



# War's Desolating Scourge: The Union's Occupation of North Alabama (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))

*Joseph W. Danielson*

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When General Ormsby Mitchel and his Third Division, Army of the Ohio, marched into North Alabama in April 1862, they initiated the first occupation of an inland region in the Deep South during the Civil War. As an occupying force, soldiers were expected to adhere to President Lincoln's policy of conciliation, a conservative strategy based on the belief that most southerners were loyal to the Union. Confederate civilians in North Alabama not only rejected their occupiers' conciliatory overtures, but they began sabotaging Union telegraph lines and trains, conducting guerrilla operations, and even verbally abusing troops. Confederates' dogged resistance compelled Mitchel and his men to jettison conciliation in favor of a "hard war" approach to restoring Federal authority in the region. This occupation turned out to be the first of a handful of instances where Union soldiers occupied North Alabama.

In this first book-length account of the occupations of North Alabama, Joseph Danielson opens a new window on the strength of Confederate nationalism in the region, the Union's evolving policies toward defiant civilians, and African Americans' efforts to achieve lasting freedom. His study reveals that Federal troops' creation of punitive civil-military policies arrests, compulsory loyalty oaths, censorship, confiscation of provisions, and the destruction of civilian property started much earlier than previous accounts have suggested.

Over the course of the various occupations, Danielson shows Union soldiers becoming increasingly hardened in their interactions with Confederates, even to the point of targeting Rebel women. During General William T. Sherman's time in North Alabama, he implemented his destructive policies on local Confederates a few months before beginning his "March to the Sea." As Union soldiers sought to pacify rebellious civilians, African Americans engaged in a host of actions to undermine the institution of slavery and the Confederacy.

While Confederate civilians did their best to remain committed to the cause, Danielson argues that battlefield losses and seemingly unending punitive policies by their occupiers led to the collapse of the Confederate home front in North Alabama. In the immediate post-war period, however, ex-Confederates were largely able to define the limits of Reconstruction and restore the South's caste system. *War's Desolating Scourge* is the definitive account of this stressful chapter of the war and of the determination of Confederate civilians to remain ideologically committed to independence a determination that reverberates to this day.

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