Impact of the War
The social impact of the war on African Americans, the common soldier, and the home front with emphasis on Virginia
Although slavery ended, African-Americans did not begin to achieve full equality during the next 100 years.
Enslaved African Americans seized the opportunity presented by the approach of Union troops to achieve freedom.
The Emancipation Proclamation allowed for the enlistment of African American soldiers.
For the common soldier, warfare was brutal and camp life was lonely and boring. Many soldiers returned home wounded or crippled.
Warfare often involved hand-to-hand combat. War time diaries and letters home record this harsh reality. After the war, especially in the South, soldiers returned home to find homes destroyed and poverty. Soldiers on both sides lived with permanent disabilities.
On the home front, women were required to assume nontraditional roles.
• Managed homes and families with scarce resources
• Often faced poverty and hunger
• Assumed new roles in agriculture, nursing, and in war industries