

Havoc In The Highlands: Appalachia's Feuding Residents Encounter Military Occupation

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Review

HAVOC IN THE HIGHLANDS

Appalachia's feuding residents encounter military occupation

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Inscoe, John C. and McKinney, Gordon B. *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War.* University of North Carolina Press, ISBN 807825441

When traveling west along the North Carolina Piedmont, one sees the Blue Ridge rise abruptly, 3,000 to 5,000 feet, like a giant fortress. This terrain, which is heavily forested, with rushing rivers and deep valleys, is the area covered in **The Heart of Confederate Appalachia**. This study of western North Carolina, by John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, is in part a social history of the mountains' inhabitants, discussing the antebellum period, attitudes about secession, the role of women, the practice of slavery, and economic circumstances. The towns involved are Marshall, Hendersonville, Boone, Waynesville, Warm Springs, Burnsville, and Asheville. With the War's outbreak, they became host to great drama involving guerrilla warfare and military conflict.

The two dominant personalities on the political scene were Governor Zebulon Vance, an Asheville native and a moderate, and Representative Thomas Clingman, a rabid secessionist. The Western Highlands, along with the rest of North Carolina, went with the Confederacy. Yet within this region, there were pockets of unionists, or tories, as they were called. Because of the isolation of this land, it was vulnerable to local partisan raids, incursions by both armies, and deserters who hid there, living off the land and its people.

At one stage, to put down lawlessness in the area, Governor Vance sent the 65th North Carolina Regiment into the mountains. Its men were mostly locals, and they pursued a group of Union partisans who had been on a raid. Thirteen were captured, many of whom were related to one another, and, forced to kneel in groups of three, they were executed, one person at a time, some witnessing the

death of a cousin or brother before their turn came. Known today as the Laurel Massacre, the act appalled the Confederate authorities, but, after much remonstrance, no sanction was imposed on those responsible beyond dismissal from Confederate military service.

Late in the war, General Grant sent General George Stoneman's cavalry regiment into western North Carolina with instructions to destroy any land that he came upon but to avoid fighting. As General Sherman tore up eastern North Carolina, Stoneman hit the Highlands hard. A contingent of his cavalry, traveling from Hendersonville to Asheville, was met under a flag of truce by authorities from Asheville. The Union regiment then marched peacefully through Asheville, enroute to East Tennessee. Downstate, Johnston had surrendered, and the War was over.

On the next day, however, the Federals returned and sacked Asheville. The excuse given was that President Johnson had not accepted the peace terms between the combatants at Durham. Observers and historians believe the actual reason for the attack was to plunder.

The Heart of Confederate Appalachia is good history and should be well-received. There were no armies marching on a grand scale, only partisan communities struggling-sometimes admirably, on other occasions brutally-for their respective causes. More than once, survival was the goal.

Frank Edward Bourne is active in the Knoxville Civil War Roundtable and the Kentucky Civil War Round Table. He interviewed John C. Inscoe a decade ago for a Civil War radio program aired on Knoxville's NPR affiliate.