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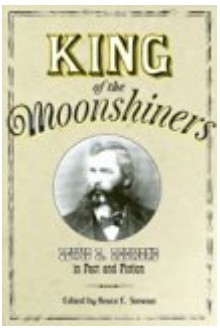
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Bruce E. Stewart. *King of the Moonshiners: Lewis R. Redmond in Fact and Fiction.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008. lxi + 127 pp. $19.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-57233-640-7.



Reviewed by Keith S. Hebert

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Bruce E. Stewart's edited volume provides readers with an engaging account of the life of Appalachia's famed moonshiner Lewis R. Redmond. The book contains three late nineteenth-century publications that detail events surrounding Redmond's 1876 murder of a U.S. deputy marshal. The book's greatest strength is Stewart's biographical introduction that examines Redmond's influence on American perceptions of Appalachia. Stewart argues that "more than any other individual moonshiner in southern Appalachia, Redmond captured the imagination of middle-class Americans during the late nineteenth century" (p. xii). *King of the Moonshiners* includes three publications that relate varying accounts of Redmond's actions and motivations. These works allow readers to trace the development of the outlaw's legacy as constructed by a journalist, dime novelist, and law enforcement officer.

Journalist C. McKinley's interview of Redmond, which appeared in the Charleston (West Virginia) *News and Courier* in July 878, offers a sympathetic portrayal of a man who represented the best qualities of southern men whose actions defended his family and community from a corrupt and abusive federal government. The journalist interviewed Redmond in June 1878 in Pickens County, South Carolina, where he evaded federal agents thanks to the assistance of local families. Redmond used McKinley as a willing medium to portray himself as a victim of unjust federal policies. According to Stewart, the reprinting of McKinley's interview in newspapers throughout the country transformed Redmond into a celebrity. The story of an ex-Confederate resisting federal tyranny elicited praise among southern audiences and reproach among northern audiences with equal effect.

One year after McKinley's interview appeared in newspapers nationwide, dime novelist Edward B. Crittenden published a sensationalized version of Redmond's story. In the story, Redmond saved Gabrielle Austin, a young white woman, from a brutal whipping by an African American consta-

ble. Subsequently, while traveling through western North Carolina with a distant relative who happened to be a revenue agent, a band of moonshiners bushwhacked their party, killed the agent, and kidnapped the woman. Much to her surprise, her captors were led by none other than Redmond. During her captivity, she discovered that Redmond's killing of fifty-four revenue agents was in response to the murder of his father at the hands of federal troops and the unfair collection of liquor taxes that robbed his family and community of much-needed income. Crittenden's fictional account transformed Redmond into a valiant knight who fought to restore the antebellum racial, political, and economic status quo upset by Reconstruction. Thanks to Crittenden's dime novel, Redmond gained a national reputation on par with outlaw Jesse James--Confederates who refused to surrender.

Redmond evaded federal authorities for five years. On April 7, 1881, federal agents under the direction of deputy collector Robert A. Cobb captured Redmond outside his home in Swain County, North Carolina. A few months later, Cobb published *The True Life of Lewis Richard Redmond* that dispelled the myths created by Crittenden's dime novel. Far removed from the heroic accounts included in McKinley's and Crittenden's publications, Cobb portrayed Redmond as a man whose illicit distilling activities and resistance of federal authority created a life of hardship, poverty, and sin, and perhaps, most important, a person no one should seek to emulate.

King of the Moonshiners is an entertaining and enlightening read. Stewart should be commended for providing the context that will undoubtedly add new meaning to these publications. Stewart casts Redmond as the mountaineer responsible for the rise of middle-class American misperceptions of Appalachia as a backward land inhabited by a violent people. Redmond became a symbol of the rural backwardness, ignorance, and violence evident in Appalachia that threatened the new American industrial order's development. Neither Redmond nor Appalachia, argues Stewart, appeared to have a place within this new order. While Stewart's assertions reflect recent Appalachian historiography, he could have provided the reader with more evidence to support his claims. For example, Stewart asserts that Redmond's image played a large role in shaping outsider perceptions of Appalachia; however, the author only provides a few newspaper editorials to support this argument. Stewart could have been more explicit about how he measured the mass response to print media among northern audiences.

Despite these minor criticisms, Stewart's *King of the Moonshiners* is an exceptional contribution to the field of Appalachian history. Future scholars interested in dissecting various myths of Appalachia will find this work to be extremely valuable. Redmond's story will also appeal to broader audiences interested in the history of American outlaws.

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