

During the mid-nineteenth century, there were many clear distinctions between men and women and what the duties and expectations were of each gender. In adolescence, boys and girls had different experiences, such as, what they were allowed to wear, what games and sports they were to play, and what bonds and friendships they were allowed to create. Each of these expectations serves as foreshadow for the futures that men and women would endure during the nineteenth century. Men's fashion between the late eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth centuries diverged from its course. At the turn of the century, boys and girls wore similar clothing, showing them that boys and girls were to act in a similar manner.²⁰ As boys grew up, they also grew out of wearing gowns and petticoats and moving closer to wearing trousers and pants. Women still wore skirts, dresses, and petticoats, restricting their movements and not allowing them the freedom that trousers allowed to boys.²¹ How men and women dressed reflected how they were to spend their days and live their lives. Boys grew up and got jobs outside the home in order to provide for their families. In the meantime, girls grew up and stayed

²⁰ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 2001), 33.

²¹ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 34.

inside the home serving as caretakers for their husbands and children. By analyzing the fashion differences between men and women at the time, one can distinguish between how female fashion portrayed restraint, while male fashion portrayed freedom.²² Their clothes reflected of the differing expectations and experiences of the different genders.

With the change in fashion for boys, they also gained more freedoms than they had wearing gowns and dresses. Boys were able to explore the outdoors in their trousers freeing them from the domestic world that their sisters were still actively participating in. Boys were able to explore more outside, hunting and killing insects for fun, playing sports, such as soccer and football, while also wrestling with one another.²³ Male pastimes focused more on physical exercise than did female pastimes. Such female pastimes focused on sewing, and learning how to cook.²⁴ This difference in pastimes among girls and boys growing up, continued the differences in pastimes they pursued as adults.

By leaving part of the domestic sphere, boys also lost aspects of their relationships with others that girls were able to hold onto. Within the domestic sphere, relationships are built more on love and nurturing. Boys lost some of those aspects of their relationships, which allowed them to gain friendships that tended to be more superficial and occur more suddenly than did those of girl friendships.²⁵ While female relationships tended to be more closely tied to nurturing and caring for children, male relationships tended to reflect aspects of dominance and defense that would aid them in the future workplace as well.

²² E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 34.

²³ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

The mid-nineteenth century set clear and explicit expectations for men and women. Men occupied the more public social circles and were to work outside of the home, making money to provide for his family. A man's identity came as much from his family as it did his from achievements outside the home. Many men throughout the nineteenth century lived with the idea that "if a man was without "business", he was less than a man".²⁶ This perpetuated the idea that men were expected to have jobs outside of the home that could provide stability for his family. If he didn't have a job or could not provide for his family, he would not be fulfilling the expectations of a man. The relationship and division between male and female work also depended upon one another. Women were expected to stay in the home and around the family, caring for her children and their husband, keeping up the house, and cooking meals for the family. If a man did not have a job, he could not be able to provide money for his family to use for the upkeep of the house and to feed the family. Because a man's job determined the amount of money he would make, men also had the power to determine the social status their families had.²⁷ Many poor men were interested in joining the military because the pay would be much better than many of the jobs they would otherwise be able to get.

Before any war commenced between the North and South, more female social groups began to develop and flourish. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony helped lead the Seneca Falls Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York, which focused on the social, civil, and religious rights of women. Many in attendance at the convention had previously attended many anti-slavery conferences and events as well, showing that many of those present agreed with ideas such as women's rights and women's suffrage. Also, at this convention,

²⁶ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era*, 168.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

Stanton shared her document entitled the Declaration of Sentiments. The document outlines the rights that American women believed they should be entitled to as women. These rights include, political, social, religious, and civil rights that would be attained by women. The work women completed before the start of the United States Civil War aided and continued in social groups that started and developed after the war ended.

The Declaration of Sentiments was modeled after the Declaration of Independence and outlined the political rights that were denied to American women, such as education, property ownership, and the right to vote. The first line reads, “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal”.²⁸ This is almost verbatim the same in the Declaration of Independence, except that in the Declaration of Sentiments, the word “women” is present in place where it is only implied in the Declaration of Independence.

Outlined in the Declaration of Sentiments is an explanation of what rights and liberties white men already have and what rights women believe they should be entitled to as well. One of the explanations for women’s rights and suffrage depicts how white men can almost be compared to God-like creatures because of the power they possess. One of the explanations reads, “He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere or action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.”²⁹ The Declaration of Sentiments also provides an overview of women’s social status at the mid-nineteenth-century and outlines the different ways that the government and the male dominated social power

²⁸ Declaration of Sentiments”, Seneca Falls and the Start of Annual Conventions: Seneca Falls and Building a Movement, 1776–1890: Explore: Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote, (Exhibitions at the Library of Congress, Library of Congress.” The Library of Congress).

²⁹ D. & Cook Blanton, Lauren M. *They Fought like Demons : Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, 4.

structure has deprived women of their inalienable rights.³⁰ On the second day of the convention, twelve resolutions were passed by those that were present. It was the first time in American history that American women had gathered and demanded change, even making some headway on the matter by drafting the Declaration of Sentiments.

The convention lasted only two days long, from July 19th-20th, 1848 at the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Seneca Falls, New York. On the first day, the convention was exclusive to just women. During this session, the women attending the conference drafted and wrote out what liberties were already restricted to women and what actions they wanted to take in order to make a change. On the second day, the convention was open to both men and women and during this session, attendees were asked to vote on whether or not they chose to support the passage of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments.³¹ As organizers of this successful conference, Anthony and Stanton, did not feel comfortable acting as chair, choosing to have Lucretia Mott's husband preside. As much as these women were fighting to make a change for themselves and women in the future, even they did not feel as though any of them should be in charge and preside over the passing of the Declaration of Sentiments. This shows the traditional ideas that were so ingrained, even in these women as they were trying to bring about change for women as a whole. While ideas about what rights and liberties should be awarded to women as well were up for debate, even the women in charge of this fight were also trying to adhere to what was acceptable for women before such change was able to occur.

³⁰ D. & Cook Blanton, Lauren M. *They Fought like Demons : Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, 3.

³¹ Penney, Sherry H., and James D. Livingston, "Seneca Falls." In *A Very Dangerous Woman: Martha Wright and Women's Rights*, 67-80, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

With the only fighting women could participate in was for social change, more and more men were being recruited as soldiers. While men were recruited for the military, women were considered unfit to join because they were presumed to be physically, emotionally, and intellectually weaker than men.³² Because of this way of thinking, the different genders garnered different reactions towards their expectations of military service. It should be notes that there was a contrast in expectations for women and men during the war in that “men faced public ridicule if they failed to volunteer for military service, while women risked social disapproval when they did enlist”.³³ These different reactions made it difficult for those men that did not desire enlistment, or public ridicule if they decided against enlisting. Similarly, these public reactions made difficult for women who wanted to enlist, but could not because on the social constraints of their gender. Because women were not able to serve in the military, when women did decide to enlist under male aliases, they were not expected to fight, causing people to assume that anyone who was fighting was male.³⁴ This is just one of the methods that allowed female soldiers to not be discovered when engaging in the fighting of the United States Civil War.

Along the traditional ideals for women in the nineteenth century, some decided it was their duty to rebel against what was already laid out for them in terms of gender expectations. From many of the memoirs, letters, and other pieces of writing of women that chose to fight, there were a few key themes that highlighted reasons why women might want to take on a male alias and go to war to fight. One of the reasons women decided to head to the front lines and fight was for financial reasons. Many female soldiers came from poorer or lower-class families.

³² E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies* (1st ed.) (2009, New York: W.W. Norton & Co), 205.

³³ D. & Cook Blanton, Lauren M. *They Fought like Demons: Women Soldiers in the American Civil War*, 30.

³⁴ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 206.

Because of the bravery these women portrayed defying gender norms, they would be able to bring in another source of income for their families if they were to fight in the war. Sarah Rosetta Wakeman's reasoning for going to war resonated with this idea. Wakeman grew up in a poor family and in order to help her family out financially, she left home to get a job. To get a job, Wakeman had to take on a male alias. She chose the name Lyons Wakeman and was known by that alias before and throughout the war. Wakeman was able to get a job working as a Chenango Canal boatman.³⁵ In a letter to her parents, she wrote about why she left home. She explained to her parents that she left in order to get a job, by writing, "I knew that I could help you more to leave home than to stay with you".³⁶ Feeling like a burden upon her family, Wakeman wanted to contribute to her family any way she could. She worked as a boatman for less than a month, Wakeman was recruited into the 153rd New York Infantry Volunteer Regiment.³⁷ Taking this job made more practical sense to Wakeman since she would be going from earning about twenty dollars for the two weeks she worked as a boatman to signing on as a soldier in the Union army for one hundred and fifty-two dollars.³⁸ This drastic increase in the money she was making made changing her job much more enticing.

One big draw for men and women to join the fighting in war was the financial value of their work, another draw was that of patriotism. The war saw women coming from all over the United States and from all over the world in order to fight. Jennie Hodgers, alias Albert Cashier, was an Irish immigrant and joined the war upon the need for more volunteers about halfway

³⁵ S. R. Wakeman, Lauren M, *An Uncommon Soldier : the Civil War letters of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, alias Private Lyons Wakeman, 153rd Regiment, New York State Volunteers*, (Pasadena, Md.: The Minerva Center), 9.

³⁶ S. R. Wakeman, Lauren M, *An Uncommon Soldier : the Civil War letters of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, alias Private Lyons Wakeman, 153rd Regiment, New York State Volunteers*, 9.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 10.

³⁸*Ibid.*

through the war. While Hodgers was an immigrant, she had an intense respect for the United States and the life that she had worked to build for herself there. That love and patriotism for her adopted country also helped fuel her decision to fight in the war as well. Hodgers also knew that the monetary compensation for the work would make the job worth the danger of being caught.

Another aspect of military life that attracted women to the front lines was love. There are numerous cases that highlight women wanting to go to war in order to stay close to their husbands or other male family members. In the nineteenth century, women were taught to be dedicated to the family. While some women decided to follow their husbands, brothers, or fathers to war, not all women chose to fight. The women that decided to follow their husbands to war and not fight were called “Daughters of the Regiment”. These women helped around the camps in whatever ways they could, oftentimes taking on the role of nurse, guardian angel, cook, or laundress.³⁹ One such daughter of the regiment was Kady Brownell. Brownell decided to follow her husband, Robert, to war as he fought for the Union side in the 1st Rhode Island Infantry. Kady Brownell did not take on a male alias, but did in fact enlist into the 5th Rhode Island Infantry with her husband, serving in a dual capacity as a nurse and daughter of the regiment.⁴⁰ Kady Brownell trained with her husband as a sharpshooter as well, but was unable to use her skills in battle because of her gender. Although Brownell came into the war as a daughter of the regiment, “this daughter of the regiment was resolved not to be a mere water-carrier, nor an ornamental appendage”.⁴¹ When enlistments were low, Brownell was able to utilize her skills in battle, for the sake of the regiment just needing more people to fight. While Brownell did not

³⁹ Richard Hall, *Patriots in Disguise: Women Warriors of the Civil War*, (New York, NY: Marlowe & Co., 1994), 3.

⁴⁰ Richard Hall, *Patriots in Disguise: Women Warriors of the Civil War*, 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

have to take on a male alias, she was able to see some action in a few battles, one such being the Battle of Bull Run.⁴² Brownell's experience differed from those such as Hodgers or Wakeman who's participation as a woman was looked down upon because of their gender. One of the only reasons Brownell was able to see action in the war was because she was already on the front lines helping care for her husband and the other men in his regiment and was sustained knowledge on how to handle a weapon.

Good wives would follow their husbands to care for them even during times of war. One example of these women was Loreta Janeta Velazquez who decided to join the Confederate side after her husband had already joined the fight. Velazquez was not opposed to speaking her mind about how she wished she was able to fight on the front lines. In her memoir, she expresses this sentiment when she writes, "I have no hesitation in saying that I wish I had been created a man instead of a woman."⁴³ Velazquez was an immigrant from Cuba, who was sent to school in Louisiana and eloped with her husband to Texas, before joining the army.⁴⁴ Her plan was to raise her own battalion and present them to her husband, for him to take over.⁴⁵ She talks extensively about how she would feel and what her husband would say when she would present the battalion to him. After Texas seceded from the U.S. her husband joined the Confederate army and despite his disapproval, she did as well. Without her husband's guidance or approval of her joining the fight, Velazquez, "...started out on the war-path with a light heart, and with brilliant

⁴² Richard Hall, *Patriots in Disguise: Women Warriors of the Civil War*, 4.

⁴³ Loreta Janeta Velazquez, and Alan Archambault, *The Woman in Battle: a Narrative of the Exploits & Adventures of a Woman Officer in the Confederate Army, Loreta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Bellerophon Books, 1996), 130.

⁴⁴ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 252.

⁴⁵ Loreta Janeta Velazquez, and Alan Archambault, *The Woman in Battle: a Narrative of the Exploits & Adventures of a Woman Officer in the Confederate Army, Loreta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army*, 70.

anticipations for the future”.⁴⁶ This mentality going into the war helped Velazquez obtain more positions than just a soldier. In addition to joining the Confederate army, Velazquez started handling messages between members of the Confederate army and even became a spy for them. When her husband died, Velazquez went back out on the battlefield to fight, but injured her foot thus, ending her military career for fear that her original identity would be discovered.

With so many women headed to the front lines to fight under male aliases, it makes it difficult to comprehend how these women were able to pass off as men. While cutting her hair or putting on male clothing could help any woman resemble a man, those that decided to become soldiers were required to go through medical exams to ensure that they would be fit to fight in the war. Any kind of medical examination would bar a woman from being able to resemble a man and continue her pursuit of fighting. To ensure of a passing recruit, “the medical officer is to examine him stripped; to see that he has free use of all his limbs...and had no infectious disorder that may unfit him for military service”.⁴⁷ A woman could meet each of the criteria outlined, but if she were ordered to strip down, she would most certainly be barred from entry as a soldier.

The composition of soldiers that fought in the Civil War is different than that of more modern-day soldiers. Since the United States Civil War was one that required both sides to pull people from the same population, each side found that they needed more members to fight. Each side had regulations in place that similarly barred recruits from being under the age of eighteen, but this did not stop people who had strong feelings about the war, courage and urge to take action and fight.⁴⁸ This means that many of the soldiers that were fighting in this war were

⁴⁶ Loreta Janeta Velazquez, and Alan Archambault, *The Woman in Battle: a Narrative of the Exploits & Adventures of a Woman Officer in the Confederate Army, Loreta Velazquez, Otherwise Known as Lieutenant Harry T. Buford, Confederate States Army*, 71.

⁴⁷ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 202.

⁴⁸Ibid., 205.

younger, some 15 and 16 years old, making it not uncommon that a soldier would not have facial hair. This ultimately aided and allowed female soldiers to conceal their original identities.

In 1852 when the number of recruits were low, each side took drastic measures to ensure they had sufficient soldiers to fight for their side. Because of this, many of the medical exams that were required for entry into the military were rushed either because each side were desperate for recruits to fight. There were numerous of recruits to get through combined with an inexperienced medical staff, ultimately causing many more volunteers to be admitted via rushed medical exams.⁴⁹ Because of these very rushed medical exams, recruits were not expected to strip down and were given a few “love taps” on the chest, back, and limbs before being allowed to continue onto service.⁵⁰ With these exceptions to the rules, many women were allowed entry, without anyone realizing that they were allowing a woman join the ranks.

Another method in which many women were able to maintain their cover under their male aliases were through clothes that they were required to wear. During the Victorian era, it was an expectation that women wore bigger hoop dresses or skirts.⁵¹ Women would not be seen wearing pants of any kind, thus implying that the norm of the time was that men were the only ones to be wearing pants. People during this time period were able to associate pants explicitly with men and did not question the gender or sex of a person wearing pants because of the way in which they were socially conditioned. It would be even less acceptable for someone to question someone’s gender than for someone to be bending gender norms.⁵² The uniforms that the army

⁴⁹ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier : Women of the Civil War Armies*, 202.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ S. R. Wakeman, Lauren M, *An Uncommon Soldier : the Civil War letters of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, alias Private Lyons Wakeman, 153rd Regiment, New York State Volunteers*, 3.

⁵² S. R. Wakeman, Lauren M, *An Uncommon Soldier : the Civil War letters of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, alias Private Lyons Wakeman, 153rd Regiment, New York State Volunteers*, 3.

gave out to wear also helped female soldiers conceal their secret. Since military personnel were to only be men, the uniform that was given out included different pieces of clothing, one of which were pants. The given uniforms were also baggy and loose fitting, which helped many female soldiers hide their figures that might otherwise give hint to their original identities.⁵³ Since so many regulations were in place to make sure that the soldiers that were entering the war were equipped to handle the fighting, many of the regulations that were set in place, unintentionally aided in the cover up of those that should not have otherwise been allowed to fight.

While many of the soldiers and spies that are remembered more prominently from the Civil War are white, there were a few black battalions and even fewer black female soldiers that fought for the Union army during the United States Civil War. It was easier for white women to be able to pass off as white men. “Colored” regiments were few and far between, making it harder for black female soldiers to find a place where they were able to fit in.⁵⁴ There are a few cases in which black women tried to and were successful in posing as white men. Much of their success came from their lighter complexion as well as from their attitudes and how they presented themselves. Maria Lewis is a prime example of a black woman who was able to pose as a white man and fight for the Union army. Her light complexion aided her in this success. Lewis served in the 8th New York Cavalry and was successful in concealing her original identity, until she told her secret to a group of abolitionists who visited her camp in order to help free slaves.⁵⁵ She turned in her uniform and the abolitionist group helped her find refuge. Other black women were not so lucky. Because Lizzie Hoffman knew what Maria Lewis had been able to

⁵³ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 204.

⁵⁴ Richard Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefield*, 204.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

accomplish, she thought it plausible for her to be able to fight as well. Hoffman enlisted in the 45th U.S. Colored Infantry, but she was discovered and arrested when she tried to board a ship with her fellow recruits.⁵⁶ The documentation of women of multiple races going to great lengths in order to fight in the Civil War demonstrates how large of an impact the war had on people and their wishes to participate in the war. What this documentation does not show explicitly is the limitations that women had in the war, causing them to need to think one step ahead to be included in the fight. This documentation also does not show the lack of opportunities that were present for women of color as well.

While some female soldiers were able to keep their original identities a secret throughout their military careers, others were not so lucky. Oftentimes, female soldiers would display more feminine mannerisms that would cause their fellow soldiers to question the soldiers' original identity. An example of this is when Sarah Collins enlisted in a Wisconsin regiment with her brother, only to be sent home before the regiment departed for service because she displayed feminine mannerisms and "unmasculine manner of putting on her shoes and stockings".⁵⁷ While these women were caught just by the passive nature that they went about their day, it shows that if female soldiers were going to retain their positions with their male aliases, they needed to be acting like a male perfectly and 100% of the time.

A lesser known yet still common problem that female soldiers dealt with was a biological problem male soldiers were not burdened with. There were a few cases in which a woman that was posing as a male soldier would become pregnant. In one of these cases, a sergeant from the 29th Connecticut Infantry, wrote a letter to his wife, asking, "One Question I wish to ask Did you

⁵⁶ Richard Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefield*, 204.

⁵⁷ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 208.

Ever hear of A Man having a child[?]"⁵⁸ Many soldiers that went to fight in this war were young men, mostly under the age of eighteen. It would have been a bit uncommon for those soldiers to have children, let alone a soldier himself carrying the baby. While putting on the persona of a man, sometimes a woman's body would limit her career as a soldier as opposed to her male counterparts.

Other women were so dedicated to their positions that if their secret were to be blown, or their position was put in jeopardy, it would have a much bigger and lasting effect on them. During an interview with Mary Livermore, a nurse and soldier relief activist, Livermore spoke about a male soldier she suspected was female. The soldier was fighting under a male alias. When the soldier was caught, she pleaded for the officer to allow her retain her position and keep her disguise. When that wish was not granted, the woman attempted suicide by jumping into the Chicago River, hoping to drown to death.⁵⁹ When the woman was rescued by a police officer, she later disappeared. Some historians believe it was due to her trying to find her way back to her original position in the military.⁶⁰ This is another example of how in some cases women were not treated well when their original sex was discovered.

Although between the two genders, women were seen as weaker. However, the resilience that these women showcased in order to fight in the United States Civil War proves otherwise. Like many of the female soldiers that decided to take on a male alias in order to fight in the war, some women decided or ended up working as spies for either the Union or Confederate sides. Some of these women were able to keep their original identities present, while others chose or

⁵⁸ Richard Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefield*, 205.

⁵⁹ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 210.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

needed to take on male aliases. Many of the reasons why a woman would want to become a spy in the war were similar to why a woman might choose to become a soldier. Love and patriotism were the two of the main driving forces pushing women to become spies throughout the Civil War.

The women that chose to become spies in the Civil War did so because they wanted to help their side in the war in whatever capacity they could. Like some female soldiers, some women joined the war effort as spies because of their extreme patriotism and love for their country. Belle Boyd is an example of someone who joined the war effort out of patriotism for her country.

Belle Boyd is a woman who joined the Confederate side as a spy. Before she started her work as a spy, Boyd worked as an actress in plays. She was considered to be a very beautiful woman, only aiding in her ability to obtain information from unsuspecting victims. She was recruited for her ability to play almost any character that came her way. One of Boyd's jobs she used as a distraction while she was spying during the Civil War was one of a courier. Boyd frequented the Union army camps and was able to eavesdrop on Union soldiers and relay the information she heard back to the Confederate side.⁶¹ Another way Boyd was so successful was her beauty. Boyd was successful in using her sex to appeal to men and get information out of them when she was in bed with them.⁶² Her sex was beneficial for her in getting information out of Union soldiers, but also for the Confederate side altogether.

One of the famous stories that follows Boyd's memory is that of July 3rd, 1861. The town where Boyd grew up and was living, Martinsburg, West Virginia, was occupied by Union

⁶¹ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 27.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 30.

soldiers.⁶³ On this day, a group of drunken soldiers entered Boyd's home, attempting to place a United States flag on their roof. While this might not seem like such a big problem, during the United States Civil War, many states in the South had succeeded from the United States in order to create their own country, the Confederate States of America. Boyd was not happy with having the flag of the country the Confederates were at war with represented on her family home. With the attempted placement of the United States flag, as well as the choice words the soldier had for Boyd's mother, did not sit well with her, whose hatred for the Union army was quite extreme. Boyd shot the Union soldier who attempted to hang the United States flag from her home, the gunshot wound killing him hours later.⁶⁴ In her dramatic and embellished writings of the incident, Boyd remarks that, "Shall I be ashamed to confess that I recall without one shadow of remorse the act by which I saved my mother from insult, perhaps death...".⁶⁵ While the soldiers were not going to kill her or her mother, Boyd's extreme actions show how she would go to any extreme necessary to support her side and further their cause.

In all her time spying for the Confederate Army, Boyd was arrested multiple times. Even from jail, Boyd continued to keep her contact with the outside world. She would write notes to Confederate troops about what she could observe from the Union guards.⁶⁶ Boyd ended up being released and banished to the South where she was arrested as a Confederate courier and escaped to Canada and once more to England where she married.

⁶³ Belle Boyd, *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, Edited by Curtis Carroll Davis, (Cranbury, NJ: Thomas Yoseloff, 1968), 131.

⁶⁴ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 26.

⁶⁵ Belle Boyd, *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, Edited by Curtis Carroll Davis, 133.

⁶⁶ P. V. D. Stern, (1975), *Secret missions of the Civil War: first-hand accounts by men and women who risked their lives in underground activities for the North and the South*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press), 96.

Boyd's patriotism is seen through her resilience to continue spying for the Confederate side, despite being caught and passing messages along, while other spies showed a different kind of patriotism. Harriet Tubman was a spy for the Union army and worked with others, such as Elizabeth Van Lew, in order to free many African Americans that were stuck in the South as slaves. Tubman was most known for her work helping to free slaves from Southern states, using the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe houses that allowed slaves to escape to freedom in northern states.⁶⁷ Having grown up a slave herself and been able to escape to her own freedom early in her life, Tubman felt the connection between herself and many of the stories she heard of other slaves trying to escape the horrors of the South. After escaping slavery as a young adult, Tubman made frequent visits back to the south to rescue slaves from bondage, starting first with family members and then branching out and working with the Underground Railroad.⁶⁸ While working as a cook and nurse for the Union, upon the start of the war, Tubman later became an armed scout and a spy.

Harriet Tubman was also the first woman to ever lead a military expedition. Tubman worked with Colonel Montgomery, who led the 2nd South Carolina Colored Infantry Regiment and the 3rd Rhode Island Heavy Artillery from South Carolina, up the Combahee River, with the plan to raid the Confederate outposts and rice plantations. With contradictory documents, it's hard to decipher to what extent Tubman was involved with the planning stages of this raid. It is suggested that she told Colonel Montgomery of the location and sketched the plan for the raid as a routine part of her work as a spy and a scout for the Union Army.⁶⁹ With her work as a spy,

⁶⁷ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies*, 70.

⁶⁸ Richard Hall, *Women on the Civil War Battlefield*, 211.

⁶⁹ Jean McMahan Humez, *Harriet Tubman: The Life and the Life Stories*, (S.I.: University of Wisconsin Press., 2003), 58.

Tubman had connections with other scouts and used their help to learn Confederate movements along the South Carolina shoreline prior to Union posts. Going up Combahee River, Tubman was in the lead boat with other scouts she had recruited and Colonel Montgomery, to help pilot the boats safely around Confederate torpedo's that were stationed all along the river.⁷⁰ Colonel Montgomery also led 150 black soldiers in three other boats to help with the raid.⁷¹ Traveling the twenty-five miles upstream, soldiers were dropped off and bridges were burned, railroads destroyed, and nine rice plantations and storehouses were raided. Tubman was able to convince many of the frightened slaves to come onto the boats, knowing she could help them attain the freedom they were desperate to find. By participating and becoming a leader in this raid, Tubman was able to rescue over seven hundred slaves at once. After the raid, two hundred of the newly freed men joined Colonel Montgomery's regiment. With the success of the raid, praise was given to Harriet Tubman and her name and position as a scout and spy were exposed in the newspapers. With her accomplishments made so public, Tubman had to be even more cautious of her surroundings and where she went.

While the Seneca Falls Conference was beneficial for many white women to voice their opinions and see some change occur, it was not open to all women. Many women at the conference just wanted to help white women, explicitly attain the right to vote. They justified their racism by reasoning that it would be easier to obtain suffrage for white women than women of color. Many black suffragettes were not welcomed by Stanton and Anthony, causing these women to have to create their own leagues and suffrage groups. Groups such as Colored Woman's League (CWL) and National Federation of Afro-American Women joined together to

⁷⁰ Jean McMahan Humez, *Harriet Tubman: The Life and the Life Stories*, 58.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

create the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) to promote black female suffrage. Both groups were founded by black suffragettes that were not allowed into groups formed at the Seneca Falls Conference.

With the Seneca Falls conference happening almost twelve years before the start of the Civil War, social and political change was already on the minds of many American women. The stories of women who chose to still be a part of the war as a soldier or a spy, helps to highlight the changing attitudes women had about their place in American society and where they felt they belonged.

In the years following the end of the Civil War, slaves saw the benefits and gains that Emancipation and the thirteenth amendment offered them. Former slaves were able to have their marriages recognized by the government, move about the country more freely than previously, and own property. Black men were afforded more privileges such as citizenship and the right to vote, leaving black women at the bottom of the social ladder. In 1867, Sojourner Truth spoke of what would happen if black men were afforded more privileges and rights than black women. She said, "...and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before".⁷² Truth's statement as to what it would like for black women after the end of the war puts in perspective how race complicates advancements and privilege. However, Truth was in the minority of people who thought this would be the experience black women would have, the majority believed that if black men obtained suffrage, black women would be soon to follow.

⁷² Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 87.

With the end of the Civil War, the United States saw a rise in female social groups. After the Seneca Falls Conference in 1848, many women were excited to see the steps that were being taken to further women's empowerment and the equality of the sexes. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's ideas from the Seneca Falls conference were continued when they created the National Women's Suffrage Association (NWSA). Another group that was formed, was called the American Women's Suffrage Association (AWSA). Members of AWSA tried to secure women's suffrage state by state, rather than federally. Stanton and Anthony, who were also working with AWSA as well, decided to cut ties and pushed instead for a national amendment to be added to the Constitution to be added on the basis of women's suffrage.⁷³ If women were going to gain the right to vote, Stanton and Anthony wanted it to be recognized federally instead of just for interpretation by each state. The two groups merged in 1890, creating an even larger group called the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Members of this group continued to push for woman's suffrage, but specifically white woman's suffrage.⁷⁴ With this very specific goal of getting white woman suffrage, NAWSA forced other groups to arise that advocated for suffrage for women of color.

This groups that arose during the late nineteenth century and was seen as very elitist. These groups allowed women a place to come together and discuss problems and different situations where they experienced inequalities, specific to their gender, in their lives. The majority of the women that were allowed to be a part of this group were from white, upper class backgrounds. Many also had nativist ideas that bled into the organization's ideals for its members. This ideology that came about excluded minorities and immigrants, many times not

⁷³ Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 95.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

allowing them to become members of the organization since the organization did not support them.⁷⁵ While some members felt this was beneficial for them, it only pushed other members away, forcing them to create their own organizations where they could be included.

Some of the aforementioned soldiers and spies that remained alive were able to share their real stories during the height of women's political movements, but not all would be allowed to participate. Jennie Rodgers, alias Albert Cashier, would be among the women not allowed to join groups such as NAWSA. Because Rodgers not only continued to use her male alias even after the end of the war, but also was an Irish immigrant, she would have been denied entry to these groups. Loreta Janeta Velazquez, alias Harry T. Buford, is another example of a female soldier and spy who would not have been able to join these groups. Even though Velazquez did not continue using her male alias after the end of the war, she was an immigrant from Cuba.⁷⁶ Because these groups had nativist sentiments, they were not in favor of immigrants joining. Since Velazquez is an immigrant, she would be looked down upon, had she tried to join one of these groups. Although Harriet Tubman, an African American Union spy, was born in the United States, she too, would be among the women barred from these groups, but in this case, the reasoning was due to her race. Belle Boyd, on the other hand, was white and born in the United States and would not have had a problem joining these groups. The only problem Boyd would have faced would be due to her views surrounding women's rights and women's suffrage, which did not align with that of NAWSA. While both of these groups promoted nativist sentiments, they were not welcome to all women. Meanwhile Velazquez and Rodgers would not have been welcomed into groups such as NAWSA, but along with Harriet Tubman, would have been

⁷⁵Macmillan, Chrystal. *Woman Suffrage in Practice*. 2d Impression with Corrections and Addition. ed. Women and Social Movements, International. London : New York: National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies ; National American Women's Suffrage Association, 1913.

⁷⁶ E. D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier : Women of the Civil War Armies*, 252.

welcomed into groups such as the National Association for Colored Women (NACW). While these groups were lesser known, they served similar purposes as NAWSA did for white women looking to support woman suffrage.

Another such group that formed after the end of the United States Civil War was the Women's Christian Temperance Movement. This movement started in the mid-1870's by Frances Willard. Almost twenty years after the start of this organization, it had 15,000 members, making it the largest female organization in the United States at the time.⁷⁷ This organization helped push for the prohibition of alcohol, but also pushing for women's suffrage. Many women were pushing for the prohibition of alcohol to help stop domestic violence from husbands as well as halting the seemingly pointless manner in which the family's money. If a man is the one who is out working at his job to provide for his family, he might feel entitled to stop by the bar on his way home from work to grab a drink because he is the one who earned that money, despite it being for his family. Many women were tired of their husbands spending the family money on drink instead. With the temperance movement in full swing, many felt that by giving the women the right to vote, there would be laws enacted to make it harder for money to be spent on alcohol.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) also focused on striving for equality between men and women. Frances Willard talks about wanting to live out her mother's wants for women to be treated better than they were. One of Willard's mother's favorite phrases that she used to say was, "Let a girl grow as a tree grows-according to its own sweet will."⁷⁸ This phrase was one that many in the WCTU could resonate with and a message they could and

⁷⁷ Frances E. Willard, *Woman and Temperance : Or, the Work and Workers of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union*. Women and Social Movements, International. Hartford, Conn: James Betts &, 1883.

⁷⁸ Frances E. Willard, *Woman and Temperance : Or, the Work and Workers of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union*, 21.

wanted to support. With the influence from the Seneca Falls Convention and many women were feeling more comfortable with the social conditions changing for women, including women speaking up for their rights to vote and joining forces to make alcohol illegal. This phrase is representative of the empowerment and growth that women were experiencing during this time.

The United States Civil war is remembered as a very convoluted war. While the United States Civil War was fought mainly over slavery, people remember there being other reasons that the country went to war, such as the state's rights verses federal rights in the South, the southern economy and its dependence on cotton and slave labor, sectionalism, regarding the disagreement between the North and the South on tariffs on imported goods, or the political problems surrounding the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. While there were problems surrounding each of these topics, the main reason for the war was the dispute over slavery between the North and the South. With so much written about the war and perspectives from both sides of the fight, there is a plethora of information available to understanding the war. With so much information made public about the war, lesser known stories can sometimes be overshadowed by more popular ones. On the other hand, finding these less popular stories make them a rare gem when rediscovered.

By looking at a woman's history that depicts women as soldiers and spies and showing women defying the traditional roles expected of them during this time, it becomes easier to see the roots and beginnings of social movements made in later periods of history. Jennie Hodgers' story of taking on her male alias, Albert Cashier, and fighting throughout the war without being detected until years after the war ended is one that cannot be definitively understood as an early example of a transgender soldier, yet merely hints at it. Sarah Rosetta Wakeman's, alias Lyons Wakeman, story of needing to provide for her family and deciding to enlist, is also one of

courage and bravery that went unknown for almost a century. While her letters may not have been as strong of an influence to social movements after the end of the war, they show the bravery she demonstrated to go up against what was expected of a woman during her time. Loreta Janeta Velazquez's, alias Harry T. Buford, story, like Hodgers' is one of an uneducated immigrant, but still wanted to fight. Belle Boyd and Harriet Tubman's work as spies demonstrated resilience. While Boyd was caught multiple times and interacted often with the judicial system, her patriotism and resilience pushed her to continue to seek information to pass along to the Confederate side. Tubman's resilience to work alongside the Union army in whatever position available developed her work ethic and commitment to the people she worked with. With many reasons to join the war such as to be with a loved one, for sheer patriotism, or for the monetary benefit, these women fulfilled and showcased the appeal of military service to people of all backgrounds, races, genders, education levels, and socioeconomic statuses.

Hundreds of other women fought in the American Civil War, many going undetected while others were discovered and thrown out. Not all of these women are remembered publicly, but their services were influential to those around them, both as their male alias and for those who knew their female identity outside of the war. These women inspire others to band together and rise up and fight in later wars just as Susan B. Anthony did with her work with the National Women's Suffrage Association in the 1870's or Frances Willard with the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Stories of Maria Lewis and Lizzie Hoffman help historians to see that black women also joined the fight on the front lines and effectively hid their secret. These women were seen as influences on other black females that were not allowed to join certain female social movements, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Movement or the National Women's Suffrage Association, causing them to create their own social groups. These different

perspectives help shape a better understanding of the United States Civil War, a war that was not fought only brother versus brother, but also sister versus sister.

War has usually been thought of and taught as a man's work, yet it overlooks the power and fact that women played major roles in and around the house as well as on the battlefield and in the camps. Traditional expectations for a woman in the mid-nineteenth century were of belief and servitude, women were not thought of as being soldiers or spies. Women were thought of and seen as dependent creatures who relied on their husband or a father to support them, politically, financially, and socially. This changes the narrative shifts when information surfaces about women posing as men and fighting in wars or taking actions that seem outside of the normal understanding of what a woman was expected to do. The idea of a Victorian woman during this time, counteracts everything that is written about women fighting along in the war.

Much of the driving forces behind why women chose to become soldiers and spies was that of patriotism, as well as the monetary compensation and the ability to be around loved ones who were battling in the war. Belle Boyd is an example of a woman who portrayed severe patriotism. Her love for her country was shown through her work as a spy for the Confederate army. Through their work, Boyd and other women were able to exemplify the idea that women could be patriotic and do more than just helping the family and supporting those who went off to war. Women were an interictal part of the war, helping support the country outside of the home.

By looking at a woman's history that depicts women as soldiers, spies, and within other aspects of the military in a male dominated realm of society, it demonstrates women defying the traditional roles expected of them during the mid-nineteenth century. This display of the jobs American women were taking on makes it easier to note the roots and beginnings of social movements made in later periods of history. Contrary to the ideas from the mid-nineteenth

century that spoke of women being the weaker gender, there are many stories highlighted that show a different side to that story. The lives and stories of Deborah Sampson, an American Revolutionary War soldier, inspired other women to rise up and fight in later wars, including the United States Civil War. It also led to a call for social change, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton did in the Seneca Falls Conference or Frances Willard with the Women's Christian Temperance Union in the 1870's. Stories of Maria Lewis and Lizzie Hoffman help historians to see that black women, too, participated on the front lines and were able to effectively conceal their original identity. These stories embody strong women that challenged many of the social constraints of their gender. While some women took on male aliases and entered the United State Civil War as soldiers, others worked as spies or were Daughters of the Regiment. By going against the social norms of the nineteenth century that pushed for women to stay and work in the home, these women were influential to those around them that these social conditions could change, sparking some women to further the advancement of women.

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