

"...for the use of the Confederate States Army...": An 1863 Trans-Mississippi Clothing and Camp Equipage Contract

By Mark D. Jaeger

Many of the most vexing questions remaining to be answered about Confederate uniform, equipage, arms, and accoutrement issues are those concerning what was issued to troops of the Trans-Mississippi Department. We know there was an incredible diversity in the items issued to troops due, in large part, to that department's geographical remoteness and *de facto* isolation after the fall of Vicksburg. Unfortunately we are also confronted with a frustrating lack of documentation establishing who manufactured these items, their precise specifications, and to whom they were actually issued. This is especially so in the case of the Trans-Mississippi Clothing Bureau, which was established in the late spring of 1863 and headed by Major William H. Haynes. What is more, the documentation that *has* survived is often vague to the point of uselessness although, of course, given the effects of time, post-war chaos, and simple neglect we should marvel that *anything* survived at all.

Nevertheless, sufficient information has been uncovered in recent years to provide us with a more distinct, albeit still incomplete, view of Confederate quartermaster activities in the Trans-Mississippi, particularly in Texas. Indeed, the image that is increasingly emerging is one of fairly sophisticated quartermaster operations that worked reasonably well, within their limitations, into May 1865, despite being both internally and externally hamstrung.¹

Although there is a relative paucity of documentation for Trans-Mississippi clothing and equipment issues, we should note there appears to be yet another potentially useful, and largely untapped, source of information; namely, the *Northern press*. This fact is perhaps illustrated nowhere better else than in a lengthy article recently encountered by the author in, of all places, the 31 March 1864 *New York Times*. The *Times* piece is singularly intriguing since, in the course of discussing reported cotton smuggling-for-profit into the North, it incorporates the detailed terms of a Confederate uniform and equipage contract drawn up in June 1863 between the newly-established Trans-Mississippi Clothing Bureau and an Arkansan businessman. A copy of the contract subsequently fell into the hands of Federal authorities and was quickly transmitted to the *Times*, which saw fit to publish it.

To provide "context," the entire article appears below and has been slightly edited for clarity:

The Rebel Army Drawing Supplies From the United States—Important Revelations.

Some six weeks ago, it was stated in some of the Western newspapers that Gen. E. KIRBY SMITH, of the rebel army in the Department of the Mississippi, had been negotiating with certain parties in the United States, with the knowledge and consent of the rebel Government at Richmond, to exchange *cotton* for provisions, army clothing and other articles of which the rebel troops were in most pressing need. The statements on this subject were at once denied, apparently on official authority, and the matter rested for a time; but it has more recently been revived, and the same statements have been repeated in the Western journals.

We have received, within a few days, certain documents which settle the matter beyond dispute. It seems that a Mr. JOHN T. CHICHESTER, of the City of Camden, County of Anachita, in the State of Arkansas, applied to the rebel Government at Richmond, through the

Arkansas members of Congress, for authority to enter into such a trade—representing that he had special facilities for carrying it on within the Union lines. In regard to this application, the rebel Secretary of War, a year ago, wrote the following letter to Gen. KIRBY SMITH, giving him full authority to act upon his own judgment:

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
WAR DEPARTMENT,
RICHMOND, VA., March 12, 1863.

Gen. E. K. Smith, Commanding, &c. :

Application has been made to me, sustained by several of the members of Congress from Arkansas, to enter into arrangements, or contracts, with a Mr. JOHN J. CHICHESTER, of that State, by *which provisions and supplies for the army of Louisiana and Arkansas may be obtained from the United States, in exchange for cotton*. It is represented very strongly by the members that the supplies for subsistence, especially of meat, has, by the presence of the army in Arkansas and Louisiana, been so exhausted that *it is impossible to afford adequate provisions for the armies* from the provisions of these States without causing the most distressing want to the people.

The gentleman offering to make the contracts is vouched for as reliable, loyal, and of adequate means, having peculiar facilities from his position as a farmer-planter on the river, and his past connections and business, to accomplish successfully the ends proposed. It is, of course, not desirable to resort to such a trade with the United States, which, under the laws of Congress, when carried on by citizens, is illicit, and the grounds of penalties; but, when necessities have compelled, *the Government has on many occasions resorted to it to a greater or less extent; and my own judgment much prefers the resort to such trade, rather than to allow our armies to suffer, or the people to be pinched by the withdrawal of their necessary suppliers for the support of the armies*. I have not, however, felt myself sufficiently advised of your circumstances or the necessities of your armies to determine on the propriety of such contracts, and therefore I have preferred referring Mr. CHICHESTER to you, and to your discretion and better knowledge the making of such engagements. If the wants of your armies require it even for the incidental relief of the people from serious pressure, *I have no hesitation in both authorizing and advising the course*. The terms and conditions I must leave likewise to your judgment. Provisions should be obtained very low from the Northwestern States, and cotton when sent forward must pay very largely. Still the risk is very serious, and parties engaging will of course have to be tempted with the prospect of large remuneration. *In the contracts I have made* in less convenient localities, I have endeavored either to make the contracts on the basis of the prices before the war of both articles of barter, or to have *four pounds of meat for three of cotton*. These are the exchange at the cost of prices of each article; It may very probably be secured by you and would be satisfactory if better prices cannot be agreed upon. I have always, too, had it stipulated positively that *the cotton should not be delivered except in payment and after the provisions were received*. That there should be no *liberty of buying the cotton*, but the cotton should be obtained and forwarded by our contractor. That the cotton should not be sent to nor be shipped afterward at New-Orleans, and if *the stipulation could be [illegible: obtained?] that the cotton, though passed to the United States should, passing through it, be shipped abroad*. All of them, except the last, should, I think, be insisted on. The party making the contract will need protection, and perhaps an armed escort to protect his provisions from guerrillas, and other transportation to your army. This will be reasonable and will, of course, be given. *He is likewise anxious that his*

motives in the matter should be recognized as loyal, so that he may suffer in the estimation of his countrymen and this, if he deserves it, by fidelity in his transaction, it will be a matter of justice to accord. He will, however, explain his views fully, and with all confidence I intrust the whole matter to your free judgment and action.

(Signed,)

With high esteem, most truly yours,
JAMES A. SEDDON,
Secretary of War.

A true copy. (Signed,)

H. P. PRATT, A. A. G.

A true copy. (Signed,)

W. H. HAYNES, Major and

Q. M. C. S. A., Chief Clothing Bureau, Department Trans-Mississippi

Gen. SMITH at once gave the matter his approval, and on the 12th of June Maj. HAYNES, the Quartermaster of that Department, entered into the following agreement with Mr. CHICHESTER:

THE CONTRACT.

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT made and entered into this 12th day of June, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three [1863], between Maj. W. H. HAYNES, Quartermaster in the service of the Provisional Army of the Confederate States of America of the one part, and JOHN T. CHICHESTER, of the City of Camden, County of Anachita, State of Arkansas, of the other part. This agreement witnesseth that the said Maj. W. H. HAYNES, Quartermaster, for an on behalf of the Confederate States of America, and JOHN T. CHICHESTER, his heirs, executors and administrators, have covenanted and agreed, and by these presents do mutually covenant and agree to and with each other as follows, viz:

First—That the said JOHN T. CHICHESTER, his heirs, executors and administrators, shall supply, or cause to be supplied, for the use of the Confederate States Army on White or Arkansas Rivers, within the State of Arkansas, thirty thousand (30,000) caps of gray or blue cloth, stiff leather viziers and oil-cloth covers complete; thirty thousand (30,000) best quality cadet gray cloth army jackets, lined through the body with good serviceable linsey², and through the sleeves with a good article of brown drilling; thirty thousand (30,000) best quality light blue cloth pants; sixty thousand (60,000) Sea Island brown cotton³, or striped cotton shirts; sixty thousand (60,000) brown drilling drawers; thirty thousand (30,000) pair best quality double-sole kip shoes, quarters five inches high, and laced in front; sixty thousand (60,000) best quality German wool socks⁴; thirty thousand (30,000) great coats for enlisted men of the Confederate States service, of cadet gray cloth, or dark blue or black English beaver cloth⁵, stand-up collars, double breasted, cape to reach to the elbow when the arm is extended, and to button all the way up (buttons eighteen,) lined through the body with linsey and through the sleeves with brown drilling; twenty thousand (20,000) pair of Gunsier⁶ or merino⁷ blankets, weighing eight pounds to the pair. Or, in lieu of the jackets, pants and great coats, materials therefor[e], viz: one hundred and ninety-five thousand [195,000] yards 6-4 best quality heavy cadet gray cloth; seventy-eight thousand seven hundred and fifty [78,750] yards light blue army cloth; one hundred and fifty thousand [150,000] yards best quality heavy plaid linsey; thirty thousand [30,000] yards brown drilling; twelve hundred and fifty [1,250] gross large sized brass buttons; twelve hundred and fifty [1,250] gross small size brass buttons, for sleeves and capes; three thousand three hundred [3,300] pounds Marshal's flax thread⁸, assorted sizes, and eighteen [18]

great gross pant-buckles, on or before the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four [1864], at the price of two dollars (\$2) for each cap; eight dollars [\$8] for each jacket; ten dollars and fifty cents [\$10.50] for each pair of pants; one dollar and twenty-five cents [\$1.25] for each shirt; one dollar and twenty-five cents [\$1.25] for each pair of drawers; three dollars [\$3] for each pair of shoes; thirty-seven and a half cents [37 1/2] for each pair of socks; fifteen dollars [\$15] for each great coat; eight dollars [\$8] for each pair of blankets; or, in event material is supplied in lieu of pants, jackets and great coats; it is to be at the price of two dollars and sixty-five cents [\$2.65] for every yard of cadet gray cloth, or dark blue, or black English beaver cloth; one dollar and five cents [\$1.05] for every yard of plaid linsey; fifteen cents [15] for every yard of brown drilling; twenty-five cents [25] for every gross 27 line bone pant buttons; two dollars [\$2] for every gross large size brass buttons; one dollar [\$1] for every gross small size brass buttons; one dollar and fifty cents [\$1.50] for every pound of flax thread; and nine dollars [\$9] for every great gross of pant buttons.

Second.—That the said JOHN T. CHICHESTER, his heirs, executors and administrators, shall supply or cause to be supplied at the points herein mentioned, the following articles of camp and garrison equipage, and Quartermasters' property, and at the price herein specified, for the use of the Confederate States Army in the Department of Trans-Mississippi, viz: Six hundred and fifty [650] dozen spades at fifteen dollars [\$15] for every dozen; six hundred and fifty [650] dozen Collins' axes⁹, at eighteen dollars [\$18] for every dozen; six hundred and fifty [650] dozen large size hand hatchets, with handle complete, at eighteen dollars [\$18] for every dozen; six hundred and fifty [650] dozen army camp kettles, of heavy double plate tin or sheet iron, at fifteen dollars [\$15] for every dozen; two thousand five hundred [2,500] dozen army mess pans, of heavy plate tin, at six dollars and fifty cents [\$6.50] for every dozen; two hundred and fifty thousand [250,000] yards Patapsco or Thistle Duck¹⁰, at sixty cents [60] for every yard; four thousand [4,000] dozen Coates' spool thread¹¹, sizes eight to forty, at one dollar and twenty-five cents [\$1.25] for every dozen; fifty [50] best quality Singer's sewing machines¹² at one hundred [\$100] dollars for every machine; and one hundred and fifty dollars [\$150] for every machine; and one hundred and fifty [150] kegs of nails, assorted sizes, 6d., 8d., and 10d., at ten cents [10] for every pound.

Third.—That the clothing or material therefor, camp and garrison equipage, and Quartermaster's property stipulated to be furnished and deliverad [*sic: delivered*] under this contract, shall be of first quality.

Fourth.—That the said Maj. W. H. HAYNES, Quartermaster, or such other officers as may be appointed to act in the premises, for and in behalf of the Confederate States of America, shall receive from the said JOHN T. CHICHESTER, his heirs, executors, administrators or duly appointed agents, all or any part of the articles that may be delivered under this contract on or before the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four [1864], and thereafter at the option of the General Commanding Department [of the] Trans-Mississippi.

Fifth.—That the certificates or receipts of the officers of agent empowered to receive the articles delivered under this contract, shall be sufficient voucher of the quality and quantity upon which payment is to be made as herein specified.

Sixth.—*It is understood and agreed that payment for all articles delivered under this contract shall be made with cotton of an average quality, at the rate of twenty-five cents for every pound, and that payment is to be made at the time and place of delivery of the articles.*

Seventh.—It is understood and agreed upon that the said JOHN T. CHICHESTER, or his duly appointed agent shall be permitted to transport without molestation or hindrance on the

part of the Confederate States Authorities all cotton paid to him or his duly authorized agents, by virtue of this contract, to any foreign part that he or his agents may select, provided the cotton is not sent to nor shipped afterwards at the City of New-Orleans, Louisiana.

Eighth.—It is understood that all assistance that may be required by the said JOHN T. CHICHESTER, or his duly appointed agents, for the purpose of protecting his property from guerrillas, and otherwise assisting in transporting it to the point or points selected for delivery, shall be given by the military authorities of the Department [of the] Trans-Mississippi, provided such assistance is not detrimental to the public service.

Ninth.—It is understood that no member of the Senate or House of Representatives of the Confederate States, shall be admitted to any share of benefit to arise from this contract.

Tenth.—Should any difficulty arise respecting the quality of the articles delivered under the contract, or the quantity or condition of the cotton used in payment therefor, the officer directed by the Lieutenant-General Commanding Department, to receive the articles and make payment for the same, is to appoint a disinterested person to meet one of the same description, to be appointed by the contractor or the party or parties acting for him; these two thus appointed shall have the power to adjust the difficulty, but should they disagree then a third person is to be chose by the two already appointed, the whole to act under oath, and the opinion of the majority to be final in the case.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals the day and date first above written.

(Signed,)

W. H. HAYNES, [seal.]
Major and Q. M. P. C. S. A.

(Signed,)

JOHN T. CHICHESTER, [seal.]

"Witness:"

Signed, GEORGE A. GODDARD,

Signed, N. A. JOHNSON,

Signed, M. JENNISON.

Appointed by command of Lieut.-Gen. SMITH.

(Signed,)

W. K. BOGGS,
Brig.-Gen. and Chief of Staff.

SIGNED IN DUPLICATE.

AUGUSTA, Ga., Sept. 5, 1863.

Know all men by these presents, that I have this day constituted and appointed _____ my agent and attorney in fact, to act for me and in my stead, in carrying out the foregoing contract, which is a true and faithful copy of the original made with Major W. H. HAYNES, Q. M. P. C. S. A., and approved by Lieut.-Gen. E. KIRBY SMITH, upon recommendation by letter by Hon. JAMES A. SEDDON, Secretary of War, June 12, 1863, hereby [*illegible: vesting?*] him with full authority to do all such acts, make all such contracts, and sign and execute all such writings for me and in my name as may be necessary to effect unto the objects of said contract and carry out its provision. In [*illegible: which?*] whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day and date above written.

(Signed,)

J. T. CHICHESTER, [seal.]

"Witness"

Signed, L. B. ROBBINS.
Signed, K. H. FORRESTER.

Further orders were given to Mr. CHICHESTER from time to time for other articles needed by the army, and by him handed over to his agent to be filled. But the military operations of last Summer interfered with the practical execution of these orders, and in September [1863] the Secretary of War made the following indorsement on his original letter of authority to Gen. [E. KIRBY] SMITH:

On representation of Mr. CHICHESTER of the difficulties interposed by the fall of Vicksburgh, and other untoward events in the Trans-Mississippi Department to the delivery of the goods contracted by him to be delivered at points on the Arkansas and White Rivers, under an engagement made by him with the Quartermaster and other officers of the Trans-Mississippi Department, with the approval of Gen. SMITH, I refer the matter again to the discretion of Gen. SMITH, with the recommendation that the privilege be accorded of *delivering and receiving payment in cotton at one or more of the ports on the coast of Texas or at points on the White and Arkansas Rivers.*

JAMES A. SEDDON, Secretary of War.

2d September, 1863.

How much has actually been done in the execution of these agreements we have, of course, no means of knowing; but there is little room to doubt that immense quantities of such articles as the rebel army has needed most have been supplied to them *from the United States*, and payment received within our lines in the South west, in accordance with this arrangement.

Whether our Government, or its agents and Generals, have had any connection with this traffic, we have no means of knowing. It is scarcely possible that they should have remained ignorant of its existence, and it is not easy to see how it should have been carried on in defiance of their wishes. The "special agents" sent out into that region by the Secretary of the Treasury, undoubtedly had very large powers confided to them in regard to trade with the Southern States; but it can hardly be supposed that they were authorized to supply the rebel armies with clothing, provisions, hardware, and other articles of which they were most destitute. If they have any such authority, it should either be revoked or the war should be stopped. It is scarcely worth while to maintain an army of soldiers to fight the rebels, if an army of office-holders is also in the field with authority to feed them.

Given the above information, this writer engaged in a search for individuals named "Chichester" known to have resided in the area of Camden, Arkansas during the war. As it happened, there were no men of any means named "Chichester" immediately answering to a description of the individual stated in the above contract. However, one "Colonel John T. Chidester" of Camden, *Ouachita County*, Arkansas did live in that locale and he is most certainly the contractor in question.

The "backstory" on John T. Chidester (1815-1892) is worthy of a significant article in itself. Chidester was, in fact, a transplanted Yankee, having been born in Cooperstown, Otsego County, New York. After initially settling in Tuscumbia, Alabama, Chidester removed with his family to Camden, Arkansas, in 1857, and was operating a profitable stage coach line with stops

in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas at the time the war began.¹³ During the course of this writer's search for information about John T. Chidester, he had the singular fortune to discover a war-datable image of not only Chidester, but also one that depicting most, if not all, of his family. Identifiable wartime images of Confederate citizens are relatively rare, and those of known contractors with the C.S. government, which can be at least roughly dated, are even more noteworthy.



Colonel John T. Chidester and Family, circa Spring 1863
Courtesy of the Ouchita County, Arkansas, Historical Society

The full extent of John T. Chidester's wartime involvement with the Confederate cause is still unclear. However, this writer's search through Confederate citizen and business files at the National Archives unearthed payment claim vouchers establishing that Chidester continued to operate his stage line under contract to the Confederate government at least through 1862. In this capacity, Chidester's coaches furnished transportation for furloughed troops and official travelers to various points in Arkansas and Louisiana and, perhaps more importantly, conveyed the mails.¹⁴ Colonel Chidester remained of sufficient means through the early years of the war to purchase a substantial home in Camden, reportedly for \$10,000 in gold, as well as furnish it with household goods purchased in New Orleans. The "McCollum-Chidester House" still stands today in Camden.¹⁵ By all accounts Chidester was a shrewd, prosperous businessman who was personally and politically well-connected. In short, precisely the type of enterprising individual ready, willing, and able to seek contracting business with the Confederate government.

The Chidester contract is also most interesting as it shows that the Trans-Mississippi Clothing Bureau could be particular, to the point of being "picky," about the goods for which it contracted. Major W. H. Haynes clearly had a well developed idea of his clothing and camp equipage needs and "quality" was certainly uppermost in his mind. What is more, Haynes clearly, if a bit indirectly, expressed his intent to bring Trans-Mississippi uniforms more into compliance with Confederate Army quartermaster regulations.

This preoccupation with the niceties of uniform regulations in the Trans-Mississippi seems, at first glance, to be rather odd, given the rough-and-tumble nature of daily life in that department. Yet as late as December 1864, with the Confederacy literally crumbling around his

ears, General E. Kirby Smith still fulminated to Major W. H. Haynes about the length of frock coats issued to his troops:

HDQRS. TRANS-MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT,
Adjutant-Gen.'s Office, Shreveport, [La.], December 30, 1864.

Maj. W. H. Haynes,

Chief Clothing Bureau:

MAJ.: I am directed by the general commanding to say that in making the uniform frock coats in [the] future you will be guided, and governed by the regulations prescribed for the "uniform and dress of the Army," published in General Orders, No. 9. Adjutant and Inspector-Gen.'s Office, series of 1861, and the plates accompanying said orders. In the matter of trimming regulations cannot in all cases be carried out, but as to the length of the coat, it can always be done, and must be. You will give the necessary orders to meet the requirements of these instructions to the several officers of your department; and any deviation therefrom will subject the delinquent party to trial by court-martial, and removal from the position he may occupy. The district commanders will each be furnished with a copy of this letter.

I am, very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

S. S. ANDERSON,
Assistant Adjutant-Gen.¹⁶

The items requested by Haynes in Colonel Chidester's contract also compare quite closely with items listed in another document found by this writer in Chidester's business file, namely a "shopping list" of goods presumably needed by Haynes for Clothing Bureau operations in Shreveport. Although undated, the list was likely prepared about the same time as Chidester's uniform and equipage contract (i.e., on or about 1 June 1863):

Articles needed in the Manufacturing Department
Clothing Bureau T[rans]. M[ississippi]. D[epartment].

1000 Doz. Coats or Clarks Spool Cotton¹⁷
1000 Sewing Machine Needles ([Best?] make)
200 Harness Needles
200 Complete Set Shoe making Tools
200 Saddle Needles
200 do. Awls
200 Harness do.
6 doz. Patent Peg awls and Handles
1 Gross open steel thimbles
100 G[rea]t Gross Black Bone Pant Buttons
50 do do Plain Brass Coat do.
50 do do do Black Bone Overcoat Buttons
300 P[iece]s. Grey Uniform Cloth (very fine all wool for officers)
150 " Blue
20 " Coat Padding
30 " " Canvass
20 " Brown Holland¹⁸
20 " Selisha¹⁹
20 " Bleached Domestics²⁰
12 Doz. Officers Bl[ac]k Felt Hats

1 Bale	Bl[ac]k Cotton Wadding
1 Lot	Gold Lace ass[or]t[e]d width (wide and narrow)
1/2 Gross	small stars
1/2 "	large "
100 yds	Blue cloth for Coat Cuffs
100 "	Buff " " " "
100 "	Red " " " "
50 cases	Light Cavalry Boots for Officers
20 Gro[ss]	Pant Buckles
10 Case[s]	Officers Shoes (Fine)

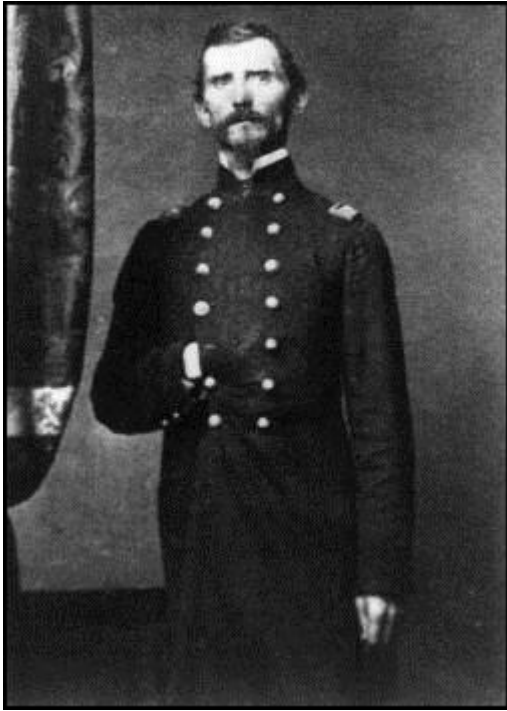
The items listed above in both the Chidester contract and the "Shreveport list," in fact, match fairly closely with materials known to have been used in clothing production at the Houston Depot run by Captain Edward C. Wharton. Among these were "black bone...buttons," "cadet grey" cloth for jackets, and "best quality light ["sky"] blue cloth pants" as well as a large quantity of "great coats for enlisted men." These items, being of "cadet grey cloth, or dark blue or black English beaver cloth, [with] stand-up collars," were apparently quite similar in pattern to an overcoat designed by Captain Wharton and that he unsuccessfully attempted to produce at his Houston Depot. However, the Chidester coats did vary slightly from the Wharton pattern in having 18 (rather than 16) buttons and in being lined with "brown drilling" rather than "unbleached domestic."²¹ Despite the apparent variations, the Chidester contract indicates there was a high expectation on Major Haynes' part that clothing items, either produced by quartermaster depots under his purview or imported into the Trans-Mississippi, were to be standardized as much as possible.

We must regretfully note at this point that no specific information has yet surfaced establishing, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Chidester was ultimately able to fully, or even partially deliver, on the terms of his contract. As Colonel Chidester himself subsequently "represented," the fall of Vicksburg, just a few weeks after the contract was inked, as well as increasing Federal occupation of the Trans-Mississippi throughout 1863 and 1864 made delivery of the uniforms and equipage he promised increasingly problematic.

What is more, Major W. H. Haynes' "Memorandum of articles of clothing and clothing material transferred, issued, and sold," covering the period through 31 December 1863, showed significant shortfalls between the needs of troops in the Trans-Mississippi Department and what was actually produced or issued by the Clothing Bureau.²² Had Chidester been able to even some of the requested items, logic dictates that Major Haynes would have duly noted them in his report. Although the odds are great that Colonel Chidester was unable to fulfill his agreed terms, we are nevertheless left with the small possibility, pending further evidence pointing one way or another, that he did provide some of the items subsequently reported by Haynes as having been transferred, issued, or sold.

Whatever the case, John T. Chidester reportedly remained in Camden until April 1864 when it was occupied by Union troops, under Major General Frederick Steele, during the Red River Campaign. Accused by Federal authorities of running a Confederate mail spying operation, he narrowly evaded arrest (reportedly by hiding in a secret room within his home) and fled to Texas where he cooled his heels for the remainder of the war.²³ Chidester finally returned home in the late spring of 1865, after receiving a grant of amnesty, and soon thereafter began to rebuild his stage coach line. Interestingly, upon his return, the ever-enterprising Chidester also

seems to have quickly resumed his involvement in cotton speculation schemes. Indeed, Chidester was apparently so open about his dealings that Brigadier General George. F. McGinnis, commander of Federal occupation troops in the Camden area, wrote a letter to his superior, Brigadier General John M. Levering, registering his annoyance with "a man named Chidester, who is quite notorious as a former Government mail contractor in this country." McGinnis further declared:



Brigadier General George F. McGinnis

I think the whole thing [of unofficial cotton sales] is wrong, and in Chidester's case I have determined that he shall not touch a bale of Government cotton if I can help it, and I think I can. If you think I would be justified I will stop the whole proceeding [as] I think the deputy marshal, regularly appointed Treasury agents, and Government aids, with the assistance of the military, ought to be able to attend to that business. The appointment of [outsider cotton sales agents] is a regular swindle. Chidester tells me that he can make \$100,000 out of it in sixty days. Wouldn't it be better for the Government to have that amount? Now that the war is over, I feel like crushing out the thieves and swindlers.²⁴

The John T. Chidester equipment and clothing contract serves to show that the Trans-Mississippi Clothing Bureau was, in end, a "noble failure."

"Oh that a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a Heaven for?"

Indeed, the Bureau's inability to provide sufficient clothing and equipage for its troops could not be attributed to any one cause, be it a lack of will, simple incompetence, or misunderstandings about the needs of the troops. Quite the contrary: judging from the Chidester contract, the men who ran the Trans-Mississippi Clothing Bureau had well-conceived specifications for uniforms and equipage for the troops they were thanklessly tasked to supply. Rather, like the Confederacy itself, the ultimate collapse of the Bureau stemmed from a "death of a thousand cuts."

We should therefore not be surprised that the Trans-Mississippi Clothing Bureau was ultimately unsuccessful in its assigned mission. However, we perhaps *should* be amazed that, given the incredible obstacles Major W. H. Haynes and his subordinates faced, their Bureau functioned as well, and produced as much, as it did.

The author wishes to thank Ron Field; Karin Timour, of the Atlantic Guard Soldier's Aid Society; Carolann Schmitt, of the Genteel Arts Academy, and, particularly, Fred Adolphus for their useful comments and insights during the preparation of this article.

Selected Further Reading:

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Oates, Stephen B. "Supply for Cavalry in the Trans-Mississippi." *Military Affairs*, 25, 2 (Summer 1961), p. 94-99.

Windham, William T. "The Problem of Supply in the Trans-Mississippi." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (May 1961), p. 149-168.

¹ See Adolphus, Frederick. 1996. "Confederate Clothing of the Houston Quartermaster Depot," *Military Collector and Historian* 48: p. 171-180. This useful and ground-breaking article discusses the quasi-independent, and surprisingly successful, Confederate quartermaster depots in Texas, which not only furnished clothing and equipment to that state's troops but also managed to "export" materiel to other Trans-Mississippi units.

² "Linsey" (i.e., linsey-woolsey).

³ "Sea Island" cotton apparently refers to *Gossypium barbadense* (i.e., "tree cotton"). This variety of cotton, yielding long, silky fibers, is picked from small, bushy trees grown in the West Indies and off the Atlantic coast of the southern United States. "Sea Island" cotton is particularly desirable as it can be made into light, superior cloth with a silky feel and luster.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/sea%20island%20cotton> and

http://www.stonehillspin.com/sea_island/sea_island.htm

⁴ "German wool" was a Nineteenth Century wool trade term referring to fine wool exported from such German wool-producing areas as Silesia and Saxony.

German wool (termed in French Zephyr Menior) -- This is another name for Berlin wool (for which see). It is very evenly twisted, smooth and soft, excelling Fleecy in these respects and all other kinds of wool in its capacity of receiving the most brilliant dyes. The wool so-called was obtained from German sheep, although chiefly spun at Keightley, in Yorkshire; but much of our best wool has latterly been imported from our own colonies in Australia. There are two sizes sold, the double and the single. [Note by Karin Timour: In the 19th century the fineness of the spinning was given names, just as we do today. Today's names are "Worsted," "Double Knitting or DK," "Sport," "Fingering," and "Lace-weight." "Zephyr", "Fleecy," "Fingering," "Scotch Fingering," and "Double Berlin" and "Single Berlin" are all 19th century names for the thickness of the wool yarn. However, we don't exactly know what each of these 19th century yarns correspond to in terms of modern weight or sizes of yarn.]

Berlin Wool: Otherwise called German Wool and Zephyr Merino. Manufactured for the purpose of knitting and embroidery. It is to be had in two sizes, the single and the double. Keightley, in Yorkshire, is the chief seat of manufacture, and the Wool is sold either in skeins or by weight. A quantity of real German Wool is brought into Great Britain in a raw state, and is combed, spun and dyed, chiefly in Scotland, but that dyed here is less perfect and durable than that imported ready for use, excepting those dyed black, which are cleaner in working. [Note by Karin Timour: I suspect that "cleaner in working" means that the English black dye is not "crocking" or rubbing off on the hands of the person who is knitting it as much as the German black dye does.] The English grown embroidery lambswool, though harsher, is in some respects superior, the scarlet dye quite equalling, if not surpassing the German as also several shades of all the other colors and neutral tints. It is best suited for use on coarse canvas. Berlin or German Wool is the finest of all descriptions and is produced from the fleece of the Merino breed of Saxony sheep, and of neighboring German States. The principal seat of it's manufacture into thread for needlework is Gotha whence it is sent to Berlin and elsewhere to be dyed. Wool of the same breed of the Merino is largely exported from Australia and Van Diemen's Land. Berlin Wool for embroidery may be had in all colors, also shaded and partridgely coloured, and ingrain at different prices both by the skein and by weight.

Caufeild, Sophia F. A. and Saward, Blanche C. *Encyclopedia of Victorian Needlework*. New York: Dover Publications, 1972 (reprint of *Dictionary of Needlework*, 2nd ed., originally published in London, 1887). Also see <http://www.dfmg.com.tw/mirron/wool/industry.html> for a brief discussion of German wool production in Silesia and Saxony.

⁵ "Beaver cloth" was originally produced in England to simulate beaver fur and is generally made of wool or, less often, of cotton. It is heavily napped on both sides, double faced, twilled, and fulled. Beaver cloth is thick, gives excellent wear, is very warm and closely resembles kersey. It has a luxurious, silky look, due to its having the longest nap of all the napped fabrics, and light colored fibers are often added to the nap to increase shine. Beaver cloth has been traditionally used for warm coats with cotton beaver being used for caps, shoe linings, work and maritime clothes. http://www.apparesearch.com/glossary_b_.htm

⁶ The author was unable to find a specific reference to "Gunsier" in regards to wool or woollen products. However this term may be a corruption of *Guernsey*, one of the Channel Islands located between England and France, which has, in fact, produced knitted clothing made from oiled wool for over four hundred years. Personal communication with Mr. Ron Field, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England, 26 February 2004.

⁷ "Merino" is long, fine white wool frequently used in knitting underwear, hosiery, fine sweaters, etc.

⁸ This writer was unable to specific information about "Marshal's flax thread." However, an 1844 Fleming, Cayuga County, New York store ledger entry mentioning, "3 lbs. fine linen Marshal thread no. 50 & 60," indicates it was a popular, high-quality linen thread, possibly imported from the British Isles.

See <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nycayuga/ledger/flem1843.html>

Products made by Marshall were also held in high regard by the United States Navy. The 29 August 1863 *United States Army and Navy Journal* carried a Navy solicitation for small stores contract bids that included a request for: "5,000 pounds THREAD; black and white, in quarter-pound packages, equal to Marshall's best quality, and in such proportions as may be required.

⁹ Established in 1826, the firm of Collins & Company, of South Canton, Connecticut, produced superior quality axes and implements. These were so highly regarded they were later nicknamed, "The axes that cleared the West." By 1862, the Collins Company was a major enterprise, reportedly producing "1452 tools per day." The price quoted in the Chidester contract for each axe (i.e., \$1.50 apiece or \$18 per dozen) seems to have been competitive as an 1868 Western newspaper dry goods store advertisement listed them for "2.00" each. Collins & Company went out of business in the mid-1960's and its mill buildings have since been converted into art studios, artisans' workshops, and retail shops. The following websites contain additional information about Collins & Company and its "celebrated axes":

<http://www.thevalleybook.com/canton.asp>,
<http://www.nswaxemen.asn.au/Articles/50poundcontest.html>,
http://24.2.142.70/collins_company%20pg1.htm,
<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Prairie/9473/MMVOL13.html>,
<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/railton/roughingit/map/indbrowne.html>

¹⁰ No specific reference to these terms was found by this writer despite a lengthy search. However, "Patapsco" is the name of a river in Maryland, near Baltimore, and thus could be associated with production of cloth in that geographical area. "Thistle" may well be an oblique reference to Scottish origins for a particular type of "duck cloth" since the thistle is a national symbol of Scotland. This writer would welcome any additional information from readers about the significance of "Patapsco" or "Thistle" *vis a vis* textile production.

¹¹ This undoubtedly refers to high-quality thread produced in the Scottish mills of "J. & P. Coates." Established in 1830 and located in Ferguslie, near Glasgow, the Coates firm was one of the preeminent exporters of cotton sewing thread to the United States during the Civil War era. Further information about the firm of J. & P. Coates can be found in Cairncross, A. K. and Hunter, J. B. K. (1987) "The early growth of Messrs J & P Coates, 1830-83", *Business History*, 29 (2), p. 157-177, "The History of Coats and Clark":

http://www.coatsandclark.com/our_company/history.htm, "Paisley on the Web":
<http://www.paisley.org/paisley1/history/mills.php>, and "A History of Paisley":
<http://www.paisley-district-scouts.org/page3.html>

The excellent quality of Coates thread was acknowledged in the following extracts from the 3 July 1863 Willimantic, Connecticut *Journal News* and the 5 September 1861 Augusta, Georgia *Daily Chronicle & Sentinel*:

Quails, the flying correspondent of the Boston Evening Express, (everybody knows who Quails is,) thus pays his respects to Willimantic and our own humble self:

Turning our steps towards the interior of the State, from the city of Norwich, we made our first halt in Willimantic, a flourishing village, made famous by the sewing thread of the Willimantic Linen Company. There are six buildings devoted to the manufacture of this thread, and the article is now universally acknowledged to be every way superior to the famous English Coates thread, which until lately has driven all American manufacture from the market.

Available at:

<http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec/message/an/topics.news.1862willimanticjournalnews/28>.

AUGUSTA [GA] DAILY CHRONICLE & SENTINEL, September 5, 1861, p. 3, c. 1

Southern Made Thread.--We have been shown a sample of thread from Sea Island cotton, manufactured at the Sweet Water factory in Campbell county, W. J. Russell Agent. It is a strong, smooth, well-twisted thread, just the thing for use on army work, and will make a very good substitute for Coates' and other "contraband" made in the domestic uses of that article. A sample of this thread may be had in a few days at Gray & Turley's and may now be seen at our office.

http://www.uttyl.edu/vbetts/textile_factories.htm

¹² The "best quality Singer's sewing machines" desired in this contract were likely top-of-the-line, manufacturing-grade, treadle-operated models. Illustrations of these can be seen on-line at the Smithsonian Institution website:

<http://www.sil.si.edu/DigitalCollections/Trade-Literature/Sewing-Machines/introduction/>.

This site also includes two useful on-line histories discussing the development of the sewing machine, including *The Sewing Machine: Its Invention and Development*, originally published in 1968 by Grace Rogers Cooper.

¹³

<http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec/message/an/localities.northam.usa.states.alabama.counties.columbia/405>. "A History of the Stage Coach Business in Camden, Arkansas":
<http://asms.k12.ar.us/armem/stark/STAGECCH.HTM>

¹⁴ Documentation relating to John T. Chidester's transportation and mail business with the Confederate government can be found in NARA M346, "Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms," Roll 162.

¹⁵ "The McCollum-Chidester House": <http://asms.k12.ar.us/armem/stark/> and "The McCollum-Chidester House Museum": <http://www.rootsweb.com/~arouachi/mccullom.htm>

¹⁶ *OR*, I, 48, Pt. I, p. 1333.

¹⁷ This refers to high-quality cotton thread produced in the Scottish mills of "J. & P. Coats" and the Clark Family. Both concerns were based in the area of Paisley, near Glasgow, and exported large quantities of thread to America before and during the Civil War. Coats and Clark family members immigrated to the United States, and acted as sales agents there for their respective firms, as early as the 1840's. http://www.coatsandclark.com/our_company/history.htm

¹⁸ Source: Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913): <http://dict.die.net/holland/>

Holland \Hol"land\, n.

A kind of linen first manufactured in Holland; a linen fabric used for window shades, children's garments, etc.; as, brown or unbleached hollands.

¹⁹ This is clearly a corruption of *Silesia*:

Si*le"si*a (?), n.

1. A kind of linen cloth, originally made in *Silesia*, a province of Prussia.
2. A twilled cotton fabric, used for dress linings.

See Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913): <http://machaut.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/WEBSTER.sh?WORD=silesia>

²⁰ This may refer to various types of bleached cotton cloth including muslin. This fabric was frequently used for uniform trouser pockets and waistbands, shirts, and overcoat linings by the Houston Depot. "Bleached domestic" was used for a variety of purposes in Nineteenth Century American including coffin linings! A reminiscence of life among the Oklahoma Choctaw in the 1870's recounted that:

Jim Lohman had an order for a coffin from a full-blood Indian and when Lohman went to line the coffin he found that there was no bleach domestic so he lined the coffin with turkey red calico. This was all right with the Indians for after that they asked for coffins to be red on the inside. This was in 1875.

http://www.rootsweb.com/~okchocta/ipp/victor_locke_jr_1st_interview.htm

Funeral expenses for one Mrs. Margaret Miller, of Pontotoc County MS, who died in October 1856 were listed as:

"Oct 21 [1856]	
Coffin and box	\$15.00
5 yds. velvet	3.75
5 yds bleach domestic	1.25
2 bolts ribbon	1.50

²¹ Adolphus, Frederick R. 1996. "Confederate Clothing of the Houston Quartermaster Depot," *Military Collector and Historian* 48: p. 176.

²² *Official Records*, I, XXII, Pt. II, p. 1136. Major W. H. Haynes' report is also discussed in Nichols, James L. *The Confederate Quartermaster in the Trans-Mississippi*. Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 1964, p. 35-36.

²³ "Ouachita County, McCollum Chidester House Museum":
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~arouachi/mccullom.htm>. "A History of the Stage Coach Business in Camden, Arkansas": <http://asms.k12.ar.us/armem/stark/STAGECCH.HTM>

²⁴ George F. McGinnis to John Levering, 9 June 1865, *OR*, I, 48, Pt. II, p. 835.