

ABSTRACT

PORTER, JR., DOUGLAS ROBERT. "Defying the Destructives": Confederate Disaffection and Disloyalty in North Carolina's Northwestern Foothills, 1861-1865. (Under the direction of Susanna Lee.)

This thesis considers Confederate disaffection and disloyalty in North Carolina's northwestern foothills; particularly Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Yadkin, and Wilkes Counties. In so doing, this thesis adds to a growing collection of social histories and community studies that question Southern loyalties during the Civil War, and suggest that social, religious, and political factors, as well as war weariness contributed to anti-Confederate thought and behavior. Prewar Unionism and overwhelming opposition to secession before mid-April 1861 prevented the foothill counties from wholly devoting themselves to the Confederacy. Consequently, uncommitted foothill citizens rejected the Confederacy once faced with the Richmond government's unpopular wartime measures. Relentless hardships on the homefront additionally deepened regional dissatisfaction. In reaction, the foothills' disaffected population viewed the Confederate national government and North Carolina's original secessionists who encouraged the war as their primary enemies. In response, the region's anti-Confederates disloyally rebelled against the Richmond government, North Carolina's pro-war politicians, and the Southern war effort from April 1862 until the end of the war.

**DEFYING THE “DESTRUCTIVES”:
CONFEDERATE DISAFFECTION AND DISLOYALTY
IN NORTH CAROLINA’S NORTHWESTERN FOOTHILLS, 1861-1865**

by
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DEDICATION

To Meghann,
For her constant love,
patience, and support

And, my Parents,
For believing in me and
always encouraging my love of history

BIOGRAPHY

Douglas Robert Porter, Jr. was born and raised in North Carolina's northwestern foothills, and is intensely interested in the region's history and culture. He proudly comes from Surry County Confederate and Scalawag stock.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| List of Tables | vi |
| List of Images | vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter One: The Five-County Community, Eve of War-April 1862 | 11 |
| “the best government vouchsafed by God to man”..... | 16 |
| “volunteering began very rapidly”..... | 22 |
| Chapter Two: Governmental Reform, Conscription, & Desertion, April 1862-1865 | 29 |
| “Reform in the Government”..... | 29 |
| “some thing worse than sickness”..... | 34 |
| “Leaving the camps and coming home appears to be common these days”..... | 44 |
| “twenty of our men runaway before we got here and six more ranaway last night”..... | 48 |
| “I found it necessary to...have troops in Yadkin, Forsyth, Surry...[and] Wilkes”..... | 51 |
| “Letters are received by the men, urging them to leave; that they will not be troubled when they get home”..... | 55 |
| Chapter Three: Mounting Hardships & Grievances, April 1862-1865 | 59 |
| “The country is in a miserable condition: suffering, trouble, hunger, starvation almost, and yet taking out more men.”..... | 59 |
| “a little meanness & rascality in this neighborhood”..... | 64 |
| “is this not making war on women and children?”..... | 69 |
| Chapter Four: Community Reactions, 1862-1865 | 77 |
| “Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was”..... | 79 |
| “I was a Union man during the latter part of the war, but at first I sympathized with the rebellion”..... | 87 |
| Conclusion | 96 |
| “Sister, the Yankees have been here”..... | 100 |
| Bibliography | 106 |

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter One

1. Secession Convention Votes in
the Five-County Community, 1861.....20

Chapter Four

1. North Carolina Gubernatorial Election
Results in the Five-County Community, 1864.....85

LIST OF IMAGES

Introduction

1. Map of the Five-County Community.....8

Chapter One

1. Counties, Towns and Neighborhoods
in the Five-County Community.....13
2. “Official Vote of Surry County, Feb. 28, 1861”.....21

Chapter Two

1. 1862 North Carolina Gubernatorial
Election Returns by County33

“It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong.”

– Voltaire (1752)

INTRODUCTION

Sixteen local Confederate conscripts and army deserters abandoned their outdoor “privat places” and sought shelter from the cold and snow.¹ The small force, armed and prepared to defend itself, convened in a small Quaker schoolhouse on the outskirts of Yadkinville, North Carolina.² Three days later, around three o’clock in the afternoon, a portion of Yadkin’s militia surrounded the schoolhouse.³ Gunshots rang out in the moments that followed, but “which side fired first is not positively certain.”⁴ The disloyal contingent in the school escaped and dispersed; in the process, the skirmish claimed the lives of two militiamen and two service evaders.⁵ The following day county authorities accused the fugitive party of murder and issued a warrant for the arrest of the

¹ Postwar diary of Jesse Dobbins [Yadkin County]. Allen Paul Speer, *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Asbury Speer, 1861-1864* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1997), 212.

² The site is locally referred to as the Bond Schoolhouse; however, period correspondence generally referred to a Quaker school, or the “Quaker school meeting house.” Diary of William Dobbins, 214-15.

³ Lieutenant. Colonel W. A. Joyce [Yadkinville] to Governor Zebulon Baird Vance [Raleigh], February 14, 1863, Governor Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina State Archives, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereafter referred to as NCDAH; Postwar diary of Jesse Dobbins [Yadkin County], 212.

⁴ Robert Franklin Armfield [Yadkinville] to Governor Vance [Raleigh], February 19, 1863. Gov. Vance Papers.

⁵ Militiamen James West and John Williams were killed. Conscripts Eck Algood and Solomon Hinshaw were also killed. A report written forty-three years after the skirmish claims the militia fired first, killing Solomon Hinshaw “near the hearth with a bullet wound through his heart.” The report further states that the “conscripts were panic stricken, and they began to withdraw in disorder. Eck Algood being the first one to leave the house, was shot, and fell mortally wounded with five or six bullet holes through his body.” Additionally, conscripts Enoch Brown and Benjamin Willard were wounded. The writer claims that Captain “James West sank upon the stone door step a lifeless, and headless form, almost all of his head being shot off...John Williams...was seen to place his hand over his heart, and was heard to exclaim O! God, I am shot. He died in a few minutes.” From “Reminiscences of 43 Years Ago,” reprinted in Frances H. Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County, North Carolina* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 151-53.

fourteen survivors.⁶ Within a week, four members of the group were detained and placed under arrest. Locating the remaining ten men, however, seemed nearly impossible.

Robert F. Armfield, a local attorney, informed Governor Zebulon Baird Vance that “the section of the country in which they lurk is so disloyal (I grieve to say it), and the people so readily conceal the murderers and convey intelligence to them, that it will be exceedingly difficult to find them.”⁷ The assertion proved correct: the ten wanted men followed different paths after the incident, but none were captured in or around Yadkin County.⁸

The February 1863 schoolhouse skirmish and Armfield’s subsequent assertion exhibited a disloyal Confederate homefront. The shootout ultimately proved to be the region’s most noted violent interaction between local authorities and anti-Confederates, but the exchange characterized the prevailing anxieties and sentiments of the locale. The men in the schoolhouse—though not great in number—represented a larger regional faction who refused to militarily support the Confederacy. In addition, Armfield’s letter to Governor Vance displays that locals recognized significant regional Confederate

⁶ The warrant named Hugh Sprinkle, Jesse Dobbins, William Dobbins, Benjamin Willard, John Douglas, Jr., Anderson Douglas, Sanford Douglas, Lee Willard, William Willard, Horace Allgood, Thomas Adams, Enoch Brown, Robert Hutchens and James Wooten. Casstevens, *Yadkin County and the Civil War*, 141.

⁷ R. F. Armfield to Governor Vance, Feb. 19, 1863.

⁸ After the Civil War, most of the surviving party continued to live in Yadkin County. Jesse Dobbins “made himself a useful and respected citizen until his death many years after the war. James C. Wooten...is in very feeble health, and is now living in about one quarter of a mile of the Deep Creek battle ground...In a short time after the battle, Jackson Douglas [Douglas was one of the four captured within seven days] was shot and wounded in one arm, by the home guard, the wound causing his arm to forever dangle, a useless member, by his side until his death, which occurred several years after the close of the war.” Sanford and Anderson Douglas “are both living near Yadkinville. Horace Allgood was successful in keeping himself secreted until peace was restored. He is now living in a pleasant and happy home near Yadkinville. Hugh Sprinkle fought [also caught within seven days and sent into Confederate service] until the end and is now living near Yadkinville...Benjamin Willard is now living out on R.F.D. route 3, Yadkinville.” Additionally, only two militiamen were known to be alive at the time the article was written: “R. M. Garbard [Gabard]...is living at Mt. Nebo Yadkin county, N.C. Henry Cowles, is and has been for years clerk of the federal court at Statesville, N.C. [in neighboring Iredell County]. See “Reminiscences of 43 Years Ago,” in Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 151-53.

opposition. Armfield held that disloyalty in that “section of the country” did not exist on a small-scale. The attorney’s assertion did not require speculation; very real local attitudes and occurrences confirmed his position. The shooting near Yadkinville served as a reminder that all men who illegally avoided Confederate service faced potentially dire consequences.

The following work examines the causes and effects of anti-Confederate sentiment in North Carolina’s northwestern foothills, particularly Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes, and Yadkin Counties. This thesis argues that prewar Unionism and overwhelming opposition to secession before mid-April 1861 prevented the foothill counties from wholly devoting themselves to the Confederacy. Consequently, uncommitted foothill citizens rejected the Confederacy once faced with the Richmond government’s unpopular wartime measures. Relentless hardships on the homefront additionally deepened regional dissatisfaction. In reaction, the foothills’ disaffected population viewed the Confederate national government and North Carolina’s original secessionists as their primary enemies. In response, the region’s anti-Confederates disloyally rebelled against the Richmond government, North Carolina’s pro-war politicians, and the Southern war effort from April 1862 until the end of the war. By 1864 foothill citizens resorted to their established prewar Unionism and demanded reunion and the “Constitution as it was.”⁹

This thesis adds to a growing collection of social histories and community studies that question Southern loyalties during the Civil War. These works jointly argue that interior dissent contributed to Confederate defeat. This trend in Civil War and Southern

⁹ “Public Meeting in Surry County,” *North Carolina Weekly Standard*, August 12, 1863.

historiographies displays that a sole factor did not influence Confederate disaffection or disloyalty. Recent examinations particularly assert that socioeconomic divisions, unique religious atmospheres, prewar Unionism, opposition to secession, and war weary homefronts influenced anti-Confederate thought and behavior.

Historians have argued that class consciousness divided Southern homefronts. In *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism*, Paul D. Escott insists that socioeconomic divisions and class animosity deteriorated the Southern war effort from within. He holds that the Richmond government's failure to convince common non-slaveholders that they held a stake in the fight deepened class resentment. In return, the lower classes refused to support a government and a war that only benefited the wealthy. Similarly, in *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia*, David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson argue that class lines divided Georgia's wartime homefront. The authors show that Georgia elites financially benefited during the war via large crops and speculation, while the less affluent were forced to fight and starve. In reaction, the authors assert that Georgia's common classes withdrew Confederate support—at home and in the field—ultimately contributing to the demise of the Southern war effort.¹⁰

In addition, recent studies have determined that religious sects influenced anti-Confederate behavior in parts of the South. In “The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina,” William T. Auman and David D. Scarborough argue that pacifist and anti-slavery religious groups influenced Confederate disloyalty in North Carolina's central

¹⁰ Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).

Piedmont. Auman continued his thesis in “Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Randolph County Area of Confederate North Carolina.” In this, Auman suggests that the central Piedmont’s Quakers, Moravians, Dunkards, and anti-slavery Lutherans “constituted a microcosm of the ‘Other South’ population.” The local religious groups, Auman holds, were consistently disloyal to the Confederate government, and their sentiments furthermore influenced the surrounding population. Likewise, in “Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865,” Henry T. Shanks shows that Dunkards in Virginia’s Blue Ridge foothills undermined the Confederacy by joining the anti-Confederate Heroes of America.¹¹

Studies link prewar Unionism and opposition to secession with wartime Confederate disaffection and disloyalty. In *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama’s Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Margaret Storey argues that Alabama Unionists adamantly opposed secession and believed their individual rights were protected by the United States government. She further argues that the state’s Unionists rejected the Confederacy due to a sense of federal patriotism based on their ancestors’ participation in the American Revolution. In *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, James Alex Baggett primarily explores the identity of postwar Southern Republicans. In his quest, however, Baggett determines that anti-Confederates—during and after the Civil War—were commonly prewar Unionists who opposed secession until Lincoln’s call for 75,000 troops.¹²

¹¹ William T. Auman and David D. Scarboro, “The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (October 1981); William T. Auman, “Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Randolph County Area of Confederate North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (January 1984); Henry T. Shanks, “Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 21 (April 1944).

¹² Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama’s Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton

Historians have displayed that Confederate loyalties evolved as the war progressed. These works suggest that the South largely supported the Southern war effort in the summer of 1861, but war weariness and distressed homefronts caused Confederate support to wither. *After Secession* and *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War* both insist that the mid-war's disloyal contingents largely supported the Confederacy during the war's first year. *Plain Folk*, in particular, suggests that war weariness related to hunger and speculation caused Confederate support to plummet as the war continued. John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney's *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* argues that North Carolina's mountain region energetically supported the Confederacy after the war erupted. Inscoe and McKinney maintain, however, that local loyalties depended more on immediate community sentiments than devotion to a particular cause. Thus, support for the Confederacy significantly diminished in mountain communities as wartime conditions distressed the region's homefront. Similarly, Martin Crawford's *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* shows that Ashe's citizens supported the Confederacy after mid-April 1861, but soon became disillusioned with the realities of war. Crawford suggests that mandatory Confederate conscription mostly hurt remotely settled farming families whose crops suffered as a result. In reaction, the sparsely settled reaches of Ashe County withdrew Confederate support and at times cooperated with Unionists operating in neighboring east Tennessee.¹³

Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); James Alex Baggett, *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

¹³ Escott, *After Secession*; Williams, Williams, & Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War*; John C. Inscoe & Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

The themes identified by historians over the past thirty years—class, religion, prewar Unionism, opposition to secession, and war weariness—contributed to disaffection and disloyalty in North Carolina’s northwestern foothill counties. In contrast, a recently popular reinterpretation of the Southern homefront counters these studies. This school argues that Southern whites of all classes had hoped in the Confederate cause, and that battlefield victories reaffirmed and embedded support at home. In *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism, and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat*, Gary W. Gallagher argues that socioeconomic divisions were ultimately insignificant and failed to deteriorate Confederate resolve. Similarly, William Blair’s *Virginia’s Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* argues that all white Virginians supported the Confederacy based on a common identification with the state’s antebellum social structure.¹⁴

Gallagher and Blair’s arguments may represent portions of the Confederacy, but their theses do not represent North Carolina’s northwestern foothills. Two points are particularly problematic. Gallagher and Blair argue that early battlefield victories encouraged support of the Southern war effort and Richmond government that lasted until the end of the war. Foothill citizens, however, began to reject the Confederacy in earnest at a time when the war’s outcome still held promise for a Southern victory. And, as this thesis argues, the Confederate national government greatly influenced disloyalty in the North Carolina foothills. Also, Blair insists that Virginians responded to wartime starvation, speculation, and conscription with a sense of pro-Confederate sacrifice. The same distressing conditions on the foothill homefront, however, underscored mounting

¹⁴ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War: How Popular Will, Nationalism and Military Strategy Could Not Stave Off Defeat* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); William Blair, *Virginia’s Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

dissatisfaction with the Confederate government, and influenced the disaffected population to continuously withdraw Confederate support.

This thesis intends to expand the current knowledge base by examining an overlooked region: the northwestern foothills of North Carolina. This study assumes that the North Carolina foothills create a geographically unique district, a transitional region that straddles mountain and piedmont. Foothill counties are occasionally referenced in discussions of the Appalachian homefront; however, for the most part, the region is ignored. Likewise, foothill counties are mentioned in examinations of the North Carolina piedmont during the Civil War, but rarely receive more than sporadic footnotes. Thus, North Carolina's foothill region demands attention.

Period correspondence, diaries, and newspaper accounts show that Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes, and Yadkin Counties were closely linked. Furthermore, marriages, friendships, and business associations frequently crossed county borders and linked the entire region via kinship and familiarity. This inter-county communication continued between 1861 and 1865. In relation, this work is based on the fact that the neighboring northwestern foothill counties formed a general community. In recognition, this thesis refers to the region as the "five-county community."

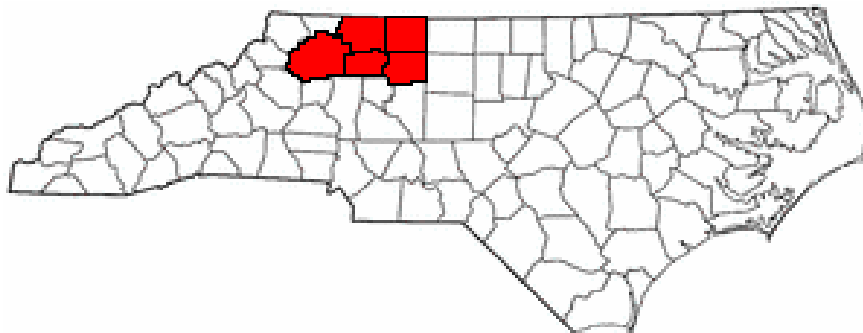


Image 1 - Map of the Five-County Community

The primary focus of this work is to explore the causes and effects of anti-Confederate thought and behavior in the five-county community. This study does not imply that local pro-Confederate support was inferior or failed to exist. The study instead contends that the foothill community experienced significant anti-Confederate thought and action. Several terms are used in describing this sentiment and behavior: anti-Confederate, disaffected, disloyal, and Unionist or pro-Union. In this study, disaffected community members felt abused by the Southern government and consequently disdained the Confederacy. Disaffection, therefore, refers to a state of mind rather than an action. Disloyalty, in contrast, refers to an active response. Thus, the disloyal population acted out against the Confederacy or displayed overt Unionist sentiments. Likewise, in this study, the terms “Unionist” and “pro-Union” label community citizens who eventually opposed the Confederate government and strongly desired peace and reunion as the war progressed. The terms do not refer to groups that provided the Federal army with military support. Nor do they imply “unconditional” Unionists, who never supported the Confederacy.¹⁵ Lastly, each category—disaffected, disloyal, and pro-Union or Unionist—is considered anti-Confederate.

Chapter One begins with a description of the five-county community on the eve of the Civil War and displays the foothills’ devoted support of the Confederacy during the conflict’s first year. Chapter Two considers the first signs of local disaffection in

¹⁵ In *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama’s Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Margaret Storey examines the experiences of Alabama’s “unconditional Unionists.” She claims that unconditional Unionists opposed secession and remained loyal to the United State throughout the war. Storey relies primarily on 405 postwar testimonies from the Southern Claims Commission. The records, taken with a degree of skepticism, shed invaluable light onto the lives and identities of wartime Unionists; however, Storey’s wholehearted faith in the honesty of the depositions is potentially problematic. Labeling a significant portion of Alabama’s Unionists as “unconditional” based on their postwar responses to a federal commission raises questions.

April 1862 and the subsequent withdrawal of voluntary Confederate support. Chapter Three considers additional grievances and follows the demoralized homefront through ruthless abuses that increased local disaffection from 1862 until the end of the war. Chapter Four examines anti-Confederate reactions to an unpopular government and despicable local conditions.

This thesis considers Confederate disaffection and disloyalty in North Carolina's northwestern foothills; a region overlooked thus far in the current historiography. In so doing, this thesis adds to the growing trend in social and community studies holding that social, religious, and political factors, as well as war weariness contributed to anti-Confederate behavior. This thesis, however, broadens the scope and argues that from April 1862 until the end of the war the five-county community viewed the Richmond government and North Carolina's original secessionists as their primary enemies. Adamantly pro-Union and anti-secession on the eve of the Civil War, the foothill counties naturally rejected the Confederacy once faced with unwanted wartime measures and conditions.

*“The[y] tolde us that they were union men up
to the call for 75 thousand Troops...and then I saw
that they did not want the union”¹*

**CHAPTER ONE:
THE FIVE-COUNTY COMMUNITY,
EVE OF WAR - APRIL 1862**

North Carolina’s northwestern foothill population overwhelmingly opposed secession prior to mid-April 1861. The region’s prewar Unionism is displayed in diary entries and period newspapers. The prevalence of “Union Meetings” held between January and April 1861, as well as the foothill counties’ secession convention voting returns, confirm the area’s entrenched prewar Unionism and solid opposition to secession. President Abraham Lincoln’s call for North Carolina militia on April 15, 1861 to help enforce “the laws of the United States” in the seceded Lower South, however, caused foothill Unionism to temporarily retreat.² In turn, foothill citizens supported Governor Ellis’s remark to Lincoln: “You can get no troops from North Carolina.”³ During the Civil War’s first year, foothill men volunteered to serve in the Confederate military, and the region’s homefront devoted itself to the Southern war effort.

On the eve of the Civil War the northwestern foothill counties of North Carolina were primarily rural. With few exceptions, the region consisted of moderately sized farms engaged in the cultivation of grains and subsistence agriculture.⁴ Most of the farms

¹ Postwar diary of Jesse Dobbins [Yadkin County], Allen Paul Speer, *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Speer, 1861-1864* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1997), 211.

² President Abraham Lincoln, “By the President of the United States: A Proclamation,” Washington, DC, April 15, 1861, printed in *Harper’s Weekly*, April 27, 1861.

³ Governor John Ellis [Raleigh] to President Lincoln [Washington, DC], April 15, 1861, printed in *Harper’s Weekly*, April 27, 1861.

⁴ Frances H. Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County, North Carolina* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 13; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 188;

were owned and worked by independent yeomen; however, landless tenancy was not uncommon in the region.⁵ To a lesser extent, larger agricultural operations concentrating on the production of a main cash crop existed in the area, and by 1860 substantial amounts of tobacco were cultivated in the region for sale.⁶

To satisfy the abundant growth of corn, wheat, rye, and oats, gristmills were built along the banks of the counties' rivers and tributaries.⁷ At the same time, the foothill counties did not rely wholly on agriculture. By the mid-nineteenth century, modest towns had emerged serving as the region's economic centers.⁸ By 1860, occupations within the reaches of these centers were numerous and diverse, ranging from physicians, mechanics, and tobacconists to at least one fortune teller in Surry County's Hollow Springs District.⁹

⁵ Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin Counties, North Carolina, National Archives, Washington, DC, online database: <http://www.ancestry.com>.

⁶ Period correspondence referred to the area as a "Tobacco region." Stokely Martin [Stokes County] to Gov. Vance [Raleigh], March 24, 1863, Governor Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NCDAH; Forsyth, Stokes, Surry and Yadkin Counties are in North Carolina's "Old Belt" tobacco region. Large-scale tobacco farms appeared in the central portion of North Carolina following the Civil War; however, prior to the Civil War, the Old Belt produced the majority of the state's tobacco. Charles E. Landon, "The Tobacco Growing Industry in North Carolina," *Economic Geography* 10 (July 1934): 240; Franklin C. Erickson, "The Tobacco Belt of North Carolina," *Economic Geography* 21 (January 1945): 58-59.

⁷ Ruth Minick, et al. *The Surry County Book*, 2nd ed. (Elkin: Nu-Line Printing & Photography, 1978), 69.

⁸ Among these were Mount Airy and Elkin in Surry County; Germanton and Danbury in Stokes County; Salem and Winston in Forsyth County, Yadkinville and Huntsville in Yadkin County, and Wilkesboro in Wilkes County.

⁹ Eighth Census of the U.S.: 1860, Surry County, N.C., Population Schedule.

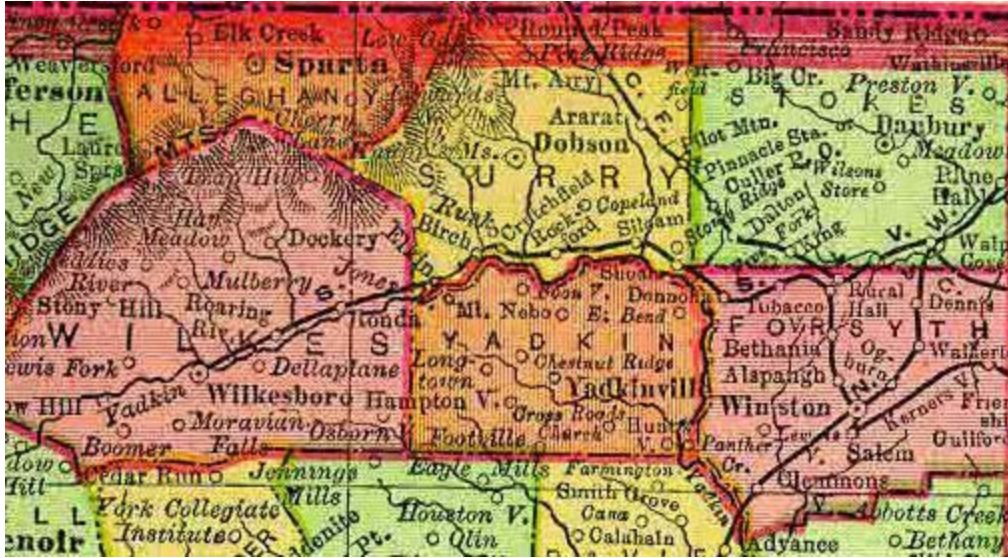


Image 1 - Counties, Towns and Neighborhoods in the Five-County Community

From Rand, McNally & Company's 1895 U.S. Atlas. The map was produced thirty years after the Civil War ended; however, the map accurately represents the five-county community from 1861-1865.

Slave labor was employed in the Blue Ridge foothills of North Carolina, as it was throughout the state. While all North Carolina counties east of Chatham consisted of slave populations ranging from 25 to 70 percent of the total county populations in 1860, the population of enslaved individuals west of Chatham was significantly lower. In 1860, only forty-one counties west of Chatham consisted of an enslaved population greater than 25 percent of the total population. Stokes County's slave population fell below 25 percent in 1860, yet comprised the highest percentage of enslaved African Americans in the northwestern foothill five-county community.¹⁰ The slave populations in Forsyth, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin, however, ranged from 8 to 14 percent of the counties' total populations.¹¹

¹⁰ Joe A. Mobley, ed., *The Way We Lived in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), <http://www.waywelivednc.com/maps/historical/slave-population.htm>.

¹¹ Eight Census of the U.S., 1860: Forsyth, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin Counties, N.C., Population Schedule.

The northwestern foothill counties of North Carolina were religiously similar; however, the Christian sects that dominated the five-county community were not proportionately distributed. Methodists and Baptists churches scattered throughout the region at the time of the Civil War. Presbyterian meetings existed in the area as well.¹² Moravian and Quaker churches were found throughout the community; however, most communicants of both sects resided in well-established religiously based settlements. The Moravian's greatest numbers were found in Forsyth County in Salem, and the surrounding townships of Bethabara and Bethania. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, were strongest in Yadkin and had established churches across the county.

It is notable that both the Moravians and Quakers in North Carolina at the outbreak of the Civil War maintained significant ties with their northern brethren. For instance, travel between Moravian settlements in North Carolina and Pennsylvania was not uncommon. Many "Salemities" had friends and relatives in Pennsylvania's Moravian communities, and young men from Salem oftentimes traveled for extended stints with their northern counterparts to experience new work opportunities.¹³ Local Quakers, as well, had relatives above the Mason Dixon Line. Starting in the 1830s, groups of Friends from North Carolina migrated to newer settlements in Ohio and Indiana.¹⁴

The Moravian's and Quaker's pacifism and anti-slavery stances throughout the antebellum period are also significant.¹⁵ Yet, both stances have been overestimated in the case of North Carolina's Moravians. Certainly some Forsyth Moravians abhorred the

¹² Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 15-16; Barbara Case Summerlin, *The Hollows* (Mount Airy, NC: Hickory Hill Publishing, 2004), 81.

¹³ Sarah Bahnson Chapman, ed., *Bright and Gloomy Days: The Civil War Correspondence of Captain Charles Frederic Bahnson, a Moravian Confederate* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), xi-xii.

¹⁴ Patrick Sowle, "The Quaker Conscript in Confederate North Carolina," *Quaker History* 56 (1967): 92.

¹⁵ William T. Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Randolph County Area of Confederate North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (Jan. 1984): 60-61.

institution of slavery, even though Salem, the state's largest Moravian settlement, included 335 slaves in 1860. This does not suggest that all of the town's enslaved population were owned by Salem Moravians. It does show, however, that slavery was tolerated and practiced by some of the Brethren within the community. For example, F.H. Fries, a prominent Salem Moravian and successful textile merchant, held forty-seven African Americans in bondage in 1860.¹⁶

In addition, traditional Moravian pacifism was not wholly regarded in the foothill Moravian communities by the outbreak of the Civil War. On one hand, a number of Salem's sons, such as Julius Lineback, avoided violent participation by enlisting as musicians in North Carolina's regimental bands. Nevertheless, on the other hand, other young Moravians independently chose to carry muskets and join the regular Confederate ranks in 1861.¹⁷

In the years leading up to the Civil War, the five-county community looked similar to North Carolina as a whole, but also contained distinctive aspects. Like most of the state, the foothill landscape was rural, and the people relied on agriculture.¹⁸ Yeomen families, owning small to moderately sized farms, spanned the region and contributed to the majority of the foothill counties' population. The region also employed slave labor, but, like North Carolina in general, most local families did not own slaves. In 1860, the majority of unfree laborers in the foothills lived on plantations with slave populations of

¹⁶ Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Forsyth County, N.C., Slave Schedule.

¹⁷ Rod Gragg, *Covered with Glory: The 26th North Carolina Infantry at the Battle of Gettysburg* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), 37; Chapman, *Bright and Gloomy Days*, xiii.

¹⁸ Mobley, ed., *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*, <http://www.waywelivednc.com/1820-1870/default.htm>.

twenty or more.¹⁹ The foothill counties' religious atmosphere set the region apart from the majority of North Carolina. On the eve of the Civil War, Quakers lived elsewhere in the state, but established Friends communities were particularly strong in portions of the five-county community.²⁰ Forsyth County's Moravian communities, however, were particularly unique to the region.

“the best government vouchsafed by God to man”²¹

The Blue Ridge foothill counties were politically in step with western North Carolina during the late antebellum period. While the Democratic Party prevailed in most of North Carolina, the Whig Party gained significant support in the foothills during the 1840s.²² The Democratic Party pushed for minimal federal government involvement in the state and national economies and purported that too much power restricted personal liberties. In contrast, North Carolina Whigs supported a strong government interested in an economy that would aid interior improvements they deemed necessary. New roads and railroads to ease travel to the state's market towns were of utmost importance to western North Carolina Whigs.²³ The Whig Party remained strong in the Blue Ridge foothills until the national party collapsed in the mid 1850s; however, even after the national party's demise, Whig theory continued in the community's politics.²⁴

¹⁹ Eight Census of the U.S., 1860: Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin Counties, N.C., Slave Schedule. Most planters in the five-county community owned 20-50 slaves. Very few area plantations employed more than 100 slaves; however, Ruth Hairston in Stokes County owned 440 slaves.

²⁰ Richard L. Zuber, “Conscientious Objectors in the Confederacy: The Quakers in North Carolina,” *The Southern Friend*, Journal of the North Carolina Friends Historical Society, 9, (1987): 56. Other areas with significant Quaker populations were Davidson, Guilford, and Randolph Counties. All of these counties are adjacent to the five-county community.

²¹ “Union Meeting in Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, January 23, 1861.

²² Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 20; Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 188; Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 143-144.

²³ Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 141.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 178-79.

Prewar foothill Unionism is evident in the diary of Basil Armstrong Thomasson. Thomasson, a devout Methodist and modest farm laborer-turned-owner, was not unlike his yeoman neighbors. Thomasson lived various stages of his life in Forsyth, Stokes, and Yadkin Counties and knew his community well. He finally settled in northern Iredell County, yet was within close proximity of his family remaining in Yadkin; as the diary proves, family visits were frequent. In addition, Thomasson regularly traveled across the entire five-county community for business matters, religious camp meetings and visitations.²⁵ As early as 1856, Thomasson expressed his hope that the Union “will remain unbroken to the end of time.”²⁶ Throughout the years preceding the Civil War, Thomasson expressed in writing his love of the Union and his subsequent concern for the future of the country. By 1860, he recognized that the “enemy of all that’s good seems to be stretching every nerve for the destruction of the Union.”²⁷

As the sectional crisis loomed, the northwestern foothills of North Carolina reflected the sentiments of Basil Armstrong Thomasson and remained staunchly devout to the Union. Preceding the 1860 presidential election, much of the five-county community placed their support behind the newly formed Constitutional Union Party.²⁸ The party sought to protect “the Constitution of the country, the union of the states, and the enforcement of the laws,” particularly attracting old Whigs and moderate Democrats opposed to secession.²⁹ As their presidential delegate, the Constitutional Unionists chose

²⁵ Paul D. Escott, ed. *North Carolina Yeoman: The Diary of Basil Armstrong Thomasson, 1853-1862* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xii-xxv.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁸ Dean Burnham, *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), 654, 664, 666, & 668; Jeff Weaver, “Results of the 1860 Presidential Election in North Carolina,” *The North Carolina Civil War Home Page* (2001), <http://members.aol.com/jweaver303/nc/prezelec.htm>.

²⁹ John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, “The Constitutional Union Party Platform of 1860,” *The American Presidency Project* (Santa Barbara: University of California, 1999):

fellow Southerner, John Bell. Bell carried the counties of Forsyth, Yadkin, and Wilkes, and had significant votes in Surry and Stokes; however, the latter two counties favored the Southern Democratic delegate, John C. Breckinridge.³⁰ Surry's and Stokes's favor of the Southern Democrat delegate, however, does not place the majority of both counties in line with the secessionists. To begin with, 38 percent of the total votes in both Surry and Stokes were for Bell and the Constitutional Union Party. Next, Breckinridge appealed to Southerners and Democrats in general, not solely Deep South secessionists. Thomasson, a non-slaveholding Union supporter, confided to his diary on November 6, 1860 that he "Went to the Election and voted for J. C. Breckenridge & Joseph Lane."³¹ Votes for the national Democratic candidate, Stephen A. Douglas, were insignificant in the northwestern foothills. Douglas received a total of 121 votes throughout the entire five-county community. Lincoln, whose name did not appear on Southern ballots, received no votes.³²

Prewar Unionism in the northwestern foothills of North Carolina is more evident in the four months preceding the firing on Fort Sumter. After Lincoln's election, "Union Meetings" resolved to keep the country whole and dissuade the calling of a secession convention in North Carolina met throughout the community. The proceedings of a meeting in Surry County stated that Lincoln's election was not "sufficient cause for the dismemberment of the best government vouchsafed by God to man" and hoped that

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showplatforms.php?platindex=CU1860>; James L. Lancaster, "The Scalawags of North Carolina, 1850-1868" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1974), 17.

³⁰ Burnham, *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892*, 664; Weaver, *North Carolina Civil War Home Page*, <http://members.aol.com/jweaver303/nc/prezelec.htm>.

³¹ Diary of Basil A. Thomasson, November 6, 1860, in Escott, *North Carolina Yeoman*, 291.

³² Weaver, *North Carolina Civil War Home Page*.

“through the patriotism of the people, peace and harmony may be restored to the country and the bonds of our national Union preserved.”³³

In addition, the community’s Union Meetings were non-partisan events, showing that prewar foothill Unionism cut across party lines. A citizen of Hamptonville, Yadkin County remarked that opposition to the secession convention was held by “nine-tenths of the Democrats in this County and by all the Union men...Principles are eternal, but the old parties have ceased to exist.”³⁴ Forsyth’s *Salem Press* reported that an “enthusiastic Union meeting, irrespective of old party ties, was held in the courthouse in Winston.”³⁵ The meetings’ pro-Union sentiments were reflected by and large in the foothills where the votes in favor of a secession convention were significantly outnumbered.³⁶ Included was Basil Armstrong Thomasson’s vote. On February 28, 1861 he wrote matter-of-factly: “Still clear and warmer than yesterday. Plowed some in the forenoon and went to the Elect. in the p. m. and voted ‘no convention.’”³⁷

³³ “Union Meeting in Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, January 23, 1861.

³⁴ “Yadkin County,” *North Carolina Standard*, March 20, 1861.

³⁵ “Union Meeting in Forsyth,” *North Carolina Standard*, April, 17 1861. The article originally appeared in the *People’s Press*, Salem, Forsyth County.

³⁶ Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 276-78.

³⁷ Diary of Basil A. Thomasson, February 28, 1861, in Escott, *North Carolina Yeoman*, 302.

Table 1 - Secession Convention Votes in the Five-County Community, 1861

| | For Convention | Against Convention |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Forsyth | 286 | 1409 |
| Stokes | 207 | 1136 |
| Surry | 204 | 896 |
| Wilkes | 51 | 1890 |
| Yadkin | 34 | 1490 |

Source: Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 276-78.

Significantly, prewar Unionists across North Carolina agreed that secession would be appropriate if Lincoln’s administration attempted to threaten the “rights and common safety” of the southern states.³⁸ Prewar Unionists in the five-county community concurred. The meeting of Surry County’s pro-Union contingent resolved “That if...we are unable to secure safety in the Union, we are ready as any people to sacrifice our blood and treasure to maintain and preserve our institutions out of the Union.”³⁹

Popular opinion in the Blue Ridge foothills of North Carolina did not endorse secession in 1861; however, a pro-secession minority did exist. Raleigh’s *North Carolina Standard* noted in March of 1861 that the “disunionists have been making quite a stir” in the northwestern foothills.⁴⁰ Included was Richard “Dick” Reeves, a staunch Democratic who represented Surry County in the North Carolina House of Commons between 1856 and 1860.⁴¹ Reeves also led Surry’s pro-secession contingent in 1861. In

³⁸ “Union Meeting in Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, January 23, 1861; Buck Yearn & John G. Barrett, *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 22.

³⁹ “Union Meeting in Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, January 23, 1861.

⁴⁰ “Surry Disunionists,” *North Carolina Standard*, March 13, 1861.

⁴¹ The Surry County Genealogical Association, *The Heritage of Surry County, North Carolina: Volume II* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company, 1994), 432.

the midst of the secession debate, Reeves called a meeting at the county seat in which he “resolved deeply” that “the Union meeting recently held in the county of Surry, does not at all reflect the sentiments of the people, and was concocted by a few political tricksters for the purpose of misleading and blinding the people.”⁴² He was correct in saying the Union meetings did not represent everyone in the county; however, the election returns prove that Surry overwhelmingly opposed secession in early 1861. Yet, Reeves’s statement may have been influenced by the sentiment in his immediate neighborhood. The Rockford Township near Reeves’s home contained, by far, Surry’s highest per capita pro-secession concentration.⁴³

Official Vote of Surry County, Feb. 28, 1861 :

| | Convention. | No Convention. | Hamlin, Dis. | Haymore, Un. |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Dobson Precinct, | 76 | 157 | 87 | 142 |
| Mount Airy, | 17 | 443 | 16 | 422 |
| Bittings, | 4 | 91 | 2 | 86 |
| Denny, | 8 | 38 | 7 | 39 |
| Whitaker's, | 15 | 88 | 15 | 87 |
| Rockford, | 40 | 55 | 42 | 51 |
| Fentress, | 2 | 92 | 3 | 88 |
| Nixon's, | 15 | 86 | 13 | 88 |
| Brown's Mills, | 9 | 44 | 9 | 43 |
| Haystack, | 21 | 42 | 24 | 39 |
| | <u>207</u> | <u>1136</u> | <u>218</u> | <u>1685</u> |

Image 2 - “Official Vote of Surry, Feb. 21, 1861”

Source: *North Carolina Standard*, March 20, 1861.

By late March of 1861, both camps witnessed the seeds of disunion blossom. On March 31, Basil Armstrong Thomasson wrote:

⁴² “Surry Disunionists,” *North Carolina Standard*, March 13, 1861.

⁴³ Eight Census of the U.S., 1860: Surry County, N.C., Population Schedule; “Official Vote of Surry, Feb. 21, 1861” *North Carolina Standard*, March 20, 1861.

These are gloomy times, and seem to be growing darker and darker every day. Every mail brings us some bad news, —news of disunion and war. Six of the slave states have now gone out of the union, and events seem to be ripening very fast to take out the remaining nine. And is this union to be utterly and forever destroyed? This glorious union—the price of the blood of our fathers—is it to be abandoned as a thing of no worth? No. “Never give up the ship.” *Never! Never!*⁴⁴

On April 15, after Lincoln’s call for North Carolina men to assist in quelling the rebellion in South Carolina, Governor Ellis urged the state legislature to call a secession convention. Representatives from across North Carolina met in Raleigh, and on May 20, 1861, the state withdrew from the Union.⁴⁵ Despite initial opposition to disunion in the northwestern foothills of North Carolina, Lincoln’s call for troops ended their “watch and wait” policy.⁴⁶ The region’s Unionists previously resolved to support secession if Lincoln threatened their “institutions” and safety. The five-county community understood Lincoln’s April 15 proclamation as that threatening measure.

“volunteering began very rapidly”⁴⁷

In reaction to President Lincoln’s mobilization of federal troops, public pro-Union sentiment dropped as North Carolina prepared for war.⁴⁸ Evidence demonstrates—or rather the lack thereof—that the once prevalent Union conventions held throughout the northwestern community were unheard of after mid-April 1861. Some who maintained pro-Union positions no longer felt comfortable iterating their sentiments in public, but

⁴⁴ Diary of Basil A. Thomasson, March 31, 1861, in Escott, *North Carolina Yeoman*, 305.

⁴⁵ Representatives from the five-county community: Forsyth, T.J. Wilson and R.L. Patterson; Stokes, John Hill; Surry, T.V. Hamlin; Wilkes, Peter Eller and James Calloway; and Yadkin, R.F. Armfield. Information obtained from, “North Carolina State Convention,” *North Carolina Standard*, May 29, 1861.

⁴⁶ W. Buck Years & John G. Barrett, ed., *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 22.

⁴⁷ William M. Norman, *A Portion of My Life: Being a Short & Imperfect History Written while a Prisoner of War on Johnson’s Island, 1864* (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1959), 117.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

allowed their opinions to be heard in trusted company.⁴⁹ Others like the Thomasson family considered “selling off” and leaving the state for “Indiana or Illinois.”⁵⁰

Lincoln’s call for troops—in spite of prevailing prewar Unionism—influenced foothill citizens to commit to the Confederate cause after the state seceded. War fervor penetrated the region by mid-1861 and signs of early Confederate support are evident by actions within the five-county community. These abundant shows of support for North Carolina’s initial course within the Southern Confederacy crossed socioeconomic barriers.

Outward displays of Confederate patriotism were especially *en vogue* among the region’s social upper tier. In September of 1861, Mollie Fries, the daughter of Salem’s leading textile manufacturer “went to school with a ‘Confederate apron’ on...made of very bright colors, the three bars form the apron and the body is made of blue with twelve yellow stars in a circle.”⁵¹ Part of Salem’s Moravian community, Mollie’s sister Carrie wrote that “Father admires it exceedingly. He wanted her to wear it to church yesterday, but she was afraid she would disturb the congregation.”⁵²

At the outbreak of the war, men of status displayed signs of Confederate patriotism as well. Young men commonly sought officer commissions in the first regiments organized in the state. One such man was Alfred H. Belo. The son of another

⁴⁹ Claim of Gabriel Tucker, Claim No. 10,897, deposition taken in Danbury, Stokes County, December 2, 1872, (Record Group 217), Southern Claims Commission Records for Stokes County, NC, Records of the Accounting Officers of the Department of the Treasury, National Archives II, College Park, MD; Samuel Stoltz, Claim 15,085, Forsyth County, N.C., Feb. 22, 1878, (RG 217), SCC.

⁵⁰ “Letter Found in a Box of Family Documents,” April 1861, in Escott, *North Carolina Yeoman*, 350.

⁵¹ Carrie Fries [Salem] to J. F. Shaffner [in camp], September 9, 1861, Christopher M. Watford, ed. *The Civil War in North Carolina. Soldiers’ and Civilians’ Letters and Diaries, 1861-1865, Vol. I: The Piedmont* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), 21.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 21.

prominent Salem merchant, Belo was named Captain of the Forsyth Rifles.⁵³ Other established figures within the community independently assembled units that later served as companies in the North Carolina State Troops. Dick Reeves, Surry's leading secessionist, was among the first to organize a company in the region. In May 1861, 105 men assembled as the Surry Regulators under Captain Reeves's command.⁵⁴

The foothill counties at large congregated as men from their immediate vicinities enlisted and prepared to leave for training in other parts of the state. Parts of the five-county community celebrated their local troops' evacuation by holding town-wide rallies and barbecues.⁵⁵ In addition, crowds in Salem were entertained by the Salem Brass Band.⁵⁶ Dramatic shows of appreciation preceding the companies' departures were also common. As Captain James Waugh's "Mountain Tigers" left Surry they "received a beautiful flag from the hands of Miss Martha Crumpler, accompanied by an address from Miss Eliza Blackwood, in behalf of the Rockford ladies...amid cheers and applause."⁵⁷ The "Yadkin Gray Eagles" experienced a similar farewell when local women presented the company with a handmade silk flag and departing address.⁵⁸ Likewise, Captain Alfred Belo noted that, upon leaving, the Forsyth Rifles encountered "ladies waving their handkerchiefs, giving us their most pleasant smiles of encouragement, as well as bouquets."⁵⁹

⁵³ Ibid., 11

⁵⁴ "Departure of Troops," *North Carolina Standard*, May 22, 1861.

⁵⁵ Chapman, *Bright and Gloomy Days*, 23; Summerlin, *The Hollows*, 183; Watford, ed., *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 12.

⁵⁶ Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 20.

⁵⁷ "Dobson, June 1st, 1861," *North Carolina Standard*, June 12, 1861.

⁵⁸ "Louise Glen's Flag Presentation Speech," *People's Press*, June 21, 1861.

⁵⁹ Alfred Belo ["Near Danville, Va."] to Carrie Fries [Salem], June 23, 1861, Watford, ed., *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 12.

Communitywide troop support penetrated below the surface in 1861. Beyond the superficial displays of gratitude, men and women of varying ages hoped to ease their neighborhood friends' and relatives' stays in camp. Writing to a friend, Carrie Fries of Salem recognized that her sister was "making quite a show of her devotion to the Southern cause, but it is not all show, for she works for the soldiers in every spare moment she has. We are all knitting and soon as she finishes one thing she has another on the needles."⁶⁰ In June of 1861, Captain Belo noted that men in the community were "offering to do anything in their power that would contribute to the comfort of our men."⁶¹ Additionally, in May of 1861, Surry County alone was able to gather \$20,000 "for the equipping of the volunteer companies that have been or may be raised in the County, and for the support of their families."⁶²

Amidst the war fervor of mid-1861, a significant number of men in the foothill community freely joined the local volunteer companies. Reasons for enlisting varied, however, and the issue could weigh heavily on the minds of men in the region. Some enlisted out of excitement or a sense of duty, while others signed up to avoid the condemnation of friends and relatives. In a diary written as a prisoner of war, William Norman, a schoolteacher and attorney from Surry County, recounted his emotional battles in the month before he enlisted. He wrote of his initial enthusiasm, but soon realized leaving his new wife, Letita, at home would be difficult to bear. Letita echoed his concerns, and he found "the subject of volunteering...was a very disagreeable subject

⁶⁰ Carrie Fries [Salem] to J. F. Shaffner [in camp], September 9, 1861, in Watford, ed., *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 21-22.

⁶¹ Alfred Belo ["Near Danville, Va."] to Carrie Fries [Salem], June 23, 1861, in Watford, ed., *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 12..

⁶² *North Carolina Standard*, May 29, 1861.

for her consideration.”⁶³ Her opinion soon changed, however, after neighborhood men “who had already volunteered began to back out, and their cowardice and toryish principles, talked of in every crowd.”⁶⁴ Letita Norman, who previously urged her husband to stay out of service, decided it was preferable for him to enlist “than act cowardly or bring any disgrace upon us.”⁶⁵ The Normans reluctantly agreed that duty required their separation, and in late May of 1861 William joined Captain Reeves’s Surry Regulators. In his diary over three years later, as a prisoner, he chose to “pass over this heart-rending and awful scene of our parting...for my heart and mind are not in a mood to undertake an explanation.”⁶⁶

By the end of their first year in Confederate service, soldiers from the five-county community were well acquainted with the drab realities of nineteenth century military life. The initial excitement of leaving home turned to weariness and depression as the troops were kept in the field and the conflict approached its second year. Poor rations and a lack of equipment added to the soldiers’ distress. An unhappy foothill soldier wrote to his parents that “it is not worth my while to write about our fare.”⁶⁷ Other local soldiers expressed similar sentiments as they encountered a lack of sufficient rations and camp necessities. In January 1862, Charles Bahnson from Salem noted that the regiment was “on half rations of sugar, soap, & candles, & short allowance of flour.”⁶⁸ Bahnson

⁶³ Norman, *A Portion of My Life*, 117.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁶ Norman, *A Portion of My Life*, vi & 120. William Norman survived Johnson’s Island and returned to his wife in Surry. After the war he “became a small farmer, a surveyor, a justice of the peace, and the father of nine children.”

⁶⁷ Ephraim Nicholson [Manassas Junction, Virginia] to Micajah and Elizabeth Nicholson [Dobson], undated, in Hester Bartlett Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War* (Charlotte: Delmar Printing, 1992), 214.

⁶⁸ Charles F. Bahnson [Camp Patterson] to “My Dear Parents” [Salem], January 28, 1862, in Chapman, *Bright and Gloomy Days*, 26.

further complained that his unit received marching orders, yet lacked “bayonet scabbards, cartridge boxes, & belts.”⁶⁹

In particular, rampant sickness and disease-related deaths threatened and demoralized foothill soldiers in camp. Hezekiah and James Collins, brothers from Dobson, Surry County, noted in November 1861 that “there is a good deal of sickness in the regiment...several of the boys has got the measles and some has the chills...hope none dangerous.”⁷⁰ Ephriam Nicholson, a twenty-one year old schoolteacher, served in a different regiment, but was from the same neighborhood as the Collins brothers. Nicholson contracted measles soon after leaving home.⁷¹ He wrote his parents in September 1861 to inform them of his improving health. At the same time, however, he wrote that “most all of our regiment is complaining at this time...Every few days a man dies in our company a neighbors boy at that. William Bledsoe died sometime during the night last night. I don’t know what time.”⁷² Regardless of his temporarily improving condition, Nicholson died of disease in May 1862.⁷³

Chapter Conclusion

Prior to mid-April 1861, the northwestern Blue Ridge foothills of North Carolina exhibited staunch Unionism. Meetings held throughout the community in early 1861 demonstrate the region’s desire to avoid secession. In addition, the county voting returns for the calling of a state secession convention in February 1861 clarify that the northern foothill counties overwhelmingly favored remaining in the Union. At the same time,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁰ Hezekiah and James Collins [Wilmington] to “Father Mother Brothers and Sisters,” November 3, 1861, Jackson, ed., in *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 288.

⁷¹ Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Surry County, N.C., Population Schedule.

⁷² Ephriam Nicholson [in camp] to Micajah Nicholson [Dobson, Surry County, NC], September 11, 1861. Jackson, ed., in *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 218.

⁷³ Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 130.

however, local Unionists agreed to endorse secession if Lincoln threatened Southern rights and safety. The foothills viewed Lincoln's call for troops in April 1861 as a direct threat. In reaction, the region supported secession and placed their support behind the Southern Confederacy. Throughout the initial year of war the region's citizens freely contributed to the state's war effort. As the Civil War approached its second year, however, the morale of foothill soldiers in the field dwindled due to war weariness, a lack of necessities, and the constant threat of disease.

“We had a good government, which was destroyed by fanatics of the North and secessionists of the South”¹

**CHAPTER TWO:
GOVERNMENTAL REFORM,
CONSCRIPTION, & DESERTION,
APRIL 1862 – 1865**

During the Civil War’s first year, men from the northwestern foothill counties of North Carolina volunteered to serve in the state troops, while the region at large devoted time and resources to the Confederate war effort. War fervor, however, subsided during the conflict’s initial period. By mid-1862 much of the five-county community became disillusioned with Democratic Governor John W. Ellis. The region’s prewar Unionists contended that Ellis and his administration solely represented the state’s original secessionists. In reaction, the foothills supported Zebulon B. Vance’s platform in the 1862 gubernatorial election. Additionally, while enlistees across the state independently chose to bear arms within the conflict’s first twelve months, by mid-1862 the Richmond government established a mandatory military draft. The decision significantly decreased community support for the Confederacy at home and in the field. In mid-1862, conscription initiated Confederate disaffection in North Carolina’s northwestern foothill counties. The draft and its repercussions caused the five-county community to view both the Confederate national government and North Carolina’s early secessionists who encouraged the war as their true enemies.

“reform in the Government”²

The 1862 gubernatorial election divided North Carolina’s prewar Unionists from

¹ “A friend writing from Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, July 9, 1862

² *Ibid.*

the state's original secessionists. Political divisions were not pronounced during the war's initial year; however, after the summer of 1862 state politics and allegiances factored on prewar sentiments. Ultimately, political divisions that arose in 1862 caused the five-county community to consider early supporters of secession as enemies. The foothill counties, in turn, supported Zebulon B. Vance, a prewar Unionist Whig, for governor in 1862. The region's choice displayed increasing animosity toward politicians who originally supported secession. Advocating Vance also showed that the region wanted a governor who would represent the state's prewar Unionists and support constitutional rights during a time of war.

Across North Carolina political affiliations virtually disappeared at the outbreak of the Civil War. As 1861 gave way to the new year, however, new political divisions arose. In 1862, prewar Unionists within the state criticized North Carolina's governors, John W. Ellis and his replacement Henry T. Clark, for loading their administrations with early secessionists.³ It was recognized that the governors' men "were appointed not for their merits or on account of their peculiar fitness for their places, *but because they had been original secessionists.*"⁴ Additionally in 1862, "original secessionists" labeled any who opposed them "traitors."⁵ More troubling were rumors that Ellis planned to restrict the constitutional rights of North Carolinians by advocating the confiscation of personal property for the Confederate war effort.⁶ Reacting in 1862, prewar Unionists throughout the state—many of which were ex-Whigs—placed themselves behind the new

³ John W. Ellis, a pro-secession Democrat was elected governor in 1858 and again in 1860. Ellis died in office and was succeeded by Henry T. Clark in July 1861; Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 231.

⁴ "The Duty of the Conservatives," *North Carolina Standard*, November 21, 1862.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ William C. Harris, *William Woods Holden: Firebrand of North Carolina Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 109-110.

Conservative Party.⁷ At the same time, Conservatives began referring to politicians who originally supported secession as “Destructives.”⁸ In mid-1862, prewar sentiments resurfaced and again separated North Carolina’s early Unionists and secessionists.

In the 1862 gubernatorial race, the Conservatives ran Zebulon B. Vance in opposition to the Democratic candidate, William Johnston. William Woods Holden, editor of Raleigh’s *North Carolina Standard* and outspoken promoter of the state’s new party, publicly endorsed Vance as the voice of the old Union faction.⁹ Holden urged North Carolinians to “look closely to your home interests—watch narrowly the conduct of your rulers.”¹⁰ In his publication, Holden avowed that Vance, unlike the Destructive candidate, would represent the interests of original Unionists and uphold constitutional rights. The Conservative platform, in 1862, supported the continuation of the war, but with civil liberties and state laws intact.¹¹

The Conservative Party gained strength throughout North Carolina prior to the 1862 election and boasted significant support in the five-county community. In relation, Holden’s *North Carolina Standard*, the state’s leading Conservative newspaper, circulated widely throughout the foothill counties. By September 1862, the statewide number of subscribers to the *Standard*, after becoming a partisan publication, nearly doubled its circulation from previous years. At that point, Mount Airy in Surry County had the second highest number of subscribers in the state.¹²

In the summer months preceding the Vance-Johnston gubernatorial race, foothill

⁷ Ibid., 230-31.

⁸ William C. Harris, *William Woods Holden*, 114-15.

⁹ Ibid., 222.

¹⁰ *North Carolina Standard*, June 19, 1861.

¹¹ Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 231.

¹² “Our Circulation,” *North Carolina Standard*, Sept. 2, 1862.

citizens voiced their opinions in the *Standard*. A Surry citizen told the paper to “Go on in your conservative course...We must have reform in the government. Z. B. Vance is the man for the times, and will get the vote in this County.”¹³ A Conservative from the same section wrote, “the people intend to read Holden’s paper and support Col. Vance...they intend to make no compromise with the Destructives.” While another stated, “Col. Vance’s majority in this County over Mr. Johnston will be overwhelming.”¹⁴

Conservative advocates from other sections of the five-county community publicly supported Vance as well. Denouncing the Destructives’ strategy, a former War of 1812 soldier from Forsyth wrote:

we had a good government, which was destroyed by fanatics of the North and secessionists of the South. But in building up a new government we must not be deprived of the rights and privileges we enjoyed under the old government. If we are, our people have enjoyed freedom too long to submit to it.¹⁵

Others in the region faithfully believed their community’s men in the field supported Conservative principles. A foothill inhabitant told the *Standard* to “supply our brave boys with Vance tickets, and they will return such a vote as will strike terror into the ranks of the Johnston men.”¹⁶

The 1862 gubernatorial election returns loudly conveyed North Carolina’s desire to have a prewar Unionist in Raleigh. Statewide, Zebulon Vance defeated William Johnston by 32,459 votes. The five-county community overwhelmingly favored Vance whose votes totaled 5,469 within the region; Johnston received only 664 votes in the foothill counties. Within the community, the Destructives received the least amount of

¹³ “A friend writing from Surry.”

¹⁴ “One writing from Surry,” *North Carolina Standard*, July 30, 1862.

¹⁵ “An old soldier of Forsyth County,” *North Carolina Standard*, July 30, 1862.

¹⁶ “Another from that [Forsyth] county says,” *North Carolina Standard*, July 30, 1862.

votes in Stokes, Wilkes, and Yadkin Counties. In these three sections, Johnston received less than 85 votes in each county. Votes for William Johnston in Forsyth and Surry were greater than 200 in each county; however, Vance's total of 2,029 in both counties far exceeded Johnston's returns.¹⁷

Local voting returns show that the five-county community demanded a prewar Unionist in Raleigh. The results furthermore show that the region rejected the possibility of a wartime suspension of constitutional rights. Significantly, however, 1862's political divisions lasted until the end of the war. After mid-1862, Conservatives in the five-county community viewed the Destructives as their enemy.

Weekly Standard.

VOL. XXVIII.—No. 36. RA LEIGH, N. C., WEDNES DAY, SEPT. 3, 1862. WHOLE NUMBER 1432.

| Official Vote for Governor of North-Carolina, 1862. | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-----------|-------------|-------|-------|------------------|--------|--------|
| Counties. | VANCE. | JOHNSTON. | | | | | | |
| Alexandria | 970 | 178 | Edgecombe | 113 | 508 | Pasquotank | 163 | 20 |
| Albemarle | 749 | 116 | Franklin | 525 | 378 | Perquimans | 85 | 13 |
| Anson | 826 | 108 | Forsythe | 1,371 | 244 | Person | 590 | 191 |
| Alleghany | 227 | 12 | Gaston | 379 | 427 | Pitt | 649 | 229 |
| Ashe | 648 | 15 | Cates | | 74 | Polk | | |
| Beaufort | 534 | 102 | Guilford | 1,977 | 74 | Randolph | 1,357 | 55 |
| Bertie | 525 | 105 | Granville | 942 | 445 | Rowan | 1,345 | 407 |
| Bladen | 316 | 204 | Greene | 330 | 144 | Richmond | 634 | 97 |
| Brunswick | 886 | 239 | Halifax | 461 | 538 | Robeson | 931 | 320 |
| Burke | 1,323 | 274 | Harnett | 414 | 204 | Rockingham | 569 | 272 |
| Cabarrus | 637 | 504 | Haywood | | 82 | Rutherford | 1,147 | 257 |
| Caldwell | 833 | 40 | Henderson | 1,208 | 82 | Sampson | 463 | 704 |
| Canden | 127 | 13 | Hertford | 190 | 61 | Stanly | 943 | 10 |
| Carters | | | Hyde | 287 | 15 | Stokes | 653 | 83 |
| Caswell | 640 | 270 | Iredell | 1,544 | 161 | Surry | 658 | 204 |
| Catawba | 605 | 565 | Jackson | 604 | 117 | Transylvania | | |
| Chatham | 1,518 | 127 | Johnston | 1,000 | 184 | Tyrrell | | |
| Cumberland | 1,915 | 864 | Jones | 68 | 29 | Union | 556 | 417 |
| Cherokee | | | Lenoir | 267 | 140 | Wake | 2,269 | 489 |
| Chowan | | | Lincoln | 605 | 367 | Wayne | 706 | 466 |
| Clay | 279 | 88 | Macon | | 165 | Warren | 174 | 464 |
| Cleveland | 523 | 575 | Madison | 810 | 165 | Washington | | |
| Columbus | 297 | 495 | Martin | 282 | 239 | Watauga | 423 | 62 |
| Craven | 117 | 113 | McDowell | 723 | 194 | Wilkes | 1,615 | 76 |
| Currituck | 31 | 14 | Mecklenburg | 425 | 1,335 | Wilson | 188 | 486 |
| Davie | 736 | 132 | Mitchell | | 18 | Yadkin | 1,172 | 53 |
| Duplin | 100 | 961 | Montgomery | 1,069 | 190 | Yancey | 714 | 186 |
| Davidson | 1,368 | 183 | Moore | 317 | 283 | | | |
| | | | New Hanover | 287 | 1,337 | | 52,333 | 20,174 |
| | | | Northampton | 385 | 299 | | 20,174 | |
| | | | Orange | 1,431 | 372 | | | |
| | | | Onslow | 313 | 293 | Vance's majority | 32,659 | |

Image 1 - 1862 North Carolina Gubernatorial Election Returns by County,
 Source: Wednesday, September 3, 1862
North Carolina Standard.

¹⁷ "Official Vote for the Governor of North Carolina," *North Carolina Standard* Sept. 3, 1862.

“some thing worse than sickness”¹⁸

The five-county community welcomed the Conservative shift in state politics; however, an unwanted turn of events occurred in 1862 as well. The Confederate Conscription Acts profoundly impacted the morale of foothill citizens and decreased Confederate support in the area. In consequence, community men attempted to avoid conscription through a series of lawful exemptions recognized by the Richmond government. Exemptions proved difficult to obtain, and the mandatory draft ultimately instigated regional disaffection.

Until the initial Conscription Act passed, men in the seceded states volunteered to bear arms; however, after April 1862, the Confederacy’s draft laws demanded military service. The “Act of 16 April 1862” required—with a few exemptions—all able white males between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five to serve for three years or until the war ended. Many who initially volunteered for twelve months of service neared the end of their terms and hoped to return home. After April 1862, however, the Confederate government required these volunteers to reenlist or return home and face conscription.¹⁹ Richmond amended the draft age as the war progressed. By February 1864 the Confederacy demanded the service of men between the ages of seventeen and fifty.²⁰

The Confederate Conscription Act of April 16, 1862, was the first general draft enacted in America, and citizens from the five-county community responded to it with

¹⁸ Subtitle Quote: John Denny [Pilot Mountain] to Azariah Denny [in camp], May 8, 1862, Denny Family Letters, Pansy Broughton Private Collection, Pilot Mountain, North Carolina.

¹⁹ William L. Shaw, “The Confederate Conscription and Exemption Acts,” *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (October, 1962), 374.

²⁰ The Richmond government passed three draft laws during the Civil War. The “Act of 16 April 1862” called men between the ages of 18 and 35; the “Act of 27 September 1862” called men between the ages of 18 and 45; and the “Act of 17 February 1864” called men between the ages of 17 and 50.

curiosity.²¹ Foothill soldiers in the field, already starved for news from home, inquired about their neighbors drafted into service. Isaac Copeland, a nineteen-year-old farm boy from Dobson at the outbreak of the war, enlisted into an infantry company in September of 1861.²² By the end of April 1862, Copeland was transferred to the Confederate Navy's *C.S. Steamer Patrick Henry*. Beyond telling his father he was "truly glad I have got out of Lee's army," Copeland inquired about the fate of the men from his town that were drafted.²³ Later in the war, another community soldier wrote home asking for information concerning the area's conscripts. His letter, which asks, "what age they are ordered...whether it be to 40 or 45" shows some confusion over the draft law, even within the ranks. He continued to write, "people entertain different opinions down this way about what age they are ordered...I am anctious to know."²⁴

On the community's homefront, the draft unsettled men who needed to remain at home to maintain their livelihoods and homesteads. The Dennys, a yeoman family from Surry, witnessed firsthand the negative impacts of conscription on the region's homefront.²⁵ Providing several direct and indirect relatives to Confederate service, the Dennys maintained a family-wide dialogue via letters throughout the war.²⁶ In May of 1862, just after the first draft law passed, John Denny wrote from the family home near Pilot Mountain to his older brother Azariah, already in service:

There is some thing worse than sickness. Everywhere it is expected that all the people in this country between 18 and 35 will be called out in a

²¹ Shaw, "The Confederate Conscription and Exemption Acts," 374.

²² Hester Bartlett Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War* (Charlotte: Delmar Printing, 1992), 46.

²³ Isaac Copeland [in service] to his Father [Dobson, Surry County], April 1862, Copeland Family Letters, Private Collection of Joe Hicks, Elkin, N.C.

²⁴ A Cousin ["camp near Golds Boro," N.C.] to Gabriel Denny [in camp], not dated, Denny Family Letters.

²⁵ Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Surry County, N.C., Population Schedule.

²⁶ Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 54-55.

short time and if this to be so they wont be people enough lift to cut the grain...now the work is to do and but a few hands to do it and we shall keep a trying and trust in the fall being late.²⁷

Azariah, accustomed to the difficulties of military life by late 1862 and aware of the lack of provisions at home, expressed hope that men could remain in the community. To his father, Azariah wrote, “let me know how much corn you made...We hear that it is impossible to get any...write which of the neighbors has to go this call or if any body has to come you must all stay at home.”²⁸

As soon as the first Confederate draft law passed in 1862, men in the foothill community attempted to avoid conscription via a series of legal exemptions. Those attempting to stay out of Confederate service spanned the region’s socioeconomic sphere, but the methods employed by opposite classes, to remain on the homefront, differed. While the community’s workers relied on their technical skills to stay out of war, men of status depended on their pocketbooks and a network of social ties. At the same time, some foothill conscripts, albeit a small portion, sought legal refuge amongst the region’s religiously exempt Quakers. Recent studies argue that military exemptions, as well as pacifist and anti-slavery churches contributed to Confederate disaffection. Exemptions favoring Southern elites helped establish class divisions which, in time, demoralized the homefront. Similarly, the Confederate government exempted pacifist sects. These churches, in turn, discouraged war support in regions where they existed.²⁹

²⁷ John Denny [Pilot Mountain] to Azariah Denny [in camp], May 8, 1862, Denny Family Letters.

²⁸ Azariah Denny [in camp] to Joel Denny [Pilot Mountain], November 14 1862, Denny Family Letters.

²⁹ For more information on class and disaffection see Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man’s War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002). For more information on religion and Confederate disloyalty see William T. Auman, “Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Randolph county Area of Confederate North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (Jan.

When the first Conscription Act was issued, local draftees forced into Confederate service were angered that some men lawfully—and others unlawfully—remained at home with their farms, families and friends. In the summer of 1862, a company of Surry County conscripts encamped in Winston, composed a series of resolutions detailing their feelings toward those who abused service exemptions. The conscripts felt that “justice requires that the law should be strictly and impartially enforced against every person coming within its provisions.”³⁰ The new soldiers were particularly angered by men who sought excused positions as blacksmiths, postmasters, and schoolteachers, as well as the entrepreneurs who aided their efforts and employed them.

The Conscripts’ resolutions held that those who sought employment in “old forges, ore pits, [and] wood and coal yards...one year ago, could not have been induced to go into any of them.”³¹ Responding to the matter, state officials in Raleigh investigated the five-county community’s abuse of the blacksmith exemption clause. Although certain occupations deemed necessary by the Confederate government—such as blacksmithing—demanded a home workforce, in order to avoid abuse the state required a contract to supply goods to the government. In cases where the work quota was filled, the state denied the exemption and required military service. In October 1862 the North Carolina Adjutant General’s Office mandated the Surry militia to inspect those employed in blacksmithing operations within their jurisdiction. A letter sent to militia Colonel Samuel Forkner in Mount Airy stated that “information has been filed here that

1984): 59-92; William T. Auman & David D. Scarboro, “The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (October 1981): 327-361; Henry T. Shanks, “Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 21 (April 1944): 118-35.

³⁰ “Meeting of Surry Conscripts,” *North Carolina Standard*, Sept. 3, 1862.

³¹ *Ibid.*

many men in your County avoid being enrolled by working in Iron... You will allow no man within the age to be excused unless he can show that he's regularly detailed" to work in the forge.³² The following month, the Surry militia was notified to arrest any "not legally exempted or detailed...you will arrest the young man you reported as working in a Foundry if he has not been detailed."³³

Iron forges were inspected not only in Surry County, but across the foothill community. In the late fall of 1862, North Carolina sent Hal W. Ayer into the region to examine the abuse of exemptions.³⁴ Writing to Governor Vance from Bethania, Ayer reported that a foundry in Yadkin County employed fifty lawfully exempt men, as well as "17 others, who have not been enrolled, being between the ages of 18 & 45 now."³⁵ Ayer also found in Yadkin fifteen additional blacksmiths in forges that were previously reported "frauds upon the Govt."³⁶ He informed the governor that the Forsyth "iron works I alluded to in my letter from Salem have been visited and have an outward appearance of honesty, but there are some rumors afloat against them, which I could not trace up as true."³⁷ Salem Moravian R. P. Linebach confirmed, however, that men in his neighborhood used unauthorized work exemptions to remain at home. In April of 1863, he confided to his diary:

The presence of half a dozen armed soldiers at the graveyard after preaching caused a general panic among the young men, who were mostly

³² Adjutant General [Raleigh] to Colonel Samuel Forkner of the Surry County Militia [Mount Airy], *North Carolina Militia Letter Book, 1863-1865*, AG 44, Microfilm Reel S.1.114, Adjutant General's Department, North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

³³ Adjutant General [Raleigh] to Colonel A. Dunnagan, Surry County Militia [Dobson], in *ibid.*

³⁴ Frontis W. Johnston, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1963), 278.

³⁵ H. W. Ayer [Pleasant Hill, Guilford County] to Gov. Vance, October 25, 1862, Johnston, *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 278.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 278.

³⁷ Hal W. Ayer [Bethania] to Zebulon B. Vance, Nov. 10, 1862, Governor Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NCDAH.

about home engaged in different occupations to keep out of the war. As most of them had no exemption papers to produce, they found it most convenient to get home without passing the graveyard, preferring the by-paths thro' fields, woods, and meadows.³⁸

The Confederate government considered postmasters necessary and exempted these men from military service to carry the mail within their jurisdictions. Nineteenth-century soldiers away from home certainly understood the importance of mail; however, conscripts unwillingly forced to the battlefield in 1862 scorned some in their community who—at least in their opinion—unlawfully claimed postal exemptions. The resolutions of the conscripted men from Surry noted that “certain Post Masters and others, who could perform all the duties of their offices and positions, without aid, up to the time of enrollment...suddenly find it necessary to appoint one or more assistants and deputies.”³⁹

The assertion that some postmasters within the five-county community wanted to avoid Confederate military service was not fabricated by Surry's forced conscripts. Admittedly, Nathaniel Westmoreland from Stokes County “took a contract in 1863 to carry the mail from Germanton, Stokes Co to Rockford Surry Co N.C. There was no other way for me to keep out of the Rebel Army.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, an established Wilkes County merchant and prominent prewar Unionist Whig, Calvin J. Cowles, served as Wilkesboro's postmaster in 1862.⁴¹ Cowles, in addition, was locally regarded for his

³⁸ “Private Diary of R. P. Leinbach,” April 5, 1863, C. Daniel Crews & Lisa D. Bailey, ed., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, 1856-1866* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 200), 6500.

³⁹ “Meeting of Surry Conscripts.”

⁴⁰ Claim of Nathaniel Westmoreland, Claim. No. 15,724, deposition taken in Germanton, Stokes County, N.C., August 31, 1873, Record Group 233, Microfilm, M 1407, Southern Claims Commission Records for Stokes County, N.C., Records of the U.S. House, National Archives, Washington, D.C., hereafter cited as SCC.

⁴¹ Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 172; North Carolina State Archives, Manuscript and Archives Reference System (MARS) description of the “Calvin J. Cowles Papers,” available online: http://www.ncarchives.dcr.state.nc.us/logicrouter/servlet/LogicRouter?PAGE=object&OUTPUTXSL=object.xml&pm_RC=REPOSC2DB&pm_OI=10886&pm_GT=Y&pm_IAC=Y&api_1=GET_OBJECT_XML&

anti-Confederate sentiments.⁴² In June of 1862, the Confederate government's Post Office Department threatened to revoke Cowles appointment due to "charges...seriously affecting your loyalty to the Government of the Confederate States."⁴³ The Richmond government further asserted that, within the war's first year, Cowles refused "to raise an artillery company, giving as a reason that it was useless to continue the struggle against our invaders."⁴⁴

Calvin Cowles's reputation as a friend to Confederate opposition traveled beyond the Wilkes County border and was known in additional sections of the five-county community. In March of 1863, A. S. Jones, the postmaster from Panther Creek in Yadkin, sought information from Cowles concerning the extent of Wilkes County's recognition of exempt occupations. Conveying to Cowles that "forsythe county did not exempt any body under 35 years of age unless they was detailed for government work[.] I want to know whither Mr. Stow does exempt any body under 35 years or not so I can fix up my tricks."⁴⁵ It is unclear why Jones, already exempt as a Yadkin postmaster, gathered information concerning enrolling practices across the community; nevertheless, it points to a common interest of evading the draft and avoiding military service. The letter, which ends "if you wil anser this you will confer a favor on a friend," suggests the two postmasters were not well acquainted; however, Jones seemingly trusted Cowles's anti-Confederate reputation and felt a degree of common ground with his Wilkes County

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⁴² John C. Inscoe & Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 127-28.

⁴³ Confederate States of America Post Office Department [Richmond] to Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro], June 12, 1862, Calvin J. Cowles Papers, NCDAH.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ A. S. Jones [Panther Creek, Yadkin Co.] to Calvin Cowles [Wilkesboro], March 10, 1863, Calvin J. Cowles Papers.

counterpart.

The Confederate government recognized that schools should remain in session during the war and that teachers must be allowed to remain on the homefront. The Surry conscripts in 1862, however, noted that “we are astonished at the number of schools which have suddenly sprung up, in every part of our Regiment, under the charge of stout young men, who have had little or no experience in teaching heretofore.”⁴⁶ It is certain that some men within the five-county community, such as Joseph Grubbs of Forsyth, attempted to teach school and stay out of Confederate service. It can not be discerned whether Grubbs’s attempt was approved or illegal; however, he was detained in Vienna, Forsyth County and sent into military service. When questioned, Grubbs “presented my list of scholars to Col Joe Masten...he said that I must go, and they then pressed me in the service.”⁴⁷ Later in the war, the state Adjutant General produced written orders to protect lawfully employed teachers from similar situations. In 1864, orders stated that James T. Hill was “exempt from all [Home Guard] duty...except within the limits of his (Surry) County so long as he continues to teach a school.”⁴⁸

Community men of greater financial standing also sought to avoid Confederate service but approached the matter differently than common yeomen and laborers. For example, owners of manufacturing outfits signed contracts to remain at home and supply the government with needed supplies. Area business owners were scrutinized, however, in 1862 for helping laborers remain out of service. The resolutions drafted by the Surry conscripts identified their anger toward entrepreneurs who knowingly hired draftees.

⁴⁶ “Meeting of Surry Conscripts.”

⁴⁷ Joseph Grubbs, Forsyth County, RG 233, M 1407, SCC.

⁴⁸ Special Order No. 94, September 14, 1864, AGO 35, Microfilm Reel S.1.103N, Adjutant General’s Department.

They concluded that people “who take *Conscripts* into their employment, for the purpose of aiding them to evade the law...[prefer] their own private interest to the public good and safety.”⁴⁹ The Surry soldiers were not alone in purporting that some business owners within the foothill community helped keep men out of Confederate military service. In Yadkin County, several neighbors of Stephen Hobson supposed he was “erecting the new forges for the purpose of screening some of his friends from the army.”⁵⁰ While on assignment in November of 1862, state agent Hal Ayer reported to Governor Vance that “Hobson has been heard to say ‘That he would ease the conscience of as many of his neighbors as he could, from fighting in the war.’”⁵¹

Until December 1863, the Confederate government allowed conscripted soldiers to pay a substitute to serve in their stead, a technique of avoiding service more practicable for conscription age men within the region’s economically established minority. Even though lawfully permitted, Confederate officials questioned the legality of substitutes hired by the area’s elite. In May of 1863, G. G. Hege of Salem, Forsyth, asked Governor Vance “whether any Confederate officer has the right to take up a man after he having furnished a able bodied man over thirty five years old & received an honorable discharge.”⁵² Additionally, state military officials in Raleigh questioned the ethics employed by two men in Yadkin County, as well as the legitimacy of their substitutes. One of the accused, farmer and slave trader Joseph A. Bitting, was one of the five-county community’s wealthiest men.⁵³ In a letter to the major of the Yadkin Home Guard, the

⁴⁹ “Meeting of Surry Conscripts.”

⁵⁰ Hal W. Ayer [Bethania] to Gov. Vance [Raleigh], Nov. 10, 1862, Gov. Vance Papers, NCDAH.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Letter from G. G. Hege [Salem] to Gov. Vance, May 30, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

⁵³ Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Yadkin County, N.C., Population Schedule; Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 11, 19.

Adjutant General wrote “that J. A. Bitting and A. Horne...have attempted to evade the Confederate Service by putting into the army the same Substitute and he a person of colour.”⁵⁴

Substitution, in general, was not a feasible practice for the majority of the foothills’ modest farmers, but the idea was considered. By March of 1863, Hardin Copeland, a middle-class farmer from Dobson, Surry County, hoped to hire a substitute for his son Isaac.⁵⁵ Already in service since September 1861, Isaac responded to his father’s gesture, “if you can get one I will except of him freely suit yourself and you will suit me[.] I think the chance of getting one hear is bad for all that is too old is getting discharges and is going home as fast as they can.”⁵⁶ Whatever the case, Isaac did not get a substitute and was still in service in April 1864.⁵⁷

Men acquainted with the foothills’ social elite, or officials in influential positions, looked to these acquaintances for assistance in avoiding active military service. In August 1864 a Salem resident appealed to Rufus L. Patterson, a Forsyth native and wealthy textile manufacturer, for possible support.⁵⁸ In his appeal, the man wrote, “You know my situation in every way – I do not want to go into the Army if I can be as usefull in any other capacity, therefore if you have written to any of the authorities in reference

⁵⁴ Adjutant General to Major N. G. Hunt [Panthers Creek], February 24, 1864, *Home Guard Letter Book, 1863-1865*, AGO 52, Microfilm Reel S.1.118, Adjutant General’s Department.

⁵⁵ The Copeland’s were farmers of modest/comfortable means. The 1860 US Federal Census of Surry County, N.C. lists their value of real estate at \$3,000 and their value of personal estate at \$700. These numbers place the Copelands within their townships middle class.

⁵⁶ Isaac Copeland [in camp, Kinston, N.C.] to Hardin Copeland [Dobson], March 27, 1863, Copeland Family Letters, Private Collection.

⁵⁷ Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*. Note: Isaac Copeland returned to Surry after the war. On 12 August 1920, the *Mount Airy News* reported “A surprise birthday dinner was given Mr. Isaac Copeland ...Mr. Copeland is a Civil War veteran and has a splendid memory; his war stories always interest his hearers.”

⁵⁸ Description of Rufus Lenoir Patterson, *Documenting the American South*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/global/getBio.html?name=Patterson,%20Rufus%20Lenoir&type=dncb&id=pn0001327&projid=>

to me, I am truly obliged.”⁵⁹ High ranking relationships, however, did not always produce the intended results. Colonel J. E. Mathews of Walnut Cove, Stokes County attempted to obtain a unique exemption for a family member. The Adjutant General informed Colonel Mathews that Governor Vance “cannot exempt one miller, without exempting all...He has therefore to decline to exempt your Brother.”⁶⁰

A small minority of conscripts turned to the Quaker faith to avoid war. Established Quaker meetings existed throughout the five-county community, but were particularly prevalent in Yadkin County. Unique among their landscape, Quakers in the region opposed slavery on moral grounds, however they accepted the institution’s existence in the South.⁶¹ In addition, as strong pacifists, Quaker’s refused to serve in military ranks. Their position was accepted by the Confederate government, and the community’s Friends legally stayed at home. By 1864, at least six non-Quaker Yadkin men joined their neighbors’ church to stay out of the war.⁶²

“Leaving the camps and coming home appears to be common these days.”⁶³

As the conscription age range widened and exemptions became more difficult to obtain, soldiers in the field and conscripts at home resorted to more desperate means of avoiding military service. As a result, desertion and “laying out” on the homefront proved to be the greatest consequence of Confederate conscription. Adding to regional

⁵⁹ Name Illegible to Rufus L. Patterson [Salem] August 22, 1864, Patterson Papers, NCDAH.

⁶⁰ J. E. Mathews [Walnut Cove, Stokes County] to Adjutant General [Raleigh], *Militia Letter Books, Sept. 1864-April 1865*, AGO 54, Microfilm Reel S.1.117, Adjutant General’s Department.

⁶¹ Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 14.

⁶² J. M. Martin [Yadkin County] to Jesse and William Dobbins [New Providence, Iowa], October 2, 1864, in Allen Paul Speer, *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Speer, 1861-1864* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1997), 207-208.

⁶³ Joel Denny [Pilot Mountain] to Azariah Denny [in camp], June 2, 1862, Denny Family Letters.

frustrations, conscripted men were, at times, treated poorly by local Confederate authorities. A Salem diarist wrote:

the enrolling officers were busy at Winston, conscripting a good many persons who had heretofore been exempted. At first the conscripts were treated very harshly. They were marched under guard, kept like prisoners in the guardhouses, and not allowed to go home without a guard, nor to give security for their appearance. After a while though, milder measures were adopted. We learn to see strange sights in our once free and highly favored land. Lord have mercy upon us.⁶⁴

In reaction, foothill men in the field and at home challenged the Confederate government's authority by taking "to the bushes" until the end of the war.⁶⁵

In January 1865, an escaped Union prisoner submitted his story to *Harper's Weekly*. As he trekked through western North Carolina in route to Union troops in east Tennessee, the escapee encountered "many deserters from the rebel armies—men who, impressed or driven into the service, had escaped, and now defied the whole power of the rebellion."⁶⁶ In addition, the ex-prisoner met a "class called 'lyers-out,' who have been living in caves and other retreats on the mountains and resisting the rebel conscription through two years of vicissitude and suffering."⁶⁷ The writer referred to the Catawba County area; however, his description would apply to the five-county community in the mid to late war period.⁶⁸ Men such as John Shores from Yadkin County, who "said he would not fight for the Confederacy if they confiscated every foot of his land," chose to actively defy the Confederate government and hide from enrolling officers. Not straying far from home, Shores was able to "lay out in the bushes & in a cave to conceal

⁶⁴ Anonymous Diary Entry, Salem, March 7, 1864, in Crews & Bailey, *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, 6511-13.

⁶⁵ Claim of Gabriel Tucker, Claim 10,897, Stokes County, N.C., Dec. 2, 1872, RG 217, SCC.

⁶⁶ "Out of Bondage," *Harper's Weekly*, January 14, 1865, 30.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Located southwest of the five-county community, Catawba County contributes to both the foothills and the mountains of North Carolina.

himself...for thirty one months.”⁶⁹ Jesse Williams from East Bend waited until he was drafted before going into hiding. Williams was discovered the following year and was “carried to the army...until a few months before the surrender when I ran off and came home.”⁷⁰

In addition, foothill men legally detailed to stay in the area and serve with their county’s Home Guard, attempted to avoid Confederate duty. In October 1864, fifteen members of Yadkin County’s Home Guard had “taken to the woods” and refused to report for duty. In return, Governor Vance issued an order to conscript the men into regular service.⁷¹

By 1864, some men in the foothill community no longer felt comfortable avoiding their county’s enrolling officer and attempted to leave the state. Those who left seemingly intended to do so only temporarily, until the war ended. The distance traveled by disaffected Southerners varied; while some sought Union lines in eastern Tennessee, others continued into the Midwest. In Forsyth County, farmer Caleb Idol supported efforts by his son and two sons-in-laws to leave the community. He reportedly “furnished my Son with Horses, Saddles, bridles and money. In 1864 they crossed the line and stayed there until after the war was over.”⁷² Several young men from Surry attempted to reach Union “lines by way of East Tennessee and had arrived within a few miles of there when...we were captured by a Scout of Cavalry and sent to Richmond, Va, and kept at Castle Thunder two weeks.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Claim of John Shores, Claim 15,460, Yadkin County, N.C., 1879, SCC.

⁷⁰ Claim of Jesse F. Williams, Claim 8,125, Yadkin County, N.C., 1874, SCC.

⁷¹ Special Orders, No. 124, Oct. 1864, AGO 35, NCDAH.

⁷² Claim of Caleb Idol, Claim 10, 717, Forsyth County, N.C., 1876, RG 217, SCC.

⁷³ David W. Worth [Point Lookout, Md.] to Brig. General W. Huffman [Washington, D.C.], April 1, 1865, Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 263.

Other Confederate service escapees evacuated to Midwestern states. Indiana proved to be the most desirable safe haven for temporary transplants; however, at least one foothill citizen went to Iowa.⁷⁴ In July of 1864, a massive group of deserters and conscript evaders from Yadkin County departed the region for Union lines. Some were captured before leaving the state, but by the end of the following month forty-eight members of the group passed safely into Indiana.⁷⁵

Forsyth provided the Midwest with temporary transplants as well. Philip Mock, a community blacksmith, resolved to remain out of service when the Conscript Act passed. When no longer protected at home, he “went to Indiana and remained there until the close of the war, working at his trade.”⁷⁶ Additionally, a Bethania diarist ambiguously noted that “Reinhold Oehman, Egbert Lehman, and the Millers left last night.”⁷⁷ Though the entry reveals little, Lehman’s memoir written after the turn of the twentieth century, confirms “an unsuccessful effort in 1864 to cross the line...later made another attempt...reached the state of Indiana...[and] remained a year.”⁷⁸

In December 1864, a group of Surry conscripts in service for less than a year, fled their regiment and proceeded to the Midwest.⁷⁹ At least three of the escapees passed into Union lines and, by April 1865, were in the safekeeping of acquaintances in Rush County, Indiana. The successful contingent consisted of three Gilmer brothers; all sons of a prominent slaveholding Mount Airy family.⁸⁰ David W. Worth, from an influential

⁷⁴ J. M. Martin [Yadkin County] to Jesse and William Dobbins [New Providence, Iowa], October 2, 1864.

⁷⁵ Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 94; Speer, *Voices from Cemetery Hill*, p. 206-207.

⁷⁶ Claim of Phillip Mock, Claim 15,720, Forsyth County, N.C., 1876, RG 217, SCC.

⁷⁷ Crews & Bailey, *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, 6536-37.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ The Generations Network, Inc., *American Civil War Soldiers*, (Provo, Utah: 1999), Available Online: <http://www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/military/cwrld/main.aspx>.

⁸⁰ Seventh Census of the U.S., 1850: Surry County, N.C., Slave Schedule; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Surry County, N.C., Slave Schedule; David W. Worth [Point Lookout, Md.] to Brig. General W.

Quaker family in Surry, was less fortunate. Worth was detained and forced to remain in Confederate service. Worth was later captured and imprisoned by Federal troops, where, in April of 1865, he pleaded to “take the Oath of True Allegiance to the United States and go to my relatives who live in Rush County, Indiana.” He further wrote that others from his company “have succeeded in deserting the Rebel Army and are now in Rush County, Indiana.”⁸¹

**“twenty of our men runaway before we got here
and six more ranaway last night”⁸²**

Starting in the summer of 1862, foothill soldiers in the field often wrote home about the rates of desertion in their regiments. Local soldiers’ attitudes on the matter varied, but each recognized that desertion was a common solution to avoiding military service. Soldiers from the five-county community also reported on the punishments deserters faced when caught. They noted that most were reprimanded and returned to service, however, soldiers from the foothill region also wrote about the occasionally dire punishments deserters faced.

Foothill soldiers mostly reported on desertion matter-of-factly and avoided judging those who left. In September 1862, John Hundley from Francisco, Stokes County, told his wife, “there is a great many of our men deserting from here they desert every few days.”⁸³ Hundley’s regiment, the Twenty-First North Carolina Infantry which

Huffman; [Washington, DC], Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 263; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Surry County, N.C., Population Schedule; Summerlin, *The Hollows*, 196; Interestingly, as the three Gilmer brothers risked their lives to reach Indiana, a fourth brother, James, had just graduated as valedictorian from the University of North Carolina. “The Sixty-Seventh Commencement at Chapel Hill,” *North Carolina Standard*, June, 8 1864.

⁸¹ David W. Worth [Point Lookout, MD] to Brig. General W. Huffman [Washington, D.C.], April 1, 1865.

⁸² James Hundley [in camp] to wife [Francisco, Stokes County], August 19, 1862, Hundley Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, hereafter cited as the SHC.

⁸³ James Hundley [in camp] to wife [Francisco], September 16, 1862, Hundley Family Papers.

contained companies from Forsyth, Surry and Stokes, continued to encounter desertions until the end of the war. Azariah Denny, a Surry soldier from the same regiment wrote to his brother, “It is the notion of all the privates that we are whiped. I can’t but think so...5 left the Company. 1 the other night”⁸⁴ The Second North Carolina Battalion consisted of companies from the five-county community as well. In December 1862, Mount Airy farm laborer Ira Shaw wrote his wife that, “They are running away every night. There was 4 left our Co last night. There was 60 out of one company night before last.”⁸⁵ Two months later, from an army hospital in Richmond, another Surry man wrote, “William Cook has just had a friend to come and see him from the army and he says the men is not going to stay in the field any longer and that they will not fight no more. Every night some leave and goes to the Yankees.”⁸⁶

While some soldiers from the five-county community accepted desertion as a consequence of an unpopular war, other foothill soldiers asserted, at least in writing, their disapproval, albeit some more strongly than others. Azariah Denny wrote often of his desire to return to Pilot Mountain. Denny decided, nevertheless, that “the disgrace of deserting is worse” than his life in the army and concluded to “die rite here before I will come that way.”⁸⁷ Proudly, Azariah confessed to his father that “I think that I done the best way that a boy could do though I have seen a hard time but I had rather go through

⁸⁴ Azariah Denny [in camp] to Gabriel Denny, August 12, 1863, Denny Family Letters.

⁸⁵ Ira Shaw [in camp “Near Drewery’s Bluff] to Susan Shaw [Mount Airy] December 15, 1862, in Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 223 & 156; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Surry County, N.C., Population Schedule. Note: Ira Shaw died of Measles six months later in a Confederate Hospital in Richmond.

⁸⁶ James H. Baker [General Hospital No. 3, Richmond] to William and Polly Baker [Siloam, Surry County], February 1, 1863, in Christopher M. Watford, ed., *The Civil War in North Carolina: Soldiers’ and Civilians’ Letters and Diaries, 1861-1865. Volume 2: The Mountains*. (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), 97; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Surry County, N.C., Population Schedule.

⁸⁷ Azariah Denny [“Camp Near Port Royal”] to Joel and Nancy Denny [Pilot Mountain], February 5, 1863, Denny Family Letters.

with the same again than to lie in the woods.”⁸⁸ At least some men from the foothill counties were angered when their neighbors refused to fight. In a letter home, a Wilkes soldier bitterly wrote:

I understand the people of Wilkes are badly whipped...I would as soon hear of a christian friend of mine being shot through the brain or heart as to hear of him deserting the army and resorting to the rock houses of his native mountains.⁸⁹

Deserters, if returned to camp, were punished; however, the degrees of punishment varied. Some soldiers who independently chose to return to their companies were lightly reprimanded. In 1864, Azariah Denny wanted his sister to know that her husband’s punishment for temporarily returning home would “be nothing serious. His captain says it wont. If they had been agoin to punish him they would not a let him so nigh at liberty.”⁹⁰ Several months later, Denny told his father that, “Jonathan has had his court martial but I don’t know the decision [but] thought it was nothing serious.”⁹¹

Soldiers caught in the act of deserting occasionally met with stricter measures. In 1863 and 1864, foothill soldiers wrote home concerning the horrifying scenes they witnessed. In June 1863, a Surry conscript told a friend that “I saw the first man killed that I ever saw in my life, he had made the attempt to go to the Yankees for which crime he was shot.”⁹² While this occurred in Kinston, the same soldier reported a similar instance that occurred while his regiment was in Virginia:

⁸⁸ Azariah Denny [“Camp near Fort Port Royal”] to Joel and Nancy Denny [Pilot Mountain], November 18, 1863, Denny Family Letters.

⁸⁹ William H. Proffit [in camp “Near Orange Court House, Va.”] to Louisa Proffit [Wilkes County], August 10, 1863, in Watford, *The Civil War in North Carolina: The Mountains*, 119-20.

⁹⁰ Azariah Denny [in camp] to Gabriel Denny, August 12, 1863, Denny Family Letters.

⁹¹ Azariah Denny [in “Camp near the Rappahn] to Joel Denny [Pilot Mountain], January 8, 1864, Denny Family Letters.

⁹² Isaac Thompson [Richmond] to Archie J. L. Cameron, June 20, 1863, in Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 241.

One of our men was shot near Petersburg as we came in here. The court marshal having sentenced him to be shot on that day for running away five times. He was shot in less than a hundred yards of me. When they fired upon him he fell instantly, crying out 'Lord have mercy' and died without a struggle or groan.⁹³

In February of 1864, a Wilkes County soldier wrote his parents in the same manner. In his letter, James Wright said he "witnessed a scene that I never want to again. I saw two men shot today...After the command to fire was given one of the prisoners hallowed a few times...It was an awful sight. A terror to all deserters or those who ought to be."⁹⁴

In relation, John Harrison, a conscript from Yadkin, was forcibly detained and returned to camp. In early 1863 he told his wife, "we are now in the guard house at Goldsboro. I cannot tell when I shall get to come home but I hope it won't be too long...Tell my father-in-law that I expect to be at home this spring if nothing happens."⁹⁵ Unfortunately, however, Harrison faced a firing squad for "mutinous language" later that year.⁹⁶

**"I found it necessary to... have troops in
Yadkin, Forsyth, Surry...[and] Wilkes"⁹⁷**

As North Carolina faced desertion and draft evading epidemics, the Confederate and state governments ordered patrols to arrest the disaffected "lyers out." As early as 1862, the inquisition was in force. Initially, the county militias handled local arrests; however in August 1863, North Carolina organized the Guard for Home Defense, or Home Guard, to apprehend deserters. Like the militias, the home guard units were

⁹³ Isaac Thompson [Richmond] to Archie J. L. Cameron, June 20, 1863, in *ibid.*, 241.

⁹⁴ James W. Wright ["Camp near Orange C.H."] to "Parents and Fanny" [Wilkes County], February 1, 1864, in Watford, *The Civil War in North Carolina: The Mountain*, 146-147.

⁹⁵ John M. Harrison [Goldsboro, NC] to Margaret Harrison [Yadkin County], January 23, 1863, Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 131.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁹⁷ Robert F. Hoke [Wilkesboro] to Governor Vance, October 2, 1863, in Joe A. Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1995), 2: 290.

organized by county and primarily operated within their jurisdictions. By 1864, as more men returned home—or refused to leave home—the local guards crossed county borders and operated throughout the five-county community. Additionally, regular Confederate troops were frequently ordered into the foothills to arrest the area’s service evaders.

By mid-1862, state officials in Raleigh ordered the foothill militias to apprehend deserters and enforce conscription. Before the Conscription Act even passed, Surry’s militia was made to arrest Confederate volunteers who refused to leave or returned home.⁹⁸ After conscription began, the region’s militias received numerous orders to detain local men.⁹⁹ Colonel Masten of the Forsyth County Militia was ordered to “force them to obey, such persons as refuse to obey the call, you will arrest and place in jail.”¹⁰⁰ Even still, Confederate officials were not always satisfied with the actions of the community’s authorities. In November 1862, it was not understood why Stokes County “judges should see fit to turn out of jail conscripts and deserters when properly arrested.”¹⁰¹ During the same month, Colonel Samuel Forkner of the Surry County Militia received a letter stating that “there are many Conscripts in your Regiment who have not yet been sent to Camp[.] you are expected to give your immediate attention to this and see that conscripts and deserters from the Army are sent to Camp Holmes.”¹⁰²

Civilians throughout the foothill counties encountered patrols operating in their neighborhoods. The reports demonstrate that foothill civilians, miles from the battlefield,

⁹⁸ Adjutant General [Raleigh] to Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy], February 12, 1862, *North Carolina Militia Letter Book, 1863-1865*, AG 44, NCDAH.

⁹⁹ For Instance, Letter from Adjutant General to Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy], November 6, 1862; Letter from Adjutant General to Benjamin Bailey [Walnut Cove], October 25, 1862; Letter from Adjutant General to A.C. Cowles [Hamptonville, Yadkin County], December 17, 1862, *North Carolina Militia Letter Book, 1863-1865*.

¹⁰⁰ Adjutant General to Colonel J. Masten [Winston], January 10, 1863, *ibid*.

¹⁰¹ Adjutant General to Benjamin Bailey [Walnut Cove], November 3, 1862, *ibid*.

¹⁰² Adjutant General to Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy], November 27, 1862, *ibid*.

directly experienced military operations within their own vicinity. Letters show that non-military residents on the homefront were, at times, intertwined with the patrolling operations carried out by their local acquaintances. A resident of Bethania reported that “Turner and Henry Spiess...searched the Church for deserters, saying they had orders to search the Church.”¹⁰³ On the same note, a diarist in 1864 wrote, “Yesterday the report was spread that a number of escaped prisoners of war were seen at Bethabara. Some of our citizens turned out in pursuit of them, but found none.”¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, local civilians witnessed wartime’s violent punishments and the aftermath. In 1865, Salem residents were angered when “Several deserters had been shot in our neighborhood...the bodies being left unburied by the roadside.”¹⁰⁵

To reinforce North Carolina’s ranks and bolster the homefront’s dwindling morale, starting in 1863 Governor Vance issued occasional reprieves to deserters who returned to the field. Those who rejoined their companies were not always welcomed back without consequence; however, the edicts promised the men would be spared if they went back on their own volition.¹⁰⁶ As was the case across the state, some deserters within the foothill community responded to Vance’s request. Winston’s *Western Sentinel* reported that “quite a number of deserters in Stokes county have availed themselves of the Governor’s Proclamation...this commendable action on the part of the deserters has saved them a vast deal of trouble.”¹⁰⁷ Despite Governor Vance’s occasional pardons,

¹⁰³ “Bethania Diary, with Bethabara,” October 23, 1863, in *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, 6496.

¹⁰⁴ “Salem Diary,” October 23, 1864, in *ibid.*, 6518-19.

¹⁰⁵ “Salem Diary,” March 22, 1865, 6561.

¹⁰⁶ “By the Governor of North Carolina A Proclamation,” January 26, 1863, in Years Buck Years & John G. Barrett, eds., *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 100.

¹⁰⁷ *North Carolina Standard*, September 21, 1864, reprinted from the *Western Sentinel*.

deserters remained in the five-county community. A Confederate official traversing the western portion of North Carolina in 1863 reported that “from present indications very few will embrace the opportunity to return to duty.”¹⁰⁸

The number of deserters returning home, as well as the conscription evaders who concealed themselves on the homefront, proved difficult for the foothill militias and home guards to independently control. As early as December 1862, the Wilkes County militia appealed to Governor Vance for military support in the region. In response, Confederate authorities prepared to send regular reinforcements to take command of the situation.¹⁰⁹ General Robert E. Lee, upon request, “proposed to remedy this formidable and growing evil” by sending Confederate troops under Brigadier General Hoke to Wilkes County.¹¹⁰ Writing from Wilkesboro, Hoke reported to Governor Vance that the “deserters have not made the slightest resistance but dispersed, each one taking care of himself...This duty is a hard one and these fellows are hard to catch.”¹¹¹ Hoke further explained that the deserter situation encompassed the region and that sufficient control would require troops in “Yadkin, Forsyth, Surry...Wilkes and Allegany all at the same time.”¹¹²

In the summer of 1864, North Carolina home guard units, which had primarily served within their immediate vicinities, received orders to serve where needed in the

¹⁰⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, hereafter cited as the OR (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series IV, Vol. 2, 733.

¹⁰⁹ William N. Pierce [Wilkes County] to Gov. Vance, December 7, 1862, in Johnston, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Vance*, 425; G. W. Smith [Goldsboro] to Gov. Vance, January 26, 1863, in Mobley, ed. *The Papers of Zebulon Vance*, 2: 25-26.

¹¹⁰ Robert E. Lee [Richmond] to James Longstreet [“Commanding, Orange Court-House”], September 1, 1863, OR, Series I, Vol. 29, Part 2, 692; Special Orders No. 6, September 7, 1863, AGO 35, NCDAH.

¹¹¹ R. F. Hoke [Wilkesboro] to Gov. Vance, October 2, 1863, Mobley, *The Papers of Zebulon Vance*, 2: 290.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

state. The immediate situation along the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge allowed local guards from the five-county community to remain, for the most part, within their home area. They were joined, however, by outside home guard units and regular troops dispatched to the state's newly declared "Western District,"—which included the five-county community—to arrest deserters.¹¹³ The patrols were initially ordered to Wilkesboro and Yadkinville; however, they "will not confine themselves to the Counties they are herein ordered to, but will extend their operations to the adjoining counties if it be necessary to accomplish their object."¹¹⁴

**"Letters are received by the men, urging them to leave;
that they will not be troubled when they get home"**¹¹⁵

By December of 1862, much of the foothill homefront responded in favor of the men who illegally returned or refused to leave home. Community civilians commonly chose to hide and feed conscripts and deserters. In addition, Confederate authorities commonly charged the community's home guards with neglecting to arrest deserters. The homefront's actions prompted Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon to write that North Carolinians in "certain Western counties" actively defied the Confederate government by providing "harbor and protection" for their community's deserters and conscripts.¹¹⁶

To survive in the "bushes," foothill conscripts and deserters commonly relied on community civilians for food and shelter. As other studies have determined, Southern

¹¹³ Special Orders No. 67 & Special Orders 78, AGO 35, NCDAH; The Western District was all portions of North Carolina "west of the Counties of Rockingham, Guilford, Randolph, Montgomery and Richman. Special Orders No. 67, August 4, 1864, AGO 35, NCDAH.

¹¹⁴ Special Orders 78, August 20, 1864, AGO 35, NCDAH.

¹¹⁵ Brigadier General P.D. Pender to Major W. H. Taylor, April 23, 1863, OR, Series I, Vol. 25, Part 2, 746.

¹¹⁶ James A. Seddon [Richmond] to Gov. Vance, May 23, 1863, in Mobley, *Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 2: 170.

women played a major role in keeping their relatives and friends alive and concealed.¹¹⁷ Certainly women in the five-county community actively assisted their husbands, brothers and fathers; however, men in the foothill counties above the age of conscription also provided for others hiding at home. John Tilley of Surry County noted that “I took my two daughters home during the war and fed their husbands and kept them in caves with other Union men to aid them in keeping out of the war.”¹¹⁸ Similarly, Gabriel Tucker from Stokes County fed neighborhood men who had “taken to the bushes.” An acquaintance of Tucker later stated that “when their wives came to his house he would feed them” as well.¹¹⁹ After the war, Constantine Stoltz, a farmer from Bethania noted that he “was a deserter, or rather I layed out a considerable time...during most of that time I was harbored and protected” by neighbor and long-time friend Tandy Kiser.¹²⁰

Aiding deserters and conscripts actively defied the Confederate government and the Southern war effort. Consequently, civilians caught and accused of illegally assisting “lyers out” were to be charged and appropriately penalized. In December 1862, the state Adjutant General ordered the Forsyth Militia to detain community civilians who aided deserters. The militia was ordered to “use force and...if necessary to accomplish their arrest use arms.”¹²¹

Ironically, home guard and militia members throughout the five-county community harbored their neighbors and refused to arrest local deserters. In doing so, the local patrols hardly resembled loyal Confederate deputies determined to support their

¹¹⁷ See Victoria Bynum, “War within a War: Women’s Participation in the Revolt of the North Carolina Piedmont, 1863-1864,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 9 (1987), 43-49.

¹¹⁸ Claim of John Tilley, Claim 10,390, Surry County, NC, 1878, RG 217, SCC.

¹¹⁹ Claim of Gabriel Tucker, Claim 10,987, Stokes County, NC, 1872, RG 217, SCC.

¹²⁰ Claim of Tandy Kiser, Claim 14,299, Forsyth County, NC, 1975, RG 217, SCC.

¹²¹ Adjutant General to Col. Masten [Winston], December 27, 1862, AGO 44, NCDAH.

new government's war objectives. Conscripts in Yadkin County were "going at-large," and local militia officers faced "neglect of duty" charges.¹²² Similarly, a Forsyth unit was chided for not paying "proper attention to sending Conscripts and deserters to Camp, though they go at large and openly in your Regiment."¹²³ In 1863, a comparable situation occurred in Surry County when local deserters attempted to conceal themselves from Confederate authorities within the ranks of the militia. When notified, the militia colonel in Mount Airy refused to arrest his neighbors and confronted "direct disobedience to the Governors orders."¹²⁴ Also in 1863, the Yadkin militia received orders to investigate a lieutenant from their unit who "concealed two deserters...nearly all the last summer."¹²⁵

Reports of anti-Confederate behavior radiated. In late 1862, Governor Vance received word that "there is some disaffection in that part."¹²⁶ By mid-1863, the region's reputation was known among North Carolinians of all ranks who served in the Army of Northern Virginia. General Pender recognized that "conscripts and deserters go unmolested in Yadkin County."¹²⁷ On the other end of the military hierarchy, Private William Proffit, a Wilkes County pro-Confederate, believed rumors that "the country was full of deserters and no effort is being made to arrest them, but that they are more highly respected than a soldier."¹²⁸

Chapter Conclusion

By mid-1862, North Carolina demanded a shift in state politics. The foothills, as

¹²² Adjutant General to William A Joyce [Hamptonville], December 9, 1862, in *ibid.*

¹²³ Adjutant General to Col. J. Masten [Winston], December 8, 1862, in *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Adjutant General to Col. Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy], February 24, 1863, AGO 44, NCDAH.

¹²⁵ Adjutant General to Col. A. J. Cowles [Hamptonville], January 28, 1863, in *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Hal W. Ayer [Bethania] to Gov. Vance, November 10, 1862, Gov. Vance Papers, NCDAH.

¹²⁷ Brigadier General P.D. Pender to Major W. H. Taylor, April 23, 1863, OR, Series I, Vol. 25, Part 2, 746.

¹²⁸ William H. Proffit ['Near Orange Court House'] to Louisa Proffit [Wilkes County], August 10, 1863, in Watford, *The Civil War in North Carolina: The Mountains*, 119.

well as the state in general, opposed the overtly partisan and radically pro-secession administrations of Ellis and Clark. North Carolinians overwhelmingly elected Zebulon B. Vance as the state's Conservative wartime governor. In return, political divisions based on prewar sentiments were in place by mid-1862; a split that caused Conservatives to view Destructives as enemies until the end of the war. Furthermore, morale in the five-county community declined as the Confederate national government passed the Conscription Acts and local men were ordered into military ranks. As the Civil War entered its second year, the draft initiated Confederate disaffection in the foothill counties. Consequently, the five-county community believed the state's Destructives and the Richmond government were responsible for the homefront's dwindling morale. In turn, conscription and its repercussions influenced disaffection in the community until the end of the war.

*“Such are some of the terrible consequences of Secession!!!”*¹

**CHAPTER THREE:
MOUNTING HARDSHIPS & GRIEVANCES,
APRIL 1862-1865**

From 1862 until the end of the war, conscription contributed to Confederate disaffection on the homefront in the northwestern foothills of North Carolina. The conscription laws disrupted the lives of community men within the draft’s age range; however, their families and neighbors left to maintain the homefront alone suffered equally. The demand for troops particularly handicapped the soldiers’ wives and children who faced unmanageable workloads, rising prices, impressment, harassment, and crime. As the homefront deteriorated, those left to fend for themselves became increasingly demoralized. Virginians, as William Blair argues, may have viewed deprivation as patriotic sacrifice, but the five-county community believed that the Richmond government was responsible for the mounting hardships.² Ultimately, conscription planted the seeds of disaffection among foothill civilians abandoned on the homefront, but further hardships deepened Confederate hostility.

“The country is in a miserable condition: suffering, trouble, hunger, starvation almost, and yet taking out more men.”³

The foothill homefront suffered as conscripted men left their families and

¹ “Private Diary of R. P. Leinbach,” November 29, 1864, in C. Daniel Crews & Lisa D. Bailey, ed., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, 1856-1866* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 200), 6548.

² William Blair, *Virginia’s Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). In *Virginia’s Private War*, William Blair argues that Virginian’s maintained Confederate loyalty and endured wartime struggles with a sense of patriotic duty. See introduction of this thesis.

³ “Private Diary of R. P. Leinbach,” November 29, 1864, in Crews & Bailey, *Records of the Moravians in NC*, 6548.

livelihoods. The lack of farmers and farm laborers resulted in regional food shortages that influenced war weariness and disaffection. As previous studies argue, war weariness contributed greatly to the decline of Confederate support on community homefronts.⁴ Inasmuch, wartime disaffection in the five-county community corresponded with other demoralized sections of the South. At the same time, class conflict deepened local disaffection as it did in other areas within the Confederacy.⁵ Socioeconomic divisions in the foothill community, however, were not clearly defined. For instance, some upper class locals stepped out of their way to provide for soldiers' families. Commoners, in return, appreciated these efforts. At the same time, the hungry region angrily charged some wealthy men with growing large crops solely for the purpose of profit.

As conscription depleted the foothill counties' male population, women and children left on the homefront attempted to subsist by independently maintaining their farms and homes. By the fall of 1862, however, the overwhelmed community suffered extensive food shortages. The deficiency coincided with the Second Conscription Act which extended the draft age to forty-five and further decreased the region's workforce. In November, a Stokes resident noted the dire situation:

Unless you had visited our Western Counties you can form no conception of the untold deprivation which would be entailed on our women and children...Our corn crop is short...and almost an entire failure in the wheat, rye, and oat crops...what men are left behind are in a constant state of uneasiness, not knowing at what moment they may be called off into service, and hence they hold on to what they have for their own families in

⁴ For more on war weariness and disaffection see Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); David Williams, Teresa Crisp Williams, and David Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); John C. Inscoe & Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

⁵ For more on class conflict and disaffection see Escott, *After Secession*; Williams, Williams, & Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War*.

case of emergency.⁶

The following season, crops thrived on farms that had been able to plant, but the lack of able hands at harvest time continued regional suffering. A Surry resident revealed that the “wheat crop looks fine for the season, but I fear that there are not men enough left to save it.”⁷

The survival of some farming families in the area, as before the war, depended on enslaved laborers; nevertheless, the vast majority of women and children in the foothill community relied on themselves to subsist after conscription passed. In January of 1863, “Mothers Wives & Daughters” from the five-county community petitioned Governor Vance to allow area men to remain on the homefront. The group reminded Vance that “we have very few slaves in Western North Carolina, therefore famine is staring us in the face...[this] is and will be the case if more men are taken from this section.”⁸ The following month a group from Yadkin echoed the same concerns. In a letter to Vance, the citizens wrote, “we have not got a nuf men in the western part of this State...to make soport for the womin & children...we have in a maner no Slaves in this cuntry our farms in general are cultivated with white men.”⁹

Survival on the wartime homefront proved extremely difficult for women whose husbands and sons left them completely alone, and especially women left with small children. When her husband was conscripted in 1862, Elizabeth Chamberlain from Yadkin County had “neither father nor brother to assist me...and one child to take care

⁶ “The Condition of the Country,” *North Carolina Standard*, November 19, 1862.

⁷ “Extract from a letter from Tom’s Creek, Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, May 6, 1863.

⁸ Petition to Governor Vance [Iredell, Wilkes, and Yadkin Counties], January 27, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers, Governor Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NCDAH.

⁹ “Confederate Friends” [Yadkin County] to Gov. Vance, February 17, 1863, Vance Papers, NCDAH.

of.”¹⁰ In a letter to Governor Vance, Chamberlain pleaded unsuccessfully for her husband’s discharge.¹¹ Similarly, neighbors of Pleasant Griffin in Forsyth appealed for his return from service. Fourteen names signed a letter attesting that Griffin’s “wife and eleven children mostly small children are left without means of supporting themselves.”¹² The neighbors further stated that two of the couple’s sons were called to service, and one “became sick, was sent home and died.”¹³

Abandoned wives and mothers, at times, received support from the government. However, aid could be denied. An abandoned Wilkes County mother whose only son was killed in Confederate service was denied assistance “on the account that I never was married...I am trying to make my own support but I must have some aid.”¹⁴ Noting that “our country is in a starving condition,” the distraught mother asked, “if the law dose not support sutch men’s mothers why dosit take them away from home to fight and die.[?]”¹⁵ Her bold words questioned the integrity of a discriminating system and defended her neighbors who experienced similar situations.

With conscription and desperate conditions on the homefront entrenched, the five-county community sought new methods to preserve the local food supply. It was suggested to temporarily dismiss locally detailed workers for “two weeks in harvest time, for there might be saved many a bushel of grain.”¹⁶ At the same time, affluent men on

¹⁰ Elizabeth Chamberlin [Yadkin County] to Gov. Vance, November 21, 1862, in Frontis W. Johnston, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1963), 380-81.

¹¹ Her husband, L.L. Chamberlin was reported AWOL from March to August 1864. In September 1864, Lewis was listed as “in arrest;” Frances H. Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County, North Carolina* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 198.

¹² “neighbors of Pleasant Griffin” [Forsyth County] to Lieutenant General Homes, May 10, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers, NCDAH.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ M. Eler [Wilkes County] to Gov. Vance, June 1, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Extract from a letter from Tom’s Creek, Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, May 6, 1863.

the homefront worked as government agents and supplied provisions to families in their county. Elias A. Vogler, an established Salem merchant, worked to secure corn from the eastern portion of North Carolina for the people of Forsyth.¹⁷ Receiving the corn, however, proved to be difficult. In early 1863, Vogler appealed to Vance for support in shipping the supply by rail from Rocky Mount to distribute to “the soldiers families under my care in the county.”¹⁸ Similarly, in Surry County, Job Worth purchased corn from outside the community. The *Standard* reported that Worth “deserves great credit for his efforts in procuring this corn. He found it much easier to purchase the corn than to procure transportation for it.”¹⁹

Influential men such as Vogler and Worth actively worked to provide for the women and children in their counties, but other citizens of influence and means were accused of exploiting their resources for personal gain. A group of soldiers’ wives in Forsyth alleged that some local men preferred to distill alcohol with their corn supply than to provide for area families in need. In a January 1863 letter, community women suggested ten guilty names and pleaded to Governor Vance for an investigation. Simply signed “Magnolia Lee & Co.,” the petitioners wrote:

We write to tell you, that, (notwithstanding the law to prohibit the distillation of grain) a number of our citizens; men, too, of wealth, and almost unlimited influence are stilling day & night (Sundays not excepted) and will consume much corn that should be kept for bread...Every person in the neighborhood believes as we do, but are afraid of getting in a “difficulty,” should they express themselves publicly.²⁰

¹⁷ Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Forsyth County, North Carolina, Population Schedule. In 1860, Elias Vogler, aged thirty-four, held real estate valued at \$14,000 and a personal estate valued at \$8,000.

¹⁸ E. A. Vogler [Salem] to Gov. Vance, February 7, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

¹⁹ “General Items,” *North Carolina Standard*, March 11, 1863.

²⁰ “Magnolia Lee & Co.” [Lewisville, Forsyth County] to Governor Vance, January 16, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

In relation, Stokely Martin from Stokes County recognized that “large farmers, who have fine lands & laborers to work them are preparing to plant enormous crops of tobacco and only make corn enough for their own uses.” He suggested that the region’s farms could provide for “starving women & children” if ordered to plant corn rather than tobacco. Martin, “a Tobacco planter myself,” selflessly offered to “make any sacrifice” needed for the community.²¹

“a little meanness & rascality in this neighborhood”²²

Additional conditions on the foothill homefront caused disaffection to mount. At the start of the war, the Confederacy, as well as state and local governments, printed large quantities of paper notes. The overabundance of paper money, mixed with Confederate defeats at the war’s midpoint, caused prices throughout the South to increase.²³ The value of Confederate notes continually decreased as the war progressed. High prices and worthless paper prevented the starving region from purchasing adequate amounts of necessary provisions. Furthermore, local speculators were able to control regional prices. Speculation underscored class divisions and continued to separate the homefront’s struggling families from the financially motivated profiteers. Governmentally sanctioned impressment also kept common families from attaining needed food and goods. Impressment further encouraged disaffection and the belief that Richmond was the enemy.

Amidst conscription related food shortages, the five-county community suffered

²¹ Stokely Martin [Stokes County] to Gov. Vance. March 24, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers, NCDAH.

²² H. W. Ayer [Salem] to Gov. Vance, November 6, 1862, in Johnston, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon B. Vance*, 313.

²³ The University of North Carolina, “The Southern Homefront, 1861-1865: Currency,” *Documenting the American South*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/currency/index.html>.

rising prices and speculation. Price gouging made necessary provisions more difficult for soldiers' families to obtain and reinforced mounting Confederate disaffection in the region. In the war's second year, local residents complained of the high costs of corn, grains, and bacon. Within five months, however, community food prices doubled from their already high state.²⁴ In 1862, a bushel of flour in Forsyth County sold for eight to sixteen dollars, but by February of 1863, a bushel of flour sold for thirty dollars.²⁵ The following month, Stokely Martin reported that "corn is now selling in many neighborhoods in this region for \$35...And the prospect is still more gloomy yet"²⁶ By the summer of 1863, corn in some parts of the community was six times its price the previous year.²⁷

The rising costs of food and other necessary items threatened lives and decreased popular morale on the foothill homefront, but the local speculators who controlled the market profited from their community's misfortune. Samuel Forkner of the Surry Militia noted that "if not for Speculation many of our Soldiers Wives & Children in this Section would have ben saved of going bare footed this Winter."²⁸ In November of 1862, Forkner temporarily detained Elisha Banner, who attempted to leave Mount Airy with four hundred pounds of leather to trade for salt in Virginia.²⁹ Forkner held that "the object was to Sell at exorbitant prices any where the Salt Could be Sold for the most,"³⁰ Banner ensured the legitimacy of his business and agreed to await Governor Vance's

²⁴ E. A. Vogler [Salem] to Gov. Vance, February 7, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers; John Bovender [Yadkin County] to Albert Poindexter, August 25, 1862, in Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 129.

²⁵ E. A. Vogler [Salem] to Gov. Vance, February 7, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

²⁶ Stokely Martin [Stokes County] to Gov. Vance. March 24, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

²⁷ M. Eler [Wilkes County] to Gov. Vance, June 1, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers; John Bovender [Yadkin County] to Albert Poindexter, August 25, 1862.

²⁸ Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy] to Governor Vance, November 4, 1862, Gov. Vance Papers.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

verdict before leaving for Saltville, Virginia. In the middle of the night, however, Banner “while honest pepole Should have ben sleping carried the leather to Va...the Salt was Sold at Salt Vill at a big price and he has the money for it a bigg pile and that we may help our selfs.”³¹

Speculators financially profited, but their unjust tactics angered the desperate foothill homefront on the brink of starvation. A resident of Salem accused local speculators of hoping the war endured so they could continue to benefit. He predicted:

a fearful day of reckoning, when the small remnant of the men that have left all at home...return and hear the tales of misery and pity that their starving families will relate...then I think there will be such a rattling amongst the dry bones as has never been heard, and the speculators will have to do more dodging, than they do now to keep clear of the enrolling officer.³²

During the summer of 1863, a Stokes County minister “of the Old Regular Baptist Church” warned Governor Vance that area speculators were “making fortunes out of the poor,” and insisted on laws to protect the soldiers’ family.³³ Also from Stokes County, Stokely Martin suggested that if “an outraged & starving people shall be [reduced] to murder and robbery...this very question will be the cause of it! Something must be done- and that immediately or else it will be too late!”³⁴

The declining worth of Confederate money also pushed the five-county community into deeper straits and intensified regional disaffection with the Confederacy. During the first two years of the war payment with Confederate notes was not always welcomed; however, after the spring of 1863, the value of Confederate money steadily

³¹ Elisha Banner [Mount Airy] to Governor Vance, November 3, 1862, Gov. Vance Papers; Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy] to Governor Vance, November 18, 1862.

³² Charles F. Bahnson [in camp] to George F. Bahnson [Salem], February 8, 1864, in Chapman, ed., *Bright and Gloomy Days*, 108.

³³ R.W. Hill [Germanton] to Governor Vance, between July 28-31, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

³⁴ Stokely Martin [Stokes County] to Governor Vance, March 24, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

dropped.³⁵ In return, regional confidence in Confederate paper waned. A citizen of Dobson reported that “Original secessionists in this County are refusing Confederate notes...families of volunteers are unable to buy the necessaries of life—their money being refused. This has become a serious evil here.”³⁶ The following year, another Surry resident remarked that a “man that would steal ten or fifteen dollars in Confederate money must be very low down or very hard pressed.”³⁷

Already distressed by the difficulty of securing needed food and supplies, the impressment of local property by Confederate troops reaffirmed disaffection in the five-county community. The need to impress further underscored the region’s lack of faith in the worth of Confederate money. Even before the Richmond government legally sanctioned military impressment, General A. J. Jenkins appealed to Governor Vance for permission to procure food from foothill residents. Jenkins asserted that “there is a great indisposition on the part of the people there, to sell their produce for Confederate money, at any price, and I desire to ask relief at your hands in the form of authority of some kind, for impressment.”³⁸ After the Impressment Act passed, troops that moved through the area issued receipts promising future payment. In effect, local citizens were stripped of needed supplies and left with worthless certificates. In Wilkes County, “Squads of men are traversing our county [taking] every thing they want and giving receipts for it...they didn’t try to by of me but took without asking.” The writer reported that “my case is the

³⁵ John H. Kinyoun [Lewisville] to Gov. Vance, November 1, 1862, in Johnston, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon B. Vance*, 1: 291; A. G. Jenkins [Salem] to Governor Vance, January 28, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

³⁶ “Extract from a letter from Dobson, Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, May 6, 1863.

³⁷ “Money Lost By Mail,” *North Carolina Standard*, February 3, 1864.

³⁸ General A. G. Jenkins [Salem] to Gov. Vance, January 28, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

case of many.”³⁹ The foothill community continued to experience the legal acquisition of personal property throughout the war. In late February of 1865, a contingent of Stokes residents from the Francisco vicinity complained that “Details from Va comes over in this state and presses as tha call it & tha don’t care from who.”⁴⁰

The impressment of property included the taking of enslaved individuals from area plantations and farms to labor for the Confederacy. In particular, by 1863 slaves from the five-county community were regularly detailed “to work on the Fortifications at Wilmington.”⁴¹ While the common classes suffered from the government’s acquisition of necessary provisions, slaveholders bemoaned the loss of their work force. In late spring of 1863, slaveholders from Stokes demanded the return of the county’s enslaved population detailed to other parts of the state. In June, the colonel of the Stokes militia informed Governor Vance that “Our people have become so impatient...We are needing them very much in our farms.”⁴² Over two weeks later, without their return, slaveholder William A. Lash noted that “I shall have to turn the stock on some of my wheat for the want of force to cut it[;] the quality as well as the quantity is fine if it could be saved.”⁴³ In consequence, slaveholders from Stokes resisted Confederate impressment of their forced workers. In early 1864, the local militia received orders to “use force and take the

³⁹ Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro] to Gov. Vance, April 21, 1864, Zebulon Baird Vance Private Collection, NCDAH.

⁴⁰ “John Beasley & menny citizens” [Stokes County] to Gov. Vance, February 26, 1865, Vance Private Collection.

⁴¹ By 1863 slaves from the five-county community were regularly detailed “to work on the Fortifications at Wilmington.” The enslaved were escorted by area militia officers to Greensboro, where they were received by Confederate authorities and transported to the coast. See Adjutant General to Colonel A. Dunnegan [Dobson], November 10, 1863; Adjutant General to Colonel Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy], March 7, 1864; Adjutant General to Colonel Benjamin Bailey [Walnut Cove], April 30, 1864, AGO 44, NCDAH; Colonel Benjamin Bailey [Walnut Cove] to Gov. Vance, May 28, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers;

⁴² Letter from Colonel Benjamin Bailey [Walnut Cove] to Gov. Vance, June 2, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

⁴³ William A. Lash [Walnut Cove] to Gov. Vance, June 19, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

negroes.”⁴⁴ This case, however, was not unique to Stokes County. Militia officers throughout the five-county community received orders to impress slaves by force.⁴⁵

In *Virginia’s Private War*, William Blair argues that Virginians viewed governmentally regulated military impressment as a necessity of war. Blair further asserts that Virginians believed that impressment benefited the homefront by keeping local prices and speculators in check. In return, Virginians appreciated the state and Confederate governments’ aid and remained loyal to the Southern effort.⁴⁶ Foothill citizens, however, responded oppositely to impressment. The region felt that the governmentally warranted confiscation of property was another unfair Confederate measure. Impressment deepened disaffection and enhanced the belief that Richmond Destructives were the enemy.

“is not this making war on women & children?”⁴⁷

By 1863, Confederate troops regularly operated throughout the northwestern foothill counties of North Carolina. The unwanted presence of soldiers and horses enraged the five-county community and added to Confederate disaffection. The frequent occupations influenced local assertions that the Confederate national government, which ordered the men and animals into the region, was the enemy. In addition, by mid-1863, the local home guards, required to detain deserters and conscripts, incessantly patrolled the region. In the process, foothill residents, at times, felt unlawfully harassed by their local guardsmen.

⁴⁴ Adjutant General to Colonel Ben. Bailey [Walnut Cove], January 26, 1864, AGO 44, NCDAH.

⁴⁵ Adjutant General to Colonel A. Dunnegan [Dobson], February 1, 1864, AGO 44, NCDAH; Adjutant General to Colonel W. A. Joyce [Yadkinville], October 24, 1863, AGO 44, NCDAH.

⁴⁶ William Blair, *Virginia’s Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 56, 70-71.

⁴⁷ Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro] to William Woods Holden, December 3, 1863, Calvin J. Cowles Papers.

In January of 1863, Virginia troops descended upon Surry County and harassed neighborhoods “near the N.C. & Va line.”⁴⁸ The troops initially claimed to be on patrol for deserters; however, they “impose upon our Citizens, insult our women, and make a business of pressing forage, provision & in short whatever they want.”⁴⁹ The Virginia soldiers, additionally, inflamed local angers by attempting to arrest Surry men already serving in the county’s militia. Nevertheless, the situation worsened within a month.

Writing from Mount Airy, Samuel Forkner reported:

Last night at the house of a Mrs. Maise, one of whose sons belongs to the Forty-Fifth Regiment North Carolina Troops, now in service (a volunteer), they took and carried off a rifle gun belonging to him. At another place they tied and carried off an old man, a citizen of North Carolina, though of rather bad character. At another place, McBride’s a man who served in the army until he was discharged, they took his corn and lavishly poured it on the ground to their horses. Wherever they go they disarm people and destroy their substance.⁵⁰

The troubles in Surry disturbed the county; however, at the same time, a more widespread dilemma distressed a larger portion of the five-county community. During the winter of 1863, the foothills were overwhelmed by “a large lot of broken down Cavalry horses...quartered in the Counties of Wilkes, Yadkin, Ash and Surry.”⁵¹ The horses were sent to the region to forage and recuperate until spring; however, in the process, the region’s already slim food supply was compromised.⁵² As hungry families were forced to co-exist with the animals, locals reported that the cavalry offered little money for their corn and impressed feed when needed. In mid-January, a group of thirty-

⁴⁸ Colonel Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy] to Gov. Vance, January 31, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Colonel Samuel Forkner [Mount Airy] to Gov. Vance, February 19, 1863, United States War Department, OR (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. LI, Part II, 681.

⁵¹ Governor Vance to Secretary of War James A. Seddon [Richmond], January 22, 1863, in Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon B. Vance*, 23.

⁵² Brigadier General A. G. Jenkins [Salem] to Gov. Vance, January 28, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

four men from Wilkes County appealed to Governor Vance for assistance. The group held that the cavalry had “forcefully broken into cribs and houses” in search of corn. They furthermore claimed that the officers illegally threatened to guard provisions that were for public sale.⁵³ Other counties within the community appealed to Governor Vance, as well. Upon receiving a letter from Colonel Forkner of the Surry Militia, Vance reported to Richmond that the horses and the men were “not only a nuisance but a terror to the community.”⁵⁴

Realizing the foothill community’s mounting disaffection, as well as their deprived state, Governor Vance threatened to take measures against the troops if they were not ordered away from the region. In a letter to Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon, Vance wrote:

When the question of starvation is narrowed down to women and children on the one side and some worthless cavalry horses on the other I can have no difficulty in making a choice. Unless they are removed soon I shall be under the painful necessity of calling out the militia of adjoining counties and driving them from the State.⁵⁵

Upon receiving Vance’s note, Seddon responded, “They are Horses of the Cavalry of the Confederate States, engaged for the common defense...I trust therefore Your Excellency will forbear from any forcible expulsion of them.”⁵⁶

The cavalry horses were removed from the region without force; however, the troubling episode remained in the minds of foothill citizens. Nearly a year later rumors circulated that more horses and troops would be wintered in the area. From Wilkes,

⁵³ Thirty-Four Citizens [Wilkes County] to Gov. Vance, January 15, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

⁵⁴ Governor Vance to Secretary of War James A. Seddon [Richmond], February 25, 1863, in OR, Series I, Vol. 18, 895.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ James A. Seddon [Richmond] to Gov. Vance, March 1, 1863, in Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon B. Vance*, 2: 74-75.

Calvin Cowles wrote that, “Everybody here is alarmed at the prospect of another descent on us by the old Va Cavalry Horses...Surry, Stokes & Yadkin are to be served likewise.”⁵⁷ A letter written by Cowles two days later states, “we are threatened with a Caravan of old broken winded Horses to eat us out of house & home[.] Pray for peace daily.”⁵⁸

The cavalry horses were not quartered in the foothills as feared; however, in late 1863, a Confederate regiment was sent to the community to arrest service evaders and those who aided them.⁵⁹ The consequences proved disastrous for the disaffected foothill community with a reputation for harboring deserters and conscripts. In December of 1863, Calvin Cowles wrote William Woods Holden concerning the situation:

A man having a son 25 years of age living to himself is striped of all his property because the son takes the bushes – one having such a son out hides his Brandy in the woods & is driven at the point of the Bayonet to show it, whereupon the soldiers take it & consume it—they have previously taken all his grain...one old bed ridden mother with 3 sons in the Army (C.S.A) and 3 in the bushes has been despoiled of her property...many deserters families have been deprived of all means of subsistence & left to starve this winter.⁶⁰

Into the winter of 1864, citizens continued to report outrages committed by the same regiment. In the midst, Governor Vance visited Wilkes and found “Whole districts were represented to have been robbed and the inhabitants reduced to the verge of starvation.”⁶¹ The troops “scourged the people terribly, especially in the Trap Hill neighborhood,” by the Wilkes and Surry border.⁶²

⁵⁷ Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro] to Gov. Vance, December 10, 1863, Calvin J. Cowles Papers.

⁵⁸ Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro] to Gov. Vance, December 12, 1863, Calvin J. Cowles Papers.

⁵⁹ Gov. Vance to Jefferson Davis [Richmond], March 1864, in OR, Series I, Vol. 51, Part II, 832.

⁶⁰ Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro] to William Woods Holden [Raleigh], December 3, 1863, Calvin J. Cowles Papers.

⁶¹ Gov. Vance to Jefferson Davis [Richmond], March 9, 1864, in OR, Series I, Vol. 51, Part II, p. 832-833.

⁶² “Outrages by the Military,” *North Carolina Standard*, February 17, 1864.

By mid-1863, home guard units operating throughout the North Carolina foothills contributed to local anxieties. Working alone or in concert with regular troops, the guards were required to arrest deserters and conscripts. The home guards' tactics and justness were questioned. In the process, the already depressed community felt further harassed.

Local home guards particularly pestered the community by detaining those they deemed suspicious. Even if a full arrest was not made, suspects were often held and questioned for extended periods of time. Gabriel Tucker of Stokes County was detained while "on my way to the mill...he thought I would give some information to some deserters he was hunting for. Was detained about an hour."⁶³ Suspected of harboring deserters, William McCaules, a Stokes County physician, was held for eight hours until released without an arrest.⁶⁴ Similarly, John Smith was "arrested at home and kept under arrest 2 days and nights...They then released me."⁶⁵

Home guard members were also known to forcefully interrogate their captives. In Surry County, Joel Denny's log book entry for November 11, 1864 stated:

This day about 10 oclock in the morning came Capt. James Snow[,] Capt. D. M. Cooper - Thomas Snow[,] John Snow[,] James Haynes[,] Ephriam Gallion[,] and many others to this place with force and arms and took prisoners all my hands that was helping me shuck corn – and kept them under strong guard all night and some of them old men over 45 ys. of age without ever giving them any lawful orders in any way threatening all or any man with instant death if any attempted to move from the corn pile with out orders from the said Capt. Snow[,] In addition to the above names was Jack Norman – Sam Jarvis[,] Clem Nance[,] one Calaway and one Thomson.⁶⁶

⁶³ Claim of Gabriel Tucker, Claim 10,897, Stokes County, NC, 1872, RG 217, Southern Claims Commission, records for Stokes County, N.C., National Archives II, College Park, Md.

⁶⁴ Claim of William McCaules, Claim 11,063, Stokes County, NC, 1874, RG 217, SCC.

⁶⁵ Claim of John Smith, Claim 11,065, Stokes County, NC, 1878, RG 217, SCC.

⁶⁶ Log Book of Joel Denny [Pilot Mountain], November 11, 1864, Denny Family Letters.

On a harsher note, “Capt. James Snow...and his men” threatened to kill Surry resident John Cordell. Though his life was spared, the contingent “took all my grain and Bacon & many other things.” Knowing the patrol would soon return, Cordell crossed into Wilkes County, “near Trap Hill [and] stayed in the woods most of the time.”⁶⁷ Cordell was not the only Surry man Captain Snow and his cohorts threatened with death. Referring to his friend John Tilley, Samuel Hanks noted that, “James Snow & his men – this was in Dobson in Surry Co[,] they said he ought to be hung for his disloyalty to the Southern Confederacy.”⁶⁸

Similar situations occurred throughout the five-county community. Caleb Idol, a Forsyth County farmer, was threatened with death several times during the war. He later stated that “Square Sapp told me I ought to hang or would be hung because I spoke against the Confederacy...Charles Ogden one of the hunters for Confederate Soldiers and conscripts said we will have to hang the damned old Son of a bitch yet.”⁶⁹ Also in Forsyth, Samuel Stoltz was “assaulted with a buggy whip by Gabriel Clayton” for disloyal sentiments.⁷⁰ Similarly, members of the Yadkin County guard threatened to hang Abner Jordan for “expressing himself strongly against the Confederacy.”⁷¹ In Stokes, local guardsmen harassed Peter Watkins and “annoyed my family by entering my house with guns and searching for deserters...both in day and night.”⁷²

It is important to note, however, that not all home guardsmen chose to hassle their neighbors. As previously addressed, some members aided army evaders, while others

⁶⁷ Claim of John Cordell, Claim 10,391, Surry County, NC, 1878, RG 217, SCC.

⁶⁸ Claim of John Tilley, Claim 10,390, Surry County, NC, 1878, RG 217, SCC.

⁶⁹ Claim of Caleb Idol, Claim 10, 717, Forsyth County, NC, 1876, RG 217, SCC

⁷⁰ Samuel Stoltz, Claim 15,085, Forsyth County, NC, Feb. 22, 1878, RG 217, SCC.

⁷¹ Claim of Abner Jordan, Claim 3,500, Yadkin County, NC, 1879, RG 217, SCC.

⁷² Claim of Peter Watkins, Claim 15,232, Stokes County, NC, 1878, RG 217, SCC.

were accused of avoiding regular Confederate service. Furthermore, the home guards' ranks consisted of virtually all reasonably able men—of varying ages, occupations, and status—left on the homefront. Thus, the organizations were diverse in membership, and the makeup was likely complex in character. A letter written by J. W. Rawley of the Surry Home Guard attests to diversity in the ranks. Rawley's letter profoundly reveals the soldiers' depressed sentiments and his sorrowful reaction to depredations caused by other troops. In December 1864, he wrote:

I have been on duty some weeks now & have just gotten home from a campaign in Alleghany where we or at least some of Gov. Vances forces destroyed innocent men's property and left poor women & children in a destitute condition...Yes I think the devil himself would blush at some of the deeds that are done in a country that was once free from such outrage...they spare none. They say the loyal men should be willing to feed their horses & the disloyal men they take from any how. So all suffer.⁷³

Consequently, the Surry guard returned home after serving only three days in Alleghany.⁷⁴ The unit was charged with failing to assist Confederate forces, and Vance demanded that the unit again “proceed to Alleghany County and cooperate with the Troops there assembled as directed.”⁷⁵

The five-county community also experienced crimes committed by deserters and conscripts. The crimes generally related to quests for provisions. Significantly, however, the region's service evaders intentionally bypassed the disaffected population and targeted local pro-Confederates. In the summer of 1863, a Wilkes resident reported that, “two or three hundred Deserters got back to this county...the citizens who are loyal are in

⁷³ J.W. Rawley [Mount Airy] to Calvin Cowles [Wilkesboro], December 8, 1864, Calvin Cowles Papers.

⁷⁴ Alleghany County borders Surry to the west; the spine of the Blue Ridge splits the two counties. Though socially and economically linked to the five-county community, Alleghany was omitted from the study because it is considered a mountain county.

⁷⁵ Adjutant General to D. M. Cooper [Dobson], December 10, 1864, AGO 52, NCDAAH.

great danger of being robed and killed...they swear by all that is good or bad that they never will go back as conscripts.”⁷⁶ In Forsyth County, service evaders stole food, clothing and arms from “the residences of Loyal citizens at the dead hour of night.”⁷⁷ The writer noted that “the Loyal citizens are greatly in the minority as the citizens in the locality where they have committed these depredations feed and in case of resistance have assisted the clan.”⁷⁸

Chapter Conclusion

After mid-1862 the northwestern foothills of North Carolina suffered as Confederate conscription drained much of the community’s work force. In particular, the exodus harmed the wives and children of conscripted soldiers, forced to subsist on their own. Making matters worse, abandoned family members battled hunger, speculation, and the declining worth of Confederate money. From 1862 until the end of the war, the foothill community unwillingly hosted Confederate troops and was forced to endure the consequences: poor treatment, violence, and the impressment of needed provisions. Additionally, the five-county community, at times, suffered the local home guards’ strong-arm tactics and threats. Foothill citizens blamed the dreadful conditions on the Richmond government and the Destructives who encouraged the war. The culmination of the circumstances deteriorated the foothill homefront’s morale and extinguished Confederate support between mid-1862 and April 1865.

⁷⁶ W. H. McNeil [Wilkes County] to Gov. Vance, July 19, 1863, Gov. Vance Papers.

⁷⁷ “Citizens and Friends of the county of Forsyth” to Gov. Vance, March 3, 1865, Zebulon B. Vance Private Collection, NCDAH.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

*“We all have to give an account to him
for our deeds that we are guilty of while journeying along
through this low ground of sorrow”¹*

CHAPTER FOUR: COMMUNITY REACTIONS, 1862-1865

The five-county community reacted to the locally unpopular war and its repeated hardships by withdrawing Confederate support and actively working to end the conflict. Foothill citizens who dodged the draft, illegally deserted the ranks, or aided service evaders at home weakened the Confederate war effort; however, by 1863, the region employed additional tactics intended to undermine the Confederacy and promote peace. In doing so, the region disloyally challenged the Richmond government and North Carolina’s pro-war Destructives. The foothill community’s prewar Unionism prepared the region to reject the Confederacy once it felt abused by the Richmond and Raleigh governments. As a consequence, the foothills’ disaffected returned to their prewar pro-Union stance.

Foothill citizens at home and in the field passively voiced anger toward the Destructives they felt encouraged secession and initiated the war. Early secessionists who sought military exemptions and evaded Confederate service particularly offended the region. A Dobson citizen noted that “Most captains commanding companies from this County, who were original secessionists, have managed in some way to get out of the service. Those captains who were original Union men are still in service.”² Similarly, soldiers in the field angrily responded to the region’s pro-secessionists who sent their

¹ King Hiram Bray [“Camp near Richmond”] to Mary Whitaker Bray [Surry County], May 29, 1864, in Hester Bartlett Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War* (Charlotte: Delmar Printing, 1992), 277.

² “Public Sentiment,” *North Carolina Standard*, May 6, 1863.

neighbors into service yet opted themselves to stay at home. Azariah Denny recognized that a portion of Surry's Destructives sought exemptions in iron forges. Writing from camp in February of 1863, Denny confided to his father that, "it is rong. I think it is rong for men to vote for anything and then run into that to keep from fighting."³

As the war ceaselessly continued, foothill citizens viewed themselves as unfortunate pawns forced to fight a war that opposed God's will. Distanced from the initial days of war fervor, residents of the community felt they participated in an "unholy and unfair struggle" and an "unhallowed war."⁴ Locals, furthermore, realized that human hands might not bring justice within their lifetimes but trusted that God would ultimately punish the Destructives responsible for the war. By the summer of 1863, letters exchanged between the homefront and the battlefield displayed a belief that the original secessionists, who initiated the war and ruined so many lives, were damned. King Hiram Bray, a conscripted soldier from Surry County, confidently held that the soldiers, wrongfully coerced to fight and die, would be justified after death. In August 1864 Bray wrote to his widowed mother:

He will Make all that was too keen for this war give an account for their cruel actions...When they appear before their God to give an account for cruel deeds here below and see these poor soldiers that they have had murdered appear before them as witnesses, They would rather be one of them that was slain in that world than to be cast in the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.⁵

³ Azariah Denny ["Camp near Port Royal"] to Joel Denny [Pilot Mountain], February 18, 1863, Denny Family Letters, Pansy Broughton Private Collection.

⁴ Isaac Copeland [in camp] to Hardin Copeland [Dobson], March 24, 1864, Copeland Family Letters; A. M. Johnson ["Camp 21st NC Reg," from Surry County] to Gov. Vance, January 30, 1865, Zebulon Baird Vance Private Collection, NCDAH.

⁵ King Hiram Bray ["Camp near Richmond"] to Mary Whitaker Bray [Surry County], August 21, 1864, Jackson, *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 279; also see King Hiram Bray to Mary Whitaker Bray, May 29, 1864.

Similarly, Isaac Thompson prayed that “the Lord will look upon us in mercy [and] will take us out of the hands of those wicked rulers...Our leaders are getting so bold in wickedness that I can but think that God will crush them for their deeds.”⁶

Although passive, words used by community citizens displayed the region’s anger and contempt toward the Richmond government and the Destructives they felt caused the war. Overt anti-Confederate rhetoric, though not an active challenge to the government, displayed regional disloyalty. Furthermore, Azariah Denny, King Hiram Bray, and Isaac Thompson clearly placed a divide between pro-Confederate leaders and unfortunate citizens forced to endure the war. In effect, the writers separated evil from good. Additionally, as Bray and Thompson held, some trusted that God understood the unwanted circumstances faced by the disaffected contingent but disdained the evil brought on by those who encouraged an unjust war.

“Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was”⁷

The five-county community employed active anti-Confederate tactics, which reinforced passive disloyal rhetoric and worked to undermine the Confederacy. During the summer of 1863, disloyal foothill citizens joined a statewide movement which pushed for an end to the war. Furthering their agenda, community peace advocates supported the movement’s leader, William W. Holden, against Zebulon Vance in the 1864 gubernatorial election. As the election approached, local views of Vance—the favored 1862 Conservative governor—shifted. From the summer of 1864 until the end of the

⁶ Isaac Thompson [Richmond Virginia] to A. J. L. Cameron [Surry County], June 20, 1863, in Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 242.

⁷ “Public Meeting in Surry County,” *North Carolina Weekly Standard*, August 12, 1863.

war, the foothills' disloyal group believed Zebulon Vance abandoned the Conservative cause and joined the ranks of the Destructives.

By the summer of 1863, disloyal foothill citizens protested the Destructives' war and vigorously promoted peace. William Woods Holden, editor of the *North Carolina Standard*, led North Carolina's peace faction and held that the Confederate national government resembled a despotism that ignored the constitutional rights of the citizenry. In return, following defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Holden pushed for peace negotiations and gained supporters throughout the state.⁸

The northwestern foothills of North Carolina particularly supported Holden's plan for peace. During the summer of 1863, peace meetings convened across the five-county community where local citizens asserted that the Richmond government ignored constitutional rights via conscription, suspension of habeas corpus, and "military encroachments."⁹ In return, meeting attendees promoted a state convention to consider North Carolina's future within the Confederacy. A Yadkin County meeting urged "our authorities to take some steps that will accomplish a speedy and lasting peace" and supported the calling of a convention.¹⁰ On Wednesday, August 26, 1863, a comparable peace meeting was held at "the grove" near the Winston courthouse in Forsyth County.¹¹ The meeting drew crowds from Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin, and it was estimated that twelve hundred to fifteen hundred people were present.¹² An attendee claimed it "was the largest and most harmonious body of people I have seen collected since the

⁸ William C. Harris, *William Woods Holden: Firebrand of North Carolina Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 125, 131; Marc W. Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina, 1836-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 250; Buck Years & John G. Barrett, *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 291-92.

⁹ Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 248; Harris, *Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, 128.

¹⁰ "Public Meeting in Yadkin County," *North Carolina Standard*, August 12, 1863.

¹¹ Resolutions from the "Public Meeting in Forsyth County," *North Carolina Standard*, August 9, 1863.

¹² "The Meeting in Forsyth," *North Carolina Standard*, September 2, 1863, reprinted from the *Salem Press*,

commencement of the war.”¹³ Similar in nature to the Yadkin meeting, the Forsyth resolutions were created “solely for the purpose of urging our statesmen and civilians at home to use their talents and influence to aid in obtaining a *just and lasting peace*.”¹⁴

Meetings across North Carolina supported William Woods Holden and advocated peace, but did not explicitly recommend returning to the old Union. Instead the meetings ambiguously hoped for an “honorable peace.” A Surry County meeting held on July 30, 1863, however, clearly stated the county peace party’s desires. Promoting reunion, the group resolved, “we would as soon be slaves in New York as in North Carolina[,] in the United States, as in the Confederacy...the best thing the people of North Carolina could do would be to go in for the ‘Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was.’”¹⁵ In return, the Surry peace resolutions inflamed angers across the state. The *Fayetteville Observer* denounced the “treasonable resolution that disgraced the action of the meeting in Surry County” and noted that “no meeting but this one in Surry has hinted at such disgraceful terms” for peace. The *Observer* furthermore asserted that the Surry resolutions would encourage disloyalty and “will do more for the Yankees than any army that they have can effect.”¹⁶ In reaction to the numerous peace meetings throughout the state, a band of Georgia troops, who believed Holden betrayed the Confederate cause, angrily ransacked his Raleigh newspaper office in September of 1863.¹⁷

Confederate officers in Virginia, concerned that the peace resolutions might influence desertion and disloyalty within the ranks, denounced Holden in a series of camp

¹³ “The Meeting in Forsyth—Gen. Leach,” *North Carolina Standard*, September 9, 1863.

¹⁴ Resolutions from the “Public Meeting in Forsyth County.”

¹⁵ “Public Meeting in Surry County,” *North Carolina Standard*, August 12, 1863.

¹⁶ “North Carolina Politics,” *North Carolina Standard*, August 26, 1863, reprinted from the *Fayetteville Observer*.

¹⁷ Harris, *Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, 138.

meetings. At the meetings, soldiers elected whether or not they wanted the *Standard* circulated in camp. It was ultimately decided to restrain the paper. In reaction, Holden declared that pro-war officers unfairly controlled the army meetings, which was probably accurate.¹⁸ In August of 1863, a soldier from Yadkin County noted that the “officers held a [illegible] election yesterday but it was no fair one. The most of the people here is for peace.”¹⁹ The same month a Forsyth soldier without explanation wrote that, “Our Batt. Took no part in the recent political meetings.”²⁰

Nevertheless, common foothill soldiers independently voiced conflicting opinions of the peace movement underway on the homefront. John Harrison of Yadkin County informed his wife that there “is right smart said here about N.C. going in the Union as it be bout times for something to be done and the people ought to rally at home for peace on some terms.”²¹ At the same time, other foothill soldiers adamantly opposed the possibility of submission and peace. Two days after Harrison’s letter, William Proffit from Wilkes County wrote:

I understand the people of Wilkes are badly whipped and willing for our patriotic old State to return to the pretended Union, and claim Abraham Lincoln as their chief magistrate...I am not in favor of a termination of the war, until it terminates in the independence of the Confederate States.²²

¹⁸ Ibid., 138-39.

¹⁹ John M. Harrison [Hanover Junction, VA] to Margaret Harrison [Yadkin County], August 8, 1863, in Frances H. Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County, North Carolina* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 134.

²⁰ Charles F. Bahnson [Orange Courthouse, VA] to his George Bahnson [Salem], April 26, 1863, in Sarah Bahnson Chapman, ed., *Bright and Gloomy Days: The Civil War Correspondence of Captain Charles Frederic Bahnson, a Moravian Confederate* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 78.

²¹ John M. Harrison [Hanover Junction, VA] to Margaret Harrison [Yadkin County], August 8, 1863, Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County*, 134.

²² William H. Proffit [“near Orange Court House, Va.”] to Louisa Proffit [Wilkes County], August 10, 1863, in Christopher M. Watford, ed. *The Civil War in North Carolina. Soldiers’ and Civilians’ Letters and Diaries, 1861-1865, Vol. II: The Mountains* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), 119.

Still, a letter from Charles Bahnson of Salem suggests that some North Carolinians within the ranks were unsure what rumors to believe. He told his father that, “I do not see Holden’s paper, but I wish they would make short work of the scoundrel (provided he really is one), or hush up their foolish clamor against him.”²³

As the 1864 gubernatorial race approached, the peace meetings divided North Carolina’s wartime Conservative Party.²⁴ William W. Holden insisted that the peace gatherings were locally organized grassroots events beyond his control; however, the pro-war contingent denounced both Holden and the meetings as treasonous.²⁵ Governor Vance sympathized with the pro-war party in the matter, and held that the peace meetings were “ruinous” events that encouraged Confederate dissent.²⁶ Vance further believed that, if continued, the meetings could lead to “absolute submission to our enemies.”²⁷ While Holden fully endorsed Vance’s conservative gubernatorial platform in 1862, the two men’s principles diverged by the 1864 race. Ultimately, Vance’s continued support of North Carolina’s course in the war and Holden’s endorsement of the peace movement split the Conservative Party’s allegiances.

In March 1864, with the Conservatives split, Holden announced his plan to challenge Vance for the North Carolina governorship.²⁸ At the same time, Holden increasingly implied that Governor Vance and his continued supporters had joined the

²³ Charles F. Bahnson [Orange Courthouse] to his George Bahnson [Salem], April 26, 1863, in Chapman, *Bright and Gloomy Days*, 78.

²⁴ Kruman, *Parties and Politics in North Carolina*, 249.

²⁵ Harris, *Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, 133-35; Yearn & Barrett, *North Carolina Civil War Documentary*, 292.

²⁶ “Holden to the Conservatives of North Carolina,” *North Carolina Standard*, May 20, 1864, reprinted in Horace W. Raper & Thornton W. Mitchell, eds., *The Papers of William Woods Holden* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2000) 1: 159.

²⁷ Gov. Vance to William A. Graham [Raleigh], August 13, 1863, in Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1995), 2: 237-38.

²⁸ Harris, *Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, 146.

ranks of the Destructives.²⁹ In a letter to Calvin Cowles of Wilkes County, Holden explained his two main reasons for seeking the office of governor. He first asserted that Vance abandoned the Conservatives and “made up his mind deliberately to go with Davis and the Destructives...He is, to all intents and purposes, the Destructive candidate.”³⁰ Additionally, supported by the peace faction, Holden felt confident in his ability to win the election. Early in the race he received encouragement from across the state and heard that the “Western Counties almost to a man will go for you.”³¹ In April 1864, a Vance supporter from Yadkinville lamented that the Holden faction outnumbered the Vance contingent two to one across the community. He further alleged that local deserters and conscripts would show up at the polls, “Every one of them, of course are Holdenites & Holden will then get a large number of votes in the county.”³² A month away from the election, Holden continued to trust that the majority of North Carolinians would vote in his favor, and he was “sure of a decided majority in the army.”³³

Despite William W. Holden’s optimism throughout the race, Zebulon B. Vance retained the governorship by an overwhelming majority of statewide votes.³⁴ Only three counties favored Holden, one of which was Wilkes. In the rest of the foothill counties, Holden received roughly one-third of the total votes.³⁵ Compared to the rest of North Carolina, however, the number displays that the foothill community contained a higher

²⁹ Ibid., 145-46.

³⁰ William W. Holden [Raleigh] to Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro], March 18, 1864, in Raper & Mitchell, eds., *The Papers of William Woods Holden*, 1: 153.

³¹ Ibid., In the letter, Holden quoted portions of correspondence he had received from supports across North Carolina.

³² Virgil A. Wilson [Yadkinville] to Gov. Vance, April 23, 1864, Zebulon B. Vance Private Collection, NCDAH.

³³ William W. Holden [Raleigh] to Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro] July 19, 1864, in Raper & Mitchell, eds., *The Papers of William Woods Holden, Vol 1*, 162.

³⁴ Holden’s total votes amounted to 14,491, while Vance accumulated 58,070.

³⁵ “Gubernatorial Elections for North Carolina in 1862 and 1864,” *North Carolina Standard*, Oct. 18, 1864.

percentage of anti-Destructive advocates than most counties. Holden averaged approximately one-fifth of the votes across the state.³⁶ Holden received less favor from the North Carolina troops. Out of 15,033 total votes, Holden received only 1,824.³⁷

Table 1 - North Carolina Gubernatorial Election Results in the Five-county community, 1864

| | Holden | Vance |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Forsyth | 572 | 700 |
| Stokes | 249 | 501 |
| Surry | 336 | 484 |
| Wilkes | 567 | 534 |
| Yadkin | 246 | 533 |

Source: "Gubernatorial Elections for North Carolina in 1862 and 1864," *North Carolina Standard*, Oct. 18, 1864.

Following the gubernatorial election, the *Standard* received numerous letters reporting anti-Holden voting abuses across the state. Writers commonly complained that Vance supporters resorted to intimidation to keep the Holden party away from the polls. It is difficult to determine to what extent Holden men in the foothills were intimidated; however, the Raleigh government closely monitored voting in the notoriously disloyal five-county community. In July, the state ordered a regular regiment into the region to oversee the voting process. The Yadkin Home Guard received notice that the Sixty-Eighth Regiment of North Carolina Troops would operate within its jurisdiction to secure "the Polls against interruption by deserters."³⁸ If any officers or soldiers from the

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Harris, *Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, 151.

³⁸ Adjutant General to Major N. G. Hunt [Panthers Creek], July 27, 1864, AGO 52, NCDAH.

regiment intimidated locals, it is unknown; however, the foothills reported abuses from “enrolling officers and County examining boards” who tried to suppress Holden votes.³⁹ A Surry citizen noted that “Special favors are granted to Vance Destructives, while Conservatives ‘after the straightest sect’ are insulted, and even their just rights denied them.”⁴⁰ In response to the military vote, Holden asserted, without concrete proof, that a fair election was not held in the North Carolina ranks.⁴¹ Thus, it is likely that the 1864 gubernatorial election returns underrepresented the foothill community’s anti-Destructive sentiment.

During the final months of the war, Foothill “Holdenites” grieved the defeat of their candidate and refused to support Vance. A Yadkin citizen bitterly remarked that Vance, in 1862, “rode in to the governors office on the Conservative Horse knowing that he could not get in to office by running as a Disunion candidate.”⁴² J. W. Fries of Salem thought there was “reason to feel ashamed of Forsyth. The citizen vote was for Holden but the army was so unanimous for Vance...Here we have another proof of the folly of the masses, who do the voting.”⁴³ Even with Vance still in office, the five-county community continued to support the principles espoused in Holden’s *North Carolina Standard*. Foothill residents, who wholly endorsed Vance’s Conservative platform in 1862, completely rejected the governor’s continued war policy in the conflict’s final year. In a reference to the French Revolution’s Reign of Terror, a Surry resident implied, “our

³⁹ “The Reign of Terror,” *North Carolina Standard*, July 27, 1864.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Harris, *Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, 151-52. Harris states that, according to the final voting returns, Holden reasonably believed that some of the soldiers’ votes were intentionally withheld or tampered with by pro-Vance officers. Harris further suggests, however, that Holden’s military returns still would have been less than Vance’s total within the ranks.

⁴² Diary of Jesse Dobbins, Speer, in Allen Paul Speer, *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Asbury Speer, 1861-1864* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1997), 211.

⁴³ Rufus Patterson to J. W. Fries [Salem], August 21, 1864, Patterson Papers, NCDAH.

modern Robespierre, at present in Raleigh...has abandoned those who stood by him manfully, and were his real friends, when his present associates were assailing him as a traitor.”⁴⁴ In addition, six months after Holden’s defeated peace platform, the region continued to actively work for a peace negotiation. In February of 1865, John Rawley, quartermaster of the Surry Home Guard, noted that the “peace movements are all the excitement now and command a [illegible] in almost every circle.”⁴⁵

**“I was a Union man during the latter part of the war,
but at first I sympathized with the rebellion”⁴⁶**

Unionism was evident in the five-county community during the Civil War’s second half. Religious sects that espoused pacifism and anti-slavery maintained Unionist principles from the beginning of the war; however, after mid-1863, prewar Unionism resurfaced in earnest in the five-county community. Local disdain for the Richmond government and the pro-Confederate Destructives directly influenced the return to Unionism. In reaction, some foothill Unionists joined the secret Heroes of America organization, while others overtly promoted the Union cause.

Previous studies argue that religion contributed to Confederate disloyalty.⁴⁷ This assertion corresponds with the religious atmosphere of the five-county community.

Labeled the “Quaker Belt,” it has been displayed that local Christian sects—particularly

⁴⁴ “from one of the worthiest citizens of the County of Surry,” *North Carolina Standard*, Feb. 1, 1865.

⁴⁵ John W. Rawley [Mount Airy] to Calvin J. Cowles [Wilkesboro], February 7, 1865, Calvin J. Cowles Papers NCDAH.

⁴⁶ Claim of Gabriel Tucker, Claim 10,897, Stokes County, NC, 1872, RG 217, SCC, SCC records for Stokes County, N.C., National Archives II, College Park, Md.

⁴⁷ For more information on religion and Confederate disloyalty see William T. Auman, “Neighbor against Neighbor: The Inner Civil War in the Randolph county Area of Confederate North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 61 (Jan. 1984): 59-92; William T. Auman & David D. Scarborough, “The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (October 1981): 327-61; Henry T. Shanks, “Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 21 (April 1944): 118-35.

Moravian, Wesleyan Methodist and Quaker—opposed the war on moral grounds and refused to support the Confederacy.⁴⁸ To varied degrees, local churches promoted pacifism and opposed slavery, and, during the war, pro-Confederates recognized that the foothills’ unique religious makeup inspired disloyalty.

Within the war’s first year, an anonymously written article in the *Richmond Examiner* claimed that North Carolina’s “hotbed of toryism is in Forsyth county...the town of Salem is a Moravian settlement and, while the people are honest and worthy in the ordinary affairs of life, politically they are rotten to the core.”⁴⁹ The article continued to allege that there were Moravians “in the community who were in correspondence with the Lincoln government.”⁵⁰ It is possible that the accusations are not completely accurate; yet, the article shows that Forsyth was viewed as a largely disloyal county. Perhaps more realistic, a girl from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, studying at the Salem Female Academy, addressed Salem’s sentiments in early 1862. The student noted that, with the exception of a few of Salem’s larger merchants, “the mass of people are still attached to the Union.”⁵¹

Pro-Confederates referred to Wesleyan Methodist and Quaker congregations in similar manners. Both groups staunchly supported the abolition of slavery. The newly formed Wesleyan Methodist church gained local converts in the mid-1840s, but by the time of the Civil War, Wesleyan churches covered the entire five-county community.

Referring to the Wesleyans, a supporter of the Confederate government wrote:

⁴⁸ See Auman, “Neighbor against Neighbor.” Auman asserts that the Quaker Belt contained Randolph, Alamance, Chatham, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Surry, and Yadkin Counties, along with portions of Orange Moore, Montgomery, Iredell, Wilkes, Alleghany, and Stokes. In fact, Auman refers to the entire five-county community; however, his study focuses only on the “Randolph County area.”

⁴⁹ *North Carolina Standard*, January 15, 1862, reprinted from the January 11, 1862 *Richmond Examiner*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ From an article entitled “Returned from the South,” by “Miss L.,” in the *Moravian* (Bethlehem, Pa.), Jan. 9, 1862, in Chapman, *Bright and Gloomy Days*, xxxix.

Throughout the whole of that district, there are whole communities dotted here & there that are thoroughly abolitionized... Those people, scattered from Chatham to Surry, read the New York Tribune before the war. They were in favor of Lincoln's election. They wanted a Lincoln Electoral ticket - & because they could not get it, many of them refused to vote at all. Go into their houses today & you will find the Tribune & other abolition Journals pasted as wallpaper in their rooms.⁵²

At the start of the war, long established Quaker congregations scattered the whole region, and Quaker communities were particularly strong in Yadkin County. Approaching the winter of 1862, a woman from Stokes informed Governor Vance that local Quakers withheld goods from the troops and "packed away from a dozen to fifty good blankets." In a gentle manner, the writer suggests that the "Quakers[,] some of Union sentiment," want to help local men in the field, but are morally unable to assist the war effort.⁵³

Outside of the Moravian, Quaker, and Wesleyan Methodist churches, most of the five-county community supported the Confederacy at the beginning of the Civil War. Unionist sentiment, however, resurfaced during the war's second half. In reaction, some locals joined a secret pro-Union organization called the Heroes of America. By the end of the war, the order approximated 10,000 members in North Carolina.⁵⁴ The Heroes of America, also called the Red Strings, worked covertly along portions of the Southern homefront to aid the Union cause and bring the Confederacy to its knees.⁵⁵ Members of the Red Strings aided local Confederate deserters and conscripts. When possible, members of the organization assisted escaped Union prisoners passing through their vicinities, as well.⁵⁶ Without certainty, it is believed that the organization originated

⁵² Auman, "Neighbor against Neighbor," 62; Reverend J. H. Coble to E. J. Hale & Sons, September 10 1863, E. J. Hale Papers, NCDAH.

⁵³ M. B. Moore [Pine Hall] to Gov. Vance, November 7, 1862, Gov. Vance Papers, Governor Zebulon Baird Vance Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NCDAH.

⁵⁴ Noe, "Red String Scare," 316.

⁵⁵ Harris, *Firebrand of North Carolina Politics*, 150.

⁵⁶ Auman, "Neighbor Against Neighbor," 64.

within the war's first year in Forsyth or one of the neighboring counties of Davidson, Guilford, or Randolph.⁵⁷

The anti-Confederate Heroes of America claimed membership in the northwestern foothills of North Carolina. Specific evidence reveals that local Red String orders actively operated in Stokes and Forsyth Counties. The evidence further stresses that the members sought strength in numbers and purposely joined to undermine the Confederate cause. From Stokes County, Reuben Tilley stated, "I was a member of the Red Strings...a secret organization of Union men during the war, who were opposed to the rebellion, and the object was to assist each other in their Union principles."⁵⁸ Henderson Morefield, also a member from Stokes, hinted at the organization's local strength. After the war, Morefield asserted that the organization's principles were "well known in the country."⁵⁹ Additionally, William McCaules from Danbury in Stokes underlined the local Red Strings' ideology when he claimed "the Red strings party...was the Union party."⁶⁰

Members of the Heroes of America from Forsyth County iterated points similar to their Stokes County counterparts. Tandy Kiser who lived north of Winston, in Forsyth County's Buffalo District, joined the order where he "talked and did all I could for the Union cause."⁶¹ After the war, farmer Caleb Idol remembered belonging "to a little Society got up among ourselves to protect Union men in anyway[;] we called it the Red Strings."⁶² Idol's friend, Ransom Phipps, claimed that only Union supporters joined the

⁵⁷ Auman & Scarboro, "The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina."

⁵⁸ Claim of Reuben Tilley, Claim 5,945, Stokes County, N.C., 1878, RG 217, SCC.

⁵⁹ Claim of Reuben Tilley, Claim 5,945, Stokes County, N.C., 1878, RG 217, SCC.

⁶⁰ Claim of William McCaules, Claim 11,063, Stokes County, N.C., 1874, RG 217, SCC.

⁶¹ Claim of Tandy Kiser, Claim 14,299, Forsyth County, NC, 1975, RG 217, SCC; Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Forsyth County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.

⁶² Claim of Caleb Idol, Claim 10, 717, Forsyth County, N.C., 1876 RG 217, SCC.

society and learned the secret symbols used to identify members. Phipps stated that Idol “was the first man that ever gave me a sign in regard to the secret union organization. I told him that I did not know the signs[;] he then told me where I could go...to be initiated.”⁶³ Secret codes did not always prove efficient, however. In 1864, E. B. Petrie, a blacksmith from Bethania, incriminated himself by mistakenly flashing a Red String sign to an undercover Confederate agent on a train in southwestern Virginia.⁶⁴ Interestingly, while in Virginia, Petrie contacted members of the Heroes of America in Wytheville and knew enough to tell the detectives that “the order was extensive in that country.” Nevertheless, Petrie was not allowed to return to Bethania, but was detained in Richmond’s Castle Thunder prison as a traitor.⁶⁵

Documentation of Red String activity in Yadkin County is less abundant; yet, an 1863 report confirms the order’s existence in that portion of the foothills. Yadkin citizen and peace advocate Andrew Cowles noted that the “military are making arrests of ‘Heroes of America’ in this county.”⁶⁶ Similarly, evidence of a Red String movement in Surry County is sparse; however, the Fisher River Primitive Baptist Church Association’s postwar minutes indicate that some of its congregation joined the pro-Union organization.⁶⁷ The subject proved to be decisive, and between 1869 and 1871, the issue nearly split the church association. Fisher River’s historian recorded:

⁶³ Ibid.; see claims of Edward Mabe, Jr. and G. W. Andrews for additional members of the Heroes of America from Stokes County.

⁶⁴ “Report of Detectives,” John B. Williams & Thomas McGill, in United States War Department, OR (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series IV, Vol. III, 816; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Forsyth County, N.C., Population Schedule.

⁶⁵ “Report of Detectives,” OR, Series IV, Vol. III, 816.

⁶⁶ Auman & Scarboro, “Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina,” 347; Andrew Cowles [Hamptonville] to Calvin Cowles [Wilkesboro], August 7, 1863, Calvin J. Cowles Papers, NCDAH.

⁶⁷ The Fisher River Primitive Baptist Association was formed in Surry County in 1832. Most churches within the association were located in Surry County; several were scattered just beyond the Surry border in Yadkin and Stokes, North Carolina, and Carroll County, Virginia.

About the close of the Civil War some members of the church had joined a secret order called "Red Strings," a party of which the writer knows nothing, it being "secret." Some of the members protested against it. The matter had been before the association at a previous session, and the association as a body declared, "We hold no fellowship with any secret organization," and advised the churches composing the body to deal with members belonging to secret orders as transgressors; and at this meeting a request was made that the churches report whether any persons belonging to such orders were held in fellowship.⁶⁸

Wilkes County's contribution to the Heroes of America is uncertain, but the organization's breadth suggests that it spanned the entire region. By 1864, the disloyal sect reached Ashe County—on Wilkes County's northwestern border—and operated in the Blue Ridge region of southwestern Virginia.⁶⁹

In the five-county community, the Heroes of America contained a diverse membership that transcended socioeconomic barriers. Class conflict existed on the foothill homefront, but the varied makeup of local Red String chapters shows that, within the region, class did not determine one's loyalty. For instance, Dr. William McCaules, an educated physician of noted stature in Stokes County, contributed to the organization's framework.⁷⁰ During the war, McCaules kept local men out of service and was believed to have "done more for the Union cause than any man in his [Stokes] county."⁷¹ At the same time, Tandy Kiser, a landless Forsyth farm laborer, joined the Heroes of America,

⁶⁸ Jesse A. Ashburn, *History of the Fisher River Primitive Baptist Association, 1832-1904* (Laurel Fork, Va.: F. P. Branscome, 1905), 57-58.

⁶⁹ Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 139-140; OR, Series IV, Vol. II, 802-16. For a discussion on Red String activity in Virginia's Blue Ridge see Henry T. Shanks, "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865," *North Carolina Historical Review* 21 (April 1944): 118-35, and Kenneth Noe "Red String Scare: Civil War Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (July 1992): 301-22.

⁷⁰ Claim of William McCaules, Claim 11,063, Stokes County, N.C., 1874, RG 217, SCC.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

as well.⁷² Like McCaules, Kiser “fed deserters & refugees & aided them to get to Union lines.”⁷³ Evidence indicates, however, that the region’s common yeomen contributed the most manpower to the pro-Union organization. Even so, landowning farmers who joined the Red Strings still represented a diverse lot; they possessed varied levels of education, and their wealth ranged from comfortable to modest.⁷⁴

Other Unionists in the five-county community responded to the Confederacy via overt public pro-Union actions. As seen in chapter two, a few disloyal Confederates from the foothills escaped to Union lines and joined the federal army. Additionally, as the war progressed, some community soldiers already in the field “absconded to the enemy.”⁷⁵ Others citizens, however, expressed blatant Union support on the homefront. Included was Mathias Masten, Forsyth County’s wartime sheriff. Masten boasted that he publicly spoke in favor of the Union many times during the war. In consequence, Masten understood that he could have been hanged as a traitor; however, a countywide network of Unionists formed to protect one another from militant pro-Confederates. Masten stated that “we told the secessionists that if they injured us we would burn & kill the last one of them[.] I helped to organize this band of 600 Union men about the middle of the

⁷² Claim of Tandy Kiser, Claim 14,299, Forsyth County, N.C., 1975, RG 217, SCC; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Forsyth County, N.C., Population Schedule. Tandy Kiser was married with children; able to read and write; a farm laborer with no real estate; and the value of his personal estate was \$200.00.

⁷³ Claim of Tandy Kiser, Claim 14,299, Forsyth County, NC, 1975, RG 217, SCC

⁷⁴ Examples: Caleb Idol, Ransom Phipps, and Reuben Tilley. Claim of Caleb Idol, Claim 10,717, Forsyth County, N.C., 1876 RG 217, SCC, Deposition of Claimant & Deposition of Witness, Ransom Phipps; Eighth Census of the U.S., 1860: Forsyth County, N.C., Population Schedule. Ransom Phipps, farmer, married with children, able to read and write; value of real estate was \$1,200.00, and value of personal estate was \$1,280.00; Caleb Idol, farmer, married with children, able to read and write; value of real estate was \$1,500.00, and value of personal estate was \$350.00. Claim of Reuben Tilley, Claim 5,945, Stokes County, N.C., 1878, RG 217, SCC; Eighth Census of the US, 1860: Stokes County, N.C., Population Schedule. Reuben Tilley, farmer, married with children, unable to read and write; value of real estate was \$250.00, and value of personal estate was \$250.00.

⁷⁵ Special Orders, No. 30, February 13, 1865, AGO 35, NCDAH; Examples of soldiers who absconded: James A. Allen, Nathaniel A. Johnson, John E. Stultz, Dred Ira Wall, John H. Watson; Jackson, *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War*, 3, 103, 171, 180, 184-85.

war and we did it for the purpose of defending ourselves & property from the secessionists.”⁷⁶

Northwestern Wilkes County’s Traphill neighborhood, in particular, proved to be a center of disloyal activity and Unionist sentiment.⁷⁷ The town’s disloyal character—especially the reputations of the staunchly anti-Confederate Bryan and Hanks families—attracted local Unionists in search of a safe haven.⁷⁸ During the war, draft dodger John Cordell stayed on the move between his home in Surry County and Traphill just over the Wilkes border.⁷⁹ Attesting to the locals’ explicit anti-Confederate stance, a nearby resident of opposing sympathies remarked that Unionists in Traphill “march under an old dirty United States rag!”⁸⁰ The same citizen noted that the Union sympathies of Traphill’s female population equaled that of the men.⁸¹ By the summer of 1863, the pro-Union movement was so strong around Traphill that a group of locals held an anti-Confederate gathering in Wilkesboro, complete with the Union flag.⁸² In addition, it is possible that the excitement moved beyond the boundaries of Wilkes. In September of 1863, a resident of Salem noted that a regular Confederate regiment “passed thro’ Salem

⁷⁶ Claim of the Estate of Darius Masten, Claim 14,839, Forsyth County, N.C., 1873, RG 233, SCC.

⁷⁷ John C. Insoe & Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 93.

⁷⁸ Claim of John Cordell, Claim 10,391, Surry County, N.C., 1878, RG 217, SCC. See deposition of claimant; deposition of witness, Jacob Hanks; and deposition of witness, Samuel Hanks; Claim of John Tilley, Claim 10,390, Surry County, N.C., 1878, RG 217, SCC, deposition of claimant; deposition of witness, Ausel Norman; deposition of witness, Elisha Thompson; and deposition of witness, Stephen Combs; Insoe & McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 126.

⁷⁹ Claim of John Cordell, Claim 10,391, Surry County, N.C., 1878, RG 217, SCC.

⁸⁰ Insoe & McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 126.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸² *Ibid.*

on their way into the western part of the state, probably to put down the Union demonstrations in the counties of Yadkin and Wilkes, etc.”⁸³

Chapter Conclusion

The five-county community disloyally defied its Confederate enemies by rebelling against the Southern war effort. Some members of the community quietly expressed anger towards the Destructives, while others publicly supported the statewide peace movement. By the war’s midpoint, the five-county community’s prewar Unionist stance resurfaced in earnest. Foothill men of all classes and occupations banded together in the Heroes of America to aid the Union cause and locally influence the Confederacy’s demise. Anti-Confederates such as Mathias Masten and his contingent of six hundred supporters in Forsyth and the outspoken Unionist men and women of Traphill actively displayed their desire to return to the prewar Union.

⁸³ Diary of Francis Raymond Holland, September 10, 1863, in , C. Daniel Crews & Lisa D. Bailey, ed., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, 1856-1866* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 200).

CONCLUSION

In the decade leading up to the Civil War, the northwestern foothills of North Carolina adamantly devoted themselves to the Union. The sectional crisis encouraged Union meetings throughout the five-county community in the year prior to the war. The extent of pro-Union gatherings, as well as the region's overwhelming vote in February 1861 against a North Carolina secession convention reaffirmed the foothills' loyal prewar stance. Abraham Lincoln's call for North Carolina militia to help keep order in the Lower South, however, caused foothill Unionism to momentarily subside. As a result, North Carolina's northwestern foothill counties voluntarily stood behind the Confederacy throughout the Civil War's first year. After mid-April 1861, local men chose to enlist in Confederate ranks. At the same time, the region in general spoke in favor of its new national government and actively aided North Carolina's course within the Southern Confederacy.

As the Civil War approached its second year, Confederate support dwindled in the five-county community. By mid-1862, North Carolinians as a whole ceased to tolerate Raleigh's early secessionist politicians. In reaction, foothill citizens—along with a majority of North Carolinians—demanded a political changing of the guard. Prewar Unionist Whig, Zebulon B. Vance, ran for office on the newfound Conservative platform and swept North Carolina's 1862 gubernatorial race. The political shift temporarily satisfied prewar Unionist Conservatives; however, the change failed to encourage long-range support for the state's course within the Confederacy. The race divided North Carolina's prewar Unionists from the state's original secessionists. Ultimately, divisions between Conservatives and Destructives intensified as the war progressed.

Also as the war entered its second year, the Richmond government established a mandatory military draft. In the war's first year, foothill men volunteered to serve in the state's military ranks, but the newly established Conscription Acts demanded Confederate service. Consequently, Confederate support decreased among community citizens at home and in the field. Drove of conscripted men refused to enter the ranks and "took to the bushes," while soldiers in the field illegally deserted and returned home. Thus, conscription initiated regional disaffection. In reaction, the five-county community held the Confederate national government which passed the Act, and North Carolina's Destructives who encouraged the war, responsible. The northwestern foothills, in turn, viewed Richmond and the Destructives as primary opponents.

The draft's demands and subsequent consequences ensured regional war weariness and disaffection. Conscription required the area's primary workforce to enter Confederate service, a reality which proved detrimental on the homefront. The Confederacy's demand particularly hurt the wives and children of conscripted soldiers forced to subsist on their own. Managing a farm unaided proved difficult for families at home, and additional trials—hunger, speculation, and declining worth of Confederate money—continued to decrease community morale. Making matters worse, unwelcome Confederate troops and horses traversed the five-county community from 1862 until the end of the war. The foothill counties suffered poor treatment, violence, and impressment at the hands of Southern soldiers, and the military presence exasperated the already disaffected homefront. The five-county community increasingly blamed the Confederate national government and the Destructives who encouraged the war for their condition. The notion became entrenched that both were their foremost enemies.

The disaffected in North Carolina's Blue Ridge foothills disloyally reacted to the Confederate government's unwanted measures and the subsequent hardships faced at home. Some in the community harbored private anger towards the Destructives; however, after 1863 the homefront's actively disloyal contingent used a variety of protest methods. A small proportion crossed into Federal lines, where they either enlisted in the Union army or sought the safety of relatives in the Midwest. A larger number of foothill soldiers, however, denied the Confederacy of manpower via desertion and avoiding conscription. In return, community members actively defied the Confederate effort by aiding local men who illegally opted out of military service. In addition, North Carolina's peace movement attracted disaffected foothill citizens. The peace movement provided an outlet to actively oppose the state's position in the Confederacy. The movement proved popular in the five-county community, and starting in 1863, peace meetings convened throughout the foothill counties.

Prewar Unionism spanned the five-county community and prepared the region to reject the Confederacy as the war progressed. Amidst Richmond's abuses, the foothill counties adamantly maintained that the Confederate national government and the early supporters of secession caused the region to suffer. In response, the disloyal region naturally returned to its earlier pro-Union stance. The secret Heroes of America organization attracted local Unionists of all classes and occupations. Together the diverse group worked to undermine the Confederacy and bring the war to an end. Additionally, local pacifist and anti-slavery religious sects opposed the war and advocated a return to the Union. Also, as the war progressed, outspoken local Unionists publicly denounced the Confederacy and supported a return to the old Union.

The Confederate national government and North Carolina's pro-secession Destructives ultimately encouraged the five-county community's disaffection and disloyalty from April 1862 until April 1865. Richmond's first Conscription Act in April 1862 initially caused local disaffection, and subsequent hardships deepened dissatisfaction. In turn, the foothill community believed the Richmond government and the Destructives who influenced and continued the war were the region's true enemies. As a response, the five-county community disloyally reacted and began withdrawing Confederate support in the war's second year. The region's anti-Confederates returned to their prewar Unionist principles during the Civil War's second half.

Disloyal sentiments and actions were not unique to the five-county community. Confederate dissenters throughout the South expressed similar grievances during the Civil War. Common hardships and complaints, however, did not mean communities shared wartime experiences. Regions within the Confederacy faced unique conditions, and location influenced sentiment and action. William Blair suggests that Virginians remained loyal to the Confederacy. Thus, it is significant that Virginia served as a constant battlefield during the Civil War. Virginians frequently encountered Federal troops, viewed the war first hand, and relied on Confederate soldiers and the Richmond and Virginia governments for relief. North Carolina's foothills, however, had a very different wartime experience. The region remained isolated from the battlefield and, until late March 1865, isolated from Union troops. While Virginia sought to satisfy the needs of its homefront, North Carolina failed to sufficiently address the five-county community's mounting grievances. While Richmond and Confederate soldiers protected Virginians near the battlefield, Southern soldiers and governmental measures threatened

foothill families. The Civil War struck the North Carolina foothills directly and powerfully; however, the Confederacy was the only enemy the community encountered.

“Sister, the Yankees have been here”¹

Federal troops finally touched the five-county community in the war’s final month. Between late March and mid-April 1865, General George Stoneman’s Union Cavalry traversed each of North Carolina’s northwestern foothill counties. The soldiers targeted railroads and burned Confederate factories. Stoneman’s troops refrained from physically harming the disaffected population; however, supplies and livestock were taken and some local homes were plundered.² A portion of the region’s enslaved population chose to follow the invading army as well. A Mount Airy citizen noted that “hardly any from this neighborhood went with them,” but, on April 10 “Several hundred” freedmen were escorted from Stokes County to a Union camp in East Tennessee.³ A Federal officers report confirmed that “most of those fit for military service...are now in Colonel Bartlett’s One hundred and nineteenth U. S. Colored Troops.”⁴

The initial prospect of encountering Union soldiers alarmed the community. A Mount Airy resident noted that “Most all the men in town left and run to the woods.”⁵

¹ “Letter from Robert Hines’ Daughter to Another Daughter,” [Mount Airy], undated, in Hester Bartlett Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers in the Civil War* (Charlotte: Delmar Printing, 1992), 425

² John C. Inscoe & Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 247-248; All SCC records for Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes and Yadkin request reimbursement for property taken by Stoneman’s Union Cavalry; “Letter from Robert Hines’ Daughter to Another Daughter,” [Mount Airy], undated, in Jackson, ed., *Surry County Soldiers*, 425; Mary A. Robertson to Jane Reeves Marion [Siloam], undated, Miscellaneous, Marion Venable Collection.

³ “Letter from Robert Hines’ Daughter to Another Daughter.”

⁴ M. W. Keogh, Major and Aide-de-Camp [“Near Jonesville”] to Colonel Palmer, April 1, 1865, in United States War Department, OR (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XLIX, Part I, 332.

⁵ “Letter from Robert Hines’ Daughter to Another Daughter,” [Mount Airy], undated, in Jackson, *Surry County Soldiers*, 425

Included was Dick Reeves, leader of Surry's pro-secession contingent in 1861. Soon after the episode, a friend wrote Reeves's sister: "Tell Dick I would liked to have seen him run through the bottom I know he made tracks does he not think it a terrible feeling to be scared and running for life."⁶ Fear was not reserved for pro-Confederates, however. James Gwyn of Wilkes County rejoiced at the presence of Union troops, yet hid to avoid any problems.⁷

The five-county community avoided direct contact with a Union force for four years. With Stoneman still in the region, General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia on April 9, 1865. In reality, the brief encounter with enemy troops proved less devastating than the ongoing hardships experienced in previous years. If nothing else, the disaffected foothills were well prepared when Stoneman's men "destroyed every grain of corn and turned the barrels of syrup upside down and let it run out."⁸

The Civil War haunted the five-county community after the fall of the Confederacy in the spring of 1865. At every turn, foothill citizens faced war related destruction and loss. Dormant households and farmsteads continued to remind the post-1865 homefront of the husbands, sons, and fathers who never returned. Already ruined farms encountered "wet in the spring" and "drought in the summer" that further deteriorated their conditions. The region depended largely on corn and hog production; however, 1867 brought small yields of corn and a "raging" epidemic of hog cholera. Locals who relied on the sale of bacon suffered as the incurable outbreak devastated the

⁶ Mary A. Robertson to Jane Reeves Marion, undated.

⁷ Inscoe & McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 247.

⁸ Mary A. Robertson to Jane Reeves Marion, undated.

area's swine population.⁹

Confederate disaffection lingered in the five-county community after April 1865. Local anti-Confederates lamented their coerced participation in the unwanted event, and wallowed in the war's negative consequences. As a result, it was difficult for the region to forgive and forget in the years following the war. Over two years after the Civil War ended, a Yadkin County mother whose son died at Ream's Station wrote to her sister:

The nation is so sad. It is a wonder we are spared and have as much as we do. It is better than we deserve. We have rebelled against our Maker and against our Government, and we could not expect nothing but judgment from the Almighty. Our country is in great distraction. I feel awful when I think of the state of things in this country. I wish I was away from this rebel state. I never wanted to leave the old South until they seceded from the old United States. If I was not so old I would try my best to persuade the rest of the family to move. But it looks like folly to break up now. We are so old and settled and have everything around us to render us comfortable, for we can't have many years to spend.¹⁰

Peace and reunion—though desired and celebrated—failed to quell local anger towards the Destructives. In response, the wartime disloyal contingent separated themselves from the state's pro-secessionists for years to come. A regional postwar examination stretches the scope of this study and demands future attention; however, two postwar social and political movements in Surry County are extremely worthy of note: a series of resolutions passed in June 1865 and the formation of the Union Leagues in 1867. Both were deeply rooted in foothill Confederate disaffection and underscore the extent of local wartime disloyal sentiments. In fact, even though these movements occurred after April 1865, they speak volumes about wartime allegiances.

In June 1865, an estimated force of three thousand congregated in Mount Airy to

⁹ Elizabeth Speer [Yadkin County] to A. Jackson Ashby, August 1867, in Allen Paul Speer, *Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Speer, 1861-1864* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1997), 151.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 151-53.

show support for North Carolina's future course within the Union. Convention participants hailed from Surry and portions of the surrounding five-county community, as well as neighboring Carroll and Patrick Counties in Virginia. The resolutions reeked of local disdain for the state's Destructives and rejoiced that "the iron heel of tyranny and despotism has been removed from off the necks of the southern people."¹¹ The mass collectively recognized that "those misguided men...were instrumental in involving us in the horrible conditions from which we are just emerging."¹² The resolutions, furthermore, confirm that the community widely supported William W. Holden's Conservative principles over Vance's Destructive policies. The convention agreed that "we owe a debt of gratitude to W. W. Holden, editor of the N.C. Standard and other editors occupying a like position for their manly support of the rights of the people and the advocacy of the supremacy of the civil law during the late struggle."¹³ The 1865 resolutions directly reflect the disaffected foothills' wartime stance and reaffirm the region's Confederate disloyalty. The motions furthermore display the community's continued desire to separate itself from the original secessionists.

Establishment of the Union League of America in the five-county community corresponded with wartime Confederate disloyalty. Union Leagues formed in support of the Republican Party—the political party associated with Lincoln, the North, and the Union—and aimed to uphold the party's newfound place in the South. Historian James Baggett insists that a natural link connected wartime disloyal Confederates to the postwar Republican Party. After the Civil War ended, pro-Confederates viewed Southern

¹¹ Surry County Resolutions, June 6, 1865, William L. Scott Papers, Duke Special Collection, hereafter cited as DSC, Duke University Library.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Republicans as traitors and derogatorily labeled them Scalawags.¹⁴

Union League chapters developed in Forsyth and Stokes Counties, and a particularly active chapter—the Hamburg Lodge—formed in Mount Airy, Surry County.¹⁵ The Hamburg Lodge Union League minutes reveal that other pro-Republican organizations operated within Surry County as well. In October of 1867, the Hamburg Lodge and local “Heroes” worked together “in selecting the Candidate for the Constitutional Convention.”¹⁶ Almost certainly, the minutes referred to the Heroes of America. The Red Strings secretly operated in favor of the Union during the Civil War, but publicly reorganized in North Carolina in 1867 to support the Republican Party during Congressional Reconstruction.¹⁷ North Carolina’s postwar Union Leagues and Heroes of America shared basic Republican principles, but differed in membership. The Union Leagues encouraged interracial cooperation, and many chapters admitted African Americans into their rank; however, the Red Strings catered only to white Republicans.¹⁸ Hamburg Lodge, in fact, worked in concert with Surry County’s freedmen, and by June of 1868, 106 African American men were listed as members.¹⁹ Also notable, Samuel Forkner—colonel of the Surry Militia during the Civil War—was elected Assistant Vice President of the Mount Airy Union League. Forkner, also a key player in the June 1865 pro-Union resolutions, represented Surry County Republicans in the North Carolina

¹⁴ James Alex Baggett, *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 3, 93 & 271.

¹⁵ Claim of Tandy Kiser, Claim 14,299, Forsyth County, NC, 1975, RG 217, Southern Claims Commission, records for Forsyth County, N.C., National Archives II, College Park, Md.; Hamburg Lodge Union League Minute Book, Brower Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

¹⁶ Hamburg Lodge Union League Minute Book.

¹⁷ James L. Lancaster, *The Scalawags of North Carolina, 1850-1868* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1974), 214.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 215-16.

¹⁹ Steven A. Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 188-89.

General Assembly from 1868 to 1870.²⁰

In examining Union Leagues in the Deep South, Michael Fitzgerald found that membership in northern Alabama's organizations directly corresponded with wartime Unionism.²¹ Thus, it is worthy to note the related conditions in northern Alabama and the five-county community: both "hill country" regions overwhelmingly opposed secession on the eve of the war; both willingly supported the Confederacy as the war opened, but the government's demands encouraged widespread disaffection; disloyal Confederates from both sections abandoned their ranks, while conscripted men refused to leave the homefront; yeomen contributed the most manpower to Union Leagues in both districts; and the northern Alabama Union Leagues as well as Surry County's Hamburg Lodge were interracial organizations.²²

The June 1865 Surry County resolutions and the foothills' Union Leagues established in 1867 lend additional credence to the significance of wartime anti-Confederate thought in the five-county community. Both show an overt postwar departure from Confederate ideals and traditions: secession and the southern wing of the Democratic Party. The topic certainly demands future investigation. Perhaps the foothills' postwar choices and climate will further illuminate the region's wartime experience.

²⁰ Surry County Genealogical Association, *The Heritage of Surry County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company), 2: 432.

²¹ Michael W. Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 16.

²² *Ibid.*, 16-17; Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 188-189. One hundred and sixty-eight white members were listed in the Hamburg Lodge minute book for the fall of 1867. By June of 1868, one hundred and six African American men were listed as members.

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