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Parallel Identities: Southern Appalachia and the Southern Concepts of Gender

During the American Civil War

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of History

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in History

by

Maegan Kathleen Harrell

August 2014

Dr. Steven Nash, Chair

Dr. Tom Lee

Dr. Victoria Meyer

Southern Appalachia, gender roles, East Tennessee, western North Carolina

ABSTRACT

Parallel Identities: Southern Appalachia and the Southern Concepts of Gender

During the American Civil War

by

Maegan Kathleen Harrell

Southern concepts of gender influenced Appalachian society throughout the antebellum and Civil War eras. Concepts of masculinity and femininity, including “the cult of true womanhood” and Southern manhood, shifted and broaden throughout the South due to wartime stressors. Appalachians adjusted these gender roles in order to survive chaos and turmoil in their region. The brutal political and community divisions, high rates of desertion, guerilla warfare, and threats of invasion in the mountain regions intensified these concepts of gender. Southern constructions of gender molded the Appalachian experience of war but the high level of conflict strengthened these new roles as a means of survival.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1866, North Carolinian Walter Lenoir reminisced about the antebellum days in a letter to his sister, Sarah Lenoir. Thinking back, the idea of Southern society captured his attention. Lenoir concluded that the era of Reconstruction symbolized “a great political revolution” and, along with it, “an equally striking social revolution.” This sweeping social revolution, he believed, would dissolve not only the institution of slavery by the “true southern character” as well. What did Walter believe illustrated the superiority of Southern society? He believed that the white women and men of the South represented the purest refinement of their culture.

Compared to white women of the North, Lenoir judged that “the lady of Southern society was, in her manner and her character, more simple, more graceful, more approachable and affable, yet more dignified and reserved. She was more cordial, confiding, and affectionate, and she was free from any approach towards a certain masculinity of thought and action which so commonly gives a repulsive hardness to the female character of the north.” For Lenoir, the contrast between “the men of the South and the North is not so striking as that between the women” but he held that “the Yankee is courser, harder, and more selfish. The Southerner was more courteous, more refined, and more genuine.”¹ Lenoir clearly believed both men and women were assigned their own culturally approved set of gender characteristics. As he claimed, white Southern women managed to avoid independence or public work and “any approach towards a certain masculinity of thought and action” whereas Southern men held themselves to a high level of conduct and esteem. Based on these descriptions of the ideal white Southern lady and

¹ Walter Lenoir to Sarah J. Lenoir, January 2, 1866, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

gentleman, Walter Lenoir believed that all of the South including Southern Appalachians maintained and strived to fit these gender characteristics and ideals. In the analysis of the Civil War in Appalachia, a new question emerges concerning whether Appalachians formed new conceptions of gender in relation to the rest of the South.

Between 1861 and 1865, both men and women chronicled their various Civil War experiences in diaries and private letters. Through their words, nineteenth century concepts emerged about the nature of life, love, politics, gender, and war. The information collected from these personal accounts provides historians with a deeper knowledge about the daily lives of Appalachians during the war. Yet, most of the historical attention remains on the prosecution of the war, the politics that fueled it, and the men who died fighting it. A bigger question arises from this era, a question that involves the war's impact on ordinary citizens and how the war influenced their society. By examining individuals and their conceptions of gender, new interpretations surface explaining how gender and social constructs of the time shaped their behavior and their experience of the war. Exploring gendered expectations and society's assigned gender duties along with a comparison of the actions of men and women presents a clearer picture of how people experienced the Civil War in Appalachia.

Historian Stephen Berry reexamined the concept of gender and motivation for soldiers arguing that, "the central fact that brought them to the field in the first place---the fact that they were men---has not been given due scrutiny."² A similar problem surfaces concerning the study of women and their role during the Civil War. Regarding the war experiences of women, Laura Edwards explains that women's history "has grown from a small outpost in the subfield of

² Stephen W. Berry, *All That Makes A Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 9.

Southern history into a field of its own.” But what about gender history? Women’s history focuses on the actions of women throughout time, but gender history allows for the exploration of societies at a given time socially constructed femininity and masculinity. So with looking at the Civil War era specifically, how did Appalachians’ ideas of femininity shape the lives of women during the war? Even then, how did the notions of masculinity and femininity work together, or did they? These questions reveal a major gap in the historiography of the Civil War in Appalachia, but the use of gender as an analytical tool can provide answers to these pressing questions.

Joan Wallach Scott’s contribution to the formation of Gender History places her among the preeminent scholars of the subject. Her 1986 article, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” propelled the concept of gender “beyond its scientific and social scientific origins” and “suggested how the language of sex difference had historically provided a means to articulate relationships of power.”³ Scott explained that using gender as an analytical tool demonstrates how “women and men were defined in terms of one another, and no understanding of either could be achieved by entirely a separate study.”⁴ Through the formation of gender theory in history, historians gather an understanding of both sexes and determine how men and women shaped their respective fates. This broadening of gender-specific history led to inspirations and formations of many other historical focuses including the “study of representations, language, perception, and discourse.”⁵ Astonishingly, as popular a field as gender history has become, Lee Ann Whites acknowledged in 2000 that gender remains a topic

³ Joanne Meyerowitz, “A History of ‘Gender’,” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 2008), 1356.

⁴ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986), 1054.

⁵ Meyerowitz, 1353.

that has been almost entirely absent from the history of the American Civil War.⁶ Fortunately since her statement, gender analysis has been a growing topic within the field.

Several historians have attempted to tackle this gap in gender history and much of their influence stems from earlier works about women's history in the antebellum era and the Civil War. In the context of women's history, Wilma Dunaway agrees with Catherine Clinton that "Southern women have been American history's half sisters" and if there is any truth in that, Dunaway claims, then "Appalachian women have been only second-cousins once removed in the country's regionally parochial history construction."⁷ Before investigating the historiography of Appalachian women, the scholarship of Southern women requires attention because many Elite Appalachian women followed the same feminine standards as their Deep South counterparts. Appalachian women saw their households as the center for both production and reproduction. Also the notion of submission to male authority remained central to their society. White Southerners did not think that women were inherently weak like their northern counterparts; instead they believed that white women restricted their passions and inner strength to "the benefit of social harmony and family honor." They could be spirited and defensive but only in support of the family and the patriarchal system.⁸

In the early foundations of American women's history, historians began to explore the roles of American women and their impact on American society. Anne Frier Scott's *The Southern Lady From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (1970), remains a monumental work that not only surveyed the history of Southern women, but also demonstrated how their roles evolved

⁶ Lee Ann Whites, *Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 2.

⁷ Wilma Dunaway, *Women, Work, and Family in the Antebellum Mountain South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.

⁸ Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North From the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 12-13.

from the antebellum period to the advent of the Great Depression. Scott completely dismissed the stereotypical southern woman that embodied the values of “softness, purity, and spirituality.” In reality, the plantation mistress subjected herself to a great amount of work as mother to a large family and supervisor of family slaves; all while keeping the household in perfect working order.⁹ In *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere in New England (1977)*, Nancy Cott explained how the Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century forced New England men and women into gendered spheres. Women obeyed the ideals of the “cult of domesticity,” a role in which they remained at home, separate from the public sphere, in order to fulfill their roles as housewives and mothers. According to Cott, “The norm for an adult woman remained household occupation, which implied dependence on a man’s initiating economic activity.”¹⁰

Catherine Clinton challenged Cott’s study and accused her of the “New Englandization” of American women’s history. In her book, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South (1982)*, Clinton argued that Southern women also found themselves in separate spheres and became isolated victims of the planter patriarchy. She called the plantation mistress the “slave of the slaves” because these women experienced the same level of oppression as the slaves in this patriarchal system and since “white men ruled, and both white women and slaves served the same master.”¹¹ Clinton also went as far as claiming that slaves “generally saw the mistress of the plantation as a positive influence on the slave system.”¹² If white mistresses abused their slaves, these actions were all part of a vicious cycle because they dealt with abuse

⁹ Anne Frier Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 15.

¹⁰ Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” In New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977), 21.

¹¹ Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 35.

¹² Clinton, 187-188.

themselves. Thus, these women's abuse toward slaves appeared natural.¹³ She created an image of elite Southern women as hapless victims who hold no control over their actions.

In *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (1988), Elizabeth Fox-Genovese provided a groundbreaking study of Southern women in their domestic sphere. She also added the elements of race and class to her portrayal of Southern women. In her study, Fox-Genovese fervently disagreed with Clinton's assessment of the plantation mistress and her transformation into a "slave of the slaves." She agreed that both black and white women became shaped by the plantation household and dominated by white men, but white Southern women were just as capable of abuse, domination, and racism against their slaves.¹⁴ A defined hierarchy still existed and white women still answered to their husbands and fathers, but they always held a great degree power and dominance over their slaves. Southern white women emerged as managers of the home and their successes depended on their ability to "order, persuade, or cajole servants to complete assigned tasks properly."¹⁵ Fox-Genovese clearly established that white women did not share bonds of oppression with slave women. White women lived a life of "privileged roles and identities" and this "depended upon the oppression of slave women."¹⁶ She also refuted the common claim that many Southern women secretly supported abolition. Most white Southern women, with few exceptions like the Grimke sisters, fully supported the institution of slavery and "were hardly prepared to do without slaves and enthusiastically supported secession."¹⁷ Fox-Genovese exposed how the patriarchal system in no way allowed black and white women to share the same "bonds of oppression." In reality, slavery

¹³ Clinton, 188.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988). 96.

¹⁵ Fox-Genovese, 115.

¹⁶ Fox-Genovese, 35.

¹⁷ Fox-Genovese, 47.

allowed white Southern women to maintain their lives of privilege and to accept the use of physical punishment to keep their slaves in a state of submission.

Much like Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Drew Gilpin Faust focused on elite Southern white women during the war. In *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (1996), Faust determined that the Civil War itself became the watershed moment that forced women to emerge as authoritative figures in the household and to reevaluate their place in society. These women “sought to invent new foundations for self-definition and self-worth.”¹⁸ As they could not rely on men during the war, elite Southern women’s views of patriarchy shifted. Accordingly, they reorganized the social hierarchy by justifying it with, “the cherished prerogatives of race and class, of whiteness and elitism.”¹⁹ The principal variation to the hierarchy dealt with the management of slaves. Faust saw that many of these elite white women struggled to control slaves because it challenged their general concept of femininity, to remain submissive and subordinate. Many of these privileged women “began to persuade themselves that the institution had become a greater inconvenience than benefit.”²⁰

Thavolia Glymph builds on Fox-Genovese’s research in her book *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (2008). Focusing on the household, Glymph displays how white planter women took the active role of maintaining the plantation while black women took on the role of destroying it. Southern white women riddled their private spheres with their own domineering power and violence over their slaves, which prompted slave

¹⁸ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 7.

¹⁹ Faust, 233.

²⁰ Faust, 73.

women to realize the “kind of freedom they wanted to have and build.”²¹ Glymph also countered Faust’s argument of the Civil War being a watershed moment that catapulted Southern women into involvement in house management. Glymph claims that decades prior to the war, Southern white mistresses dominated their plantation homes and used violence to coerce slaves to labor and punish them for subordination. White Southern women prior to the war did not live “lazily in subjection” or as Clinton previously argued “as a positive influence” over their slaves. In fact, plantation mistresses “by the outbreak of the Civil War...had become...central partners in slavery’s maintenance and management.”²²

All of these historians establish a foundation from which to study Southern women. However, their work mostly focused on the elite. Upper-class women left behind the most evidence, but they experienced the Civil War era as a minority. The majority of white Southern women lived on small farms either with a few slaves or with none at all. Laura Edwards, who also reflects Fox-Genovese with her book *Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* (2000), attempted to break the typical “Southern belle” stereotype through the lens of race and class. She emphasizes the roles of yeoman women to be as important as those of plantation mistress and slaves. Yeoman women’s gender roles confirm a duality of work between the public and the domestic sphere. They worked side by side with their husbands, while maintaining order in the domestic sphere and performing daily tasks. They initially supported the war, but as they lost the majority of their male breadwinners, their support waned.²³

²¹ Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11.

²² Glymph, 23, 31.

²³ Laura Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 36-37.

Although Edwards places yeomen women in the bigger picture of the Southern woman context, Appalachian scholars have notably focused on women and their experiences within specific regions of Southern Appalachian. Wilma Dunaway provided a unique study of Appalachian women throughout the entirety of her scholarship. In *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (1996), she promotes the idea that white settlers brought their ideas of capitalism into the region and created “local economies” that gradually incorporated the region into the “capitalist world system.” She also claimed that, “contrary to popular stereotypes that subsistence farming was not characteristic of antebellum Southern Appalachia.”²⁴ She highlighted some of women’s roles in this market system. As men engaged in the market, women were the ones to grow subsistence gardens, all while rearing children and maintaining the household.²⁵ Because the majority of women stayed at home and fulfilled the roles as “unpaid workers of their husbands,” some women did enter into wage labor to increase their household income. Many of these women participated in mining, and the manufacture of textile and glass.²⁶

In *Slavery in the Mountain South* (2003), Dunaway again attempted to break with another Appalachian stereotype. She explored the myths of mountain slavery and how in the past, the region was once thought of being void of this practice. As she highlighted in her first book, Appalachia became a market driven economy, so slaves naturally became the preferred laborers. Dunaway focused her last book on the yeomen women, but this time she spends more time developing the roles of Appalachian slave mistresses. Similar to Fox-Genovese and Glymph, she emphasizes in her work that the Appalachian slave mistress “engaged in brutality toward

²⁴ Wilma Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 125.

²⁵ Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, 103, 118.

²⁶ Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, 190.

enslaved women and children, just about as frequent as male owners.”²⁷ Even though Appalachian mistresses contributed to the violence toward slaves, Dunaway makes it clear that these women still abided by claims of patriarchy and were still less powerful than men. Since this remains a generalized study about slavery in the mountain South, she spends time reflecting on the differences between class. Dunaway asserted that poor white women lived in some of the same conditions as enslaved women, and sometimes in worse. They worked in field labor or hired themselves to do industrial work for low wages, and by the end of the day, their children continued to be hungry.²⁸

In *Women, Work, and Family in the Antebellum Mountain South* (2008), Dunaway’s main goal was to debunk the idea of “separate spheres” between men and women. She determined that labor shaped an Appalachian woman’s roles as a wife, mother, daughter, and housekeeper as they worked outside and inside of the home.²⁹ Dunaway contended that Appalachian women shared no regional “sisterhood” and the only thing in common was their resistance to the patriarchal societal framework that shaped the power relations in Appalachia.³⁰ She understood that these specific female groups lived in relatively small and self-contained environments and this led to a lack of shared experience. Dunaway reasserted the goal of debunking the “separate sphere” paradigm and built off the frameworks established by Clinton and Fox-Genovese. She placed her own Appalachian spin on this concept with focus on the yeomen family. Dunaway also emphasized that Appalachian women never abided by the “cult of domesticity.” Because of their race, class, and stigmatized work, poor white and nonwhite women did not meet the “cult of domesticity standards of female moral superiority or of

²⁷ Wilma Dunaway, *Slavery in the Mountain South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 168.

²⁸ Dunaway, *Slavery in the Mountain South*, 162.

²⁹ Wilma Dunaway, *Women, Work, and Family in the Antebellum Mountain South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³⁰ Dunaway, *Women, Work, and Family*, 50-51.

idealized motherhood.”³¹ These claims raise many questions within the historiography of the Civil War in Appalachia.

Regarding specific women studies of the regions of East Tennessee and western North Carolina, John Inscoe, Gordon B. McKinney, and William A. Strasser presented further evidence developing the gender lens of Civil War Appalachia. In *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (2008), John Inscoe included a look at Mary Bell, a woman “coping in Confederate Appalachia” by taking over her husband’s businesses while he served in the Confederate military. He portrays Mary Bell as a woman who fully enjoyed her new roles of head of house and slave owner. Inscoe’s interpretation of Mary Bell contrasts with Faust, who saw Bell as inadequate manager and slave owner who ultimately had a profound sense of failure.³² He also devotes a chapter to the “Talking Heroines,” the elite women of western North Carolina who chronicled their experiences of Stoneman’s raid in April 1865. These women perceived themselves as “vital to the defense of their households,” but their experiences differed from those of the poorer mountain women whose support began to wane for the Southern cause.³³

In *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (2000), John Inscoe and Gordon McKinney devote a chapter to women. They focused on how the isolated regions of western North Carolina could not stop “institutional collapse of its communities, nor shield its women from the consequences of such intrusions of a modern, war-torn world.” The women’s frustration to maintain normalcy forced many of these women to challenge the Confederate government by aiding and abetting deserters, participating in guerilla

³¹ Dunaway, *Women, Work, and Family*, 196.

³² Faust, 72.

³³ John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 220.

warfare, and instigating bread riots.³⁴ Gordon McKinney's article, "Women's Role in Civil War Western North Carolina," contains many of the same arguments that he and Inscoc put forth in their book. McKinney argued that "the destruction of the community economy, local institution and family ensured that mountain women could not support the Confederacy."³⁵ William Strassler analyzed similar incidents that took place in East Tennessee in his article, "A Terrible Calamity Has Befallen Us': Unionist Women in Civil War East Tennessee." Strassler claims that, "the departure of the majority of men from the region caused a shift in social relations" and that women made the adjustments and accepted new responsibilities to care for their family. Unionist women took on different feminine roles, especially when Tennessee seceded in June 1861. These inscrutable women petitioned politicians, spied for the Union, nursed and cooked for soldiers, helped other Unionists and prisoners escape, and even participated in guerilla warfare.³⁶

Appalachian historians frequently used the angle of gender history to explore other aspects of the region, but much of their research remains one-sided because many historians chose to focus on the Appalachian female perspective of the antebellum era or the Civil War era. Although women's experience of the conflict delivers a fascinating perspective of home life during the war, the Appalachian war experience as a whole is fragmented. The absence of the males in women's experience of the war limits the historiography and in some ways fails to explain the female experience. Female and male gender roles work together and the historiography needs both to develop a well-rounded portrayal of the Appalachian experience in

³⁴ John C. Inscoc and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

³⁵ Gordon B. McKinney, "Women's Role in Civil War Western North Carolina" in *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol LXIX, No. 1 (January 1992), 38.

³⁶ William A. Strasser, "'A Terrible Calamity Has Befallen Us': Unionist Women in Civil War East Tennessee," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 71 (1999): 66-88.

the Civil War. Historians have already looked into the Southern male experience of war on a broad scale including Bertram Wyatt-Brown in his book, *Southern Honor* (1982). Wyatt-Brown focused on the Southern elite, whose “wealth and lineage allowed them to perpetuate a code of honor increasingly outdated in early national America.” Although many saw honor as a “relic of medieval European culture,” this principle created the basis of traditional white Southern manhood. Wyatt-Brown “found that emotion rather than intellect drove Southern masculinity” and they “immortalized valor through vengeance, exalted individual will, and defended masculinity through duels, vigilantism, and lynching.”³⁷ Historian W. J. Cash described in *The Mind of the South* (1941), “the quintessential Southern man as intensely individualistic, independent, and resentful of authority.” In contrast, Cash also described the typical Southern man as the yeoman farmer, not the planter aristocrat that Wyatt-Brown linked with Southern masculinity.³⁸ Nonetheless, these various portraits of Southern manhood elaborate certain ideals that validate the arguments of both Wyatt-Brown and Cash. The concepts of individualism and independence resonated with these ideas about Southern manhood.

Stephanie McCurry’s book *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeomen Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (1995) reflects common themes within Appalachia since it shifts focus to the South’s yeomen majority. McCurry’s detailed study explained how Southern patriarchy held dominance in the South between the Southern plantation owner and the yeoman farmer who (although still occupying separate classes), gained independence as subordinates of the planter class. The goal of gaining independence relied on the display of dominance over subordinates, including women, children,

³⁷ Thompson Friend and Lorry Glover, eds., *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004) viii. See also Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) and W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (1941; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1991)

³⁸ Ibid.

and slaves. Planters and yeomen farmers displayed control over their subordinates to prove their masculine capacity. Though the low country of South Carolina shares little with Southern Appalachian demographically, the paternalism that McCurry emphasizes can relate to the same framework that Appalachians abided to in the nineteenth century. Appalachian society was also dominated by paternalism with Appalachian men as the patriarch and his wife, children, and slaves as their submissives.³⁹

In the study of masculinity, historians attempt to see how a specific era and culture construct the ideals of manhood. In *All That Makes A Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (2003), Stephen Berry employed the lens of masculinity to establish the reasons why men fought for the South during the war. Berry explained that elite white Southern men wanted to make a mark on history and this validated their concepts of masculinity. Berry also focused on the love between soldiers and their sweethearts at home, in which the love for their companions exemplified their love for their country (the South). These gender constructions underline the way in which masculinity became embedded in upper class Southern circles as an agent of historical change and how the defense of one's home resembled one's love for a woman.⁴⁰ Michael Kimmel approached the study of masculinity differently and he believed that American views of masculinity shifted during the Civil War. For Southern men, "defeat meant a kind of gendered humiliation---the Southern gentleman was discredited as a 'real man.'"⁴¹ In Kimmel's *Manhood in America* (2012), he details how Southern men felt they had failed to defend their homes and their country, the sole task impelled by honor and manhood. On the other hand, those who proclaimed Unionist loyalties and sympathies emerged from the war with a dominant

³⁹ Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴⁰ Stephen W. Berry, *All That Makes A Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴¹ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), 77.

position over their enemies that provided them with a profound reassurance of their manhood in their victory.⁴²

As the historiography of Southern men unfolds, links to gender roles in Appalachia become more pronounced. Appalachian men adhered to many of the same masculine standards presented in these books, but unfortunately a study of Appalachian manhood has never been done to the extent that Inscoe and McKinney offered about Appalachian women. W. Todd Groce and John Inscoe attacked Appalachian myths concerning the area as fully Unionist with a population of all-white, non-slaveholders, but by debunking these myths, new realities emerged. The ideals entailed within the Appalachian perceptions of politics, race, and class, defined men of this period, and the understanding of these notions will lead to other works detailing Southern Appalachian masculinity.⁴³

From the late 1970s, historians employed gender as an analytical tool in their research, but something remains missing. Many have ignored the basis of what Joan Wallach Scott emphasized in her 1986 article: using gender as an analytical tool shows how “women and men were defined in terms of one another, and no understanding of either could be achieved by entirely a separate study.”⁴⁴ To understand the Civil War experience, the historian must demonstrate perspectives from both sides of the gender spectrum and everything in between. What is not masculine in a given culture is feminine and vice versa, then with many gray areas developing in between. These notions of gender reinforce one another and ultimately balance out each other. It is difficult if not impossible to understand one without the other. In the case argued

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999). and John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008)

⁴⁴ Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” 1054.

by Lee Ann Whites, “the Civil War... suggests that gender roles as well as gender relations played a critical role in the initial outbreak of the war, as well as in its course, its conduct, and its eventual outcome in the “reconstruction of the South.”⁴⁵

Although Whites tested this historical inquiry with data from Augusta, Georgia, this use of gender analysis provides a more developed image of the war in an area that many people, even today, possess serious assumptions about. The goal is to apply the use of gender analysis to investigate the Civil War experience of East Tennessee and western North Carolina. Using the diaries, letters, and written memoirs of Appalachians, one can demonstrate how both men and women of this region understood and experienced the war through a gendered lens. Appalachians already adhered to the Southern gender ideals in the antebellum era and throughout the conflict and turmoil, Appalachian people still managed to fight in an attempt to maintain their ideals of femininity and masculinity. As the war and the internal conflict increased in the area, their fluidity of gender roles happened, as it did in the rest of the South, but in a stronger way to adjust towards the intense amount of conflict in the area. Before beginning this journey to expand the Appalachian war experience through a gendered lens, a quick overview of the Appalachian region is warranted.

Throughout the history of Appalachia, the region “has [had] no agreed-upon boundaries.” The seventeenth century labeled the “hinterlands” past the colonies, close to the outskirts of present-day Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina as Appalachia. The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) created the official boundary line in 1965, which stretched from the Southern tier of New York all the way down south to the northern parts of

⁴⁵ Whites. 3.

Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia.⁴⁶ Southern Appalachia, sometimes called the “Mountain South,” includes areas of eastern Kentucky, East Tennessee, southwest Virginia, southern West Virginia, western North Carolina, and sometimes includes in this definition upstate South Carolina, northern Georgia and Alabama. Historian John C. Campbell noted that the southern highlands or Mountain South made up the “backyard of several southern states.”⁴⁷

Out of Southern Appalachia, I have chosen to examine two parts of that region, East Tennessee and western North Carolina. These two adjacent regions share more than a mountainous border; they share many similarities in culture, topography, agriculture, racial demography, and socioeconomic makeup. Families on either side of the border had relatives or close friends on the other side, and this ensured a constant connection between the two regions. The Lenoirs of western North Carolina consistently maintained contact with their East Tennessee cousins, so they could inform them of various dangers, including invasions from the west. These regions also provide perfect microcosms to represent the Mountain South in an era of national turmoil. Much like the rest of the Southern Appalachian mountain society, the majority of the community resembled tenant farmers and landless whites; although the top tier of Appalachian society were the slaveholders. Wilma Dunaway concludes that in 1860, 41.7 percent of white Southern Appalachians lived at poverty level, 7.5 percent were working class, another 38.1 percent lived as middle class and the elite, or upper class only represented 12.2 percent of the population.⁴⁸ Based on the average of the Appalachian region, western North Carolina and East Tennessee fall close to the percentages. Insoe correlates similar conclusions that the majority of

⁴⁶ John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 9-10.

⁴⁷ John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (Originally published in 1921, Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1969), 19.

⁴⁸ For individual states: Tennessee was at 40 percent poverty, 7 percent working class, 42.6 percent middle class, and 9.6 for the upper class. For North Carolina: 46 percent poverty, 9.2 percent working class, 36 percent middle class, and 8.4 percent for the upper class. Dunaway, *Women, Work, and Family*, 113.

the residents were small farmers, but by 1860 their access to the commercial market expanded beyond the region's bounds to other parts of the South. Knoxville and Asheville both emerged as vital and growing hubs for these two regions.⁴⁹ East Tennessee and western North Carolina also represent the region because of their inherent political turmoil and dissent. Throughout the entire area of Appalachia, political divisions emerged. Not all of the Appalachia states seceded from the Union. Kentucky remained in the Union, from where Virginia seceded, West Virginia seceded from Virginia and joined the Union in 1863. Common political conflicts throughout the Mountain South provoked the use of guerilla warfare in retaliation for secession or Union occupation.

East Tennessee and western North Carolina experienced all of these factors and embodied the entirety of the Civil War experience in the divided South. Although they shared much in common, the regions reacted differently to the secession crisis of 1860 and the war itself. Comparing and contrasting these two regions allows for a deeper understanding of the Appalachian experience of war. This thesis uses diaries, letters, and memoirs from men and women in East Tennessee and western North Carolina to demonstrate how their society observed the same gender roles and constraints as the rest of the South. As divided as their politics and communities grew after the secession crisis in 1861, new assumptions about gender emerged from both secessionists and Unionists. The Civil War in Appalachia created a fluid perception of masculinity and femininity, leading to the development of different socially constructed views of gender that some people may or may not have found acceptable. Just as Appalachians' view of gender shifted, so did those in the rest of the South. Appalachians' experiences in the Civil War

⁴⁹ Insoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 104-105.

are therefore not entirely unique to the region, but the stressors of the Appalachian region created a greater flexibility of these gender roles.

Wilma Dunaway believes that even during the antebellum era, Appalachian women could not meet the standards of the “cult of domesticity” and the separate spheres. Dunaway remains correct on that assumption, but the “cult of domesticity” never entered into Appalachia at all. This concept applied to Northern women only. The industrialization and the urbanization of Northern cities promoted this ideal toward flourishing middle class families. As men entered the world of business and politics, women remained in their world, or “sphere.” Women now stayed within their domestic sphere and became the moral guardians of their families, as they were seen as inherently less passionate than men.⁵⁰ Southern women’s home became their center of their world, meaning their influence spread through the domestic sphere and into the public sphere to help their menfolk. Dunaway mentions that Southern households delayed the potential of any concept of separate spheres, but Appalachian women never could have rejected the “cult of domesticity” because it never existed in the South in the first place. Dunaway also interchanges the term of “cult of domesticity” with the “cult of true womanhood.” White Southern women could and did abide by the tenets of “the cult of true womanhood.” White Southern women strived to live by the notions of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.⁵¹ Dunaway even claims that Appalachian women confronted the patriarchal social structure, but according to Southern gender ideals, “submission remained central to society” but “women could function as virtuous and active citizens as long as they supported the system.”⁵² Women throughout the South, even in extremely divided Appalachia, attempted to hold onto these practices, but, at

⁵⁰ Campbell, 12-13.

⁵¹ Angela Boswell, “Married Women’s Property Rights and the Challenge to the Patriarchal Order” in *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with the Powers That Be*, ed. Janet Lee Coryell, (Columbia: The University of Missouri, 2000), 90.

⁵² Campbell, 12-13.

times, the stress of war forced gender to become fluid in a sense that women took on unaccustomed roles or acted beyond antebellum standards. But the basis of their original gender roles remained consistent.

Southern Appalachian men's view of manhood and masculinity stemmed from their honor and the protection of their family. For secessionists and Unionists, their differing ideals turned into opposing loyalties as the outbreak of war loomed. Different concepts and understandings emerged with the secession crisis and Unionists and Confederates alike adapted their own masculine standards suited to particular political beliefs. Men on both sides feminized their enemies as "submissionists" to either the Union or the Confederacy. The "hard code" of masculinity "pervaded all the social classes." Southern men saw the "centrality of family loyalty, the hierarchy of ascriptions, the primacy of reputation over individual conscience, and the retributive nature of justice." These tenets remained the foundation for both Secessionists and Unionists, but their political beliefs forced masculinity into a fluid state.⁵³

The first section of this thesis presents background information concerning East Tennessee and western North Carolina. It includes a general history of politics, economics, race, and events in the antebellum and war years. Understanding the background of these two regions provides a better understanding of the diversity of gender during the Civil War. The second section chronicles the wartime experiences of Appalachian women through the lens of femininity. Women remained on the home front during the war but many witnessed disorder and destruction of their everyday lives. The war altered their traditional roles within the domestic sphere including some of the notions of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity," but

⁵³ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1890s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 200, 103.

many struggled to keep their traditional roles. Their fluid notions of femininity allowed them to adapt to the harsh realities of war: including abandonment, food shortages, and assault. Women throughout Appalachia felt these brutalities on different levels, varying from class, location, and political leanings.⁵⁴ In the last section, the gender lens turns to men and the discovery of how the ideas of masculinity and manhood influenced the Southern Appalachian war experience. The use of the term “manhood” references honor and the ability to provide for his dependents. The use of the term of patriarch embodies the dominant/submissive relationship between a man and his dependents: wives, children, slaves. Due to political divisions and class differences, Appalachians perceived these notions of manhood and patriarchy differently throughout the course of the American Civil War.

When investigating the lives of Appalachians during the Civil War, historians have rarely sought to use the gender lens to analyze and understand the experiences of Appalachians on the home front. Even when used, historians tend to focus only on the women’s experience of war in Appalachia. Examining the written word of these Appalachian residents and the use of the gender lens to explore their socially constructed gender roles, a new and wholesome interpretation of their experiences emerges. Appalachians followed the Southern set of gendered rules, the Civil War transformed gender into a fluid state throughout the rest of the South, and Appalachians changed right along with it. This thesis illustrates that through the Civil War, Appalachians attempted to maintain their gender roles, but the extreme political divisions and violence forced them to adapt to these extremes. While some attempts remained unsuccessful, some Appalachians took advantage of the extension and flexibility of their gendered boundaries.

⁵⁴ Boswell, 90.

John Inscoe reminds us that, “there is considerable evidence that the war was in many respects experienced with more intensity in the mountains than elsewhere in [North Carolina].”⁵⁵ If this is true, then East Tennessee in the same respect dealt with even more internal strife and division than its eastern neighbor during the conflict. In the midst of national turmoil, Appalachians saw their world changing and wanted to hold onto something familiar, such as their gender roles. Men and women spanning all regions of the South, not just Southern Appalachia, viewed gendered behavior in a very different light by 1865 than they did before the outbreak of the Civil War, but based on the Appalachian experience, the men and women of the mountain South region felt the greatest changes.

⁵⁵ Inscoe and McKinney, 12.

CHAPTER 2

A CIVIL WAR WITHIN THE CIVIL WAR: CONTRASTING THE COMMUNITIES OF EAST TENNESSEE AND WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

To understand the experiences of Appalachians during the antebellum and Civil War years, one must familiarize oneself with the divisions and tensions within East Tennessee and western North Carolina. Southern Appalachians followed the standard set of gender ideals found acceptable during the nineteenth century, but these ideals became blurred with the war close to the homefront in both East Tennessee and western North Carolina. Historian John Inscoe describes these two adjacent regions of Appalachia with “similarities in topography, agricultural output, racial demography, and socioeconomic makeup.” Despite their similarities, “highlanders on either side of the border” demonstrated “collective views regarding their commitment to the Union and to the South.”¹

Many assumptions about the region and its people plague its history and remain present today. As early as 1861, amongst the beginning of the war, journalists such as James W. Taylor exclaimed the Alleghania region (term used prior to Appalachia) boasted their dedication to free labor and “the slaves are so few and scattered.” Read in *The Continental Monthly* in March 1862, James R. Gilmore illustrated the Alleganian region full of “inhabitants of the mountain districts, who hold but few slaves, who have preserved a devoted love for the Union.”² From the beginning of the Civil War, these ideas emerged about the region, and early historians read these articles and assumed these characteristics as fact. These sources instilled Appalachian history with assumptions of devout Unionism and white racial purity. Appalachian historians, such as

¹ John C. Inscoe, *Race War and Remembrance in the Appalachia South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 101.

² Inscoe, *Race War and Remembrance*, 1.

Wilma Dunaway, John C. Inscoe, and Robert Tracey McKenzie, disprove these notions thoroughly, providing a new image that details the great political and moral divide present at the time of the Civil War.

Stereotypes identify many Appalachians as self-sufficient farmers in the nineteenth century. Classic images show farmers working their land to provide enough food and supplies to support their families. James R. Gilmore detailed in *The Continental Monthly* that the highlanders “who are, if not at [a] positive feud, at least on anything but social harmony with their aristocratic neighbors of the lowlands and of the plantation.” He highlights a tension among the yeomen farmers and the elite planters throughout the region and presents the common myth of the yeomen farmers’ desire for a “counter-revolution [to] sweep the slavocracy from existence.”³ These assumptions create an appearance that the relationships between the elite and the yeoman farmers remain distant and even hostile and competitive toward each other. A conflict emerges between the subsistence farmer and the elite planter over resources, land, and labor. On the other hand, when New York journalist Frederick Law Olmsted travelled around the South between 1853 and 1854, he stopped in Appalachia, and he proposed several questions to its residents. He asked about the idea of abolition of slavery and few “advocated abolishing the institution.” Some reacted with disgust when Olmsted told them that blacks in New York were considered free. Overall he gathered that Appalachians saw this system as a “lesser evil” and their blatant “racism dominated their rationales for tolerating” this particular institution.⁴

Historians realize that these two groups were not as “cut and dry” as we once thought. Wilma Dunaway proves that the “subsistent homesteader” image as false and that “it was

³ Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 1-2.

⁴ Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 25.

unusual in the region during this period.” A minority of landholders controlled 3/5 of the arable land in Appalachia, leaving the worst terrain to the majority of the population who worked as tenants on property they did not own. This agrarian structure discouraged subsistence farming and as Dunaway notes, 90 percent of Appalachian farm owners produced surpluses and the average farm “consumed less than one-quarter of its total annual grain and livestock production for subsistence.” This agrarian structure also motivated many smaller farmers to produce more for the market in hopes to become “larger and wealthier in their holdings.” Appalachian farmers sold their surpluses in the external market and these surpluses included “grains, livestock, tobacco, cotton, orchard fruits, and wool.” The Appalachian farmer valued surplus and desired profit much like many of the Southern planters.⁵⁶

Despite the years of historians casting the yeoman farmer as only concerned with subsistence farming and in direct competition with the elite, the yeomen emerge as a more complex figure in Appalachia. Both East Tennessee and western North Carolina were market driven and not isolated with yeoman farmers working only for subsistence. Their market ties established their reliance on the use of slavery, although the past assumptions remarked on the absence of this institution. One-third of Appalachian farmers “who held slaves, produced more than one-half of the region’s total output of major food crops and meat.”⁷ The institution of slavery became essential to turn out a profit and the slaveholders monopolized the region’s production.

Past chroniclers of Appalachia, historians and writers alike, tended to classify East Tennesseans and western North Carolinians as “nonslaveholders,” and therefore this idea added

⁵ Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 152-154.

⁶ Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, 153.

⁷ Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, 134.

to the independent yeoman farmer image. The assumption that mountain farmers never relied on slaves to help produce their crops provoked the stereotype that Appalachia remained an anti-slavery region. In 1888, Thomas Humes, an East Tennessee clergyman and educator, wrote about “the loyal mountaineers” of Tennessee and noted that slavery “had a depressing, degrading influence on them.”⁸ Humes asserted that “slave labor and the plantation system forced yeomen from their seaboard and piedmont homes up into the mountains.” Slavery “shut out white labor” and forced the yeomen to remain independent from the slave system.⁹ A wedge emerged between the yeoman farmers and the elite planters based on the use of slavery, enhancing the idea that the yeomen would be unsupportive of a secessionist government led by slaveholders. In fact, this myth of the loyal, Unionist yeomen farmers proves false. Later on in the chapter, the yeomen emerge as a complex group that in some cases supported both the Union and the Confederacy while even embracing the practice of slavery themselves and instituting it on a smaller scale.

Historian W. Todd Groce provided insight on Unionist and Confederate loyalties throughout East Tennessee. Groce demonstrated that 62 percent of secessionists worked in a professional occupation compared to 38 percent of Unionists, who tended to work in an agricultural setting. Sixty percent of secessionists owned estates worth more than \$5,000, whereas only 40 percent of Unionist did. Unionists tended to be over 40 years of age while only 28 percent of secessionists were over 40. Unionists and secessionists differed in every category except for the practice of slaveholding in which around 40 percent of both secessionists and

⁸ Through his account of East Tennessee in *The Loyal Mountaineers of Tennessee*, Humes’ agenda specifically linked the idea of “nonslaveholders” to the idea of loyal patriots to the Union. The “loyal mountaineers” inherited the same “broad patriotism” that the mountaineers so valiantly fought for in the battle of King’s Mountain during the American Revolution. Humes finds a connection between the patriots of the American Revolution and the Unionists of the Civil War.

⁹ Insoe, *Race War and Remembrance*, 25.

Unionists were classified as slaveholders.¹⁰ In a similar fashion, in western North Carolina, results on a referendum to hold a secession convention showed a “fairly even split between slaveholders and little or no correlation between a county’s slave population and its vote on secession.”¹¹ Slave ownership in Appalachia did not define loyalty to either the Union or Confederacy, which disproves the assumption of the region as a bastion of Union-loving nonslaveholders. Many Appalachians claimed allegiance to the Union yet owned slaves, whereas some sided with the Confederacy and owned none. Political allegiance and slave ownership remained separate issues and showed no correlation.

In terms of mobilization, both East Tennessee and western North Carolina provided many soldiers, but according to statistics, head of households were reluctant to join immediately after the call for volunteers. In Ashe County, North Carolina, the data of marital and household status of enlistees of 1861 and 1862 reflects that young, married men lacked enthusiasm for military service. Only 75 married men enlisted in 1861 compared to 156 unmarried men. As the war progressed into 1862, the number of married men increased to 200 enlistees, whereas unmarried men increased to 162. The data also show that although a greater number of unmarried men enlisted, this is because a majority of them lived in their parental home. Only 9 unmarried men owned their own home, whereas 126 lived with their family. Crawford explains that the 70 married men who owned their home suggests, “the relatively older, more established households, with greater economic and domestic resources...were better able to respond to the Confederate call in 1861.” Married men who established their own homes and unmarried men who remained in their parental home enlisted more often because their greater resources both financially and

¹⁰ W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War 1860-1870* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 66.

¹¹ Inscoc, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 29.

socially led them to support the Confederacy. In other words, the “Confederate cause seems to have been most active among those households with sufficient resources to sustain the loss of one or more adult members to military service.”¹² This trend emerged in other western North Carolina counties. In Buncombe County, the vast majority of “the 1861 recruits ... came from households that included other adult males” and that in Henderson County, a local minister stated “out of the 90 men who composed a company, only two or three were married.” Similar data in East Tennessee reveal, “Men who volunteered before the end of March 1862 were predominately young, single males.”¹³ Unmarried men’s absences provided less of a “hindrance to the continued functioning farms, businesses, and households.”¹⁴ Their departure had less of an impact on their families compared to a male head of household, as they were more dispensable than the ones who would join them in the months ahead. These western North Carolinian statistics correlate to those in East Tennessee in terms of how secessionists usually held more wealth than those who claimed Unionist loyalties.

As new light falls upon the updated image of the Appalachian yeoman farmer, the notion of mountain slavery coincides with it. Slavery existed in this region, although on a smaller scale as roughly 1/10 of the white households owned slaves in East Tennessee.¹⁵ Slaves constituted approximately 10 percent of western North Carolina’s population, and roughly 90 percent of white western North Carolinians owned no slaves.¹⁶ Sociologist Wilma Dunaway argues that 29

¹² Martin Crawford, *Ashe County’s Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2001), 93-94.

¹³ Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolnton and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 119.

¹⁴ John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 75.

¹⁵ McKenzie, 16.

¹⁶ John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 9.

percent of Southern families owned slaves compared to the 18 percent of Appalachian families that did.¹⁷

Slave labor practices varied throughout Appalachia. Slavery in the mountain South was distinctive because Appalachian farms grew a more diverse set of crops compared to Tidewater areas and the Lower South. Both Dunaway and Inscoc detail how the Appalachian farms cultivated many different crops and to “generate their variety of market surpluses, [they] aggregated labor from family, wage laborers, tenants or croppers, squatters, and slaves.”¹⁸

Another unique characteristic of mountain slavery involved the ability of slaveholders to rent out and employ an excess amount of slaves to nonslaveholders. This process of “hiring out” slaves remained a popular practice in Appalachia. In western North Carolina, the largest slaveholders worked in nonagricultural professions such as merchants, doctors, and lawyers. The owners invested in slave labor and used their slaves in their businesses, shops, mills, mines, and even hotels and resorts. Although the mountain South boasted many farms and a diverse set of crops, the topography did not allow the region’s economy to be solely reliant on staple crop agriculture. The “hiring out” process allowed slave labor to enter other markets and give yeoman farmers the ability to rent out slaves. This process not only yielded greater profits to the slaveholder, it also instilled a deeper connection between the yeoman farmers and other nonslaveholders and slavery.

¹⁷ Wilma Dunaway, *Slavery in the American Mountain South* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 25. Wilma Dunaway has provided an extensive study of Southern Appalachia, in particular issues dealing with women, race, and slavery. In this book, Dunaway contributes an interesting look into slavery in Appalachia, often highlighting the enslavement of the African-Americans in this region. Readers need to be cautious with her use of primary sources and evidence. She frequently cites sources outside of the Appalachian region. She uses some slave narratives from White, Coffee, and Franklin Counties that are not considered in the East Tennessee region. The use of these Middle Tennessee counties can make her data inaccurate. The same goes for Jackson County, North Carolina, which is located in the eastern part of the state, whereas Jackson, North Carolina falls within Appalachia.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 60.

Slavery not only helped increase the marketable trade of crops between elite slaveholders and yeomen farmers but also emerged as a major connection to the outside regions, in particular with both the Northern and Southern states. This connection provided Appalachia with ties to bigger markets that led to greater commerce, especially with factories and other types of industry in the North. As cotton dominated the agriculture of the Lower South, planters depended on the importation of food supplies from the Upper South. These “hinterlands” such as western North Carolina and East Tennessee “took advantage of the increased demand for their surplus crops.”¹⁹ These economic ties helped create a less isolated region.

It is also important to note that alongside mountain slavery, Southern Appalachia boasted its own antislavery movement as early as the late eighteenth century. Inscoc describes how “East Tennessee had been the site of the South’s most fully developed antislavery movement.” Abolitionist activity grew with an influx of Methodists and Quakers into the region. In 1797, a Pennsylvania Quaker named Thomas Embree published a letter in the *Knoxville Gazette* “calling on ‘the public spirited citizens of every denomination whose patriotic zeal is not limited to those of their own color’ to join in an effort to effect ‘a gradual abolition of slavery of every kind’ in the state.”²⁰ The nation’s first manumission society was formed at the Lost Creek Meeting House in Jefferson County in 1815 and new societies emerged in Blount, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Knox, Sullivan, and Washington counties.²¹ Two leading abolitionist editors, Elihu Embree and Benjamin Lundy, established antislavery newspapers in the region. Embree published the *Manumission Intelligencer* in 1819 and later *The Emancipator* in 1820, and Lundy ran his paper *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* in Greenville, Tennessee. By 1827, East

¹⁹ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 41.

²⁰ Durwood Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South: Ezekiel Birdseye on Slavery, Capitalism, and Separate Statehood in East Tennessee, 1841-1846* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Tennessee contained 1/5 of all the antislavery societies in the United States.²² In 1834, abolitionists from East Tennessee including Ezekiel Birdeye, Robert J. McKinney, and William C. Roadman voted against the provision that “the General Assembly shall have no power to pass laws for the emancipation of slaves without the consent of their owner or owners.” The provision passed 30 votes to 27.²³ In addition, Inscoc points out that this “antislavery rhetoric undoubtedly fanned the flames of class resentment among mountaineers against the planter aristocracy” but “a rampant racism among these highlanders led very few to support their cause.” Well before 1860, the abolition fervor quieted down in Appalachia as tensions mounted on sectional issues.

In 1850, “massive changes occurred in East Tennessee’s economy” and “made the section’s prosperity increasingly dependent upon growing commerce with the Lower South.”²⁴ East Tennessee welcomed the completion of two major railroads, the East Tennessee and Georgia railroad in 1855, and the East Tennessee and Virginia line in 1858. These railroads together linked much of the region with both the north and south via Bristol and Chattanooga. Western North Carolina maintained trade with the plantation markets of Georgia and South Carolina and its leaders demanded the development of rail lines to link their part of the state with the eastern half and the rest of the south. On both sides of the mountains, Appalachians maintained strong commercial ties with other parts of the country that allowed the expansion of the market economy to the average yeoman farmer.²⁵

John Inscoc provides similar insight into this complex relationship by explaining how mountain masters, the powerful, slaveholding minority, “established and maintained the lucrative

²² Dunn, 6-7.

²³ Dunn, 13.

²⁴ Dunn, 19.

²⁵ Inscoc, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 105.

markets for mountain produce and livestock in the Lower South.”²⁶ In 1860, western North Carolina slaveholders (only a tenth of the region’s population) “held over a third of its landed wealth.” Inscoe calculates that the 50 largest slaveholders (only a minority of 2.7 percent of all slaveholders) held over a fifth of the total amount of slaves, land, and personal wealth.²⁷ In 1850, 88.2 percent of the state legislators from western North Carolina were slaveholders and the number increased to 93.7 percent by 1860. The percentage of slaveholding representatives of western North Carolina boasted the most slaveholding legislators in the South and had even more than the South Carolinian representatives who only had 81 percent of their legislators as slaveholders in 1860. Among all slaveholding states in the country, 56.5 legislators identified as slaveholders in 1850, and 65.1 percent in 1860. These numbers prove that wealth parlayed into power and prestige in western North Carolina.²⁸ The “mountain masters” influence over the region of western North Carolina shows a great divide financially between the leaders and the constituents, but, as Inscoe points out, the lower classes, such as the yeoman farmers overlooked these issues, and voted for the elite to take government positions.²⁹

East Tennesseans reacted to “mountain masters” in a different way. Although in East Tennessee, Knoxville’s economic elite, the merchants, bankers, and lawyers, dominated and held most of the political offices above the level of alderman, the notion of slavery did not compel support one way or the other.³⁰ East Tennessee identified with the South and shared similar fears involving race, and “antislavery agitation from the North continued to repel” almost all of the citizens. But at the same time they resented the influence of large slaveholders over political affairs, with the exception of Andrew Johnson, who identified as a Unionist slaveholder. With

²⁶ Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 263.

²⁷ Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 121.

²⁸ Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 125.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ McKenzie, 42.

fears involving slaves and slaveholders, East Tennessee had a hard time trusting either side of the political and social spectrum.³¹

The absence of class tensions within western North Carolina allowed a relationship to emerge between the mountain masters and the rest of the nonslaveholding majority. This allowed the elite to serve “as conduits that allowed their fellow mountaineers, regardless of how small or how remote their holdings, access to that extended trade network.”³² The elite used their “varied business and professional pursuits [to play] active and vital roles in a society that was far more integrated socially and economically” than the rest of the South. These mutual relationships depended on a specific economic transaction in that the elite relied on the yeomen’s demand of their goods, and the yeomen relied on what the slaveholders had to offer.³³ Yeomen farmers depended on the mountain masters for their ability to establish their own place in the market. This mutual exchange of goods provided a relationship that defied class structure and boasted support for the elite.

Before the outbreak war in 1860 and 1861, the elite planters and the yeoman farmers maintained this mutual relationship based on this economic transaction. Yeomen fought for the defense of their homes based on a variety of different beliefs. Some fought to protect the institution of slavery to maintain their relationship with the southern gentry who held power and influence over the local economy and politics. Many feared the election of a northern Republican, Abraham Lincoln, would end the practice of slavery. William John Brown from Asheville told his son, James E. Brown, who lived in New Zealand at the time, how men in the

³¹ Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 21.

³² Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 263.

³³ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 130.

region have volunteered to “protect the South vs the Black Republicans & Lincoln.”³⁴ Even those against secession, including political leaders such as Zebulon Vance, William Brownlow, and Andrew Johnson, agreed, “Slavery was safer in, rather than out of, the Union.”³⁵ Racism remained on either side of the issue, and the many of those opposing secession refrained from associating with the abolition movement. Without slavery, the mountain masters would lose millions of dollars in property and their means of production. The yeomen would lose their connections with the gentry and their primary buyer of their marketable food crops. These dynamic relationships fostered divided loyalties in the mountains of Southern Appalachia as people in both the regions of East Tennessee and western North Carolina sought to solve the issue of secession.

Other than economic similarities, both East Tennessee and western North Carolina established similar political ties. But issues developed between the Whigs and the Democrats throughout the regions. Both East Tennessee and western North Carolina “had been bastions of Whig Party strength” until the party’s demise in the 1850s. In East Tennessee, town-based groups such as lawyers and merchants, and others living in more economically developed areas tended to support the Whig Party, whereas those living in rural areas supported the Democrats. Similar to Tennessee, “North Carolinians most able to profit from new entrepreneurial opportunities were likely to favor the Whigs.”³⁶ In the North Carolina gubernatorial campaign in 1848, Democratic candidate David S. Reid proposed the idea to remove the limitation among the prerequisite for voting. The ownership of 50 acres of property or the payment of taxes had been

³⁴ William John Brown to James E. Brown, April 26, 1861 in Christopher M. Watford, *The Civil War In North Carolina: Soldiers’ and Civilians’ Letters and Diaries, 1861-1865, Volume II :The Mountains* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), 9.

³⁵ Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 28.

³⁶ Crawford, 49.

the qualifying circumstances to vote. This idea of “free suffrage” became the key issue when campaigning against his rival, Whig candidate Charles Manly. Manly won against Reid, but later in 1850, Reid claimed victory over Manly as governor and the issue of free suffrage moved to the forefront.³⁷ The debate over free suffrage won out in 1857 by a popular referendum with 50,007 votes to 19,397. This allowed an estimated 125,000 North Carolinian men to gain the right to vote.³⁸ This law created even great divisions between the planter class and the nonslaveholders. This division worsened when the Whig supported ad valorem taxation of slaves. This allowed slaves to be taxed as property, thus planters dealing with an increasing tax burden.³⁹ This pattern changed in East Tennessee by 1854, mostly due to the increasing influence of the sectional crisis, stemming out of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.⁴⁰ After 1854, merchants, lawyers, and other professionals in the urban setting drifted out of the Whig Party in West Tennessee but flocked more to the Whig Party in East Tennessee. The Democratic Party gained new voters in West Tennessee, whereas East Tennessee remained loyal to the Whigs.⁴¹ Coincidentally, West Tennessee and East North Carolina boasted the majority of plantations in each state.⁴² Both these regions “continued to mount stubborn resistance to the Democrats” and felt the pressure of the growing “intrastate sectional biases” erupting in the “central and far ends

³⁷ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 142.

³⁸ William S. Powell, “Free Suffrage”, <http://ncpedia.org/free-suffrage> (accessed 16 March 2014).

³⁹ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 145.

⁴⁰ The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 created the territories of Kansas and Nebraska and repealed the Compromise of 1820, which had previously involved the regulation of slavery by the division of free states and slave states by the 36°30' parallel. This act made the Compromise of 1820 null and void and gave individual states the right to utilize popular sovereignty on the issue of slavery. The Whig Party’s national platform fell victim to this new act and the party disintegrated at the national level. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 95, 194.

⁴¹ Historian Noel Fisher highlights that these trends reflect the sectional crisis on voting in Tennessee but “these connections were tenuous, however, and local factors may have been more influential.” Fisher, *War at Every Door*, 11.

⁴² Stephen V. Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 10. Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 181.

of their states.”⁴³ In the election of 1860, two-thirds of these mountain regions voted for the Constitutional Union candidate John Bell. Inscoe indicates that the two-thirds of these East Tennesseans and western North Carolinians showed “relatively strong commitments to the Union.”⁴⁴

On the other hand, some yeoman farmers in the mountain region fought for the right to emerge as an independent nation and in correlation to create a stronger economy. Congressman Thomas Clingman, western North Carolina’s strongest proslavery advocate, found his constituents unsure of the decision to secede. Clingman emerged as an unusual politician, who established himself as “North Carolina’s most ultrasouthern representative in Washington,” yet he owned no slaves. Clingman first emerged on the political scene as a “loyal nationalist Whig” during his first term in Congress from 1843 to 1845. As an avid follower of Henry Clay, Clingman rejected the plan for the annexation of Texas out of fear that it would reignite the slavery question. He desperately wanted to avoid sectional issues that threatened party unity. He also drew attention as one of the only southerners of either party to demand the repeal of the “gag order,” that prevented Congressmen from introducing anti-slavery legislation. Southerners and especially his constituents feared his betrayal of the South.⁴⁵

In 1845, James Graham entered the congressional election against Clingman on the platform that Clingman’s stance against the annexation of Texas and his support to end the “gag rule” revealed him to be an abolitionist and traitor against the South. Graham defeated Clingman with 54 percent of the vote. Clingman realized this defeat meant he needed to appeal to the

⁴³ Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 105.

⁴⁴ Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 106.

⁴⁵ Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 182.

“sectional identities of western Carolinians as southerners.”⁴⁶ He won the election of 1847 as he adopted a “more acceptable southern Whig stance” by berating the Democratic Party for igniting sectional tensions but at the same time defending slavery against northern Abolitionists.⁴⁷ Soon the Whig Party found it hard to reconcile with Clingman’s stance on slavery and he realized he “moved one step closer to the Democratic party.”⁴⁸ Clingman desired to move from the House of Representatives to the Senate and his alliances with the Democratic Party allowed him to “broaden his political appeal and win election by the state legislature to a senate seat” by capturing his support of “the influential planters of the eastern half of the state.” Clingman won the opportunity to fill in the unexpired term of Sen. Asa Biggs in 1858 and won again in 1860.⁴⁹

As the majority of his constituents identified themselves as nonslaveholders, Clingman defended secession from the Union in terms that his constituents could understand. Clingman stressed the economic factors that nonetheless would affect the western North Carolina population. He “made no mention of the plantation system, slavery, or the cotton economy.” Instead, he focused on the burden of protective tariffs and the high prices that his community had to pay for iron. He insisted that if the South became a separate nation, these financial burdens and inequalities would disappear and would improve links to market commerce.⁵⁰

As for Tennessee, the eastern, middle, and western regions competed for “political dominance, revenues, and funding for internal improvements.” As the region that was settled first, East Tennessee controlled much of the state’s politics, but by 1812, the rapid growth in industry and population propelled Middle Tennessee into control. By the 1830s, Middle

⁴⁶ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 184-185.

⁴⁷ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 185.

⁴⁸ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 188.

⁴⁹ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 181.

⁵⁰ Inscoc, *Mountain Masters*, 191.

Tennessee “blocked several bills funding railroad and road projects in the other two sections.”⁵¹ These issues created great political schisms throughout the state and East Tennesseans “craved development that would improve the region’s economic position.” Although these industrial and internal improvements drew East Tennesseans and western North Carolinians to the Whig Party, others “identified strongly with the South and shared Southern fears of the North.” A minority relied on the dependence of slavery and Southern trade, and repelled Northern anti-slavery sentiment, whereas others “resented the influence of large slaveholders over political affairs.”⁵² Both East Tennessee and western North Carolina had their fair share of mixed political allegiances of their population prior to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Although clashes emerged between the Whigs and Democrats in East Tennessee, both parties were well represented through the region. Where central East Tennessee supported the Whigs, the northeastern counties were the home of Andrew Johnson and the Democrats.⁵³ One of Johnson’s most enduring enemies was William “Parson” Brownlow, editor of the *Knoxville Whig* and “spokesman of the East Tennessee Unionist.”⁵⁴ Although they shared many similarities including “both had risen from obscurity, both resented the influence of large slaveholders over Southern politics, and both were passionately devoted to the interests of East Tennessee,” they disagreed on how East Tennessee could improve. Brownlow saw internal improvement as the answer, but Johnson favored limited government and desired protection of the common people from economic exploitation. He even attacked bank and railroad charters that many Whigs assumed would help promote East Tennessee. Their political differences ignited a war of words

⁵¹ Fisher, 14.

⁵² Fisher, 21.

⁵³ Fisher, 11.

⁵⁴ Fisher, 12, 14.

between the two, and both accused each other of immoral behavior and of promoting hatred and violence.⁵⁵

Of course, this was not the first time that Brownlow managed to start a political fight, as he was famous for his exchange of slander and assaults with Landon Carter Haynes, a rival Democratic newspaper editor, in 1840. Things escalated so badly between the two that “an assailant fired at Brownlow” in which he “accosted Haynes on the streets of Jonesborough and began beating him with a cane.” Haynes then pulled out a pistol and shot Brownlow in the leg. These conflicts forced Haynes to step down as editor for the *Jonesborough Sentinel*, and Brownlow emerged popular as ever. Although Brownlow won this battle of politics and newspapers, Haynes would always seek revenge against Brownlow, especially during the Civil War.⁵⁶

The mixed political climate finally took a turn as the secession crisis unfolded in 1860 with the election of the Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln. During the presidential election of 1860, Tennessee took a leading role in the organization of the Constitutional Union Party with the state’s own presidential candidate John Bell. Bell received 12 out of the 39 electoral votes because the Democrats split the votes between Stephen Douglas and John C. Breckinridge.⁵⁷ Although some Tennesseans distrusted the election of Abraham Lincoln and feared the “triumph of the Black Republicans,” they favored a wait and see course of how Lincoln would handle the situation. Even many Unionists in the region were weary of the newly elected president. Many made sure to separate themselves from the antislavery movement, arguing that staying within the Union protected the institution far better than leaving it.

⁵⁵ Fisher, 14.

⁵⁶ Fisher, 12.

⁵⁷ Fisher, 23.

Brownlow stated that he hated Northern abolitionists and much as Southern disunionists.⁵⁸ As for “Carolina highlanders, whether they themselves owned slaves or not, [they] had some stake in the institution and thus, to varying degree, accepted it.” They “were aware of [slavery’s] ills” but their devotion to property rights and their aversion to blacks outweighed any interest in abolition.⁵⁹

After the election, Senator Andrew Johnson and Representative T.A.R. Nelson held a public meeting and provided resolutions “asserting the right of Southerners to take slaves into all territories, criticizing antislavery agitation, and deploring the election of a sectional president.” Johnson then proposed a resolution declaring secession illegal, yet many of his fellow Democrats voted it down. Johnson soon returned to the Senate and he attempted to rally the Democrats for support. On the Senate floor he said, "I will not give up this government ... No; I intend to stand by it ... and I invite every man who is a patriot to ... rally around the altar of our common country ... and swear by our God, and all that is sacred and holy, that the Constitution shall be saved, and the Union preserved."⁶⁰ He needed a compromise and at the same time he wanted to satisfy Southern demands, but he felt that if the Southern states remained in the Union, Democrats would be in control of Congress after Lincoln’s inauguration, and with their control, they could protect the South’s interest.⁶¹ Johnson’s hope for the preservation of the Union began to slip away.

⁵⁸ Insoe, *Race War and Remembrance*, 115-116.

⁵⁹ Insoe, *Mountain Masters*, 113-114.

⁶⁰ Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1989), 131.

⁶¹ Trefousse, 134.

Tennessee governor and staunch secessionist, Isham G. Harris, requested a vote throughout the state concerning a convention to consider secession.⁶² In February 1861, after the election calling for a convention ended, the results found that the majority of Tennessee rejected the convention (68,282 to 59,449 votes).⁶³ East Tennessee voted 20 percent in favor of the convention compared to Middle Tennessee with 48 percent in favor and West Tennessee with 74 percent.⁶⁴ This vote proved to many Unionist leaders such as Andrew Johnson, William “Parson” Brownlow, T.A.R. Nelson, O.P. Temple, and John Fleming, that East Tennessee desired to remain with the Union, much like the previous year’s presidential canvas when John Bell won Tennessee. But this public sentiment quickly deteriorated with the attack on Fort Sumter and President Abraham Lincoln’s call for troops in April 1861. These events incited outrage amongst East Tennesseans and prominent local secessionists including John Crozier Ramsey, his father J.G.M. Ramsey, William H. Sneed, John H. Crozier, and W.W. Wallace. These Tennessee secessionists moved to exploit the shift in public opinion.⁶⁵

Public opinion changed and Tennessee voted to leave the Union on May 7, 1861 with voters approving the agreement on June 8, 1861.⁶⁶ Sentiment in East Tennessee, however, remained largely unchanged. Demonstrating even more division the city of Knoxville endorsed secession with a 68 percent majority. Regardless of 2/3 of their state voting for secession, Unionist leaders recognized East Tennessee’s desire to remain in the Union. After the vote, Unionist leaders met in Greenville to discuss the current political situation. By the first day of the meeting, the Unionists had already split into two groups. The radicals headed by Nelson and

⁶² Groce, 25.

⁶³ Fisher, 24.

⁶⁴ Groce, 29.

⁶⁵ Fisher, 29.

⁶⁶ Ellen Renshaw House, *A Very Violent Rebel*, Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), xxiii.

Brownlow declared that the secession of Tennessee was unconstitutional and void and that East Tennessee, along with some Middle Tennessee counties, would continue “to constitute the true state of Tennessee.” Nelson also put forth a conciliation agreement that placed East Tennessee as a neutral region that, if attacked, would defend themselves with support from the Federal government. The conservatives of this group, including Temple, saw these resolutions as reckless, but after days of debate, the convention delegates agreed on a plan. They agreed to send a committee to the Tennessee Confederate legislature requesting that East Tennessee and the Unionist counties of Middle Tennessee be allowed to form a separate state.⁶⁷

The Tennessee legislature rejected this plan and decided not to take any action on this particular matter. Moderate Unionists were disappointed, but they encouraged their followers to remain patient and avoid any conflicts with Confederate authorities. Radical Unionists refused to give up their fight to ward off Confederate rule and their actions resulted in violence. Unionists “organized and drilled military companies, seized political control of many counties, attempted to acquire weapons and ammunition, and initiated contacts with the Union army in Kentucky.”⁶⁸ Many Unionists escaped to Kentucky, while others remained in East Tennessee to harass Confederate troops.⁶⁹ After the June vote, fearing for his life, Andrew Johnson decided to flee East Tennessee through the Cumberland Gap and head north, leaving his family behind.⁷⁰ The summer and fall of 1861 proved to be a violent time for East Tennessee, and Union dissenters proved to be a hard crowd to stop.

⁶⁷ East and Middle Tennessee “had originated as separate enterprises” and they functioned apart from West Tennessee. These regions “established grand divisions” for purposes of taxation, appropriations, and some political appointments. The sections competed for “political dominance, revenues, and funding for internal improvements” but “Whigs in East and West Tennessee frequently allied against Democratic Middle Tennessee, but representatives from the middle counties nonetheless tended to dominate state legislature.” Such political success provided the change of the state capital from Knoxville to Nashville. Fisher, 15-16, 38-39.

⁶⁸ Fisher, 41.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Trefousse, 142-143

As for North Carolina, the decision for secession proved to be a difficult contest. The state legislature held a vote on February 28 based on whether the state should hold a convention on February 28. Seven out of seventeen western North Carolina counties voted for the convention. Some Unionists including western North Carolinian Whig and Congressman Zebulon Vance desired a convention since he viewed a convention “as the only democratic means by which a people should commit themselves to war.” Though Vance treasured this democratic process, he nonetheless campaigned for Unionist delegates to control the convention.⁷¹ With 50.3 percent of the vote, North Carolinians rejected the call for a convention.⁷²

With the bombardment of Fort Sumter and President Abraham Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers, North Carolina felt a greater threat than before. Bordering the state of South Carolina, North Carolinians found themselves not far from the action at Fort Sumter. North of the state, Virginia seceded on April 17, just two days after the attack. Lincoln’s call for troops created outrage amongst North Carolinians who felt their way of life was under attack. Zebulon Vance described how he learned of the events. He stated that:

For myself, I will say that I was canvassing for the Union with all my strength; I was addressing a large and excited crowd, large numbers of whom were armed, and literally had my arms extended upward in pleading for peace and the Union of our Fathers, when the telegraphic news was announced of the firing on Sumter and [the] President’s call for seventy-five thousand volunteers. When my hand came down from the impassioned gesticulation, it fell slowly and sadly by the side of a Secessionist.⁷³

Vance among other North Carolinians felt a sense of betrayal by Lincoln due to his demand for troops from the state to wage war on the South. Previously, Secretary of State William H. Seward assured Vance and other Unionist congressmen from the Upper South that

⁷¹ Inscoe and McKinney, 53.

⁷² Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 243.

⁷³ Gordon B. McKinney, *Zeb Vance: North Carolina’s Civil War Governor and Gilded Age Political Leader* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 76.

the Lincoln Administration would follow a “let alone” policy regarding the Confederacy. This policy stated that Lincoln would avoid coercion with the Confederacy, but with Fort Sumter under attack, Lincoln broke this policy with his call for troops.⁷⁴ As many North Carolinians became enraged with Lincoln’s demand of troops, they also found themselves vulnerable and surrounded by Confederate states. North Carolina seceded on May 20 and joined the Confederacy thereafter.⁷⁵

Weeks after the Confederate victory at the first Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, the Confederate Congress passed several acts to eliminate threats to the new nation. Confederate Brigadier General Felix Zollicoffer, commander of the District of East Tennessee, began to break up Unionist organizations and arrest their leaders. Then the Confederate government in turn, issued the Alien Enemies Act that ordered anyone hostile to the Confederacy to leave within a forty-day period.⁷⁶ Later in 1861, the Confederate government passed the Sequestration Act, which allowed any Confederate military officers the ability to locate land, goods, chattel, or anything “held, owned possessed or enjoyed by or for any alien enemy.”⁷⁷ This incited fear among the Confederates as this law implied the confiscation of their slave property. In the same month, the Confederate government issued loyalty oaths for Confederate supporters to sign throughout the seceded states. The government enlisted the help of “receivers,” who tracked down and confiscated property. Historian Rodney Steward addresses the abuse that receivers inflicted on the population of North Carolina. Receiver David Schenck, among others, confiscated an excessive amount of property from his fellow North Carolinians and even into the East Tennessee region. In most cases, these receivers targeted small family farms instead of the

⁷⁴ McKinney, *Zeb Vance*, 76.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 57.

⁷⁶ McKenzie, 109

⁷⁷ Steward, 56.

“alien enemies” they initially sought out. Steward explains that receivers targeted helpless, poor families and forcefully tested their allegiance to the Confederacy, and when they deemed them as “unloyal,” they confiscated their property and possessions. Instead of sending the collected revenue to sequestration funds, Schenck and the other receivers pocketed the money.⁷⁸ Unionists retaliated against these new laws and began sabotaging the infrastructure, especially in East Tennessee.

Confederate rule created a growing fear for those under its government in North Carolina and even more so in the towns of East Tennessee. Unionists such as Parson Brownlow frequently suffered harassment from the Confederate government due to laws against dissent. Unionists suffered the loss of their home and property by the Sequestration Act, and this created even more bitterness and resentment towards the Confederate government.⁷⁹ Amongst the sequestration cases, the Confederate soldiers clashed with outspoken Unionists and violence ensued. Unionists dealt with threats including murder and arson. Governor Harris pleaded with President Jefferson Davis to send troops in order to stop the resistance in East Tennessee. Brigadier General Felix K. Zollicoffer arrived in East Tennessee in July 1861. His primary responsibility consisted of protecting the rail lines and blocking Northern attempts to aid to mountain Unionists. Zollicoffer warned residents that “he would not tolerate resistance to Confederate rule,” but “he promised that if Unionists refrained from giving aid to the North they would be allowed to carry on normal activities.” Zollicoffer even allowed Parson William Brownlow to continue publishing his openly Unionist paper, the *Knoxville Whig*.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Steward, 63.

⁷⁹ Fisher, 50.

⁸⁰ Fisher, 45.

This conciliatory relationship diminished by August 1861, as Tennessee scheduled to hold its first elections under the Confederate government. Confederates including Senator Landon Carter Haynes and J.G.M. Ramsey worried that the elections might encourage further Unionist resistance. They urged Governor Harris to appoint provisional representatives, but instead both Harris and Zollicoffer believed that cancelling the election might encourage even more resentment against the Confederate government.⁸¹ In the congressional elections, Unionist candidates ran for the U.S. Congress, opposing Confederate candidates in all three of the region's districts. Unionists T.A.R. Nelson and Horace Maynard successfully won against their Confederate opponents in the First and Second Districts. George Bridges tied with his opponent, although he most likely won the majority of the votes. All three men attempted to reach Washington D.C., but only Maynard and Andrew Johnson succeeded. Bridges escaped to Kentucky until Confederate authorities arrested him sneaking back into Tennessee to visit his sick wife. Confederate authorities captured Nelson in southwest Virginia and secessionists wanted him indicted for treason, but Zollicoffer desired to move him secretly to Nashville to stand trial. Zollicoffer then decided to send Nelson to Richmond to await his fate in fear that Nelson's move to Nashville would incite even greater hostility in East Tennessee.⁸² In exchange for release and immunity against prosecution, Nelson agreed to "recognize the authority of the Confederate government, counsel Unionists to submit, and refrain from making public statements against the Confederacy."⁸³

In November 1861, Unionists expecting a Federal invasion, planned to destroy nine strategic railroad bridges. Although they successfully destroyed five of the bridges they targeted,

⁸¹ Fisher, 47.

⁸² Fisher, 48.

⁸³ Ibid.

the “bridge burners” received no support from the Union Army. According to Robert Tracy McKenzie, Union Commander William Tecumseh Sherman, “on the verge of a nervous breakdown,” called off the plan to invade from Kentucky.⁸⁴ Many of these “bridge burners” faced jail time or execution. Unionist leaders Brownlow and Temple denied any previous knowledge of these attacks, but Zollicoffer felt that the Unionists betrayed his trust. On November 12, Zollicoffer ended his lenient policy with the Unionist leaders and arrested them.⁸⁵ Brownlow was arrested and by early March 1862, Confederate cavalry escorted him to the Union lines close to Nashville. Brownlow moved to Kentucky and instantly became a celebrated “exile” in the North.⁸⁶ These chaotic actions quickly laid the groundwork for guerilla warfare in the region.

Both Unionist and secessionist guerrillas roamed the region during the war as early as 1861. Historian Noel Fisher details a profile of about 100 guerillas and reveals similarities between the groups. Partisans on both sides tended to be in their late thirties, and majority were married and had children, Fisher points out that the Unionist and secessionist guerillas were divided by occupation and wealth. Unionists were mostly small farmers, artisans, and farm laborers. Almost all secessionist guerillas were farmers with large land holdings that amounted to 3 times more than that of Unionists. Although Fisher warns the reader that the sample size remains small to draw conclusions, it is safe to say that the secessionist guerrillas came from higher ranks of society.⁸⁷

Both Unionist and Confederate guerillas terrorized the region throughout the war. Whether a Unionist or Confederate, guerillas were defined by distinct characteristics. First, they

⁸⁴ McKenzie, 101.

⁸⁵ Fisher, 57.

⁸⁶ Fisher, 59.

⁸⁷ Fisher, 64.

were considered “irregular” since they “attacked, harassed, and worried their foes, quite unlike the methods used by regular soldiers in conventional armies.” Second, their principle responsibility,” was local defense.⁸⁸ They wanted local control and protection of their families from both internal and external enemies. In East Tennessee, Unionist guerillas emerged early into the war with the bridge burning at the end of 1861. They later not only targeted bridges and other means of transportation and communication, but also many of these guerrilla bands captured and murdered Confederate soldiers. Unionist guerillas waited alongside the fringes of camp and targeted the soldiers who were traveling. In June 1863, a Unionist band discovered two Confederate brothers who recently returned home on leave in Carter County. The band lured the brothers outside, shot one to death, and kidnapped the other one and took him to the mountains. Although believed to be dead, the other brother escaped his captors and returned home.⁸⁹

Secessionist guerillas would not emerge until the winter of 1863, when they began preying on Union troops in hope to challenge their occupation of the region.⁹⁰ Secessionist guerillas eluded Federal troops and Unionist home guards by hiding across the border of North Carolina and Georgia. As they emerged at night, they “would sweep through a particular area, capture or kill a number of Union men, rob loyalist homes, and escape to their hideouts before dawn.”⁹¹ The most famous secessionist guerilla in East Tennessee, Champ Ferguson, controlled his hometown of Sparta and continued to harass loyalist and Unionist soldiers. In February 1864, Ferguson’s band managed to raid two Union corals near Kingston and captured over 500 horses and mules in the hope to disadvantage the army. The Union army failed to obtain information from the citizens around Sparta about Ferguson’s gang and the army was ordered to plunder

⁸⁸ Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), xii.

⁸⁹ Fisher, 70.

⁹⁰ Fisher, 79.

⁹¹ Fisher, 83.

every house in town for information. Their attempt failed, and “the secessionist bands continued to control Sparta until the war’s end.”⁹²

Adding more fuel to the fire in 1863, the Confederate Congress passed the Impressment Act that allowed “the government only to impress goods needed to feed and sustain the military.” Similar to the “receivers,” impressment agents targeted farms and businesses for goods and paid the owners in either Confederate money or redeemable certificates. Smaller farmers became outraged with this law as they felt their rights were being violated along with other problems in this new system. Inflation “prevented the prices paid by the government from equaling the actual market value of the goods.” Essentially the impressment agents stole necessary goods in exchange for worthless money and certificates.⁹³ In April 1863, the Confederacy enacted the law known as the “tax-in-kind.” Cotton producers paid an 8 percent tax while corn and wheat farmers “had to deliver to Confederate quartermasters 10 percent of their crops above a personal allotment of one hundred bushels of corn and thirty bushels of wheat.” Again, this law favored cotton planters and targeted smaller farmers.⁹⁴ These new laws increased the tension and decreased the support for the Confederate government in both East Tennessee and western North Carolina.

The situation worsened even more for Confederate supporters when General Felix Zollicoffer, who helped restrain resistance to secession in East Tennessee, died at the Battle of Mill Springs in January 1862. Once General Edmund Kirby Smith replaced him, tensions

⁹² Fisher, 82.

⁹³ Terry L. Jones, *The Historical Dictionary of the Civil War: Volume 1, A-L* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 729.

⁹⁴ Scott Reynolds Nelson and Carol Sheriff, *A People at War: Civilians and Soldiers in America’s Civil War, 1854-1877* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131.

increased even more. Smith saw East Tennessee as a land of “unionism and traitordom.”⁹⁵

Despite the issue of stricter policies and the constant change of Confederate military leaders, the Federal Army finally moved into the region in June 1863. General Simon B. Buckner abandoned Knoxville believing his forces to be outnumbered and evacuated the city on August 25, 1863. Soon General Ambrose Burnside and Union troops marched through East Tennessee and captured Knoxville on September 1, 1863.⁹⁶ After “twenty-seven months of Confederate occupation, the Union army now controlled the ‘metropolis of East Tennessee’” and to many Unionists who remained undercover in Knoxville and the surrounding area, the “reign of terror was over” and they would not be oppressed anymore.⁹⁷ General Burnside served as “liberator” in East Tennessee and encouraged Unionists to return to Knoxville. The return of Parson Brownlow and other banished Unionists brought a sense of vengeance toward the southern loyalists, and in turn, the secessionists felt the danger of persecution and imprisonment. With the Federal army establishing control over the city, the secessionists dealt with strict rules under the occupation and felt pressure to sign loyalty oaths to the Union.⁹⁸

Although the Knoxville voters favored secession, the “local population did exhibit one redeeming quality in the eyes of their liberator: the vast majority were passionately, courageously devoted to the Union.”⁹⁹ When the Union Army travelled through East Tennessee, they assumed Knoxville would show less enthusiasm upon their arrival since “Unionism in East Tennessee was stronger in the countryside than the towns.”¹⁰⁰ They understood that the rural

⁹⁵ House, xxiv.

⁹⁶ McKenzie, 173.

⁹⁷ McKenzie, 142.

⁹⁸ McKenzie, 142.

⁹⁹ On the books, Knoxville voted for secession with 777 votes to 377 votes. Though in reality, 436 of those votes casted were by Confederate soldiers from other counties currently stationed in Knoxville. The actual vote: 377 to 341, with Secessionists winning an extremely narrow victory. McKenzie, 81. McKenzie, 150.

¹⁰⁰ McKenzie, 150.

populations tended to favor Union support while the city population supported the Confederacy, but that simply was not the case. As they arrived, Union soldiers stated that the people “seemed frantic with joy” and “wild with delight.” The civilians of Knoxville welcomed the Union Army because they grew tired of conflict and the oppression of the Confederate government. They hoped this occupation would eventually speed up the end of war and their families might finally be reunited.¹⁰¹

Although some Appalachians rejoiced with the arrival either army, some Appalachians’ Confederate support began to wane as early as 1862 with the implementation of the Conscription Act. This act required that all “able-bodied white males from eighteen to thirty-five years old to be available for up to three years of service.” A supplementary act was passed a few days later to exempt state employees, ministers, teachers, industrial workers, and it allowed those who could afford to pay substitutes to take their place in the draft.¹⁰² Throughout the mountain South, even in East Tennessee, this policy grew increasingly unpopular and Appalachians began to resent these new policies. Historian Mark Neely “points to conscription and defeatism as motivating upland dissent” and indicates that East Tennessee provided the most political prisoners of the war with 660 “dissenters.”¹⁰³ “Parson” Brownlow argued against conscription by pointing fingers at the gentry of the Cotton States:

the honest yeomanry of these border States, whose families live by their hard licks, four-fifths of whom own no negroes and never expect to own any, are to be drafted, ---forced to leave their wives and children to toil and suffer, while they fight for the purse-proud aristocrats of the Cotton States, whose pecuniary abilities will enable them to hire substitutes!¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ McKenzie, 149.

¹⁰² Inscoc and McKinney, 111.

¹⁰³ Mark E. Neely Jr., *Southern Rights: Political Prisoners and the Myth of Confederate Constitutionalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia: 1999), 104.

¹⁰⁴ Neely, 111.

Along the same lines, John Inscoc remarks that because of the Conscription Act, the war “came to be perceived as to what so many had already called it: ‘a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.’”¹⁰⁵ This new policy isolated poorer Appalachians who could not fall under any of the restrictions mentioned under the act. In some instances, this obligation of military service “forced men who felt no enthusiasm for the new government to defend it with their lives or to become outlaws in their own communities.”¹⁰⁶ Resentment of the military escalated due to mounting Confederate defeats at Shiloh in April 1862 and Vicksburg and Gettysburg in July 1863, poor conditions at camp, and the ongoing struggles on the homefront. The Conscription Act of 1862 forced men to leave their wives and children in the midst of a season of crop shortages. Men worried how their families were going to survive without their support.¹⁰⁷ Soldiers learned about the economic stresses, and like the rest of the Confederacy, North Carolina found itself with a “scarcity of cash, the high price and limited supplies of staples, especially salt, [and] the drainage of vital foodstuffs.”¹⁰⁸ These factors led to a high degree of desertion in the Confederate Army by the middle of the war, and as Inscoc describes the western North Carolina “mountains came to serve as refuges and hiding places for deserters, draft dodgers, escaped slaves, and escaped prisoners of war.”¹⁰⁹

Desertion caused major problems for North Carolina and new governor Zebulon Vance, who took office in 1862. Vance, whose loyalties shifted from preserving the Union to his commitment to his home state, realized North Carolina soldiers “were the worst provisioned in the Confederate army” and these issues helped heighten the desertion rate.¹¹⁰ Vance believed

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Inscoc and McKinney, 139.

¹⁰⁷ Inscoc and McKinney, 112.

¹⁰⁸ Inscoc and McKinney, 167.

¹⁰⁹ Inscoc and McKinney, 9.

¹¹⁰ McKinney, *Zeb Vance*, 110.

that by 1863, that over 1,200 deserters escaped to the mountains for protection. Vance issued a proclamation that pressured deserted soldiers to return to duty in order to escape state capture and punishment. To ease the worries and consciences of the deserters, Vance promised to care for the soldiers' families and provide them with food and supplies.¹¹¹ When reconciliation did not work, Vance ordered General Robert F. Hoke and a regiment of Confederate troops to central and western counties of North Carolina in September 1863. He instructed Hoke to "use every effort to capture deserters and conscripts, and break up and disperse any organized bands of lawless men..." He also ordered Hoke to assist local authorities to arrest people who helped aid the deserters and arrest "all local government officials who had either failed to do their duty or actively supported deserters."¹¹²

These promises and threats failed to convince some of the deserters to rejoin their comrades. Bands of deserters and Unionists grouped together and harassed Confederate loyalists in the area. Even the dreaded Home Guard Units, the local militia of Confederate sympathizers, remained incapable of stomping out the violence and insurrection caused by these deserters. Vance explained how the Home Guards were "rendered timid by fear of secret vengeance from the deserters." The General Robert F. Hoke and his troops helped capture several deserters and conscript avoiders but never successfully terminated the insurrection completely.¹¹³

Clashes between military units and deserters and conscript avoiders added to the rising tension already present on the homefront in western North Carolina. One of the most shocking incidents occurred in Madison County at Shelton Laurel in January 1863. A Union guerilla raider named John Kirk and other various deserters and dissenters, many from the 64th North Carolina

¹¹¹Insoe and McKinney, 115.

¹¹² McKinney, *Zeb Vance*, 189.

¹¹³ Insoe and McKinney, 127.

Regiment, moved into the region seeking shelter from Confederate forces. Desperate for salt to preserve food in the winter months, Kirk and his band of over fifty deserters and Unionists raided the town of Marshall for salt, food, and other supplies. They also attacked Colonel Lawrence Allen's home, their former commander, plundering his home where his sick children resided.¹¹⁴

Lieutenant Colonel of the 64th Regiment, James A. Keith went straight to the Laurel Valley to launch a search for those involved in the Marshall salt raid. Although ordered by Governor Vance not to seek revenge, Keith and his men harassed and tortured the women of Shelton Laurel in the hope of gaining knowledge of the whereabouts of Kirk and the rest of his raiders. Even though most of those involved fled the area, Keith arrested fifteen men and boys for the involvement of the raid in Marshall.¹¹⁵ Colonel Allen finally joined Keith in the Laurel Valley and learned of the invasion of his home and the terrorizing of his children sick with scarlet fever. The raiders stripped the home of blankets and supplies needed for the children. Two of the Allen children died the next day, this tragic event infuriated Allen and amplified his hatred toward the raiders. Inscoc explains that Allen's rage upon learning of his children's death influenced his decision on the fate of the prisoners.¹¹⁶ While two escaped, the rest of the prisoners believed they would be moved to Knoxville; instead, Keith ordered his soldiers to take the prisoners into the woods and execute them. This incident incited public outrage throughout

¹¹⁴ Phillip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 85.

¹¹⁵ John Inscoc states that by some accounts, only five men rounded up by Keith actually participated in the raid. Inscoc and McKinney, 119.

¹¹⁶ Paludan, 93.

the state, and even Governor Vance demanded an investigation and ordered Colonel Keith to be court-martialed.¹¹⁷

With the fall of Knoxville and East Tennessee in September of 1863, western North Carolina feared the invasion of the Federal Army. Yet, Unionists and dissenters alike desired to see the army cross over into the region to end the turmoil and violence. Unionism increased as the war went on and many soldiers and their families “crossed the line” and pledged their loyalty to the Union. Civilians and soldiers both feared conscription, food shortages, the Home Guard, and the on-going violence the war created. Inscoe explains being a Unionist in western North Carolina “varied considerably over time and according to circumstance.” Western North Carolinians at first boasted their Union sentiments but as the war began, they sided with the Confederacy. As the war raged on, they grew tired of the destruction of war and many saw the opportunities, such as food, supplies, and a quicker end to the war, that came with accepting Unionism. Some North Carolinians may not agree politically with the Union, but they agreed on the ending of the war.¹¹⁸ By March 1865, Union General George Stoneman joined with George Kirk to take control over western North Carolina. As they entered the town of Boone, they commenced a path of destruction through the region to destroy property, take supplies, and free prisoners.¹¹⁹ The raid ended with the ransacking of Asheville, but Union forces could not stop the guerilla activity throughout the mountains. On May 9, a full month after Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, North Carolina forces finally surrendered on the terms that Union troops leave the area and end their plundering.¹²⁰ Although these terms were ignored after the

¹¹⁷ Inscoe and McKinney, 118-119.

¹¹⁸ Inscoe and McKinney, 104.

¹¹⁹ Inscoe and McKinney, 244.

¹²⁰ Inscoe and McKinney, 257-259.

end of the war, North Carolina faced greater problems with its own civilians and the destruction they faced.

Both western North Carolina and East Tennessee had more than their share of turmoil and strife. Both sections dealt with divided loyalties that created tension among their communities. These divided loyalties ignited constant fear for both Unionists and secessionists, and this only added to the war torn home front. The number of deserters, raiders, Home Guard units, food strikes, and incidents of low supplies created a region that suffered longer and at a greater extent than any other place in the war. To survive these experiences, many Appalachian women altered their traditional roles. When faced with opportunities to advance their position, to maintain greater amounts of food and supplies, or even to make known their political beliefs in a forward manner, some Appalachian women shed their traditional female roles as the domestic and submissive, and embraced independence that allowed them to become the defenders and protectors of their homes and family. The war forcefully demolished the lines between the domestic and public sphere, and some Appalachian women found the courage to step out of their normal routine and gender expectations to take advantage of the new situations the war created for them and seek of the defense and protection of their homes.

CHAPTER 3

FEMININITY IN CIVIL WAR SOUTHERN APPALACHIA: HOW APPALACHIAN WOMEN MAINTAINED SOUTHERN CONSTRUCTS OF GENDER

The experiences of women in East Tennessee and western North Carolina varied throughout the Civil War in similar fashion as with women in the rest of the South. Although these Appalachian regions shared many qualities including those of politics, economics, culture, and agriculture, families' socioeconomic class differences and locale molded the female experiences differently. All Women entered 1861 with their own gender specific duties, mostly tied to the domestic sphere: caring for the children, supervising domestic slaves, sewing, and maintaining the household. They also strove to abide by the "cult of true womanhood" and attempted to immerse themselves in the notions of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. These gender conceptions stemmed from the Southern culture and Appalachian women followed the same definition of femininity. This chapter explores how Appalachian women attempted to hold onto these standards during the war, but socioeconomic differences and the locale of these Appalachian women ushered in new standards of femininity at different times throughout the war. Appalachia's extreme political divisions and turmoil brought on by the Civil War tested their accepted gender roles. While others fought to maintain them, some accepted these changes to their gender specific roles, but these changes were not entirely specific to the Appalachia region. What emerges as unique to Appalachia is the amount of turmoil and strife that these women witnessed. The region itself encountered higher levels of political division, dissent, and violence than other region in the South. Although they shared the same understanding of femininity as the rest of the South, their location and the turmoil escalated these variations in the female gender roles.

When Tennessee seceded from the Union in June 1861, political divisions deepened in the eastern portion of the state. The desire to preserve the Union drew substantial support in the Upper South, especially in Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina. But as Noel Fisher claims, “Unionism in the Upper South was a powerful sentiment, but it was also conditional.” After Fort Sumter, most Unionists abandoned their hope for reconciliation and joined the Confederacy. But there remained a “large group of hard-core loyalists whose commitment to the United States was unalterable.”¹ Those who claimed loyalty to the Union remained under the watchful eye of the newly established Confederate government and local secessionists.

By November 1861, any conciliatory feelings between the Confederate government and known Unionists ended on account of the bridge burning plot enacted by a group of East Tennessee Unionists. Confederate General Felix Zollicoffer hoped to subdue Unionists with promises that the sole mission of Confederate troops in the region was to protect—not oppress—law-abiding citizens. In the aftermath of the bridge burnings, Zollicoffer’s policy had been a failure.² Governor Isham Harris insisted that the “rebellion must be crushed out instantly” and a “reign of terror” ensued over East Tennessee.³ Confederate troops occupied disloyal areas of the state and the local jails filled with political prisoners, including the tenacious William “Parson” Brownlow, who fled the area after the bridge burnings. During this time, Unionist women saw their whole world turned upside down as their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons stood accused of treason against the Confederacy. Many of these women were left alone for the first time as their menfolk awaited their fate in jail or left home to join Union forces in Kentucky. Some men decided to flee toward the mountains and hide for fear of the pro-Confederate

¹ Noel C. Fisher, *War At Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 179.

² Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 91, 101.

³ McKenzie, 101, 110.

bushwhackers. Yeomen farmers were “men who worked on their own land and sometimes owned a few slaves.” Laura Edwards argues what defines a yeomen is not farming but “the ownership of sufficient land or tools to direct their own labor instead of working for someone else.”⁴ Many yeomen claimed loyalty to the Union cause, so as they left, the male labor supply vanished in the regions of East Tennessee and western North Carolina. The menfolk left many of these women to continue managing their domestic tasks, but women then fully immersed themselves in the public sphere while taking care of businesses and farms.⁵

Many East Tennessee Unionist women quickly involved themselves in defending the Union and aiding their menfolk. In O. P. Temple’s book, *East Tennessee and the Civil War* (1899), he recalled a young woman named Elizabeth Self who wrote to Confederate President Jefferson Davis because of her father’s imprisonment and scheduled execution. Her father, Harrison Self, accused of participating in the Lick Creek bridge burning of November 8, 1861, was sentenced to be hanged the following month. Confined in the same jail, “Parson” Brownlow himself remembered Elizabeth’s visit to her father. Elizabeth “heart-broken and bowed down under a fearful weight of sorrow, she entered his iron cage, and they embraced each other affectionately.” Through Brownlow’s testimony, Elizabeth requested him “to write a

⁴ Laura Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 2000), 33.

⁵ Fisher attempts to sort out the factors that led to high Unionism support in East Tennessee. He highlights James Patton’s argument that more urban dwellers and wealthy residents supported secession whereas poorer nonslaveholding regions generally supported the Union. Eric Lacy states that more factors come into play, such as sectional and political splits since disagreements aroused between the different regions of East Tennessee over funding for internal improvements. The majority of East Tennessee counties supporting secession were located in the South, whereas upper East Tennessee tended to side with the Union. W. Todd Groce throws another wrench in the discussion and believes that the East Tennessee rail system changed the political landscape in 1850. This led to a wheat boom, thus creating a new class of businessmen who tended to be young, wealthy and live in towns along the railroad. They tended to vote democratic as they had many connections with the other Southern states. They were seen in conflict with the older, conservative merchant class. Groce also mentions that farmers that lived in developing areas tended to vote for secession where Unionists generally came from places economically stagnant. Case in point, the rise of political loyalties remains a heated debate amongst historians but it is safe to assume that it involves many different complexities. Fisher, 180-181.

dispatch...and sign her name to it.” She wanted to write Confederate President Jefferson Davis and request her father’s pardon, as he “remain[ed] [her] earthly all.” She feared for her future, so she appealed to Davis for patriarchal support. As a young woman, the absence of her father scared her as she relied on him for survival. Elizabeth was used to the patriarchal system and she found herself desperate without her father at home. She decided to vocalize her concern by putting pen to paper and requesting help. Surprisingly Elizabeth’s telegram touched Davis enough that he granted her father’s release.⁶

When their letters failed to protect their homes and loved ones, some Unionist women decided “actions spoke louder than words.” Prior to her father’s arrest in November 1861, twenty-three year old Susan Brownlow forced two Confederate soldiers into retreat. In the terribly embellished story for Northern audiences titled, *Miss Martha Brownlow; or the Heroine of Tennessee*, “Martha” promised her parents that she would be safe remaining at home by herself because the Union flag protected their house.⁷ “I am safe beneath its protecting folds” she assured them. She recalled that during the American Revolution “women... who, with their husbands, fathers, brothers, sisters, lovers, braved every danger, faced the foe, and defended that flag against the assaults of our country’s invaders.” She promised to emulate these women and protect the flag as it protected her home.⁸

⁶ O.P Temple quotes William Brownlow throughout his memoir. He uses Brownlow’s book simply titled, “Parson Brownlow’s Book.” Temple noted that this Elizabeth Self account was on page 326 of “Parson Brownlow’s Book.” Oliver Perry Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*. 1899. Reprint. (Knoxville: Burmar Books, 1972), 397-389. Stephen V. Ash, ed., *Secessionists and Other Scoundrels: Selections from Parson Brownlow’s Book* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 122. The full account of Harrison Self’s trial can be read in the United State’s War Department’s *The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington 1880-1901), 859-868.

⁷ Published in 1863 by William D. Reynolds, renamed Susan in the account as Martha, “as most of her exploits were fictitious”. E. Merton Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: The Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 245.

⁸ Reynolds, William D., *Miss Martha Brownlow, or, The Heroine of Tennessee a truthful and graphic account of the many perils and privations endured by Miss Martha...* (Philadelphia, 1863), 24-25.

Two Confederate soldiers on the way to Virginia decided to stop by the home of the infamous Brownlow family and to their delight they saw the Union flag above the house. They knocked, “Martha” answered and they asked her if her father was home as they “[had] business with “Parson” Brownlow and wish[ed] to come in.” As a woman by herself, she again told them no, and they insisted by the “authority of the commander of the Southern forces in Tennessee and in the name of the Confederate States of America.” She cheekily claimed, “we recognize no such authority, no such power.” As the men grew frustrated, they told her to “draw down that flag!” She refused and they began to attempt to remove the flag themselves. “Martha” soon “emerged...with a well charged musket, and taking her stand beneath the stars and stripes.” Yelling, she tells the men “touch not the scared folds of that good old flag!”⁹

This highly exaggerated account presented Susan Brownlow as a Unionist heroine and Northern audiences celebrated her determination and courage. This story seems almost entirely fabricated, but Susan really did confront two “would- be flag-snatchers” with a revolver. Brandishing weapons could be seen as a “mannish activity” but many Southern women learned how to shoot guns. Rural women especially learned to handle guns as slave mistresses learned in response to slave revolts and yeomen women used weapons for hunting. Living in the South during the war, especially in Southern Appalachia, inspired women of all classes to wield weapons in preparation to defend their family from an invading army. George C. Rable noted that many city dwelling women of higher class requested revolvers but “the thought of delicate ladies wielding these weapons must have amused if not frightened public officials.”¹⁰ But for most cases, the appeal of weapons for women was to defend their households, not to join the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1989), 152.

army. Although the grandeur of her confrontation with the Confederate soldiers may not have happened exactly as depicted in *Miss Martha Brownlow*, she still managed to defend the domestic sphere, her home, along with her and her family's political beliefs against Confederate aggressors.¹¹

Another woman shrouded in legend, Malinda Pritchard Blalock, held many ties to the Unionist cause in western North Carolina. Although Union sentiment remained higher in East Tennessee, pockets of Unionism appeared throughout western North Carolina in counties bordering Tennessee. Studies show that Ashe and Yancey counties held the most Union sentiment in their northern regions that lined with the Tennessee border.¹² The counties of Watauga and Madison also line the Tennessee border and were known for their Unionism. Malinda's husband Keith Blalock inherited his stepfather's Unionism, shared the same sentiment with his neighbors across the mountains, and knew he could not escape the Conscription Act in North Carolina. Keith devised a plan. He would join the Confederate army, but as soon as he was close to Union lines, he would slip over and change sides. He hoped that a well-timed defection would result in him being listed as "missing" instead of as a "deserter." If Blalock could conveniently go "missing," this would not raise suspicions about his loyalty and his newly wedded wife would be protected at home without any harassment by the Confederate government regarding his whereabouts.¹³ Malinda disregarded the plan. She was newly married, and she wanted his patriarchal support and care during the war. So she decided to go to war with

¹¹ Coulter, 159, 245.

¹² John Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 94.

¹³ William R. Trotter, *Bushwhackers: The Civil War in North Carolina* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair Publisher, 1988)148.

her husband. Therefore, she “cut her hair, donned trousers and a loose-fitting shirt” and joined the Confederate Army as “Sam” Blalock, all in order to remain close with her husband.¹⁴

By March 1862, Keith joined Company F of the Twenty-sixth North Carolina Troops and Malinda followed suit and enlisted as Keith’s younger brother named “Sam.” A fellow soldier described her as “a good looking boy...weight about 130 pounds, height five feet, four inches.” She participated in the activities of the camp but after a month, Keith whether bored or desperate to be discharged, intentionally rolled in poison oak and ended up with a major rash. Keith received a medical discharge and out of fear that she again would be alone without her husband, Malinda decided to reveal her identity. A brief entry of the company muster records include a few lines indicating that a “Mrs. L. M. Blalock, discharged for being a woman.”¹⁵

After recovering from his condition in the later months of 1862, the Confederate agents kept a close eye on Keith Blalock and explained to him that he must “reenlist and serve out the duration of his original commitment” or be “subject to the full penalties of the new draft law.” He and Malinda decided to gather weapons and a few essentials and made their way to Grandfather Mountain. Records indicate Keith’s involvement with several skirmishes around the region, but it is hard to connect Malinda to them. Supposedly, Malinda twice received wounds in an exchange of gunfire, and Keith decided to escape to Tennessee to seek medical care for his wife. While in Tennessee, Keith joined up with Union Army Colonel George W. Kirk to help gather intelligence and conduct raids across the North Carolina border.¹⁶ Whether or not Malinda Blalock travelled with her husband and participated in this guerilla warfare remains unclear, but this extreme example casted a lasting folklore. Yet all these claims of her defying her traditional

¹⁴ Trotter, 132.

¹⁵ Trotter, 148-149

¹⁶ Trotter, 150-151.

gender roles only covers up her true intentions. As her political beliefs remain unknown, Malinda desired to be with her husband, not to be left alone at home. As a newly wedded wife, she wanted to care for her husband, whether it was at home or hiding in the mountains.

Some women took an even more active role in defending their Unionist beliefs. Julia Marcum of Scott County, Tennessee considered herself a Unionist like the rest of her family. Her father, Hiram, “made his farm available as a way station for thousands of Southern men traveling north to join Lincoln’s army.”¹⁷ Everyone in the community knew of the Marcums’ allegiance to the Union and they quickly became targets for the incoming Confederate army.

In the summer of 1861, Confederate units moved into Scott County to subdue this heavily Unionist area. As a Unionist and a guide for those who desired to escape to Kentucky, Hiram heard rumors that his life was in danger. He decided to find shelter in the surrounding woods around his farm to avoid detection. On September 7, 1861, 16-year-old Julia recalled Confederate soldiers bursting into her home and threatening to “kill all the women and burn [them] all in the house.”¹⁸ Julia, her sister Didama, and their mother sat quietly in the darkened house until Didama lit a candle and begged for mercy from the soldiers. One soldier grabbed their mother, started choking her while another soldier followed Didama as she tried to escape upstairs, and threatened to cut her throat with an ax. With her family under attack, Julia and her other sister, Minerva, wielded axes and followed their sister’s attacker upstairs.¹⁹

Once upstairs, a soldier attacked Julia with a bayonet, but she dodged his blows and she managed to “[run] under the gun and chopped him in the face and breast with the ax leaving him

¹⁷ Julia Marcum Account, August 7, 1926, typescript, in the Julia Marcum Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Ky.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

cut to the hallow, with his chin split open.”²⁰ The soldier begged Julia to stop and as she put her weapon down, the soldier “picked up his gun and struck [her] with the Bayonet in the fore head and bursted [her] brains out.” Julia ended up with a traumatic head wound and the loss of her left eye. The third finger on her right hand was shot off during the struggle as well. Alerted by the gunshots and screams, Hiram returned home and thereafter shot and killed the Confederate soldier. The rest of the soldiers quickly left after the violent attack by Hiram. Frightened of the repercussions of killing a Confederate soldier, Hiram quickly fled back into the woods. A female neighbor tended to Julia and the next morning the neighbor went to the encampment to report the incident to Captain George W. Gordon. After the meeting with the woman, Captain Gordon and some other soldiers visited the farm to take notes on the incident and take back the body of the dead Confederate soldier. Gordon and his men saw the severity of Julia’s injuries and insisted that two physicians from the encampment come to the farm and tend to her wounds.²¹ Captain Gordon’s reaction to Julia’s response to her attacker is not known, but clearly with his insistence of medical care, he must have dismissed her actions since she, as a woman, was violated in her own home.²²

Julia Marcum’s experience in the Civil War uniquely displays a woman’s role when it comes to the defense of her home and family. The Confederate soldiers entering into the domestic sphere and threatening the family fueled the Marcum sisters’ resistance against the intruders. As women, the Marcum sisters felt violated and scared, and this added to their resistance. The Marcum’s wealth and class may have come into play, as “the poorer the woman,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Julia recovered from her wounds but moved with her family to Kentucky when they became targets for Confederate sympathizers and the army. Her father Hiram fled to Kentucky to join the Federal Army. Unfortunately, Hiram never reunited with his family; he contracted smallpox in Nashville and died in 1864. Julia’s mother also passed away before the end of the war in 1865. Ibid.

the more vulnerable and less creditable she became.”²³ As yeomen women living on the farm, they appeared less wealthy than their city-dwelling counterparts, and this prompted less care and concern from the soldiers when entering the home. Women also needed to submit to men, but Julia refused to take the submissive role. In the South, submission to men “was not based on a belief that women were inherently delicate creatures, but that they *chose* to restrain their inner strength for the benefit of social harmony and family honor.”²⁴ In times of need, “it was permissible for white women to display passion and proficiency provided it was in support of the family.”²⁵ Marcum and her sisters grew passionate as they attempted to defend their family and home. She seriously wounded the assailant Confederate soldier to the point of him begging for his own life. Marcum took extreme action by using a farming implement as a weapon to defend her home, and loved ones, but she still abided by the Southern gender roles as it was an attack inside of her home. When the war ended, Julia moved back to Tennessee and taught school for twelve years despite her disabilities. She never fully recovered from her wounds, which forced her to retire at the age of 32. In 1885, Congress awarded her a special pension of \$30.00 per month. In September 1920, Congress increased it to \$40.00. In her recollection, she proudly stated that she “is the only woman in the United States that draws a pension without the aid of a soldier.” She ended her typed account with “It is glad tidings to me to be remembered.”²⁶

Sarah Thompson played a similar role to that of Julia Marcum by defending her Unionist loyalties in retaliation against Confederate soldiers. In 1864, Rebel bushwhackers killed her husband, Sylvanus H. Thompson, private in the 1st Tennessee Union Cavalry. After her husband’s death and in his honor, Sarah worked as a spy providing the Union with intelligence

²³Edwards, 157.

²⁴ Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: The University of Chapel Hill Press, 2003), 13.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

on Confederate military activity.²⁷ While staying in Greenville in September 1864, Sarah saw Confederate general John Hunt Morgan and his men arrive at the same house in which she lodged. That day she busied herself with cooking then suddenly “a rush was heard in the street and then a knock at the door, and then when [she] opened it [she] was surprised to see John Morgan, the rebel raider, the king of terror in that part of the country.” Morgan came into the kitchen, into her domestic sphere and attempted to flirt with her, but she refused to play his game. “[He] used a great deal of flattery as it made [me] mad and it did him good to tantalize me for I disliked it very much,” she recollected. Thompson remembered, “after a while in came a number of rebels and took my kettle of tomato butter off of the fire and poured it out in dishes and carried it off and turned my bread out of the Baker. I called to Morgan to protect me, he laughed at me to scorn and said I need not fear, for I had never starved and they had to live and the Union women had to help to feed them.”²⁸

While still in mourning for her husband, the angry and vengeful Sarah Thompson decided to retaliate against Morgan and his men. Supposedly she told a Colonel Williams that she needed a pass to leave the city so she could look after her cow. She promised him an exchange of milk for a pass. He agreed and, with her pass in hand, Thompson went “through the enemy’s lines [she] crossed over in a corn field and went to [a] friend’s house.” A friend provided her with a horse and Thompson went to the Union forces stationed “at Bull’s Gap and sent the word in.” Thompson claimed that at first the Union cavalrymen refused to believe her and thought it to be a “woman’s tale,” but the next morning, she found a “man under a bush or grape vine in the

²⁷ LeRoy P. Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul H. Bergeron, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Johnson, Volume 7, 1864-1865* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 271.

²⁸ “Sarah Thompson’s Account of Morgan’s Defeat,” in the Sarah E. Thompson Papers, 1859-1889, Online Archival Collection, Special Collections, Duke University, Durham, N.C. Duke has two separate transcriptions of Thompson’s accounts. The one used above is the one transcribed by researcher Joan Yehl who provided Duke with a more readable transcription since the literal one may be difficult to read and understand because Thompson’s literacy was poor.

middle of the garden.” Allegedly, she told the Union soldiers to “take him, for that was Morgan...he was undressed, only his underclothes, [and] he was crunched down.” She recalled his capture that morning:

I stepped to the street and laid my hand on a man’s shoulder and said, Sir, if you will tear the fence down, I will ensure you Morgan. Now the fence I spoke of was a board fence for the partition of the grapes and it was very heavy, boards or planks set up end-ways, and it is not necessary to say it came down, for it did. Then I advanced and showed him to the man, and they tried to get him to surrender though he would not. He sat as long as he had anything to sate[state?], then he was shot near the middle and fell back, and he did not more than strike the ground when he was caught by two of our men and thrown on the horse.²⁹

In her recounting of Morgan’s defeat in Greeneville, Sarah Thompson displayed no remorse or lament regarding his death. As a Unionist widow whose life altered significantly due to the nature of war, she grew tired of the conflict and the sight of traitorous Confederate soldiers. Once Morgan arrived with his men and stole her food and supplies, this incident became the “final straw.” A month later, Military Governor Andrew Johnson wrote a testimonial for Sarah Thompson. He commended her as an “East Tennessee lady of the highest respectability, and unquestionably loyal to the Federal Government.” He also added that “left with two children to provide for, and altogether the circumstances of her case are such as to commend her to the most favorable consideration of all Government officials.” Thompson’s remarkable tale attested to her determination to defend her husband’s honor, uphold their Unionist beliefs, and secure her home after Morgan’s men invaded her sphere, looking for food.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Graf, Haskins, Bergeron, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Johnson, Volume 7, 1864-1865*, 271. In Noel Fisher’s *War at Every Door*, he speculates about Unionist informants who helped lead to the death of John Hunt Morgan. James Leahy, a twelve-year old boy, and Lucy Williams, daughter-in-law of the woman who owned the house where Morgan was killed, both claim they betrayed Morgan to the Union troops. 186-187. Melanie Storie states that James Leahy was the one who notified the Union Cavalry of Morgan’s locale but she does mention the

Twenty-nine year old Nancy Brown also found herself a Union war widow at the end of May 1865. Prior to the war and the breakdown of their family unit, the Browns lived a rather ordinary life in Knox County. Her husband William led the life of a traditional yeoman farmer, he owned \$300 of personal property, no slaves, his family worked their own land, and produced primarily for family consumption.³¹ They had four young children, Martha, Mary, John, and William Henry, before he enlisted as a Union private in Company B of the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry in 1862. Exactly nine months later in July 1863, Nancy gave birth to Albert Rosecrans Brown, who they named after Major General William S. Rosecrans.³² Unfortunately, only William's letters survive including a few returned letters from Nancy, but his responses to Nancy reflect the hardships that she and the children faced at home. His letters throughout 1863 capture his fear of the Rebel army remaining in East Tennessee and he wrote his wife saying, "Nancy, if you can't live in east Ten. I want you to leave and come to Nashville and I will send you back North."³³ Before the Union occupation in September 1863, Confederate authorities scrutinized Nancy and the Brown family for William's choice to join the Union Cavalry.

In May 1864, William advised Nancy concerning their food situation. "If you can draw your grub you won't need much money till Fall and if you can't draw write to me and if I stay here I will send you something by express."³⁴ Most likely, Nancy helped her husband William on the farm, because "virtually every wife whose tenant or cropper husband worked in close

possibility of Sarah Thompson as the informant in her notes. Melanie Storie, *The Dreaded Thirteenth Tennessee Union Cavalry: Marauding Mountain Men*, (Charleston, The History Press, 2013).

³¹ United States. Census Office, *Eighth Census of Population*. 1860.

³² Biographical Information "William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

³³ William Laban Brown, letter to Nancy Brown, December 21, 1863, William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

³⁴ William Laban Brown, letter to Nancy Brown, May 24, 1864, William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

proximity to the home was expected to contribute labor as an assistant.”³⁵ In his absence, Nancy took over many unaccustomed responsibilities, that as a woman, she never had to deal with on a daily basis. She never had to take on the full responsibility of planting crops for the season. Fortunately, by the next month William seemed relieved to learn from Nancy that the crops looked good.³⁶ At the start of fall, the kitchen necessities began to run low and with winter coming, Nancy needed these to survive. William responded with, “We are expecting to draw money before long and if we do I will try to send you some if there is any chance. If times don’t get better I will see if there is any chance to send you some salt and flour by express if I can.”³⁷

Even with the end of the war on the horizon, Nancy felt out of spirit. She informed her husband that she and the children were barely surviving. “Well William you wanted to know how I am getting along. As well as any person can without money. I [have not] had any money for some time nor I [have not] borrowed but one dollar but I expect I will have to try to borrow a little. but I have paid for most of the bread we have [eaten] ever since last fall by sewing for my peas of corn... and my meat will not hold out till fall.”³⁸ As desperate as Nancy appeared, she commented that she never asked to borrow money. It seemed Nancy was too proud to ask for any help, or perhaps her family’s Unionism left her feeling isolated among the community with no one to turn to for support.

In a letter she wrote the following day, Nancy seemed to perk up and seemed excited about her work on the farm.

³⁵ Wilma Dunaway, *Women, Work, and Family in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), 141.

³⁶ William Laban Brown, letter to Nancy Brown, July 12, 1864, William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

³⁷ William Laban Brown, letter to Nancy Brown, September 18, 1864, William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

³⁸ Nancy Brown, letter to William Laban Brown, May 2, 1865. William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

Well, William as I have wrote 2 letters before and told you how I was getting along I will say no more about it this time. I will just say my Irish potatoes looks well. I put them right across the branch from the spring so I think I will have good potatoes this season. William if you will come home you shall have as many peas as you can eat for I gathered one bushel of hulled peas last year. My corn is not planted yet. I thought last winter I should try to get more corn put in than my new ground peas but as I don't feel as stout as I did then I felt like if me and the children works the truck patches, we will do very well.³⁹

By the end of the war, Nancy's confidence in her decision-making and ability to farm grew substantially. As a woman, she remained hesitant to use the new power she received after her husband left, but as a mother and devoted wife, Nancy altered her gender boundaries and successfully managed the farm all while maintaining her household.

Nancy's adoption of the role as head of household may demonstrate a typical adjustment for wives in Southern Appalachia, but the true change in her typical feminine role occurred when her husband was killed. On April 27, 1865, William died on the Sultana, a steamer that exploded while transporting former prisoners of war from the Vicksburg area to their homes.⁴⁰ With her husband dead, Nancy moved herself and her five children to Washington D.C. and placed them in the National Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphan Home. Within the ideals of the cult of true womanhood, the home and the children came first for mothers whose duty it was to protect their children and instill them with lessons for the future. During the postwar era, the advice to young widows was this: "take care of yourself for your dear children. Who can fill a Mother's place?" Letters repeatedly echoed this reaction, reminding a woman that although she may be upset, she must fulfill her primary duty as a mother.⁴¹ Widows had only a minimal range of options for

³⁹ Nancy Brown, letter to William Laban Brown, May, 3, 1865. William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

⁴⁰ "Biographical Information "William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

⁴¹ Angela Esco Elder, "Civil War Widows" in the Essential Civil War Curriculum, <http://www.essential.civilwar.vt.edu/assets/files/ECWC%20TOPIC%20Widows%20Essay.pdf> 7.

survival and support, apart from using their government pension. Some decided to remarry, others depended on their children to marry, and some moved in with family members.⁴²

As a widow in the postwar South, Nancy defied much of the advice given to her. She chose not to remarry right away, and her children were far too young to marry, so she abandoned her role as a mother, moved to Washington D.C., and placed her children into the care of an orphanage. Although her father-in-law, John Brown, remained alive and well, she decided to move her family out of East Tennessee and forgo the assistance of male family members. As it remains unclear why she chose to move out of East Tennessee, Nancy may have seen the capital as an escape from the turmoil of the area and the memory of her husband, or saw more ample opportunities in the North. Nancy lost her role as a mother and housewife because she was forced to adapt to a new role in the public sphere to survive the war, and then to survive widowhood. She worked independently while her children grew up in an orphanage and she accomplished this by manipulating the gender expectations that worked best for her and her children.

Many widows who chose not to remarry, could “obtain work as domestics or washerwomen, but these jobs were generally reserved for African American women because, they hired agricultural labor, they were considered too indelicate for respectable white women.” Another option for widows was the sale of food or other homemade products. Many of these widowed yeomen wives were already familiar with this practice, but for some it would not bring

⁴² Jennifer Lynn Gross, “Confederate Widowhood in Virginia” in *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*, ed. Catherine Clinton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 137.

in enough profit to survive financially. Nancy became one of the lucky few and “found work in a traditionally female profession” as a seamstress.⁴³

Nancy may have defied notions of women’s roles, expectations as a widow, and patriarchy, but dire circumstances of the war led her to readjust her gender roles. She joined the labor force as a wage laborer while her children lived in an orphanage. She worked to become financially independent to allow her children to move back home to Tennessee. The turmoil of Appalachia, especially East Tennessee, pushed out of the area many families who, like the Browns, required a new way to recover financially.

Nancy’s sons, Judson, William, and Albert, spent seven years (1866-1873) in the orphanage, where they received an education. Her daughters, Martha and Mary, only remained in D.C. for four years and then returned home in 1870 due to illness.⁴⁴ Although Nancy gave up her children due to the circumstances of inability to care for them and work at the same time, she gave up her maternal role for the sake of her children’s welfare. She saw the necessity of working on her own, earning an income while her children were fed, clothed, had access to medical attention, and school. Without the orphanage, her children may not have had these opportunities, especially in a post-war East Tennessee.

In 1867, Nancy’s father-in-law, John Brown, encouraged her to return to Tennessee with the children. He wrote “now for you and the children coming home, do as you think best, but I think it would suit you as to health the best and some of the children best...but never mind me. Do as you think best...but my judgment is that you have been thar long enuf.”⁴⁵ With her

⁴³ Gross, 141. “Biographical Information “William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ John Brown, letter to Nancy Brown, 27 February 1867. William Laban Brown and A.R. Brown Family Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

husband dead, Nancy's father-in-law naturally became her patriarch, but she simply declined his advice and remained in Washington D.C. for three more years. Even though the war broke Browns' family unit, the end of the fighting did not bring them back together. Nancy could not support herself and her children in post-war East Tennessee and sought employment outside of the region. Although it is unclear why, she obstinately denied the support of other family members and desired to become head of the household. By placing her children in an orphanage and earning wages as a seamstress, Nancy believed she could eventually earn enough to support her children independently.

Another East Tennessee Unionist woman, Fannie Fain, began her journal on November 26, 1863, almost three months after the Union Army occupied the area. Twenty-nine year old Fannie lived with her husband John and their four children in Blountville, Tennessee.⁴⁶ Fannie wrote mostly about the struggles of dealing with the military occupation and the hardships that emanated from it. Fannie and John considered themselves "Northern sympathizers," although they tended not to get involved with the politics of the time.⁴⁷ They also owned a number of slaves and according to the 1860 census, John owned over \$6800 in personal property.⁴⁸ The Fain family were well known throughout East Tennessee but divided politically. Fannie's cousin Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, who lived in Rogersville, Tennessee with her husband Richard owned nine slaves but considered themselves Confederates.⁴⁹ Eliza's husband and her five sons served in the Confederate army, and surprisingly all survived.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Fannie A. Fain, Biographical Information, Fannie A. Fain Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

⁴⁷ John N. Fain, *Sanctified Trial: The Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, A Confederate Woman in East Tennessee* (Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 309.

⁴⁸ United States. Census Office, Eighth Census of Population. 1860.

⁴⁹ Fain, xxxii.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Unlike his wife's cousins, Fannie's husband, thirty-seven year old John Fain, desired to avoid the war at all costs. John avoided the First Conscription Act due to his age in April 1862 and hired a substitute to take his place in September after the Confederate Congress extended the age limit to forty-five. When Congress ended the process of hiring substitutes and required all men of military age to report for duty, John Fain left the town of Blountville on January 28, 1864, for Cincinnati and did not return for another 15 months.⁵¹ Many men fled the area to avoid conscription and headed north. John may have chosen Cincinnati as his destination due to its appeal for banished Unionists. "Parson" Brownlow headed to Cincinnati after his release in early 1862.⁵² Even months after her husband left, Fannie continued to dwell on his absence. "That day at Mr. Neil's we heard of the repeal of the 'Substitute leave'..." she recalled, "Just then Mr. F said he w'd leave the country."⁵³ As the war progressed, she grew dissatisfied with the Confederate government. She complained that "Congress is still in session passing some very unpopular laws for the government of our people. The last and the meanest law passed was to put in all those who had furnished substitutes, a most complete violation of all contracts, and perfectly unconstitutional."⁵⁴ Fannie absolutely dreaded to be left by herself at home. Many women felt the same way and feared for their survival without the structure of patriarchy. After her husband left, Fannie, like many Southern women, fell into responsibilities that she was not accustomed to.

Fannie remained in Blountville with her four children and adapted to life without her husband. Without the patriarch overseeing the household, which included slaves, Fannie struggled to manage this new sense of authority she received. As a subordinate to her husband,

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Fisher, 111, 123.

⁵³ Fannie A. Fain, unknown date 1864, page 51, Fannie A. Fain Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN.

⁵⁴ Fannie A. Fain, diary entry January 1864, page 44.

she was not accustomed to take over the role as head of household. Fannie began her diary in 1863, with sporadic entries and even in 1863 before her husband left, Fannie remained unenthusiastic about the war and none of her entries show particular leanings to either side. Her only concern was that of her husband's safety. In September of that year, Fannie mentioned the Battle of Blountsville and notes "we have had wars & rumors of wars, fighting a bloodshed in our quiet little town. During the months of June, July, and August nothing special took place."⁵⁵ Fannie tended to write more in her diary once her husband left and she wrote entries concerning the crops she planted, the amount of supplies left in her home, and the very few times that she heard back from her husband. Through various entries, Fannie explicated the misery of war and the loneliness she felt in the absence of her husband. By June 1864 she saw how "war has become awful in the extreme, when or how it will terminate, God only knows. Man can know nothing about it." Fannie "hope[ed] and pray[ed] the end [was] not far off."⁵⁶

Management of the home and farm overwhelmed Fannie, but her attempts to control her slaves produced the most trouble. When the Union Army occupied the region in the fall of 1863, her male slave, "Burr went off with the Federals."⁵⁷ In early 1865, she complained about her female slave, "Phebe is still in here house, don't come out to do anything. Sister H and I have done mostly all the cooking & work this week."⁵⁸ Fannie never effectively dealt with the management of slaves because she was too dependent under her husband. The controlling of slaves did not fall under the "cult of true womanhood" so acting as the dominant figure in the household may have seemed foreign to Fannie. With her slaves refusing to complete tasks and escaping one by one, Fannie grew frustrated as a woman. As she was forced to take the head of

⁵⁵ Fannie A. Fain, diary entry for September 1863, page 16.

⁵⁶ Fannie A. Fain, diary entry for 6 June 1864, page 54.

⁵⁷ Fannie A. Fain, diary entry unknown date 1863, page 37.

⁵⁸ Fannie A. Fain, diary entry unknown date 1864, page 62.

household position, she expected the slaves to give her the same respect and obedience that they give her husband. Fannie showed no dominance and assertion when dealing with the slaves, as she only understood her roles of submission.

Later in 1864, Fannie described when the Federals came into town and wrote that “seeing was believing” and how “the town was crowded” and they had “struck up their fires in town.”⁵⁹ The Yankees broke into her mother’s cellar and “carried off all her milk and milk vessels, salt, [and] some pork out of the smokehouse.”⁶⁰ These stories of constant requisition of livestock and supplies from the townspeople filled her diary. She explained a scenario in which “the [Yankees] took Mr. Spurgen’s horse from him” and told “him if he did not dismount, they would kill him.”⁶¹ She described the trouble with men going from door-to-door for food and the confusion of not knowing who was knocking at the front door. At one point in her diary, she exclaimed how she heard the familiar voice of a neighbor who also left town to escape conscription. She wrote, “I knew the voice was Mr. Snapp. I jumped out of bed, drew on my dress and went out to see him. I thought maybe Mr. Fain was with him, but no, not so. Then I was disappointed.”⁶² The disappointment of her husband not returning displays the frustration she held toward her husband because he failed to serve as a patriarch and protect her.

Fannie ended her diary in mid-April 1865. One of her last entries thanked “the Heavenly Father that this war has wound up as it has. My husband who has been from his family and home for 15 months can return and all my friends. I have looked for Mr. Fain every day for a week He will surely come soon.”⁶³ Fannie found it hard to accept the new roles she undertook during the

⁵⁹ Fannie A. Fain, unknown date 1864, page 103.

⁶⁰ Fannie A. Fain, unknown date 1864, page 104.

⁶¹ Fannie A. Fain, unknown date 1864, page 105.

⁶² Fannie A. Fain, unknown date 1864, page 104.

⁶³ Fannie A. Fain, April 1865, page 105.

war and she struggled maintaining the dominant, masculine role over her household and the slaves. Fannie found it difficult to transpire as head of household, but many women found it hard to manage the slaves, as they identified themselves as submissive under the patriarch as well.⁶⁴

The Confederate women of East Tennessee generally fared better than their Unionist counterparts did at the beginning of the Civil War. Since most of these Confederate women belonged to the upper class of the region, their lifestyles remained almost unchanged during the first two years of the war. They made the usual adjustments, as many women did when their fathers or husbands went off to war, such as maintaining the farm and managing the slaves. Things changed dramatically for East Tennessee Confederate women when the region fell to Union forces in September 1863. Of course, Knoxville women were not the first to find themselves under Union occupation. A year prior in 1862, Union troops already encompassed parts of the Confederacy including parts in Louisiana, northern and eastern Virginia, the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida, and parts of western Tennessee. Elite women in these areas under Union occupation “claimed their privilege as ladies to act politically while disowning responsibility.” Union commanders, like Major General Benjamin Butler, issued orders and proclamations to control the actions of these elite ladies.⁶⁵ Butler issued the General Order No. 28 in New Orleans during the spring of 1862. Under its terms, if his troops faced harassment by the “secesh ladies of the city” then he “vowed to treat future offender as he would any ‘woman of the town plying her avocation.’”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 73.

⁶⁵ Stephanie McCurry, *Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 105.

⁶⁶ McCurry, 104.

Under occupation, Confederate women began to see direct challenges to their pattern of life and so in defense, some women altered their gender roles to suit their needs for survival, whereas some faltered under Union forces. Union occupation and Federal officers in East Tennessee “found white secessionists women particularly troublesome.” These “rebel women” insulted Union officers, harassed troops, displayed openly their Confederate flags, snuck supplies across Union lines, and even spied for the Confederate Army. Some mocked Union funerals, and others openly refused to take an oath of loyalty. As much as they attempted to resist the newly instated Federal military presence, their hostility grew out of their vanishing way of life.

Ellen Renshaw House, a nineteen-year old southern belle, held nothing back about her vocal hatred of Union forces during their occupation of East Tennessee. She lived with her parents, Samuel Crawford House and Frances Budden Renshaw, in Knoxville during the war. Her father, a South Carolina native, and her mother, from Philadelphia, settled in Savannah after their marriage in 1831. Ellen and all her siblings were born in Savannah and later moved to Marietta, Georgia in 1848. Samuel Crawford House established himself as a planter in Marietta and eventually owned seven slaves. Ellen’s older brothers, Will and Sam, moved to Knoxville in 1857 and convinced the rest of the family to join them there. When war came, ill health prevented her brother Will from serving, but Sam enlisted with the First Tennessee Heavy Artillery. Ellen’s younger brother, eighteen-year-old John, enrolled in Company E of the Nineteenth Tennessee Infantry.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Prior to the occupation, Ellen’s entries scatter across the months of January to July 1863. After January, she became an infrequent writer, almost as if she were waiting for something exciting to happen. In July, she explained in an entry, “I fully intended---when I commended to keep this,” suggesting she wanted to try to continue recording in her diary. Two months later in September 1863, Ellen began venting in her diary about the occupation. Her first words for September 1, “I think its outrageous. The Yankees are here.” Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., *A Very Violent Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Ellen Renshaw House* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), xviii.

Even though Ellen Renshaw House began her diary in January 1863, she well knew the divided loyalties throughout East Tennessee during the opening months of the conflict. No doubt, she heard about the “bridge-burning” incident in November 1861, which instigated a massive crackdown on Unionism in the region and the arrest of one of the most famous and defiant Unionists, “Parson” Brownlow, the editor of the *Knoxville Whig*. Although the majority of the region voted against secession, the House family lived in Knoxville, and they among other well-endowed families in the city, supported the Confederate cause.⁶⁸ As a young woman living in wartime Knoxville, her youthfulness, confidence, and precocious attitude allowed her to channel her energies into becoming a young rebellious woman once the Union occupation began in 1863. Ellen favored the sight of men in military uniform, but these sights became unwelcome to say the least, when the military men showed up in Yankee blue uniforms.⁶⁹

Within the first month of the occupation, Ellen Renshaw House recorded a passage about the sight of Union flags around Knoxville. “The sight of them has the same effect on me as the blue jackets, it completely nauseates me,” she complained. “I have been sick to my stomach ever since the creatures have been here. Won’t I be happy when they go.”⁷⁰ Insults and political opinions like these seemed natural within a diary, but the occupation encouraged her feelings of hatred in a more public manner. Ellen even associated herself with many politically minded women. For young women growing up during the Civil War, the war itself “exacerbated southern girls’ discomfort with the status quo by producing tension between a customary gender identity (as a southern lady) and a new political identity (as a Confederate rebel). Anya Jabour addresses how the physical conflict and turmoil of war actually mirrors Southern women’s inner

⁶⁸ Robert Tracy McKenzie finds that roughly three-quarters of the economic elite in Knoxville sided with the Confederacy but eventually two-thirds of the community as whole would take that position. McKenzie, 125.

⁶⁹ Sutherland, 15.

⁷⁰ Sutherland, 19.

conflict of their identity. The war brought on many responsibilities for the young women and some “struggled to adapt to the demands of the war-torn South and to work the necessary changes in their identities into a new definition of southern womanhood.”⁷¹ On the other hand, the young elite like Ellen and her friends could act outgoing, be vivacious, and outwardly show contempt towards Union soldiers due to their function of age. Being a young woman provided them with a sense of independence and that allowed them not to worry about protecting their families. One of Nancy’s friends, Mary Hazen, “walked round the flag that hung at the State Bank...and there were a great many officers standing there some of who were making remarks about it.” Another friend, Miss Nancy Scott lost her pass around town because “she had taken a [Confederate] flag and flaunted [it] in the guards face.”⁷² Flags became small tokens of contempt towards the Union soldiers and provided these Rebel women with a tangible political statement, and they viewed these items as a great way to address their inner turmoil of the war had on their lives.⁷³

Through her insults, House displayed a similar determination to many of the younger female rebels, by not giving in through her refusal to compromise her beliefs. Women stepping off the sidewalk to avoid walking under a flag demonstrated their disdain for Knoxville’s Union occupiers. Ruining the bottom of her dress to prove a point went against the manners and respectability expected of a white southern woman and made an effective statement. Waving the Confederate flag in the face of Union soldiers presented a direct form of protest. By today’s standards, Ellen and her friends’ actions would be a tame show of protest, but when Union troops arrived and witnessed young women actively discussing their political beliefs, this blurred their

⁷¹ Anya Jabour, *Scarlett’s Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 240.

⁷² Sutherland, 26, 29.

⁷³ McCurry, 106.

own traditional idea of women avoiding politics and acted contrary to the ideal of “true womanhood.” Northern men grew up with the concept of the “cult of domesticity” and their mothers and sisters abided by the “separate spheres” ideal. They grew accustomed to seeing women with “innate pacifism.” Once Union soldiers entered the South, they saw how Southern women embraced different gender distinctions. Southern society encouraged women to show their patriotism when the Union troops invaded their homes, they grew defensive and vindictive towards the soldiers. Union men assumed these “she-devils” continually crossed acceptable gendered behavior for women. In actuality, it was a clash of cultures.⁷⁴ House’s staunch beliefs and her protest of Union occupation gave the impression of her involvement in the political sphere and her strong devotion to Confederate nationalism and consequently many southern women followed suit with what they saw as an acceptable form of patriotic behavior.

At the same time that she overtly protested Union occupation, Ellen fulfilled many of the necessary feminine roles that the war effort demanded from women. Throughout her diary, she mentions the constant parade of Union soldiers at her house and those of surrounding neighbors asking for supplies. The House family frequently furnished Rebel prisoners in town with food and supplies, and on more than one occasion Ellen and her family denied and hid food from Union soldiers. She promised to “burn any thing I had before they [Union soldiers] should have it.”⁷⁵ Denying Union soldiers food and supplies while providing Rebel soldiers pleased Ellen who saw this as a small victory over the Union occupation of Knoxville.

As many of the citizens of Knoxville and the outlying areas of East Tennessee began taking oaths to the Union, Ellen wittily pledged herself “not to be blue.” In this double entendre,

⁷⁴ Campbell, 14.

⁷⁵ Sutherland, 57.

she attempted to not become upset after learning of her father's taking of the oath while she devoted herself to the Confederate cause. "I have been mad as a hornet all day," Ellen exclaimed. "Father went and took the oath...it is not going to do one bit of good, and I would have done any thing rather than have had him do it."⁷⁶ By disagreeing with her father on a matter of politics, she broke with the tenet of "true womanhood," submissiveness. As a daughter, Ellen maintained this role as a submissive or dependent when she obeyed her father, but as it was the time of war, her political beliefs superseded her role as a submissive daughter. She viewed her commitment to the Confederacy as greater than her commitment and obedience to her father. Ellen's father saw his oath of allegiance to the Union in terms of aiding his family by avoiding persecution, although in Ellen's opinion this did not matter. His actions reflect his abidance of his gender roles as a man who protects his family under any circumstances.

Along with her writing, Ellen's actions displayed a steadfast loyalty to the Confederate cause by removing herself from the domestic sphere to insult Yankees in the public sphere. Upon Ellen and Captain McAlister's first meeting, she noted in her diary, "He said he heard of me before he came here..." That he knew "[she was] an outrageous rebel."⁷⁷ She even openly admitted that her behavior as "something devilish...though not a lady like one."⁷⁸ In April 1864, Ellen insulted a Union officer's wife and subsequently Union authorities suspected her of being a spy. When she received word of these rumors, she wondered if "Parson" Brownlow "heard about the incident and urged the matter."⁷⁹ Many other women were sent into exile as Brownlow desired to see all "rebel females" and "she rebels" sent down South. Susan Ramsey, daughter of J.G.M. Ramsey, another prominent Secessionist from Knoxville, was forced to leave town on the

⁷⁶ Sutherland, 89.

⁷⁷ Sutherland, 113.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Sutherland, 127.

same day. Susan faced exile for the “disloyal acts” of making Confederate flags and “had floated them on the grounds at Mecklenburg [family home] and on the verandas of her father’s domicile.”⁸⁰ The Union government forced these “she rebels” to leave their families behind in Knoxville and Ellen relocated to Georgia until the Confederate surrender in April 1865.⁸¹

For Confederate women in western North Carolina, their war experiences differed in many ways compared to the women across the mountainous border in major East Tennessee cities who had direct contact with troops. For one thing, North Carolina women rarely dealt with Union occupation until the end of the war, unlike the women of East Tennessee who lived under Union rule for at least two years. The region’s isolation from major battles sheltered its inhabitants from major battles and large standing armies, and few felt the need to leave their homes for the majority of the war until April 1865.⁸² Despite these benefits, the women of western North Carolina were still affected by political and internal divisions, as well as the deprivation of food and supplies. Guerrilla warfare plagued women and children of the counties close to the East Tennessee border, but some women played active roles in the warfare. Some women aided and cared for some of the guerrilla fighters.⁸³ Of course, women across the different economic classes felt these effects differently. In May 1863, the women of Shelton Laurel asked Governor Zebulon Vance if they could be paid for the damages of the “account of troops eating up all [their] provisions and killing [their] men and property.” The recent massacre of their menfolk by Confederate troops who suspected them of guerilla activity devastated this

⁸⁰ William B. Hesseltine, ed., *Dr. J.G.M. Ramsey: Autobiography and Letters* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 165.

⁸¹ Sutherland, 127.

⁸² Gordon B. McKinney, “Women’s Role in Civil War Western North Carolina” in the *North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume LXIX, No. 1 (January 1992), 38.

⁸³ Inscoc, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 136.

community.⁸⁴ By the end of 1864, a majority of western North Carolina women “had stopped supporting the war and worked actively or passively for peace.”⁸⁵

The Lenoir women of Caldwell and Wilkes counties, members of one of the most prominent families in western North Carolina, remained isolated from the turmoil and hardships that many lower class women faced during the war. They participated in easier tasks such as sewing, as they had slaves to do the hard work, and they never worried about managing slaves as their menfolk remained home for most of the war. The generational differences between the Lenoir women show how each generation experienced and understood the war. The younger generation, similar to Ellen Renshaw House, spouted off their Confederate support and their hatred of the Yankees. As they were young, single, and vivacious, they frequently supported the war cause and wrote their menfolk letters of support and encouragement. The older generation, their mothers, their aunts, and grandmother, supported the war in similar fashion but showed less patriotic fervor.

In March 1861, Colonel Thomas Lenoir, the patriarch, died and left his children an inheritance of sixty-one slaves. This abundance of slaves provided the Lenoirs with labor and private property they could sell for profit. With the war starting, the Lenoir brothers began to wonder what to do with this amount of property. With a market surge in the economy due to the war, the brothers decided to sell off some of their property in private sales. The youngest Lenoir brother, Rufus, decided to remain at home during the war and involved himself with the business dealings with advice from his brothers, Tom and Walter.⁸⁶ As his brothers went to the front, Rufus supervised the home and farm, which kept him away from the battlefield. Rufus and his

⁸⁴ Women of Madison County, North Carolina to Governor Zebulon Vance, May 29, 1863 in Governor's Papers. Zebulon Baird Vance. Online Digital Collections. State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC.

⁸⁵ McKinney, 38.

⁸⁶ Inscoc, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 88-89.

wife, Sallie, lived at the main homestead, Fort Defiance with Lenoir matriarch Mrs. Selina and their spinster sister Sarah.⁸⁷ Fort Defiance became the natural center for the Lenoirs' activities during the war, and with the help of slaves, the home functioned successfully and entertained and many of the siblings, cousins, and grandchildren who visited there.

With the secession crisis and the threat of war looming in early 1861, Rufus's older brother Tom, forty-three years old at the time, decided to take a commission in the Confederate military. Sarah Lenoir completely opposed his decision and told him, "You can serve your country better by staying at home, and making bread and meat for our soldiers to eat than by going to be a soldier yourself at this stage of the game."⁸⁸ As his sister, and spinster at the age of forty, Sarah had no husband or children to care for. Under the Southern ideals of womanhood, single women still followed the tenets of submission and domesticity. She remained at her childhood home, Fort Defiance, and she managed that household along with her mother and her sister-in-law.⁸⁹ As she worried for her brother, Tom and his safety, Sarah saw his age as a factor and thought his contribution to the war effort would suffice with the production of food and supplies. Tom disagreed with her "out of place" comment and quickly took his position as Captain. At the same time, maybe in attempt to feel younger, he decided to marry the seventeen year old Lizzie Garrett.⁹⁰

With excitement in the air accompanying the approaching war, Lizzie agreed to marry Tom in June 1861. Tom admitted to Rufus that "the exciting state of the times is taken into

⁸⁷ William L. Barney, *The Making of a Confederate: Walter Lenoir's Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009) 55.

⁸⁸ Sarah Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, May 25, 1861, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁸⁹ Barney, *The Making of a Confederate Soldier*, 32.

⁹⁰ Jones, Carroll, *Captain Lenoir's Diary Tom Lenoir and his Civil War Company from Western North Carolina* (Wilmington, NC: Wincoa Press, 2010), 57.

consideration together with the fact that I am going to be married on next Thursday morning!!!”⁹¹ Lizzie, even younger than Ellen Renshaw House, gave up her freedom of girlhood to the inferior status of a wife under the terms of patriarchy.⁹² Upon her marriage she transitioned her role from a young southern belle to a dutiful wife. The newly appointed Captain Tom Lenoir left his new wife alone at his bachelor pad, the “Lion’s Den,” as he mustered his volunteer troops. The young Lizzie began her war experience in a lonely state. As quickly as she was married, Tom left home. Many young married women “experienced increased isolation from family and friends as they devoted themselves to home and husband.”⁹³ By August of the same year, Lizzie’s letters to Tom frequently addressed her loneliness and isolation:

Perhaps you will not be looking for a letter from me so soon, but I will write anyhow and maybe it will be inducement for you to write [me] for much as I wish to, I can not hope you wrote to me immediately after you reached Asheville—doubtless you had so much to do and so much to think about that you could not give me one thought.⁹⁴

Sarah Lenoir was not the only outspoken member of the household. Lizzie’s letters throughout 1861 criticized her husband’s lack of writing. In October 1861, Lizzie visited Fort Defiance and left her isolated home, the “Lion’s Den.” Although her visit to Fort Defiance curbed her loneliness, she still reprimanded Tom for not writing as often. “I promised to write to you again this week and I must try to fulfill my promise. I suppose you have received the letter I wrote...I wish I could have received an answer, before writing...”⁹⁵ As Lizzie had no children, she spent her days leisurely sewing or visiting with her sisters and the boredom of her husband

⁹¹ Thomas Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, June 10, 1861, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁹² Jabour, 180.

⁹³ Jabour, 209.

⁹⁴ Lizzie Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, August 30, 1861, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁹⁵ Lizzie Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, October 4, 1861, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

being absent gave her impetus to guilt Tom in her letters. As a woman, and a newly married one at that, she desired the attention from her husband and longed to begin her future with Tom.

Lizzie filled her letters to Tom with countless tidbits of information. She desired to let him know everything that went on during her day. Lizzie often complained frequently of illness and always expressed her sicknesses to Tom. “I got up and tried to dress,” Lizzie explained, “but I could not come [to] it, so I lay down again, but soon had to get up again to throw up.”⁹⁶ Fortunately, since her lifestyle as a young genteel woman promoted leisure activities, she never worried about labor or upkeep of her home.⁹⁷ Once she felt healthy again, she asked Tom for advice on subjects she should study and she excitedly told him of her knitting and promised him “if you think of anything else you will need that I can get, do let me know.”⁹⁸ Even with her husband away, Lizzie maintained the role of an observant and reliable wife.

The war also never scared the Lenoir women enough to travel. While they sold off their abundance of slaves, the Lenoirs profited and thus they desired to spend their money. In November 1861, Lizzie asked Tom if she could visit him. “Even Brother Rufus has been talking to me about going said he did not know why I should not go. Sister Sallie says she would go if she were in my place.”⁹⁹ Lizzie wanted to see her husband and she wanted to act as a wife but the war took away her ability to fulfill these roles. Although it is unclear if Lizzie made the trip to visit her husband, her sister-in-laws also decided to make frequent trips around the state for entertainment and pleasure. As the war raged on into 1862, the Lenoir women carried on with their lives as if nothing disparaging was happening. “Laura [Lenoir Norwood] is going to

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Carroll C. Jones, *Captain Lenoir's Diary: Tom Lenoir and his Civil War Company from western North Carolina* (Wilmington, NC: Wincoa Press, 2010), 37.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Lizzie Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, November 9, 1861, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Greensboro in a few weeks to take lessons in painting,” Lizzie informed Tom. “Millie [Mary Ann Lenoir Gwyn] will go with her to take music.”¹⁰⁰

As a newly married woman, missing her husband and concerned for his health, Lizzie begged Tom not to re-enlist in the beginning of 1862. She pleaded, “I don’t believe you have been well a week at a time since you went away. You must not think of enlisting, it would be so imprudent of you to do so.”¹⁰¹ Tom agreed and left after his twelve-month enlistment ended, he returned home to Fort Defiance. Almost immediately after he returned home, Tom was ordered to lead a local militia through the mountains to apprehend Unionist guerillas and Confederate deserters alike. Fortunately for Lizzie, since he served with the Home Guard for the remainder of the war, Tom always remained close to home.¹⁰²

The older Lenoir women, Laura Lenoir Norwood, Mary Ann Lenoir Gwyn, Sallie Lenoir, and Sarah Lenoir appeared not as politically vocal as their younger counterparts. Their letters imply their support for the Confederacy, especially their male family members, but they never mentioned politics, as many of these women probably felt politics was an unmentionable topic for women. Their letters tended to update on the home situation. The younger girls, their daughters and nieces, wrote fiery letters of support to their Uncles Tom and Walter Lenoir. Julia Gwyn updated her Uncle Walter on their support of the soldiers at home. “I must tell you how domestic we have grown since the war broke out. We have learned to spin and weave...Mary [sister] is a first rate spinner; she can beat me all to pieces.” Young Southern girls found sewing

¹⁰⁰ Lizzie’s sister-in-laws, Laura Norwood, forty-six years old and matriarch of the Norwood family and Mary Ann Lenoir Gwyn, forty-two years old, and the matriarch of the Gwyn family. Lizzie Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, January 22, 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

¹⁰¹ Lizzie Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, April 22, 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

¹⁰² Barney, *The Making of a Confederate*, 101.

items for soldiers as a huge support for the cause.¹⁰³ Julia reiterated her support when she updated her uncle on the political divisions of her community. “I am sorry to tell you of the Union sentiment existing in [Wilkes] county, among the women as well as the men; the women write to their husbands to leave the army and come home and that’s the reason that so many of them are deserting. . .It makes me so mad to think about that I just want to fight.”¹⁰⁴ The Union sentiment in Wilkes county irritated Julia and this motivated her to continue supporting the war effort and providing her uncles encouragement to continue to fight. Walter Lenoir’s other niece, Laura Norwood, enjoyed writing him and discussing politics. She also updated Walter with news from the home front:

Now that our soldiers have received some clothes I hope we will have a little time to read and study. Some of the folks about here were much concerned because the men complained of the size of the pants we sent. They were too large and the soldiers did not like them, and these people said if they were so particular and [testy], let them go without. One said to me "I think we might as well let the Society fall through any how, for we got no thanks for what we have done!" That, you perceive, is the main spring. They are tired and want to give up. I told her that any body that wanted to fall through, could fall through, but I should decline to do any such thing yet a while. There is a great deal of Human Nature in woman, as well as in Man. I have found that out. Knew it before, as [well], though it accumulates daily.¹⁰⁵

As Laura Norwood alluded to waning support, she vowed never to “fall through.” Both Laura and Julia provided their uncles with strong support and enjoyed discussing the politics and the internal conflicts that fueled the war. They involved themselves in the war effort unlike their mothers and aunts, who preferred the isolation from the war. Although married, Lizzie loved to talk about politics and the war in her letters. Still a young and vibrant woman, she teetered on the line that separated her from her young nieces. Upon learning about the nearby bread riots, Lizzie

¹⁰³ Jabour, 253.

¹⁰⁴ Julia Gwynn to Walter Lenoir, July 25, 1863, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

¹⁰⁵ Laura Norwood to Walter Lenoir, January 16, 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

wrote that she held nothing but contempt for the actions of those women involved. She remarked on the latest bread riot in Jonesville, North Carolina in January 1865. Lizzie scoffed about the “band of women, armed with axes, came down in the place to press the tithe corn...and brought wagons to carry it off.” Lizzie concluded in an amusing tone that the women failed to get any corn, “as there was only one man in the place, and he (Leonidas like) stood in the door of the house and bid defense to the crowd. You know women generally want to carry their point, and it was with great difficulty that our hero could withstand them. They were happily thrown into confusion by an old drunk man...”¹⁰⁶ Lizzie remained shocked by these actions, even though as she and the rest of her family knew of the turmoil and desperation through her brother-in-law Rufus who aided the struggling members of the community. But in a sense, Lizzie could not fathom the motivation as to why these women acted the way they did in such a violent manner, and this seemingly displays how insulated the Lenoir women were to the realities of war.

The younger women continued the support of their uncles, but by 1863 both Tom and Walter remained at home. Walter Lenoir returned in the beginning of 1863 due to an injury and all the Lenoir men were reunited with their families at this time. Following the men’s return, Walter and Tom helped Rufus with the business of selling slaves. Aside from the shock of Walter’s injury, the Lenoir women continued their lives of leisure without concern for the developments of the war. As the war dragged on into the years of 1863 and 1864, the Lenoirs faced problems with food shortages and the fear of a Federal invasion, but they managed to live a somewhat peaceful existence until April 1865. Federal troops invaded the region and began confiscating everything they could carry. Tom bitterly described the time when Union Cavalry troops arrived. “They took six of my horses and mules, rushed up to the house cursing and

¹⁰⁶ Lizzie Lenoir to Sarah J. Lenoir, January 22, 1865, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

swearing with guns presented. Miss Laura Garrett [Lizzie's sister], Lizzie and myself were here. They threatened to kill Lizzie. Searched my pockets, took what gold and silver we both had, some of Lizzie's jewelry...and other articles including bacon, hams, flour, etc."¹⁰⁷ The end of the war provided the deepest shock for the Lenoir women. As the Union searched their homes and seized their property, the Lenoir women finally witnessed and felt the harsh effects of war. Through the entire Civil War, their involvement consisted of little more than letters and supplies to soldiers, but with Stoneman's Raid in early 1865 their isolation ended and they too succumbed to the effects of war. These women began to notice their slaves escaping. Most slaves left Fort Defiance in the spring of 1865, leaving Sallie Lenoir and her sister-in-law Sarah without any domestic help. Sallie told Lizzie in January 1866 that none of the local white women met her standards for a house servant so she and Rufus took on the domestic work around the house themselves.¹⁰⁸ The war forced the Lenoir women to begin heavy domestic labor for the first time in their lives.

Western North Carolina's Mary Bell eventually challenged the established norms of the "cult of true womanhood" and took on challenging work. Unlike some of her East Tennessee counterparts, Mary's letters never voiced strong support for the Southern cause; most of the time she complained that the war took away her husband. While she sulked over the absence of her husband, the war provided her an outlet to act independently and gain experience in the business world. At first, the protection of her family and community was her main goal and like many women during the conflict, she stepped in and helped her husband maintain his work while he served in the Confederate forces. In the beginning of the war, he dictated the plans for the farm

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, August 14, 1865, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

¹⁰⁸ Barney, *Making of a Confederate*, 152.

and his businesses through his letters. This opportunity provided Mary Bell with her first taste of independence outside of the domestic sphere.

Little is known about the Bells' early lives before they moved to western North Carolina in 1860. Mary, a native of Georgia, married Alfred Bell in 1856 and they lived in the mountains of Georgia prior to their move to North Carolina. While in Georgia, Alfred worked as a dentist and shared the same practice with his brother, a physician. A year later, the Bells moved to Franklin, North Carolina near where Alfred's father, one of the community's founding members, operated a jewelry and clock-making business. Alfred established a popular dental practice and took interest in his father's business as well.¹⁰⁹ Alfred also bought a small farm outside of town upon which he employed a white tenant, and in turn, hired out two slaves from the county's largest supplier.¹¹⁰

During the secession crisis, Franklin and the rest of Macon County supported the Confederate cause, but Alfred delayed enlisting until the fall of 1861. He helped raise a company for Macon County and, as their captain, moved them to Asheville where the rest of the North Carolina Thirty-ninth Regiment awaited assignment.¹¹¹ When Alfred left, Mary assumed responsibility of handling the account and debts of his dental practice. She also managed his share of the jewelry and watch business as well as overseeing the farm. The twenty-six year-old Mary took on a range of businesses while taking care of the home and their two daughters. As she expanded her control over her husband's business affairs, Mary gave birth to two children,

¹⁰⁹ Bell Biographical Information, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹¹⁰ John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachia South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 91.

¹¹¹ Inscoe, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia," 394.

and buried one of them. She immersed herself in a world of duality, where she shined in both the public and domestic sphere.

At the beginning of 1862, Mary felt hesitant regarding the business transactions. In February, she reported to her husband that a man wanted to “change about 70 dollars of [her] money with him for Murphy money.” She hesitantly wrote, “I put him off telling him that I was looking for you home and he could see you about it. If you do not come before he starts must I change with him?”¹¹² Her tone in her letters reflects her apprehension concerning her involvement in her husband’s business affairs. Uneasy with her new role, Mary struggled “to keep in good spirits but it is very hard to do. I find myself almost despairing sometimes.” She begged Alfred not to enlist. “One thing I beg of you not to do for my sake is not to enlist. I can look forward now to that time when if you live, you can come home and stay, but if you were to enlist I could have no set time and I would be miserable.”¹¹³ By the summer of 1862, her uneasiness seemed to dwindle though she still hesitated with business decisions. When they discussed the loans she gave to soldiers in his unit, Mary timidly asked Alfred for reassurance. “I had to loan some of your men some money... I hope I did nothing wrong.”¹¹⁴ But she concluded to Alfred that, “I seem to have their good will as their Capt.”¹¹⁵ In the capacity of these dual roles, at home and at the family businesses, Mary became overwhelmed at times and confessed to Alfred that “I wish I could be man and woman both until this war ends.”¹¹⁶

¹¹² Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, February 9, 1862, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹¹³ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, April 4, 1862, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹¹⁴ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, August 26, 1862, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, May 22, 1862, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

As the war progressed in 1862, Mary Bell grew into a shrewd businesswoman. She based many of the prices at the jewelry store on her own inventory at home. She bargained with her customers, basing the price on what she needed to provide for the household. She explained to Alfred “I charged a soldier \$20, which he willingly paid, for the repair of his watch.” She calculated the price based on the equivalent of two bushels of corn.¹¹⁷ Mary found other bargaining opportunities throughout the county for valuable supplies such as thread, dye, candles, and nails. Alfred saw Mary’s growing confidence and decided to give her an even greater task: the purchase of a slave. By the end of 1862, Alfred desired to invest their accumulation of Confederate money into either land or a slave. He insisted that Mary make the business decisions and transactions. “I want you not to ask me anything about it. Its enough for me to know that I want you to buy it...I have a wife, and I thank god for it, who is not extravagant and always trying to lay something up for the future.”¹¹⁸ As Alfred spent most his time at home during the year of 1863, not much correspondence exists between him and Mary, but sometime in that year they came into possession of a female slave named Eve.¹¹⁹ This slave purchase not only provided Mary with a new position of power and control but also allowed her to focus on the upkeep and management of the businesses, leaving domestic tasks to Eve.

By 1864, Mary transitioned into a completely independent woman. In February 1864, she asked Alfred if he intended to reenlist. “Are you going to reenlist or what are you going to do? Get out if you can honorably.” She explained her inquiry when she told Alfred in a later dated letter that “O! Would that you were here today...I would take you over the farm and show you

¹¹⁷ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, December 16, 1864, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C..

¹¹⁸ Alfred Bell to Mary Bell, December 9, 1862 in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹¹⁹ Inscoc, *Race, War, and Remembrance*, 92.

our prospect for a crop.”¹²⁰ The desire for her husband’s return demonstrated that she needed him not to relieve her from work or her loneliness but to boast about the likelihood of a good yield for that season. In March of the same year, she decided to trade her slave girl Eve for an entire slave family. The profits from this bargain provided her with a new degree of empowerment since she negotiated a trade and she explained to Alfred that, “I have swapped Eve for a man, woman, and child...and gave \$1800 to boot.”¹²¹ Because they never owned slaves before the war, Alfred had no experience as a slaveholder and Mary needed to learn the ropes of her new job.

As a slaveholder and operator of several businesses, Mary exuded a great deal of confidence and independence. In her letters, she even wrote about her business dealings in a different manner than before. When referring to the farm, she used the singular pronoun “I” rather than the plural “we.” Mary boasted, “I think I will have a clover patch by next year; my horses are fatter than any of my neighbor’s horses; I like my darkies better I believe than I did at first.”¹²² Her able management of these tasks allowed Mary to gain a sense of pride and Alfred appeared to understand this transition. Alfred remarked to her, “As for giving any advice about home matters I expect you are a better farmer than I am, so I won’t dictate, so as you think best & suit yourself & I shall be satisfied.”¹²³

Living in Appalachia also provided Mary with the ability to run her own businesses. Historian John Inscoe explains that the “sense of community” distinguishes Mary’s experience as truly Appalachian. John Inscoe explained that this “sense of community” in Franklin, and even

¹²⁰ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, February 19, 1864, June 5, 1864, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹²¹ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, March 11, 1864 in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹²² I Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, July 8, 1864 in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹²³ Alfred Bell to Mary Bell, March 31, 1864, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

the rest of western North Carolina, led to Mary's new sense of independence. The Appalachian way of life influenced this "sense of community" through widespread practices including "short term slave hiring, tenant employment...and the great diversity of highland agricultural production allowed for a degree of local self-sufficiency."¹²⁴ These aspects allowed Franklin to remain a community sheltered from the harshness of war that many other communities in the region faced. Thanks to these uniquely Appalachian traits, Mary took over her husband's businesses with ease.

Even as Macon County remained isolated from devastation of war unlike other Appalachian communities, like East Tennessee, the letters between the Bells exhibit an underlying fear of what could happen. The fear of deserters disturbing property or the distress of a possible Union invasion plagued some of their letters. These troubling and ominous possibilities absolutely forced Mary to establish a contingency plan for survival. She did not want to disappoint her husband or her family and her business dealings allowed her a safety net if the situation worsened. She chose not to support the war effort as many women did in cases when they sewed and knitted for the soldiers or participated in fundraisers. Mary shed her typical feminine duties adopted in times of war, broke away from the tenant of domesticity, and took on the masculine role of securing the safety of her farm, family, and finances. Ultimately, she fulfilled her female duties of caring for her home and family by stepping out of her gendered sphere to take on a renewed role in the public sphere where she gained a sense of empowerment.

He mentions that her community remained untouched by many of the internal problems and divisions that neighboring counties dealt with among Unionist and Confederate residents. However, in "neighboring Cherokee County, Unionists and deserters threatened Confederate wives" and this news could easily have invoked fear for both Alfred and Mary Bell. In some of

¹²⁴ Inscoc, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia," 412.

their exchanges, the Bells made comments that illustrated some of the tension surrounding their community. Mary awoke one night in May 1862, to a pounding on the door of her home. When she investigated the noise, she heard her neighbor's dogs barking, as if someone were visiting. Mary never figured out who or what caused the noise, but it concerned her enough to tell Alfred about the incident. Alfred later assured Mary that "Ill teach them how to act the rascal with me when I am absent. Ill let those conscripts know that they shall not tamper with my property."¹²⁵

Beyond tampering with or stealing from the Bells' property, Alfred worried about rumors from Macon County and especially the safety of his wife. In February 1864, he grew anxious, as he had not received a letter from Mary in a few weeks. He wrote to her that:

I see in the Mobile Paper a few days ago that the Yanks had made a raid in to Macon [County], but Thomases Indians bush whacked them so that they turned back 20 miles below Franklin...but then last evening out Adj[utan]t James D. Harden came from home in NC...and says Franklin was burned down. I hope it not true thoe is makes us very uneasy & we all are very anxious to hear from home.¹²⁶

The First Wisconsin Cavalry did in fact launch a raid, but they never got closer than twenty miles from Franklin. After the initial excitement and fear wore off, Mary sent a snarky reply to her husband. "I guess you have heard of the great yankee and tory raid we had or at least expected to have...It was the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of."¹²⁷ Mary's comical and sassy reply reflects her desire to appear brave and fearless for her worrisome husband. She wanted to allay his fears about her safety at home, and because she operated three businesses, she needed to be seen as someone in total control and without weakness. Her spirited attitude toward the threat of invasion after the fact, provided her husband with a unusual sense of security knowing that

¹²⁵ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, May 22, 1862, and Alfred Bell to Mary Bell, September 18, 1862 in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹²⁶ Alfred Bell to Mary Bell, February 25, 1864, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹²⁷ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, February 19, 1864, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

Mary could ably defend his businesses and take care of herself in an independent manner. By the following April, Alfred continued to worry about his wife and the state of his home. He and his men petitioned Governor Zebulon Vance to reassign them to western North Carolina so that they could defend their homes. Alfred even thought about resigning but told Mary “I hate the idea of being conscripted.” He then mentioned that he “could join Thomases legion & get to stay at home nearly all the time.” These ideas never materialized and Alfred clung to hope that he might receive a furlough as quickly as possible.¹²⁸

Similar to Mary Bell, Cornelia Henry’s wartime experience seemed mostly vacant of turmoil and strife. As a western North Carolinian of the upper class, the slaveholding elite, Cornelia never felt the constraints of food shortages or laboring on a farm in the absence of her husband. She too, quickly adapted to her new role as a manager over her husband’s businesses, but Cornelia never quite succeeded to the level of independence that Mary Bell attained, nor did she really desire to. Cornelia married William Henry in April 1855 and they settled into a farm in Buncombe County, North Carolina in 1859. William was a prosperous leader in the community who worked as the postmaster for Sulphur Springs prior to the war. He also worked as a miller and helped lay roads throughout the town; he collected tolls and served on the Asheville court. During the war, William served as a Captain for the local Home Guard unit that primarily searched out and captured deserters.¹²⁹ Later in the war, William Henry participated in several skirmishes that took him away from home, including Shelton Laurel in January 1863 and the Battle of Asheville in April 1865.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Alfred Bell to Mary Bell, April 8, 1864, in the Alfred W. Bell Papers, Special Collections Department, Duke University Library, Durham, N.C.

¹²⁹ Karen L. Clinard and Richard Russell, eds., *Fear in North Carolina: The Civil War Journals and Letters of the Henry Family*, (Asheville: Reminiscing Books, 2008), ix.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Throughout her diary, Cornelia Henry wrote about her daily tasks of managing the household, taking care of her children and slaves, and her daily sewing. As a woman of a higher class, she spent most of her time managing the house including monitoring the slaves and their work in completing the cooking, cleaning, washing of clothes, gardening, and childcare.¹³¹ On June 9, 1861, she began using her sewing skills for the war effort. “I made three pair [of] pants for the volunteers.”¹³² Another daily activity that Cornelia enjoyed was her small responsibility of feeding her chickens, ducks, and turkeys. “I feed my chickens every day twice. We have some 60 or 70, three little ducks & two others setting so perhaps we will have more soon.”¹³³ Even amidst the war, Cornelia held on to her traditional roles because her husband remained so close to home.

As the war intensified and threats to western North Carolina increased, the Home Guard traveled more and further away. Cornelia remarked on the pain of how much she missed her husband. In October 1862, Cornelia worried that the Conscription Act would require her husband to leave the region. “I hope Mr. Henry will not have to go. If he does, what is to become of me & my children?”¹³⁴ She constantly worried about her husband and the fate of her children and herself, but she never took the initiative like Mary Bell. While her husband mustered with the militia, Cornelia took on some of her husband’s tasks by managing the slaves and some of his business at the mill and on the farm. He instructed her to:

Continue the mill dam to the hill, if it [is] broke around at the end or do the best under the circumstances. Have Sam [slave] to sow wheat...I want the corn on the Joe Green field & sow the wheat. Then sow in the land joining Johnson’s corn...Have a pasture spend for the dry cattle. Close the fence above the houses including the oat field.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Edwards, 21.

¹³² Clinard and Russell, 22.

¹³³ Clinard and Russell, 81-82.

¹³⁴ Clinard and Russell, 105.

¹³⁵ Clinard and Russell, 167.

Cornelia had no trouble in following these instructions since she only had to deliver requests to the tenants and to the slaves. She merely monitored the progress and made sure her husband's plans were completed. Cornelia easily monitored her husband's businesses, but she found it difficult to manage the slaves. "I hated to see [Mr. Henry] leave for I don't like it much. Things don't go well when he is away. George [slave] is troublesome when he is not here & all the negroes in general, they don't like to obey me."¹³⁶ The masculine role of the slaveholder as a disciplinarian was a role that Cornelia found difficult to fulfill. As a dependent herself, she failed to project her authority in a dominant role to control the behavior of her slaves. Cornelia attempted to undertake the role of head of household through the years of 1863 and 1864 while her husband was away. But as much as she hated to see her husband go away, she fully supported the Confederacy. She constantly hoped " [the Confederates] maybe be able to whip them good there and that peace may soon dawn on our bleeding country...May we come out conquerors and oh Lord I pray Thee grant us a speedy peace."¹³⁷ She wanted peace, so her husband could remain home but she understood the need for war. Even by the end of the war in April 1865, she continued to say, "Our Confederacy."¹³⁸ The looming end of the war did not tarnish her belief in the government.

Cornelia Henry's position as interim head of the household and her dedication to her husband and his safety shines through her actions. When Colonel George Kirk and his men raided the area in April 1865, Cornelia acted on her own to secure her family's future. In her letter to her husband, Cornelia takes the role of advisor and informant. She tells her husband what to do to find safety in the woods away from Kirk's men. She warned her husband, "For God's sake don't come to the house...you must keep hid and leave the country tonight." She

¹³⁶ Clinard and Russell, 48-49.

¹³⁷ Clinard and Russell, 216.

¹³⁸ Clinard and Russell, 271.

continues with “you must not stay near the road but go way over the mountains...oh Papa, for my sake and our children’s sake leave tonight if you think you can possibly get through.”

Cornelia then provided a plan for her husband to follow. She explains, “Till says her papa will plot you through the mountains. Yes, go and I will come when able. George [a male slave] said there was 15 Yankees at the Murray place this morning...go lie in some thicket till you leave...disguise yourself and pass under a fictitious name.”¹³⁹ Under the threat of danger to her family and home, Cornelia ignored the tenet of submissiveness and sought to take control of her husband’s fate. Their roles reversed as the wife conveyed orders and her husband obeyed them. Not only as an Appalachian but as a Southerner too, allowed her to become the provider to ensure the survival of her husband and the future of her household.

Cornelia then received word from William that he planned to get out of the country. In her reply she told William “I only send your clothes as I am affraid of your being detected...I send all the stuff I have cooked [and] when this gives out I hope you may meet with good friends who will help you on...” She advised him with a plan of escape. “You must be very cautious till you get out of the country,” she instructed, “Change your name should you meet any one. Pass for deserters or anything so you get out safe.” Cornelia heard about deserters wearing both Yankee blue and Confederate grey claiming they belonged to a particular regiment, and with this she told William to follow suit, but remain cautious and “stop at Bill Miller’s and inquire how things are ahead.”¹⁴⁰ She finally heard back from William about a month later in May 1865. She does not mention his whereabouts, but she provides him with an update about the current situation at home. Cornelia detailed that the “yanks” have behaved tolerably toward her but, “some of them were the worst men [she has] ever heard” as they terrorized and stole from their

¹³⁹ Clinard and Russell, 274-275.

¹⁴⁰ Clinard and Russell, 276.

fellow neighbors.¹⁴¹ Her sternness and domineering force became acceptable traits as she headed the household to protect her husband. Cornelia followed the gender conceptions that allowed Southern women “responsible for the material and cultural survival of the family. When threatened by an invading army, they were more than able to respond with a passion worthy of both mothers and warriors.”¹⁴²

By June 1865, Cornelia warned William that, “the Tories [Union sympathizers] blame you with Allen’s death.” Pinck Allen, a deserter of the Twenty-Fifth North Carolina Regiment, was also known as a thief around the region.¹⁴³ William and the rest of the Home Guard made many attempts to find Allen and arrest him. Allen was shot and killed by an unknown gunman in May 1864.¹⁴⁴ In a diary entry for May 21, 1864, Cornelia stated that, “Allen’s sudden & inglorious death has ceased to be a theme of conversation. I think it has [given] some of the deserters in his neighborhood a big sceer [scare].”¹⁴⁵ In a June 1865 letter, Cornelia continued by scolding her husband for not taking her advice. “I wish you had listened to me sometimes when you did not. Things would have been better for us I imagine but the past can’t be recalled.”¹⁴⁶ Although it remains unclear what Cornelia is referencing, most likely it involved William’s part in searching for Pinck Allen. Cornelia chastised and criticized her husband’s rash decision. A few days after Cornelia sent the letter, William returned home safe and sound.

The end of the Civil War and the fall of the Confederacy forced Cornelia and William to re-examine their lives. They fortunately never experienced such turmoil until the end of the war, compared with East Tennessee. With the defeat of the Confederacy, came the end of chattel

¹⁴¹ Clinard and Russell, 282-283.

¹⁴² Campbell, 13.

¹⁴³ Clinard and Russell 114.

¹⁴⁴ Clinard and Russell, 218.

¹⁴⁵ Clinard and Russell, 219.

¹⁴⁶ Clinard and Russell, 287.

slavery. Cornelia complained in July 1865, “There is a great change in the negroes. They seem not to want to do anything, only as they are hired.” Cornelia had to learn for the first time how to cook, do laundry, and haul firewood if she wanted her household to remain in working order. “I have done my first day’s washing...My hands are very sore and raw in several places but everything is clean. I spoke to Tena [former slave] about washing yesterday but she did not seem to want to do so...Mr. Henry did not want me to wash.” Interestingly, it seems that Cornelia found it difficult to comprehend the reasons why her former slaves refused to do the work, but she understood that if she wanted the work done, she needed to do it herself.¹⁴⁷ Later in her diary, she admitted that, “this war had changed our circumstances a great deal. I have done more hard work this summer than I ever did in my life. I can’t see the good of abolishing slavery.”¹⁴⁸ The war forced Cornelia and other Southern women to expand their domestic roles and instead of monitoring the domestic duties, they worked to accomplish these tasks on their own.

Cornelia Henry’s war experience shared similarities with Mary Bell’s. Because she lived in western North Carolina, the isolation from the war protected her and her family from the destruction it caused in other southern Appalachian states. Her social status also allowed her an escape from many wartime duties such as laboring in the fields or caring for the livestock. Cornelia’s wealth allowed her to focus only on her feminine activities such as sewing, and taking care of her children and slaves. With her husband William’s involvement in the Home Guard, he remained close to home throughout the majority of the war and his proximity to home kept Cornelia from taking on his masculine duties. When he left for an extended period, she managed his businesses well but never gained the power to control and discipline her slaves. When her husband required protection, Cornelia provided him with vital instructions to escape the area.

¹⁴⁷ Clinard and Russell, 293, 303.

¹⁴⁸ Clinard and Russell, 305.

She became the protector and provider of the home when she feared for the safety of her husband. After the war, during the summer of 1865, Cornelia realized that her role as a domestic needed to expand with the absence of her slaves. She learned quickly and took responsibility of tasks that she never had before. Cornelia lived a sheltered life during the war, but at its end in 1865, she took on new roles to continue managing her household.

The Civil War for both East Tennessee and western North Carolina women varied throughout the region. The war tested and forced many women to re-evaluate their gender roles. The women of East Tennessee lived in constant terror through the entire war. After Tennessee seceded, Unionist women adjusted their roles as heads of the household as many of their menfolk left the area out of fear of arrest or conscription into the Confederate army. Many took on their menfolk's roles as they took over the farms to survive. Some even spoke out against the Confederate government in retaliation until the Union occupation in 1863. For Confederate women, Union occupation became the most unbearable period of their war experience. As Union troops arrived, they became more vocal in their politics and more resistant to the public sphere. Western North Carolina, although sharing common characteristics with East Tennessee, provided its women with an entirely different experience. The isolation of the region from military incursions allowed Confederate women vital protection from the turmoil of war. Because many of these Confederate women were the wealthiest in the region, they managed to retain their traditional female roles until the end of the war. Some women took on their husbands' roles as head of their household, managing businesses and slaves.

The Appalachian female experience during the Civil War shared similarities with the experiences of Southern women generally, but the extreme internal divisions, invasions, and occupations, forced the women to take on these roles at a higher level. These traditional ideals of

femininity spread into the South and influenced Appalachian women but they in turn molded national ideals for their survival. This notion of protest that Wilma Dunaway puts forth, that Appalachian women fought against the “cult of true womanhood” proves false. These Appalachian women highlighted in this chapter found their traditional gender ideals hard to attain during war, so they learned to adapt with a new sense of flexibility within their gendered sphere. With the war destroying their communities and even the institution of slavery, women desired to hold onto something familiar, and these gender roles provided them with that along with a new sense of power and control over their household. Appalachian women also did not fight against the patriarchal system. They may have been upset with the abandonment, but many of these women took on head of household roles to protect their homes, their families, and husbands.

CHAPTER 4

APPALACHIAN MANHOOD: SOUTHERN MASCULINITY'S INFLUENCE THROUGH THE POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF SOUTHERN APPALACHIA

Young men growing up in East Tennessee and western North Carolina during the antebellum years learned and accepted particular gender roles. They saw their fathers, grandfathers, older brothers, and uncles as their role models. They understood that when the time came, they would become their own patriarchs and look after their dependents. Thus, Southern men exuded confidence, loyalty, and honor toward family and home and total dominance over women, children, and slaves. Yet, as political tensions and divisions emerged in these Appalachian communities prior to the Civil War, the notion of masculinity became fluid. Unionists and Confederates alike styled their own masculine standards suited to particular political beliefs. Men on both sides feminized their enemies as “submissionists” to either the Union or the Confederacy.¹ By looking through the wartime experiences of several Appalachians, Southern definitions of masculinity and several different factors influenced Appalachian masculinity, but similar to the women, these definitions evolved to fit the extreme environment caused by the war.

In East Tennessee, many Unionists felt reluctant to fight for the Confederacy once their home state of Tennessee seceded from the Union in June 1861. Twenty-one year old Andrew Silas Newton “A. S. N.” Dobson of Greenville felt like an outsider in his class at Tusculum College on the eve of the war. In his memoirs, he reflected on being only one of eight self-proclaimed Unionists at school and the remaining Confederate students targeted and labeled

¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1890s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 200.

them “Benedict Arnolds.”² After the school closed following the attack on Fort Sumter, the faculty and the students returned home to decide the next chapter in their lives.

As many of his classmates and neighbors volunteered for the Confederate Army, Dobson adhered to his family’s loyalty to the Union. Dobson’s father, Isaac Calvin Dobson, a middle class professional in tax collecting, “was opposed to the rebellion and was a Union man.” He described, “all [his] relatives were Union people” and some felt extremely “opposed to going into war on either side if they could avoid it.”³ His older brother John felt compelled to fight for the Union cause, so he ran away from home and joined a Union regiment in Indiana. Dobson also admired Andrew Johnson, the U.S. Senator from Tennessee who refused to resign his office after his state’s secession. Johnson’s speeches conveyed the sense of manhood that existed when defending the Union. In one speech printed in the *Nashville Union* in July 1862, Johnson, who wanted to generate Unionist support, called out those men who chose not to assert and defend their rights. He explained, “when you band yourselves as manly and honest citizens you have power. Tell the rebels that you are determined to have free Government and you can have it.” He then admonished “And if you have the power, and lack the courage to use it, you deserve to be slaves. It is yours to defend yourselves, and assert your manhood.”⁴ Encouraged by his Unionist family and the politics of Andrew Johnson, Dobson saw “asserting his manhood” as not fighting for the Southern cause. He decided to remain at home in Greenville and seek exemption from the

² Dr. A.S.N. Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, 1914, 2. All subsequent references to this biography refer to this collection.

³ Ibid.

⁴ LeRoy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, *The Papers of Andrew Johnson, Volume 5, 1861-1862* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 560.

Conscription Act by helping his father collect taxes in Greene County and by taking up a position as a teacher in Limestone, Tennessee.⁵

His “double exemption” plan, as he called it, failed in 1863 when “two Enrolling Officers of the Southern army came to [his] father’s farm gate.”⁶ Dobson claimed that because his father was an influential man in Greene County on the Union side, the Confederate officers determined “to put his sons in the Southern army.”⁷ Although Dobson showed the officers his exemption papers as a tax collector and teacher, the men responded that, “some old men could collect the taxes and teach and [Dobson] had to go in the Southern army.” Reluctant to pack his things and follow the officers to camp in Knoxville, Dobson asked his parents for advice. Not wanting their son to submit to the “Southern army,” his parents encouraged Dobson to escape out the back door. Dobson fled on a road toward Tusculum, but exhaustion overtook him and the officers managed to find and apprehend him.⁸ He told his captors that, “I would rather die than go into the Rebel army and fight against my principles and I never would fire a gun for the confederacy.”⁹ According to his memoir, when the Confederate officers arrested him he explained that this was the moment “I turned my back upon parents, brothers, home and the College with all their happy associations of my childhood and youth—trudging along half clad at the point of pistols, with my hands tied behind my back.”¹⁰ At that moment he felt defeated and he saw his capture and his forced conscription into the Confederate army as a major disappointment. At the same time, his situation ushered him into manhood. He could no longer rely on his parents for safety and guidance as he once did as a child, he now entered the conflict

⁵ Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” , 2-3.

⁶ Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” , 4.

⁷ Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” ,3-4.

⁸ Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” ,5.

⁹ Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” ,6.

¹⁰ Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” ,7.

as an adult. The night of his arrest, his thoughts kept drifting back to his brother John, who had moved north to join the Union army. He realized as he joined the Confederate Army, the nature of the conflict turned into “brother against brother,” with “one who had volunteered and the other had been conscripted and forced into the Southern army.”¹¹

Dobson’s parents attempted once more to keep their son home, especially after “[he] was arrested and treated so cruelly.” They “determined to spare no reasonable means” and they hired a substitute for \$1,000 named Abb Morgan, “a stout, hearty, mountaineer.” Morgan passed every test to join up, but the examiners found “a small speck on one eye and rejected him as unfit for army service.” With his options now depleted, Dobson had no choice but to follow through with his enlistment. His orders directed him to the Cumberland Gap where he reported to Captain W.C. Kain’s Company of the Mabry Light Artillery.

Just as his parents sheltered him at home, Dobson continued to be shielded in the army. At the headquarters in Cumberland Gap, the officers asked Dobson to take the company secretary position, based on his writing ability and his penmanship. Dobson saw this gesture as “a very kind Providence in giving [him] a place in the officers’ quarters, by a nice warm fire instead of going with the other soldiers to work on the fortifications in snow and wind on top of the mountains.”¹² He described that many of the soldiers in the camp walked past his door and harassed him with insults such as, “I wish I had been a D--- conscript and I might have had that soft job.” His fellow soldiers questioned his masculinity for not only being a conscript but also receiving an easy job away from the front, whereas they volunteered and risked their lives on the field. Bertram Wyatt Brown distinguishes the differences between Northern and Southern

¹¹ Dobson,”Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” ,8.

¹² Dobson,”Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” ,13-14.

interpretations of manhood. Northern men saw duty as “patriotism, loyalty to the Constitution, law, and order. Southerners found duty to mean “self-sacrifice, to family, community, race, and region against outside forces of evil and ruin.”¹³ Dobson, although a Unionist, still felt duty to his family but his fellow soldiers who volunteered assumed he lacked those ideals as he was conscripted in.

Although some of the soldiers derided Dobson’s manhood, Dobson enjoyed working as a secretary for the company. He “won the confidence of all the officers and they entrusted [him] with all the business of the battery.” Working behind the lines and avoiding combat allowed him to fulfill his promise to “never fire a gun for the Confederacy.” He bragged that he “drilled a few times at the guns and that was done with more recreation and exercise than anything else.”¹⁴ His lack of military involvement never hindered his own honor or opinion of his masculinity. In fact, he was proud that as a secretary, he would never have to inflict damage to the Union army. Interestingly, Dobson grew loyal to his company even after their surrender to Union forces in September 1863. When Federal troops entered his camp, Dobson spotted some “Friends in Blue”—childhood friends, neighbors, and classmates who left East Tennessee to join the Federals. His friends knew of his loyalty to the Union and his conscription into the “Southern army,” so they concocted a plan to take him back to their camp and get him home or at least to Knoxville. Dobson responded “No” on account that his conscience told him “[he] would be betraying [his] oath and [his] officers...and not wait until [he] was regularly paroled.”¹⁵ As a man, especially in the time of war, he still fortified a strong relationship with his commanding

¹³ Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 214.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Dobson, “Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880” , 20.

officers, despite their Confederate allegiance. He felt compelled by his own honor to refuse to betray his fellow comrades and surrender with them.

Dobson travelled to Chicago, Illinois and remained a prisoner of war at Camp Douglass until December 1863. He claimed that his personal connections back home with Andrew Johnson, the military governor of Tennessee, garnered his release from prison. Dobson maintained that when Johnson still lived in Greenville as a tailor, he made his father's wedding suit. This family connection encouraged Andrew Johnson to have Dobson released based on his family's loyalty to the Union.¹⁶ After his release, he married and attended medical school and later began his practice in Broylesville, Tennessee.

Dobson's experience of the Civil War demonstrates the difference in perceptions of masculinity and loyalty, especially within Southern Appalachia. The internal divisions in Appalachia, between Confederate and Unionist loyalists, generated their own definition of manhood and honor. Ideas of loyalty and so-called "submission to the enemy" informed popular notions of southern manhood, and both sides viewed their enemies as weak and submissive. Attacking one's masculinity during a time of war seemed an even greater insult to those risking their lives whilst attempting to provide care and support for their families. Dobson saw his experience of war as still defending his Unionists beliefs all while in a Confederate uniform. Some may have seen his failure to escape the conscript as submission to the enemy but the fact that he never raised a weapon to the Union and even submitted himself to ridicule based on his "soft" job as a secretary confirmed his loyalty to the Union cause. As Andrew Johnson stated, "Tell the rebels that you are determined to have free Government," and Dobson achieved that in his own way.

¹⁶ Dobson,"Dr. and Mrs. A.S.N. Dobson Biography, 1862-1880", 30-31.

The adoption of the Conscription Act in 1862 forced many reluctant Southerners, including Appalachians, to join in the ranks of the Confederate army. A number of factors influenced the reasons for desertion. The draft kept men away from their homes, “word that loved ones at homes were suffering poverty and hunger was too much” for soldiers. In addition, strings of military defeats that the South suffered in 1862 and 1863 forced many men to evaluate their position for the Confederacy. Many felt they were needed more at home.¹⁷ Mixed with reluctance and the turmoil they witnessed on the front caused many of the men to desert. By May 1863, “as much as 1/5 of the entire armed forces were absent without leave.”¹⁸ North Carolina, which provided 1/7 of the soldiers for the Confederate army, had twice as many deserters and draft dodgers.¹⁹ Some men felt compelled to return home and help their wives and children while others grew tired and restless of war. Letters from many soldiers talk about the act of desertion, and many of these men speak with hate and disgust toward the men who chose to leave. Julian Gash, Confederate Captain of Company D, 65th Regiment of North Carolina, voiced his concern about deserters to a fellow officer. He wrote, “My company has about gone up too! All deserted or at home without leave... I wish I could express the contempt that I naturally cherish for a deserter...I candidly think they should be shot...Confound a man who is void enough of principle to desert his country in so perilous time as now.”²⁰

The idea of desertion provoked many different opinions on one’s masculinity. Comrades and officers may deem a deserter as “less of a man,” as they worried that a “loss of collective

¹⁷ Johnathan Dean Sarris, *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia, 2006), 69-70.

¹⁸McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 124.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Captain Julius Gash to “Colonel,” September 5, 1863 in Christopher M. Watford, *The Civil War In North Carolina: Soldiers’ and Civilians’ Letters and Diaries, 1861-1865, Volume II :The Mountains* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), 122.

manhood” would invoke a “feminization of the Southern spirit.”²¹ North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance agreed that “certainly no crime could be greater, no cowardice more abject” than those who desert. He concluded, “the father or the brother who does it should be shot instead of his deluded victim, for he deliberately destroys the soul and manhood of his own flesh and blood.” Vance even went as far as condemning those “who harbors and conceals the deserter.”²² Yet, the family at home may see the opposite. Mothers and daughters pleaded for help and their cries of desperation tempted many of the men to return home. One of the defining characteristics of manhood is “the defense of family dependents.”²³ A man takes care of his family and he provides for the household. If he is away on the battlefield, he is not fulfilling his duty to his family. Desertion holds no singular reaction, some see it as a blessing, some see it as submission and failure.

Men who fell outside of the age requirements for the Conscription Act witnessed innumerable conflicts and turmoil between insurgent Unionists and Confederates on the home front in East Tennessee and western North Carolina. As their age restricted them from fighting, some men fueled the conflicts with words and accusations, while some provided aid to guerilla warfare. William “Parson” Brownlow, fifty-six years old in 1861, promoted his persistent Unionism in his newspaper the *Knoxville Whig*.²⁴ If he could not fight for the Union and defend East Tennessee, he would at least attempt to persuade Southern men not to submit to the Confederacy. In many of his editorials, he expressed the notion of manhood and the weakness of submission. He described in 1861 the ruses of the Confederacy:

²¹ Wyatt-Brown, xvii.

²² Zebulon Vance, "Vance's Proclamation Against Deserters" (1863).

²³ Wyatt-Brown, 36,

²⁴ Stephen V. Ash, ed., *Secessionists and Other Scoundrels: Selections from Parson Brownlow's Book* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 2.

Demagogues and designing men charge it here, and by this means enlist thousands under their banner who, otherwise, would never support their wicked schemes of secession. We Union men believe that the blow was struck upon Fort Sumter to induce Virginia to go out, and to create sympathy elsewhere... fraud and force, and all the other appliances of Secessionism, will be brought to bear in carrying the State out of the Union. When overpowered and voted down we shall be forced to submit. When I surrender, it will be because I can no longer help myself; but it shall be under protest claiming the right as a Union man, to curse this whole movement in my heart of hearts!²⁵

Brownlow admitted that submission to the Confederacy would be caused not by his weakness but to demonstrate the corruption and force of the Confederate government. Those in support of this government are in turn are exchanging their own manhood and honor for the support of secession. Brownlow even rallied in support for Tennessee men joining the Union forces. He applauded the men who spied and the men who supported the cause from under the table, but he desired the men to “enter the ranks, as there is more honor in serving as a private.” He attempted to scare the men by saying “You will feel bad when *drafted*, and pointed out as one who had to be *driven* into the service of your country! Let these Union traitors submit to the draft, but let us who are true Southern men *volunteer*.”²⁶ Brownlow established the notion that true Southern men volunteered and remained in the Union. A true man who respects himself and his family, volunteers and fights for the Union, does not submit to the Confederacy. Of course, after the Unionist conspiracies and unrest emerged in East Tennessee in November 1861, the Confederate government grew suspicious of Brownlow, arrested him, and exiled him to the North. Even though kicked out, Brownlow continued protesting and eliciting support against the Confederacy.

Abraham Jobe, fifty-four years old when the war started in 1861, found himself in the same position as Brownlow: too old to fight but unwilling to submit. Jobe practiced medicine as

²⁵ Ash, 60.

²⁶ Ash, 72.

a surgeon in northeast Tennessee and western North Carolina. Born in Carter County, Jobe highlighted his ancestry and explained that his family, both the Jobses and the Tiptons, settled the area in the years prior to the Revolutionary War.²⁷ These connections with the land may have sparked Jobe's desire to remain loyal to the Union. He explains his devotion to the Union:

I espoused the cause of the Union very early when the war clouds first began to rise. Although born and raised in the South, I could see nothing but disaster in secession. This early alliance with the Union sentiment of East Tennessee made me a marked man during the war.²⁸

Also according to the 1860 Slave Schedule, Jobe owned four slaves.²⁹ He may have believed that remaining in the Union guaranteed his slaves as property. But even as a slaveholding Unionist, his profession as a doctor provided him with leeway during the war since people on both sides of the political spectrum required medical attention. Interestingly, Jobe conflicts the data of Unionists. Men of professional jobs such as merchants, doctors, and lawyers tended to lean towards the Confederacy, but men over the age of 40 seemed to side mostly with the Union. Throughout the conflict, however, "non-combatants did not feel very safe in traveling about; therefore, it was hard to secure the services of a doctor." Yet Jobe continued to provide his services throughout Washington, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Johnson counties in Tennessee and Mitchell, Yancey, Buncombe, Madison, and Watauga counties in North Carolina.³⁰ Since his practice forced him to serve such a vast area during the war, his cache of medical supplies

²⁷ Abraham Jobe, "Abraham Jobe Autobiography" in Abraham Jobe Autobiography, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN. 1905, 7. All subsequent references to this biography refer to this collection.

²⁸ Jobe, "Abraham Jobe Autobiography," 130.

²⁹ United States. Census Office, Eighth Census of Population. 1860.

³⁰ Jobe, "Abraham Jobe Autobiography," 86.

remained low. The war “had been going on long enough to prevent [them] from having a full supply of medicines, therefore, [Jobe] had no chloroform.”³¹

Although he considered himself a Unionist, he attempted to thwart Unionist guerilla activities as early as November 1861. Jobe heard about the Unionist plan to “hamper the Rebels by burning all the railroad bridges between Chattanooga and Bristol.” Jobe “did not approve of it from the first initiation” as he felt “it would be a failure as a war measure, and the consequences of the failure would be more direful . . . then [sic.] the Union men had calculated.” Jobe claimed that he convinced one of the conspirators not to burn the Carter and Union bridges because as he believed “if Sherman’s Army failed to come to the rescue . . . Union men would be hung.” The idea that Union men and their families would be in much greater peril than ever in East Tennessee, convinced one of the conspirators to suspend any further plans. The Carter Bridge remained unharmed, but the Union bridge was burned. Jobe had now indirectly involved himself, even with attempting to foil the guerilla activities. The next day, Jobe described how “1000 Union men, citizens of Carter, Johnson, Washington, and Sullivan counties assembled in Elizabethton” to prepare their march toward the Cumberland Gap to meet General Sherman. The men and their actions became “a little rebellion against the big rebellion.”³²

This “little rebellion” ended quickly after some minor clashes with the Confederate Army. Many of these Unionist men found shelter around Elizabethton, waiting for General William T. Sherman to enter East Tennessee. After a week of waiting, many of the Unionists, including Jobe, “retreated into the mountains, and for about six weeks were fed by good Union friends who carried supplies.” Jobe’s health began to decline and he returned home early. With

³¹ Jobe, “Abraham Jobe Autobiography,” 114.

³² Jobe, “Abraham Jobe Autobiography,” 115.

his name now in connection with the bridge burning conspiracy, Jobe hid in his cellar for another six weeks.³³ Inside the cellar, Jobe “remained night and day for the longest 6 weeks ever.” He described his time in the cellar as “the beginning of the war” for himself and his family. While in hiding, he “could hear the Rebel soldiers hunting for [him],” and the soldiers inquiring of his wife about his whereabouts. For several days he heard about the hanging of the bridge burners and he “felt sure if they caught [him] they would hang [him] for what they called ‘complicity in bridge burning’”—in which he knew the knowledge of the plans of the bridge burnings but did not report it to the Confederate authorities. Through his wife, he learned that about the execution of a local man who “merely for giving supper to the men who burnt bridges.” He feared for the safety of his family and himself should the Confederate authorities manage to learn of his whereabouts. Jobe also worried about his health while hiding underground in the cellar. He decided he needed to leave the area to allow for his health to improve and for the safety of his family.

Jobe managed to leave his home undetected and traveled with the help of two close friends, who ironically supported the Confederacy. In his experience, “the horrors of war could have been more severe, if it had not been judicially tempered by personal friendship on both sides, when they had it in their power to show kindness and favor.” Nathaniel M. Taylor guarded Jobe on the journey from Elizabethton to General Robert B. Vance’s headquarters near Johnson’s Depot. General Vance provided Jobe with papers that protected him from any harassment while travelling through North and South Carolina to Georgia, where he remained under the care of distant friends and relatives.³⁴ His son, age 16, later followed his father to Georgia, to avoid conscription. They both returned to East Tennessee in April 1865 after the war

³³ Jobe, “Abraham Jobe Autobiography,” 118.

³⁴ Jobe, “Abraham Jobe Autobiography,” 119.

officially ended. On his journey home, Jobe remarked on how “[they] found everything changed by the ravages of a 4 years' war. The country was overrun and devastated by both armies, and the citizens of every political opinion had to pay tribute.”³⁵ He continued by describing his war experience with an overall explanation of what happened in this region. East Tennesseans,

felt the war more severely...than any part of the South. Upper East Tennessee was held during the whole 4 years alternately, first by one side, then by the other, which in several ways made it hard for both. Then we had bush whackers, bummers, and camp followers. These men had no principles. They did not care who whipped. They had no patriotism. They did not know one day, which flag they would prefer to follow tomorrow.³⁶

As a doctor and a civilian, Jobe intended to remain neutral, but his beliefs in Unionism and his determination to stop the bridge burnings catapulted him into the sectional divisions of the region. For Jobe, like so many others, the idea of secession seemed like the wrong direction for the country. Some Southerners feared how secession may affect slavery and without the U.S. Constitution, the system was not guaranteed. Some hated to see what their fathers and grandfathers sacrificed during the American Revolution, to go away.³⁷ A combination of those notions influenced Jobe's allegiance to the Union. But when Jobe returned home in 1865, East Tennessee, like the rest of the South seemed dramatically different since 1861. When he returned home, he explained to his slaves that they could no longer be enslaved and that the war provided them freedom. They decided to remain under the Jobe household as paid employees.

Jobe shared many of the same beliefs as the guerillas and bushwhackers around the East Tennessee region, but he believed these men had no honor or self-respect. He shared the common belief that a true Southern gentleman *volunteered* for the Union. Both Union and Confederate Officers “condemned guerilla violence as criminal and dishonorable” and many of

³⁵ Jobe, “Abraham Jobe Autobiography,” 124.

³⁶ Jobe, “Abraham Jobe Autobiography,” 119-120.

³⁷ Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 109, 116

these partisans “shot, hanged, beat and whipped their civilian and military enemies.” Families on the home front feared many of these guerilla fighters, yet many of them sought out support and protection from the civilians. Again, much like deserters, both Confederate and Unionist guerillas held a duality to their image. Some saw them as villains, while others saw them as heroes. Abraham Jobe clearly disagreed with their actions, yet he collaborated with them when he needed a mountain hideout. For Jobe, it was clearly impossible to separate himself from the guerilla violence completely, and although his politics aligned with them, he managed to separate himself from the stigma and save his own honor and pride.

The men of the Lenoir family from western North Carolina exemplified different notions of what Southern gentlemen aspired to be like. General William Lenoir’s grandsons, William Avery, Thomas Isaac, Walter, and Rufus, descended from a well-known and prominent family from the region. Their grandfather, General William Lenoir, settled near the Yadkin River Valley around 1775. Known as an “enthusiastic patriot,” he commanded militia troops in campaigns against the British and their allies in 1780. His greatest accomplishment came with his participation in the Patriot victory at King’s Mountain in October 1780. This monumental victory provided him with trust and respect at home and brought his family name a lauded reputation. After the war, General Lenoir served in North Carolina’s General Assembly and served as a delegate in the state’s ratifying convention for the U.S. Constitution. After becoming the first president of the board of trustees for the newly established University of North Carolina in 1791, General Lenoir purchased a 200-acre tract of land at the site of old Fort Defiance. He and his family were able to establish and operate a “gristmill, sawmill, distillery and leather shop” along

with raising several crops. Lenoir's landholdings transformed his family into one of the richest and largest landholding families in western North Carolina.³⁸

General Lenoir's three sons, much like their father, desired to establish their own homesteads and command their own households. William Ballard moved to East Tennessee. Walter Raleigh moved his family to Missouri, and Thomas remained to help his father at their home, Fort Defiance, to relieve him of the tasks around the plantation. Thomas's sons in turn struggled to establish their own independence as they remained in western North Carolina. The eldest, William Avery (born in 1808), the only son not to see the Civil War, dealt with depression and several failed business ventures. After the death of his father in 1861, William Avery lost his stability with the one person who bailed him out of his debts and business failures. William Avery took his own life a few months after his father's death. Due to his father's death, increasing debts, and the uncertainty of secession, William Avery may have felt like a failure compared to his grandfather, the General, and father Thomas, both of whom made their mark on the region with several successes. This tragedy sparked an on-going series of devastating events for the Lenoirs that tested the notions of male gender roles of that time.³⁹

Walter Lenoir, the second youngest son of the family (born in 1823), and the most promising academic out of the children, spent much of his younger years away from Fort Defiance. He received his education from Bingham School and then later at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.⁴⁰ He studied law in 1844, finding interest in politics and following the rhetoric of the Whigs, the party that the Lenoirs wholeheartedly supported.⁴¹ He married

³⁸ William L. Barney, *The Making of a Confederate: Walter Lenoir's Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009) 16-17.

³⁹ Barney, 51.

⁴⁰ Barney, 32-33.

⁴¹ Barney, 35.

Cornelia Christian in 1856 and they moved to Lenoir, outside the homestead of Fort Defiance. With growing tensions developing between the North and South, Walter and his wife seemed eager to make the move to a free state. After one of his slaves was caught stealing from a store, he confided to his brother Thomas about his thoughts on slavery. He told him, “I feel determined at present never to own another slave. Both [Cornelia] and I have concluded after our limited experience with slaves, that the evil of being a master and mistress of slaves is greater than we are willing to bear...Our present feeling is that we will eventually make our home in a free state.”⁴² Although he identified as a Whig, Walter’s decision to abandon slavery and move away to a free state clashed with the Lenoirs’ established way of life, since many of his siblings households revolved around slave labor.

Walter’s dreams of moving to a free state ended with the death of his wife and infant daughter later in 1858. He travelled to the Northeast and Northwest, ultimately deciding to purchase land in Minnesota, to escape the memories of his wife and daughter.⁴³ Again, his relocation plans ended, this time due to the secession crisis. He decided to abandon his plans for Minnesota amidst the crisis of the Union stating that “I will cast my fortunes with the South, at least till the question is settled and peace restored, or till the question has settled me. I don’t want to live in a country where I will have to get a pass from Abraham Lincoln, or the likes of him, before I can come to North Carolina.”⁴⁴ Walter truly disliked the idea of disunion and hoped “that the Union could be restored peacefully” in the early months of 1861.⁴⁵

⁴² Walter Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, April 19, 1858, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁴³ Barney, 40-41.

⁴⁴ Barney, 45.

⁴⁵ Barney, 49.

Walter mirrored many of the same ideas as Zebulon Vance, Congressman and future governor, who wholeheartedly defended the Union and desired for North Carolina not to secede. After Lincoln's call for volunteers after the Fort Sumter attacks Unionists "fell slowly and sadly by the side of a Secessionist."⁴⁶ As a man, he felt the need to defend the honor of North Carolina, against the Union. Jefferson Davis feminized the state of Mississippi in a state Convention in 1851. Jefferson exclaimed that Mississippi's "honor was the first consideration" and that "*her* flag was hoisted to the mast and [he] for one pledged to cut away the halyard, and there let it float."⁴⁷ Southern men saw their land and their states as feminine and when external threats attacks her honor, they vowed and pledged to defend her. Vance saw North Carolina the same way. He justified his actions of turning against the Union that war was a "more chivalrous call for the manhood of her true sons." The lifeblood of "liberty and independence" he argued was "sustained and fostered by devoted patriotism and heroic manhood."⁴⁸ Walter also feminized his state of North Carolina, and he felt the need to defend her honor.

Walter's views also shifted after President Lincoln called for volunteers after the attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861. Walter continued to struggle with his loyalties. He described the time as, "For ten or fifteen minutes, I studied perhaps harder than I ever did in my life...I owed my life my ease my enjoyment my property to the laws and institutions of my country; and I paid the debt. I gave them all back to my country to be used, if needed, in asserting its liberty and power to protect me and those that were dear to me."⁴⁹ His political shift resulted in his family's utter confusion, especially since he claimed that he preferred to leave the slave-based South for a

⁴⁶ Gordon B. McKinney, *Zeb Vance: North Carolina's Civil War Governor and Gilded Age Political Leader* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 76.

⁴⁷ Wyatt-Brown, 170.

⁴⁸ McKinney, 259, 201.

⁴⁹ Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, September, 27, 1863, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

free state two years prior to the war. Walter in fact emerged as a man who diligently supported the Confederacy during the war. His adoption of new ideals gave Walter something to live for. Since he lost both his wife and daughter and his dream of moving to the Northwest, he needed something to compel him to move forward. He could no longer fulfill his masculine role as a provider for his family, but he could fill that void by taking up arms to defend his state.

Following William Avery's suicide, Walter put his family first and delayed his enlistment. He needed to remain at home whereas his older brother Tom enlisted and began to build a volunteer unit. His other brother Rufus, the youngest, inherited Fort Defiance after his older brother's death and decided to remain at home. According to William Barney, Rufus "justified his decision as being in the family's best interest; a trusted male figure had to supervise the family's core agricultural operations and financial dealings."⁵⁰ Rufus saw no need to enlist in the war as his interpretation of manhood involved taking care of his family first, and staying with them to protect the homestead. Walter finally left Fort Defiance in January 1862, leaving Rufus to take care of home, Walter finally reunited with his brother Tom at Camp Lee.⁵¹

Throughout the beginning of the war, Walter received many discouraging letters from Rufus. Although remaining at home, Rufus seemed to grow disillusioned with the war. The disheartening news coming from the front about the early Confederate defeat at Fort Donelson in February 1862 made it difficult for Rufus to support a war in which the Confederacy had already suffered defeat, in his opinion. He feared that a Union victory "would reduce his family to homeless wanderers."⁵² Walter told Rufus "I know with what gloomy apprehension you have

⁵⁰ Barney, 55.

⁵¹ Barney, 59.

⁵² Barney, 62.

viewed this war...our prospects are darkened by the news of defeat. I wish to ask you to shake off your gloom, and to remind you of some things which will help you do it.”⁵³

Walter reminded Rufus that “war is not so hazardous and destructive of life or property as our apprehensions picture it to be.” Walter then retold the family history of their grandfather General Lenoir who “fought through an eight years war, a few infant colonies struggling against the richest and most powerful and war like nation on earth.” Their grandfather “[was] exposed to constant dangers, but that he survived it all.”⁵⁴ Walter encouraged Rufus to find the strength and motivation their grandfather fought with during the Revolutionary War and provided parallels to help show support for a cause in which victory seemed impossible. Walter reassured him that “that adversity only serves to develop the better qualities both of men and nations I can not but believe that your manly and loyal nature will be aroused by the calamities of our country, and that your despondency will give place to a firmness which will even border cheerfulness.”⁵⁵ Walter understood that Rufus’s support for the war stemmed out of his criticisms and that this all reflects his manhood in which he desired to be watchful and protect his family and property first.

Even with Walter’s help of shining a light on the Confederate cause and attempting to provide motivation through their family’s history, Rufus remained unconvinced. He attempted to sway Walter and Tom about his reasoning, “I try hard to realize that you belong to your country and endeavor to wean my heart from you, and to think of my brothers on the same footing with my neighbor’s brother but I cannot! We are all poor selfish creatures, and I am particularly so.”⁵⁶

Walter responded to Rufus that “your letter is so incorrigibly blue that I feel more than usual

⁵³ Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, February 20, 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Rufus Lenoir to Thomas and Walter Lenoir, March 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

difficulty in answering...you say that you have been expecting defeat...I hope that I am humble as well as sincere in believing that such a frame of mind is sinful.”⁵⁷ He again reminded Rufus that those remaining on the home front “have not suffered near as much or as long under the ravages of war.” Walter attacked Rufus when he complained about not having enough salt to cure meat, when Walter insisted that, “meat is a luxury...the Roman soldiers who conquered the world had little or no flesh.” Walter grew incredibly frustrated with Rufus’s lack of support and understanding of the defense of their country. Walter accepted Rufus’s restraint in the beginning, but as the war raged on, he grew impatient with his hesitance and finally found it necessary to attack his brother’s stubbornness. In a sense, Walter attacked Rufus’s manhood by stating that life on the home front, in which Rufus chose to stay and defend, has no vulnerability while its safety and stability remains untouched by the war. In Rufus’s defense, he took on a paternalistic role over his community during the conflict. He worried for the rural poor in his neighborhood and understood that he and his family were fortunate enough not to worry about hunger during this hard time. Rufus continued to carry this tradition of distributing corn and wheat to the poor farmers throughout the war. He felt the needs for his community and his family trumped the duty to his state.⁵⁸

During this period of convincing his own brother to support the cause, Walter came to a crossroads himself. By April 1862, Tom decided to leave the army after his twelve-month enlistment ended. The Confederate Conscription Act, passed the same month, forced a reorganization of the army. The existing new companies needed to re-elect new officers and Tom

⁵⁷ Walter Lenoir to Rufus Lenoir, August 17, 1863, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁸ Barney, 42-43.

felt obligated to bow out of the re-election.⁵⁹ He based his decision on his deteriorating health. He justified his decision by “experience had proved that my health was such to disqualify me, and prevent my fulfilling the duties of that office as it should be done.”⁶⁰ He also felt compelled to come home due to news from his overseer concerning his property. He received a letter from A. C. Hartgrove detailing the “misfortunes from home.” He wrote, “Saturday night some rogue broke open your smoke house and stole three shoulders of bacon...they pickt [picked] the lock.”⁶¹ He also learned that his tenants have not paid their rent and he feared a growing sense of hostility towards the Conscription Act that could erupt into rebellion at any moment.⁶² These several different factors forced Tom to realize that his family needed him at home rather than on the battlefield. His concern, as many Southern men for defending their homeland, shifted from resorting to military service and battle in faraway regions to the defense of their actual homes.⁶³ Walter now remained the sole Lenoir brother left in the Confederate Army.

Walter only served with his brother Tom for a couple of months and became the only one of the Lenoir brothers to experience a battle. He transferred from Vance’s Legion to become a first Lieutenant in Company A of the 37th North Carolina regiment. He then received a promotion to the rank of Captain in July 1862. Walter led his men through the Battle of Cedar Mountain and again at Second Manassas, both Confederate victories in August 1862. He noted in his diary that, “I had desired from the first to be in one battle, partly from curiosity, and partly because I wished to know and feel, if I had survived the war, that I had done some thing on the

⁵⁹ Carroll C. Jones, *Captain Lenoir’s Diary: Tom Lenoir and his Civil War Company from western North Carolina* (Wilmington, NC: Wincoa Press, 2010), 199.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ AC Hargrove to Thomas Lenoir, April 18, 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶² Barney, 67.

⁶³ Sarris, 69-70.

battlefield to maintain the independence of my country... but had no desire to see another battle.”⁶⁴

Walter’s desire to avoid a second combat engagement faced disappointment as the war rolled on. During the Battle of Chantilly in September 1862, while resting during a lull in the fighting, Walter stretched his legs out and then felt an awful pain in his right leg. A minié ball had ripped through his leg between the knee and foot. Then a second minié ball hit his shinbone and severed his right toe. Fearing he would bleed out, Walter dragged himself fifteen feet out of the line of fire and waited until either death or one of his men found him.⁶⁵

In a quick letter to his mother Selina Lenoir, Walter told her, “I am entirely reconciled to bear my wounds and sufferings in the good cause of my country’s independence and that viewed in that light I look upon them with entire content and cheerfulness.” Attached to the note, his cousin Willoughby Avery wrote to Selina verifying Walter’s story and told her that both Walter and their cousin Tom Norwood received wounds in battle. He assures her that “Cousin Walter and Tom acted in the most gallant manner.”⁶⁶ They both exuded the ideals of true manhood in making sacrifices for their country. In a second letter to his mother, Walter again tells her that he and Joe Norwood were wounded, but Joe suffered minor injuries and would soon recover. Walter on the other hand, needed his leg amputated. He told her he thought, “I would have died in the hospital” but a kind woman took him and Joe into her home for recovery. He tells his mother that he “wrote to Rufus to come immediately” but worried about the “irregular mails and the difficulty he might have in finding [him].” A few weeks later in a letter to his mother, Walter

⁶⁴ Walter Lenoir’s diary entry for January 10, 1863 in Thomas Lenoir Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁶⁵ Barney, 85-86.

⁶⁶ Willoughby Avery to Selina Lenoir, September 2, 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

again asked Rufus to come bring him home.⁶⁷ As usual, Rufus was reluctant to leave his home and abandon his family, and then put off his trip for two weeks. Because of his delay, on his journey to pick up Walter in Middleburg, Virginia, he encountered military roadblocks that deterred civilians from crossing into central Virginia. Rufus discovered an alternative route through East Tennessee and southwestern Virginia, but then came in contact with an outbreak of smallpox, so he turned back home. On his journey home, he stumbled upon a Confederate soldier who knew Walter and convinced Rufus that his brother was doing well, but needed some extra time to recuperate. Rufus felt that Walter's condition seemed stable and there was no pressing need to bring him home yet.⁶⁸ Tom instead came to Walter's care as his brother and wasted no time in doing so. As a former CSA captain, Tom managed to overcome many of the civilian barriers and soon reunited with both Walter and their cousin Joe by the end of September 1862. Tom informed his wife Lizzie that they would return home in the first weeks of October.⁶⁹ The dynamic relationships between the Lenoir brothers show a clear picture of what family meant to them.

Walter's attitude on returning home surprised many people. Even with his newly attained handicap, he insisted on living by himself, independent of care. He moved to a small farm he called Crab Orchard near Tom and Lizzie's farm.⁷⁰ Walter told Tom, "I am encouraged some and discouraged some about my leg. I have learned enough to know that the best artificial leg will not supply the natural one as well as I hoped. On the other hand I find myself improving in the use of the temporary wooden leg which Rufus made for me, and I hope that even with it I

⁶⁷ Walter Lenoir to Selina Lenoir, September 21, 1862, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁶⁸ Barney, 99.

⁶⁹ Thomas Lenoir to Lizzie Lenoir, September 26, 29, 1862 in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁷⁰ Barney, 108.

could get about well enough after practice to see the management of a farm.”⁷¹ Walter enlisted the help of Samuel Montgomery, a carpenter, who designed a new wooden leg. He later named this new aid, the “Montgomery leg.”⁷² In April 1863, he declared the prosthetic “as good as they make ‘em, but it is a wretched substitute for the one that [he] left in Virginia.”⁷³ Even as the war took his leg, and possibly his ability to live independently, Walter refused to let his disability affect him in any way. Although his family criticized him for living on his own and sometimes called him a “hermit,” he desired to live independently and be his own patriarch in his own home.

As the war concluded in April 1865, the Lenoir family remained intact but their way of conducting business changed. The emancipation of their slaves forced the brothers to transition their farms for a new labor force. The brothers still desired to be their own patriarchs of their homes and they managed to continue their reign over their lands. Also during Reconstruction, as many men sought out to regain some normalcy into their lives, many ex-Confederates wrote to President Andrew Johnson on the grounds of amnesty, to forfeit their allegiance to the Confederacy. Both Tom and Walter refused to seek a Presidential Pardon, yet Rufus petitioned and wrote an amnesty letter in July 1865. In his petition, he admits that although he held the office of post master “under the pretended authority of the so-called Confederate States,” he never “was a secessionist, nor aided nor was connected with the rebellion in any other way.”⁷⁴ Tom and Walter may have felt too proud of their time involved with the Confederacy and an amnesty letter may have impugned their honor. The base of their honor developed from their

⁷¹ Walter Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, February 25, 1863, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁷² Barney, 102.

⁷³ Walter Lenoir to Thomas Lenoir, April 8, 1863, in the Lenoir Family Papers #426, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁷⁴ Rufus Lenoir’s Amnesty Letter to President Andrew Johnson, July 17, 1865 in the Civil War Amnesty Letters Transcription Project, in the Appalachian College Association’s Digital Library of Appalachia.

commitment to protect their homes and families. Rufus desired to wash his hands clean and remove the stigma that he felt the Confederacy had left on his honor.

Through these brief microhistories of several men from East Tennessee, and western North Carolina, the war created a new sense of masculinity. This new definition emerged not only in the South, but these definitions deepened but all over Appalachia due to the political tensions and strife the communities faced. Overall, the South saw Unionists as collaborators with the “Black Republican President” and labelled all of them as submissives. The entire ideal of man reflects that he is a dominant figure in his home and community. Being labelled a submissive becomes a major insult, as that word tends to describe dependents in a man’s home. Masculinity is socially constructed and Appalachia as a whole created their own particular notion based on the commonality of their political and social beliefs. As the communities of East Tennessee and western North Carolina grew more divided and deadlier, Appalachian men continually adjusted their ideals of masculinity to justify their actions.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In reality, Southern Appalachians and the rest of the Confederate South followed the ideals of femininity and masculinity but Southern Appalachians experienced a unique degree of political divisions, internal dissent, guerilla warfare, and occupation. The excessive amount of physical violence and strife that rank and file Appalachians faced in their region as a whole is greater to what other Southern inhabitants dealt with. East Tennessean and western North Carolinian experiences during the war served as microcosms that represented the complexities and turmoil of the national conflict. The Appalachian war experience emulated the experiences of those in other regions of the South.

As much as historians attempt to classify Appalachia as unique, especially during the antebellum era, Southern Appalachians abided by the same codes and principles that Southern ideologies constructed for them. Family and market connections expanded the Appalachian worldview in the nineteenth century, thereby allowing Southern constructs of gender to become the norm for Appalachians to redevelop. Wilma Dunaway contends that the rejection of the “cult of domesticity” and the active American protest against patriarchy sprouted in Southern Appalachia during the Civil War. Dunaway is correct in certain instances but fails to recognize the flaws in early Appalachian historiography. The “cult of domesticity” cannot be evenly applied to Southern Appalachia because it was an ideal only relative to Northern and Victorian women. In general, Southerners adhered to their own sets of gender standards, which did not include the concept of separate spheres. Southern women maintained the home and helped their husbands with the duties of farm life as necessary. They still aspired to fulfill the tenets of “true

womanhood,” including the tenet of submission. Southern women grew accustomed to the patriarchal system, and acknowledging and abiding by the system provided Southern women with greater “freedoms,” allowing them to function as “active citizens.”¹ Dunaway is guilty of applying these terms and situations to the entire region of Appalachia. Several cases presented in this thesis argue, contrary to Dunaway’s argument, that this shift in gender roles was not uniquely Appalachian.

Southern Appalachian women retained many of these gender roles throughout the war, but the situation in the region intensified these gender roles. Unionist and Secessionist women alike acknowledged their submission to the patriarchal system and broadened their own roles to protect their homes and family. Ellen Renshaw House, an avid rebel, supported the war effort in the context of her feminine duties of sewing and collecting food and supplies for the soldiers. Ellen, like many southern belles during the war, used her political voice as a form of protest against the Union occupation of Knoxville. Mary Bell reluctantly took over her household in western North Carolina in the absence of her husband but quickly realized how much she enjoyed the independence and power she received. She still successfully maintained the domestic aspects of the household all while managing her husband’s business affairs. Fannie Fain on the other hand, struggled to maintain her new role as head of the household. After her Unionist husband dodged the draft in Confederate East Tennessee, she found it difficult to balance her domestic work with managing the farm and slaves. Fannie was too accustomed to being the submissive wife at home and desired for her husband to return as soon as possible. Nancy Brown learned to manage the household without her husband permanently. As a widow, she took the initiative and moved her family out of the turmoil in East Tennessee to Washington D.C. where

¹ Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North to the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Hone Front* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 12-13.

she placed her children in an orphanage while she worked as a seamstress. As many Southern widows adjusted their roles within the household, Nancy did the same to care for her children by any means.

Southern manhood never before excelled to the degree that it did during the American Civil War. The notions of honor and duty inspired white Southern men to volunteer in defense of their state while reinforcing their care and determination to protect their families. Paternalism, honor, and duty appeared as values in the letters of men on both sides in the conflict. Appalachian Unionists and Secessionists alike took to these notions of Southern manhood and applied them to justify their political beliefs. Even with Appalachian communities divided, each side clung to Southern manhood to justify their actions to defend their communities from their neighbors turned enemies. A.S.N. Dobson, a Unionist at heart, took every effort necessary to avoid conscription into the Confederate Army. When he was finally conscripted into the army, the other soldiers scrutinized and feminized Dobson for not being a volunteer and taking a “soft job” as a rear-echelon secretary. Dobson claimed that his masculine pride emanated from his “soft job,” since it kept him from fighting his fellow Unionists. Guerilla fighters, deserters, and draft dodgers even validated their treasonous actions with the notions of Southern manhood, as they wanted to protect their family and their homes from the massive amount of dissent and destruction in the region. The Lenoir brothers retained different priorities as well and each of them handled the war differently. Rufus saw his duty to protect his family, home, and the community as a far greater priority than fighting for the state of North Carolina. His brothers Tom and Walter viewed their manhood in the context of protecting the sovereign honor of North Carolina. These different definitions of manhood are not unique to Appalachia either, but with

the high amount of political dissenters, draft dodgers, guerilla fighters, and deserters, the Appalachian war experience intensified the male gender roles.

Observing the many similarities between the South and Appalachia, a new understanding emerges of the mountain South. Appalachians and white Southerners shared many cultural and societal ideals and when the economic and social strain of war created change, these new ideals of gender gripped the South but intensified in Appalachia. Long after the end of the war, gender, Appalachia, and the South looked quite alien compared to their antebellum selves. The war in the region changed the dynamics of Appalachian society by providing women with more power and control over their lives. Men returned home to a war-torn community and found themselves contemplating the substance of their manhood. Confederate men felt defeated with their hopes of state autonomy dashed, and Unionists saw that they could not prevent the destruction of their homes through simple allegiance.

I hope that in future studies, historians will understand more of the relationship between Appalachia and the South and disprove some of the negative stigmas that continue to hold Appalachia captive today. The use of gender as a tool of analysis can aid in the search for a historically accurate image of the region. Studies of gender in this period of turmoil manifest how collective culture shaped people and vice versa. Investigating gender roles allows for a deeper understanding for how and why people in societies act in a particular way. As conflicted, chaotic, and divided as Southern Appalachia was during the war, the study of the region's men and women proves that they shared many of the same experiences as the rest of the Confederate South but their exposure of war escalated the fluidity of gender.

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