

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

MUSIC AND WAR:
SONGS OF THE CIVIL WAR AND THEIR EMOTIONAL VALUE FOR SOLDIERS AND
THEIR FAMILIES

THESIS SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY FOR CANDIDACY FOR THE
BACHELORS DEGREE

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TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED

Abstract

This paper is a brief look at the wide variety of songs that were written during the Civil War and their importance to the soldiers of the time. Not only were they important to the soldiers, they were important in understanding the feelings and positions of people at this time. The role that songs played helped to explain what life was like to those who were unable to experience it firsthand. Soldiers were able to hear songs about their loved ones back home; and sweethearts and family members were able to glimpse the life their soldier was living while at camp, on the field, and even at death's door. It was a hard time for both civilians and soldiers, but the songs of the time helped to make it a little easier. By examining these songs and taking a closer look into the lives of the soldiers, a better understanding of the thoughts and feelings during all wars will develop.

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PREFACE

I come from a family that has been active in the military over three generations. My grandfathers served in the Second World War, my aunt and uncle both served in the military and my brother was a soldier during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Taking my inspiration from their selfless service, I decided to focus my topic on the military. I wanted to gain a better understanding of the effects tragedy and suffering have on those during a period of war, so I decided to delve deeper, and focus on the more positive side of war. While thinking of what could be considered a positive side of war, I was offered a suggestion that I considered positive: music. In order to find enough information to write a paper with sufficient depth and importance, I had to go back to the Civil War.

The Civil War offers an abundance of material and there are countless songs from this period to research. Knowing that songs were written and played at this time is only half the story. The other half concerns the men whose experiences are reflected in these songs. In my opinion, the Civil War was the last war for which music and musicians played an active role. As time passed, it is my belief that military bands came to be less and less known. There are few reasons that I know that they still exist to the present day. One is because my high school music teacher was a member of such a band for over thirty years. Another is that they are sometimes shown at important political events. Bands also sometimes play at funerals of soldiers. I feel that it is my responsibility to show others this less commonly viewed part of war and to inform them of the historical importance these songs have and the stories they tell so that everyone will gain interest in this topic and come to appreciate it.

INTRODUCTION

Music is more than just words put into song. There are feelings and emotions in those words that may not be there if they were only spoken. There is a tremendous difference between somebody telling you “happy birthday” and somebody singing it. The same analogy can be applied to songs during war time. Sometimes it isn’t enough just to say the words; they need to be sung. Singing provides a way to express feeling and emotion during times that words just cannot. Soldiers and their families knew what it was like to have more than just words during the Civil War, they were able to express their feelings and emotions more profoundly through song. Songs inspired soldiers on long marches and before, during, and after battles. On April 1, 1865, General Phillip H. Sheridan noticed one of his bands playing “Nelly Bly” under heavy fire at Five Forks. As he rode past, he encouraged the band to continue the good work. Sheridan was later quoted as saying “Music has done its share, and more than its share, in winning this war.”¹ Another example of how important music was during the war was given by General William Tecumseh Sherman after his famous “March to the Sea” in November. Sherman’s army was singing “John Brown’s Body” and Sherman said, “The incident was one of the most remarkable illustrations of the influence of song [I have] ever known.”² A Confederate officer at a meeting with the Union said, “I tell you gentleman if we had had your songs we would have

¹ William Carter White, *A History of Military Music in America* (New York: The Exposition Press, 1944), 74.

² Ibid., 79.

whipped you out of your boots. Who couldn't have marched and fought with songs such as yours?"³ These statements clearly show that music played a very important role during the war.

³ Ibid., 81.

REVIEW OF SECONDARY LITERATURE

In order to fully appreciate the value of the music and songs of the Civil War it is necessary to understand how important they were at the time. Richard Crawford stated,

The music of the Civil War has many tales to tell. Its background is implicitly religious, and the combatants never doubt that they deserve God's blessing. It celebrates lofty political ideals: union and states' rights. It commemorates heroes and martyrs. It struts exultantly in victory and mourns defeat. It glimpses human dramas behind the fighting lines: the wife urges her husband to battle; the mother weeps for her slain son; the dying soldier clings to memories of home.⁴

Crawford then divides songs of this time into various categories. These categories include patriotic songs, soldiering life, battlefield deaths, and domestic scenes. This separation of songs is the perfect way to describe why songs were important not only then but now as well. The songs of the time were used for more than just entertainment; they were used as a way to convey messages from soldiers to civilians and civilians to soldiers, and they did it quite well.⁵ Songs were used to express the emotion of the time whether sung by civilian or soldier. Love of home, family, and friends and the security of the family and nation are basic sentiments of people in both peace and war. War intensifies these emotions which are then expressed in a song allowing it to become a very powerful propaganda weapon. In order to become "national" or "patriotic" a song must express more than love of country or lofty sentiments of patriotism; it needs to intensify or strengthen what the populace is already thinking and feeling. Songs that strike basic

⁴ *The Civil War Songbook* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977), v.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vi.

human emotions can have tremendous power. This is evidenced by the comparison of music to journalism and the influence they both had on the emotions of Union sympathizers.⁶

Patriotic songs were used as a means to inspire national sentiment in everyone. Most of the songs were used to promote feelings of enthusiasm for the side one thought had the correct stance during the Civil War and inspired hatred for the other. Two famous songs that fall under this category are “Dixie” (from the South) and “Battle Hymn of the Republic” (from the North). Many songs were written during this time, so it was not surprising that many sounded the same but with different lyrics. This was common because musical borrowing at the time was an accepted and popular technique.⁷

“Dixie” was the national rallying song of the Confederacy. It was written as a closing number for Bryant’s Minstrels by Daniel Decatur Emmet in the spring of 1859. Later, it was used in a march and drill routine in New Orleans by Carlo Patti which introduced the song to the South. The most important place this song had in the South was when it was played at the inauguration of Jefferson Davis in Montgomery, Alabama on February 18th 1861.⁸

The song “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” received its name from James T. Fields, an editor at the *Atlantic Weekly*, when he titled the poem of Mrs. Samuel (Julia Ward) Howe in the February, 1862 issue. Julia Ward Howe wrote the poem after visiting an army outpost in Virginia and bearing witness to a skirmish between Confederate and Union troops, after which the Union troops marched back singing “John Brown’s Body.” Rev. James F. Clarke suggested that Mrs. Howe find more dignified words to the song; thus in the early hours of the morning at

⁶ Willard A. and Porter W. Heaps, *The Singing Sixties* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 7.

⁷ *Civil War Songbook*, vi.

⁸ Paul Glass, *Singing Soldiers (The Spirit of the Sixties): A History of the Civil War in Song* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), 8.

the Willard Hotel in Washington DC, she first wrote the lyrics for “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”⁹

A Sunday-school hymn composer named William Steffe is accredited with the authorship of “Glory Hallelujah” which became closely related to the Twelfth Massachusetts Regiment after Captain Henry J. Hallgreen overheard it and took a fancy with it. Hallgreen had it taught to his company and eventually it became known to the entire regiment. The regiment added new verses and rhymes to the song and eventually it became the camp-song. This song became national after Colonel Fletcher Webster had the entire regiment sing it as they marched across Boston Common on their way to the old Providence Depot and the next day in New York where it was cheered enthusiastically by the public.¹⁰

Songs about soldiers’ experiences allowed civilians a fairly open view into the life of a soldier. These songs depicted life of a soldier both in and out of battle. One of the big draws of this type of song was the portrayal of camaraderie. The poem “We Are Coming Father Abraham, Three Hundred Thousand More” was inspiration for at least eight songs, some of which depicted the President Lincoln’s order as a religious summons. Other songs were less inspirational and instead more practical. George Fredrick Root composed a song titled “Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!” which described the very real possibility of capture. The basis of the song is the hope of liberation and the end of the war. Root composed this song after he heard reports of mistreatment of Union prisoners at Andersonville, Georgia. The most common occurrence of mistreatment was starvation which led to the death of almost 13,000 prisoners.¹¹ Some songs

⁹ Heaps, *Singing Sixties*, 53.

¹⁰ Ibid., 78-79.

¹¹ Heaps, *Singing Sixties*, 89-90, 206-7.

were highly emotional pieces that allowed those who heard them a glimpse into the thoughts of the soldier during various situations. One of these songs, “Just Before the Battle, Mother” describes a young man who is thinking of his mother before the battle begins and what he would say to her. The final verse of the song says that the battle is beginning and he will either live or die nobly defending the banner.¹² When President Abraham Lincoln made the call to draft an additional 300,000 troops, James Sloan Gibbons wrote a poem “We Are Coming Father Abraham, Three Hundred Thousand More” that Luther O. Emerson set to music as the most popular version of the song. This song was later revised by Nathan Barker and Augustus Cull when the number of troops was raised to 600,000.

Not all aspects of the soldiering life were captured in song. Homesickness and illness were common themes in songs, but the boredom of camp life was not captured. Some men were able to find camp life better than civilian life, but they were typically older and officers. The duty of command contrasted with the dullness of civilian life and allowed for an escape from the complexities of family relationships. Typical soldiers had it much worse. The lowest point of camp life came when lice were found in bedding and clothing. Compared to lice, the boring, dullish, monotonous daily routines were much better, but not by much. Many soldiers complained of boredom and a lack of activity. The typical daily routine of a soldier was generally: Roll call at six; breakfast at seven; squad or company drill for two hours; lunch at noon; battalion drill for two hours; dress parade at five; supper at six; roll call at nine; and finally taps at 9:30. This routine was broken up every two or three days with a turn on guard duty.¹³

¹² *Civil War Songbook*, vi.

¹³ Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 117-8.

In an attempt to combat the drudgery that was camp life, officers and men planned activities to fill their idle time. Some examples included wrestling, running, boxing and jumping competitions, building of chapels or Masonic lodges, or more social activities such as reading clubs, singing classes, or theatrical troupes. One example of this implementation of activity was done by General Joseph Hooker after the disaster at Fredericksburg. He instituted regimental snowball fights, brigade baseball competitions, and numerous religious meetings.¹⁴

No matter how much effort was put forward to end the monotony of camp life, it always came back. This had adverse effects on soldiers' morale. It caused them to feel as though they were wasting their lives doing nothing when they had actually signed up to serve their country. Camp also contained the highest chances of getting sick. When many people live in close proximity, disease is easily spread. Not only were physical sicknesses spread, emotional sickness worked its way around the camp quickly as well. These issues were the reason that soldiers deserted or resigned.¹⁵

The category of battlefield deaths contains songs that described various ways that soldiers died during the war. Examples of this include the death of a lone drummer boy, a soldier clutching a picture of his children to his chest, and a soldier surrounded by his comrades as he makes his last wishes. Songs of this type typically allowed the hero of the song to utter his last words. These final words varied from encouragement for his companions to continue fighting while he sees his deceased mother coming to take his soul with her as she returns, to the desire of a dying lone soldier asking for a drink.¹⁶

¹⁴ Linderman *Embattled Courage*, 118-9.

¹⁵ Linderman *Embattled Courage*, 119.

¹⁶ *Civil War Songbook*, vi-vii.

The after effects of a battle were much worse than those portrayed in song. Most songs talked about the dying soldiers final wishes, but many deaths occurred so quickly for a soldier to get these last wishes out. When the battle ended, the field needed to be cleared. This included picking up weapons and equipment, but also human and animal remains. Horses and mules were burned for quick disposal. Human remains littered the field. This wasn't just body parts, it was also belongings that were lost or dropped in the confusion of battle. The gruesome sight that those who cleaned up saw was more than could be expressed in song. Intact bodies were the best that could be hoped for, the rest consisted of arms, legs, heads, and chunks of unidentifiable flesh. Other parts included brains, hair and entrails scattered on rocks or trees. Another sight that accompanied any battle was the large amount of blood. "Blood-soaked fields" and "blood flowing in streams" were literal descriptions of the scene. Battles were typically fought on ground that was geographically and geologically favorable. Leaders of both sides did not want to fight in swamps or rough terrain because of the implications such areas posed to a large body of people. This tended to leave areas such as fields or plains the logical choice. Sometimes the soil would compact under the excessive amounts of traffic during a battle and the blood could not soak into the ground. Instead, it would pool on the surface or run to a low spot; hence the literal meaning of the phrases.¹⁷

However disturbing and emotionally wrecking death was, it got worse as time passed and the hot, humid southern climate began to decompose corpses. The rotting flesh emitted terrible smells that could be sensed days after an engagement. Bodies swelled to twice their normal size and soldiers often noted that the eyes of the dead swelled "out of their heads." The other way that soldiers encountered death was not as disgusting, but more destructive to their emotional

¹⁷ Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 37-9.

state. Some soldiers were frozen with instant rigor mortis in their final acts. These acts could be huddling in a hole or loading a gun. Other times they died while sitting against a tree. These deaths were particularly hard to accept for soldiers because they were sometimes fooled into talking to dead men who appeared alive. Knowing that death is a horrible thing made acceptance of the gruesome scenes left on the field easier, but seeing dead men who appeared unharmed caused a sense of mortality that was not easily overcome.¹⁸

In order to balance the songs about soldiering life, many songs were written about the other half of the war; the domestic scene. Songs of the domestic scene were about the home and feelings of those who waited for sons, brothers, or husbands to return. Part of war's psychological impact is felt at home, and these songs painted the picture of anxious families that soldiers left behind. Another aspect of these songs was their ability to portray the war as one that was fought between volunteers and not one fought between professional soldiers. The most common theme that these songs share is the presence of the "mother" figure. "Can I Go, Dearest Mother?" is a song by Bernard Covert that tells how a son is seeking his mother's blessing before enlisting in the war. Other songs, such as "The Vacant Chair" by George Fredrick Root, describe the sorrow that was felt when a soldier would not be returning home.

Morale was the driving force behind the soldiers in the Civil War, and that morale was kept up by the support they received from home. Homesickness was a prominent theme in letters from the soldiers. One way they were able to combat homesickness was the use of the mail system. According to an officer of the 11th Georgia, "The mail is *the event* of the camp."¹⁹ This was not the case if a soldier did not receive a letter. In fact, it had the opposite effect and

¹⁸ Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle*, 39-41.

¹⁹ James M McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought In The Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 132.

spirits sank. Sometimes letters contained chiding remarks for loved ones that they did not write often enough. Other times letters from home had the same effect as not receiving a letter.

Letters filled with doubt and worry often caused the soldiers to feel the same way. Fear of death and widowhood in letters elevated the anxiety and dread that soldiers were feeling.

Married soldiers often faced a major conflict in the form of letters. Wives expressed their desire for their husbands to come home, but a sense of duty and honor bound the men to stay and serve their country. In response to such letters, men appealed not only to their wives' obligation of womanly duty, but also to their family honor. When these appeals did not work, men would state that was necessary to uphold their manhood. Officers had the option to resign and their wives wished that they would. However, to do so implied incompetence and added injury to insult. The option of resignation was not available to enlisted men. Desertion was the only way that an enlisted soldier had out. Men who deserted were seen not only as dishonorable, they were leaving duty illegitimately. Desertion rates were higher among married men which was expected, but some married men decided to stay out of pride. The shame of going home and admitting to desertion was more than some men could handle. Instead, they continued to put their lives at risk do uphold family honor.²⁰

²⁰ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 131-38.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF SOLDIERS

The songs and music of the time were clearly important and can be seen by looking at the lives of actual soldiers. Many soldiers from Wisconsin served during the Civil War and their accounts enforce this importance. The following section looks at the lives of some of these soldiers and the experiences that they had while they were serving. These personal accounts give unique insight into the experiences, feelings, and emotions that are commonly found in the songs of the Civil War.

In a response to a letter from his cousin, W.D. Bartlett described life as a soldier in the Civil War. In it, he stated that he was very glad to receive a letter and welcomed the chance to reply. Like most of the songs of this time, Bartlett gave a glimpse into the life of a soldier as he told his cousin about his general well-being and the ability of the army to move quickly, but to no place that he knew of. One of the things that stood out in his letter was his desire to never cross the Potomac River again. He said that he was sick of Virginia and would like to see Maine again. This is another theme that occurred in many songs of this time. Most soldiers were looking forward to being home. All things considered, he said, “I am happy as a clam in high water” where I am. He ends the letter with an apology for not writing as much as he would like because he is in hurry, but promises to write more the next time he can.²¹

Samuel Hawkins M. Byers was the author of a poem he titled “Sherman’s March to the Sea.” Byers wrote this poem while imprisoned in Columbia, South Carolina. After writing the poem, it was put to a tune and sung by a prison glee club. The song made its way out of the

²¹ Bartlett to Cousin, 1863, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

prison and to General William Tecumseh Sherman carried secretly in an artificial leg by Capt. Tower of Ottumwa, Iowa. This song was written after Byers heard that Sherman was campaigning through the south. Another song possibly written by Byers was “Union Song.” This song told the tale of soldiers from the start of the war and their enthusiasm to defend their nation to the end of the war and their victory over the rebels. One verse of the song stood out for its description of the typical soldier during the war. The verse went as follows: “Our soldiers they have left their homes and wives, and for their country cause have sacrificed their lives, but when the flag is hoisted and they see it waving free, they think of the Union and its sweet liberty.”²²

The diary of Robert M. Addison, 1st Lieutenant, Company E, 23rd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment, of Arena Wisconsin covered the entire year of 1864. The entries of Addison tell a very different story of the war than what is taught in most history classes in schools of primary education. Addison wrote about the weather in his very first entry, along with the details of his heading to the south, and continued to write about the weather every day until the last entry. The only exception was for a few days in June. The days of June 10th-13th have no entries and no reason in prior entries or following entries as to why he did not write on those days.²³ Weather influenced the activities of the Civil War more than it does today. This explains the prevalence of the entries that include this topic.

Another topic that Addison talked about frequently was drilling. There were different types of drills to be practiced, and he wrote that every day they were drilled. The rest of the diary is filled with experiences that were common to many soldiers of the time. These

²² Civil War Songs, undated, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

²³ Robert Molford Addison, diary, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

experiences included waiting, marching, inspections, boredom, more waiting, and more marching. There is only one entry that makes any reference to combat and it related only that the cavalry had run into a few rebels, engaged in a skirmish, and returned after the rebels had fled back into the woods. The least frequent, but most important, entries were those that stated he had received letters in the mail. These entries provided a very emotional and personal glimpse into the feelings of Addison. On July 1, 1864, Addison wrote that he received a letter from his beloved Amelia.²⁴ Using this diary as a guide, it is easy to see why the songs of the Civil War were so popular. It was as if somebody had opened up this diary back then, read what Addison had written, and then wrote songs about his departure, camp life, marching, drilling, and his delight in receiving letters from loved ones.

Capt. Andrew Gallup was a member of Co. K, 6th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry and keeper of various records including a song titled “The Iron Brigade.” The song describes the peaceful yet disciplined atmosphere of the camp and goes on to list the many accomplishments of men from the 2nd, 6th and 7th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Units, the 19th Indiana, and later the 24th Michigan after they joined the brigade. The first battle that the brigade became widely known for was the Battle of Gainesville. Here the brigade stood its ground against superior numbers led by none other than Thomas Jonathan “Stonewall” Jackson. This first battle is recorded in the song, as are the rest of the battles that the brigade fought. “The Iron Brigade” is perhaps a bit inclined to overestimate the accomplishments of the brigade, but history shows not by much. The final verse of the song, “And they look back with pride to the days when they fought. That the work of the ‘Fathers’; should not be for naught. And he should be excused;

²⁴ Addison, diary, 1864.

who in boasting has said, ‘I, was one of the men of the, Iron Brigade,” describes the pride that these men had and the respect that they won for all they had accomplished during the war.

Another member of Co. K, 6th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry was Sgt. Mickey Sullivan. Sullivan wrote a poem titled “The Old Veteran’s Request” which begins with a memory depicting the scenes on a battlefield. It goes on to describe the life that he lived while he served in the military. He talked about the hardships he endured; including sleeping in mud, rain and snow, eating salted horse, marching while sick or lame, and having to fight with no sleep. Sullivan then asked God to end slavery and end the war. As he neared the end of his poem, Sullivan reminisced about his younger days and the excitement he had at the beginning as a young soldier, the elation that was tied to victory, and the sorrows that accompanied defeat. Finally, it becomes clear where he got the title for the poem when he asked to be remembered, for his service thirty-five years ago, by the current generation.²⁵

The “Reunion Greeting” of the Co. K reunion in 1900 was another poem written by Sgt. Mickey Sullivan. In it, he talked about the service the men had provided in a time of need. He remembered the fallen of the Iron Brigade, and like most addresses given at reunions, he reminisced about the past. The last few lines are an apology for not being able to attend the reunion and spoke of the camaraderie that he missed, but he closed with a wish that he would someday meet them all again in Heaven.²⁶

²⁵ Mickey Sullivan, poem, “The Old Veterans Request”, Andrew Gallup Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

²⁶Sullivan, “Reunion Greeting”, 1900.

Conclusion

Looking at the historical evidence shows that the songs of the time were inherently linked to the experiences that soldiers had during the Civil War. Although not all aspects of the war were represented in these songs, a majority of the feelings and emotions that soldiers and their loved ones experienced were. These songs reinforced the feelings and emotions of the entire population. It did not matter if one was a civilian or a soldier, a Yankee or a Rebel, woman or man, child or adult, there was a song that could be related to and told the story to the rest of the nation. Songs of loved ones far away, songs of camp life, songs of death, all had their role in conveying messages between the various separations in the population. People were drawn together by these songs because they provided common ground based emotions and feelings. The songs of the Civil War were shared by the entire nation. It did not matter if one was a supporter of the Confederacy or the Union, because in the end, people were united by the common theme of humanity that was present in the songs of the time.

Future Work

I think that there is a vast amount of work that can be done with this topic. I think that it would be interesting to look at personal accounts of non-combatants during the Civil War and see if there is a relationship between their feelings and emotions and the songs that portrayed the domestic scenes of the war. Along with looking at accounts of non-combatants, I think it could be interesting to look at the accounts of soldiers from other areas of the United States and see if they have the same correlation to the songs as Wisconsin soldiers.

Another possibility would be to find counter examples of the relationship between the feelings and emotions of the people and the songs of the time. This could lead to some very interesting conclusions on why there were discrepancies with that certain group of people or that particular location. Perhaps religious beliefs or specific cultural differences could be a factor in these discrepancies as well.

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APPENDIX

Battle Hymn of the Republic by Julia Ward Howe

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword,
His truth is marching on.

(Chorus)
Glory, Glory Hallelujah,
Glory, Glory Hallelujah,
Glory, Glory Hallelujah,
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read his righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps,
His day is marching on. (Chorus)

I have read a fiery gospel write in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with My contemnors, so with you My Grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on." (Chorus)

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His Judgement Seat;
Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him, be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on. (Chorus)

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me;
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on. (Chorus)

http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=battlehymn

Dixie's Land by Daniel Emmett

I wish I was in the land of cotton,
Old times there are not forgotten;
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!
In Dixie's Land where I was born in,
Early on one frosty morning,
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!

(Chorus)

Then I wish I was in Dixie! Hooray! Hooray!
In Dixie's Land I'll take my stand, to live and die in Dixie!
Away! Away! Away down South in Dixie!
Away! Away! Away down South in Dixie!

Old Missus married "Will the Weaver";
William was a gay deceiver!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!
But when he put his arm around her,
Smiled as fierce as a forty-pounder!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!

(Chorus)

His face was sharp as a butcher's cleaver;
But that did not seem to grieve her!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!
Old Missus acted the foolish part
And died for a man that broke her heart!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!

(Chorus)

Now here's a health to the next old missus
And all the gals that want to kiss us!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!
But if you want to drive away sorrow,
Come and hear this song tomorrow!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!

(Chorus)

There's buckwheat cakes and Injin batter,
Makes you fat or a little fatter!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!
Then hoe it down and scratch your gravel,
To Dixie's Land I'm bound to travel!
Look away! Look away! Look away, Dixie's Land!

(Chorus)

http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=dixie

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! (The Prisoner's Hope)
by George F. Root

In the prison cell I sit,
Thinking mother, dear, of you,
And our bright and happy home so far away,
And the tears, they fill my eyes
'Spite of all that I can do,
Tho' I try to cheer my comrades and be gay.

(Chorus)
Tramp, tramp, tramp the boys are marching,
Cheer up comrades they will come,
And beneath the starry flag
We shall breathe the air again
Of the free land in our own beloved home.

In the battle front we stood,
When their fiercest charge they made,
And they swept us off a hundred men or more,
But before we reached their lines,
They were beaten back dismayed,
And we heard the cry of vict'ry o'er and o'er.

(Chorus)

So within the prison cell
We are waiting for the day
That shall come to open wide the iron door,
And the hollow eye grows bright,
And the poor heart almost gay,
As we think of seeing home and friends once more.

(Chorus)

http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=tramp

We Are Coming, Father Abr'am
by James Sloan Gibbons

We are coming, Father Abr'am,
Three hundred thousand more,
From Mississippi's winding stream
And from New England's shore;
We leave our plows and workshops,
Our wives and children dear,
With hearts too full for utterance,
With but a silent tear,

We dare not look behind us,
But steadfastly before,
We are coming Father Abr'am,
Three hundred thousand more!

(Chorus)

We are coming, we are coming,
Our Union to restore,
We are coming Father Abr'am,
With three hundred thousand more,
We are coming Father Abr'am,
With three hundred thousand more,

If you look across the hilltops
That meet the Northern sky,
Long moving lines of rising dust
Your vision may descry;
And now the wind, an instant,
Tears the cloudy veil aside,
And floats aloft our spangled flag
In glory and in pride;
And bayonets in the sunlight gleam,
And bands brave music pour.
We are coming, Father Abr'am,
Three hundred thousand more!

(Chorus)

If you look all up our valleys
Where the growing harvests shine,
You may see our sturdy farmer boys
Fast forming into line;
And children from their mother's knees
Are pulling at the weeds,
And learning how to reap and sow
Against their country's needs;
And a farewell group stands weeping
At every cottage door.
We are coming, Father Abr'am,
Three hundred thousand more!

(Chorus)

You have called us and we're coming,
By Richmond's bloody tide,
To lay us down for Freedom's sake,
Our brothers' bones beside;
Or from foul treason's savage group,

To wrench the murderous blade;
And in the face of foreign foes
Its fragments to parade;
Six hundred thousand loyal men
And true have gone before.
We are coming Father Abr'am,
Three hundred thousand more!

http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=coming

When Sherman Marched Down to the Sea

by S.B.M. Meyers

Our campfires shone bright on the mountains
That frowned on the river below.
While we stood by our guns in the morning,
And eagerly watched for the foe.
When a rider came out of the darkness
That hung over mountain and tree.
And shouted "Boys! Up and be ready!
For Sherman will march to the sea"
And shouted "Boys, up and be ready,
For Sherman will march to the sea".

Then shout upon shout for bold Sherman
Went up from each valley and glen.
And the bugles re-echoed the music
That rose from the lips of the men.
For we know that the stars in our banners
More bright in their splendor would be.
And that blessings from North land would greet us,
When Sherman marched down to the sea.
And that blessings from North land would greet us,
When Sherman marched down to the sea.

Then forward, boys, forward to battle,
We marched on our wearisome way.
And we stormed the wild hills of Resacca,
God bless those who fell on that day!
Then Kennesaw, dark in its glory,
Frowned down on the flag of the free.
But the East and the West bore our standards
When Sherman marched down to the sea
But the East and the West bore our standards
When Sherman marched down to the sea

Still onward we pressed till our banners
Swept out from Atlanta's grim walls.
And the blood of the patriot dampened
The soil where the Traitor flag falls.
We paused not to weep for the fallen
That slept by each river and tree.
But we twined them a wreath of the laurel,
When Sherman marched down to the sea.
But we twined them a wreath of the laurel,
When Sherman marched down to the sea.

Proud, proud was our army that morning,
That stood where the pine darkly towers
When Sherman said, "Boys, you are weary,
But today, fair Savannah is ours."
Then we all sang a song for our Chertan,
That echoed o'er river and lea,
And the stars on our banners shone brighter,
When Sherman marched down to the sea.
And the stars on our banners shone brighter,
When Sherman marched down to the sea.

http://www.civilwarmusic.net/display_song.php?song=sherman

Just Before the Battle Mother

Just before the battle, Mother, I am thinking most of you.
While upon the field we're watching, with the enemy in view.
Comrades brave are 'round me lying, filled with thoughts of home and God;
For well they know that on the morrow, some will sleep beneath the sod.

CHORUS: Farewell, Mother, you may never press me to your breast again;
But, oh, you'll not forget me, Mother, if I'm numbered with the slain.

Oh, I long to see you, Mother, and the loving ones at home,
But I'll never leave our banner till in honor I can come.
Tell the traitors all around you that their cruel words we know,
In every battle kill our soldiers by the help they give the foe.

CHORUS

Hark! I hear the bugles sounding, 'tis the signal for the fight,
Now, may God protect us, Mother, as He ever does the right.
Hear "The Battle Cry of Freedom," how it swells upon the air,
Oh, yes, we'll rally 'round the standard, or we'll nobly perish there.

CHORUS

"Can I Go Dearest Mother!" (1862)

Ballad

Composed by Bernard Covert

1.

I am writing to you mother, knowing well what you will say,
When you read with tearful fondness what I write to you today.
Knowing well the flame of ardor on a loyal mother's part,
That will kindle impulse, with each throbbing of your heart.
I have heard my country calling for her sons that still are true;
I have loved that country, mother, only next to God and you;
And my soul is springing forward to resist her bitter foe;
Can I go, my dearest mother? tell me, mother, can I go?

2.

From the battered walls of Sumter, from the wild waves of the sea,
I have heard her cry for succor, as the voice of God to me;
In prosperity I loved her in her days of dark distress
With your spirit in me, mother, could I love that country less?
They have pierced her heart with treason, they have caused her sons to bleed,
They have robbed her in her kindness, they have triumphed in her need;
They have trampled on her standard, and she calls me in her woe;
Can I go, my dearest mother? tell me mother, can I go?

3.

I am young and slender, mother, they would call me yet a boy,
But I know the land I live in, and the blessings I enjoy;
I am old enough, my mother, to be loyal, proud and true
To be faithful to my country I have ever learned from you.
We must conquer this rebellion: let the doubting heart be still;
We must conquer it or perish. We must conquer, and we will!
But the faithful must not falter, and shall I be wanting? No!
Bid me go, my dearest mother! tell me mother, can I go?

4.

He who led his chosen people, in their efforts to be free
From the tyranny of Egypt, will be merciful to me;
Will protect me by His power, whatso'er I undertake;
Will return me home in safety, dearest mother, for your sake.
Or should this, my bleeding country, need a victim such as me,
I am nothing more than others who have perished to be free,
On her bosom let me slumber, on her altar let me die.
I am not afraid, my mother, in so good a cause to die.

5.

There will come a day of gladness, when the people of the Lord
Shall look proudly on their banner, which His mercy has restored;
When the stars in perfect number, on their azure field of blue,
Shall be clustered in a Union, then and ever firm and true;
I may live to see it, mother, when the patriot's work is done,
And your heart so full of kindness, will beat proudly for your son;
Or through tears your eyes may see it with a sadly thoughtful view,
And may love still more dearly the cost it won from you.

6.

I have written to you, mother, with a consciousness of right
I am thinking of you fondly, with a loyal heart to-night:
When I have your noble bidding, which shall tell me to press on,
I will come and kiss you, mother, come and kiss you, and be gone
In the sacred name of Freedom, and my country as her due
In the name Law and Justice, I have written this to you.
I am eager, anxious, longing to resist my country's foe;
Shall I go, my dearest mother? tell me, mother, shall I go?

<http://www.pdmusic.org/civilwar/cws24.txt>