

The Civil War in the Border South

Mark M. Carroll

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Review

Carroll, Mark M.

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Phillips, Christopher *The Civil War in the Border South*. Praeger Publishers, \$37.00 ISBN 9780275995027

Conflicted Loyalties and Postwar Identities in the Border South

This important book explores the Civil War in four key slaveholding Border States, the first monograph of its kind since Edward Conrad Smith's *The Borderland in the Civil War* (1927). Phillips, an accomplished specialist in this field, focuses on Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware. Integrating traditional narrative of conventional battles and guerilla warfare with discussions of wartime social, cultural, and political changes, he systematically makes the case that the issues of slavery and emancipation were not only central to the armed strife in the four polities but also to the processes of "southernization" in each of the defeated states after the Civil War, a development that, in his view, distorted the significance of the war for generations to come.

The first chapter lays out the extraordinarily wide array of political views in the southern Border States, east and west of the Appalachians, on the questions of slavery, emancipation, and the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in fall 1860. Occupying the large middle-ground between unconditional unionists and solid states' rightists were the far more numerous conditional unionists – proslavery moderates who favored continuance in the Union so long as the national government did not meddle with slave property – which was precisely what they expected at the outset of the Civil War when majorities in each opted for their respective states to remain part of the Union and maintain, as much as possible, a position of neutrality in the coming armed conflict. The next chapter shows how unconditional unionists, including President Lincoln, rather promptly declared neutrality of any kind tantamount to disloyalty. As such, the governments of each of the southern Border States faced untenable crises of legitimacy and dealt ineffectively with hostile forces within their borders, including soldiers and armed partisans from other states. But

federal troops soon took control of all the southern Border States, notwithstanding that, in Missouri and Kentucky, pro-Union and pro-Confederate state governments laid competing claims to sovereignty – a bewildering situation rendered somewhat moot when, in spring 1862, the United States Army drove most rebels from these states. At the same time, conditional unionism and neutrality only served to give various “wartime oppressors” on both sides something of a license to manipulate the meanings of neutralism to their own advantage. Chapter three describes the military occupation of the four southern Border States and the difficulties this posed to ordinary residents, active partisans, and federal troops and officials. Residing in each, especially in Missouri and Kentucky, were inhabitants whose true loyalties remained uncertain and somewhat fluid. With President Lincoln called on time and again to set policy in this connection, federal and state officials implemented an array of “counterinsurgency measures,” which authorized the suppression of disloyal newspapers, the suspension of habeas corpus, martial law and military commissions to deal with suspected “secesh,” and loyalty oaths, which “visibly divided local communities.” (40) Most hated were the “assessments,” that is, forced contributions to compensate unionist communities and individuals for property losses they had sustained at the hands of disloyal partisans.

Chapter four investigates the guerilla and conventional warfare waged by Confederate and Union forces in the southern Border States through 1863. General Robert E. Lee and his army scored daunting successes in Virginia in 1862. But, in rural areas of the western Border States, guerillas waged a desperate and sometimes ruthless campaign, even violating fellow southern sympathizers at times. Contrary to the expectations of Confederate partisans, most of the residents in Kentucky and Maryland refused to join them, a pattern that grew more pronounced after the Confederate defeat at Antietam in September 1862. Ultimately, more men fought with the Union than with the Confederacy in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, which Phillips casts as “a benchmark of allegiances in these Border States.” (64) But he also points out that there were hundreds of thousands who avoided military service because the war, one way or another, “did not serve their interests.” (64) The next chapter examines how the demands of irregular and totalizing warfare in the four southern Border States sorely tested the patriotism of Unionists – and how the enactments of the Republican Congress and President Lincoln to emancipate the slaves further undercut their commitments. Some residents had certainly supported the Union cause to spur the end of human bondage. But wartime

emancipation generated a rapid transformation of unionists, conditional and unconditional, into war dissenters, with opposition to wartime emancipation most pronounced in Kentucky. This position, Phillips stresses, was rooted fundamentally in racial antipathy against African Americans. In his words, "Lincoln's proclamation and the ensuing election spurred a political realignment." (82) Chapter six explores the extreme tactics that Confederate partisans and federal authorities employed in those venues of the western Border States most fraught with community division and conflict. Notable in this connection was Order No. 11, issued by General Thomas Ewing, Jr., in response to the massacre of unionists at Lawrence, Kansas, in August 1863 – a directive that entailed the national government's first-ever forcible removal of propertied white citizens from their homes, ultimately affecting four Missouri counties bordering Kansas. Partisan fervor shredded local schools, neighborhoods, and church communities. The United States Army increasingly subjected southern sympathizing families to reprisals, while slaves fled to Union lines by the thousands. Lincoln's emancipation edict spurred bushwhacker depredations on African Americans as white fears of black enlistments intensified. In April 1863, Lincoln approved what was issued as General Orders No. 100, new rules of engagement to facilitate newly-adopted "hard war" tactics to suppress guerillas, including the destruction of non-combatant property and summary capital punishment for suspected rebel insurgents. In this context, "many once moderate unionist women became overt disloyalists." (102) In the November 1864 election, Lincoln won Missouri and Maryland but lost Delaware and Kentucky, and final battles unfolded in spring 1865.

The epilogue traces how African Americans in the four Border States exercised their new freedom by migrating *en masse* to the cities, even as white violence increased and recalcitrant Border State leaders instituted restrictive Black Codes. More important for the purposes of the book's argument, the hardened responses of white Border State residents to Lincoln's assassination at the hands of rabid Confederate extremist John Wilkes Booth arose primarily from the forced emancipation of slaves in those states. This same resentment spurred open opposition to the Radical politics of black freedom. (107, 111) In the ensuing decades, white resentments of coerced black freedom spurred whites in the southern Border States to embrace "the cult of the Lost Cause" and a program of Confederate memorialization. A constructed "Confederate tradition" shaped not only the politics of white residents but also their collective memory of the war. (113) One consequence of these developments was a full-scale

“cultural identification with the Old South.” (115)

The author has produced a well-integrated, tightly-conceptualized history of four extraordinarily complicated polities during an unusually complicated period of sociocultural, economic, and political transformation. *The Civil War in the Border South* is rendered with admirable precision and draws on the best relevant scholarship, both old and new. The author employs a wide array of archival materials, including personal letters, private journals, memorials to state legislatures and Congress, military reports, executive orders, and newspapers, just to name a few. He knows how to tell a story, possesses a keen sense of the dramatic, makes clear his conceptual points, and enlivens his narrative with the voices of key historical actors. The prime value of *The Civil War in the Border South* is its keen insights into the extraordinary complexity of the beliefs and sentiments that motivated residents in the Border States to fight, or not, in behalf of the Union or secession and slavery, especially after Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. By the same token it makes a superb addition to a growing array of monographs produced in the last decade-and-a-half that focus on Border States, North and South, during the Civil War.¹ But this work stands out as the only one to tackle the daunting challenge of providing much needed interpretive coherence for the Civil War Border State experience on the whole.

The only quibble this reviewer can muster worth mentioning is that *The Civil War in the Border South* might have explored a bit more carefully the extent to which evangelical Protestantism figured into the strife under study. The southern and northern Border States, after all, featured a distinctive congregational demography wholly different from that commonly found in the more homogenous North and Deep South. Missouri and Kentucky were home to both pro-slavery and anti-slavery Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian congregations, in both town and country, churches that served as vital centers of worship, community, and politics. Congregational strife between pro-Confederate and pro-Union factions over church property ownership grew intense and commonly entered the courts. As well, irregular partisan violence commonly implicated religious factionalism over the morality of slavery. Provost marshals and Union troops routinely arrested, confined, and, sometimes, deported “secesh” ministers and dissenting pro-Confederate congregants.

The Civil War in the Border South will make excellent reading for Civil War historians, lay readers interested in the Civil War, and for students in the college classroom and seminar room. It includes an excellent collection of images

illuminating key developments – black and white reproductions of sixteen drawings, paintings, and one photographs. And the included up-to-date bibliographical essay ranges widely from a discussion of works dealing with the Civil War in discrete Border States to the history of women and African Americans in these turbulent and intrinsically-interesting wartime venues.

¹Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Steve Longenecker, *Gettysburg Religion: Refinement, Diversity, and Race in the Antebellum and Civil War Border North* (Fordham University Press, 2014); Thomas Goodrich, *Black Flag: Guerilla Warfare on the Western Border, 1861-1865* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Kevin Conley Ruffner, *Maryland's Blue & Gray: A Border State's Union and Confederate Junior Office Corps* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Brian Dallas McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); John W. Shaffer, *Clash of Loyalties: A Border County in the Civil War* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2003); Mary Jane Warde, *When the Wolf Came: The Civil War and the Indian Territory* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2013). And see Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

Mark M. Carroll is an associate professor of history at the University of Missouri. He is the author of Homesteads Ungovernable: Families, Sex, Race, and the Law in Frontier Texas, 1823-1860 (2001). He is currently working of a book project tentatively entitled "Civilization and Transgression: Evangelicalism, Gender Legalities, and the Rise of White Man's Democracy in St. Louis, 1804-1837."