

### A South Divided: Portraits of Dissent in the Confederacy

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## Review

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**Downing, David C.** *A South Divided: Portraits of Dissent in the Confederacy*. Cumberland House, \$22.95 hardcover ISBN 9781581825879

### Confederate Dissent

Scholars writing about the Confederate experience have recognized at least since Albert Moore's *Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy* (1924) and Georgia Tatum's *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (1934) that Southerners were anything but unified in their support of the their region's bid for independence. The topic of Confederate dissonance has continued to draw the attention of historians in more recent years and led to significant analytical and synthetic studies such as Carl Degler's *The Other South* (1974), Richard Current's *Lincoln's Loyalists* (1992), William W. Freehling's *The South vs. The South* (2001), and Jon Wakelyn's *Confederates Against the Confederacy* (2002). These broader works have been accompanied by a large number of articles and monographs on Southern disloyalty at the state and local level. This book, *A South Divided*, written by David Downing who is a Professor of English at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania focuses on the broader question and seeks to provide what the author describes as a panoramic overview of southern dissent that emphasizes the individuality of that phenomenon.

Downing develops his picture of southern dissent with chapters that focus on sources of opposition, including geography, ethnicity, race, and gender. These chapters include ones on antebellum Southern opponents to slavery, southern soldiers in the United States Army who remained loyal to the Union, Unionists in West Virginia and Tennessee, the assortment of deserters and guerillas, Native Americans, blacks who joined the Union Army, and women. Within each of these chapters, he focuses, whenever possible, on the lives of individuals who took a stand against the Confederacy or its institutions, searching for an explanation for the position that they took. The latter effort takes him into an exploration of individuals as varied Sarah Grimk $\Theta$ , General George Thomas,

Admiral David Farragut, Francis Pierpont, William Brownlow, Creek chieftain Opothle Yahola, and Elizabeth Van Lew. In the end, the author discovers no common theme or purpose explaining Southern dissent and he concludes simply that a variety of reasons caused many Southerners to remain either uncommitted or not fully committed to the Southern cause. He also notes, however, that there were enough of such dissidents refusing to serve in the Confederate military, undermining morale, resisting Confederate authority, and ultimately even helping the Union military to be considered a factor in final Confederate defeat.

The reader who is unfamiliar with the extensive literature on Confederate dissent will find this to be an interesting overview of that phenomenon. The scholar will find nothing here that is new. The author's narrative is based almost totally on secondary sources and the ones he selected deal with the more readily apparent examples of opposition. He does not, for example, delve into instances of internal class struggle such as that identified by Wayne Durrill's study of Washington County, North Carolina, *War of Another Kind* (1990). His broader generalization concerning the role of dissent in Confederate defeat takes him into an area that has generated considerable controversy among scholars, but his conclusions do not appear based on the evidence developed in the narrative. Instead, they are little more than an assertion derived from the secondary literature and add nothing to the existing arguments. While an interesting introduction, the work offers little more.

*Carl Moneyhon teaches at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and is a specialist in Southern history during the Civil War and Reconstruction eras. Relevant publications include The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on Arkansas, 1850-1874 (1994) and "Disloyalty and Class Consciousness in Southwestern Arkansas, 1862-1865," Arkansas Historical Quarterly (1993).*