

# H-Net Reviews

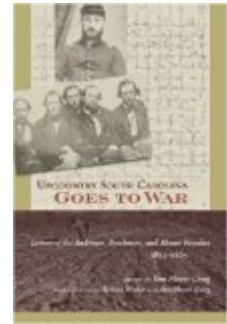
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Tom Moore Craig, ed. *Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War: Letters of the Anderson, Brockman, and Moore Families, 1853-1865*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009. 190 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57003-798-6.

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## Kin, Community, and the Civil War

This is a uniquely revealing collection of letters among three Piedmont South Carolina families, tightly linked as kin, as Presbyterian Irish, and as neighboring planters during wartime. Correspondence between four soldiers—John Crawford Anderson, Franklin Leland Anderson, Andrew Charles Moore, and Thomas John Moore—and their families and a trusted overseer at home lies at the heart of this material. The letters do not focus on attitudes toward the coming of the war or its fighting—here the language is often formulaic (for example, in February 1861, “the time has come when every man much gird on his armor & take the field or submit to despotism tyranny”; and “Bitter hatred of us & a wicked fanaticism” had brought a dead Union soldier to a horrible end, while dead Confederate soldiers had been universally “loved and honored” and died “fighting bravely ... among the front men” [pp. 40, 52, 107, 136]). Their descriptions of growing privation in the field and on the home front are valuable, but other letters and diaries tell similar stories. What is unique, in my reading, is the way they convey the interpenetration of family concerns and military duties, and with family ultimately coming first.

The Anderson, Brockman, and Moore families were upcountry cotton planters, not numbered among the Carolina elite, but very privileged in terms of land, wealth, opportunity for travel and education, and political connections—a cousin was governor of Alabama. One letter writer, Andrew Moore, had visited Congress, had heard Charles Sumner damn slavery, had been to

New York and felt strange with white servants, and knew of John Brown’s attack at Harper’s Ferry—and had written home about these things. The crisis between North and South, and slavery’s part in it, was well known to these families, but was not central to their lives until the war started, when young men left home, slaves and horses were impressed, and the cotton trade was blockaded. There was a growing sense that the war put established social values and practices at risk. John Anderson’s mother inquired, insistently, about the state of her soldier son’s soul, and did not talk of politics. His father hoped that his son, serving at the Citadel in Charleston, had acted with honor during a brief student uprising, but also asked him to serve as an agent, buying salt and cotton bagging; they even explored how cotton might be run through the blockade. Young female kin described their social rounds and wanted him to buy them thread and notions.

On the one hand, the letters clearly delineate a deeply felt localism. There was great pride in community schools and churches, and in benevolent efforts to shield poorer neighbors from the impact of inflation; young women canvassed the home region for funds for a gunboat and proudly reported the generosity of planter and factory girls alike. On the other hand, upcountry letter writers bitterly stigmatized the arrogance of lowland Carolina and Charleston. Ella Brockman wrote John Anderson that “the (up)country clod hoppers” as she thought the lowlanders called them, were the “very

ones that will do the fighting” (p. 67). Later John exulted to his mother that in sickening contrast with the gallant conduct of their (up)countrymen, “in the very birth place of Secession, we are compelled to resort to the draft ... to uphold our cause” (p. 72). She answered him complaining of the contemptuous attitude Low Country refugees had toward Spartanburg, while expecting that the “(up)country people might put up with any and every privation for them” (p. 90). Some locals, she reported, thought that God had decreed that Charleston must fall as punishment to Low Country slaveholders who had “grossly abused” the institution of slavery. Only Yankee abolition fanatics inspired more hateful rhetoric than the cowardly Charlestonians.

Letters depicted upcountry slavery in several contradictory guises. Letter writers fretted over slave health—and hoped that a slave disease would not spread to whites. A terminally ill, elderly slave nurse was waited on all night by her mistress, her devotion celebrated and repaid. An ad hoc planters’ court unanimously ruled that a raucous, unauthorized slave card and dance party had earned the partygoers whippings—to the satisfaction of men who educated favorite slaves and had enthused over their devotion. Tom Moore thought his tardy slave needed to be “brushed”—the same term John Anderson later jocularly applied to the Union army. During the war, two (illegally) literate, gray-uniformed body servants, Stephen and Elihu Moore, wrote home to their wives, asking for home favors, and rejoicing in the money they were making cooking for the Moore brothers’ mess and in their kind young masters. Elihu and Stephen had agreed to take turns serving the soldier Moore brothers. However, after the foray into Maryland, needing shoes and clothing, a dispirited Stephen wanted his turn to be over and, while Tom was sick and invalided elsewhere, started to run away from the army. Talked into returning, he was sent back to the plantation. Shortly afterwards, at his dead mother’s estate sale, Tom wanted Elihu bought as a replacement cook, but was willing to let his sister have Elihu’s wife, Lou. While he missed and offered to collect money owed him for cooking for the mess, Tom calmly noted that “I hate to see the negroes sold, but can not help them” (p. 110). Some slaves remained loyal after Appomattox. John Anderson’s body servant returned to Spartanburg with him after the surrender. No letter mentioned black resistance, and Stephen’s and Elihu’s families stayed on the plantation as sharecroppers after the war, evidently accepting a cropping agreement very favorable to Tom.

At several points these letters will jolt traditional-

ist southern sensibilities. These were privileged enlisted men, with body servants/cooks, subsisting on boxes of food and clothing prepared by slaves and shipped to the regimental camps. When these ran out, Tom Moore begged his family overseer for relief, lamenting being “thrown back” on government supplies, fit only “to be thrown away” and leaving him starving—like the rank and file (p. 136). Requests for “boxes” were common content in the letters; when in camp without family supplies, Tom ultimately boarded out. Over time, evocations of duty and honor gave way to the harsh realities of war. John Anderson recorded the brokenhearted looks on the faces of his kin and their unit when they arrived at the front, leaving safe duty behind. An experienced soldier, Frank Anderson relished a quartermaster assignment in March 1865. And his forthright letters to his father, and those of Tom Moore to overseer Thomas W. Hill, about finding substitutes cast the relationship of war service and home responsibilities in the starkest possible light—and not the romanticized glow often illuminating Confederate service. Frank Anderson, with a sick wife and three children under five, early agonized over his term in the army, and with the passage of the conscription act, he consulted his father about the propriety of getting a substitute. By June 1862, he was home, at the cost of five hundred dollars for a substitute. After his wife’s death in April 1863, and having employed two substitutes, the correspondence does not show him back in the ranks until March 1864, leaving his elderly father and his wife’s sister in charge back home. Tom Moore, twenty, recently orphaned, with his older brother Andrew killed at Second Bull Run, and facing family estate questions complicated by the presence of his late mother’s second husband and his late brother’s father-in-law, had to place complete reliance on the plantation overseer, Hill. Honor forbade desertion, but by April 1863 Tom was pushing Hill to get him a substitute, upping the ante he was willing to put up from 1,500 dollars to 2,500 dollars, suggesting possible candidates and instructing that one potential substitute be told (untruthfully) that he would not likely have to leave South Carolina. With no substitute to be found, Tom had to depend on Hill to advise on selling slaves and dividing plantation holdings, as well as running the plantation—and supervising Tom’s box, shipments of “medicinal” brandy and the like. Tom later acknowledged that Hill was indispensable, and offered to pay to maintain his military exemption. Family and home trumped Confederate loyalty.

Editor Tom Moore Craig, and Melissa Walker, who wrote the introduction with Craig, supply fine back-

ground on upcountry South Carolina, and clear family genealogies. I wish that the Confederate service records of the soldiers and their units had been better developed, and that a little more had been said about postwar careers. The surviving soldiers resumed established family positions, in Tom Moore's case partly through the foresight of Hill, who cached cotton in the plantation house for later sale, and loaned Tom money and through labor contracts with former slaves. As local notables, all held political posts, Tom and Frank holding appointed militia ranks (colonel and major) that they had not achieved during the war, and serving in the state legislature during years that suggested they were "Redeemers" dedicated to restoring Old Carolina.

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