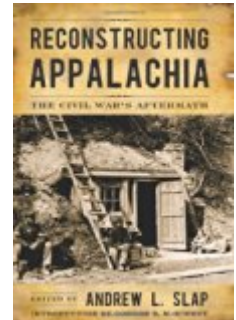


Andrew L. Slap, ed.. *Reconstructing Appalachia: The Civil War's Aftermath*. New Directions in Southern History Series. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010. 390 pp. \$40.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8131-2581-7.



Reviewed by Fred J. Hay

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Commissioned by Judkin J. Browning (Appalachian State University)

Edited by East Tennessee State University historian Andrew L. Slap, *Reconstructing Appalachia* consists of an introduction, a useful overview of Appalachian historiography by Gordon B. McKinney, and thirteen essays concerned with various aspects of post-bellum Appalachia. Slap's chapter is also an overview, supplementing and occasionally repeating McKinney's survey of recent literature on wartime and post-bellum Appalachia.

Following Slap's essay are four essays focused "on violence and politics in Reconstruction Appalachia" (p. 40). Keith S. Hébert offers an interpretation of Klan violence in northeast Georgia as a defense of local autonomy and resistance to federally imposed Reconstruction. T. R. C. Hutton examines postwar violence in Breathitt County, Kentucky, in which Unionists and Confederates continued to fight the war after Robert E. Lee's surrender. Hutton also reveals how the national press portrayed this violence as due to the "bestial mountaineer" and his "lack of civilization brought on by spatial isolation" rather having been caused by outside forces (p. 90). Steven E. Nash explores

the changing loyalties in postwar North Carolina where former Unionists and Confederates eventually found consensus in their desire to reenter the Union, end Reconstruction, and to disenfranchise African Americans. Paul Yandle looks at the Klan activity--of the uncle and associates of Thomas Dixon, author of *The Clansmen* (1905) and *The Leopard's Spots* (1902)--centered in Cleveland County, North Carolina and its role in ensuring white supremacy in that state.

These are followed by two essays disputing Appalachia's isolation. Kyle Osborn reexamines Parson Brownlow's changing "rhetoric of race" in east Tennessee moving from a pro-Union, anti-enfranchisement rhetoric to one that supported enfranchisement and working for a biracial east Tennessee's rejoining the Union (p. 163). Mary Ella Engel looks at the Mormon mission movement in northwest Georgia where missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints found a fertile mission field, converting many, and leading a number of them to relocate to Utah.

Randall S. Gooden and Ken Fones-Wolf shed light on the post-bellum experience in West Virginia. Gooden explains how the rivalries between pro-Confederate and the more numerous Unionist forces in West Virginia gradually came to a mutual accommodation for the purpose of promoting business development and the construction and control of the railroads which played such an essential role in this development. Gooden describes how business growth and industrialization happened very unevenly in various regions within the state. Fones-Wolf employs borderland theory to help explain the “changing geography and political economy of party strength in West Virginia” during the state’s first fifty years (p. 238). Border states, like all borderlands, display “contrary tendencies” (p. 238); for West Virginia, the Old South cultural traditions vs. those of the more recently industrialized Northeast and Midwest are reflected in the contrary political parties. The state did industrialize in the north but, through lack of taxation, subsidized coal extraction in the southern and mid-state coal fields led West Virginia prematurely into the Great Depression. As Fones-Wolf observes, West Virginia had its opportunities but “Virginia’s legacy remained” (p. 262).

Slap is to be applauded for bringing Robert M. Sandow’s essay on Appalachian Pennsylvania into this collection. As Sandow notes, most Appalachian studies scholars have little understanding of this geographically Appalachian region but one not, until after the Appalachian Regional Commission was created and made its own map of Appalachia (and only very slowly then), considered culturally Appalachian. Sandow describes an Appalachian region which shares the usual stereotypes of southern mountaineers: geographically remote cabins inhabited by fiercely independent, violent, draft-dodging individualists, resistant to outside control. It is evident that there is not just one Appalachia; the cultural differences trend gradually from east to west (with pockets that are more distinctive in culture) through the Blue

Ridge Valley and through the Cumberland/Alleghenies, but also from south to north. Yet, there is enough commonality to define the eastern mountain range as a distinct cultural region.

Tom Lee addresses east Tennessee and the myth of Unionist Appalachia. Following the war, east Tennessee elites focused on the region’s connection with the American Revolution rather than the recent conflict, helping Confederates and Unionists unite over a common heritage. Part of this process has been the repeated invoking of the idea that northeast Tennessee was different and--from Andrew Johnson to late twentieth-century congressman Jimmy Quillen--that the State of Franklin should once again secede. The myth of monolithic Unionism in east Tennessee facilitated the area’s quest for northern investment.

John C. Inscoe, in usual fashion, brings new insights to our understanding of Appalachia and, in addition, how its image has been produced for a national market. Inscoe notes how the supposedly more accurate, early twentieth-century depictions of the region (including those by Horace Kephart, William G. Frost, John C. Campbell, and Emma Bell Miles) largely ignored the Civil War in their constructions of Appalachia: “To sell the remoteness and ‘otherness’ of highland life required that the Civil War . . . be granted only a marginal place in explaining southern Appalachia” (p. 343). This led to an “image of mountain people these writers worked so hard to create and convey . . . one that became firmly embedded in popular perceptions for far too much of the century to follow” (p. 344).

Anne E. Marshall’s fascinating study is of the use of Confederate symbolism in eastern Kentucky and the ways it is employed to perpetuate myths of an all-white eastern Kentucky and one that evolved, as did the rest of southern Appalachia, from the Confederacy. Marshall states, “The trouble with embracing this notion is that it not only erases the presence of African Americans

but also the presence of racism, both in the past and in the present” (p. 363).

An important contribution to Appalachian scholarship, this volume is mistitled in that it is hardly representative of Appalachia: only three of the chapters deal with the Blue Ridge compared to eight which address the Alleghenies/Cumberlands; some important Appalachian states including Alabama and Virginia are not included at all. Nowhere to be found are the voices of African Americans. Although much space is devoted to discussing race relations and related topics, we never hear from black Appalachians themselves. Before African American history was incorporated into general American history, scholars such as Carter Woodson (native Appalachian, “Father of Negro History,” founder of the *Journal of Negro History*) created a distinct African American history; it seems as if the same will be required before the voices of black Appalachians will be represented in the region’s histories.

Another complaint of mine is that so many Appalachian scholars, since Henry D. Shapiro’s groundbreaking 1978 monograph, *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*, keep trotting out William Goodell Frost (whose name does not even appear in the very inadequate index), the local color writers, and other outsiders and their role in creating “Appalachia” without adding anything new or contextualizing it in some new way (I admit that I have been guilty of this myself). This stuff is “tired” and tiresome. In an edited volume such as this, all references to Frost et al. should have been edited out after the first allusion, unless absolutely necessary to the integrity of the essay. If we need to keep repeating ourselves, let’s do something more—go back a few more years and see how other outsiders had earlier defined the region and what kind of influence they had on Frost and crew. I can think of several which might be consulted: Joseph C. G. Kennedy’s description, in his summary of the 1860 federal

census, of “The Alleghany Region” extending from Pennsylvania to northern Alabama “as a region of great salubrity”[1] or Minnesota journalist James Taylor’s 1862 monograph, *Alleghania: A Geographical and Statistical Memoir, Exhibiting the Strength of the Union, and the Weakness of Slavery in the Mountain Districts of the South*, in which he touches on many of the same issues as this volume and in which he defines the region in very much the same way as Frost and Campbell, but there are undoubtedly other examples if we do our homework.

Criticisms aside, this is an essential work for Appalachian Studies scholars whether historians or not.

Note

[1]. Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior (Washington, DC: GPO, 1864), xlii-xliii.

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