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Review: Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860- 1870

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eration and perhaps for generations to come. This is a model of how Civil War history should be written.

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Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870. By W. Todd Groce. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999. Pp. xviii, 218. Preface, illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$28.00.)

Civil War Tennessee, like other border states (including Arkansas), was deeply divided in sentiment between Federal and Confederate loyalties. On the whole, secessionists dominated the western and central sections of the state, while East Tennessee remained staunchly Unionist. In each region, of course, there existed a sizable minority opposition, and this was especially true in East Tennessee. W. Todd Groce, in his well-written and scholarly *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870*, has examined this forgotten Confederate minority, observing that “the Confederate experience of East Tennessee was distinctive, if not unique, differing not only in degree but also in kind from that of other Southerners” (p. 153). According to Groce, the executive director of the Georgia Historical Society, these East Tennessee rebels were reluctant warriors, motivated to arms by economic and political self-interest, and were never fully accepted (or trusted) by Confederate authorities in Richmond. After the war, they returned home only to experience a reign of terror and intimidation on the part of a hostile Unionist population. In all, Groce gracefully intertwines social, economic, political, and military history to answer three basic questions: “Who were the secessionists of East Tennessee? Why did they chose separation over union? What happened to them during and after the war that had made them so invisible to us today?” (p. xvi).

In analyzing the identity of these secessionists, the author draws extensively on primary sources—including government reports, newspapers, and diaries—to render a very detailed and convincing portrait of rebel leadership in East Tennessee. Presenting a collective profile of one hundred high-ranking Confederate officers from the region, Groce concludes that East Tennessee Confederates were, typically, slave owning, Democratic city-dwellers who came from the commercial and professional ranks. They

were younger and wealthier than their Unionist neighbors. Integrated into the southern economy and culture after the completion of the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad in 1858, these East Tennessee townspeople soon became oriented toward the states of the future Confederacy. Indeed, East Tennessee secessionists chose separation over union because of the economic benefits reaped from a profitable trade with the Deep South.

Groce also considered East Tennessee service in the Confederacy, observing that “no more than 25,000 East Tennesseans (or 13.4 percent of the 186,652 officers and men from Tennessee who . . . fought in the Rebel ranks) served in the Southern army” (p. 76). Still, that number represented a committed group, corresponding as it did, with East Tennessee’s 14 percent of the statewide vote favoring secession. Unfortunately for this rebel minority, their service in the Confederacy was characterized by mistrust and ridicule from Richmond. “Throughout the Confederacy there existed a growing suspicion toward all East Tennesseans that worked to the disadvantage of those loyal to the Confederate government. Either because of the region’s known Unionist sympathies or because of the traditional rivalry between the divisions of the state, Middle and West Tennesseans and southerners in general tended to distrust and even dislike Confederate troops from the Great Valley” (p. 78). As a result, thousands of Confederate soldiers from the region were ordered to the Deep South, where, at places like Vicksburg, Mississippi, “they suffered defeat, sickness, and ridicule from their comrades in the field” (p. 153). Scorned by Confederate authorities in Richmond, “and unable to turn secession to their economic advantage, Rebel morale sagged and eventually collapsed” (p. 153).

Finally, the author provides an engrossing account of both the motives and means of the postwar terror exacted upon these returning rebels by their Unionist neighbors. In addition, Groce thoughtfully considers the former mountain rebels’ ambivalence toward the memorializing of their sacrifices through the cult of the Lost Cause. “The Lost Cause was for them not an avenue to reunion but a divisive factor between themselves and the Unionists with whom they now had to live peacefully for the economic and social benefits of both sides. Little could be gained by keeping alive old memories which might antagonize or alienate former enemies, who were now business partners, neighbors, and even friends” (p. 159). Thus the passing of East Tennessee’s mountain rebels into near oblivion.

Fortunately, *Mountain Rebels*—original, insightful, and highly readable—rescues the story of these Confederates from the myths and stereotypes of East Tennessee Unionism. In the end, Groce’s work is a splendid addition to the historiography of Civil War Tennessee and the study of lo-

cal, conflicting loyalties in the War of the Rebellion. A similar, detailed study of Arkansas's mountain rebels would be much welcomed.

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Southern Rights: Political Prisoners and the Myth of Confederate Constitutionalism. By Mark E. Neely, Jr. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999. Pp. 213. Acknowledgments, introduction, notes, indices. \$35.00.)

In constitutional and legal circles the Lincoln administration's legacy of high-handed oppression has long been recognized and is enshrined in leading Supreme Court decisions. Conversely, less has been written on the Confederacy, and much of that followed Jefferson Davis's postwar claim that the South placed civil liberties on a pedestal.

The driving reason for writing this new study was the discovery that buried in 150 reels of microfilm entitled "Letters Received by the Confederate Secretary of War" were reports from Confederate habeas corpus commissioners revealing the existence of over 4,000 political prisoners. Rather than writing a systematic account, one that would chronicle civil liberties infringements involving both the states and the Confederate government, the author chose to fire a four-barreled shotgun at the problem, in the process giving some of his targets a direct hit but merely wounding others.

The first barrel, entitled "Liberty and Order," starts with "The Rogue Tyrant and the Premodern State," and is devoted to Arkansas's Thomas Carmichael Hindman's effort to make the state a power base for the Confederacy. Virtually no one, not even his biographers, has paid proper attention to what Hindman attempted or considered that the opposition it generated from Albert Pike produced some of the most cogent writing on civil liberties to come out of the entire nineteenth century. Even if the author glosses over a number of important details, it is commendable that Hindman's concept of total war, which preceded that of the Union's W. T. Sherman, gets the attention it deserves. The other pellet in this barrel only wounds the attempt to control demon rum through martial law.

The second barrel contains an overview of the South's bench and bar before moving into the author's analysis of the North Carolina supreme court, which dealt with martial law in forty-six cases. Since the Confeder-