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UNION PROVOST MARSHALS' FILE
OF PAPERS RELATING TO
INDIVIDUAL CIVILIANS

On the 300 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced a series of documents dated from 1861 to 1866, each of which pertains to one civilian. The series was assembled in the War Department from documents that were extracted from the files of Union Army provost marshals and from other records of Army territorial commands. Similar documents referring to more than one civilian constitute the Union Provost Marshals' File of Papers Relating to Two or More Civilians (reproduced on Microcopy 416).

The documents reproduced in this microcopy relate to civilians, or "citizens" as they were called during the Civil War, who came in contact with the Army. They include correspondence, provost court papers, orders, passes, paroles, oaths of allegiance, transportation permits, and claims for compensation for property used or destroyed by military forces.

The provost marshals who served in territorial commands, armies, and Army corps were military police. They sought out and arrested deserters, Confederate spies, and civilians suspected of disloyalty; investigated the theft of Government property; controlled the passage of civilians in military zones and those using Government transportation; confined prisoners; and maintained records of paroles and oaths allegiance. Provost courts were established in some territorial commands to try cases involving civilian violators of military orders, the laws of war, and other offenses arising under the military jurisdiction. They also tried cases involving military personnel accused of civil crimes.

The documents in the series reproduced in this microcopy are arranged alphabetically by the name of the civilian concerned. Documents relating to different persons with the same name are often intermingled. The name of the subject person is usually underscored on the back or in the body of the document.

Some cross-reference slips in the series are stamped "PROVOST MARSHAL FILE" and show the name of a civilian and a number that cites a document in the Union Provost Marshals' File of Papers Relating to Two or More Civilians. Only part of that series is cross-referenced here. The names written upside down on the bottom of the cross-reference slips have no relevance for the series reproduced in this microcopy. Other cross-reference slips refer to civilians listed in volumes 119-121 and 123 of the records of the Middle Department, 8th Army Corps. Those volumes contain lists of civilian as well as military prisoners who were confined at or passed through Baltimore, Md. The lists show the name of the civilian confined, his residence, the charge against him, the dates of his confinement, and the disposition of his case.

The records reproduced in this microcopy are a part of Record Group 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records. Although they are records of the Union Army, they were associated with Confederate records in the War Department because they relate in part to Confederate citizens and sympathizers.

Other records of the War Department in the National Archives contain information about civilians during the Civil War. The records of Army territorial commands still contain many documents similar to those on this microcopy. Information pertaining to civilians enrolled for the draft or drafted is in the records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau. The files of Col. Lafayette C. Baker, as special provost marshal and special agent of the War Department, and of Maj. Levi C. Turner, as an associate judge advocate, relate to both civilians and soldiers who were investigated or arrested. The proceedings of some military courts that tried cases of civilians are among the records of the Office of The Judge Advocate General (Army).

Miscellaneous Confederate records pertaining to Confederate civilians have been microfilmed under the title of Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens or Business Firms (Microcopy 346). Other references to Confederate civilians are scattered throughout the series filmed under the title of Unfiled Papers and Slips Belonging in Confederate Compiled Service Records (Microcopy 347).

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