

# ANTI-CONFEDERATES IN THE SOUTH



CENTER FOR ARKANSAS  
HISTORY AND CULTURE  
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

## Anti-Confederates in the South

### Introduction

In December 1860, following the November election of Abraham Lincoln to the office of President of the United States, South Carolina became the first slave-holding state that seceded from the Union. By February 1, 1861, six more Southern slave-holding states seceded. On February 8, 1861, the seven rebel states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas) formed the Confederate States of America, known also as the Confederacy. After the first shots at Fort Sumter were fired on April 12, 1861, four other states joined Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The eleven states were determined to preserve their slave-holding privileges.

That does not mean, however, that all white Southerners supported the Confederacy and its cause. While some did not agree with the official stand of the Confederacy but remained passive, others engaged in secret activities to fight against the Confederacy in the seceded South. One such initiative was the Arkansas Peace Society, a loose affiliation of anti-Confederate groups established shortly after Arkansas seceded from the Union. Those groups were usually secret because Confederates, who represented the majority of white Southerners, believed their members were traitors.

The secret anti-Confederate groups in Arkansas were particularly popular in northern counties, where slavery was not as crucial to the economy as in other parts of the state. They did not last long, however. Most were disbanded already at the end of 1861 when the persecution of their members resulted in large-scale arrests. After the groups were forced to dissolve, some former members and supporters of the Arkansas Peace Society left Arkansas to join the Union forces and fight against the Confederacy.

In this activity, you will examine a document that includes an oath that individuals supporting the cause of the Arkansas Peace Society were required to take before joining an anti-Confederate organization.

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E.T.C.

I do solemnly swear before the almighty  
god and these witnesses, that I will well  
and truly keep all the secrets of this society,  
and that I will ever hold & always conceal  
and never reveal any thing in connection  
therewith and that I will on the shortest  
notice go to the assistance of any brother  
at the peril of my life so help me god

As it is a matter of life and death with  
us who shall betray to our enemies the  
existence of the society he shall forfeit  
his life and it shall be the duty of this  
society having received knowledge of a  
any such traitor forthwith to  
inform the brethren each of whose  
duty it shall be to procure such  
traitor and take his life at the  
peril of his own &c

Clinton Ark  
Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1861

I do hereby certify that the above  
and foregoing is a true copy of the  
original now in my possession and  
obtained from Amariah Stabough  
one of the members of the society  
who is now a prisoner at Little  
Rock said Stabough acknowledged  
that all persons entering into said  
society had to take the oath

(Signed) J. B. Lewis  
Col. Comdt 2<sup>d</sup>  
Regmt. Ar.

Testimony of a member of an anti-Confederate group during the Civil War, November 28, 1861  
(John Rice Homer Scott Collection, 1836-1895)

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### Questions:

1. When was this document written? See the photo caption for more information.
2. What kind of oath does this document contain? See “Introduction” for more information.
3. What did a person who signed this oath “solemnly swear”?
4. Why does this oath require to “Truly Keep all the secrets of this society”?
5. Who are the “enemies” mentioned in the oath?
6. Who would be considered a traitor according to this oath? What will happen to traitors?
7. See the note added underneath the date of November 28, 1861.
  - A. What does this note tell us about the origin of this document?
  - B. Who was the person that wrote this document?
  - C. How did the person who wrote this document likely obtain the secret oath?
  - D. What does this note tell us about the experience of anti-Confederates in Arkansas in late 1861?