

CIVIL WAR AND TRANSPORTATION



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

Civil War and Transportation

Introduction

Throughout the 19th century (1800s), the means of transportation and transportation infrastructure developed rapidly in the United States. State and federal governments as well as private companies and entrepreneurs invested large amounts of money in new transportation inventions and infrastructure. One reason behind this development was the growing size of the country. As the United States continued to expand westwards and colonized lands all the way to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, a need for efficient, quick, and inexpensive transportation grew too.

During the Civil War, the armed forces of both the Union and the Confederacy relied on many kinds of transportation. Soldiers marched from one place to the other mostly on foot but also used horses to move around more quickly. Simple wagons operated by a driver and pulled by horses or mules were commonly used to transport supplies. Most roads at the time were poorly designed and maintained dirt roads although several major well-developed roads that made transportation faster and more efficient existed too. In addition to these long-used means of transportation, advancing new technology played a very important role as well. Steamboats, which moved across rivers and a network of canals built in the first half of the century, were a cheaper and faster way to transport large amounts of supplies, humans, and animals. Railroads, which developed rapidly after 1830, were also widely used by the Union and the Confederacy military forces.

In this activity, you will examine a document that provides information about how some means of transportation were obtained by and used in the military during the Civil War. You will also explore two photos that show a very different approach to transportation during the Civil War.

*Important vocabulary note: One document used in this activity, includes the term “Negro” to refer to an African American. Today, this term is considered offensive and disrespectful. Until the 1960s, however, it was used as a descriptive (neutral or non-offensive) term that both black and white Americans used to refer to African Americans. Historical documents often include words that we consider offensive and disrespectful today. It is important that we study how language changes and remember that words, just like actions, are often used to harm or belittle individuals or entire groups. History helps us understand why words matter.

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(Copy)

List of Transportation Means & Condition thereof
in the Squadron of Arkansas Cavalry Vol C.S.A. under command
of Captain J^r Homer Scott composed of Capt Scott & Squires & Company
Cavalry C.S.A. of the 1st Battalion Arkansas Cavalry Vol Commanded
by Col J. Herbert Lane 2nd Brigade La. Vol C.S.A. Co. H. 1st

Fit for Service

One Wagon (6 mule size) & harness, Public property, Fit for Service

One Wagon with 4 mules & harness therefor = Private Property, Fit for Service
and hired in the Confederate States Service (with a negro boy
as driver since the third day of August 1861 able belonging
to A. H. Scott) Wagon team & harness valued at 600⁰⁰

One Wagon with 6 mules & harness therefor, Private Property, Fit for Service
and hired in the Confederate States Service (with a white man as driver)
since the fifteenth day of December 1861 belonging to W. C. McCune
Wagon team & harness valued at 1000⁰⁰

Nine mules = Public property, Fit for Service

Unfit for Service & Condemned

Three Wagons & harness (2 mule size) Public property, Unfit for Service
examined and Condemned on the 25th January 1862 as totally unfit
for the Public Service by a Board of Survey composed of Capt J. S. Sinton
and Lieutenants M. J. Anderson & Samuel M. Ford appointed therefor by &
under Special Order 470 - of Major W. H. Brooks Comdg 1st Battalion
Ark. Cav Vol C.S.A. on the 25th December 1862 and recommended
to be sold &c -

Five Mules, Public property, unfit for public service, examined
and condemned on the 25th January 1862 as totally unfit
for the Public Service by a Board of Survey composed
of Capt J. S. Sinton and Lieutenants M. J. Anderson and
Samuel M. Ford appointed therefor by and under

An excerpt from inventories of military supplies by John Rice Homer Scott for Arkansas cavalry units, not dated/ca. December 1862, p. 1 (John Rice Homer Scott Collection, 1836-1895)

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Special order of Major W^m H Brooks Comdg 1st Battalion A.K. Cav-
rye C.S.A on the 23rd December 1862 and by said board
recommended to be sold to

Recapitulation

Fitted for Service

One Wagon & harness	Public Property,	Fitted for Service
Two Wagons & harness	Private Property, <u>Hired</u>	" "
Nine Mules	Public property,	" "
Ten Mules	Private Property, <u>Hired</u>	" "

Unfit for Public Service & Condemned

Three Wagons & harness, Public property, Unfit for Public Service & Condemned
Five Mules, Public property, " " "

I certify, that the above is a true statement of the transportation
& condition of the same as above stated from the date mentioned
and as the same appears at present ~~date~~ 30th January 1862

Camp Leonora
Burrville Arkansas
January 30th 1862

J. R. Homer Scott, Captain
Comdg Squadron C.S.A. &
Adj. Gen. & Co.

A copy of the above sent to Major W^m H Brooks of this date
under this special order

J. R. Homer Scott Capt

An excerpt from inventories of military supplies by John Rice Homer Scott for Arkansas cavalry units, not dated/ca. December 1862, p. 2 (John Rice Homer Scott Collection, 1836-1895)

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Questions:

1. Before you analyze this document, see “**Important vocabulary note**” in “Introduction” for additional information on the use of the term “Negro” in this primary source.
2. What is this document? See the first paragraph for important information.
3. When was this document written? See the document caption for more information.
4. What means of transportation are listed in this document? What role did animals and humans play in providing transportation to the military during the Civil War?
5. What does a difference between “public property” and “private property” suggest in this document? What does this difference tell us about how the military obtained means of transportation during the Civil War?
6. One wagon was hired by the military with an African American man as a driver and one wagon was hired with a white man as a driver. Although this document does not say it, we can conclude with certainty that the African American driver was enslaved, and the white driver was free. What does this information tell us about different ways, in which slave owners benefited from the labor of the enslaved persons that they owned?
7. This document’s author refers to the African American driver as a “boy” while the white driver is described as a “man.” Today, we use the word “boy” to describe a very young man, and the word “man” means an adult man. But that was not the case in the United States in the past. Research how the word “boy” was used by white Americans to describe adult African American men in the past. Using this example, discuss how words change their meanings depending on how they are used and why it is important that we learn how words were used in the past.
8. What does this document tell us about transportation in the military during the Civil War?

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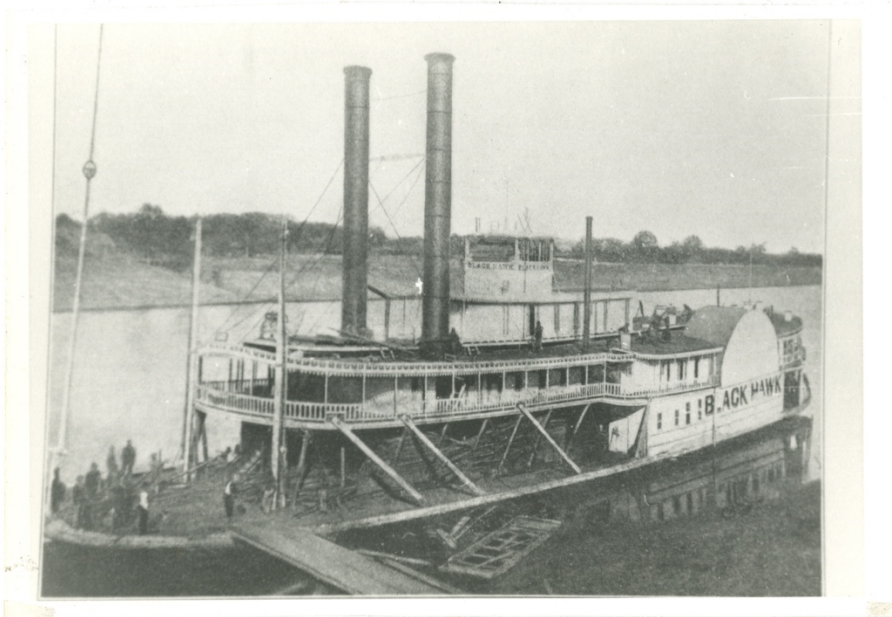


Photo 1: Steamboat Black Hawk, 1864 (Huddleston Steamboat Photograph Collection)

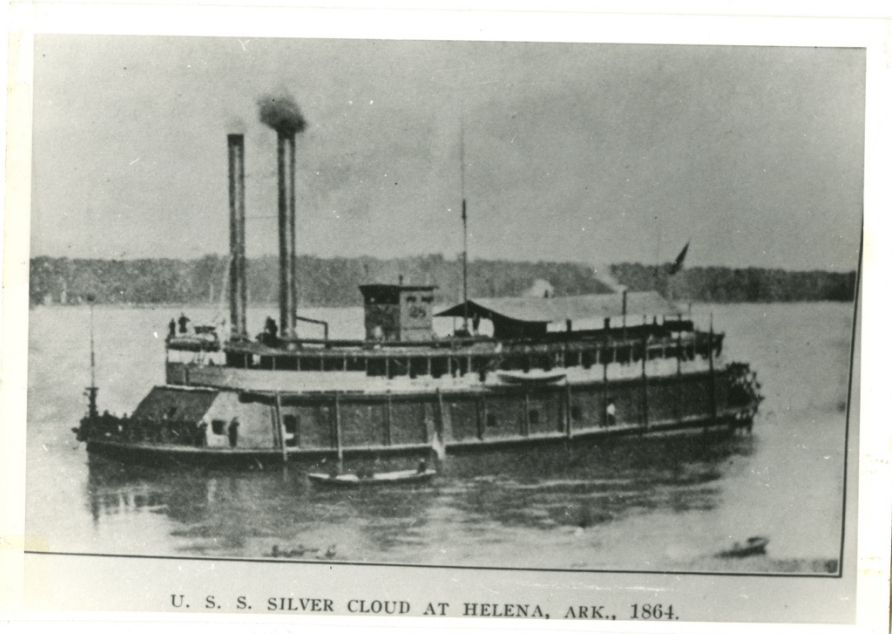


Photo 2: Steamboat Silver Cloud in Helena, Arkansas, 1864 (Huddleston Steamboat Photograph Collection)

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Questions:

1. When were Photos 1 and 2 taken?
2. What can we see in Photos 1 and 2? Describe the photos in detail.
3. What were the advantages and disadvantages of using steamboats as means of transportation during the Civil War? Consider their size, speed, capacity, cost, what they need to move around, etc. Do further research if necessary.
4. Compare these two photos to the inventory of transportation that you analyzed earlier. What do these three documents tell us about transportation during the Civil War? Was transportation at the time simple, old-fashioned, or even primitive? Or did it rely on recent technology and industrialization?