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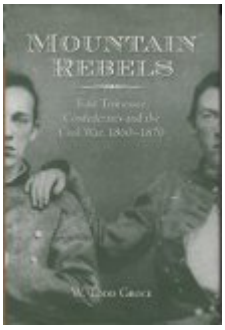
**W. Todd Groce**. *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999. xvii + 218 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57233-057-3.

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The Unionism of East Tennessee is one of the basic concepts fixed in the minds of students of the Civil War. Dr. Groce gives the reader a look at the other side of that concept, the motives and attitudes of the sizable minority in East Tennessee who supported the Confederacy. Dr. Groce[1]s thesis is that the coming of railroads into the Tennessee River Valley of East Tennessee created an economic and social link which tied the towns of that area to the lower South. Trade, news, social ties, and political opinions tended to flow along the rails along with farm commodities and industrial goods. These ties, however, did not influence the rural areas or the towns which were not on the rail lines. These areas held to the older views which been formed by trade flowing along the rivers which eventually led north and west to St. Louis, Cincinnati, or Louisville.

In the mountain area slavery was not as prevalent as in the more fertile Piedmont of Middle Tennessee or the alluvial flat lands of West Tennessee but the practice did exist and exerted political influence. In the sample cited by the author 57% of the pro-Confederate leaders in East Tennessee owned no slaves and the same was true of 59% of the anti-secession, pro-Union leaders in the area. It is the author[1]s conclusion, however, that the slave-owning Confederates were younger than their Union counterparts and had thus achieved economic success (as measured by owning slaves) earlier in life. This early economic success is assumed to have made the Confederates more firmly attached to the slave system than were the pro-Union slave holders.

One of the most valuable aspects of the book is the attention given to Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith and his role in creating anti-East Tennessee sentiment in Richmond. Kirby Smith, as commander of East Tennessee, wrote and spoke frequently about the anti-Confederate sentiment in the area and about the unreliability of Confederate troops recruited in the midst of such sentiment. This attitude, it is argued, affected Braxton Bragg and caused him, as Commander of the Army of Tennessee, to mistrust troops from East Tennessee.

Following Vicksburg, when many regiments from East Tennessee serving in Pemberton[1]s army were captured, and after the Chickamauga-Chattanooga-Knoxville campaigns of the autumn of 1863, Confederate morale suffered in East Tennessee and among East Tennessee troops. Many soldiers captured at Vicksburg came home instead of awaiting exchange and rejoining their units. Reasons for abandoning the Confederate cause included both war weariness and a desire to protect families from revenge by pro-Union neighbors. This pattern is not decidedly different from that observed in other areas of the Confederacy which came under Union occupation and differs for East Tennessee in degree, not in kind.

The title of the book promises an examination of conditions until 1870 but the five years after the war are but lightly touched upon. Basically, the story presented of post-war East Tennessee is one of revenge taking against pro-Confederates for acts committed against their pro-Union neighbors early in the war. The result was an exodus of pro-Confederates, most of them Democrats in political affiliation, from the area. An interesting addition to the book could have been made by tying the roots of East Tennessee's traditional adherence to the Republican Party to these war time and post-war experiences.

The assumption stated by Dr. Groce that pro-Confederate slave holders were more firmly attached to slavery than were pro-Union slave holders is quite in keeping with currently popular historiography; however, the author puts forth no evidence whatsoever to support this assumption. Indeed, there is evidence that the pro-Union slave holders may have been the party more firmly attached to slavery. These men surely knew that the Dred Scott Decision gave absolute protection to slavery so far as the national legislature was concerned and that by remaining in the Union a state could claim that protection. By leaving the Union Secessionists were giving abolitionists an opportunity to attack slavery, an opportunity which would have been denied by remaining in the Union.

In one instance Dr. Groce overplays the dislike of the Confederate high command for East Tennessee troops. On page 88 the author depicts General John P. McCown as a "scapegoat" for Confederate failure at Stones River, a scapegoat chosen because the general was from East Tennessee. Actually, McCown had botched his combat assignment at Murfreesboro, causing a delay in the Confederate advance and allowing other troops to come under an enfilade fire due to his failure. McCown was, also, prominent among the ranks of Braxton Bragg[1]s critics once the Army of Tennessee withdrew to the Tullahoma area. It is much more the case that McCown[1]s criticism of Bragg caused his battlefield performance to be used against him in a court-martial than that his East Tennessee origins account for the action taken against him.

Although *Mountain Rebels* is a recasting of Dr. Groce's Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Tennessee, curiously absent from the bibliography is the major original document source which reveals the fate of pro-Confederates behind Union lines and which also contains vast amounts of testimony about what had happened to pro-Union civilians during the period of Confederate occupancy. This source is the records of the Provost Marshal of the United States Army, four hundred reels of microfilm, R.G. 416 and R.G. 345, from the National Archives with copies in the Tennessee State Library and Archives. Also, Dr. Groce is on shaky ground in asserting that since 191 companies, or company-sized units, were recruited in East Tennessee that less than 20,000 men from that area served in the Confederate forces. The author reaches this figure by multiplying the number of units by the official strength of such a unit, that is, 191 times 100. Confederate practice, however, often assigned new recruits to an existing company so that a unit with an official strength of 100 may have had twice, or more, that number of men carried on its rolls during the course of the war. To derive an accurate count one needs to look at the unit rolls and count the names, not estimate from an "official" strength.

Overall, *Mountain Rebels* addresses a neglected aspect of the Civil War and which raises interesting questions for further debate. Scholars and serious readers will find interesting and helpful information as well as stimulating interpretations. The "buff" seeking battlefield exploits will have to look elsewhere.

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