

Taking the oath

When Union troops took control of Confederate territory, the residents had to take a loyalty oath promising to uphold the U.S. Constitution and government. In return, they were allowed to keep their homes and land, travel, get protection from the U.S. Army, and receive rations and support from the U.S. government.

Loyalty oaths were most commonly required of former soldiers, but thousands of Confederate women took the oaths to protect their homes, families, and livelihoods. By the end of the war, these oaths came to symbolize the possibility of reconciliation.