

“Sisson’s Kingdom”
Loyalty Divisions in Floyd County, Virginia, 1861-1865

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters in History

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May 1, 1997
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Floyd County, Civil War, Unionism, Desertion, Appalachia

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(ABSTRACT)

“Sisson’s Kingdom” uses a community study paradigm to offer an interpretation of the Confederate homefront collapse of Floyd County, Virginia. The study focuses primarily on residents’ conflicting loyalty choices during the war, and attempts to explain the myriad of ways that their discord operated to remove Floyd County as a positive portion of the Confederate homefront.

The study separates the “active Confederate disloyalty” of Floyd County’s Unionist inhabitants from the “passive Confederate disloyalty” of relatives or friends of local Confederate deserters. It then explores the conflicting loyalties of the county’s pro-Confederates, Unionists, and passive disloyalists, seeking to understand better the wide variety of loyalty choices available to residents as well as the consequences of their choices. To determine some of the significant factors contributing to the Floyd County community’s response to the Confederacy and Civil War, this thesis documents the various ways residents’ reactions took shape. Chapter One examines the roots of these decisions, exploring briefly Floyd County’s entrance into Virginia’s market economy during the 1850s and its residents’ conflicting choices during Virginia’s secession crisis. In the aftermath of secession, many Floyd residents embraced their new Confederate government and enlisted by the hundreds in its military units. The decision by some county soldiers to desert their units and return to Floyd caused loyalty conflicts between their supporters and the county’s pro-Confederates. This conflict, and the effects of deserters living in the Floyd community, are both explored in Chapter Two. Floyd’s Unionist population and its loyal Confederate residents clashed violently throughout much of the war, hastening the disintegration of the Floyd homefront. Their discord is examined in Chapter Three.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ink and paper (or in this case cyberspace) can not fully convey my appreciation for the generosity, camaraderie, and insight I encountered during my stay at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. This roll call will therefore provide somewhat of an outline, and moreover serve as a list of my debts.

I owe Dr. Crandall A. Shifflett a great deal, most of which I can never repay. Without his guidance, patience, and good humor this thesis could not have been completed. Every student of history should be lucky enough to work with a professor the caliber of Dr. Shifflett.

Dr. Peter Wallenstein's helpful insight made this paper much stronger, and Dr. James I. Robertson Jr.'s editing skills helped make it readable. I offer a sincere thank you to both.

A Curtis Thesis Research Grant from the V.P.I. history department made several trips to Richmond and a visit to the National Archives possible. John M. Ratliff generously allowed me access to his great-grandfather's letters and papers. This thesis benefited immensely from each.

Dr. Larry Neil Shumsky, Dr. Kathleen Jones, and Dr. A. Roger Ekirch each helped to broaden my understanding of history. I offer my gratitude to them. Rhonda, Jan, and Linda kept me on a straight path through the bureaucratic maze of graduate school. My thanks to each of them as well.

My comrades at V.P.I., Sarah Mitchell-Cotton and Chris Curtis, served me well. When I got lost, they steered me to The Cellar, when I felt overwhelmed, they offered a laugh, and when I wondered why, they showed me the Preston graveyard. I wish them both the best.

My friend, roommate, and coconspirator Sabrene Blevins somehow put up with me through two years of graduate school. A thanks here will never be enough.

This paper could not have been completed without the support and encouragement of Shannon Bowles. Her kindness never ceases to amaze me. Thanks Shanny.

My grandparents, Jack and Florence Wyatt and Kathleen Dotson, and my parents Paul and Carol Dotson, each encouraged me to attend graduate school and supported me through it. I dedicate this work to them.

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I am for Virginia, but have no affections for the Dictator of the Confederate States.

Ferdinand A. Winston
Floyd County Courthouse
June, 1861

INTRODUCTION: LOYALTY DIVISIONS ON THE FLOYD COUNTY HOMEFRONT

In the fall of 1864, undercover Confederate detectives John B. Williams and Thomas McGill passed through mountainous southwest Virginia on a mission to infiltrate secret Unionist peace societies rumored to be operating in the region. Upon gaining the confidence of several men belonging to a clandestine Unionist organization in the area, the detectives pressed for information concerning the society's strength. Rowsie, a German member of the peace society, conceded to Williams and McGill that the association was well established only in a few Appalachian counties, but informed them it was especially strong in Floyd County, where he reported, "nearly all the people" were members, like him, of "The Heroes of America."¹

The claim that "nearly all" of Floyd County's Confederate homefront residents belonged to an organized Unionist peace society is incorrect. During the war, numerous Floyd inhabitants were Unionists, and they openly and actively participated in action defined as disloyal to the Virginia and Confederate governments. Many county residents eventually became war weary and apathetic in their commitment to the Southern cause, displaying disloyalty to the Confederacy by not actively supporting it. Hundreds of Floyd residents, the relatives or friends of county soldiers, engaged in disloyal activity by supporting the men when they deserted and returned to the county. However, at least an equal number of Floyd's wartime inhabitants remained devoutly loyal to Virginia and the Confederacy. The wide array of loyalty postures present in the county caused conflict and division. This community-wide turmoil deepened throughout the Civil War and eventually resulted in the collapse of Floyd County as a useful or positive portion of the Confederate homefront. The disintegration of the wartime homefront in Floyd County mirrored similar collapses elsewhere on the Southern homefront, making Floyd County's homefront failure one of the many thousands of straws that contributed to help break the Confederacy's back.

Although it is likely that antebellum residents in Floyd County occasionally disagreed or even feuded, no circumstance so profoundly and bitterly divided them as the Civil War did from 1861 to 1865. From secession through Appomattox the war caused a divergence of ideologies and loyalties among Floyd County residents and grouped its inhabitants into numerous conflicting and adversarial factions. The resultant indigenous strife led to widespread local eruptions of intimidation, brutality, and even homicide. The discord and violence between county inhabitants with opposing loyalty postures eventually

¹*The Official Records of the War of Rebellion* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), series 4, volume 3, 806-809.

also elicited a series of actions initiated at the highest levels of the Confederate and Virginia governments against Floyd residents they deemed disloyal.²

Widespread community support and the mountain geography of Floyd made the county a favorite destination of Confederate deserters. Local Confederate runaways organized gangs to elude capture and subjected loyal Confederate residents to foraging raids, intimidation, violence, and murder.³ Floyd County's Confederate loyalists increasingly sought outside governmental assistance to quash the local deserter bands and actively assisted troops sent to the county to carry out such actions.⁴ When the Confederate army responded to the requests of Floyd loyalists and sent deserter hunting squads into the county, a systematic campaign of terror against relatives of deserters began. So too did the large-scale arrest and occasional execution of runaway Southern soldiers living in the Floyd community.⁵ These actions, and others promoted by upper-echelon Confederate army officers, high-level members of the Confederate government, and two Virginia governors, transformed many residents' ambiguous apathy for the Confederate "Cause" into focused antipathy for it.

Floyd County's Unionist population provoked hostile responses from local loyalists and the Confederate government. Floyd's loyalists suspected Unionists were serving with the county's elected government during the war, and they sought ways to remove the disloyalists from office by expressing their concerns in correspondence with the governors of Virginia. Loyalists' distrust of Floyd's government, and hostility toward

²For a sample of executive department and upper-level military interest in "disloyal" activity in Floyd County, see letters and enclosures from Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon to Jefferson Davis in *The Official War Records*, series 4, volume 3, 802-816; a letter from Major-General John C. Breckenridge to General Robert E. Lee in *ibid.*, series 1, volume 33, 1269-70; a letter from Virginia Governor William Smith to Floyd County Justice of the Peace, 18 September 1864, Executive Papers and Letters, Virginia Governor William Smith, The Library of Virginia, Richmond (hereafter cited as Smith Papers); and an address to the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates by Governor Smith on 19 January 1865, transcript in the January folder of *ibid.*

³*The Official War Records*, series 4, volume 3, 802-805; *Lynchburg Daily Virginian*, 8 October 1862; John S. Wise, *End of an Era* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1901), 385; Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1928; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1966), 62-67 (page references are to reprint edition); Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1934; reprint, New York: A.M.S. Press, 1970), 160, 164-65 (page references are to reprint edition).

⁴See the dozens of wartime letters from Floyd County residents to Virginia Governors John Letcher and William Smith in their respective Executive Papers and Letters, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.

⁵*The Official War Records*, series 1, volume 43, part 2, 889-90, 907-908; Louisa and Nancy Walton, "Simpsons," Floyd County, Virginia, to Cephas L. Walton [Petersburg, Virginia], 5 March 1865, Walton Family Correspondence, Special Collections, Carol M. Newman Library, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg (hereafter cited as V.P.I. and S.U.).

the county's hundreds of Unionist residents, led to community policing by Confederate home guard units and loyalist partisan rangers. Unionists in the county also formed their own guard unit and, along with local deserter gangs, clashed with Floyd's home guard and Confederate troops. The chaos and violence that resulted caused law enforcement in Floyd to disintegrate, left the county's residents unprotected against guerrilla warfare and foraging raids, and removed the Floyd as a productive portion of the Confederate homefront.

Many historical analyses single out the residents of southwestern Virginia for displaying an extreme variety of disaffection for the Confederacy.⁶ Much of this secondary work also suggests Unionist beliefs were an intrinsic and ubiquitous aspect of southern mountain society. However, the arguments these interpretations present are often based on broad generalizations, or they provide explanations derived from monolithic and misleading "either-or" correlation that defines residents as either openly pro-Confederate or disloyal.⁷ In Civil War Floyd County, societal conduct did not always conform to the static categories of Confederate "loyalty" or "disloyalty."⁸ Occasionally Floyd residents' loyalties to relatives or neighbors forced a dissolution of bonds with the South's wartime governments. This behavior is often interpreted as wholly and overtly disloyal to the Confederacy, but actually reveals more of a commitment to family or friends than hostility to the Confederate government. While many recent studies have added a great deal of complexity to early interpretations, much historical stereotype remains.⁹

⁶Early interpretation of the region is typified by work done by Lonon, *Desertion*, 62-67; Tatum, *Disloyalty*, 5, 32-33, 155-65; and most specifically by Henry T. Shanks, "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865," *North Carolina Historical Review* 21 (April 1944): 118-35.

⁷Durwood Dunn and Ronald Eller both stress dissimilarities and the quilt-like pattern of pre-industrial Appalachia as well as warn against interpretive generalizations that encompass large sections of the region. See Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), xv; and Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 6-7.

⁸The words "loyal" and "disloyal" hold many connotations within the sphere of America's Civil War. For example; someone "disloyal" to the Confederate Government would be at the same time considered "loyal" to the Federal government, and vice versa. To avoid confusion it is perhaps best to always remember that each of these words possesses an implicit antithetical definition. To avert possible confusion I anticipate using each word only as an adjective connected to a noun that qualifies its implied meaning.

⁹Recent analyses of the region by Kenneth W. Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Kenneth W. Noe, "Red String Scare: Civil War Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (July 1992): 301-22; and Gordon B. McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865-1900: Politics and the Appalachian Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 19-26, 56, provide greatly expanded complexity to interpretations of the region and valuable commentary on the factors that shaped southwestern Virginians' attitudes during the Civil War.

To understand the extent of actual Confederate disloyalty in Floyd County, this thesis separates the “active disloyalty” of its hundreds of Unionist inhabitants from the “passive disloyalty” of relatives or friends of local deserters and the county’s disaffected residents. It then examines the conflicting loyalties of pro-Confederates, Unionists, and passive disloyalists within the Floyd community, seeking to understand better the wide variety of loyalty choices available to residents as well as the consequences of their choices. Since the inter-community conflict in Floyd County was not regionally unique, but mirrored types of societal turmoil found elsewhere on the southern Appalachian homefront, a study of the Floyd community also provides explanations useful to broader interpretations.¹⁰

By examining county residents who were both actively and passively disloyal to the Confederacy as well as the reaction to them by residents who remained loyal, this thesis exhibits the wide array of loyalty decisions available to residents and the consequences of their choices. It looks specifically at residents who were forced to choose between loyalty to family and neighbors or to governments in Richmond. Among them were the hundreds of inhabitants that protected, provisioned, and sheltered relatives who deserted the Confederate army and were then automatically defined as “disloyal” by the Virginia and Confederate governments.

To determine some of the significant factors contributing to the Floyd County community’s response to the Confederacy and Civil War, this thesis documents the various ways residents’ reactions took shape. Chapter One examines the roots of these decisions, exploring briefly Floyd County’s entrance into Virginia’s market economy during the 1850s and its residents’ conflicting choices during Virginia’s secession crisis. In the aftermath of secession, many Floyd residents embraced their new Confederate government and enlisted by the hundreds in its military units. The decision by some county soldiers to desert their units and return to Floyd caused loyalty conflicts between their supporters and the county’s pro-Confederates. This conflict, and the effects of deserters living in the Floyd community, are both explored in Chapter Two. Floyd’s Unionist population and its loyal Confederate residents clashed violently throughout much of the war, hastening the disintegration of the Floyd homefront. Their discord is examined in Chapter Three.

¹⁰Divided wartime loyalties resulting in pervasive guerrilla activity, deserter gang raids, intimidation, blackmail, violence, assassination, and murder, has been documented in several Appalachian communities. For examples, see Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 128-40; Ralph Mann, “Family Group, Family Migration, and the Civil War in the Sandy Basin of Virginia,” *Appalachian Journal* 19 (Summer 1992): 374-93; Gordon B. McKinney, “Women’s Role in Civil War Western North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (January 1992): 37-56; Philip Shaw Paludin, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981); Jeffery C. Weaver, *The Civil War in Buchanan and Wise Counties: A Bushwhackers’ Paradise* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1994); and William R. Trotter, *Bushwhackers: The Civil War in North Carolina: The Mountains* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1988), 135-179, 209-219. Michael Fellman’s *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 23-29, 52-73, 176-89, also provides cogent analysis of the effects of such activity on dispersed rural populations.

Community Study Methodology and Confederate Homefront Historiography

The methodological schema most appropriate for this thesis is commonly referred to as a “community study.” This paradigm, and topical arrangement, offers interpretations based primarily on evidence generated by a population living in a specific geographic location (usually no larger than a few counties) and within a specific time-frame. The resultant concentrated and limited examination ideally can provide a “micro-interpretation” on a single facet of a much larger discussion.¹¹ In this case, the methodology will provide material that can be used comparatively with other southern war-time homefront community analyses. Since the disintegration of the Confederate homefront is often cited as a primary reason for Southern defeat, this thesis provides data for inclusion in the larger discussion on that topic.

Southern homefront literature has dealt with a variety of issues; the resultant historiography is both immense and diverse; correspondingly providing a wide range of questions, methodological schema, topical material, and interpretation. Aside from contrasting interpretations regarding life within the South during the Civil War, the overall debate this thesis is concerned with centers around questions involving Confederate loyalty or disloyalty among the region’s white homefront population. While some work has taken this debate to lesser explored areas of the South, including a few examinations of the Appalachian region during the war, most regions of the South not within the realm of combat have thus far been excluded.¹²

Homefront cohesion and Confederate allegiance are documented in numerous recent studies.¹³ While not nearly as abundant, literature exploring homefront friction and

¹¹For analysis of the methodology, topical material included, and current state of nineteenth-century southern community studies and southern homefront literature, see Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr., eds., *Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), xi-xviii, 291-98; Randolph B. Campbell, “Planters and Plain Folk: The Social Structure of the Antebellum South,” in *Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Stanford W. Higginbotham*, ed. John B. Boles and Evelyn T. Nolen (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 48-77; and Mary Elizabeth Massey, “The Confederate States of America: The Homefront,” in *Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green*, ed. Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 249-72.

¹²For Civil War homefront regions of Virginia thus far unexplored in community study literature, see Brent Tarter, “The New Virginia Bookshelf,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 104 (Winter 1996): 62-66; Jane Turner Censer, “The Nineteenth Century Bookshelf,” *ibid.*, 124-25; and Edward L. Ayers, “Virginia History as Southern History,” *ibid.*, 134.

¹³Stephen V. Ash, *Middle Tennessee Society Transformed, 1860-1870: War and Peace in the Upper South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Robert C. Kenzer, *Kinship and*

Confederate disaffection adds significant complexity to interpretations of the South's wartime communities.¹⁴ Explorations of the Confederacy's Unionist residents also contribute to a broader comprehension of the dissenting attitudes expressed by a portion of the South's wartime population. Works explaining Confederate disaffection and Unionism, debating the strength of Confederate nationalism, and documenting Southerners who maintained allegiance to the United States government, offer considerable secondary dialogue for inclusion in this thesis.¹⁵

Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987); Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University, 1985). Recent work done by Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), offers many intriguing answers to questions regarding slaveless southerners' continued loyalty to the Confederacy.

¹⁴For Southern homefront studies exploring disunity and Confederate disaffection, see Wayne K. Durill, *War of Another Kind: A Southern Community in the Great Rebellion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1995); Marc W. Kruman, "Dissent in the Confederacy: The North Carolina Experience," *Civil War History: A Journal of the Middle Period* 27 (December 1981): 293-313; Randolph B. Campbell, *A Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850-1880* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983); William T. Blain, "'Banner' Unionism in Mississippi: Choctaw County, 1861-1869," *Mississippi Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1976): 207-220; John W. Shaffer, "Loyalties in Conflict: Union and Confederate Sentiment in Barbour County," *West Virginia History* 50 (1991): 109-129; William Alan Blair, "Virginia's Private War: The Contours of Dissent and Loyalty in the Confederacy, 1861-1865" (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1996).

¹⁵Confederate Nationalism is discussed by Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Richard E. Baringer and others, *The Elements of Confederate Defeat: Nationalism, War Aims, and Religion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988); and James O. Farmer, "Southern Presbyterians and Southern Nationalism: A Study in Ambivalence," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 75 (Summer 1991): 275-294. Unionism and Confederate citizens loyal to the United States is dealt with by Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Richard N. Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1992); Tatum, *Disloyalty*; Walter Lynn Bates, "Southern Unionists: A Socio-Economic Examination of the Third East Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment, U.S.A., 1862-1865," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 50 (Winter 1991): 226-239; Michael K. Honey, "The War Within the Confederacy: White Unionists of North Carolina," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives* (January 1994): 55-71; James Penn, "The Geographical Variation of Unionism in Louisiana: The Study of Southern Claims Data," *Louisiana History* 30 (Fall 1989): 399-418; John Hammond Moore, "Sherman's 'Fifth Column': A Guide to Unionist Activity in Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 68 (Fall 1984): 382-409.

For discussion of Confederate disaffection, see Tatum, *Disloyalty*; Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1924; reprint, New York: Hillary House, 1963); Malcolm C. McMillan, *The Disintegration of a Confederate State: Three Governors and*

Race and gender roles and relationships on the Southern homefront shifted profoundly during the war. Slaves assumed a contraband or free status, and the South's men and women were forced to redefine normative spheres of influence and proper behavior. Women assumed an integral role within the Confederacy's communities. In Floyd County, women's actions and loyalties were often the prime force enabling husbands both to elude deserter hunters and to survive in remote mountain hideaways. Their husbands' extended absences from the home, serving with Confederate forces or "laying-out" in the woods, also thrust the county's women into the traditionally male sphere of responsibility for family economics, sustenance, and security. For the wives of Floyd County's deserters, this responsibility was made even more problematic by the harassment campaigns of Confederate deserter hunters and home guards who occasionally terrorized and tortured the women in an effort to learn their husbands' hiding places. The importance of their conduct, the changing role of women on the southern homefront, and the fluid nature of gender during the war, can be better understood when considered alongside arguments presented in several new studies.¹⁶

Soldiers from Floyd County deserted the Confederate army in numbers far exceeding the average ratio for Virginia troops. Understanding the complex reasons for desertion as well as deserters' impact on families and community is an integral facet of this thesis. Several secondary analyses of desertion during the Civil War allow context for discussion.¹⁷ By utilizing them, and addressing the ways Floyd residents grappled with the

Alabama's Wartime Homefront (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1986); Eric Foner, "The South's Inner Civil War," *American Heritage* 40 (March 1989): 46-56; Paul D. Escott, "'Cry of the Sufferers': The Problem of Welfare in the Confederacy," *Civil War History* 23 (September 1977): 228-240; Kruman, "Dissent in the Confederacy"; Richard B. McCaslin, "Wheat Growers in the Cotton Confederacy: The Suppression of Dissent in Collin County, Texas, During the Civil War," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 96 (April 1993): 526-539; Carl H. Moneyhon, "Disloyalty and Class Consciousness in Southwestern Arkansas, 1862-1865," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 52 (Autumn 1993): 223-243; James T. Otten, "Disloyalty in the Upper Districts of South Carolina During the Civil War," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 75 (April 1974): 95-110.

¹⁶Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1989); John C. Inscoe, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia: Portrait of a Mountain Woman and her Community at War," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (October 1992): 388-413; Gordon B. McKinney, "Women's Role in Civil War Western North Carolina," *ibid.* (January 1992): 37-56.

¹⁷Lonn, *Desertion*; Bessie Martin, *Desertion of Alabama Troops from the Confederate Army: A Study in Sectionalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932); Richard Bardolph, "Confederate Dilemma: North Carolina Troops and the Deserter Problem," *North Carolina Historical Review* 66 (January 1989): 60-86; and Richard Bardolph, "Confederate Dilemma: North Carolina Troops and the Deserter Problem," *ibid.*, 67 (April 1989): 179-210; Peter S. Bearman, "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War," *Social Forces* 70 (December 1991): 321-342; Judith Lee Hallock, "The Role of Community in Civil War Desertion," *Civil War History: A Journal of*

consequences of an indigenous deserter population, the complexity of community response can be better understood. For this thesis, a component of that understanding is also found in literature exploring the covert Unionist society “The Heroes of America.”¹⁸

Virginia, the state in which much of the Civil War was fought, is centrally addressed in a colossal load of primary wartime literature and post-war secondary analysis and exposition. Although Virginia has been the subject of profuse wartime examination and consideration, surprisingly little of the literature focuses exclusively on Virginia’s wartime communities.¹⁹ Civil War community study literature concentrating on the Appalachian region of southwest Virginia is even more sparse. However, several examinations of wartime Appalachia are available and contribute greatly to better understanding of southwest Virginia within the 1861-1865 period. Gordon B. McKinney’s *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865-1900: Politics and the Appalachian Community* (1978) discusses many of the factors that led him to conclude that a comparatively weaker variety of Unionism existed in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. John C. Inscoe’s “Coping in Confederate Appalachia: Portrait of a Mountain Woman and Her Community at War” (1992) adds another valuable interpretation of the wartime responsibilities of Appalachian women. Inscoe’s *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (1989) provides an understanding of how slavery and slaveholding status operated in Appalachia. Martin Crawford’s “Political Society in a Southern Mountain Community: Ashe County, North Carolina, 1850-1861” (1989) is helpful in supplying an appreciation for the fluid and evolving nature of political thought in a single Appalachian county.²⁰

the Middle Period 29 (June 1983): 123-134; Richard Reid, “A Test Case of the ‘Crying Evil’: Desertion Among North Carolina Troops During the Civil War,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (July 1981): 234-62; Kevin Conley Ruffner, “Civil War Desertion from a Black Belt Regiment: An Examination of the 44th Virginia Infantry,” in *The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia*, ed. Edward Ayers and John C. Willis (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 79-108; and for an expanded earlier version of the same essay, see Kevin Conley Ruffner, “‘A Dreadful Affect upon Good Soldiers’: A Study of Desertion in a Confederate Regiment” (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1987).

¹⁸William T. Auman and David D. Scarboro, “The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (October 1981): 326-64; Kenneth W. Noe, “Red String Scare: Civil War Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America,” *ibid.*, 69 (July 1992): 301-22; Kruman, “Dissent in the Confederacy”; and William C. Harris, “The Southern Unionist Critique of the Civil War,” *Civil War History: A Journal of the Middle Period* 31 (March 1985): 39-57.

¹⁹Recent studies of Virginia’s homefront communities, an indication this trend may be changing, cogently reveal this paradigm’s potential. For examples, see Daniel E. Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861-1865* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Daniel W. Crofts, *Old Southampton: Politics and Society in a Virginia County, 1834-1869* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992). Literature concerned with specific groups on the homefront also add to a better understanding of wartime Virginia. For a recent example, see Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

²⁰McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, 18-29, 56; Inscoe, “Coping in Confederate

Although there is a scarcity of literature focusing exclusively on southwest Virginia communities during the Civil War, two interpretations do directly address the region. Henry T. Shanks' "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia, 1861-1865" (1944) is a broad monograph detailing the evolving growth of disaffection for the Confederacy and rise of Unionist sentiment in Appalachian southwest Virginia.²¹ Shanks contends that the people of the region, for a variety of reasons, slowly turned against their Richmond governments. In *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (1994) and "Southwest Virginia, The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, and the Union, 1861-1865" (1990) Kenneth W. Noe challenges Shanks' findings and argues that widespread Confederate apathy in the region may have been mistaken for Confederate disloyalty.²² Noe's "Red String Scare: Civil War Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America" (1992) dismisses much of Shanks' evidence of extensive secret Unionist societies in the region.²³ Both studies contribute to a better understanding of southwest Virginia during the Civil War as well as the ways a community study might add to analyses already completed.

Appalachia," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (October 1992): 388-413; Inscoc, *Mountain Masters* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Crawford, "Political Society," *Journal of Southern History* 55 (August 1989): 373-391. An examination of slavery in neighboring Montgomery County by Charles L. Grant, "An Appalachian Portrait: Black and White in Montgomery County, Virginia, Before the Civil War" (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1987), provided additional insight into Floyd County's Civil War era slaves and slaveholders.

²¹Shanks, "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwestern Virginia."

²²Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*; and Noe, "Southwest Virginia, The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, and the Union, 1816-1865" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990).

²³Noe, "Red String Scare."