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Desertion and Unionism in Floyd County, Virginia, 1861–1865

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In Floyd County, Virginia, the Civil War generated an extreme example of divided loyalties and community division in the Confederacy. The county was the home of a strong and growing pro-Union sentiment during the war, and to the dismay of Confederate leaders in Richmond, it also became a haven for deserters. Almost a fourth of Floyd's soldiers deserted their units and returned to hideout in the mountains around their homes. This article examines desertion and Unionism in Floyd, elements that both reflected and heightened division, and suggests that mounting desertion and Unionism were crucial elements in transforming the community's initial support for the Confederacy into rampant disdain for it.[1]

I. Initial Bonds to the Confederacy

During secession, Floyd County's residents found their political interests meshed to those of eastern Virginia and the South. Most of the county's approximately 8000 residents had profited in a regional economic boom during the 1850s. They reaped the benefits of increases of 47 percent in the number of farms, 52 percent in improved farm acreage, and a 2000 percent increase in tobacco harvests. Transportation improvements, which opened Virginia's market economy to local farmers, accounted for dramatic growth in tobacco weights and solidly linked the interests of the community with tobacco speculators in the east. Floyd's 116 slaveholders, who owned only 475 slaves in 1860, nonetheless disproportionately dominated local economics and politics; they controlled a third of local real estate, possessed nearly half the county's personal wealth, and held nearly all significant political offices.[2]

In the 1860 presidential election, Floyd residents paralleled southwest Virginia's vote, dividing their ballots almost evenly between (Southern) Democrat James Breckinridge and Constitutional Unionist John Bell.

After Lincoln's election, voters in Floyd choose "conditional" Unionist candidate Harvey Deskins as their representative to Virginia's secession convention. Like most southwest Virginians, they believed that as long as slavery and the South were left alone, they could remain faithful to the Federal government. Deskins thus mirrored their sentiment on April 4, when he cast his vote against secession. Events at Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers in mid-April shattered that trust. In Christiansburg, *The New Star* demanded armed rebellion against "the treacherous and cowardly Abe Lincoln" as the only option left to maintain the "honor of Virginia." Deskins also quickly shifted his position. On April 17, he voted with the majority of Virginia's legislators for immediate secession.[3]

During the county's follow-up "reference" vote on secession, disunionists crushed all signs of dissent at the polls. They threatened anti-secessionists with property seizure, violence, and even death. In Southern Claims Commission testimony recorded in the early 1870s, Indian Valley tenant farmer Madison D. Reed remembered that during "reference ... no person at my voting place was allowed to vote against it." In similar testimony, Andrew F. Stigleman claimed that in the Court House district, he thwarted the orders of a mob and "refused to vote for secession." Another dissenter, Eli Epperly, "voted for secession ... through fear" because "the Rebels would destroy his property" if he refused. Charles Huff witnessed "the general influence exerted very severely in Floyd County in favor of secession" and reported that the county's "leading Rebels" openly threatened "that those who refused to vote for secession would be hung." [4]

Despite the emergence of at least limited contention during the "reference" vote, dissent appeared to be insignificant in the months following secession. Enthusiasm for the Confederacy was high; hundreds of residents rushed to enlist in the county's newly forming infantry companies. Henry Lane, a 35 year-old Jacksonville lawyer, recruited 101 volunteers for his company of "Floyd Guards." By mid-June, Lane successfully mustered the unit into the newly formed 42nd Virginia Infantry. As Lane and his "Floyd Guards" marched off to Lynchburg to begin drilling at Camp Lee, others in the Floyd community moved to organize additional infantry companies. County surveyor Jackson Godby enlisted 74 "Floyd Defenders," Andrew Dickerson signed up 89 "Floyd Grays," and by the end of summer they were joined by three additional Floyd units in the 54th Virginia Infantry. By the fall of 1861, over a third of the roughly 1,400 Floyd men eligible for Confederate service had voluntarily en-

listed. They elected slaveholders as captains in four of the county's six infantry companies.[5]

Others swore loyalty to the Confederacy in the strongest terms. G.W. Shelton and Jacksonville lawyer James Luke Tompkins expressed their enthusiasm to Virginia Governor John Letcher, reporting their "anxious" desire "to get some positions in the Virginia Regiments" and "assist Virginia in her troubles." S.A. Buckingham, captain of a local militia company, told Letcher that "the flower and pride" of the county's young men would "beat back the hired mercenaries of the base and despotic usurper that now occupies the position once occupied by Washington, Jefferson and Madison." He claimed to be willing "to pour out blood like water" in defense of Virginia's "untarnished honor." In July, 54th Virginia Infantryman Cephas Walton wrote relatives in Floyd. He boasted of volunteering "to fight for my cuntry and my wife and my father and my mother and my brothers and frends." In the initial excitement of the Southern revolt, the community also warmly received Confederate soldiers. When the 51st Virginia Infantry bivouacked at Floyd Courthouse, enthusiastic crowds offered "a hearty reception" for the troops.[6]

II. The Effects of Desertion

The majority of Floyd County's enlistees and conscripts served the length of their commitment and returned home only after being discharged, killed, or defeated. However, nearly 23 percent of local soldiers chose to abandon the Confederate cause, and return to "lay out" in the county's woodlands and mountains. They were three times more likely to desert as other Confederate troops and almost twice as likely as Virginia soldiers. The consequences of their desertions were profound; they fostered community division, generated chaos, and eventually provoked Confederate military actions.[7]

The county's soldiers deserted for a myriad of reasons. To many, absence from their families became intolerable. Tenant farmer John A. Ratliff, who enlisted in the 54th Virginia Infantry, worried about his 26-year-old wife Adline and two infant children left alone in Floyd's Court House district. He wrote home often to check on his "dear wife" and "sweet little children." A year after enlisting, Ratliff felt "very uneasy" after experiencing a series of omens he interpreted as indicative of his children's impending deaths. Scarcity at home worried Ratliff as well; his wife reported that the family "had got out of money" and would need his soldiers' pay to survive. By the spring of 1863, he confessed to Adline: "i hope the wore wont last much longer ... three boys is running a way

i wish they hole regment would run a way." Ratliff stayed, but pondered desertion again at the end of summer, warning his wife in August that "you might not be surprised to see mee at home at any time for I am coming some way or another." His older brother Philip seized the opportunity to urge him to desert. Philip reported in 1863 that "the general opinion of the people in Floyd is that the war is nearly over." He claimed that 250 Confederate deserters were passing through the county each week and they were "respcted as much as eny body else." Ratliff, already eager to return, heeded his older brother's advice and deserted that autumn. The home guard arrested him soon after his return and within weeks forced him back into the military. However, the misery of continued absence from his wife and children was brief. Just weeks after his departure Adline received a lieutenant's notice confirming "the sad news" that her husband had been killed by an artillery shell near Jonesboro, Georgia.[8]

Suffering on the homefront drew hundreds of soldiers home. Although Floyd was shielded from combat, its population experienced food and labor shortages. Its magistrates taxed and impressed provisions to feed its troops' families, but still reported "a great many of our soldiers wives and families are inteirely barefoot, and a good many neighborhoods are so scarce of men that the soldiers families can not get help to get firewood." Nancy Walton, like spouses throughout the county, begged her husband to return: "my trubble is so grate i dont now how i can bar it ... try to gite home as soon as posible."[9]

County soldiers began deserting early in the war and continued to desert in increasing numbers through 1865. In June 1861, only a month after volunteering for service with Henry Lane's "Floyd Guards," John William Howell, David Linkins, and James Manning abandoned Camp Lee. Two weeks later, Andrew Michael Reed and Jackson Brogan also deserted. A distraught Captain Lane turned to the *Daily Lynchburg Virginian* in an attempt to get the men back. The newspaper published two notices naming the deserters and reminded Floyd County's sheriff and home guard units to "arrest the said deserters and cause them to be delivered at this camp to be dealt with according to law." Later in the war, the homogenous composition of county units, which made their localist identity preferential to Confederate ideology, contributed to increasing desertion rates. In the spring of 1864, it was likely a significant factor in the decision of Captain Asa Booth and all 101 Floyd soldiers in Company D to desert the 54th Virginia Infantry in Georgia and head home.[10]

The omnipresent threat of military punishment made abandoning the war a potentially dangerous decision. In the fall of 1863, county soldiers in the 42nd Virginia watched as three weeping deserters were tied to stakes and executed. Men in the 54th Virginia also saw firsthand the "dying agony and spasms" of fellow soldiers executed for abandoning the war. Physical punishments, like those inflicted on Floyd soldier Thomas King, who was "branded on his left hip with the letter D [and] put in hard labor for four months ... with a 12 pound ball attached to his ankle," were a far more popular penalty for deserting.[11]

Officers reacted with disbelief and anger when men in their commands fled the war. In the summer of 1862, Colonel William Banks Shelor, a former court clerk, put a heavy guard around the 54th Virginia to impede the flow of men from the unit. When the guards proved ineffective, Shelor drank heavily and went into "a perfect rage." He swore to end all furloughs and proclaimed that his troops "might die and go to hell for all he cared." Local Confederate commanders John R. Hammet, captain of the 54th Virginia's Company I, and Austin Harman, captain of Company D, were also distraught. In March 1863, they filed complaints against Monroe Hudson, James and Joseph Gray, Daniel Keith, and George Wells for having "deliberately thrown down their arms, abandoned their comrades, and deserted their flag and country." The captains urged Floyd's magistrates to post the deserters' names in "the most public place in the county" to humiliate the men back into service. However, the anguish of officers and the punishments they inflicted did little overall to stem the tide of Floyd men leaving the war. By the fall of 1862, more county soldiers were abandoning local units than joining them (see Figure 1).[12]

Once in Floyd, deserters usually attempted to conceal themselves in mountainous portions of the county or in woodlands near isolated family farms. For additional protection and sustenance, many also banded together in gangs. They staged hundreds of foraging raids against the county's loyal Confederates and used scouts scattered throughout the countryside to provide warnings against home guard patrols. One notorious gang, established and commanded by David and James Sisson, eventually even turned the tables on Confederate deserter hunters by ambushing and capturing them instead.[13]

Since deserters were usually unable to sow or tend crops, their wives or mothers were often made responsible for producing provision. In Southern Claims Commission testimony, Jane Weddle reported that during the war she felt an obligation to send out "a basket of provisions

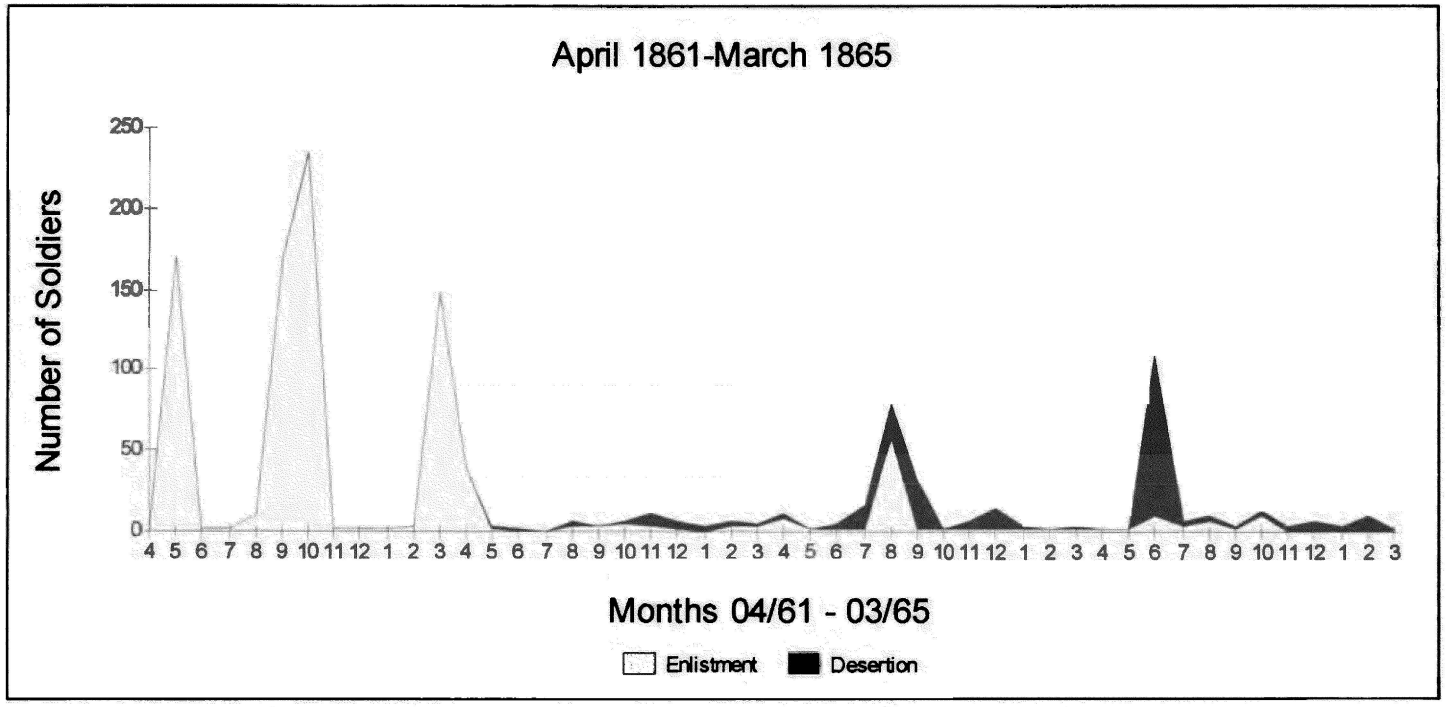

Figure 1. Enlistment and desertion occurrence, Floyd County Confederate soldiers. Sources: N.J. Agnew, "A Listing of Men from Floyd County"; Chapla, 42nd Virginia, *pp. 64–106; Gunn,* 24th Virginia, *pp. 68–106; Olson,* 21st Virginia Cavalry, *pp. 58–88; Sherwood and Weaver,* 54th Virginia, *pp. 171–230.*

for deserters every day for about 15 months." Aley Ann Kinsey remembered caring for several young children during the war, but still managing to find a way to provide provisions to several relatives "laying out" in Floyd's mountains. Most deserters' wives suffered harassment when loyalists learned they were aiding their husbands. In the spring of 1864, dozens of deserters' wives responded to the intimidation by banding together and robbing a Confederate "tax-in-kind" station at Locust Grove.[14]

Warnings supplied by female relatives were of vital importance to runaway soldiers who were attempting to elude capture. Not surprisingly, the warnings also provoked persecution from pro-Confederates. In the fall of 1864, Aley Kinsey told her son-in-law that deserter hunters were in the neighborhood. When the home guard learned of the warning, they arrested Kinsey and her nine-year-old son and charged them both with treason. Rebecca Blackwell instructed her eight-year-old son Isaac "to blow the horn when the homeguards were in the neighborhood." She successfully safeguarded her older son Abraham, but was harassed and threatened for the action.[15]

Aid from Unionists was also vital to the survival of runaway soldiers. In their efforts to end the war, Unionists considered "encouraging desertion from the rebel ranks by feeding deserters" a top priority. Miriam Reed and her father, who were typical of the Floyd Unionists, fed men who were "strangers" they "never saw before." David Weddle Sr. claimed to have fed "as many as 150 deserters a week" at his isolated farm. Philip Ratliff used providing breakfast as an opportunity to urge deserters to "go to their homes and stir up their friends against the secession cause." Farmers Tilman Overstreet and Eli Epperly both hoped to "brake up the war." They "would harbor and feed deserters from the rebel army" as much as possible. Dunkard Joshua Weddle, who fed Floyd's runaway soldiers even after receiving death threats from loyalists, was remembered by them as "a great friend to us poor fellows who had to stay in the woods."[16]

Unionists also provided food for deserters' families, becoming an alternative outlet of assistance in direct contrast to the Confederate aid offered soldiers' families. In 1862, Otey F. Kinsey, who operated a grist mill in the Simpsons district, began providing free grain to deserters' families. When loyalists eventually learned of his actions, and threatened to burn his mill, Kinsey outsmarted them by grinding surplus grain under the cover of darkness. To further provide for the families of runaway soldiers, Unionists sometimes offered deserters employment. In 1863, Amos Graham hired several runaway soldiers to assist him in cleaning grain. After deserting the 54th Virginia Infantry, Henry Dangerfield se-

cured a job with Otey Kinsey. According to him, Kinsey employed several other deserters, "paid them well," let them sleep on his premises, and provided "timely warnings" when home guards approached. When the guard captured Dangerfield, Kinsey even lured the soldiers to a nearby still and "made them drunk," a circumstance that allowed Dangerfield to flee back into the woods and remain at large.[17]

When deserter hunters began scouring the county, Unionists frequently sheltered and protected its runaway soldiers. During one raid, Elijah Hylton concealed dozens of deserters in the loft of his barn. As the guard began closing in on Andrew Weddle, William J. Dillion pulled him out of the woods and advised him to "dodge in and stay with him a little for protection." In the winter of 1863, Andrew Stigleman warned Floyd deserter John Earls that the home guard was tracking him in the snow. Stigleman promptly retraced Earls' tracks in another direction and confounded the nearby deserter hunters. Unionists also actively assisted deserters across the lines, providing maps, horses, provisions, and often even money to local runaway soldiers heading north. Noah B. Underwood, a Court House district farmer, made maps for local deserters detailing the safest route to nearby Union lines. Elijah Hylton, another strong Union man, claimed to have done everything he could to assist local runaway soldiers in crossing into Federal lines.[18]

Floyd's loyalist community realized early in the war that they would be unable to apprehend most of the county's runaway soldiers or halt community support. By the fall of 1862, gangs of runaway soldiers were subjecting them to foraging raids, threats, violence, and murder. The county's loyal Confederates, who were primarily outside the age parameters of the southern draft, felt outnumbered and outgunned by local deserters. They turned to the Virginia and Confederate governments for additional assistance and prompted military actions that further divided residents.

Loyalists' demands for governmental support began in November 1862, when members of a Bent Mountain deserter gang ambushed and killed Confederate recruiting officer John R. Payton. Tazewell Price wrote Governor John Letcher and explained that Payton was "shot dead from his horse" in the middle of the day and that a witness's house had been "burned to the ground." He demanded "a force sufficient to scour the mountain" to "put a stop to such outrageous acts," complaining that "robbery, theft and attempts to murder various citizens" and "threats" against witnesses were commonplace. He explained that no "sufficient force" was available locally to arrest the "traitors," making Floyd's "re-

spectable citizens. . . alarmed [to] such an extent that they don't believe their lives are safe."[19]

Loyalists continued to beg the state for help throughout the rest of the war. In the spring of 1864, an anonymous "loyal citizen" who signed his name as "Virginia" wrote newly elected Governor William Smith to inform him of "the deplorable situation of affairs in our county." The writer estimated that "not less than 500 deserters" were already in Floyd and noted that "their number is almost daily increasing." He described "unbearable depredations upon the persons and property of loyal citizens," which included "theft, arson and murder." The home guard was "nearly powerless," and suspected to be "friends of desertion." The circumstances required "some plan by which our county may be rid of this growing and disgraceful nuisance."[20]

The following summer, the "Committee of Safety" in Montgomery County reported that Floyd and Giles counties were "infested by armed bands of deserters," making "the lives and property of all loyal citizens very insecure." Deserter gangs were shooting "unarmed and inoffensive citizens," pillaging and burning their property, and believed to be planning to destroy track of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. In September 1864, Floyd's pro-Confederates relayed even more shocking information. They warned Governor Smith that 300 deserters, led by a "Yankee officer," were planning to "destroy the railroad and keep it in said condition and dispell the secessionists of all their property." In addition, they alleged that an unnamed Floyd magistrate was aiding the runway soldiers with their scheme.[21]

The complaints prompted Governor Smith to lash out at Floyd's magistrates. In September 1864, he chastised Harvey Deskins, complaining: "I am astonished to have reported to me that there is large amount of disloyalty in your county, that bands of deserters were at large therein, that they pillage and plunder peaceable citizens, that they are even organized and that they and others of your county have been publicly addressed by a man said to be a Yankee officer and that no steps have been taken to suppress such scandalous proceedings." In a simultaneous letter, he urged Commonwealth Attorney, G. W. Shelor, to immediately prosecute those persons responsible for "the grave and scandalous evil infected to your people."[22]

Despite Smith's suspicions, Floyd magistrates had organized deserter patrols. In the spring and summer of 1864, the court forced male residents to "ride night and day" in search of deserters. However, their absence from farms caused a grain shortage the following fall and further

disillusioned the community. The patrols fought fiercely with armed local runaway soldiers. In August 1863, a patrol led by Captain Asa Booth was "unlawfully and maliciously" ambushed by the Sisson Gang. The following month patrols along mountains bordering Franklin County stumbled upon a deserter fortress. In the resultant combat, two deserters and four home guard members were killed, and 60-70 runaway soldiers were captured.[23]

Confederate military actions against Floyd's deserters began in the spring of 1864, after Robert E. Lee learned that soldiers from the county in the Army of Northern Virginia were receiving letters from kin urging them to desert. He alerted John C. Breckenridge, the commander of Western Virginia, and ordered him to suppress the treasonous activity. Breckenridge quickly ensured the general that "a plan for the suppression of this band of tories and deserters" was underway and reported that Brigadier-General John Echols was being placed in charge of deserter hunting operations in the county. In October, Echols forwarded a report detailing the "large collections of deserters and disloyal men in Floyd ... and the depredations and outrages committed by them." He claimed to be nearly ready to "hunt them out, ... drive them from the country or exterminate them." However, in a shocking subsequent report, Echols alleged that residents had "gone so far as to elect what they called a brigadier-general of deserters ... and organized what they called a state government, for which they claimed to have elected a governor."[24]

Later that fall, Echols reported that his troops had apprehended "a large number of deserters and disloyal men." He claimed that they "shot some" and hunted others "so effectively that many are coming in." The Floyd jail was full and the county's "disloyal citizens" had been terrorized. To ensure continued progress, Echols ordered Colonel Robert Taylor Preston and his 4th Virginia Reserves to "follow up the treatment" through the fall of 1864. Nearly 200 of Preston's soldiers were conscripts from Floyd. By dispatching them into "the very heart of ... Sisson's Kingdom," Preston hoped to learn the location of deserter hideouts. Once that information arrived, the unit staged a series of surprise nighttime raids and apprehended dozens of runaway soldiers. Lieutenant John S. Wise, a 17-year-old Virginia Military Institute cadet, conducted one of the reserve's raids on a man considered to be a "notorious" runaway Confederate soldier. His squad burst into the runaway's cabin in the pre-dawn hours, but startled only the man's wife and infant children. After questioning the woman and searching the premises, Wise concluded that her husband had already crossed into Federal lines. However, while preparing to leave, the squad stumbled upon her husband emerging from a tunnel

behind the cabin. As they left with him in their custody, his wife sounded a "cow's horn" to warn men concealed in the woods nearby.[25]

Colonel Preston's troops, and other Confederate forces, continued scouring the county for deserters throughout the remainder of the war. They returned hundreds of men to service. Floyd's loyalists praised the actions, assuring relatives in the army that troops were rounding up deserters and sending them back into the war. Louisa Walton of Floyd County wrote to her son, Cephas Walton, who was with the 54th Virginia Infantry in the trenches around Petersburg: "they shot a deserter from Petersburg the same night he got home and they say that they is going to shot them all." She counseled him not "to be woraly about the runaways that are in here, for they is a heap after them now." Cephas' wife seconded his mother's opinion, informing him that "thar is guards from petersburg hear i hope they will git all of the deserters out from hear."[26]

In their effort to arrest runaway soldiers, Confederate forces harassed, imprisoned, and terrorized residents who were supporting them. In the fall of 1864, Jane Weddle received threats from Confederate cavalry hunting her sons. The soldiers stole her chickens, fed their horses, and proceeded to "curse and swear and threaten to shoot," warning her that if she refused to "bring [her] boys in from the woods that night that [the] next morning they would burn [her] house down." Huffsville district farmer Jacob Weaver received similar intimidation and claimed "rebel soldiers threatened to hang my daughter in law" because they were feeding and sheltering his deserter son.[27]

Despite the apparent success of numerous deserter hunting raids conducted in the county, the support of the community allowed the majority of Floyd's deserters to escape arrest. In November 1864, Brigadier-General Echols admitted the difficulty in correspondence with his superiors in Richmond. He complained that "It has been found very difficult to capture or drive from the county these deserters, because they are supported and sustained in every way by the disloyal citizens of that section, and ... they are supplied with all that they may need by their friends at the expense of the loyal citizens' property in the vicinity."[28]

III. The Effects of Unionism

Confederate disaffection, which often eventually produced disloyalty and Unionism, expanded throughout the war in Floyd. Although persecution of deserters eventually became a leading cause of disaffection, residents' discontent was also generated in other ways. Some, like the

county's hundreds of Dunkards, who were "as a body ... opposed to the war," were Unionists from the opening days of the conflict. Others were enraged by confusing Confederate conscription laws, or alienated by new taxes, wartime inflation, and Confederate impressment. In September 1862, when the county experienced a severe grain shortage, its residents held a mass meeting in Jacksonville and drafted a petition to explain how "the distilling of grain during our present difficulties" made "the principal sufferers the needy and unprotected families of the poorer classes." The petition was signed by 572 residents and described "intense suffering in our midst." The effects of such suffering early in the war, combined with even greater shortages and hardships later, created disaffection within a portion of the community.[29]

Extortion by merchants, pillaging by Confederate troops and home guard units, and the increasing worthlessness of Confederate currency added to the community's misery. Jacksonville tanner James W. LeSueur, like other merchants, forced residents to sign his military exemption petition, threatening customers who refused that he would "see them in hell" before ever selling them leather again. From the camp of the 54th Virginia Infantry in Dalton, Georgia, John Howell instructed his wife not to "sell eny thing you have for Confederate money." Cephas Walton wrote county authorities, begging them to "try and tend to my famley and see that they dont suffer if you can help it." Scarcity and hardship forced some residents to examine their allegiance to the Confederacy and prompted many of them to seek an end to their continued suffering.[30]

Late in the war, even county slaveholders found reasons to question their loyalty to the Confederacy. In January 1863, the Virginia government instructed magistrates to impress a Confederate-mandated county quota of twenty slaves. Floyd's magistrates compiled the list, but eventually denied the request. The court also declined a subsequent re-request in December 1864, and informed authorities that their county was "one of the poorest grain growing in the state" because local "crops for the last two years have been an intire failure." They also complained of being forced to feed 1,800 soldiers' families with only the assistance of "brokendown old men." They therefore beseeched the state to "spare the negroes to assist in relieving the poor families." Although these excuses were likely a factor in their decision, two other unspoken elements played a greater role: several of the magistrates' slaves were on the county's quota list and two of the magistrates were overt Unionists.[31]

The Unionist magistrates, Esom Huff and Ferdinand Winston, were two of approximately 100 leading and well-known Unionists in Floyd.

Their elections, which occurred despite strenuous objections from Confederate loyalists, indicate that Unionist sentiments were also present among hundreds of less outspoken citizens. Although little is known about the less vocal Unionists, census data reveals that overt Unionists were primarily middle- to upper-class farmers. They were sometimes slaveholders, usually wealthy landowners, and often Dunkard in religion. They were also mostly men, roughly 40 years old, and usually owned real estate worth about $1,000 and personal property valued at $775. Non-farming Unionists were occupied mainly as merchants, artisans, industry owners, civic representatives, and clergy. Only a small portion were tenant farmers, impoverished, or female. In 1860, most lived clustered in portions of five neighborhood districts: Court House, Huffsville / Simpsons, and Greasy Creek / Willis Ridge. Most also lived within 100 households of Dunkard clergyman Christian Bowman, near Spangler's Mill, or concentrated in family groupings.[32]

Floyd's overt Unionists capitalized on disaffection in the county and attempted to convert disillusioned residents to their cause. In 1862, Freeborn Hall lectured a group of farmers about Confederate policy, suggesting that the war would starve the South and "free the negroes." The home guard promptly arrested Hall and charged him with "counseling, aiding and abetting ... residents] to resist the laws and authorities [of the Confederacy]." David Weddle informed his neighbors that "if he had his way he would hang Jeff Davis and all his rebel crew." Andrew F. Stigleman, a brazen Unionist, made his opinions about the "so called Confederate government" known "regardless of the company or persons [present]." Outspoken disloyalty, however, could also result in violent retribution. In September 1862, Hyram Dulany enraged Confederates by declaring that "he was glad to hear of the death of Henry Lane in the Battle of Cedar Run, [and] that he hoped he was in Hell where all secessionists ought to be." The loyalists informed the county court of Dulany's pronouncements, demanded his arrest, testified against him, and afterwards shot him.[33]

In 1861, the Virginia legislature passed laws defining treason as "levying war against the State, adhering to its enemies, or giving them aid and comfort." The state sanctioned "punishment by death" if two witnesses verified the treasonous activity. In April 1862, Floyd's court used the Virginia Code to charge Clarburn Lloyd and Hiram Hall with treason. It accused them of "acting and speaking in a contemptuous manner and threatening personal violence against the person of William E. Lewis, Captain of the home guard." Lewis testified that the men spoke openly of their "hostile sentiments to the Southern Confederacy and in favor of

the federal government." Due to a lack of further evidence, however, the men were eventually freed. Five months after the trial, Lewis received similar threats and again attempted to arrest the men responsible. This time Lewis was "waylaid and murdered." In Lynchburg, the *Daily Virginian* reacted to the homicide by declaring Floyd County "infested" with Union men and deserters.[34]

To ensure a continued anti-Confederate stance among impoverished Unionists, and to strengthen their resistance to Confederate bribes, wealthy Unionists like Joshua Weddle "contributed means to many poor fellows whose sentiments were that of mine." Others sheltered residents who "were afraid to stay at their own houses because of their Union sentiment" or harbored Federal soldiers. In 1862, when five escaped Federal prisoners of war found their way to Floyd, Hosea Wimmer fed and sheltered them for several days. He then assisted them out of the county and toward northern lines. Jacob Walters gave his grandson "a horse, saddle, bridle, and eleven dollars in silver. . . to go to the Union army," but reported that he was "driven back by the rebels" and instead "laid in the woods the balance of the war."[35]

To counter the intimidation and abuse of home guards, Unionists infiltrated the units and "used the position for the benefit of Union men" by providing false intelligence to officers and warning anti-Confederates of the guard's plans. In the summer of 1864, approximately 100 Unionists created their own guard unit. Under the leadership of "captain" Charles Huff, they terrorized their oppressors with a series of ambushes and nighttime raids.[36]

Sometime in 1863, members of the covert Unionist peace society known as The Heroes of America visited Floyd and recruited residents into the organization. The order, which was headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, promised its members protection and guaranteed a post-war division of Southern loyalists' land. In exchange, the H.O.A. expected its constituents to encourage desertion, provide intelligence on troop movements, and aid Federal forces nearby. Members swore an oath to secrecy, faced the penalty of death for divulging the order's covert existence, and used an elaborate biblically themed password and sign system to identify fellow H.O.A. members. Floyd's Unionists were receptive to the H.O.A.'s doctrine and joined the order by the dozens. In 1863, Court House district farmers John H. Sowers, Peter Bowman, and L. G. Wickham took the Heroes' oath, but were afterwards "afraid to talk with anybody [about their membership] ... in the red string or Union league party." Tilman Overstreet and miller Jacob B. Moses joined the "Heroes of America to break down the Confederate government,"

and Dunkard Eli Epperly took the league's oath "to brake the Confederacy down." Court House district farmer Freeborn Hall and his neighbor, carpenter Robert W. Whitlow, joined the "order for the suppression of the rebellion." Charles Huff took the oath and in the winter of 1863 Huff's friend Otey F. Kinsey, a Simpsons district blacksmith, also became a member of the "secret organization of the neighborhood ... which had for its object the preservation of the Union and signs [by] which one Union man knew another."[37]

H.O.A. members spread the doctrine of the society throughout the county. They also eventually recruited soldiers in the 54th Virginia Infantry and local politicians. Members risked execution for treason, yet boldly confronted loyalist residents, threatening them with death for reporting H.O.A. and deserter activities. When Court House district slaveholder Perry Graham complained to the home guard about deserters and H.O.A. members in his neighborhood, an informer alerted the H.O.A. The society then left a note for Graham, cautioning him that, "You will get your dues ... you old rebell ... for vengence is at hand."[38]

In November 1863, army physician James Dove accused Floyd magistrate and H.O.A. member Ferdinand A. Winston of supplying deserters' families with relief materials collected for soldiers' families. Winston, a Jacksonville cabinetmaker, began expressing his disloyal sentiments publicly shortly after secession. In June 1861, he notified Governor Letcher of his lack of affection for "the Dictator of the Confederate States" as well as his plan to refuse all Confederate oaths. He claimed the pledges were designed to "humiliate the people and confer more power upon those who are crushing us with a weight too intolerable to be born." Winston later told Letcher that Floyd's Unionists longed "for the restoration [because] it is impossible to forget the old United States." Dove accused him now of using his position to "inculcate and spread disaffection among the citizens" and "hamper our efforts at independence in every possible way." He demanded action from Governor Letcher and forwarded corroborating testimony from Presbyterian minister Lindsay H. Blanton. The Reverend's sworn affidavit alleged that during a dinner party in November 1863, Winston spoke of plans to redistribute loyalists' land and boasted "'the South can never succeed in establishing its independence.'" He also reportedly claimed that "'Virginia was forced out of the Union by a mob [and] there was no free expressions of the sentiment of the people at the polls.'" The visit left Blanton convinced that he was "a notorious Union man or <u>something worse.</u>"[39]

Letcher forwarded the information to Adjutant-General L. Baptist French. On November 21, 1863, French charged Winston with "disloy-

alty" and issued a warrant for his arrest. The Floyd Court subsequently declared "the conduct of Mr. Winston and his genuine character is such to repel any such charge." They informed authorities that the court would "unanimously refuse to sanction or enter said order." However, the court's bold declaration did little to dissuade the Confederates who eventually arrested Winston. On January 5, 1864, French transported him by train to Richmond's Castle Thunder Prison to await trail on "disloyalty" charges.[40]

Winston's imprisonment created several problems for Virginia's legal authorities, because while a "disloyalty" law existed for state militia members, no similar law existed for Virginia's civil officers. William Smith, the state's newly elected governor, understood the potential problem of trying Winston and asked Attorney General J. R. Whicker to examine the question. On January 13, 1864, Whicker reported that he could "find no law or ordinance of Convention applicable to such cases." For while the state could charge Winston with "malfeasance in office," it could not use the magistrate's "disloyalty" as the sole means of establishing the malfeasance. Whicker concluded that "the disloyal sentiments attributed to Winston, however reprehensible in the view of every true patriot, don't render him liable to any indictment under our law." He encouraged Smith to notify the General Assembly of the legal difficulty, but in the meantime, "Winston ... must be left to disgrace the official station which [he] treasonably holds." Days later, Smith encouraged legislators to render a disloyal speech law. He appealed for "proper legislation ... for the arrest, detention, and punishment of all such persons," because they were "a source of very great annoyance to [Virginia's] loyal citizens." The legislature, perhaps realizing the inherent difficulty of regulating or defining "disloyal" speech, denied the request and left Whicker no choice but to free Winston.[41]

In early 1864, Winston returned to Floyd on a horse provided by county Unionists. His magistrate term had by then expired, making him immediately eligible for the draft. As a way to avoid such circumstances, Winston declared himself a Union candidate for Sheriff. His campaign infuriated loyalists. They organized to ensure a defeat, and on election day, according to Winston, "there was guards placed at every precinct ... to prevent men from voting for me." Some Unionists mustered the courage to vote, but most submitted to the threats. Confederate officials conscripted Winston after his defeat, but were forced to provide a 30-day furlough due to his ill health. During the break, the Floyd Court quickly appointed him Assistant Commissioner of Revenue, and on March 4, 1865, with few other legal options available, Governor Smith be-

grudgingly approved the appointment and certified him exempt from military duty.[42]

Floyd's loyalists used its home guard to suppress the treasonous activity of their neighbors through a campaign of terror. In 1863, they informed H.O.A. member Robert W. Whitlow that they planned to hang him for his Unionist beliefs. They also warned Madison D. Reed that he "was to be hung [along with] other violations of his person" for expressing anti-Confederate sentiment. Others, like Philip Ratliff, were forced to "swear allegiance to the Confederate States" or face prison. They destroyed David Weddle's corn crop, terrorized his family, and "threatened to set fire to his buildings and burn them up and take him and put him in Castle Thunder." The guard fed their horses with Andrew Stigleman's fodder supply and then "wasted and destroyed" what was left over "just for meanness." When they similarly attacked Jacob Walters, he informed the men "that he would rather feed a bad dog" than feed them. The insult, however, only hastened the looting and pillaging of his family's foodstuffs.[43]

Floyd's Dunkards were obvious and highly visible targets for the home guard and, according to post-war testimony, "were persecuted and abused as rebels to the Confederacy." The Dunkards reported that loyalists late in the war planned to drive them from Floyd, destroy their churches, and hang their ministers. Others in the community reported suffering oppression from Confederate troops under the command of Captain George. Amos Graham, who said he was assaulted by the soldiers, considered George's men no better than "regular cutthroats." In the fall of 1863, according to later testimony, the troops surrounded William J. Dillion's farm and "threatened to burn up everything [he] had because [he] was a Union man and harbored and fed deserters." When the soldiers also threatened to shoot him, a defiant Dillion brazenly shouted "to shoot, that he would soon die that way as any." Confederate regulars under General Duke's command, according to Jacob Weaver, terrorized the county's Unionists and "destroyed considerable property" at his Huffsville district farm; they even forced his wife Lucy to serve as their cook, he said. Duke's troops raided Elijah Hylton's farm and afterwards promised a continuance of similar treatment because he "was a Union man." Duke's men stole bacon and oats from Court House district farmer James Wright and his eight children before quartering themselves in his house. They informed him that because he was a Union man, it was entirely legal, according to the testimony.[44]

Confederate troops also repeatedly and illegally arrested dozens of county Unionists. "Disloyalty" charges were difficult to make and nearly

impossible to prove in court. Commanders like General Echols countered the difficulty by dressing troops in tattered Federal Uniforms and dispatching the "bogus Yankees" to the homes of suspected anti-Confederates. Others, like Colonel Preston and the 4th Virginia Reserves, simply arrested suspected Unionists without proof. In 1864, the Reserves threatened Noah Underwood with execution and jailed him for five days on the sole charge of being a Union man. They arrested Floyd County's constable Joseph Phares on the suspicion of being a Unionist and threatened to burn his farm while they held him in a guardhouse in Dublin. In their search for Freeborn Hall, the troops terrorized his family. Hall confronted the men after learning of their action and was afterwards imprisoned for three months on the charge of possessing "Unionist sentiments."[45]

Unionists were also punished by being forced into the military. Amos Graham claimed that he was imprisoned and "much against my will" forced into Colonel Trigg's regiment. He deserted "the first opportunity he had ... and came home and evaded service." Loyalists imprisoned Jacob Weaver, and were attempting to force him into the Confederate army, when he escaped and managed to hide out for the remainder of the war. In 1864, they captured Philip Ratliff and forced him into a reserve unit stationed nearby. A defiant Ratliff immediately informed his commander that he would refuse to bear arms. He then allowed himself to be captured by Federal forces, swore an oath of allegiance to the United States, and returned to Floyd.[46]

When loyalists grew desperate, they began reporting the treasonous actions of Unionists to the governor and to Confederate authorities. In the spring of 1864, Jacksonville lawyer Martin Holt relayed his indignation in a letter to Governor Smith. He complained that magistrate Esom Huff was "unquestionably a disloyal man [and] doing everything he can against the Confederate cause ... [including] encouraging desertion ... . and [attempting to] stir up strife and array the people against the Confederate government." He reported that Huff was a candidate for re-election and begged Smith to somehow keep such "disloyal men" out of office, because loyalists were "fearful from the crowd he has behind him that he will be re-elected."[47]

In April 1864, after investigating the H.O.A. with fellow loyalists, the anonymous resident known as "Virginia" alerted the governor. He alleged that "a secret organization whose avowed object is to stop this war" existed in Floyd and that "every deserter ... and every 'union' man and Lincoln well wisher ... were] members of the society." He begged Smith to somehow "remedy the evil" and advised him to contact physi-

cian Andrew Jackson Hoback for further information. Secretary of the Commonwealth G. W. Mumford quickly located Hoback and demanded the details. In response, the doctor explained "that a very large majority of the citizens of this county are in it ... [and they are] Union in sentiment or have become despondent of Southern secession, men who want peace upon any terms" and who "threaten death to any person who shall seek to betray them." They "employ deserters to work on their farms [and] harbor, feed and conceal them." To remedy the situation, loyalists were "feverently hoping that the Governor may devise some plan to restore order in our afflicted county."[48]

In September 1864, the Confederacy began an investigation of H.O.A. operations in southwest Virginia. To provide the necessary intelligence, authorities in Richmond dispatched undercover spies Thomas McGill and John B. Williams to the region. The detectives learned the H.O.A.'s passwords and signs and compiled "a large list of traitors" that included several "prominent men," local magistrates, and the sheriff of Montgomery County. They also reported that the society was well established only in a few regions, but informed authorities that members claimed the order was especially strong in Floyd County, where "nearly all the people" were participants in "The Heroes of America."[49]

After reviewing the detectives' reports, Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon forwarded the information along with his opinion to Jefferson Davis. He urged a "prompt and vigorous response" to "arrest and repress" the "treasonable association among the disaffected people." He reported that the society was "plundering and subsisting upon the means of the well affected citizens" as well as preventing its disclosure through a campaign of "terror, threats, and outrages." The H.O.A.'s promise of land division, according to the Secretary, was popularizing the order among the "disaffected" and "ignorant" residents of the region and allowing the order's leaders to become ambitious enough to contemplate "the idea of forming a new state of Southwest Virginia." The crisis, he felt, called for the suspension of *habeas corpus* as "the prudent and most satisfactory remedy." On November 9, 1864, Davis followed the advice and notified the Confederate Congress that "a dangerous conspiracy exists in some of the counties of southwestern Virginia." He called for a suspension of the writ "in order that full efficiency may be given to the military power for the repression of the evil." Although they submitted to Davis' request for suspension of the writ twice in 1862 and once on early 1864, this time they denied his appeal.[50]

Early in 1865, the Confederacy abandoned most efforts to restore its disintegrating homefront, leaving Floyd's disloyal and Unionist residents

in control of their county's fate. By April, Major-General George Stoneman's Federal cavalry raided the county and signaled the end of even theoretical Confederate control. Although en route to block the Army of Northern Virginia from its move toward Danville, the cavalry stopped long enough to seize supplies and confiscate fresh horses. Floyd's loyalists, sensing an inevitable end to the war, offered only minimal armed resistance. Those who did challenge the cavalry's superior numbers and firepower, like former 42nd Virginia lieutenant James M. Howard, were captured or killed, as was Howard. Unionists recognized the raid as a sign of the end to the Confederacy and "came to rejoice that the Yankees were there" at last.[51]

Endnotes

The author thanks Professors Crandall Shifflett and Peter Wallenstein and Mr. Lon Savage for their assistance with this study.

1. An expanded version of this study is available in Paul Randolph Dotson, Jr., '"Sisson's Kingdom': Loyalty Divisions in Floyd County, Virginia, 1861–1865" (M.A. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1997). The division in Floyd was not unique, but instead mirrored turmoil found elsewhere on the Appalachian portion of the Confederate homefront. For examples, 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 (January 1984): 68–69, 71–72, 78–86; Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), pp. 131–38; Ralph Mann, "Family Group, Family Migration and the Civil War in the Sandy Basin of Virginia," *Appalachian Journal* 19 (Summer 1992): 380–89; Gordon B. McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865–1900: Politics and the Appalachian Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 26.
2. [United States, Bureau of the Census] *7th Census, 1850: Statistical View of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1854), pp. 320–30; [United States, Bureau of the Census] *8th Census, 1860: Agricultural View of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), pp. 154–57, 218; [United States, Bureau of the Census] *8th Census, 1860: Population of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), pp. 501–03, 505–13; [United States, Bureau of the Census] *Eighth Census of the United States: 1860* Manuscript Schedules of Free Population, Floyd County, Virginia; [United States, Bureau of the Census] *Eighth Census of the United States: 1860* Manuscript Schedules of Slave Population, Floyd County, Virginia; Papers of the Floyd County Historical Society, Special Collections, Carol M. Newman Library, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg (hereafter cited as V.P.I. & S.U.); Amos D. Wood, *Floyd County: A History of its People and Places* (Radford, Va.: Commonwealth Press, 1981), p. 383.

3. *Richmond Enquirer*, 25 December 1860; *Journal of the Acts and Proceedings of a General Convention of the State of Virginia, Assembled at Richmond on Wednesday, the Thirteenth of February, Eighteen Hundred and Sixty-One* (Richmond: Wyatt M. Elliot, 1861), p. 4. For Deskins being the Unionist candidate, see Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim 3491, National Archives of the United States, Washington D.C.; "Record of the Proceedings in the Committee of the Whole Upon Federal Relations," pp. 31–32, in *Journal of the Acts and Proceedings*. For discussion of this vote, see Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847–1861* (Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1934; reprint New York: A.M.S. Press, 1971), pp. 159, 190; *The* [Christiansburg] *New Star*, 13 April 1861; "Portions of Journal of Secret Session of the Convention," pp. 10–11, in *Journal of the Acts and Proceedings*. See also Shanks, *Secession in Virginia*, pp. 205–06.
4. Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2994; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2436; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 3491, testimony of Jacob B. Moses for Eli Epperly; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740, testimony of Charles Huff for Otey F. Kinsey. For an argument supporting the validity of claims testimony by Floyd County residents, see Dotson, "Sisson's Kingdom," pp. 114–16.
5. Enlistment data compiled from N.J. Agnew, "A Listing of Men from Floyd County Who Served as Confederate Soldiers in the Civil War or Between the States, 1861–1865: Compiled from the Records of Camp III," typed manuscript, no date provided, Floyd County Historical Society Papers [folder number five], V.P.I. & S.U.; John D. Chapla, *42nd Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1983), pp. 64–150; Ralph G. Gunn, *24th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1987), pp. 68–106; John E. Olson, *21st Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1989), pp. 58–88; George L. Sherwood and Jeffery C. Weaver, *54th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H.E. Howard, 1993), pp. 171–230. Figure cited for residents eligible for enlistment includes 40 percent of men listed being age 15 to 19 and 50 percent of men listed being age 40 to 49 in *1860: Population*, pp. 500–01; slaveholders elected to officer positions are available by cross-listing names in Agnew, "A Listing of Men"; 1860 Schedules of Slave Population, Floyd County; Sherwood and Weaver, *54th Virginia*, pp. 171, 189; and Chapla, *42nd Virginia*, p. 105.
6. G.W. Shelton and James Luke Tompkins, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor Letcher, Richmond, Executive Papers and Letters, Virginia Governor John Letcher, The Library of Virginia, Richmond (hereafter cited as Letcher Papers); S.A. Buckingham, Copper Valley, Floyd County, Virginia, to John Letcher, "Governor of Virginia," Richmond, 30 April 1861, *ibid.*; Cephas L. Walton, "Camp Lee," Lynchburg, Virginia, to "Frends and Relations" [Floyd County, Virginia], 14 July 1861, Walton Family Correspondence, V.P.I. & S.U.; Rufus James Woolwine Diary, The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.
7. All Floyd County enlistment and desertion information is derived from N.J. Agnew, "A Listing of Men"; Chapla, *42nd Virginia Infantry*, pp. 64–150; Gunn, *24th Virginia Infantry*, pp. 68–106; Olson, *21st Virginia Cavalry*, pp. 58–88; Sherwood and Weaver, *54th Virginia Infantry*, pp. 171–230; The Confederate and Virginia desertion rates are based on Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1928; reprint Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1966), pp. 24–27; 63, 231.

8. John A. Ratliff, Isle of Wight County, Virginia, to "Wife" [Adline Ratliff, Floyd County, Virginia], 11 March 1863, John A. Ratliff Letters and Papers, Private collection in the possession of John M. Ratliff, Salem, Virginia; Adline Ratliff quoted in letter of John A. Ratliff, "Camp Near Knoxville," Tennessee, to "Wife" [Adline Ratliff, Floyd County, Virginia], 23 April 1863, *ibid.*; John A. Ratliff, "Camp Jackson," Wythville, Virginia, to "Wife" [Adline Ratliff, Floyd County, Virginia], 5 April 1863, *ibid.*; John A. Ratliff, "Bell's Bridge," Knoxville, Tennessee, to "Wife" [Adline Ratliff, Floyd County, Virginia], 15 August 1863, *ibid.*; P[hilip]. Ratliff, Floyd County, Virginia, to John Ratliff [Knoxville, Tennessee], 27 August 1863, *ibid.*; his desertion is noted in Sherwood and Weaver, *54th Virginia*, p. 121; the letter to Adline came from Lieutenant James [Luke Tompkins], "Camp 54th Regiment," Georgia, to Adline Ratliff [Floyd County, Virginia], 3 September 1864, Ratliff Papers.
9. Harvey Deskins claims that throughout the war Floyd's magistrates found ways to feed approximately 700 to 800 soldiers' families. See Deskins, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], January 1865, Executive Papers and Letters, Virginia Governor William Smith, The Library of Virginia, Richmond (hereafter cited as Smith Papers); Nancy A. Walton, Floyd County, Virginia, to "Husband" [Cephas L. Walton, Camp Near Petersburg, Virginia], 13 March 1865, Walton Family Correspondence.
10. *Daily Lynchburg Virginian*, 20 June 1861; Chapla, *42nd Virginia*, pp. 99, 107, 108; *Daily Lynchburg Virginian*, 11 July 1861; Chapla, *42nd Virginia*, pp. 71, 121; *Daily Lynchburg Virginian*, 20 June; 11 July 1861; Peter S. Bearman, "Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War," *Social Forces* 70 (December 1991), pp. 336–37, 340; Sherwood and Weaver, *54th Virginia*, p. 5.
11. *Daily Lynchburg Virginian*, 18 November 1863; John S. Robson, *How a One Legged Rebel Lives: Incidents in the Life of the Writer During and Since the Close of the War* (Richmond: W.H. Wade and Company, 1876), pp. 55-56; Chapla, *42nd Virginia*, p. 104.
12. Milton [Charlton], "Rocky Gap" [Virginia], to Oliver [H. Carden, Montgomery County, Virginia], 29 July [1862], Charlton Family Papers, V.P.I.&S.U.; Captain John R. Hammet, "Camp on the Blackwater," Isle of Wight County, Virginia, to Floyd County Magistrates [Floyd County, Virginia], March 1863, and Captain Austin Harman, "Camp in the Blackwater," Isle of Wight County, Virginia, to Floyd County Magistrates, March 1863, in Floyd County Court Order Book, 1858–1864, Floyd County Courthouse, Virginia, pp. 416–17.
13. Floyd County Court, Common Law Order Book 3, 1859–1868, Floyd County Courthouse, Virginia; John Sergeant Wise, *The End of an Era* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), pp. 385–86.
14. Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 17764; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740; Dr. Andrew Jackson Hoback, "Flathead," Floyd County, Virginia, to G. W. Mumford, "Secretary of the Commonwealth of Virginia" [Richmond, Virginia], 25 April 1864, Smith Papers; for similar raids by deserters' wives in Appalachian North Carolina, see Gordon B. McKinney, "Women's Role in Civil War Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (January 1992): 37–45.
15. Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2990.

16. *Ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2436; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2434; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2441; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8741; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 3491, testimony of Tilman Overstreet for Eli Epperly; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 3491, testimony of Jacob B. Moses for Eli Epperly; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim 2995, testimony of Denis Hylton for Joshua Weddle; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2995.
17. *Ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740, testimony of Charles Huff for Otey F. Kinsey; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2992; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740.
18. *Ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 17710; for other examples see *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Numbers 17604, 5861, and Record Group 233, Claim Number 14698; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2430, testimony of Andrew Weddle for William Jasper Dillion; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740, testimony of Henry Dangerfield for Otey F. Kinsey; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim 2436, testimony of John Earls for Andrew F. Stigleman; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 3520, testimony of A.P. Dobbins for Noah B. Underwood; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 17710.
19. Tazewell Price, "Copper Hill," Floyd County, Virginia, to Governor John Letcher [Richmond, Virginia], 16 November 1862, Letcher Papers.
20. "Virginia" [presumably Dr. A. J. Hoback, whose handwriting on subsequent loyalist letters to Smith appears very similar to this one], Floyd County, Virginia, to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 6 April 1864, Smith Papers. See other quotes from "Virginia" on pages 108–09.
21. *The Official Records of the War of Rebellion* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), series 4, volume 3, pp. 804–05; "We the Undersigned Citizens," Floyd County, Virginia, to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 11 September 1864, Smith Papers.
22. Jackson Godby, "Clerk of County Court," Floyd County, Virginia, to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 18 February 1864, Smith Papers; Virginia Governor William Smith, Richmond, Virginia, to Harvey Deskins, Floyd County, Virginia, 15 September 1864, *ibid.*; Virginia Governor William Smith, Richmond, Virginia, to "The Commonwealth Attorney of the County of Floyd" [G. W. Shelor], Floyd County, Virginia, 15 September 1864, *ibid.*
23. For conscription of all available Floyd men into deserter patrols and the subsequent grain shortage, see Harvey Deskins, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 7 January 1865, Smith Papers; the Sisson ambush is noted in Floyd County Court, Common Law Order Book 3, 1859–1868, p. 239; the deserter battle is available in the *Daily Lynchburg Virginian*, 14 September 1863.
24. Major-General John C. Breckenridge, "Headquarters — Department of Western Virginia" [Dublin, Pulaski County, Virginia], to General Robert E. Lee, 9 April 1864, in *Official War Records*, series 1, volume 33, pp. 1269–70; Brigadier-General John Echols, "Headquarters — Department of Western Virginia" [Dublin, Pulaski County, Virginia], to Major J. Stoddard Johnson, "Assistant Adjutant-General," Richmond, Virginia, 10 October 1864, in *ibid.*, series 1, volume 43, part 2, pp. 889–90; Brigadier-General John Echols [Dublin, Virginia] to Major J. Stoddard Johnson, "Assistant-Adjutant General" [Richmond, Virginia], 27 October 1864, in *ibid.*, series 1, volume 43, p. 907.

25. *Ibid.*; Wise, *End of an Era*, pp. 374, 385–90; for additional commentary on deserters using tunnels to elude Confederate deserter hunters, see David Dodge, "The Cave Dwellers of the Confederacy," *Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Science, Art, and Politics* 68 (October 1891): 514–21.
26. Louisa Walton, Floyd County, Virginia, to "Son" [Cephas L. Walton, Camp near Petersburg, Virginia], 17 March 1865, Walton Family Correspondence; "Mother" [Louisa Walton, Floyd County, Virginia] to Cephas L. Walton [Camp near Petersburg, Virginia], 5 March 1865, *ibid.*; Nancy A. Walton, "Simpsons P.O.," Floyd County, Virginia, to "Husband" [Cephas L. Walton, Camp near Petersburg, Virginia], 5 March 1865, *ibid.*
27. Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 17764; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 5862.
28. Brigadier-General John Echols [Dublin, Virginia] to John Seddon, Confederate Secretary of War, Richmond, Virginia, in *Official War Records*, series 4, volume 3, p. 813.
29. Quote is from Floyd County Dunkard Joshua Weddle, in Records of The Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2995; Dunkards in Floyd paid $500 each for conscription exemptions; see also Edward N. Wright, *Conscientious Objectors in the Civil War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931); the meeting is explained in an enclosure that arrived with the petition, in Virginia General Assembly, Legislative Petitions, Floyd County, 1831–1862, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
30. A letter from concerned Floyd government authorities explained LeSuer's extortion to state authorities; see Harvey Deskins, William Banks Shelor, Jackson Godby, and Burwell Akers, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor John Letcher [Richmond, Virginia], 13 July 1863, Letcher Papers; John Howell, Dalton, Georgia, to Mary A. Howell, Floyd County, Virginia, 2 March 1864, quoted in Sherwood and Weaver, *54th Virginia Infantry*, p. 103; Cephas L. Walton, "Camp Near 7 Pines," to Captain S. R. Alderidge [Floyd County, Virginia], 17 June 1864, Walton Family Correspondence.
31. See, Colonel J. F. Gilman, "Chief of Confederate Army Engineer Bureau," to James A. Seddon, "Confederate Secretary of War," enclosed in a letter from Seddon to Governor John Letcher, January 1863, Letcher Papers; see also a printed circular with Floyd County's quota of 20 slaves, dated 22 January 1863, in *ibid.*; the twenty slaveholders are listed in Floyd County, Court Order Book, 1858–1864, p. 407; for the letter from Floyd County magistrates to J. S. Preston, "Chief of the Conscript Bureau," requesting a slave exemption, see *ibid.*, p. 472; for subsequent requests, see the printed circular from George W. Mumford, "Secretary of the Commonwealth," to "Clerks of County Courts," 16 December 1864, in Smith Papers; the magistrates' response is available in Harvey Deskins, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 7 January 1865, Smith Papers. The magistrates' claim of furnishing 1,800 soldiers appears to be an exaggeration of roughly 500 men; the slaveholding magistrates are listed on the twenty slave impressment list in the Floyd County, Court Order Book, 1858-1864, p. 407; Unionists Esom Huff and Ferdinand A. Winston were both elected county magistrates during the war.
32. The foremost Unionists of Floyd County during the Civil War are derived from roughly 97 names residents provided in response to question seventeen on the Southern Claims Commission interrogation form: "Who were the leading and

best known Unionists of your vicinity during the war?"; Floyd County's well known Unionist slaveholders were derived from names provided on question seventeen of the Southern Claims Commission interrogation form, and then cross-listed with Floyd slaveholders listed in Manuscript Schedules of Slave Population, Floyd County, Virginia. They were: John Carter – 6 slaves; Ruth Carter – 2 slaves; Jackson Godby – 1 slave; John Harman – 1 slave; Jacob Helm – 7 slaves; Preston Howery – 1 slave; Jacob Moore – 8 slaves; Elijah Wilson – 2 slaves; Unionist homestead information was derived from the names provided on question seventeen of the Southern Claims Commission interrogation form and from data available in Manuscript Schedules of Free Population, Floyd County, Virginia.

33. Floyd County Court, Common Law Order Book 3, 1859–1868, p. 214; Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2441, testimony of William Jasper Dillion for David Weddle Sr.; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2436, testimony of Alex Weddle for Andrew F. Stigleman; Floyd County Court, Common Law Order Book 3, 1859–1868, p. 224; for the Dulany shooting, see Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2441.
34. See the printed circular titled "Treason in Virginia" issued by the state on 15 May 1861, available in Confederate Imprints, 1861–1865, Microfilm, Number 2867 [and filmed from the collection available in the Archives Division of Rice University, Texas]; Floyd County Court, Common Law Order Book 3, 1859–1868, p. 212; *Daily Lynchburg Virginian*, 8 October 1862.
35. Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2995; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2992 [Amos Graham]; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 14495. Wimmer claimed the Union soldiers were from units that originated in Indiana. It seems reasonable to conclude that they escaped from the Confederate prison in Danville, Virginia, approximately 80 miles southeast of Floyd County; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 5861. Jacob Walters' grandson, Jacob Board, lived with Walters at his Court House district farm. Board would have been eighteen, and eligible for Confederate conscription, sometime in 1864.
36. *Ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 5649, testimony of Esom Huff for Joseph Phares; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740, testimony of Charles Huff for Otey F. Kinsey.
37. The society was also known as The Heroes of 1776 and The Red String League. Some evidence that the order was established in Floyd County as early as the fall of 1862 by Raleigh, North Carolina physician John Lewis Johnson can be found in William T. Auman and David D. Scarboro, "The Heroes of America in Civil War North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (October 1981): 336, 338–39; evidence the society was founded in Floyd in the fall of 1863 by North Carolina Unionist Horace Dean is available in Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1934), pp. 32–34, 158–59; and in *The Official War Records*, series 4, volume 3, pp. 802–03, 807; Auman and Scarboro also concluded that the order's cryptic signs and passwords came mainly from text in the Book of Joshua and were based on the practices of Freemasons, see "Heroes of America," pp. 342–44; see also *The Official War Records*, series 4, volume 3, pp. 806, 809–11; Kenneth W. Noe's assertion that the Heroes of America are mentioned by only one claimant in the 220 post war claims from southwestern Virginia filed with

the Southern Claims Commission is entirely incorrect. In Floyd County alone the H.O.A. is mentioned in five separate claims by seven residents who refer to membership in the order and implicate approximately 30 other Floyd residents as H.O.A. members. For Dr. Noe's inaccurate assertion, see his "Red String Scare: Civil War Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (July 1992): 321–22. For Floyd claimants mentioning the H.O.A., see Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2993, and Record Group 233, Claim Numbers 2091, 3491, 8740, 13909; quoted material is from *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 13909, testimony of Peter Bowman and L. G. Wickham for John H. Sowers; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2993, testimony of Tilman Overstreet for Jacob B. Moses; Record Group 233, Claim Number 3491, testimony of Tilman Overstreet for Eli Epperly; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2091, testimony of F. A. Hall and Ferdinand A. Winston for Robert W. Whitlow; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740, testimony of Charles Huff for Otey F. Kinsey.

38. Deserters recruited into the H.O.A. while hiding in Floyd County, who were afterwards captured and returned to their units, spread H.O.A. doctrine among the troops. For evidence that this was especially true with deserters returned to the 54th Virginia Infantry, see Sherwood and Weaver, *54th Virginia Infantry*, p. 129; the local H.O.A. also placed members in Floyd's home guard, see Tatum, *Disloyalty*, p. 160; The death threat appears as an enclosure in a letter from the Floyd County home guard, to Colonel Gardener, Dublin, Virginia, 3 December 1864, available in the Letters Received, Confederate Secretary of War, Record Group 109, National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C.
39. Winston testified for H.O.A. member Robert W. Whitlow during a Southern Claims Commission interrogation in June 1872, informing investigators that Whitlow "belonged to a Union organization, I was a Union man myself during the war." See Record Group 233, Claim Number 2091; in 1867 Winston was noted as a member of a "loyal secret society during the war" by Union General John M. Schofield, see Richard G. Lowe, "Virginia's Reconstruction Convention: General Schofield Rates the Delegates," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 80 (July 1972): 355; Ferdinand A. Winston, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor John Letcher [Richmond, Virginia], 28 June 1861, Letcher Papers; Ferdinand A. Winston, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor John Letcher [Richmond, Virginia], 9 July 1861, *ibid.*; Dr. James Dove, Salem, Virginia, to Governor John Letcher [Richmond, Virginia], 19 November 1863, in the January 1864 folder of Smith's Papers; the details of Blanton's visit is recorded in "Memorandum of Lindsey H. Blanton," and located in the January 1864 folder of *ibid.*, (Underlining is Blanton's).
40. French's arrest order is located as part of a circulating Confederate military document dated 19 November 1863 through 5 January 1864, and enclosed in the January 1864 file of Smith's Papers; the Floyd Court's statement is available in Floyd County, Court Order Book, 1858–1864, p. 463; Winston's arrest is noted in the same Confederate military document cited above, in the areas signed by General Jones and Major J. B. Dorman, located in the January 1864 folder of Smith's Papers; for Winston's confinement, see an Address of Virginia Governor William Smith to the Virginia General Assembly, 19 January 1864, Smith Papers; Unionist assistance is noted in Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim 8042 [Freeborn Hall].

41. J. R. Whicker, "Attorney General of Virginia" [Richmond, Virginia], to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 13 January 1864, Smith Papers; Address by Virginia Governor William Smith delivered to the Virginia General Assembly, 19 January 1864, *ibid.*; no law regulating "disloyal" speech by officers of the Commonwealth appears in *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia Passed at Session of 1863–4* (Richmond: William F. Ritchie, Public Printer, 1864); or in *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia Passed at Session of 1864–5* (Richmond: William F. Ritchie, Public Printer, 1865).
42. In Southern Claims Commission testimony for his friend Samuel Morricle, Winston informed the claims commissioners that: "I myself was a Union candidate for sheriff for the county of Floyd in 1864." See Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 14406; and see also *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 5862, for corroborating testimony from Jacob Weaver; Winston's conscription and furlough information is available in a letter from S. P. Guerrant, "Acting Enrolling Officer, Floyd County, Virginia," to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 25 February 1865, Smith Papers; Winston's appointment to Commissioner of Revenue is available in Harvey Deskins, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 25 February 1865, *ibid.*; Governor Smith's exemption of Winston is available in his March 1865 Executive Papers.
43. Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2091; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2994; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8741; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2441, testimony of William Jasper Dillion for David Weddle Sr.; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2436, testimony of Willis Reed for Andrew F. Stigleman; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 5861, testimony of Esom Huff for Jacob Walters.
44. Confederate prosecution of local Dunkards is noted in *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2995, testimony of Willis Reed for Joshua Weddle; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 17710, testimony of Alexander Weddle for Elijah Hylton; Graham's quote is available in *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2992; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2430, testimony of Dillion and testimony of David Weddle for him; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 5862; *ibid.*, Record Group 217, Claim Number 17710; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 9141.
45. Echols' methods of capturing Unionists is noted in W. H. Newlin, *An Account of the Escape of Six Federal Soldiers from Prison at Danville, Virginia: Their Travels by Night Through the Enemy's County to the Union Pickets at Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, in the Winter of 1863–64* (Cincinnati: Western Methodist Book Concern, 1889), p. 87; Underwoods' arrest is available in Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 3520, testimony of Noah B. Underwood and A. P. Dobbins for him; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 5649 [Phares]; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8042 [F. Hall].
46. *Ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 2992 [Graham]; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 5862; *ibid.*, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8741.
47.. Martin H. Holt, "Flat Head" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 25 April 1864, Smith Papers.
48. "Virginia" [Floyd County, Virginia] to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], 6 April 1864, Smith Papers; Andrew Jackson Hoback, "Flat Head,"

Floyd County, Virginia, to G. W. Mumford, "Secretary of the Commonwealth" [Richmond, Virginia], 25 April 1864, *ibid.* See other quotes from "Virginia" on page 99.

49. *Official War Records*, series 4, volume 3, pp. 805–09.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 802–04, 813; *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861–1865*, volume 7 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), p. 266; *Official War Records*, series 4, volume 3, pp. 819–20; rejection of the suspension is discussed in Frank Lawrence Owsley, *State Rights in the Confederacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1961), pp. 150–202; *Journal of the Congress of Confederate States*, volume 7, pp. 346–50.
51. Howard was discharged from the Confederate military in 1862 and killed in Floyd County by Stoneman's troops on 2 April 1865, see Chapla, *42nd Virginia Infantry*, p. 99; local Unionists welcoming the Federal army were noted by W. Edward Howery, "Personal Reminiscences," in Wood, *Floyd County*, pp. 383–384.