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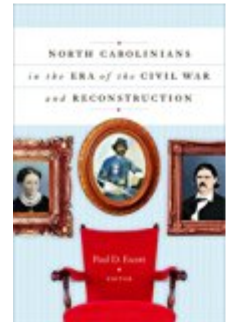

Paul D. Escott, ed.. *North Carolinians in the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 320 pp. $22.50, paper, ISBN 978-0-8078-5901-8.

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Commissioned by Hugh F. Dubrulle (Saint Anselm College)

Historians have long debated where North Carolina fits into Civil War history. Was it the great supplier of troops and equipment or did it face an inner civil war because its population lacked loyalty to the Confederacy? The answer to this question is, of course, that North Carolinians both strongly contributed to and strongly protested against the Confederacy. Because of this dichotomy, historians have devoted a significant amount of attention to the Civil War in the Tarheel state, which serves as useful lens for understanding the conflict's broader impact on racial, class, and gender relationships. *North Carolinians in the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction* offers a valuable addition to this body of scholarship. Consisting of nine previously unpublished essays, the collection emphasizes the flux created by the Civil War, not just in terms of the demise of slavery, but also in terms of gender and class divisions. Many of the chapters either trace these Civil War changes to their antebellum roots and/or demonstrate how they played out in Reconstruction and beyond. Overall, these essays emphasize that the "world of these North Carolinians in contrast to our own, was intensely local" (p. 3). And, for the most part, the authors do indeed focus on local events, in some cases embracing the entire state, but in other cases looking at a specific region or even just a few counties. Nevertheless, while highlighting narrow geographic areas, most of the authors still successfully address larger questions in Civil War historiography.

David Brown's essay on Confederate loyalty best displays how to weave adroitly local history into larger historiographical questions. Concentrating on the Piedmont counties, Brown skillfully demonstrates the folly in posing a simply division between Confederate loyalty and disloyalty. While historians might prefer these simplistic categorizations, North Carolina's yeomanry stubbornly resists easy classification. Instead of unequivocally embracing or rejecting the Confederacy, they responded first and foremost to conditions at home. Consequently, their commitment to the Confederacy was "ambivalent, ambiguous, and

subject to rapid and frequent change" (p. 20). In regions which witnessed significant combat, this "home protection"-first strategy may have pushed men into military service. Yet, in the less battle-scarred Piedmont, Brown sees this outlook as pulling men from the army. On the whole, Brown's essay drives home the point that in examining loyalty, historians must consider both the local context and the fact that Southerners often experienced competing allegiances to family, community, state, and nation.

Chandra Manning's essay on the 1864 election dovetails well with Brown's piece. Analyzing the Confederacy's most important gubernatorial contest, she also posits a citizenry whose attachment to the Confederacy was more nuanced than most historians appreciate. In this contest, incumbent Zebulon Vance faced William Holden, a challenger openly championing peace. While many North Carolinians desired peace, they did not desire submission or abolition. Thus, she contends that Vance's successful connection of peace with the ending of slavery (and perhaps even the drafting of white North Carolinians into a biracial Union army) dealt a devastating blow to Holden's candidacy. The overwhelming pro-Vance majorities therefore reflected North Carolinians' belief that an imperfect Confederacy trumped a reunion predicated on emancipation. Again, North Carolinians could not be easily pigeon-holed as completely loyal or disloyal--even those desirous of peace--but they instead acted in manner that best protected their local interests.

Given his importance during the Civil War era, Governor Zebulon Vance, aptly described by Steven Nash as "the enigmatic public face of the Civil War in North Carolina," makes appearances throughout the essays (p. 287). Two of the essays highlight Vance's role in Civil War memory. First, John Inscoe examines Cornelia Phillips Spencer's history of the end of the war in North Carolina. Written in the fall of 1865, Spencer's work defends her state and its leaders (especially her friend Governor Vance) and demonizes William T. Sherman. Though Spencer only tries to defend North Carolinians' conduct in the war, her book presages the Lost Cause ideals of a valiant Confederacy crushed by Union might. Inscoe contends that while Spencer's history does not exemplify the highly personal nature of most women's first-person histories of the war, it does indeed reflect highly localized concerns. Second, Steven Nash examines Vance's political role in creating a Civil War memory. By stressing Vance's conduct as both a staunch Confederate and a loyal North Carolinian, the state's Democrats created a myth of wartime unity in an effort to overcome the class conflicts of the postbellum era. And, for white Tarheels regardless of party, lauding Vance enabled them to strengthen their credentials as steadfast Confederates.

Paul Yandle's essay on the intersection of the themes of mutual dependence and segregation in the state legislature also addresses the themes of race and class. Here, Democrats used the debate over a national civil rights bill as a way to usher all North Carolina white men into their party. Republicans faced a more difficult task, and their reaction to the measure depended on local demographics. In areas such as the mountainous west where few African Americans lived, one had to listen very keenly to detect any differences between the parties. In the east, however, Republicans needed African American votes, and here they used phrases such as "mutual dependence" to explain how they could endorse short-term segregation. Yandle's many tables detailing the legislators' votes would benefit from some summary with subtotals reflecting party and regional votes. And these tables most clearly reveal the book's one glaring omission--given the intensely local nature of these studies, the absence of a North Carolina county map is inexcusable.

Other essays concentrate more directly on the role of race in Civil War North Carolina. Barton A. Myers' discussion of the 1863 raid by "Wild's

African Brigade" into the northeastern corner of the state addresses several key Civil War debates. Union General Edward Wild and his African American brigade had the task of protecting Unionists, freeing slaves, and destroying a guerrilla force. Myers' essay challenges all interpretations of how a hard or destructive war evolved. When officers such as Wild faced challenges on a local level, the evolution of official policy could be replaced by the revolution of unofficial policy. During the course of a three-week operation, Wild and his increasingly frustrated men not only discriminated less between Unionists, neutrals, and Confederates, but also grew more aggressive, and far more destructive--though never completely breaking down the barrier between combatant and noncombatant. Ultimately, in another example of how North Carolinians concentrated on local conditions first and foremost, the region's residents negotiated a neutrality to stem the region's descent into chaos. While Myers' essay uses a local focus to challenge the prevailing view, Judkin Browning employs a case study to support the current historiographic interpretation. The idea that African Americans acted as "savvy pragmatists" trying to achieve the four "E"s of escape, employment, enlistment (in the Union army), and education is certainly not iconoclastic (p. 70). At the same time, his description of African American efforts in New Bern and Beaufort (and the role of the Union Army in supporting these efforts) certainly adds to our understanding of the complexities of emancipation.

Two other essays address the continuities and changes the Civil War precipitated regarding women, gender, and the law. Laura Edwards brilliantly explains the role of women in North Carolina's antebellum legal culture. With the law stressing the maintenance of a rigid social order rather than individual rights, everyone had a place within the system. The law was both local (and often not based in courthouses) and woven into the fabric of daily life. Thus, with the emphasis on peace, women, regardless of race, played a role. For Edwards, this legal culture served as the progenitor of women's use of the legal system during Reconstruction. While Edwards succeeds in explaining antebellum legal culture, her essay could do more to explain what changed or remained the same during Reconstruction. Karin Zipf finds a discussion of gender in an unexpected place--North Carolina's 1868 constitutional convention, whose members voted on twenty-seven divorce petitions. Prior to the Civil War, divorces were exceedingly difficult to obtain in North Carolina, so when delegates met to rewrite the state's organic law, petitioners urged them to address divorce law as well. Like Edwards, Zipf does an excellent job of explaining the antebellum reality. However, she also does not do enough to explain the changes in postbellum culture, especially in regards to what the delegates' granting of fifteen of the twenty-seven divorce petitions means in a larger context. Her contention that the issues raised at the convention "marked a watershed for women's political status" leavse one wanting to hear more about how this status played out beyond this meeting (p. 214).

With the high quality of these nine essays, one can find few areas to criticize. Overall, ***North Carolinians in the Confederacy*** serves as a model for how to connect local, social history to the broader themes of historiography. Unsurprisingly, the closer one gets to the ground level, the more complex things become. For the most part, these authors have succeeded in conveying the messiness of local events while still addressing the broader questions of Civil War historiography, a task that is not as easy it as seems. For those interested in the Civil War in North Carolina, this book is essential. For those interested in the Civil War's impact on other areas of the South, this book is a great example of social history done well.

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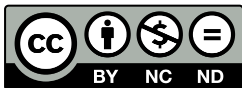

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