

## ABSTRACT

### NATIONALISM, CALIFORNIA, AND THE CIVIL WAR: THE DIVIDED TOWN OF VISALIA

California remained loyal to the Union during the Civil War; however, its population experienced deep divisions with regards to the national situation. A majority of the citizens chose to advocate loyalty to the United States and its government. Other groups, however, chose to do the opposite and instead expressed sympathy for the secessionist ideology of the Confederate States of America. In some regions of California, such sociopolitical divisions were the cause of much discord between rival Unionist and Secessionist factions. The small San Joaquin Valley town of Visalia best exemplified this division and discord. Between 1860 and 1865, the growth of a secessionist movement within the town nearly resulted in open conflict. The local Secessionist and Unionist factions sought to demonstrate their own superiority over the other through a variety of means from newspaper editorials, protests, and even violence. Eventually, the Federal Government responded to the situation by garrisoning soldiers in the town to maintain order. How and why did such political divisions and antagonism come to exist in such a remote region as Visalia, California? The explanation lies with certain principles of nationalism, particularly the role of printed media, the dynamics between dominant and subordinate groups, and collective conceptions of national identity. Through the use of these theoretical ideas, this study attempts to explain the origins of the secessionist movement in Visalia and the nature of the Unionist reaction to suppress it.

Tristan DuVal Shamp  
August 2009