



# BLOOD IN THE HILLS

A History of Violence in Appalachia

EDITED BY BRUCE E. STEWART

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## **Blood in the Hills**

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*Edited by Bruce E. Stewart*

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# Preface

Perhaps no other region in the United States has been subject to as much misconception and stereotyping as has Appalachia. For many Americans, Appalachia was—and still is—a land of backwardness, poverty, hopelessness, and violence. It is—to use the words of journalist Dan Rather—“a place that seems like something out of another country.”<sup>1</sup> Appalachia often evokes images of drunken hillbillies, rednecks, feudists, and moonshiners. Its residents are supposedly eccentric, illiterate, lazy, and hard-drinking. They are “a different breed of people.”<sup>2</sup>

The essays in this book seek to challenge one of the most enduring stereotypes about the region and its inhabitants: the myth of violent Appalachia. Debunking previous theories that attribute violent behavior in Appalachia to geographical and cultural isolation, they demonstrate that mountain violence was not exceptional, but a reflection and result of deeper tensions within the fabric of all of American society. Taken together, the following essays add texture and complexity to the study of Appalachian violence.

Many people worked hard to make this book a reality. I owe my greatest debt of gratitude to the contributors, all of whom went beyond the call of duty to make this volume a success. I would like to thank Peter Carmichael, who recommended that I submit the book to the University Press of Kentucky, and Anne Dean Watkins, who supported this project from the beginning. I am also grateful to Dwight Billings, Ronald Eller, David Hsiung, Gordon McKinney, and the anonymous readers for their valuable and perceptive suggestions in the preparation of this book.

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## Notes

1. Quoted in David C. Hsiung, "Stereotypes," in *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*, ed. Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 102.
2. Quoted in "Signs of the Times," *Appalachian Journal* 23 (Fall 1996): 144.

# Introduction

*Bruce E. Stewart*

On the afternoon of September 20, 1967, Canadian Hugh O'Connor and four other television journalists arrived at the hamlet of Jeremiah in Letcher County, Kentucky, to film a documentary on poverty in Appalachia. As they began to interview coal miners living on the property of Hobart Ison, an eccentric sixty-seven-year-old man whose family had migrated to the region in the 1890s, a woman drove up and warned them that Ison "was coming to throw them" off his land. Ison arrived at the scene minutes later with pistol in hand. Shouting "get off my property," he fired two shots in the air. The filmmakers immediately picked up their equipment and headed toward their cars. As they fled, Ison pointed the pistol at O'Connor and pulled the trigger. The fatal bullet ripped through the award-winning journalist's chest. Before falling to the ground, a shocked O'Connor spoke his final words: "Why did you have to do that?"<sup>1</sup>

Local authorities promptly arrested Ison for the murder of O'Connor. Realizing that many Letcher County residents supported the defendant, prosecutors convinced the judge to move the trial to nearby Harlan County. But even there Ison enjoyed widespread support. "Before the case, people were coming up and saying, 'He should've killed the son of a bitch,'" Harlan County prosecutor Daniel Boone Smith recalled. "People would say, 'They oughtn't to make fun of mountain people. They've made enough fun of mountain people. Let me on the jury, Boone, and I'll turn him loose.'"<sup>2</sup>

Ison's trial began in May 1968. Prosecutors portrayed O'Connor and his colleagues as respectable men who never intended to degrade mountain people. They blamed Judy Breeding, a Jeremiah citizen, for encouraging Ison to confront the cameramen. Ison's attorney countered by arguing that the reporters had been intrusive and claimed that his client suffered from

paranoid schizophrenia. The trial resulted in a hung jury. On March 24, 1969, days before a second trial was scheduled to commence, Ison pled guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced to ten years in prison. Paroled after serving one year of his sentence, Ison died in 1978.<sup>3</sup>

Hugh O'Connor's murder and the subsequent trial of Hobart Ison helped to perpetuate the widespread misconception that Appalachian residents were inherently more violent than other Americans. Since the late nineteenth century, the national media had popularized mountain whites as "hillbillies" whose culture and genetic makeup encouraged them to act irrationally when confronting change. They were supposedly "a different breed of people": social misfits devoted to kinfolk and suspicious of outsiders.<sup>4</sup> For many Americans, Ison's actions and the local community's reaction to the murder confirmed such stereotypes. Reporting for the *New Yorker* in 1969, Calvin Trillin noted his belief that Ison had killed O'Connor because he, like most other mountain residents, viewed "strangers" with disdain. "In Letcher County," Trillin wrote, "fear of outsiders by people who are guarding reputations or economic interests blends easily into a deep-rooted suspicion of outsiders by all eastern Kentucky mountain people, who have always had a fierce instinct to protect their property and a distrust of strangers that has often proved to have been justified." Trillin suggested that "the code of the hills" had driven Ison to kill the journalist and encouraged his neighbors to remain supportive of him. "A strong-looking woman with a strong Kentucky accent," whom Trillin had overheard while in Harlan County, explained:

Us hillbillies, we don't bother nobody. We go out of our way to help people. We don't want nobody pushin' us around. Now, that's the code of the hills. And he [Ison] felt like—that old man felt like—he was being pushed around. You know, it's like I told those men [O'Connor's film crew]: "I wouldn't have gone on that old man's land to pick me a mess of wild greens without I'd asked him." They said, "We didn't know all this." I said, "I bet you know it now. I bet you know it now."<sup>5</sup>

The years following O'Connor's murder in 1967 witnessed a revolution in the field of Appalachian studies. Scholars have debunked the long-standing assumption that Appalachia is geographically, economically, and culturally at odds with the nation. They have demonstrated that stereotypes

about Appalachia and its residents were “invented” after the Civil War by writers from outside the region who “discovered” an isolated people still living like America’s pioneer ancestors. But far from being static and homogenous, they argue, mountain culture was—and is—dynamic and diverse, the product of neither geographical isolation nor ethnicity, but of the same historical forces that influenced the development of regions elsewhere in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Revisionist scholars have also begun to shed new light on the nature of mountain violence.<sup>7</sup> They have challenged previous theories that attribute violent behavior in Appalachia to isolation, poverty, inadequate legal systems, familialism, and/or ethnicity, pointing out that the causes for mountain violence resembled those in other parts of the nation. For them, violence in Appalachia is best understood as a response to the larger economic, social, and political forces that shaped the history of the region—and the nation—at a particular time.<sup>8</sup>

Seen in this way, the murder of O’Connor was not simply the result of Ison and other Letcher County residents’ supposed “innate, clannish suspiciousness of outsiders.” Months prior to the journalist’s death, locals had become alarmed and angered at rumors that the federal government planned to build a dam in the county. The dam posed an immediate threat to families whose homes and farms would soon be underwater. O’Connor and his film crew arrived at Jeremiah unknowingly in this charged atmosphere. Perhaps Ison viewed the journalists as agents of a federal government that was engaged in a power struggle with his neighbors. Perhaps, as historian Robert S. Weise has suggested, the local residents, already upset with the national media’s negative portrayal of the mountain region, remained supportive of Ison, not because they approved of the murder, but “because they perceived the prying eyes of reporters to be an assault on manners, common decency, and the integrity of their communities.”<sup>9</sup>

The essays in this book seek to add further complexity and texture to the study of violence in Appalachia between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Several of them focus on the creation of the myth of violent Appalachia, revealing that the origins of such a negative stereotype predated the Civil War and that mountain residents played an active role in the development of this misconception. The other essays probe the causes and impact of violence in Appalachia. They argue that mountain violence was part of a struggle for power, whether individual or collective, within the region. Taken as a whole, the essays comprising this book demonstrate that

the nature of violence in Appalachia was not exceptional, but a reflection and product of deeper tensions within the fabric of all of American society.

“The Appalachian ‘mountain people’ today are no better than barbarians. They have relapsed into illiteracy and witchcraft. They suffer from poverty, squalor, and ill-health. They are the American counterparts of the latter-day White barbarians of the Old World—Rifis, Albanians, Kurds, Pathans and Hairy Ainus.” So wrote Arnold J. Toynbee in his 1946 abridged classic *A Study of History*, describing the “barbarizing effect of the American frontier” on Appalachian residents.<sup>10</sup> It should come as no surprise that Toynbee cast mountain people in such a negative light. During the late nineteenth century, novelists, missionaries, and scholars popularized Appalachia as a land of violence and lawlessness. For them, the apparent prevalence of moonshining and feuding demonstrated that highlanders were unwanted remnants of America’s pioneer past: staunch individualists who relied on violence to maintain order and preserve their “primitive” way of life.<sup>11</sup> The rise of violence in the coalfields of Appalachia in the twentieth century further reinforced this stereotype. As the U.S. Coal Commission explained in 1922, “Local traditions [still] exert a dominating influence and account very largely for the outbreaks of violence. Much of the violence had nothing to do with the coal industry but had to do with the nature and racial characteristics of the people. . . . The primitive conditions of life of this people can scarcely be paralleled anywhere.”<sup>12</sup> In short, Toynbee’s *A Study of History* simply regurgitated the long-held misconception that mountain inhabitants were the “riff-raff of civilization.”<sup>13</sup>

Although agreeing that Appalachia was steeped in violence, Toynbee and other early writers differed in their explanations for the causes of the region’s “degraded” state. Toynbee argued that mountain violence was a product of the American frontier. Forced to live in the “wilderness” and defend themselves against Native Americans, Appalachian whites “relapsed” into savagery, a condition that future generations failed to rise above. Quoting historian Frederick Jackson Turner, Toynbee elaborated: “[The frontier] strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war-cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion.”<sup>14</sup> Other contemporaries disagreed with Toynbee, contending that violent behavior in

Appalachia was the result of genetic deficiency. They opined that most highlanders were the offspring of “shiftless and vicious” Virginians and North Carolinians who, unable and unwilling to adapt to “civilization,” migrated to Appalachia, where they “gave birth to generations of violent and hardened criminals.”<sup>15</sup>

Many early-twentieth-century writers, however, insisted that the roots of mountain violence lay not in America, but in Europe. They argued that most highlanders were descendants of Scottish and Scotch-Irish settlers who had carried with them to the backcountry a cultural and historical propensity to break the law, act “clannish,” and repeatedly engage in acts of violence.<sup>16</sup> “They [the Scotch-Irish] were a fighting race,” Horace Kephart wrote in 1921, explicating why mountain residents distilled alcohol illegally. “Accustomed to plenty of hard knocks at home, they took to the rough fare and Indian wars of our border as naturally as ducks take to water. They brought with them, too, an undying hatred of excise laws, and a spirit of unhesitating resistance to any authority that sought to enforce such laws.”<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the most popular explanation for the supposed prevalence of violence in Appalachia was geographical isolation. By the turn of the twentieth century, most scholars, educators, and missionaries believed that the mountains had always served as a physical barrier preventing “civilization” from entering the region. As such, Appalachian residents remained impoverished, uneducated, and savage. According to C. T. Revere in 1907, mountain people had “never come in contact with the world, and are amazingly ignorant of anything which happens outside their immediate neighborhood.”<sup>18</sup> Revere and other writers agreed that geographical isolation ultimately forged a peculiar mountain culture. Adapting to their environment, highlanders became “extreme individualists” who lacked a sense of community and regarded strangers with suspicion.<sup>19</sup> These cultural traits, along with an absence of effective legal systems, resulted in the proliferation of feuding and other acts of individual and collective violence throughout Appalachia.<sup>20</sup>

Since the 1970s, a growing number of activists and academics have challenged such theories about mountain violence. Henry Shapiro’s 1978 classic *Appalachia on Our Mind* proved instrumental in sparking this wave of revisionist scholarship. Shapiro argued that the popular image of Appalachia as being vastly out of step with America, economically and culturally, was not based on evidence. Instead, it was a post-Civil War construct “invented” by urban Americans in order to project their own fears about eco-



conomic modernization onto a people perceived as different. Appalachia became the “other,” a fictional place that reminded Victorian Americans why they had embraced “progress,” which provided them with an excuse to intervene in the lives of mountain residents, whom they viewed as crude and unrefined.<sup>21</sup>

Shapiro’s work inspired other scholars to conduct more empirical studies of Appalachia. Contrary to popular perception, they discovered an ethnically, racially, economically, and politically complex region. They concluded that mountain culture had always been dynamic and heterogeneous, the product of a people whose ancestors were not only Scotch-Irish, but English, German, Welsh, Italian, African, and Native American as well. Nor did these revisionists believe that geographical isolation forged an Appalachia that was out of step with the rest of America. Despite the region’s rugged terrain, historical forces at work elsewhere in the United States also shaped the history of Appalachia. Slavery, war, racism, poverty, industrialization and modernization, economic exploitation, environmental degradation, and labor unrest led to divisions along class, religious, gender, racial, and political lines. It was a society very much American.

This scholarship ultimately encouraged writers to develop new theories on the nature of violent behavior in Appalachia. Instead of attributing mountain violence to geographical and cultural isolation, they argued that such conflict resulted from definable historical causes that had shaped the region at a particular time. Many stressed the role that outside forces played in the rise of individual and collective violence in Appalachia, while others emphasized local events as the leading factor in the outbreak of mountain violence. All of these scholars, however, agreed on two points: that violence in Appalachia was not exceptional and that it was often the product of power struggles within the region.

Published in 1977, Gordon B. McKinney’s “Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890s” marked the beginning of this new wave of scholarship on mountain violence.<sup>22</sup> McKinney argued that violence was a rare phenomenon in Appalachia until the advent of industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century. He believed that economic modernization transformed Appalachia from a region of self-sufficient and stable communities to one of poverty and dependency. Unable to control their own economic and social environments, highlanders responded with what many outsiders considered “irrational acts of violence”: political assassination, rioting, lynching, and feuding. “No other group in the history of the

United States has faced such an onslaught in such a short period of time,” McKinney concluded. “The wonder is not that the people of Appalachia were violent in the 1890’s, but that they were not even more violent than they were.”<sup>23</sup>

Many scholars followed McKinney’s lead by interpreting violence as a reaction to economic and political changes that occurred in the region at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1980, for instance, William F. Holmes argued that moonshine violence was neither the product of geographical isolation nor the result of ethnic origins. He described highlanders’ resistance to federal liquor taxation as a form of “reactionary violence.” “Usually local and small-scale,” Holmes explained, “reactionary violence is essentially backward-looking and designed to protect rights once enjoyed but subsequently threatened.” Fearing that the federal government used liquor taxation to expand its authority, Georgia moonshiners and their neighbors resorted to vigilantism as a means of combating this threat to local autonomy. But such violent opposition to the “forces of political and economical nationalization” was not confined to Appalachia. Holmes asserted that similar acts of collective violence also became widespread in rural communities elsewhere in the United States throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>24</sup>

Other revisionists revealed that industrialization also played an important role in the rise of feuding in Appalachia following the Civil War. According to these scholars, feud violence was not irrational, cultural, or genetic, but was instead caused by conflicts between local elites to maintain or achieve economic and political hegemony over their changing communities.<sup>25</sup> Altina Waller’s 1988 *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860–1900* typified this new interpretation. In it, Waller recast the legendary Hatfield-McCoy feud as a class confrontation within mountain society. She argued that internal forces initially created an atmosphere in which violence became almost inevitable. By the 1870s, high birth rates, land shortages, and agricultural decline had made it more difficult for many Tug Valley farmers, especially young men, to make a living. Frustrated, Randolph McCoy’s sons lashed out at William Anderson Hatfield, a budding entrepreneur whose dubious business practices had earned him the nickname “Devil Anse,” and his family. The advent of industrialization in the 1880s heightened these economic and social tensions within the Tug Valley region, ushering in a new and more violent phase of the feud. Randolph McCoy and his supporters allied with outside capitalists in order to

gain economic and political power over the community. "Devil Anse" Hatfield responded to this threat by siding with local residents who feared that modernization would destroy local autonomy. "The resulting conflict between subsistence farmers, as well as small-scale independent entrepreneurs like Devil Anse, and the local allies of distant corporations defined the political conflicts of the decade," Waller concluded. "The exploitation of the mountains, then, was not a simple struggle between outsiders and natives but a complex set of struggles at the local level over control of Appalachia's vast resources."<sup>26</sup>

Not all revisionists have interpreted economic modernization as the leading culprit responsible for the outbreak of violence in Appalachia at the turn of the twentieth century. Influenced by Raymond Gastil and other sociologists, these scholars opined that highlanders shared with all southerners a cultural proclivity toward violent behavior. They maintained that historical forces and social values forged a "subregional culture" that tolerated violence in all forms.<sup>27</sup> In his 1986 study of homicide in four mountain counties along the Kentucky-Tennessee border, for instance, folklorist William Lynwood Montell traced the origins of this "culture of violence" to guerrilla activity during the Civil War. According to Montell, this type of warfare fostered a new attitude within local communities that accepted the use of violence in the defense of one's honor, property, and home. This "fatal code," along with the prevalence of gun ownership, widespread use of moonshine whiskey, ineffective law enforcement, and geographical isolation, accounted for the region's high incidence of homicide during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Only when improved roads in the 1940s allowed state and local police to enforce the law did murder rates subside to near national levels.<sup>28</sup>

Contrary to popular misconception, recent scholars have also discovered that Appalachia shared with the rest of the United States a long history of racial violence. According to them, mountain whites had always utilized force to maintain the racial status quo. Like those elsewhere in the antebellum South, masters in Appalachia often subjected their slaves to physical and sexual abuse.<sup>29</sup> Nor did mountain blacks escape such maltreatment after the Civil War. The unwillingness of white highlanders to accept African American equality often led to open unrest during Reconstruction, as evident in a race riot that erupted in Asheville, North Carolina, in 1868.<sup>30</sup> The influx of African Americans into mountain towns, coal mines, and lumber camps, all of which were places experiencing rapid economic and

social change, further exacerbated race relations, resulting in an increase of lynching in Appalachia at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> “The violence of the mountain lynchers was not an inarticulate, irrational reaction to inchoate fears but rather a concentrated effort to control, not stop or reverse, change,” historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage explained in 2001. “Like their counterparts in other rapidly changing regions of the South . . . the whites who lived in Appalachia used violence as a tool to define racial boundaries in a region where traditional racial lines were either vague or nonexistent.”<sup>32</sup>

Over the past thirty years, activists and academics have also shed new light on labor conflict in twentieth-century Appalachia. Published in 1981, David A. Corbin’s *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields* served as a foundation for this revisionist scholarship. Corbin dismissed the prevailing interpretation that violence in West Virginia (and other coal mining communities across Appalachia) was the product of the region’s tradition of “gun-totin’,” moonshining, and feuding.<sup>33</sup> “This erroneous, pejorative reasoning fails to recognize the decades of economic growth and social change in [the region] prior to the outbreaks of strikes and violence,” he explicated. “It displays an ignorance of the fact that about two-thirds of the area’s work force . . . came from outside the region.”<sup>34</sup> Corbin argued that violence against coal operators in West Virginia ultimately reflected the emergence of a working-class consciousness among a diverse population of African American, eastern European, and Appalachian miners. Rather than a manifestation of inherent violent tendencies, it was a “rational response” to the economic exploitation and political corruption that these laborers could no longer endure.

While Corbin’s work encouraged subsequent scholars to interpret class conflict in twentieth-century Appalachia within the context of larger struggles between labor and capital, it failed to explain why the vast majority of strikes ended with no violence.<sup>35</sup> Contrary to popular perception, Price V. Fishback discovered that most miners and coal operators sought to avoid violence, fearing that it would hinder labor relations and reduce employers’ profits and workers’ earnings. Both sides, however, armed in self-defense. “The miners felt they had to set up their own defenses to protect themselves and their civil rights,” Fishback wrote in 1995. “On the other hand, the operators set up elaborate defenses because they feared destruction of property and attacks on men who continued to work.” Although such defensive posturing often deterred violence, it sometimes transformed a minor event into a violent clash. Fishback concluded:

A rock that found its mark, a guard stumbling under the pressure of the crowd, someone firing into the air, or an angry move in self-defense could start a melee. In the confusion of the incident, both sides charged the other with starting the violence. The violence might end there if both sides quickly settled. But this initial incident damaged relations, thus lowering the costs to both sides of aggressive retaliation. Both sides exacted revenge for prior acts, sometimes striking before the other side could act. The worst excesses of aggressive violence occurred during these periods of retaliation.<sup>36</sup>

Recent scholarship has also demonstrated that labor violence in Appalachia was more than just an uprising of exploited workers against capitalists. In 2008, for example, Rebecca J. Bailey revealed that local circumstances played an important role in the infamous Matewan Massacre. Bailey acknowledged that external forces—conflicts between the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and coal operators, a sluggish national economy, federal deregulation of the coal and rail industries, and inflation—fostered tensions within Mingo County. But these factors, which existed in neighboring Logan and McDowell counties as well, failed to account for the violence that erupted in the town of Matewan on May 19, 1920. According to Bailey, the “massacre” was the product of political infighting and chronic economic instability that had plagued Mingo County for decades. During the spring of 1920, the UMWA capitalized on these “unique” local conditions to establish Mingo as the “beachhead from which to organize their true targets of Logan and McDowell.” Consequently, Matewan became the center of political and labor agitation in southwestern West Virginia, setting the stage for violence.<sup>37</sup>

Taken as a whole, revisionists have demonstrated that violent behavior in Appalachia was not exceptional. When highlanders used violence to combat economic exploitation, environmental degradation, political inequality, and social change, they were acting much like other Americans. This should come as no surprise. Violence has always been a part of American culture and history. Most eighteenth-century Americans accepted the existence of riots and other extralegal uprisings, believing that they occurred “in all governments at all times.”<sup>38</sup> Colonialists supported the use of force to relocate American Indians and then later to rebel against the British Crown when they felt unfairly taxed. During the antebellum period, farmers utilized “rebellions” as a form of social protest, nativists employed riots

to intimidate “foreigners,” and abolitionists and slavery apologists alike formed vigilante committees to combat their adversaries. The Civil War continued the country’s turbulent history, as “internal violence flared behind the lines of the bloodily contending Northern and Southern armies.”<sup>39</sup> The post–Civil War period proved to be the most tumultuous epoch in American history—an era of increased racial violence and labor conflict. And in the twentieth century, the 1960s witnessed a renewed outbreak of domestic violence as the country became divided along racial, gender, and generational lines. In short, violence is as American as apple pie.<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, the widespread belief that Appalachian residents have always been inherently more violent than other Americans lingers to this day. Television networks continue to perpetuate negative images about the mountain region by recycling repeats of *The Dukes of Hazzard* and broadcasting popular Hollywood films like *Deliverance* and *Next of Kin*. Such stereotyping persists in academia and the arts as well. Most Appalachian scholars and activists, for instance, have taken exception to David Hackett Fischer’s 1989 award-winning *Albion’s Seed* and Robert Schenkkan’s 1992 Pulitzer Prize–winning play, *The Kentucky Cycle*, arguing that both works portray mountain culture as “simplistically rooted in violence and cruelty.”<sup>41</sup> The essays in this book, then, seek to further challenge the myth of violent Appalachia, while also shedding new light on the nature of mountain violence.

In his 1962 classic *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, a book that helped to raise national awareness about poverty and economic exploitation in Appalachia, Harry M. Caudill characterized mountain whites in the eighteenth century as “loudmouthed, profane, vulgar, and short-tempered.”<sup>42</sup> According to Caudill, life on the American frontier had encouraged highlanders to act much like the “red man.” “He was an uncouth brawler, wholly undisciplined and untamed,” Caudill explained, “and it was practically impossible to direct or control his energies in any sustained undertaking.”<sup>43</sup> Caudill is one of many scholars who have argued that the roots of violent behavior in Appalachia lay in the eighteenth century. Historians like David Hackett Fischer, for instance, maintained that frontiersmen operated within a “warrior culture,” one that they had inherited from their Scotch-Irish ancestors and that made them prone to commit violence in defense of honor, family, and property. “The [Scotch-Irish] were more at home than others in this anarchic [frontier] environment, which was well suited to

their family system, their warrior ethic, their farming and herding economy, their attitudes toward land and wealth, and their ideas of work and power,” Fischer wrote in 1989. “The ethos of the North British borders came to dominate this ‘dark and bloody ground,’ partly by force of numbers, but mainly because it was a means of survival in a raw and dangerous world.”<sup>44</sup>

The first three essays in this book challenge such misconceptions about mountain frontiersmen and the causes of violence in eighteenth-century Appalachia. Kevin T. Barksdale explores the role that threatened and targeted violence played in the rise and fall of the state of Franklin between 1784 and 1788. Dismissing previous cultural, ethnic, and geographical explanations for the prevalence of violent behavior in the upper Tennessee Valley during those years, he reveals that conflict was the product of internal factionalism and political instability. Led by John Sevier, Franklinites combated their antistatehood adversaries, both white and Native American, to achieve political and economic hegemony. Meanwhile, Cherokee resistance to white highlanders’ attempts to seize their land further destabilized the region, thereby creating an atmosphere in which violence became inevitable.

The next essay broadens our understanding of violent confrontation in Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania, from 1752 to 1800. In it, Kathryn Shively Meier discovers that “bloodshed” in the region was not as widespread as contemporaries and later scholars claimed. According to Meier, the Delaware and white settlers more often relied on postured aggression rather than actual violence when defending their claims to the land. Through verbal warnings and the mobilization of large numbers of men, both groups sought to intimidate their opponents into submission without resorting to killing. Nor were white frontiersmen in Wyoming Valley staunch individualists who utilized vigilantism in defiance of authorities. They continually sought sanction from formal power structures before engaging in acts of violence.

While Native Americans utilized diplomacy as a means of stymieing white encroachment, internal divisions often threatened to prevent them from successfully and peacefully doing so. Tyler Boulware’s essay examines the impact that generational conflicts between elder headmen and younger men had on Cherokee society in eighteenth-century Appalachia. Horse stealing and revenge killings largely conducted by young warriors, Boulware reveals, alarmed many village leaders who feared that such behavior served to only further destabilize relations with neighboring Anglo-Americans. Elder headmen responded by distancing themselves and their communities from the marital activities of these “mad young men.” But village leaders

also discovered that it was beneficial to “have members of the community who were ostensibly beyond authority,” using them as a “powerful diplomatic weapon” to counter challenges to their lands. In the end, however, the generational divide within Cherokee society undermined elder leaders’ attempts to “convince Anglo-Americans that border raids were ‘private’ affairs and not a ‘general’ war.”

Most recent works on antebellum Appalachia have focused on the region’s diverse and vibrant economy. Challenging the long-standing assumption that nineteenth-century Appalachia was a land of self-sufficient white farmers who lived in isolated, egalitarian communities, revisionists have demonstrated that improved transportation routes, population growth, and new manufacturing technologies allowed some mountain residents access to the larger market economy. An agricultural and commercial elite, most of whom owned slaves or hired tenants, also populated the region, revealing that mountain society was both heterogeneous and class differentiated. Nonetheless, this new wave of scholarship has often overlooked the role that violence played in the region before the Civil War. Three essays here help to fill in this historiographical gap.

During the 1830s, gold mining in north Georgia brought national attention to Appalachia. Writers journeyed to the region, where they often commented on the high levels of violence and lawlessness in mining communities. Did such media coverage pave the way for the creation of the myth of violent Appalachia before the Civil War? In his evaluation of the 1834 novel *Guy Rivers*, set in the gold country of Georgia’s highlands and written by one of the antebellum South’s most popular writers, William Gilmore Simms, John C. Inscoe answers this question with an emphatic no. Inscoe argues that the novel’s Appalachian setting “was only incidental to the plot, the characters, and the social realities that inspired both.” In fact, the descriptors *Appalachia* and *southern highlands* never appear in the story, suggesting that Simms and other Americans had not yet identified the region as a cultural entity unto itself. Inscoe contends that *Guy Rivers* was one of several “Border Romances” penned by Simms to contrast “ordered society” with the “unbridled license” of the American frontier. “As an apt description of the society Simms created in *Guy Rivers*, and indeed an equally apt characterization of the reality of the early settlements in Georgia’s gold country,” he concludes, “there seems to be nothing in either case that makes these particular tensions in any way integral to, or even typical of, Appalachia per se.”



While Williams Gilmore Simms may not have perceived violence as a defining feature in antebellum mountain society, other writers, according to Katherine E. Ledford, did. Ledford discovers that travel writers often depicted Appalachia as a “no man’s land,” a place where the mountainous landscape caused white inhabitants to continue to behave in an “uncivilized” way and to rely on violence. This perception, however, did not necessarily reflect the reality of life in Appalachia before the Civil War. Instead, it was created by middle-class northerners to help them define themselves in opposition to the “other.” “From real to imaginary violence, from threatened to acted-upon violence,” Ledford concludes, “depictions of physical conflict tell us more about the traveler, his personal worries and his cultural expectations—and more about an emerging U.S. national identity (bound by place and race)—than about the people of the Mountain South.”

Like other parts of the United States, antebellum Appalachia was sometimes a brutal place, especially for African Americans. In Rogersville, Tennessee, in 1857, for instance, John Netherland, an elder in the Second Presbyterian Church and a prominent politician, ordered the savage (and, in one case, fatal) beating of two of his slaves. Durwood Dunn chronicles how white eastern Tennesseans responded to these whippings. Residents like Samuel Sawyer, who would resign as pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, condemned Netherland’s actions and began to question whether such brutality could be justified in any civil society, regardless of the circumstances. These beatings, Dunn concludes, triggered among many white highlanders a sense of moral revulsion and guilt toward the peculiar institution, helping to revive the antislavery crusade in eastern Tennessee, a political movement that had become victim to “the successful characterization of abolitionism as an incendiary and morbidly irresponsible form of extremism.”

Most recent scholarship has focused on the causes of violence in post-Civil War Appalachia, and for good reason. It was during those years that the media popularized to a national audience the image of Appalachia as a land of violence and lawlessness. In his essay, Bruce E. Stewart examines the role that the Moonshine Wars of the 1870s played in the construction of this stereotype. Although resistance to federal liquor-law enforcement occurred throughout the nation, local colorists and journalists singled out Appalachia following Reconstruction. Nearly a decade before feuds made national headlines in the late 1880s, these writers’ coverage of the Moonshine Wars introduced Victorian Americans to a mythical region of “big-

boned, semi-barbarian people” whose culture and genetic makeup made them reject civilization and defy federal authority.

The myth of violent Appalachia ultimately encouraged religious organizations to journey to the region, where they sought to “Christianize” its residents. As Mary Ella Engel demonstrates, such attempts to win converts sometimes ended in bloodshed. Engel chronicles north Georgians’ opposition to Joseph Standing and other Mormon missionaries during the late 1870s. She argues that violence directed at Mormon elders was neither the product of highlanders’ (supposed) suspicion of outsiders nor the result of an enduring southern tradition of vigilantism. Instead, it was a response to Mormons’ successful campaign to recruit local residents, particularly women, into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The conversion of mountain women, and their subsequent migration to Colorado, disrupted kinship ties and eroded male heads of household’s authority over their dependents. Consequently, many north Georgians, especially those whose loved ones had converted to Mormonism, employed violence to combat this perceived threat to their families and communities.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates Appalachia’s connectedness to the rest of the post–Civil War South than its racial violence. Rand Dotson explores one such example of racial discord in Appalachia: the Roanoke Riot of 1893. Celebrated as the “Magic City of the New South,” Roanoke defied popular misconceptions of Appalachia as a land of isolation and backwardness. By 1890, the town had become the economic and political center of southwestern Virginia, serving as the headquarters for the Norfolk & Western and Shenandoah Valley railroads. But all was not well for this booming city. During the early 1890s, tensions within Roanoke’s white community erupted as middle-class reformers implemented prohibition and other statutes aimed at controlling white workers and criminalizing vigilantism. The influx of African Americans into the city further exacerbated the situation, unsettling many whites who viewed blacks “as chronic criminals and potential rapists of white women.” According to Dotson, these racial fears, along with white laborers’ growing opposition to middle-class hegemony, ignited the riot.

By the turn of the twentieth century, most Americans had accepted the stereotype that Appalachia was a land of lawlessness. For them, geographical and cultural isolation had conspired against highlanders, forging a culture that encouraged them to reject modernity and embrace violence to preserve their “primitive” way of life. The apparent persistence of mountain

feuds, especially in eastern Kentucky, helped to perpetuate and confirm this misconception. "It is the feud that most sharply differentiates the . . . mountaineer from his fellows," John Fox Jr. wrote in 1901. "The feud means, of course, ignorance, shiftlessness, incredible lawlessness, a frightful estimate of the value of human life; the horrible custom of ambush, a class of cowardly assassins who can be hired to do murder for a gun, a mule, or a gallon of moonshine."<sup>45</sup>

In his essay, T. R. C. Hutton reveals that such depictions served to mask what many of these feuds actually were: calculated acts of violence used by Democrats to achieve political hegemony in their communities. Hutton argues that the murders of James Cockrell and other Republicans in "Bloody" Breathitt County, Kentucky, during the early 1900s were not the result of a feud between members of the Cockrell and Hargis families. According to Hutton, James Hargis, a prominent local Democrat, orchestrated (at least two of) these assassinations to prevent Republicans from gaining a foothold in Breathitt County. In an attempt to obfuscate the political motives that lay behind the murders, Hargis recast them within the larger narrative of a "family feud," a characterization that Bluegrass Kentuckians and other Americans, already believing that highlanders were prone to commit "irrational" acts of violence, accepted at face value.

The rise of violence in Appalachian coalfields during the early twentieth century further solidified the region's reputation as a land of lawlessness. Debunking the myth that bloodshed associated with labor strikes developed from a "backward" mountain culture, recent scholarship has portrayed such conflict as a class struggle pitting workers against exploitive mine owners. But as Paul H. Rakes and Kenneth R. Bailey point out in their essay, little scholarly study has focused on non-strike-related violence within mining camps and towns. In southeastern West Virginia, Rakes and Bailey discovered, coal communities were dangerous places at the turn of the twentieth century. There, some miners, often under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, resorted to violence to settle personal disputes, defend their honor, and prove their manhood. According to Rakes and Bailey, however, such violence was not unique to Appalachia. It had evolved from conditions common in all industrial frontiers throughout the nation's history.

No matter how much violence in Appalachia resembled that elsewhere in the nation, Americans continued to emphasize the region's "savage" culture during the twentieth century. The media's coverage of the public dis-

play of Broadus Miller's corpse in Morganton, North Carolina, is one such example. In 1927, Miller, an African American construction worker, allegedly murdered a young girl, igniting a nearly two-week-long manhunt for her assailant in the mountains of Burke and Caldwell counties. Commodore Vanderbilt Burleson, a white Morganton denizen, eventually tracked down and killed Miller. He then transported Miller's remains to Morganton, where thousands of residents viewed the corpse in celebration. As Kevin W. Young argues in his essay, white southerners often displayed in public the dead bodies of "outlaws," especially those of African American men who had committed a sexual crime, following the Civil War. Nonetheless, Young reveals that Piedmont townspeople, hoping to distance themselves from the exhibition, depicted it as an act of crude "hillbillies," much to the dismay of Burke County inhabitants. By emphasizing the town's "hilly" location, he concludes, the state press framed its coverage of the case in ways that both played upon and reinforced stereotypes of mountain residents.

Not all Appalachian residents stood idly by as outsiders portrayed violence as a central component of mountain life. They knew how outsiders perceived them and, as Richard D. Starnes demonstrates, "took steps to shape those perceptions." In the book's final essay, Starnes chronicles local boosters' response to the murder of Thomas Price, a prominent New Jersey industrialist who retired to Haywood County, North Carolina, in the 1930s. On September 24, 1933, Dewey Potter and four of his relatives shot and killed Price. The murder alarmed many residents, especially local boosters who feared that it threatened to undermine their attempts at promoting outside investment, tourism, and economic development. Hoping to distance western North Carolina from the prevailing representations of Appalachian violence, these denizens depicted the assailants, all of whom had been born in north Georgia and had just recently moved to Haywood County, as outsiders beyond the control of the community. Meanwhile, they championed Price as a native Appalachian whose death was not the product of highlanders' supposed fear of outsiders. Price's murder and local reaction to it, Starnes concludes, reveal that "the construction of Appalachian identity remained a process mediated by both outsiders and mountaineers themselves and that for both, violence continued to play a central role."

In 1977, Wilma Dykeman, one of the pioneers of the Appalachian studies movement, bemoaned the region's undeserved reputation as a land of violence:

While robber barons were fleecing the people of public lands and treasured resource, while big city bosses and rural demagogues were subverting the essential democratic processes, while chain-gang labor enriched certain treasures and lynching of blacks violated every sanction of law and order, national readers were invited to believe that moonshine stills and family feuds made Appalachia a unique example of lawlessness. Actually, violence was as American as apple pie—whether it was exemplified by a “splendid little war” in the Philippines, by John Dillinger, or by the Hatfields and McCoys. The variance in social acceptability seemed to be determined in part by the economic status of the participants and by the public enormity of the violence.<sup>46</sup>

Over the past thirty years, scholars following Dykeman’s lead have labored diligently to debunk the myth of violent Appalachia. Building upon their works, the essays in this book further broaden our understanding of the problem of violence in the region without denying that it exists. Taken together, they remind us that Appalachian residents have always been American for better or worse.

## Notes

1. David S. Walls and John B. Stephenson, eds., *Appalachia in the Sixties: Decade of Reawakening* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 193–94.
2. Walls and Stephenson, *Appalachia in the Sixties*, 196–98.
3. Walls and Stephenson, *Appalachia in the Sixties*, 199–200; *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1969.
4. Quoted in “Signs of the Times,” *Appalachian Journal* 23 (Fall 1996): 144.
5. Walls and Stephenson, *Appalachia in the Sixties*, 196, 201.
6. For examples of this scholarship, see Jennifer Ego, Ken Fones-Wolf, and Louis C. Martin, eds., *Culture, Class, and Politics in Modern Appalachia: Essays in Honor of Ronald L. Lewis* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2009); Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen, eds., *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Ken Fones-Wolf and Ronald L. Lewis, eds., *Transnational West Virginia: Ethnic Communities and Economic Changes, 1840–1940* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2002); John C. Inscoe, ed., *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001); Dwight B. Billings and Kathleen M. Blee, *Road to Poverty: The Making of Wealth and Hardship in Appalachia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ronald L. Lewis,

*Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Mary Beth Pudur, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, eds., *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Allen W. Batteau, *The Invention of Appalachia* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990); John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters, Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachia Community, 1818–1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Henry S. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); and Helen Lewis, Linda Johnson, and Donald Askins, eds., *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978).

7. Violence, as I use the term in this book, refers to acts that “kill or injure persons or do significant damage to property.” These acts could be performed by an individual or a group of people. The reasons for committing violence could be political, economic, or personal. See Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, eds., *American Violence: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 9.

8. For examples of this scholarship, see Rebecca J. Bailey, *Matewan before the Massacre: Politics, Coal, and the Roots of Conflict in a West Virginia Mining Community* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2008); Richard A. Brisbin Jr., *A Strike like No Other: Law and Resistance during the Pittston Coal Strike of 1989–1990* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Billings and Blee, *Road to Poverty*; Dwight Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford, eds., *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999); Stephen L. Fisher, ed., *Fighting Back in Appalachia: Tradition of Resistance and Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); David Allan Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); and Gordon B. McKinney, “Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890s,” in *An Appalachian Symposium: Essays Written in Honor of Cratis D. Williams*, ed. J. W. Williamson (Boone: Appalachian State University Press, 1977): 131–44.

9. Robert S. Weise, “Remaking Red Bird: Isolation and the War on Poverty in a Rural Appalachian Locality,” in *The Countryside in the Age of the Modern State: Political Histories of Rural America*, ed. Catherine McNicol Stock and Robert D. Johnston (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001): 268–71.

10. Quoted in James S. Brown, "An Appalachian Footnote to Toynebee's *A Study of History*," *Appalachian Journal* 6 (Autumn 1978): 29–30.

11. For examples of this scholarship, see Harry M. Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1962); John F. Day, *Bloody Ground* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1941); Edwin E. White, *Highland Heritage: The Southern Mountains and the Nation* (New York: Friendship Press, 1937); John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York: Russell Sage, 1921); Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1913); John Fox Jr., *Blue-Grass and Rhododendron: Out-Doors in Old Kentucky* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901).

12. U.S. Coal Commission, *Report of the United States Coal Commission*, Senate Document no. 195, 68th Cong., 2nd sess., 5 vols. (Washington, DC, 1925), quoted in Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*, xiv.

13. *Big Stone Gap Post*, Apr. 24, 1891, quoted in McKinney, "Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia," 138.

14. Quoted in J. S. Brown, "Appalachian Footnote," 30.

15. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 1: 154. See also Harry M. Caudill, *A Darkness at Dawn: Appalachian Kentucky and the Future* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976); Nathaniel D. M. Hirsch, "An Experimental Study of the East Kentucky Mountaineers," *Genetic Psychology Monographs* 3 (Mar. 1928): 183–244; Arthur Estabrook, "Presidential Address: Blood Seeks Environment," *Eugenical News* 2 (Aug. 1926): 106–14; Hartley Davis and Clifford Smyth, "Land of Feuds," *Munsey's Magazine* 30 (November 1903); and John Fiske, *Old Virginia and Her Neighbours* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1897), ii.

16. For examples, see John Anthony Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959); James Watt Raine, *The Land of Saddle-bags: A Study of the Mountain People of Appalachia* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1924); John M. Moore, *The South To-Day* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the U.S. and Canada, 1916); and Charles J. Ryder, "Our American Highlanders: Problems and Progress," *Education* 18 (Oct. 1897): 69.

17. Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders*, 151.

18. C. T. Revere, "Beyond the Gap: The Breeding Ground of Feuds," *Outing Magazine*, Feb. 7, 1907, 612.

19. Campbell, *Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, 91.

20. For examples, see D. H. Shockel, "Changing Conditions in the Kentucky Mountains," *Scientific Monthly* 3 (Aug. 1916): 105–31; Ellen Churchill Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains: A Study of Anthropogeography,"

*Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 42 (Aug. 1910): 561–94; J. Stoddard Johnston, “Romance and Tragedy of Kentucky Feuds,” *Cosmopolitan* 27 (Sept. 1899); William Goodell Frost, “Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,” *Atlantic Monthly* 83 (Mar. 1899): 311–19; and John Fox Jr., *The Kentuckians* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1898).

21. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*. Other scholars have followed Shapiro’s lead by examining the development of Appalachian stereotypes during the twentieth century. See Batteau, *Invention of Appalachia*; J. W. Williamson, *Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

22. Although Gordon McKinney was the first scholar to publish a full-length article on mountain violence, since the 1960s, revisionists had begun to question the prevailing interpretations of the nature of violent behavior in Appalachia. For overviews on the origins and growth of the Appalachian studies movement during the 1960s and 1970s, see Ronald D Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008); Dwight B. Billings, “Writing Appalachia: Old Ways, New Ways, and WVU Ways,” in Egolf, Fones-Wolf, and Martin, *Culture, Class, and Politics in Modern Appalachia*, 1–28; John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and Dwight B. Billings, Mary Beth Pudup, and Altina L. Waller, “Taking Exception with Exceptionalism: The Emergence and Transformation of Historical Studies of Appalachia,” in Pudup, Billings, and Waller, *Appalachia in the Making*, 1–24.

23. McKinney, “Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia,” 141. See also John Alexander Williams, *West Virginia: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1976).

24. William F. Holmes, “Moonshining and Collective Violence: Georgia, 1889–1895,” *Journal of American History* 67 (Dec. 1980): 590. See also Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Stephen Cresswell, *Mormons and Cowboys, and Moonshiners and Klansmen: Federal Law Enforcement in the South and West, 1870–1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991).

25. For revisionist scholarship on feuding in Appalachia, see James C. Klotter, “Feuds in Appalachia: An Overview,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (1982): 290–317; Waller, *Feud*; Kathleen M. Blee and Dwight B. Billings, “Violence and Local State Formation: A Longitudinal Case Study of Appalachian Feuding,” *Law and Society Review* 30, no. 4 (1996): 671–705; Altina L. Waller, “Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype,” in Pudup, Billings,



and Waller, *Appalachia in the Making*, 347–76; Kathleen M. Blee and Dwight B. Billings, “Where ‘Bloodshed Is a Pastime’: Mountain Feuds and Appalachian Stereotyping,” in Billings, Norman, and Ledford, *Back Talk from Appalachia*, 119–37.

26. Waller, *Feud*, 139–40.

27. For scholarship that argues that the South has a subregional culture of violence, see Richard Maxwell Brown, “Southern Violence—Regional Problem or National Nemesis? Legal Attitudes toward Southern Homicide in Historical Perspective,” *Vanderbilt Law Review* 32 (Jan. 1979): 225–50; John Shelton Reed, “To Live—and Die—in Dixie: A Contribution to the Study of Southern Violence,” *Political Science Quarterly* 86 (Sept. 1971): 429–43; Raymond D. Gastil, “Homicide and a Regional Culture of Violence,” *American Sociological Review* 36 (June 1971): 412–27; and Sheldon Hackney, “Southern Violence,” *American Historical Review* 74 (Feb. 1969): 906–25.

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## Chapter 1

# Violence, Statecraft, and Statehood in the Early Republic

## The State of Franklin, 1784–1788

*Kevin T. Barksdale*

In December 1784, a small contingent of upper Tennessee Valley political leaders met in Washington County, North Carolina's, rustic courthouse to discuss the uncertain postrevolutionary political climate that they believed threatened their regional political hegemony, prosperity, and families. The Jonesboro delegates fatefully decided that their backcountry communities could no longer remain part of their parent state and that North Carolina's westernmost counties (at the time Washington, Sullivan, and Greene counties) must unite and form America's fourteenth state.<sup>1</sup> From 1785 through 1788, the leaders of the Franklin separatist movement struggled to secure support for their state from the U.S. Confederation Congress, the North Carolina General Assembly, high-profile national political figures, and their bitterly divided neighbors. Throughout the three-year effort to win Franklin's admission into the union, violence and the threat of violence plagued the political movement.

Despite involving a relatively small number of western residents and the state of Franklin's brief existence, Amerindian clashes, internal political factionalism, and divisive western political policies resulted in a high level of backcountry bloodshed in the upper Tennessee Valley. From supposed violent tendencies culturally engrained in the region's Scotch-Irish residents to the anarchic impulses unleashed by mountain isolation, there is no shortage of explanations for Appalachian frontier violence. When the rise and fall of the state of Franklin and the corresponding level of regional hostilities are briefly examined, many of these earlier *raison d'être* regarding postrevolutionary Appalachian violence are replaced with more compelling explanations grounded in specific historical circumstances and a complex collision of political and economic forces. The violence surrounding the

state of Franklin resulted from the intersection of three primary causes: national and regional postrevolutionary political instability, fierce regional and state economic and political competition, and finally skillful and determined Amerindian diplomatic and martial resistance to western encroachment. In the end, culture and physiography proved much less important factors than the struggle for regional economic and political hegemony in the chaos surrounding the state of Franklin.

Since the “discovery” and “invention” of Appalachia in the last decades of the nineteenth century, local color writers, missionaries, reformers, and scholars have offered their own ideas regarding the root causes of Appalachian violence. Two of the earliest and most persistently reoccurring arguments offered to explain the perception of a hyperviolent mountain culture by relying upon ethnic and cultural generalizations and a fundamental misunderstanding of Appalachia’s past, both of which are challenged by the socioeconomic conditions surrounding the state of Franklin. Beginning in the 1880s, the outbreak of feuds and labor militancy associated with the trauma accompanying rural industrialization resulted in the application of the principles of social Darwinism to Appalachia in order to decipher the underlying factors behind mountain violence.<sup>2</sup> The fallacious notion that nearly all southern Appalachians descended from Scotch-Irish immigrants gave birth to the idea of the “Appalachian Highlander,” who carried a cultural and historical propensity to act “clannish”; live outside of the law; and, most important, repeatedly and unabashedly engage in acts of violence.<sup>3</sup> In his 1989 work *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, historian David Hackett Fischer updates the cultural comparison of southern Appalachia to the Scottish Highlands. Fischer argues that in what he labels as “border culture,” Highlands Scots, driven from their homes during the eighteenth-century clearances, carried their culture to Ireland (Ulster) and eventually on to the Appalachian Mountains. Fischer contends that several of the defining characteristics of this “border culture,” including individualism, “autarchy,” and “retributive justice,” created a “climate of violence in the American backcountry.”<sup>4</sup>

Out of the search for an explanation for the perceived persistence of this violent and clannish “border culture” in the southern mountains emerged the theory of Appalachian isolation and the resulting cultural stagnation. In short, the absence of trade and transportation connections, geographic distances, and geological obstacles retarded cultural, political, and economic growth in the region. According to scholars, educators, and

reformers, Appalachian isolation preserved both positive and negative aspects of Scotch-Irish culture and prevented the “modernization” and “Americanization” of the southern mountains. When married to the “border culture,” in theory, Appalachian isolation perpetuated generational and trans-Atlantic mountain violence and offered a clear explanation for the brutal Indian wars of the eighteenth century, the Civil War bushwhacking and feuding of the nineteenth century, and the labor militancy of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, Appalachian scholars have spent the better part of fifty years demonstrating that both the “Appalachian Highlander”/“border culture” and isolation theories are at best exaggerated and at worst historically inaccurate.<sup>6</sup> As one historian notes, the Scotch-Irish were not nearly as culturally predisposed to violence as many scholars have asserted. Despite the Scotch-Irish bringing “fighting techniques like biting and eye-gouging to the colonies,” preexisting frontier conditions in the areas they settled were far more critical in determining the levels of backcountry violence than were ethnic origins.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, “assumptions about the cultural homogeneity” of southern Appalachia represent a “gross misrepresentation” of the region’s ethnic diversity.<sup>8</sup> A cursory glance at the socioeconomic conditions in the upper Tennessee Valley during the Franklin separatist movement provides further evidence that ethnicity and isolation played very little role in the persistence of frontier violence in the southern mountains. First, the upper Tennessee Valley’s population at the end of the eighteenth century was relatively diverse and far from being homogeneously Scotch-Irish. In a survey conducted of the roughly 31,913 residents of the Tennessee country in 1790, approximately 83.1 percent were English, 11.2 percent were Scotch-Irish, and 2.3 percent were Irish. Additionally, the 1790 census also included Germans, Welsh, Dutch, Swiss, Alsatians, Africans, and French Huguenots.<sup>9</sup> Many of the leading figures in the Franklin movement and the opposition party (Tiptonites) belonged to these minority groups, including Franklin governor John Sevier (French Huguenot), adjutant general of the Franklin militia George Elholm (Danish), and leading anti-Franklinite Evan Shelby (Welsh).<sup>10</sup>

The “isolation theory” also proves historically inaccurate as an explanation for Franklin-related violence. Appalachian scholars have effectively demonstrated that Appalachia has never been isolated from the rest of North America. Historian Wilma A. Dunaway convincingly argues that from the moment of Euroamerican contact, Appalachia’s indigenous resi-

dents participated in a “capitalist export economy” that linked the region to global pelt markets. As Euroamerican settlements developed and advanced across the mountain backcountry, local and regional markets expanded that connected Amerindian and Euroamerican mountain communities to local, regional, and international markets. These market connections served as the conduits for not only the exchange of goods and services but also the transference of culture, technology, and information. As geographer Gene Wilhelm contends, “The idea that the Appalachian Mountains acted as a physical barrier . . . hardly stands up against the evidence at hand.” In his examination of early eastern Tennessee, historian David C. Hsiung thoroughly debunks the idea that the antebellum upper Tennessee Valley was cut off from the outside world. He argues, “East Tennessee’s road system and economic ties should dispel any notions that the region has been like a fly trapped in amber, isolated and untouched for generations.”<sup>11</sup> Appalachian scholars’ identification of the existence and continued expansion of private and public roads, repeated demands for further internal improvements, and evidence of regional market connections across southern Appalachia have largely dispelled the antebellum “isolation theory.”<sup>12</sup>

Ethnicity and geographic isolation ultimately do not explain the high levels of violence and fear that surrounded the Franklin statehood movement. However, postrevolutionary political instability within the national, state, and local governments and a high-stakes competition for control over the region’s emerging commercial economy and political system do stand as compelling causes underlying the anarchy of Tennessee Valley separatism. In his sweeping examination of the underlying factors behind America’s fluctuating homicide rates, historian Randolph Roth argues that frontier regions and communities were not intrinsically violent due to their cultural or ethnic composition. Instead, Roth identifies four historical variables that he believes determined the level of backcountry homicide rates: confidence that a government is “stable” and effective at defending person and property, belief in the “legitimacy” and integrity of a government, level of community cohesion fostered by socioeconomic and political bonds, and community acceptance of the authority of a ruling class. Roth’s analysis of the correlation between political stability and violence is particularly revealing when applied to the upper Tennessee Valley during the Franklin separatist movement. Roth states, “If no government can establish uncontested authority and impose law and order, if political elites are deeply divided and there is no continuity of power or orderly succession, men can . . . take up

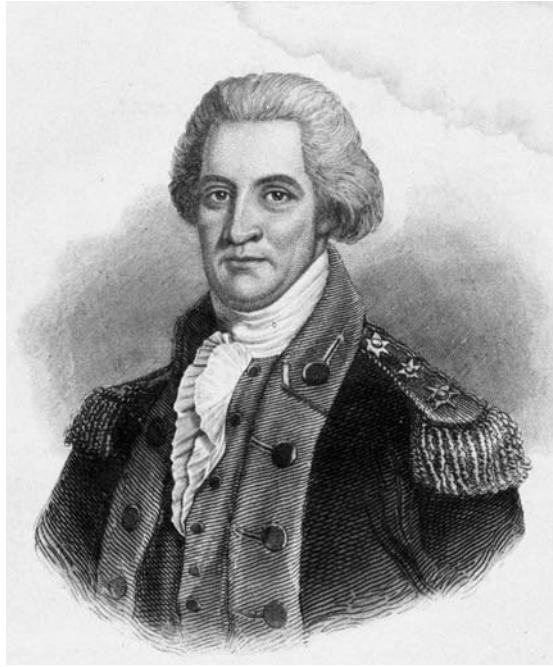
arms on behalf of particular political factions or racial groups and kill without restraint.”<sup>13</sup>

Following the American Revolution, the national government struggled under the weight of the severely restrictive Articles of Confederation, war debts, specie shortages (British pound), currency deflation, the loss of British markets, and the destruction of America’s urban centers of commerce and the merchant fleet. Additionally, the United States proved incapable of protecting its western frontier from Amerindian resistance movements, foreign threats (Spain and Great Britain), and Western separatists.<sup>14</sup> The North Carolina state government found itself in a very similar situation during the postwar years. North Carolina’s political leadership confronted a growing postrevolutionary Cherokee resistance movement on its western fringes, significant war debt, and disaffected western communities.<sup>15</sup> The dire economic and political situation of both the national and the North Carolina governments created a geopolitical climate in the upper Tennessee Valley that was clouded by uncertainty and fostered widespread citizen discontent.

The Franklin statehood movement emerged out of this political uncertainty and the policies enacted by both the Confederation Congress and the North Carolina Assembly aimed at solving these economic and diplomatic challenges. The beginning of the Franklin statehood movement was a direct result of a piece of North Carolina legislation aimed at ameliorating the state’s postrevolutionary economic crisis. One of the many strategies the national government developed to reduce the national debt required that states with sizeable tracts of western lands either cede their territory to the federal government or face the prospect of being saddled with steep taxes on these lands. The national government in turn planned to divide up the ceded western lands, sell the tracts, and use the proceeds to reduce the national debt. Beginning in 1780, several of these states, including New York (1780) and Virginia (1781), relinquished their western territory to the national government. North Carolina’s political leadership was divided over the western land-cession issue. Many of the state’s eastern political leaders argued that the state’s investments in infrastructural development and Indian diplomacy made the territory simply too valuable to turn over to the national government. However, with the intentionally obscured support of western political figures, including many future leaders of the state of Franklin, the state finally ceded its western lands with the passage of the Cession Act in April 1784.<sup>16</sup>



John Sevier (1745–1815), engraving. Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives.



Despite the fact that many of the leading men of the upper Tennessee Valley lobbied and voted in support of the Cession Act, after the legislation's passage, many of the region's political and economic leading figures publicly criticized the legislation and used manufactured outrage to promote the creation of a new state out of their communities. The first official discussion related to the creation of an independent state occurred just four months after the passage of the Cession Act. During the legislature's August meeting in Jonesboro, the forty delegates to the as yet unnamed Franklin Assembly decried their "abandonment" by the state of North Carolina with the passage of the Cession Act, relayed their fears that they were being thrown to the Indian "savages," and expressed their desire to form an independent state. As news of the Jonesboro meeting reached eastern North Carolina, the state's political leadership quickly realized that western political and business leaders had duped them into passing the legislation. A few months later, North Carolina repealed the Cession Act, a decision that unleashed a wave of partisan anger across the Tennessee Valley and left many western residents unsure about who held political authority in their own neighborhoods.<sup>17</sup>

The decision to repeal the Cession Act triggered the December 1784 Jonesboro meeting, in which the first signs of political factionalism developed among the leaders of the upper Tennessee Valley. Proponents of statehood argued that the formation of a new state would allow them to direct their taxes toward improving their own regional infrastructure, encourage emigration into the region, and create a state government responsive to the demands of westerners. Former Revolutionary War hero turned Tennessee Valley politician John Sevier, a man destined to serve as the state of Franklin's only governor, initially led the opposition to the statehood proposal. Sevier and other statehood opponents warned that political separatism was a very radical proposition and asserted that North Carolina's expansion of backcountry defenses and repeal of the Cession Act eliminated the primary grievances of western residents. Despite his initial reluctance to support statehood, William Cocke, one of Sevier's most trusted advisors and the state of Franklin's most skilled diplomat, ultimately convinced Sevier to join the movement. By the closing of 1784, North Carolina's passage and repeal of the Cession Act had opened a deep fissure that polarized the Tennessee Valley's communities. A region once united by Indian warfare, the struggle for American independence, and a shared political and economic agenda succumbed to the political chaos and partisanship fostered by the North Carolina Assembly's wavering western policies and the manipulative political machinations of an ambitious cabal of Tennessee Valley political and economic leading men.<sup>18</sup>

The political partisanship and regional instability that began with the Cession Act and statehood debates intensified the following year with the implementation of North Carolina's "divide-and-conquer" strategy, designed to peaceably defeat the separatist movement from within the region; the debate over the Franklin constitution; and the emergence and growth of a determined anti-Franklinite faction. Over the state of Franklin's brief existence, three North Carolina governors, Alexander Martin (1782–85), Richard Caswell (1785–87), and Samuel Johnston (1787–89), oversaw the state's strategy for derailing the separatist movement. The Martin administration determined that the most effective approach for confronting the Franklinite government was to directly challenge the state's leadership and rank and file. In February 1785, Governor Martin dispatched one of his military advisors, Major Samuel Henderson, to travel to the upper Tennessee Valley and apprise the governor of the level of citizen support for the statehood movement. Henderson also carried a letter from Martin to newly

elected Franklin governor John Sevier demanding an explanation for the separatist actions and stating unequivocally that the actions taken by the Franklinites were unconstitutional. Governor Sevier's response to Martin's letter laid out a number of reasons for the Franklinite declaration of independence and encouraged Martin to throw his support behind the admission of Franklin into the confederation of states. Just a few weeks prior to being replaced as governor, Martin issued a threatening public manifesto to the leaders and supporters of Franklin, rejecting the reasons for separation and warning that "far less causes have deluged States and Kingdoms with blood" and that the actions of the Franklinites could set a precedent for other groups to engage in "dangerous and unwarranted procedures" that might ultimately topple the new American Republic. Martin's manifesto exacerbated an already chaotic political situation in the Tennessee Valley, and the Franklinites accused Martin of attempting to "create sedition and stir up insurrection among the good citizens of this State, thinking thereby to destroy that peace and tranquility that so greatly abounds among the peaceful citizens of the new happy country." Martin's address to the residents of the Tennessee Valley also galvanized a growing minority faction of anti-Franklinites under the leadership of Washington County resident John Tipton. Tipton sent a response to Martin's manifesto offering to "continue to discountenance the lawless proceedings of my neighbors." The Franklinites' expression of concern for the intensification of communal factionalism and the Tiptonite response reveal the disruptive effects of political instability within the communities of the upper Tennessee Valley.<sup>19</sup>

As Franklin's leadership warned of "sedition" and "insurrection" and Tipton and his supporters aligned themselves with the state of North Carolina, Richard Caswell began his term as North Carolina's governor. In sharp contrast to Governor Martin's confrontational handling of the Franklin affair, the Caswell administration initiated a much less threatening policy, aimed at defeating the separatist movement from within and avoiding the outbreak of violence. In what can best be described as a "divide-and-conquer" strategy, Caswell engaged in direct diplomacy with the leadership of Franklin, supported a parallel state bureaucracy with the upper Tennessee Valley, and repeatedly made offers to pardon the Franklinites if they restored their loyalties to the state of North Carolina. If the Caswell policy unfolded as planned, it would reduce anti-North Carolina rhetoric, expand the growing faction of anti-Franklinites, and topple the Franklin government without loss of life or disruption to the regional

economy. Richard Caswell's policy was also influenced by two underlying factors: his close personal and business relationship with John Sevier and his own financial interests in the upper Tennessee Valley. Governor Caswell owned sizeable tracts of land in the region and even went as far as to jointly speculate in land during the Franklin affair with his friend John Sevier.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the effort to rely on diplomacy to peaceably undermine the Franklin movement, the expansion of support for the Tiptonites and the political competition and civic disruption fostered by the existence of a competing internal bureaucracy ultimately resulted in an intensification of regional partisanship and elevated the likelihood of violence. Beginning with the state and local elections of 1786, North Carolina maintained its own regional courts, polling stations, law-enforcement officials, and militia in the upper Tennessee Valley. As one Tennessee historian explains, the residents of the upper Tennessee Valley "were presented with the strange spectacle of two empires exercising at one and the same time over one and the same people." Unsurprisingly, John Tipton and his loyalist supporters dominated the North Carolina-backed elections and political offices. Both factions conducted their own discrete 1786 regional elections without any real incidents of violence. The Franklinites and the Tiptonites erected polling stations, and the statehood issue dominated the political climate as the sides rallied under the banners of "new state" and "old state" men. In the end, the Franklinites and the Tiptonites elected their own slates of representatives, but the results reveal an intensification of political polarization, further destabilization of the region's communities, and the effectiveness of Caswell's divide-and-conquer strategy.<sup>21</sup>

Following the 1786 elections, political rancor escalated across the region and eventually sparked the first physical confrontations between Franklinite and Tiptonite partisans. Much of the initial violence surrounding the Franklin government resulted from the competing state bureaucracies and the subsequent legal confusion and challenges to regional political and economic hegemony. Both the Franklinites and the Tiptonites understood the economic importance of controlling the region's courts and political offices. From deciding on which road construction projects to fund to recording land sales, backcountry courts stood as the seats of political, legal, and of course fiscal power in the upper Tennessee Valley. Additionally, state and county officials exerted tremendous power over the region's political economy, and controlling the offices was paramount for both regional partisans.

As both factions sought to assert their own dominance over the region's judicial system and local offices, the county courts became the sites of violent altercations. In Washington County, John Tipton held court at Buffalo, and John Sevier simultaneously presided over the Franklin court, just ten miles away in the town of Jonesboro. In the winter of 1786, Tipton and a group of approximately fifty men burst into Sevier's Washington County courtroom, destroyed legal documents, and forced the court to shut down. In retaliation, the Franklinites targeted Tipton's Buffalo court, destroying court documents and disrupting the proceedings. Remarkably, the first and only direct confrontation between the states' two leading protagonists, John Sevier and John Tipton, occurred in a Jonesboro courtroom. After a verbal altercation between Sevier and Tipton, John Sevier struck Tipton with a cane, and Tipton countered with a flurry of punches. Bystanders managed to separate the two combatants, but the frequency of these types of courtroom brawls led one Tennessee Valley resident to quip that "families took lessons in pugilism from each other at public meetings."<sup>22</sup>

The office of sheriff also took on a heightened degree of importance and danger as the hardening of political positions increasingly sparked regional violence in and out of courtrooms. One such "recounter" occurred in the summer of 1787, when North Carolina's Washington County sheriff, Jonathan Pugh, attempted to arrest John Sevier's son James for failure to pay North Carolina taxes. When Franklin's Washington County sheriff, Andrew Caldwell, received word of the impending arrest, he confronted Pugh in Jonesboro. After he "violently struck and abused" Pugh, Caldwell arrested the North Carolina sheriff, then "put him in prison and shut the door." The significance of the altercation between the two Washington County sheriffs dramatically increased after John Sevier publicly pronounced that the Franklinites "paid no obedience to the laws of North Carolina" and that he personally "despised her [North Carolina's] authority." The Tiptonites swiftly responded to the assault and abuse of Sheriff Pugh. Flanked by a sizeable group of armed men, Tipton entered Jonesboro in search of Andrew Caldwell. Unable to locate the Franklin sheriff, the Tiptonites again raided the Jonesboro courthouse and destroyed court documents. The Tiptonite raid nearly plunged the entire region into civil war when an erroneous report circulated that John Sevier had been arrested and was being held at John Tipton's Washington County farm. The Franklinites quickly organized a large militia of two hundred men and made plans to assault the Tipton farm. Fortunately, John Sevier managed to get

word to his armed supporters that he was not being held by Tipton, but the narrowly averted raid and the rapidity with which the region's citizen-soldiers mustered to the apocryphal report reveal the unintended consequences of North Carolina's divide-and-conquer tactics and the growing specter of backcountry violence.<sup>23</sup>

By the opening of 1788, the Franklin statehood movement stood on the precipice of collapse. The Franklinitic diplomatic effort aimed at securing support for the state's admission into the union failed despite the repeated attempts of the state's most skilled diplomat, William Cocke. The Caswell administration's strategy for toppling the Franklin government by fomenting internal divisions, quietly supporting the swelling opposition, and repeatedly dangling pardons, lucrative state positions, and tax concession had paid huge dividends. The number of anti-Franklinites continued to increase as the Franklin government slowly watched regional support fade and key members of its leadership return their loyalties to North Carolina. Despite the occasional flare-up of localized violence and the visceral feelings of fear and uncertainty that shrouded the region, the Caswell strategy seemed to succeed in minimizing the potential threat of an all-out civil war. However, the events that occurred in February 1788 proved just how illusory the Caswell strategy's successes had been.<sup>24</sup>

Predictably, the climactic clash between the Franklinites and the Tiptonites began as a result of the bureaucratic uncertainty created by the existence of two parallel state governments functioning simultaneously in the region and the partisan anger built up after nearly three years of political and legal wrangling. At the end of February, John Tipton ordered Washington County sheriff Jonathan Pugh to travel to John Sevier's Plum Grove plantation and confiscate Sevier's slaves as payment for delinquent North Carolina taxes. Tipton directed Pugh to remove Sevier's slave property to his own farm on Sinking Creek. It is almost certain that John Tipton knew that his actions would provoke Sevier and his supporters, and the anti-Franklinitic leader retreated to his home with over 50 armed loyalists, awaiting Sevier's response. News of the confiscation of his slaves reached John Sevier as he mustered the Franklinitic militia in preparation for a raid on the Overhill Cherokee towns dotting the lower Tennessee Valley. Sevier immediately ordered the Franklin militia to Tipton's farm to restore the governor's property. Approximately 150 Franklinitic troops reached the Washington County farm on the morning of February 27, 1788, and quickly surrounded the Tiptonites barricaded in the farmhouse.<sup>25</sup> The re-

turn of Sevier's slaves served as the impetus for the standoff, but both sides realized that much more was at stake that frigid morning than simply private property and unpaid taxes. Bolstered by Governor Caswell's support for the region's North Carolina bureaucracy and blinded by seething anger fueled by political partisanship, John Tipton's actions stood as a direct challenge to Franklin's political and economic sovereignty. Once again, the Tiptonites attempted to enforce North Carolina laws and collect North Carolina taxes in the state of Franklin. As the Franklin government struggled to survive the winter of 1788, Sevier and his supporters knew that what was unfolding on Tipton's farm would have significant consequences for the future of their statehood movement and their own political and economic positions within the region.

While the Franklinite forces paraded outside of the home of their chief political opponent, John Sevier instructed Colonel Henry Conway to carry a flag of truce, accompanied by a demand that the Tiptonites surrender to the Franklin militia and accept the legal authority of the state of Franklin. Tipton responded to Sevier's ultimatum, stating that "he begged no favours, and if Sevier would surrender himself and leaders, they should have the benefit of North Carolina Laws." There was no mention of slave property or taxes in these initial exchanges, and each side simply demanded that the other accept their political authority. As the two political factions finally faced off on the banks of Sinking Creek, nothing less than political and economic control over the upper Tennessee Valley was at stake. After the initial exchange, the Franklin militia set up camp and continued to march menacingly around the Tipton property. As the sun set on the first day of the siege, John Tipton managed to get word to his supporters relaying his dire predicament, and a small detachment of troops under the command of Captain Peter Parkinson set off from Jonesboro to reinforce the Tiptonite forces.<sup>26</sup>

As night fell on the Tipton farm, the outbreak of hostilities commenced with Franklinite forces firing on Parkinson's troops. Despite a hail of bullets from both sides, three horses were initially the evening's only casualties. As the Franklinite and Tiptonite troops continued to exchange fire, two women inside the Tipton home attempted to flee the "fiery fracas" under the cover of darkness. One of these women escaped unharmed, but the other, Rachel Devinsly, "received a ball through her shoulder" and became the only human casualty of the opening round of the Battle of Franklin. The next morning (February 28), additional North Carolina loyalist troops

from neighboring Sullivan County received word of the backcountry standoff. After dispatching a small force to halt the advance of these Tiptonite reinforcements, John Sevier sent a second flag of truce, requesting that the anti-Franklinites submit to the authority of the state of Franklin. Tipton again refused, informing Sevier that “all I wanted was a submission to the laws of North Carolina, and if they would acquiesce with this proposal I would disband my troops here and countermand the march of the troops from Sullivan.” Once again, these exchanges reveal the efforts of Sevier and Tipton to assert their state’s authority in a region gripped by three years of political instability. As each side proved incapable of breaking the diplomatic impasse, troops from both political factions made preparations for the impending pitched battle.<sup>27</sup>

As a strong winter snowstorm cloaked the region in a cover of whiteness, John Sevier dispatched a small detachment of troops commanded by his two sons, John and James, to intercept the Sullivan County reinforcements before they could rendezvous at the Tipton farm. Less than three hundred yards from the Tipton farm, the small expedition led by the Sevier sons encountered some of the Sullivan County Tiptonites. After briefly exchanging fire with a portion of the Tiptonite reinforcements, the Franklinite forces quickly reversed course and sped back through a blinding snowstorm to rejoin the main body of militia troops. The appearance of the Sullivan County reinforcements outside of the Tipton farm offered the anti-Franklinite men a long-awaited opportunity to attack Sevier’s Franklin militia and break the siege. A witness to the events that morning described what transpired next: “A great body of Sullivan men attacked him [Sevier] with heavy firing, and rushed among them, took a number of prisoners, arms, saddles, and dispersed the whole of the Franklinites.” As the Sullivan County forces engaged the Franklinites, John Tipton and the remainder of the barricaded Tiptonites “sailed out [of the farmhouse] and drove them [the Franklinites] from their ground without much resistance.” The rapid turn of events caught the Franklinites off guard and forced their leader John Sevier, who was a few miles from the farm at the time of the engagement, to “retreat without his boots.”<sup>28</sup>

Both factions suffered several casualties during the Battle of Franklin. Franklinite John Smith sustained a fatal shot to the thigh, and Henry Polley and Gasper Fant each received devastating wounds to their extremities. During their hasty retreat, the Franklinites’ delaying fire led to the deaths





“Escape of Gov. Sevier” engraving. Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives.

of Washington County sheriff Jonathan Pugh and Sullivan County militiaman John Webb, as well as the wounding of Captain William Delancy and John Allison. Slowed by the driving snowstorm, the troops under the command of John Sevier and James Sevier finally reached the Tipton farm shortly after the Franklinites retreat. The Franklinites rode “up to the camp [with] Col. Sevier’s flag still flying,” unaware of the “sudden & complete change in affairs that had taken place during their brief absence.” As they approached the Tipton home, “a volley of guns arrested them and some few, amazed & wondering were pulled from their horses & called in to surrender, among them, James & John Sevier [Jr.] & their cousin John Sevier.” Shortly after their capture, Governor Sevier learned of the fate of his family and sent John Tipton a message “asking [for] his life [and that] of his parties” and agreeing to “submit to the Laws of the State” of North Carolina. After initially threatening to hang Sevier’s two sons, John Tipton released the members of the Sevier family and accepted John Sevier’s capitulation.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the repeated diplomatic failures, the crushing military defeat on the fields of John Tipton’s farm, the near-complete collapse of the state government, and Governor Sevier’s promise to restore his loyalty to North Carolina, the Battle of Franklin did not signal the end of either the upper

Tennessee Valley's political instability or the violence surrounding the Franklinites movement. Throughout the remainder of 1788, significant support for Sevier and the separatist movement remained in the newest Franklin counties in the lower Tennessee Valley. Driven by valuable and contested land claims, Sevier, Blount, and Greene County residents continued to support the Franklin government. Even the replacement of moderate governor and Sevier associate Richard Caswell by political hardliner Samuel Johnston a few months prior failed to persuade Sevier and the Franklinites holdouts to submit to North Carolina's authority. Bolstered by a significant faction of regional loyalists, and despite a warrant being issued for his arrest for treason by the state of North Carolina, John Sevier refused to uphold his promise to "abide by the laws" of North Carolina and even made a failed attempt "to raise a militia of their party to march against Colonel Tipton." In response, John Tipton requested "a few volunteers to quell the Insurrection" and "save [the region] from future bloodshed" from neighboring Washington County, Virginia. The existence of an arrest warrant also did not deter Sevier from frequent visits to Jonesboro and its neighboring communities. The day before his arrest for treason, the former governor of Franklin (Sevier's term expired in March 1788) entered the town of Jonesboro with a group of ten to twelve armed men on horseback. The group eventually stopped at the home of David Deaderick, who was being visited by former Franklin sheriff Andrew Caldwell. Deaderick described what unfolded that afternoon in a deposition taken by North Carolina justice of the peace William Cox. According to Deaderick, Sevier demanded "Whiskey or Rum" from him. Upon learning that Deaderick had no alcohol, Sevier asked Caldwell "nearly the same respecting Liquor," and the former sheriff also "informed him he had none." Sevier then became angry and "began to abuse this place, then its inhabitants without distinction." Deaderick and Caldwell confronted Sevier, asking him "if he aimed that discourse or abuse at" them. Sevier answered, "Yes, at you or anybody else," and then called Deaderick "a son of a Bitch." Deaderick replied "[that Sevier] was a dead son of a Bitch, and stepped close to Sevier, who immediately drew out his pistol." The altercation eventually spilled out into the Jonesboro street, where Sevier accused Caldwell of owing him money, pulled his pistol, and threatened to shoot him. As Sevier waved his pistol in the air at Caldwell, the gun discharged and wounded Richard Collier, an innocent onlooker. Sevier and his men quickly fled the scene of the shooting, but the incident highlights the continued threat of violence surround-

ing the separatist movement. The fact that Sevier turned his weapon on a former ally also reveals the political instability that continued to breed violence in the region's communities.<sup>30</sup>

Shortly after the Jonesboro shooting, John Tipton and a small posse of a dozen men, armed with a North Carolina arrest warrant, tracked Sevier down at the home of a Franklinite widow. With John Sevier accused of "High Treason in levying troops to oppose the Laws and Government of this State" and using "an armed force [to] put to death several good Citizens" by the Johnston administration, North Carolina and its Tennessee Valley loyalists finally arrested him. Tipton initially proposed hanging Sevier on the spot but eventually agreed to allow his political rival to be transferred across the mountains to stand trial in the eastern North Carolina community of Morganton. Despite Sevier's appeal to remain in Washington County to stand trial, the Tiptonites shackled the Franklinite leader, paraded him in front of Tiptonite supporters, and finally transported him to the Burke County jail to await trial. The Tiptonites turned their prisoner over to Burke County sheriff William Morrison, a former Revolutionary War soldier who had fought under Sevier at the Battle of King's Mountain; Morrison immediately released the prisoner from his irons and escorted him to the nearest tavern. A short time later, Sevier and a small group of Franklin supporters simply rode out of Morganton and returned to their communities in the upper Tennessee Valley. The former governor of the state of Franklin never stood trial for his participation in the Battle of Franklin or the Jonesboro shooting.<sup>31</sup>

Sevier's arrest signaled the effective end of the Franklin statehood movement and with it a decrease in violence within the Tennessee Valley communities. As former separatists, including John Sevier, returned their loyalties to North Carolina, with many reclaiming their former political and civic positions within state and local government, the political instability that had fueled regional violence subsided. However, the fear and threats of violence resulting from white encroachment, land speculation, and the former state of Franklin's aggressive and uncompromising Indian policies continued to plague the region. Even as the Tennessee Valley communities experienced some level of internal political stabilization, the Overhill and Chickamauga Cherokees remained determined and defiant in the face of a rapidly expanding American population. Only slightly less significant than the impact of political destabilization and economic competition, this Am-

erindian resistance movement played a central role in creating the perception and reality of backcountry disorder.<sup>32</sup>

Relations between the upper Tennessee Valley's white settlers and the region's dominant Amerindian group, the Overhill Cherokees, remained confrontational throughout the eighteenth century. From the first appearance of Euroamerican settlers in the region, the Overhill Cherokees had struggled to defend their territory and villages from white encroachment by utilizing a sophisticated plan that combined strategic territorial and trade concessions, direct diplomatic engagement, and targeted martial resistance. The Overhill Cherokee policy directly led to the fragmentation of their own Tennessee Valley communities; served as an underlying impetus for the Franklin separatist movement; and, most important, contributed to the endemic fear and violence that dominated the trans-Appalachian backcountry.

Beginning with the 1773 lease agreement between the region's earliest Watauga settlers, the Overhill Cherokee leadership embraced at least some level of territorial concessions to Euroamerican westerners in the Tennessee Valley. The first significant Cherokee-white land sale in the region occurred in 1775, when Richard Henderson, a former North Carolina judge and successful land speculator, secured twenty million acres from the Cherokees for two thousand English pounds and ten thousand pounds' worth of trade goods. At that time, the Henderson Purchase stood as the largest private land deal in American history and initiated a wave of land sales between the Overhill Cherokees and the region's leading land speculators. Not all of the Overhill Cherokee leadership agreed with the territorial transactions. Cherokee chief Dragging Canoe denounced the land deals and eventually broke away from the Overhill Cherokee alliance, establishing separate Indian towns on the banks of Chickamauga Creek. Under the leadership of Dragging Canoe, the Chickamauga Cherokees refused to accept the territorial treaties with American westerners and launched a bloody resistance movement that targeted Tennessee Valley western settlements, land surveyors, and mountain travelers.<sup>33</sup>

The backcountry chaos reaped by Dragging Canoe's Chickamauga warriors forced western settlers to expand and improve their backcountry defenses. As the intensity of the Cherokee-white conflict raged during the second half of the eighteenth century, increased western demands for funding for internal improvements in order to construct and bolster backcountry forts, pay and equip militia companies, and bribe Amerindian leaders

placed considerable strains on Euroamerican governments. This financial burden, created by western demands for internal improvements and the expenses associated with Indian diplomacy and warfare following the French and Indian War, served as one of the primary causes that led the British government to enact the Proclamation of 1763. One of the most important and controversial provisions of the 1763 colonial legislation established a boundary line, roughly following the Appalachian Mountain chain, between white western settlements and Native American territory. The colonial legislation reserved the territory west of the Proclamation Line for Amerindian residents and forbade western land speculation and settlement in the region. According to historian Woody Holton, these British colonial concessions to the indigenous westerners and the obstacles the policies presented to western land speculation served as one of the determining factors cementing backcountry resident's patriot loyalties during the American Revolution.<sup>34</sup> Following the Revolution, the new American government and several state governments resumed the British policy of Amerindian diplomacy and compromise. During the Franklin affair, the state of North Carolina passed legislation that attempted to establish and protect Native American territorial reserves from western land speculators and squatters. This shift in state Indian policy did not go unnoticed by the political and economic leadership of the upper Tennessee Valley and quietly emerged as one of the key factors behind the Franklin separatist movement. Although this was never stated explicitly, the leaders of the Franklin movement believed that the establishment of an independent state government would allow them to replace North Carolina's conciliatory Indian policy with a much more aggressive strategy aimed at forcing further land concessions and eventually driving the region's native people from the Tennessee Valley. The coupling of a sophisticated and determined Cherokee resistance movement, the national and the North Carolina governments' Indian diplomacy, and Franklin's aggressive and threatening Native American policy resulted in high levels of postrevolutionary Indian-white violence across the Tennessee Valley backcountry.<sup>35</sup>

A brief survey of Indian-white relations during the Franklin period illustrates the violent consequences of the collision of Indian resistance and Franklinitic policies. Shortly after the establishment of the Franklin government, the Tennessee Valley separatists revealed their contentious Amerindian policy during their earliest Indian treaty negotiations. In the summer of 1785, a small delegation of Franklinites, including John Sevier, Joseph

Hardin, Luke Boyer, Ebenezer Alexander, Joshua Gist, and Alexander Outlaw, parlayed with Overhill Cherokee leaders at the mouth of Dumplin Creek in an effort to purchase a sizeable swath of Indian land. The negotiations surrounding the Treaty of Dumplin Creek established the basic contours of Franklinitic Indian diplomacy. The Franklinites aggressively demanded land concessions from the Cherokee leaders and made few if any concessions of their own. The Franklinites all but guaranteed favorable treaty terms by excluding Cherokee leaders critical of further land sales from the negotiations and threatening violence if those chiefs in attendance failed to acquiesce to their demands. Whether the Indian representatives' action was pragmatic or not, the huge Cherokee tract of land they sold at Dumplin Creek further enflamed Chickamauga Cherokee anger and emboldened Franklin's political leaders.<sup>36</sup>

As reports of backcountry violence perpetrated by both whites and Indians and the Dumplin Creek negotiations reached political leaders in North Carolina and New York, U.S. Indian agents drafted plans for a large Indian treaty council to be held at Hopewell, South Carolina. The negotiations and agreements reached at Hopewell provide a striking contrast to the Treaty of Dumplin Creek. First, the U.S. Indian agents and Cherokee diplomats did not include either the Franklinites or the Chickamauga Cherokees in the meetings. However, the U.S. government did invite all of the other tribal leaders, including over a thousand additional representatives from Cherokee towns. From November 18 through November 29, 1785, Benjamin Hawkins, Joseph Martin, Andrew Pickens, and Lachlan McIntosh, the congressionally appointed Indian commissioners, engaged the Cherokees in a series of talks that proved to be far more equitable and compromising than the Dumplin Creek parlay. While territorial issues remained at the forefront of these talks, the maintenance of peaceful backcountry relations also stood out as a diplomatic priority. Additionally, the U.S. negotiators at Hopewell accepted the concept of Cherokee territorial sovereignty and included a provision that allowed the Indians to force white squatters off of their lands.<sup>37</sup>

Although the Treaty of Hopewell was perceived as a great diplomatic victory by the Cherokees, it created a backlash that accelerated backcountry violence across the Tennessee Valley. The treaty contained provisions that restored Overhill Cherokee lands in the region by disavowing earlier controversial and often coerced land cessions. The Hopewell negotiators also agreed to disallow the recently signed Treaty of Dumplin Creek and return

these lands to Cherokee control. The return of the Dumplin Creek lands to the Cherokees meant that several of the state of Franklin's most significant towns and communities, including the new Franklin capital of Greeneville, now rested in Cherokee territory. As news of the Hopewell Treaty terms reached the state of Franklin, the state's political leadership quickly rejected the Cherokee land restoration and maintained the validity of the Dumplin Creek land purchases. The Treaty of Hopewell and the resulting threats to Franklinites' land claims and individual wealth strengthened regional support for the separatist government and Franklinites' resolve to maintain and expand the state's geographic boundary. Simultaneously, the treaty bolstered the Overhill Cherokees' resistance efforts by dubiously giving the tribe's leadership confidence that they could count on support from the United States and the state of North Carolina in their efforts to defend their communities and lands. The diplomatic and economic reverberations from Hopewell all but ensured the escalation of backcountry violence as both the Franklinites and the Cherokees struggled to come to grips with the terms of the treaty.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the remainder of the state of Franklin's existence, the Overhill Cherokees and American communities experienced perpetual backcountry warfare and faced the constant threat of violence. The Franklinites simply ignored the provisions of the Treaty of Hopewell and the United States' and North Carolina's conciliatory Native American policies and continued to encourage their citizens to purchase and settle on Dumplin Creek lands. Despite the protestations of Cherokee leaders, white encroachment on Cherokee land continued apace. The inability (or perhaps unwillingness) of the national and North Carolina governments to enforce the provisions of Hopewell and remove Franklinites' squatters from Cherokee lands predictably led Chickamauga Cherokee leaders Dragging Canoe and métis John Watts to initiate a series of backcountry raids across the Tennessee Valley. In 1786, Watts and a force of nearly a thousand Chickamauga Cherokee warriors raided settlements near the community of Knoxville. In response, Franklinites' militia forces under the command of John Sevier attacked and burned a number of Overhill Cherokee towns a few months later. This cycle of retaliatory violence defined Indian-Franklin relations from 1786 through 1788 and left hundreds of Cherokee and American casualties and decimated communities across the Tennessee Valley.<sup>39</sup>

Amid the escalating Indian-white warfare, two significant events occurred that further fanned the flames of backcountry violence. In the face

of increasing demands for additional Indian land transactions from regional land speculators and commercial farmers, the Franklin government initiated another round of treaty negotiations with the Overhill Cherokees in the summer of 1786. Relying on the same tactics of selective chief invitation and threats of violence, Franklin diplomats pressured Cherokee leaders into selling another large area of land. The Treaty of Coyatee not only governed the sale of Indian lands but also contained extraordinarily threatening language warning against any future Cherokee resistance to white encroachment. The Franklin diplomats warned the Overhill Cherokees in attendance not to resist their territorial expansion or “kill any of our people,” for the consequences of such actions would lead to the destruction of “the town that does the Mischief.”<sup>40</sup>

The signing of the Treaty of Coyatee, the opening of a Franklin land office in order to divide and sell former Cherokee lands, and the renewal of Indian diplomacy with the Cherokees by both the U.S. and North Carolina governments triggered another round of Indian raids and American counterattacks during the final months of 1786. The year 1787 witnessed a further intensification of backcountry violence perpetrated by both whites and Indians that climaxed in the spring of 1788 with a particularly gruesome set of murders that eventually sparked outrage on both sides of the Appalachian Mountains and hastened the downfall of the Franklin government. In May 1788, a Cherokee named Slim Tom viciously hacked down eleven members of the Kirk family, living just a few miles from the Overhill Cherokee capital of Chota on the Tennessee River. According to the only surviving member of the family, John Kirk, Slim Tom, “with a party of Sattigo [Citico] and other Cherokee Indians,” fell upon his family; “murdered my mother, brothers and sisters in cold blood”; and mutilated the “smiling faces” of the Kirk children. In response, John Sevier mustered the Franklin militia and prepared to retaliate against Overhill Cherokee towns. Accompanied by a vengeful John Kirk and facing little resistance from the Indians, the Franklinite forces attacked a number of Overhill Cherokee towns. After burning several towns and killing dozens of Indians, the Franklinites turned their attention to the Overhill Cherokee town of Chilhowe, unfortunately the hometown of Slim Tom. After laying siege to the town, the Franklinites invited two Cherokee chiefs, Old Tassel and Old Abraham, who just happened to be meeting in Chilhowe at the time of the attack, to meet with them to discuss terms of peace. Both Cherokee chiefs, who were widely known to be among the Cherokees’ strongest proponents



of peace, agreed to meet with the Franklinites in John Sevier's tent. As the two Cherokee leaders and their party approached the Franklinite encampment, "[John Kirk and James Hubbard] fell on the Indians, killed the Tassel, Hanging Man [*sic*], Old Abram, his son, Tassel's [*sic*] brother, and Hanging-Man's [*sic*] brother, and took in Abram's wife and daughter—brought in 14 Scalps." Under a flag of truce, the Franklinites cut down the two Cherokee leaders most dedicated to amity and effectively undermined any chance for the cessation of backcountry violence. Despite Sevier's protestation that he was absent when Kirk and Hubbard murdered the Cherokee chiefs, the events that transpired that May morning were widely condemned by the U.S. administration and the political leadership of North Carolina. After receiving support from the U.S. Congress, North Carolina governor Samuel Johnston issued an arrest warrant for Sevier and the other members of the Franklin militia involved in the murders. Despite Sevier's eventual acquittal of the crime, the Kirk and Cherokee chief murders derailed any possibility of ending backcountry violence in the region. Sadly, the ramifications of the Franklinite Indian policies and the Cherokee resistance movement continued to breed violence, death, and destruction in the Tennessee Valley long after the collapse of the state of Franklin.<sup>41</sup>

This brief history of the state of Franklin leaves little doubt that the separatist movement was engulfed in near-perpetual violence during its less than four-year existence. Racked by political instability and internal factionalism fostered by economic and political competition, North Carolina's divide-and-conquer diplomatic strategy, and a determined and well-supported antistatehood faction; the communities of the upper Tennessee Valley constantly faced the threat of civil strife and bloodshed. The addition of a resolute and effective Cherokee resistance movement that relied upon diplomacy and warfare to halt territorial encroachment and to defend Cherokee backcountry communities further escalated the level of fear and violence in the region. Despite efforts to offer ethnic, cultural, and geographic explanations for the persistence of backcountry violence in the region, these are the primary factors that underlie the "effusions of blood" in the upper Tennessee Valley following the American Revolution.

## Notes

The author wishes to thank Randy Roth for sharing his work and insight into the nature and causes of frontier violence.

1. Kevin T. Barksdale, *The Lost State of Franklin: America's First Secession* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 53–54; John Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee from Its Earliest Settlement up to the Year 1796, Including the Boundaries of the State* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891; reprint, Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1999), 149–51; Samuel Cole Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin* (Johnson City, TN: Watauga Press, 1924; reprint, Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1993), 28–34.

2. Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 6–8.

3. Henry David Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870–1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 85–112.

4. David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 618, 629, 639, 651, 765–71.

5. Waller, *Feud*, 7–8; John Anthony Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959; reprint, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 39–40.

6. Ronald L. Lewis, “Beyond Isolation and Homogeneity: Diversity and the History of Appalachia,” in *Backtalk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, ed. Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 21–29; David C. Hsiung, “How Isolated Was Appalachia? Upper East Tennessee, 1780–1835,” *Appalachian Journal* 16 (Summer 1989): 342–43.

7. Randolph Roth, *American Homicide* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 82–85.

8. Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818–1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 145–46.

9. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 38; Albert C. Holt, “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee” (PhD diss., George Peabody College, 1923), 163; Stephen B. Weeks, “Tennessee: A Discussion of the Sources of Its Population and the Lines of Immigration,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 2 (June 1916): 246–49.

10. Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 275–77, 289–338; “The Tipton-Hayes Place: A Landmark of East Tennessee,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 29 (Summer 1970): 105–7; East Tennessee Historical Society, *First Families of Tennessee: A Register of Early Settlers and Their Present-Day Descendants* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 2000), 25–27; George W. Sevier to Lyman Draper, Feb. 9, 1839, King's Mountain Papers (DD), Draper Manuscript Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison. Weeks's 1790 ethnic survey offers these figures: Dutch 0.2 percent, French 0.3 percent, German 2.8 percent, and all others combined 0.1 percent (Weeks, “Tennessee,” 249).

11. Hsiung, "How Isolated Was Appalachia?" 343–45; David C. Hsiung, *Two Worlds in the Tennessee Mountains: Exploring the Origins of Appalachian Stereotypes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 56–79; Gene Wilhelm Jr. "Appalachian Isolation: Fact or Fiction?" in *Appalachian Symposium*, ed. J. W. Williamson (Boone: Appalachian State University Press, 1977), 77–78; Lewis, "Beyond Isolation and Homogeneity," 22–23; Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 23–50.

12. There are a number of works that have advanced the argument of southern Appalachia's antebellum market capitalism and regional and national economic, political, and cultural connections. These include John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters: Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Dunaway, *First American Frontier*; Dunn, *Cades Cove*; L. Scott Philyaw, *Virginia's Western Visions: Political and Cultural Expansion on an Early American Frontier* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004); Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

13. Roth, *American Homicide*, 17–20.

14. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763–89* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 115–28; Reginald Horsman, *The Diplomacy of the New Republic, 1776–1815* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harland Davidson, 1985), 28–41; Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 29–45.

15. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 30–32.

16. Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 54–59; Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 36, 54–57; Walter Clark, ed., *The State Records of North Carolina*, 26 vols. (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1903), 24: 561–63; Hugh Talmage Lefler, *North Carolina History: Told by Contemporaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), 120–21; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 22–26.

17. Pat Alderman, *The Overmountain Men* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1970), 188–90; Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation*, 69–71; Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 58–59; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 149–51; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 26–29.

18. Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 189–90; Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 60–61; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 154–55; J. G. M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Charleston, SC: J. Russell, 1853; reprint, Baltimore: Clearfield Company, 2003), 287–88.

19. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 62–64; John Sevier to Alexander Martin, Mar. 22, 1785, Alexander Martin's Governor Letter Book, North Carolina State

Archives; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 642–47; Alexander Martin to John Tipton, Apr. 25, 1785, King's Mountain Papers (DD); Sevier countermanifesto, May 14, 1785, "Letters concerning the independence of the State of Franklin," North Carolina State Archives; "State of Franklin: A Proclamation," May 15, 1785, Newspaper Abstracts (JJ), Draper Manuscript Collection; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 72–73; Alexander Martin to John Tipton, Apr. 25, 1785, King's Mountain Papers (DD).

20. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 64–67; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 73–76; Irene M. Griffey, *Earliest Tennessee Land Records and Earliest Tennessee Land History* (Baltimore: Clearfield Company, 2000), 134, 361; John Sevier to Richard Caswell, May 14, 1785, "Letters concerning the independence of the State of Franklin"; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 648; "Letter from a gentleman in Franklin to his friend in Virginia," Aug. 17, 1785, Newspaper Abstracts (JJ); Alice Barnwell Keith, *The John Gray Blount Papers*, vol. 1, 1764–1789 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1952), 191.

21. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 75–77; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 173; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 337–39; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 18: 243–45; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 107–9; Paul H. Bergeron, Stephen V. Ash, and Jeanette Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 44.

22. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 76–78; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 173–74; William A. Henderson, "Nolachucky Jack," King's Mountain Papers (DD); Mary French Caldwell, *Tennessee: The Dangerous Example, Watauga to 1849* (Nashville: Aurora Publishers, 1974), 175.

23. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 129–30; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 689–91; M. F. Caldwell, *Tennessee*, 174–75; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 391–92; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 163–64.

24. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 129–31; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 401–3; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 20: 119–20, 202, 218, 223, 247–48, 261–62, 270, 273, 276, 284, 293, 300–302, 326.

25. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 132–33; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 190–91; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 223–24; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 406–7; deposition from John Tipton and others, Aug. 20, 1788, Miscellaneous Folder, North Carolina State Archives; Joyce Cox and W. Eugene Cox, comps., *History of Washington County Tennessee* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 2001), 87–88.

26. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 130–33; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 223–24; Cox and Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 87–88; Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper's Notes (S), Draper Manuscript Collection; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 406–7; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 198–201; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 691–93, 714; deposition from John

Tipton and others, Aug. 20, 1788; "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin," *Winchester Advertiser*, Mar. 1788, Newspaper Extracts (JJ); Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper's Notes (S).

27. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 133–34; deposition from John Tipton and others, Aug. 20, 1788; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 691–93; "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin," Mar. 1788; Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper's Notes (S); Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 224–25; George Maxwell and John Tipton to Arthur Campbell, Mar. 12, 1788, King's Mountain Papers (DD); Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 201.

28. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 135–37; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 691–93; deposition from John Tipton and others, Aug. 20, 1788; Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper's Notes (S); Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 193; "Intelligence from the State of Franklin," reprinted in *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, Apr. 8, 1788, Newspaper Extracts (JJ); "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin," Mar. 1788.

29. Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper's Notes (S); "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in the new State of Franklin," Mar. 1788; deposition from John Tipton and others, Aug. 20, 1788; Maxwell and Tipton to Campbell, Mar. 12, 1788; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 192–94; Bond of Andrew Hains (Haynes), John Sevier Jr., and James Sevier, Mar. 1, 1788, Paul Fink Collection, W. L. Eury Collection, Appalachian State University; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 691–93.

30. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 139–41; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 200–203; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 231–32; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 699–701; Andrew Caldwell Examination, n.d., Paul Fink Collection.

31. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 141–42; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 699–701; M. F. Caldwell, *Tennessee*, 180–81; Cox and Cox, *History of Washington County Tennessee*, 90–91; Haywood, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 203–5; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 424–25; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 230–33; Franklin Government, Lyman Draper, Draper's Notes (S); Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 231–32; "Sevier Taken by Tipton," Lyman Draper, Draper's Notes (S).

32. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 142–44; "Bill to Repeal Part of Act Once More to Extend Act of Pardon Offenses of Certain Persons, Etc.," General Assembly Record Group, North Carolina State Archives; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 21: 43, 56, 64, 73, 77, 110, 114, 218, 221, 222, 230, 232, 239, 256, 285–86; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 234–35; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 245–47; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 21: 547, 22: 729.

33. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 31–23, 96–97; Mary Hardin McCown, *The Wataugah Purchase, March 19, 1775 at Sycamore Shoals of Wataugah River: the*

*Cherokee Indians to Charles Robertson, trustee for the Wataugah Settlers: an Index of the Wataugah purchase, the North Carolina Land Grants, and Deeds Through 1782: a Bicentennial Contribution* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1976), 5–6; William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 28–29; Bergeron, Ash, and Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History*, 18–19, 22–23; Phillip M. Hamer, “The Wataugans and the Cherokee Indians in 1776,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 3 (Jan. 1931): 108–9; Robert J. Conley, *The Cherokee Nation: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 57–58; Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 88–89; Max Dixon, *The Wataugans: Tennessee in the Eighteenth Century* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1989), 6–23.

34. Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 6–7.

35. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 95; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 4–5; John Preston Arthur, *Western North Carolina: A History from 1730 to 1913* (Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press, 1996), 68–69; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 56–60; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 18; James Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Asheville, NC: Bright Mountain Books, 1992), 54.

36. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 65–66, 102–5; Conley, *Cherokee Nation*, 73–74; Randolph C. Downes, “Cherokee-American Relations in the Upper Tennessee Valley, 1776–1791,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* 8 (1936): 42–43; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 319; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 78–80. Only a small contingent of younger Cherokee chiefs, including Ancoo, Chief of Chota; Abraham, Chief of Chilhowe; the Bard; the Sturgeon; the Leach; the Big Man Killer; and the translator Cherokee Murphy agreed to the Treaty of Dumplin Creek (Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 649–50).

37. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 105–6; Downes, “Cherokee-American Relations,” 42–43; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 21; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 205–7; Conley, *Cherokee Nation*, 74; Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas*, 61–62; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 334–35.

38. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 106; Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas*, 61–62; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 334–35; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 21; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 207.

39. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 108–9; Downes, “Cherokee-American Relations,” 43–44; Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas*, 62–63; Hayward, *Civil and Political History of Tennessee*, 175–76; Duane H. King, ed., *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 56; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 18: 603–4; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 23.

40. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 109–13; Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22: 656–58; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 342–43; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 213; Conley, *Cherokee Nation*, 74.

41. Barksdale, *Lost State of Franklin*, 114–16; Arthur, *Western North Carolina*, 117; Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas*, 64–65; Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, 413–15; Williams, *History of the Lost State*, 212–14; General Sevier—1st Campaign of 88, Draper's Notes (S); Clark, *State Records of North Carolina*, 22, 695–96, 21: 487–88; Downes, "Cherokee-American Relations," 46–47; Alderman, *Overmountain Men*, 227; Nathaniel Evans and James Hubbard [Hubbart], Oct. 22, 1788, depositions from Greene County in defense of John Sevier, General Assembly Record Group, North Carolina State Archives; William P. Palmer, ed., *Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts from January 1, 1785, to July 2, 1789, Preserved at the Capital at Richmond*, 11 vols. (Richmond: R. U. Derr, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1884), 4: 18–19, 452.

## Chapter 2

# “Devoted to Hardships, Danger, and Devastation”

## The Landscape of Indian and White Violence in Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania, 1753–1800

*Kathryn Shively Meier*

In 1787, politician Timothy Pickering described the Pennsylvanian frontier’s Wyoming Valley as home to a wild and brutish people: “The natural instability of . . . that settlement, where during so many years they have lived in anarchy—where they have been taught to abhor the government of Pennsylvania . . . warrants the suspicion that a large number of [settlers] would again easily be wrought up to a pitch of violence.”<sup>1</sup> The alleged miscreants were Connecticut migrants who had begun to settle in the Indian-inhabited Wyoming Valley under extraordinary colonial charter claims during the 1750s.<sup>2</sup> A special congressional court had awarded Pennsylvania jurisdiction over Wyoming Valley in late 1782, which emboldened Pickering to denounce the contemporarily termed Connecticut “Yankees” who continued to refuse to relinquish many of their claims to the land.<sup>3</sup> But contemporaries as well as modern historians have misrepresented the competition for Wyoming Valley as rampantly violent by magnifying the moments when resistance escalated to bloodshed. Indeed, the claims dispute is an early example of Appalachian mountain dwellers being erroneously stereotyped as backward and lawless. As is so often the case, myth had partial grounding in reality: when confronting each other and their Pennsylvanian neighbors, Yankees and their Delaware Indian competitors did resort to killing under predictable circumstances: serious diplomatic failures; interference from well-known vigilante instigators; or formal conflicts, such as the Seven Years’ War, Pontiac’s Rebellion, and the American Revolution. But these moments merely punctuated a fifty-year land dispute during



which the majority of settlers preferred to pursue diplomatic channels while intimidating their neighbors with restrained tactics, such as razing farms and buildings or threatening with makeshift militias, that did not claim lives.<sup>4</sup>

This argument confronts scholarly stereotypes regarding Appalachian residents, Indian and white. Historians have either left northern Appalachian settlers out of the history of the mountains altogether, or they have portrayed them as a homogenous people who internalized the surrounding untamed landscape and, in isolation from legitimized government, practiced vigilantism. Among the most famous scholars, Frederick Jackson Turner and Arnold Toynbee have labeled Appalachians as uncivilized or as “no better than barbarians.” Richard Slotkin has suggested that borderland Americans reflected the wildernesses they encountered by acting lawlessly.<sup>5</sup> Historians have also carelessly labeled the Wyoming claims dispute as a typical mob action that had either escalated beyond the control of its leaders or was a manifestation of political protest.<sup>6</sup>

These portrayals, however, obscure the complexity of Yankee settlement strategies and reduce the region’s Delaware Indian inhabitants, who also resided in Wyoming Valley during the eighteenth century, to caricatures.<sup>7</sup> Both Connecticut settlers and the Delawares operated within the confines of political reality rather than as unruly, anti-institutional mobs who embraced vigilantism in defiance of authorities. They desired legitimacy from the formal power structures governing them: the Delawares had been conquered by the Iroquois Six Nations, and the Yankees were citizens of the colony of Connecticut. Thus, white settlers and Native Americans were not responding to the isolation of the frontier, but rather fully comprehended their incorporation within the British and Indian power structures. The tide of Western settlement had swept them into contested land, where they hoped to build permanent homes and fruitful lives. Anarchy could not serve their goals. Yet neither could the strategy of intimidation permanently resolve the land dispute; settlers required a solution from powers beyond Wyoming Valley. Ironically, whenever claimants invited outside intervention, they also invited violence and suffering.

In the northeastern belt of the Appalachian Mountains, within present-day Pennsylvania, sits Wyoming Valley. An adjacent triangular arm of New York separates the valley from the state of Connecticut. Wyoming itself is a crescent-shaped depression that accommodates part of the Susquehanna River, which drops in from the northwest and flows southwesterly for half



Wyoming Valley as seen from the Wilkes-Barre mountains, c. 1896. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

of the valley, then southeasterly as it exits through a mountain gap. Though the river does not dominate, it enriches the land, making it fertile for agriculture. In October 1754, the Susquehanna Company, a land corporation that laid claim to Wyoming based on the latent Connecticut sea-to-sea charter, had accumulated eight hundred shareholders and begun to survey the area. The surveyors' presence distressed two groups who also resided in Wyoming: Iroquois Indians and Pennsylvanians.

Having the primary claim to Wyoming, the Iroquois Six Nations resolved to prevent this new white invasion of its lands. Its leaders commenced the nonviolent tactic of occupation because empty space was often too tempting for white settlers.<sup>8</sup> Instead of relocating one of its own tribes, the Six Nations used threats and enticements to reposition a portion of a conquered people—former Lehigh River Delaware Indians.

The Six Nations had already compelled the Delawares to move north a decade earlier to please Pennsylvanian authorities. In 1737, the Delawares had been tricked out of their original land between the Lehigh and Delaware rivers in Pennsylvania, because John Penn and Thomas Penn, the sons and successors of Pennsylvania founder William Penn, claimed that the Indians had sold this land to their father. Denying the corrupt “Walking Purchase,” the Delawares refused to leave until the Iroquois intervened.<sup>9</sup> On July 10, 1742, at a meeting of Delawares, Iroquois, and Pennsylvanian leaders, Governor Thomas Penn demanded that the Delaware people depart immediately, as they had been ordered to do five years earlier. But it was Onondaga Canasatego, a spokesman for the Six Nations, who finally convinced the Delawares to move: “We conquer’d You, we made Women of you. . . . This Land that you Claim is gone through Your Guts.”<sup>10</sup> Histori-

ans have argued over the emasculating implications of this speech, but at the very least, Canasatego intended a humiliating reminder that the Delawares no longer enjoyed political sovereignty.<sup>11</sup> The defeated Indians took a variety of paths, including living as scattered wards in northern Iroquois land, moving into white religious settlements, or adopting European identities.<sup>12</sup> Thus, when the Iroquois insisted that a number of Delaware Indians, most of whom had been living at the nearby Moravian mission at Gnadenhütten, occupy Wyoming Valley in 1753, they had little choice but to relocate.

Although this fertile crescent provided the Delawares with a satisfactory opportunity to rebuild their shattered communities, their fortunes reversed again one year later, when permanent Yankee settlers from the Susquehannah Company began building in the valley. The Yankees had received a temporary setback at the Albany Conference of 1754, when the Iroquois relinquished some lands but specifically reserved Shamokin and Wyoming.<sup>13</sup> Just when it appeared that the Yankees would not be able to proceed with settlement, Susquehannah Company representative John Henry Lydius secured a liquor-clouded purchase of Wyoming Valley from illegitimate Iroquois representatives.<sup>14</sup> Though the authentic Six Nations' leadership later repudiated the deal, the Yankees saw their opportunity to move settlers in and began heavy recruiting.<sup>15</sup> The Connecticut settlers sought colonial sanction for their plans, and while Connecticut's governor approved, its legislature did not.<sup>16</sup> The colonial assembly had a much more immediate concern to attend to: tensions between the French and British occupiers of the Ohio Valley had erupted, resulting in the Seven Years' War in 1754. Nevertheless, hundreds of Yankees began constructing homes and farms in the valley, and the Delawares, though feeling forsaken by the Iroquois, did not immediately lash out at their new neighbors.

Instead, the Delawares appealed to higher authorities for aid, often via their emerging spokesman, Teedyuscung. With pressure from Connecticut to the east and a mounting threat from the French to the west, the Delawares sought the support of their superiors, the Six Nations, in deference to their conquered status. They begged, "Uncles the United Nations, we expect to be killed by the French your Father; We desire, therefore, that you will take off our Petticoat that we may fight for ourselves."<sup>17</sup> The request reflected a desire for legitimacy of action and a fear of Iroquois retribution for unauthorized killing of whites. Although the Iroquois wished to maintain control over the Wyoming Valley and recognized the dual Yankee and European threats, they did not sanction Delaware violence, hoping to remain neutral during the Seven Years' War.<sup>18</sup>

No Native American tribes would succeed in sitting out the Seven Years' War, yet most Wyoming Delaware Indians avoided excessive killing even in this period of formalized violence.<sup>19</sup> Unlike many of their Indian neighbors, Teedyuscung and the Wyoming Delawares did not immediately form war parties, but focused on protecting their women, children, and homes from outsiders. The men, in particular, felt bound to their adopted home in light of a late spring frost that had ruined their harvest, requiring a steady hunt to replace the food. They showed deep resolve to maintain peace when, on September 11, 1755, they refused to supply the Oneida Indians, part of the Six Nations, with warriors to fight for the British.<sup>20</sup> Finally, during the winter of 1755, Teedyuscung arranged a small war party of around thirty men, mostly family members, who probably sought honor in their participation rather than a decisive defense of their land. It seems the group was sufficiently satisfied after just one raid and returned home to Wyoming, at which point many of their people temporarily fled north in fear.<sup>21</sup> Following the raid in 1756, Teedyuscung hoped to use diplomacy in place of violence and attempted to make a separate peace with the British to gain independence from the Iroquois. He even tried to purchase Wyoming from Pennsylvania, though Pennsylvania officials did not have the authority to sell Six Nations land.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the turbulence of war, the Delawares attempted to hold Wyoming Valley against the Yankee invasion mainly through postured aggression, threats, and occupation rather than killing. This should not come as a surprise, considering that unruly Indians could be disowned by their tribal governments, or worse, handed over to be killed in retribution. Further, the Delawares were not only a conquered nation but entirely surrounded by hostile whites, who had the advantage of numbers.<sup>23</sup> When the Susquehanna Company threatened to occupy Wyoming Valley by force, the Delawares announced that they would kill any cattle or white men who entered the valley. They then backed this claim with a calculated, brief display of physical might that proved temporarily effective. On June 22, 1755, three whites were killed and scalped near Willis Creek, presumably by Delaware Indians. Even a few scalplings went a long way in frightening off whites, who considered the practice uncivilized.<sup>24</sup> The potential of Indian barbarism and the chaos of the Seven Years' War prevented significant Yankee settlement until after 1758, when the Delawares abandoned the war with the Treaty of Easton.<sup>25</sup>

By the summer of 1760, the Yankees had managed to construct a new community near Wyoming. Teedyuscung responded by registering com-

plaints through diplomatic channels with Pennsylvania. In 1760 and 1761, he negotiated with Lieutenant Governor James Hamilton, who assured him that his colony would be “very sorry if you remove from Wyoming,” recognizing the Indians as a significant buffer against Connecticut.<sup>26</sup> Hamilton announced to the Pennsylvania council in 1761, “The Delaware chief, Teedyuscung, hath made a very earnest and formal Complaint and Remonstrance to me . . . insisting that the Intruders should be immediately removed by the Government to which they belonged, or by me.” Further, “if this was not done, the Indians would come and remove them by force, and do themselves Justice.”<sup>27</sup> Teedyuscung’s warning to Hamilton revealed the Indians’ desire that legitimate government would prevail over unnecessary violence. The Susquehannah Company, however, made further plans in 1762 to send a large number of settlers to Wyoming Valley.<sup>28</sup>

Though the Delaware efforts at peaceful diplomacy were rewarded with the British Order of June 1763, which temporarily forbade white settlement of Wyoming and instructed the Yankees to return to Connecticut, Teedyuscung fell victim to violence just prior to this small victory.<sup>29</sup> In 1762, because Yankees had refused to vacate the region, Teedyuscung amassed 150 warriors to bully the settlers into leaving. The act was largely symbolic, as none was injured.<sup>30</sup> This display of intimidation, however, soon encouraged the Yankees to retaliate. On April 19, 1763, a mysterious conflagration razed an Indian town in Wyoming Valley, forcing many of its inhabitants to flee north in despair. The fire also claimed the life of Teedyuscung, who burned to death in his cabin.<sup>31</sup>

A number of Delawares, led by Teedyuscung’s son Captain Bull, had not learned of the June proclamation before they joined in the larger Indian uprising that occurred at this same moment: Pontiac’s Rebellion. Captain Bull killed or captured the Wyoming Yankees who had immediately occupied his father’s village, and Delaware Indians joined with Shawnees to scalp white settlers and lay waste to their homes. Yet even these more vicious attacks were within the context of widespread Indian war.<sup>32</sup>

Despite this final attempt at massive Native American resistance, Yankees continued to pour into the area. When the Iroquois finally ceded Wyoming Valley in the Fort Stanwix Treaty of 1768, the remaining Delawares departed north to Fort Tioga or Fort Niagara.<sup>33</sup> They had been forsaken once again—this time by their conquerors—though they had been largely peaceful occupants of Wyoming Valley. Their defensive tactics had included verbal threats, diplomacy with the Iroquois (who were in effect

their governors) and the Pennsylvanians, and amassing large numbers of warriors to intimidate their foes. At times, the Delawares had backed their threats with limited displays of force, but usually within the context of larger wars. It is difficult to say whether the Delawares avoided bloodshed simply because their Iroquois conquerors refused to “remove their petticoats” or because they had been influenced by their time spent at the Moravian mission.<sup>34</sup> It seems likely that the Delawares, politically vulnerable and unlucky in their harvests, hoped above all to secure their homes and families, and so they avoided unnecessary killing that might have drawn the disapprobation of those in power. They were ultimately unsuccessful at holding their ground and passed into history either forgotten as north Appalachian residents or misrepresented as savages. Nevertheless, they would wait up north until the Revolution provided them with a brief opportunity for revenge.

The Fort Stanwix Treaty swept the Wyoming-dwelling Indians aside and ushered in a new phase of conflict between white claimants only—the Yankees and the Pennsylvanians, contemporarily termed Pennamites. As the Susquehannah Company devised new plans in February 1769 to send forty settlers to erect five towns on the banks of the Susquehanna River, the Yankees’ revived fervor to claim Wyoming sparked what has been termed the First Yankee-Pennamite War (1769–71), a bit of a misnomer.<sup>35</sup> Contrary to popular conception, the Connecticut natives did not resort to immediate violence to achieve settlement. In this early phase of conflict, they most often relied upon postured aggression, much like the Delaware Indians had used against them in the preceding decade, to fleeting success.

When the “first forty” arrived in Wyoming Valley, officials from Northampton County, the Pennsylvania county that had absorbed Wyoming, responded by arresting a number of these Yankees on charges of rioting. Rather than backing down, the Susquehannah Company sent an additional two hundred settlers to the region, with three hundred more shortly to follow. Intimidation by occupation was a tactic reminiscent of the Iroquois strategy: the more bodies in Wyoming Valley, the greater chance of holding the land. The strategy proved effective. Under pressure from the now-formidable numbers of Connecticut settlers, not to mention the sudden construction of several Yankee forts, Northampton authorities released their prisoners.<sup>36</sup>

Seven months later, tensions between Yankees and Pennamites culminated in real, if overdramatized, violence. On September 22, 1769, the

*Pennsylvania Gazette* reported that the Connecticut settlers “came to the number of sixty armed with tomahawks, axes and other instruments of violence, in order to take possession of some land in the tenure of Captain [Amos] Ogden.” Pennsylvanian Ogden had owned a trading post in Wyoming Valley since 1765. In what would become a typical display of intimidation between the warring claimants, Ogden then “called about twenty-five of his neighbors to his assistance, to enable him to defend his property.” Unlike the many incidents in which both sides would amass pseudo-armies that would threaten but not harm, Ogden’s men were supposedly “attacked by this lawless gang of fierce warriors, and five or six of them much wounded.” Wielding wooden sticks, Ogden’s men forced the Yankees, some of whom “got broken heads from the hard knocks they received in the affray,” to retreat.<sup>37</sup> Despite the tenor of the newspaper, a few men were injured but none killed, the “hard knocks” being exaggerated to champion the Pennsylvanian resistance.

Over the next three years, control over Wyoming Valley changed hands repeatedly as the two groups attempted to bully each other with displays of force. For instance, in November 1769, Pennamites stormed Yankee Fort Durkee and razed Yankee homes in the vicinity. But violence was not as rampant as contemporary newspapers and later historians claimed. Wanton references to “maimings, deaths, and lootings” or a “shooting war” during the First Yankee-Pennamite War misrepresent the rarity of killing in the early stage of the dispute.<sup>38</sup> In reality, Susquehannah settlers only occasionally threatened each other, because Yankee leaders John Durkee, Zebulon Butler, and Ebenezer Backus hoped to be embraced by the Connecticut colonial assembly as a legitimate settlement. While some were wounded in these staged exercises in terror, the handful of men who would be killed before the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775 was the result of a new leadership compact with the Paxton Boys. These true vigilantes from southwest Pennsylvania were notorious for slaughtering peaceful Indians in Lancaster in December 1763, provoking Indian retaliation.<sup>39</sup>

In 1770, the Susquehannah Company allied with the Paxton Boys in hopes of retaking the captured Fort Durkee and increasing its hold over Wyoming. Led by Lazarus Stewart, the Paxton Boys had courted the Susquehannah Company due to their interest in the company’s democratic dispersal of land and their general discontent with Pennsylvania’s Indian policies.<sup>40</sup> During Pontiac’s Rebellion, self-serving Stewart had seen firsthand the Susquehannah Company dealings in Wyoming Valley, where he

led a company of Pennsylvanian militia in driving out the Connecticut settlers and Indians.<sup>41</sup> The Susquehannah Company was interested in the Paxtons for their demonstrated success in seizing land. On January 15, 1770, Wyoming representatives Backus and Butler met with Stewart to deliver the terms of the agreement: Stewart and fifty of his followers would receive “a township of land six square miles” in exchange for their help in driving out the Pennamites.<sup>42</sup> For the moment, neither the Wyoming leadership nor the Susquehannah Company speculators anticipated the high level of violence these new settlers would ignite.

Immediately upon arriving in Wyoming, the Paxton Boys made good on their promise. On February 12, 1770, they easily drove Amos Ogden’s men out of the fort, though the Pennamites retook it several days later. Over the next month, the Paxton Boys violated the unspoken rules of Wyoming defense with unfettered aggression, raucously burning and looting the Pennsylvania settlements. The Ogden brothers described the Paxtons as “armed with fire Arms and other offensive weapons, and made forcible Entry on the said proprietor’s Tract.”<sup>43</sup> Butler was notably absent from this destructive orgy, but he was present to demand Pennamite eviction on February 28, though the Pennsylvanians did not leave.<sup>44</sup>

The Paxton Boys’ unregulated violence provoked the first two murders of the dispute. On March 28, 1770, a gunfight broke out, during which Pennamite John Murphy slew a Stewart follower, Balzer Stager. Two other Yankees were wounded. Though Murphy was arrested, local authorities released him, unable to find a proper venue in which to try him. Since Connecticut had not yet extended its jurisdiction, Wyoming Valley had no Connecticut courts, and allowing a Pennsylvania trial would suggest Pennsylvanian jurisdiction.<sup>45</sup> Even in this moment of bloodshed, which highly inflamed tempers, both sides appealed to the legal system first to resolve their disputes. Outside authority, however, failed to resolve the situation.

It was only after Murphy’s release, when traditional justice seemed to have failed, that Lazarus Stewart retaliated with murder. Amos Ogden’s brother, Deputy Sheriff Nathan Ogden, approached a Pennamite fort captured by Stewart. William Sims, a Pennsylvanian, recalled what happened next: “It was the Shot or Ball from Lazarus Stewart’s Gun that killed Nathan Ogden; That this deponent ran immediately, as soon as Ogden fell, and then thought and now thinks he heard the Bullet when it entered his Body.”<sup>46</sup> This event marked the second death in the land dispute.

The deliberate shooting of Nathan Ogden convinced Pennamites and





Col. Zebulon Butler Homestead, 1939. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

many Yankees that Stewart possessed none of the restraint that previous settlers in Wyoming Valley had displayed. Outraged, current Pennsylvania governor John Penn issued the Riot Act—which forbade mobs from assembling and disturbing the peace, offered a reward for the capture of Stewart, and even tried to involve British general Thomas Gage in removing the Connecticut claimants. Gage coolly declined.<sup>47</sup> Relations between the Paxton Boys and the Susquehanna Company also began to deteriorate as Stewart and his followers became alarmed at rumors that the company had decided to renege on its promise of providing them with a tract of Wyoming land.

Ultimately, Zebulon Butler tempered Stewart's aggression enough that the Paxtons and Yankees reunited. For the next year, most Yankee-Pennamite exchanges revolved around plundering and destroying each other's farms as they had in the past.<sup>48</sup> Eventually, however, Stewart's influence renewed violence. In August 1771, the combined forces of Butler and Stewart besieged a Pennsylvanian fort and ignited a confrontation that claimed one Pennamite's life and three Yankees' lives.<sup>49</sup> The Pennsylvanians

temporarily surrendered, and new numbers of Yankees came flooding into the region, signaling the end of the First Yankee-Pennamite War. Six lives had been claimed since the Yankees enlisted the Paxtons.

Throughout the First Yankee-Pennamite War, the Yankees had continually petitioned the Connecticut colonial assembly for formal recognition. It repeatedly declined formal support for a new colony or an extension of its domain to that area. While pursuing the question of claims through legal and government channels, Yankee settlers struggled to maintain peace and order in their towns to prove the permanency of their settlements.<sup>50</sup> The original Yankee leaders had preferred intimidation, occupying the land with large numbers of settlers and plundering and targeting Pennamite land rather than actual people. Murder would not help the Yankee case before the Connecticut Assembly. The original Connecticut settlers were not hostile to colonial government, though the Paxton Boys, who introduced real violence into the dispute, genuinely despised Pennsylvanian authorities. When, at long last, Connecticut welcomed Wyoming Valley as Westmoreland County in 1773, the settlers' spirits soared. Unfortunately for the Yankees, this legitimization failed to settle the land dispute with Pennsylvania.

Though the American Revolution would soon affect the region, one final confrontation occurred in September 1775, when the Susquehanna Company decided to extend its reach to the western branch of the Susquehanna River, encroaching upon several remaining Pennsylvanian settlements. On September 23, the Yankees pursued the coveted land in pre-Stewart fashion by amassing a force of around 150 men and planning to merely order Pennamite families to leave. But given the tenor of violence introduced in the frays, still fresh in Pennamites' memories, they responded with violence. The Pennsylvanians mustered a 300-man militia that killed a Connecticut settler, wounded two others, and apprehended between 75 and 85 men.<sup>51</sup> Two months later, Pennsylvanian sheriff William Scull, with magistrates from Northumberland County, demanded complete Yankee capitulation, still believing that even one casualty was enough to render a confrontation decisive. Yankee leader Butler and his followers had no intention of surrendering to Scull's forces. They blamed the Pennamites for the recent casualties and warned that they too would embrace violence if the dispute continued. Just a month prior to this recent confrontation, Butler had scoffed at Ellis Hughes, a leading Pennamite: “You mention the thing of Shedding Blood, I am as much Concerned of your Wetting us with your

Watter as we are of your Shedding our Blood.”<sup>52</sup> Now that the Pennamites had committed more murders, Butler considered meeting them blow for blow.

Finally, on December 15, 1775, Pennsylvanian William Plunkett led a five-hundred-man crowd of Pennamites against a four-hundred-man group of Yankees under Lazarus Stewart. Though both sides were armed to intimidate, no casualties resulted, as had been the case in the pre-Paxton days. The Pennamites were repelled, and throughout 1776, Connecticut settlers continued to harass the last Pennsylvanian settlements without casualty until the reignited Indian threat briefly consumed their attention.<sup>53</sup> Following Plunkett’s Expedition, the Yankees, fully aware of the gathering storm of revolution, slapped their enemies with the incendiary title of Tories.<sup>54</sup> It is true that a number of Pennsylvania settlers would take up arms with the British during the Revolution to try to win back Wyoming, and Pennsylvania itself was notoriously late in answering the patriotic call to action.<sup>55</sup> Still, Yankees would use this title, ringing of treachery, long after the end of the war to rally sympathy for their cause.

During this same period from 1775 to 1776, Delaware Indians began reappearing in the Wyoming area. Though the Native Americans claimed that they only wished to hunt, the Yankees anticipated renewed Indian conflict.<sup>56</sup> In the summer of 1776, Zebulon Butler petitioned the Continental Congress to raise a Wyoming-based militia, and Pennsylvanians in Wyoming, learning of the request, urged congressmen not to oblige it. They feared that Yankees would use the militia to dispossess them.<sup>57</sup> This duo of petitions concerned Connecticut colonial leaders Silas Dean and Roger Sherman, who believed Butler’s request would draw negative attention from Congress to the claims dispute as a nasty reminder of colonial disunity. They urged him to refrain from further confrontation with Pennsylvania.<sup>58</sup> Though Dean doubted Congress would grant Butler’s request for troops, on August 23, 1776, Congress sanctioned two militia companies in the region, gauging the Indian threat as formidable.<sup>59</sup> To the Yankees’ dismay, Congress also reserved the right to call these companies into national service, which it did almost immediately.<sup>60</sup> With the heartiest Connecticut men off fighting for Washington’s Continental Army, local residents became easy prey for Native Americans and British sympathizers who wanted to gain control over the region.

The British quickly capitalized on Wyoming vulnerability. Royal colonel John Butler pulled together a ranger corps of approximately 500 men,

mostly disaffected “Tory” Pennsylvanians from Northumberland County and Iroquois, Delaware, and Shawnee Indians from the north, who arrived in Wyoming Valley on June 30, 1778.<sup>61</sup> The ranger corps secured the peaceful surrender of two outlying forts and moved on to take Forty Fort, an important military garrison where 300 to 400 Yankee troops under Zebulon Butler, on furlough from the Continental Army, and Lazarus Stewart had gathered.<sup>62</sup> On July 3, the famous Battle of Wyoming ensued.<sup>63</sup> According to the recollection of Zebulon Butler, after a bloody clash, the Rangers feigned retreat, and Stewart walked into the trap. Stewart and a number of his men were killed or captured, while Butler retreated with roughly half of the Yankee defenders, fleeing east toward Sunbury or the Delaware River.<sup>64</sup> At this point, the battle allegedly turned into a massacre as the Ranger force murdered and scalped fleeing settlers and burned their homes and crops. In the end, the battle and massacre resulted in the deaths of approximately 150 Yankees.<sup>65</sup> Following the attack, all white settlers abandoned the valley for a time, as Indians continued to raid the area in the coming months.

Sensationalized throughout the colonies, the Battle of Wyoming and the subsequent massacre evoked the sympathy of many Americans and became a national symbol of excessive violence both at the time and in historical memory. In fact, it was this Revolutionary War battle that earned Wyoming Valley Indians their barbaric reputation. Some Pennsylvanians even began to welcome Yankee refugees into their land. William Maclay, a former Pennamite settler of Wyoming, wrote: “Something in the way of charity ought to be done for the Many Miserable objects that crowd the Banks of this River, especially those who fled from Wioming. They are a People, you know, I did not use to love. But I now most sincerely pity their distress.”<sup>66</sup> Responding to public outcry over the massacre at Fort Forty, along with an earlier massacre at Cherry Valley, New York, General George Washington ordered General John Sullivan to conduct a “scorched earth” campaign against Native Americans in the western New York and Wyoming areas.<sup>67</sup> Throughout the spring of 1779, Sullivan, accompanied by four thousand patriots, torched forty Indian settlements and 160,000 acres of corn, killing any Indians they encountered. Destructive as Sullivan’s expedition was, it only temporarily halted Indian raids in the context of the war.<sup>68</sup>

Though Yankees had suffered a major blow, they also had renewed hope for resettlement of Wyoming Valley. With the full support of Wash-

ington, they believed they might rid the region of Native Americans once and for all. Public outrage over the Wyoming Valley massacre also allowed the Yankees to gain even more leverage in their fight against white Pennsylvanians over control of the Wyoming Valley. The massacre provided them with an opportunity to define their struggles in the region as patriotic. Like other Americans, they had fought and died for the patriot cause, earning them the right to claim the Wyoming Valley as their possession. To the dismay of the Yankees, however, the land remained in dispute.

Following the Battle of Wyoming in 1778, Yankees and Pennsylvanians returned to the valley. When Connecticut and Pennsylvania ratified the Articles of Confederation in July 1778, Yankees became particularly fearful that Pennsylvania would win legal claim to the valley. Article IX stated that “all controversies concerning the private right of soil claimed under different grants of two or more States . . . shall on the petition of either party to the Congress of the United States, be finally determined,” and Connecticut settlers were well aware that Wyoming Valley lay adjacent to Pennsylvania, not Connecticut.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, Wyoming Yankees successfully petitioned for a new company of militia to protect their settlements, while Pennsylvania actively worked to prevent supplies from reaching those troops.<sup>70</sup> On December 12, 1780, General Washington responded to this problem by replacing Connecticut militiamen with “neutral” New Jersey troops under the command of Alexander Mitchell.<sup>71</sup> The Yankees viewed these troops as pro-Pennsylvanian and became even more alarmed when Maryland ratified the Articles, committing them to law.<sup>72</sup>

Congress confirmed Yankee fears by granting Pennsylvania jurisdiction over Wyoming Valley with the Trenton Decree of 1782.<sup>73</sup> Despite the fact that Pennsylvania was supposed to honor the individual claims of Connecticut settlers, Pennamites used their now-legitimized militia to arrest Yankees and uproot them from their homes. This diplomatic failure for the Yankees launched the so-called Second Yankee-Pennamite War, 1783–87—a truly violent chapter in the claims dispute. During this new phase, Zebulon Butler remained a bastion of cool-headed leadership and attempted to work with the Pennsylvania government to secure individual Yankee farms. But at the same time, a new radical and violent Yankee leader, reminiscent of Lazarus Stewart, also rose to power: John Franklin, an influential shareholder in the Susquehannah Company. Like Stewart, Franklin was an outsider who had moved to Wyoming with the goal of personal gain, rather than creating a peaceful, permanent home. Because Franklin had com-

manded a militia unit during the Revolutionary War, he ignited patriotic rage against the Pennsylvanians, defaming them as Tories.<sup>74</sup>

Bloodshed ensued with Franklin at the helm. In May 1784, Franklin justified his outrage by citing Pennamites' physical and psychological abuse of Yankees. "Numbers of families were forceably turned out of their houses and Possession without regard to their age or sickness," he wrote. Yankee families received "the greatest Insults and Abuses from some of the Justices as well as from the Officers and Soldiers." The Pennsylvania militia prevented the Yankees from building homes, slaughtered their animals, and ruined their crops.<sup>75</sup> In response, in July 1784, Franklin led a group of Connecticut settlers in several assaults on Pennsylvanian Fort Dickinson, a confrontation at Locust Hill, and an engagement at the Wilkes-Barre garrison, resulting in approximately eight deaths and a number of woundings, including Franklin himself. Though the Pennsylvania Assembly showed increasing interest in obtaining justice for the Yankees by negotiating individual land titles and allowing Yankees to sit on the legislature, events on the ground remained dangerous.<sup>76</sup> In October 1784, the Pennamite militia mobilized for mass arrests of Connecticut settlers and ambushed the Yankees in their homes. The casualty count included one dead Pennsylvanian and a number of wounded. Franklin claimed that the Pennsylvanians mistreated and starved the Yankee prisoners they apprehended and raped several women, a situation Franklin deemed outright war. In his words, "we are now in a State of War Which the state of Pennsylvania is supporting against us. To live in a state of Anarchy we cannot."<sup>77</sup> Even Franklin was growing tired of the violence, but the Yankees' tempers remained inflamed by the extreme Pennamite aggression.

The general Wyoming Yankee populace was divided about how to cope with the situation from 1783 to 1787, which had turned dismal. All of the families faced hardship; some would settle for whatever land Pennsylvania would allot them, while others were intrigued by Franklin and the Susquehannah Company's insistence upon radical separatism.<sup>78</sup> It was far easier for the Susquehannah shareholders who were not living in the valley and facing torment to continue to advocate for a Connecticut Wyoming. Though the Connecticut settlers ultimately hoped to remain peacefully in their homes, the majority of them elected Franklin to the Pennsylvania Assembly in February 1787, condoning, at least on some level, his more violent approach to defense. Franklin, however, refused to sit.<sup>79</sup>

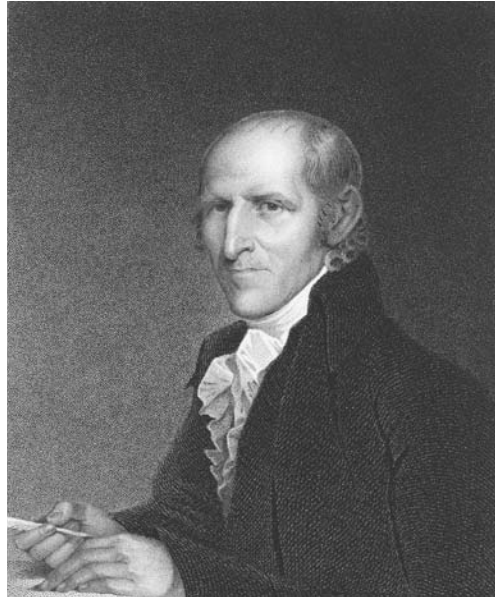
During the 1780s, the Yankees pursued the dual strategies of appealing

through legal channels for individual titles, championed by Butler, and using Franklin-inspired violence, their tempers fueled by Pennamite aggression. Just as the Yankees had learned from other borderland strategies during the 1770s, they took note in the 1780s of the successes of Ethan Allen, who led the Green Mountain Boys' revolt in New York to eventually create Vermont. Allen's tactics involved armed group intimidation to evict opponents, burn houses and property, and administer threats and occasional abuse.<sup>80</sup> Franklin and the Susquehannah Company worked with Allen to create a "New Vermont Plan," in which Allen advised the settlers to "crowd your settlements, add to your numbers and strength, procure fire arms and ammunition, be united among yourselves."<sup>81</sup> The advice was familiar but also gave the Yankees revived hope in the possible success of violence, thanks to Allen's victory. They continued to support Franklin, though their lives were becoming increasingly bleak.

Violence had escalated beyond what either side had imagined possible. The rebellious leader of the Yankees despaired that the Connecticut settlers had been "reduced to about 2000 souls . . . the principle part of which are Women & Children. Scattered in the Woods, with only Huts of Bark and Thatch to Cover them from the Inclemencies of the approaching Winter; & their Enemy in full possession of their houses farms Crops and other property and they Starving with Hunger and Cold."<sup>82</sup> In June 1788, Franklin's political rival Thomas Pickering agreed, noting that areas occupied by Connecticut settlers were "under very slovenly husbandry. . . . The hovels they dwell in are wretched beyond description. . . . The children are often very ragged & the whole family very dirty."<sup>83</sup> This turbulent state of affairs could not last forever, and indeed the Pennsylvania Assembly passed the Confirming Act of 1787, entitling Connecticut settlers and their heirs to lots owned prior to the Trenton Decree. While this did not satisfy the separatists, it was a victory indeed for those Yankees attempting to build lasting homes in Wyoming Valley.<sup>84</sup>

Still the radical Franklin would not relent, and Pickering finally had him arrested for advocating separatism in violation of the Confirming Act.<sup>85</sup> This moment represented a triumph for those who had grown weary of destruction. It marked a shift from bloodshed back to symbolism and threats. In retribution for Franklin's detainment, rather than organize a militia, his followers abducted his old archrival and arrester, Timothy Pickering. Pickering was hardly surprised, as the Yankees had forewarned him. On June 26,

Portrait of Timothy Pickering. Courtesy of the Emmet Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.



1788, a group of men dressed as Indians seized Pickering from his house and kept him bound in the forest, moving him every two to three days, but allowing him to write to his wife. Pickering was released within the month, as was Franklin, nearly a year later.<sup>86</sup> Much has been made of this game of dress up played by the abductors and whether they were enacting a kind of Indian-learned ritual.<sup>87</sup> It seems the men were simply in disguise, much like the “Indians” who dumped tea in Boston Harbor before the American Revolution. More important, the abductors were engaging in symbolic aggression rather than bloodshed. Pickering was unharmed if shaken.

When Franklin returned from his imprisonment, he was somewhat subdued and even took his assembly seat. Though the Connecticut settlers faced several more legislative setbacks after the repeal of the Confirming Act, confrontations had again receded into threats, mostly on the part of the Pennsylvanian militia, and symbolism, such as the Yankee tarring and feathering of a Pennsylvanian agent.<sup>88</sup> Both bloodshed and intimidation faded away by the turn of the nineteenth century, though individual legal questions remained.

Throughout the Yankee-Pennamite claims dispute, the desire of the Connecticut settlers who lived in Wyoming had been to construct perma-



ment homes, farms, and lives. The Yankees pursued soil rights and legitimacy through legal channels first, while resorting to intimidation on the ground. They amassed armed pseudo-militias to scare off Pennsylvanians, built defensive forts, and targeted the land of their enemies. When violence was employed, it was not random, crazed, or anarchic, but instrumental in nature. Two main leaders—Lazarus Stewart and John Franklin—invited bloody tactics into the Yankee repertoire of defensive strategy. Otherwise, killing was contained to formal wars, such as the American Revolution. The Yankee-Pennamite Wars did result in casualties, and the bloodier Second Yankee-Pennamite War wrought tremendous destruction in Yankees' lives. Violence, however, was not the result of shiftless, uncivilized mobs lashing out amid political or economic turbulence. Claimants resorted to killing only when outside authorities failed to protect them. Even then, most competitors employed violence during wars or under the leadership of rare extremists. Despite settling on the borderlands, Indians and whites were integrated into formal power structures and well aware of events unfolding in America, which they used to their advantage.

Historical memory, mainly produced by the Pennsylvanian victors, has corrupted our understanding of the landscape of northern Appalachian violence. In nearly every county history of Wyoming Valley, the Battle of Wyoming became the climactic historical moment, eclipsing all other events in the dispute. Pennsylvanians likely hoped to forget their own less patriotic revolutionary track record and draw attention away from white violence toward the Indian massacre. Wyoming Pennsylvanians even raised a monument in honor of the battle in 1842 and have held yearly commemorations since the battle's centennial. One county history claims that "no historical event of the American frontier is better known in song and story than that of the battle and subsequent massacre."<sup>89</sup> Other histories have even found a fond place in the battle story for the formerly notorious Pennsylvanian traitor—Lazarus Stewart—who defended Forty Fort on that fateful July day.<sup>90</sup>

Even Yankees were recast as sympathetic characters. A history of Luzerne County in 1866 read: "The conduct of the state of Pennsylvania is without excuse. Her vacillating legislation, and her bad faith, expose her to the severest censure. . . . It is hoped that our great Commonwealth will never suffer the pages of her history to be darkened and disgraced by a disregard of the dictates of justice and humanity."<sup>91</sup> Another history showed sympathy with the Connecticut settlers, "who had become deeply attached

to the land of their adoption.”<sup>92</sup> In each account, the Delawares were conveniently disgraced.<sup>93</sup> These two distortions of historical memory—the magnification of the Battle of Wyoming and the unification of white claimants against the Indians—contributed to the image of a hyperbloody claims dispute in which Indians were the prime villains. Appalachia conveniently appeared steeped in bloodshed. But the actual landscape of violence in Wyoming, with its peaks and valleys, is far more representative of the American borderland experience.

The irony of the real Wyoming Valley story is contained in John Franklin’s 1786 letter to a Pennsylvanian authority: “You Query that whether after all that the wisdom and forbearance of Government can do for us, we must be a people devoted to hardships, danger and devastation. . . . The good people of Wyoming . . . stand forth in their defence in a just and righteous cause, and overthrow the hellish schemes of the Land monopolizers, who wish to destroy the Yankees from the face of the Earth.”<sup>94</sup> Despite the fact that Franklin had ignited the worst violence outside of the Revolutionary War, he revealed the underlying “just and righteous cause” that fueled the actions of all the settlers involved in the dispute. They were determined to build peaceful lives and permanent homes in Wyoming Valley, but in the process they became “a people devoted to hardships, danger and devastation.”

## Notes

1. Timothy Pickering to George Clymer, Nov. 1, 1787, in *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, ed. Julian P. Boyd and Robert J. Taylor, 11 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962–71), 9: 256 (hereafter SCP).

2. The Susquehannah Company and two other Connecticut companies that laid claim to western lands outside of colonial Connecticut relied upon the ambiguous language of the original Connecticut charter, which conferred “a Grant of the Sea-Coast, from Naraganset River to the South-West, forty Leagues, to keep the Breadth to the South Sea”; see William Smith, *An Examination of the Connecticut Claim to Lands in Pennsylvania with an Appendix Containing Extracts and Copies taken from the Original Papers* (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruxshank, 1774). Having just ended a dispute with New York, Connecticut speculators bypassed land in that state for territory in the northwest to which Pennsylvania also laid claim: Wyoming Valley. Pennsylvania also claimed Wyoming under its charter and an Indian deed. For more information on the competing claims, see SCP, 1: introduction; and Paul B. Moyer, *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania’s Revolutionary Frontier* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 16–17.

3. The Trenton Decree of 1782 came out of a congressionally ordered special court that reviewed the claims dispute between Connecticut and Pennsylvania. The court awarded Pennsylvania jurisdiction of Wyoming Valley, solving only a superficial problem. Still remaining was the question of individual soil rights (SCP, 7: xxi).

4. This argument harmonizes well with recent work done by Peter Silver that suggests that “mass refugeeism and large-scale rioting were the unfolding results of actions taken by small numbers of people.” See Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2008), xxv.

5. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1921); Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 149; Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973). This essay affirms newer literature, such as John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), which reveals the complexities of land ownership and the varieties of people who settled in Appalachia.

6. Among the first group of scholars, who cite excessive rural mob violence, are William Pencak, “Introduction: A Historical Perspective,” in *Riot and Revelry in Early America*, ed. William Pencak, Simon Newman, and Matthew Dennis (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), who portrays Wyoming Valley as “far more violent than the activities initiated by the urban crowds” during the Revolution (9); Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 43, who suggests that Revolutionary mobs spread to the frontier; and Thomas Slaughter, “Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America: Reflections and New Directions,” *Pennsylvanian Magazine of History and Biography* 115 (1991): 14, who maintains the anti-institutional and antiauthority predilections of rural mobs, such as those in Wyoming. Among the second group of scholars, who suggest that Wyoming violence was directed at the government, are W. Eugene Hollon, *Frontier Violence: Another Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), who believes that most violence up to Washington’s administration was directed at the state; Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking, 2005), who describes mobs as highly political and calculated; and Russell Bourne, *Cradle of Violence: How Boston’s Waterfront Mobs Ignited the American Revolution* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2006), who states that the American Revolution gave mobs “a new kind of predetermination” and “program and purpose” (202).

7. A final historiography confronted by this paper is the role of race in prompting borderland violence. Gregory Knouff, *The Soldiers’ Revolution: Pennsylvanians in Arms and the Forging of Early American Identity* (University Park: Pennsylvania

State University Press, 2004), has argued that Continental soldiers disseminated racism learned on the frontier, while John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607–1814* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), has argued that “instead of racism leading to violence, in early America violence led to racism” (12). In Wyoming, racial strife did not dictate violence, as whites and Indians hoped to avoid the appearance of bloodshed in their mutual quests for legitimate settling. Grenier’s point is valid insofar as Indians were portrayed as violent in historical memory. Likewise, Peter Silver’s *Our Savage Neighbors* details how white rhetoric depicted their victimization by Indians—the “anti-Indian sublime”—in order to gain white sympathy and coveted land (xx, xxii).

8. Historian C. A. Weslager also believes that the Six Nations wanted to protect Wyoming Valley because it “blocked white expansion northward into Six Nation country and controlled war and diplomatic trails to Onondaga from Pennsylvania.” See C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indians: A History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 192.

9. For more on the “Walking Purchase,” see Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 78.

10. Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 191.

11. An inquiry into the meaning of Canasatego’s words can be found in William A. Starna, “The Diplomatic Career of Canasatego,” in *Friends and Enemies in Penn’s Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*, ed. William Pencak and Daniel K. Richter (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 151–52.

12. Stephen C. Harper, “Delawares and Pennsylvanians after the Walking Purchase,” in Pencak and Richter, *Friends and Enemies*, 179.

13. “A Treaty with the Shawanese and Delaware Indians, Living on and near the Susquehanna River. Negotiated at Fort Johnson, in the County of Albany, in the Province of New-York, By the Honourable Sir William Johnson, Baronet, His Majesty’s Sole Agent, and Superintendent of the Affairs of the Six Confederate Nations of Indians, their Allies and Dependents,” in *Early American Imprints*, 1st series, no. 40888.

14. Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 214–16.

15. For the Six Nations’ repudiation of the alleged land title sold to the Susquehanna Company, see SCP, 2: 106–7. The Six Nations claimed, “Some of the English have settled upon our lands, but we don’t know from whence they came. WE have heard that this Land has been sold, but we do not know for certain by whom. . . . Whoever has sold the Land stole it from us. . . . We have heard that two Tuscaroras, one Oneida, & one Mohawk sold it unknown to the Six Nations.”

16. Moyer, *Wild Yankees*, 20.

17. Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 217.

18. Historian Daniel K. Richter shows that even the Delawares’ conquerors, the Iroquois, “prized peace far more than war,” though “war remained a necessary

exercise.” See Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 38.

19. Most historians conflate the fragments of Delaware Indians during the Seven Years’ War and incorrectly claim that Wyoming residents participated in unbridled bloodshed (see Moyer, *Wild Yankees*, 21). It is true that non-Wyoming Delaware Indians terrorized Pennsylvanians in retribution for the Walking Purchase, sparking an angry white response; see “By the Honourable Robert Hunter Morris, Esq; Lieutenant Governor, and Commander in Chief of the Province of Pennsylvania, and Counties of New-Castle, Kent and Suffex, upon Delaware, A Proclamation,” in *Early American Imprints*, 1st series, no. 7754.

20. Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 227.

21. Unruly Indians who attacked whites could be disowned by their tribal governments, or worse, handed over to be killed in retribution. See Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 229–30.

22. For an overview of the events described, see “By his Excellency Jonathan Belcher, Esq; Captain General, and Commander in Chief, in and over his Majesty’s Province of Nova-Cefara, or New Jersey, and Territories thereon depending in America, Chancellor, and Vice-Admiral in the Same, & c. A Proclamation” in *Early American Imprints*, 1st series, no. 40857; see also Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 233–39.

23. Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 229–30; John Heckewelder, *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations, who once inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States* (Philadelphia: Abraham Small, 1819), 112.

24. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *King of the Delawares: Teedyuscung 1700–1763* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1949), 67.

25. The treaty stated that the Native American tribes in Ohio country would not side with the French in exchange for the British agreeing not to settle west of the Alleghenies after the war. See “Proclamation by Henry Bouquet, Esq, Colonel of Foot and Commanding at Fort Pitt and Dependencies,” *Archives*, series A, vol. 26, 4: 10, Memorial University of Newfoundland and the C. R. B. Foundation, [http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/lab6/labvol6\\_3087.html](http://www.heritage.nf.ca/law/lab6/labvol6_3087.html).

26. SCP, 2: 109.

27. James Hamilton to Sir William Johnson, read at the Pennsylvania council meeting of Feb. 17, 1761, and James Hamilton, Esq. Lt-Governor and Commander in chief of the Province of Pennsylvania, and counties of New-Castle, Kent and Sussex, on Delaware, “Proclamation against the Connecticut Settlers,” SCP, 2: 51, 61.

28. See Minutes of the Susquehannah Company, May 1, 1762, SCP, 2: 130–31.

29. See “Instructions from the Privy Council to Thomas Filch,” June 15, 1763, SCP, 2: 256.

30. SCP, 3: i–ii.
31. Wallace, *King of the Delawares*, 256, 259.
32. Frederick Stefon, “The Wyoming Valley,” in *Beyond Philadelphia: The American Revolution in the Pennsylvania Hinterland*, ed. John B. Frantz and William Pencak (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 133–53, 134–36. For a firsthand account of a white captive taken at this time, see Isaac Hollister, “A Brief Narration of the Captivity of Isaac Hollister, Who was taken by the Indians, Anno Domini, 1763,” in *Early American Imprints*, 1st series, no. 10653.
33. The Fort Stanwix Treaty actually gave encouragement to both Pennsylvania and the Susquehanna Company. Pennsylvania purchased a great tract of land in the forks of the Susquehanna for ten thousand dollars. Connecticut won the establishment of a western line of settlement to the far west of its purchase, fortified with its own Indian title from 1754 (SCP, 3: xii–xiii). It also once again demonstrated the Six Nations’ penchant for selling off Delaware land. See Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 45.
34. Weslager, *Delaware Indians*, 227.
35. Stefon, “Wyoming Valley,” 136.
36. Stefon, “Wyoming Valley,” 136.
37. SCP, 3: 217.
38. Historian Frederick Stefon made the first reference (“Wyoming Valley,” 139) and Paul Gilje the second (*Rioting in America*, 43).
39. In fact, there was already an outstanding warrant by the Pennsylvanian government for the Paxton Boys’ arrests. See Krista Camenzind, “Violence, Race, and the Paxton Boys,” in Pencak and Richter, *Friends and Enemies*, 204.
40. The Pennsylvania Assembly was provoking its western settlers in a number of ways, including providing unequal representation in the assembly for western counties, constructing poor roads with no offers of improvement, and showing favoritism to Eastern land speculators when new lands opened up through the Proclamation of 1763. Thus, the Paxtons had resorted to violent possession of Lancaster and were no strangers to vigilantism (SCP, 4: ii–iv). Paxton discontent is evident in the petition of Lazarus Stewart and sixty-three other frontier settlers to the Pennsylvania Assembly of Mar. 27, 1769 (SCP, 2: 277).
41. Paul Moyer, “‘Real’ Indians, ‘White’ Indians, and the Contest for the Wyoming Valley,” in Pencak and Richter, *Friends and Enemies*, 229.
42. This offer appeared in a letter from the Susquehanna Company Executive Committee to John Montgomery and Lazarus Young, both members of the Paxton Boys, Jan. 15, 1770, SCP, 4: 5.
43. SCP, 4: 71–72.
44. James R. Williamson and Linda A. Fossler, *Zebulon Butler: Hero of the Revolutionary Frontier* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 20–21.

45. SCP, 4: xiii.

46. Quoted in the Deposition of William Sims, SCP, 4: 155.

47. The warrant for the arrest of Lazarus Stewart “and others” set a price of three hundred pounds for Stewart’s arrest and fifty for his accomplices’. See SCP, 4: 50. Mention of the Riot Act is made in John Penn to Thomas Penn, Mar. 6, 1771, SCP, 4: 174. In a letter from John Penn to General Thomas Gage, dated Apr. 6, 1770, Penn complained that the Connecticut settlers had “lately fired upon a Party of our People. . . . One of the Rioters was killed. . . . And not having any Militia in the Province, I find myself under the disagreeable Necessity of applying for the Aid of the Military, to support the Civil Power.” Gage replied on Apr. 15, 1770: “I can’t but think, it would be highly improper for the King’s troops to interfere.” See SCP, 4: 55–56.

48. See Memorandum Book of Zebulon Butler, 1770, SCP, 4: 80.

49. SCP, 4: 223–24, 241–43, 252.

50. We can see evidence of the desire to maintain high standards of order despite the lack of a formal government in the “Minutes of a Meeting of the Proprietors and settlers of Wilke-Barre,” Feb 16, 1773, SCP, 5: 67: “Voted by this Company to appoint a Comtee to Draw a Plan in order to Supress vise and Immorallty that abounds so much amongst us.” Around this time the Yankees had come up with a fairly elaborate pseudo-governmental system. Among their regulations they restricted timber cutting along the river, forbade the export of grain during winter months, sought to establish weights and measures, formed a pound to control animals, began construction of a road to the Delaware River, and provided a ferry service between Kingston and Wilkes-Barre. Zebulon Butler was at the head, overseeing the Committee of Settlers (SCP, 5: xxiv). In 1773, the Company finally established a formal government: each town was to have a directorate of three men to enforce order. See SCP, 5: xxvi. A detailed description of the legal battle for Wyoming Valley, held in England from 1773 to 1775, can be found in SCP, 5: xxviii–xxxv.

51. SCP, 5: xlvi, 6: 173–75; Stefon, “Wyoming Valley,” 143.

52. Zebulon Butler to Ellis Hughes, Aug. 21, 1775, SCP, 5: 345. Butler acknowledged that “I rece’d yours of the 25 June, 1775. . . . Can’t Say but Some of your People have Mett with Some Rough Treatment by Some of our People, but I’m not to Answer for that” (a statement followed by the quote cited in the text).

53. Stefon, “Wyoming Valley,” 145.

54. Stefon, “Wyoming Valley,” 143.

55. See Anne M. Ousterhout, “Frontier Vengeance: Connecticut Yankees vs. Pennamites in the Wyoming Valley,” *Pennsylvania History* 62 (July 1995): 330–63, for an excellent discussion of the complexity of the term *loyalist* in reference to Pennsylvanians.

56. The Delawares at the Indian conference held at Wyoming on Aug. 20, 1775, claimed they had come to “make you a visit”; “We are for Peace,” they in-

sisted. “When our young Men come to hunt your Way don’t dream they come to hurt you.” See SCP, 6: 342–43.

57. SCP, 6: 333.

58. Silas Deane to Zebulon Butler, July 24, 1775, SCP, 6: 332; Sherman Roger to Zebulon Butler, 1776, and Portrait, n.d., Accession #12562, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville.

59. *The Journal of the Continental Congress*, Friday, Aug. 23, 1776, 669, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28jc00567%29%29>; “The Acts of the Continental Congress for the Defence of the Wyoming Valley, PA, 1776–8,” in *The Massacre of Wyoming. The Acts of Congress for the Defense of the Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvanian 1776–8: With the Petitions of the Sufferers by the Massacre of July 3, 1778, for Congressional Aid*, ed. Horace Edwin Hayden (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Baur and Son, 1895), 3.

60. This pleased the Pennsylvanians, who were rumored to want to keep the companies permanently attached to the Continental Army. See letters from Nathan Denison to Roger Sherman and Samuel Huntington, Mar. 14, 1777, SCP, 7: 33.

61. For the best description of exactly who the so-called Tory Pennsylvanians were and why they fought, see Ousterhout, “Frontier Vengeance.”

62. Rumor had it that one of those forts, Wintermute, had been surrendered by treasonous loyalists, who had possibly corresponded with the enemy for months in advance and then joined them for the assault at Forty Fort. This was Butler’s belief, as told to William Rogers. See William Rogers, *Journal of Rev. William Rogers, D.D., Chaplain of Gen. Hand’s Brigade in the Sullivan Expedition, 1779*, Pennsylvania USGenWeb Archives Project, second series, vol. 15, 255–88, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/pa/1pa/military/revwar/sullivanexpedition/rogers.txt>. The second fort was surrendered by Yankees who were apparently too elderly to fight. See Hayden, “Introduction,” in Hayden, *Massacre of Wyoming*, xii.

63. For secondary accounts, see Joseph R. Fischer, *A Well-Executed Failure: The Sullivan Campaign against the Iroquois, July–September 1779* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 27; Ousterhout, “Frontier Vengeance,” 337.

64. This account of events was related by Zebulon Butler to Rev. William Rogers (Rogers, *Journal of Rev. William Rogers*). For an overview, see Fischer, *Well-Executed Failure*, 27.

65. For specific descriptions of what the settlers who fled Wyoming lost, see Hayden, *Massacre of Wyoming*, appendix. A general estimation of monetary loss—38,308 pounds—can be ascertained from the 1780 Wyoming Selectmen Report, SCP, 7: xvii.

66. William Maclay to Timothy Matlack Paxton, July 12, 1778, SCP, 7: 46–47. This statement should also remind us that not all Susquehanna Pennsylvania settlers were loyalists.

67. Governor George Clinton of New York referred to the combined massacres at Cherry Valley, in his own state, and Wyoming, slightly to the southwest, as



provoking a national response and Sullivan's Expedition. See Hugh Hastings, ed., *Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777–1795–1801–1804*, Military Volume 1 (New York: Wynkoop-Hallenbeck-Crawford Co., 1899).

68. For a detailed account of the Sullivan Expedition, see Fischer, *Well-Executed Failure*.

69. SCP, 7: xviii; Articles of Confederation, <http://www.usconstitution.net/articles.html#Article9>. For an overview of events, see Peter S. Onuf, *The Origins of the Federal Republic: Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775–1787* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 11.

70. For the petition of John Jenkins and Others to the Connecticut General Assembly in Oct. 1780, see SCP, 7: 59. As Pennsylvanians actively worked to prevent the Yankees from getting supplies, Zebulon Butler's troops were having an increasingly hard time holding out and complained to Congress, provoking a response from Washington. See SCP, 7: xviii–xix.

71. The fact that many Connecticut soldiers petitioned to stay home after their company was dissolved provoked controversy and rivalry with Mitchell. See SCP, 7: xix.

72. Onuf, *Origins of the Federal Republic*, 11.

73. The Trenton trial lasted from Nov. 12 to Dec. 30, 1782, documented in SCP, 7: 144–242. The proclamation announcing the decree was read on Jan. 6, 1783. See SCP, 7: 247.

74. Moyer, “‘Real’ Indians,” 234; SCP, 9: 209.

75. SCP, 7: 411–20.

76. Dickinson showed continued devotion to investigating the Yankee claims; furthermore, he ordered the demolition of his namesake fort on Aug. 10, believing that it symbolized violence rather than defense. The assembly, for its part, voted on Sept. 7 of that year to formally investigate the claims of Yankee settlers. See SCP, 8: xvi–ii.

77. SCP, 8: 121–22.

78. The extremists under Franklin hearkened back, extraordinarily enough, to the original sea-to-sea charter. See SCP, 9: xxxv.

79. SCP, 9: 33–37, 45–49.

80. Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 43.

81. As quoted in Nash, *Unknown American Revolution*, 445.

82. SCP, 8: 126.

83. SCP, 9: 384.

84. SCP, 9: xix.

85. SCP, 9: xxiv.

86. This information is taken from Timothy Pickering's own memorandum on his abductors (SCP, 9: 436); Franklin's release is detailed in SCP, 10: xiii.

87. Historian Paul Moyer takes the view that white settlers in Wyoming

learned brutal tactics from the Indians and perpetuated them long after the Indians had departed, even dressing in native attire. See Moyer, “‘Real’ Indians.”

88. The legislative setbacks included the Passage of Intrusion Act, *Van Horne’s Lessee v. Dorrance* (a case confirming the legality of repealing the Confirming Act), and the final passage of Compromise Act in 1799, all of which favored Pennsylvanian holdings. See SCP, 10: xl, 468, 11: xv–xvii. See also Onuf, *Origins of the Federal Republic*, 64.

89. Wilbur A. Myers, ed., *Book of the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the Battle of Wyoming: July 1–4, 1928* (Wilkes Barre, PA: Smith-Bennett Corp., 1928), 22.

90. Horace Hollister, *History of the Lackawanna Valley*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1885), 155–76.

91. Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County: a Record of Interesting Events, Traditions and Anecdotes. From the First Settlement in Wyoming Valley to 1866*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: J. R. Lippincott and Company, 1866), 99. A smoothing over of ills is evident in Samuel Livingston French, *Reminiscences of Plymouth: Luzerne County, Penna* (Plymouth, 1914), 2. French avoids the debate over claims altogether, calling it “very unpleasant,” but deeming it now “bared out from controversy by the statute of limitations.” In Steuben Jenkins’s *Historical Address at the Wyoming Monument 3d of July 1878, on the 100 Anniversary of the Battle and Massacre of Wyoming* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Robert Baur, 1878), the Yankees are virtually accepted as the rightful settlers of Wyoming. Their heroic stand at the battle of Wyoming is gleefully recounted.

92. E. G. Smith, *Sesquicentennial Celebration*. Also find sympathy for Connecticut settlers being hung out to dry by their mother state of Connecticut in *The Centennial Jubilee and Old Home Week: Wilkes-Barre, May 10, 11, and 12, 1906 Official Souvenir & Program*, comp. George A. Edwards, 37, Ivy Stacks, University of Virginia Library.

93. In virtually every history of Wyoming Valley, the Indians’ main role is as perpetrators of the brutal massacre on July 3, 1778. “All kinds of barbarities were committed by [the savages],” reads Isaac Chapman’s *The History of Wyoming: With an Appendix, Containing a Statistical Account of the Valley and Adjacent Country* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Sharp D. Lewis, 1830), 128.

94. John Franklin to William Montgomery, June, 26, 1786, SCP, 7: 657–58.

## Chapter 3

# “Our Mad Young Men”

## Authority and Violence in Cherokee Country

*Tyler Boulware*

Attakullakulla was one of the most influential Cherokee headmen in 1761. Customarily referred to as Little Carpenter by the English, Attakullakulla had long been a proponent of the Anglo-Cherokee alliance. His diplomatic and trading connections to Charleston and Williamsburg usually served him and his people well, but March 1761 was an especially tense period for Anglo-Cherokee relations. The Seven Years' War had strained the alliance to the breaking point as an unfortunate series of events resulted in war between the Cherokees and their English neighbors. As the British readied an army to invade Cherokee country for the second time in less than a year, Attakullakulla and other village leaders intensified their peace efforts. Attempting to divert blame from themselves, their villages, and the nation as a whole, these leaders reverted to an age-old argument: the war had commenced and continued because of the rash actions of their young warriors. Lieutenant Governor William Bull of South Carolina remained unconvinced. “They say the mad Young Men who did not know the Consequence begun the War,” Bull wrote to Attakullakulla, but if village headmen could not restrain their warriors, “How shall I know that they can hinder them from continuing or beginning it again? If they cannot be hindered, it looks to me, as if these mad Young Men ruled their Nation, and made Peace and War, and not the old Head Men.”<sup>1</sup>

More than thirty years later, and following nearly two decades of endemic warfare with the Americans, a new generation of Cherokee leaders attempted to ease relations using similar arguments. In October 1794, the well-known leader Doublehead returned home after treating with U.S. officials in Philadelphia. Directing his talk to Governor William Blount of

the Southwest Territory, Doublehead hoped the recently affirmed peace would last, noting “the old head-men strove a long time” to conclude it. Yet Doublehead also recognized that the activities of young Cherokee men threatened the fragile peace. Some of “our mad young men” might steal horses from American settlers, he forewarned Blount, but “you must not get in a passion for that with us, but wait till the horse or horses shall be returned to you again.” In a frontier milieu where horse theft generated as much hostility among the Americans as scalping raids, Doublehead rightly worried the young Cherokees’ forays would undermine both the leadership of village headmen and the recent treaty.<sup>2</sup>

What should we make of these generational tensions within Cherokee society, and what do they tell us about violence in Appalachia? Answering the first part of that question is not as straightforward as it may seem. On the one hand, revenge killings and horse stealing largely carried out by younger men generated great concern among village leaders, since such behavior destabilized relations with their Anglo-American neighbors. The repercussions of trade embargos and border warfare for village security prompted many leaders not only to publicly distance themselves from young warriors but also to intensify their efforts to rein in the martial activities of their “mad young men.” They did so first by utilizing social control mechanisms within the family, clan, and village and later by supporting new legal and political institutions, such as a mounted police force and laws designed to restrict clan revenge. Headmen also blamed delinquent acts on warriors from neighboring villages to safeguard their own towns and leadership. When such efforts failed, headmen lamented their inability to control even the young men of their own villages, thereby providing a convenient outlet for rising border tensions with Anglo-Americans. On the other hand, the generational discord that figures so prominently in the historical record should not always be taken at face value. While young warriors did in fact complicate the headmen’s ability to maintain order and stability, they also served as a powerful diplomatic weapon for village leaders who strategically employed arguments of unruly, mad, and roguish young men to counter challenges to Cherokee sovereignty and lands. Threats of unleashing the young warriors allowed Cherokee leaders the ability to flex their diplomatic muscle while at the same time disclaiming responsibility for these actions. It could prove beneficial, in other words, to have members of the community who were ostensibly beyond authority.

The generational divide—both rhetorical and real—held important

long-term consequences for village authority and Anglo-Cherokee relations. Displacing blame for border unrest onto young Cherokee men helped to undermine conventional village political structures and strategies. The decentralized polity known as the Cherokee nation provided headmen a means to redirect cross-cultural tensions to villagers in other towns and regions. This had long served them well, for it forced the Cherokees' Indian and European neighbors to hold individual towns, rather than all Cherokee peoples, accountable for hostile acts. But this changed markedly in the second half of the eighteenth century, in part because the headmen's condemnation of the young men on a general level effectively transcended local politics by spreading culpability to all towns and regions, which thwarted efforts to isolate and contain potential conflicts. Furthermore, when young men from different towns and regions did participate in border raids, it increased the likelihood that conflict would become more general. Warfare, indeed, escalated and widened throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. One of the most important ramifications of this endemic warfare is that younger warriors and war leaders played an ever-expanding role in politics and diplomacy. The rising political power of warriors and war leaders consequently altered and unbalanced the structure of village authority as elder headmen contended with a new agent of power in their young men. It also produced a powder keg for Anglo-Cherokee relations by facilitating violence throughout the southeastern borderlands.

Generational tensions within Cherokee society also reveal much about violence in early Appalachia. Perhaps most important, they force us to recognize that modern stereotypes of an exceptionally violent Appalachia do not apply to the eighteenth-century mountain South. Indeed, the recurring warfare that plagued Anglo-American and Cherokee relations was not unique to the region. Young warriors asserted themselves throughout Indian country in order to gain status and goods, revenge or replace lost kinfolk, and resist encroachment. Conflicts accordingly resulted between Native and newcomer and among Indians. Thus, despite the many instances of intercultural friendships, goodwill, and peace, early America was a violent world. Far from an isolated mountain people, the Cherokees directly contributed to this volatile landscape. They would point less to their own warriors as the cause of this violence, however, but instead stress the hostile and belittling attitudes of Anglo-Americans, the rapid encroachment of settlers onto Cherokee lands, and the scorched-earth policies of British and American armies.

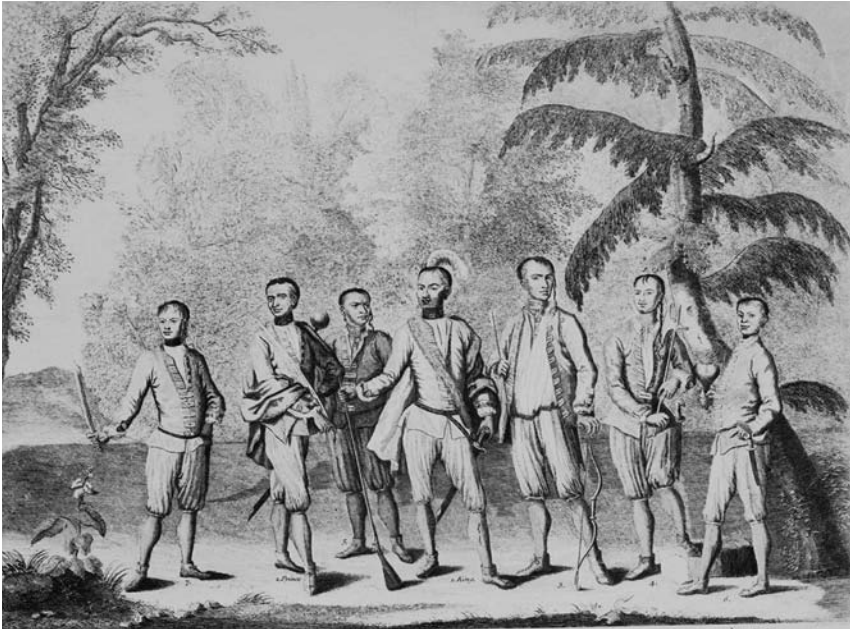
“Damn them they are blood thirsty and must have blood somewhere,” wrote Alexander Cameron about the young Cherokee warriors in 1771. The British Indian commissary among the Cherokees had not tempered his disdain three years later, adding that they were “as Eager for Human Blood as Greyhounds for the Blood of Deer.” Cameron’s observations on the eve of the American Revolution testify to escalating border tensions between the Cherokees and Americans, but they also speak to the cultural importance of war to young Cherokee men. Warfare was central to Cherokee manhood because it formed the basis of a warrior’s identity, sense of masculinity, and position in society. Attaining rank, in particular, was a primary objective of younger warriors. Scouting an enemy, securing a prisoner, taking a scalp, and other wartime achievements provided Native men with “war titles,” observed the trader James Adair, “which distinguish them among the brave; and these they hold in as high esteem.” Cameron’s immediate superior, John Stuart, likewise found that the ascending levels of Cherokee warriorhood—Raven, Slavecatcher, Mankiller, and Skiagusta—afforded a corresponding degree of respect and influence among their people. Young men thus readily engaged in warfare, according to another Indian agent, “for the sake of acquiring War Names.”<sup>3</sup>

The procurement of war titles and status had a direct bearing on political authority, since Cherokee town government was largely meritocratic. The “great and leading” men, noted Adair, rose to prominence from their “reputed merit alone,” which gave them “titles of distinction above the meanest of the people.” While Adair’s observation does not address the hereditary aspect of Cherokee leadership, it does testify to its hierarchical nature. This hierarchy was based on gender and generation. Men officially directed the affairs of the village in trade, diplomacy, and war—increasingly so as the eighteenth century progressed—though women exerted an informal (and at times official) influence that frustrated and concerned their Euroamerican neighbors. More specifically, authority rested in the hands of older, proven men. A British officer in 1756 found that village leaders were usually “old and middle-aged People who know how to give a Talk.” Cherokee headmen repeatedly stressed this generational underpinning of village leadership in speeches to their English counterparts. “This my Talk is not to be looked upon as Nothing,” noted the Raven of Hiwassee. “I am not a young Man.” Skiagusta of Keowee likewise reminded the governor of South Carolina he was “an old Man,” adding, “There were many head Men here, who are but Boys to me.” Young men accordingly bolstered their po-

litical influence not only by acquiring war titles but also by advancing in years. One aspiring leader realized his youth limited his participation in public meetings, “but in a few Years more I hope to be able to talk myself,” he declared.<sup>4</sup>

Giving and receiving “talks” within the village often took place in the townhouse. These council houses were the focal point of a community’s political activities, and seating arrangements were determined by age and rank. Adair wrote, “Every one takes his seat, according to his reputed merit”—a convention that was strictly observed. If an ambitious but unseasoned warrior ventured beyond his station, the trader continued, “he is ordered to his proper place, before the multitude, with the vilest disgrace, and bears their stinging laughter.” Jests, barbs, and other social control mechanisms speak to the involvement of all adult community members in the town’s political affairs. Although civil leaders (“beloved men”), elder warriors, and priests managed village policy, every adult villager had a voice in the council house. Young warriors played an important political role by deciding to reject or accept a war leader’s talk. If a noted warrior “beat up [the drum] for Volunteers,” for example, young warriors could either ignore the call for recruits or join the expedition. A British officer serving in Cherokee country during the Seven Years’ War expressed his displeasure at this perceived wayward individualism. “The very lowest of them thinks himself as great and as high as any of the Rest,” wrote Captain Raymond Demere, whereby older headmen “may influence the Minds of the young Fellows for a Time, but every one is his own Master.”<sup>5</sup>

Headmen had to contend with this individual autonomy, but they were also forced to deal with kinship systems that placed significant power in the hands of young warriors. In particular, the law of clan revenge meant the cultural importance of war to young Cherokee men was not about simply titles and status, but fulfilling familial obligations. The “law of blood,” as the legal historian John Reid describes it, directed the nearest relations of a slain clan member to take satisfaction for the murder, usually through direct retaliation against the offending party. This cultural precept was inviolable, for, as John Stuart noted, “revenging the Death of a Relation is esteemed the point of honor.” Young men were often the conduits through which these scores were settled, although women proved instrumental in encouraging (or not) retaliation for a deceased relative. In July 1759, for example, a group of “young fellows” from Estatoe brought three English scalps to a Keowee woman. When a British officer confronted the woman



“Seven Delegates to London in 1730” engraving, n.d. Attakullakulla is on the far right. Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (NAA INV 06221500).

about the scalps, she countered that her relations had been killed “by the white People and that those Sculps were brought and given to her in revenge & that she thought very well of it.” Accordingly, young men who conducted revenge killings had the backing of female relatives and other clan members, which complicated headmen’s efforts to contain border hostilities. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Anglo-Cherokee War (1759–61).<sup>6</sup>

The most immediate cause of Anglo-Cherokee unrest stemmed from repeated incidents of horse stealing and murder in western Virginia. During the Seven Years’ War, Britain and France competed for imperial supremacy in North America, and Native allies played a vital role in the war effort of both empires. The British tapped their long-established Cherokee alliance to secure hundreds of warriors for the mid-Atlantic campaigns. While in the vicinity of Bedford County, Virginia, however, Cherokees and back-country settlers clashed, ultimately leading to murders on both sides. Warriors subsequently revenged “their [murdered] Relations in Bedford” by killing a corresponding number of Virginians. A British officer seemed



confused as to “why the Cherokees . . . had so suddenly declared War,” but headmen dismissed the idea of a general war by offering a conventional response: the acts “were committed by young People who would give Ear to no Admonitions.” When pressed further about the murders and the need to punish the guilty individuals, Cherokee leaders denied their authority trumped clan law. The failure to deliver the murderers to the English, Atakullakulla noted, owed “to the Obstinacy of their Relations who only have power to punish them by the Custome of the Country.”<sup>7</sup>

Attakullakulla’s deference to clan law testifies to the limitations placed on town leaders. Headmen were beholden to clan and village support, for the lack of consensus among their followers could undermine headmen’s policies. Even if older leaders disapproved of the younger warriors’ revenge killings, they at times muted their opposition to maintain power. Patrick Calhoun of Long Cane witnessed this during his visit to the Lower Cherokee Towns in September 1759. Troubled by the general fear gripping his neighbors in the South Carolina backcountry, Calhoun traveled to Keowee to ascertain the Cherokees’ real intentions. He found that Lower Cherokee headmen endeavored to clear themselves of the behavior of their young men, but they would give no satisfaction. A later report indicated Overhill leaders also confirmed “their young Men were the Authors” of the raids, but they likewise “did not offer any Satisfaction.” These headmen failed to placate the English because the young warriors had the support of their people. For this reason, many headmen ultimately chose to countenance war, as described by one British observer in the winter of 1759–60. The “prevailing Sentiment of *their Councils*,” he noted, “seemed to be, to meet our Army, with their collected force.”<sup>8</sup>

The headmen’s decision for war resulted from misguided British policies, but it also stemmed from the rising political consequence of younger warriors who exerted power independently of village councils. Once the British and Cherokees seemed on the verge of war, younger warriors reportedly “had a meeting of their own” at the Overhill town of Tenasee. Headmen in other regions subsequently notified Governor Lyttelton of South Carolina that bad talks had been spread “by young runnagade Fellows from Town to Town.” The substance of these talks centered on the warriors acting “in conjunction” against the British, a view seconded by a warrior’s wife in the Lower Towns, who related “they were all in every town throughout the Nation from Chotee [Chota] to Keowee of one mind.” Militants received additional support from villagers and headmen alike when the Brit-

ish imprisoned and then massacred Cherokee leaders in February 1760. The incident marked the breaking point in Anglo-Cherokee relations. Whereas many warriors earlier promised they would not seek revenge “for their Relations that was kill’d in Virginia,” they now openly sent “scalping Gangs” throughout the settlements to revenge their fallen relatives. Headmen realized by this point that accommodation was a failed policy that threatened their political standing. Although some leaders continued to claim that the raids “were committed by only a few of their young Fellows,” eyewitnesses recorded how “many [headmen] followed them in the Manner of a Mob.”<sup>9</sup>

A trade embargo, coupled with two British invasions of Cherokee country, quashed the militants’ political support by the fall of 1761. Village headmen, including the more notable war leaders, intensified peace efforts, in part by further distancing themselves from the young warriors. Overhill headmen claimed that “all the young Men begun this War that knew nothing of the Danger & they were Fools.” Even those “head Men who had been Active in the War,” noted Attakullakulla, “were Determined to stay at home & Leave the Young Warriors to Themselves.”

Such arguments might have appeared to British diplomats as thin promises of peace, since recalcitrant warriors could renew the war, but they were in fact strategically employed by village leaders to stabilize relations. Labeling the young warriors as “rash” or “mad” placed them outside the headmen’s authority. This would hopefully convince the British that village leaders, townspeople, and the nation in general did not condone hostilities. Headmen, in other words, attempted to project the conflict as a “private” affair rather than a “general” war. As the historian Wayne Lee argues, Indians distinguished between “grand” and “little” war, a distinction also noticed by the French missionary Joseph-François Lafitau, who wrote, “War may be regarded either as private when it is made by little parties . . . or as general, when it is carried in the name of the tribe.” When Cherokee leaders dismissed the young warriors’ acts as isolated incidents, they intended to lessen the political ramifications of intercultural conflict. Think nothing of it, Lower Cherokee headmen advised Governor Lyttelton at the onset of hostilities, for it is as “if two of our Children had been playing together, and one had hurt the other, and we hope you will think the same.”<sup>10</sup>

How did Anglo-Americans respond to such logic? The answer appears mixed. On the one hand, officials had long been familiar with the structure of village authority before the Seven Years’ War. The more astute diplomats,

for instance, recognized that the young warriors' autonomy was an inherent part of Native conflicts. Colonel George Chicken, South Carolina's agent among the Cherokees during the 1720s, admitted the "Young Men of this Nation" could not be expected to "live without warring at one place or Another." He accordingly pressed village leaders to "keep their Young Men under them and make them obey them in everything," but headmen replied, "They were Young Men and would do what they pleased." Chicken was apparently convinced, for when relations became strained in 1726, the agent eased tensions by assuming "this Mischief . . . to be done by some of your Young Men who I desire may be talked to." The language of British officials of the following generation mirrored Chicken's sentiments. South Carolina's governor assured Cherokee leaders in 1753 that "when any Mischief is done by your young Men, we are far from laying that to the Charge of your Nation." Later, during the Anglo-Cherokee War, an English trader among the Cherokees likewise vindicated peace-minded headmen by noting that "the young Men, the new made Warriors, are all mad."<sup>11</sup>

The British also had to confront the political realities of the Cherokee "nation" when deciding whether headmen and their followers favored a "little" or "grand" war. For much of the eighteenth century, the Cherokee nation was highly decentralized, with individual towns and town clusters, or regions, exerting independent political authority. Scholars typically identify the Lower, Middle, Valley, and Overhill settlements as the dominant Cherokee regions prior to the American Revolution. Although the British attempted repeatedly to bypass town and regional autonomy by centralizing Anglo-Cherokee relations, they were only moderately successful, thus forcing officials to work within the Cherokee political framework. Headmen consequently labored to contain border conflict by not only stressing the young warriors' independence but also utilizing the diplomatic advantages offered by local and regional autonomy. Prior to the Anglo-Cherokee War, for instance, Oconastota (the Great Warrior of Chota) downplayed the Virginia incidents by blaming the "many great Rogues in the Lower Towns, especially Estertoe [Estatoe]." Attakullakulla supported his Overhill peer by assuring Governor Lyttelton "all the mischief was done . . . by the mad young men of the lower towns, where he had not much influence." Middle Town headmen likewise absolved themselves by claiming Cherokees in other parts of the nation "seems not to sett any regard by us no more then if we were a different People" for they "don't care to lead us into the Light of their Private affairs."<sup>12</sup>

The transference of blame to other towns and regions or to younger warriors—and Anglo-American acceptance of such arguments—was effective only to a point. As border warfare and horse-stealing raids reached epidemic proportions throughout the revolutionary era, citizens of the new United States were less willing to entertain the headmen’s diversionary rhetoric. The remainder of this essay explores this escalation of border hostilities, focusing specifically on the rise of the warriors’ military and political influence, the indiscriminate spread of retribution to all Cherokee towns and regions, and subsequent efforts by headmen to control the young warriors.

The period between 1763 and 1794 were crisis years for the Cherokees. Land pressures from an exploding Anglo-American population intensified after the Seven Years’ War, ultimately leading to Cherokee cessions of immense proportion. Territorial loss cut into the young warriors’ economic livelihood as their once-extensive hunting grounds diminished. Not surprisingly, young warriors clashed with village leaders, whose land-for-peace policy failed to keep the intruders at bay. Headmen grew increasingly troubled by this warrior unrest and voiced their concerns to British officials. At the Treaty of Lochaber in 1770, Oconastota related that the younger warriors—many of whom were then out hunting—would say the “old men give away the Land without our knowledge.” Oconastota and other headmen responded by ensuring all land deals had the backing of “the young fellows.” In a conference the following year, Overhill leaders assured officials they had unanimously agreed, “with the consent of Our young Men,” to cede the lands in question. Younger Cherokees consented in part to rid themselves of their mounting debts to traders. With “the Deer growing scarcer every year,” as one Cherokee noted in 1771, the lure of gifts and debt forgiveness proved hard to resist.<sup>13</sup>

Minimal and temporary remuneration, however, did little to ease the general unrest swelling among younger Cherokees. Overhill leaders continually warned the British their “young fellows are very angry to see their Hunting Grounds taken from them,” but Cherokee disaffection did not fall upon the British. Instead, the split between Britain and her American colonies provided militants the opportunity to attack the “Virginians” (Americans), who, they argued, “Steal our Deer & our Land too.” As tensions mounted in the spring of 1776, British agents serving in Cherokee country reported the young warriors “seem unanimously resolved to recover their lands.” One Overhill warrior in particular emerged as the leading voice in

favor of armed resistance against the Americans. Dragging Canoe of Great Island Town (Overhill), son of Attakullakulla, repeatedly condemned the older headmen and vowed to contest American expansion. Writing to his brother John from Pensacola, agent Henry Stuart reported Dragging Canoe had “a great many Young fellows that would support him and that they were determined to have their land.” The militants followed their rhetoric with coordinated attacks against the settlements that summer. American militia quickly responded, thereby ushering in a period of endemic warfare that would last until 1794.<sup>14</sup>

Dragging Canoe and his many supporters left their ancestral lands early in the war to establish new villages near present-day Chattanooga, Tennessee. Initially settled in the vicinity of Chickamauga Creek, the militants became known as the Chickamaugas, while Cherokees in older towns and regions (later known as the “Upper Cherokees”) officially positioned themselves as the peace proponents. The Chickamauga emigrants also included aged headmen, women, and children, but since their towns emerged as the hotbed of militancy and pan-Indian resistance, warriors exerted an inordinate amount of influence on village politics. One wartime report noted how the “young warriors” would “counsel amongst themselves,” after which they “sent for the beloved men” to further discuss policies. This autonomy, coupled with the political split between Chickamaugas and Cherokees, has prompted some scholars, such as the anthropologist Fred Gearing, to speculate the “divided Cherokees slipped into virtual anarchy” during the Revolution. In older Cherokee towns “were amiable old men,” he writes; “in the Chickamaugas, violent young men had thrown the political structure away.” The Chickamauga warriors, however, were not delinquent “rogues” who drifted into political and social anarchy. Instead, they projected their power while simultaneously working with village headmen to formulate policy. Furthermore, not only did Chickamauga warriors consult their own “beloved men,” as the above report indicates, but they also worked closely with Cherokee warriors and headmen in older regions to negotiate matters relating to both war and peace.<sup>15</sup>

Gearing and others exaggerated the divide separating Cherokees and Chickamaugas, but they had good reason for doing so: Cherokee accommodationists repeatedly emphasized the distinctions between themselves and the militant Chickamaugas. One beloved man, for instance, informed the Americans in 1792 that the Chickamaugas, now also known as the Five Lower Towns, “make war by themselves . . . it is not the consent of the

whole nation, nor no part of it only them five towns—they agreed amongst themselves.” Governor William Blount reassured the aged leader that the United States “do not wish to punish the innocent for the guilty.” However, Blount and other Americans increasingly understood that prowar Chickamaugas and peaceable Cherokees were not as disconnected as the accommodationists would have them believe. One eyewitness noted how Upper Cherokee leaders expressed their desire for peace, yet he found “many of the young men of every part of the nation” possessed “an inclination to join the war party of the Lower towns.” Blount likewise related to his superiors the following year that the Chickamauga militants attracted young warriors “from every town in the nation.”<sup>16</sup>

American views were partly influenced by the realities of war, for Cherokees and Chickamaugas did assist one another in war and peace, but they were also connected to the age-old arguments of village leaders who blamed border unrest on the young warriors. As we have seen, headmen utilized such rhetoric to excuse themselves and their people from culpability, as well as to convince Anglo-Americans that border raids were “private” affairs and not a “general” war. Village leaders also sometimes employed arguments of mad and unruly young men to project their tribal sovereignty in the face of increasing land pressures. When the federal government failed to enforce tribal boundaries as agreed upon by treaty, for example, Cherokee leaders reportedly “directed their young men to remain at home and have their moccasins ready”—a thinly veiled threat of border reprisals if the United States did not protect Cherokee lands. Thus, by asserting that “their young mad people would not agree to be quiet,” as did some headmen during the Revolution, village leaders attempted to flex their diplomatic muscle in an age of decreasing opportunities for resistance against the expansionist Americans.<sup>17</sup>

Accentuating the generational divide within Cherokee society held important long-term consequences for Anglo-Cherokee relations. Perhaps most important, it undermined conventional strategies of conflict resolution that transferred blame to other towns and regions. The argument that all young warriors were beyond authority, in other words, forced the Americans to dissociate politics from place—meaning they no longer seemed willing to discriminate between peace towns and war towns or, more simply, between the “innocent” and the “guilty.” To be sure, some Americans continued to articulate their belief that headmen simply could not control their young men. An agent among the Cherokees in 1793 be-

lieved the young warriors in search of rank had been the cause of recent hostilities. An ethnocentric report from the secretary of war two years later held that the “passion of a young savage for war . . . is too mighty to be restrained by the feeble advice of the old men.” A few officials accordingly sought satisfaction from the Cherokees by punishing “the young and unruly part of them.” But such arguments were drowned out by the groundswell in retributive calls to attack all Cherokees, regardless of their true political leanings or place of residence. One border citizen, who recognized Creek and Cherokee wartime collaboration, advised his countrymen to “destroy the whole of the Cherokees and Creeks, the friendly as well as the hostile parts.” Backcountry settlers and southern militias apparently needed little convincing, for the Americans launched at least twenty invasions of Cherokee country between 1776 and 1794, often attacking the peaceful as well as the militant towns.<sup>18</sup>

Amid the turmoil surrounding these wartime invasions, Cherokee leaders increasingly worried about the border activities of their young men. Revenge killings generated great concern, but so too did horse stealing. Younger Cherokees participated in horse-raiding expeditions for multiple reasons. American expansion and the subsequent reduction of hunting lands undermined the hunter-warrior role of Cherokee men. Young warriors thus turned to horse stealing to acquire war titles and reinforce their sense of manliness. Horses were also vital to village economies, in part because they provided a much-needed commodity in the face of shrinking deer populations and a decline in the transatlantic deerskin trade. It is interesting to note that both the legal and the illegal intercultural trade in horses surged as the trade in skins diminished. Lastly, since equines were equally indispensable to American frontiersmen, horse stealing doubled as a form of economic resistance and warfare for the Cherokees. Not surprisingly, American officials responded with alarm as backcountry settlers retaliated against these border raids and the illegal traffic in horses (in which many frontiersmen readily participated). William Blount called horse stealing “one great source of hostility” between Indians and whites that would only worsen “if measures are not taken to prevent it.” The Creek agent Benjamin Hawkins similarly found it to be “the source of much evil in this land,” adding it was an “evil being now so deep-rooted that it would require much exertion and some severity to put an end to it.” Hawkins consequently vowed “to go to the utmost extent of my authority to crush it,” an action that was particularly necessary since he and other officials believed village

headmen “can neither restrain nor punish the most worthless fellow” involved in border raids and the illicit trade in horses.<sup>19</sup>

Blount, Hawkins, and other U.S. agents did not fail to notice their own authority had severe limitations as well. In November 1794, when a final peace between the Cherokees and Americans seemed at hand, Blount rushed a letter to Doublehead and other Chickamauga leaders, warning them of an unauthorized invasion by Kentucky militiamen who intended to recover their stolen “negroes and horses.” Blount advised the Cherokees to temporarily quit their towns with all their livestock and other possessions. They must also deliver up all stolen property and avoid bloodshed, he continued, for “war will cost the United States much money, and some lives, but it will destroy the existence of your people, as a nation, forever.”<sup>20</sup>

Such statements were not idle threats as the eighteenth century neared an end. After nearly forty years of endemic warfare, Cherokee leaders—even the militant Chickamaugas—intensified their efforts to secure peace, largely by attempting to control the actions of their young warriors. This was a long, uneven process that took many forms, two of which centered on the prevention of revenge killings and horse stealing. Numerous treaties with the individual colonies, the states, and the federal government in the latter half of the century addressed these two most important contributors to border unrest. Internally, Cherokee government underwent a restructuring, which placed more power in the hands of nationalist leaders and a more institutionally based, centralized polity. New legal institutions were put into place, such as a mounted police force and laws designed to abolish clan vengeance. Isolated border incidents continued after the revolutionary era, but by 1795 the great age of Anglo-Cherokee warfare had ended, and the “mad young men” seemed under control.<sup>21</sup>

The popular view of Appalachia as a land of lawlessness was not new when the infamous Hatfield-McCoy feud erupted along the borders of West Virginia and Kentucky in 1878. Indeed, Anglo-Americans in the colonial South had long cast a steady but wary eye toward the west, where the Cherokees lived amid the steep ridges, deep valleys, and fortified walls of the southern mountains. The Scottish adventurer Alexander Cuming perhaps best encapsulated this mixture of uncertainty and fascination following his visit to Cherokee country in 1730. In his memoirs penned more than thirty years later, Cuming wrote about “the *Cherekee* mountains, the mountains of the Wild men that inhabit the Wilderness.” Eurocentric assumptions of the Cherokees and other Indians as “savage” and “wild” pre-



dated Cuming, of course, but the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a new epoch in Anglo-Cherokee relations with the spread of endemic violence throughout southern Appalachia. An exploding Euroamerican population, coupled with the imperial crises of the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution, facilitated intercultural conflict throughout the region. Cherokee warriors attacked the expanding settlements, while Anglo-American armies invaded and unsettled Cherokee country. The decentralized structure of both Cherokee and Anglo-American authority added to this instability, whereupon "mad young men" on both sides found outlets for aggression and resistance. Once the war ended, the United States would steadily employ demographic and legal means to force Cherokees off their lands. Some Cherokees remained in their mountain homeland following the era of removal, but Americans in the East would ultimately turn their attention to other populations when describing the Appalachians and its people as savage and wild.<sup>22</sup>

## Notes

1. Little Carpenter's Talk, Mar. 12, 1761, William Bull to Attakullakulla, Mar. 30, 1761, reel 32, James Grant of Ballinalloch Papers, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh, microfilm at the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania (hereafter JGBP). For additional insights concerning some of the ideas expressed within this essay, see Tyler Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation: Town, Region, and Nation among Eighteenth-Century Cherokees* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).

2. *American State Papers, Ser. II: Indian Affairs*, 2 vols. (1832–34; Buffalo: William S. Hein and Co., 1998), 1: 532 (hereafter *ASP*).

3. Alexander Cameron to John Stuart, Mar. 4, 1771, C.O. 5/72/217, British Public Record Office, Colonial Office Microfilm, in Hunter Library, Western Carolina University (hereafter BPRO); Cameron to Stuart, Mar. 1, 1774, C.O. 5/75/79, BPRO; James Adair, *The History of the American Indians: Particularly those Nations Adjoining to the Mississippi [sic], East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia . . .* (London: E. and C. Dilly, 1775), 151; John Stuart to Board of Trade, Mar. 9, 1764, C.O. 323/17/240, BPRO; Edmond Atkin to Major General Jeffery Amherst, Nov. 20, 1760, in *Amherst Papers, 1756–1763: The Southern Sector*, ed. Edith Mays (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1999), 146. For more on gender, masculinity, and warfare among Indian peoples in early America, see Ann Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Michelle Marie LeMaster, "'Thorough-paced girls' and 'cowardly bad men': Gender and Family in Indian-

White Relations in the Colonial Southeast, 1660–1783” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2001), particularly chap. three; Tyler Boulware, “‘We are MEN’: Native American and Euroamerican Projections of Masculinity,” in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 51–70.

4. Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 379, 428–29; Captain Raymond Demere to Governor Lyttelton, July 30, 1757, in *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754–1765*, ed. William McDowell Jr. (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1992), 393 (hereafter *DRIA II*); Talk of the Cherokee Indians to Governor Glen, Nov. 14, 1751, in *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750–August 7, 1754*, ed. William McDowell Jr. (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1958), 175–77 (hereafter *DRIA I*); Proceedings of the Council Concerning Indian Affairs, *DRIA I*, 452; *South Carolina Gazette*, May 6, 18, 1745; Tom Hatley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Revolutionary Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 10–13; Theda Perdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 10, 62, 86, 92–94; Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 2–3, 14; LeMaster, “‘Thorough-paced girls,’” 60, 198.

5. Adair, *History of the American Indians*, 421–22; Paul Demere to William Henry Lyttelton, Sept. 30, 1758, William Lyttelton Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (hereafter WLP); Captain Raymond Demere to Governor Lyttelton, July 30, 1757, *DRIA II*, 393; Fred Gearing, *Priests and Warriors: Social Structures for Cherokee Politics in the Eighteenth Century*, American Anthropological Association, Memoir 93 (Menasha, WI: American Anthropological Association, 1962), 4, 23–24.

6. John Phillip Reid, *A Law of Blood: The Primitive Law of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970); Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 88; John Stuart to Board of Trade, Mar. 9, 1764, C.O. 323/17/240, BPRO; Richard Coytmore to William Henry Lyttelton, July 23, 1759, WLP. In a recent article, the historian Wayne Lee agrees that both the search for status and the demand for blood revenge contributed to patterns of conflict among Native Americans, but he also notes that these blood feuds “had both structure and restraint.” Wayne E. Lee, “Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500–1800,” *Journal of Military History* 71 (July 2007): 713–15.

7. Francis Fauquier to William Henry Lyttelton, Sept. 5, 1759, WLP; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 22, 1759; John Stuart to William Henry Lyttelton, Jan. 29, 1760, WLP.

8. Patrick was the father of the renowned South Carolina statesman of later years John C. Calhoun. Patrick Calhoun to William Henry Lyttelton, Sept. 21, 1759, WLP; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 22, 1759, Jan. 24, 1760 (my emphasis).

9. Paul Demere to William Henry Lyttelton, Feb. 27, 1759, WLP; Thirteen

Cherokee Towns to Governor Lyttelton, May 16, 1759, *DRIA II*, 494; Richard Coytmore to William Henry Lyttelton, Nov. 24, 1759, WLP; Richard Coytmore to William Henry Lyttelton, July 23, 1759, WLP; James Beamer to William Henry Lyttelton, Feb. 25 1759, WLP; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 22, July 24, 1760.

10. Little Carpenter's Talk, Mar. 12, 1761, reel 32, JGBP; Attakullakulla (Cherokee Chief), July 17, 1761, Speech to William Byrd, George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741–1799: Series 4, General Correspondence, 1697–1799; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 22, 1761; Joseph-François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, ed. and trans. William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore, 2 vols. (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974–77), 2: 101; Tistoe of Keowee and the Wolf to Lyttelton, July 12, 1758, enclosed within Lachland McIntosh to William Henry Lyttelton, July 21, 1758, WLP; LeMaster, "Thorough-paced girls," 184; Lee, "Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge," 717–18, 720.

11. Journals of His Majesty's Council in South Carolina, July 27, Aug. 10, 1726, C.O. 5/429, South Carolina Council Journals, Microfilm at South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia; "Colonel George Chicken's Journal to the Cherokees (1725)," in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton Mereness (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 109, 117; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 30, 1753, Oct. 30, 1760.

12. Talk from Cherokees, and Buffalo Skin to Demere, enclosed within Paul Demere to William Henry Lyttelton, Aug. 28, 1759, WLP; John Entick, *The general history of the late war: containing it's rise, progress, and event, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. And exhibiting the state of the belligerent powers at the commencement of the war; . . . And with accurate descriptions of the seat of war . . .*, vol. 5 (London, 1764), 11; Cherokee talk to Lyttelton, May 16, 1759, enclosed within Richard Coytmore to William Henry Lyttelton, May 23, 1759, WLP; Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation*; Lee, "Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge," 719;

13. Copy of the Report of the General Meeting of the Principal Chiefs and Warriors of the Cherokee Nation with John Stuart, Oct. 18–20, 1770, C.O. 5/72/22, BPRO; Deed of sale from the Cherokees for land on the Broad River, Feb. 22, 1771, C.O. 5/661/192, BPRO; Alexander Cameron to John Stuart, Mar. 4, 1771, C.O. 5/72/217, BPRO; Speech from Judd's Friend to Scotchie [Alexander Cameron], Mar. 7, 1771, C.O. 5/661/194, BPRO. For statistics and maps relating to Cherokee land cessions, see William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 26–29.

14. Talk from Headmen and Warriors of the Cherokee to John Stuart, July 29, 1769, C.O. 5/70/295, BPRO; Henry Stuart to Alexander Cameron, May 23, 1776, C.O. 5/77/153, BPRO; Henry Stuart to John Stuart, Aug. 25, 1776, C.O. 5/77/169, BPRO.

15. *ASP*, 1: 271–72; Gearing, *Priests and Warriors*, 104. For a reassessment of

the Chickamaugas and Cherokees during the revolutionary era, see Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation*, chap. 8. For additional works on the American Revolution in Cherokee country, many of which envision the Chickamaugas and Cherokees as a “secessionist” divide, see Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, 191–228; James H. O’Donnell III, *The Cherokees of North Carolina in the American Revolution* (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1976); Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); James Pate, “The Chickamauga: A Forgotten Segment of Indian Resistance on the Southern Frontier” (PhD diss., Mississippi State University, 1969); Jon Parmenter, “Dragging Canoe (Tsi’yu-gũnsi’ni): Chickamauga Cherokee Patriot,” in *The Human Tradition in Revolutionary America*, ed. Ian K. Steele and Nancy Rhoden (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Press, 2000), 117–37. It should be noted that Parmenter does not characterize the Chickamauga withdrawal as a secessionist movement.

16. *ASP*, 1: 276–77, 280, 294, 431–32.

17. Thomas Foster, ed., *The Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796–1810* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 181; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 21, 1779.

18. *ASP*, 1: 275–76, 443–45; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 7, 1795; *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 3, 1794; Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation*, chap. 8.

19. *ASP*, 1: 325, 535–36; Foster, *Collected Works of Benjamin Hawkins*, 35, 210–11, 223, 238, 271; James Taylor Carson, “Horses and the Economy and Culture of the Choctaw Indians, 1690–1840,” *Ethnohistory* 42 (Summer 1995): 501, 504; William McLoughlin, “Cherokee Anomie, 1794–1810: New Roles for Red Men, Red Women, and Black Slaves,” in *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers from European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500–1850*, ed. Peter Mancall and James Merrell (New York: Routledge, 2000), 270–72. For more on Southeastern Indians and horses during the eighteenth century, see Tyler Boulware, “‘Skilful Jockies’ and ‘Good Saddlers’: Native Americans and Horses in the Southeastern Borderlands,” in *Comparative Perspectives on North American Borderlands, 1500–1850*, ed. A. Glenn Crothers and Andrew K. Frank (Athens: Ohio University Press, forthcoming).

20. *ASP*, 1: 534.

21. For examples of horse stealing and the return of stolen horses in Cherokee agreements and treaties with Anglo-American governments, see Talk of Governor Glen to the Cherokees Concerning their Treaty, Nov. 26, 1751, *DRIA I*, 190; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 22, 1761, Aug. 12, 1789; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Jan. 17,

1777; *ASP*, 1: 543. For Cherokee political changes, see McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renaissance*, 110; Perdue, *Cherokee Women*, 135, 142; William McLoughlin, "Thomas Jefferson and the Beginning of Cherokee Nationalism," *William and Mary Quarterly* 32 (Oct. 1975): 547, 550.

22. Alexander Cuming [1764], "Memoir of Alex. Cuming," British Museum Add. Mss 39855, folio 1, 25, quoted in Hatley, *Dividing Paths*, xvi. A statement from a Creek leader sums up the problems facing both Indian and white leaders throughout the southeastern borderlands: "If the governor cannot prevent the Virginia people (Crackers) from taking our lands," he asked, "how does he think we can restrain our mad young men?" See *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 17, 1767.

## Chapter 4

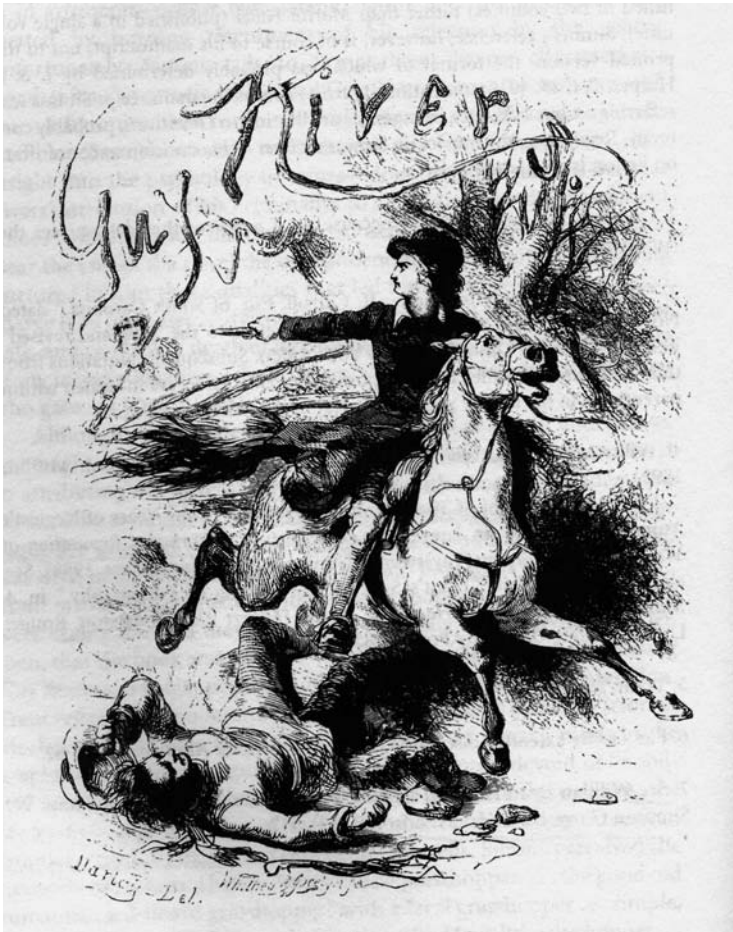
# The “Ferocious Character” of Antebellum Georgia’s Gold Country

## Frontier Lawlessness and Violence in Fact and Fiction

*John C. Inscoe*

In 1833, a miner in Auraria, in the heart of Appalachian Georgia’s recently developed gold mining region, exclaimed in a letter home: “I have never before been amongst such a complete set of lawless beings.” At the same time and place, an exasperated judge described his fellow residents as “thieves, gamblers, and murderers—quarrelsome, drunk, and malicious—forming altogether a lawless, ungovernable community. This condition could not be tolerated by an English people.”<sup>1</sup> With the rush of thousands of newcomers into the Blue Ridge Mountains of northeast Georgia in the months and years after gold’s discovery there in 1828, many shared the impression of these two observers, noting the many ruffians, drifters, and con men who had turned this remote frontier on the bounds of Cherokee country into an excessively violent and brutal society.

Curiously, this phase of southern highland settlement, as tumultuous and colorful as it was, seems to have had little lingering effect on later perceptions of Appalachia as a violent, depraved, and backward society. This was true despite the fact that one of the earliest novels to be set in southern Appalachia focused on the gold country of Georgia’s highlands, which also happened to be the second novel of one of the antebellum South’s most distinguished and popular writers, William Gilmore Simms.<sup>2</sup> His *Guy Rivers*, published in two volumes in 1834, was critically well received and sold well, especially among northern readers. It was the first of his so-called Border Romances, which Simms described as “A Tale of Georgia—a tale of the miners—of a frontier and wild people, and the events are precisely such as may occur among a people & in a region of that character.”<sup>3</sup>



Frontispiece of William Gilmore Simms's *Guy Rivers: A Tale of Georgia* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1834).

Simms made violence a prevalent theme of the novel; his title character, in fact, is perhaps the most ruthless criminal ever to appear in his vast fictional output. He filled his narrative with multiple forms of violence—ambushes and knife fights; lynchings and murders; pitched battles between rival gangs, vigilantes, and military forces—all of which were very real parts of the early days in Georgia's gold country. Indeed, he so effectively captured that rough-and-tumble world that the preeminent Simms scholar,

John Caldwell Guilds, has called *Guy Rivers* a landmark in American fiction, noting that “for the first time in our literature the ugliness, the lawlessness, the brutality of the early nineteenth-century American frontier was fully exposed.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet just as this social upheaval was rarely incorporated into emerging images of southern Appalachia, so this first major literary effort to be set in the same region is rarely acknowledged in treatments of Appalachian literature.<sup>5</sup> This essay explores why this is the case. Was there nothing regionally inherent in the nature of the violence that took place in these goldfields, or were there other, more prevailing factors in both the historical realities and their fictional re-creations that rendered the Appalachian context of Georgia’s gold rush peripheral or even irrelevant to its subsequent characterization and interpretation?

It remains unclear when gold was first discovered in the Georgia mountains. The most widely accepted account has a young resident, Benjamin Parks, stumbling upon a sizeable nugget while hunting along the Chestatee River in 1828. But it was an announcement in the *Georgia Journal* in the state capital of Milledgeville the following year that brought on the “rush.” On August 1, 1829, the newspaper proclaimed that two mines had just been discovered in Habersham County, and “preparations are making to bring these hidden treasures of the earth to use.” By year’s end, thousands of “twenty-niners” from throughout the Southeast fell prey to “gold fever” and converged on the region centered primarily in Habersham, Lumpkin, and White counties.<sup>6</sup>

As was true in most such situations, those who made up that “rush” represented all types of men, but drew most heavily from the lower, often unattached, classes, for whom the opportunity for fast gain and quick profits proved irresistible. They constituted the majority of the populace of the first boom towns in the area—first Auraria and shortly thereafter Dahlonega, only five miles to its north, both in Lumpkin County.<sup>7</sup> Governor George Gilmer called them “idle, profligate people . . . whose pent up vicious propensities, when loosed from the restraints of law and public opinion, made them like the evil one in his worst mood.” With them came a bawdy, unruly lifestyle as well. “Drinking, gambling, and fighting were rife,” according to an eyewitness in 1831, “and the laws were little known and less cared for.”<sup>8</sup> And yet the region was never totally devoid of law and order. Makeshift courts were established within a year or so of the 1829 influx, and lawyers



and judges were kept busy by a flurry of lawsuits generated mostly by property disputes, but also by efforts to maintain the peace and discourage the unruly behavior often rampant within these booming mine towns.<sup>9</sup>

Nor was all of this lawlessness violent in nature. Theft was rampant on a variety of scales, much of it perpetrated by roving gangs of horse thieves and gold robbers, along with trespassers digging for gold on land owned by others. More subtle crimes included con games and other forms of swindling, price gouging, and financial corruption. The imposition of a land lottery system by the state of Georgia for the reassignment of what had been Cherokee territory opened the door to other types of fraud in attempts to move resident Indians off the land and in the sale and resale of lots.<sup>10</sup> The many slaves who were a part of the influx into the region spurred other crimes and subversive activity. Those bondsmen who accompanied their masters and were made to mine for them were exposed to new temptations, including theft and escape, while other slaves fled from lowland areas and sought refuge in the region. A number of unscrupulous white men actually stole slaves from elsewhere and brought them into this area, where they either sold them or hired them out to miners eager for extra labor in their grab for gold.<sup>11</sup>

Yet much of the area's lawlessness did indeed entail violent action. Most common were physical fights; brawls spawned by alcohol, vagrancy, and an atmosphere of distrust; competitiveness; and short tempers. Governor Gilmer noted that the early miners "exhibited scenes of indulgence, violence, and fraud. . . . Hundreds of combatants were sometimes seen at fisticuffs, swearing, striking, and gouging, as frontier men only can do those things."<sup>12</sup> Auraria had previously been called Nuckollsville, named for one of its earliest settlers, though many referred to it as "Knucklesville," due to the many fistfights that took place there, presumably spawned by disputes over mining claims.<sup>13</sup>

A remarkable firsthand account by one of those miners provides a vivid sense of just how brutal that world could be. Edward Isham, born in nearby Jackson County, Georgia, around 1826, came of age in that rough-and-tumble world and was already a drifter and ne'er-do-well who moved through the Georgia goldfields as an adolescent and young adult. In an autobiographical confession he dictated in 1859, just before his execution for a murder in North Carolina, Isham recounted his delinquent youth in revealing detail. A mere sampling of his narrative makes the point:

I left next morning and went to Forsythe County Georgia to my Uncle Hardin Millers and dug gold. There while working on the road, a man accused me of stealing milk from his spring house and I tried to kill him with my axe but was prevented. I went then to a little cross road town called “Shake rag town” and got to gambling with one Roger, who tried to cheat me and we had a fight but neither was hurt. I then started for Carroll [County]. On the way . . . there were two men were quarreling and one refused to fight because he was sick, the other pressed on him and I agreed to be his second, so they went to fighting and during the fight one Gus Wood, a great bully, attempted foul play and I struck him with a heavy hickory stick and hurt him badly. There men were then parted and the other party gathered in force to mob us and we fled. I was not yet grown at the time.<sup>14</sup>

Isham’s confession consists of a constant litany of such encounters, as he drifted from one site to another throughout north Georgia, sometimes only a few steps ahead of either law officials or makeshift mobs. At some point in the early 1840s, Isham spent four or five months in Lumpkin County, the real center of gold fever and lawless activity. There, he “took up with a woman named ‘Thirs’ Murphy, and had a severe fight with a man who had been keeping her.” He later linked up with two men who had a “feud” with a grocery man in Dahlonega and jumped at the opportunity to help his new companions retaliate against the merchant: “We went to his grocery one day and broke up everything he had decanters, glasses and barrels and his fiddle.” The grocer took out a warrant on all three vandals; one was jailed, and Isham and the other hid in the woods for several days, until Isham decided to move on to Cobb County, Georgia, “to dig gold.”<sup>15</sup>

As rampant as such individual volatility must have been throughout the region, larger-scale forms of group violence were also prevalent. Disputes over land claims led both to clashes between single miners and, increasingly, to turf wars between factions of miners. Historian David Williams recounts several such instances, including a showdown in Forsythe County in 1833 between about thirty whites and thirty Cherokees over conflicting claims to the same area, who battled with “fists, sticks, and stones,” and a similar confrontation between Georgia miners who were attacked by a much larger group of Carolinians. The locals ultimately pre-

vailed over the outside intruders, with at least one man killed and others seriously injured.<sup>16</sup> One site—Battle Branch in Lumpkin County—still bears the name of an 1831 clash that also pitted insiders against outsiders. A group of Tennesseans who had come into the area to sell pork and other food supplies to Georgia miners soon realized that they could profit far more by staking their own claim in the mining operations they were supplying, or at least claiming some share of the profits. The refusal of the miners to comply led to yet another pitched battle, a free-for-all fought with “shovels, pick handles, rocks and other convenient weapons,” in which, once again, the Georgians emerged triumphant.<sup>17</sup>

Cherokee residents of the area were the most frequent targets of gang violence. In 1830, bands of ruffians that came to be known as “Pony Clubs” began a reign of terror that, much like raids by the Ku Klux Klan and “white cappers” several decades later, wreaked havoc on much of the settled populace, both Indian and white. Targeting Cherokee farms at first, they roamed the countryside, driving families out of their homes; burning barns and fields; and stealing what cattle, horses, and other livestock they did not butcher on the spot (the activity from which the name obviously derived). Some reports claimed that the Pony Club riders massacred whole families. Two members of one such band actually ambushed Cherokee chief John Ross and his brother, who were saved from assassination by a quick retreat as soon as one of the men pulled a pistol on them.<sup>18</sup>

In response to Pony Club rampages and other violations of Cherokee people and property, federal troops came into the area to maintain order. When they proved less than effective in curbing the Pony Clubs, Governor Gilmer sought alternative means of force from the state legislature. In December 1830, the General Assembly in Milledgeville passed legislation creating a state militia to patrol the gold country and prevent trespassers and other unauthorized miners from working lands that were not theirs. Inevitably, this Georgia Guard, as it was called, soon found itself pitted against the Pony Clubs as well. In an incident that came to be known as the “Battle of Leather’s Ford,” in January 1831, the guard arrested eleven men caught intruding at a mining camp on the Chestatee River. As it escorted its prisoners south, a band of their friends and allies ambushed the guard farther down the river. According to the guard’s commander, “We had warm work at Leather’s Ford. . . . We were attacked by about 60 men, who used every thing except guns. We charged on them and dispersed every one of them, without damage to my men.”<sup>19</sup>

All of this provided an abundance of material for William Gilmore Simms to draw on as he wrote his novel set in the Georgia goldfields. Although he never visited the region himself, he did make an extensive tour of the Old Southwest in the spring of 1831, moving through central Georgia and on into Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, with New Orleans as his westernmost destination.<sup>20</sup> On that trip, Simms had regular access to newspapers in Savannah, Augusta, Milledgeville, Macon, and Columbus, all of which published regular reports—many of them drawn from Auraria’s own weekly paper, the *Western Herald*—of the dramatic developments in north Georgia. Soon after his return, he began work on the novel that became *Guy Rivers*. Simms’s interest in the region was also piqued by the well-known fact that the most prominent of South Carolinians, John C. Calhoun, an acquaintance if not friend of his, had purchased what proved to be a particularly lucrative mine there and had sent several of his slaves to work it; that in turn drew increasing numbers of South Carolinians westward into Georgia’s Blue Ridge.<sup>21</sup> (It is hardly coincidental that so many of Simms’s key characters, including his protagonist, are South Carolinians.)

*Guy Rivers* is an action adventure—and to a lesser extent, a “romance”—set in a boom town in the heart of Georgia’s gold country. Called Chestatee, the actual name of a small river running through the heart of the area, the rustic, almost makeshift village was most likely based on Auraria. Simms writes that it was “in character and caste . . . the frontier and outskirts of civilization.” There, he writes, “came the spendthrift and the indolent, the dreamer and the outlaw, . . . herding confusedly together” in the pursuit of a like object—“the novel employment of gold-finding, or rather gold-seeking, for it was not always that the search was successful.”<sup>22</sup>

Curiously, Simms transforms the actual beautiful Blue Ridge setting into a landscape far more bleak, ominous, and appropriate for the malevolent activity it will spawn. He begins the novel with “a wayfarer lost in the a long reach of comparatively barren lands,” which he describes as a tract “tarnished with a stunted growth, a dreary and seemingly half-withered shrubbery . . . that saddens the soul of the most careless spectator.” One can only assume that Simms’s never having visited the north Georgia mountains accounts for his characterization of them as “the dreary wastes, the dull woods, the long sandy tracts, and the rude hills that send out no voices, and hang out no lights for the encouragement of the civilized man.” The bleakness of the landscape seems to attract an equally unseemly populace. With language he could have drawn directly from Governor Gilmer and



Portrait of William Gilmore Simms from volume 1 of his *Poems* (New York: Redfield, 1853).

other contemporary observers, Simms notes, “The section of the wild world in which our traveler journeyed was of doubtful character; but sparingly supplied with good citizens; and most certainly infested with many with whom the world had quarreled—whom it had driven forth in shame and terror.”<sup>23</sup>

That wayfarer is Ralph Colleton, the young son of a South Carolina planter, who, in all his innocence and nobility of spirit, is moving into the Georgia mountains not for gold, but to take refuge from the unpleasant dictates of his father regarding the woman he loves. Simms wastes no time in exposing his genteel protagonist to that violent world. In the novel’s opening scene, his “wayfarer” is ambushed as he “finds himself lost in a long reach of comparatively barren lands.” The perpetrator is none other than Guy Rivers, who introduces himself as the leader of the Pony Club and demands on its behalf and at gunpoint that Colleton pay a toll in order to continue on his journey. “The Pony Club,” Rivers tells him, “is the proprietor of everything and everybody. . . . Scarce a man in Georgia but pays in some way to its support—and judge and jury alike contribute to its treasuries. Few dispute its authority . . . without suffering condign and certain *punishment*.” In a lengthy exchange between the ruffian and the young

gentleman, the latter refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the club or to pay even a few cents to Rivers. Tensions flare, and the encounter ends as Rivers shoots and wounds Colleton and leaves him to die. He is soon rescued by a passing frontiersman, Mark Forrester, who becomes the young South Carolinian’s guide and mentor in this strange new wilderness world that he has entered.

That initial encounter sets off a lengthy and intense vendetta waged by Rivers against Colleton, with the title figure determined to avenge this young upstart who so openly defied his status and power. Yet the young gentleman never becomes a mere victim of Rivers’s bullying ways. His sense of decency and justice (for Simms, he embodies the best of civilized society, as reflected in the South Carolina Low Country) makes Colleton determined to bring down the Pony Club and to bring to justice the ruthless Rivers, who himself embodies “the absence of all civil authority, and almost of all laws. . . . [which] may readily account for the frequency and impunity with which these desperate men committed crime and defied its consequences.” The plot is driven in fits and starts by this tension, a rather blatant allegory of the forces of lawlessness and law and order in what Simms termed “the “wildest region of the then little-settled state of Georgia—doubly wild as forming the debatable land between the savage and the civilized—partaking of the ferocity of the one, and the skill, cunning, and cupidity of the other.”<sup>24</sup>

Colleton comes into the town of Chestatee, only to find it as violent as the wilderness where he has just been ambushed. “Strife, discontent, and contention were not infrequent,” Simms writes of the town’s cut-throat, dog-eat-dog climate. “The laborers at the same instrument, mutually depending on each other, not uncommonly came to blows over it. The success of any one individual . . . procured for him the hate and envy of some of the company, while it aroused the ill-disguised dissatisfaction of all. . . . The issue of these conflicts, as may be imagined, was sometimes wounds and bloodshed, and occasionally death.”<sup>25</sup>

With that, Simms sets the scene for Colleton’s initiation into this volatile new order. Colleton comes upon a rowdy crowd gathered in the town square, taunting a Yankee peddler who was discovered to have duped his local customers by selling “them nutmegs made from hickory and clocks that strike thirty-one times.” One of the mob explains to Colleton that this has become standard practice in dealing with shysters and swindlers: after a mock trial of sorts, vigilante justice prevails. “Ef the whole country’s

roused,” he declares, “then Judge Lynch puts on his black cap, and the rascal takes a hard ride on a rail, a duck in a pond, and a perfect seasoning of hickories, tell thar ain’t much of him, or, may be, they don’t stop to curry him, but jest halts him at once to the nearest swinging limb.” The mob engages in an extended debate as to the proper punishment for this particular form of fraud, with Colleton offering a feeble voice of reason for a more civilized form of justice than that proposed by most of the ever more rowdy crowd. At last a bonfire is built, and the peddler’s remaining merchandise burned, while in a “scene of indescribable confusion . . . the rioters danced about the blaze like so many frenzied demons.” This confusion allows the accused to slip away, only to return later as an ally of Colleton as they both face further abuse from Guy Rivers and the Pony Club.<sup>26</sup>

Simms may have modeled the central clash between the Chestatee residents and a group of squatters encamped on the community’s outskirts on the 1831 Battle of Leather’s Ford, which journalists widely publicized at the time. Organized only days after the peddler’s near lynching, this impromptu party of forty or fifty men easily shifts their target to other outsiders—“the better portion of them mounted and well armed, all in high spirits, and indignant at the invasion of what they considered their own.” Simms makes clear that these are not simply miners protecting their turf; rather, “the whole village—blacksmith, grocer, baker, and clothier included, turned out *en masse*; for, with an indisputable position in political economy, deriving their gains directly or indirectly from this pursuit, the case was, in fact, a cause in common.”

Presided over by Wat Munro, Guy Rivers’s chief henchman, the group marches on the nearby encampment, which sets off a showdown between the two forces in a lengthy sequence that spans three chapters and thirty pages. It begins, all too typically, with a lengthy verbal exchange between the rival leaders—Munro and the squatter’s leader, a man named George Dexter—over whose territorial rights are more legitimate. Resolving nothing, the vigilantes quickly resort to violent force, and Munro, whom Simms describes as courageous, cool, and yet with the “vindictive ferocity of the savage,” taps into his considerable “experience in all forms of warfare, commonly known to white man and Indian alike, in the woods,” to launch his assault.<sup>27</sup>

Simms shapes this attack specifically like those frontier clashes fought between white settlers and Native Americans in various parts of the North

American wilderness for well over a century. He describes the battle as follows:

The invading force . . . came to the attack after the manner of the Indians. The nature of forest-life, and its necessities, of itself teaches this mode of warfare. Each man took his tree, his bush, or stump, approaching from cover to cover until within rifle-reach, then patiently waiting until an exposed head, a side or shoulder, leg or arm, given an opportunity for the exercise of his skill in marksmanship. To the keen-sighted and quick, rather than to the strong, is the victory . . . the hunter is enabled to detect the slightest and most transient exhibition, and by a shot, which in most cases is fatal, to avail himself of the indiscretion of his enemy.

The fact that both sides are “at the outset studiously well sheltered” creates an early stalemate, and in response to “this fruitless manner the affray had for a little time,” Munro resorts to trickery. He creates a diversion in the guise of a temporary truce and “parley” with Dexter, the leader of the “beleaguered fort.” As the two men talk, the vigilantes, in a prearranged move, sneak behind the settlement undetected and set it afire, generating great panic and chaos among the squatters and their families.<sup>28</sup>

Upon realizing the betrayal inflicted on his people, Dexter physically attacks Munro and, “with the sinuous agility of the snake, winding himself completely around his opponent, now whirled him suddenly over and brought himself upon him.” Caught off guard, Munro responds in what has to be one of Simms’s very few understatements: “The face of the ruffian . . . was black with fury; and Munro felt that his violation of the flag of truce was not likely to have any good effect upon his destiny.” Dexter pulls a knife and is about to stab his opponent when “the look of Dexter was turned from the foe beneath him, and fixed upon the hills in the distance—his blow was arrested, his grasp relaxed—he released his enemy, and rose sullenly to his feet, leaving his antagonist unharmed.”<sup>29</sup>

This melodramatic twist, one of many employed throughout Simms’s narrative, adds a new element to the battle at hand. For what Dexter sees fast approaching is a detachment of the Georgia Guard, “a troop kept in the service of the state, for the purpose not merely of breaking up the illegal and unadvised settlements of the squatters upon the frontiers, upon lands now



known to be valuable, but also of repressing and punishing their frequent outlawries." Thus, the squatters face a fresh and formidable foe, one that quickly engages them in full-scale combat, much of it hand-to-hand. Ralph Colleton, up until this point a mere observer, is finally drawn into the action in a fateful encounter with Dexter, who sneaks up on him from behind: "It was well for the youth and unlucky for the assassin, that as Dexter with his uplifted hatchet, struck at [Colleton's] head, his advance foot became entangled in the root of a tree . . . and the stroke fell short of his victim, and grazed the side of his horse, while the ruffian himself, stumbling forward and at length, fell headlong upon the ground." Ralph responds to the surprise attack by drawing his pistol, "and while the prostrate ruffian was endeavoring to rise, . . . the unerring ball was driven through his head, and without word or effort he fell back among his fellows, the blood gushing from his mouth and nostrils in unrestrained torrents."<sup>30</sup>

The battle concludes with a dramatic denouement imposed by Mother Nature, as an avalanche obliterates the majority of the Georgia Guardsmen, who have been maneuvered into a vulnerable position in a narrow gorge. Again, Simms is at his melodramatic best in describing the horror of their fate and their helplessness in responding to it. Focusing on the contrasting sounds of the incident, he writes:

The advancing troops looked up, and were permitted a momentary glance at the terrible fate which awaited them before it fell. A general cry burst from the lips of those in front, the only notice which those in the rear ever received of the danger before it was upon them. That involuntary shriek . . . was more full of human terror than any utterance which followed the event. With the exception of a groan, wrung forth here and there from the half-crushed victim, in nature's agony, the deep silence which ensued was painful and appalling.<sup>31</sup>

In this pivotal and much prolonged set piece, Simms incorporates multiple forms of violence, or what he calls "all modes of warfare"—from a frontal military assault to stealth, ambush, and sniper fire; from hand-to-hand combat to knife and gun fights; from the intentional setting of fires to the most destructive, if unintentional, of all such forces, an avalanche.<sup>32</sup> This episode provides the novel's readers with as much suspense, action, and melodramatic twists as the rest of the novel combined. Yet it is by no means a culmination, of either violent action or plot development. "The

struggle between the military and the outlaws had now terminated in a manner that left perhaps but little satisfaction in the minds of either party,” Simms writes in concluding this scene. He then returns both Colleton and Rivers to center stage, along with their respective allies, Mark Forrester and Wat Munro, and advances his plot through further, equally violent encounters among the foursome.<sup>33</sup>

A romantic rivalry adds much to Rivers’s resentment of Colleton. Wat Munro’s Lucy had been bound to her uncle’s partner in crime with little regard for her own feelings. But she and Colleton find themselves attracted to one another, much to Rivers’s anger and frustration. In one of the novel’s most impassioned scenes (and a far cry from most of the stilted exchanges between men and women in the book), Lucy refuses to reveal the whereabouts of Colleton, whom she has just helped elude his rival, and Guy responds with both verbal and physical abuse. “May God curse you for it!” her enraged suitor spews in “broken and bitter words.” “You have bearded a worse fury than the tiger thirsting after blood. What madness prompts you to this folly? You have heard me avow my utter, uncontrollable hatred of this man—my determination, if possible, to destroy him, and yet you interpose. You dare to save him in my defiance.” Lucy insists that she would rather perish than place Colleton again within Rivers’s power, vowing that “before a word of mine puts him in danger, I’ll perish by your hands, or any hands.”

“Then you shall perish, fool!” cried the ruffian,” and just as his hand is raised “by the ferocious impulse of his rage,” he catches sight of a locket with Colleton’s portrait hanging around Lucy’s neck, and he rips it off her with a “single wrench.” Even more enraged, Rivers attempts to force an answer from her as she cowers before him. “She struggled desperately to release herself from his grasp, but he renewed it with all his sinewy strength, enforcing, with a vice-like grip, the consciousness, in her mind, of the futility of all her physical efforts.” As their struggle continues, she shrieks for help from her uncle and then faints. It is only as “her brutal assailant was hauling her away, with a force she could no longer oppose,” that Munro enters the room and forces his ally—and prospective son-in-law—to release her: “I tell you, Guy Rivers, if you but ruffle the hair of this child in violence, I will knife you, as soon as I would my worst enemy.” Curiously, Munro reaffirms his commitment to his niece’s marriage to the brute. “Though I’m willing you should *marry* Lucy, I’ll not stand by and see you harm her,” he tells Rivers, “and with my permission you lay no hands on

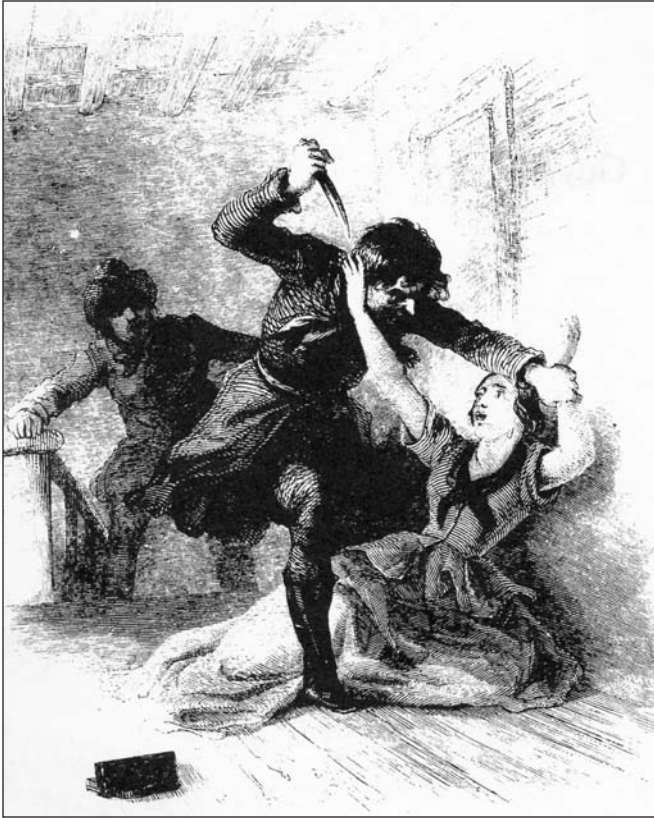


Illustration of Rivers attacking Lucy in *Guy Rivers*.

her, until you are married,” to which Rivers sullenly responded: “Very well! See that you get the priest ready soon.”<sup>34</sup>

With this rather startling conclusion to one of the novel’s most dramatic encounters, Simms adds a new and darker dimension to the villainy not only of Guy Rivers but of Wat Munro, as well. Certainly such violent treatment of women as that exhibited by Rivers and (nearly) condoned by Munro would have been unacceptable in Charleston society. It stands in sharp contrast to the very formal, but genteel dialogue that takes place between Ralph Colleton and his fiancée, fellow Charlestonian Emily, and even in his romantic exchanges with Lucy herself.<sup>35</sup> Rivers is thus confirmed, once again, as the novel’s most unredeemed villain, serving as a powerful example of the brutalizing effects of frontier life.

This exchange also strengthens Rivers’s resolve to murder Colleton, as does a public charge of attempted murder by the latter before the local court, leading to another form of violence, though one seemingly more out of place in this rough-and-tumble frontier than it would have been in the civilized world farther east: Rivers challenges Colleton to a duel. Colleton refuses, and to counter charges among the locals that he did so due to a lack of courage, as “timidity brought scorn and indignation in all faces around him,” he explains his refusal on the grounds of class differences: “You mistake me greatly . . . if you suppose for a moment that I will contend on equal terms with such a wretch. He is a common robber and an outlaw, whom I have denounced and whom I cannot therefore fight with. Were he a gentleman, or had he any pretensions to the character, you should have no need to urge me on, I assure you.”<sup>36</sup>

A series of further complications culminates in a chapter entitled “The Bloody Deed,” in which Rivers and Munro carry out a long-planned ambush of their young nemesis on a moonlit night along a lonely, thicketed route where they know he will be traveling. As the anticipated horseman approaches “the fatal avenue,” Rivers attacks him, “a single stroke was given,” and the horseman is thrown from his horse. Only then, when “the moon shone forth unimpeded by a single cloud [and] the person of the wounded man was fully apparent to the sight,” does Munro recognize their victim as Mark Forrester, not Ralph Colleton. Yet Rivers raises his arm to strike again, even as Munro points out that this is not the man they thought it was. As Forrester pleads for his life, Rivers makes it clear that he fully intends to finish the murder he has begun, if only out of frustration with Forrester for foiling his original plans: “‘Who would have thought to find him here?’ was the ferocious answer; the disappointed malice of the speaker prompting him to the bitterest feelings against the unintended victim.”

In the book’s original edition, Simms describes the final blows in graphic detail:

[Forrester] threw up his hands with fearful energy as he beheld his murderer—from whom Munro had wrested the weapon originally used—aiming a second blow with the small hatchet which he always wore. The interposition of Munro was without avail; the sharp steel drove through, separating the extended fingers of the fallen man as he threw them up, and crushing and crunching deeply into the skull.

The unhappy woodman sank back, without groan or further word, even as an ox beneath the stunning stroke of the butcher.

For some reason, Simms or his editor found this passage too extreme or explicit, and in the 1855 revised edition of the novel, the author replaced it with a simpler statement: “And the dying man threw up his hands in order to avert the blow; but it was in vain. Munro would have interposed, but this time the murderer was too quick for him, if not too strong. With a sudden rush he flung his associate aside, stooped down, and smote—smote fatally.”<sup>37</sup>

This incident—in either version—is a turning point in the novel and takes on added significance because of the subsequent argument between Munro and Rivers as to why this “unintended victim” had to die, which proves to be one of the novel’s more enlightening exchanges. “It is no wonder, Guy, if the whole country turn out upon us,” Munro tells his companion. “You are too wanton in your doings. Wherefore, when I told you of your error, did you strike the poor wretch again?” Simms is quick to remind his readers that Munro “deserved as little credit for humanity as the individual he rebuked” and articulates the difference in these two dastardly characters: “Both were equally ruffianly, but the one had less of passion, less of feeling, and more of profession in the matter. With the other [Rivers], the trade of crime was adopted strictly in subservience to the dictates of ill-regulated desires and emotions suffering defeat in their hope of indulgence, and stimulating to a morbid action which becomes a disease.”<sup>38</sup>

These episodes only take us about two-thirds of the way through the novel, and the story continues with Rivers’s gradual but inevitable downfall. He is ultimately captured, imprisoned, and tried and convicted for the murder of Forrester, all of which plays out slowly and allows Simms to use his villain’s comeuppance and his reflections on his failures to offer further commentary on the psychology of crime and the complex—some would say ambivalent—motives of this master criminal who becomes a more compelling and multidimensional character as the novel proceeds. Perhaps fittingly, Rivers’s own death is a violent one, if barely so. In the novel’s final scene, he watches from his jail-cell window as Colleton and his first fiancée head out of town and back home to the civilized world that he has so ably embodied throughout. Rivers, furious at seeing his detested rival triumph over him, is equally put out with a compassionate young woman, a former love, who comes to Rivers’s cell to urge him to repent of his many sins. He asks her to turn toward the window, and as she does so, he stabs himself in

the heart with a pen knife. She is horrified at his deed and takes his head in her lap, where he utters his final words: “Throw open the window—I will not rest—I will pursue! He shall not escape me!”<sup>39</sup>

The question raised by all this is to what extent Simms’s vividly etched portrait of this exceptionally violent society—in many ways a fairly accurate depiction of the Georgia goldfields in the early 1830s—can be attributed to its geographical setting. Close examination of the text suggests that, for the most part, the Appalachian setting is only incidental to the plot, the characters, and the social realities that inspired both. Most of the novel’s major characters are not native highlanders, but transplants—even transients—attracted by the promises of instant wealth suddenly offered in the region. The two central combatants, Colleton and Rivers, are themselves South Carolinians—Colleton arriving in Georgia as the novel begins and Rivers having been there only a few years longer.

Even the most stereotypical mountain man among Simms’s characters, Mark Forrester, is never explicitly identified as Appalachian. Representing Simms’s version of what Richard Slotkin has called “the Leatherstocking myth,” Forrester was modeled on historical figures such as Daniel Boone and fictional characters such as James Fenimore Cooper’s Natty Bumppo, who had already appeared in two of his novels by the time Simms wrote *Guy Rivers*.<sup>40</sup> He is clearly a frontiersman, a hunter at home in this wilderness environment. Yet in his only description of Forrester, Simms simply states that “his face was finely southern,” with no reference to that particular part of the South—its highlands—that produced men of his type. Nor does Simms label Forrester or, for that matter, any other character in the novel as a highlander, an Appalachian, or a mountaineer. Even literary scholar Cratis D. Williams, whose focus was fully on the literature on and of the southern highlands, admits that this novel “cannot really be called a book about mountaineers,” for its characters “remind us more of characters we have known outside the mountains than they do of mountaineers.”<sup>41</sup>

It was the frontier writ large, not the southern highlands, that inspired Simms to take on this novel and that he emphasizes throughout. He refers to his principal setting, Chestatee, as like “some ten out of every dozen of the country towns . . . in all the interior settlements of the South and West.”<sup>42</sup> And while he clearly suggests a strong connection between the geographic setting of his story and the unruly society that emerges there, it is less the physical or topographical features of this setting, and more its stage of development, that defines it. “The wild condition of the country,”

he notes early on, “the absence of all civil authority, and almost of laws . . . may readily account for the frequency and impunity with which these desperate men committed crime and defied its consequences.” As such, that “wild condition of the country” could describe any part of those so-called borderlands, which Simms and others in the 1830s envisioned as nearly all of those sparsely settled areas west of the Atlantic seaboard, of which the southern highlands were only a small part.

That lawlessness, which Simms witnessed firsthand on his 1831 tour of the Deep South, became the common bond in the series of Simms’s novels generally referred to as his “Border Romances.” *Guy Rivers* was the first of four works categorized as such—the others being *Richard Hurdis* (1838), *Border Beagles* (1840), and *Helen Halsey* (1845). Only *Guy Rivers* takes place in a mountain environment; the others are set, respectively, in the backwoods of Alabama and Mississippi and in the swamps of Louisiana. All are characterized by what one scholar has called “the clash between civilization and anarchy, or law and crime,” as embodied by the contrast between “the ordered society of the plantation South and the unbridled license of the far frontier.” Simms himself, in fact, defined the term *borders*, in the last of the series, *Helen Halsey*, as “a neutral ground . . . neither savage nor social, between civilization and wilderness.”<sup>43</sup>

It is not surprising then that all of these novels are characterized by the same types of violence that permeate *Guy Rivers*. Indeed, a likely inspiration for the character of Guy Rivers, as well as prominent villains in the first novel’s three successors, was an actual outlaw whose exploits Simms probably learned of first during his venture into the Gulf States. John W. Murrell was a Georgia native who migrated west and, during the late 1820s, organized a band of ruffians, not unlike the Pony Clubs, that terrorized travelers along the Natchez Trace and robbed banks, burned farms, and stole property, including slaves, from new settlers in that area. By the time of Simms’s visit in 1831, Murrell was well-known as “the Great Western Land Pirate,” and by 1835 (after *Guy Rivers*’s publication), his exploits and ultimate capture by law authorities had inspired a host of popular accounts, both fictional and nonfictional.<sup>44</sup> In short, while Simms drew on much in the actual crime and conflict of north Georgia’s gold rush for *Guy Rivers*, what he had seen and heard of in the Old Southwest was equally influential in his depiction of violence in not only this novel but those that followed.

Most of Simms’s critics have taken their cues from the author himself and from the larger patterns apparent in the Border Romances. Like Guilds,

most have characterized *Guy Rivers* as part of a frontier tradition, both historically and literarily.<sup>45</sup> William P. Trent, Simms’s first biographer, explained the novel’s popularity by stating in 1895, “Unadulterated Americanism was what many readers were crying for, and what they got in *Guy Rivers*; excitement, sentimentality, bombast were what others were crying for and got in *Guy Rivers*.” Its readers, Trent proclaims, “had found an author who could describe in a lively way the wild and picturesque scenery of a virgin country and who was quite successful in his delineation of striking and original characters drawn from the humbler walks of life.”<sup>46</sup> By the same token, Mary Ann Wimsatt, in one of the most sustained literary assessments of *Guy Rivers*, states that “the violence that characterized the frontier of the Gulf South permeates major sequences of the novel.” Rayburn Moore declares that “the frontier itself serves as a powerful influence on the lives of the characters and on the action of the novel,” while Caroline Collins argues that it is through the encounters between the novel’s lead characters that “Simms chronicles the development of the American frontier and achieves the effects of saga.”<sup>47</sup> None of these scholars ever uses the terms *Appalachia* or *southern highlands* to define either the novel’s physical setting or its social or cultural context.

Guilds, the most thorough interpreter of *Guy Rivers*, has provided perhaps the most astute characterization of the social dynamics of the lawlessness at the heart of the novel. “Such conditions,” he argues, “inevitably promoted two things: the concept of frontier justice (an attempt by the people to control the lawless) and the concept of the crime syndicate (an attempt by the lawless to control the people).”<sup>48</sup> As an apt description of the society Simms created in *Guy Rivers*, and indeed an equally apt characterization of the reality of the early settlements in Georgia’s gold country, there seems to be nothing in either case that makes these particular tensions in any way integral to, or even typical of, Appalachia per se. One could argue that elements of both—frontier justice in the hands of the people or outlaws seeking to harass or dominate local law abiders—are recognizable in the guerrilla warfare that wracked much of southern Appalachia during the Civil War or the feuds that plagued select parts of the region later in the nineteenth century. And yet the same dynamics characterized much of the American West during the same era. Indeed, both the popular literature and the Hollywood films that made the “Western” such an integral part of American lore, legend, and national identity were built on variations of these two basic sets of conflict and tension, as laid out by Guilds.



Yet another context, also more national than regional, lies behind much of the violence portrayed in *Guy Rivers*. The chaotic and often ruthless nature of gold rushes and the boom towns they spawned were largely functions of high-stakes situations and “get-rich-quick” opportunities that brought out the worst in human nature—greed, competition, corruption, crime, and crudity. This has been documented by both contemporary observers and historians of Georgia’s gold rush, along with the primary causes that made such lawlessness so rampant, most notably an influx of vagrants, ruffians, and drifters moving quickly into areas still lacking strong legal or governmental infrastructures. The same was true across North America whenever and wherever gold or other minerals created “boom-town” environments—whether in California some two decades after Georgia’s rush or in Colorado, Nevada, or Alaska later in the nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup> This is the dynamic that Simms captures so vividly, and relatively accurately, in *Guy Rivers*, and it is among the factors that most distinguish it from the later Border Romances. Yet those are also the very factors that inspired critics to extol this novel, in particular, as a literary landmark for what it reveals not so much about Appalachia, or Georgia, or even the South, but rather about “the American frontier,” to quote John Caldwell Guilds, and “unadulterated Americanism,” as William Trent labeled it.

It would be more than a decade after *Guy Rivers* was published before Simms actually saw Appalachia firsthand. In 1847, he first ventured into western North Carolina for a five-week hunting trip; it would take him almost another decade to write about his impressions of the region. Perhaps the strongest indication of just how little he saw the violence that he rendered in such dramatic ways in *Guy Rivers* as indicative of the Mountain South lies in how he characterized Appalachia *after* he had seen it in person. (There’s no evidence that Simms ever visited Lumpkin County or any other part of north Georgia.)

In a series of lectures he wrote in 1856 to be delivered in New York and perhaps elsewhere in the North, entitled “The Idylls of the Apalachian,” Simms drew on notes he had made during his 1847 excursion and on the descriptions of other travel writers. In them, he extolled the region’s scenic grandeur in terms that could hardly be more romanticized or idyllic. “I would have you know us better,” he wrote for his New York listeners. “Our wild forest homes, our mighty mountains, our sheltered Cottages—our hardy cottagers—how they live, how they feel and this, in this beautiful world which we inhabit.” Practically claiming to be a highlander himself,

he continued: “I have been nursed in those mysterious regions. I have been sung to sleep by the deep voices of wind and torrent in their mountain gorges, and the thunder of perpetual cataracts through the night have brought me, in dream and vision, the wild aspects of their legendary lore.”<sup>50</sup>

In a further reversal of his earlier themes, Simms actually suggested that the Appalachians were superior to the Low Country South in which he had previously taken such pride: “It is a vulgar notion that the South is a region of mere heat and pestilence—swamp and thicket—without form and void, and that there is no refuge, in all the land, for the terrible fevers of the lower latitudes. You have heard but little of the mountain ranges of the Carolinas and Georgia, though these are unsurpassed in grandeur, beauty and sublimity.” A far cry indeed from his descriptions of Georgia’s mountains in 1834 as a “bleak . . . and barren land,” where “a stunted growth, a dreary and seemingly half-withered shrubbery . . . saddens the soul of the most careless spectator.”<sup>51</sup>

As for the temperament of the highland populace, Simms had little specific to say, but in veiled hints he seemed to take his greatest leap yet from the violence-prone world where he had set *Guy Rivers*. In his most idyllic mode, he waxed poetic about the Appalachians of Virginia: “Oh, to behold this triumph of humanity over place, custom, the tyranny of false gods—the ferocity of savage hates and habits—this is to realize that lovely promise which teaches that the lamb shall yet lie down with the lion, and innocent childhood, unafraid, shall slumber above the very hole of the adder. Here are the grand essentials of all romance—heroism and tenderness; courage and sympathy—all serving to subdue immortal hates by an immortal humanity.” While much of this reverie was set off by a reference to Pocohontas saving John Smith at Jamestown, Simms made it clear that he included the Virginia Blue Ridge in his assessment of regional character: “And every height and headland of this region may be crowned, in like manner, with its own moral monument.” So much for Appalachian violence! In these admittedly vague rhetorical flourishes, Simms seemed to suggest the very antithesis of conflict as characteristic of the Mountain South. And nowhere in these lectures did he seem to recognize—or at least acknowledge—how differently he had characterized the region two decades earlier.<sup>52</sup>

There was then nothing exclusive—or even particularly distinctive—about the nature of Appalachian culture or society in the antebellum period, as defined by excessive violence. At least through the 1830s, Appalachia seems to have been perceived as little more than part of a vast frontier that

captured the imaginations of antebellum Americans, who felt no reason yet to view the southern highlands as a cultural or social entity unto itself. Most historians see the emergence of Appalachian distinctiveness as beginning only after the Civil War and evolving gradually through the latter nineteenth century and into the early twentieth.<sup>53</sup> Only as the region itself came to be perceived as what Simms himself later acknowledged as “a retarded, inner frontier” did violence become an integral part of both the process and the product of that image making.<sup>54</sup>

Yet long before such violence came to stigmatize the region as backward, primitive, or degenerate, both Georgia’s gold rush and its most prominent fictional depiction clearly demonstrated that much of the brutality and ruthlessness the gold rush spawned were as transient as those who practiced it. Such social upheavals would continue to erupt not just in southern Appalachia or even the South, but throughout frontier America, as long as mining camps and other boom towns rose and fell, as they would do for many decades to come. It just so happened that the first of those frontiers on which these dramas played themselves out lay in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Georgia.

## Notes

1. Both quotes are from Fletcher M. Green, “Georgia’s Forgotten Industry: Gold Mining: Part I,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 19 (June 1935): 100–101.

2. Cratis D. Williams identifies only two fictional works set in southern Appalachia prior to *Guy Rivers’s* appearance in 1834, both minor efforts: Virginian George Tucker’s *The Valley of the Shenandoah*, published in 1824, and James Hall’s *Harpe’s Head: A Legend of Kentucky*, published in 1833. See Williams, “The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction,” part 2, *Appalachian Journal* 3 (Winter 1976): 101–3.

3. William Gilmore Simms, *Guy Rivers: A Tale of Georgia*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1834). On the novel’s initial reception, see John Caldwell Guilds, *Simms: A Literary Life* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992), 54–56; and Mary Ann Wimsatt, *The Major Fiction of William Gilmore Simms: Cultural Traditions and Literary Forms* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 122.

4. John Caldwell Guilds, introduction to William Gilmore Simms, *Guy Rivers: A Tale of Georgia*, ed. John Caldwell Guilds (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), xx. All quotes from the novel refer to this edition.

5. I develop this point more fully in a review of Wimsatt’s book; see *Appalachian Journal* 7 (Spring 1990): 290–93.

6. The fullest sources on the Georgia gold rush are Andrew W. Cain, *History of Lumpkin County for the First Hundred Years, 1832–1932* (Atlanta: Stein Printing Co., 1932), chaps. 2–6; Green, “Georgia’s Forgotten Industry,” part 1, and part 2 (Sept. 1935): 93–111, 210–28; E. Merton Coulter, *Auraria: The Story of a Georgia Gold-Mining Town* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1956); and—the most comprehensive treatment of the subject—David Williams, *The Georgia Gold Rush: Twenty-Niners, Cherokees, and Gold Fever* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993). Williams quotes the *Georgia Journal* announcement in full on page 24 of his book.

7. Coulter has a full chapter entitled “Auraria vs. Dahlonega,” which examines why the latter ultimately prevailed as the county seat and thus the more permanent settlement (*Auraria*, chap. 7). The names of both towns come from the word for gold—one in Latin, one in Cherokee. See also Cain, *History of Lumpkin County*, 60–62.

8. George R. Gilmer, *Sketches of Some of the First Settlers of Upper Georgia, of the Cherokees, and of the Author* (New York: D. Appleton, 1855), 265. These quotes, and several others like them, also appear in D. Williams, *Georgia Gold Rush*, 25–27.

9. Coulter has a full chapter entitled “Crime in Aurarialand”; the vast majority of activity he describes is nonviolent in nature (*Auraria*, chap. 4). See also D. Williams, *Georgia Gold Rush*, chap. 2, entitled “The Great Intrusion: Acting like Crazy Men.”

10. David Williams, “Gambling Away the Inheritance: The Cherokee Nation and Georgia’s Gold and Land Lotteries of 1832–1833,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73 (Fall 1989): 519–39.

11. For the role played by slaves and free blacks, see David Williams, “Georgia’s Forgotten Miners: African Americans and the Georgia Gold Rush of 1829,” in *Appalachians and Race: From Slavery to Segregation in the Mountain South*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 40–49.

12. Gilmer, *Sketches of Some of the First Settlers*, 282–83.

13. Green, “Georgia’s Forgotten Industry,” part 1, 108.

14. “Autobiography of Edward Isham, Alias ‘Hardaway Bone,’” in *The Confessions of Edward Isham: A Poor White Life of the Old South*, ed. Charles C. Bolton and Scott P. Culclasure (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 2. This volume consists of several essays in addition to Isham’s eighteen-page “confession.” Most relevant to the issues here are David H. Kleit, “A Stereoscopic View of the Frontier: George Swain, Edward Isham, and the Resettlement of the Cherokee Country,” 32–44; and Culclasure, “Edward Isham and Criminal Justice for the Poor White in the Antebellum South,” 71–85.

15. “Autobiography of Edward Isham,” 6.

16. D. Williams, *Georgia Gold Rush*, 88–89.

17. Cain, *History of Lumpkin County*, 111–12.

18. D. Williams, *Georgia Gold Rush*, 34–35.

19. Colonel Charles H. Nelson, quoted in *Georgia Journal*, Jan. 27, 1831, and in Green, “Georgia’s Forgotten Industry,” part 1, 105; see also D. Williams, *Georgia Gold Rush*, 35–36.

20. Those letters to the *City Gazette*, from Mar. 1 through May 1831, are reproduced in full in *The Letters of William Gilmore Simms*, vol. 1: 1830–44, ed. Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T. C. Duncan Eaves (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952), 10–38.

21. The best sources on Simms’s initial interest in and exposure to the Georgia gold rush are Guilds, introduction, xv–xviii; and Wimsatt, *Major Fiction of Simms*, 120–23. On Calhoun’s mine, see Cain, *History of Lumpkin County*, 92–94.

22. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 45.

23. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 1–2, 10.

24. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 46, 40.

25. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 46.

26. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 49–71. Mary Ann Wimsatt has suggested that this scene owes more to Simms paying homage to the southwestern humorists and in so doing “insures that comedy with a strong backwoods flavor finally overmasters the violence with which it has been precariously balanced” throughout the episode (*Major Fiction of Simms*, 125–26).

27. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 133, 136–37.

28. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 139–41.

29. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 140–41.

30. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 155–56.

31. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 156–57.

32. Simms was ambivalent as to whether *Guy Rivers* and others of his band had somehow orchestrated the avalanche or at least the entrapment of the guard in the gorge. Only as the dust settled and the “scene of bloody execution [became] now one of indiscriminate extermination” does Simms bring back into the picture the “malignant and merciless Rivers, of whom we have seen little in this affair, but by whose black and devilish spirit the means of destruction had been hit upon, which had so well succeeded” (*Guy Rivers*, 157–58).

33. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 158.

34. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 226–28.

35. On the contrast between these scenes, and the different types of dialogue Simms employed in both, see Rayburn S. Moore, “William Gilmore Simms’s *Guy Rivers* and the Frontier,” and David W. Newton, “Voices along the Border: Language and the Southern Frontier in *Guy Rivers: A Tale of Georgia*,” both in *William Gilmore Simms and the American Frontier*, ed. John Caldwell Guilds and Carolina Collins (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 55–63, 118–44.

36. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 166–67.

37. The original passage appeared in the original 1834 edition of *Guy Rivers*, 2: 66; it is included in an appendix entitled “Textual Notes” that Guilds includes in the Arkansas edition, cited here (Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 487). Simms’s revised version of the passage appears on page 250 of the Arkansas edition.

38. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 252.

39. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 448. In his afterword to the Arkansas edition of the novel, Guilds provides an extended analysis of the criminality of Guy Rivers and the subtleties with which Simms explores it in the latter half of his book (464–67).

40. Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 507; and Louis D. Rubin Jr., *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), chap. 3. Cooper created Natty Bumppo, also known as “Leatherstocking,” “Hawkeye,” and the “Deerslayer,” as the protagonist of *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and *The Prairie* (1827); he would appear in two subsequent Cooper novels, published in 1840 and 1841.

41. C. Williams, “Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction,” 103–4.

42. Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 44.

43. Wimsatt, *Major Fiction of Simms*, 120, 93.

44. Wimsatt, *Major Fiction of Simms*, 93–98. Not only does Wimsatt provide the fullest discussion of Murrell and his influence on Simms’s Border Romances; she also provides a full list of both contemporary and historical treatments of Murrell (95, n. 21). See also Caroline Collins, “Simms’s Concept of Romance and His Realistic Frontier,” in Guilds and Collins, *William Gilmore Simms*, 79–91.

45. See, e.g., discussions of *Guy Rivers* in Dickson D. Bruce Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), chap. 10; Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*, 507–8; Rubin, *Edge of the Swamp*, in which the novel is discussed in a chapter entitled “The Romance of the Frontier”; Moore, “William Gilmore Simms’s *Guy Rivers*”; and Wimsatt, *Major Fiction of Simms*, chap. 5. It is telling that all of these works use the term *frontier* in some part of their titles, whether of chapter or book. The only work on Simms in which Appalachia is mentioned in the title is cited below, and it deals only with writings he produced in the 1850s and beyond.

46. William P. Trent, *William Gilmore Simms* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1895), 86–87.

47. Wimsatt, *Major Fiction of Simms*, 124; Moore, “Simms’ *Guy Rivers* and the Frontier,” 55; Collins, “Simms’s Concept of Romance,” 85.

48. Guilds, afterword, 463.

49. At the same time as Georgia’s gold rush, there was a lesser, and far briefer, rush in the South Mountains of western North Carolina, with little evidence of the violence or lawlessness so rampant in Georgia. See Edward J. Phifer, “Cham-

pagne at Brindletown: The Story of the Burke County Gold Rush, 1829–1833,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 40 (Autumn 1963): 489–500, which makes no mention of violence or criminal activity during those “few frenzied years.” In fact, in response to a general observation in 1831 that gold miners were generally “poor, ignorant, and morally degenerate,” a local newspaper editor called the statement “very far from the truth and a libel on the character of our miners. At the principal mines much system is pursued, and no more immorality exists than in any other pursuit of industry” (quoted in Phifer, “Champagne at Brindletown,” 493–94).

50. These lectures, which indeed were probably never delivered by Simms, remained unpublished until 1973. The first of them was reproduced as Miriam J. Shillingsburg, ed., “The Idylls of the Apalachian: An Unpublished Lecture by William Gilmore Simms,” part 1, *Appalachian Journal* 1 (Autumn 1972): 2–11, part 2, *Appalachian Journal* 1 (Spring 1973): 146–60. Quotes here are from part 1, pages 5 and 6. (The fact that Simms misspelled *Apalachian* suggests that it was a term only recently brought into common usage for this region.) The fullest analysis of the source material and interpretation of these lectures appears in Miriam J. Shillingsburg, “William Gilmore Simms and the Myth of Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 6 (Winter 1979): 111–19. Curiously, Shillingsburg makes no mention of *Guy Rivers* in this essay, perhaps confirming the perception of it as a frontier, not an Appalachian, novel.

51. Simms, “Idylls of the Apalachian,” part 1, 6. The contrasting quote is from Simms, *Guy Rivers*, 1.

52. Simms wrote two more novels set in southern Appalachia at the end of his career. Both *Voltmeier* (1869) and *The Cub of the Panther* (1869), the latter published only in serial form, appeared in 1869, only a few months before Simms’s death in 1870. Both are set in post–Civil War western North Carolina. The fullest discussion of both appears in Wimsatt, *Major Fiction of Simms*, chap. 10. Neither of these works was as well received, or as well-known, as *Guy Rivers*.

53. On the conceptualization of Appalachia as a discrete regional entity, see Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1820–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); Allen W. Batteau, *The Invention of Appalachia* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990); and John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), esp. chap. 3.

54. Quoted in Wimsatt, *Major Fiction of Simms*, 221.

## Chapter 5

# “A Possession, or an Absence of Ears”

## The Shape of Violence in Travel Narratives about the Mountain South, 1779–1835

*Katherine E. Ledford*

Henry Tudor, an English lawyer traveling through the Appalachian Mountains of eastern Kentucky in the early 1830s, found just what he was looking for. As he begins his two-and-a-half-day coach trip from the mountains westward to the Ohio River, he shares with the readers of his travel narrative the tenor of what he expects to find among his fellow travelers—namely, “strong shades of difference between the character of the southern and western inhabitants of the republic and those of the north.”<sup>1</sup> Kentuckians’ reputation, specifically, has preceded them: “Having heard much of the people of Kentucky, as exhibiting, in their persons and manners, all the rugged outlines of that poetical personage the ‘*half-horse and half-alligator*,’ I had long felt particularly anxious to see the illustration.”<sup>2</sup> That Tudor’s curiosity “was at length satisfied to the full, and, indeed, to overflowing,” may speak more to the expectations of regional difference he held when he entered the coach than to the events he relates.<sup>3</sup> Tudor describes how, after taking initial stock of his new traveling companions in the public coach, he “sat on the watch, like a lion couching in his lair, to seize on those peculiarities of character which [he] fully expected would be displayed during the journey that lay before [them].”<sup>4</sup> Before recounting the horrors of the trip, however, Tudor assures the reader, “my anticipations were not disappointed.”<sup>5</sup> And by extension, the reader’s anticipations will not be disappointed either.<sup>6</sup>

Tudor’s narrative serves as an effective starting point for considering travelers’ representations of violence in the Mountain South in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a transformative period marking the end of Native American control of the trans-Appalachian frontier. Eight



published narratives of trips made by men traveling through the region between 1779 and 1835 illustrate the expectations about mountain places and people travelers brought with them; the adjustments travelers made to those attitudes once in the mountains; and the complexities of violence itself, from physical confrontation to acute mental anxiety about bodily danger, that travelers grappled with on their journeys. Rather than counting and cataloging documented instances of violence in the Mountain South, one possible approach for understanding the subject, this essay seeks to explore the perceptions and representations of mountain violence circulating in the print culture of the early nation, particularly in travel writing. The travel narrative genre is a productive literary landscape to examine for this concern because it self-consciously “reports” to its readers, purporting to reveal the unvarnished truth about a place and its people. Scholars of travel writing, most notably Mary Louise Pratt, have demonstrated the utility, even the necessity, of turning *from* a seeking of the truth of people and place via the travel narrative and turning *toward* an analysis of the cultural work the genre does, its participation in cultivating a space for economic and social exchange and exploitation, for example.<sup>7</sup> Narratives of travel through the Mountain South in the early national period represent violence (anticipated violence and experienced violence) in such a detailed, specific, and imaginative way that it bears considering what cultural purpose the imagery of a violent Mountain South may have served. Representations of violence in the Mountain South, I argue, contributed to the formation of a U.S. national identity inflected by region that coalesced around issues of progress and degeneracy, two states impacted by perceived distance from and closeness to violence.<sup>8</sup>

Henry Tudor, whom we left trapped in a public coach in the Kentucky mountains, is uncomfortably close to those he perceives as degenerate, focusing his interest on the behavior of one man as a representative specimen of the half-horse, half-alligator breed of Kentuckian:

The elder of the semi-civilised Kentuckians—not to call them barbarians, which, though it might be severe, would nevertheless in this instance be perfectly just—was a Mr. Willis Morgan, an “investigator of land titles,” . . . who appeared determined, in the significant phraseology of his own country, to “go the whole hog;” in other language, to let loose the unrestrained coarseness of his nature, and to lord it over our little community with a supremacy as despotic and self-willed as

his great prototype of the sty. His word, in short, was to be law, with certain penalties beyond his merely expressed displeasure, annexed to its infraction.<sup>9</sup>

This “semi-civilised” man’s choice of despotic rule, Tudor relates, was sole control over the windows in the coach, which he insisted be kept shut on this cold and snowy morning. Since the coach was filled “with nine full-grown persons inside, and some of them not of the most delicate complexion of either body or mind, tainting the air with the sickening odour of spirituous liquors, which they were guzzling as often as they could procure them,” Tudor believes there is a good chance that he and his fellow travelers will be stifled in the confines of the coach.<sup>10</sup> Finally, unable to stand the noxious atmosphere any longer, “a mild, unassuming young man” ventures to open a window:

Scarcely was the act completed, when this “whole hog-going” *gentleman* instantly seized hold of him by the collar of his coat, dragged him down on his lap, and assaulted him in the most furious and brutal manner that can be conceived. I verily believed, having previously been told of some of the extraordinary practices of these “half-horses and half-alligators,” that he was literally going to *bite his nose off*; for certainly the demonstration of such an intent was, in the first onset, particularly strong, and it is said to be a delicate little custom in high favour among the epicures and gourmands of that state.<sup>11</sup>

This “human hyaena” eventually lets go of the young man, “declaring, with a volley of the most bitter oaths, that if the offence were repeated, he would hurl the offender out of the window.”<sup>12</sup>

Tudor, for his part, is satisfied: “Here is a specimen, thought I, of Kentucky manners, with a vengeance! I have longed for the exhibition to some purpose, truly!—a wild Indian—a good honest Hottentot—or a plumed savage of Otaheite—would be gentlemanly society in comparison with such company.”<sup>13</sup> Having seen what he came to see, Tudor is desirous of “wash[ing] [his] hands of the whole affair,” but he finds himself “in the midst of the mountains” where “retreat was impossible.”<sup>14</sup> Condemned to “run the gauntlet” with the present company, Tudor complains that he “had to witness some of the most disgusting and offensive behaviour that ever characterised the civilised state of man,” including “blowing the nose

out of the coach window, and sometimes inside of it,” without the aid of a handkerchief; cursing and swearing; and enough “spitting, hawking, and chewing tobacco” to “break the drums of one’s ears.”<sup>15</sup> Violence, therefore, goes hand in hand with other antisocial behaviors and is part and parcel of incivility. Tudor concludes his portrait of his coach mates with a scathing assessment of their comparative worth relative to all the people he has met during his travels: “I must frankly acknowledge, without at all mincing the matter, as there is nothing of exaggeration in what I have said,—not having ‘set down aught in malice,’ a feeling the very farthest from my thoughts and wishes—that this was the most sickening exhibition and journey, and these human bipeds the most disgusting, to which I was ever in my life exposed throughout the four quarters of the globe.”<sup>16</sup> The Kentuckian has degenerated below even the three lowest representatives of humanity (an Indian, a Hottentot, and a “plumed savage of Otaheite,” according to Tudor), resting in an animalistic (half-horse, half-alligator) state.

Tudor models for his readers what they should be getting from his account: a shudder for what he had to suffer and an appreciation that his good-humored wit let him share the tale with a civilized readership. Tudor’s travel narrative addresses issues of class, violence, and regional stereotyping, subjects that preoccupied many travelers to the Mountain South in the early national period. Tudor’s narrative displays class issues through his condemnation of his fellow travelers’ lack of exhibition of middle-class standards of polite behavior in regard to language, consumption of alcohol, and bodily functions, coupled with his righteousness in declaring them mere “human bipeds,” “semi-civilised,” and “barbarians.” Violence erupts in the coach, and Tudor explains it as a function of region: everyone knows Kentuckians are like that.

Tudor’s tale of the coach is bracketed by expectations of regional differences and an “I-told-you-so” summation of the veracity of those expectations. Tudor expects to find “difference[s] between the character of the southern and western inhabitants of the republic and those of the north” at the outset, and he does.<sup>17</sup> He concludes his tale with the assurance that “the change, too, was as rapid as it was violent, from the civilised polish of the northern and middle states,—for such I had invariably witnessed there,—to the Algerine practices of the western and southern regions.”<sup>18</sup> Tudor places his experiences within this North/South/West social matrix, but elements of both the coach trip and his descriptions of the western places he visits afterward fail to fit neatly into this template.

The coach becomes a microcosm of competing regional identities hurtling through an untamed, unpopulated section of the U.S. landscape. Tudor positions most members of the party both socially *and* geographically. In this “motley group” are two “slave-drivers, dignified by the appellation of ‘merchant,’” representing, along with another man’s “slave-servant,” the South; “two *soi-disant gentlemen* of Kentucky,” along with the half-horse, half-alligator window tyrant, representing simultaneously Kentucky and the West; and “a young gentleman from Fredericksburg,” east of the mountains in Virginia.<sup>19</sup> Two other passengers are not identified. Tudor clearly aligns himself with the northern civilized. The violent confrontation that ensues takes on regional, territorial, and racial connotations. The half-horse, half-alligator Kentuckian/western, in defense of “his” window, assaults “the passenger from Fredericksburg, a mild, unassuming young man.”<sup>20</sup> This West versus East affray ends in the two principles “talking loudly of daggers and pistols” and the remainder of the company banding together and insisting on an opposite window being left down.<sup>21</sup> As the representative of cool northern detachment (waiting in his lair to seize on regional peculiarities), Tudor characterizes the Kentuckian/western’s behavior as barbaric, placing him on the cultural evolutionary scale below “a wild Indian—a good honest Hottentot—or a plumed savage of Otaheite,” whose company Tudor proclaims he would have preferred.<sup>22</sup> From the perspective of the northern elite, the behavior of this “human hyaena,” this “half-horse, half-alligator,” is representative of the residents of both Kentucky specifically and the “West” in general. Significant portions of the nation, in this formulation, are peopled by animalistic horrors that are inferior when compared with a collection of the world’s “savages.” But instead of existing in a safely distant land with wild Indians, Hottentots, plumed savages, and others of their ilk, they are located in the civilized citizens’ backyard, where escape from them proves impossible.

The regional “battles” and social confrontations that take place among this group of travelers escalate within an environment signifying the shortcomings of Mountain South spaces in patterns of U.S. national development. Tudor, aligned with the northern elite, is trapped in a disturbingly intimate association with these barbarians from whom the mountain landscape will not allow him to extract himself. After the physical confrontation over the window, Tudor desperately wants to leave the coach and its passengers behind, “but we were, at this time, in the midst of the mountains, and retreat was impossible.”<sup>23</sup> The journey takes on a militaristic air, with

Tudor unable to “retreat” and forced to “run the gauntlet through a weary distance of 160 miles.”<sup>24</sup> The coach is a microcosm of regional, social, and class strife, hurtling for two and a half days through a mountainous landscape that offers no possibility of escape from the forced encounter between representatives of the United States’ development triumphs and its tragedies. Tudor describes encountering only one other person on the journey, a young “cottage girl,” without mentioning the sleeping and eating establishments he and his coach mates must have patronized. There are no descriptions of towns, farms, or other travelers on the roads. The coach passengers are alone, together. Tudor gives no information about the driver (or drivers) of the vehicle, not even acknowledging his presence, focusing entirely on the group trapped inside.<sup>25</sup>

The image of the Mountain South Tudor develops in his narrative is of a primarily unoccupied landscape through which the coach hermetically travels, encountering almost no one and offering no possibility of escape. What would there be to escape to? His only indication of human agency in the landscape occurs when he mentions passing “salt-manufactories” on the “Kenhawa” River and recounts a stop the coach makes at the Burning Spring, “the surface of which . . . was agitated by a continual bubbling, occasioned by unremitting exhalations of gas.”<sup>26</sup> A girl from a nearby cottage sets the surface of the spring on fire for them. Saltworks or burning springs are no place to exit a public conveyance in hopes that another form of transportation will come along. Tudor’s only physical description of the landscape over which he is forced to travel occurs after he has related the internal social workings of the group and passed judgment on them. His mountainous landscape, while sublimely beautiful and mercifully distracting, presents no alternative to remaining cloistered with half-horses and half-alligators:

The only alleviating circumstance of consolation, to lighten over this deeply-shaded picture of savage existence, was the splendid scenery that met my eye in crossing the noble range of the Alleghanies, of which the main ridge is denominated, in figurative language, the “back-bone of the United States.” The “*beau morceau*,” however, of this romantic mountain-chain was the White Cliffs on the River Kenhawa, that flows, for a number of miles, through a profound and most picturesque ravine, bounded by tremendous precipices, and beautifully wooded banks, till it reaches the Falls to which it gives

name. Hence it is precipitated over a foaming cataract, and, winding along, is lost amid the defiles of the mountains. This is, perhaps, the most imposing landscape of the whole of the kingdom-like state of Virginia. Here, as throughout these Alpine regions, all was wildness—woody wilderness—sterility—and silence, broken, alone, at the latter place, by the noise of the rushing waters.<sup>27</sup>

The Mountain South landscape offers no comfort for Tudor or, by extension, for his readers, only a site for violent, rude social confrontations between regionally stereotyped barbarians and representatives of the morally and culturally advanced East.<sup>28</sup> The Alpine regions, in their wildness, sterility, and silence, are a no-man’s land into which the cultivated traveler ventures at his own peril.

In early national travel narratives of the Mountain South, violence manifests itself in the region not only through the unlucky combination of strangers forced to travel together in a public conveyance but also on the mountainous landscape over which those people travel. Charles Fenno Hoffman, returning eastward in the early 1830s after having spent a winter across the Appalachian Mountains in the sparsely populated West, relates two travelers’ tales that hint at the possibility of a more place-based interaction between the people of southern Appalachia and the larger nation. Describing the area around Cumberland Gap, Hoffman notes that “the dividing lines of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia here intersect each other; and the triangular section thus made on the confines of these three ‘sovereign and independent states,’ is reputed to be a sort of neutral ground, so far as the operation of the laws of either is concerned.”<sup>29</sup> Within this no-man’s land, “a gang of counterfeiters and coiners of false money are said to have their workshops among the deep glens adjacent.”<sup>30</sup> Hoffman learns that “they mingle with the people in the most impudent manner” and that their “fast horses carry them when suspected soon beyond the reach of immediate pursuit.”<sup>31</sup> The mountainous landscape, virtual terra incognita to the laws of the land, is what allows the lawlessness to continue: “the seclusion of their rocky dens prevents their being subsequently ferreted out—supposing even that the sheriff’s officers should be anxious to encounter these ‘Cumberland riders.’”<sup>32</sup> In this mountainous landscape, lawbreakers traffic among ordinary citizens with impunity—officials of the law unable, or unwilling, to confront them.

Additionally, their mode of crime (counterfeiting) breaks not just local

but federal systems of economic trust, questioning national authority. If it is unlikely that the “Cumberland riders” will break out of their neutral territory to terrorize the good citizens of the lowlands, it is, Hoffman points out in another anecdote, quite possible that geography could help all mountaineers—counterfeiters and the general citizenry alike—remain defiant—and potentially violent. He writes, “The innumerable caverns and mountain fastnesses of every description in this region would make it a strong refuge in time of hostile invasion, and enable the inhabitants to hold their wild hills against the armies of the world.”<sup>33</sup> Hoffman’s primary imagery of a quaint Rip Van Winkle stasis in the Mountain South, carefully constructed in other sections of his narrative, mutates into a more confrontational specter as he describes some mountaineers’ willingness to take up illegal activities that threaten economic exchange in the capitalist system coupled with the power for defiance their rugged landscape gives them.

Whereas Henry Tudor depicts the Mountain South in a primordial natural state virtually devoid of human habitation or human impact as he hurtles across it enclosed with a half-horse, half-alligator, Charles Hoffman represents a populated, poverty-stricken Mountain South whose citizens resort to counterfeiting. John Palmer’s 1818 travel narrative utilizes elements of both these views of the Mountain South, establishing the region as a holdover from an earlier age because of both its terrain and the people who have sparsely settled it. Having traveled west from Pittsburgh to Wheeling, and then south along the western slopes of the Cumberland to Lexington, Kentucky, Palmer heads east to pass back through the mountains at Cumberland Gap. His descriptions of the land over which he travels, the towns and cities where he stays, and the people he encounters are positive and encouraging, noting general prosperity and refinement. As he journeys farther into the heart of the mountains in southeast Kentucky, however, his assessment of the land and the people changes dramatically. He writes: “We are now in that part of Kentucky which is yet called ‘the wilderness.’ Twenty years ago it was infested by hostile bands of thievish and murdering Indians, and travellers intending to pass it, were obliged to stay in the settlements and collect in armed bands of fifty or an hundred: now there is no danger, the whole route is more or less settled and no Indian can come near to molest the traveller.”<sup>34</sup> Even though the traveler may not have to contend with “thievish and murdering Indians,” the region is still drastically different from the western areas through which he has just traveled so pleasantly. He characterizes the country as “still very wild, and

full of game, and wild beasts; every farmer keeps five or six mongrel dogs, and the sheep, hogs, and fowls are carefully penned every night."<sup>35</sup> Deer carcasses are easily bought, since "some of the expert hunters will kill seventy or eighty in a season, besides bears, wolves, foxes, turkies, and other game."<sup>36</sup> Not too long ago, "buffaloes, elks, and moose, used to be common here."<sup>37</sup> Palmer rides "through a wild unsettled country, hilly, and full of creeks," where the water "is very bad, and the people look sickly."<sup>38</sup> The settlers themselves are representative of this state of "wilderness," this state of violence, both a physical violence, through the killing of animals, and a social violence, through limited economic opportunity. Palmer describes one family newly settled in the area living in a "miserable log house" that was "dirty" and "disagreeable," with a passel of "filthy" children.<sup>39</sup> The physical wildness of the area, represented by the difficult terrain and abundant animals, coupled with far-flung "settlers" still trying to tame this dangerous land, sets this region apart from the prosperous western spaces through which he previously journeyed.

Tudor's, Hoffman's, and Palmer's narratives of travel through southern Appalachia present three different views of violence in the region, but they coalesce around images of physical, social, and economic backwardness causing strife. In each, the Mountain South is represented as a distinct region operating under systems out of step with those governing other sections of the nation in the North and South and, increasingly, in lands to the west. While these patterns of difference connote negativity to Tudor, Hoffman, and Palmer, James Kirk Paulding finds sections of bucolic simplicity in both the landscape and the inhabitants of the Mountain South. He calls the Shenandoah Valley, nestled among the southern hills of Virginia, "one of the most verdant, fruitful, and picturesque regions of the United States."<sup>40</sup> "The fields are greener," he writes, "and the people that cultivate them are white men, whose labours being voluntary, seem to make the landscape smile."<sup>41</sup> He finds the region's economic system, which does not rely heavily, he says, on slave labor, peculiarly advantageous for the scenery as well, since "you see but few slaves, and every thing is the more gay for not being darkened by them—at least to my eyes."<sup>42</sup> In this cleansed, whitened social landscape, where the majority of inhabitants are "laborious Dutchmen," even the physical landscape reflects purity: "Here too, the rivers which, east of the mountains, are muddy and turbid, become pure and transparent as the fount of Parnassus, out of which poets drink—because they can get nothing stronger."<sup>43</sup>



But the simplicity of the Shenandoah Valley does not extend throughout the entire Mountain South in such an uncomplicated way. At another point in his narrative, Paulding recounts the terror with which he encounters a mountain family in their home as he seeks shelter one night. Caught out after dark far from public lodging, he knocks on a cabin door, only to have it answered by a hulking man he believes to be at least seven feet tall. Ushered into the kitchen, he finds the man's six equally gigantic sons sitting around the kitchen table: "Hereupon, at sight of this most picturesque group, all the stories I had ever read of people being killed, wounded, and thrown into a ditch, in traversing lonely heaths, or desert mountains, rushed upon my memory. I fully determined to look at the sheets to see if they were not bloody, before I went to bed. . . . I did not like the looks of three or four rifles, displayed rather ostentatiously over the chimney."<sup>44</sup> Paulding listens to the men talk of "the day's work they had just gone through, and of the task of the morrow, when they were going to reap a field of oats—and at once all apprehensions subsided."<sup>45</sup> Paulding assures his reader that "the industrious farmer, even in the wildest recesses of the mountains, is ever a harmless, honest being, with whom the lonely stranger may eat, and drink, and sleep in safety."<sup>46</sup> In this reversal of fortune, Paulding's bloodthirsty robbers become "cultivators of the land" who "constitute the real wholesome strength and virtue of every civilized country."<sup>47</sup> According to Paulding, "these are the lads to go in front of the great caravan of man, in his progress to the west—to clear the lands, to hunt the deer, to war against the wild beasts, and cope with the savage, equally wild."<sup>48</sup> Their imposing stature, collection of guns, and rustic appearance signify for Palmer the possibility of random, violent behavior on their part. Only when he learns that they are farmers, an occupation of simplistic honor, does Paulding calm his own fears.

Scary mountaineers who morph into wholesome farmers parallel scary mountains that morph into awe-inspiring landscapes in some travel narratives of the Mountain South. Perhaps the most vivid example of the intersection of terror inspired by a violent wildness and the role that sublimity, the combination of pain and pleasure, played in mediating such moments of discomfort is in an 1806 narrative by Thomas Ashe. Traveling through the Appalachian Mountains, Ashe found himself alone on a mountaintop trail with night fast approaching and no welcoming cabin in sight. Afraid that if he should advance on the unknown trail "a sudden and rapid death

was unavoidable; or if [he] remained where [he] was, wolves, panthers, and tiger cats, were at hand to devour [him],” Ashe weighs his options and chooses to stay where he is for the night instead of risk a violent death.<sup>49</sup> While contemplating a frightening night alone, he watches fog rise from the valley as the moon shines “capriciously,” “exhibit[ing] various fantastic forms and colours,” making the “‘darkness visible,’ conveying terror and dismay.”<sup>50</sup> Just as Ashe is almost overcome with fear, this terrifying landscape changes into one of almost incomprehensible beauty:

Such apprehensions were gaining on my imagination, till an object of inexpressible sublimity gave a different direction to my thoughts, and seized the entire possession of my mind. The heavenly vault appeared to be all on fire . . . through which the stars, detached from the firmament, traversed in eccentric directions, followed by trains of light. . . . Many meteors rose majestically out of the horizon: and having gradually attained an elevation of thirty degrees, suddenly burst; and descended to the earth in a shower of brilliant sparks, or glittering gems. This splendid phenomenon was succeeded by a multitude of shooting-stars, and balls and columns of fire.<sup>51</sup>

Ashe falls to his knees, crying, “offering to the great Creator of the works which [he] witnessed, the purest tribute of admiration and praise.”<sup>52</sup> This sublime landscape does not remain extant for long, however, as “the profound silence maintained during the luminous representation, was followed by the din of the demon of the woods.”<sup>53</sup> Owls screech. Wolves and panthers howl. The mountains return to a place of danger and potential violence for Ashe as the landscape once again threatens to engulf and master him.<sup>54</sup>

Ashe’s terror arises from his realization that he is alone in a landscape void of the trappings of human habitation—symbolized by an imaginary protective cabin and welcoming family. He is surrounded by a landscape that, save for the trail, appears untouched by the march of westward progress. In this moment of personal and cultural anxiety, Ashe utilizes the descriptive elements of the sublime (itself a dichotomy of terror and pleasure) to paradoxically gain an element of control over a landscape dramatically *out* of control. As a light show explodes over the valley, it appears for a time as if this sublime vision will transport him to a safer landscape, one in which the sounds and actions of the beasts of the woods are suspended. In

that moment of stunned pleasure as Ashe gazes on such an awe-inspiring scene, the fact that he is alone is no longer troubling. But this sublime experience emerges from displeasure. Both before and after this event, Ashe's discomfort with his position on a dehumanized landscape is the focal point. Danger—first from the unknown as he watches the fog rise in the valley and finally from the too-well-known as he listens to wolves howl—is the primary element from which the sublime arises. The sublime landscape may momentarily infuse terror with pleasure, but for Ashe, horror of the untamed land reemerges as the primary issue in the text.

Ashe's juxtaposition of terror/awe/terror in his reactions to the potentially violent landscape, and the dangerous animals it contains, foregrounds the discomfort and anxiety surrounding human interaction with the mountain landscape. In the late eighteenth century, that mountain landscape likewise contained violent people, not as an anomaly, as demonstrated by Hoffman's counterfeiter, and not as a fantasy, as demonstrated by Paulding's "bloodthirsty" mountaineers, and not as a representative of regional distinctiveness, as demonstrated by Tudor's traveling companions, but as representative of economic, social, and political upheavals emerging from conflict between American Indians and people of European descent. In a journal account of moving back eastward from Kentucky in 1779 and 1780, William Fleming describes a scene that was all too commonplace on the Kentucky frontier:

At noon this day three men and a negro came in to us who belonged to a party of 12 from Lexington that were defeated about five miles before us, we marched in silence and pritty good order to the place and found John and Robert Davis from Amherst lying scalped and much mangled on the road. There was two war Clubs left[,] on the head of one was the figure of a Lizard cut[,] which I supposed belonged to the Spring Lizard of Chickamaga[,] it appeared to me there was two parties out. One of 17 and one of 18 Indians[,] we buried the Corps as well as we could and pursuing our Journey crossed Cumberland Mountains and encamped half a mile short of Walkers Creek.<sup>55</sup>

Entry after entry in Kentucky frontier journals recounts days spent observing violence, participating in violence, avoiding violence, and gathering intelligence about violence. Fleming provides specific, detailed descriptions of attacks and body counts:

*May 22.* Breakfast at Bakers[,] some days before a party of Indians attacked a house on Nonachucky[,] had two of their party killed. Our People were relieved by some people that came up to their Assistance. A man was either killed or taken Prisoner in Carters Valley. halted at Grays three miles from Shelbys and was overtaken by a party who left Kentucky some days after we did and who met with Wimer[,] one of the Lexington party at Martins Cabbins[,] Powells Valley[,] when the party was attacked he quit his horse with a design to fight them but seeing his companions dispersed he was obliged to run and was fired at by an Indian. Wimer soon after falling by stepping into a hole[,] the Indian[,] thinking he had shot him[,] run up to Wimer with his tomahawk and knife without his gun, Wimer[,] recovering himself[,] presented his gun at the Indian who stopt short in Amaze and standing motionless was shot down. Wimer then ran off and blundering a second time fell in a hollow place, the Indians loosing his tract he loaded his gun and observing an Indian running toward him shot at him with a zest 50 yards and thinking he wounded him in the belly[,] he was no longer pursued and made his Escape[,] he discovered another party of fifteen whom he avoided, and got to where Skeggs Party overtook him, inable to go further from his Legg and knee being much swelled. Tomlins the only person missing of this Party got in wounded in both his Arms. Capt. Pawling coming up who had gone back for my saddlebags which I had left[,] we went to Mr. Cummins 15 miles from Col. Shelbys[,] he informed us that the Indians had attacked a Fort on Nonachucky and lost three after which they went to the house mentioned above.<sup>56</sup>

Narratives from this period are far more likely to record scenes such as those above than to contain descriptions of majestic mountains or sublime landscapes, textual indulgences that were rare when lives were at stake.<sup>57</sup> The lived experiences of violence in the trans-Appalachian West and the published tales that circulated about those experiences created a collective mental trauma in the early nation that impacted reactions to the Appalachian and trans-Appalachian region for years afterward.<sup>58</sup> For example, Elias Pym Fordham, addressing an English audience in his narrative about his American travels in 1817–18, notes:

The inhabitants of the Eastern ports know no more about this coun-

try, than you do in England. Some are afraid to cross the Mountains: so many terrible stories of it are in circulation. Kentucky, or Bloody Ground, as it used to be called, seems to them to be the verge of the habitable world. These prejudices are, however, disappearing. The rising, and already important, commerce of the West is becoming an object of their jealousy. The poorer and more enterprising of the farmers leave the inhospitable climates of the North, and find here fertile lands and short winters.<sup>59</sup>

Spurred on by the prospects of economic success, migrants in the early decades of the nineteenth century braved travel over a landscape that but lately represented physical and psychological violence.

As Paulding's fantasies about bloodthirsty mountaineers demonstrate, in the white collective understanding of a violent trans-Appalachian frontier, murder and mayhem were not only perpetrated by Native Americans. In 1806, Thomas Ashe notes that the mountainous part of Virginia "was, at no very remote period, deemed the *frontier*, not only of Virginia, but of America."<sup>60</sup> Drawn like a magnet "to this frontier all persons outlawed, or escaping from justice, fled, and resided without the apprehension of punishment, or the dread of contempt and reproach."<sup>61</sup> These people, unbound from civil constraints, "formed a species of nefarious republic, where equality of crime constituted a social band."<sup>62</sup> Ashe claims that only the conclusion of the Indian wars and the subsequent removal of Natives westward, which pushed the frontier before it, he believes, brought civil order to the region, cleansing the outlaw population through the moral example displayed by a solid citizenry immigrating from the East.<sup>63</sup> This cleansing sweep is incomplete, however. Ashe notes that the town in western Virginia that he is visiting will make another great leap forward when it can finally "abolish cock-fighting, horse-racing, fighting, drinking, gambling, &c. and, above all, enforce the observance of the sabbath and other solemn days."<sup>64</sup> Far from settling down to a pious day of rest from work, the "majority of the present inhabitants have no means whatever of distinguishing Sunday, but by a greater degree of violence and debauchery than the affairs of ordinary days will allow them to manifest."<sup>65</sup> After describing a "rough and tumble" fight in this post-frontier Virginia town complete with gouged eyes and torn lip, Ashe identifies the best way to determine the quality of a western Virginia hotel.<sup>66</sup> Check the hotelier's ears:

I again demanded how a stranger was to distinguish a good from a vicious house of entertainment? I was answered . . . a tolerable judgment could be formed, from observing in the landlord, *a possession, or an absence of ears*: many of the proprietors of small inns being men who had left those members nailed to certain penitential market crosses in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the Carolinas, in lieu of certain horses and cattle of which they had from time to time become the illegal owners.<sup>67</sup>

A final example of violence in travel narratives of the Mountain South, this time only threatened, illustrates another source of tension—the enforcement of racial boundaries. We leave where we began—on a coach. William Faux writes:

Off, an hour before day-light, along the banks of the Monongahela. Just as we were starting, up came a Mr. Morgan and six negroes, requesting of the gentlemen passengers that he and his negroes might be graciously permitted to share the stage with us: we consented. My companions' compliance, indeed, surprised me a little, and in came Morgan and his black cattle. . . . On leaving Washington, several other gentlemen entered our stage, but would not permit Mr. Morgan and his negroes to enter.—“What?” said they, “ride with negroes?”—Much strife now ensued, and a battle was intended; but to quiet the angry passions of both sides, a stage was provided for the refusing party.<sup>68</sup>

Violence takes many shapes in travel narratives of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Mountain South. From real to imaginary violence, from threatened to acted-upon violence, depictions of physical conflict tell us more about the traveler, his personal worries, and his cultural expectations—and more about an emerging U.S. national identity (bound by place and race)—than about the people of the Mountain South.

## Notes

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1. Henry Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour in North America: Comprising Mexico, the Mines of Real de Monte, the United States, and the British Colonies; with an Excursion to the Island of Cuba. In a Series of Letters, Written in the Years 1831–2* (London: James Duncan, 1834), 13.

2. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 13 (original emphasis).

3. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 13–14.

4. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 14.

5. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 14.

6. Tudor's statement that he began the journey with certain expectations—and, indeed, hopes—of witnessing “half-horse and half-alligator” behavior and his comment that he felt satisfied by the end of the trip that he had indeed witnessed such behavior necessitate that we take into consideration the role his expectations may have played in influencing his observations. Gregory Nobles contends that we should read “unsympathetic observers of backcountry culture much as we now read Euro-American observers of Native American culture—with great care, with some skepticism, and with an eye to finding an element of truth between the lines.” See Nobles, *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 106. In other words, Nobles advocates putting travelers' “observations” in context. I am interested in exploring cultural narratives of violence that may have impacted the expectations Tudor had developed before stepping into the coach, coloring his observations and their subsequent manifestation in his travel narrative.

7. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

8. It is wise to consider the reality versus the perception of regional violence in the United States as we begin this examination of representations of violence in travel narratives about the early national Mountain South. The American West in the frontier years, for example, has entered the national (and international) consciousness as a place of unbridled violence. For an analysis of actual violence rates in two western frontier mining towns, see Roger D. McGrath, “Violence and Lawlessness on the Western Frontier,” in *Violence in America: The History of Crime, Vol. 1*, ed. Ted Robert Gurr (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989), 122–45. McGrath notes that “it is popularly assumed that the frontier was full of . . . brave, strong, reckless, and violent men—and that they helped make the frontier a violent and lawless place” (123). McGrath's analysis of rates of larcenous crime, for example, shows that while the “first assumption is correct; the second is mostly wrong” (123). Similar analyses of recorded violence in the Mountain South and

the trans-Appalachian frontier during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries might reveal similar patterns of disconnection between perception and reality. In this essay I examine textual *representations* of a variety of forms of violence in the Mountain South. Travel narratives should not be regarded as accurate logs of violence in the region, but as narrative interpretations of events, real and imagined.

9. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 14–15.

10. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 15.

11. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 16. Nose biting, eye gouging, hair pulling, and other unorthodox fighting methods were attributed in the nineteenth-century United States to rough-and-tumble brawls in the South or on the frontier. So widespread was the knowledge of this behavioral predilection on the part of frontiersmen that “biting and gouging” fights became a staple of literary accounts of the frontier and the backcountry South and Southwest. (For example, see Augustus Baldwin Longstreet’s short story “The Fight,” in *Georgia Scenes: Characters, Incidents &c.*, *In the First Half Century of the Republic* [Augusta, GA: S. R. Sentinel Office, 1835]: 53–66.) In a book investigating frontier violence, Eugene W. Hollon accepts the general characterization of the frontier as violent but also questions the cause of such violence. See Hollon, *Frontier Violence: Another Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). He argues that “frontier lawlessness was primarily the result, rather than the cause, of our violent society” and shows that incidents of western frontier violence were overemphasized at the same time that violence in eastern cities and the South was just as bad if not worse (ix). Reginald Horsman agrees that there was “much overwriting on the violent nature of frontier society.” See Horsman, *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783–1815* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 127. Richard Slotkin sees the prevalence of accounts of “biting and gouging” fights and the glee with which many eastern travelers related them as significant in national identity formation. His focus on the “*mythology* of violence, the special meanings given to violence of a certain kind, in a certain style” (original emphasis), recasts both Tudor’s expectations that the Kentuckian is likely to bite off the nose of another passenger *and* his account of the violent encounter, rendering it an example of how the mythology of frontier violence operated. See Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 62. Slotkin challenges readers to see such accounts as embedded in the function that violence played in a national consciousness of U.S. identity in the nineteenth century. See also Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

12. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 17, 16.

13. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 16–17.

14. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 17.

15. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 17.



16. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 17–18.

17. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 13.

18. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 18.

19. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 14.

20. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 15.

21. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 17.

22. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 16.

23. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 17.

24. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 17.

25. Tudor's narrative is intriguing in this respect. Most travelers writing of their journeys through the Mountain South comment, sometimes extensively, on the men who drive their coaches. Tales of harrowing ascents and descents of mountain roads supervised by reckless coach drivers are a staple of mountain travel narratives. Often travelers also use observations of the manners, speech, and dress of their coach drivers to draw conclusions about mountain men and, sometimes, women. The fact that Tudor never acknowledges the presence of a driver on such a long journey, coupled with the absence of any evidence of other human beings in the mountains besides a "cottage girl," speaks to the symbolic constructiveness of the Mountain South for Tudor and for his readers.

26. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 19.

27. Tudor, *Narrative of a Tour*, 18–19.

28. Assigning certain forms of or predilections for violence to particular regions or cultures has a long history, one that scholars have both participated in and, increasingly, become more critical of. For an analysis of the trajectory of this connection between "culture" and violence, see John Carter Wood, "Conceptualizing Cultures of Violence and Cultural Change," in *Cultures of Violence: Interpersonal Violence in Historical Perspective*, ed. Stuart Carroll (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 79–96.

29. Charles Fenno Hoffman, *A Winter in the West. By a New Yorker* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835), 176.

30. Hoffman, *Winter in the West*, 176.

31. Hoffman, *Winter in the West*, 176.

32. Hoffman, *Winter in the West*, 177.

33. Hoffman, *Winter in the West*, 191.

34. John Palmer, *Journal of Travels in the United States of North America, and in Lower Canada, Performed in the Year 1817; Containing Particulars Relating to the Prices of Land and Provisions Remarks on the Country and People, Interesting Anecdotes . . . &c . . . By John Palmer* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1818), 114–15.

35. Palmer, *Journey of Travels*, 115.

36. Palmer, *Journey of Travels*, 115.

37. Palmer, *Journey of Travels*, 115.
38. Palmer, *Journey of Travels*, 115.
39. Palmer, *Journey of Travels*, 116.
40. James Kirk Paulding, *Letters from the South, Written During an Excursion in the Summer of 1816. By the Author of John Bull and Brother Jonathan* (New York: James Eastburn, 1817), 110.
41. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 110.
42. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 110.
43. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 110–11.
44. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 174.
45. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 174.
46. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 175.
47. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 175.
48. Paulding, *Letters from the South*, 174.
49. Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America Performed in 1806, for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers, Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and Ascertaining the Produce and Condition of Their Banks and Vicinity* (Newburyport, 1808), 16.
50. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 16.
51. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 16.
52. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 17.
53. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 17. The specificity and exuberance with which Ashe describes a scene that “seized the entire possession of [his] mind” hint at the linguistic challenges travelers faced when describing the sublime. See Ashe, *Travels in America*, 15. Wayne Franklin argues that there is a linguistic desire in American travel writing “to filigree the outer edges of a vacuum which itself remains unfilled” when travelers encounter American landscapes that defy description. See Franklin, “Speaking and Touching: The Problem of Inexpressibility in American Travel Books,” in *America: Exploration and Travel*, ed. Steven E. Kagle (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1979), 21.
54. Ashe’s experience of the sublime emphasizes extraordinary visual encounters with the “firmament.” An alternative trope in the rendering of the sublime associates the experience of sublimity with blindness. For a discussion of this manifestation, see Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999). “The sublime,” he argues, “presents the limits of the eye along with a maelstrom of powerful feelings produced as the viewing subject teeters on the brink of perspectival and epistemic collapse” (191).
55. William Fleming, *Colonel William Fleming’s Journal of Travels in Kentucky, 1779–1780*, in *Travels in the American Colonies*, ed. Newton Mereness (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 649.
56. Fleming, *Journal of Travels*, 651.

57. For examples of violence in trans-Appalachian exploration and frontier narratives and an analysis of violence's causes and impacts, see Ellen Eslinger, *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

58. For an examination of the role of violence in the colonizing enterprise, see Laura E. Franey, *Victorian Travel Writing and Imperial Violence: British Writing on Africa, 1855–1902* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

59. Elias Pym Fordham, *Personal Narrative of Travels in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky; and of a Residence in Illinois Territory: 1817–1818*, ed. Frederic Austin Ogg (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 132.

60. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 220.

61. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 220.

62. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 220.

63. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 220. This is reminiscent, of course, of J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's imagery of the cleansing sweep of culture from the East articulated in *Letters from an American Farmer*, ed. Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

64. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 222.

65. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 223.

66. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 225, 228.

67. Ashe, *Travels in America*, 232 (original emphasis).

68. William Faux, *Faux's Memorable days in America, November 27, 1818–July 21, 1820* (Cleveland, 1905), 167.

## Chapter 6

# Violence against Slaves as a Catalyst in Changing Attitudes toward Slavery

## An 1857 Case Study in East Tennessee

*Durwood Dunn*

In the three decades before the Civil War, escalating tensions over the issue of slavery between North and South led to the development of differing images of each section in the popular perceptions of the American people. Southerners increasingly saw their northern counterparts as rabid abolitionists, determined to destroy the peculiar institution immediately and with no compensation to the owner. Northerners, on the other hand, gradually gave credibility to theories that slaveholders actually plotted to destroy the freedom of all, not just their black bondsmen. Erroneous as both these counterimages of each section were, they assumed a life of their own through constant debate and agitation during the 1850s and framed the larger context of further changing, or hardening, attitudes against the rival section in both the South and the North. In a very real sense, these differing perceptions of the rival sections determined reality for most Americans, dictating not only how they viewed themselves but ultimately how they would react to any national political crisis involving slavery between regions of the country that were rapidly becoming differentiated from each other in both economic development and political culture.<sup>1</sup>

The single incident that best symbolized this growing alienation and the distorted images of the other section, both North and South, was John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859. Brown's subsequent trial and death evoked the image of martyrdom in the North, but southerners saw only the brutal, seemingly psychotic killer who had escaped from Kansas and planned a bloody slave insurrection throughout the lower South. Arming slaves with crude iron staves

would enable them to murder their masters at night in their sleep, a deeply rooted fear among all southern slave owners after the 1790s massacre of white masters by their slaves in Saint-Domingue. Two years earlier, a Presbyterian minister had been forced to leave his church in a small East Tennessee town, Rogersville, because he questioned one of his prominent parishioners for brutally beating two slaves. This 1857 incident would likewise invoke widespread publicity in both competing sections and would be interpreted completely differently by proslavery forces in the South and by abolitionist forces in the North.<sup>2</sup>

Yet such analysis as that of competing images of rival sections greatly oversimplifies the reality of southerners living in border regions such as East Tennessee. Intrasectional attitudes varied in remarkably complex ways and often contained internal contradictory corollaries within them. Antislavery sentiment, as noted by Ezekiel Birdseye, a Connecticut Yankee living in this area during the 1840s, often varied from day to day, depending on their audience, among the same individuals, and sympathy toward particular slaves did not necessarily mean condemnation of the institution per se. Nevertheless, Birdseye frequently commented on the "prevailing public sentiment" among East Tennesseans, which discountenanced both cruelty toward slaves and their condition of servitude.<sup>3</sup>

East Tennessee's exceptionalism to southern patterns of thought is explained by its distinctive history, differing geography, and sense of alienation and inferiority in relation to the rest of the state in the decades leading up to the Civil War, as historian John Inscoe so ably demonstrates. The "lost state of Franklin," the section's first effort to secede from North Carolina, failed miserably between 1784 and 1788. By the early 1840s, the much more successful growth of middle and west Tennessee further embittered an area whose geography of small farms did not lend itself to the plantation economy of the cotton South. Angered over perceived lack of equal treatment in state funding for internal improvements, the section again made an effort to secede from the state in 1842, unsuccessfully. Finally, the presence of an active manumission movement in East Tennessee in the 1820s left a lasting legacy of hostility toward slavery that survived into the 1850s and that partially explains why the section overwhelmingly voted against Tennessee's secession from the federal Union, then made a belated attempt, in two secession conventions at Greeneville and Knoxville in June 1861, to secede from the state itself and form a new state, such as West Virginia would eventually succeed in accomplishing.<sup>4</sup>

But as historian Todd Groce has demonstrated, East Tennessee had numerous slave owners and many adherents to the southern cause, as espoused by leaders such as John C. Calhoun, who demanded that southerners should cease defending slavery as a necessary evil and insisted by the late 1830s that it actually be defended as a positive good. Herein rests the real complexity, and myriad contradictions, of both the political economy and the social attitudes of this beleaguered border section. Staunch defenders of the peculiar institution lived in the same communities and villages throughout East Tennessee with residents who remained antislavery at heart. Practically everyone agreed that abolitionists were ultraists, extremists whose incendiary methods threatened the peace and stability of the country. But almost all other aspects of slavery were subject to individual interpretation and differing responses.<sup>5</sup>

Central to their understanding and attitude toward slavery in both sections was evangelical religion, which historian Richard Carwardine argues was among the principal shapers of American political culture in the nineteenth century. Evangelical Protestantism was at the very core of southern identity, and proslavery scriptural defenses of the peculiar institution quickly assumed paramount importance as southerners responded to mounting abolitionist attacks within the mainstream Protestant churches in the North. Religious schism occurred first among the Presbyterians, who in 1837–38 split into the Old School and New School factions primarily over differences in theology, church constitutional law, and ecclesiastical policy. Although historians disagree about the exact role of slavery in this split, it is indisputable that the peculiar institution played a major role. The New School faction's theology was essentially an effort to liberalize Calvinism, moving toward revivalism as an agency for humankind's freedom to choose its own destiny. In the final analysis, abolitionists in the North were able to win over New Schoolism to the idea that slavery was a sin per se, a concept so subversive to New School southern Presbyterians that they would agree to withdraw from the New School General Assembly at Richmond, Virginia, in August 1857.<sup>6</sup>

Nowhere was the struggle between conservatives and abolitionists in the New School Presbyterian church so desperately fought as in the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS). Founded in 1826 to coordinate domestic missionary work of the Calvinist churches, the AHMS was supported by Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed Dutch, and Associated Reformed denominations, but was predominantly funded and controlled by the New

School Presbyterians after the 1837–38 split. In order to send Presbyterian ministers to the South, moderates within the New School sect insisted that the AHMS remain neutral in regard to the slavery issue. Dissatisfied with this compromise, the Congregational Church in 1846 established the American Missionary Association, which was unequivocal in denouncing slavery as a sin. By 1853, a rival Southern Aid Society had been funded by wealthy patrons in the North who had commercial ties to the South and who wished to challenge the mounting abolitionist tendencies they perceived spreading in the AHMS. Finally, in December 1856, the AHMS capitulated to the inexorable pressure from northern abolitionists and withdrew all support from any southern churches containing slaveholders.<sup>7</sup>

In 1848, the AHMS sent Samuel Sawyer, a young graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York, to Rogersville, Tennessee. The county seat of Hawkins County, Rogersville is located in the northeast corner of the state, just below the Virginia state line. Shaped like a parallelogram, Hawkins County is one of the largest counties in the state, with 570 square miles. It is divided into two almost equal parts by the Holston River, which traverses its entire length. Lying on the north side of the Holston River, and on a major road between Kingsport and Knoxville, Rogersville was prosperous until the completion of the railroad built between Bristol and Chattanooga in 1858, which bypassed it. Rogersville was celebrated as the location of the first newspaper printed in Tennessee, the *Knoxville Gazette*, in 1791. The Presbyterian church to which Sawyer was sent as supply/acting minister, with his salary partially paid by the AHMS, had suffered more than most churches from the bitter split between Presbyterians in 1837–38. It was hoped that the new minister, with his wife and baby accompanying him, could assist in both healing Presbyterianism and strengthening the New School's standing in the area.<sup>8</sup>

According to the 1860 slave census of Hawkins County, there was a total of 311 slave owners and 1,925 slaves in the county. Out of a total of 16,162 people, black and white, slave and free, living in the county, the 1860 population schedule identified 194 as free blacks. The largest single slave owner had 50 slaves, but only a few owners had many slaves, and the large slave owners were concentrated in the Tenth Civil District. Many of these civil districts had very few slaves, and often there was no separate housing for slaves on smaller family farms, leaving the impression that many such slaves lived in the same house with their owner and were treated like household workers or hired field hands. For the very few large slave-

holders, profits from their chattels' labor were evidently tremendous. In an article initially published in the *Springfield (Mass.) Republican*, Mr. Phipps of Hawkins County, Tennessee, was said to have made a gross profit of \$20,000 from his 50 slaves in 1857. He realized a yearly income of \$400 per slave, yet the cost of supporting each slave was not over \$50, according to this article.<sup>9</sup>

The concentration of numerous slaves among a relatively few owners also mirrors the unequal economic distribution of land and the glaring disparity between rich and poor in the cash value of farms and crops in Hawkins County before the Civil War. In an 1857 article, the *Rogersville Times* reported that a great number of white people were actually starving to death in this county due to a lack of corn and wheat. "Our citizens who have grain should look to this thing—not hold back to sell to foreign speculators," the article continued, citing the death of one poor woman and her four small children from starvation. In Hawkins County, ownership of large numbers of slaves was inextricably linked with wealth, class, and status. At the other end of the scale, many small white farmers owned neither slaves nor very much land that could be profitably cultivated, setting the stage for deference toward the wealthy elite in their midst, but also much resentment.<sup>10</sup>

By almost any standard, Sawyer, a native of New York State, appeared to be remarkably successful, finding his work "severe yet pleasant toil" and missionary life "arduous, but delightful." On September 29, 1849, he was ordained by the Holston Presbytery and quickly began to play a leading role within the New School Presbyterian Synod of Tennessee. By 1851, he had been chosen one of the commissioners to the General Assembly from the Holston Presbytery. Energetic and popular, he regularly preached in the outlying communities of Liberty Hill, Mooresburg, and the Kinkead settlement; by 1850, his home church, Second Presbyterian Church of Rogersville, numbered 123 members, with an average weekly attendance of 250 people. Endeavoring to maintain friendly relations with ministers of other denominations, by his second year, he had increased offerings from his own congregation to the point where he seriously considered foregoing supplemental income from the AHMS. One of his parishioners wrote in her diary that "our beloved minister (may we always love him)" was "one whose powers to give comfort at such seasons are not often met with."<sup>11</sup>

Sawyer argued from the beginning of his ministry that he was not an abolitionist, at least, not an "ultraist," as he characterized extremists in the



North who saw slavery as a sin in itself. He basically divided public opinion on this critical issue into three parts. First, there were the fanatics in the North, abolitionists, who refused any compromise and insisted on immediate freedom for all slaves. Second, there were people, mainly white southerners, who could see no evil whatsoever in the institution and whom he characterized as “bigots and worse than fanatics.” Finally, a third and much larger class of people, North and South, among whom he included himself, saw slavery not as an evil per se, but as “having many evils necessarily growing out of it—at least invariably attending it, and therefore they feel it their duty to pray for its removal—to circumscribe it, and to do what they can to get rid of the institution.” He believed the majority of East Tennesseans fell into this last category, but viewed them as “deficient in moral courage,” which made the advance toward emancipation very slow.<sup>12</sup>

Although Sawyer regularly preached to mixed congregations of African Americans and whites, he especially enjoyed preaching once a month to slaves and free blacks alone. At one point, his wife had hired a slave to do her work while she was ill, but Sawyer “concluded to wash our hands in innocence and have nothing to do with supporting the system of American slavery.” Periodically he read to his congregation antislavery materials sent by the AHMS and observed that they “*have never yet objected.*” Even in the heated atmosphere following passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, he insisted that a minister could preach to East Tennesseans against the evils of the peculiar institution if he “has the confidence and love of his people” and clearly shows that “his object is not to abuse and reprove so much as to correct and inform.” He noted no diminution in his congregation’s regard for him, only a stronger attachment because of his “frankness and candor.”<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, as coeditor of the *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness* between 1855 and 1856, Sawyer routinely excoriated attacks against the institution of slavery in numerous northern publications as abolitionist fanaticism that threatened to destroy the union. “We regard all *oppression* as a sin against God, and a gross moral wrong before men,” he argued in 1855, “but a man may sustain the relation of a master and be no oppressor.” The act of oppression against anyone, whether family member or slave, was the actual sin, not slave ownership. Nor were southern Christians apologists for all that took place under the shelter of slavery, he contended, citing familiar abolitionist charges against breaking up slave marriages and separating slave children from their mothers. In arguing that East Tennessee slaves were not op-

pressed, but were allowed to attend church and become church members, Sawyer came dangerously close to being an apologist for slavery, however. His assertions that slaves “seemed contented and happy,” “feed off the fat of the land,” and indeed were “much better cared for, many of them, than their masters,” echoed remarkably similar proslavery arguments that other southerners routinely made in the 1850s to justify their peculiar institution.<sup>14</sup>

In the spring of 1857, a sequence of events occurred in Rogersville that put Sawyer’s convictions about slavery to the ultimate test and led to his resignation on May 22 as minister of the Second Presbyterian Church. According to a statement written by him on July 26, 1857, and verified by two elders of Sawyer’s church, Joseph Hoffmaster and J. R. Johnston, a prominent member of his church, Colonel John Netherland, had a year earlier sold one of his slaves to a Negro trader, ultimately to be sold in Mississippi. This slave, Abe, ran away rather than be separated from his wife and children and lay hidden in the surrounding woods for more than a year. Finally captured that spring, when he was found by some hunters in his hiding place, Abe, it was expected, would be taken quietly to be sold in the Lower South by Mr. Blevins, the slave trader. At this point, however, Colonel Netherland gave his consent to Blevins that Abe be publicly whipped as a lesson for his defiance and as a warning to other potentially errant slaves. Taken in chains by the parsonage to a field just back of the church, he was stripped naked, tied to four saplings, blindfolded so he could not see the blows coming, and given 330 blows by the trader with a leather strap nailed to a wooden handle for the occasion. Blevins warned Abe he would give him 900 lashes unless he confessed who had harbored him during the past year.<sup>15</sup>

A large crowd gathered to witness this spectacle; one sympathetic bystander, from motives of humanity, had placed Abe’s clothes under his stomach to keep him from the rocks and bare ground. It was rumored that the man who whipped Abe was commonly intoxicated, was angry because the slave had escaped from him once before, and performed his task with profane words. Some students from Caldwell College witnessed this scene, along with numerous other citizens of the town, and actually counted the blows. Many left in disgust at the scene after several hours; others went up afterward to examine with revulsion Abe’s bloody body. Plans were made to continue the whipping a second day, but one magistrate, expressing the growing public outrage over this atrocity, stated that if they “had undertaken it the second day, they would not have got through it,” according to

Sawyer's statement. Critical to understanding public opinion on this issue in East Tennessee at the time is the public debate that ensued over Abe's brutal beating. Many were especially outraged by the *public* aspect of the beating, commenting that it was an insult to the town "to bring Mississippi brutalities so close to our doors." Another remarked that if the population of the entire county of Hawkins had been present, it would have made five hundred lifelong enemies to the institution of slavery.<sup>16</sup>

It was widely rumored in Rogersville that Colonel Netherland's brother-in-law had stated publicly that the colonel was equally to blame as the slave trader for the whipping of Abe because he had sanctioned it. According to Sawyer, the community had not recovered from this shocking spectacle before they were agitated again by a rumor "of a still more melancholy instance of cruelty." Netherland had taken an old gray-headed slave named Anthony, who had helped nurse him in childhood, "*a servant reputed as generally dutiful and exemplary,*" and given him to the same slave trader, Blevins, to be whipped because of his suspicion that Anthony knew where Abe was hiding and had actually assisted the runaway. Blevins took Anthony to Bean's Station, another town, and, finding a stable on the public highway, stripped him naked, stretched him on a plank, tied his arms together under the plank, strapped his feet to a post, and tied his head forward to a brace, so the hapless elderly Negro could not move in the slightest to evade the coming blows. Then the slave trader proceeded to whip Anthony with a carpenter's handsaw, which raised large blisters, burst them, and cut his skin into pieces, "*a Mississippi way of whipping,*" Sawyer editorialized.<sup>17</sup>

This beating occurred on Sunday and continued until "the neighbors closed their doors, shut down their windows, and dropped their curtains, to keep from hearing the negro's cries for mercy," Sawyer continued. The women of the community "cried out against it," and one man said "if it was not stopped he would return him to court." Finally the landlord, after Anthony had received three hundred blows, went to Blevins and told him he must put an end to it, "that he himself was liable to indictment for whipping a slave, even on a Sunday." Blevins was angered at having been forced to stop, after he had hired a little boy to get him a bundle of whips to continue beating Anthony's now-raw flesh. Manacled the elderly slave, he left in disgust at the Bean's Station people and went on to Rutledge, the county seat of neighboring Grainger County. Anthony reportedly had two fits or spasms from the effects of the beating, one in the buggy en route and another when the irons were taken off him in the jail in Rutledge. "Hypocrite



John Netherland (1808–1887). Colonial Dames of America Portraits in Tennessee Painted before 1866 Collection, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville.

fits, of course,” Blevins asserted, and he proceeded the next day to whip Anthony in jail, despite the opposition of the jailor and his superiors. Taking advantage of the absence of the jailor, Blevins took three sticks from a loom and proceeded to whip Anthony once again until he confessed Abe’s whereabouts. Sawyer believed Anthony did not know the location of his fellow slave, a later point of contention. Finally, the returning jailor demanded that the whippings cease in his jail, and Anthony remained there a week until his wounds had healed sufficiently so that he could be allowed to return home.<sup>18</sup>

Both Anthony and his master, Colonel John Netherland, were members of Sawyer’s church. Both church members and members of other denominations, slaveholders and nonslaveholders alike, protested against

these brutal beatings and demanded that a session (a meeting of the local Presbyterian congregation) be called to consider the “wisest and best course to pursue with reference to this matter.” No charge was preferred against Netherland, but as it was commonly believed he was a high-minded and honorable man, it was preferred that he come before the session himself and “relieve himself of all unjust censure.” An elder was duly appointed to see Netherland, tell him about the session’s concerns, and ask him to come before the session on the following Sabbath. Sawyer believed that “could he have done this, and had he done it, the breach would have been healed and the church need not have been torn in twain.” Netherland’s family and friends, however, “took violent grounds against” even the meeting of the session to consider this subject, and many church members as a consequence refused to ever hear Sawyer preach again. Many feared that Netherland’s “standing and natural pride would keep him” from appearing before the session to defend himself. Netherland reportedly argued that it was exclusively the right of a master to correct his slave, regardless of how cruel or inhumane such treatment might be, and that consequently “the minister or session, or church had no right to inquire into it.”<sup>19</sup>

The Rogersville delegate to the called meeting of the Holston Presbytery at Jonesborough represented this entire case, which had caused such bitter division in the local congregation, in an extremely prejudicial fashion, according to Sawyer. The delegate argued “that the ground they had taken against their minister at Rogersville was, that slavery was to be ignored altogether in the action of a church session—that as a judicature they had no cognizance whatever of even evils growing out of the abuse of the relation of master and slave.” The moderator reminded him that this position was “strange and indefensible,” pointing out that the *New York Observer* had praised the South by stating that “there was not a church in the South but would fearlessly discipline a church member for cruelties to his or her slave.” Sawyer realized he had lost the battle, however, and subsequently resigned as minister of the Rogersville Second Presbyterian Church on May 22, 1857, to avoid further division. His resignation was accepted, with one dissenting vote, and a motion was adopted stating that Sawyer had labored in their midst for nearly nine years “with great industry, zeal, devotion, and success as a minister of the gospel of reconciliation.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite his resignation from the Rogersville church, Sawyer was still a member in good standing of the Holston Presbytery, a fact corroborated by his presence, and actual service as clerk, or secretary, at a called meeting of

that body in Jonesborough on July 14, 1857. This group drew up a statement regarding their views on slavery—that is, that it was not a sin per se, that Christians should strive for its removal in the spirit of the gospel, and that Christians living in the midst of slavery should avoid “perpetual agitation of this subject.” These propositions were unanimously adopted, including a recommendation to attend a proposed convention in Washington, DC (later changed to Richmond, Virginia), on August 27, to encourage and labor for the formation of what, in essence, would become a new southern Presbyterian Church. In response to the call made at this Richmond convention, representatives from twelve presbyteries and four synods (Virginia, Tennessee, West Tennessee, and Mississippi) would organize “The United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.” in April 1858, thus separating primarily over the issue of slavery. Sawyer had dutifully traveled to Richmond in late August 1857 to attend what would later be called the Richmond Convention, but he was approached by several prominent members and requested to withdraw his credentials because his presence might “bring up an exciting question.” He remonstrated with these officials “on the ground that he was a minister in good standing in the Presbytery; that his credentials were genuine; that the Convention had no business with local differences.” Colonel Netherland was also in attendance as a delegate at this convention, along with a prominent slave trader from Rogersville, but they were not asked to leave.<sup>21</sup>

Although Sawyer agreed to leave the Richmond Convention without further remonstrance, he had in the meantime written a lengthy statement detailing the whole history of the brutal beating of Colonel Netherland’s slaves Abe and Anthony. Twelve hundred copies of this statement were printed by James B. G. Kinsloe and Charles A. Rice, publishers of the *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, who later claimed that Sawyer through “misrepresentations and fraud” had persuaded the compositors to print it. They destroyed eleven hundred copies when they discovered that “its character was *entirely different* from what we were lead to suppose,” but Sawyer had already left with one hundred copies, which he proceeded to send to various northern newspapers. Netherland purportedly told the printer that he was liable to indictment for a felony for printing these copies, but Sawyer consulted the state’s attorney, who concluded it contained no inflammatory matter that could possibly sustain such an indictment. Another friend of Sawyer’s, one of the judges of the Tennessee Supreme Court, agreed that “all they could do was to answer it if they could.” So angry was Colonel

Netherland over this unfavorable publicity that almost a year later, on August 3, 1858, long after Sawyer had left for the North, he persuaded the Holston Presbytery to depose Sawyer from the ministry in absentia on grounds of “contumacy.”<sup>22</sup>

John Netherland (1808–87) was one of the wealthiest and most prominent lawyers in East Tennessee. Born in Virginia, he had moved with his family at an early age to Sullivan County, where he was educated by Samuel Doak and licensed to practice law in 1829. Marrying the daughter of a prominent judge, John Augustine McKinney, he moved in 1837 to Hawkins County near Rogersville, where he built his home, “Rosemont.” He served in both the house and the senate of the Tennessee General Assembly between 1833 and 1853 and ran as the unsuccessful Whig candidate for governor in 1859 against Isham G. Harris, the Democratic candidate who later led the state out of the Union in 1861. He was wonderfully entertaining as a trial lawyer, one of his legal contemporaries remarking that probably “no other lawyer of equal reputation ever cared so little for book law as Mr. Netherland,” but conceding that “no other lawyer who knew so little law ever was so successful.” Clearly, Netherland ideally fits the pattern so carefully analyzed by Bertram Wyatt-Brown of a southern gentleman whose whole conduct was determined by the code of honor. In a culture like that of the old South, where a person’s reputation was vitally important and was determined largely by his contemporaries, Netherland could not allow Sawyer’s attack against his character to go unanswered or unchallenged.<sup>23</sup>

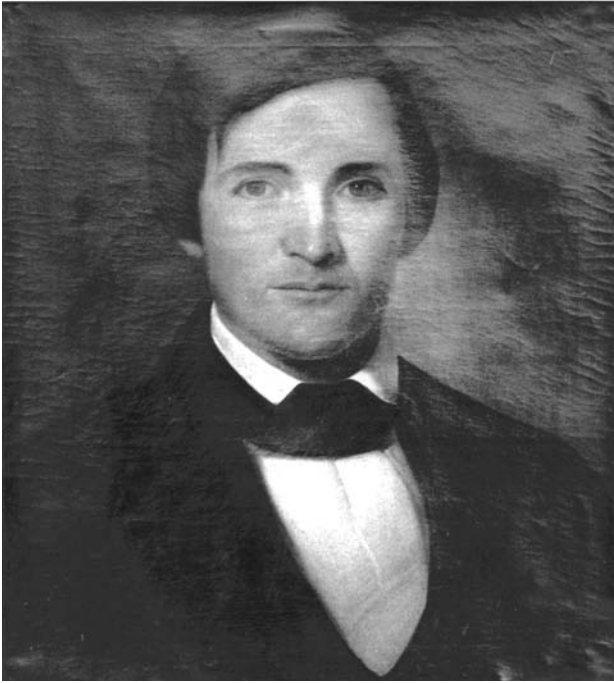
Like the fine courtroom lawyer he was, Netherland devised a counter-attack against Sawyer’s statement that was cleverly designed to persuade his immediate audience in Tennessee and the larger South. Legally, he was undeniably acting within his rights as a master. He certainly well understood as a practicing attorney that Tennessee statutory law permitted a master to virtually beat his slave to death under two conditions. If the slave were resisting, or if the master were administering “moderate correction,” there were no limits to the physical violence that could be involved in the punishment. The central problem Netherland faced lay in the incontrovertible public brutality surrounding the severe beatings of two of his slaves, which had so outraged the local community. Nevertheless, in his own statement, or rebuttal, published on September 15, 1857, in the *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, he led his attack by focusing on destroying the characters of both slaves, Abe and Anthony. Abe had been sold to him initially by his good friend Reverend Frederick A. Ross, a famous proslavery Presbyterian

minister, but owing to this slave's "drunkenness, gambling and laziness," he had been forced to sell him to Mr. Blevins, from whom Abe had escaped in the fall of 1855. During the next year, Abe had been harbored and fed at the Female College in Rogersville "day and night," unknown to the president or staff, by Anthony, Netherland's slave hired to work at the college. A large number of these innocent young ladies from Tennessee and adjoining states had thereby been placed in some danger, according to this narrative.<sup>24</sup>

In the spring of 1856, Abe concealed himself in a den in the woods, within sight of the town, where he continued to be harbored and fed by other Negroes in the area. Shortly before Netherland had sold Abe, the slave had taken up with "a free mulatto prostitute, by whom he had no children." After Abe escaped Blevins and went into hiding, this woman "took up with another free Negro, and was perhaps married to him." In June 1856, Abe encountered his former innamorata and her new husband and was instantly infuriated. Armed with a pistol and a large butcher knife, he immediately attacked the hapless couple, chasing the man until he knocked him down with a stone, leaving him unconscious. Abe then returned to the woman and beat her over the head with his pistol, thereby cutting her to the skull in several places. Afterward he tied her up and raped her, then returned to cut the throat of her husband, who had in the meantime escaped. The poor mulatto woman also managed to untie herself and escape, then ran into Rogersville, where both she and her husband sounded the alarm. Netherland certainly knew the immediate reaction of a southern audience to the threat of sexual attack by a black slave and consequently asserted disingenuously that in Rogersville the "females in the neighborhood were afraid to pass from house to house." The obvious fallacy in spreading this rumor, however, lay in the reality that southern anger was kindled only when a *white* woman was raped by a slave, a fundamental rule in the southern code of honor that Netherland certainly knew. It was actually unclear in Tennessee law whether or to what extent sexual violence directed against black women, free or enslaved, was even punishable.<sup>25</sup>

Although "many citizens of the town turned out to arrest the villain," Abe again managed to escape, Netherland continued. Stopped on the road by a white man with a rifle, he refused to surrender and was shot twice but still managed to escape to the next town, where he was harbored by the servants of "one of the most respectable ladies in the state," who, being in bad health, never went down into her own cellar. Again he was discovered, was captured, and managed to escape. Finally, his hiding place was discov-





Portrait of John L. Blevins (1817–1888). Colonial Dames of America Portraits in Tennessee Painted before 1866 Collection, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville.

ered by two slaves, who informed a white man, and thereafter he was captured and brought to Rogersville, where he was delivered to Mr. Blevins, his owner since the fall of 1855. Netherland specifically stated that Abe had never been “blindfolded and cruelly whipped.” But he did acknowledge that Blevins with his full approval beat him “not equal in severity to 39 lashes with a cow hide.” He did admit to allowing Blevins to whip his slave Anthony until he had confessed the location of Abe’s hideout. He also conceded that Blevins whipped Anthony “at Bean’s Station very severely” and later gave him blows from a small wooden slat, whereupon the slave confessed where Abe was hiding. Here the narrative is extremely ambiguous, because Netherland asserts that he consented to Blevins’s beating Anthony “a few days before Abe’s apprehension.” Earlier Netherland had stated that Abe had been discovered by two Negroes, which subsequently led to his final cap-

ture, but here he adroitly concludes that Anthony's ultimate confession corroborated the actual location where Abe had indeed been discovered!<sup>26</sup>

After having characterized Abe as a psychotic rapist, Netherland turned his attention to destroying the reputation of his elderly slave Anthony. This proved to be a far more difficult task, because Anthony was a member in good standing of the Second Presbyterian Church of Rogersville, along with his master. He categorically denied that Anthony was "dutiful and exemplary" or that he had ever been his childhood nurse. He asserted that Anthony actually had "some notoriety in the region" and that he had been a stubborn, disrespectful slave owned by six previous masters, four of whom had sold him for his "bad conduct." Why Netherland had bought such a slave, who, he stated, had appealed to him by letter to buy him while he was in jail, is a mystery in itself. The crux of Netherland's case against Anthony was seriously compromised by Sawyer's charge that he had consented to have his elderly slave whipped only on the "suspicion" that he knew Abe's location. Netherland now confidently claimed that he had "full proof" that Anthony did indeed know where Abe was hiding, although he never offered any evidence of this proof in his statement. It also seems highly improbable that the Female College would hire anyone as a servant who had a questionable character, and indeed, Netherland was highly culpable by his own standards for knowingly sending such an apparent wolf in among the sheep.<sup>27</sup>

Netherland's next line of defense was simply to portray Sawyer as an abolitionist, unconcerned with the real truth and interested only in giving a sensational, if distorted, story to serve the purposes of the northern abolitionist press, "a tissue of lies from the beginning to the end." In light of this line of argument, it is especially noteworthy to examine specific instances where Sawyer had allegedly lied. Netherland especially bridled at the charge that the magistrate had said that "if they undertook to whip the Negro again that they would not get through with it." Public opinion was perhaps the most sensitive issue to an ambitious politician, and Netherland was loath to admit that there was any such adverse community reaction to the beatings of these slaves. He also taxed Sawyer with his assertion that he had defended whipping slaves on "chattel ground" and denied ever having believed in this doctrine, which, he claimed, was actually a fabrication of the abolitionists. Nor did Netherland allow that "any such doctrine prevails in the South." He then accused Sawyer of lying when he asserted that he had refused to appear before the session; Netherland actually claimed he had

never even been requested to do so. Finally, he ended with a blanket ad hominem attack against the minister, stating that “many in this community have charged Sawyer with lying for years.”<sup>28</sup>

Reactions North and South to both Sawyer’s statement and Netherland’s rebuttal predictably reflected the growing sectional tensions dividing the United States in 1857. Both sections perceived only their own preconceptions and values and seemed to welcome yet another opportunity to denigrate their disagreeing countrymen in the opposite camp. Southern opinion was led by the irascible and vituperative editor of the *Knoxville Whig*, who was well known for his support of Whig politicians like his friend Netherland, his hatred of the abolitionists, and his earlier battles as a Methodist minister against Presbyterianism. In an article of August 8, 1857, in his own newspaper, William G. (“Parson”) Brownlow castigated Sawyer for using inflammatory language irresponsibly in a slaveholding community: “It is an outrage that ought not to be tolerated.” He went on to lament that there were too many of “these vile incendiaries, Abolitionists, and cut-throats in the South, *in disguise*, sowing the seeds of discord, discontent and disunion,” especially those “under a pretence of ‘preaching Christ and Him crucified.’” He had previously noted Sawyer for several years publishing highly offensive antislavery articles in the *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, thus dismissing him as yet another predictable northern abolitionist.<sup>29</sup>

In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, responding to an editorial in that paper on September 5, 1857, Brownlow attempted to link in the public mind the controversy between Sawyer and Netherland over beating two slaves with a more serious episode that had occurred several years earlier, in Cocke County, Tennessee. The *Times* editorial had made reference to a thousand citizens who “assembled in cold blood and burnt a Negro alive at the stake.” The slave in question, a Negro man twenty-two years old, had murdered his master, Mr. Moore, by chopping his head off with an ax, and then bashed in the head of Mrs. Moore while she slept beside her husband. Then the slave raped and murdered Mrs. Moore’s younger sister in an adjoining bedroom. Had he been there, Brownlow asserted with his characteristic rhetorical hyperbole, “we should have taken a part, and even suggested the pinching of pieces out of him with red-hot pincers, the cutting off of a limb at a time, and then burning them all in a heap.” Thus, in its not so subtle form, this letter to the editor of the *New York Times* was clearly intended to demonstrate to a largely racist American audience,

North and South, that violence against slaves was *occasionally* justified. By implication, the violence against Netherland's slaves was also justified under the circumstances, in Brownlow's estimation. Like Netherland, Brownlow was extraordinarily adept at manipulating popular prejudices to suit his own ends, regardless of the untruth of either his assumptions or the corollary false analogies attached.<sup>30</sup>

Sawyer's statement quickly became a cause célèbre in northern newspapers, forming as it did such excellent grist for abolitionist propaganda mills. The publication of Netherland's rebuttal shortly thereafter presented a splendid opportunity to compare the two statements, and "Deacon-Colonel Netherland," as he came to be referred to ubiquitously, suffered in contrast because of the arrogance of his tone and the numerous inconsistencies in his own statement. The *American Presbyterian* noted that Sawyer's views on slavery were "the old views formerly universal in the Presbyterian Church," as "plentiful as blackberries" before the rise of either abolitionism or proslavery, but that now such views were very rare in the South. Boston's *Liberator* characterized Sawyer himself as a "weak and inconsistent man," who made no objection to slavery itself, but did reprobate its cruelty to its victims. Especially did the *Liberator* deplore his ready acquiescence of his seat at the Richmond convention, "a position far more commanding than the pulpit from which to make his protest against cruelty to slaves, and to incorporate reform," where he had both a legitimate forum and a moral responsibility as a minister of the Gospel to express his views. Sawyer's failure to recognize that violence under the guise of discipline was the cornerstone of slavery, however, was his biggest mistake, according to the *Liberator*. This lack of awareness had accordingly almost inadvertently caused him to fling a "firebrand into the quiet slaveholding community in which he lived."<sup>31</sup>

Deacon-Colonel Netherland's statement provided "a succession of point-blank contradictions," according to the *Liberator*. Netherland had accused Sawyer of being a liar, but if the minister had misrepresented the beatings of the two slaves, he must have been mad "to devise a roorback which so many people were in a position to refute," because he was writing about events "of which all his neighbors were cognizant." Netherland himself had specifically verified the essential tale of the beatings, noting that Anthony had been flogged "very severely" at Bean's Station. If the slave Abe were indeed incorrigible, this was "more discreditable to his former master," the Reverend Frederick A. Ross, leader of the proslavery Presbyterians in

the South. On the other hand, the *Liberator* pointed out, “this depraved wretch was fed, sheltered and concealed by the neighbors, white and black, which affords pretty good evidence that he was popular among them.” Netherland’s assertion that he had never himself whipped a grown Negro in his life struck the editors as particularly specious: “Pray is it the custom of Southern gentlemen to do their own flogging?” Finally, the *Liberator* charged Netherland with assisting in the invention of a lie to his slave Anthony that he was to be substituted for Abe and sent south in Abe’s place if he did not confess his location.<sup>32</sup>

No southern audience was likely to be persuaded by these arguments, of course, any more than a northern audience would likely be amenable to Parson Brownlow’s tirade. By 1857, each section had a different set of values and presumptions regarding the debate over slavery, and a reasonable dialogue based on shared assumptions was no longer possible. But what about the people of East Tennessee? What does this whole sorry episode reveal about the inhabitants of Rogersville, Hawkins County, and the surrounding region? The key to understanding their reaction lies in the character and personality of Samuel Sawyer. Contrary to Parson Brownlow’s charge, he was not an abolitionist, and he was not moving closer to an abolitionist position during the latter part of his career as minister of the Rogersville Second Presbyterian Church. A careful examination of Sawyer’s own writings, both his correspondence with the AHMS and his numerous articles in the *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, clearly demonstrates the fact that he was becoming even more conservative and felt quite at home in the South. Time and again, he blasted northern abolitionists as reckless incendiaries and extremists and reasserted his conviction that slavery in itself was not a sin. In a revealing letter to David B. Coe at the AHMS in October 1855, Sawyer actually appeared to take sides against the AHMS for its increasingly anti-slavery stance and threatened that because its policies might prevent his church from assisting a slave-owning minister, his congregation must cease all relations with the AHMS in the future.<sup>33</sup>

Far from becoming radicalized by northern abolitionism, Sawyer seemed to be becoming increasingly more conservative and prosouthern in his outlook in the years just before the 1857 incident with Netherland’s slaves. Scarcely a month after that incident, in the minutes of the Holston Presbytery he took on July 14, 1857, as clerk and fully participating member of that meeting, he, along with the presbytery’s other members, resolved that their delegates to the forthcoming Richmond convention would “be

instructed to encourage and labor for the formation of a National Assembly," which would in effect form a separate church. This group also unanimously resolved that "slavery is not necessarily sinful, or a *sin per se*," but neither was it a "permanent or desirable institution." Nor did Sawyer appear to leave his church readily. In his letter of resignation, dated May 22, 1857, he said that he "need not refer to the painful strong ties which have bound us together for nearly nine years, nor allude to the painfulness of a lasting separation." Indeed, he had become "so attached to this people and had received so many evidences of regard from them" laboring for them that he cherished the wish "that as this was my first, it might be my lifelong, field of labor." He concluded by asking the congregation's forgiveness for "whatever real or supposed imprudencies I have been betrayed into, whatever unintentional wrongs I have done."<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the question becomes one of agency, whether Sawyer himself was primarily responsible for the sequence of events that resulted in his resignation as minister. In this regard, Sawyer's initial statement offers strong internal evidence that he was pushed along by the force of overwhelming public antagonism against the *public* beating of Netherland's two slaves. Neither Sawyer nor Netherland was actually present at these beatings, but the former's narrative of events repeatedly shows marked public outrage, as exemplified by such minutely detailed and graphic accounts from numerous witnesses in the community. The narrative itself is too full of such telling details, such as a sympathetic bystander placing Abe's clothes under him before the first beating. Descriptions of these reactions of the crowd to the brutal floggings abound, reaching a climax when one magistrate opined that a second day of such floggings would not have been permitted by the public in Rogersville.<sup>35</sup>

Likewise, Anthony's whipping at Bean's Station continued until "the women of the place cried out against it," one man threatened to take Blevins to court to stop it, and finally the landlord stopped him, arguing that he himself was "liable to indictment for whipping a slave, even on a Sunday." Even the jailor in the neighboring town of Rutledge, Grainger County, protested against the further beating of Anthony. Blevins, the slave trader who whipped Anthony, might have shaken "the dust off of his feet in disgust against the Bean's Station people," but everywhere "the horrible details of this whipping inflamed the public feeling of indignation against slave trading cruelties." It seems quite clear that various indignant neighbors and church members regaled Sawyer with innumerable, horrific accounts of

these brutal whippings and demanded that he at least make some inquiry into the matter. Both Netherland and his slave Anthony were members of Sawyer's congregation, after all, and he undoubtedly finally yielded to the frantic importunities of his own parishioners. Even proslavery members of his congregation who were friends of the Netherlands, like Eliza Fain, were profoundly shocked by these events. "Our church is in what I consider a soul destroying condition," she wrote in her diary on August 2, 1857. Eliza was still agonizing over her beloved minister's resignation a year later: "It is with difficulty that I can bring myself to think that he is not a Christian," she lamented, "how strangely and mysteriously has that man acted." Additionally, Sawyer reported that members of other churches, "interested in the cause of a common Christianity, spoke in the same way. This was the feeling of slaveholders as well as non-slaveholders."<sup>36</sup>

Violence against slaves was thus the catalyst in gauging the limits of public opinion in East Tennessee, even as late as 1857, in regard to what most people considered acceptable behavior regarding the treatment of their enslaved brethren. Reverend Andrew Blackburn, one of Sawyer's close friends and editor of the *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, wrote a blistering article attacking slave traders in December 1857, noting that formerly "the Negro-driver was a sort of monster, who was unworthy to be esteemed or treated as a gentleman." But of late, politicians were only too willing to "have winked at the thing" and to allow the Negro trader a position in respectable society. "Cruelty and shame are thus holding up their heads, and bidding defiance to the public sentiment of the country," he argued. "The devil never persuaded men to engage in a more wicked business than driving Negroes," Blackburn concluded. "Money is his only object, and if he may but get money, he does not hesitate to commit any sin, from crushing out every kindly feeling in his own heart, up to virtual murder itself." Likewise, violence against slaves had represented the fatal flaw in Sawyer's own previous defense of slavery as not being a sin per se. The peculiar institution itself could not exist without violence as a means of coercion and control, either threatened or realized. What northern abolitionists were trying to point out was simply the undeniable fact that the very institution of slavery was inherently *oppressive*.<sup>37</sup>

In the final analysis, however, it would be a critical mistake to assume that public opinion in East Tennessee in opposition to violence against slaves was not strong enough to prevent Samuel Sawyer from being forced to resign as minister from his church in Rogersville. What actually cost him

his job was directly challenging a tight-knit group of wealthy men who dominated and virtually controlled all aspects of local community life—political, social, economic, and religious. John Netherland was the acknowledged leader of this group, which included family names like McKinney, Ross, and Kyle and later broadened to include political allies like Thomas A. R. Nelson, William G. Brownlow, and Andrew Johnson. Defeated at the apex of his career in 1859, when he ran as the Whig candidate for governor against Isham G. Harris, Netherland, along with his fellow Whigs, regarded the mounting agitation over the extension of slavery into the western territories after the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 as the primary reason for this defeat. Harris and his fellow Democrats increasingly used the defense of southern rights to defeat Whig reliance upon economic issues, like Netherland's campaign promise to stabilize the currency through various banking reforms.<sup>38</sup>

In the bitter debates after the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 over whether Tennessee should secede from the Union, Netherland and his group tirelessly canvassed the eastern portion of the state, urging citizens to remain loyal to the United States. Historians have debated their reasons for doing so, but a strong and growing sense of alienation from middle and west Tennessee, as well as their hostility to the plantation economy and so-called fire-eaters, or rabid secessionists from the lower South, seems the most probable explanation. After Fort Sumter, when Tennessee did secede from the Union in a second secession referendum on June 8, 1861, this group immediately tried to organize a separate government in East Tennessee, which would remain loyal to the federal Union. Netherland gave an important speech on the convention's first day and was one of three delegates, along with Oliver P. Temple and James P. McDowell, chosen by the Greeneville Convention, June 17–20, to present to the state legislature a memorial requesting permission to form a separate state.<sup>39</sup>

If the national Union were dissoluble, however, the state legislature of Tennessee refused to admit any possibility that the state itself might legitimately also be divided, and dissatisfied Unionists in the eastern portion of the state were forced to remain against their will in the Confederacy until liberated by federal forces in 1863. John Netherland remained Unionist throughout the war, although at one point he had to make humiliating concessions to the Confederates to escape arrest or at least not be actively persecuted. Slavery, or the continuing debate over it in the hands of his political enemies, seemed to have thwarted him at every turn. But he none-



theless publicly protested against the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and remained proslavery in his attitudes throughout the war, regardless of his Unionist stance. He was ever a realist, however, and his political instincts allowed him to survive the war and reemerge afterward protected by the patronage of his old friend and political ally Andrew Johnson. He served as a member of Tennessee's constitutional convention in 1870, rewriting the state's prewar governing document, and was offered in 1867 a diplomatic post as U.S. minister to Bolivia by President Johnson, which he declined.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the best key to understanding how violence toward slaves affected public opinion in East Tennessee lies in the character and personality of the slave trader who actually beat Netherland's slaves. Although Netherland's published rebuttal to Sawyer's accusation represented this man as an almost anonymous and transient slave trader, he was actually one of Netherland's very best friends and closest political allies. John Lucian Blevins was born on July 24, 1817, in Hawkins County, the illegitimate son of John Blevins. Raised by James P. McCarthy's family, he was employed as a driver for the Great Eastern and Western Stage Lines, operated by Absalom and William Kyle of Walnut Hill, in the same county. James P. McCarthy was a nephew of Absalom Kyle. At the age of eighteen, Blevins eloped with the sixteen-year-old daughter of his employer, Minerva Leanna Kyle, marrying her on October 29, 1835, to the consternation and outrage of her family. Minerva's father initially refused even to see them after their elopement. Described by later friends as "well-educated," Blevins briefly taught school and in March 1838 was elected clerk of Hawkins County, a position he had held by appointment since the resignation of the previous clerk the preceding October. In 1846 he operated a tavern at Rogersville, and by 1849 he had been elected clerk of the Bank of Tennessee in that town. The president of the board at this bank was his father-in-law, Absalom Kyle, who had by now become reconciled to his daughter's husband. Clearly the assistance of his wife's family made Blevins's rapid rise to wealth both possible and comparatively easy.<sup>41</sup>

Blevins's great friendship with Netherland is perhaps best indicated by the fact that he named one of his sons John Netherland Blevins. Although he himself never belonged to any church, his wife, Minerva, attended the Presbyterian church with her good friends the Netherlands. Real wealth, however, came through slave trading, and Blevins bought a large cotton plantation in Mississippi to facilitate this commerce, soon accumulating large tracts of land in both that state and Tennessee. He owned a string of

race horses that were raced from Baltimore to New Orleans, befitting his role as a southern plantation owner and cotton grower. By 1860, Blevins had real estate valued at \$47,000 and personal property valued at \$127,000, most of which were slaves. His extreme wealth undoubtedly partially accounts for his arrogant attitude toward the community's reaction to his beatings of Netherland's slaves. To the vast majority of Hawkins County citizens, who owned neither slaves nor much property, Blevins must have seemed the very epitome of the arrogant planter class of the lower South, which they despised.<sup>42</sup>

Between 1854 and 1856, the Blevins family had moved to Aberdeen, Monroe County, in northeastern Mississippi, where they had relatives. In 1856 they moved back to Hawkins County, and Blevins bought out his mother-in-law's dower interest in the Kyle family home at Walnut Hill, known as the Mansion House. The opprobrious characterization in Sawyer's statement of the types of instruments and weapons used to beat Netherland's slaves in 1857 as "Mississippi methods" doubtless stemmed from the community's knowledge and assumption that Blevins's residence in that state had honed his skills in the best procedures for punishing disobedient chattels. Yet despite his evident identification with the southern planter class, Blevins joined his friend Netherland at the Knoxville and Greeneville conventions in June 1861 to protest Tennessee's secession from the Union and to devise separate statehood for East Tennessee. However, Blevins and his brother-in-law, William C. Kyle, hedged their bets at the Greeneville Convention by insisting that a written protest of their disagreement with the actions of this convention be entered into the formal minutes of the proceedings. What specifically they objected to was not stated, but clearly both men wished to escape future opprobrium from the new Confederate government.<sup>43</sup>

Blevins nevertheless remained Unionist throughout the Civil War, although his eldest son, Kyle Blevins, became a major in the Confederate Army. Losing property, slaves, and horses valued at over \$100,000 during the war, Blevins was shot in the foot by a Confederate straggler trying to steal a horse near the end of that conflict and walked with a limp from this wound for the rest of his life. He, however, maintained his political ties with both Netherland's group and Andrew Johnson throughout the war. As a consequence, after the defeat of the Confederacy, President Johnson appointed him U.S. marshal of the Northern District in Mississippi, a post he held from 1866 to 1868. Nothing could be more ironic, perhaps, than an archetypal slave trader, who had actually owned a cotton plantation in the

same district of Mississippi before the war, being appointed to reconstruct this area in 1866, but Blevins was nothing if not resourceful and flexible regarding the expediency of his political allegiances. He appointed his brother-in-law, L. N. Kyle, an ex-Confederate captain, as his deputy in this position and by all accounts enjoyed conspicuous success.<sup>44</sup>

The actual fate of the two slaves in question, Abe and Anthony, lies hidden in obscurity. An article in the *Liberator* claimed in 1865 that Nethland's elderly slave, Anthony, had actually died from the "moderate correction" administered to him with a handsaw, but none of the articles or accounts penned at the time of the incident, in 1857, mentions this fact. Abe, the runaway who had been purchased by John Lucian Blevins, in all probability was sold much farther south, as his owner had previously threatened. Samuel Sawyer served as chaplain in the U.S. Army, Forty-seventh Indiana Infantry, between 1861 and 1864. As an agent for the Presbyterian Committee on Home Missions from 1864 to 1866, he actually returned to Rogersville to assist in reorganizing the Holston Presbytery to be loyal to the federal government. His triumph was bittersweet, however, because Presbyterians remained more bitterly divided in East Tennessee than they had been before the war. One of his most admiring church members before the war, Eliza Fain, an ardent supporter of the Confederate cause, now in 1865 reviled him for "wild fanaticism" because northern Presbyterians characterized ministers who had supported secession as "grievous sinners against God." After serving as an agent for Maryville College between 1866 and 1868, Sawyer returned to the North, serving a variety of churches as minister in New Jersey, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana before his death in Indianapolis on May 23, 1902.<sup>45</sup>

In the 1857 catalog of Caldwell College, thanks were duly rendered to Samuel Sawyer upon his resignation for his "great zeal and fidelity" as professor of literature. Among the names of the trustees listed for this ephemeral institution, which did not survive past 1858, were men like John Caldwell, Seth A. J. Lucky, and John R. McKinney, all of whom had been actively engaged in the antislavery movement with Ezekiel Birdseye a decade earlier, in the 1840s. Indeed, John Caldwell, one of Birdseye's best friends, always fervent in his opposition to slavery from an early date, had actually given ten thousand dollars to found Caldwell College. What had happened to this movement to end slavery in Tennessee by the time Sawyer was forced to resign as pastor from his church in Rogersville? As a political movement it was moribund, victim of the successful characterization of

abolitionism as an incendiary and morbidly irresponsible form of extremism that threatened both southern prosperity and the federal Union.<sup>46</sup>

Yet the basic abhorrence toward the peculiar institution, the sense of guilt and moral revulsion it triggered in most nonslaveholding East Tennesseans, continued as a subterranean stream of conscience, just below the surface of the political rhetoric raging between North and South during the 1850s. In some respects, it was a classic example of what political scientists today regard as latent public opinion. The brutal beatings of Colonel Netherland's slaves in 1857 by his friend John Lucian Blevins triggered a brief outcropping of this opinion. The secession referendums Tennessee held in February and June 1861 would finally bring it clearly to the surface, when East Tennesseans voted overwhelmingly *not* to leave the federal Union. Neither does the very able political leadership of men like Parson Brownlow, John Netherland, T. A. R. Nelson, Horace Maynard, or Andrew Johnson completely explain the region's determination to remain within the Union. Nor does the section's historic sense of alienation and separatism from the rest of Tennessee and from the larger South fully account for this decisive plebiscite. If their latent antislavery sensibilities are factored into this extraordinarily complex political mixture as a catalyst, however, the vote of the majority of East Tennesseans in 1861 makes perfect sense.

## Notes

1. Merton L. Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and Their Allies, 1619–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 177–242; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Dwight L. Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961); C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960); William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, vol. 1, *Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); William W. Freehling, *The Reintegration of American History: Slavery and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery* (New York: Pantheon, 1965); and Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

2. Paul Finkelman, ed., *His South Goes Marching On: Responses to John Brown and the Harpers Ferry Raid* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995);

Franny Nudelman, *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, and the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); Merrill D. E. Peterson, *John Brown: The Legend Revisited* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848–1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Edward Renehan, *The Secret Six: The True Tale of the Men Who Conspired with John Brown* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995); David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery and Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); "Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention," *American Presbyterian* (Philadelphia), Aug. 20, 1857. For southern guilt over slavery, see Gaines M. Foster, "Guilt over Slavery: A Historiographical Analysis," *Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 4 (1990): 665–94.

3. Durwood Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South: Ezekiel Birdseye on Slavery, Capitalism, and Separate Statehood in East Tennessee, 1841–1846* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 26–86. See also John C. Inscoe, ed., *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001); Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s–1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); and Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson, eds., *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

4. John C. Inscoe, *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 103–23. See also Paul H. Bergeron, *Antebellum Politics in Tennessee* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982); Kevin T. Barksdale, *The Lost State of Franklin: America's First Secession* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009); Jonathan M. Atkins, *Parties, Politics, and the Sectional Conflict in Tennessee, 1832–1861* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters, Slavery, and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Oliver P. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Co., 1899); Robert Tracy McKenzie, *Lincolmites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860–1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

5. W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860–1870* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999). See also William B. Hesseltine, ed., *Dr. J. G. M. Ramsey: Autobiography and Letters* (Nashville:

Tennessee Historical Commission, 1954); Thomas William Humes, *The Loyal Mountaineers of East Tennessee* (Knoxville: Ogden Brothers and Co., 1888); Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818–1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Mary Emily Robertson Campbell, *The Attitudes of Tennesseans toward the Union, 1847–1861* (New York: Vantage Press, 1961); and Charles Faulkner Bryan, “The Civil War in East Tennessee: A Social, Political, and Economic Study” (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1978).

6. Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, vol. 2, *1607–1861* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963); John R. McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionists and the Northern Churches, 1830–1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Elizabeth Adams, “Divided Church, Divided Nation: The Presbyterian Schism, 1837–1838,” *Historian* 54, no. 4 (1992): 683–96; Irving Stoddard Kull, “Presbyterian Attitudes toward Slavery,” *Church History* 7, no. 2 (1938): 101–14; James H. Moorhead, “The Churches, Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction: A Review Essay,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 78, no. 4 (2000): 285–300; Robert Bruce Mullin, “Biblical Critics and the Battle over Slavery,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61, no. 2 (1983): 210–26; Tommy W. Rogers, “Dr. Frederick A. Ross and the Presbyterian Defense of Slavery,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 45, no. 2 (1967): 112–24; Hugh Davis, “‘The New York Evangelist,’ New School Presbyterians and Slavery, 1837–1857,” *American Presbyterians* 68, no. 1 (1990): 14–23; William D. Carrigan, “In Defense of the Social Order: Racial Thought among Southern White Presbyterians in the Nineteenth Century,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 1, no. 2 (2000): 31–52; and Elwyn A. Smith, “The Role of the South in the Presbyterian Schism of 1837–1838,” *Church History* 29, no. 1 (1960): 44–63.

7. Victor B. Howard, *Conscience and Slavery: The Evangelistic Calvinist Domestic Missions, 1837–1861* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1990); George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 59–141; Clifford S. Griffin, “Cooperation and Conflict: The Schism in the American Home Missionary Society, 1837–1861,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 38, no. 4 (1960): 213–33; Victor B. Howard, “The Southern Aid Society and the Slavery Controversy,” *Church History* 41, no. 2 (1972): 208–24; Clifford S. Griffin, “The Abolitionists and the Benevolent Societies, 1831–1861,” *Journal of Negro History* 44, no. 3 (1959): 195–216; Earl R. MacCormac, “Missions and the Presbyterian Schism of 1837,” *Church History* 32, no. 1 (1963): 32–45; and Fletcher M. Green, “Northern Missionary Activities in the South, 1846–1861,” *Journal of Southern History* 21, no. 2 (1955): 147–72.

8. Charles R. Gillett, comp., *General Catalogue of the Union Theological Semi-*

nary in the City of New York, 1836–1918 (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1919), 50; Mary U. Rothrock, ed., *The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee* (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society, 1946), 92, 113, 477; John N. Fain, ed., *Sanctified Trial: The Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, a Confederate Woman in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), xxvi–xxxii; J. E. Alexander, *A Brief History of the Synod of Tennessee, from 1817 to 1887* (Philadelphia: MacCalla and Co., 1890), 29–55; Clay R. Crawford and Sheila W. Johnston, eds., *Reminiscences of Rogersville* (Rogersville, TN: privately published, 1994); and *A Statement of Facts, Respecting the Division of the Presbyterian Congregation of Rogersville* (Jonesborough, TN: L. F. Gifford, 1839).

9. 1860 Slave Census of Hawkins County, TN, National Archives and Records Administration, RG M653, roll 1282. These figures cited must take into consideration the extreme difficulty in reading this handwritten census report, which does not list individual slave names, but only the names of the owners. Individual slaves were simply noted as “23MB,” for example, indicating a twenty-three-year-old black male. The article was reprinted in the *Savannah (GA) Daily Morning News*, Dec. 24, 1857. The initial article said “a morbid philanthropy would say that this money belongs to the men that earn it, and that to take it from them by force is no better than robbery.” The *Savannah Daily Morning News* editorialized in reply that the “same philanthropy would say that the prison inmates of Northern factories ought to have the money which makes millionaires of their masters, but it is true nevertheless that they don’t get it.”

10. “Suffering in East Tennessee,” *Rogersville Times*, reprinted in *Augusta (GA) Daily Chronicle and Sentinel*, May 3, 1857. Poor relief was also impaired because of fear on the part of many wealthier Hawkins County farmers that they would not have enough grain left to feed their cattle and horses. See also Roger Raymond Van Dyke, “The Free Negro in Tennessee, 1790–1860” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1972); and Campbell, *Attitude of Tennesseans toward the Union*, 256–57. Robert Tracy McKenzie argues that a highly skewed concentration of wealth was not peculiar to the Black Belt of middle and west Tennessee, but was actually a prominent feature of yeoman-dominated areas of East Tennessee. See Robert Tracy McKenzie, *One South or Many? Plantation Belt and Upcountry in Civil War-Era Tennessee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 84.

11. Samuel Sawyer to Charles Hall, Oct. 1, 1849, Samuel Sawyer to Charles Hall, Mar. 1, 1850, Samuel Sawyer to Charles Hall, Oct. 1, 1850, and Samuel Sawyer to Charles Hall, Mar. 5, 1851, all American Home Missionary Society Correspondence, Amistad Research Library (hereafter AHMSC); *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Apr. 25, 1851; Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, 1835–1892, Apr. 28, Sept. 4, 1853, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, East Tennessee History Center, Knoxville. In reference to the controversy between Presbyterians and Methodists, Sawyer noted the bitter dispute between William G. Brownlow

and Presbyterian minister Frederick A. Ross (Sawyer to Hall, Oct. 1, 1850). See Forest Conklin and John W. Wittig, "Religious Warfare in the Southern Highlands: Brownlow versus Ross," *Journal of East Tennessee History* 63 (1991): 33–50.

12. Sawyer to Hall, Oct. 1, 1849. See also Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831–1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, eds., *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); John R. McKivigan and Stanley Harrold, eds., *Antislavery Violence: Sectional, Racial, and Cultural Conflict in Antebellum America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999); and Elizabeth Fox Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

13. Sawyer to Hall, Oct. 1, 1849; Samuel Sawyer to David B. Coe, June 1, 1854, AHMSC. See also David B. Chesebrough, *Clergy Dissent in the Old South, 1830–1865* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996).

14. Samuel Sawyer, "Southern Christianity and Slavery," *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Feb. 21, 1855; Samuel Sawyer, "Northern Presbyteries on Slavery," *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Mar. 28, 1855; Samuel Sawyer, "A Statement That Needs Explanation," *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Apr. 4, 1855; Samuel Sawyer, "To the Readers of the Witness," *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Oct. 7, 1856. See also Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds., *Religion and the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); C. C. Goen, *Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985); Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002); and Larry Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

15. "Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention." For slavery in Tennessee, see Lester C. Lamon, *Blacks in Tennessee, 1791–1970* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981); Arthur F. Howington, *What Sayeth the Law: The Treatment of Slaves and Free Blacks in the State and Local Courts of Tennessee* (New York: Garland, 1986); James Merton England, "The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Tennessee" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1941); Gordon E. Finnie, "The Antislavery Movement in the South, 1787–1836: Its Rise and Decline and Its Contribution to Abolitionism in the West" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1962); and Van Dyke, "Free Negro in Tennessee."

16. "Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention." Historian Peter Kolchin argues that almost all southern masters whipped their slaves



and that very few slaves ever escaped the lash. To northern abolitionists, these beatings came to symbolize the essence of the peculiar institution. See Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619–1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 121. See also Wilma A. Dunaway, “Put in Master’s Pocket: Cotton Expansion and Interstate Slave Trading in the Mountain South,” in Inscoc, *Appalachians and Race*, 116–32.

17. “Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention.” Netherland’s wife, Susan, had two brothers living in Rogersville, Charles J. McKinney (1813–80) and John McKinney (1824–82). See Muriel Clark Spoden, *Ancestry and Descendants of Richard Netherland, Esquire 1764–1832* (Kingsport, TN: privately printed, 1979), 254–59. One of her first cousins, Robert J. McKinney (1803–75), a well-known opponent of slavery who had earlier freed all his own slaves, was a justice on the Tennessee Supreme Court from 1847 to 1861. See Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 113; Joshua W. Caldwell, *Sketches of the Bench and Bar of Tennessee* (Knoxville: Ogden Brothers and Co., 1898), 155–59. For McKinney’s conversations regarding slavery with abolitionist Ezekiel Birdseye in the 1840s, see Dunn, *Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 250–51.

18. “Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention.” Tennessee’s legal code and actual administration of the law, especially at the local level, provided no significant safeguards to protect slaves from violence at the hands of their master (Howington, *What Sayeth the Law*, 96).

19. “Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention.” See also Jack P. Maddex Jr., “Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Southern Calvinism,” *American Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1979): 46–62; and Walter B. Posey, “The Slavery Question in the Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest,” *Journal of Southern History* 15, no. 3 (1949): 311–24.

20. “Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention”; Session Meeting, May 25, 1857, Rogersville Presbyterian Church, 1849–1860, Microfilm, McClung Historical Collection.

21. “Proceedings of the Holston Presbytery,” *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, July 21, 1857; Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 2: 554–50; Alexander, *Brief History of the Synod*, 29–36; Howard, *Conscience and Slavery*, 168–71; “Ingenious Cruelty,” *Boston Liberator*, July 30, 1858; “Want of Principle,” *Boston Liberator*, Oct. 2, 1857; “Dr. Ross’s Slave,” *Vermont Chronicle*, Oct. 6, 1857.

22. “Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention.” The Holston Presbytery charged that Sawyer had “withdrawn himself from this Presbytery by joining another in the State of Indiana.” The committee also stated that if “Mr. Sawyer will designate any date within the next six months, and give 30 days notice to either of the prosecutors, that he will meet them in Rogersville before a committee to be appointed by the Rev. John R. King, Jonathan Lyons and J. M. Hoffmeister, the prosecutors will meet him before said committee, and they pledge

to sustain the charges against him by full proof.” John Netherland and A. Carmichael were the stated prosecutors. See “Holston Presbytery,” *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Aug. 17, 1858. Sawyer’s friend was undoubtedly Robert J. McKinney, who served on the Tennessee Supreme Court continuously from 1847 until 1861 (Caldwell, *Sketches of the Bench and Bar*, 155–59).

23. Caldwell, *Sketches of the Bench and Bar*, 279–82; Oliver P. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee from 1833 to 1875: Their Times and Their Contemporaries*, compiled and arranged by his daughter, Mary B. Temple (New York: Cosmopolitan Press, 1912), 159–65; Robert M. McBride, et al., eds., *Biographical Directory of the Tennessee General Assembly*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Tennessee State Library and Archives, 1975–91), 1: 549 (hereafter *BDTGA*).

24. “Statement of Col. Netherland,” *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Sept. 15, 1857; Return J. Meigs and William F. Cooper, eds., *The Code of Tennessee, Enacted by the General Assembly of 1857–1858* (Nashville: E. G. Eastman and Co., State Publishers, 1858), 512–15. See also Rogers, “Dr. Frederick A. Ross,” 112–24; Frederick Augustus Ross, *Position of the Southern Church in Relation to Slavery: As Illustrated in a Letter of Dr. F. A. Ross to Rev. Albert Barnes* (New York: J. A. Gray, printer, 1857); Frederick August Ross, *Slavery Ordained of God* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1957).

25. “Statement of Col. Netherland.”

26. “Still it is but a few years since we had a case reported in the papers of the day, and not contradicted, of the abolition saints in Cincinnati burning a Negro alive in open day in sight of hundreds for the offence committed by Abe,” Netherland further argued (“Statement of Col. Netherland”). See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 402–59; Genovese and Genovese, *Mind of the Master Class*; Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Diane Miller Sommerville, *Rape and Race in the Nineteenth Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1960). The best discussion of slaves, sexual violence, and the law is Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 303–21.

27. “I will do the Negro [Abe] the justice to say,” Netherland further asserted in a mocking tone, “that I regard him as a better man and more of a gentleman than Sawyer, and I consider that a poor compliment to the Negro” (“Statement of Col. Netherland”).

28. “There is not as much blood drawn from this Negro, as Sawyer has drawn from white boys that he has whipped since he came to Rogersville,” Netherland

further asserted, which gives some indication of the absurd lengths to which he would go to sustain his argument ("Statement of Col. Netherland").

29. *Knoxville Whig*, Aug. 8, 1857. See also E. Merton Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937); Steve Humphrey, *That D—d Brownlow* (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978); William G. Brownlow, *Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism; or, An Unsophisticated Exposition of Calvinism, with Hopkinsian Modifications and Policy, with a View to a More Easy Interpretation of the Same. To Which Is Added a Brief Account of the Life and Travels of the Author; Interspersed with Anecdotes* (Knoxville: T. F. S. Heiskell, 1834); and William G. Brownlow, *Ought American Slavery to Be Perpetuated? A Debate between Rev. W. G. Brownlow and Rev. A. Pryne, Held at Philadelphia, September 1858* (Philadelphia: The Authors, 1858).

30. "Letter from the Notorious Ruffian, 'Parson Brownlow,'" reprinted in *Boston Liberator*, Sept. 25, 1857; *Knoxville Whig*, Aug. 8, 1857. The case Brownlow cites occurred in 1853 in Cocke County, Tennessee. See Dunn, *Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 85; Anna Roe Mims, comp., *Tennessee Records of Cocke County; Scrap Book of W. J. McSween* (Nashville: Works Progress Administration, 1936), 28–30.

31. "Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention"; "Want of Principle"; "Slavery and the Slave Code," *Boston Congregationalist*, Aug. 28, 1857; "Ingenious Cruelty"; "Why a Minister Left His Church—Brutal Outrages on the Slaves," *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, Aug. 22, 1857; "A Thrilling Statement: The Cruel Master Protected by the Church—The Minister Who Exposed Him Expelled from the Pulpit," *Boston Liberator*, Sept. 4, 1857; "Dr. Ross's Slave"; "Deacon-Colonel John Netherland," *Boston Liberator*, Oct. 9, 1857; "The Southern Aid Society," *Boston Liberator*, Nov. 20, 1857; "A Horrible Narrative," *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, Oct. 13, 1857; and "Slavery and the Slave Code." The Sawyer-Netherland controversy was widely reported in both American and British newspapers. The universal ubiquity and notoriety of this controversy are perhaps nowhere better explicated than by its appearance in Welsh: "Trychineb Barbaraidd yn Nwrreinbarth Tennessee!" *Baner Cymru* (Denbigh, Wales), Sept. 30, 1857.

32. "Deacon-Colonel John Netherland"; "Dr. Ross's Slave, Again," *Vermont Chronicle*, Aug. 25, 1857. Reverend Frederick A. Ross, leader of the proslavery Presbyterians in the South, was himself subjected to repeated brutal and scurrilous assaults because of his dark complexion, to the effect that he had been illegitimately born of a slave mother. Reverend W. E. Caldwell, later editor of the *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, defended Ross by stating that his father, a man of great wealth in Virginia, had married a beautiful and intelligent young Portuguese girl. He demanded a full retraction of all the vituperative comments on Reverend Ross's parentage from numerous northern newspapers. See W. E. Caldwell, "A Merited

Rebuke," *Savannah Daily Morning News*, Aug. 14, 1857. See also "Rev. F. A. Ross, D.D.," *Vermont Chronicle*, June 16, 1857; "Letter from the Rev. Dr. Ross, of Huntsville, Alabama, to the Rev. Dr. A. Barnes, of Philadelphia," *Charleston Mercury*, Feb. 21, 1857; and "Refuge of Oppression: Letter from Dr. Ross," *Boston Liberator*, Sept. 5, 1856.

33. "Southern Christianity avoids that Abolition fanaticism, on the one hand, which asserts that the relation of the master to his slave is a *sin, per se*, and with this unscriptural postulate, rushes on till it ignores the Bible with the Garrison school, and screams wildly in favor of the dissolution of the Union; and, on the other, she holds that the master is responsible for his treatment of the slave—that he is bound to treat him according to Bible ethics; and thus it would, with the agencies God has placed in her reach, relieve the system in time of all its moral, social, and political evils" (Sawyer, "Southern Christianity and Slavery"). "The servants of Christian families in Tennessee—we say Tennessee, because we can speak from observation here—are not oppressed. They have no hard task-masters set over them. They are taught, many of them—those who will learn—to read the Bible. They are gathered with the family at the altar of prayer. They are allowed to attend the sanctuary. A large proportion of them are members of the Church. Many of them are examples of piety. They seem content and happy. They feed on the fat of the land" (Sawyer, "Northern Presbyteries on Slavery"). See also "Statement That Needs Explanation"; Samuel Sawyer to David B. Coe, Oct. 19, 1855, and Samuel Sawyer to David B. Coe, July 23, 1856, both AHMSC. The Holston Presbytery did finally separate from the AHMS, which it accused of having "taken such action on the subject of slavery as forbids our further co-operation with it in the great work of evangelization" ("The Home Missionary Question," *Vermont Chronicle*, May 5, 1857).

34. "Proceedings of the Holston Presbytery"; Session Meeting, May 25, 1857, Rogersville Presbyterian Church, 1849–1860. For a similar public reaction against beating slaves in East Tennessee during the 1840s, see Dunn, *Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 78–85. Interestingly, the minutes of the Holston Presbytery on July 14, 1857, were widely reprinted in the northern press ancillary to the Sawyer-Netherland controversy. See "Holston Presbytery on Slavery," *Vermont Chronicle*, Aug. 4, 1857.

35. "Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention."

36. "Slavery in East Tennessee: Delegates to the Richmond Convention"; Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, Aug. 2, 1857, Aug. 8, 1858.

37. Andrew Blackburn, "A Hopeless Undertaking," *Knoxville Presbyterian Witness*, Dec. 22, 1857. For the question of the slave trader's status in the South, see Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 179–210. See also Stephen Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York:

Oxford University Press, 2005); David L. Lightner, *Slavery and the Commerce Power: How the Struggle against the Interstate Slave Trade Led to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst Co., 1931); and Aaron D. Purcell, "A Damned Piece of Rascality': The Business of Slave Trading in Southern Appalachia," *Journal of East Tennessee History* 78 (2006): 1–22.

38. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee*, 159–65; H. H. Ingersoll, "Biographical Sketch of Col. John Netherland," *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Bar Association of Tennessee at Tullahoma, Wednesday, August 1, and Thursday, August 2, 1888* (Nashville: Marshall and Bruce, 1889), 233–52; Atkins, *Parties, Politics, and the Sectional Conflict*, 215–58; Joseph H. Parks, "The Tennessee Whigs and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill," *Journal of Southern History* 10, no. 3 (1944): 308–30; Thomas B. Alexander, *Thomas A. R. Nelson of East Tennessee* (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1956); "Col. Netherland's Record—His Present and Future Policy," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, May 25, 1859; and Thomas B. Alexander, "Strange Bedfellows: The Interlocking Careers of T. A. R. Nelson, Andrew Johnson and W. G. (Parson) Brownlow," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 51 (1979): 54–77.

39. Atkins, *Parties, Politics, and Sectional Conflict*; Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*; McKenzie, *Lincolinites and Rebels*; Groce, *Mountain Rebels*; Fisher, *War at Every Door*; Bryan, "Civil War in East Tennessee"; Humes, *Loyal Mountaineers of East Tennessee*; Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*; Charles F. Bryan Jr., "A Gathering of Tories: The East Tennessee Convention of 1861," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1980): 27–48; Charles Lawson Lufkin, "Secession and Coercion in Tennessee: The Spring of 1861," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1991): 98–109; Martha L. Turner, "The Cause of the Union in East Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1981): 366–80.

40. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee*, 159–65; Ingersoll, "Biographical Sketch of Col. John Netherland," 233–52; Spoden, *Ancestry and Descendants of Richard Netherland*, 254–57; *BDTGA*, 1: 549; Caldwell, *Sketches of the Bench and Bar*, 279–82. Netherland continued to play an active role in Tennessee politics after the Civil War. He formed a partnership with T. A. R. Nelson and was mentioned for a gubernatorial nomination in 1867 (Alexander, *Thomas A. R. Nelson*, 100, 117, 126).

41. *BDTGA*, 2: 70–71; *Nashville American*, Oct. 11, 1872; *History of Tennessee: Containing Historical and Biographical Sketches of Thirty East Tennessee Counties* (Chicago and Nashville: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1887), 880; WPA, Records of Hawkins County, Miscellaneous (Prentiss Price Collection), 31, 34; Hawkins County, TN, Will Book 3, p. 43. The Bank of East Tennessee, where John Lucian

Blevins was made clerk in 1849 and where his father-in-law, Absalom Kyle, was president, had initially been established and funded by Lawson D. Franklin (1804–61), Tennessee's first recorded millionaire and a prominent slave trader. See Jean Patterson Bible, *Bent Twigs in Jefferson County* (Rogersville: East Tennessee Printing Co., 1991), 182. For a detailed record of Franklin's financial transactions, see Lawson D. Franklin Papers, 1809–1874, Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

42. *BDTGA*, 2: 70–71; *Nashville American*, Oct. 11, 1872; *History of Tennessee*, 880; WPA, Records of Hawkins County, Miscellaneous (Prentiss Price Collection), 31, 34; Hawkins County, TN, Will Book 3, p. 43; Prentiss Price Papers, Kyle Collection, McClung Historical Collection; 1860 Manuscript Census, Tennessee, Hawkins County, 11th District, 22.

43. *BDTGA*, 2: 70–71; Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 353–54; Humes, *Loyal Mountaineers*, 351; *Proceedings of the East Tennessee Convention*, 7, 14; John Netherland and F. M. Fulkerson, "Public Meeting in Hawkins County," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, Dec. 14, 1860; "The Greeneville Memorial," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, July 3, 1861.

44. *BDTGA*, 2: 70–71; LeRoy P. Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul Bergeron, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, 16 vols. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967–2000), 4: 456–57, 14: 216–17, 16: 312–13, 406.

45. "Latter-Day Saints," *Boston Liberator*, Sept. 15, 1865; Gillett, *General Catalogue of the Union Theological Seminary*, 50; Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 2: 124–30; Alexander, *Brief History of the Synod*, 35–36; Fain, *Sanctified Trial*, 345–47. Eliza further asserted that Sawyer "took great pleasure in showing forth his zeal not for the upbuilding of his Master's kingdom on earth but for the setting forth of everything calculated to produce mischief and unkindness. But the Lord gave to the people, hearts to be disaffected with him and he returned feeling he could not accomplish much there" (Fain, *Sanctified Trial*, 352).

46. *Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Caldwell College, Rogersville, Tennessee, Published by the Students* (Knoxville: Kinsloe and Rice, 1857), 17, McClung Historical Collection. Interestingly, Ezekiel Birdseye noted that Reverend Frederick A. Ross was at one time also strongly opposed to slavery (Dunn, *Abolitionist in the Appalachian South*, 4, 14, 55–57, 157–58, 14, 16, 22–23, 75, 250–51, 21–22, 139, 218, 20, 156, 169).

## Chapter 7

# “These Big-Boned, Semi-Barbarian People”

## Moonshining and the Myth of Violent Appalachia, 1870–1900

*Bruce E. Stewart*

“It is a good deal the fashion to ascribe to this transmontane country an undue share of that moral and intellectual darkness . . . characteristic of the back woods settlement.” So wrote an anonymous mountain resident to the *Asheville Citizen* in 1883, angry over the media’s portrayal of western North Carolina as a violent and uneducated region. “The error begins with ignorance of facts,” the writer pleaded. “The mountain people are neither so ignorant nor so irreligious as careless persons pronounce them.” Nor were most of them violent moonshiners. “While there is occasional violence,” he explained, “it is so exceptional as to justify the assertion that there is no more peaceful, law abiding and moral people than those of Western North Carolina.”<sup>1</sup> This plea for understanding would fall on deaf ears. Captivated by the national media’s coverage of the Moonshine Wars in the late 1870s, Victorian middle-class Americans had already accepted the stereotype that Appalachia was “the home of the hunter, the moonshiner, and the beasts of the forest.”<sup>2</sup>

Although negative images of Appalachia and its people originated during the antebellum period, it was not until after the Civil War that these misconceptions gained widespread acceptance among northern and southern townspeople.<sup>3</sup> This was largely due to the emergence of local color writing, a literary genre that grew out of new American literary magazines and catered to a burgeoning urban, middle-class readership in the 1870s. The goal of these writings was to increase magazine sales by focusing on the peculiarities of Appalachian people.<sup>4</sup> Local colorists ultimately “discovered” a distinct but noble white “race” out of step with modern society.<sup>5</sup> Beginning in the late 1870s, however, writers forged another conception of

mountain whites, one that portrayed them as both violent and savage. The moonshiner played an important role in the creation of this stereotype, epitomizing a mountain populace that Americans came to fear was a threat to civilization.

Since the 1970s, historians have devoted considerable attention to the images that local color novelists, journalists, and missionaries produced of mountain residents at the turn of the twentieth century. They have demonstrated conclusively that negative stereotypes about the region often reflected middle-class America's desire to stress the benefits of industrialization and “progress.” “In an age of faith in American, and more generally Western, intellectual, cultural, and social superiority over the other ‘races’ of the world,” historian Anthony Harkins explained, “these [stereotypes] were designed to show not cultural difference so much as cultural hierarchy—to celebrate modernity and ‘mainstream’ progress.”<sup>6</sup> Urban, middle-class Victorians perceived southern Appalachia as an unwanted remnant of the colonial era. They believed that the region and its people were economically, geographically, and culturally at odds with modern America.

Hoping to reaffirm their cultural superiority, among other reasons, Victorian whites also depicted Appalachia as a region where lawlessness and violence prevailed. Most historians have emphasized the role that feuding played in the construction of this myth of violent Appalachia. During the late 1880s, they agree, the national media's coverage of the Hatfield-McCoy and other feuds convinced middle-class citizens that mountain whites were inherently more violent than other Americans.<sup>7</sup> Although correct, these scholars have underestimated the impact of moonshiner violence on the formation of such misconceptions. Published nearly a decade before the emergence of Victorian America's fascination with feuding, local color and newspaper accounts of illicit distilling, whether sympathetic to the moonshiners or not, portrayed southern Appalachia as a lawless region that needed civilizing. According to these writings, illicit distillers and other mountain residents were the products of a “frontier” environment: rugged individualists who rejected modernity and were willing to use violence to preserve their way of life. Many middle-class Americans embraced these stereotypes, which made illicit distilling synonymous with Appalachia. More important, moonshiner stories convinced urban Victorians, when reading about feuding in the 1880s and 1890s, to accept the image of violent Appalachia and intervene in the lives of mountain residents, whom they already believed were crude and uncivilized.<sup>8</sup>



In October 1869, *Appleton's Journal* published a three-part series called "Novelties of Southern Scenery" by landscape artist and travel writer Charles Lanman. This illustrated work introduced middle-class Americans to Appalachia, portraying it as a land of "grand and beautiful scenery." Lanman believed that the Civil War had prevented "modern civilization" from "rapidly developing" in the mountains. The region's landscape remained pristine because it had not been cut up to make way for "cumbersome coaches and the railway trains." The mountains, whose peaks, he reported, rose higher than Mount Washington in New Hampshire, offered abundant resources, blue skies, and diverse flora and fauna, all "glories beyond compare." "The Roan and the Bald, the Grandfather, and the White-side Mountains, each and all of them, and hundreds of others afford charms and delightful association without member," Lanman praised.<sup>9</sup>

"Novelties of Southern Scenery" was the first of several illustrated works on Appalachia's mountain landscape published in *Appleton's*, *Harper's*, and other literary magazines during Reconstruction. Spurred by technological advances in the mass production of images, increasing literacy, and the growth of advertising, these articles appealed to urban, middle-class northerners, who, adopting British aesthetics, wanted to enjoy "picturesque" scenes that contained elements both beautiful and sublime.<sup>10</sup> These illustrated works also served to reunite the North with the South.<sup>11</sup> War-weary northern urbanites were eager to reconcile with their former adversaries, learn about the southern landscape, and invest in its unexploited raw materials.<sup>12</sup> *Appleton's* and other urban-based magazines met this demand by providing their readership with a glimpse of a "strange and peculiar" world.

Like "Novelties of Southern Scenery," subsequent illustrated pieces portrayed Appalachia's landscape as pristine and untamed. Henry E. Colton, another *Appleton's* writer who penned a series of short features on the region in 1870 and 1871, declared that the highlands were "nature's gallery of the queer, the beautiful and grand." Set amid "lofty mountains, majestic and fatherly, standing with a saintly presence like a benediction over the gentle valley," this was a land undisturbed by modern society.<sup>13</sup> In *The Land of the Sky; or, Adventures in Mountain By-Ways*, Frances Fisher Tiernan, using the pen name Christian Reid, continued where Colton had left off. This novel, serialized in *Appleton's* during the autumn of 1875 and based on a trip that Reid made to the region, chronicles the adventures of four young northerners spending a summer in western North Carolina. These Victorian youth encounter a land "so boundless and so beautiful,

that the imagination is for a time overwhelmed.” They also discover a pristine mountain landscape. When traveling from Asheville to Warm Springs, the characters feel that they are “leaving civilization altogether behind, plunging deeper and deeper into the heart of primeval Nature.” The narrator describes what the group observes: “[The mountains] rise over our heads hundreds of feet . . . in every interstice of which great pines grow, and thickets of rhododendron flourish. In the dark shade, ferns, flowers, and mosses abound, together with trees of every variety, while down the hillsides and over the rocks countless streams come leaping in foam and spray.”<sup>14</sup> Focusing on the “curiosities” of the landscape, Colton, Tiernan, and other scenic entrepreneurs mostly ignored the mountain inhabitants.<sup>15</sup> In *The Land of the Sky*, for instance, Tiernan mentioned only one highlander by name: John Pence, “a spare, sinewy man, dark as an Indian, with the eyes of a hawk, who wears a pair of the brownest and dirtiest corduroy trousers.”<sup>16</sup> When local characters did appear in literature, writers often portrayed them as the product of an isolated environment. In 1872, David Hunter Strother wrote that the highlander was “born and nurtured in poverty and seclusion. He [had] no set pattern to grow up by, with none of the slop-shops of civilization at hand to furnish him ready-made clothing, manners, or opinions.”<sup>17</sup> Two years later, author Edward King described western North Carolinians as noble people out of step with modern America. “They were neatly dressed in home-made clothes, and their hair was combed straight down over their cheeks and knotted into ‘pugs’ behind,” King explained. “There were none of the modern conventionalities of dress visible about them. The men were cavalier enough; their jean trousers were thrust into their boots, and their slouch hats cocked on their heads with bravado air.”<sup>18</sup> For the most part, however, the mountain landscape remained the central character in the narratives of scenic entrepreneurs. It was a world different from that in which they and their urban readership lived, a fantasy of an unspoiled wilderness devoid of civilization.

Beginning in the mid-1870s, a new literary genre emerged that would further shape how middle-class Victorians perceived southern Appalachia and its people. More so than earlier authors, local colorists began to focus considerable attention on the dialect and culture of mountain people. Building on the works of Lanman, Strother, and King, they portrayed mountain white inhabitants as a noble “race” uncorrupted by the evils of modern civilization. In “Qualla,” published in 1875, Rebecca Harding Davis praised highlanders for their primitive lifestyle:

They were not cumbered with dishes, knives, forks, beds, or any other impediments of civilization: they slept in hollow logs or in a hole filled with straw under loose boards of the floor. But they were contented and good-natured: they took life, leaky roof, opossum, and all, as a huge joke, and were honest gentlefolk despite their dirty and bedless condition. . . . Money, indeed, appeared throughout this region to be one of the unknown luxuries of civilization; and it's startling (if anything could be startling up yonder) to find how easily and comfortably life resolves itself to its primitive conditions without.<sup>19</sup>

In "The French Broad," published in *Harper's Monthly* that same year, Constance Fenimore Woolson expressed a similar admiration for mountain whites. "There are noble hearts under those gaunt, ungraceful exteriors that excite your mirth," one of Woolson's characters explains. "Those very women will come over the mountains from miles away, when you are ill, and nurse you tenderly for pure charity's sake. They will spin their wool and dye and weave, and make you clothes from the cloth."<sup>20</sup> These characterizations of mountain folk served to differentiate middle-class townspeople from the rural, primitive "other" and helped satisfy urbanites' longing for a simpler past. Southern Appalachia became a refuge, a place where these Victorians could escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.<sup>21</sup>

By the late 1870s, the depiction of southern Appalachia in literature had become less of an idyllic escape from the realities of the modern world and more of a region full of violence and lawlessness. In 1879, Louise Coffin Jones claimed that most Carolina highlanders belonged to "the lower class, composed of 'poor white trash,'" and "the civilities, courtesies, even some of the decencies, of life were dispensed with; and as a relapse from culture is always more degrading in its influence and tendencies than a corresponding state of ignorance among a people who have never been elevated, so these degenerate Anglo-Saxons compared unfavorably with the native Indians, a few of whom still lingered in the mountains."<sup>22</sup> For local colorists like Jones, this was a primitive people who had willingly rejected modernity. The mountain moonshiner played an important role in the creation of this stereotype. Even though illicit distilling persisted in many northern cities and in other parts of the South, it would become synonymous with the mountain region, largely due to the national media's coverage of the conflict between the Bureau of Internal Revenue and moonshiners following the end of Reconstruction. These accounts helped



“Illicit Distilling of Liquors—Southern Mode of Making Whiskey,” engraving. *Harper’s Weekly*, December 7, 1867, 73. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

to convince many outsiders that mountain residents were inherently more ignorant and violent than other Americans. They perpetuated the idea that all highlanders—not just moonshiners—were products of a “frontier” environment, a “big-boned, semi-barbarian people” who needed civilizing.

In 1862, the U.S. Congress imposed duties on liquor, tobacco, and other “luxuries” to raise revenue for the Union war effort.<sup>23</sup> It also created the Office of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (commonly known as the Bureau of Internal Revenue) to collect these taxes.<sup>24</sup> Following the Civil War, many highlanders, having relied on alcohol manufacturing to support their families and participate in the larger market economy, began to oppose the new levy on liquor, arguing that it challenged local control over distillation and reduced their profit margin.<sup>25</sup> Some of these men and women, mostly small farmers, chose to resist revenue agents in their collection efforts. As historian Wilbur R. Miller explained, they became moonshiners because “a distant federal government ‘criminalized’ part of their way of life by imposing a tax on home-distilled whiskey they had produced for generations.”<sup>26</sup>

From the beginning, mountain residents—even those who did not manufacture alcohol—challenged the legitimacy of the Bureau of Internal Revenue. As long as distillation did not deprive their communities of food-

stuffs, many highlanders regarded liquor manufacturing as an inalienable right. Moonshiners gained sympathy among these residents by claiming that they had the right, just as their fathers did, to make a living unmolested by the federal government. According to revenue agent George Atkinson in 1881, West Virginians “claimed that inasmuch as this is a free government—a Republic—every citizen should be allowed to make a living for himself and family as best he can; and if he does not steal, or trample upon the rights of his neighbors, the Government should not interfere with him.”<sup>27</sup> Alexander Stephens, a resident of the mountains of Georgia, shared the views of his West Virginia brethren: “A farmer should have the same right to boil his corn into ‘sweet mash’ as to boil it into hominy.”<sup>28</sup>

Other highlanders embraced the moonshiners’ fight against the Bureau of Internal Revenue because they saw federal liquor-law enforcement as an attack on local autonomy. For many former mountain Confederates, liquor taxation reaffirmed their fears of Yankee centralization. In 1870, for instance, South Carolina moonshiners attacked a group of revenue agents, shouting that “they had been Confederate Soldiers for four years, had often fought and whipped Yankees.”<sup>29</sup> Nor did revenueurs’ history of Unionism help their cause with the mountain populace. Wartime Unionism was often a prerequisite for southerners hired by the Bureau of Internal Revenue.<sup>30</sup> Former mountain Confederates quickly developed a deep hatred for these revenue agents, whom they also viewed as the purveyors of radical change in the post-Civil War South.

Meanwhile, Democratic politicians did little to discourage moonshiner violence and often encouraged it. Resentful that the Bureau of Internal Revenue provided Republicans with “hundreds of patronage jobs,” they condemned federal liquor taxation by linking it with Radical Republicanism and the question of “home rule.”<sup>31</sup> In 1876, Democrat and former North Carolina governor Zebulon B. Vance chastised the entire revenue system as corrupt and called bureau agents “red-legged grasshoppers.” Holding up to his mountain audience a grasshopper preserved in alcohol, he proclaimed: “This fellow . . . eats up every green thing that God ever gave to man, and he only serves the universal dissolution. The time has come when an honest man can’t take an honest drink without having a gang of revenue officers after him.”<sup>32</sup> Five years later, the North Carolina legislature summarized Vance’s and other Democrats’ criticisms of the Bureau of Internal Revenue:

The present system of internal revenue laws is oppressive and inquisitorial, centralizing in its tendencies and inconsistent with the genius of a free people, legalizing unequal, expensive, and iniquitous taxation, and, as enforced in this state, is a fraud upon the sacred rights of our people and subversive of honest government, prostituted in many instances to a system of political patronage which is odious and outrageous, corrupting public virtue and jeopardizing public liberty, and sustained by intimidation and bribery on the part of the revenue officials to debauch the elective franchise.<sup>33</sup>

The conflict between moonshiners and revenueurs came to a head in 1877, when newly appointed commissioner of internal revenue Green B. Raum intensified federal liquor-law enforcement. Throughout Appalachia, illicit distillers increasingly intimidated, assaulted, and killed bureau agents.<sup>34</sup> But such violence was neither the product of ethnic origins nor the result of geographical isolation. This politically motivated lawlessness reflected a number of grievances that certain elements in mountain (and southern) society had against the federal government following the Civil War. Nor was the amount of bloodshed as high as contemporaries claimed. Between 1876 and 1880, when moonshine violence against the Bureau of Internal Revenue reached its climax in the Mountain South, twenty-five agents were killed in the line of duty, an average of about six per year. When compared to the death rates of deputy marshals in the “Wild West,” which averaged twenty per year, those in southern Appalachia were low.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, the Moonshine Wars of the 1870s provided writers with an opportunity to depict Appalachia as a land of violence and lawlessness.

Although illicit distilling in Appalachia was reported as early as 1867, it was not until the late 1870s that northern newspapers and magazines depicted moonshining as one of the “peculiarities” of the mountain region.<sup>36</sup> By 1877, the *New York Times* was offering extensive coverage of the Moonshine Wars, noting that illicit distilling occurred most frequently in the mountains of Tennessee, Georgia, and the Carolinas. The *Times* first argued that the Democratic Party encouraged “densely, ignorant men of the up-country” to evade the federal liquor law. It read in July 1878:

At one time, during the rule of Republican Governors . . . an earnest and what promised to be a successful effort to break up the rapidly-



A moonshine still seized by revenuers. From John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921), facing 103.

growing traffic was made by the Federal officers, aided by United States troops. The return of the Democracy to power brought other methods, however; the State courts did everything in their power to shield the still-owners against the officers of the National Government, until, sometime after the inauguration of the present Administration, the distillers in many cases began to openly defy the Marshals, and to publicly break the laws which they had previously violated in secret.<sup>37</sup>

By 1880, however, influenced by descriptions of the region in local color literature, the newspaper had begun to downplay the role of politics, instead blaming geographical isolation for the violence surrounding moonshining. "They [illicit distillers] live in districts remote from railroads and from markets, where they could sell surplus grain," the *Times* explained. Like most highlanders, these moonshiners "were illiterate and ignorant. They scarcely ever read a book or a newspaper, and know very little of what is going on in the world." This, combined with their supposed natural fondness for whiskey and distrust of federal authority, encouraged mountain farmers to manufacture alcohol illegally. The best way to end illicit distill-

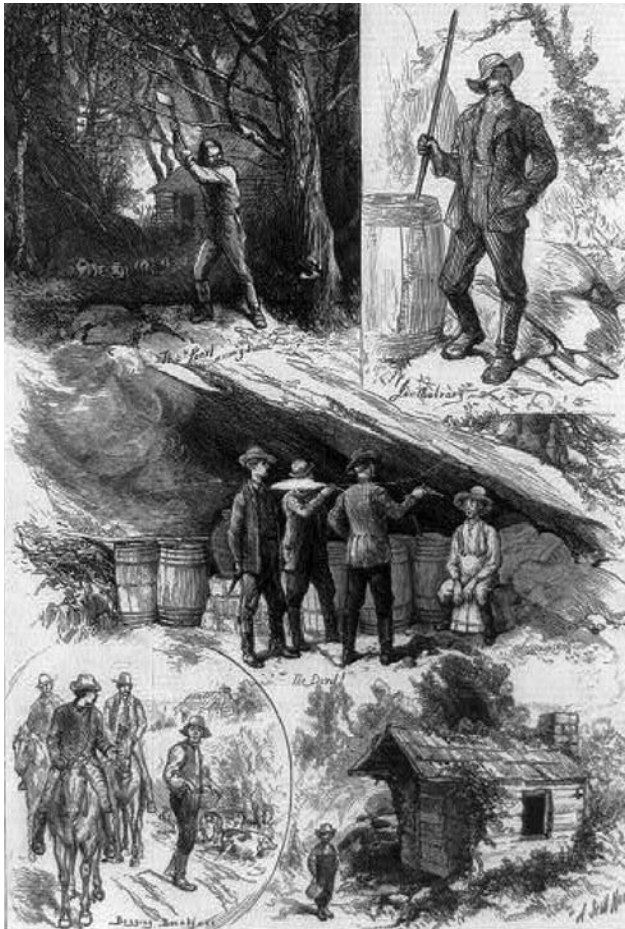
ing and improve the region, the paper argued, was to introduce mountain inhabitants to civilization by building free schools and railroads. “So long as they remain isolated,” the *Times* concluded, “they will defy the laws.”<sup>38</sup>

As the national media coverage of moonshiners intensified in the late 1870s and 1880s, local color writers also began to include them as central characters in their stories. During those years, illicit distilling became virtually a requirement in descriptive pieces dealing with the mountain region. Writers used the moonshiner as a symbol of what was wrong with Appalachia and, like the media, proposed that only industrialization could change the behavior of mountain residents.

In 1877, *Harper's* published “The Moonshine Man: A Peep into His Haunts and Hiding Places,” the first of several pieces that focused on illicit distilling in southern Appalachia. In it, the anonymous author recounts his journey with two revenuers attempting to capture moonshiners in Kentucky. This work contains two themes that journalists and local colorists would build on as they developed the image of both moonshiners and highlanders. First, it characterizes illicit distilling as the product of geographical isolation. According to the anonymous author, most moonshiners lived in “so dreary and desolate” places “that wild-cats and other beasts of the forest are still around them.” “In the mountains, in ravines, briers, brushes, trees thick and tall, in caves and under cliffs, are these peculiar specimens of law-breakers,” he explicates. “Many have never beheld aught else of the world than exists within a hundred miles of their own habitations.” Second, it uses the distiller to epitomize tensions between urban America and savage Appalachia. The anonymous author explains:

The moonshiner in a large city is as mild-looking a man as is ever seen. The sudden change from horseback to a seat in the [train] cars, on which nine-tenths of them have never ridden until captured, and the startling effect produced by sudden entry into a city after long years of life in rural regions, so overcome the illicit distiller that his appearance on the streets would picture him to the observer as meek and mild-mannered in the extreme. Clad in garments of butternut, sometimes yellow, oft-times brown, and occasionally blue jeans, and always homespun, with hands in pockets, an old slouch hat shaped in semi-Continental style and pulled partly over the forehead, the moonshiner on arriving in Louisville, where all of his kind are brought after their capture, waddles awkwardly through the streets, with an

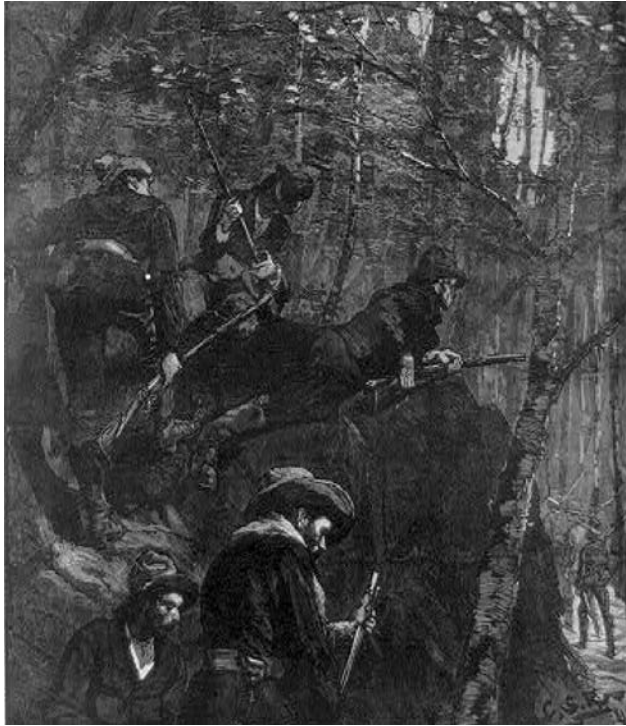




“The Moonshine Man,” engraving. *Harper's Weekly*, October 20, 1877, 820. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

expression upon his features, if not of awe, most certainly astonishment of the deepest dye.

The story's message was that illicit distillers were unable and unwilling to adapt to civilization and felt out of place when forced out of their natural habitat. They were members of “the poorest and most ignorant classes,” the unwanted remnants of the colonial past.<sup>39</sup>



“Moonshiners,” engraving. *Harper’s Weekly*, November 2, 1878, 865. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Woolson further develops these themes in the short story “Up in the Blue Ridge,” published in *Appleton’s* in 1878. Woolson, who just four years earlier had extolled highlanders for their simplicity in “The French Broad,” now expresses the fear that most of them will never adjust to modern society. The story chronicles the adventures of Stephen Wainwright, a northerner who visits the mountains of North Carolina and falls in love with a mountain girl. Wainwright, however, soon discovers that his life is in danger because many local residents, including a Baptist preacher, believe he is a revenue agent attempting to capture the notorious moonshiner Richard Eliot. According to Woolson, Eliot is a typical highlander: he had turned to illegal distilling because he had been unable to “adapt” to modern society and find a “civilized” profession. Wainwright convinces locals that he is not a revenuer, but his cousin and fellow New Yorker John Royce pledges to

capture Eliot, who has murdered a bureau agent named Allison. In a battle of the civilized versus the savage, Royce and Eliot square off in a gunfight. Eliot wounds Royce and escapes, vowing to continue his illegal activities. "The moonlight-whiskey is made up in the mountain, and still the revenue-detectives are shot," Woolson concludes. "The wild, beautiful region is not yet conquered."<sup>40</sup>

Following the publication of "Up in the Blue Ridge," journalists and local colorists devoted considerable attention to illicit distilling in the Carolina highlands, which they considered to be one of the most dangerous moonshine enclaves in Appalachia.<sup>41</sup> Edward Crittenden's 1879 dime novel about Lewis Redmond, an actual moonshiner whose exploits against revenueurs in South Carolina had gained him national notoriety, helped solidify this perception.<sup>42</sup> Published in Philadelphia, this tale of romance, betrayal, and murder must have thrilled its Victorian audience. In it, Redmond kidnaps and falls in love with the angelic Gabrielle Austin, who had the misfortune of riding in a carriage attacked by Redmond's gang. Gabrielle soon discovers that her captor is a tormented man. Although educated and refined, he lives only to avenge his father's death at the hands of Internal Revenue agents. "One night a body of Federal troops surrounded our house, and demanded my father's surrender," he explains to Gabrielle. "Like a brave man he refused, and gave up his life rather than sacrifice his liberty. The shock of that terrible night's occurrence killed my mother, and I, a boy in years and in experience with the rugged side of life's journey, was an orphan." While Redmond ultimately allows Gabrielle and her fiancé, who attempts to rescue her, to leave unscathed, he refuses to abandon his way of life. "Redmond the outlaw," Crittenden concludes, "still defies the authority of the law, daily commits crimes unparalleled in history, has startling adventures and hairbreadth escapes."<sup>43</sup>

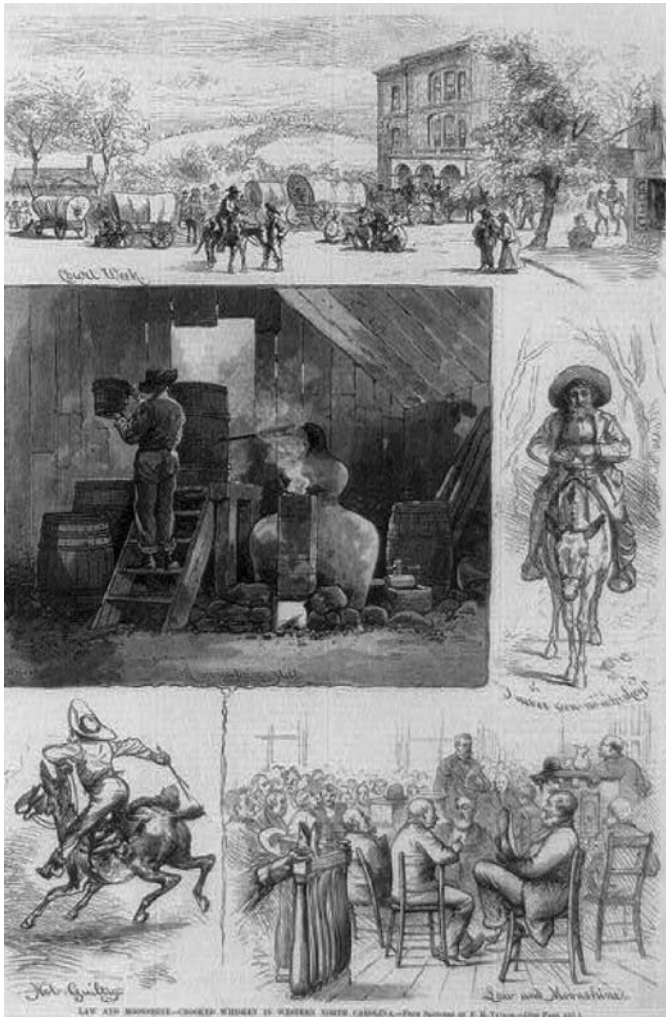
In August 1879, *Harper's Weekly* printed "Law and Moonshine," an exposé on illicit distillers in western North Carolina. The piece agrees that moonshiners are the products of geographical isolation, but it adds a new explanation: genetics. According to the anonymous author, most mountain whites were not only illicit distillers but also naturally "wild" and "grotesque." They were social misfits who were dedicated to kinfolk and predisposed to reject authority. "It is impossible," the author explains, "to convince these big-boned, semi-barbarian people that the revenue official who comes with an armed posse into their haunts, searching for and destroying their stills, is not an emissary of a tyrannical and unjust government, for whom



Cover of Edward Crittenden's dime novel *The Entwined Lives of Miss Gabrielle Austin, Daughter of the Late Rev. Ellis C. Austin, and of Redmond, the Outlaw, Leader of the North Carolina "Moonshiners"* (Philadelphia: Barclay and Co., 1879).

the sly bullet is but too good a welcome.”<sup>44</sup> Unlike “Up in the Blue Ridge,” “Law and Moonshine” places the blame for moonshiner violence squarely on the shoulders of highlanders, whose culture and genetic makeup encourage them to act irrationally.

By the 1880s, most journalists and local colorists characterized Appalachia as a region full of moonshiners who refused to embrace civilization. Some writers sympathized with the “mountain outlaws,” pointing out that, although misguided, they were not “bad people.” In 1882, for instance, the *Atlantic Monthly* published a story on illicit distillers by Jonathan Baxter



“Law and Moonshine—Crooked Whiskey in North Carolina,” engraving. *Harper’s Weekly*, August 23, 1879, 667. Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Harrison, an Ohio native and Unitarian minister who had recently traveled throughout the South. In it, Harrison, having “heard many wild stories of their life and actions,” ventures into Appalachia “to see the moonshiners.” He eventually befriends a group of illicit distillers residing in an unnamed

mountain community. “They all seemed to think it entirely right to go on making whisky and selling it, as their fathers had done before them,” Harrison writes in explaining why these men defied the federal government. “For law in general they appeared to have as much regard as any Northern community with which I am acquainted, but they did not think it wrong to disobey the revenue.” Harrison ultimately portrays illicit distilling as the product of an isolated culture resistant to change and modernity. “They despise the life of towns and cities, and think the inhabitants of such places much inferior to themselves in wisdom, character, and happiness,” Harrison concludes. “The continued manufacture of whisky in violation of the laws [is] partly a feature of [this] old warfare of the mountaineers against the civilization and the people of the towns.”<sup>45</sup>

Adopting the view that mountain violence was largely the result of genetics, other writers condemned the moonshiners. In 1885, Donald Baines remarked that illegal distillers in the border counties of North Carolina and Georgia remained “semi-barbarians” and, as such, knew “no law of right and justice.” According to Baines, these “uncouth looking specimens of humanity” were a breed apart, a distinct, racialized “other”:

Imagine a tall, finely-built, powerful, loose-jointed man, standing six feet two inches in his stockings, (for the air of his mountain home is conducive to perfect physical development), with long tangled hair, black as jet, falling over a low sunburned forehead, and clustered in luxuriant masses in his neck; eyebrows of equal blackness that seem to shadow his eyes; a high, prominent nose; thin, cruel lips, which, when parted, disclose long white teeth of enviable regularity and beauty; eyes like burning coals of fire and of serpent-like brilliancy, always moving restlessly; muscles that stand out like knotted cords upon his arms and legs; a sinewy, shapely body, denoting extraordinary physical strength—this is a faithful pen picture of the “moonshiner” as he is to be seen to-day.<sup>46</sup>

Culturally and genetically predisposed to break the law, moonshiners and their families lived in squalor and ignorance. “Of morality,” Baines charged, “it is impossible to speak in an article of this character—suffice it to say there is scarcely any such thing as morality among the class of people described.”<sup>47</sup> Baines and other local colorists also linked the highlanders’ alleged genetic inferiority, inherent violence, and fondness for alcohol to

feuding, a practice that became synonymous with the region during the late 1880s.<sup>48</sup> Kentucky journalist James Lane Allen explained in 1886:

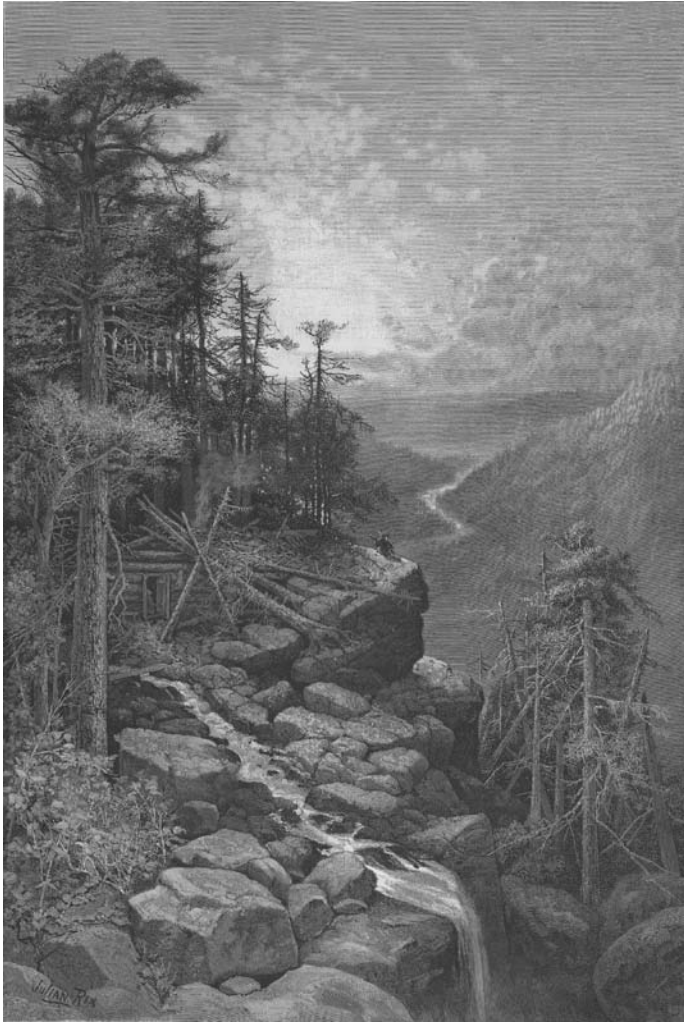
The special origins of [feuding] are various: blood heated and temper lost under the influence of “moonshine”; reporting on the places and manufacturers of this; local politics; the survival of resentment engendered during the civil war—these, together with all causes that lie in the passions of the human heart and spring from the constitution of all human society, often make the remote and insulated life of these people turbulent, reckless, and distressing.<sup>49</sup>

Journalists and fiction writers continued to promote industrialization as the solution to the economic and social ills of the southern Appalachian Mountains. By improving education, introducing new religious groups, and modernizing the region’s economy, the moonshiner—who was both a product and a cause of his environment—would be eradicated. Railroads, factories, and other industrial projects would usher in a new era of “progress” by discouraging highlanders from engaging in illicit distilling, binge drinking, and violence.<sup>50</sup> As Donald Baines concluded in 1885:

In a few more years, when the march of progress shall have sounded through these woods and dales the “moonshiners” occupation will be gone, and in his stead we shall find industrious, hard-working farmers, cultivating the rich soil that is now running to waste; the hum of the spindle shall succeed the bubbling of the still, and where now is nought but desolation, squalor and ignorance, there shall be cultivation and plenty, happiness and wealth, education and intelligence.<sup>51</sup>

Four years later, Charles Dudley Warner, writing about eastern Kentucky, concurred. “Worthless, good-for-nothing, irreclaimable, were words I often heard applied to the people of this and that region,” Warner wrote. “I am not so despondent of their future. Railways, trade, the sight of enterprise and industry will do much with this material.”<sup>52</sup>

Much to the dismay of Warner and other writers, modernization failed to eliminate moonshining in Appalachia during the 1890s. But the continuation of this profession was neither the result of geographical isolation nor the product of ethnic origins. It was rather a response to the region’s increasing connectedness to the larger market economy. In 1891, a nation-



“The Moonshiner’s Home,” engraving. *Harper’s Weekly*, October 23, 1886, 687. Shirley Stipp Ephemera Collection, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collection, University of North Carolina at Asheville.

wide depression began that would continue until 1897. This economic crisis made moonshining an attractive alternative for some highlanders who saw the cash value of their farms plummet during those years. In 1894, the U.S. Congress raised the federal liquor tax. This new tax encouraged evasion



because many small distillers believed that it reduced their profit margin.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the enactment of local-option laws further encouraged illicit distilling by providing a wider market for moonshiners, who, without legal competition, often raised the price of alcohol on mountain residents who did not appreciate the ban.<sup>54</sup> Other illicit distillers also took advantage of industrialization to expand their operations, selling their product to a new clientele: “thirsty lumberjacks, miners, and millhands.”<sup>55</sup>

Most of these moonshiners used their wits rather than a Winchester rifle to evade revenuers, but some did resort to violence. Between 1891 and 1895, for instance, illicit distillers operated a “white cap” club in Wilkes County, North Carolina, to protect their whiskey operations from federal and local officials.<sup>56</sup> Modeled partly on the Ku Klux Klan, white caps had appeared in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia in the late 1880s.<sup>57</sup> Like the Klan, these vigilantes wore disguises and terrorized African Americans in an attempt to maintain white supremacy. They also paid unwelcome visits to informers and fired on federal agents conducting raids. In the Roaring River section of Wilkes County, these terrorists ruled with an iron fist. According to the *Wilkesboro Chronicle* in 1895, white caps there were “an energetic people in the cause of Satan.” The newspaper elaborated: “Last Friday night a crowd went to Ansel Prevet’s, and called him to the door and shot him through the thigh. They went to John Prevet’s near by and tore down his dwelling house. They then went to an unoccupied house belonging to Mathew Prevet and burned it. John and Mathew are sons of Ansel, [who was a witness] a few days ago in a case again[st] W. C. Wiles, charged with blockading. . . . It is dangerous to be safe up there.”<sup>58</sup>

Although such violence was an exception to the rule, journalists and local colorists continued to portray it as widespread, the product of an isolated culture that needed civilizing. “[Mountain] people have customs quaint and curious, elsewhere obsolete,” S. M. Davis wrote in the *Missionary Review* in 1895. “Their moral looseness is dreadful; but what can be expected where sometimes three generations live, eat, and sleep in small, windowless cabins.”<sup>59</sup> Even writers like Francis Lynde, who downplayed the level of moonshine violence in Appalachia, conceded that illicit distilling was the result of a culture “not sufficiently in touch with modern civilization.”<sup>60</sup> Emil O. Peterson concurred: “Three hours’ ride takes one from the heart of busy civilization to a certain moonshine quarter on the slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where may still be found true children of nature and the primitive customs of forest dwellers.”<sup>61</sup>

Much of this literature also served as propaganda for the uplift movement of the 1890s. Missionary Margaret Johann’s “A Little Moonshiner,” for instance, chronicles the rescue of a rural mountain girl from poverty and ignorance. The girl lives in a crude cabin “built of logs, and the branches of trees, and clay.” One day, she accompanies her father, whom revenueurs had arrested for illicit distilling, to the town of Marshall in Madison County. She is dumbfounded, having never seen windows, ceiled walls, and trains. A town resident helps the “poor little thing” by convincing the community to build a new cabin for her father. “The place is a little nearer to civilization than the old cabin, but yet it’s wild enough to be homelike to them,” the narrator concludes. “As for the father . . . he’ll go at some legitimate work—tobacco raising perhaps.”<sup>62</sup>

While perpetuating the myth of violent Appalachia, stories like this also reinforced middle-class America’s belief that moonshining prevented mountain whites from embracing wage labor, commercial agriculture, and other “civilized” pursuits. Even more distressing, the profession victimized children, who, mired in poverty, remained ignorant of the outside world. But, as Johann emphasizes in “A Little Moonshiner,” these unfortunate families could find salvation. It was the duty of reformers to encourage moonshiners to go to school, embrace mainstream Christianity, learn new job skills, and participate in the larger market economy. “We cannot fail to love this land of beauty nor to appreciate the high and noble qualities of its dear people,” missionary E. G. Prudden agreed. “Their patient endurance of deprivation and trial calls forth our warmest sympathies.”<sup>63</sup>

The myth of violent Appalachia and its moonshiners was embraced by two groups. Northern capitalists could rationalize their activity in the region because they were, in effect, saving the people of Appalachia as much as they were profiting off them. It also allowed middle-class Americans to project their own fears about economic modernization onto a people they perceived to be different. The illicit distiller reminded these Victorians why they had embraced industrialization and “progress.” Moreover, northerners’ embrace of violent Appalachia permitted them to reunite with the South following Reconstruction. By focusing their attention on moonshining, and later feuding in the mountains, middle-class northerners were able to overlook the racial violence that accompanied “redemption” elsewhere in the South, thereby making it easier for them to reconcile with their former adversaries.<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps more significantly, the myth of violent Appalachia and its moonshiners ultimately encouraged northern, middle-class Victorians to

launch the uplift movement of the 1890s. These reformers, disappointed over their failure to empower African Americans in the South during Reconstruction, increasingly focused their attention on reforming mountain whites, whom they believed were “Americans-in-the-making.” Although primitive and violent, highlanders had supposedly rejected slavery, been loyal to the Union during the Civil War, and remained racially pure, the embodiment of “Anglo-Saxonism.” In other words, they possessed “qualities which made them capable of uplift and improvement.” As historian Nina Silber argued, these myths helped open “a new path for northern humanitarianism that was far removed from the disturbing racial and social conflicts that held the South in its grip” during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup>

## Notes

1. *Asheville Semi-Weekly Citizen*, Jan. 4, 1883.

2. *Asheville Weekly Citizen*, Nov. 13, 1889.

3. For a discussion of the construction of Appalachian stereotypes before the Civil War, see David C. Hsiung, *Two Worlds in the Tennessee Mountains: Exploring the Origins of Appalachian Stereotypes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997); and Bruce E. Stewart, “Select Men of Sober and Industrious Habits: Alcohol Reform and Social Conflict in Antebellum Appalachia,” *Journal of Southern History* 73 (May 2007): 289–322.

4. The most popular of these magazines were *Harper's Weekly*, *Lippincott's*, *Scribner's*, the *Living Age*, the *Century*, and *Appleton's Journal*. On the rise of these magazines, see Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); and Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996).

5. For more on the local color “movement,” see Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*; Anne Rowe, *The Enchanted Country: Northern Writers in the South, 1865–1910* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); and Kevin E. O'Donnell and Helen Hollingsworth, eds., *Seekers of Scenery: Travel Writing from Southern Appalachia, 1840–1900* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004).

6. Anthony Harkins, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 29.

7. For a discussion of feuding and the creation of violent Appalachia, see Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*; Allen W. Batteau, *The Invention of Appalachia*

(Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990); and Altina L. Waller, “Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype,” in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 347–76.

8. J. W. Williamson and Anthony Harkins have shown the role that moonshining played in the making of the term *hillbilly*. Both, however, focus mostly on media images of illicit distillers in the twentieth century. See J. W. Williamson, *Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Harkins, *Hillbilly*.

9. Charles Lanman, “Novelties of Southern Scenery,” *Appleton’s Journal*, Oct. 16–30, 1869, 257–61, 296–97, 327–29.

10. “Nineteenth-century landscape viewing in America has roots in British aristocratic traditions. The term ‘picturesque’ originated in eighteenth-century British aesthetic discourse. Edmund Burke’s widely circulated *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) helped to set the stage, by establishing the meanings of two related terms: ‘sublime’ and ‘beautiful.’ According to Burke, scenery that is wild, untamed, disordered, and terrifying is sublime. Scenery that is pastoral, lush, ordered, and serene is beautiful. A third term, ‘picturesque,’ was coined by a British cleric, William Gilpin, after Burke’s treatise had circulated. In Gilpin’s view, a picturesque scene contains elements both sublime and beautiful. Gilpin popularized the use of all three terms, roaming the countryside and using ‘sublime,’ ‘beautiful,’ and ‘picturesque’ in a series of essays to categorize specific landscape views. To Gilpin and his late eighteenth-century British adherents, a picturesque landscape was the most desirable.” See O’Donnell and Hollingsworth, *Seekers of Scenery*, 12.

11. Sue Rainey, *Creating Picturesque America: Monument to the Natural and Cultural Landscape* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1994), 22.

12. Paul Herman Buck, *The Road to Reunion, 1865–1900* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937); Rowe, *Enchanted Country*; and O’Donnell and Hollingsworth, *Seekers of Scenery*.

13. H. E. Colton, “A Farm on the French Broad,” *Appleton’s Journal*, Dec. 17, 1870, 737–38; H. E. Colton, “Mountain Island,” *Appleton’s Journal*, Jan. 17, 1871, 15–18; and H. E. Colton, “Reems’s Creek and the Old Mill,” *Appleton’s Journal*, Feb. 4, 1871, 135–37.

14. Christian Reid, *The Land of the Sky; or, Adventures in Mountain By-Ways* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890), 22, 33–40.

15. For additional “scenic entrepreneur” works on Appalachia, see Edward A. Pollard, “The Virginia Tourist,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* (May, June, Aug. 1870): 5: 487–97, 599–609, 6: 140–49; John Esten Cooke, “The Natural Bridge,” *Apple-*

*ton's Journal*, Feb. 1871, 168–70, 195–98; Oliver Bell Bunce, “On Lookout Mountain (with Illustrations by Harry Fenn),” *Appleton's Journal*, Aug. 26, 1871, 238–42; F. G. de Fontaine, “Cumberland Gap,” *Appleton's Weekly*, Mar. 16, 1872, 281–82; Jehu Lewis, “The Grandfather of North Carolina,” *Lakeside Monthly* 10 (Sept. 1873): 218–24; Constance Fenimore Woolson, “The French Broad,” *Harper's Monthly* 50 (Apr. 1875): 617–36; and George Dimmock, “A Trip to Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina,” *Appalachia* 1 (June 1877): 141–51.

16. Reid, *Land of the Sky*, 7.

17. David Hunter Strother, “The Mountains,” *Harper's Magazine* 44 (May 1872): 800.

18. Edward King, “The Great South: Among the Mountains of Western North Carolina,” *Scribner's Monthly* 7 (Mar. 1874): 521.

19. Rebecca Harding Davis, “Qualla,” *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 16 (Nov. 1875): 577. See also Rebecca Harding Davis, “The Rose of Carolina,” *Scribner's Monthly* 8 (Oct. 1874): 723–26; Rebecca Harding Davis, “The Yares of the Black Mountains,” *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 16 (July 1875): 35–47; and Rebecca Harding Davis, “A Night in the Mountains,” *Appleton's Journal* 3 (July–Dec. 1877): 505–10.

20. Woolson, “French Broad,” 630.

21. James Klotter, “The Black South and White Appalachia,” *Journal of American History* 66 (Mar. 1980): 832–49; Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*; and Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine*.

22. Louise Coffin Jones, “In the Backwoods of Carolina,” *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 24 (Dec. 1879): 756.

23. The federal government had previously levied duties on imported and domestically manufactured alcohol in 1791 and 1814. Appalachian distillers vehemently opposed these duties and ignored the law. Because of this resistance, the federal government retreated from its attempts to collect the liquor tax. See Jeffrey J. Crow, “The Whiskey Rebellion in North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 66 (Jan. 1989): 1–28; Mary K. Tachau, “The Whiskey Rebellion in Kentucky: A Forgotten Episode of Civil Disobedience,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 2 (July 1982): 239–59; Kevin T. Barksdale, “Our Rebellious Neighbors: Virginia's Border Counties during Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 111 (Jan. 2003): 5–32; and Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

24. The commissioner of internal revenue oversaw a network of collection districts. A collector headed each district and “appointed subordinates to monitor the output of distilleries, breweries, and tobacco processors and to apprehend those who failed to pay taxes.” See Wilbur R. Miller, “The Revenue: Federal Law En-

forcement in the Mountain South, 1870–1900,” *Journal of Southern History* 55 (May 1989): 197. In 1953, the agency was renamed the Internal Revenue Service.

25. For a discussion of distilling in Appalachia before the Civil War, see Bruce E. Stewart, “‘This Country Improves in Cultivation, Wickedness, Mills, and Still’: Distilling and Drinking in Antebellum Western North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 83 (Oct. 2006): 447–78; Wilbur R. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Joseph Earl Dabney, *Mountain Spirits: A Chronicle of Corn Whiskey from King James’ Ulster Plantation to America’s Appalachians and the Moonshine Life* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974); David W. Maurer, with the assistance of Quinn Pearl, *Kentucky Moonshine* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974); Jess Carr, *The Second Oldest Profession: An Informal History of Moonshining in America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972); and Ester Kellner, *Moonshine: Its History and Folklore* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1971).

26. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 15.

27. George Wesley Atkinson, *After the Moonshiners, by One of the Raiders* (Wheeling, WV: Frew and Campbell, 1881), 13–14.

28. *Atlanta Constitution*, May 19, 1880, quoted in Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 41.

29. Quoted in Bruce E. Stewart, *King of the Moonshiners: Lewis R. Redmond in Fact and Fiction* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), xviii.

30. See Stewart, *King of the Moonshiners*, xviii; Bruce E. Stewart, “‘When Darkness Reigns Then Is the Hour to Strike’: Moonshining, Federal Liquor Taxation, and Klan Violence in Western North Carolina, 1868–1872,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 80 (Oct. 2003): 465–66; Bruce E. Stewart, “Attacking ‘Red-Legged Grasshoppers’: Moonshiners, Violence, and the Politics of Federal Liquor Taxation in Western North Carolina, 1865–1876,” *Appalachian Journal* 32 (Fall 2004): 30–31; Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 41–42.

31. Radical Republicanism represented what southern Democrats believed were the evils of Reconstruction: African American equality, excessive taxation, and the expansion of federal authority. See Stewart, “Attacking ‘Red-Legged Grasshoppers’”; and Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*.

32. Quoted in Daniel J. Whitener, *Prohibition in North Carolina, 1715–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 79.

33. Quoted in Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton, *North Carolina since 1860* (Chicago: Lewis, 1919), 196.

34. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 97–146.

35. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 107.

36. See A. H. Guernsey, “Illicit Distilling of Liquors,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Dec. 7,

1867, 733; and A. H. Guernsey, "Hunting for Stills," *Harper's Weekly*, Dec. 21, 1867, 811.

37. *New York Times*, July 21, 1878. See also *New York Times*, Mar. 15, July 19, Oct. 27, 1877, July 19, Dec. 22, 1878.

38. *New York Times*, Feb. 2, 1880.

39. "The Moonshine Man: A Peep into His Haunts and Hiding Places," *Harper's Weekly*, Oct. 20, 1877, 821–22.

40. Constance Fenimore Woolson, "Up in the Blue Ridge," *Appleton's Journal* 5 (July–Dec. 1878): 104–25.

41. *New York Times*, July 19, July 21, Dec. 22, 1878, Feb. 2, July 5, 1880, May 25, July 23, July 25, 1881.

42. *Washington Post*, May 8, July 29, Sept. 3, 1878; *National Police Gazette*, July 20, Sept. 21, Nov. 2, 1878; *Christian Union*, Nov. 27, 1878; *Atlanta Daily Constitution*, Aug. 3, 11, 17, 27, Oct. 1, 1878; and *New York Times*, Mar. 14, 15, 16, 19, July 15, 27, Aug. 18, 20, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, Sept. 3, 29, Nov. 2, 20, 27, 1878. See also Stewart, *King of the Moonshiners*.

43. Edward B. Crittenden, *The Entwined Lives of Miss Gabrielle Austin, Daughter of the Late Rev. Ellis C. Austin, and of Redmond, the Outlaw, Leader of the North Carolina "Moonshiners"* (Philadelphia: Barclay and Co., 1879), 58, 63. In 1881, Redmond refuted the contents of this story. See R. A. Cobb, *The True Life of Maj. Lewis Richard Redmond, the Notorious and Famous Moonshiner, of Western North Carolina, who was Born in Swain County, N.C., in the Year 1855, and Arrested April 7th, 1881* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards, Broughton, and Co., 1881).

44. "Law and Moonshine," *Harper's Weekly*, Aug. 23, 1879, 667. See also "Moonshiners," *Harper's Weekly*, Nov. 2, 1878, 875; and "Moonshiners," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 59 (Mar. 1879): 380–90.

45. Jonathan Baxter Harrison, "Studies in the South," *Atlantic Monthly* 49 (Jan. 1882): 90.

46. Donald Baines, "Among the Moonshiners," *Dixie* 1 (Aug. 1885): 10.

47. Baines, "Among the Moonshiners," 12.

48. See also Rebecca Harding Davis, "By-Paths in the Mountains, III," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 61 (Sept. 1880): 532–47; Sherwood Bonner, "Jack and the Mountain Pink," *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 29, 1881, 75–77; Sherwood Bonner, "The Case of Eliza Bleylock," *Harper's Weekly*, Mar. 5, 1881, 155–57; Atkinson, *After the Moonshiners*; Louise Coffin Jones, "In the Highlands of North Carolina," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 32 (Oct. 1883): 385; Charles Dudley Warner, "On Horseback," *Atlantic Monthly* 51 (July 1885): 195–96; Morgan Bates and Elwyn A. Barron, *A Mountain Pink: Realistic Description Among the Moonshiners of North Carolina, a Romantic Drama* (Milwaukee: Riverside Printing Co., 1885); "Home of the Moonshiners," *Harper's Weekly*, Oct. 23, 1886, 687–88; and Charles Dud-

ley Warner, “Comments on Kentucky,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 78 (Jan. 1889): 269–71.

49. James Lane Allen, “Through Cumberland Gap on Horseback,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 81 (Sept. 1886): 60.

50. See Atkinson, *After the Moonshiners*, 15, 28, 32; R. H. Davis, “By-Paths in the Mountains, III,” 533; “Home of the Moonshiners,” 687–88; Harrison, “Studies in the South,” 91; Warner, “Comments on Kentucky,” 270–71; Allen, “Through Cumberland Gap on Horseback,” 66; and *New York Times*, Feb. 2, 1880.

51. Baines, “Among the Moonshiners,” 14.

52. Warner, “Comments on Kentucky,” 271.

53. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 166–67.

54. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 172.

55. Miller, *Revenuers and Moonshiners*, 30.

56. See *Wilkesboro Chronicle*, Mar. 25, July 1, 1891, Mar. 17, 1892, Feb. 21, Feb. 28, Mar. 7, Mar. 28, June 6, 1895; and *North Wilkesboro News*, Mar. 7, 1895.

57. William F. Holmes, “Moonshiners and Whitecaps in Alabama, 1893,” *Alabama Review* 24 (Jan. 1981): 31–49; William F. Holmes, “Moonshining and Collective Violence: Georgia, 1889–1895,” *Journal of American History* 67 (Dec. 1980): 589–611; and William F. Holmes, “Whitecapping and Agrarian Violence in Mississippi, 1902–1906,” *Journal of Southern History* 25 (May 1969): 165–85.

58. *Wilkesboro Chronicle*, Mar. 28, 1895.

59. S. M. Davis, “The ‘Mountain Whites’ of America,” *Missionary Review* (June 1895): 920.

60. Francis Lynde, “The Moonshiners of Fact,” in *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture*, ed. William K. McNeil (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 81.

61. Emil O. Peterson, “A Glimpse of the Moonshiners,” *Chautauquan* 26 (Nov. 1897): 178. For other stories on moonshining at the turn of the twentieth century, see Mary F. Murfree, “The Mountaineers at Hoho-Hebee Falls,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Sept. 23, 30, 1893; Will Allen Dromgoole, *Spurrier with the Wildcats and Moonshiners* (Nashville: University Press, 1892); William M. Brewer, “Moonshining in Georgia,” *Cosmopolitan* 12 (June 1897): 127–34; B. G. McFall, *Among the Moonshiners; or, A Drunkard’s Legacy: A Temperance Drama in Three Acts* (Clyde, OH: Ames, 1897); Bernard Francis Moore, *The Moonshiner’s Daughter: A Play of Mountain Life in Three Acts* (Boston: Walter H. Baker and Co., 1898); Will Allen Dromgoole, *A Moonshiner’s Son* (Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Company, 1898); “North Carolina Romance,” *New York Times*, Dec. 25, 1898; C. W. Waite, *Among the Moonshiners* (New York: F. T. Neely, 1899); J. C. L. Harris, “A True Story of Life among the Moonshiners of the Blue Ridge,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Jan. 19, 1899; Samuel G. Blythe, “Raiding Moonshiners,” *Munsey’s Magazine* 25 (June



1901): 418–24; and Leonidas Hubbard Jr., “The Moonshiner at Home” *Atlantic Monthly* 90 (Aug. 1902): 234–41.

62. Margaret Johann, “A Little Moonshiner,” *Christian Observer*, July 21, 1897, 700–701.

63. *Lenoir Topic*, Mar. 23, 1892.

64. Klotter, “Black South and White Appalachia,” 832–49. See also Waller, “Feuding in Appalachia,” 349, 361.

65. Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 143–58. See also Nina Silber, “‘What Does America Need So Much as Americans?’: Race and Northern Reconciliation with Southern Appalachia, 1870–1890,” in *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 245–58; and Klotter, “Black South and White Appalachia.”

## Chapter 8

# “Deep in the Shades of Ill-Starred Georgia’s Wood”

## The Murder of Elder Joseph Standing in Late-Nineteenth-Century Appalachian Georgia

*Mary Ella Engel*

In the fall of 1876, Mormon missionary John Hamilton Morgan answered a call from church president Brigham Young. He was to go to the South, to join other elders there in a new effort to win converts for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Morgan quickly determined that he would make the counties of northwest Georgia his mission field, and according to Mormon historians, the rugged and mountainous area that extended from Rome to Chattanooga proved to be “the most profitable field the Mormon missionaries found in the South”—so profitable, in fact, that locals soon dubbed the region “Utah.” In one sense, Morgan’s decision to concentrate his proselytizing efforts in north Georgia would seem to represent the emerging national obsession with Appalachia. However, his mission differed considerably from those of the mainstream Protestant denominations that would also turn their attention to the southern mountains in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As Morgan saw it, the True Gospel of the LDS Church offered spiritual deliverance to the unchurched souls of the region. In addition, the Mormon doctrine of “gathering” the Saints to a western Zion promised to relocate poor farmers of northwest Georgia to a more stable and secure economic situation. As Mormon efforts intensified and the pace of conversions accelerated, local opposition similarly ratcheted up. On July 21, 1879, a mob of twelve men confronted two young Mormon missionaries as they traveled through Whitfield County, Georgia, on their way to a church conference in nearby Chattooga County. In the confrontation, Elder Joseph Standing was killed.<sup>1</sup>

To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Standing's murder represented only the latest in a series of religious persecutions, dating back to the church's emergence from the "burned-over" district of western New York during the period of intense revivalism known as the Second Great Awakening. Founded by Joseph Smith Jr. in 1830—the same year that Smith produced the Book of Mormon—the LDS Church attracted both jeers and cheers. Critics questioned Smith's claim that the Book of Mormon was divinely inspired; church members accepted Smith as prophet and embraced his vision of a restored Christian church. Discord and violence followed the Saints as they sought their earthly "Zion" in Ohio, Missouri, and then Illinois, where Smith met his death at the hands of a mob. The Saints left Illinois in 1846 under the leadership of the new prophet, Brigham Young, who led them to the valley of the Great Salt Lake in what would later become Utah Territory. But controversy continued to plague the church, especially as its practice of plural marriage became public. Plural marriage, or polygamy, disturbed most nineteenth-century Americans, so much so that the 1856 platform of the Republican Party vowed to eliminate both slavery *and* polygamy, "those twin relics of barbarism." Fears regarding an expanding Mormon theocracy and animus toward polygamy prompted the U.S. government to invade and occupy the territory in 1857–58, and in 1862 Abraham Lincoln signed into law the first antipolygamy act passed by Congress, legislation largely ignored by the Saints. Their defiance would provoke later, and more aggressive, anti-Mormon legislation.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, opposition and persecution were familiar challenges for the nineteenth-century LDS Church, and the Latter-day Saints interpreted Elder Standing's murder in Georgia as a continuation of American anti-Mormonism. They did, however, acknowledge a peculiarly southern propensity for violence. In 1886, an unidentified elder from Ogden, Utah, received a call to missionary service in the South and reacted with horror: "Save me from that horrible place. Any place on earth but the Southern States." In contemporary examinations of Standing's murder, scholars have perpetuated that theme, attributing the bloodshed in Georgia to an enduring southern tradition of extralegal violence. A significant change occurred in the 1980s, when historians began to point out that Georgia's violence against Mormons was more precisely located in Appalachian Georgia. In his 1989 article about Joseph Standing's murder, Ken Driggs noted that "the Mormons had their greatest missionary success in a poor rural mountainous area of Georgia which had one of the most active traditions of vio-

lence at the time.” Historian Edward Ayers also placed violence against Mormons within mountain traditions, linking whitecapping, feuding, moonshine wars, and anti-Mormonism. “Isolated mountain people,” he explained, “had no notion of cultural pluralism or moral relativism—only right and wrong.” According to Ayers, mountain folks rejected both the moral threat of Mormon polygamy, which threatened male honor and female purity, and the organized forces of the LDS missionary effort.<sup>3</sup>

In stressing the geographic location of an event such as Standing’s murder, *place* assumes extraordinary explanatory power. As a result, Standing’s death could be seen as simply representative of a mountain predilection toward lawlessness, a frontier mentality, or fear of outsiders, making further inquiry unnecessary. An acknowledgment of north Georgia’s violent past, however, does not mean that anti-Mormon violence—and more particularly, Joseph Standing’s murder—should simply be subsumed to larger patterns or attributed to a general regional proclivity toward violence. As this essay suggests, this particular incident of mob violence can best be understood as the consequence of disrupting community, family, and kin—especially the relationships between heads of households and dependents. Initially, southern Saints fashioned a new Georgia community of like-minded believers, but eventually most relocated to a communitarian settlement in Manassa, Colorado. So conversion to Mormonism presupposed the physical separation of converts from loved ones and dependents from heads-of-household. Additionally, the Latter-day Saints’ practice of plural marriage, considered by many nineteenth-century Americans to be the invention of hypersexual men, also invited suspicion that mission efforts focused on north Georgia’s women. Had Mormon missionaries been less persuasive, Joseph Standing may have escaped harm. Ironically, it was the success of Mormon conversion efforts that all but guaranteed retaliation from those intent upon maintaining family and community.<sup>4</sup>

Only weeks after his arrival in north Georgia in late 1876, Elder John Morgan waxed optimistic about his new Chattooga County mission field. In a letter directed to the editor of Utah’s *Deseret News*, but intended to communicate mission news to supportive Saints as well as church authorities, he described the success of his Georgia labors. Though “the opposition has been bitter, as it usually is,” his ten-week endeavor had produced satisfying results. “We have a good church building,” he wrote, “controlled entirely by the Saints,” and each Sabbath day he carried his message to new members and their families, an audience of about fifty Georgians.<sup>5</sup>

Encouraged by his reception, Morgan moved from his Chattooga County headquarters into other northwest Georgia counties, his way often eased by introductions provided by new Georgia Saints. It was usually the case that Mormon elders negotiated the ties that connected family, kin, and neighbors as they sought new converts, and Elder Morgan did this quite successfully in northwest Georgia. After the organization of the first branch of the church in Chattooga County, he quickly organized two branches in Floyd County. From Floyd, Morgan moved to Walker County and began three branches there. The local churches would be necessary for only the short term, he hoped, as he forcefully encouraged Georgia converts to “gather” to the western Zion. In May 1877, he confided to his journal that “the spirit of emigration is taking hold upon the Brethren,” continuing, “I am much in hopes that all will try and emigrate this Fall.” By late October 1877, John Morgan reported to new church president John Taylor that plans for an initial expedition had been finalized and that he was “endeavoring to pick out the strongest of the saints”—from Appalachian Georgia and Alabama—to travel first and open the way for future companies. In November, less than a year after his arrival in Georgia, Morgan accompanied that expedition of Georgia converts to the West. They wintered in Pueblo, Colorado, completing their journey to a new Mormon settlement in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado the following spring.<sup>6</sup>

The church rewarded Morgan’s efforts by naming him president of the entire Southern States Mission, and he returned to Georgia in the spring of 1878. Violence and threats of violence had dogged John Morgan’s heels during his first mission to Georgia, and he expected little change in the second. Warnings of trouble had come during the summer of 1877, when Morgan visited with converts in Walker County. “Some pistols fired near the house after night,” he wrote in his journal at that time. The casual dismissal belied the fact that sinister forces had organized against the missionary. In the autumn that followed, Jesse Bartlett Faucett, of a Walker County branch, reported a midnight visit from “devils” claiming to represent the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). They asked for Elder Morgan, but upon learning that the Mormon missionary was not in residence, they left. They reappeared days later at an outdoor meeting hosted by convert William Dixon Bailey. Morgan remembered that the meeting had barely begun when one of the Bailey daughters “rushed in from a neighbor’s house and informed her father that the KKK were preparing to break up the meeting and forcefully drive” Morgan from the community. After a moment’s delib-

eration, Morgan asked if Bailey possessed firearms. Bailey then walked into his home, reemerging moments later with three loaded weapons, “which Elder Morgan stacked immediately beside the table he was using as a pulpit.” The Klansmen retreated.<sup>7</sup>

Nineteenth-century Appalachian Georgia was a dangerous place. It is impossible to divorce the mountain counties from the violence inherent in antebellum racial slavery as that institution existed, at least marginally, in north Georgia. The Civil War had also unleashed destructive and devastating guerrilla warfare in northwest Georgia counties, as Confederate sympathizers and Unionists clashed on the home front. Whether described as raiders, Independent Scouts, or guerrilla bands, brutal marauders prowled northwestern Georgia, inciting fear in Unionist and Confederate alike. In the months immediately following the war, guerrillas continued to plague the region, claiming that they worked on behalf of local residents and the maintenance of law and order. Reconstruction saw renewed violence as the Ku Klux Klan—considered by Republicans to be “the terrorist wing” of the Democratic Party—worked to “redeem” Georgia from Republican rule and return control of the state to white conservative Democrats.<sup>8</sup>

Chattooga County boasted the largest group of Klansmen north of the Chattahoochee River, attracting members from Floyd, Walker, and Chattooga counties, who worked to suppress the Republican vote in northwest Georgia. Although the KKK had officially disbanded by the time Mormon missionaries appeared in the state in the mid-1870s, men identifying themselves as members of the Klan continually harassed Mormon elders, describing themselves as protectors of public morality. Whether they had represented the terrorist group in the past is unknown. The illegal liquor trade also provoked shooting wars in the Georgia mountains, as it did in 1877 when armed conflict between moonshiners and U.S. revenue officers broke out on the borders of Fannin and Gilmer counties.<sup>9</sup>

Though he decried all anti-Mormon expressions, John Morgan reserved his bitterest recriminations for those he believed responsible for inciting violence against Latter-day Saints: Georgia’s clergy and press. He communicated Georgia threats to the Saints in Utah, an effort to emphasize both the perils of his mission and the sweetness of success, which led the *Deseret News* to report: “Alarmed on account of so great progress being made, notices were posted warning Elder Morgan to leave the country, and ministers from the pulpit advocated mobbing, hanging, and other violent measures.” For an 1878 issue of the church journal *Juvenile Instructor*, Morgan wrote a

first-person account of an event that took place in the shadow of Floyd County's Lavender Mountain. The Floyd County Saints, he wrote, typically gathered at dusk, seating themselves "upon the rough planks and benches that have been hastily brought together for the purpose." Morgan remembered that the small church was crowded with converts and curious family and neighbors who had come to hear him preach. His words were met with such close attention, he said, that "a pin can almost be heard to drop upon the floor." However, the peaceful service was suddenly and shockingly interrupted. To newspaper readers, he described the scene:

"Bang, bang, bang, bang!" go a lot of guns. The boards that cover the crevices between the logs rattle, and we hear the heavy thud as the lead strikes the solid logs. The shots rattle alongside of and against the weather boards while the hurried tramp of feet on the outside tells us that our disturbers are fulfilling scripture, in that they are fleeing "where no man pursueth." For a moment only does the audience show signs of uneasiness. One or two start to their feet, while a frightened word or two falls from the lips of the most excitable. Uncle Billy Manning, sitting directly in front, without ever turning his head, or deigning to notice the alarm, speaks slowly and calmly: "Keep quiet!" The tones of his voice show that he is cool and collected as though at the table asking for polk greens, his favorite dish. A word from the Elder of assurance is offered, and the thread of the discourse is taken up, and continued to the close without any allusion to the incident.<sup>10</sup>

John Morgan expected the opposition to resume upon his return to Georgia in 1878, so he was not surprised to learn that Klansmen intended to welcome the elder by disrupting LDS meetings in Walker County's McLemore's Cove Branch. Forewarned of the threat, branch president William C. Kilgore and Elder Morgan resolved to meet violence with violence, "so we sent for some of the brethren and armed ourselves for a fight." The anticipated showdown never occurred. "More or less talk of K.K.K.," Elder Morgan wrote in late May, "but we have not been troubled yet."<sup>11</sup>

The arrival of new missionaries from Utah buoyed his spirits, especially the arrival of Joseph Standing, called by the church on March 1, 1878, to take up his second mission to the South. Some of the elders Morgan assigned to neighboring southern states, but four would labor in Georgia, including John Morgan and the young man he selected as his



Photograph of Joseph Standing. Courtesy of the University of Utah.

missionary companion. Of Joseph Standing’s responsibilities, Morgan wrote simply, “Joe will stay with me for a while.” The elders had labored together briefly in Indiana and Illinois before Standing relocated to Tennessee to complete his mission. Twenty-three years old in 1878 and unmarried, Standing was the son of British converts who had made the perilous journey to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Standing’s father earned a good living as a stonecutter and supported his wife and ten children comfortably in Salt Lake City’s Twelfth Ward, a neighborhood that demonstrated the scope and diversity of nineteenth-century Mormon conversion efforts. Among the Standings’ neighbors were a lawyer from Iowa, a surveyor from New York, a bookbinder from Norway, an artist from England, and a shoemaker from Pennsylvania. Prior to his call to mission, Standing was employed as a fireman with the Wasatch Engine Company.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps his enhanced missionary force led John Morgan to downplay local resistance. “The opposition has been strong and bitter,” Morgan re-



ported to church authorities in 1878, “but so far has not had any perceptible influence to retard the work. I am satisfied that thinking people throughout this part of the country are more in the spirit of investigation than they heretofore have been, and if we but have the patience to teach steadily along, good results will follow.” At this point, no face-to-face violent confrontations between elders and locals had occurred, largely because the initial branches of the LDS Church in Georgia—those in Chattooga, Floyd, and Walker counties—primarily represented nuclear families, some of them constituent families within a larger network of kin. In these counties, the presence of male heads-of-household seems to have successfully deterred serious efforts to confront directly either Georgia’s new Saints or the LDS missionaries who often relied on their protection. When patriarchs assumed a prominent role in branch leadership, their participation appears to have diffused, at least partially, objections from local critics. The situation would prove very different in the Varnell’s Station Branch, which drew converts from both Catoosa and Whitfield counties.<sup>13</sup>

It was Walker County Branch member Nathaniel Connally who encouraged elders Morgan and Standing to carry their LDS message to relatives near Whitfield County’s Varnell’s Station. In the fall of 1878, the missionaries left Walker County, Connally traveling with them as he intended to personally introduce the missionaries to family members living along the border separating Catoosa and Whitfield counties. Connally delivered the missionaries first to the Catoosa County home of his niece Elizabeth Elledge, who welcomed them cordially, as did her husband and children. Elizabeth, in turn, directed the elders to the residence of her married daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Henry Huffaker, a short distance away in the railroad town of Varnell’s Station, where Henry and his father-in-law ran a store.<sup>14</sup>

The first baptisms to occur in Varnell’s Station came only six weeks after the elders’ initial visit, when Mary and Henry were baptized, along with Mary’s mother, Elizabeth Elledge. Dillingham Elledge gave consent for his wife’s baptism but did not join her in the living waters, due perhaps to the influence of his brother-in-law and Baptist minister Brittain Williams. Local residents had always considered Dillingham and Elizabeth Elledge as “good Baptists,” so word of her defection quickly spread. Brittain Williams was especially outraged. According to family members, when the preacher heard of Elizabeth’s baptism, he exclaimed forcefully, “I’ll soon straighten her out!” His effort to “straighten her out” proved singularly

unsuccessful, as both the Elledges and the Huffakers were soon inviting neighbors to attend meetings with the Mormon elders at their homes and nearby Smith’s Chapel. Among those giving the missionaries careful consideration was David Williams, the son of the Baptist preacher. “I think we are moving something,” John Morgan enthused after a meeting at the Huffakers, noting that there had been a “full house” and “good attention” given his message.<sup>15</sup>

Morgan also found “a good spirit” at the home of John Nations, who had married into the Huffaker family and was, in fact, a cousin to Elizabeth Elledge. However, the visit to John Nations is perhaps illustrative of the selectivity of the conversion process and the potential for family disruption. The oldest child of Elizabeth Elledge’s paternal uncle, Manley Nations, John was the only member of Manley’s family to receive a call from the elders. There is no record that Mormon elders visited Manley Nations or any other member of his household, which included a wife, daughter, and grown sons. Similarly, the missionaries made no call at the home of Elizabeth Elledge’s stepmother. By indirectly choosing her coreligionists, Elizabeth appears to have rejected her deceased father’s extended family even as she embraced the new religion brought to her by members of her mother’s family.<sup>16</sup>

Eighty-eight-year-old Sarah Cline Fullbright, who lived next door to the Elledges and so near Smith’s Chapel that some of the cemetery gravestones were actually on her property, found the Mormon message irresistible. Three generations of Fullbright women soon attended meetings: Sarah “Granny” Fullbright; her widowed daughter, Elviny Hamblin; and Sarah Hamblin Kaneaster, her granddaughter. Sarah Kaneaster’s attendance was apparently tolerated by her husband, Josiah, although he displayed only limited interest in the Mormon elders. On New Year’s Day, 1879, Joseph Standing baptized the three women. The Varnell’s Station Branch now boasted six members, five of them women. Henry Huffaker, the lone male participant, served as branch president.<sup>17</sup>

John Morgan believed that some of the Varnell’s Station converts would join the spring expedition to Colorado. It would be his last expedition, he hoped. He anticipated an end to his southern mission; in fact, church president Taylor had released him to return home to Utah, which he intended to do once he had seen the southern company safely to Manassa. Calling the Georgia missionaries together to Varnell’s Station, Morgan saw to a new distribution of labors, his chief concern the maintenance of

branches already established and continued efforts in those mountain vicinities newly opened to Mormon visits. As a result, Morgan instructed Joseph Standing to go to Fannin County. Elder Charles Hardy would travel “with Brother Joe into the mountains east.”<sup>18</sup>

At least some of the Varnell’s Station Saints made arrangements to join Morgan’s expedition. In anticipation of the move Henry Huffaker sold his Catoosa County farm, accepting a partial payment of five hundred dollars but relying on his wife’s uncle Thomas Nations to collect the remaining five-hundred-dollar balance. The Elledges’ son George assumed management of the store in Varnell’s Station, a temporary expedient as the Elledges intended to follow their daughter and son-in-law to the western colony. Though they remained in residence, they had already transferred their Catoosa County property to the supervision of Nathaniel Connally, who agreed to dispose of the real estate. The Fullbright-Hamblin-Kaneaster women also began to prepare for a later move. As wagons were loaded with belongings and remaining converts excitedly continued preparations for a better life in the new western Zion, those who did not embrace the Mormon message likely viewed the altered social landscape with dismay.<sup>19</sup>

On March 21, 1879, Elder Morgan ushered a party of sixty new Saints—among them Henry and Mary Huffaker—aboard a train bound for the new Mormon colony. The coming separation created anxiety, but Mary Huffaker’s distress was mitigated by her mother’s promise of a future reunion in the Colorado Zion. Conversely, the Huffakers’ departure prompted anxiety for Elder Standing, now officially in charge of the Georgia mission. Four new members had joined the Varnell’s Station Branch, all of them women. “We now have a Branch of eight,” Joseph Standing set forth in a letter, “all sisters.” The development, though not unwelcome, created a dilemma for the missionary. “We are undecided as to what steps to take,” Standing wrote. “Bro. Huffaker, who was the only male member of this branch, and its president, is on his way to Zion, so that there are eight lone women, and all young in the Church.” He expressed keen disappointment in the men of Varnell’s Station. “I would like to see some men step forward and take hold of the Gospel so that meetings could be held in the branch,” Standing declared. He then added, exasperated, “The men, oh, the men!” With no male to preside over the branch, meetings would not be possible; instead, Elder Standing mused that they might “let the sisters hold their own meetings,” perhaps through the organization of a Relief Society or similar woman’s organization.<sup>20</sup>

Standing’s disappointment in the men of Varnell’s Station continued into April, so, perhaps resigned to the men’s recalcitrance, he organized the women into a Relief Society, an organization intended to provide adult women the opportunity for religious education, service, and leadership and emphasizing the sisterhood of female Saints. Elizabeth Elledge agreed to accept the presidency, with Granny Fullbright and Sarah Kaneaster serving as her counselors; Elizabeth Loggins assumed the office of secretary. At least three of the sisters were married, but their husbands—D. H. Elledge, Josiah Kaneaster, and Riley Loggins—had not been baptized, so they may not yet have shared their wives’ commitment to the new religion. That spring, eight sisters from Catoosa and Whitfield counties came together regularly in an exclusively female religious organization, bound together by gender and belief, but excluding those—even friends and family—who did not accept Mormonism. To those unfamiliar with LDS religious organizations, the group may have seemed a female-headed church, with no male authority supervising the sisters and no spouses to exercise husbandly control. Instead, the sisters worshipped under the solicitous care of the young male representatives of a polygamous lifestyle.<sup>21</sup>

Varnell’s Station quickly became a congenial meeting place for young elders who sought southern hospitality as they moved within the mission. On one occasion, six young missionaries gathered at the Elledge home for twilight hymn singing, an activity that some in the small community may have found provocative, as it encouraged both men and women to participate. Passions were further inflamed when local ministers accelerated their attacks against the marriage practices of the LDS Church, describing the religion as the creation of sexually insatiable men. Commentaries regarding the Mormon practice of polygamy featured prominently in Georgia newspaper coverage at the time, and occasionally, anti-Mormon sentiment was masked as humor. In 1878, for instance, one writer quipped, “A Mormon has just married, at one swoop, a mother and a daughter. Has he a mother-in-law?”<sup>22</sup>

In some cases, news articles focused on the licentiousness of local missionaries. Following the departure of the Georgia Saints to the West in the spring of 1879, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported on the progress of that expedition, reprinting an interview that appeared in the *Memphis Avalanche*, under the heading “Mormon Converts from Georgia.” The *Avalanche*’s reporter intercepted the company only days out of Georgia, describing the party as “squalid in dress, ignorant looking,” and “taken from the poorer and lower walks of life.” The Memphis newspaperman

sought out one attractive young woman to ask why she had undertaken the journey. She had only barely responded that she was on her way to the West “after a husband,” when John Morgan, according to the reporter, intervened to “put an end to the conversation.” The reporter directed the same question to Morgan: “Why is it that these people wished to leave?” Morgan allegedly replied that “the men go because it is the religion of the world, and it will finally prevail.” Of the women, he said, they go “because they cannot get husbands here.” For the benefit of the newspaperman, Morgan explained that Georgia possessed thirty-three thousand unmarried women. “As soon as we get to Utah,” he said, “all will be married to as many as we want to.” Morgan then pointed out that the reporter was young and handsome. “This young lady,” Morgan indicated the young Georgia Saint, “is also young and pretty,” adding slyly that “if you will go along with us you may have her.” According to the reporter, his finer qualities prevented him from accepting Morgan’s offer. Whether or not the writer accurately reproduced Morgan’s remarks or character is uncertain. The *Atlanta Constitution* simply reprinted the article with no comment.<sup>23</sup>

Morgan often complained that newspapers stirred anti-Mormon sentiment in Georgia, explaining that articles carried in the *Atlanta Constitution* were routinely reproduced by smaller county newspapers, becoming fodder for local ministers’ sermons against the religion. In some cases, the opposite was true. On May 1, 1879, the *North Georgia Citizen* included a small and suspect, but incendiary item: “Within the past year eight Mormon girls have married colored men in Salt Lake.” The same appeared, word for word, in the May 15 issue of the *Atlanta Constitution* and then was reproduced exactly in the May 21 issue of Murray County’s *Gazette*.<sup>24</sup>

Elder Standing’s efforts in Varnell’s Station thus coincided with a deliberate inflammation of gender and racial anxieties, but if he feared for his personal safety at this point, there is no indication of it. He tended to dismiss the opposition of rival ministers and argued that their personal shortcomings prevented serious objections, even to plural marriage: “The moral status in this land would hardly admit of a very vehement tirade against the ‘down-trodden women of Utah,’” he opined, then shared an encounter with a hypocritical ex-minister of the Baptist Church who had recently scheduled a public meeting in order to dispute the Mormon teachings. “He came in a wagon,” Standing wrote, along with “his legal wife and a woman that he has kept as a wife for years,” making the subsequent tirade against polygamy seem ridiculous.<sup>25</sup>

Standing hoped that the establishment of the Relief Society for the sisters of Varnell’s Station would “encourage and sustain” the women until they could emigrate west. Satisfied that he and Elder Hardy had successfully resolved the problem, Standing noted his intention to leave Varnell’s Station to go “up among the mountains” of Fannin County, “where the pure breezes blow and the clear streamlets flow.” An Atlanta newspaper would later report that he fled Varnell’s Station to avoid accusations of seduction, but there is no evidence of that. Instead, elders Standing and Hardy hoped to fulfill John Morgan’s desire to build on an opening he had made in that area. In Fannin County, the elders found a receptive audience, but Standing soon faced the loss of yet another missionary companion.<sup>26</sup>

“Elder Hardy left me to return home, having been released,” Standing wrote in an 1879 letter to Matthias Cowley. “This was by no means pleasant to my feelings, for not only had I become greatly attached to Brother Hardy, but here were scores of people seemingly interested in the gospel, and it now devolved upon me to teach and instruct them.” He then noted gloomily the possibility that John Morgan would remain in the West and compared Cowley’s long-term relationship with his missionary companion to his own unfavorable circumstances. “It seems to me that you and brother Barnett are married. I get a companion for a short time, then am left alone, and then another one is given me, and he goes, and so ad finitum,” Standing complained, adding a plaintive postscript at the bottom of the missive: “Write.”<sup>27</sup>

Later, Standing learned that Elder Hardy’s departure had been fraught with considerable difficulties. Hardy left Fannin County for Varnell’s Station, his intended departure point, but reached the depot late and missed the train by ten minutes. With time to spare, he decided to call the Varnell’s Station Saints together for one last meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting, one of the Georgia Saints “looked out and saw a bunch of men coming.” According to young William Kaneaster, whose “three mothers”—mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother—attended Mormon meetings, it was the first mob to move against the Mormons in Varnell’s Station. If the assembled men intended to apprehend the missionary, they were thwarted in their effort by the sisters gathered inside. Just as the men approached the front of the Kaneaster house, the women led Hardy to a rear window that opened into a field of corn. Hardy, who said he “didn’t want to cause any trouble,” escaped, invisible among the tall stalks. The immediate arrival of Rudger Clawson, Hardy’s replacement and the new missionary companion

to Joseph Standing, further prompted the ire of anti-Mormon forces. Though Clawson escaped an encounter with the mob, a group of men emerged to successfully drive away new elders Charles W. Hulse and Thomas Lloyd, who arrived in Varnell's Station seeking mission assignments. Hulse and Lloyd fled the state to North Carolina in early June and prompted Joseph Standing, who had assumed the position of president of the Georgia Conference, to seek the intervention of authorities.<sup>28</sup>

On June 12, 1879, from his headquarters in Fannin County, Elder Standing penned a letter to Governor Alfred Colquitt of Georgia. He informed the governor of the situation in Varnell's Station and asked his assistance, writing that Mormon elders "have been obliged at times to flee for their lives, as armed men to the number of 40 and 50 have come out against them." Additionally, Varnell's Station Saints reported that mobs had, on occasion, "entered their houses in search of said elders." He acknowledged the unpopularity of Mormonism but reminded the governor that "the laws of Georgia are strictly opposed to all lawlessness, and extend to her citizens the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience." In return, Elder Standing received what he described as "a very respectful letter" from J. W. Warren, secretary of the Executive Department, which officially decried extralegal violence that attempted to inhibit the free practice of any religious faith, so long as the practice of that faith conformed to the laws of the state. "The Governor regrets to hear the report you give from Whitfield County," the letter continued. "He will instruct the State Prosecuting Attorney for that district to inquire into the matter, and if the report be true, to prosecute the offenders." The governor's reply apparently reassured Standing, who reported its contents to other elders.<sup>29</sup>

What Standing did not tell the governor was that when the new Mormons of Whitfield and Catoosa counties found angry mobs at their doors, familiar faces dominated the groups. Community members later testified that neighbors and kin of the Varnell's Station Saints frequently patrolled the community in their search for elders, if necessary bursting into homes where they may have once been welcomed as family. So fearful was Riley Loggins, whose wife was a member of the local branch, that he forbade his children to accompany teenager William Kaneaster to school in Varnell's Station, as was their practice. Children of the Kaneaster and Loggins families attended a school run by the Huffaker family in Whitfield County, along with children from the Nations and Elledge families, and that, in addition to other neighborhood associations, contributed to a chain of rela-

tionships that linked the area. William Kaneaster, who typically sang the hymns he had been taught by Mormon elders on the way to school and back, said Loggins “stopped his son and daughter from going to school for fear the mob would take action on me for singing Utah Mormon songs along the road.”<sup>30</sup>

Joseph Standing and Elder Clawson, reassured by the governor’s letter and hopeful that the potential for violence had been snuffed out, remained securely remote from the immediate threat as they labored in Fannin and Pickens counties. In the first week of July, Standing sounded an optimistic tone in reports to John Morgan, who had not been released by church authorities as expected and so retained the position of Southern States Mission president, but lingered in the West to welcome another company of fifteen Georgians who planned to leave from Chattanooga in mid-July.<sup>31</sup>

The Elledge family dominated that small summer expedition, which traveled unaccompanied by a Mormon elder. On July 18, 1879, the company of Georgians successfully reached Colorado. On that same day, Joseph Standing sat down to pen the last letter he would ever write. To a friend in Utah, he reported the terrible summer heat: “Talk about hot, it is simply awful. Yet we have considerable walking to do.” He worried about the condition of Georgia’s farms and speculated that “there are hundreds and thousands who will suffer for food” in the coming months. Still, he reported that “last night we had a genuine treat,” when he and Clawson “visited a house where there is a piano as well as those who play it.” Standing enjoyed tunes such as “Auld Lang Syne,” the first instrumental music he had heard for months. For a time, he wrote, he “was conscious only to the sweet tones of the instrument and the long ago scenes, that came fresh to my memory, as the familiar airs one after another were played.” Overwhelmed by nostalgia, and likely exhausted by his Georgia mission, Standing described to his friend the unhappy challenges he faced: “How would you like it,” he asked, “after having preached to have two ministers get up and lie about you and shake their fists nearly in your face, and that before an audience of 150 people?”<sup>32</sup>

In the wake of the latest expedition, threats against the missionaries escalated in both number and intensity, and according to Ruder Clawson, Elder Standing had grown increasingly troubled. “Brother Standing had a dream which made a powerful impression upon his mind,” Clawson recalled, “and caused him to have forebodings of approaching trouble.” In his dream, Standing traveled to Varnell’s Station, “when suddenly clouds of



intense blackness gathered overhead and all around me.” He dreamed that he visited a family of Georgia Saints, which did little to alleviate his distress. The Georgians, who seemed frightened and fearful, “made it clear” that Standing’s visit was unwelcome. Standing told Clawson that the dream concluded when “I suddenly awoke, without my being shown the end of the trouble.” So it may have come as no surprise to the missionaries when they arrived in Varnell’s Station on Saturday, July 19, 1879, to find the Saints frightened and fearful and doors firmly shut against them.<sup>33</sup>

Elders Standing and Clawson intended only a short visit with branch members, before traveling on to the Haywood Valley Conference, scheduled for August in Chattooga County. The sun had set by the time they reached Whitfield County and knocked at the door of Riley and Elizabeth Loggins, where they hoped to find shelter for the night. Instead, Mr. Loggins “brusquely turned them away and would not keep them.” When the bewildered missionaries asked where they should go instead, Loggins directed them to Henry Holston’s home, about a mile and a half away. Though not a member of the Varnell’s Station Branch, Holston enjoyed a local reputation for fairness and had opened his home to Mormon elders on more than one occasion. Elders Standing and Clawson left Loggins’s house, reassured by the prospect of a night’s lodging but disturbed by their inhospitable greeting. After proceeding about a half mile, they decided to try their luck again, this time at the Josiah Kaneaster home.<sup>34</sup>

Young William Kaneaster answered their knock and later claimed to have invited the elders to stay all night, an offer he said was refused by Joseph Standing. Rudger Clawson’s account differs. He noted that the household “seemed to be in a state of great excitement.” The Kaneasters reported that “threats had been made against the brethren, and the feeling toward them in the neighborhood was bitter and murderous.” Clawson remembered that their request to stay overnight was refused, just as it had been in the Logginses’ home, “because if anything happened, they would have to share the trouble.” In fact, evidence suggests that Sarah Kaneaster was especially fearful, as she and her husband, Josiah, had recently separated. Her embrace of Mormonism and determination to go west with her sister, mother, and grandmother strained her marriage to the breaking point. Though she would not allow them to stay, the elders did leave their valises at the Kaneaster home, planning to return for them the next day.<sup>35</sup>

Henry Holston only reluctantly opened his door to the missionaries, explaining that “there was danger in the air. Threats of mobbing, whip-

pings and even killing the Elders had been freely made, and he expected to get into trouble on account of entertaining them.” An uneventful night passed, and at first light on Sunday morning, William Kaneaster went to seek assistance from local law enforcement, a task urged upon him by Joseph Standing. He returned to Holston’s, burdened by an unhappy report that no help would be forthcoming, to find his female kin—Sarah Fullbright, Elviny Hamblin, Sarah Kaneaster, and aunt Mary Hamblin— assembled there, perhaps the only Varnell’s Station Saints willing to attend Sunday services with the elders. The women prudently departed for home before darkness could settle. Clawson remembered that Standing appeared “pale, anxious, and determined” throughout the visit, preoccupied with thoughts of impending danger and unnerved by the prospect of an encounter with the mob. He double-checked the windows and doors to make sure all were carefully secured. Still, Sunday night passed without disruption, just as Saturday had.<sup>36</sup>

The missionaries left Holston’s early Monday morning, intending to retrieve their suitcases from the Kaneaster house, unaware that Varnell’s Station was already astir. Henry Holston saw the elders off before departing for a local sawmill, where he found several armed men gathered and inquiring as to the whereabouts of the Mormons. Other local residents encountered the men that morning as they searched for the missionaries. By midmorning, only Joseph Standing and Ruder Clawson were unaware of the impending confrontation. Valises in hand, they left the Kaneaster home and began the walk back toward Mr. Holston’s house. Clawson described the road they traveled as curving and “densely wooded on both sides,” so the missionaries were unprepared when they rounded a bend and found their way blocked by three horsemen who presented weapons and ordered the elders to halt. Within minutes, nine other men joined their three compatriots. “Some were mounted, the remaining were afoot,” Clawson remembered, though “all were armed,” and when they recognized the two young elders as the Mormons they sought, they unleashed whoops of joy. Detained in the middle of the road, Joseph Standing demanded to know why and by what authority they had been stopped. The question prompted one Georgian to brandish his weapon threateningly before retorting that “the government of the United States is against you, and there is no law in Georgia for Mormons.” Standing and Clawson were directed at gunpoint back down the road, in the way they had come.<sup>37</sup>

Standing walked briskly and argued incessantly with his captors, at-

tempting to persuade them that the missionaries intended immediately to vacate north Georgia. From his precarious position within the jostling assembly, Clawson sadly listened to Standing's appeals. He understood that Standing's promises to abandon the mission field were pointless, as "it was not what the missionaries might do for which these base fellows had resolved to punish them, but for what had already been done." In fact, their captors shared a personal grievance with the representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Four of Elizabeth Elledge's cousins rode with the mob: Jasper "Newt" Nations, Dave Nations, Bill Nations, and Joe Nations. However, Dave Nations's perceived injury extended beyond the loss of the Elledge family. Married to Josiah Kaneaster's sister, he likely viewed the destruction of the Kaneaster marriage as the result of Mormon conversion. Hugh Blair, a neighbor of the Brittain Williams family, also numbered among the group assembled to punish the Mormon missionaries. Blair anticipated the loss of two sisters due to the efforts of Mormon missionaries. One sister, Nancy, was married to David Williams, who now planned to abandon his Baptist father in order to join his aunt and uncle Elizabeth and Dillingham Elledge in the western Zion. Another of Hugh Blair's sisters, Martha Blair, planned to accompany them to Colorado. Blair's neighbor Andy Bradley rode with the mob. David Smith, neighbor to Andy Bradley and the now-emigrated Huffakers, also joined the armed group, as did A. S. "Jud" Smith, who possessed a reputation for violence. Gang members Jefferson Hunter and Mac McClure were linked by marriage, not blood, and both had lost neighbors to Mormonism. Jim Faucett of Catoosa County, kin to numerous Walker County converts, rode with the mob. Ben Clark was a Baptist deacon and related by marriage to John S. Martin, who had left the Baptists for the Mormons. Resentful at the family and community divisions that resulted from conversion to the LDS Church, they resolved to punish elders Standing and Clawson.<sup>38</sup>

While no north Georgia men intervened on the elders' behalf, women did. Just as the female Saints of Varnell's Station had spirited Elder Charles Hardy out a rear window and to safety, they tried to prevent the capture of elders Standing and Clawson. Apprised of the danger, Elviny Hamblin and her daughter Mary set out from home in a vain effort to intercept and warn the missionaries. Mary was the first to locate the two; however, by the time she reached Standing and Clawson, they were already in the hands of the mob. Clearly, the gang understood that she intended to help the missionaries, for when she emerged from the woods and attempted to pass them on

the road, Jud Smith issued a threat: “We’ve got your brethren” and “we’ll tend to you hereafter.” She was allowed to leave but anticipated punishment for having interfered.<sup>39</sup>

It is not clear that the mob intended murder. At one point, Jim Faucett told the elders that “if we ever again find you in this part of the country we will hang you by the neck like dogs,” suggesting that their lives would be spared. However, Clawson recalled, “they told us they were going to whip us and that we’d be limber when it was over.” Joseph Standing, described by Clawson as fearing the whip more than death, was terrified. When they reached a shady hollow by a spring, the July heat forced the men to a halt. Standing drank twice from the spring, perhaps an indication of his extreme anxiety. “Some of the men sat down,” Clawson recalled, “and one of them laid his pistol down.” Joseph Standing realized his opportunity and seized the weapon. Directing the pistol toward the men still on horseback, Standing ordered them to surrender. It was at that moment, Clawson later recalled, that “one man raised up from under the tree” with a weapon of his own. A shot was fired, and Standing fell.<sup>40</sup>

At first, it seemed that Clawson would be shot as well, and the elder braced himself. Unaccountably, the group lowered their weapons. Having escaped injury, Clawson knelt in the dust beside Joseph Standing and examined his friend, finding him still alive but suffering a mortal wound to the head. As Clawson tenderly placed his hat under Standing’s head to keep it out of the dust, a member of the Nations family approached the body and said, “Well, he shot himself, didn’t he?” Perhaps it was because Clawson carefully replied, “I don’t know,” that the mob agreed to let him leave the scene to summon help for the dying man. Clawson departed immediately, casting apprehensive glances over his shoulder, though he understood that nothing could be done to prevent Standing’s demise. He only hoped that the law could be brought to bear against Standing’s murderer and wondered at his own good fortune in escaping. It was sundown when he returned, having fetched the local coroner to the scene. The mob had melted away into the Georgia woods, and Clawson noticed that Standing’s hat had been removed from under his head and placed over his face. The removal of the hat verified that Standing was lifeless; further, new injuries had been inflicted. A coroner’s inquest determined that Standing had met his death as the result of twenty or more gunshots to the head and neck. Rudger Clawson surmised that the members of the mob had “agreed to stand upon an undoubted common ground,” so each had fired into the body. A closer in-

spection confirmed that they had fired into Standing's head and neck from close proximity, as the wounds were also "powder-burnt." Information from Henry Holston, Mary Hamblin, and other witnesses produced the names of the men accused of murder, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of twelve men.<sup>41</sup>

Rudger Clawson refused to consign Standing's remains to Georgia soil and transported the body back to Utah. Ten thousand mourners attended his funeral service, conducted in the Salt Lake City Tabernacle. The Saints later erected a monument over Standing's tomb. A poem decorates one face of the monument, twelve lines written by Orson F. Whitney, including "Deep in the shades of ill-starred Georgia's wood, / Fair freedom's soil was crimsoned with his blood." Another carries the names of the men accused, but acquitted, of Standing's murder. On a third are the words attributed to Standing's murderers and chiseled permanently into stone: "There is no law in Georgia for the Mormons." The monument reflected the futility of their demands for justice. Though Whitfield County's grand jury indicted twelve men for murder and riot, only three were apprehended and faced trials—Jasper Nations, Andy Bradley, and Hugh Blair. Thomas Nations, Elizabeth Elledge's brother, rode with the sheriff's posse that captured and returned his kin to face trial, providing further evidence of the fractured family unit.<sup>42</sup>

As Salt Lake City grieved its newest martyr, the murder garnered local, state, and national attention. The *Chicago Times* reported, erroneously, that "ten indignant servants of the Lord" dispatched "the heathen . . . with shot-guns." The *New York Herald* predicted that the murderers would never be punished and expressed the belief that evading the law entirely was surely possible "since more than half the houses in Georgia would offer them refuge." Not that the *Herald* was unsympathetic to north Georgians. Indeed, even as New York writers denounced the mob as "savage, blood-thirsty, and cowardly," they offered an explanation for the murder: "There were many men and women who had become converts to the polygamic faith and had expressed a determination to leave for Utah. This incensed their friends and relatives, who several times threatened the Elders with summary treatment, if they did not leave the country." Connecticut's *New Haven Register* deplored the murder—"Violence is not the remedy for Mormonism"—but pointed out that "families are the composite units which are the foundation stones of society." The *Register's* editor called on legislators to act against the Mormon menace, arguing that "the state must protect the



Joseph Standing’s gravesite. Photo by Mary Ella Engel.

family from [the] corruption and disintegration” that accompanied Mormon conversion efforts.<sup>43</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the murder, the *Atlanta Constitution* hastened to defend Georgia’s image. Arguing that “the killing was entirely unwarranted,” the newspaper reassured its readers that the mob did not enjoy popular support. “The quiet people of the county are determined that a fair and full trial shall be had, and the parties committing this murder be

brought to justice.” By comparison, local newspapers rallied to the defense of the accused. The *North Georgia Citizen* placed the blame for the murder on the Mormons, explaining that the elders had been “proclaiming their plurality of wives doctrine, with a view to working up a colony of women to send to Utah. The boldness with which they proclaimed this doctrine incensed the men of that neighborhood against them.” Similarly, the *Catoosa Courier* justified the attack on the Mormon elders as a defense of household and womanhood, arguing that the “good citizens” of north Georgia “could not stand any longer the bad influence that his preaching had upon the female portion of the neighborhood.” It appears that local reaction prompted the *Atlanta Constitution* to reconsider its stance. Just prior to the commencement of the trials, the *Constitution* offered a new account of Mormon activities in north Georgia. Describing Joseph Standing as a “lustful lout,” the *Atlanta Constitution* alleged that Standing had, prior to his death, deflowered numerous virgins and cuckolded numerous husbands as he proselytized in Varnell’s Station. Though he did not mention them by name, the writer even referred to the strained marriage of Josiah and Sarah Kaneaster, noting that “so great were the troubles in one family on account of Standing’s intimacy that it caused the husband and wife to separate.” The defense was a powerful one, and most north Georgians believed the accused would escape justice.<sup>44</sup>

The speculations proved accurate when a jury found Jasper Nations not guilty of Standing’s murder. In consideration of the acquittal, prosecutors immediately dismissed murder charges against both Bradley and Blair. The following week, a jury found Bradley innocent of charges of riot, and within days, the grand jury absolved the entire mob of blame. Many predicted that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would abandon its mission to the South in the face of such violent repression, and according to Mormon accounts, the violence against Standing and subsequent acquittal of his murderers convinced many local converts to abandon the state. Only weeks after the unsuccessful prosecution of Standing’s killers, John Morgan led a company of over one hundred southern Saints to Colorado, among them the three generations of Georgia women at the heart of the Varnell’s Station controversy. Granny Fullbright, now nearly ninety years old, completed the journey, along with daughter Elviny Hamblin. Three of Elviny’s daughters emigrated, too—Mary and Martha Hamblin and Sarah Kaneaster. Whitfield County residents remembered that Sarah’s husband, Josiah, was unaware and “plowing in the fields” when his wife and children

boarded a train to the West. Sarah carried a yet-unborn daughter with her. Local folklore suggests that Josiah followed his family to Colorado and pleaded with them to return to Georgia, without success, but William Kaneaster refuted that, reporting that after leaving north Georgia, he never saw his father again.<sup>45</sup>

In drawing followers away from their homes, Mormon missionaries overstepped the already limited bounds of their welcome by disrupting established patterns of family and community. Standing was killed where it was perceived that he did the most damage—in Whitfield County, Georgia, but within easy walking distance of the boundary of Catoosa County. In order to conduct business and visit family and neighbors, inhabitants often moved from Whitfield into Catoosa County, then back. Such political boundaries apparently carried little meaning. Instead, residents used reference points such as “Elledge’s mill” or “Henry Holston’s place,” and it is useful to re-create that sense of the local, as the violence against Mormon Joseph Standing must be understood in local terms.

As historian Gene Sessions points out, Mormon conversion was a decidedly individual thing. Mormon missionaries, he argues, frequently threatened the southern societal system: “They often converted a single member of such basic southern community units as the family, extended family, or church, drawing its members apart” and disrupting these basic social units “with both philosophical and geographic distance.” Conversion created division in north Georgia, especially when the community’s women embraced Mormonism. It was in Varnell’s Station that women openly defied men—ministers, fathers, brothers, and husbands—by claiming the new religion for their own. It was in Varnell’s Station that men felt justified in resorting to violent action against both the representatives of the disruptive faith and the women who continued to intervene on behalf of the missionaries, deliberately shielding them from harm whenever possible. The mob’s elimination of Joseph Standing attempted to establish boundaries beyond which community members could not go.<sup>46</sup>

The actions of north Georgians against missionary Joseph Standing can best be understood in just that way—as the consequence of the tensions resulting from separating converts from loved ones and dependents from heads-of-household. This interpretation relies on the understanding that mob violence is a *local* event, best understood at the *local* level. Such a vantage point moves us beyond facile explanations for Appalachian violence, rooted in theories that stress the “otherness” of the region. Rather, Stand-



ing's murder may be viewed as a response to social and cultural forces at work in nineteenth-century Appalachian Georgia. Sadly, the decision to employ violence against Mormon missionaries mirrored the actions advocated by many Americans and placed Appalachian Georgians at the center of a national debate.

## Notes

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of John Inscoe in the preparation of this essay. Additional thanks are due the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute at Brigham Young University for their generous funding of the author's research.

1. Missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints apparently first traveled south, seeking converts, in the 1830s, but it was 1843 before the first Mormon elder reached Georgia, and then only to pass through the state on his way from Alabama to North Carolina. The church did assign four missionaries to the state in 1844 to preach the gospel and campaign on behalf of Joseph Smith's bid for the presidency. That endeavor proved of short duration, cut short by the assassination of the candidate. In the years just prior to the Civil War, missionary activity in the South virtually ceased, but with the abatement of sectional warfare and the establishment of the Southern States Mission in 1875, missionaries ventured from Utah again—and back to the South. The LDS Church formally established its Southern States Mission at the Oct. 1875 General Conference when seven men were called to serve in the southern states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia. Initially, Elder Henry G. Boyle was set apart as mission president, and he established the mission headquarters in Hickman County, Tennessee. In 1878, church officials gave John Morgan the responsibility for the Southern States Mission. See "Record of Elders in the Southern States Mission, 1877–1898," Southern States Mission, Manuscript History, reel 1, Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT (hereafter LDS Church Archives); Devon H. Nish, "A Brief History of the Southern States Mission for One Hundred Years, 1830–1930," box 8677.5, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT; LaMar C. Berrett, "History of the Southern States Mission, 1831–1861" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960); Heather M. Seferovich, "History of the LDS Southern States Mission, 1875–1898" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1996); Leonard J. Arrington, "Mormon Beginnings in the American South," Task Papers in LDS History, no. 9, 1976, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter Historical Department); Arthur M. Richardson and Nicholas G. Morgan, *The Life and Ministry of John Morgan* (privately printed, 1965); "Converts of Elder John Morgan in North Geor-

gia during his First Mission in 1876,” box 3, folder 3, John Hamilton Morgan Papers (hereafter JHM Papers), accn. 1465, Manuscripts Division, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City; “Conferences Established by John Morgan in North Georgia during his First Mission in 1876,” box 3, folder 5, JHM Papers; “Report of Branches of the Church in Georgia,” box 1, book 1, JHM Papers; Marshall Wingfield, “Tennessee’s Mormon Massacre,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 17 (Mar. 1958): 19–20.

2. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); John L. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Claudia Lauper Bushman and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Building the Kingdom: A History of Mormons in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Eric A. Eliason, ed., *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Jan Shippo, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830–1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

3. For works that place anti-Mormonism in a southern context, see Marshall Wingfield, “Myth, Mormonism, and Murder in the South,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 75 (Spring 1976): 212–25; William Whitridge Hatch, *There Is No Law . . . A History of Mormon Civil Relations in the Southern States, 1865–1905* (New York: Vantage Press, 1968); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 91; Seferovich, “History of the LDS Southern States Mission”; Leonard J. Arrington, “Mormon Beginnings in the American South,” *Task Papers in LDS History*, no. 9, 1976, Historical Department; Patrick Q. Mason, “Opposition to Polygamy in the Postbellum South,” *Journal of Southern History* 76 (Aug. 2010): 541–78; and Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). For works that place Standing’s murder within north Georgia’s mountains, see Ken Driggs, “There Is No Law in Georgia for Mormons’: The Joseph Standing Murder Case of 1879,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 4 (Winter 1989): 745–72; Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 256.

4. Judson Harold Flower Jr., “Mormon Colonization in the San Luis Valley, Colorado, 1878–1900” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966); Carleton Q. Anderson, Betty Shawcroft, and Robert Compton, *The Mormons: 100*

*Years in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, 1883–1983* (privately published, 1982); “Records of Old Manassa Cemetery, Manassa, Conejos, Colorado,” <http://files.usgwararchives.org/co/conejos/cemeteries/manassa.txt> 1880; U.S. Federal Census, Manassa, Conejos County, CO, T9\_89, 167–69; “Name and Head of Families Living in Manassa, April 1888, Also Block Number on Which Each Family Lived,” box 3, folder 18, JHM Papers; “Heads of Families Who Belonged to the Manassa Colony, April 1888, and Was Living on Farms in the Manassa Vicinity,” box 3, folder 18, JHM Papers.

5. John Morgan to Editor, *Deseret News*, Dec. 4, 1876, JHM Papers.

6. “Conferences Established by John Morgan in the Organization of the Southern States Mission,” box 3, folder 5, JHM Papers; Typescript of John Morgan’s Journal (hereafter JHM Journal), Nov. 1875–Nov. 1892, entry dated May 7, 1877, JHM Papers; Richardson and Morgan, *Life and Ministry*, 138–39.

7. JHM Journal, June 23, Oct. 1, 5, Nov. 14, 1877.

8. Robert S. Baker, *Chattooga: The Story of a County and Its People* (privately published, 1988), 365–66; James Alfred Sartain, *History of Walker County Georgia* (privately published, 1972), 120–21; Gordon B. McKinney, “The Civil War and Reconstruction,” in *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*, ed. Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 52; Jonathan D. Sarris, “Anatomy of an Atrocity: The Madden Branch Massacre and Guerrilla Warfare in North Georgia, 1861–1865,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77 (Winter 1993): 679–710; Keith S. Bohannon, “They Had Determined to Root Us Out: Dual Memoirs by a Unionist Couple in Blue Ridge Georgia,” in *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South*, ed. John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 97–120; Jonathan D. Sarris, “‘Shot for Being Bushwhackers’: Guerrilla War and Extralegal Violence in a North Georgia Community, 1862–1865,” in *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, ed. Daniel E. Sutherland (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999); John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Sean Michael O’ Brien, *Mountain Partisans: Guerrilla Warfare in the Southern Appalachians, 1861–1865* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

9. Baker, *Chattooga*, 365–66; Sartain, *History of Walker County*, 120–21; Joint Select Committee, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States: Georgia V2* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872); Kenneth Coleman, ed., *A History of Georgia*, 2nd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 214–17; Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999); George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens:

University of Georgia Press, 1984). For the deadly conflict between moonshiners and U.S. revenue agents, see *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, Mar. 11, May 6, 8, 9, 13, 19, 20, 1877.

10. “Returned Missionary,” n.d., box 1, book 1, JHM Papers; “Leaf from an Elder’s Journal,” *Juvenile Instructor* 13, no. 2 (1878): 22.

11. JHM Journal, May 3, 5, 23, Sept. 8, 10, 1878.

12. JHM Journal, Feb. 18–23, Apr. 18, May 2, 1878; Richardson and Morgan, *Life and Ministry*, 150–51. For Joseph Standing, see Andrew Jensen, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1971), 719–21, 174–78; Joseph Standing, Individual Record, AFN:277V-QM, <http://www.familysearch.org>; 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory, M432\_919, 87; 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Salt Lake City Ward 12, Salt Lake, Utah Territory, M653\_1313, 157; 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Salt Lake City Ward 12, Salt Lake, Utah Territory, M593\_1611, 624, all at <http://www.ancestry.com>.

13. John Morgan to Church President John Taylor, May 8, 1878, box 2, folder 2, JHM Papers.

14. JHM Journal, May 28, Sept. 13, 1878; untitled document, box 1, book 1, 124, JHM Papers; “Death of a Genuine Gentleman,” *Deseret News*, Aug. 27, 1884, box 3, folder 20, JHM Papers; John Morgan to Editors, *Deseret News*, Oct. 3, 1878, box 1, book 1, JHM Papers; 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593\_140, 316; “D” Deed Record Book, Catoosa County, GA, 519, Catoosa County Courthouse, Ringgold, GA; 1871–1875 Whitfield County Tax Digest, Varnell’s Station, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow (hereafter GDAH); 1871–75 Catoosa County Tax Digest, Catoosa, GA, GDAH.

15. JHM Journal, Sept. 15, 17, Oct. 22, 27, 1878, Jan. 15, 18, 1879; Elledge Family History, <http://www.rootcellar.us/elledge.htm>. My thanks to Karen Keeley for leading me to this family history. For Brittain Williams, see 1850 U.S. Federal Census, Murray County, GA, M432\_78, 233; 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Murray County, GA, M653\_114, 941; 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593\_140, 311; Family Group Record, AFN: CDP3-T3; Whitfield-Murray Historical Society, *An Official History of Whitfield County Georgia, 1852–1999* (privately published, 1999), 584; Catoosa County Historical Society, *Catoosa County, Georgia Heritage, 1853–1998* (privately published, 1998), 294; Susie Blaylock McDaniel, *Official History of Catoosa County, Georgia, 1853–1953* (privately published, 1953), 35, 135, 136, 166.

16. JHM Journal, Oct. 7, 1878. For John Nations, see 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M653\_114, 935; 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Whitfield County, GA, M593\_183, 114; Whitfield-Murray Historical Society, *Whitfield County, Georgia Marriages, 1852–1894* (privately published, n.d.), 47.

17. William Lonzo Kaneaster, "The Martyrdom of Joseph Standing—July 21, 1879," *Whitfield-Murray Historical Society Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1996): 3–6. Kaneaster's eyewitness account of the events of 1879–80 was published in 1996. For the Kaneaster family, see 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M653\_114, 940; 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593\_183, 114; William Lonzo Kaneaster, Family Group Record, AFN:20QL-F2. For Sarah Fullbright, see 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593\_140, 316; Individual Record, AFN: 3FPZ- 51; "D" Deed Record Book, Catoosa County, GA, 767; McDaniel, *Official History of Catoosa County*, 140.

18. JHM Journal, Mar. 11, 15, 1879; John Morgan to Editors, *Deseret News*, Mar. 17, 1879, Journal History, Historical Department.

19. JHM Journal, Mar. 24, 1879; "E" Deed Record Book, Catoosa County, GA, 160, Catoosa County Courthouse, Ringgold, GA; 1877 and 1878 Catoosa County Tax Digest, GDAH.

20. Joseph Standing to Editors, *Deseret News*, Mar. 26, 1879, Journal History, Historical Department.

21. Standing to Editors, Mar. 26, 1879; Joseph Standing to Matthias Cowley, Mar. 31, 1879, box 6, folder 5, JHM Papers; Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1992).

22. Joseph Hyrum Parry, "Missionary Experience and Incidents in the Life of Joseph Hyrum Parry," <http://www.welshmormonhistory.org>; *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 31, 1878.

23. *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 2, 1879.

24. *North Georgia Citizen*, May 1, 1879; *Atlanta Constitution*, May 15, 1879; *Murray County Gazette*, May 21, 1879.

25. Joseph Standing to Matthias Cowley, Nov. 30, 1878, box 6, folder 5, JHM Papers; Joseph Standing to Editors, *Deseret News*, Jan. 2, 1879, Journal History, Historical Department.

26. Joseph Standing to Editors, *Deseret News*, Mar. 26, 1879, and Joseph Standing to Editors, *Deseret News*, June 2, 1879, both Journal History, Historical Department.

27. Joseph Standing to Matthias Cowley, Apr. 23, 1879, box 6, folder 5, JHM Papers.

28. Kaneaster, "Martyrdom of Joseph Standing."

29. Joseph Standing to Governor Alfred Colquitt, June 12, 1879, Journal History, Historical Department.

30. Kaneaster, "Martyrdom of Joseph Standing."

31. *Millennial Star*, Aug. 25, 1879.

32. Joseph Standing to M. P. Rockwood, July 18, 1879, published in *Deseret News*, Aug. 5, 1879.

33. John Nicholson, *The Martyrdom of Joseph Standing; or, The Murder of a “Mormon” Missionary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1886), 12–13. In 1885, Rudger Clawson related the story of Standing’s murder to John Nicholson, who published the eyewitness account in book form.

34. Kaneaster, “Martyrdom of Joseph Standing.”

35. Kaneaster, “Martyrdom of Joseph Standing”; Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 14; “Memoirs of the Life of Rudger Clawson, Written by Himself,” box 1, folder 1, Rudger Clawson Papers, MS 481, Manuscripts Division, Marriott Library.

36. Kaneaster, “Martyrdom of Joseph Standing”; Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 15–16.

37. “Coroner’s Inquest relative to the death of Joseph Standing,” July 21, 1879, Whitfield County, GA, Superior Court Records, Record Group 255–1-13, box 11, GDAH; Kaneaster, “Martyrdom of Joseph Standing”; Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 17.

38. Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 20. Jasper Nations, David Nations, William Nations, and Joseph Nations were sons of Manley Nations, the uncle of Elizabeth Elledge. For the early history of Manley Nations, see William Henry Harrison Clark, *History in Catoosa County* (privately published, 1975), 44. Joseph “Joe” Nations and William “Bill” Nations resided with their father in 1870. See 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593\_140, 315. David “Dave” Nations also resided with his father in 1870, prior to his marriage to Susan Kaneaster in that same year. See Whitfield-Murray Historical Society, *Whitfield County, Georgia Marriages, 1852–1894*, 47. For years just prior to the murder, see Whitfield County Tax Digest, Varnell’s Station, GDAH. For Jasper N. “Newt” Nations, see 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593\_140, 313; Whitfield County Tax Digest, Varnell’s Station, GDAH; Catoosa County Tax Digest, GDAH. For Hugh Blair, see Catoosa County Historical Society, *Catoosa County, Georgia Heritage*, 74. For Andrew Bradley, see 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593–140, 309; 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Varnell’s Station, Whitfield County, GA, T9\_171, 25. For A. S. “Jud” Smith, see Kaneaster, “Martyrdom of Joseph Standing.” Jefferson “Jeff” Hunter and Mac McClure were related by marriage. See Peggy Anderson, *Marriages, Catoosa County, Georgia, Book A, 1858–1887*, (privately published, 1995), 33–34. For James Faucett, see 1879 Catoosa County Tax Digest, GDAH. For Benjamin Clark, see 1870 U.S. Federal Census, Catoosa County, GA, M593\_140, 313; “Clark Family File,” Whitfield-Murray Historical Society, Dalton, Georgia; Catoosa County Historical Society, *Catoosa County, Georgia Heritage*, 100.

39. Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 24–25; Kaneaster, “Martyrdom of Joseph Standing.” According to Kaneaster, the women received additional threats after the murder.

40. Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 27. According to this Rudger Clawson account—and it has been repeated many times—Joseph Standing “leaped to his feet with a bound, instantly whirled so as to face them, brought his two hands together with a sudden slap, and shouted in a loud, clear, resolute voice—‘Surrender.’” But in his testimony at the coroner’s inquest, taken only hours after the shooting, Clawson swore that Standing grabbed a pistol belonging to one of the members of the mob. I rely on that account. See “Coroner’s Inquest,” July 21, 1879.

41. “Elder Rudger Clawson’s Account,” *Deseret News*, Aug. 1, 1879; “Coroner’s Inquest,” July 21, 1879; *Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 1879; Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 42–44.

42. Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 45–54; Aug. 3, 1879, Journal History, Historical Department; *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 7, 1879; photographs of Joseph Standing’s Salt Lake City Monument, by author.

43. *Chicago Times*, *New York Herald*, *New Haven Register*, all reprinted in *Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 1879.

44. *Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 26, Aug. 24, 1879; *North Georgia Citizen*, July 24, 1879.

45. Whitfield County, GA, Superior Court Minutes, GDAH; John Morgan to Editors, *Salt Lake City Herald*, Oct. 19, 1879, box 1, book 1, JHM Papers; John Morgan and Rudger Clawson to Editors, *Deseret News*, Oct. 19, 1879, Journal History, Historical Department; Kaneaster, “Martyrdom of Joseph Standing”; Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*, 77.

46. Gene A. Sessions, “Myth, Mormonism, and Murder in the South,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 75 (Spring 1976): 212–25.

## Chapter 9

# Race and Violence in Urbanizing Appalachia

## The Roanoke Riot of 1893

*Rand Dotson*

By 1893, the barely ten-year-old city of Roanoke had become the economic engine of Southwest Virginia. A booming railroad hub with bustling machine shops and iron mills, the “Magic City” was on the brink of becoming one of the New South’s shining examples of post–Civil War industrial triumph. That narrative, however, suffered a catastrophic blow in late September, when working-class residents bent on lynching an African American suspected of assault went on a rampage that plunged the city into near anarchy. In the ensuing maelstrom, the city’s police and militia killed eight white residents but were unable to prevent a lynch mob from taking over the town and hanging the African American in their custody. As local authorities fled for their lives, the mob ransacked downtown stores for guns and dynamite and vowed to bury the dead man in the mayor’s front yard. Dissuaded by a local minister, the mob instead burned his body in front of thousands of cheering onlookers.

Disparaging accounts of the “Roanoke Riot” in northern newspapers cast a pall over the city, leaving many to believe that it was on the precipice of economic ruin. Numerous stories blamed the mayhem on residents from the nearby mountains and countryside, ignoring the fact that many of Roanoke’s inhabitants were transplants from the urban North. Such descriptions meshed well with Victorian-era notions of Appalachia as a place uniquely prone to violence and viciousness. What happened in Roanoke, however, was not as exceptional as the northern press would have readers believe. When residents responded to economic depression, rapid demographic change, and social upheaval with racial violence, they not only mirrored the reactions of other southerners but acted much like other working-class Americans.<sup>1</sup>



In the 1880s, no city in the South grew faster than the railroad hub of Roanoke, Virginia. Located in a valley of the Appalachian Mountains in the southwestern portion of the state, Roanoke had been the Town of Big Lick—a tobacco depot with about a thousand residents—until 1882, when a group of native businessmen used tax breaks, cash bonuses, and land grants to convince a Philadelphia investment firm to select the place as the junction, headquarters, and machine shops for its two railroads. Opportunity in the town attracted thousands of skilled northern laborers and scores of new residents from the surrounding mountains and countryside. By 1890, the “new” city of Roanoke had become Virginia’s fifth largest municipality and the fourth fastest-growing urban area in the nation. New South boosters, buoyed by Roanoke’s seemingly spectacular rise from nowhere, declared it the “Magic City of the New South” and described the place as “teeming with wealth, culture, industry, energy, and vim.” Its destiny, they promised, was “to be that of one of the largest manufacturing and industrial centers of the South.”<sup>2</sup> Town boosters in Appalachia extolled Roanoke’s emergence as well. For unlike most industrializing mountain towns, which were generally the base of operations for extractive industries and typically owned by northeastern capitalists, Roanoke was an independent municipality largely under the control of natives, where manufacturing was the main source of employment.<sup>3</sup>

Roanoke natives, albeit with a helping hand from their northern benefactors, were primarily responsible for the intense industrial and demographic development that accompanied the arrival of the railroad. They were also the residents who reaped the most significant economic rewards in the land booms and manufacturing investments that followed. Unlike other natives trapped in industrializing Appalachia’s colonial economy, these men not only courted and welcomed northern-owned industries; they also shepherded them into place, served on their boards of directors, and mitigated conflicts between them and the municipality’s inhabitants. Having nearly abolished corporate taxes and guaranteed all new enterprises an accommodating and obsequious government in order to get manufacturers to locate in Roanoke, they also strapped the place with a chronically underfunded government, a chaotic growth pattern, and an infrastructure that failed to keep pace with the massive influx of new residents. Many of its dirt streets became impassable mud bogs after a rain, and its stagnant streams served as open sewers, which, coupled with a lack of adequate sanitation, produced outbreaks of cholera and typhoid.

Political and social conflicts between the thousands of native southern whites and northern white newcomers arriving in Roanoke for a time divided the town. Most of the migrants from the North were Republicans, who, with the support of African American residents, threatened the hegemony of native Democrats. Very quickly, however, most white residents, no matter what their geographic origins or political affiliations, found common ground in pushing the municipality to fund modest infrastructure improvements and in a variety of law-and-order issues aimed at African American residents. Class and race also deeply divided the society that emerged. White migrants from the mountains or countryside and white working-class residents from the North existed in one world, white upper-class natives and newcomers in another, and black residents in yet one more. Most of the town's white working class lived in company-owned housing; frequented the city's thriving saloon and brothel district; and patronized its lowbrow culture of street carnivals, traveling museums, and bawdy theaters. Native and newcomer elites, by contrast, resided in Queen Anne mansions on the outskirts of town and lived in a world of exclusive societies, fraternal orders, civic associations, and patrician clubs. African Americans—nearly a third of all residents—lived in a world of exclusion in a completely separate section of town, where they created a flourishing culture of dance halls, eating houses, and saloons that white inhabitants rarely saw.

By the early 1890s, Roanoke's white community, which first had fractured into factions of natives and newcomers, divided itself more overtly by class. The city's workers and their families, along with migrants from the nearby mountains and countryside, comprised one distinct class, its business leaders, professionals, and their families another. The cleavage between the two groups grew more severe when the town's upper classes attempted to impose an array of "reforms" on lower-class whites that they hoped would rationalize Roanoke's unruly and disordered environment. While that quest operated on numerous fronts, it was most apparent in moves designed to shut down the city's rowdy saloon district by imposing prohibition and in an attempt to end extralegal violence.

The move to enact prohibition generated immediate hostility and resentment among the city's lower classes, almost all of whom saw it as an illegitimate attack on their liberty. Since most of these men also understood justice in terms of personal vengeance, they likewise reacted with disbelief and rage when municipal authorities prevented them from exacting retribution on African Americans charged with crimes against whites. The fact

that municipal authorities then repeatedly failed to punish black residents for their supposed crimes only added to their fury. As lower-class challenges to municipal control of the judicial process mounted, elected officials and business leaders—the men most concerned about the maintenance of Roanoke’s progressive image—eventually decided to make a stand for law and order. When they did, however, lower-class whites reacted by rioting. In the ensuing violence, known afterward as the “Roanoke Riot of 1893,” the city’s militia shot and killed eight residents before a mob took control of the city, lynched an African American in police custody, and threatened to hang the mayor.<sup>4</sup>

While the conflict over prohibition and extralegal violence were the immediate causes of the riot, its origins can be found in the dramatic intensification of tensions between white and black residents. White hostility toward African Americans, while constant, grew more intense in the 1890s, as the city’s black population increased, putting whites into more frequent contact with African American strangers, at least some of whom refused to conform to contemporary white notions of appropriate black subservience. By then, African Americans accounted for roughly 30 percent of the city’s twenty-three thousand inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Many of the newcomers were lone black males looking for a better life than tenant farming or sharecropping provided. In Roanoke, as elsewhere in Appalachia and the South, the presence of unknown black men wandering about town unsettled white males, most of whom understood them as manifestations of their worst fears about blacks as chronic criminals and potential rapists of white women.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, as the city’s population grew and its economy boomed, traditional boundaries of decorum and space between the races became more amorphous or occasionally broke down altogether, with streets, sidewalks, depots, and other public spaces turning increasingly into contested terrain.<sup>7</sup>

As tensions between the races mounted, clashes over appropriate public etiquette increased in intensity. In the summer of 1893, for instance, one paper reported that a black male had “attempted to monopolize more of the sidewalk than belongs, by custom or good breeding, to any one man” and bumped into a white pedestrian “who resented the encounter by drawing a gun upon the aforesaid Senegambian.” C. W. Allen did not shoot the man, the paper explained, “and many people think he ought to have been imprisoned for neglecting to perform his bounded duty.”<sup>8</sup> Such sidewalk confrontations were generally the result of African Americans asserting their humanity in the face of an emerging racially hierarchized society that

sought to define them as subhuman and unfit for equal access to public space.<sup>9</sup> One way authorities dealt with that assertion was by arresting black males more frequently for disorderly conduct, vagrancy, suspicion, or trespassing on railroad property. As a result, by 1893, African American men in Roanoke comprised only about a quarter of the city's male population but accounted for slightly over half of all arrests.<sup>10</sup> The emergence of supposedly disease-ridden and corrupt "negro dives" in the city added to white anxiety and fear, as did the constant barrage of local newspaper stories warning readers about dissipated and depraved African Americans descending into "barbarism" and "savagery." In addition, some whites resented the handful of black residents who had emulated Victorian ideals and managed to establish successful businesses, while others, mainly rural white newcomers, chafed at competing for day labor jobs against African Americans.<sup>11</sup>

One symptom of the growing fear and racism was an increase in incidents over which white residents asserted what they perceived as their right to lynch blacks suspected of assault, rape, or murder of whites. Lynching, after all, served not simply as retribution against a transgressor, but also as an assault on all black residents, marking them as outsiders beyond the bounds of due process or basic rights of citizenship.<sup>12</sup> Twice in the 1880s, after Roanoke police arrested African American males accused of murdering white residents, members of the white community formed vigilante gangs to seek extralegal retribution. In both cases, mobs bent on lynching the men arrested for the murders gathered around the jail, and each time authorities thwarted riots only by removing the accused to nearby cities. Demands for "lynch justice" appeared again after hung juries or insufficient evidence led to acquittals in both cases. In the aftermath, many Roanokers lost faith in their government's ability to mete out justice, making the potential for vigilantism not just possible but highly likely. In such an atmosphere, any black on white violence had the potential to unleash furious demands by whites for swift retaliation, as well as the potential to put outnumbered authorities attempting to maintain law and order on the defensive. The fact that many white residents were recent migrants from the nearby mountains or countryside, whose traditional ideas about justice rested on notions of honor and personal vengeance, only made the situation more precarious.<sup>13</sup>

The result was that by the early 1890s, lower-class whites in Roanoke were calling for "lynch law" both more forcefully and more frequently. Such was the case in late 1891, when an African American named Jeff

Dooley killed a white police officer attempting to arrest him. Police captured Dooley shortly afterward and put him in the city jail, where a menacing crowd of several hundred men had already gathered to attempt a lynching. Falling back on their standard response to such a threat, authorities quickly snuck Dooley out the back door and onto a train bound for Lynchburg.<sup>14</sup> The move, of course, infuriated those who wanted immediate retribution, ratcheting up their already high resentment and suspicion of local officials.

Early the following year, after a black male supposedly attempted to rape a twelve-year-old white girl in one of the town's working-class neighborhoods, lower-class whites again united in calls for swift extralegal justice. Alice Perry, the victim of the attack, provided a detailed description of the man, but according to the *Roanoke Times*, "the police did not seem to appreciate the gravity of the situation and made no effort to investigate the matter." Relatives of the girl, outraged by police disinterest, armed themselves with shotguns and searched in vain for the suspect.<sup>15</sup> As news of the attempted assault and lax reaction by police spread, other vigilante groups joined in the hunt for Perry's assailant.<sup>16</sup> Her relatives eventually captured William Lavender not far from where the supposed assault had occurred, and Perry identified him as her attacker. Why Lavender, an unemployed bootblack, would return to the scene of his crime in the midst of a frantic manhunt is unclear, as is the sudden replacement of another man police listed as the prime suspect. Lavender was, however, an easy target for white fury: he was relatively new in town and had an extensive police record for offenses ranging from vagrancy and disorderly conduct to theft and assault on the chief of police.<sup>17</sup>

After Perry identified Lavender, police placed him in the city jail, where a large and boisterous mob had already gathered to demand his immediate lynching. The mob's outrage was legitimate, according to one man in the crowd, since "justice in Roanoke could hardly be trusted." Though worried about the police's ability to protect Lavender, Roanoke's chief of police insisted that he be kept in the city, lest it reflect poorly on the municipality's capability to maintain law and order. That evening, however, after the crowd grew larger and more unruly, the chief had Lavender removed to a house belonging to one of his officers. A few hours later, members of the mob located Lavender and easily overpowered the three police officers guarding him. They afterward marched him to the bank of the Roanoke River, coerced his confession, and hung him.<sup>18</sup>



The lynching of William Lavender. Anonymous archive, Roanoke, Virginia.

The *Roanoke Times's* editors endorsed the lynching, proclaiming in oversized type on their front page: "Judge Lynch! Little Alice Perry Has Been Avenged." In an editorial condoning "lynch law," they explained that "when the people come to believe that the machinery which they have erected for carrying out of justice has lost its power to right wrongs, they erect new machinery."<sup>19</sup> By early the following day, thousands of residents had turned out on a bitter cold February morning to view the "weird, strange scene" of Lavender dangling "frozen stiff and stark." Indeed, so many spectators cut off pieces of the rope for souvenirs that by midmorning his body had fallen down. Later, at the funeral home where Lavender was taken, a photographer "secured a likeness of the man as he lay on the board with the big hangman's knot encircling his neck" to be sold as a memento of the event. The general feeling in town, the *Times* boasted, was "that a good thing had been done" and the "dignity of the people maintained."<sup>20</sup> A subsequent grand jury investigation failed to indict anyone.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time racial antipathies and predilections for lynching were reaching new highs in Roanoke, a catastrophic economic depression was sweeping the nation. The 1893 depression struck Roanoke especially hard,

throwing the Norfolk & Western Railroad into a reorganization receivership, driving the Norwich Lock Works out of business, forcing layoffs at the Roanoke Machine Works, and causing four of the town's seven banks to fail.<sup>22</sup> Unemployed shop and railroad workers packed up their families and left town; those who stayed struggled to make ends meet. Unskilled laborers from the nearby mountains or countryside faced even worse economic circumstances; those who did not leave subsisted on odd jobs, charity, and occasionally even begging. In poorer parts of the city, entire neighborhoods of workers' housing stood deserted.<sup>23</sup> The depression ratcheted up tensions between workers and the town's professionals and upper classes, who both managed local businesses and took the blame for the shocking and mysterious economic collapse.<sup>24</sup>

Racial and class resentments were thus already simmering by the fall of 1893, when residents became embroiled in a heated "local option" election to decide whether Roanoke would ban the sale of alcohol. While the vote did not break down entirely along racial or class lines, a significant segment of the city's registered African Americans joined middle- and upper-class whites in supporting prohibition, while lower-class whites generally opposed any restrictions on the sale of alcohol. The fight began in earnest a month before the vote, when organizations representing each side began staging rallies and marches to attract supporters. For the city's white workers, patronizing saloons among fellow workingmen was a cherished liberty and integral part of their social life. While many businessmen and politicians sided with them and also came out against prohibition, most of the town's middle and upper classes viewed saloons as a threat to law and order, production, and family life. Prohibition, in their view, would recast working-class recreation in ways that conformed to a modern, bourgeois value system.<sup>25</sup>

Since the issue almost evenly divided the town's whites, organizers from both sides focused some of their efforts on African American voters. At a rally in the black section of town, white business leaders and politicians railed against prohibition and reminded their audience that they were the men who had supported funding for a new African American schoolhouse.<sup>26</sup> At a counterrally for blacks held in the Opera House, white ministers joined the city's two most prominent African American clergy in encouraging those in attendance to save their race from dissipation and extinction by casting votes in favor of prohibition. "Never," the *Times* summed up the campaign, "has a conflict been more vigorously waged."<sup>27</sup>

On Election Day, the antiprohibitionists won decisively in the city's

lower- and working-class wards. They also carried its mostly black ward, but by the slimmest margin possible, with only 51 percent of voters casting ballots against prohibition. The prohibitionists won easily in predominantly middle- and upper-class wards, and in the end, they carried the entire election by 139 votes. The votes cast in favor of prohibition by blacks were thus critical to that outcome. Hostility over the result was palpable, according to the *Times*, which reported that the vote had engendered “a large amount of enmity and strife” that showed no signs of dissipating.<sup>28</sup> In the days after the contest, antiprohibitionists accused the prohibitionists of fraud, hired a team of lawyers, and filed a suit contesting the election.<sup>29</sup>

The city’s working classes were despondent about the outcome of the election, and while there were many obvious targets for their fury, the fact that blacks had played a major role in removing their right to drink was perhaps most galling of all. In the aftermath of the vote, workers’ and poor whites’ mistrust of local authorities and intolerance for African Americans reached their zenith in Roanoke, creating an atmosphere so poisoned with suspicion and disgust that any spark might ignite class warfare or a racial pogrom. That spark appeared just two weeks after the vote, when rumors spread that a black man had robbed, raped, and killed a middle-aged white woman in downtown Roanoke.

Sallie A. Bishop, a farmer’s wife, and her twelve-year-old son had come to the city on the morning of September 20, 1893, from neighboring Botetourt County to sell produce on Market Square. Not long after arriving, Bishop stumbled into a nearby grocery store in a daze and bleeding from several large gashes on her head. About thirty minutes earlier, she explained to the throng of men who quickly surrounded her, a black man had offered her sixty cents for some grapes on the condition that she go with him to deliver the fruit to a “Miss Hicks” who lived only a couple of blocks away. Bishop followed the man into the basement of the building given as the address, where he drew a straight razor and demanded money. After she handed over two or three dollars, he beat her unconscious with a brick and fled the scene. The man, she told those gathered around her, was in his early twenties, “tolerably black,” and wearing a faded gray frock coat, gray pants, and a “large, black slouch hat.” Word of the assault spread quickly, as did rumors that a black “brute” had murdered or raped Bishop. Within minutes, patrons poured out of saloons and businesses to look for the culprit, and dozens of farmers at the market unhitched their teams and rode bareback through the city searching for him.<sup>30</sup>



William Edwards, a black teenager who had joined in the hunt, witnessed someone matching Bishop's description jump aboard an outbound train a couple of blocks from the market. Edwards hopped aboard as well and pulled the man off. As the suspect fled toward nearby woods, a posse nearby joined the chase. William G. Baldwin, chief detective of the Norfolk & Western Railroad, rode into the lead and first overtook the man. Baldwin drew his revolver, ordered him onto the back of his horse, and proceeded back to town through dozens of men throwing rocks and demanding that Baldwin turn over the suspect to them. Baldwin took the suspect to Conway's Saloon, where doctors were treating Bishop, and forced his way through the enraged men gathered outside. Over shouts of "lynch him" or "hang him," Bishop tentatively explained that the man resembled her attacker and asked to see his hat, which she identified as the one worn by the person who had robbed her. The detective, gun drawn, rushed the suspect back to his horse and headed for the jail. An immense and hysterical mob followed close behind.<sup>31</sup>

Baldwin beat the crowd to the jail and turned the man over to authorities, who lodged him in a cell on the second floor. Within minutes, according to a reporter on the scene, the municipal building was "surrounded by over a thousand men clamoring for revenge and blood." The mob was almost entirely composed of lower- and working-class white men, almost all of whom interpreted the attack on Mrs. Bishop as yet another assault on the white community. Mayor Henry Trout and the city's commonwealth attorney addressed the increasingly boisterous crowd and promised swift justice. Trout, a Big Lick native, former state legislator, well-known bank president, and member of the N&W's board of trustees, was widely admired by residents, and his speech at least temporarily mollified the mob. In a clear sign of the crowd's mistrust of local authorities, however, its members surrounded the jail to make certain officials did not attempt to remove the prisoner. Others in the mob headed off for Botetourt County to gather Bishop's kin and neighbors. The man in custody, Thomas Smith, a married, unemployed former iron-furnace worker from nearby Vinton, denied any knowledge of the attack. Beyond the identification of his slouch hat, there was no actual evidence against him. Moreover, that a black male, witnessed by dozens of farmers leading Bishop away from the market, would rob her, beat her, and then remain nearby for the next half an hour makes little sense. Although Smith was probably innocent, the city's press

assured readers that he was the culprit. The *Roanoke Times* even falsely claimed that Bishop “immediately knew her assailant and said so.”<sup>32</sup>

Protecting Smith from the lynch mob was far more precarious in Roanoke because the police force charged with safeguarding him was understaffed and inept. Authorities had removed the department’s former chief for embezzlement and had dismissed numerous officers for fighting, being drunk or asleep on duty, or consorting with prostitutes.<sup>33</sup> Roanoke’s current mayor, Henry Trout, had reorganized the department in 1892 but left John F. Terry, a fellow Civil War veteran and former N&W yardmaster, in his position as chief and Alexander H. Griffin, a Pennsylvanian and former machine-shop worker, in his position as sergeant. Neither officer had any formal police training, nor had either been on the force more than a year.<sup>34</sup> The sixteen other officers in the department lacked formal training as well, and most of them were wholly unprepared for the danger and mayhem they encountered on Roanoke’s streets. They came and went as quickly as they could, according to Sergeant Griffin, who observed that many “started out very bravely as patrolmen in the morning but could hardly lay aside their badge fast enough at night.”<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the remainder of the day, the crowd outside the jail grew in size and became more belligerent. Bottles of whiskey passed freely between its members all afternoon, and as the men become more and more intoxicated, their demands for “lynch justice” steadily increased in volume. Unlike other municipal officials in Virginia, who generally acquiesced to the demands of lynch mobs, Henry Trout vowed to protect Smith, knowing that he risked social ostracism and retribution. Given state authorities’ silence on the issue and hesitancy to protect potential lynching victims, his stand was all the more remarkable.<sup>36</sup> It did not take Trout long to realize that his police force would be no match for the mob and that he could not remove the prisoner, so rather than risk Smith being taken by the crowd, he called up the Roanoke Light Infantry, the city’s component of the Virginia Militia. According to Jack W. Hancock, a member of the infantry, when he and seventeen other militia members marched to the municipal building, Trout again came outside and pleaded with the crowd to disperse before ordering the squad to clear the street in front of the jail. The mob, Hancock reported, laughed at the men and “made fun of us saying we were afraid to shoot.” The militia, although armed with bayonets and rifles, was hardly threatening. A social organization as much as an infantry, its crisply uni-



The Roanoke police and light infantry. Anonymous archive, Roanoke, Virginia.

formed members, most of them young clerks for the railroad or other businesses, had no experience with actual combat. Although outnumbered by at least twenty to one, the infantry was able to clear the street in front of the municipal building, giving police an opportunity to arrest two of the most vocal men in the crowd when they refused to back up.<sup>37</sup>

After driving the crowd back, John Bird, captain of the infantry, stationed his men along nearby streets, creating a blockwide perimeter around the municipal building. Bird, who had moved to Roanoke from Connecticut a couple years earlier to help operate the Norwich Lock Works, believed the situation was under control even though hundreds of men remained nearby, milling about Campbell Avenue beside the Ponce de Leon Hotel. In an obvious indication of just how confident Bird was, at 7:30 P.M. he walked several blocks to check on a takeout dinner order for his troops. According to Hancock, Bird had been gone only a few minutes when he frantically telephoned to report that a mob was rushing up Commerce Street and Campbell Avenue. Bird beat the crowd back to the municipal building and

had his men to take up defensive positions along the front steps and at windows. Hancock, stationed on the steps with four other soldiers, saw what he believed to be at least a thousand men running up the street and “cheering as they came.” Its leaders, according to local papers, were Mrs. Bishop’s oldest son and fifty to a hundred other men from Botetourt County who had just arrived in the city. “It seemed,” Hancock reported, “that they would attempt to rush over us at every moment.”<sup>38</sup>

Thousands of spectators followed the mob to the municipal building and watched the confrontation. E. P. Tompkins, a railroad clerk among them, recalled that he gossiped with friends and never dreamed of danger.<sup>39</sup> Reverend William Campbell, like other ministers, wandered through the crowd, doing what he could to talk its members out of an attempt to lynch the prisoner. Campbell, who like most residents believed the rumor that Mrs. Bishop was dead, left the scene to hold a special prayer meeting at his church a few blocks away. “We have a murderer in our city,” he told his congregation, “and I fear we shall have a number of others.”<sup>40</sup> While Campbell preached, the mob closed in around the jail. Trout and Bird—his sword drawn—pleaded once again for calm, informing those close enough to hear them that the infantry’s guns were loaded and that they would protect Smith. “They replied with curses and abuse,” Hancock recalled, “saying that they were not afraid of us, that we were afraid to shoot, and that they would have the negro.”<sup>41</sup> The situation now clearly spiraling out of control, Bird wired the governor to warn him that a mob of five thousand had surrounded the infantry and that he and his men would be “wiped out shortly.”<sup>42</sup>

Around 8:00 P.M., according to a reporter at the scene, the shouting and screaming mob made a “wild rush” toward the western side of the jail, battering a door there with logs and shattering every window with rocks and bottles. In the chaos, Bird issued the “ready” command, signaling his men to cock their rifles and take aim at the crowd below.<sup>43</sup> Seconds later, a shot rang out. Who fired it remains unclear. Hancock, stationed out front, swore that it and four or five others that rang out afterward in rapid succession came from the sidewalk across the street.<sup>44</sup> A correspondent for the *Roanoke Times* concurred, reporting that “in the fever heat of excitement and suspense . . . several imprudent persons in the street opposite the jail, near the Chinese laundry, fired a number of pistol shots.”<sup>45</sup> E. P. Tompkins, however, claimed that as soon as the mob started bashing the door, there “came a volley of shots from the windows over my head, and men fell right and left in the street.”<sup>46</sup> The *Daily Record*’s correspondent at the scene

agreed and reported that there were thousands of other witnesses who saw the militia open fire on the crowd. Whatever the origins of the first shot, after it rang out, the infantry opened fire. Over the next two minutes, it and the mob exchanged about 150 shots.<sup>47</sup>

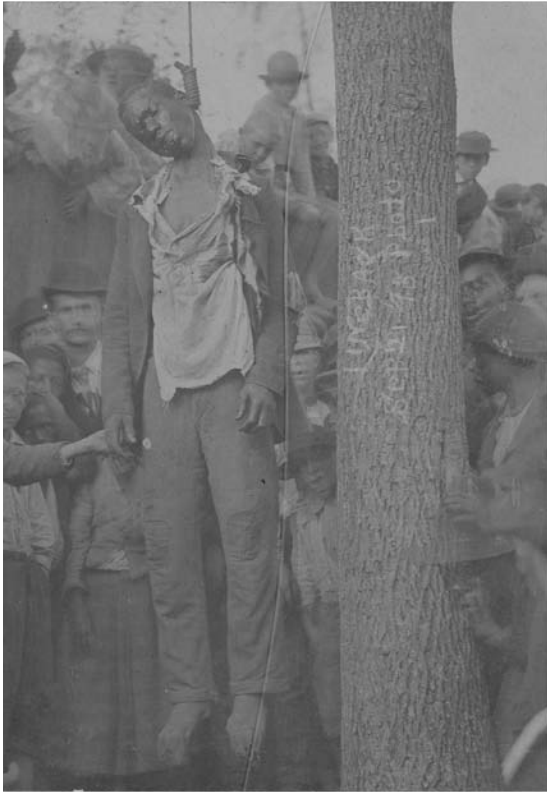
Many of the bullets hit Greene Memorial Church next door, forcing parishioners to seek shelter under their pews.<sup>48</sup> A couple blocks away, at William Campbell's prayer vigil, he and his congregation heard the "terrific roar of musketry" and rushed outside to see what had happened. Campbell passed several of the wounded and saw thousands of men and women "running in every direction to get out of reach of other shots that might come."<sup>49</sup> In the panic, the mob and the crowd of spectators fled down Campbell Avenue or tumbled into piles behind the Ponce de Leon Hotel's railing. "The street before the jail," according to E. P. Tompkins, "looked a shambles, blood in forty places, the street car rails slippery with it."<sup>50</sup> In the alley beside the jail, the *Daily Times* reported, the ground was "soaked with blood, stones splattered and walls splashed with the same dreadful dye." The melee killed eight men in the crowd, wounded thirty-one others, and left Mayor Trout, the only casualty inside the courthouse, with a bullet lodged in his foot. According to local papers, most of those struck down or wounded had been spectators standing on the outskirts of the mob. The proprietor of the St. James Hotel was among the dead, as were three Norfolk & Western employees, a Roanoke County distiller, and a popular member of the Roanoke Athletic Club's baseball team. A black saloon-keeper was wounded, as were two African American women who had been watching the mob from across the street. Most of those hit in the volley were horrifically injured. One man had his leg blown off, another lost his foot, and several others had wounds to the groin, stomach, or head. In the chaos of the assault, the militia and mob both fired haphazardly, and according to doctors who treated the injured, pistol shots from the crowd hit at least three spectators in addition to Mayor Trout.<sup>51</sup>

Within a few minutes of the clash, N&W detective William Baldwin made his way to the courthouse to warn the militia and city officials that members of the mob were breaking into hardware stores downtown to steal rifles and dynamite. According to a *Times* correspondent in the area, "incendiary speeches were being made by a dozen men," all of whom had vowed to mount another attack on the infantry and to lynch Mayor Trout along with Smith. When Judge John W. Woods and local politician J. Allan Watts attempted to dissuade the crowd, men in the mob shouted them

down and fired pistols in the air. According to Jack Hancock, shortly after Baldwin's warning, Trout limped into the Ponce de Leon Hotel, and Captain Bird ordered the militia to shed their uniforms, go home, and stay inside. Before leaving, Trout instructed the police force to take Smith into hiding. Once the mayor left, however, Chief Terry suggested that the police save themselves by turning Smith over to the mob. Sergeant Griffin and two other officers ignored him, and along with George Gordon, another black prisoner, they took Smith across the Roanoke River, to a hiding spot beyond the southwestern limits of the city.<sup>52</sup> When the mob returned and found the courthouse empty, according to Tompkins, one of its leaders mounted a table inside, "swinging a coil of rope with many oaths calling for volunteers to help hang the mayor."<sup>53</sup> William Campbell once again begged the crowd to disperse but found the men so enraged that "they would not listen to reason or anything else."<sup>54</sup>

After a frenzied search of the courthouse and the Ponce de Leon Hotel failed to turn up the mayor or Smith, the crowd followed Mrs. Bishop's son to Trout's house. The mayor had slipped out the back door of the hotel only minutes earlier, after getting treatment for his wounded foot, and remained in hiding among his friends.<sup>55</sup> Having failed to find the mayor or Smith, the mob broke up into several ten- to fifteen-man squads to ransack the homes of city officials and guard the railroad tracks to prevent either man from escaping by train.<sup>56</sup> Sometime later that night, George Gordon—the prisoner who had helped Smith escape—and Sergeant Griffin returned to the jail. By then, Griffin had reconsidered and told Chief Terry that Smith was "nothing but a damned negro" who deserved to be lynched. Terry agreed and at around three that morning ordered Smith brought back to the jail. He then informed at least one member of the mob about the plan. As a result, twenty-five armed men, their faces hidden behind handkerchiefs, were waiting in a vacant lot halfway between Commerce and Roanoke streets when Smith and his escorts appeared. Smith spotted the posse first and took off running but made it only a few dozen yards before someone knocked him down. The gang ordered Griffin and the other officers to "take a walk" and then headed off into the darkness with Smith.<sup>57</sup>

The men proceeded only a short distance before they stopped beneath an electric light at the corner of Franklin Road and Mountain Avenue. Unlike William Lavender, who in a desperate attempt to save his life admitted to being drunk and accidentally knocking Alice Perry down, Smith refused to confess to assaulting Mrs. Bishop, denying his executioners their



The Thomas Smith lynching. In this previously unpublished image, Smith hangs in the center of a large crowd on the morning after his murder. A Roanoke photography studio sold the image as a souvenir. Anonymous archive, Roanoke, Virginia.

final prize and leaving them determined to stigmatize his body. They promptly tossed a rope over a hickory tree, strung Smith up, riddled him with bullets, and desecrated and decorated his body in ways that marked him both physically and socially as one who had transgressed the boundaries of allowed behavior. To them, Smith's supposed assault of a "defenseless" and "respectable" white woman was an attack on their masculine responsibility to protect white women from the black "menace" roaming Roanoke. Moreover, Smith, the former "property" of local officials, was the symbol of middle- and upper-class efforts to impose order on the city's working

classes and rural immigrants. His hanging thus served a twofold purpose: it terrorized black residents and rebuked white authorities.

In the morning, the *Times* reported, thousands of residents turned out to view the tree's "ghastly fruit." Signs pinned to Smith's back proclaimed him "Mayor Trout's Friend" and warned "Do Not Cut Him Down—By Order of Judge Lynch." Hundreds of those who came to view Smith took bark from the tree, slices of the rope, or pieces of his clothing as souvenirs.<sup>58</sup> A photo of the scene, sold as a keepsake by Lineback Photography Studio, reveals throngs of smiling men and women as well as several black residents in the immense crowd around Thomas Smith, who hangs, much like a prize buck or bear, as a trophy to be admired. Smith, dressed in a shabby suit and wearing pants with patches over the knees, dangles only a few feet off the ground, his white socks hanging off his feet, his eyes and tongue protruding out of his badly swollen head, and his ears bleeding from spots where hunks had been cut off as souvenirs.<sup>59</sup> That residents felt not only comfortable but enthusiastic about posing for cameras next to Smith says a great deal about their self-righteousness and evident pride in his violent demise. The carnival-like atmosphere that followed Smith's extralegal hanging was common in lynchings throughout the South, and much like participants in other "lynch festivals," Roanoke residents sought to prolong their "victory" by further desecrating Smith's body.<sup>60</sup> The difference, however, was that they wanted to do so in a way that further solidified their disdain for city authorities as well. Indeed, when members of a coroner's jury arrived and had Smith cut down for transport to the city morgue, the enormous crowd refused to release him and insisted that they were going to lay Smith in state on the mayor's dining room table before burying him in Trout's front yard.<sup>61</sup>

William Campbell learned of the plan to further demean Mayor Trout from Robert Moorman, an elder in his church, and insisted that Moorman rush him to the scene so that he could prevent it. When Moorman and Campbell arrived, several men had just begun to drag Smith down the street, and there were at least a thousand people cheering them on. Campbell pleaded with them to stop. Their reply, according to him, consisted of "angry words" and fists waved in his face. Several men pushed Moorman down and started dragging Smith away again before Campbell grabbed the rope and told them "they should not drag the body through the streets; that we had already suffered enough." His stand convinced at least a few men in the group to back him up, and with their added pleas, the mob eventually



decided to burn Smith on the banks of the Roanoke River instead. A crowd of hundreds then followed the wagon bearing Smith's body down Mountain Avenue, cheering and tearing down fences along the way. When they reached the riverbank, several men gathered brush and tree limbs to build a pyre, doused Smith with coal oil, and set him afire. "The flames roared and cracked, leaping high in the air," according to a reporter at the scene, "while all around stood 4,000 people, men, women, boys and children on foot, in buggies and on horseback, and numbers of them shouting over the pitiful scene." Hundreds of onlookers fed the flames by tossing branches and twigs into the fire, and by noon, according to another correspondent, all that remained of Smith "was a few ashes and here and there a bone."<sup>62</sup>

After the fire burned out, the mob turned its fury back to the militia and mayor—some allegedly gathered buckets of Smith's ashes to dump in Trout's yard; others spread out to locate him.<sup>63</sup> Trout, who was still hiding in town, decided to leave after the torrent of threats against him showed no signs of abating. The following evening, accompanied by railroad detective Baldwin, he boarded a special Norfolk & Western coach and rode to Lynchburg. When a reporter visited Trout later that evening, he found the mayor in a "highly nervous and overwrought condition and laboring under much mental perturbation." In a sign of just how troubled Trout was, his .38-caliber pistol was on the hotel room table.<sup>64</sup> Back in Roanoke, the president of the city council had taken over as mayor. In an attempt to restore order, he and a citizens' committee headed by Joseph H. Sands, vice president of the N&W, issued a broadside. "It is most desirable," the flyer proclaimed, "that all excitement should be allayed, exciting speeches or conversation discouraged, and the majesty of the law shall be respected as being competent to deal fully and justly with all persons who may be suspected of sharing illegally in the events of last night." The committee advised all citizens to go home or back to work and summoned a grand jury to investigate the lynching and riot. The acting mayor suspended Police Chief Terry and appointed dozens of special police officers "whose duty is to urge upon citizens to preserve order and disperse to their homes." He and the committee also convinced saloonkeepers to close their businesses.<sup>65</sup>

Later that day, Joseph Sands addressed all N&W and Machine Works employees and asked them to abide by the law and help restore order. Although the workers voted to follow Sands's advice, they also passed a resolution declaring the militia's actions unprovoked and demanded a full investigation of the mayor, police force, and infantry. The city's Masons

and Odd Fellows pledged to assist municipal authorities, as did the William Watts Camp of Confederate Veterans and the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic. The Blue and Gray veterans issued a joint statement backing the citizens' committee and condemning the "lawless persons" responsible for tarnishing the reputation of the Magic City.<sup>66</sup> The mob, nevertheless, continued to roam the streets in search of city authorities and militia members. Although most infantrymen stayed in hiding, Jack Hancock, a bank clerk, reported to work the morning of the lynching and stayed there until friends convinced him to leave. Like all members of the militia, Hancock later received a death threat from the "Headquarters of the Vigilant Committee." "Sir," the note read, "prepare yourself to meet your creator—one day longer in Roanoke you will sleep the sleep of the brave. We want your blood—you shot our friends. Yours to administer death, 163 Citizens." After getting the threat, Hancock decided to lodge with heavily armed comrades at a boardinghouse rather than go home.<sup>67</sup> Other infantrymen and city officials hid in nearby Salem, which according to the *Richmond Dispatch* had become a "city of refuge for many of those who have incurred the wrath of the mob."<sup>68</sup>

The coroner's jury charged with investigating the shooting and lynching called its first witnesses the day after Smith's hanging. The men who testified failed to concur on who fired the first shot but agreed that Mrs. Bishop's son and Walter Davis, a seventeen-year-old Roanoke resident, led the assault on the jail and that the most violent and determined members of the mob were fifty to one hundred of Bishop's neighbors from Botetourt County. Captain Bird of the infantry admitted to giving the order to fire on the crowd, but swore that he did so only after men in the mob fired several shots at him. Several witnesses claimed that Chief Terry attempted to turn Smith over to the mob after the shooting, but that Mayor Trout had insisted that the police force continue to protect him. At the conclusion of testimony, the jury found that all the men killed except Smith died because of Bird's order, and it forwarded the case to a grand jury to determine the legality of the shooting.<sup>69</sup>

Mayor Trout, who had gone to Richmond the day after arriving in Lynchburg, refused all requests for interviews but told reporters that he hoped to return to Roanoke as soon as possible.<sup>70</sup> Back in Roanoke, the citizens' committee issued a statement to the Southern Press Association urging the mayor to return. "It is our purpose," they claimed, "to demonstrate to the world that the charge we are under mob rule and the course of

law cannot be pursued on account of intimidation and threats is false.”<sup>71</sup> Virginia governor Philip W. McKinney, who had previously been hesitant to use the power of the state to suppress lynching, changed course after the mayhem in Roanoke. The riot, he told the state senate, was a “terrible lesson” that should make all Virginians realize the need to “respect the authorities and obey the law.” Henceforth, he warned, the state would maintain order, “and the consequences must rest upon the heads of those who make it necessary.”<sup>72</sup>

Reaction to the lynching and riot appeared in newspapers around the nation and as far away as London.<sup>73</sup> Coverage of the riot in out-of-town newspapers shattered the progressive image of the Magic City that its business boosters had cultivated, directly threatening continued economic investment. The press accounts justifiably horrified Roanoke’s business leaders, who reacted to the riot with strong support for municipal authorities and loud demands for law and order. Roanoke’s papers, longtime supporters of “lynch justice,” did an abrupt about-face and called for speedy punishment of the men responsible for the riot. The *Times* extolled Trout’s leadership and acknowledged that the infantry had no choice but to fire upon the mob. The *Daily Record* likewise informed readers that unless they were “ready to see their hopes of building a metropolis turned to despair, her streets turned to pastures, and her houses the roosting places of birds of night, they will with one accord, sustain the constituted authorities in the maintenance of law and order.”<sup>74</sup>

City editors’ stance against “lawlessness” did much to quell tensions and bolster public acceptance of the stand against the mob, and when Trout did return, a week after fleeing for his life, a crowd of three hundred residents cheered his arrival at the depot.<sup>75</sup> According to the *Times*, by then, “the great mass of the people” had begun to sympathize with authorities and finally “recognized the fact that the laws of the land are supreme and must be enforced.”<sup>76</sup> Mrs. Bishop, who had been recovering in Roanoke since her attack, left for home the same day Trout returned. Although a week earlier she had only been able to tentatively identify Smith based on his “slouch hat,” when questioned leaving town, Bishop reported that she was absolutely certain the man who had beaten her had “met his just deserts.”<sup>77</sup>

Roanoke’s papers, while admonishing lawlessness, did so while simultaneously damning Smith as a monstrous brute who deserved to die for his crime. They entirely ignored the lack of any real proof against Smith, not only embellishing the meager evidence against him but also turning the

assault on Bishop into an attempted rape. Although it is perhaps impossible to prove, it seems likely that Smith was innocent. In the immediate aftermath of his murder, antilynching activist Ida B. Wells claimed to have learned that Smith was not guilty and that this fact was “well known in the city before he was killed.”<sup>78</sup> The *Cleveland Gazette*, like other northern papers, reported only weeks after the riot that the “poor Afro-American lynched, and whose body was riddled with bullets, then burned, is now generally acknowledged to have been innocent of the offense charged.”<sup>79</sup> Although Wells and the northern press offered no evidence to support their contentions, more credible accounts of Smith’s innocence appeared in the years that followed. According to former infantryman Jack Hancock, a subsequent chief of Roanoke’s Police Department had informed him that detectives eventually uncovered evidence that “the man lynched was not the one guilty of the crime for which he was taken up as a suspect.” Hancock, unfortunately, did not reveal what the new details were, nor did he name the informant.<sup>80</sup> In 1916, the NAACP’s journal *Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* backed up Hancock’s claim, reporting much like he did that a high-ranking Roanoke police officer had “recently revealed the fact that the colored man Smith, who was lynched Sept 21, 1893, for assaulting a woman, was innocent and known to be so by officials a short time afterwards.” According to the *Crisis*, by the time Baldwin captured Smith, another suspect had admitted his guilt and been ordered by authorities to leave town immediately.<sup>81</sup> If that was indeed the case, then Trout’s stand against the lynch mob makes even more sense.

With Trout back in town and the tide of public opinion now running against the mob, a semblance of law and order returned to the city. Over a hundred “special policemen” teamed up with what was left of the local force to maintain the peace. By September 30, nine days after the lynching, participants in the riot had even returned twenty-six of the forty-one pistols they had stolen from Evans Hardware.<sup>82</sup> The torrent of bad press worried city fathers, but most assumed a looming grand jury investigation would result in punishments against members of the mob so severe that Roanoke’s reputation would be at least somewhat rehabilitated. During the subsequent hearing, the jury heard over two hundred witnesses before it handed down nineteen indictments on sixteen men for felonies and misdemeanors. Oddly enough, the jury failed to charge Mrs. Bishop’s son, the openly acknowledged leader of the mob. It proclaimed the action of the mayor and militia lawful, declared some of those killed active participants in the riot,

and charged Police Chief Terry and Sergeant Griffin with being accessories to the lynching. Of the fourteen other men indicted, only four stood accused of felonies, and only three of them with lynching Smith. The other felony indictment was against James G. Richardson, a Botetourt County farmer, for threatening to hang the mayor and breaking into a hardware store to steal guns and dynamite. Most of the misdemeanor charges were for inciting the riot or burning Smith's body.<sup>83</sup> Following their indictments, Trout suspended Terry and Griffin. He also created a permanent reserve police force of 150 "discreet men" to quell riots.<sup>84</sup>

The November 1893 trials of those charged by the grand jury ended up doing little to help in the city's restoration efforts. Edward Page, who had openly boasted of placing the noose around Smith's neck, found plenty of witnesses willing to provide an alibi, and his jury cleared him of any responsibility in Smith's death.<sup>85</sup> James Richardson, who testified that he had been drinking in a local saloon the day of the riot, claimed that he had been too drunk to recall anything about leading the search for Mayor Trout or breaking into a hardware store. Numerous witnesses, however, placed him at the scene and recalled his threatening language against the mayor. The jury found him guilty, and the judge sentenced Richardson to thirty days in jail and fined him one hundred dollars. The two other rioters found guilty of misdemeanors, S. W. Fuqua, a carpenter, and D. D. Kennedy, an N&W employee, received one-day prison sentences and one-dollar fines.<sup>86</sup> Such light sentences bewildered the *Times* editors, who deemed them "travesties upon justice."<sup>87</sup>

To make matters worse, prosecutors found no witnesses willing to testify against Chief Terry or Sergeant Griffin, and as a result, their jury did not even leave its seats before proclaiming them not guilty of being accessories to the lynching.<sup>88</sup> Mayor Trout, outraged at the acquittals, not only refused to reinstate the men but also had them both charged with conduct unbecoming an officer of the law.<sup>89</sup> At their subsequent hearings in December, Terry and Griffin testified against each other, and this time numerous witnesses claimed that both men had plotted to turn Smith over to the mob. Although they were once again acquitted, Trout fired Terry and demoted Sergeant Griffin to patrolman.<sup>90</sup> Early the following year, a Roanoke jury found four men, including mob leader Walter Davis, guilty of felonies for rioting and burning Smith's body. The judge sentenced all of them to a year in jail and imposed one-hundred-dollar fines. None of the men, however, served any significant time in jail or had to pay their fines. Some of

them won subsequent appeals; others, like Walter Davis, received pardons from the governor.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, even James Richardson's thirty-day jail sentence for threatening to hang Mayor Trout was eventually reduced to just twenty-four hours.<sup>92</sup>

In the aftermath of the trials, Roanoke's business and civic leaders kept up their campaign to restore the city's progressive image. In early 1894, as part of that effort, they mounted a campaign to convince Henry Trout to run for reelection.<sup>93</sup> Tensions from the lynching and riot still simmered, and it was unlikely that Trout would have had a repeat of the easy victory he had claimed two years earlier. Having survived both Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg and the Roanoke Riot, Trout decided the time was right to withdraw from public life. While most of the community forgave their former mayor for his role in the riot, other officials were not so lucky. Captain John Bird of the Roanoke Light Infantry, for example, found the lingering hostility against him impossible to live with and, by mid-January, had resigned his position and left town.<sup>94</sup>

Roanoke's businessmen and politicians, well aware of the public relations damage done by the lynch riot, did what they could in the years that followed to conceal it.<sup>95</sup> Many of the city's other white inhabitants, by contrast, attempted to keep memories of the lynch riot alive with scrapbooks, souvenirs, folklore, and photos.<sup>96</sup> "Haunt tales" circulated widely in town after the hickory tree used to hang Smith died in mid-October. Indeed, so many residents saw its death as a sign of God's wrath that the *Times* felt obligated to investigate the matter and inform readers that street grading along Mountain Avenue was the actual culprit. City workers cut it down later that month, but folk legends that the hanging tree lived on persisted as late as 2001, when landscapers removed an ash tree on Franklin Road that many residents claimed was the Smith hanging tree.<sup>97</sup> A few weeks after the actual tree had been removed, a suspicious fire gutted the house directly across the street from where it had stood. The *Times*, aware that "silly, hallucinatory stories" about the fire's genesis were rampant, lectured residents again, informing them "that the ghost of the departed black man had nothing to do with the origin of the fire."<sup>98</sup> A more likely suspect was Fred Primity, an African American arrested the following month for setting fire to the cellar where the attack on Mrs. Bishop occurred.<sup>99</sup>

At least one white resident even wrote a popular ballad about the lynch riot. Sung to the melody of the well-known British ballad "Barbara Allen," the lyrics of "Roanoke Riot," also known as "Roanoke Outrage," are per-

haps the best representation of contemporary public sentiment about what happened:

It was the twentieth of September  
when the moon shown from on high  
in the Magic City of Roanoke  
nine innocent men did die.

They were shot down by the militia  
that was stationed at the jail.  
It was the awfulist outrage  
that ever did prevail.

The captain gave his orders to fire  
when he heard the people shout  
for he had instructions from the mayor—H. L. Trout.  
It was the awfulist outrage  
that was ever heard about.

And I think it was foolish  
to call out the militia  
all because of  
a dirty low down Negro

Some were shot through the heart  
while many were shot through the head.  
After the firing was over,  
nine innocent men lay dead.

Many people did many cruel things,  
yes, things we call hard  
for they wanted to bury the Negro  
in the Mayor's backyard.

But the preacher pleaded with them,  
yes, loudly he did shout,  
“have some respect for your neighbors here,  
if not for Mayor Trout.”

Some suggested they burn him  
at the stake  
for the awful crime attempted,  
Mrs. Bishop's life to take.

So they built the fire upon him  
out of oil and pine,  
and all looked on him to see him burn  
yes, everyone that could.

That it was outrage in our city,  
yes, everyone that could be clear.  
Let's all be quiet now  
and have no lynching here.

For the Negro is dead  
and gone to a different world from this,  
but all do know that he did not go  
to a world of heavenly bliss.<sup>100</sup>

In the public's opinion, the ballad shows, city authorities murdered innocent citizens to protect a subhuman criminal. It adds one to the actual number killed in the melee and incorrectly implies that Mayor Trout gave the militia an order to fire. Because eight white men died, the folk song does not celebrate the lynching of Thomas Smith as much as it mourns the loss of good citizens in the process. It also seeks repentance for the many "cruel things" done by the mob and counsels against future extralegal hangings. Traditional lynching ballads served as a way to enshrine lynchers, prolong a "glorious" event, and remind blacks of their subservient and precarious position in society. They were generally an accurate depiction of a community's interpretation of the event, as well as a way to preserve its social memory and add to the production of the extralegal hanging by keeping its messages alive.<sup>101</sup> "Roanoke Riot," by contrast, is as critical of white authorities as it is of Thomas Smith, and it is ambivalent about lynch "justice." It celebrates the actions of William Campbell that prevented additional "outrages," but in a final blow against the "low down dirty Negro" responsible for the tragedy, it envisions Smith in hell.

Virginia governor Charles T. O'Ferrall, elected only six weeks after the



Roanoke Riot, alluded to the chaos in Roanoke in his inaugural address and vowed to do all he could to prevent any repetition of mob rule, “let it cost what it will in blood or money.”<sup>102</sup> Such antilynching rhetoric, however, had little to do with sympathy for African Americans, but was instead part of a conservative quest to maintain an orderly society in which the power of elected officials did not come into question. Indeed, by the time O’Ferrall assumed office, the 1893 depression, the rise of the Populist Party, and the Roanoke Riot had combined to make Virginia’s politicians and business leaders alike believe that the prospects for an underclass revolt that could plunge the Old Dominion into anarchy were genuine.<sup>103</sup> To counter this threat, O’Ferrall called out the state militia on dozens of occasions to protect prospective African American lynching victims. He demanded thorough investigations of extralegal violence and ordered local officials to do whatever necessary to safeguard prisoners held in their jurisdictions. For blacks charged with capital offenses against whites, however, the prospects for actual justice were slim. To counter the public’s outcry for lynchings, most authorities arranged hasty and unjust trials for the accused and then professionally executed them beyond the immediate purview of the community. Combined, these measures led to a dramatic decline in lynching in Virginia in the years that followed.<sup>104</sup>

Thomas Smith was one of 12 blacks lynched in Virginia in 1893 and one of 153 blacks lynched in the South that year. Unlike his fellow Virginia victims, all of whom stood accused of rape, murder, or barn burning and had been taken easily by mobs and immediately hung, Smith stood accused of a minor offense and had received what protection city officials were able to muster.<sup>105</sup> That protection, however, prompted unruly poor whites to attack those in power, threatening the very core of elites’ social, political, and economic status. As a result, Smith’s execution took on the trappings of a true “carnival”—rioters turned the world upside down, disrupting the orderly hierarchy that had taken control of him. His lynching, however, was the last in the city’s history. In the years that followed, Roanoke authorities followed the precedent set by Henry Trout and did all they could to quash extralegal violence. The only serious challenge to that effort appeared in 1904, when city authorities faced potential mob action against an African American male accused of brutally assaulting a white woman and her daughter. In a show of force that was a direct reaction to the 1893 riot, Virginia’s governor dispatched eight hundred infantrymen to help protect the prisoner.<sup>106</sup>

## Notes

Material in this essay appeared in a different form in Rand Dotson, *Roanoke, Virginia, 1882–1912: Magic City of the New South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007).

1. Henry S. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); David Allan Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); and Gordon B. McKinney, “Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890s,” in *An Appalachian Symposium: Essays Written in Honor of Cratis D. Williams*, ed. J. W. Williamson (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University Press, 1977): 131–44.

2. Lawrence H. Larsen, *The Rise of the Urban South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 155, 157. For a sample of the “Magic City” designation, see the *Virginian*, Dec. 6, 1885, in Shenandoah Valley Railroad Scrapbook (SVRS hereafter), no. 4, Norfolk & Western Railway Archives (hereafter N&WRA), Special Collections, Carol M. Newman Library, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; *Manufacturers’ Record*, Dec. 22, 1888; *Roanoke Times*, Jan. 22, 1891; Thomas Bruce, *Southwest Virginia and Shenandoah Valley* (Richmond: J. L. Hill, 1891), 132. The term “Magic City” originally developed as a popular nickname for western railroad towns. See Shelton Stromquist, *A Generation of Boomers: The Pattern of Railroad Labor Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 143. The quotes are from *Manufacturers’ Record*, Dec. 15, 1888; *New York Herald*, June 15, 1890.

3. For a sample of work done on Appalachia’s extractive industries or company towns, see Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880–1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Crandall Shifflett, *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880–1960* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Ronald Lewis, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion*.

When explaining modernization in Appalachia, historians have generally focused their efforts on the region’s extractive industries and related developments, ignoring cities on the periphery like Roanoke. Those who have commented on Roanoke’s early development have typically done so in ways that seek to disconnect it from the region or downplay industry there. Ronald Eller, for example,

portrays Roanoke in the 1880s and 1890s as the booming industrial base of operations for an “assault” on the nearby mountains by northern capitalists (*Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 70). That the city was in Appalachia or that natives were responsible for much of its development has generally seemed less important to scholars than the fact that a few wealthy Philadelphians owned the Norfolk & Western Railroad. For Roanoke being in Appalachia, see Ann DeWitt Watts, “Cities and Their Place in Southern Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 8 (Winter 1981): 106–8; and Gordon B. McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865–1900: Politics and the Appalachian Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), xii.

4. Historians who have analyzed the Roanoke riot have done so primarily to determine its causes and impact. In the most comprehensive study, Ann Field Alexander argues that the city’s growing black population, incompetent police force, frontier ethos, and economic recession combined to foster the tragic response to the assault on Bishop. In the aftermath, Alexander contends, the violence and mayhem in Roanoke were the main factors behind the state’s dramatic turn toward preventing lynchings. See Ann Field Alexander, “‘Like an Evil Wind’: The Roanoke Riot of 1893 and the Lynching of Thomas Smith,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 100 (Apr. 1992): 173–206. Gordon B. McKinney, by contrast, claims that workers and formerly rural residents resented the rationalization and discipline efforts of the city’s new professionals and middle classes and that when the 1893 depression hit Roanoke, its lower classes reacted by blaming business leaders and civic authorities. He argues that such antiauthoritarianism combined with a raw, boomtown atmosphere, a large population of former “mountain men who accepted personal revenge as a routine practice,” and an atypical number of black residents for Appalachia made the riot almost inevitable. McKinney, however, also contends that such episodes of violence were not endemic to Appalachia, but were typical responses to modernization, industrialization, and loss of personal control. See McKinney, “Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia,” 131–41 (quote is from 140); and McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, 128–31. W. Fitzhugh Brundage notes similarly that the high incidence of lynching in Southwest Virginia, the region most sparsely populated with African Americans, “reflected the desperation of whites to define the status of blacks in a region where blacks were still uncommon and furious social and economic change was taking place.” Moreover, he points out, mob violence against blacks tended to occur in the region’s few towns and cities, where population growth, industrialization, and modernization were happening most rapidly. According to Brundage, the riot became a “clarion call for strong action against mob violence” and “a catalyst for widespread demands for the suppression of social disorder” throughout the remainder of the 1890s and the early twentieth century. See W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (Urbana: Uni-

versity of Illinois Press, 1993), 143, 145, 167–90 (quotes are from 143, 169, 172); and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Racial Violence, Lynchings, and Modernization in the Mountain South,” in *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 302–16.

5. Black migrants to Roanoke from 1883 to 1890 exceeded whites by almost 200 percent. For population statistics, see Town Council of Roanoke, “Census of the Town of Roanoke, December 1883,” vols. 1 and 2, Virginia Room, Roanoke City Public Library (hereafter VR-RCPL); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Report in Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890. Part 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1895), 483; and figures from *Sholes 1892 Roanoke City Directory* reprinted in the *Roanoke Times*, Oct. 20, 1892.

6. Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black and White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 58–59, 111–14; Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860–1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 261–62; Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 22–30, 46–57.

7. This was common in most southern cities at the time, according to Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South*, 262.

8. *Roanoke Daily Record*, June 24, 1893, VR-RCPL.

9. Jane Daily, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 98–111; Rabinowitz, *Race Relations*, 182–97, 333–39.

10. This was a common practice throughout the South, according to Rabinowitz, *Race Relations*, 43–44; see also Allison Dorsey, *To Build Our Lives Together: Community Formation in Black Atlanta, 1875–1906* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 149–50. For crime figures, see City of Roanoke, *Department Reports of the City of Roanoke for the Year Ending June 30, 1893* (Roanoke: Stone Printing and Mfg. Co., 1893), 24–26. For a black male population of 3,447 in 1892, see statistics in the *Roanoke Times*, Oct. 20, 1892.

11. Dorsey argues that it was the success of the local African American community in emulating Victorian ideals that fomented the 1906 Atlanta Riot. See her *To Build Our Lives Together*, 122–46.

12. Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 186–87.

13. David Goldfield, *From Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607–1980* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 94.

14. Raymond P. Barnes, *A History of Roanoke* (Radford, VA: Commonwealth Press, 1968), 244.

15. *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 10, 1892.

16. *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 11, 1892.

17. Identification is from *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 12, 1892; Lavender's police record is from *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 13, 1892.

18. *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 12, 1892.

19. *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 12, 1892.

20. *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 12, 13, 1892.

21. *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 19, 1892.

22. Information on the effects of the 1893 depression is from E. B. Jacobs, *History of Roanoke City and History of the Norfolk & Western* (Roanoke: Stone Printing and Mfg. Co., 1912), 153–55; E. F. Pat Striplin, *The Norfolk & Western: A History* (Forest, VA: Norfolk & Western Historical Society, 1997), 62–64. See the description of bank failures by James P. Woods in “Personal Biographical Sketches and Reminiscences of James Pleasant Woods,” reprinted in Roy H. Hipert Jr., “Col. James P. Woods, Lawyer, Congressman,” *Journal of the Roanoke Valley Historical Society* 11, no. 1 (1982): 32.

23. See an account of the Roanoke Machine Works Relief Association in *Roanoke Times*, Nov. 28, 1893; Barnes, *History of Roanoke*, 275, 278.

24. McKinney, “Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia,” 134–39. According to Joel Williamson, in the South, the depression also created confusion and anxiety among white men, who, unable to wholly fulfill their role as family providers, turned to protecting their wives and daughters from imagined black rapists. See his *Crucible of Race*, 115–17.

25. Roy Rosenzweig presents an argument for this point in his *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 93–102.

26. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 1, 1893.

27. *Roanoke Times*, “Extra Edition,” Sept. 5, 1893; for black ministers elsewhere in the South speaking out against the dangers of alcohol for the African American community, see Dorsey, *To Build Our Lives Together*, 154–58.

28. *Roanoke Times*, “Extra Edition,” Sept. 5, 1893, Mar. 10, 1894.

29. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 7, 8, 1893.

30. Accounts of Bishop's assault are available in *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 20, 1893, Norfolk & Western Scrapbook No. 18 (hereafter N&WS18), N&WRA; quotes are from *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893. For widespread rumors that Bishop had been murdered, see William C. Campbell, “Roanoke's Tragedies,” typed MS, n.d., William C. Campbell Papers, History Museum and Historical Society of Western Virginia (hereafter HMHSWV).

31. *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 20, 1893, N&WS18; *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893. In the 1890s, Baldwin, a native of Tazewell County, VA, teamed with Thomas Felts of Galax, VA, to create the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, which later became notorious for its participation in breaking up strikes at Virginia and West Virginia coalfields.

32. *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 20, 1893, N&WS18; quotes are from *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893.
33. For the chief being dismissed, see Roanoke City Council Minutes, Oct. 12, 1892, Clerk's Office, Roanoke Municipal Building; for problems with the force, see *Roanoke Times*, May 18, 24, June 10, 15, Oct. 7, 8, 1892.
34. See Trout's comments in Roanoke City Council Minutes, July 22, 1892; information on Terry and Griffin is from *Roanoke Times*, July 23, 1892.
35. For size of force, see *Roanoke Times*, July 8, 1892; for Griffin's observation, see Roanoke Police Pension Fund Association, in *History of the Roanoke Police Department* (Roanoke: Union Printing, 1916), 96.
36. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 166.
37. Hancock's account is from Jack W. Hancock, "Eyewitness Account of the Roanoke Riot of 1893," 1–2, typed MS (1893), HMHSWV; see also *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893. According to Hancock's "Clarification Notes" in the same file, he wrote his "Eyewitness Account" immediately following the Roanoke Riot of 1893.
38. Hancock, "Eyewitness Account," 3–4; *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893; *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18.
39. E. P. Tompkins, "Medical Annals of Roanoke," 18, typed MS (1922), VR-RCPL.
40. Campbell, "Roanoke's Tragedies."
41. Hancock, "Eyewitness Account," 4–5.
42. *Report of the Acting Adjutant General of the State of Virginia for the Year 1893* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1922), 63.
43. *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18.
44. Hancock, "Eyewitness Account," 4–5.
45. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893.
46. Tompkins, "Medical Annals," 18.
47. *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18.
48. *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18.
49. Campbell, "Roanoke's Tragedies."
50. Tompkins, "Medical Annals," 19; Hancock, "Eyewitness Account," 5.
51. *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18; *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 22, 26, 1893.
52. Hancock, "Eyewitness Account," 5; *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 23, 1893.
53. Tompkins, "Medical Annals," 20.
54. Campbell, "Roanoke's Tragedies."
55. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 24, 1893.
56. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893.
57. See testimony in *Roanoke Times*, Nov. 26, Dec. 11, 12, 17, 1893 (both quotes are from Dec. 17). George Gordon was later pardoned by the governor of

Virginia for assisting the police in their attempt to hide Smith. See *Roanoke Times*, Oct. 4, 1893.

58. *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18.

59. H. V. Lineback Photography Studio, Aftermath of Thomas Smith Lynching, Photograph (Sept. 21, 1893), HMHSWV. Commercial photographs and postcards of lynching scenes were both common and readily available in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See James Allen, ed., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000). Such photos, according to Allen, “played as significant a role in the ritual as torture and souvenir grabbing” and facilitated “the endless replay of anguish” (204–5). For a similar analysis and argument, see also Dora Apel, *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 1–46.

60. See Leon F. Litwack, “Hellhounds,” in Allen, *Without Sanctuary*, 10–11; Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 185–89.

61. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 22, 1893.

62. Campbell, “Roanoke’s Tragedies.” For another description of Campbell’s stand, see William McCauley, *History of Roanoke County, Salem, and Roanoke City, Va., and Representative Citizens* (Chicago: Bibliographical Publishing Co., 1902), 378–80; first quote is from *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 22, 1893; second quote is from *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18.

63. See story in *Roanoke Times*, June 24, 2008, on 1893 letter that describes Smith’s ashes being thrown in Trout’s yard.

64. *Lynchburg News*, Sept. 23, 1893, N&WS18.

65. City of Roanoke, “To the People of Roanoke! Sept 21st, 1893,” broadside in Hancock, “Eyewitness Account”; see also *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 21, 1893, N&WS18.

66. Sands’s address and information about the Masons and Odd Fellows are from *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 22, 1893, N&WS18; reaction of Confederate and Union veterans’ groups is noted in *New York World*, Sept. 28, 1893, N&WS18; their joint statement is available in part in an unidentified newspaper article on the Sept. 28, 1893, page of N&WS18.

67. “Headquarters of Vigilant Committee,” Roanoke, to Jack Hancock, City, Sept. 22, 1893, in Hancock, “Eyewitness Account.”

68. *Richmond Dispatch*, Sept. 24, 1894, N&WS18.

69. See coverage of the coroner’s jury in *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 22, 23, 1893, N&WS18; *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 23, 24, 26, 27, 1893. Both papers also referred to Walter Davis as Will Davis.

70. *Richmond Dispatch*, Sept. 24, 1893.

71. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 26, 1893.

72. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 168–69; first and second quotes are

from *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1893–1894* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1894), 45–46; third quote is from *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia for the Session of 1893–1894* (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1893), 52–54.

73. John Anderson Waits II, “Roanoke’s Tragedy: The Lynch Riot of 1893” (MA thesis, University of Virginia, 1972), 53. For a sample of newspaper coverage, see also *New York Herald*, Sept. 23, 1893, N&WS18; *Evening Post and Telegraph*, both reprinted in *Lynchburg News*, Sept. 23, 1893, N&WS18; *New York World*, Sept. 23, 1893, N&WS18; *Richmond Dispatch*, Sept. 24, 1893, N&WS18; *Richmond Planet*, Sept. 30, 1893; *Lynchburg News*, Sept. 24, 1893, N&WS18.

74. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 21, 1893; *Roanoke Daily Record*, Sept. 22, 1893, N&WS18.

75. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 28, 1893; Waits, “Roanoke’s Tragedy,” 49.

76. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 29, 1893.

77. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 29, 1893.

78. Ida B. Wells, *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States, 1892–1893–1894* (Chicago: Donohue and Henneberry, 1895), 48.

79. *Cleveland Gazette*, Oct. 14, 1893.

80. “Clarification Notes,” in Hancock, “Eyewitness Account.”

81. *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* (Oct. 1916): 300.

82. *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 30, 1893.

83. *Roanoke Times*, Oct. 24, 1893.

84. Roanoke City Council Minutes, Oct. 10, 1893; *Roanoke Times*, Oct. 11, 1893.

85. *Roanoke Times*, Nov. 16, 1893.

86. *Roanoke Times*, Nov. 18, 21, 22, 23, 1893.

87. *Roanoke Times*, Nov. 26, 1893.

88. *Roanoke Times*, Nov. 26, 1893.

89. Roanoke City Council Minutes, Dec. 12, 1893.

90. See coverage of trials in *Roanoke Evening World*, Dec. 11, 1893, Campbell Papers; *Roanoke Times*, Dec. 12, 17, 1893. For firing and demotion, see *Roanoke Times*, Dec. 13, 19, 1893.

91. See, e.g., *Roanoke Times*, Jan. 16, 1893, Feb. 8, 1894. For Virginia governor Charles T. O’Ferrall’s pardoning of Walter Davis, see *Roanoke Daily Times*, May 24, 1895.

92. *Roanoke Times*, Feb. 3, 11, 13, 1894.

93. See petition in *Roanoke Times*, Jan. 27, 1894.

94. *Roanoke Times*, Jan. 16, 1894.

95. There is no mention of the riot in the city’s first official history, published twenty years later. Indeed, its only reference to the riot appears in its biographical



section in a single sentence detailing Reverend William Campbell's stand against men who wanted to drag "a negro who had been lynched" through the streets. See Jacobs, *History of Roanoke City*, 171–72.

96. See, e.g., clippings from the riot in a scrapbook in the Campbell Papers and in "Valuable Clippings from the Roanoke Riot," another scrapbook compiled by an unidentified resident, located at HMHSWV. Lineback's photo of Smith's lynching is also available in "Valuable Clippings." Such folk preservation of lynchings was common. See Allen, *Without Sanctuary*; and Bruce E. Baker, "North Carolina Lynching Ballads," in *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 219–45. Although in the immediate aftermath many whites did what they could to preserve memories of the riot and lynching, in the century that followed, the events all but faded from local memory. There are no historical markers denoting the events of Sept. 20 and 21, 1893, nor do local museums include the events of that day in their general exhibits on the city's history. Such neglect, according to Bruce Baker, is common in the South, where whites tend to downplay or erase episodes of racial violence, and the African American community typically maintains those memories so as not to forget the longtime history of racial injustice. See his "Under the Rope: Lynching and Memory in Laurens County, South Carolina," in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 319–45. On the one hundredth anniversary of Smith's lynching, the local newspaper published an overview of the riot and in subsequent months followed up with related stories. See *Roanoke Times and World News*, Sept. 20, 1993, Jan. 18, 1994.

97. For details of the actual tree's demise and removal, see *Roanoke Times*, Oct. 18, 31, 1893; for persistence of the legend that it lived on, see *Roanoke Times*, Mar. 28, 2001.

98. *Roanoke Times*, Oct. 31, 1893.

99. *Roanoke Times*, Nov. 14, 1893.

100. Lyrics compiled from cross-reference of "The Roanoke Riot," ballad lyrics in the collection of Southwest Virginia Tragedy Ballads in the Blue Ridge Institute, Ferrum College, Ferrum, VA, and "The Roanoke Outrage," reprinted in *Roanoke Times and World News*, Jan. 18, 1994.

101. Baker, "Lynching Ballads," 221.

102. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 169, 282 (O'Ferrall quote is from 169).

103. For concerns about order over racial sympathy, see William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 61–70; Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press,

1983), 231. For the conservative nature of antilynching in Virginia, see Raymond H. Pulley, *Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 52–53; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 169–78.

104. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 169, 282 (O’Ferrall quote is from 169).

105. Wells, *Red Record*, 16–19.

106. William Larsen, *Montague of Virginia: The Making of a Southern Progressive* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 122.

## Chapter 10

# Assassins and Feudists

## Politics and Death in the Bluegrass and Mountains of Kentucky

*T. R. C. Hutton*

In February 1900, William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* printed a poem written by Ambrose Bierce, alluding to the recent shooting death of Kentucky's Democratic gubernatorial candidate William Goebel. It also proved alarmingly prophetic for another office-holder of the day.

The bullet that pierced Goebel's breast  
Can not be found in all the West;  
Good reason, it is speeding here  
To stretch McKinley on his bier.

When self-styled anarchist Leon Czolgosz killed President William McKinley nineteen months later, rumors flew that a clipping of Bierce's poem had been found in the assassin's pocket. Hearst had been McKinley's most flagrant journalistic detractor, and some interpreted the quatrain as a veiled threat, especially since William Goebel had apparently fallen to an assassination plot devised by Kentucky Republicans. Bierce swore that he had never intended for his stanzas to be taken as an attack on the president or his party, but that they were instead a warning of the dangers posed by the growing population of "foreign elements" who espoused the fearful philosophy of anarchism and its most publicized product, *assassination*.<sup>1</sup> The poem, Bierce insisted, was a warning of a clear and present—and foreign—danger, one that was most definitely new on the American scene. William Goebel, however, was probably killed by native-born Americans, and ones with politics decidedly less exotic than anarchism.

*Anarchist* was already a widely used epithet by the time of William

Goebel's death, and critics described him as such because of his Jacobin politics. After his death, the term was used to describe his murderers as well.<sup>2</sup> Assassination, a new method of violence no longer exclusive to Europe, was deemed the American Republic's greatest threat at the time of Bierce's writing, due to both its deadly, chaotic result and its origins among the throngs of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants.<sup>3</sup> But when it came to Kentucky, a section of the country fairly lacking in Serbs and Italians, the media had previously embraced another description of violence: *feud*.

By the end of the 1880s, as Altina Waller observed in her seminal article on the subject, *feud*, and all it entailed, had become discursively fastened to the Kentucky mountains—but with gross imprecision. Precisely speaking, a feud is a protracted, reciprocal conflict between groups or individuals or groups of the same social strata—a popular theme in nineteenth-century fiction.<sup>4</sup> By the turn of the century, *feud* had become pregnant with meaning far beyond its actual definition. Impromptu knife affrays, riots, and lynchings all were called feuds or symptoms of feuds without consideration of the nature of violence or the number of people involved.<sup>5</sup> The word monosyllabically conjured images of the occidental past (i.e., the Middle Ages) or societies that, from an Anglophone perspective, lived out the past while existing in the historical present (such as the Mediterranean island of Corsica). While *assassination* represented a new Industrial Age danger that had recently arrived with Europe's swarthy throngs, *feud* was vestigial, foreign in time but not in place and race, emerging bizarrely but familiarly from the foundations of Anglo-America. *Feud* reiterated Kentucky's not entirely undeserved reputation for violence, but its use led to continued misinterpretation of its causes.

For a time, the death of William Goebel was associated with *feud*. The Republican Party dominated most mountain counties, and for weeks before Goebel's murder hundreds of Republicans from Kentucky's mountains flooded Frankfort's streets protesting his claim to the governorship. "The mountain feuds," one Democratic paper wrote, "have been transferred to Frankfort at the instance of acting [Republican] Governor [William] Taylor."<sup>6</sup> Still, as defendants were tried and political mud slung for years afterward, the taint of *feud* and all it entailed drifted away from the memory of Goebel's assassination. *Feud* suggested a medieval antiquity far removed from the Gilded Age hustings. For Kentucky Democrats, there was too much to gain from Goebel's death for it to be relegated to some mythic, primordial past.

In 1903, *assassination* and *feud* were again mingled when Republican attorney James Marcum was murdered by a hidden gunman in the mountain boomtown of Jackson, the county seat of Breathitt County. Within days of Marcum's death, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* bemoaned the "cowardice" with which men had been murdered in the state's mountains. "It is by stealthy methods and implacable spirit that they intimidate whole communities, including the officers of the law and the courts of justice," the paper accused, "the result being that it is rare indeed, that one of these assassins and anarchists is brought to punishment."<sup>7</sup> The phrase "assassins and anarchists" accentuated the parallels between the killings of Goebel and Marcum. In the long run, however, Marcum's death was remembered less as a political assassination and more as the outcome of an ongoing feud. This was partly because he had died in the Kentucky mountains, and in the early twentieth century this was a reflexive media assumption. It was also because of a concerted effort to reframe the narrative of Marcum's death by Democratic county judge James Hargis, who wielded a considerable amount of influence in the party and had likely ordered Marcum's death. In this instance, unlike with Goebel, it was politically beneficial for the party to embrace *feud* as an explanation for violence.

This essay examines how impoverished, isolated Breathitt County in Kentucky's mountain region became central to the state's political enterprises or, more precisely, those of its Democratic Party, following the Goebel affair. As had been the case in the South since Reconstruction, violence was one of the party's primary tools for achieving regionwide dominance. In viciously dispatching challengers to their power, Breathitt County's Democratic leaders differed little from those elsewhere in the South. However, their decidedly political violence took on an apolitical visage thanks to the language used to describe it. The memory of the Marcum killing was indelibly associated with the loosely defined feud phenomenon that had plagued the region in past years. *Feud*, and all that it meant to Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, disguised the nature of Marcum's death, portraying it as the result of some strange, organic process native to the Kentucky mountains, rather than the calculated act of political expediency that it was.

Unlike most other southern states, where post-Reconstruction "redemption" virtually eliminated the Republican Party, Kentucky remained a "genuine" two-party state, albeit one with a consistent Democratic major-

ity for most of those years.<sup>8</sup> The 1890s was a decade of unprecedented triumphs for Kentucky Republicans, successes helped along by the Democratic Party's internal divisions at both the state and the national levels. The 1888 end of *viva voce* had stifled the power of Democratic county regimes all over the state, allowing Republicans to gain local offices via secret ballot.<sup>9</sup> Internal divisions over Free Silver lost votes to the Populist insurgency, especially in the western counties' black leaf tobacco belt, further weakening Kentucky Democrats.<sup>10</sup> As the party floundered, the Republican vote increased steadily over the course of the 1890s, resulting in the election of William O. Bradley, Kentucky's first Republican governor, in 1895.<sup>11</sup> The following year, Democrats bemoaned President-Elect William McKinley's narrow victory in the state's electoral college and the election of the state's first Republican U.S. senator.<sup>12</sup> With the onset of actual two-party competition in the state, eastern Kentucky, predominantly Republican since the Civil War, had become almost as politically vital as the always-predominant Bluegrass.

The loss of the governor's mansion was simply unacceptable to many Democrats, especially considering Governor William Bradley's attempts to maintain black political equality and his friendliness with the Louisville & Nashville (L&N) Railroad.<sup>13</sup> With hundreds of miles of track in Kentucky and other southern states, the L&N had promised to be an interstate "Railway Emperor," one that some Kentucky Democrats feared held too much influence over the state government (on the other hand, one of the state's most prominent Democrats, Basil Duke, was the railroad's public face).<sup>14</sup> This half-hearted concern resulted in unsuccessful Democratic calls for heightened railroad regulation.<sup>15</sup> Although Kentuckians had established a healthy two-party system by relatively honest and peaceful means, Democrats, envying the "Solid South" forming below them, sulkily refused to recognize Republican legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> "Republicanism," the *Louisville Courier-Journal* opined in 1888, "is simply an epidemic. Like Federalism, cholera, Know-Nothingism and yellow fever, when it has run its course, it will pass away."<sup>17</sup> Over the following decade, Kentucky Democrats remained doggedly unwilling to acknowledge their opponents' legitimacy in their state.

Distrust toward the L&N, coupled with ambitions of one-party rule, fueled the political career of one of the South's most unlikely political figures, Pennsylvania-born firebrand William Goebel. As the son of a German-born Union veteran, Goebel did not fit the mold of a Kentucky Democrat



Portrait of Governor William Goebel. Courtesy of the Kentucky Historical Society.

imagined by those who retained sympathy for the Lost Cause.<sup>18</sup> But his opposition to the L&N and acumen in dealing with more traditional courthouse Democrats increased his popularity during the 1890s.<sup>19</sup> Northern-born though he may have been, he was adept at the New South's emerging practice of "shooting on sight." In 1895, an armed Republican banker confronted Goebel for writing an unflattering article about him, to which Goebel swiftly responded with a bullet to the banker's head. Because both men were armed, many accounts of the shooting framed it as a traditional southern duel. However, neither the banker nor Goebel had planned for the encounter. More likely than not, Goebel dispatched his target before the banker had the time to shoot him, a scenario that hardly qualified as the traditional (and, by this time, sharply declining) white southern ritual.<sup>20</sup> Although Goebel was acquitted on grounds of self-defense, his public killing of a prominent financier was the first of many other controversies that would surround him. When banditry broke out in the Bluegrass to protest toll road fees and the fencing of hunting land, the young state senator expressed sympathy for the protestors, prompting conservative legislators of both parties to associate him with lawlessness.<sup>21</sup> Goebel became the most controversial political figure to emerge in Kentucky (at least since flamboy-

ant abolitionist Cassius M. Clay), upsetting conservative Democrats and producing fears among Republicans that a new era of demagoguery had arrived. In light of his salvos against the L&N and other corporations, even members of his own party condemned Goebel for turning their party over to "Anarchists, Socialists and Populists."<sup>22</sup>

But Goebel's call for railroad regulation, one echoed by many other southern politicians, paled in comparison to his brash foray into electoral reform. In 1895, Goebel (who was then state senate president pro tem) proposed a bill to centralize the management of elections, a measure that would have theoretically strengthened Democrats. Republicans considered the bill a disenfranchisement measure every bit as egregious as other states' poll taxes, but the bill passed over Governor Bradley's veto.<sup>23</sup> While this so-called Goebel Election Law increased the General Assembly's ability to manipulate elections, it in turn diminished the authority of local courts.<sup>24</sup> By 1898, Goebel, riding upon an angry minority's support, had alienated the majority on his left and right flanks. Nonetheless, his political capital never sank so low as to prevent him from running for governor.

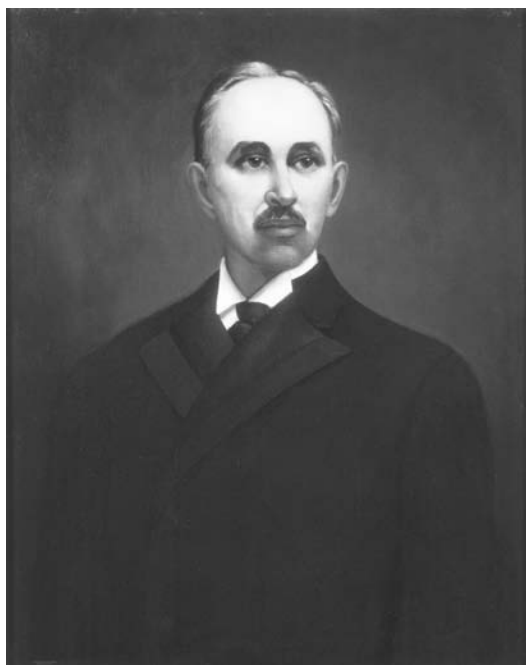
Goebel's nomination as Democratic gubernatorial candidate in 1899 was widely attributed to the selection of his former Senate bench mate, "ardent Democrat of the Jeffersonian school," and citizen of Breathitt County, Circuit Judge David B. Redwine, as convention chair.<sup>25</sup> Redwine was a former state senator and minor luminary from one of the few Democratic counties in eastern Kentucky. Judge Redwine's residency brought with it a certain amount of pariah status. Anyone outside of Kentucky who had heard of Breathitt County since the 1870s associated it with nothing more than irrational violence and depravity and its centrality within the state's "feud belt."<sup>26</sup> Over the following years, Redwine's "Bloody Breathitt" origins obscured all other details of his role in Goebel's ascendancy.<sup>27</sup> But the selection of an obscure circuit court judge from an isolated, notorious county proved masterful. A dark horse of the mountains, Redwine had fewer relationships with powerful Democrats and, as such, was less in their thrall. More important, he served as judge in a circuit district that rarely elected Democrats.<sup>28</sup> The selection of a mountaineer diminished the possibility of sectional prejudice being thrown against Goebel. It was also fancifully suggested that a convention chair from "Bloody Breathitt" was the only selection intrepid enough to stare down a hostile convention hall.

With a Republican in the governor's mansion, thanks largely to votes from other mountain counties, Breathitt County's political stock had risen



considerably. By 1899, Redwine had allied with merchants James “Big Jim” Hargis and Edward Callahan, both of whom shared his desire to maintain the Democratic Party’s continuing dominance in Breathitt County.<sup>29</sup> After attaching himself to Goebel’s rising star, Hargis became the first Breathitt County resident appointed to his party’s state central committee, a position that gave him patronage privileges over his entire congressional district and a voice in the party’s highest statewide echelons.<sup>30</sup> Callahan, with fewer connections outside of eastern Kentucky, acted as majority whip within the county.<sup>31</sup>

With or without his home county’s reputation, Judge Redwine brought Louisville’s infamous June 1899 “Music Hall Convention” under control.<sup>32</sup> The convention was nationally known as a conflagration of river-town dregs brought to act as conventioners. Redwine managed to maintain the convention in the direction of a Goebel nomination (despite physical threats from hostile delegates) by insisting on a dizzying flurry of roll-call votes and refusing to adjourn until Goebel’s other conventioners could negotiate a firm majority. A disgruntled Republican recalled: “He apparently desired the world to surrender on its knees. Parliamentary usages formed no part of his code. He was not there for the convention to direct, but to direct the convention. There was but one man he obeyed, but one man he served, and that man was William Goebel. He served with all the fidelity with which a slave serves his master.”<sup>33</sup> Redwine was game enough to remain onstage during some angry delegates’ impromptu rendition of “We’ll Hang Jeff Davis from a Sour Apple Tree,” with his own name substituted for Davis’s.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the proceedings, James Hargis worked behind the scenes as “one of the main manipulators,” quietly cajoling delegates and supposedly threatening Redwine with bodily harm when he finally considered leaving the lectern.<sup>35</sup> After he was nominated on the twenty-sixth ballot, Goebel coyly disregarded Redwine’s role at the convention, even when visiting Democratic strongholds like Breathitt County. “I want to know if Judge Redwine really was for me,” he announced at a whistle stop in Jackson. “They say he was but I want to know.”<sup>36</sup> While campaigning, Goebel continued to demonize the L&N and went so far as to suggest that any other candidacy represented the railroad’s executive domination. Goebel scarcely mentioned his Republican opponent, Attorney General William S. Taylor, by name during his fiery speeches.<sup>37</sup> By 1899, even anti-Goebel Democrats favored railroad regulation or at least favored ending the L&N’s undue influence.<sup>38</sup> But his election bill, by far his most outrageous legacy, was con-



Portrait of Governor  
William S. Taylor.  
Courtesy of the Kentucky  
Historical Society.

siderably more complex and problematic than his attacks on the railroad. The Democratic Party in Kentucky remained fragmented for the remainder of Goebel's life.

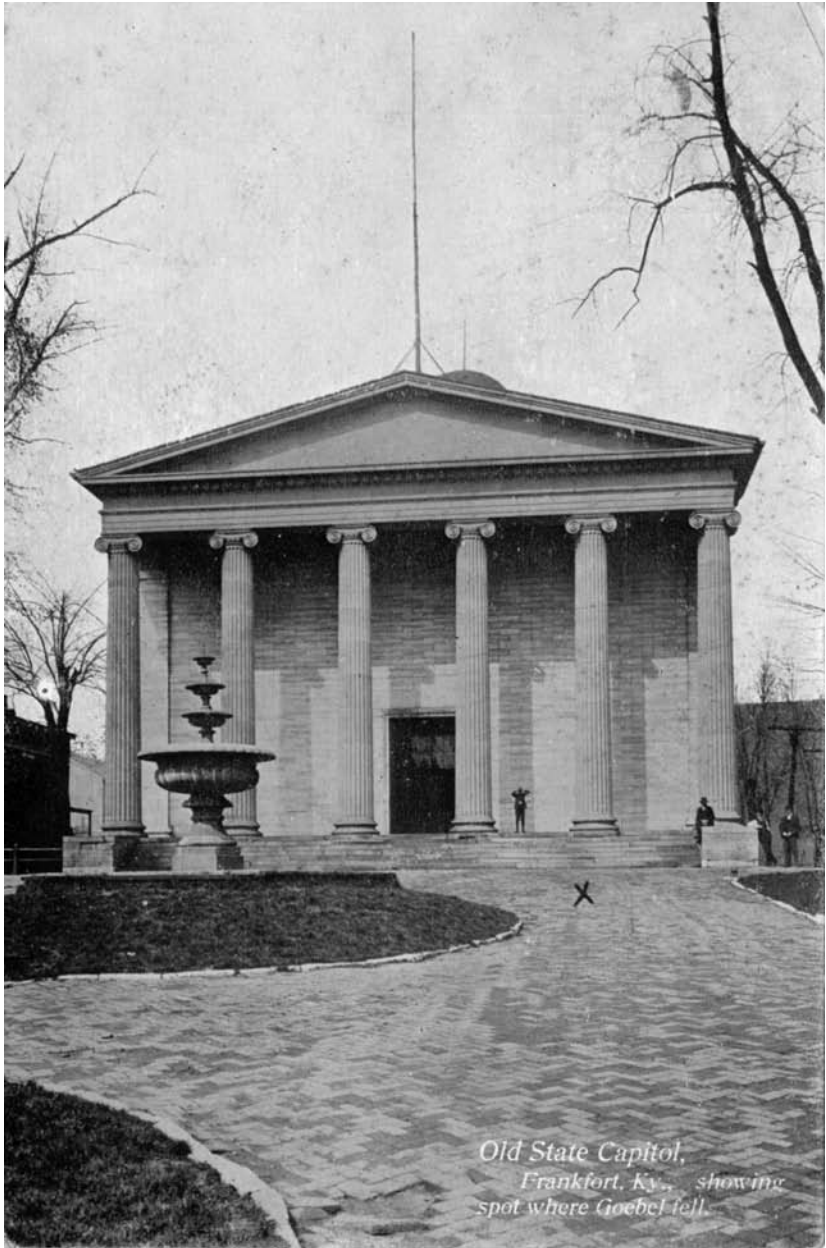
Even as Goebel styled himself an anticorruption leveler, Hargis and Callahan assured his success in Breathitt County with a heavy hand.<sup>39</sup> Callahan hired men to guard the ballot boxes in the county's most heavily Republican precinct and threatened Republican election inspectors with physical harm during the November polling. When election inspectors held the final count in Jackson's courthouse, an armed gang of "Goebel desperadoes" entered and fired pistols in the air, driving all of the Republicans from the room and securing the ballot box. According to the state Republican campaign chair, this act of intimidation secured an additional four hundred votes for Goebel. Even in the precincts where Republican inspectors remained, all Democrats voted for Goebel. Due to both specially configured heavy-paper ballots and "bulldozing never seen in Breathitt County before," Goebel won the county with 756 votes.<sup>40</sup>

Even with the endorsements of William Jennings Bryan and the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Goebel's lack of support within his own party (as well

as the persistence of the Populists who pilloried his election law) ended in his apparent narrow defeat.<sup>41</sup> For their part, Republicans capitalized on Democratic furor over Goebel and concentrated solely on state issues (this at a time when Republicans elsewhere were winning elections by touting issues of national and international reach). The review board created by Goebel's own notorious election bill surprised everyone by ruling in William Taylor's favor.<sup>42</sup> Although Goebel initially conceded defeat, Democrats decried the Republican ticket and the L&N for corrupting the election by using fraudulent ballots and intimidating railroad workers at the polls.<sup>43</sup>

Inigorated by this support, and vindicated by blatant L&N activism, Goebel rescinded his concession and returned to the General Assembly in January with accusations against the election returns from more than a third of the state's counties. The General Assembly's Democratic majority selected a committee made up of nine fellow party members (including James Hargis), one Republican, and one Populist to review the evidence of fraud.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, armed Democrats patrolled the streets of Frankfort in anticipation of a Republican attempt to confound the review process. Republicans responded by summoning more than one thousand militiamen from the eastern "Whig Gibraltar" counties (the L&N openly volunteered its rolling stock to transport the armed Republicans from the foothill and mountain counties without charge).<sup>45</sup> As members of both parties awaited the committee's findings, pro-Goebel and anti-Goebel Democrats united to protest the latter group's presence, while Republicans defended the freedom-loving mountaineers as a peaceful assembly gathered to "protect their liberties."<sup>46</sup> Throughout January 1900, both sides appeared to be preparing for a miniature civil war.

On the morning of January 30, a hidden rifleman shot Goebel as he walked by the state house to the senate chamber with two Democratic companions. Later that day, probably unaware that Goebel was mortally wounded, the committee announced a party-line decision that Goebel had received the largest number of votes (but without giving the exact numbers of the returns). Viewing this decree as an act of sedition, Governor Taylor dismissed the General Assembly with instructions to reassemble in the "bloody eleventh" congressional district's Laurel County, the point of origin for many of the Republican militiamen.<sup>47</sup> Republican legislators quickly complied, while their opponents gathered in the hotel where Goebel lay dying in order to ratify the election committee's decision. While succumbing to a fatal case of pneumonia, Goebel twice took the oath of office from two friendly Demo-



*Old State Capitol,  
Frankfort, Ky., showing  
spot where Goebel fell.*

Old State Capitol, Frankfort, Kentucky. The mark indicates where Goebel fell. Newton Owen Postcard Collection, University Archives and Records Center, University of Louisville.

cratic judges.<sup>48</sup> Even as Governor Taylor presided over a reassembled General Assembly in the Kentucky mountains, Democrats declared his recumbent opponent the state's thirty-fourth governor.

Goebel's death three days later failed to alleviate tensions between the two parties. Many Democrats remained convinced that Governor-Elect Taylor had directed Goebel's assassination. After sixteen initial indictments, eastern Kentucky native Caleb Powers, Republican secretary of state and the primary assembler of the mountain militiamen, was convicted for planning Goebel's murder.<sup>49</sup> Taylor fled late in 1900 to Indiana, where the Republican-dominated government refused to extradite him back across the Ohio River. Although a jury "made up entirely of Democrats" sentenced him to life imprisonment, Powers's ensuing appeals triggered years of politically charged trials that resulted in the eventual pardoning of Taylor and two other men implemented in the assassination.<sup>50</sup> Following a long series of court battles, J. C. W. Beckham, Goebel's running mate for lieutenant governor, became governor.<sup>51</sup> Kentucky's Democrats would glorify the name "Goebel" for nearly a decade after his assassination. When Beckham ran for reelection in 1903, even Democrats who had once hated Goebel conjured up his "martyrdom" for the party.<sup>52</sup>

One of the foremost Kentucky historians of recent decades characterized the Goebel campaign as the "breaking down" of "old political lines" that had existed since 1865.<sup>53</sup> This may have been true, if only by happenstance. Goebel's later categorization as a populist and progressive ran counter to his reliance upon the machine tactics of Kentucky's many undemocratic courthouse rings like Breathitt's. While he attempted to make clear who Kentuckians' economic enemies were, he never developed a critique of the state's political process. His inability to negotiate differing strains within his own party prevented his higher goals while highlighting his baser methods. His expressed plans to punish the forces of monopoly proved to be in vain; Goebel's successor and protégé, Governor Beckham, became a firm friend of the L&N.

The Goebel campaign's most lasting outcome was the revelation of eastern Kentucky's paradoxical role in the state's political process. Goebel's Democratic nomination had been initiated by Kentucky mountaineers, and (apparently) his life had ceased because of them as well. There was little doubt that the successes, failures, and eventual tragedy experienced by William Goebel in his doomed campaign for governor could all be traced either

to his Breathitt County supporters, Hargis, Redwine, and Callahan, or to “the roughest [Republican] crowd ever gotten together in the mountains.”<sup>54</sup>

In return, the Goebel legacy was long-lasting in Breathitt County. Riding upon their ascendancy, brought by the Goebel campaign, James Hargis and Edward Callahan were elected county judge and sheriff respectively, cementing their hold on Breathitt County’s government and the local Democratic Party. Their connections to William Goebel, and the fraudulent methods by which they had secured his victory in the county, however, dictated that a perpetual air of controversy followed them both. Breathitt stood out as the most overtly forceful example of what the Republican *New York Times* vaguely labeled “the Goebel methods.”<sup>55</sup> Long known for its singular record of violence, it had become simply another piece of evidence for the crisis of governmental legitimacy suffered throughout the entire state. After he had won the sheriff’s office by a mere sixteen votes in a 1901 election, Callahan’s opponent contested the outcome, prompting Judge Redwine to declare the election void.<sup>56</sup> In his capacity as county judge, James Hargis then appointed Callahan as acting sheriff until a new election could be held, creating an uproar in both parties. Republicans challenged Callahan’s right to the office, but Kentucky’s State Court of Appeals sustained Hargis’s and Redwine’s decisions in 1903. By that time, Callahan had already served as sheriff for nearly two years, hardening control over the county.<sup>57</sup> Having direct or indirect influence over “at least one-half the business interest of Breathitt county,” as well as the courthouse, Hargis and Callahan then possessed “entire control of the juries of Breathitt county, and [could] convict or acquit a person charged with crime at their pleasure.”<sup>58</sup> Democrats indicted in federal and state criminal cases remained free and appeared in court at their leisure.<sup>59</sup> When a former Democratic county judge released an anti-Hargis circular in 1902, he could only disingenuously accuse Hargis of supporting Republican candidates for the past two decades, charges that Hargis easily dismissed by invoking the names of Goebel and William Jennings Bryan.<sup>60</sup> The two politicians had formed a local one-party dominance similar to those forming all over the South.

And as in other states, fusionism was the disfranchised minority’s response.<sup>61</sup> Republican attorney James B. Marcum and Jim Cockrell, Jackson’s Democratic town marshal, began a bipartisan reform effort against the courthouse ring.<sup>62</sup> In 1901, Marcum had been his party’s inspector in one precinct during the 1899 gubernatorial election before “Hargis-Callahan

Goebelites” forcibly locked him out of the room containing the ballot box (he had also represented Callahan’s opponent in the election for sheriff the following year).<sup>63</sup> Marcum was the nephew of the late William Strong, a pugnacious Union partisan during the Civil War who, till his mysterious assassination in 1897, had refused to accept the continuance of Democratic/Confederate dominance in Breathitt County.<sup>64</sup> Following his uncle’s death in 1897, Marcum rose through Kentucky’s Republican ranks and by 1903 had become state party chair. Short years earlier, Breathitt County was a sparsely populated backwater that most of the rest of the state could afford to ignore. When James Marcum challenged Hargis’s newly formed courthouse ring, however, it was the beginning of a fight between two of the most influential power brokers in Kentucky.

In early 1902, Hargis, Callahan, Marcum, and Marcum’s law partner, O. H. Pollard, met in Marcum’s law office to take depositions for the fusionists’ upcoming contestation of Callahan’s election. To complicate matters, Hargis and Callahan had requested Pollard’s services as their faction’s attorney, and despite the obvious conflict of interest involved, Pollard had accepted. Unsurprisingly, this led to a quarrel during the meeting, and before cooler heads prevailed, four pistols were drawn. After Marcum demanded that the other three leave his office, charges were filed against Marcum and Hargis (but apparently not Pollard and Callahan). In order to allay any future confrontations, Marcum paid his own fine and asked the police judge to dismiss the case against Hargis, but not before Jim Cockrell and his brother Tom (whom he had enlisted as deputy marshal) served warrants to Hargis in the courthouse, leading to another incidence of unholstered pistols. Again, no shots were fired.<sup>65</sup> A few weeks later, Tom Cockrell confronted Hargis’s younger brother Ben in an illegal tavern, resulting in a gunfight that left both of them seriously wounded. Cockrell was taken to the home of his “guardian” (the Cockrells were both orphaned young men in their twenties), Dr. Braxton D. Cox, and recovered shortly thereafter. Ben Hargis was not as fortunate. He died in his brother’s home the following day.<sup>66</sup>

Within its time and place, Ben Hargis’s death was not unusual. As in other parts of the South, violence had been common in Breathitt County for decades, often fueled by readily available supplies of whiskey.<sup>67</sup> However, by way of his home county’s prior reputation and Judge Hargis’s ability to use that reputation to his own end, Ben Hargis’s violent demise was made to appear as a recent episode in an ongoing feud between families. Six years

earlier, railroad detective Jerry Cardwell shot and killed James and Ben Hargis's other brother, John, who had become unruly on a passenger train car en route to Jackson. Cardwell was convicted of manslaughter, but received a pardon from Republican governor William Bradley soon thereafter.<sup>68</sup> Cardwell's brother was the police judge before whom Hargis had refused to appear earlier in the year, while Dr. Cox, the Cockrells' guardian, was married to Cardwell's sister.

In 1902, Judge Hargis used these familial connections and his brother John's death to his political advantage. Angered by his other brother's more recent death at the hands of the brother of a political enemy, he portrayed the shooting as part of a longer history of personally motivated violence. By placing the killing within the larger narrative of a "family feud," Hargis could claim victimhood and preemptively justify future retaliations. Although Cardwell's shooting of John Hargis in 1896 had no connection to later events, Bluegrass Kentuckians and other Americans, already believing that the region was a land of violence and lawlessness, readily accepted Hargis's characterization of the murders, one that overlooked the political motives that drove Breathitt County residents to commit violence.<sup>69</sup> In this manner, even if Judge Hargis was later found culpable for violent wrongdoing, his actions could be excused as those of an uncouth mountaineer following a bloody hidebound tradition or, perhaps, a sort of familial-honor-based self-defense that might draw sympathy from tradition-minded Kentuckians.<sup>70</sup> Most important, the "feud" invocation encouraged observers to interpret any future deaths in Breathitt County as part of a reciprocal, mutual fight between equals, not the oppressive force of a political elite.<sup>71</sup> Thus began the "Hargis-Cockrell feud" and decades of requisite misinformation in Kentucky newspapers and the national press.<sup>72</sup>

The subsequent murders of Dr. Braxton Cox and James Cockrell seemed to further confirm the widespread misconception that a "feud" continued to plague Breathitt County.<sup>73</sup> On the night of April 13, 1902, Cox was riddled with buckshot as he walked home from a house call. That July, James Cockrell met a similar fate, shot and killed within yards of Cox's place of death.<sup>74</sup> Cockrell's murder attracted far more statewide attention than his guardian's because he had been shot from the upper window of the courthouse in the middle of the day.<sup>75</sup> Even before his expiration from internal bleeding, the press had already placed his impending death within a feud narrative that swapped facts for conformity to a prearranged plot. According to the Republican *Lexington Leader*, the young town marshal was





Sketch of Judge James Hargis.  
*Louisville Courier-Journal*,  
 May 1903.

the latest victim of the “Breathitt County feuds.” The evening edition of the newspaper fumbled key facts, particularly the familial relationship between Ben Hargis and Judge Hargis (calling them father and son and then brothers at different places in the article), foreshadowing future media errors that always kept the details of Breathitt County’s violence obscured, seemingly unexplainable, and from a distant past.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, as in past interpretations of feud violence in eastern Kentucky, Cockrell’s death was headlined as only “Another Dark Chapter Added to Bloody Breathitt’s Terrible Record that Savors of Middle Age Barbarism.”<sup>77</sup> Authorities were slow in finding suspects in either killing, and the declaration of “feud” helped obfuscate matters. Wolfe County’s *Hazel Green Herald*, one of the only Democratic papers in the Kentucky mountains, insisted that Breathitt County residents were having “a hell of their own” and that “people outside the immediate trouble do not know the cause of any of the parties involved, save as retailed to them, and are apt, therefore, to misjudge.” The *Herald* assured readers that the troubles were strictly part of a “family affair.”<sup>78</sup> Hargis’s plan was working.

No doubt through the encouragement of the *Herald* and other papers, many Kentuckians were happy to think of these homicides as strictly localized occurrences with no broader significance, feud related or otherwise. But Republicans were not as willing to accept the conflict's singular peculiarity, either to Breathitt County alone or to the mountains at large. After James Marcum alerted the newspaper that he had received death threats, the Republican *Lexington Leader* launched a prolonged attack on Hargis and Callahan in the fall of 1902. The *Leader* accepted Marcum's claims, which were also reprinted in other state Republican newspapers, whole cloth.<sup>79</sup> Marcum produced an affidavit signed by one of his clients in a criminal case, claiming that the judge and sheriff had offered him money to kill Marcum. Above all, Marcum made it clear that, though he had been threatened, he was not part of a feud.<sup>80</sup>

Hargis and Callahan responded by calling Marcum a liar. Hargis cited his own record of shutting down illegal whiskey sales as evidence for his county's lack of troubles.<sup>81</sup> Callahan was more candid, acknowledging that Marcum might have had reason to be alarmed due to the recent murder of "two prominent men" in Jackson.<sup>82</sup> Unmoved, Marcum scoffed at Hargis's and Callahan's claims of innocence, announcing that two of Callahan's deputies, Curtis Jett and Tom White, had conspired to kill him.<sup>83</sup> Marcum then condemned the state's Democratic apparatus for protecting Breathitt County's courthouse ring. "[Hargis and Callahan] have men employed, newspaper correspondents, to misrepresent the facts," Marcum asserted, "and Hargis is now trying to arouse political prejudices in order to secure the sympathy of the Democratic press. There is no politics in the law. It was made for all parties and should be obeyed by all, even the 'leading Democrats in Eastern Kentucky.'"<sup>84</sup> Outraged, Hargis directed Breathitt County's grand jury to indict Marcum for criminal libel, temporarily stifling any further public accusations (the charges were eventually dismissed).<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, Marcum had succeeded, at least for the time being, in publicly associating party politics with the recent murders of his allies. Not only were Hargis and Callahan implicated, but Hargis's "feud" explanation for recent deaths had been challenged.

In May 1903, an unknown gunman shot and killed James Marcum in a manner almost identical to the previous year's murders, again within sight of the courthouse (this time in its doorway) and yards away from where Cox and Cockrell fell.<sup>86</sup> By dying violently after publicly announcing threats against his life, and implicating the courthouse ring, Marcum almost suc-

ceeded in his goal of exposing the corruption of Breathitt County's government. Circumstantially, it would have indicted the Hargis courthouse immediately—if only his and the previous deaths had not already fallen under the feud rubric. The most widely publicized “feudal” death to occur in Kentucky since the 1880s, Marcum's murder reinforced Breathitt's pre-existent violent reputation. The *Louisville Courier-Journal*, for instance, argued that Marcum was the latest casualty in the Hargis-Cockrell feud:

The feud which took Mr. Marcum's life has caused, it is said, no less than forty deaths in the last two years. This would be an astounding statement to anyone who was a stranger to these mountain vendettas. But this is only one of many similar feuds which have disgraced the State and will continue to disgrace it until the State shows a more resolute purpose and power to uphold the law.

These feuds have too often been looked upon as romantic episodes of primitive life in our backwoods. That is entirely too charitable a view to take of them. There is nothing romantic or manly about them. Originating in some trivial quarrel, they continue for generations of cowardice, treachery and assassination. The murders which are their outcome are not even committed man to man, in the open, but almost invariably are perpetrated after patient lying-in-wait and ambush extending over months and years.<sup>87</sup>

Like the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, other Kentucky newspapers, mostly Democratic, portrayed the Breathitt County killings as the product of extrapolitical “lawlessness.”<sup>88</sup> Well aware of the ever-present danger of libel charges, these newspapers interpreted Breathitt County's violence as a sin of the local authorities' omission rather than as violence directed with political certainty. In fact, after having initially accepting Hargis's “feud” scenario, the *Lexington Leader* was the only Kentucky newspaper that examined the killings of 1902 through a political lens.<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, Hargis continued to cast the death of James Cockrell within a larger feud narrative that acknowledged enmity between his family (but not necessarily himself) and the Cockrells. Although Hargis admitted that Marcum was one of a number of “Republican leaders” who had “endeavored to run [Hargis] out of the county,” he insisted that the recent outbreak of violence had been sparked by old, bitter familial disputes, not current political matters. According to Hargis, Marcum's uncle William



“A Republican Preserver of the Peace at Frankfort.”  
*Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 27, 1900.

Strong had raided his family’s farm and left him hungry and shoeless during the Civil War.<sup>90</sup> Marcum, he continued, had been “reared in an atmosphere of feuds.” In a condemnation that doubtlessly referred to Marcum’s notorious relative, Hargis concluded that there was “not a *family* in Breathitt county some one of whose members has not been slain by Marcum *blood*.”<sup>91</sup> *Feud*, it seemed, could have political associations so long as they rebuked the past while allowing the present to remain benign. The small number of Democratic papers that glibly decried the crimes of Breathitt without specifically placing blame often did so by comparing Marcum’s death to that of William Goebel.<sup>92</sup>

After Marcum's death, the only person in Breathitt County willing to publicly suggest a courthouse-ring conspiracy was his widow, Abrelia Hurst Marcum. Although many men in the community probably knew the identities of Marcum's (and Cox's and Cockrell's) killer(s), most of them remained silent out of fear. But as a woman and mother, Abrelia Marcum represented to the men of Breathitt County home and family, communal institutions that the county's decades-old cycle of violence had not violated. James Marcum's tactic of shielding himself with women and children in the weeks before his assassination demonstrated the reverence with which local residents regarded the "domestic sphere." Even the most ruthless men kept violence, especially politically motivated violence, as far from women as possible.<sup>93</sup>

As such, the widow Marcum felt free to denounce Hargis and his political allies. Publicly, she not only charged Hargis's "clan" with her husband's homicide but also accused "the administration of Judge Hargis" of promoting such lawlessness and refusing to prosecute those who committed it.<sup>94</sup> Breathitt County residents tolerated violence, she concluded, not because of some unnamable force that kept the feud tradition alive in "Bloody Breathitt," but because Hargis and other community leaders sanctioned it. Within the boundaries of the county, no one other than Abrelia Marcum was willing to announce this to the world even though many knew it to be true.

Mrs. Marcum's accusations did little to weaken the courthouse ring, even as Governor Beckham became involved. Soon after Beckham offered a two-hundred-dollar reward for the capture of James Marcum's murderer, local authorities arrested Deputy Sheriff Curtis Jett (soon after, fellow deputy Tom White was indicted as well). Jett refused to implicate his superiors in the crime.<sup>95</sup> His role as an agent of the courthouse was not forgotten, but the rumor that he and James Marcum had "quarreled" publicly shortly before the latter's death emphasized personal enmity over political calculation.<sup>96</sup> Fearing that Jett's trial would incite further violence, Governor Beckham issued an executive order sending the state militia to Jackson.<sup>97</sup> During the trial, however, Beckham announced that the "situation" in Jackson had "been exaggerated" and refused to deploy additional militiamen to the town.<sup>98</sup> Before long, however, the county's ill fame was used against Beckham as personal connections between himself and the Hargis courthouse were insinuated in Kentucky and elsewhere. Beckham shrewdly acted as if these innuendos were not directed toward him but toward the

entire state, reframing the issue as a sectional one. He ignored most complaints from Kentucky Republicans while instead addressing the small number of jeers from northern newspapers. The governor parried with northern critics over the quantity of violence in his state as a whole, which he contended was not on scale with much of the North. "The calling into service of the entire national guard of one of the northern states to suppress a strike, where hundreds may be slain, does not attract one-half the notice as does the use of one company of Kentucky militia in aiding some Circuit court in trial of a criminal," he explained.<sup>99</sup> At the official opening of the Democratic state campaign, he declared: "That the Democratic officials have done everything in their power to put an end to the troubles in Breathitt County no one disputes. They were purely local, and not half as serious as the feudal outbreak in Clay County [a Republican-dominated mountain county] during the last [Bradley] administration." Like his party's press, Beckham could not resist exhuming his slain predecessor as proof of Republican hypocrisy: "If the Republicans had shown the same desire to punish the assassins of William Goebel that the Democrats did to punish Marcum's assassins, both crimes would now be avenged. Let the past be forgotten, and let us stand together henceforth shoulder to shoulder as Democrats, with our hearts full of devotion for the welfare of our State and Nation."<sup>100</sup>

Beckham's reelection victory the following November showed that sacrificing the reputation of eastern Kentucky was an effective Democratic tool. In January 1904, Beckham repeated these claims in his annual address but, safely back in office, used language that restored the highlands back to the state at large while repeating his earlier critique of the North's urban crime. "Irresponsible romances" had inflated Breathitt County's conditions, Beckham argued. "It is not an exaggeration to say that there was not a day during the past year that human life was not safe in Kentucky, even in Breathitt County, than it is any night upon the streets of Chicago or New York, from the sanguinary columns of whose voracious journals the people have been told day after day of the awful condition of lawlessness and crime in Kentucky."<sup>101</sup> Beckham's address to his party had multiple implications. Even many Democrats remained unconvinced that the Breathitt County killings were rooted solely in local conflicts. Breathitt County's violence had to be, as had always been the case in other eastern locales (especially those under Republican control), purely internal and without any greater significance. In addition, his reference to an analogous "feud" situ-

ation in a Republican county during a Republican administration negated whatever attempts Republicans might make to pillory his party for sanctioning violence.

For his own part, Hargis's position in the state Democratic organization remained largely untarnished throughout Jett's and White's trial. Hargis retained his seat in the central committee, and shortly after Jett's and White's change of venue to another county, Lexington Democrats honored him with a dinner.<sup>102</sup> But it was the 1904 passage of the "Day Law," one of the most far-reaching pieces of Jim Crow legislation in American history, that confirmed Hargis's restored position in the Kentucky Democratic Party.<sup>103</sup> That January, Breathitt County's state representative Carl Day proposed a bill to effectively prohibit integrated educational facilities for all private institutions (Kentucky's public education system was constitutionally segregated) in an attempt to segregate Berea College, one of the few remaining biracial schools south of the Ohio River.<sup>104</sup> Judges Hargis and Redwine attended the state house's educational committee closed session (representatives from Berea College were excluded) to express their support, as well as that of their "section." Although Judge Hargis's name had become synonymous with "feudism" the previous year, the press portrayed his presence at the capitol as neither peculiar nor deleterious to the bill's potential passage.<sup>105</sup> State legislators voted overwhelmingly in favor of the bill, and it became law that March.<sup>106</sup> If any Kentucky Democrats believed that Hargis and his cronies were behind the murder two years ago, they were willing to overlook it in the interest of segregation.<sup>107</sup>

Angry that the new law would force its hometown institution to segregate against its will, the Republican *Berea Citizen* grouched that the General Assembly intended to next form a new mountain judicial district "for the sake of enthroning the famous Judge Hargis."<sup>108</sup> Four days later, as the *Citizen* had predicted, state legislators passed a redistricting that made Breathitt part of a theoretically Democrat-majority district.<sup>109</sup> Within Breathitt County, Sheriff Callahan's continuing popularity was reaffirmed as well. Praised for his "executive ability and services to the party," he was unanimously renominated as chair of Breathitt County's Democratic central committee the following November.<sup>110</sup> No Kentucky Democrats, within Breathitt County or beyond, considered the two men liabilities.

The Democratic establishment's loyalty to Hargis protected the judge from many things, but litigation was not one of them. Soon after Hargis's Frankfort appearance, Abrelia Marcum sued Hargis, Callahan, and two

others for one hundred thousand dollars.<sup>111</sup> Hargis delayed proceedings by arguing for the dismissal of the civil suit due to an “existing and continued state of hostile feeling” between himself and the scheduled judge, but to no avail. He and Callahan were eventually found to be culpable for James Marcum’s death and ordered to pay the widow eight thousand dollars in damages.<sup>112</sup> This wrongful-death suit was the beginning of the end for Hargis and his courthouse cabal. Although its immediate success was limited, Marcum’s civil suit brought the details of the Jackson killings in 1902 and 1903 directly to the Bluegrass audience, and Breathitt County’s most powerful men soon found themselves defendants in a short series of criminal trials. In the winter of 1905, Hargis, Callahan, and a number of confederates were indicted in Lexington for Jim Cockrell’s murder, on the grounds that he had died within its judicial jurisdiction.<sup>113</sup> But the criminal trial for Cockrell’s murder, as well as those for Cox’s and Marcum’s murders that followed shortly thereafter, failed to prove the guilt of either Hargis or his compatriots. Against seemingly overwhelming evidence, Hargis managed a hung jury and then an acquittal for the Cockrell murder by challenging Fayette County’s right to try him for a crime committed in another county.<sup>114</sup> Hargis’s trial in Lee County for the Marcum murder also ended with the judge’s acquittal, much to the dismay of prosecutors. After signing an affidavit implicating Hargis and Callahan, Curtis Jett unexpectedly refused to testify. Instead, Jett attributed his actions to drunkenness and swore to the jury (said to be packed with Democrats) that Marcum had been his personal “bitter enemy,” a testimony that fit neatly into the general conception of “feud” behavior that trumped the notion of political conspiracy.<sup>115</sup> Later that week, Hargis and Callahan were acquitted.<sup>116</sup> Jurors in the trial for the murder of Braxton Cox did not have the opportunity to weigh in on Hargis’s and Callahan’s guilt. The presiding judge dismissed the case before it commenced, due to the prosecution’s failure to produce key witnesses.<sup>117</sup> The “uncrowned Czars of Eastern Kentucky,” as they were dubbed by a *New York Times* correspondent, had walked away scot-free, with their wealth and influence intact.<sup>118</sup>

Membership in the continuously militant Kentucky Democratic Party ultimately brought with it a privileged position. The judge specially appointed by Governor Beckham to try Hargis, Callahan, and other defendants in the criminal trial for Marcum’s murder was known for his “unwavering allegiance to the Democratic Party.”<sup>119</sup> The trial for Braxton Cox’s murder had occurred in one of the most intensely Democratic counties in



the state, Elliott County, where the authorities allowed Hargis to spend most of his time awaiting trial outside of the jailhouse shooting marbles with locals.<sup>120</sup> While Edward Callahan sat in the Lexington jail during his trial for Jim Cockrell's murder, a Democratic merchant treated the defendant to "50 quarts of whisky and about 50 boxes of cigars a two bushel tub of apples and case of beer all free," which Callahan served to the "at least 3000" admirers who visited his cell. "The Fayette County Democrats are Red hot for us they want to fight for us too," Callahan boasted, describing the widespread support that he, Hargis, and the other accused enjoyed throughout Kentucky. "Every Goebel Democrat in this county is hot for us."<sup>121</sup> Still disheartened more than five years after Goebel's death, many Democrats, recognizing the contributions that Callahan had made in their late hero's campaign, continued to tolerate (or perhaps even sanction) the brutal methods employed to accomplish what Republicans called "the best exemplification of the horrors of Goebelism."<sup>122</sup>

Despite Callahan's and Hargis's popularity among Bluegrass Democrats, the murder trials destroyed their political dominance back in Breathitt County. While Hargis awaited trial for the Cox murder, he and Callahan were defeated in a countywide fusionist landslide.<sup>123</sup> In October 1906, six men elected to the Democratic state central committee from various counties signed a petition complaining that Hargis had arbitrarily deprived them of committee membership.<sup>124</sup> The following month, with Democratic support waning in Breathitt County, Kentucky's Tenth Congressional District elected its first Republican U.S. House representative since 1896.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps even more damaging to the Democratic Party, a majority of Breathitt County residents voted for William Howard Taft in the 1908 presidential election, the only time before 2008 that a Republican presidential candidate carried the county.<sup>126</sup>

The murder trials also triggered broader political fallout. Beginning in 1906, Republicans charged Governor Beckham as an ally of Breathitt County's "assassination chiefs" and his administration as an embodiment of "Gobelism, Redwineism and Hargisism."<sup>127</sup> They accused him of imposing "many indignities on Breathitt County's peaceful majority" through his mishandling of the Hargis trials.<sup>128</sup> Nor did Hargis improve the situation. His boasts that he could get anyone pardoned convinced many Kentuckians that the judge and Beckham had allied with one another. Beckham's pardoning of Tom White further confirmed this suspicion.<sup>129</sup> Kentucky Republicans could not have been more pleased. In 1907, Democratic control

of the General Assembly was narrowed to a slim majority.<sup>130</sup> When Beckham attempted to run for the U.S. Senate the following year, four Democrats bolted from the party line, sending former governor William O. Bradley to Washington, DC, as Kentucky's first Republican U.S. senator.<sup>131</sup>

The publicity surrounding "Bloody Breathitt" led to tremendous political fallout between 1906 and 1910, but most state and national newspapers situated the murders in Breathitt County within the nonpolitical feud narrative. As such, the political origins of the "Hargis-Cockrell feud" have been forgotten. The press portrayed assassinations that encapsulated the statewide furor over William Goebel's murder as nothing more than "human nature's daily feud."<sup>132</sup> Accordingly, state and national media continued to report all killings from Breathitt County as the product of an extant feud.<sup>133</sup> When Judge Hargis's nephew Matt Crawford, who had no prior involvement in his uncle's political wranglings, was killed near his illegal whiskey still in 1910, one nationally read almanac blithely recounted his death as part of "a feud which has long been carried on in Breathitt County."<sup>134</sup> Perhaps the most dramatic explication of the familial concealing the political appeared in 1917, when a law journal characterized James Marcum as a family rather than an individual in order to fit violence in Breathitt County into the "family feud" mold.<sup>135</sup> Although the murders that James Hargis directed eventually cost him his political office (the prize that had motivated the killings in the first place), his strategy of casting them within the context of an ongoing family feud proved successful. "The Hargis-Cockrell feud was like nearly all the other mountain feuds," historian Lewis Franklin Johnson wrote in 1916. "It was a family difficulty."<sup>136</sup>

Ensuing events either added more evidence of familial violence or made Breathitt County appear to be a preternaturally violent place regardless of politics. While Judge Hargis was on trial, his oldest son, Beech, began a profligate spree, and his father's agents had to retrieve him from Lexington brothels multiple times. After another incident in 1908, the disgraced former judge beat his son almost to the point of unconsciousness. Shortly thereafter, Beech shot his father to death and attempted to commit suicide by swallowing morphine. Although this in-family homicide had nothing directly to do with past factionalism, state newspapers described it as a "natural sequel" to recent events.<sup>137</sup> Following the death of his former partner, Edward Callahan gradually withdrew from politics and grew increasingly paranoid, avoiding Jackson and building a protective bunker around his home in southern Breathitt County. On the ninth anniversary of James

Marcum's assassination, in 1912, an unknown rifleman killed Callahan just as he concluded a telephone conversation in his house. While the timing of Callahan's murder suggested a motive of revenge for Marcum's death, the "noted feudist" had amassed too many enemies, both personal and political, for local authorities to pinpoint a definite suspect.<sup>138</sup> Only Judge David Redwine, who had always remained on the periphery of the controversy, managed a peaceful passing and a posthumous reputation untarnished by "feuds."<sup>139</sup>

Assassination as it was used in Frankfort in 1900, or in Breathitt County in 1902 and 1903, had broader implications in both means and ends. William Goebel's assassination in 1900 was initially attributed to the "mountain method of ambush," the surreptitious "bushwhacker" style of sniper killing popular during the Civil War.<sup>140</sup> But the *mise en scène* of Goebel's death did not reflect the circumstances suggested by the label "mountain method." The latter was best suited to the unpopulated quiet of the isolated wagon roads and footpaths found throughout Kentucky. Goebel was killed in the clear of a winter morning while walking through Kentucky's capitol grounds, circumstances that befitted his position in government. Although the rifleman's identity remains unknown, we do know that he shot Goebel from the second-story window of the State House, next to the capitol, a building "tenanted by Republicans exclusively."<sup>141</sup> Even if Secretary of State Caleb Powers did not sanction the assassination, the conditions that ended Goebel's life were meant to publicly denounce his legitimacy as governor-elect.<sup>142</sup> In short, conspirators orchestrated the assassination in such a way that it would appear to be the will of the state. Carried out in the urban center of state governance, the murder was a far cry from the anonymous nature of wartime bushwhacking. In fact, it more approximated the definitively public (in the anarchist parlance of the period) "propaganda of the deed," performed not only to dispatch a hated political figure but also to broadcast a public message.

The murders of Braxton Cox, James Cockrell, and James Marcum occurred under remarkably similar circumstances. Dr. Cox was killed in the dead of night by a shotgun blast in the area of Jackson's main thoroughfare, close to both the courthouse and James Hargis's commercial property.<sup>143</sup> Cockrell and Marcum, more directly linked to the ensuing political conflict, were dispatched more publicly and flamboyantly than Cox, shot from the Breathitt County courthouse in broad daylight with numerous potential witnesses present and Judge Hargis and Sheriff Callahan nearby.<sup>144</sup> The

close proximity of all three killings established the courthouse square as “the assassination center of Jackson.”<sup>145</sup> Even though Judge James Hargis linked at least two of the deaths (Cockrell’s and Marcum’s) within ongoing kin-based feud narratives, the manner in which these deaths were spatially arranged confirmed that they were the will of the local powers that be and acts that involved some amount of planning. Hargis was hardly, it seems, the picture of the benighted “mountain white” given to the impassioned violence that Americans associated with “feuding.” One home-missions progressive explained shortly after Hargis’s death that the mountain judge “was neither poor nor ignorant, and had had no little contact with public affairs in the larger world of men.”<sup>146</sup> As long as violence in “Bloody Breathitt” was assumed common, however, the motives behind individual homicides could easily remain enigmatic or even hidden completely. But it was not Hargis’s use of directed violence itself that led to his downfall, but rather the unwanted, and unexpected, publicity attracted by the deaths of Cox, Cockrell, and Marcum. Still, Hargis encouraged observers to think of these deaths as outcomes of an ongoing “feud,” and most Kentuckians and Americans obliged.

Breathitt County’s assassinations, and the ensuing trials of the accused assailants, had broad political connections to the “outside world.” But the press included the Cox, Cockrell, and Marcum homicides within the older narrative of violence that had earned the county the nickname “Bloody Breathitt” in the 1870s. Although state Republicans (who recognized the connections with the hated Goebel island of mountain Democracy) insisted on the political motive behind these killings, *feud* endured as the dominant descriptor, one that accentuated the prevalence of communal violence with purely insular, local causes. This was not only because of the influence of Democratic elites outside of the county, who, like their brethren farther south, profited from violence while striving to distance themselves from it. It was also because Kentuckians, and Americans in general, preferred to segregate native violence into the darkest corners possible, lest it reveal too many corrupt realities.

## Notes

1. Ralph Frasca, *The Rise and Fall of the Saturday Globe* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1992), 120–21; Margaret A. Blanchard, *Revolutionary Sparks: Freedom of Expression in Modern America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 40–41.

2. Even members of his own party condemned Goebel for turning their party over to “Anarchists, Socialists and Populists” (*Tribune Almanac and Political Register*, 1900, 82). For other characterizations of William Goebel as an anarchist, see *Hartford Republican*, Oct. 5, 1900; James C. Klotter, *William Goebel: The Politics of Wrath* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 68.

3. Olivier Hubac-Occhipinti, “Anarchist Terrorists of the Nineteenth Century,” in *The History of Terrorism from Antiquity to Al Qaeda*, ed. Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, trans. Edward Schneider, Kathryn Pulver, and Jesse Browner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 117–18. For the relationship between *anomie* and assassination, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 311–12; Elwin H. Powell, *The Designs of Discord: Studies in Anomie* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 72–73, 152–53, 165; Goran Therborn, “‘Europe’ as Issues of Sociology,” in *European Societies: Fusion or Fission?* ed. Thomas P. Boje, Bart van Steenberghe, and Sylvia Walby (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 22–23; H. L. Nieburg, *Political Violence: The Behavioral Process* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1969), 118–21.

4. Jeffrey Guy Johnson, “Feud, Society, Family: Feud Narratives in the United States, 1865–1910” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2001), 52.

5. Altina L. Waller, “Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype,” in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 347–76.

6. *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Jan. 19, 1900.

7. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 6, 1903.

8. Thomas Louis Owen, “The Formative Years of Kentucky’s Republican Party, 1864–1871” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1981), 165.

9. While the new constitution reaffirmed ballot voting, a law had already been in place two years before the convention eliminating *viva voce* in elections for state office; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Jan. 14, 1888.

10. The state’s agrarians had initially expected the Democrats to conform to their needs, but after a dissatisfying term of office under Governor John Young Brown, the strongest advocates of silver coinage and legislation that stifled the power of railroads began to look elsewhere. Kentucky Populism had been defined by a strong spirit and weak flesh. Agrarian organization and protest against the ascendancy of corporations had emerged just as divisions between Bourbons and “New Departure” Democrats were beginning to heal in the late 1870s. The growth of the L&N Railroad and the monopoly power of tobacco trusts were enough to fuel some interest in the party. Sympathy for its causes ran high in the state, but the party confronted two major parties that remained strong enough to ignore any of their third-party competitor’s entreaties to bargain. See Elizabeth Shelby

Kinkead, *A History of Kentucky* (New York: American Book Company, 1915), 216–18; Malcolm E. Jewell and Everett W. Cunningham, *Kentucky Politics* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 10–12; Lowell Harrison, *Kentucky's Governors* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 103–6; Klotter, *William Goebel*, 11–12; Gaye Bland, “Populism in Kentucky, 1887–1896” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1979), 140.

11. There was also a Republican majority in the state’s House of Representatives. See Kinkead, *History of Kentucky*, 216–17.

12. *Tribune Almanac and Political Register*, 1896, 238, 1897, 241. Kentucky’s first Republican U.S. senator was elected in 1897; see Gordon McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 198; Harrison, *Kentucky’s Governors*, 108.

13. While much of the Republicans’ national success had come from their abandonment of the war’s partisan legacy in favor of “old Whig conservatism,” Bradley attempted racial reforms at a time when most of the white South was circling the wagons of Jim Crow. His plea to repeal the state’s “separate coach law” was met with bipartisan white jeers, and his calling out of the militia during a prolonged legislative conflict between Gold Democrats and Silverites angered both factions. See C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 29; James C. Klotter and Hamilton Tapp, *Kentucky: Decades of Discord, 1865–1900* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1977), 369; Lowell Harrison, *Kentucky’s Governors*, 168–79; Bland, “Populism in Kentucky,” 109.

14. Suspicion toward the L&N began in 1887 when the railroad unsuccessfully lobbied for the abolition of Kentucky’s regulatory railroad commission, a lobbying effort accompanied by a well-known measure of bribery. Although the L&N’s proposal was passed by the Kentucky House, it was defeated in the Senate. However, anti-L&N Kentuckians, including Goebel, did not consider this a permanent victory and continued to attack the railroad as a conspirator in statewide graft. See Gary Robert Matthews and James A. Ramage, *Basil Wilson Duke, CSA: The Right Man in the Right Place* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 265; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Jan. 19, 1888, quoted in Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 7; Bland, “Populism in Kentucky,” 4.

15. This began in earnest in 1893. See *Kentucky Senate Journals*, 1893 (vol. 3), 3909, 3929, 3949; Thomas D. Clark, “The People, William Goebel, and the Kentucky Railroads,” *Journal of Southern History* 5 (Feb. 1939): 48.

16. Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 48–54; Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869–1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 269–75; J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880–1910* (New

Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); V. O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949).

17. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Dec. 24, 1888.

18. This was exacerbated by his rivalry with fellow Democrat, “blue-blooded, ex-Confederate soldier,” W. J. Stone. To add further weight to the war memory’s contribution to the controversy, Goebel’s two primary Democratic detractors were two of the state’s most highly regarded Confederate veterans: W. C. P. Breckinridge and Henry Watterson (although the latter eventually cautiously endorsed him). See Clark, “People, William Goebel,” 37; Klotter, *William Goebel*, 47–49.

19. Even though the earlier respective popularities of the Greenback Party, Grange, Farmer’s Alliance, Colored Farmer’s Alliance, and Agricultural Wheel resulted in enthusiasm for Populism in the state (especially the tobacco-growing west), the history of Kentucky’s People’s Party was relatively brief. The Republicans’ 1895 gubernatorial victory alarmed Kentucky Democrats enough to follow the national trend in absorbing the Populist platform, after which “the People’s Party itself wither[ed] away.” However, under Goebel’s leadership, “Populism became more than a party in Kentucky; it became a style.” See Eugene A. Conti Jr., “Mountain Metamorphoses: Culture and Development in East Kentucky” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1978), 185–86; quotes from Thomas J. Brown, “The Roots of Bluegrass Insurgency: An Analysis of the Populist Movement in Kentucky,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 78 (Summer 1980): 241.

20. *New York Times*, Apr. 12–13, 1895; “Kentucky’s Political Anarchy,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Feb. 10, 1900, 126. The manner in which Goebel dispatched his street-side antagonist adds credence to C. Vann Woodward’s contention that the public “shooting on sight” had supplanted the traditional duel as the primary method of white intraracial violence after Reconstruction, especially since Goebel apparently did not respond to a “customary challenge to a duel” by the L&N’s lobbyist Basil Duke short years later. See Matthews and Ramage, *Basil Wilson Duke*, 277; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 158, 160, 378.

21. Klotter, *William Goebel*, 22; *Appleton’s Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1896, 375, 1897, 437, 1898, 356.

22. *Tribune Almanac and Political Register*, 1900, 82. For other characterizations of William Goebel as an anarchist, see also *Hartford Republican*, Oct. 5, 1900; Klotter, *William Goebel*, 68.

23. As a product of Kentucky’s ancient inclination toward county autonomy, election officers were chosen by county courts, meaning that ballot boxes were subject to the whims and wishes of county judges, clerks, and sheriffs. If multiple parties were to be represented in the boxes’ management, this was solely up to local courts. Goebel’s bill took this authority away from local officials and placed it in the hands of a commission chosen by the General Assembly. Succinctly, the directors of local elections would be chosen without the permission of the local court, a

potentially problematic situation in cases in which county courts were under the control of a different party than happened to currently hold the majority in the General Assembly. While the most immediate effect of this law was to place elections in all counties (including those controlled by Republicans) under the management of the then Democratically controlled legislature, Goebel insisted that his election bill was a remedy for the alleged corruption that had resulted in William Bradley's election and the continuing influence of the L&N. See *Kentucky Senate Journals, 1898*, 1022, 1145; *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia, 1899*, 356; *Hartford Republican*, Oct. 5, 1900; Klotter, *William Goebel*, 46–47.

24. Henry Loomis Nelson, "The Kentucky 'Boss's' Desperate Campaign," *Harper's Weekly*, Oct. 23, 1899, 1083.

25. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 4, 1899; R. E. Hughes, F. W. Shaefer, and E. L. Williams, *The Kentucky Campaign; or, The Law, the Ballot and the People in the Goebel-Taylor Contest* (Cincinnati: R. Clark Company, 1900), 16–42; H. Levin, ed., *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1897), 556; H. L. Nelson, "Kentucky 'Boss's' Desperate Campaign," 1084; Klotter, *William Goebel*, 57.

26. *National Geographic*, Feb. 14, 1894, 632; *Hazel Green Herald*, Aug. 28, 1902. See also *Kansas City Journal*, May 3, 1903; *New York Times*, May 30, 1903; William E. Barton, "The Church Militant in the Feud Belt," *Century*, Oct. 10, 1903, 351–52; *Decatur (IL) Daily News*, Mar. 14, 1910, Mar. 24, 1912; Charles Neville Buck, *The Call of the Cumberland*s (Teddington, Middlesex, UK: Echo Library, 2005), 102; Frederick Morgan Davenport, *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals: A Study in Mental and Social Evolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 305.

27. See, e.g., Caleb Powers, *My Own Story: an account of the conditions in Kentucky leading to the assassination of William Goebel, who was declared governor of the state, and my indictment and conviction on the charge of complicity in his murder* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1905), 86.

28. Levin, *Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*, 556; McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, 195.

29. McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, 195.

30. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 6, 1908.

31. "Hargis still sat high in the councils of his party, while Callahan, always the lesser light, kept his fingers gripped upon county affairs." See Harold Coates, *Stories of Kentucky Feuds* (Knoxville: Holmes-Durst Coal Corporation, 1942), 3.

32. Hughes, Shaefer, and Williams, *Kentucky Campaign*, 46–48; Klotter and Tapp, *Kentucky*, 418–22.

33. Powers, *My Own Story*, 80.

34. Hughes, Shaefer, and Williams, *Kentucky Campaign*, 34; Powers, *My Own Story*, 86.



35. Quote from Thomas D. Clark, *Kentucky: Land of Contrast* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 209; *Lexington Leader*, Nov. 14, 1902; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 6, 1908. In order to maintain an air of mysteriousness, Hargis refused all requests for photographs and continued to do so for years after the convention; see Edward S. Linner, "The Human Side of Jim Hargis," *Harper's Weekly*, Feb. 29, 1908, 21.

36. Quote from Hughes, Shaefer, and Williams, *Kentucky Campaign*, 108. See also *Louisville Dispatch*, Aug. 27, 1899; John H. Fenton, *Politics in the Border States* (New Orleans: Hauser Press, 1957), 41–44.

37. "There are only two candidates for governor of Kentucky," he announced a month before the election. "There are more than that number who pretend to be candidates, but the only real candidates are the Louisville Company [the L&N] and the person who addresses you." See *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Oct. 17, 1899.

38. *New York Times*, June 24, 1899; *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1899, 409.

39. *Paris (KY) Bourbon News*, Feb. 13, 1900.

40. *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1899; *Hartford Republican*, Nov. 27, 1903; *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Jan. 26, 1900.

41. *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1899; Tracy Campbell, *The Politics of Despair: Power and Resistance in the Tobacco Wars* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 33–36; Powers, *My Own Story*, 56, 58–59, 89–97, 120–23.

42. Lowell Harrison, "Taylor, William Sylvester," in *The Kentucky Encyclopedia*, ed. Thomas D. Clark, Lowell Harrison, and James C. Klotter (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 870.

43. *Kentucky House Journals*, 1900, 46–52; *Kentucky Senate Journals*, 1900, 60–66.

44. Hughes, Shaefer, and Williams, *Kentucky Campaign*, 145; J. Reginald Clements, ed., *History of the First Regiment of Infantry: The Louisville Legion and Other Military Organizations* (Louisville: Globe Printing Comp., 1907), 119; Klotter, *William Goebel*, 95.

45. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Jan. 26, 1900; "Caleb Powers, Appt., v. Commonwealth of Kentucky," Kentucky Court of Appeals; Burdett A. Rich and Henry P. Farnham, eds., *The Lawyers' Reports Annotated*, book 53 (Rochester, NY: Lawyers' Co-operative Publishing Company, 1912), 258–60.

46. *Lexington Herald*, Jan. 26, 1900.

47. If eastern Kentucky's "bloody Eleventh" congressional district (so named the day after the L&N's delivery of many of its armed constituents in Frankfort) was the danger that Democrats said it was, it was largely a danger of their own making. In 1880 the Democrat-controlled General Assembly gerrymandered a new district between the Three Forks region and the Bluegrass in an attempt to contain the overwhelming bulk of Republican votes within the area and weaken the party's influence in the rest of the state. The concentration of Republican votes

into one discrete area of the state only ended in creating a unified electoral (and, as seen in Frankfort in Jan. 1900, paramilitary) force opposed to the perceived dangers represented by Goebel's reforms. See *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Jan. 26, 1900; McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, 119.

48. *William S. Taylor and John Marshall, Plffs. In Err. V. J.C.W. Beckham, Drt. Err.*, U.S. Supreme Court (argued Apr. 30 and May 1, 1900), *Supreme Court Reporter, Cases Argued and Determined in the United States Supreme Court, October Term, 1899*, 20 (Nov. 1899–July 1900): 895; Klotter and Tapp, *Kentucky*, 450.

49. Powers, *My Own Story*, 122–23.

50. *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1899, 409; *Berea Citizen*, Apr. 29, 1909; "Howard v. Commonwealth," *Kentucky Reports: Reports of Civil and Criminal Cases Decided by the Court of Appeals* 18 (Apr. 1904): 2–18.

51. *William S. Taylor and John Marshall, Plffs.*, 1187–212.

52. James C. Klotter, *Kentucky: Portrait in Paradox, 1900–1950* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1996), 206.

53. Klotter and Tapp, *Kentucky*, 453.

54. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Jan. 26, 1900. The memory of Goebel and the supposed dangers posed by Kentucky mountaineers were entwined for years afterward and provided a means for Kentuckians and other Americans to reconcile (or confuse) political and communal uses of violence and draw boundaries between the two Kentuckys. In John Fox Jr.'s fictionalized account of Frankfort in Jan. 1900, published more than ten years later, Goebel's death provided an ironic twist in the plot of an imaginary feud between the "Hawns and Honeycuts" in an unidentified eastern county. The threat posed by "the autocrat" (an unnamed fictionalized Goebel) necessitated the two families' swearing "that they had buried the feud for a while and that they would fight like brothers for their rights." Soon after, a member of each "clan" is implicated in the governor-elect's murder. In the account, the feud between the Hawns and the Honeycuts had begun over small differences of a strictly personal nature; politics, the cause of the real-life ruptures that had been labeled as "feuds" years before, was instead treated as the force through which warring clans could be united against a common enemy worthier of their heretofore misplaced wrath. The communal conflict that had led to their initial division was subsumed by the political conflict that not only united them but prompted the Hawns and the Honeycuts to engage the more modern world of the Bluegrass in a manner that bettered them with exposure to the "outside world" without stripping them of their native nobility and egalitarianism. The ability of the Kentucky mountaineer to accept the progress of the "outside world," rejecting communal violence while maintaining his nobler qualities, was a typical theme of Fox's portrayals of the region. The use of a Goebel figure as the unseen antagonist in a Fox novel reflected the danger that mountain Republicans saw in his candidacy but, as a literary device, represented the overly bureaucratized repub-

lic's loss of democracy that only the reinvolvement of the "pure" Anglo-Saxon yeoman could heal. In Fox's (albeit patronizing) portrayal published years after Goebel's death, the "ignorant men" who occupied Frankfort in the winter of 1900 could be heroes. See John Fox Jr., *The Heart of the Hills* (New York: A. L. Burt and Company, 1912), 207. Fox was inspired to include a Goebel-like character in the novel after attending the governor-elect's funeral. See Bill York, *John Fox, Jr.: Appalachian Author* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2003), 165–66.

55. *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1900.

56. *Hazel Green Herald*, Nov. 28, 1901; Burdett A. Rich and Henry P. Farnham, eds., *The Lawyers' Reports Annotated*, new ser., book 37 (Rochester, NY: Lawyers' Co-operative Publishing Company, 1912), 886–89; *Louisville Evening Post*, May 19, 1903.

57. *Kentucky Law Reporter* 24—part 2 (Jan. 1, 1903–June 15, 1903) (Frankfort: Geo. A. Lewis, 1903): 2498–500; *Mount Sterling Advocate*, Dec. 17, 1902; *Louisville Evening Post*, May 19, 1903; *Breathitt County News*, Oct. 23, 1903.

58. Hargis's and Callahan's hegemony was proven to a man convicted of manslaughter in 1902 who believed that he had gotten an unfair trial after he "incurred their prejudice" by opposing them in an election; see *Bohannon v. Commonwealth*, Mar. 3, 1903, *Kentucky Law Reporter* 24—part 2 (Jan. 1, 1903–June 15, 1903): 1815.

59. *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Jan. 25, 1901.

60. Handbill: "Answer to Judge Hagins' Circular," Assorted Documents, Breathitt County Museum, Jackson, KY.

61. In many parts of the South in the last years of the nineteenth century, party fusions among Republicans, Populists, and unhappy Democrats were last-ditch interracial efforts against all-white Democratic juggernauts, often resulting in counterinsurrectionary violence from the latter. Breathitt County's fusionists were not only using the same tactic employed by Populists a few years before, but were doing so out of a similar impulse. Before it became a national movement with far-away northern plutocrats as targets, Populism's political manifestation had its beginnings in small farmers' disgust with local courthouse elites. See Connie L. Lester, *Up from the Mudsills of Hell: The Farmers' Alliance, Populism, and Progressive Agriculture in Tennessee, 1870–1915* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006); Samuel C. Hyde Jr., *Pistols and Politics: The Dilemma of Democracy in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810–1899* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 244–54; Robert C. McMath, *American Populism: A Social History, 1877–1898* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 197, 203–6; Ayers, *Promise of the New South*, 42–46, 290–305; Phillip D. Uzee, "The Republican Party in the Louisiana Election of 1896," *Louisiana History* 2 (1961): 332–44; Vincent P. de Santis, "Republican Efforts to 'Crack' the Democratic South," *Review of Politics* 14 (Apr. 1952): 244–64; Albert D. Kirwan, *Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876–1925* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1951), 99–100; Helen G.

Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894–1901* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951); Munroe Smith, “Record of Political Events,” *Political Science Quarterly* 14 (June 1899): 370; Frederick Emory Haynes, “The New Sectionalism,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 10 (Apr. 1896): 275; James Turner, “Understanding the Populists,” *Journal of American History* 67 (Sept. 1980): 367–68.

62. *Lawyers’ Reports Annotated*, new ser., book 37, 886–88. Populists were set against an ascendant Democratic Party.

63. *Hartford Republican*, Nov. 27, 1903; *Lawyers’ Reports Annotated*, new ser., book 37, 886–88.

64. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 12, 1897; Henry Duff, interview, July 22, 1898, *John J. Dickey Diary*, reel 3, 2428–29, Margaret I. King Library Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky, Lexington; Kelly Kash, “Feud Days in Breathitt County,” *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1954): 343.

65. *New York Times*, July 3, 1904.

66. Kash, “Feud Days in Breathitt County,” 344. Kash was personally acquainted with the Hargis brothers, Cox, Marcum, and most of the men involved in the conflicts of 1902 in Jackson.

67. David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 170.

68. *Maysville (KY) Daily Public Ledger*, Nov. 2, 1896; “Cardwell v. Commonwealth, Court of Appeals of Kentucky, June 23, 1898,” *Southwestern Reporter, Containing all the Current Decisions of the Supreme Courts of Missouri, Arkansas, and Tennessee, Court of Appeals of Kentucky, and Supreme Court, Court of Criminal Appeals, and Courts of Civil Appeals in Texas* 46 (June 27–Aug. 22, 1898): 705–7; *Spout Springs (KY) Times*, July 30, 1898; *New York Times*, July 3, 1904.

69. *Stanford (KY) Semi-Weekly Interior Journal*, May 12, 1903.

70. Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 384–85.

71. Esther Heidbuchel, *The West Papua Conflict in Indonesia* (Wettenberg: Johannes Herrmann J&J-Verlag, 2007), 142–52, 161–88, 400–401; Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 330–70.

72. *Hazel Green Herald*, July 17, Sept. 18, 1902; *Maysville Evening Bulletin*, Nov. 12, 1902; *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, May 8, 1903. In 1902 and for years afterward, the “Hargis-Cockrell feud” was only the most common descriptive for these events. Other variations included the “Hargis-Callahan feud,” the “Hargis-Marcum feud,” the “Hargis-Cockrell-Marcum feud,” the “Hargis-Callahan feud,” and the “Curtis-Jett feud.” See Isaac F. Marcossou, “The South in Fiction,” *Bookman: A Review of Books and Life* 32, no. 4 (1910): 366; Harold Everett Green, *Towering Pines: The Life of John Fox, Jr.* (Boston: Meador, 1943), 91.

73. *Hazel Green Herald*, Apr. 17, 1902; *Lexington Leader*, July 21, 1902; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 6, 1908; Clements, *History of the First Regiment of Infantry*, 151; Kash, "Feud Days in Breathitt County," 344–45.

74. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 22, 1902; *Mount Vernon Signal*, July 25, 1902; *Hartford Republican*, July 25, 1902; *Adair County News*, July 30, 1902; *Louisville Evening Post*, May 4, 1903.

75. "Hargis et al v. Parker, Judge, et al," Court of Appeals of Kentucky, Mar. 10, 1905, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 85 (Mar. 15–Apr. 19, 1905): 705.

76. *Lexington Leader*, July 21, 1902; *Louisville Evening Post*, May 4, 1903.

77. *Lexington Leader*, July 22, 1902.

78. *Hazel Green Herald*, July 31, 1902.

79. *Lancaster Central Record*, Nov. 14, 1902; *Berea Citizen*, Nov. 27, 1902.

80. *Hazel Green Herald*, Nov. 13, 1902; *Lexington Leader*, Nov. 14, 1902.

81. *Paris Bourbon News*, Nov. 14, 1902.

82. *Lexington Leader*, Nov. 15, 1902.

83. *Lexington Leader*, Nov. 16, 1902. According to later court testimony, Marcum expressed the same speculations to his wife's sister; see "White v. Commonwealth," Court of Appeals of Kentucky, Mar. 17, 1905, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 85 (Mar. 15–Apr. 19, 1905) (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1905), 755.

84. *Lexington Leader*, Nov. 16, 1902. See also *Berea Citizen*, Nov. 27, 1902.

85. *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Nov. 25, 1902; *Lancaster Central Record*, Nov. 27, 1902.

86. *Louisville Evening Post*, May 4, 1903; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 5, 1903; *Hazel Green Herald*, May 7, 1903; *New York Times*, May 5, 10, 12, 25, 31, June 5, 16, 18, 20, 28, 30, 1903.

87. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 6, 1903.

88. Instead of suggesting violence acted out for or against the legitimacy of state power, "lawlessness" denoted "a Hobbesian state in which the relations between individuals or small groups are like those between sovereign powers," a description of premodern societies most likely to experience or produce "feud-" or "vendetta-"related acts of violence. See Mehrdad Vahabi, *The Political Economy of Destructive Power* (Cheltenham, UK, and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004), 103–5.

89. *Lexington Leader*, May 5, 1903.

90. R. L. McClure, "The Mazes of a Kentucky Feud," *Independent*, Sept. 17, 1903, 2220.

91. *Stanford (KY) Semi-Weekly Interior Journal*, May 12, 1903 (my emphasis).

92. Even Democratic papers that had no interest in using the language of feuding insisted on at least acknowledging that, since "murder is murder" regardless of politics, Marcum's slaying "was as bad as the murder of Goebel," while another praised Breathitt County's "Democratic officials" for "using every effort to

bring the guilty to justice,” unlike when Goebel “was assassinated on the capital grounds under Republican rule”; see *Clay City Times*, May 28, 1903; *Adair County News*, June 10, July 29, 1903. For Republican comparisons between the investigations of Goebel’s and Marcum’s respective deaths, see *Hartford Republican*, Aug. 21, 1903; *Breathitt County News*, Mar. 15, 1907.

93. “As the nineteenth century drew on, the family as an institution was figured as existing, by natural decree, beyond the commodity market, beyond politics, and beyond history proper. The family thus became, at one and the same time, both the organizing figure for natural *history*, as well as its *antithesis*”; see Anne McClintock, “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” *Feminist Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 63–64 (original emphasis). See also Alison Piepmeier, *Out in Public: Configurations of Women’s Bodies in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Edward Said, “Secular Criticism,” in *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 231–32; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Working Class, 1780–1850* (London: Hutchison, 1987).

94. Abrelia Marcum: “Judge Hargis and the whole state knows that there have been thirty-eight homicides in Breathitt county during his administration as county judge. What attempt has been made by him as the highest official in the county to have the laws enforced? When he became county judge about two years ago there was no more peaceful county in Kentucky. Our people walked the streets at night in the pursuit of their vocations with absolute safety and no thought of danger. Every man whose life’s blood has stained the soil of Breathitt county during Judge Hargis’s administration of law has bit the dust at the hands of some adherent of their clan, or his identity remains unknown and no strenuous effort has been made to find him” (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 25, 1903).

95. “Commonwealth of Ky. vs. Curt Jett & C.,” May 28–June 19, 1903, *Breathitt County Criminal Order Books and Indexes*, Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Frankfort; “Jett v. Commonwealth,” Mar. 25, 1905, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 85 (Mar. 15–Apr. 19, 1905): 1179–82.

96. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 10, 1903; *Louisville Evening Post*, May 10, 1903; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 7, 11, 25, 1903.

97. *Earlington (KY) Bee*, May 28, 1903; *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1903: Vol. I, Reports of the Secretary of War, Chief of Staff, Adjutant-General, Inspector-General, and Judge-Advocate-General* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903), 330; Clements, *History of the First Regiment of Infantry*, 158.

98. Less than four weeks later, the militia unit was ordered back to the Bluegrass to prevent a potential lynching during a highly publicized murder trial of three black men. Highly publicized as it was, however, it did not gain the same

national attention as the Marcum murder. See Clements, *History of the First Regiment of Infantry*, 164.

99. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 27, 1903. For a similar Beckham rebuke toward northern Republicans, see *Earlington Bee*, May 14, 1903.

100. *New York Times*, Sept. 6, 1903.

101. *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1904.

102. *Breathitt County News*, May 29, 1903; *New York Times*, June 21, 1903.

103. George C. Wright, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, vol. 2, *In Pursuit of Equality* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 136–48; “The Founding of Lincoln Institute,” *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 49 (Jan. 1975): 57–70; Klotter and Tapp, *Kentucky*, 396–400, 418–25; Paul David Nelson, “Experiment in Interracial Education at Berea College, 1858–1908,” *Journal of Negro History* 59 (Jan. 1974): 13–27; Betty Jean Hall and Richard Allen Heckman, “Berea College and the Day Law,” *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 66 (Jan. 1968): 35–52. All of these secondary-source accounts of the Day Law have far more to say about its effects than its legislative origins.

104. *Kentucky House Journals*, 1904, 73; *Richmond (KY) Climax*, Feb. 3, 1904; *Breathitt County News*, Apr. 15, 1904; Wright, *History of Blacks in Kentucky*, 144–45.

105. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 2, 1904; *Berea Citizen*, Feb. 4, 1904.

106. *Nation*, Feb. 25, 1904, 141; Klotter, *Kentucky*, 152–53. Since Day died very shortly after it passed the Kentucky house, he did not live to see his bill made into law; see *Clay City Times*, Apr. 14, 1904; *Breathitt County News*, Apr. 15, 1904; *Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky*, special session, 1905 (Louisville: George G. Fetter Company, 1905), 14–15. Day’s proposal to legislatively prevent “the contamination of the white children of Kentucky,” and Hargis’s and Redwine’s public endorsement, was undoubtedly a product of an enduring popular belief in white supremacy even in places with a miniscule black population. Also, their espousal of forced segregation reflected the conservative Democratic regime that had officially controlled the county since the Civil War. But it was a means to a less ideological end as well. Many black Kentuckians blamed William Frost, Berea’s president, more than they did the state’s Democrats since his intensified interest in educating “mountain whites” to their own detriment appeared as tacit approval of the law, as did his relatively lax defense of the college against it. See *Nation*, Nov. 19, 1908, 480–81; P. D. Nelson, “Experiment in Interracial Education,” 24–27; Thomas D. Clark, *My Century in History: Memoirs* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 245; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 2, 1904; Hall and Heckman, “Berea College and the Day Law,” 35–52.

107. Liberal northern indignation against the Day Law was aimed at both the general and the particular, targeting Breathitt County, the state of Kentucky, and the South as a whole. In the years after its passage, various commentators blamed

its unprecedented enforcement of segregation on Carl Day's egregious personal racism or a personal vendetta toward Berea College. But by ignoring the "notorious" mountain county's politics, and the men who directed the county, the complex relationship between the seemingly all-white county and the passage of the maligned statute was lost. The killing of James Marcum, and its fallout, was potentially the Kentucky Democratic Party's greatest embarrassment since William Goebel's election law. The Day Law was a way of reingratiating Breathitt County's Democrats with the rest of the state by appealing to the popular Democratic current of legislated racism. One defender of Berea's coracial education avowed that, aside from its being "evidence of the negrophobia which is sweeping over the South," Day's bill was just as likely "a political move [on the part of Hargis and Day] to win the favor of those who desire to keep the colored people in subjection, and also of those who dislike Berea's work for the education of mountain Republicans." See Delevan L. Pierson, "Berea College and Its Mission," *Missionary Review of the World* 24 (June 1904): 418.

108. *Berea Citizen*, Mar. 17, 1904.

109. *Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1904* (Louisville: Geo. G. Fetter Co., 1904), 126–27.

110. *Breathitt County News*, Nov. 11, 1904; *Hazel Green Herald*, Dec. 8, 1904.

111. *Mrs. J. B. Marcum agst. James Hargis, February, 1904–1905*, Clark County Circuit Court Case Files, Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 28, 1904; "Marcum et al. v. Hargis et al.," Court of Appeals of Kentucky, Oct. 16, 1907, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 104 (Aug. 28–Nov. 27, 1907): 693–95; *Earlington Bee*, Mar. 3, 1904; *Barbourville (KY) Mountain Advocate*, Mar. 4, 1904; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, June 3, 1904; *Adair County News*, Dec. 21, 1904; *Hazel Green Herald*, Dec. 22, 29, 1904; E. Merton Coulter and William Elsey Connelley, *History of Kentucky*, vol. 2 (Chicago and New York, 1922), 186.

112. "Notes on Important Decisions," *Central Law Journal* 65 (Aug. 16, 1907): 118–19; *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Jan. 12, 1905; "Marcum et al. v. Hargis et al.," Court of Appeals of Kentucky, Oct. 16, 1907, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 104 (Aug. 28–Nov. 27, 1907): 694; "French v. Commonwealth," Court of Appeals of Kentucky, Nov. 21, 1906, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 97 (Nov. 28, 1906–Jan. 2, 1907): 427–33; "Herald Publishing Company, et al. v. Feltner" (decided Mar. 17, 1914), *Kentucky Reports: Reports of Civil and Criminal Cases Decided by the Court of Appeals* 158 (Mar. 13–May 14, 1914): 35–44.

113. *Breathitt County News*, Jan. 27, Feb. 17, Mar. 24, 1905; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 5, 1912.

114. Without attempting to absolve Hargis et al. of guilt, the defense suggested that, even though Cockrell had died in Lexington, the fact that he had sustained his fatal injury in Breathitt County meant that Fayette County's bench had no



jurisdiction in prosecuting the crime. See *Breathitt County News*, Jan. 27, 1905; *New York Times*, Mar. 28, 1905; *Hazel Green Herald*, June 8, 1905; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 24, 1907; *Hargis, &c. v. Parker, Judge, &c.* (filed Mar. 10, 1905), *Kentucky Law Reporter* 27 (Feb.–Sept. 1905): 441–48; “Hargis et al v. Parker, Judge, et al,” Court of Appeals of Kentucky, Mar. 10, 1905, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 85 (Mar. 15—Apr. 19, 1905), 704–9.

115. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 12, 1906; *Breathitt County News*, July 20, 1906. It was widely believed that key witnesses like Jett remained loyal to Hargis since “he could get any man in the penitentiary pardoned” by Governor Beckham. But although Jett was eventually paroled from prison, he was not the recipient of a pardon. See *Louisville Herald*, June 8, 1908.

116. *New York Times*, July 18, 1906; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 18, 1906; *Breathitt County News*, July 20, 1906.

117. *New York Times*, July 20, 21, 1907; J. A. C. Chandler, Walter Lynwood Fleming, and Joseph Walker McSpadden, *The South in the Building of the Nation: A History of the Southern States designed to Record the South's Part in the Making of the American Nation; to Portray the Character and Genius, to Chronicle the Achievements and Progress and to Illustrate the Life and Traditions of the Southern People*, 8 vols. (Richmond: Southern Historical Publication Society, 1909), 1: 322.

118. *New York Times*, June 30, 1904.

119. E. Polk Johnson, *A History of Kentucky and Kentuckians; the Leaders and Representative Men in Commerce, Industry and Modern Activities*, 3 vols. (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), 2: 639.

120. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 30, 1907. Elliott County proved to be an even more dramatic deviation from the general trend of Kentucky mountain Republicanism than did Breathitt County. The county was said to have not even a telegraph connection to the “outside world” as late as 1907. Between its creation and 1907, its largest Republican vote in a presidential election was 34 percent; see Ruth McQuown and Jasper B. Shannon, *Presidential Politics in Kentucky, 1824–1948* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1950), 47, 50, 55, 58, 61, 66, 72, 76, 80.

121. Edward Callahan to J. L. “Dutch” Burton, Apr. 19, 1905, Assorted Documents, Breathitt County Museum. Callahan’s claims of his popularity in Lexington and the throngs of Democratic visitors are corroborated in *Hopkinsville Kentuckian*, Mar. 21, 1905.

122. *Lexington Leader*, Nov. 14, 1902.

123. *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1905, Jan. 3, 1906; “Cope v. Cardwell,” May 1, 1906, Court of Appeals of Kentucky, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 93 (June 27–July 25, 1906): 3–4; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 6, 1908.

124. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Oct. 10, 1906; *Breathitt County News*, Oct. 12, 1906.

125. *Official Congressional Directory, 61st Congress 2nd Session, for the Use of the United States Congress* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), 39–40.

126. Breathitt County's Republican majority in this election was particularly phenomenal considering that Bryan carried the state as a whole in 1908. See McQuown and Shannon, *Presidential Politics in Kentucky*, 80.

127. *Lexington Leader*, quoted in *Breathitt County News*, Nov. 2, 1906.

128. *Breathitt County News*, quoted in *Hartford Republican*, Jan. 18, 1907.

129. *Paris Bourbon News*, June 5, 1903; *Hartford Republican*, Aug. 28, 1903; McClure, "Mazes of a Kentucky Feud," 2223–24; clipping, *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, Oct. 27, 1916, Appalachian Feuds Collection, box 1, series VI, Southern Appalachian Archives, Hutchins Library Special Collections and Archives, Berea College, Berea, KY. A survey of pardons issued during Beckham's administration shows a certain amount of political interest, if not prejudice. One Shepherdsville, Kentucky, "Democratic barber" received a pardon since his conviction for concealment of a deadly weapon (his straight razor) was allegedly "persecution by the Republicans instead of prosecution." However, most of these pardons made no explicit mention of political affiliation. What is indicated instead is a proliferation of pardon requests and pardon contestations originating mostly in eastern Kentucky. Of the fifty-four extant petitions sent to Governor J. C. W. Beckham in order to protest requests for pardon (with the vast majority being in reference to murder or manslaughter), twenty-nine were in regard to crimes committed east of the Bluegrass. This indicates that such crimes were well publicized and committed in a way that aroused entire communities against the accused. Many simply reflected the atmosphere of crime that had developed there during the early twentieth century. In one, a young man convicted for carrying a concealed weapon (probably one of the most common convictions in Kentucky jurisprudence between 1870 and 1910) claimed that he did so only because he was visiting an area of Knox County "known and regarded as a community in which the disregard for law prevails to such an extent that it has been thought foolish in him who ventured therein unarmed." Tom White's pardon can be interpreted either way. See Herbert Glenn to Gov. Beckham, n.d., and Chadwell Hall to Governor J. C. W. Beckham, n.d., Governor's Correspondence—Contested Pardons, *Papers of J. C. W. Beckham*, Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Frankfort.

130. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 6, 1907; Klotter, *Kentucky*, 210–12.

131. *New York Times*, Feb. 29, 1908, Nov. 7, 1909.

132. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 10, 1903.

133. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 5, 1905.

134. Frank Moore Colby, ed., *The New International Year Book: A Compendium of the World's Progress for the Year 1910* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1911), 401.

135. Although she was one of very few to announce her husband's death as a premeditated act carried out as part of a political conspiracy rather than a "feudal" action, Abrelia Marcum's litigation probably exacerbated the event's false familial significance. See "Notes on Important Decisions," *Central Law Journal* 65 (Aug. 16, 1907): 118–19.

136. Lewis Franklin Johnson, *Famous Kentucky Feuds Tragedies and Trials* (Cleveland: Baldwin Law Book Co., 1916), 331.

137. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Feb. 6, 8, 1908; *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 1908; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 7, 1908; *Adair County News*, Feb. 19, 1908; Linner, "Human Side of Jim Hargis," 21. Although his father's old ally David Redwine was Beech's chief counsel in the following murder trial, he was also represented by a less obvious choice of representation, newly elected Senator Bradley. The legal team complicated the trial by charging the Republican judge with political prejudice, and the young man was eventually acquitted on a plea of self-defense. Beech Hargis lived in Jackson for years afterward, but with the onset of World War I left to join the Canadian army and was never heard from in Kentucky again. See *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 26, 1908; *Mount Vernon Signal*, Sept. 4, 1908; *Winchester News*, Dec. 14, 1908; Kash, "Feud Days in Breathitt County," 352.

138. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 4, 5, 1912; *New York Times*, May 5, 1912; *The American Library Annual, 1913* (New York: Office of the Publisher's Weekly, 1913), 15.

139. *Law Notes* 16 (Apr. 1913): 17; William M. McKinney and H. Noyes Greene, eds., *Annotated Cases, American and English* (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney Company, 1917), 59–64.

140. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Jan. 31, 1900.

141. *Hartford Republican*, Feb. 2, 1900; *Cyclopedic Review of Current History* 10 (1900): 83–84; "Powers v. Commonwealth," Kentucky Court of Appeals, *Lawyers' Reports Annotated*, book 53, 260.

142. Since Goebel's position as governor-elect was not roundly recognized, his assassination can be interpreted as either "assassination by one political elite to replace another" or "assassination by the government in power to suppress political challenge," two very different motives for political murder. See James F. Kirkham, Sheldon G. Levy, and William J. Crotty, *Assassination and Political Violence: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 3, 6.

143. *Lexington Blue-grass Blade*, Apr. 27, 1902; *New York Tribune*, Apr. 3, 1905.

144. *Hartford Republican*, July 25, 1902; McClure, "Mazes of a Kentucky Feud," 2219–20; "Jett v. Commonwealth," Mar. 25, 1905, *Southwestern Reporter* . . . 85 (Mar. 15–Apr. 19, 1905): 1179, 1181; *Kentucky Law Reporter* 27 (Frankfort: Geo. A. Lewis, Publishing House, 1905), 605.

145. William Dinwiddie(?), untitled manuscript, personal collection of Charles Hayes, Jackson, KY. This strategy reflected Judge Hargis's modus operandi in state politics. Even though he was heavily interested in the affairs of the statewide Democratic Party, Judge Hargis attempted to maintain a semblance of the isolation that had benefited Breathitt County Democrats in the past. Hargis himself employed a measure of anonymity in furthering his influence in the Democratic Party. Since the Music Hall Convention, Hargis's statewide political strength had been bolstered by a healthy measure of stealth. At least after the initiation of the Hargis-Cockrell feud, Hargis tended to avoid public settings, even in Jackson. For this reason he had attempted to discourage interviews with members of the press from outside his area. In 1902 Hargis had a Louisville reporter threatened by "toughs" and, a few years later, threatened a visiting playwright who planned to write a dramatic account of Jackson's 1902–3 assassinations. Before his first indictment in 1904 he had long avoided having his photograph taken for newspapers and, during one of the ensuing trials, even entered the camera-free safety of the courtroom with a quilt over his head (he later reluctantly relented to having a photograph taken). See *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1903; Linner, "Human Side of Jim Hargis," 21.

146. Harlan Paul Douglass, *Christian Reconstruction in the South* (Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press, 1909), 326.

## Chapter 11

# “A Hard-Bitten Lot”

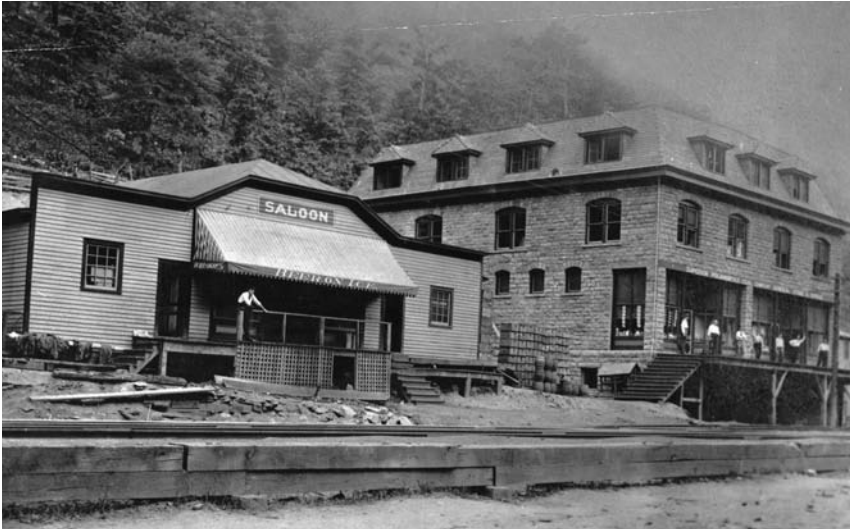
## Nonstrike Violence in the Early Southern West Virginia Smokeless Coalfields, 1880–1910

*Paul H. Rakes and Kenneth R. Bailey*

A typical Saturday-night payday crowd had gathered in James Collins’s saloon. Yet, as too often occurred, arguments erupted, tempers flared, and Collins soon found himself in a fistfight with patron Clarence Staten. Although victorious in the contest, Collins grew apprehensive and concerned when Staten publicly declared that he intended to kill the proprietor before morning. Collins had become accustomed to dealing with miners who faced danger daily, knowing that these, mostly young, men had no inhibitions about rebelling against authority. Alcohol and/or drugs influenced such temperaments, resulting in the creation of volatile situations.

To make matters worse, intoxicated individuals began to take sides regarding the affair, further increasing tension within the crowd. Unfortunately, Collins then found himself forced to eject two other patrons, Noah Rodgers and Frank Kirk, from the establishment. Word of the expanding troubles at the saloon had been conveyed to the local magistrate, and Collins probably hoped law enforcement might soon arrive to quell any other potential disturbance.

Rodgers and Kirk had left the building without incident, but their anger increased as the two loitered nearby, fuming over the arguments with fellow patrons and what they considered to be their unjustified and unacceptable banishment from the tavern. Before Special Constable William Combs arrived on the scene, Rodgers and Kirk had already reentered the saloon, where a group of men continued to fight. Several of the combatants carried firearms, and Combs immediately began confiscating pistols. Proprietor Col-



An early saloon, company store, and office in close proximity, Pocahontas Coal Company, Davy, McDowell County, West Virginia. West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

lins exited from behind the bar to back up Combs and stood slightly behind the officer just as Rodgers flatly refused to surrender his weapon. A scuffle ensued when Combs tried to force the revolver from his opponent's hand. In the struggle, Combs fired two shots, one missing its mark and the other striking Rodgers in the hand, forcing him to drop the weapon.

Kirk had either purposely taken up a position behind the bar, placing him to the rear and slightly to the right of his companion, or he had fled to that post whenever the first shots rang out and some of the customers dove for cover. Either way, Kirk had a clear view of Combs, and he quickly joined in the battle. Other patrons also pulled weapons and produced a general roar of gunfire. Someone, probably Rodgers, fired a pistol so close to the officer that he received a painful facial powder burn from the muzzle blast. In spite of shots fired in his direction, Combs escaped injury, and instead, saloon owner Collins staggered and dropped close to the front doorway. Although struck just below the heart, the wounded man remained conscious and tried to save himself from further violence by crawling out of the building.

Possibly because the group realized someone had been hit, the gunfire ceased, and Combs managed to arrest both Rodgers and Kirk. Saloon patrons rushed outside and carried Collins back into the building. Shortly afterward, the men moved Collins to a nearby house, where he soon died.<sup>1</sup>

The Collins incident seems reminiscent of the many popular stories of violence in famous western cattle towns such as Dodge City or Abilene. Actually, the episode in the Collins saloon occurred not in the “Wild West,” but in the “rough-and-tumble” southern West Virginia coal camp of Rush Run on February 19, 1901. Historian Roger McGrath has discovered that western frontier mining camps proved to be twice as dangerous as the boisterous cow towns of the 1870s, and evidence suggests equally hazardous conditions at saloons, boardinghouses, and holiday celebrations in the early coal operations of West Virginia’s southern smokeless coalfields. Pioneer coal operator William P. Tams remembered the early coal miners of the smokeless fields as a “hard-bitten lot,” and the initial coal camps did indeed include a substantial element of rugged individualists who readily settled personal disputes with guns, knives, clubs, and fists.<sup>2</sup> Yet the increased violence did not evolve from any form of Appalachian cultural behavior, but rather sprang from factors common on all frontiers in the nation’s history. Guns, liquor, and drugs in the hands of single men from a wide array of backgrounds resulted in confrontations typical everywhere, not specifically in Appalachia.

Previous historical studies have concentrated on coalfield violence associated with labor strikes, but these models have limited usefulness in examining the bloodshed among the miners themselves. Labor historians have naturally focused on the confrontations between miners and mine guards during the Paint Creek–Cabin Creek strike of 1912 and the Logan County conflict culminating in the March on Blair Mountain in 1921. Noting the diversity of coalfield populations and working-class distrust of vested authorities, scholars such as David Alan Corbin corrected the earlier twentieth-century notion that strike violence evolved from the inherent cultural characteristics of mountain people. In “The 1913–1914 Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike, with Reflections on the Causes of Coal-Strike Violence,” historian Priscilla Long entered into a debate with economist Price V. Fishback regarding the causes of miners resorting to physical conflict during labor disputes. Long questioned Fishback’s observation that workers armed themselves in self-defense during labor strikes, but neither author considered whether or not many miners already habitually carried weapons.

Research indicates that firearms certainly proliferated in the smokeless coalfields, and guns regularly came into use during altercations among miners. Fishback suggested that “hotheaded” individuals may well have contributed to the opening of hostilities during mine strikes, and the coal-camp altercations described in the present essay primarily evolved from similarly hot-tempered individuals reacting to perceived personal insults.<sup>3</sup>

Young miners with a “short fuse” frequented the early coal camps and contributed to a remarkable expansion of crimes-against-the-person in Fayette, McDowell, Mercer, Kanawha, and Mingo counties. Although these individuals came from a variety of backgrounds, all who became miners worked in a violent world where natural environmental forces claimed life and limb on a daily basis. In essence, those laboring underground found themselves in combat with “Mother Nature.” Most worked independently in mining “rooms” and had to become self-reliant on their knowledge and skill to make a living in an inherently dangerous underground world. Significantly, mining subcultural mandates required a miner to exhibit bravery in dangerous situations, and the volatile combination of young “courageous hot-heads,” alcohol, and firearms produced frequent deadly quarrels in the early coal camps.<sup>4</sup>

The drastic population increase in the southern coal counties translated to a higher incidence of violent confrontations, and by 1904, there developed a dramatic contrast in numbers of state prison inmates from West Virginia’s southern mining region versus the figure for those from elsewhere in the state. Prison records indicate that in 1904 the five counties of Fayette, McDowell, Mercer, Kanawha, and Mingo, with a combined population of 139,812, had contributed 419 of the 748 state convicts, while a comparative list of sixteen agricultural counties, with a population of 205,175, had contributed only 28 criminals.<sup>5</sup> In an effort to identify the cause of this disparity, Warden C. E. Haddox pointed to a transitory mining population that lived in makeshift shacks, a society “more loosely organized [with] fewer safeguards . . . thrown around the people,” and a “tendency in cases being to foster conditions that imperil society, rather than to try to protect it.” Haddox further argued that the sixteen counties supplying fewer convicts benefited from a permanent population, stable agricultural occupations, an organized society, and people owning their own homes. Most important, by 1906, the warden’s records indicated that murder or similar incidents of violence represented 80 percent of the crimes in the southern mining areas.<sup>6</sup>



Haddox offered a harsh assessment of conditions in the southern coal counties, and clearly something more than just the numbers associated with a massive population increase had produced the explosion in violent crimes. In 1880, only 3 of the 229 convicts at the Moundsville state prison in the northern panhandle came from Fayette County, and between 1866 and 1882, McDowell County contributed only 1 individual to the penal system.<sup>7</sup> By 1905, the numbers had increased to 130 and 107, respectively. These numbers are even more compelling when one realizes that this translates to 1 convicted criminal for every 277 people in Fayette and 1 for every 233 in McDowell. Warden Haddox compared these figures to ratios of 1 convict in 6,500 (total population) in Fayette's agricultural neighbor Nicholas County and 1 in 8,330 in Preston.<sup>8</sup>

Prison statistics prove equally indicative of the coal industry's influence on the demographic change sweeping southern West Virginia. In 1890, the nativity of Moundsville's entire prison population incarcerated for state crimes represented nineteen states and foreign nations, with most born in West Virginia, Virginia, and Ohio. By 1908, the original citizenship of only those individuals convicted and sentenced during the biennial period reflected fifty-one states and nationalities. West Virginia and Virginia prisoners continued to be a majority, but the state's native-born convicts between 1890 and 1908 had decreased from 42 to 36 percent, and those from its sister state had increased from 18 to 25 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio and Norfolk and Western railroads provided the primary catalyst for the economic and social change in southern West Virginia reflected by penitentiary statistics. The railroads opened previously inaccessible areas to coal industrialization in the late nineteenth century and produced significant topographical and demographic changes to southern West Virginia's rugged and primarily agricultural setting. Outcrops of easily accessible coal on mountainsides allowed numerous enterprising individuals to open drift mines with minimal capital. Realizing profit practically from the first strike of the pick, these embryonic operations in remote regions often established camps that proved to be equally rudimentary. In many cases, sawmills set up at the site cut timber in the immediate vicinity and used the green lumber for both elementary physical-plant needs and miner housing. Many successful operations progressively expanded and improved the outside industrial complex and the living quarters, but "shanties," the contemporary name for simple basic shelters, remained common housing for many black and bachelor miners.<sup>10</sup>

Attracted by the economic opportunities that the coal industry offered them, migrants from a variety of backgrounds seeking financial improvement flooded into this rural-industrial setting. Nevertheless, many of these workers had no idea that this fiscal pursuit included deadly physical quarrels as either instigator or victim. The migration included native white mountaineers such as thirty-three-year-old James Collins from Alderson, West Virginia, who died at Rush Run in 1901, and African American blacksmith Funston Cox from Virginia, whose future included six months on a chain gang followed by a controversial murder conviction in 1898 that eventually received the attention of Governor Albert B. White. Although native whites and blacks dominated the early smokeless coalfields in McDowell, Fayette, and Mercer counties, and the Cabin Creek district of Kanawha County, Italian and eastern European immigrants soon joined them, providing a substantial ethnic presence in such areas as Boomer and “Hunk Hill” in Fayette County. The vast majority of violent episodes occurred within the cultural groups themselves, but ethnocentric-related troubles occasionally surfaced. Ohio-born white miner Perry Christian never anticipated an altercation with “foreigners” leading him to the gallows at Moundsville in 1902. In some cases, women such as Fannie Washington and Annie Kidwell experienced violence: Washington used a firearm to settle a domestic dispute, and an intoxicated Kidwell died from the slice of a straight razor in the hands of her drunken husband.<sup>11</sup>

These representative crimes reflect the reality that the state’s southern coalfields suffered from an abundance of liquor and testosterone and a proliferation of firearms. Future coal-industry official John J. Lincoln recalled that his 1892 trip to the emerging industrial enterprises of McDowell County’s Elkhorn region involved a half-day delay in Pocahontas, Virginia, because a local train delivering alcoholic beverages for coal-mining camps and railroad construction workers blocked the rail line. Lincoln noted the presence of professional gamblers, related an incident involving gunplay, and suggested that “seldom a weekend passed without several shootings and sudden death.” By 1901, the *Fayette Journal* informed its readers that arrests and fines related to discharging or carrying firearms had become so numerous that many such instances escaped the notice of the press. In 1906, Moundsville warden Haddox insisted that smokeless coalfield violence resulted from “the indiscriminate, unregulated sale of adulterated liquors and cocaine, coupled with an equally unregulated and restrained sale and use of firearms.” Although possibly overstated, the warden’s criticism insisted that

“dangerous drugs are freely sold and consumed in immense quantities, low resorts are allowed to ply their nefarious trade almost as a matter of course, and every pay day a reign of terror prevails.”<sup>12</sup>

Whatever the accuracy of Haddox’s assessment, violent confrontations of one sort or another expanded dramatically in the smokeless coalfields and affected every level of state government. Magistrates regularly imposed antipistol laws, and constables often found themselves on the wrong end of firearms. Tragedies evolved from trivial quarrels, and criminal cases involving violence overwhelmed the court system. The trial of Rodgers and Kirk for the killing of James Collins, described in the introduction, proved to be only one of nineteen murder cases on the docket. As early as 1891, the state legislature recognized the strain on the legal system caused by an increase of industrial activity, population, and crime in such counties as Fayette and divided the legal unit into two branches: a criminal court to handle felonies and a circuit court to hear civil cases. The West Virginia State Supreme Court of Appeals soon found it necessary to offer opinions in capital cases involving a vast array of legalities, including complex self-defense arguments based on intoxication or imminent threat. The state’s chief executives also experienced an increased workload due to a dramatic expansion of appeals for commutation of sentences, and Governor Albert B. White found himself accused of allowing too many murderers to escape the gallows.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Penitentiary in 1906, this significant increase in crime in Fayette, McDowell, Mingo, Mercer, and Kanawha counties between 1880 and 1910 could be explained by easy access to liquor, cocaine, and pistols. Homicide accounted for 80 percent of the crimes committed in those five counties, and the board insisted that the murders directly resulted from “the indiscriminate, unregulated sale of adulterated liquors and cocaine, coupled with an equally unregulated and [un]restrained sale and use of fire-arms.”<sup>14</sup>

In the early 1900s, the West Virginia legislature believed it necessary to address this general use of liquor and drugs and the subsequent impact on crime. A prohibition movement had existed in West Virginia since the 1870s, but it had met with little success. The 1906 penitentiary report, coupled with the constant increase in the number of criminals being sentenced to the prison, resulted in a new push to prohibit the sale of liquor and efforts to regulate cocaine. Cocaine had legitimate medical uses, and doctors prescribed the drug to regulate bleeding, control pain, and relieve

other ailments. As with other painkillers, laudanum being a popular one in the United States, a potential for drug abuse plagued those individuals unable to regulate their use of it, and increasing reports surfaced regarding cocaine abuse by persons who consumed it for its euphoric qualities.<sup>15</sup> West Virginia laws placed no legal restrictions on the possession of cocaine and did not require a medical doctor's prescription to purchase the drug. Consequently, unrestricted purchases of cocaine took place in drugstores and even from traveling peddlers in the coalfields. Confronted with the burgeoning crime rate perpetrated by persons intoxicated from drugs and alcohol, the state legislature finally passed a law in 1911 regulating the sale and use of cocaine and in 1912 adopted a resolution allowing voters to endorse a constitutional prohibition amendment that went into effect on July 1, 1914.<sup>16</sup>

Officials realized some success in regulating alcohol and drugs, both contributors to the crime rate, but found it much more difficult to limit the sale and misuse of pistols. West Virginia's 1863 Constitution merely copied the Virginia statute permitting ownership of various weapons, but it forbade the carrying of firearms or dangerous armaments such as dirks and bowie knives. The original edict provided no penalty for violating the law, but over the years the West Virginia legislature had increased the restrictions on carrying weapons and made violation of the law punishable by fines and/or confinement.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the law remained largely ineffective at the turn of the twentieth century because inexpensive pistols could be easily purchased at both company and independent stores in the state.

Although West Virginians continued to carry illegal weapons, evidence suggests that the general population readily reported to authorities anyone they had witnessed breaking the law. In 1904, for instance, a pistol fell from the pocket of intoxicated Bud Thompson as he drove a wagon in Mingo County. William Blair, an innocent bystander, retrieved the weapon and placed it back into Thompson's clothing, but witnesses only saw Blair with the revolver, and the latter incurred the twenty-five-dollar minimum fine. Local justices of the peace often passed judgment as to the seriousness of such offenses and pronounced punishment accordingly. Arthur Clark from Fayette's Laurel Creek, an area increasingly renowned for gunplay, received the maximum year in jail and a two-hundred-dollar fine, while H. P. Tollen in McDowell paid fifty dollars and court costs. Women who carried weapons for protection received sentences under the law as well. Bertha Ferrell's

offense seemed to warrant only the minimum punishment, until Justice H. M. Pauley, offended by her comments, raised the sentence to the maximum allowed by the law.<sup>18</sup>

Even coal-company officials with powerful political connections found themselves reported for violating the pistol law. In 1909, H. H. Pinckney held a position as superintendent of the Price Hill mining complex, an operation within the domain of Fayette County's most powerful coal operator and politico Sam Dixon. Pinckney instructed an employee to retrieve a revolver in order to euthanize a mine mule with a broken leg. Someone later reported that Pinckney had walked home that night with the pistol in his overcoat. The local justice responded with the minimum punishment of a twenty-five-dollar fine, despite the fact that the superintendent held controlling stock in the New River Company and that the town of Price Hill existed as the private property of that corporation. Such events suggest an equal application of the pistol law to coal officials in company-owned towns. In 1910, James K. Laing, a member of one of the earliest coal-entrepreneur families in the smokeless fields, found himself incarcerated for violation of the pistol law. With a revolver in his valise, Laing boarded a train for a return visit to the family home in Craig County, Virginia. At a stopover in the railroad town of Hinton, a witness claimed to have seen the pistol, resulting in Laing receiving a sentence that included a fifty-dollar fine and six months in jail.<sup>19</sup>

Easy access to guns often led to bloodshed. In 1901, James Kearney, following an argument about the ownership of a pair of shoes with fellow Turkey Knob miner and Virginia migrant H. P. Watts, purchased a .38-caliber Iver and Johnson revolver. Heated words resumed when the two met again at their boardinghouse, and Watts invited Kearney to follow him outside to settle the matter. Kearney followed a few paces behind Watts, and the new pistol owner stepped slightly through the door and killed Watts. Two years later, a group of men at Wilcoe in McDowell County instigated an argument with a Hungarian painter. Rather than solve the matter with fists, the group entered the Kelley Creek company store, obtained and loaded a .32-caliber Smith and Wesson, and then walked outside and shot the painter to death.<sup>20</sup>

A substantial market existed for these firearms. Young American males maintained an attraction to weapons, and those seeking economic opportunity in the southern coalfields brought with them a fascination with guns. Historian Thomas D. Clark suggests that the frontier antebellum



Early coal miners staging a gunfight. West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

South had passed down a “spirit of rowdiness and irresponsibility” to the younger southerners of the postwar period and, consequently, that “young men had a love for lethal weapons.” Clark notes that this love affair with weapons did not evolve purely from the period of post–Civil War violence, but also from the colorful stories of life on the Great Plains filtering back across the Mississippi River. Dime novels provided stories of quick-on-the-draw characters and, as such, contributed to the continuation of a cultural love of firearms and admiration for skilled gunmen.

Sociologist Raymond D. Gastil suggests a “predisposition for lethal violence” among southerners, and records indicate that the American South contributed a majority of miners migrating into the early smokeless fields.<sup>21</sup> Among the transitory young males living in the often rugged industrial frontier conditions of early coal camps, a deadly combination developed when a love of firearms, a reverence for “gun-toting,” and a tendency for the physical settlement of quarrels blended with liquor consumption, card-

game excitement, crap shooting, holiday celebrations, and the stimulation of womanizing.

Miners occasionally engaged in actual stereotypical “dime novel” shoot-outs. In April 1902, for instance, black miners James Freeman and Charles Brown argued over a woman with whom they boarded at Rush Run. Supposedly, Brown had “insulted” the boardinghouse proprietor, and Freeman decided to intervene on her behalf. Through mutual agreement, the two men met outside the boardinghouse on a Sunday and conducted a draw-and-fire gunfight resulting in Brown’s death. Special cultural admiration existed for individuals taken by surprise, but who still managed to draw and return fire while falling. Constable John L. Kincaid arrived in the rugged coal camp of Slater to arrest one of two black miners who had engaged in a fight. The officers located black miner Charles Perkins, a notorious individual with previous gunfight credits, near the company store, but he refused to surrender unless Kincaid read the arrest warrant. When the constable turned his head to search his pockets for the warrant, Perkins pulled his pistol and fired point-blank into Kincaid. As the constable fell from a bullet that struck a left rib and glanced down close to his spine, he managed to fire four times at the fleeing Perkins, only to have all four rounds pass through the criminal’s coat instead of his body. Even mining entrepreneur William P. Tams exhibited some esteem for coalfield characters with excellent pistol skills when he referred to a policeman such as Nat Ressler, who had managed to kill an assailant after being mortally wounded.<sup>22</sup>

The apparent rise in crime encouraged many people to carry a weapon whenever traveling in the coalfields. Indeed, by the early twentieth century, many mining communities in Fayette, McDowell, Mingo, and Mercer counties had become dangerous places. In 1909, the *Fayette Journal* reported on an upcoming criminal court term with the headline, “Exceptional Large Docket for *Even* Fayette County.” Those charged with overseeing felons convicted of various malicious assaults also believed it necessary to move about well armed. In 1902, Fayette sheriff Nehemiah Daniel, himself shot and killed by a coal miner at Montgomery two years later, made use of twenty-one guards to escort county prisoners to Moundsville. Prison rules forbade entrance with firearms, and penitentiary officials took charge of thirty-eight revolvers handed over by Daniel’s group. Although a few of the guards arrived unarmed, others carried as many as three pistols.<sup>23</sup>

The proliferation of firearms and the appeal of liquor made taverns in the smokeless coalfields the principal sites of gunplay. Ohio mining expert



Saloon interior at Parral (present-day Summerlee), Fayette County, West Virginia, 1911. West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

Andrew Roy knew well the drunkenness and violence associated with America's early coal industry, and in 1883, he suggested that saloons functioned as “the curse of the coal mines.” The popularity of whiskey among miners became evident with the 1902 announcement that fifty-one saloon keepers had received liquor licenses in Fayette County, most of these situated in the various mining camps. In May 1908, county commissioners in Kanawha County responded to the rash of violence in the “watering holes” along Paint and Cabin creeks by refusing to renew liquor licenses outside the capital city of Charleston. As if to punctuate the necessity of such a move, on the night the license expired for the saloon at the Mammoth coal camp, a second murder within a month occurred when an aged Civil War veteran stepped between armed combatants to protect his son.<sup>24</sup>

Tavern keepers had to be “tough customers” themselves to regularly manage their often intoxicated, gun-toting patrons. George Workman, for example, established a reputation for a willingness to engage in gunplay in Mount Hope, an independent village surrounded by several coal camps.



Workman had been involved in several shooting incidents and been wounded himself during an election riot in 1906. When Workman challenged one-armed Dan Johnson, a fellow business owner, by entering the competing establishment and brandishing a pistol, a policeman convinced him to put away the weapon. Workman turned to leave, but Johnson, concerned that his adversary might return later, shot Workman in the side. Although the bullet lodged dangerously close to his spinal column, and local rumor insisted that this constituted a mortal wound, Workman once again made a surprising recovery.<sup>25</sup>

In many cases, saloon keepers had to deal with an increase of drunken and argumentative patrons during holiday periods. In 1908, Independence Day celebrations in Fayette County's Loop Creek district resulted in the fatal shooting of three tavern customers. Garrett Grigsby, a sixty-year-old farmer and miner, entered the infamous "Red Rabbit" saloon at White Oak and left his dinner pail with one of the bartenders. In the meantime, Jerry Coleman, a Virginia native, took over bartending and informed Grigsby that he had no knowledge of the whereabouts of the dinner pail. Grigsby became boisterous, and a scuffle ensued when Coleman ordered the elderly man to leave. Although versions of the struggle vary, the fight escalated after Coleman struck Grigsby with a pool cue and then shot the elderly man in the stomach. On the same day, white Ashley Allen and black Riley Bailey pulled guns on one another at an African American restaurant and bar in the mining town of Kilsyth. Bailey had the faster hand and was about to kill Allen when the proprietor quickly stepped in to prevent a gun battle. Allen made use of the pause to shoot Bailey and then ran from the establishment, pursued by William Holstein, a Kilsyth police officer. The men fired at each other during the chase, but Allen finally became exhausted and fell. Shortly before his death, Allen insisted that Holstein had shot at him first and fired the final two rounds into him after he had lain down and surrendered.<sup>26</sup>

Shooting affrays among miners on holidays extended beyond saloons, and a pardon for one such case in 1899 at the mining town of Sewell ultimately became an embarrassment for Governor William M. O. Dawson. With the completion of the C & O Railroad in 1873, the Longdale Iron Company began mining operations at Sewell on New River. Industrial activity attracted men with skilled trades, such as Funston Cox, an African American blacksmith from Virginia. In September 1898, Cox pulled a revolver and fired at Special Constable James Tait. Pleading guilty to both



A gaming room in Glen Jean or Thurmond, Fayette County, West Virginia, c. 1910. West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries.

violation of the pistol law and attempted second-degree murder, Cox received six months on a chain gang.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence suggests that Cox regularly exhibited a bad temper, and only a few months after completing his sentence, the twenty-five-year-old blacksmith found himself involved in yet another shooting incident at Sewell. On Independence Day, Cox became embroiled in a dispute with another black miner, and word of a potential gunfight spread through the crowd. Harrison Lusk, a white man who had assumed the role of special constable at the celebration without authority, and a comrade confronted Cox near the railroad, pointed a gun at his head, and told him to raise his hands. Self-proclaimed constable Lusk made no effort to announce himself as a peace officer, and consequently, the blacksmith refused to comply. At that moment shots rang out, and a shooting brawl developed when others joined in the affray. One witness later testified that another African American had fired into the ground near Lusk and that Cox had then opened up with his

revolver. Two fatal bullets entered Lusk, whose brother, standing some distance away, shot Cox in the shoulder and lower leg. Rumors surfaced regarding the killing of a white man, particularly among those who recalled that exactly nine years earlier, black miner John Turner had killed Sol Walker in the Rush Run saloon and a Fayette mob had stormed the jail and lynched him. Although seriously wounded and bedfast for five months, Cox recovered, and a jury in October 1899 recommended a sentence of life imprisonment for first-degree murder rather than execution.<sup>28</sup>

Various petitions on behalf of Cox eventually convinced Governor William M. O. Dawson that the blacksmith had been treated unjustly. In March 1908, the chief executive commuted Cox's sentence to eighteen years' imprisonment and granted him parole for "good time" served, even though the prison record indicated that his behavior had been only "fairly good." Cox's "hot-headed" reputation encouraged the governor to offer him a conditional pardon, which remained in effect only so long as Cox avoided trouble. This concern proved well-founded, because by April 1909, Cox had returned to Fayette, once again violated the law, and then escaped from a chain gang.<sup>29</sup>

Although holidays and payday may have escalated drinking, many miners needed no such excuse to regularly consume large amounts of alcohol. In 1915, Governor Henry Hatfield suggested that the "loss of self control is usually the cause of men getting into trouble." Certainly, alcohol and drugs often generated a loss of self-control in the coalfields, and two particularly horrifying cases exemplify that observation. One such case of crazed intoxication, and probably drug use, occurred in 1901 at Beechwood, a particularly violent New River coal camp located between Quinimont and Thurmond. Ike Young and Ed Tyler visited Thurmond, "the magic city on the river," where they engaged in a day of extensive drinking. Tyler had become quite drunk and had given his revolver to Young on the return trip. Standing in front of the Beechwood Coal and Coke company store, the two began arguing when Young insisted that he did not have six dollars of Tyler's money. A scuffle ensued, and the pistol fell to the ground. Young grabbed it, stepped back, and fired a round into Tyler. Wounded, the young man staggered to the steps of the company store porch and sat down. Witnesses insisted that Young behaved "like a demon," a possible indication that drugs procured in Thurmond had added to his intoxication. Bystanders fled inside the company store as "Demon" Young paced back and forth on the porch and threatened to shoot anyone who interfered. Young contin-

ued his tirade at Tyler, who by this point pleaded, “Don’t shoot me anymore.” Ignoring the appeal, Young placed the muzzle of the weapon against Tyler’s head and pulled the trigger twice, but the pistol misfired. On the third attempt the revolver discharged, killing Tyler instantly. Still crazed, Young fired yet another round into the body and then fled.<sup>30</sup>

Authorities captured Young a few miles from the scene on the following day, and shocked citizens believed his crime warranted a trip to the gallows. Tyler’s family retained Frank H. Brazie to assist the county prosecutor and see justice done, while Young’s appointed defense counsel of three talented attorneys scrambled to avoid a trip to the gallows for their client. The outcome seemed to be a foregone conclusion because even defense witnesses corroborated the state’s evidence. Young’s lawyers could only hope to convince the jury that the intoxicated defendant had lost all control of his faculties and therefore must be found innocent of premeditated murder. Much to the surprise of the general public, the defense maneuver succeeded. After deliberating for an hour, the jury returned with a first-degree murder verdict, but added, “We further find that his punishment be imprisonment in the penitentiary.” Within the legal guidelines of the period, Judge James Dunbar reluctantly abided by the jury’s recommendation, prefacing the life sentence with words that conveyed community shock: “If there ever was a murderer who deserved hanging, you do, for your crime is the cruelest and brutalest that has come before me, as judge of this court.”<sup>31</sup>

Tendencies toward extreme alcohol abuse also contributed to domestic violence in the early coal camps. In 1907 at Royal, situated on the New River, James and Mary Kidwell engaged themselves in a three-day drinking binge in which both “remained in a state of gross intoxication.” At some point during the drunken spree, Kidwell murdered his wife with a straight razor and then insisted that he had no control over his actions because of intoxication-induced insanity. The court disagreed with the argument, but imposed a relatively light sentence of ten years’ imprisonment.<sup>32</sup>

Although historical studies document that mine officials and company-paid peace officers violated laws with impunity during the mine wars, one must not assume that either local or mine officials who attempted to preserve order in and around the early coal camps had full governmental sanction for any of the actions they took. In 1906, a mining superintendent at the Merrimac Coal and Coke Company complex in Mingo County provided mine foreman John Newcome with a .22-caliber pistol and instructed him to investigate a disturbance within the camp. Several rowdies, among

them a petulant drinker named Dock Childers, had terrorized the neighborhood for several hours. Newcome soon found himself not only cursed by Mrs. Childers but also confronted by her approaching husband. Childers kept a hand behind his back, and Newcome naturally feared a pistol might be displayed at any moment. When the angered Childers ignored the foreman's commands to stop, Newcome fired one shot, wounding his assailant in the arm. Without proof that the injured man had been carrying a weapon, the jury found the mine foreman guilty of unlawful wounding, and a two-year penitentiary sentence followed.<sup>33</sup>

In 1902, Constable James Tate, an individual with a solid reputation as a ruffian, learned that peace officers violating laws in the coal camps also risked prosecution. That February, Tate traveled to "Hatcher's Saloon" at Stone Cliff, a camp approximately a mile upriver from Thurmond. At dusk, a group of black miners went outside the bar, where others had involved themselves in a game of dice. Gunfire soon rang out, and Tate and a companion walked outside to investigate the disturbance. Tate's actual role in the battle remains unclear, but Tom Mallery, a black miner dying from his wounds, blamed the constable for the violence. Although Mallery recanted his accusation before he died at the nearby McKendree miners' hospital, Tate went on trial for murder. A combination of blithe behavior, bad luck, and the violent nature of the coal camps sealed the constable's fate: neither Tate nor his habitually intoxicated attorney took the case seriously, the physician who heard Mallery retract his accusation died before the trial, and someone murdered the chief defense witness. Consequently, the jury returned a guilty verdict, and the judge sentenced Tate to life in prison.<sup>34</sup>

Five years later Governor Dawson commuted the charge to second-degree murder and released the constable on a conditional pardon. The *Fayette Journal* referred to Tate as a "well-known character," and unfortunately, within two months of his release, the parolee repaid Dawson's leniency by brandishing a weapon and exhibiting threatening behavior in the Loup Creek region of Fayette. A new governor, William E. Glasscock, received word of Tate's twenty-five-dollar fine and sixty-day incarceration for this most recent escapade and had the hooligan returned to Moundsville to serve out his life sentence for the Mallery murder.<sup>35</sup>

The case of F. P. Thornton indicates that abusive mine guards in the communities also found themselves on the receiving end of a pistol. In the summer of 1903, young Thornton, a Lincoln County native, journeyed by rail to Thurmond for the purposes of settling a personal debt and finding

employment. Unable to secure a position in the railroad town, Thornton moved to the bustling area of Glen Jean and White Oak, where Justus Collins and Samuel Dixon had established rapidly growing mining operations. After landing a job at a sawmill and securing boardinghouse space in Glen Jean, the lad set out to see the town. Fascinated by so much activity, the rural youth roamed the area for quite some time. Thornton realized he needed to answer a call of nature, and a young boy suggested that some nearby unoccupied company buildings might provide the necessary privacy. As Thornton walked toward his destination, mine guard Henry Ball yelled for him to halt. Unfamiliar with company towns and privately hired “police,” Thornton stopped and asked Ball what authority he had to hinder a person’s movements. Ball responded by pushing and punching Thornton. When the guard then raised a club to strike Thornton, the lad fired his revolver, killing Ball instantly.<sup>36</sup>

Justus Collins, a coal operator strongly committed to use of the mine-guard system, hired an attorney to assist the county prosecutor in convicting Thornton of murder. Ball’s father, a practicing attorney in nearby Raleigh County, also joined the legal team in locating and presenting a series of unreliable witnesses to testify against Thornton. Fayette prosecutor Charles W. Ostenton harbored some suspicion that the Collins Coal Company had coerced several citizens into giving false evidence by threatening to terminate their employment. When the jury returned a second-degree murder conviction, Judge Walter R. Bennett confirmed his own concerns about the case by sentencing Thornton to the minimum of five years’ imprisonment. Three years later, Governor Dawson agreed a miscarriage of justice had occurred and granted Thornton a pardon.<sup>37</sup>

Thornton had simply stumbled into trouble, but adolescents beginning an occupation in the coal industry always faced the possibility of violence at the hands of older quarrelsome miners. As experienced trapper boys matured, they often moved up to mule drivers in the coal mines, and Matthew Halstead, a slight youth weighing about 135 pounds, held such a position at the Cherokee mines on Cabin Creek in Kanawha County. Halstead had previously received an injury to his spine and arm from a mining accident, but had continued to work. On July 15, 1905, he joined several of his comrades at a restaurant and saloon to spend the paychecks they had just received. After drinking for a time, Halstead and two companions purchased a watermelon and retired to a nearby building porch to eat it. Charles Massey, a brawny miner notorious for fighting, approached the group and

entered into a bantering conversation. Massey grew angry and lunged toward Halstead, but another man stepped in, only to get the worst of the affray. Still injured from the mining accident, Halstead had little hope of defeating his larger assailant. In desperation, Halstead drew a revolver and killed Massey.<sup>38</sup>

A jury concluded that the youth had fired too quickly and convicted him of second-degree murder. Jurisprudence required that legitimate self-defense cases demonstrate the English-law concept of one being “against the wall”—meaning that bodily harm proved imminent, and no retreat remained open. West Virginia’s pardon attorney argued that Halstead had not met this standard, but recently elected governor William Glasscock disagreed. Instead, the chief executive suggested that a “mere boy of peaceable and quiet disposition” had proved no match for his slain adversary and undoubtedly feared for his life.<sup>39</sup>

Women in the southern coalfields also sometimes resorted to violence in self-defense or as a means of resolving problems. In the mining camp of Carbondale in Fayette County, for example, Fannie Washington spied on her second husband, Clay Washington, whom she believed had impregnated her fifteen-year-old daughter by a previous marriage. Peering through a keyhole, she saw Clay attempting an abortion on the girl and immediately broke open the door. Her husband lunged at her with a knife, and Fannie grabbed a revolver from a table as she fled. According to Washington, her hand struck a flour barrel, causing the weapon to discharge accidentally. Yet when neighbors arrived, she claimed that Clay had abused her and that she had used the gun to make him stop. Authorities ultimately believed Fannie’s version of events and nullified the murder indictment.<sup>40</sup>

Intoxicated males with wages in their pockets presented robbery opportunities for women who came into the coalfields as practitioners of the “oldest profession,” but the methods used for theft sometimes led to murder. In 1898, several black McDowell County women at the “house” of Fannie Johnson conceived a plot to rob African American miner Rhines Foster. After going into a room with Foster, Rose Clark exited and told Lou Griffin, her sixteen-year-old housemate, that the miner appeared to be intoxicated and that another drink could “fix him.” The women placed some morphine in his whiskey, a mixture that made the man senseless, and proceeded to steal twenty-one dollars from his pockets. Unfortunately, an overdose killed the intended robbery victim, and Fannie Johnson and Lou Griffin received lengthy prison terms for murder.<sup>41</sup>

Drugs and alcohol did not always provide the primary catalyst for violence in coal camps. Perceived verbal affronts also led to deadly confrontations. One such case occurred in the Laurel Creek district of Fayette County in 1899, when black miner Lud Madison murdered one of his three shanty mates, Peter Suader. Madison and Suader sat playing checkers until bedtime. As the men prepared to retire, Suader asked for a piece of bread, and Madison responded by telling him to cook his own bread. As the bantering continued, Suader escalated its seriousness by using profanity toward his adversary. Madison's temper flared as he warned his roommate not to swear at him, and Suader casually informed his opponent, “Don't take it then if you don't like it.” Madison left for nearly an hour, returned armed, and shot and killed the sleeping Suader. Authorities captured Virginia native Madison later that night as he traveled south along the C & O Railroad line in Summers County. His only explanation for the crime centered on a determination not to allow anyone to curse him. Only twenty-four years old, Madison received the death sentence in October 1899, but two years later Governor White commuted his punishment to life in prison.<sup>42</sup>

Any miner committing such a crime could not automatically trust on the clemency of the chief executive. Almost two years after Madison's episode, intoxicated Perry Christian, a white miner from Ohio, and a gang of rowdy drunken companions became involved in an argument with George Dent, a well-regarded citizen in the Fayette County coal town of Boomer. Dent broke away from the clutches of one of the ruffians and ran, but Christian pulled a revolver, fired four times, and hit the fleeing man twice in the back. Dent fell dead, and Christian fled to the woods, but local authorities used hounds to track and capture him.<sup>43</sup>

Boomer citizens became enraged at the murder. Not only did the community recoil at such an attack on a fifty-five-year-old man, but it also noted that Dent had left behind four children and been shot in the back. Christian's reputable Ohio family sent an attorney who assembled a legal team to defend him, but he was convicted. A Fayette judge passed a death sentence, and by April 1902, the state's pardon attorney refused to recommend clemency to the governor. After three reprieves, Christian's execution took place at Moundsville on June 13, 1902.<sup>44</sup>

These incidents indicate that it is no longer adequate to view violence in the smokeless coalfields only within the context of a struggle between management and labor. Powerful political and economical forces did compel strik-



ing miners to adopt physical confrontation in an effort to preserve their rights and make themselves heard at governmental levels. Yet as has been shown, hostilities existed as a common occurrence in early coal camps, and “hot-headed” individuals already experienced in violent reprisals later served on the strike lines of the Paint Creek–Cabin Creek and Logan County mine wars.

Similar to people in boom towns elsewhere in the national experience, southern West Virginia coal miners assaulted and killed one another for a variety of perceived causes, but most often as a consequence of motivations confused by intoxication of one sort or another. In various camps, inebriated men shot one another over arguments related to card games or because of disagreements over such trivial matters as ownership of a pair of shoes. Quarrels regarding the affections of women turned into gun battles along railroad tracks or in saloons.<sup>45</sup> To be sure, more miners died in the dangerous world of the underground coal mines working “faces,” but a precarious life also existed for those who went about armed and intoxicated.

Some historians suggest that drinking in these early coalfields served an important social purpose; in their view, limiting access to alcohol or other substances functioned as a form of social control imposed on residents by “paternalistic” or arrogant mine owners. Perhaps, but early coal operators did have to confront a serious social problem. These rural-industrial settings overwhelmed the capabilities of local infrastructures and resulted in some early coal camps resembling lawless zones of liquor, drugs, and gunplay. Most dockets of a Fayette criminal court term represented more shooting deaths than those deaths stemming from the infamous strike-oriented Matewan Massacre. Quite simply, many coal camps in West Virginia’s smokeless coalfields, particularly Fayette and McDowell, constituted a dangerous industrial frontier.

## Notes

The authors wish to express their deepest appreciation to Cathy Miller, the West Virginia State Archives, Daniel Wright, the Fayette County circuit clerk, and Kathy Sizemore from the Records Department at Mount Olive Correctional Complex for the valuable and cheerful assistance in locating records for this project.

1. *Fayette Journal* (Fayetteville, WV), Feb. 28, May 2, 1901; Fayette County Criminal Court Records, envelope #4890, Fayette County Courthouse, Fayetteville, WV.

2. Roger D. McGrath, *Gunfighters, Highwaymen, and Vigilantes: Violence on*

*the Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 255; William P. Tams Jr., *Smokeless Coal Fields of West Virginia: A Brief History* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1963), 58. Rush Run’s designation as a “rough place” has long resided in the collective memory of the local population. Coauthor Rakes, born in the vicinity of then all-but-deserted Rush Run, often heard “tall tales” from older coal-mining relatives regarding the camp’s reputation.

3. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), xiv–xv; Priscilla Long, “The 1913–1914 Colorado Fuel and Iron Strike, with Reflections on the Causes of Coal-Strike Violence,” in *The United Mine Workers of America: A Model of Industrial Solidarity?* ed. John H. M. Laslett (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 345–70; Price Fishback, “An Alternative View of Violence in Labor Disputes in the Early 1900s: The Bituminous Coal Industry, 1890–1930,” *Labor History* 36 (Summer 1995): 426–56.

4. Paul H. Rakes, “A Combat Scenario: Early Coal Mining and the Culture of Danger,” in *Culture, Class and Politics in Modern Appalachia: Essays in Honor of Ronald L. Lewis*, ed. Jennifer Egoft, Ken Fones-Wolf, and Louis C. Martin (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2009), 69. For a description of the coal handloader’s work, see Keith Dix, *Work Relations in the Coal Industry: The Hand-Loading Era, 1880–1930* (Morgantown: Institute for Labor Studies, 1977), 8–14; and Tams, *Smokeless Coal Fields*, 34–40.

5. The sixteen counties used for comparison include Boone, Brooke, Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Jackson, Lewis, Pleasants, Morgan, Mason, Pendleton, Putnam, and Roane.

6. West Virginia, *Biennial Report of the Board of Directors and the Warden of the West Virginia Penitentiary for the Years 1903–1904* (Charleston: Tribune Printing Co., 1904), 10; West Virginia, *West Virginia Penitentiary Report, 1905–1906* (Charleston: Tribune Printing Co., 1906), 10.

7. Although one could argue that this figure is somewhat distorted because executions of violent criminals occurred at the county level until 1899, inclusion of those executed or lynched in either Fayette or McDowell barely influences the overall ratio of increase in crime.

8. West Virginia, *West Virginia Penitentiary Report, 1878–1880* (Wheeling: W. J. Johnston, 1881), 29; West Virginia, *West Virginia Penitentiary Report, 1881–1882* (Wheeling: W. J. Johnston, 1882), 72–73; *West Virginia Penitentiary Report, 1905–1906*, 9.

9. Nativity percentages computed from West Virginia, *West Virginia Penitentiary Report, 1889–1890* (Charleston: Moses Donnally, 1890), 64; and West Virginia, *West Virginia Penitentiary Report, 1907–1908* (Charleston: Tribune Printing Co., 1908), 40.

10. Randall Gene Lawrence, “Appalachian Metamorphosis: Industrializing

Society on the Central Appalachian Plateau, 1860–1913” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1983), 34–42; Paul H. Rakes, “Technology in Transition: The Dilemmas of Early Twentieth-Century Coal Mining,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 5 (Spring 1999): 29; Charles Kenneth Sullivan, *Coal Men and Coal Towns: Development of the Smokeless Coalfields of Southern West Virginia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 155–57, 169; “State v. Madison,” in *West Virginia Reports, 1901* (Charleston: Daily Mail Publishing Company, 1902), vol. 49, 97; *Fayette Journal*, Apr. 4, 1901.

11. Jerry Bruce Thomas, “Coal Country: The Rise of the Southern Smokeless Coal Industry and Its Effect on Area Development” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1971), 78–79; West Virginia, *Annual Report, West Virginia Department of Mines, 1900* (Charleston, 1900); figures taken from 1900 and 1910 U.S. Census for West Virginia; Fred Barkey, “Here Come the Boomer ‘Talys’: Italian Immigrants and Industrial Conflict in the Upper Kanawha Valley, 1902–1917,” in *Transnational West Virginia*, ed. Ronald L. Lewis and Ken Fones-Wolf (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2002), 164; *Fayette Journal*, Feb. 28, Mar. 28, 1901, May 22, 1902; Fayette County Criminal Court Records, envelope #1938; West Virginia, *Journal of the Senate, 1909*, appendix B, 54–57; *Logansport (IN) Morning Journal*, June 14, 1902; “State v. Kidwell,” in *West Virginia Reports, 1907* (Morgantown: Acme Publishing Company, 1908), vol. 62, 466–75.

12. “A Busy Time in McDowell History: Looking Back with John J. Lincoln,” comp. Stuart McGehee, *Goldenseal* 15 (Fall 1989): 57–60; *Fayette Journal*, Apr. 4, 1901; *West Virginia Penitentiary Report, 1905–1906*, 10.

13. *Fayette Journal*, Apr. 4, 1901; George W. Atkinson, ed., *Bench and Bar of West Virginia* (Charleston: Virginian Law Book Company, 1919), xxviii; J. T. Peters and H. B. Carden, *History of Fayette County West Virginia* (Charleston: Jarrett Printing Company, 1926), 354; “State v. Dillard,” in *West Virginia Reports, 1906* (Morgantown: Acme Publishing, 1906), vol. 59, 197–204; Albert B. White to Editor News, Jan. 4, 1902, in *Public Addresses of Albert Blakeslee White, Including Proclamations and Other Official Papers* (Charleston: Tribune Printing Co., 1905), 48.

14. West Virginia, *Biennial Report of the Board of Directors and Warden of the West Virginia Penitentiary* (Charleston: Tribune Printing Company, 1906), 10.

15. For examples of drug abuse reported in local newspapers, see *Beckley (WV) Messenger*, July 22, 1910, *Bluefield (WV) Daily Telegraph*, Jan. 21, Oct. 17, 1912; *Beckley (WV) Raleigh Herald*, Aug. 9, 1906, May 30, 1907, Jan. 9, 1908.

16. West Virginia, *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia, 1911* (Charleston: Union Publishing Company, 1911), 46–48; *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, Mar. 21, 1912; Fred O. Blue, *When a State Goes Dry* (Westerville, OH: American Issue Publishing Company, 1916), 35–36; Kenneth R. Bailey, *Alleged Evil Genius: The Life and Times of James H. Ferguson* (Charleston: Quarrier Press, 2006), 97–98.

17. James W. McNeely, “The Right of Who to Bear What, When and Where—West Virginia Firearms Law vs. the Right to Bear Arms Amendment,” *West Virginia Law Review* 89 (1987): 1125.

18. *Fayette Journal*, July 23, 1908, Mar. 25, 1909; West Virginia, *Senate Journal*, 1907, appendix A, 104; West Virginia Secretary of State’s Office: Pardons and Paroles, AR 1561, West Virginia State Archives; *Senate Journal*, 1909, appendix B, 106–7.

19. West Virginia, *Senate Journal*, 1911, appendix C, 110–11, 124–25.

20. *Beckley Raleigh Herald*, Dec. 24, 1908; *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, June 6, 1903. The Kelley Creek Company store manager claimed the men took the pistol without his consent. Yet even if one accepts the manager’s effort to avoid implication, the fact remains that the men could have purchased the weapon and rounds in little more time than it took to grab and load it.

21. Thomas D. Clark, “A Little Bit of Santa Claus,” in *Appalachian Christmas Stories*, ed. James M. Gifford, Owen B. Nance, and Patricia Hall (Ashland, KY: Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1997), 52–76; Raymond D. Gastil, “Homicide and a Regional Culture of Violence,” *American Sociological Review* 36 (June 1971): 412; West Virginia, *Annual Report*, 1900.

22. *Fayette Journal*, May 1, 23, 1902; Tams, *Smokeless Coal Fields*, 59–60. Local rumors insisted that all four of Kincaid’s rounds passed through the right breast area of Perkins’s coat and that the criminal only cheated death by wearing a metal breastplate.

23. *Fayette Journal*, May 22, 1902, Apr. 15, 1909 (my emphasis); Anonymous (“A Virginia Lad”), *Sodom and Gomorrah of Today or the History of Keystone West Virginia* (n.p., 1912), West Virginia State Archives; *Fayette Journal*, May 22, 1902; *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 2, 1903; Shirley Donnelly, *Historical Notes on Fayette County, W. Va.* (privately printed, 1958), 135–36.

24. Andrew Roy, quoted in Robert F. Munn, “The Development of Model Towns in the Bituminous Coal Fields,” *West Virginia History* 40 (Spring 1979): 245; *Fayette Journal*, May 1, 1902, May 7, 1908.

25. *Fayette Journal*, Aug. 6, 13, 1908.

26. West Virginia, *Senate Journal*, 1911, appendix C, 72–73; *Fayette Journal*, July 9, 1908.

27. Peters and Cardin, *History of Fayette County*, 618; Fayette County, 1900 Census; Indictments of Funston Cox, Oct. 1898 and 1899, Fayette County Criminal Court Records, file 4890. Limited records make it difficult to determine whether the above James “Tait” is the same constable later referred to as the James “Tate” who received a sentence for killing a black miner at Stonecliff, on New River, in 1902. Records do suggest Tate’s role as a rather notorious character, showing up in many incidents along New River, and he may well have changed the spelling to avoid legal attention.

28. West Virginia, *Senate Journal, 1909*, appendix B, 54–55; Criminal Court Indictments, file 1938, Fayette Circuit Clerk Records; *Sandusky (OH) Star*, July 5, 1899.

29. West Virginia, *Senate Journal, 1909*, appendix B, 54–55; *Fayette Journal*, Apr. 29, 1909. Cox cannot be located in any West Virginia records following his 1909 escape from the chain gang. It is probable that he managed to elude authorities and relocated elsewhere, possibly under another name.

30. Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion*, 35–38; Henry D. Hatfield, *First Biennial Message of Governor Hatfield to the Legislature of 1915* (Charleston: State of West Virginia, 1915), 59; *Fayette Journal*, May 9, 1901; John Cavalier, *Panorama of Fayette County* (Parsons, WV: McClain Printing Co., 1985), 424.

31. *Fayette Journal*, May 9, 1901; Fayette County Criminal Court Records, envelope #9567; West Virginia, *Senate Journal, 1909*, appendix B, 81–82. Youthful attorney Frank H. Brazie, son of a former Fayette judge, joined the violent tendencies of the era when he got into a scuffle with an older man and then shot and killed a farmer who tried to intercede in the fight. Brazie managed to avoid conviction and later became a member of the West Virginia legislature and a leader in the county's Republican Party. See Fayette County Criminal Court Records, envelope #1030. This talented team included two future judges, John Wesley Eary and Edward G. Pierson, along with black attorney and state legislator J. M. Ellis. See Peters and Cardin, *Fayette County, 354–62*; and John T. Harris, ed., *West Virginia Legislative Hand Book and Manual and Official Register* (Charleston: Tribune Printing Co., 1916), 721.

32. Sullivan, *Coal Men and Coal Towns*, 96; “State v. Kidwell,” in *West Virginia Reports, 1907*, vol. 62, 466–75.

33. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 114–16; Richard D. Lunt, *Law and Order vs. the Miners: West Virginia, 1906–1933* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1979), 155–56; Ronald L. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict, 1780–1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 158–60; *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1909*, appendix B, 22–23. Seven months' incarceration, coupled with new information indicating that Childers had indeed been armed, convinced Governor Dawson that justice had been served, and he pardoned Newcome.

34. *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1909*, appendix B, 33–35.

35. West Virginia Secretary of State Pardons and Paroles, AR 1562, West Virginia State Archives; *Fayette Journal*, Apr. 9, 22, 1909.

36. *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1907*, appendix A, 39–40.

37. Thomas, “Coal Country,” 262–64; *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1907*, appendix A, 39–40; Fayette County Criminal Court Records, envelope #8483; Fayette County Census, 1900; *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1907*, 40–41. The only reason Thornton had the pistol on him was because of his unsuccessful effort

to use it to pay off a debt. Accordingly, the county nullified the pistol-law charge against him.

38. West Virginia, *Annual Report of the Department of Mines, 1912* (Charleston: Union Publishing Company, 1912), 360–61; *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1911*, appendix C, 28–29. “Trappers” opened and closed critical ventilation “trap doors” to allow the passage of loaded and unloaded underground coal cars.

39. *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1911*, appendix C, 29–30. For a study of the influence of firearms and the American frontier on the transition from the English “back-to-the-wall” legal concept into the U.S. right-to-defend-oneself, see Richard Maxwell Brown, *No Duty to Retreat: Violence and Values in American History and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

40. *Fayette Journal*, May 22, 1902, Aug. 20, 1908; Fayette County Criminal Court Records, envelope #8951.

41. Governor Albert B. White, Commutation of Sentence, Fannie Johnson, Dec. 24, 1904, West Virginia Secretary of State Pardons and Parole Papers, AR 1562, West Virginia State Archives; *West Virginia Senate Journal, 1907*, appendix A, 69–71. Governor Albert White pardoned Griffin in 1905 because he believed she had not been the principal perpetrator and had been convicted on the testimony of the truly guilty party, Rose Clark. Fannie Johnson received a pardon in 1904 because White thought the sentence excessive, and the governor suspected that other parties present at the house were primarily responsible for the crime.

42. *Fayette Journal*, Apr. 11, 1901; “State v. Madison,” in *West Virginia Reports, 1901*, vol. 49, 97–99; Information Card, Lud Madison, No. 3773, Records Department, Mount Olive Correctional Complex; Albert B. White, Executive Proclamation, Dec. 20, 1901, West Virginia Secretary of State’s Pardon and Parole Papers, AR 1562, West Virginia State Archives.

43. *Fayette Journal*, Mar. 28, 1901, Apr. 24, 1902.

44. *Fayette Journal*, Apr. 11, 1902; *Logansport Morning Journal*, June 14, 1902.

45. William Taylor Pardon, Apr. 23, 1902, West Virginia Secretary of State’s Pardon and Parole Papers, AR 1562, West Virginia State Archives; *Fayette Journal*, Mar. 21, 1901, Apr. 17, May 8, 1902.

## Chapter 12

# “The Largest Manhunt in Western North Carolina’s History”

## The Story of Broadus Miller

*Kevin W. Young*

“In the heart of an uncharted range of mountains with a crippled bloodhound following the scent with gasping choking sobs, the Negro, sought unrelentingly for five days, tonight was believed near exhaustion.” Thus, in the summer of 1927, a correspondent for the *Raleigh News and Observer* reported the latest news from a manhunt in western North Carolina, where hundreds of armed pursuers hunted a twenty-three-year-old man. Accused of murdering a young girl in the foothills town of Morganton, Broadus Miller had fled west, up the Johns River and into the mountains. For nearly two weeks, the hunt for Miller attracted great attention throughout North Carolina and beyond. Newspapers as far away as California covered the case, which Morganton resident and future U.S. senator Sam Ervin Jr. later described as “the largest manhunt in western North Carolina’s history.” Contemporary press coverage emphasized the manhunt’s mountainous setting, but the case originated—and concluded—far from the mountain woods.<sup>1</sup>

The story of the 1927 manhunt begins at the turn of the century in Greenwood County, South Carolina, in the cotton-producing flatlands of the western Piedmont. Formed in 1897 from Abbeville and Edgefield counties, Greenwood County had a population of nearly thirty thousand people, two-thirds of whom were African Americans. These former slaves and their descendants toiled in the local cotton fields, while the region’s white minority maintained political power by force. The year following the county’s creation, the election of November 1898 precipitated widespread violence throughout many parts of the South. In the most noted of these incidents, armed white supremacists in Wilmington, North Carolina, over-

threw the democratically elected, racially integrated city government, then swept through the city’s African American neighborhoods, killing several people and causing hundreds more to flee north. The same week as the Wilmington massacre, Democrats clashed with African Americans attempting to vote in Phoenix, a small community in southern Greenwood County. The fight at Phoenix sparked a weeklong reign of terror in which white supremacists murdered at least eight people. In the wake of the killings, the *Greenwood Index* warned local African Americans “to keep out of politics,” declaring that “our civilization won’t allow us to entertain any thought of the negro taking a part in a white man’s realm.”<sup>2</sup>

Born about 1904 and orphaned at an early age, Broadus Miller grew up with his three siblings in the household of their uncle and aunt, Thomas and Alpha Walker. The Walkers were tenant farmers in northern Greenwood County, in a region where lynchings and other forms of violence were common. Two years after Miller was born, a local mob—comprised of both whites and blacks—seized an accused rapist named Bob “Snowball” Davis, an African American man who had allegedly assaulted women of both races. The mob tied Davis to a tree and killed him in a volley of gunfire. In October 1911, a gruesome lynching spectacle took place in the community of Honea Path, where a mob led by Joshua Ashley, a member of the South Carolina General Assembly, captured a young African American accused of raping a white girl. Several thousand people, including the editor of the local newspaper, traveled to the scene to watch Ashley and his companions hang Willis Jackson—still alive and pleading for mercy—upside down from a telephone pole, then riddle his body with gunfire. After killing the teenager, members of the mob cut off Jackson’s fingers to keep as souvenirs.<sup>3</sup>

Broadus Miller would have been about seven years old when the mob killed Willis Jackson at Honea Path, which was only a few miles north of Miller’s home. When Miller was around thirteen years old, a mob in neighboring Abbeville County lynched Anthony Crawford, one of South Carolina’s most prosperous and successful African American farmers. Crawford owned over four hundred acres of prime cotton fields, but after quarrelling over cotton prices with an Abbeville shopkeeper, he was placed in the local jail. Two hundred men stormed the jail and dragged the wealthy farmer through the streets to a public fairground, where they hanged him and then fired volleys of gunfire into his body. In the words of historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage, the killing was a case of “an affluent black man being lynched for what can only be described as the status envy of whites,” and the mes-



sage of the lynching was clear: "If it happened to Anthony Crawford, it could happen to anybody."<sup>4</sup>

By the time he was a teenager, Broadus Miller was working as a hired farm laborer. But in early 1921, at the age of about seventeen, he left his uncle and aunt's home and moved to the nearby city of Anderson, probably searching for employment. There he took up residence in a row of boardinghouses at the corner of West Market and South Main streets, the center of an African American neighborhood in downtown Anderson. A middle-aged woman named Essie Walker, listed on census records as a "mulatto" and possibly a relative of Miller, worked as the landlady at one of these houses. On the night of Sunday, May 1, 1921, Essie Walker's young son stumbled over something in the boardinghouse's pitch-dark hallway. Fetching a light, he returned to discover a horrific scene. The walls of the hallway "were spattered with blood." On the floor lay his mother's body, her head crushed by multiple blows from a baseball bat and a bullet wound in her chest. In an adjacent boardinghouse police found and arrested Broadus Miller, who had "bloodstains all over his clothes." Taken to the Anderson jail and "put through the third degree," he "broke down and confessed his guilt."<sup>5</sup>

Judge George E. Prince presided over Miller's trial. In his mid-sixties, Prince had played a prominent role in Anderson County civic affairs for several decades, first as an attorney and then as a judge, and he had fervently championed public education and other progressive causes. "It has been brought to my attention," the judge noted two weeks after Miller's arrest, "that there is some doubt as to the defendant's sanity." He therefore appointed Dr. Anne Young to examine Broadus Miller and determine whether he was sane. A graduate of Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia—the first American medical school for women—Dr. Young was "the only trained psychiatrist in upper South Carolina" and had previously served for three years on the staff of the state Hospital for the Insane in Columbia. After examining Miller, she would testify that he "was not normal mentally, and was irresponsible for the crime." Following Dr. Young's testimony, the case against Miller ended in a mistrial and the prosecution and defense agreed to a plea bargain: In exchange for pleading guilty to killing Essie Walker, Miller would serve three years in the South Carolina State Penitentiary. Located in Columbia, the severely crowded and poorly run penitentiary held some five hundred inmates, far more than its intended capacity. Guards subjected prisoners to random beatings, while in-

mates were forced to share small cells—designed to hold only one person—and sleep together in one-man cots.<sup>6</sup>

While Broadus Miller was in prison, his uncle and aunt moved away from Greenwood County. Thomas and Alpha Walker were part of a massive 1920s exodus of African Americans from South Carolina. At the beginning of the decade, the boll weevil devastated the state’s cotton fields, destroying the livelihood of tenant farmers like the Walkers. Following the dismal 1922 harvest, over fifty thousand African American farmers left the state and headed north; by the end of the decade, more than two hundred thousand were gone. Like many of their fellow emigrants, the Walkers moved to Asheville, the largest city in western North Carolina, one hundred miles north of Greenwood County. The city was experiencing a real estate and construction boom; Thomas Walker found work as a construction worker, while his wife took a job as a maid. Upon his release from prison in February 1924, their nephew Broadus Miller rejoined them in Asheville. Soon after arriving, Miller wed eighteen-year-old Mamie Wadlington, who—like Miller and his relatives—had recently arrived in the city from South Carolina. The newly married couple took up residence in a tenement house in a downtown African American neighborhood known as the Block.<sup>7</sup>

By the mid-1920s, several thousand African Americans had moved from South Carolina to Asheville, alarming many of the city’s white residents and prompting a backlash from local authorities. Just three weeks after the Millers were married, Buncombe County commissioners ordered the racial segregation of water fountains on downtown Pack Square. The following year, in the late summer and fall of 1925, a series of alleged sexual assaults created an atmosphere of mass hysteria in the city. Described by the *Asheville Citizen* as “a sordid saturnalia of bestial ravishment,” the alleged assaults began in August, when a woman claimed to have been attacked by a black man on Sunset Mountain. In September and October, further rape accusations led to the arrests of Alvin Mansel and Preston Neely, recent immigrants from South Carolina. After Mansel’s arrest, a mob of several hundred men ransacked the Buncombe County jail, seeking to find and lynch the prisoner, but the sheriff had already transferred him to Charlotte for safekeeping.<sup>8</sup>

During the first week of November 1925, authorities transported Mansel and Neely back to Asheville to stand trial. To deter any further mob violence, state officials deployed National Guard troops to the city, where one

detachment stood guard in the courtroom “with their Springfield rifles at a business-like angle, attracting much attention and sending a chill over the throng.” The only evidence against the two defendants was the testimony of the alleged victims, filled with inconsistencies and outright contradictions, while both men had solid alibis, supported by numerous witnesses, for the times of the alleged assaults. Nevertheless, a jury quickly convicted the hapless Alvin Mansel, who was then sentenced to death. Two days later a second jury stunned the courtroom audience by acquitting Preston Neely. Fifty troops with fixed bayonets hurriedly rushed Neely out of the courthouse and to a waiting convoy of police cars, which then sped south through Hendersonville and released Neely at an undisclosed location in South Carolina. Though acquitted of rape, Preston Neely had been both literally and figuratively driven out of Asheville and back to his native state.<sup>9</sup>

At the peak of public hysteria over the rape allegations, the *Asheville Citizen* published an editorial addressed to the city’s African American community. The editorial concluded with an ominous ultimatum: “There must be no other assault on a white woman by a Negro—one more and peril will stare you in the face—a fearful peril. It will be no respecter of persons—the powers and influences which have restrained it will no longer avail.” Alarmed at what they termed the *Citizen’s* “general negro-baiting tendency,” some African American residents spoke to a *Citizen* reporter and attempted to draw a distinction between themselves and recent immigrants from South Carolina:

These newcomers, in large measure, are of the so-called “boll weevil” type. They were brought to Asheville by construction workers to aid in the gigantic developments that have called for hordes of robust day laborers. The creation of the white man’s residential paradise, the miracle of forming new business districts of accessibility and adequacy, the erection of factories and the placing of machinery in an industrial revival have required men of muscle. They have arrived in multitudes. . . .

Many of these strange negroes have been picking cotton and hoeing corn in the flat lands with a month’s earning absorbed by a month’s appetite, with overseers ruthless and unscrupulous. Suddenly transplanted to a tolerant [*sic*] city like Asheville, they have shown a tendency to run riot and have exercised a bad influence on their fellows. With pockets bulging with money, they have made possible

such dives and rendezvous as exert a wicked sway. The Asheville negro can not disclaim a certain racial responsibility for them but neither can he assume a personal guarantee of their good behavior, especially since he had nothing to do with bringing them here

At least some of these recent immigrants drifted back and forth between Asheville and their native South Carolina, desperately pursuing any opportunity to earn money. At some point in 1925, Broadus Miller returned to Greenwood County, where in March of the following year he pled guilty to housebreaking and larceny. Freed from a county chain gang after serving ten months at hard labor, Miller traveled back to Asheville, where in the spring of 1927 contractor Dante Martin hired him as a manual laborer for a construction project in Morganton, a town in the Blue Ridge foothills some sixty miles to the east.<sup>10</sup>

The county seat of Burke County, Morganton in the 1920s had a population of over five thousand people. In the center of town stood a handsome two-story stone courthouse, nearly a century old, surrounded by a large grassy lawn and a bustling downtown with wide sidewalks, well-lit streets, and brick office buildings and shops. Many of the town’s residents worked in three local furniture factories, while on East Union Street, only a few minutes’ walk from the courthouse square, businessman Francis Garrou had established a knitting mill that employed several dozen women and girls.<sup>11</sup>

Slaves had accounted for over a quarter of Burke County’s antebellum population. In the decades following the Civil War, race relations in Morganton had been fraught with tension and occasional violence, and by 1927 nearly 90 percent of Morganton’s residents were white. In 1884, hundreds of whites and blacks fought one another with rocks and sticks on the Morganton courthouse square, while during the violent November 1898 election, white residents of the town warned African Americans that if they attempted to vote, they would be shot. In April 1925, an incident at Morganton’s School for the Deaf brought racial tensions in the town to a head once again. A native of Florida, Arthur Montague moved to Morganton in the spring of 1925 and found work as a substitute cook at the school, which also provided him room and board. On the evening of April 23, Montague attended a dance and got blind drunk. Returning to the school late that night, he broke into a dormitory and entered the room of a fourteen-year-old deaf girl. The following morning he was found passed out in her bed;

doctors examined the girl and declared she had been raped. In order to prevent a lynching, law-enforcement officials immediately rushed the accused rapist to the state prison in Raleigh, bringing him back to Morganton three weeks later to stand trial. Following a one-day trial and jury deliberations lasting seven minutes, Montague was convicted and sentenced to death.<sup>12</sup>

The Montague case outraged many Morganton residents. After indicting Montague for the crime, the grand jury issued a written statement to the press: "We, the grand jury, desire to recommend that the two State institutions located in Burke county, that is the State Hospital and the School for the Deaf, not employ in or around the buildings of said institutions any colored help." An extended appeals process delayed Montague's execution for eight months, leading *Morganton News-Herald* editor Beatrice Cobb to suggest that a lynching would have been preferable to any judicial delay. The alleged victim had been a boarding student from the eastern part of the state, "If she had been the daughter of a local citizen," Cobb declared, "the situation would have never been allowed to reach its present state."<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of June 1927, just two years after the Montague case, Asheville contractor Dante Martin and his crew of African American laborers arrived in Morganton. Broadus Miller's wife accompanied her husband. The Millers took up residence in Will Berry's boardinghouse on Bouchelle Street, which ran west from the center of town to its rural outskirts, and whose scattered houses formed a predominantly African American neighborhood. Several blocks away, at 410 West Union Street, Miller and the other laborers began work at the construction site, digging the foundations for a large granite house. Homeowner Franklin Pierce Tate was the son of a Confederate colonel and one of Morganton's most socially prominent residents. Tate held a variety of corporate offices, serving as a bank director, president of an insurance agency, and a member of Garrou Knitting Mill's board of directors.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time as Dante Martin's work crew began construction on Tate's house, Garrou Knitting Mill hired a fifteen-year-old girl named Gladys Kincaid. Born in 1912, Kincaid had grown up on a farm near Chesterfield, a small rural community a few miles north of Morganton. When her father died of influenza in early 1923, he left a widowed wife and eight children who struggled to make ends meet. Within a few years they abandoned their rural home and moved in with Mrs. Kincaid's brother, who lived in a farmhouse near the Catawba River, on the western outskirts of

town. A slender girl with long black hair, Gladys Kincaid was quiet and shy; many years later, a former schoolteacher described her as “something of a dreamer, gazing often with unseeing eyes beyond persons and objects within her immediate presence.” Because of her family’s financial circumstances, she had to quit school and begin working ten-hour days in the mill. Her daily mile-and-a-half walk to work led along Bouchelle Street—and past the boardinghouse in which Broadus Miller had taken up residence. Boarders in the house frequently spent their evenings sitting and talking on the front porch facing the street, and over the first three weeks in June, Miller allegedly began to watch Kincaid closely as she walked by the boardinghouse in the evenings on her way home from work.<sup>15</sup>

On Tuesday, June 21, Broadus Miller finished work at the construction site at four-thirty in the afternoon, then ate supper at the boardinghouse around five o’clock. At five-thirty, Gladys Kincaid’s shift at the knitting mill ended, and she began her walk home. The sky was overcast and later that evening it would begin to rain. Halfway between Miller’s boardinghouse and the Kincaid home lived the Whisenant family. Gladys briefly stopped to speak with Ida Whisenant, who was outside in her yard with her children. Whisenant invited the girl to stay for supper, but Kincaid’s mother was out working in the fields and expected Gladys to cook the family’s evening meal. “No, I must go on home,” Kincaid told Whisenant. “I am very tired.” Around the time of her conversation with Kincaid, Whisenant noticed an African American man walking along the road. He wore a yellow raincoat and held a short iron pipe in his hand.<sup>16</sup>

When Kincaid’s mother came home shortly after six-thirty, she found dinner uncooked and her daughter not there, so the worried family began searching for the missing girl. About five hundred yards from the Whisenants’ house, one of Kincaid’s brothers heard a groan and discovered his sister lying unconscious in the bushes beside the road, with her skull crushed and a bloody iron pipe lying on the ground nearby. She never regained consciousness and died later that night in Morganton’s Grace Hospital. Burke County sheriff John Julius “Jules” Hallyburton would head the police investigation of the attack on Kincaid, while thirty-year-old attorney Sam Ervin Jr. served as the sheriff’s legal counsel. Police soon identified Broadus Miller as the man whom Mrs. Whisenant had seen. When officers arrived at Miller’s boardinghouse residence, only a few hundred yards up the road from the Whisenants’ home, the suspect had vanished. His wife said that she had spent the evening outside on the street, watching as people

rushed to the scene where the girl's body had been found, and she had not seen her husband. Upon searching the boardinghouse, detectives found that some items of clothes had been taken from Miller's room. They also discovered the suspect's raincoat hidden behind a door. The raincoat was spattered with wet bloodstains.<sup>17</sup>

News of the assault on Kincaid quickly spread through Morganton, causing hundreds of townspeople to begin furiously searching for the suspect. Police took Miller's wife and boardinghouse owner Will Berry into custody as material witnesses—and to guard them from the angry crowds. That night a journalist for the *Raleigh News and Observer* drove to Morganton and found the town in an uproar. "Two thousand men went wild," he reported. "Armed with every sort of weapon from ancient squirrel rifles to the latest automatic, they beat about the streets here, pried the alleys, backyards and every conceivable hiding place, and then lay a dragnet far out into the hills." Carloads of men cruised Bouchelle Street yelling racial epithets at the street's African American residents, who armed themselves and prepared to defend their homes. During the first frenzied hours of the search, any African American man in Morganton ran the risk of being mistaken for the accused killer. In the southern end of town, a mob of townspeople seized a worker walking home from his job in a local tannery. As they prepared to hang the man from a railroad bridge, one of his white coworkers—a man named Bert Walker—happened upon the scene. Insisting that the man had been at work all day and was not the suspect, Walker eventually persuaded the mob to release its intended victim. In the words of one press account, "If the [suspect] had been caught the first night after the crime, there would undoubtedly have been a necktie party."<sup>18</sup>

On the morning following Kincaid's murder, Burke County authorities used a provision of state law to declare the accused murderer an "outlaw," which meant any citizen of North Carolina could legally kill the fleeing fugitive. State and county officials each posted \$250 rewards for the wanted man, dead or alive, while local resident Sam Taylor organized an even larger private reward fund. Over the next week and a half, businesses and private individuals pledged nearly \$1,500 in reward money "for the brute who murdered Gladys Kincaid"; among the main contributors were Burke County's furniture factories. The intense search for Broadus Miller—a pursuit that would last for twelve days and involve thousands of private citizens—would thus be sanctioned by the state and financed by local businesses, while the outlawry proclamation and the offered rewards

provided legal justification and considerable financial incentive for killing the fugitive.<sup>19</sup>

The day after the assault on Kincaid, groups of armed private citizens gathered on the courthouse square in downtown Morganton, awaiting any new developments in the case. When word came that the outlaw had allegedly been spotted near Lake James—about eighteen miles west of town—chaos erupted on the square: “The scattered groups instantly became hundreds dashing madly across the streets and into automobiles. . . . There appeared to be no speed limits, no thoughts for safety of men or machines. The first rush for position having been settled on the score of survival of the fittest machine and the fastest driver, the long line of automobiles stretched out over the hills. . . . A few cars dropped out of the way; the occupants were picked up by others.” By noon on Wednesday, an estimated 2,500 people had converged on the scene of the alleged sighting, a wooded area on the southern shore of Lake James. Many of them were millworkers and factory hands from Morganton, given time off work by their employers so they could participate in the search. A large posse came from the nearby town of Marion, and police brought bloodhounds from Asheville. The Associated Press noted that roads in the area were “choked with automobiles carrying men and even some women to the scene,” while the local country stores “did a land office business” selling cold drinks to the arriving townspeople. Police officers openly admitted to reporters that they probably “could not control the crowd if the negro was captured,” causing newspapers to proclaim “Lynching in Prospect in Burke.” But the day’s search proved fruitless, and Wednesday ended with Broadus Miller still at large.<sup>20</sup>

In the following days, newspapers played a crucial role in shaping public perception of the case, transforming the murder of Gladys Kincaid from a private tragedy to a public sensation. All the major papers in North Carolina covered the events in Morganton, emphasizing the race of the accused killer and describing the attack on Kincaid as an attempted sexual assault. The press consistently portrayed Broadus Miller as subhuman, and the *Raleigh News and Observer* even described the suspect as an “ape-faced Negro.” The *Charlotte Observer* gave a highly salacious account of a premeditated assault. In correspondent Harry Griffin’s words, “Miller had for several days followed the girl’s movements as she passed . . . on her way from work, with bestial lust in his eyes. On two occasions at least he had skulked behind her as she, a wistful looking girl of appealing beauty, had wandered her way home.”<sup>21</sup>



One of the most outspoken commentators was Beatrice Cobb, owner and editor of the *Morganton News-Herald*, who penned racially inflammatory editorials denouncing the crime and demonizing the accused killer. Though the circulation of the *News-Herald* was smaller than that of large city papers, Cobb was no obscure country editor. She served as secretary of the North Carolina Press Association—a position she would hold for several decades—and was influential politically. For eighteen years—from 1934 to 1952—she would be the Democratic national committeewoman from North Carolina, and in 1940 she would serve on the committee tasked with choosing the party's national chairman. In Beatrice Cobb's words, the murder of Gladys Kincaid should "stir people as few things can arouse them—a pretty, innocent young girl, just blossoming into her teens, the victim of a savage-minded, unspeakably brutal black beast." Two days after the murder, the editor rhetorically asked her Burke County readers how they would feel if Kincaid—"the helpless, innocent victim of a devil in human guise"—were a sister or daughter. She declared that death seemed "too lenient a punishment" for the accused killer, whose life was "too small a forfeit" to pay for his crime.<sup>22</sup>

By stating that Broadus Miller deserved a fate worse than a simple execution, Cobb implicitly approved the idea that he experience the torture—the mutilation and burning alive—so frequently associated with lynchings of black men by angry white mobs. Her proclamations were strongly reminiscent of the heated rhetoric of Rebecca Latimer Felton, the Georgia suffragist and first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate, who thirty years before had infamously declared that "if it takes lynching to protect women's dearest possession from drunken, ravening human beasts, then I say lynch a thousand a week." Nor was Cobb alone in wanting to see the accused murderer suffer. On Thursday evening, after a rumor spread through the town of Hickory "that Miller had been captured and was being lynched," more than three hundred cars filled with eager would-be spectators sped out of Hickory and toward Morganton.<sup>23</sup>

As rumors flew and purported sightings of the fugitive came from all directions, the manhunt "spread over three states, with authorities and poses in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia engaged in the search." Authorities widely distributed a photograph of Broadus Miller. The grainy and blurred image, showing an unsmiling and sleepy-looking young black man in a cloth cap, was in great demand. The *Winston-Salem Journal* reported that a Morganton "studio has capitalized upon the situation by turn-

ing out hundreds of postcard pictures of the alleged negro culprit which are sold at 15 cents apiece.” Law-enforcement officers engaged in a massive roundup of potential suspects, and anyone remotely resembling the photograph faced the possibility of arrest. The *Hickory Daily Record* noted that Morganton deputies “have been speeding back and forth over the foothill section of North Carolina in an effort to quickly identify the many captures that have been made. . . . Asheville, Marion, Lenoir, Hickory and other sections of this country have captured and held tall ginger-cake negroes until the Burke officers could identify them.”<sup>24</sup>

Even far from Burke County, officials took dozens of African American men into custody. Young men traveling by freight train were especially vulnerable to arrest. Less than two days after the assault on Kincaid, police arrested a “nervous” young man near Raleigh and announced that they would hold him until they were “completely convinced” he had “no connection with the Morganton crime.” From Lynchburg, Virginia, to Gaffney, South Carolina, railroad detectives and local police detained travelers and pursued hoboes. At Spencer, a small community near Salisbury, workers spotted and chased a man through the railway yards and—after he eluded them—summoned the Rowan County sheriff to continue the pursuit. When farmers outside Charlotte “reported that a strange negro was wandering around the fields and acting queerly,” a police officer arrested the man after a daylong search. In the ominous words of a news account, the policeman “put the negro through a severe cross-examination.”<sup>25</sup>

Among the many alleged sightings of Broadus Miller, the most credible reports indicated that he had fled northwest on foot. In the vicinity of Chesterfield lived a number of rural African American families. Some persons in the community fed the fleeing man, but others later reported having seen him to the police, who then brought bloodhounds to the scene. As Sam Ervin Jr. remarked many years later, western North Carolinians had “a superstitious awe about bloodhounds and any testimony of bloodhounds tracking a suspect.” If hounds stayed on the trail of a particular suspect, it seemed proof of the suspect’s guilt. However, bloodhounds had not been able to pick up a trail anywhere in Morganton, neither at the scene of the attack on Kincaid nor at Miller’s boardinghouse residence. Only after police took the dogs to Chesterfield did they finally strike a trail, which officers then followed “in an almost direct route” up the Johns River valley and into the Blue Ridge Mountains of western Caldwell County.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the following week, manhunters combed some fifty square

miles along the mountainous and heavily wooded eastern slopes of Grandfather Mountain. Concentrated in the area of Wilson Creek, the mountain manhunt began in earnest around noon on Friday, June 24, when someone spotted a man resembling Miller in the vicinity of Adako, a small community near the Burke-Caldwell county line. Over the next few days, newspapers emphasized that the “phantom negro” had not been conclusively identified. In the words of the *News-Herald*, “some negro, who for some reason is dodging, has been giving the inhabitants of that section occasional glimpses of his dusky form and has been leaving traces of his flight.” Some speculated that the man might be a recently “escaped convict from a road construction gang.” However, according to the *Charlotte Observer*, authorities thought Broadus Miller might be trying to reach his sister, who reportedly worked as a cook at a resort hotel in the small community of Edgemont, several miles up Wilson Creek from Adako.<sup>27</sup>

On Friday, Hickory police chief Eugene Lentz traveled to Adako to check out alleged sightings of the outlaw by local African Americans. An elderly man described giving food to a stranger who claimed to be on the run for accidentally killing a man in Asheville; the stranger had requested shelter, but the old man had refused and sent him away. A group of children near Brown Mountain said that the suspect had stopped at their family’s cabin around one o’clock in the afternoon, “then left hurriedly going in the direction of the mountains.” That afternoon Lentz tracked the fugitive for several miles before losing his trail. In the evening a posse of three hundred civilians cordoned off Adam’s Knob, a mountain peak a few miles north of Adako, but did not find anyone.<sup>28</sup>

The following morning someone allegedly glimpsed the suspect in the woods near Adako, and another reported sighting in the nearby community of Collettsville caused several carloads of sheriff’s deputies to race to the scene. As the day progressed, the hunt centered on a heavily wooded area between Johns River and Mulberry Creek. In the words of the *Charlotte Observer*, “All day the pursuit was hot, with a bloodhound leading the pursuers almost to within sight of the fugitive.” Hunters chased the suspect “until his shoes were worn off and his feet were bleeding,” and bloody footprints indicated “the killing speed which the fugitive has been forced to keep up to stay ahead of the pursuers, both man and dog.” The footprints showed that the pursued man was using his cap to cover his raw and bleeding feet. Late Saturday evening the bloodhound’s handler believed the dog was within a few hundred feet of their prey, but the fugitive succeeded in



Reward notice for Broadus Miller.  
*Winston-Salem Journal*, June 24,  
1927.

doubling back on his trail and losing his pursuers. The bloodhound, “exhausted by long hours of trailing, dropped in his tracks and could go no farther,” so the posse stopped to wait for morning and the arrival of fresh hounds from Salisbury and Asheville.<sup>29</sup>

On Sunday, the hunt resumed. From dawn to dusk, private citizens and law-enforcement officials from Burke, Catawba, and Caldwell counties swept the mountains north of Collettsville. Among the hunters that day was Sam Ervin Jr., who came from Morganton to participate personally, while a Catawba County police chief, wearing “a pair of overalls” and “with a pistol strapped under his left arm,” directed one of the hunting parties. A member of the posse—described in press reports as a “hearty young hillsman from near Morganton”—later claimed to have “jumped the negro from his night’s bed and stayed close on his heels until early afternoon be-

fore he lost the trail.” However, none of the other hunters could find any clear sign of their prey. Nor could the bloodhounds pick up the fugitive’s scent, erased by the hordes of men tramping through the woods over the previous two days.<sup>30</sup>

The Sunday manhunt attracted a “typical holiday crowd,” for townspeople swarmed to the mountains to watch the latest developments in the case. “Hundreds of cars went from Morganton, Hickory and Lenoir to Adako and Collettsville,” noted the *Charlotte Observer*. Throughout the day these sightseers drove the narrow backroads, traveling “from one place to another” as “various reports and rumors gained circulation,” and a long line of traffic slowly moved “along the road by Mulberry or up the Globe and between Lenoir and Collettsville.” Over a thousand of the tourists parked their cars and walked along a stretch of road between Collettsville and Olivette, but they did not enter the woods to hunt the wanted man. Instead, in the contemptuous words of one reporter, they only “paraded the broad highway and displayed their vicious guns and pistols,” causing the Caldwell County sheriff to remark that he had “never seen so much artillery and so many varied guns in his life as an officer.” Though the armed tourists “walked up and down in places where they could be seen by the most persons and threatened extreme violence if Broadus Miller were to walk out in that big and thickly populated highway,” they did not dare “stick their toes under a patch of shrubbery, unless a car pushed them off the road.” In the late afternoon as the sun sank and the air grew chill, the sightseers and highway strollers began heading back down the mountains and home to town.<sup>31</sup>

Over the next couple of days, the hunt continued on a smaller scale. Police and bounty hunters combed the woods near Collettsville, while a posse of twenty men from Blowing Rock spent Monday searching a nearby rocky crag. However, the fugitive’s trail had grown cold, and law-enforcement officials began “talking among themselves to the effect that the negro has made good his escape.” Hoping to pick up the trail again, police brought in fresh bloodhounds from eastern North Carolina. One of the hounds was accompanied by six puppies, for its handlers wanted the young dogs to learn “their first lesson in man hunting under the most adverse circumstances it is possible to imagine.” As the *Raleigh News and Observer* explained to its urban readers, the area of the manhunt was “the rugged land at the very foothills of the uncharted Blue Ridge and Grandfather ranges.” Though the terrain was daunting, the mountain woods contained “plenty

of water and fine huckleberries.” Journalists and police speculated that Miller might also be receiving food from some mountain residents. About four miles north of Collettsville lived a number of rural African American families, descendants of slaves from the Johns River valley. As the *Charlotte Observer* reported, “Officials have searched every negro house in this community and are keeping a close watch on them.”<sup>32</sup>

Eighty years later, a number of elderly residents of the Caldwell County mountains still remembered oral accounts of the 1927 manhunt. Many accounts emphasized the theft of food from isolated cabins and springhouses. When one family found that some of their milk had been stolen, they threw away their remaining milk and butter because “Broadus had been in the springbox.” From another family’s house, Miller stole a bowl of food and some rags to wrap around his raw and bleeding feet, discarding the empty bowl a few hundred feet from the home. Late in the afternoon on Tuesday, June 28, the fugitive entered the home of Charlie Ingram, who lived on Cold Water Creek near Mortimer. Ingram’s wife was outside with other local women, hoeing a nearby cornfield, when the intruder stole milk and cornbread from the family’s kitchen. The Ingrams’ daughter saw him and screamed, causing Miller to jump out the open kitchen window and flee. Posse members with bloodhounds soon arrived. Seeing movement in the bushes near the Ingrams’ home, the posse opened fire, killing two chickens. After the hounds caught scent of the man’s trail, the chase began anew. Late that night, the family of a woman giving birth to a child heard the baying of the hounds and looked out their kitchen window. They allegedly glimpsed the fleeing fugitive and, minutes later, the posse and dogs, hot on his trail.<sup>33</sup>

On the morning of Wednesday, June 29, as news spread of the previous day’s events, carloads of men again headed into the mountains from the Piedmont towns. In the words of one reporter, “Cars began passing Collettsville at an early hour this morning and the search began to resemble one of its earlier days.” Unlike the weekend sightseers, these midweek arrivals “went into the thickets of the mountains,” determined to claim the large rewards offered for the outlaw. Late Wednesday afternoon a woman near Mortimer saw him breaking into her family’s springhouse. Hunters quickly arrived with hounds and began a relentless pursuit that lasted throughout the evening and into the night. After sunset, members of the posse spotted and fired at the fugitive as he crossed a railroad trestle over Wilson Creek. From there his trail “led the men and dogs on into the untracked region

west of Mortimer.” That night, a journalist on a nearby ridgeline reported hearing “a continuous but faint roar of the barking dogs as they stick to the course over the rugged cliffs.”<sup>34</sup>

Far from the mountains, the *Charlotte Observer* provided its urban readers with a vivid summary of unfolding events:

With the bass voices of half a dozen bloodhounds echoing through the stillness of the night in these Caldwell county mountains, the man-hunt . . . was believed by officers in charge of the search to gradually be coming to a close. Reports coming out of the dense mountains are that the negro . . . is just a few paces ahead of the pursuing posse. From Collettsville to Adako, and then from Adako to Globe, the chase for the outlawed man has been resolutely pushed, and tonight the pack of bloodhounds, increased from all parts of the state, has battled its way through the thicket of mountain growth on toward Mortimer, near the line of Avery county.

But predictions of an end to the manhunt proved premature. West of Mortimer the fugitive entered one of the most rugged areas in the Appalachians, with twelve-mile-long Linville Gorge at its center. On each side of the gorge, steep wooded cliffs plunged down some 1,400 feet to the Linville River. In this harsh terrain, the wanted man finally managed to shake off the hunters and bloodhounds on his heels.<sup>35</sup>

Early on the morning of Sunday, July 3, a storekeeper in Linville Falls—a small village on the other side of the gorge, ten miles west of Mortimer—noticed that a neighboring café had been broken into during the night. Candy bar wrappers marked the intruder’s trail down the mountain into the North Cove valley and toward the rural community of Ashford, some six miles away. Suspecting that the intruder might be the long-sought outlaw, storekeeper John Wiseman telephoned the police. That same morning a farmer in Ashford discovered that someone had broken into his springhouse and stolen a jar of milk. The farmer’s daughter claimed to have glimpsed a black man, shotgun in hand, crossing the road at Concord United Methodist Church.<sup>36</sup>

Residents of the North Cove valley were rather isolated, but because of the telephone, news of the events in Linville Falls and Ashford spread to the outside world with amazing alacrity. Among the men who converged on Ashford were four bounty hunters from Morganton. Fons Duckworth,

Commodore Burleson, Harrison Pritchard, and John Burnett had set out early that morning in Duckworth’s Model T Ford, heading west to Yancey County, where the previous day police had taken an African American suspect into custody. On the way, they stopped in the town of Marion. There they heard that the Yancey County sheriff, fearful of a potential lynch mob, had transferred the suspect to the Asheville jail. They also heard about the burglaries at Linville Falls and Ashford. Ironically, one of the four men—Commodore Vanderbilt Burleson—had been born and raised in Linville Falls and was the nephew of John Wiseman, the storekeeper who discovered the break-in. Following his marriage to a Morganton resident in 1913, Burleson had moved to the town, where he worked as a policeman and then as a carpenter, and he seldom returned to visit his mountain relatives. For most of the previous week, Burleson had been one of the many hunters scouring the mountains of Caldwell County, searching for the fugitive; he and his companions now changed direction and drove north, following the fugitive’s trail to Burleson’s own birthplace.<sup>37</sup>

Arriving in Ashford, the men found a number of cars parked beside the road near Concord United Methodist Church. The McDowell County sheriff had brought bloodhounds, and a few dozen people had gathered at the scene. Starting at the farmer’s springhouse, members of the loosely organized posse traced the fugitive’s trail to an empty milk jar a hundred yards away. From there footprints led up the wooded mountainside behind the church. Burleson and Pritchard recognized the tracks as the same they had followed in Caldwell County a few days before, for one of the hunted man’s feet was “covered with rags with two toes [sticking] through.” The four men from Morganton split up and went in separate directions, agreeing that whoever came upon any sign of their prey would give a bobwhite whistle to alert the others. As Pritchard and Duckworth circled around the top of the mountain, they came upon a fresh trail through the brush and whistled. While working his way up through the dense undergrowth toward the other hunters, Commodore Burleson suddenly encountered Broadus Miller.<sup>38</sup>

As the crow flies, Ashford is only some twenty miles from Morganton, but during twelve days on the run Miller had covered a much greater distance—up the Johns River valley, back and forth across the rugged ridges at the base of Grandfather Mountain, and over the steep rock faces and thick scrub brush of Linville Gorge. In a mad zigzag course, going in circles and doubling back on his own trail, he had frantically tried to shake off the



incessant hounds and hunters on his heels. He had worn out his shoes in the first few days of running, and from then on he had been barefoot, his bleeding feet wrapped in rags, as he pushed blindly forward through dense laurel thickets and snake-infested creek bottoms. Living on wild berries, on occasional milk and food pilfered from springhouses and remote cabins, he had lost thirty pounds while on the run. When he emerged from Linville Gorge early on Sunday morning, hungry and tired, he had broken into a café, desperately searching for food. Apparently making no attempt to cover his tracks, he had littered the ground with candy bar wrappers as he made his way down the mountainside toward Ashford. There he drank milk from a farmer's springhouse, tossed aside the emptied jar, and wandered back into the woods.

Commodore Burleson shot and killed Broadus Miller on the thickly wooded mountainside behind Concord United Methodist Church. The details of the killing are shrouded in controversy. According to Burleson, the fugitive was armed and fired at him with a .12-gauge shotgun, stolen from some isolated mountain cabin. Burleson's companions supported his account, and one of them stated that when he arrived on the scene "less than a minute" after the shooting, a shotgun was "lying at the negro's side"; when the gun was broken open, "it was still smoking" from having recently been fired. The previous week, the *Charlotte Observer* had reported rumors that Miller had stolen a shotgun and was armed, and the newspaper noted that posse members were "prepared to shoot without a great deal of provocation." In the coming days, the press would portray the encounter between the fugitive and his pursuer as an epic gun battle in which Burleson, armed with a .45-caliber pistol, had triumphed.<sup>39</sup>

However, a group of seven hunters who had tracked the fugitive from Caldwell County, traversing Linville Gorge and arriving on the scene shortly after the shooting and too late to claim any reward, would later challenge the official account of the outlaw's death. The seven hunters asserted that they had tracked Miller through nearly impenetrable laurel thickets, places where a person "had to crawl considerable distances on hands and knees," and that they had never seen "any sign of any gun on this trail." But though the details of Burleson's encounter with the outlaw were disputed, its outcome was clear. Burleson stood holding an emptied pistol, and Miller lay on the ground, mortally wounded. Hearing the gunshots, other posse members quickly arrived on the scene. Broadus Miller, who had

been shot at least once in the chest, “never spoke and in a moment or two closed his eyes and was dead.”<sup>40</sup>

Eager to claim the large rewards offered for the outlaw, Burleson and his companions tied a rope around Miller’s legs and dragged him like a dead animal out of the woods and to the road, where they threw him into the back of Duckworth’s Model T. Joined by Burleson’s uncle John Wiseman, the men began the hour-and-a-half journey back to Morganton. Growing up in the mountains, Commodore Burleson had become a skilled tracker and hunter, but he had never learned to drive, and sitting in the crowded car as it sped along a curving mountain road was a hair-raising experience. “I was more scared coming down that mountain in the car, turning curves as fast as possible,” Burleson later told a reporter, “than I was while being shot at by Miller.” But once out of the mountains, the road straightened and flattened and ran directly toward Morganton, where shortly before noon the carload of men entered town with their grisly trophy.<sup>41</sup>

Journalist Ben Dixon MacNeill of the *Raleigh News and Observer* happened to be in Morganton that Sunday morning, having stopped in the town on his way west to a Fourth of July celebration in Mitchell County. Known as “the most colorful newspaperman in North Carolina,” and seeming to have a “mysterious gift for being where things happened,” MacNeill vividly described the bounty hunters’ arrival:

An automobile swept into [town] with its siren shrieking. Four men rode in the car, and over the right rear door projected the feet of a figure thrown carelessly on the floor. The feet were wrapped in rags. The left foot was partially bare and very black. It hung loosely over the side of the car. The streets were filled with people going home from their places of worship.

One of the men sat still and tired in the seat but the other three leaned far out of the car to yell jubilantly to the crowds going home from church[,] “Here’s your Nigger—come and look at him.” People stopped to stare as the car swept along and then they turned toward the court house in the center of the town. . . .

Shooting half across the sidewalk before it was brought to a stand still, the car drew up before the courthouse. The rear door was opened, and two men grabbed the feet that projected. The body was dragged to the pavement, its head hitting sharply as it fell. For a moment it lay

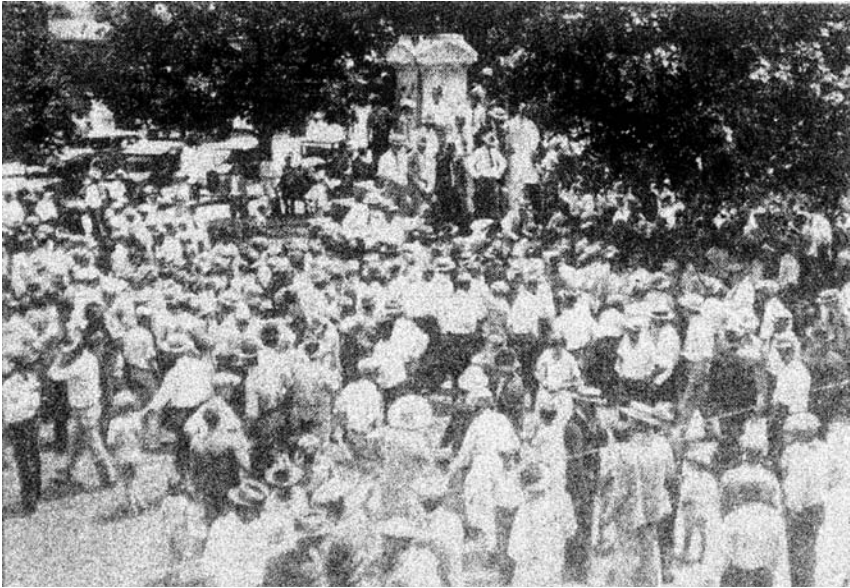
there, with its red, gaping wounds in the naked breast and stomach still dripping. The clothing had almost all been torn off in his wandering through mountain forests. . . .

Again grasping the figure by the feet, two men dragged it across the sidewalk, across the courthouse lawn, pausing a moment before the door and then going in. A vast throng collected with miraculous speed. They yelled in exultation. Women embraced one another and men shook one another by the hand and slapped one another on the back. Before the doors of the courthouse they all clamored for a sight of the dead, naked fugitive.

For half an hour Broadus Miller's body "lay in a huddled heap" on the courthouse floor while local residents crowded into the building to look at his remains. In the words of the *Charlotte Observer*, "thousands of people, in varying moods and temperaments, began to pour into town and fill the streets about the courthouse." As the crowd grew in size and began demanding to see the body, authorities allowed townspeople to drag the corpse out of the courthouse and to the north side of the lawn, where they placed it on the ground next to a large Confederate monument. The crowd—mostly comprised of men, but with a few women and children—clustered around Miller's body, while several men stood on the base of the Confederate monument to look down at the dead black man on the ground below.<sup>42</sup>

Over the course of the next hour, the crowd became increasingly restive and unruly, with people pushing forward to get a glimpse of the body—and threatening to do more than just look at it. In MacNeill's words, "Some proposed to hang him up in sight of everybody and others demanded that he be dragged through the streets behind an automobile." Alarmed at a situation rapidly spiraling out of their control, local law authorities hurriedly seized the body and hauled it to the jailhouse, a small two-story building on the opposite side of the courthouse square. There they removed it from public view and locked it in a cell. While the body lay in the cell, authorities brought in Broadus Miller's wife—who had been held in an undisclosed location in another county—and a dozen of his coworkers to confirm the identity of the emaciated corpse. Two policemen then escorted Mrs. Miller back to Asheville by train.<sup>43</sup>

The large crowd on the Morganton courthouse lawn attracted the attention of motorists on a nearby highway, who stopped to see the cause of



The exhibition of Broadus Miller’s body. The Morganton courthouse square during the early afternoon of Sunday, July 3, 1927. Miller’s body lies at the base of the Confederate Monument. *Raleigh Times*, July 6, 1927.

the rampant excitement. Traffic on the highway came to a standstill, and as news spread by telephone and telegraph to nearby towns, carloads of more spectators rushed to the scene, clamoring to see Broadus Miller’s body. After the crowd grew to a few thousand people, Sheriff Hallyburton acquiesced to their demand to see the corpse. However, this time local authorities took steps to maintain a more orderly exhibition. While some fifty town and county officers stood guard, police carried the body back outside and laid it “on a board at the foot of the steps of the north portico of the jail.” Officers roped off a narrow aisle leading to the steps and allowed the crowd to pass by in single file in front of the dead outlaw.<sup>44</sup>

As the public exhibition began, Commodore Burleson sat in the law office of Ervin and Ervin across the street from the courthouse, giving a formal statement concerning the shooting to North Carolina pardon commissioner Edwin Bridges. The governor’s special envoy to Morganton to oversee the Broadus Miller case, Bridges had a long-standing personal and professional friendship with Morganton resident Sam Ervin Jr. Successful attorneys in their early thirties and politically active in the state Demo-

cratic Party, the two men had known each other since their schooldays in Chapel Hill. Bridges would subsequently report to the governor that “the slaying of Broadus Miller was necessary and justifiable” and would praise local officials, especially Ervin, for having “worked diligently and wisely in taking precautionary measures for the purpose of preserving law and order.” The interview with the governor’s envoy ended when a police officer stepped into the office and announced that the huge crowd outside was demanding to see Broadus Miller’s killer. When Burleson emerged from the law office, the crowd cheered wildly. Police officers escorted him to the jailhouse porch, where he stood “above the body of the dead negro, and as the hundreds after hundreds milled past, Burleson was acknowledged as the hero.” He remained on the porch throughout the afternoon, occasionally waving in response to the people shouting his praises, while members of the crowd speculated about electing their new hero to the office of Burke County sheriff.<sup>45</sup>

That afternoon a local photographer took pictures of Burleson and of Broadus Miller’s corpse, causing hordes of people to stampede the photographer’s downtown studio, demanding copies of the photographs. “We had to sell the pictures while they were still wet,” the studio’s owner later recounted. “If we had waited until they were dry that crowd would have torn the building down.” In the two photographs of the dead outlaw, the shotgun that Miller had allegedly carried is prominently displayed on top of his body. The shirtless dead man wears a pair of knee-length shorts, while a knotted sheet has been looped around his shoulders, presumably to use in carrying or dragging the body. In one of the photographs the corpse is spread-eagle with legs outstretched, while two men stand behind the body and raise it by the arms for the benefit of the camera; in order to keep Miller’s head upright, one of the men props it up with his foot, his highly polished leather dress shoes contrasting sharply with the dead man’s gaping mouth and open eyes.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the Sunday afternoon a constant stream of spectators moved through the roped aisle at the jailhouse. A journalist counted more than five thousand people passing in front of the body; however, some persons went through the line more than once. Many spectators spat on the corpse, but police protected it from greater desecration. When one man “paused at the side of the dead negro and then kicked it mightily,” deputies intervened and arrested him. Another person “showed an open knife up his sleeve and the officers pushed him on down the line hurriedly.” As people

passed through the line, two men solicited donations for Gladys Kincaid’s family, collecting more than three hundred dollars. Not everyone on the crowded courthouse lawn stood in line to see the corpse. Editor Beatrice Cobb later wrote that though she had not felt any “desire to gaze upon a dead negro and did not look at the body,” she had nevertheless “felt no uneasiness or hesitancy in mingling with the crowd.” Those who did wait in line “came out expressing profound satisfaction” at having had “a glimpse of the huddled ragged figure.”<sup>47</sup>

In spite of Prohibition, some members of the crowd were drinking, and by late afternoon, according to the circumspect description that would later appear in the *News-Herald*, “an atmosphere of unrest appeared prevalent.” Local officials feared that crowd members—their passions inflamed by alcohol—might attempt to seize the corpse in order to desecrate it further. Although hundreds of spectators were still waiting in line to see the body, police took it back inside the jail, placed it in a coffin, and prepared to ship it by train for burial in an undisclosed location. At six-thirty that evening, “thousands were lined up at the railway station as officers placed the body in an express car.” A funeral-home employee and sheriff’s deputies accompanied the coffin. According to one account, the men planned to disembark in nearby Hickory and bury the body there. However, members of the crowd, intent on desecrating the corpse, sped to Hickory and were waiting when the train arrived, so the body’s handlers had to continue on farther east. When the train stopped in Statesville late that evening, the men unloaded the coffin and turned it over to a local funeral home.<sup>48</sup>

The following morning, July 4, Broadus Miller was buried in an unmarked grave near Statesville’s African American cemetery. His burial took place on the day of the city’s Fourth of July celebration. Festivities included a large horse show—as well as the long-planned annual rally of the North Carolina Ku Klux Klan. At its peak, around 1924, the Klan in North Carolina had numbered some fifty thousand people, but by the summer of 1927 the North Carolina Klan had sharply declined in size and power. Though its heyday had passed, the Klan still maintained significant support, and by noon on Monday, July 4, an estimated two thousand Klansmen had gathered in Statesville. They came “from all parts of North Carolina,” as well as from South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Hundreds more Klan members arrived throughout the day. When the afternoon horse show commenced, the “official Klan band from Gastonia supplied music from the pavilion, in the center of the race tracks, from which the

judges and officials of the show view[ed] the contests.” The horse show featured a special visitor: Commodore Vanderbilt Burleson, the killer of Broadus Miller—and a member of the Morganton Ku Klux Klan.<sup>49</sup>

Describing Burleson as “the mountaineer who shot and instantly killed Broadus Miller . . . in a pistol duel,” the *Statesville Landmark* noted the warm welcome he received: “Ex-Sheriff J. M. Deaton, on horseback, with Mr. Burleson riding behind him, rode in front of the grandstand and around the grounds, announcing, ‘Here’s the man who killed the negro.’ Cheers came from all sides of the grounds, many enthusiasts yelling out, ‘Bring him around and let me see him.’” In the evening after the horse show ended, a large parade wound its way through the center of Statesville. “Two mounted police officers, accompanied by two mounted Klansmen, with both riders on horses in white robes, led the procession and opened the way for a long train of robed Klansmen,” who carried American flags. City officials accompanied the Klansmen along the parade route, and following the parade, a crowd of thousands watched a large fireworks display, capped off by “the burning of the fiery cross.”<sup>50</sup>

The same day as Klansmen gathered in Statesville to celebrate the Fourth of July, the *Raleigh Times* published a biting editorial entitled “Morganton Church-Goers Applaud a Gory Matinee.” Quoting at length “from the account of the ubiquitous Ben Dixon MacNeill,” the paper denounced what had happened in Morganton: “When the automobile brought the dead body through the streets, the people were just emerging from church, meditating sermons. The siren announcing the kill changed them instantly from a collection of pious sheep and demure doves into a pack of wolves ravening after the event.” The *Times’s* criticism set the tone for the editorial reaction of other Raleigh-area newspapers. The *News and Observer* decried what it termed “a carnival of community hate” and “a gruesome spectacle to satisfy the fierce exultation and the morbid blood lust of a group of white men,” while the *Greensboro Daily News* condemned Morganton as “a community where so many persons have happily utilized a Sunday afternoon to drench themselves in savagery.”<sup>51</sup>

The widespread editorial criticism outraged Morganton’s white residents. A news report noted townspeople’s anger at “a piece in the *Raleigh News and Observer* by Ben Dixon MacNeill, staff feature writer, which states that he saw ‘5,000 ostensibly civilized human beings descend [*sic*] to the gutters of stark savagery.’” Residents felt “much aggrieved that the pic-

ture of a ‘carnival of hate’ should have been presented to the State,” and Sheriff Hallyburton declared “that a very grave injustice had been done Morganton.” In the words of editor Beatrice Cobb, local people who had read MacNeill’s article were “spitting fire.”<sup>52</sup>

Newspapers in adjacent counties rallied to Morganton’s defense. The *Hickory Daily Record* argued that “if the truth were known, any other community of North Carolina, or any other state, would have done itself no better under the circumstances.” The *Lenoir News-Topic* concurred, insisting that the town had “not received fair treatment at the hands of some of the would-be sensational newspapers.” Among the staunchest supporters of Morganton was the *Cleveland Star*, published in neighboring Cleveland County. Many of the county’s residents had driven to Morganton to see the Sunday exhibition; during the Fourth of July holiday, the *Star* had displayed photographs of Miller’s body and of Commodore Burleson on a bulletin board outside the paper’s Shelby office, where they were viewed by hundreds of people. The *Cleveland Star* dismissed the criticism of Morganton as “sanctimonious pish” and “a bunch of talk with no more realism in it than Mencken’s phrases of derision.” According to the *Star*, the behavior of the crowd that had flocked to see Miller’s dead body was no worse than the typical conduct of fans at “a league baseball game in some of the cities where the criticism comes from.”<sup>53</sup>

Debate over the events in Morganton reverberated far beyond North Carolina. In a front-page article entitled “Lynch Man, Let Public View Body: Church Goers Take Part in Celebration,” the *Chicago Defender* excoriated the town’s residents. The most widely read black-owned newspaper in the United States, the *Defender* “didn’t mind exaggerating the details of a lynching or other injustice.” Mixing fact and fantasy, the paper claimed that a “mob estimated at more than 2,000 whites, business men and church workers, started the celebration of the Fourth of July . . . by piercing the body of Broadus Miller, alleged slayer of a girl, with more than a hundred bullets.”<sup>54</sup>

Although the *Chicago Defender* described the shooting of Broadus Miller as a “lynching,” the killing had been legally sanctioned by the state. In designating Miller an outlaw, Burke County authorities had carefully followed state law to the letter, turning the search into an open hunting season. In the mountain woods west of Morganton, the pursuit of the fugitive had come to resemble a bear hunt, requiring the cooperative efforts of groups of armed men using dogs to pursue their prey for several days and





Bear hunters in Linville Falls posing with their trophy, c. 1900. Standing, third from left in the middle row, is Commodore Burleson, who holds a long-barreled pistol. Kneeling at the far left is Burleson's father, noted bear hunter Mitch Burleson. Courtesy of Pat Burleson Howell.

over many miles. Having grown up in Linville Falls, Commodore Burleson had extensive bear hunting experience and was the son of “a well known bear hunter of the mountain country.” A photograph from about 1900 shows a group of hunters in Linville Falls posing with a black bear they had killed. Commodore Burleson stands over the bear’s dead body, holding a long-barreled pistol. As historian Amy Louise Wood has noted, there is often an “uncanny resemblance” between lynching photography and photographs of hunters with their prey. The photograph from Linville Falls eerily foreshadows the exhibition in Morganton three decades later, when the pistol-carrying Burleson would stand in triumph over an African American’s corpse.<sup>55</sup>

Though Burleson was born and grew up in Linville Falls, he had moved to Morganton over a dozen years before the Broadus Miller case, leaving his birthplace in the mountains for a town whose geography and history much more closely resembled the Piedmont than Appalachia. Nevertheless, journalists invariably described Commodore Burleson as a “mountaineer.” The

*Charlotte Observer* announced that he was a “stalwart mountaineer.” The *Winston-Salem Twin City Sentinel* reported that the outlaw had been “killed by a lone mountaineer,” while the *Washington Post* described Burleson as “a mountaineer and used to reading signs that enable the mountaineer to trail persons through the bush.” The press extended this identification to all Morganton residents. According to the *Winston-Salem Journal*, the town’s male population consisted of “grim hillmen” and “courageous and determined men of the hills.” The *Cleveland Star* described Burke County’s inhabitants as “hospitable, friendly, ‘square-shooting’ hill people,” while the *Charlotte News* labeled Morganton “the hill city.”<sup>56</sup>

When associating Morganton with the mountains, observers drew upon the established stereotypes of the violent ways of mountain people. A few days after Gladys Kincaid’s murder, police arrested Eugene Martin, a Hickory construction worker with a striking resemblance to Broadus Miller. The suspect soon confessed to being a fugitive from a chain gang, but fear of a potential lynch mob led authorities to transport Martin to the Gastonia jail, where he was held for several days. The *Gastonia Daily Gazette* quoted a sheriff’s deputy who was relieved that Martin’s stay in the city did not end in violence. “If those mountain people had taken a notion,” the deputy declared, referring to the residents of Morganton, “they might have come down here, taken Gene from the jail and lynched him on the spot.” In a cartoonish attempt at dialect, the Gastonia paper reported that Martin regretted his remaining time under the watch of a chain gang’s armed guards could not be extended. “Den dem mountain folks mought of forgot who Ah ever wuz,” the prisoner allegedly said.<sup>57</sup>

The newspapers that most emphasized Morganton’s “mountain” setting were located in the border region between Piedmont and the mountains, in towns and cities not so very different from Morganton itself. Gastonia was less than sixty miles south of the town, Shelby was even closer, and though the Winston-Salem press referred to the town’s inhabitants as “hillmen,” the difference in elevation between Winston-Salem and Morganton was less than the length of a football field. In categorizing the residents of Morganton as “mountain people,” journalists distanced themselves and their fellow townspeople from such a designation. As Appalachian scholar Jerry Williamson has noted, it is “always someone else” who is the “hillbilly.”<sup>58</sup>

Broadus Miller was killed in the mountain woods, but the subsequent exhibition of his body took place in the center of town, before a crowd dressed in their Sunday best—women in dresses and large-brimmed hats,

men in long-sleeved shirts, straw hats, and ties. News of the event was rapidly broadcast via telephone, attracting additional spectators who rushed to the scene by car. Thanks to photography, an even larger audience would eventually view the dead outlaw. In their examination of lynching violence, scholars Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck have noted that “exhibition of the victim’s body . . . had the express purpose of reminding African-Americans of their subservient place in the southern social hierarchy—and the consequences for them if they forgot it.” The Sunday spectacle on the Morganton courthouse lawn clearly had such an underlying meaning. In the candid assessment of an elderly present-day resident of Morganton, a native of the town and one of its most prominent citizens, townspeople publicly displayed Miller’s corpse in order to “put the fear of the Lord into Negroes.” Yet Broadus Miller’s own life journey—from the Greenwood County cotton fields to an unmarked grave in Statesville—suggests that lynchings and mob vigilantism had not fulfilled their expressly stated purpose. Instead, such actions had merely kept the cycle of violence spinning in a long and circular path, from the flatlands to the mountains and back.<sup>59</sup>

## Notes

1. “Now Believe Capture of Negro Fugitive Is Near,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 26, 1927; “Girl Attack Suspect Dies Battling Posse,” *Oakland Tribune*, July 4, 1927; Sam Ervin Jr., “Richard Venable Michaux,” in *The Heritage of Burke County*, ed. Jean Conyers Ervin and Marjorie Miller Triebert (Morganton, NC: Burke County Historical Society, 1981), 312.

2. Ann Herd Bowen, *Greenwood County: A History* (Greenwood, SC: The Museum, 1992); 1900 census, Greenwood County, SC. For the 1898 events in Wilmington, see H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: The Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984); David S. Cecelski and Timothy Tyson, eds., *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and North Carolina 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission, 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Final Report, May 31, 2006, <http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm>. For the violence at Phoenix, see the following: John Hammond Moore, *Carnival of Blood: Dueling, Lynching, and Murder in South Carolina, 1880–1920* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 205–12; George Brown Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes, 1877–1900* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 257–59; Bruce Lee Kleinschmidt, “The Phoenix Riot,” *Furman Review* 5 (Spring 1974): 27–31; Daniel Levinson Wilk, “The Phoenix Riot and the Memories of Greenwood County,”

*Southern Cultures* 8, no. 4 (2002): 29–55; “No Negro Domination,” *Greenwood Index*, Nov. 17, 1898. As George Tindall has noted about the events in Phoenix, the “precise number of victims of this mob violence will never be known” (*South Carolina Negroes*, 257). In all secondary accounts, the date of death of Eliza Goode—a woman killed at Phoenix—has been recorded as Nov. 18, 1898 (see, e.g., Moore, *Carnival of Blood*, 208). However, Goode was actually killed some days before, for her death is reported in “Shameful, Cowardly, Awful,” *Greenwood Index*, Nov. 17, 1898.

3. 1910 census, Greenwood County, SC, Walnut Grove township, district #98, dwelling #79; 1920 census, Greenwood County, SC, Walnut Grove township, dwelling #121; Moore, *Carnival of Blood*, 75–76; “Negro Rapist Was Lynched after Confessing His Crime,” *Anderson Daily Mail*, Oct. 11, 1911. The Bob Davis lynching was covered by the *Charleston News and Courier*, Aug. 15–18, 1906. Accused of similar crimes, Davis’s brother had been lynched a few years earlier; see the *Charleston News and Courier*, Aug. 22–23, 1893.

4. Brundage is quoted in Ellen Barry, “Service Atones for Past Racial Strife,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 2005. The Anthony Crawford lynching has been written about rather extensively; see, e.g., Moore, *Carnival of Blood*, 78–80, and Philip Dray, *At the Hand of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 226–29.

5. “Broadus Miller Still at Large,” *Greenwood Index-Journal*, June 25, 1927; 1920 census, Anderson County, SC, 122 West Market Street, dwelling #462; “Negro Confesses to Killing Negress at House in Anderson,” *Greenville News*, May 3, 1921; “Former Anderson Negro Is Killed,” *Anderson Daily Mail*, July 4, 1927. The records of the Essie Walker murder case are fragmentary and sometimes contradictory. According to Walker’s death certificate, she was thirty-one years old, but census records list her as a dozen years older. The local newspaper, the *Anderson Independent*, presumably covered the murder, but no issues of the *Independent* from 1921 have survived. However, brief accounts of the killing appeared in the newspapers of neighboring counties. The fact that a death in a black neighborhood received any press coverage at all indicates the unusual brutality of the murder. The press considered black-on-black violence a common occurrence and not very newsworthy; on the same day as Walker’s death, the killing of a second black woman in Anderson would be virtually ignored. 1920 census, Anderson County, SC, 122 West Market Street, dwelling #462; Essie Walker’s death certificate (1921, Anderson County, #6249) is available at the South Carolina State Archives, Columbia. The second killing in Anderson is briefly alluded to in “Broadus Miller Still at Large.”

6. U. R. Brooks, “Judge George E. Prince,” in *South Carolina Bench and Bar, Vol. 1* (Columbia, SC: The State Company, 1908), 302–4; Louise Ayer Vandiver, *Traditions and History of Anderson County* (South Carolina: McNaughton and

Nunn, 1991), 125; Records of General Sessions of Anderson County Court, 1921, available at the Clerk of Court's Office, Anderson County, SC; Beth Ann Klosky, *Daring Venture: A Biography of Anne Austin Young, Pioneer Woman Doctor* (Columbia: R. L. Bryan, 1978), 99–114, 122–23. In 1923, while Miller was incarcerated, the state legislature investigated conditions in the South Carolina State Penitentiary and issued a sharply critical report. See South Carolina General Assembly, Special Joint Legislative Committee to Investigate Conditions in the State Penitentiary: Transcript of Testimony Taken by Witnesses at the Investigation before the Above Committee, Columbia, SC, 1923, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. As sociologist Guy Johnson would later note, "Prison systems in the South are especially backward, and the caste position of the Negro exposes him to the worst which prison experience has to offer" ("The Negro and Crime," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 217, *Crime in the United States* [Sept. 1941]: 101).

7. Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882–1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 214; 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 censuses, Greenwood County, SC; Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 485–86; Asa H. Gordon, *Sketches of Negro Life and History in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 166; Ann Herd Bowen, *Greenwood County: A History* (Greenwood, SC: Greenwood County Museum, 1992), 163–213; Central Register of Prisoners, May 27, 1913–May 2, 1925, South Carolina Department of Corrections, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia; Broadus Miller/Mamie Wadlington marriage license and certificate, June 30, 1924, Buncombe County Register of Deeds, Asheville, NC; *Asheville City Directory*, 7 vols. (Asheville, NC: Commercial Service Company, 1921–27), North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville.

8. "Color Line on the Square: Negroes Baited for Using Wrong Fount," *Asheville Times*, July 20, 1924; photocopy, "Race Relations" vertical file, Pack Memorial Library; "Neely and Mansel to Face Trial at Once," *Asheville Citizen*, Oct. 28, 1925; Theodore Harris, "Negroes Present Their Side of the Situation," *Asheville Citizen*, Oct. 30, 1925; "Sheriff Takes Negro from the City as Big Crowd Begins to Form," *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 20, 1925.

9. "Troops Ordered to Guard Trials Here If Needed," *Asheville Citizen*, Oct. 31, 1925; "With Troops Guarding Jail Negroes Await Their Trial," *Raleigh News and Observer*, Nov. 3, 1925; "Troops Again Ordered to Report in Armory," *Asheville Citizen*, Nov. 8, 1925; "Preston Neely Is Acquitted and Rushed to South Carolina under Guard; Indignation Is Expressed," *Asheville Citizen*, Nov. 8, 1925; Seth Kotch, "Unduly Harsh and Unworkably Rigid: The Death Penalty in North Carolina, 1910–1961" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2008), 87–94.

Alvin Mansel’s death sentence was later commuted, and in 1930 he received a pardon from Governor Max Gardner.

10. “To Asheville Negroes,” *Asheville Citizen*, Oct. 29, 1925; “Negro Citizens of Asheville Call Huge Mass Meeting for Sunday to Consider Situation,” *Asheville Citizen*, Oct. 31, 1925; Harris, “Negroes Present Their Side”; Records of General Sessions of Greenwood County Court, 1926, Clerk of Court’s Office in Greenwood County, SC; “Broadus Miller Still at Large”; “Suspected Slayer of Girl, 15, Caught,” *Asheville Times*, June 22, 1927.

11. 1920 and 1930 censuses, Morganton township, Burke County, NC; Edward W. Phifer, *Burke: The History of a North Carolina County* (Morganton, NC: privately published, 1977), 70–71, 205, 348; “The Lenoir News-Topic Makes a Plea . . .,” *Morganton News-Herald*, Jan. 28, 1926; “The Garrou Mills” and “Garrou Knitting Mills,” Industries Vertical File, Burke County Public Library, Morganton, NC. Phifer gives the 1930 population of Morganton as 6,001, but does not cite a source for the number; census records give a higher total, but seem to include outlying areas that are outside the town proper.

12. 1860 census, population and slave schedules, Burke County, NC; “Local,” *Carolina Mountaineer*, Nov. 8, 1884; Karl E. Campbell, *Senator Sam Ervin, Last of the Founding Fathers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 28; “Atrocious Crime at N.C. School for Deaf,” *Morganton News-Herald*, Apr. 30, 1925; “Found Asleep in Girl’s Room after Assault,” *Charlotte Observer*, Apr. 25, 1925; “Montague Negro Is Sentenced to Die,” *Morganton News-Herald*, May 14, 1925. The Morganton newspaper listed the alleged victim as age fourteen, while the *Charlotte Observer* reported that she was twelve.

13. “Special Court Term Closed on Wednesday,” *Morganton News-Herald*, May 14, 1925; “Arthur Montague Dies in Chair for His Crime,” *Morganton News-Herald*, Jan. 28, 1926; “When Patience Has Ceased to Be a Virtue,” *Morganton News-Herald*, Nov. 26, 1925. See also “Delay a Dangerous Element,” *Morganton News-Herald*, Nov. 5, 1925.

14. “Mr. and Mrs. Frank Tate to Build Stone House,” *Morganton News-Herald*, May 5, 1927; Phifer, *Burke*, 162, 165; “Garrou Knitting Mills,” Industries Vertical File, Burke County Public Library; Bruce E. Baker, “Lynching Ballads in North Carolina” (master’s thesis, University of North Carolina, 1995), 45.

15. Johnston Avery, “Extensive Search Is Being Made for Morganton Slayer,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 22, 1927; James Kincaid’s death certificate (Jan. 4, 1923, Burke County, Quaker Meadow township), Burke County Register of Deeds Office, Morganton, NC; H. Clay Ferree, “The Day the Mob Took Over,” Crime and Criminals Vertical File, Burke County Public Library; Marjorie Fleming (ninety-year-old Morganton resident and relative of boardinghouse owner Will Berry), interview with the author, June 26, 2007. See also the interview with Mae

Fleming Wellman in Terry Helton's 1997 privately produced documentary video *"Let the Dead Speak": The Saga of Gladys Kincaid*. Further information on the Kincaid family comes from Cecil Kincaid (Gladys Kincaid's brother), telephone interview with the author, June 28, 2007.

16. "Officials Doubt Negro Taken in Chatham County Is Broadus Miller, Wanted Outlaw," *Winston-Salem Journal*, July 1, 1927; Harry L. Griffin, "Hundreds Join Grim Hunt for Assailant of Girl in Burke," *Charlotte Observer*, June 23, 1927; Frank Smethurst, "Determined Search for Negro Slayer of Young Morganton Girl Futile," *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 23, 1927; "Morganton Negro Attacked Girl in Sight of Three Homes," *Winston-Salem Journal*, June 28, 1927; "Negro Attacks White Girl, Inflicting Wound Causing Her Death; Whole Community Aroused," *Morganton News-Herald*, June 23, 1927; A. L. Stockton, "Citizens Continue Hunt for Negro Who Killed Little Morganton Girl," *Greensboro Daily News*, June 24, 1927; "Suspected Slayer of Girl, 15, Caught."

17. "Negro Attacks White Girl"; Griffin, "Hundreds Join Grim Hunt"; "Morganton Negro Attacked Girl"; "Young Woman Is Dead Following Brutal Attack," *Danville (VA) Bee*, June 22, 1927; Gladys Kincaid's death certificate (1927, Burke County, Morganton, #136), Burke County Register of Deeds Office, Morganton. For information on Sheriff Hallyburton, see "Hallyburton Rites to Be Held on Tuesday," *Morganton News Herald*, Oct. 13, 1969. Ervin's role in the case is discussed in Campbell, *Senator Sam Ervin*, 59–61.

18. Smethurst, "Determined Search for Negro Slayer"; "Morganton Negro Attacked Girl"; "Negro Attacks White Girl"; "Suspected Slayer of Girl, 15, Caught"; Fleming, interview, June 26, 2007; Carl Evans, telephone interview with the author, July 3, 2007. For the "necktie party" quotation, see "Let the Law Take It [*sic*] Course," *Kinston Daily Free Press*, reprinted in *Winston-Salem Journal*, June 26, 1927.

19. Avery, "Extensive Search Is Being Made"; Griffin, "Hundreds Join Grim Hunt"; Fugitives from Justice, North Carolina Consolidated Statutes, Article 6, Section 4549: Outlawry for Felony; "Statement from Mr. Taylor," *Morganton News-Herald*, July 7, 1927; "To My Friends," *Morganton News-Herald*, July 14, 1927.

20. Smethurst, "Determined Search for Negro Slayer"; Avery, "Extensive Search Is Being Made"; "Lynching in Prospect in Burke," *Statesville Landmark*, June 23, 1927; "\$500 Reward for Capture of Young Girl's Assailant," *Gastonia Daily Gazette*, June 22, 1927; "Peace Comes after Wild Day at Bridgewater," *Hickory Daily Record*, June 23, 1927.

21. Frank Smethurst, "Troops Now Taking Part in Search at Morganton," *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 24, 1927; Griffin, "Hundreds Join Grim Hunt." On Wednesday morning, Sheriff Hallyburton signed an affidavit stating that Broadus Miller was wanted "for the crime and felony of murder and rape." How-

ever, the charge of rape was contradicted by all contemporary media coverage of the crime. According to the *Raleigh News and Observer*, “Examination by physicians . . . was clear in the disclosure that whatever might have been the motive of the Negro as he waylaid his victim, murder was his only accomplishment” (Smethurst, “Determined Search for Negro Slayer”).

22. Edna Mae Herman, “Beatrice Cobb,” in *Heritage of Burke County*, 145; Roy Parker Jr., “Beatrice Cobb,” North Carolina Press Association, 1998: “A Trying Week,” *Morganton News-Herald*, June 30, 1927; “The Difference,” *Morganton News-Herald*, June 23, 1927. For an examination of Cobb’s type of rhetorical question, see George C. Rable, “The South and the Politics of Antilynching Legislation, 1920–1940,” *Journal of Southern History* 51, no. 2 (1985): 202.

23. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), 198; “Sleepless Searchers for Negro Slayer Find No Clue,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 24, 1927.

24. “Seeking Negro in Wide Area,” *Charlotte Observer*, June 26, 1927; L. J. Hampton, “Hickory Reports Say Murderer Has Been Caught; No Confirmation Yet,” *Winston-Salem Journal*, June 24, 1927 (morning edition); Ervin, “Richard Venable Michaux”; “National Guard Troops Aid Search for Negro,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 23, 1927.

25. Smethurst, “Troops Now Taking Part in Search”; “Suspect Held in Odd Tangle,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 1, 1927; “New Hunt for Negro Slayer Is Started in Adako Section Today,” *Asheville Times*, June 25, 1927; “Miller May Have Hopped Off the Train at Spencer,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, July 2, 1927; “Think Slayer of Morganton Girl Captured,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 3, 1927.

26. “Search for Negro Outlaw Renewed with New Enthusiasm as Trail Seems to Lead Nearer,” *Morganton News-Herald*, June 30, 1927; Bill Wise, *The Wisdom of Sam Ervin* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 61. In a detailed examination of lynchings in the year 1930, scholar Arthur Raper concluded that “the only evidence against several of the persons lynched in 1930 was that of the bloodhounds halting trails, a fact symbolic of the primitive elements in man-hunts.” See *The Tragedy of Lynching* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 10.

27. “Phantom Negro Eludes Dogs and Officers in Several Days Chase,” *Lenoir News-Topic*, June 30, 1927; “Search for Negro Outlaw Renewed”; “Hopes of Capturing Man Back to Low Ebb Again,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 27, 1927; “Morganton Negro Attacked Girl”; “Knob Surrounded in Man-Hunt,” *Charlotte Observer*, June 25, 1927.

28. “Man Hunt Started Again Today in Adako Section,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 25, 1927; L. J. Hampton, “Manhunt Goes on in Burke,” *Winston-Salem Journal*, June 25, 1927; “Knob Surrounded in Man-Hunt.” Police officers in 1920s North Carolina were eligible to claim reward money; see, e.g., “Officer Gets Large Reward,” *Charlotte Observer*, Apr. 24, 1925. The large rewards for Broadus Miller



thus appealed to a wide variety of law-enforcement officials, including town police chiefs from neighboring counties who had no formal jurisdiction in either Caldwell or Burke. For an earlier attempt by Lentz to claim a reward, see Tom Rusher, *Until He Is Dead: Capital Punishment in Western North Carolina History* (Boone, NC: Parkway Publishers, 2003), 17, 40.

29. "Man Hunt Started Again Today"; "Seeking Negro in Wide Area"; "Now Believe Capture of Negro Fugitive Is Near"; "Trail of Slayer of 15 Year Old Morganton Girl Is Lost," *Lenoir News-Topic*, June 27, 1927.

30. "Pursuers Fag in Man-Hunt; Negro Escapes Sight Race," *Charlotte Observer*, June 27, 1927; "Local Negroes Believe Wrong Person Hunted"; "Trail of Slayer."

31. "Hunt in Vain for Broadus Miller," *Raleigh News and Observer*, June 27, 1927; "Trail of Slayer"; "Local Negroes Believe Wrong Person Hunted." As Arthur Raper noted, "The man-hunt provides an opportunity for carrying and flourishing firearms with impunity, a privilege which appeals strongly to the more irresponsible elements" (*Tragedy of Lynching*, 9).

32. "Dense Forests Hide Fugitive," *Charlotte Observer*, June 29, 1927; "Hunt in Vain for Broadus Miller."

33. In the summer of 2007, Sandra Coffey of the Collettsville Historical Society interviewed several elderly Caldwell County residents about the manhunt; I am indebted to her for transcribing these interviews and providing them to me (Sandra Coffey, emails to the author, Aug. 4, 13, 17, 20, 2007). The only newspaper reference to the Ingrams ("Search for Negro Outlaw Renewed") claims that the fugitive stole canned fruit, shoes, and a shotgun from the home; however, the *Charlotte Observer* ("Posse Hot on Negro's Trail," June 30, 1927) reported that the same three items (canned fruit, shoes, and a shotgun) were stolen during the Tuesday-night burglary of a store near Piney, a small community a dozen miles south of the Ingram residence. The pursuit of the fugitive led north from the Ingrams', and none of the Caldwell County residents interviewed by Sandra Coffey mentioned a shotgun as one of the stolen items.

34. "Posse Hot on Negro's Trail"; "Phantom Negro Eludes Dogs"; "7 Bloodhounds Aid in Search for Negro Now," *Hickory Daily Record*, June 29, 1927.

35. "Posse Hot on Negro's Trail." For information on Linville Gorge, see Dirk Frankenberg, *Exploring North Carolina's Natural Areas: Parks, Nature Preserves, and Hiking Trails* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 293–95.

36. "Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw"; "Young Man from the Mountains Shoots Outlaw," *Hickory Daily Record*, July 4, 1927; "Negro Outlaw Slain at End of Long Trail in Mountains," *Charlotte Observer*, July 4, 1927; "Broadus Miller, Outlaw, Is Killed," *Marion (NC) Progress*, July 7, 1927. According to the article in the *Marion Progress*, farmer George Ollis glimpsed the fugitive with the shotgun. However, elderly Ashford resident Buford Franklin, who grew up a few hundred feet from the scene and knew the Ollis family personally, remembers Ollis's daughter Tressie

as the person who claimed to have spotted the outlaw (Buford Franklin, interview with the author, June 11, 2007).

37. “Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw”; Franklin, interview, June 11, 2007; Ben Dixon MacNeill, “Broadus Miller Meets His Doom in Gun Battle,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, July 7, 1927; “Young Man from the Mountains Shoots Outlaw”; “Broadus Miller, Negro Outlaw, Is Killed in Gun Duel Sunday,” *Lenoir News-Topic*, July 4, 1927. Further information on Commodore Burleson comes from personal interviews with Burleson’s children, Charles Burleson (Apr. 13, 2007) and Pat Burleson Howell (June 26, 2007).

38. “Broadus Miller, Outlaw, Is Killed”; “Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw.”

39. “Vain Effort Being Made to Discredit Burleson,” *Morganton News-Herald*, July 21, 1927; “Posse Hot on Negro’s Trail.”

40. “Claims Broadus Miller Shot While Asleep beside Stump,” *Lenoir News-Topic*, July 14, 1927; “Broadus Miller, Negro Outlaw, Is Killed.”

41. The description of the treatment of Miller’s body comes from Franklin, interview, June 11, 2007. Franklin’s account is corroborated by a description given by H. Clay Ferree, who later saw Miller’s body in Morganton: “I saw . . . the seared and broken skin where the taut rope had cut his legs” (“Day the Mob Took Over”). Information on Burleson comes from personal interviews with Charles Burleson (Apr. 13, 2007) and Pat Burleson Howell (June 26, 2007); “Man Slaying Negro Killer Is Hero of the Day,” *Asheville Times*, July 4, 1927. Ben Dixon MacNeill (“Broadus Miller,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, July 4, 1927) states that the men arrived in Morganton shortly after noon. However, all other eyewitnesses give a slightly earlier time of arrival. See J. Alex Mull, *Tales of Old Burke* (Morganton: News Herald Press, 1975), 94; Harry Wilson Jr., *Lazarus Bros. The Early Years: The Story of Their Store and Their Times 1893–1993* (Morganton, NC; privately published, n.d.), n.p.; Margaret Burleson Crumley, telephone interview with the author, June 27, 2007.

42. Margaret McMahan, “Early Years of Ben Dixon MacNeill,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Aug. 13, 1967. For additional information on MacNeill, see David Stick, “Ben Dixon MacNeill,” in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). A member of the North Carolina Historical Commission, MacNeill had been invited to the July 4 dedication of a monument to the Revolutionary War soldiers known as the Overmountain Men; see “To Unveil Monument at Historic Gillespie Gap,” *Raleigh Times*, June 24, 1927; MacNeill, “Broadus Miller Meets His Doom”; “Negro Outlaw Slain at End of Long Trail.” A photograph of the scene on the courthouse lawn appeared on the front page of the *Charlotte Observer*, July 5, 1927, and the *Raleigh Times*, July 6, 1927.

43. MacNeill, “Broadus Miller Meets His Doom”; “Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw”; “Young Man from the Mountains Shoots Outlaw”; “Negro Outlaw Slain

at End of Long Trail.” MacNeill was the only journalist to describe the body lying next to the monument; the photograph later published in the *Charlotte Observer* confirms the accuracy of his description. The various newspaper accounts offer a confused and sometimes contradictory chronology of events, indicative of the tumultuous atmosphere on the courthouse lawn. In reconstructing the scene, I have pieced together these various accounts.

44. MacNeill, “Broadus Miller Meets His Doom”; “Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw”; “Young Man from the Mountains Shoots Outlaw”; “Negro Outlaw Slain at End of Long Trail.”

45. “Negro Outlaw Slain at End of Long Trail”; “Edwin Breathed Bridges,” in *Encyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: American Historical Society, 1938); Edwin B. Bridges to Sam Ervin Jr., May 24, 1924, Feb. 19, 1926, Sam J. Ervin Papers, Manuscripts Department, Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Edwin B. Bridges to Governor A. W. McLean, July 5, 1927, McLean Governor Papers, Correspondence, 500–526, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh; “Burleson’s Deed,” *Hickory Daily Record*, July 15, 1927; “Along Comes a Hero,” *Cleveland Star*, July 6, 1927.

46. “L. E. Webb Relates Experience When Negro Was Killed,” *Hickory Daily Record*, July 13, 1927. Copies of the photographs are in the possession of the author, courtesy of Ronald Huffman.

47. MacNeill, “Broadus Miller Meets His Doom”; “Young Man from the Mountains Shoots Outlaw”; “Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw”; “Negro Outlaw Slain at End of Long Trail”; Beatrice Cobb, “Indignant,” *Morganton News-Herald*, July 7, 1927.

48. “Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw”; MacNeill, “Broadus Miller Meets His Doom”; “Young Man from the Mountains Shoots Outlaw”; “Long Hunt for Negro Outlaw”; “Negro Outlaw Slain at End of Long Trail”; “Man Slaying Negro Killer”; “Broadus Miller’s Body Buried Here,” *Statesville Landmark*, July 4, 1927; Mull, *Tales of Old Burke*, 95–96.

49. “Broadus Miller’s Body Buried Here”; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1965), 95–96; “Several Thousand Klansmen in City,” *Statesville Landmark*, July 4, 1927; “Horse Show Very Successful Event,” *Statesville Landmark*, July 7, 1927; “Klan Parade Draws Immense Crowd,” *Statesville Daily*, July 5, 1927; Timothy Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 175. Confirmation of Commodore Burleson’s Klan membership came from Burleson’s children Charles Burleson (interview, Apr. 13, 2007), Pat Burleson Howell (interview, June 26, 2007), and Margaret Burleson Crumley (interview, June 27, 2007).

50. “Horse Show Very Successful Event”; “Klan Parade Draws Immense Crowd.” Statesville civic leaders had previously written to Governor Angus

McLean, describing the city’s plans for the Fourth and requesting that the Statesville Calvary Troop of the North Carolina National Guard be part of the celebration. However, the governor declined the request, stating that “it would set a very troublesome precedent” (Angus Wilton McLean to Bailey Groome, June 27, 1927, Angus W. McLean General Correspondence, 1924–28, North Carolina State Archives).

51. “Morganton Church-Goers Applaud a Gory Matinee,” *Raleigh Times*, July 4, 1927; “Needless Atrocity,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, July 5, 1927; “On a Sunday Afternoon,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 5, 1927.

52. “Morganton Warm over Paper Story,” *Hickory Daily Record*, July 7, 1927. The origin of the supposed MacNeill quotation is unclear, for it is not contained in the journalist’s July 4 *News and Observer* front-page article. A different version of MacNeill’s account may have appeared in an afternoon or evening edition of the *News and Observer*, but it is also possible that the supposed quotation was apocryphal. See “Sheriff Resents Unfair Reports Affair Sunday,” *Morganton News-Herald*, July 7, 1927; “Too Severely Criticized,” *Morganton News-Herald*, July 14, 1927. Throughout her coverage of the Broadus Miller case, Cobb had maintained an idealized representation of her hometown, minimizing or ignoring any news that contradicted such a portrait. She had emphasized that Miller was an “outsider” and not a native of Morganton. In the immediate aftermath of Kincaid’s murder, when mobs were roaming Morganton’s streets, a reporter had spoken to Cobb. “There is no danger of a lynching here,” the editor blithely asserted. “The searchers are orderly and calm.” Yet Governor Angus McLean—alarmed at the mobs whose existence Cobb denied—had deployed National Guard troops, who patrolled the town for two days. The *News-Herald* never acknowledged the troops’ presence, while the *Charlotte Observer* noted that Morganton civic leaders had “expressed resentment” at outside journalists’ coverage of the mobs. See “Knob Surrounded in Man-Hunt.”

53. “Why the Fuss?” *Hickory Daily Record*, July 12, 1927; “Morganton and Burke,” *Lenoir News-Topic*, July 18, 1927; “The Morganton Affair,” *Cleveland Star*, July 11, 1927; “Shelby and County People Go to See Slain Negro—Get His Photo,” *Cleveland Star*, July 4, 1927; “Scores Look Over Morganton Photos on Star Bulletin,” *Cleveland Star*, July 6, 1927.

54. Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown*, 224; “Lynch Man, Let Public View Body: Church Goers Take Part in Celebration,” *Chicago Defender*, July 9, 1927.

55. “Young Man from the Mountains Shoots Outlaw”; Charles Burleson, interview, Apr. 13, 2007; Pat Burleson Howell, interview, June 26, 2007; Fugitives from Justice, North Carolina Consolidated Statutes, Article 6, Section 4549: Outlawry for Felony; Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 94. Enacted by state lawmakers in Raleigh in the aftermath of the Civil

War, the outlawry statute laid out specific procedural steps for declaring a fugitive an “outlaw,” beginning with a sworn affidavit by a county sheriff and ending with official certification by two justices of the peace.

For an excellent description of the difficulties in defining lynching, see Christopher Waldrep, “War of Words: The Controversy over the Definition of Lynching, 1899–1940,” *Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 1 (2000): 75–100. As Waldrep has noted, the NAACP’s Thurgood Marshall consistently argued against expanding the definition to include lethal violence by a posse, and neither the NAACP nor the Tuskegee Institute would classify Miller’s death as a lynching. The NAACP did consider the Aug. 2, 1927, killing of Tom Bradshaw by a Nash County posse a “lynching”; however, Bradshaw had been held in police custody before escaping and was gunned down while still wearing handcuffs. See Frank Smethurst, “Nash Negro Who Assaulted Girl Dies of Wounds,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, Aug. 3, 1927. In 1927 North Carolina was one of a handful of states with antilynching legislation, but state law narrowly defined lynching as “conspiring to enter jail for the purpose of killing a prisoner or actually so entering.” In other words, in order to be considered a lynching victim, a person had to be jailed before being killed. Writing just six years after Broadus Miller was killed, and with the Miller case apparently in mind, legal scholar James Chadbourn posed a hypothetical situation to illustrate the absurdity inherent within such a definition: “Five hundred men capture an alleged rapist in the mountains of . . . North Carolina, hang him, and riddle him with bullets. This is no lynching.” See James Harmon Chadbourn, *Lynching and the Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 31, 35. Historian Vann R. Newkirk has recently categorized Broadus Miller’s death as a “police-sanctioned lynching,” but he does not define the term. See Vann R. Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina: A History, 1865–1941* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 106.

56. “2,500 Grim Hillmen Continue Search for Murderer of Woman,” *Winston-Salem Journal*, June 23, 1927; “Bridges Tells of Slaying of Miller,” *Charlotte News*, July 4, 1927; “Negro Outlaw Slain at End of Long Trail”; “Speaking Frankly,” *Winston-Salem Twin City Sentinel*, July 5, 1927; “Alleged Murderer of Young Girl Killed,” *Washington Post*, July 4, 1927; “A Lesson in Law Enforcement,” *Winston-Salem Journal*, July 5, 1927; “Morganton Affair.”

57. “Local Negroes Believe Wrong Person Hunted,” *Hickory Daily Record*, June 27, 1927; “Gene Martin Is Taken to Chain Gang from Here,” *Gastonia Daily Gazette*, July 7, 1927.

58. The U.S. Geologic Survey gives the respective elevations of Winston-Salem and Morganton as 912 and 1,155 feet (<http://geonames.usgs.gov>). See J. W. Williamson, *Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What the Mountains Did to the Movies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Press, 1995), 20. I thank Sandy Ballard for drawing my attention to this passage from Williamson.

59. Tolnay and Beck, *Festival of Violence*, 78; C. T. Jr., telephone interview with the author, May 21, 2007. In the words of a widely distributed broadside poem about the Broadus Miller case, the outlaw’s fate should teach African Americans “to stay in their place.” See Henry D. Holsclaw and Harry Lee Pennell, *The Murder of Gladys Kincaid* (Lenoir, NC: privately published, 1927). The Broadus Miller case also inspired a series of folk ballads; see Bruce E. Baker, “North Carolina Lynching Ballads,” in *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 219–46; Kevin W. Young, “The Murder of Gladys Kincaid: The Story Behind the Ballads,” *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 56, no. 1 (2009): 21–32.

## Chapter 13

# The Murder of Thomas Price

## Image, Identity, and Violence in Western North Carolina

*Richard D. Starnes*

Thomas Price loved horses. In fact, he loved animals of all kinds. He also loved the southern mountains. He discovered Haywood County, North Carolina, during a vacation just before World War I and, like many, grew to love the region's natural landscape and mild climate. He also developed a love and admiration for the people of western North Carolina that, while infused with paternalism, reflected real emotion. He established an extensive estate on Lickstone Mountain just south of Waynesville to which he took many sojourns from his job as secretary to the president of the Union Pacific Railroad. It was a place where he could spend his days surrounded by the mountains he loved and indulging his outdoor interests. By 1933, he had retired to a permanent residence in Haywood County, where he could enjoy the landscape, the wildlife, and his relationships with his neighbors. On the warm and clear morning of September 24, 1933, he and two companions—Virge Williams and Charlie Buchanan—rode up Lickstone Mountain, a ride through beautiful country that Price took regularly. They traveled together for most of the morning, Price on horseback and his companions on mules, and in the afternoon they turned back down the trail. About 2:30, near the top of the mountain and close to where his property abutted the Big Ridge mica mine, a man called out, "You've gone far enough." "Who?" Price asked, reining his horse to a stop. "All of you," the voice replied. Gunfire broke the day's solitude. Williams and Buchanan were both wounded, but that horseback ride up Big Ridge would be Price's last.<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, Price's death appears to be a simple case of murder. A closer examination shows that the murder and the trial that followed offer

a glimpse at the persistent connections among image, identity, and violence in the Appalachian South. Since the Civil War, violence seemed a central component of Appalachia's regional image. The bitter, divisive fighting that swept the region during the Civil War, the Hatfield-McCoy feud, labor unrest, and other widely circulated stories of mountain bloodshed provided ample evidence in the minds of many Americans that southern highlanders were a people defined by violence. Such perceptions often stemmed from the writings of missionaries, social reformers, and local colorists who flocked to the Mountain South to win souls, reform society, and document a place and a culture seemingly out of step with a modernizing America. Horace Kephart, who penned widely read observations of mountain life in nearby Swain County, North Carolina, described mountaineers as "unchecked by any stronger arms, inflamed by a multitude of personal wrongs, [and] habituated to the shedding of human blood," a people accustomed to living a violent existence.<sup>2</sup> Violence, specifically a primitive and visceral type of violence, seemed an essential and expected part of mountain life well into the twentieth century. Too often this perceived link between violence and Appalachian identity has been dismissed as the result of outsiders stereotyping southern mountaineers, but both Appalachians and outsiders influenced the ways violence affected regional identity. Outsiders did play powerful roles in shaping what being Appalachian meant, but Appalachians themselves were keenly aware of the ways outsiders perceived them, and they took steps to shape those perceptions. Therefore, to ask questions about Appalachian violence is to ask questions about the components—real or perceived—of regional identity. The Price murder presents an interesting study of the links between violence, image, and identity. When a prominent industrialist like Price met his end at the hands of mountaineers, the incident brought to the forefront the question of what it meant to be Appalachian. The murder and reaction to it at the local, state, regional, and national levels demonstrate that the construction of Appalachian identity remained a process mediated by both outsiders and mountaineers themselves and that for both, violence continued to play a central role.<sup>3</sup>

Although many facts in this case were disputed, one thing remained clear: Thomas Price was an outsider to the North Carolina mountains. Born in Wrexham, Wales, in 1875, Price migrated to America as a boy and soon became a clerk with Union Pacific. He worked his way up the corporate ladder, becoming secretary to the president in 1907. Price became prominent in Union Pacific's railroad empire, serving as a director of nine-



teen coal, railroad, and utility subsidiaries. In short, Price was a powerful player in American capitalism during an important period in the nation's history. Price's interests extended well beyond the boardroom. He developed a passion for horses and maintained a large stable for most of his adult life. His desire to protect horses from mistreatment, specifically in the realm of horse racing, led him to become active in the cause of animal welfare. From 1925 to 1932, Price served as president of the New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a position that allowed him to pursue his love of animals, but one that placed him at the center of a number of controversies. When it came to the cause of animal welfare, Price exhibited clear convictions. He was attacked on two occasions while trying to prevent incidents of animal cruelty. In one incident in October 1928, Vivian Munce "struck Mr. Price with her riding crop as he was leading the horse away after declaring her horse lame." Although Munce was subsequently convicted of animal cruelty, the incident set off a series of charges and countercharges, suggesting that Price was a man of firm beliefs and one accustomed to using the legal system and his personal influence to achieve his ends. Described as "an enthusiast for horseback riding and the outdoor life," he became acquainted with the North Carolina mountains just after the First World War, a time when the region was becoming something of a playground for the American elite. Following his retirement from Union Pacific in 1932, Price voiced his intention of residing permanently on Lickstone Mountain in Haywood County.<sup>4</sup>

His thousand-acre mountain estate with its well-appointed lodge gave Price the ideal base from which to pursue his outdoor interests. It offered a number of riding trails and other diversions well suited for a man of Price's predilections. But Price did not come to western North Carolina expecting to live out his days in seclusion. Not unlike other prominent Americans who came to the region during these years, he brought with him a philanthropic zeal, likely influenced by progressivism and a strong sense of paternalism. Others described Price as a "kindly, generous, genuinely democratic man" who was "deeply interested in the welfare of his mountain neighbors and eager to aid in the advancement of that welfare." He "maintained a free circulating library and a free drug dispensary" and often provided books, food, school supplies, and even candy to the children at nearby Allen's Creek School, where they recalled him as "the chewing gum man." His wife, Esther, did not share his desire to spend retirement in the southern mountains and regularly returned to New Jersey. However, Price could not

imagine anything else. In a conversation at the offices of the *Waynesville Mountaineer* shortly before his death, Price remarked, "When I am in these mountains I feel like I am among my people. I feel more at home here than anywhere else."<sup>5</sup>

His attackers were also outsiders of a sort. Four men stood accused of murdering Price: Dewey Potter; his fourteen-year-old son, Wayne; his brother Clarence; and Eric Ledford, his first cousin.<sup>6</sup> Sons of the southern mountains, the Potter family hailed originally from Towns County, Georgia, where they lived a simple, if impoverished, existence farming in the North Georgia mountains. In the early twentieth century, the family headed west for Oklahoma. The specific reasons for their move to Oklahoma and for their return thirteen years later remain unknown, but both migrations were likely motivated by a quest for better economic opportunities. Upon their return, the Potter brothers lived in Macon, Clay, and Jackson counties in western North Carolina, most likely moving to Haywood County in 1932 or early 1933. Their father, W. E. Potter, pastored a church on Johns Creek in neighboring Jackson County, where the rest of family often attended services.<sup>7</sup> The Potters most certainly remained poor. The 1920 census found Dewey Potter living propertyless in Clay County, North Carolina, with his wife, Bessie, and his son Wayne, and working as a wood chopper. At the time of the attack, the Potters had found employment in Haywood County with Tom Blaylock, who had leased the Big Ridge mica mine from the Haywood Lumber and Mining Company. Blaylock paid the Potters by the ton for scrap mica they found at the old mine.<sup>8</sup> It was dirty, backbreaking work that held few rewards, but working for Blaylock meant that their families could live in houses at the mine, thus providing a bit of stability during a time of great economic uncertainty. Little more is known of the Potters, except that their lives likely reflected the themes familiar to many of their Appalachian neighbors. They were poor and hardworking, espoused strong religious faith, and maintained strong kinship bonds. Despite common roots and similar circumstances, they remained outsiders to many in Haywood County. Even if they hailed from the southern mountains, they lacked the local ties that would make them full, integrated members of the community.

These events unfolded in a region undergoing rapid social and economic transformations. The extension of the railroad during the 1880s helped establish the region as an elite resort destination and led to the exploitation of its natural resources. The Ohio-based Champion Fibre Com-

pany opened a large pulp paper mill in Haywood County in 1908 and, combined with significant mining and timber operations, ushered in a period of industrialization. Not surprisingly, local elites praised these changes, and through regional newspapers, boards of trade, and other organizations, these leaders actively promoted the region as a great place to visit and as a profitable place to invest. By the 1920s, leaders in Waynesville, Haywood County's seat, were promoting road projects, sidewalks, a municipal power plant, and even a public golf course to enhance economic development and boost the community's image. By the late 1920s, the movement to establish the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was well under way, a process that would create a powerful tourist attraction in the region and forcibly relocate hundreds of families from ancestral homes in North Carolina and Tennessee. These economic changes led to rapid population increases, as Haywood grew from 16,222 residents in 1900 to 28,273 in 1930. The Great Depression interrupted Haywood County's economic growth, making the county more reliant than ever on outside forces to bring relief and recovery to the local economy. Local boosters realized that the region's image remained an essential component of Haywood's economic future. Price's murder threatened the county's image in the minds of tourists and potential investors, something that it could not afford, especially in the depths of the Great Depression.<sup>9</sup>

Price and the Potters did not meet for the first time on that September morning on Lickstone Mountain. The week before, they had met in Haywood County Superior Court in a case of trespassing. In past years, Price had allowed his neighbors to graze livestock on his estate, but had stopped the practice in 1933. Sensitive to trespassing, Price had recently posted his land, warning others not to graze cattle, hunt, or otherwise intrude on his property. In August, Price learned that Clarence Potter had killed a groundhog on his estate. Hearing that Potter has violated his land, Price dispatched Virge Williams—one of his employees who would accompany him on his last ride—to swear a warrant against Potter for trespassing and unlawful hunting. At the hearing, Justice of the Peace J. C. Patrick dismissed the hunting charge, but found Potter guilty of trespassing and fined him five dollars, giving Potter until September 26 to pay the fine or spend thirty days in jail.<sup>10</sup>

The tension between the Potters and Price did not end with the verdict. J. C. Churchwell, an African American working at the Price estate, told reporters that Dewey Potter had stopped him on Main Street in Waynes-

ville just after the trial, offering Churchwell a warning for his employer. According to Churchwell, Potter told him to tell Price “not to ever get off his land again and not to ride to the top (of the mountain) again. What’s fair for the goose is fair for the gander.” Virge Williams reported a similar encounter with Clarence Potter. After the judgment against him, Potter met Williams on Main Street and said, “Tell old man Price not to ride the mountains any more.” When Williams asked what he meant, Potter replied, “I mean for him not to ride anymore.”<sup>11</sup> Price took these warnings quite seriously. The next day, Price asked J. N. Tate to go to Waynesville the following week to be sworn by the sheriff as a special deputy so he could act as his bodyguard. Tate noted that Price “was worried to death and was restless” after Churchwell relayed Potter’s warning, even changing the location of his bed so he could sleep away from a window.<sup>12</sup> Price’s fear was well-founded. As he and his companions rode up Lickstone Mountain toward the Big Ridge mine, they were doubtlessly aware that Dewey Potter or his family might discover them and follow through on their threats. Not surprisingly, that morning Price and his companions rode armed.

On that fateful Tuesday, neighbors and deputies carried Price’s body several miles down the mountain by stretcher as the ambulance could not navigate the rough roads near the murder scene. The next day, a crowd including a large number of his Allen’s Creek neighbors met Price’s body at Waynesville’s Garrett Funeral Home for the viewing. Mrs. David West, wife of Price’s caretaker, sobbed openly near the casket, proclaiming, “He was the best friend we ever had and now he’s gone!” The Potters had also spent Tuesday night in Waynesville, but in custody of the sheriff, as Clarence and Dewey Potter and their cousin Eric Ledford turned themselves in the afternoon following the murder. Deputies brought young Wayne Potter down from Big Ridge later that evening. Despite requests for bail, Judge Felix E. Alley held all four defendants in the county jail. There, they were not the only prisoners who stood accused of murder. The Price case was one of four murder trials on the same grand jury docket that fall, perhaps indicating that Haywood County was growing more violent and residents were becoming concerned. In fact, members of the grand jury called the recent crime spree “not only regrettable, but revolting to good citizens.” Too many cases, both capital and noncapital, “are prompted by a spirit of revenge and malice. . . . Let all men deal honestly and in good faith and not in a spirit of revenge.” They called on “our civic leaders, ministers, and teachers to call meetings over our county not once but often in the interest of better citizen-

ship and crime prevention,” focusing especially on the county’s youth. In short, the community had to take a stand to stem crime so as to protect the county’s people and reputation.<sup>13</sup>

After the incident, the *Waynesville Mountaineer*, the weekly newspaper for Haywood County, rose quickly to celebrate Price and condemn his attackers. Being branded with a reputation for violence clearly remained a concern for local boosters as such an image threatened the region’s economy and the social fabric of the community. “We readily admit,” the *Mountaineer* editorialized, “that the publicity received was not any help to Waynesville,” but “neither do we feel that it was detrimental to the extent that some would have us believe.” If properly managed and accurately reported, the editor argued, the murder would not have a lasting effect on the region’s image, noting that “very few remember what town in North Carolina in 1929 had a mill strike and a number of men killed,” an oblique and erroneous reference to Gastonia’s infamous Loray Mill strike.<sup>14</sup>

As part of its defense of the region’s image, the *Mountaineer* attempted to clarify the origin of those accused of Price’s murder. This defense initially took the form of an editorial battle. In describing the murder, the *Charlotte Observer* declared, “No fouler crime has stained the escutcheon of this commonwealth than that in Haywood county, North Carolina, when a mountaineer shot and killed a distinguished New Yorker.” The victim’s “only sins, so far as the evidence of the case has turned up, was that he was wealthy, had bought up large areas of mountain lands and converted them into preserves, had established libraries and given away books, distributed medicine among the sick and dispensed charity to the needy of that community.” The *Observer* editor decried the incident as something that “might attract little attention in blood crazed Russia with its seething prejudices and boiling passions of the unsuccessful toward the achieving.” It was difficult to believe “that so gruesome a murder as this could be conceived in the brain of a citizen of North Carolina.”<sup>15</sup> In response to this apparent attack on Haywood’s reputation, the *Mountaineer* quickly defended the community’s collective identity and the image of its residents. The editor noted that press coverage of the murder had dominated the headlines, but wanted to make “perfectly clear . . . that the alleged murderers are not Haywood County folks.” Although the Potters were from north Georgia and had lived for some time in western North Carolina, they were not locals. “The men charged with this crime have only been living in this county for the past eight months,” the *Mountaineer*

recorded. "They are originally from Georgia and Oklahoma. They moved to Haywood from Jackson County."<sup>16</sup>

Not content to watch his clients maligned in the press, defense attorney Doyle Alley took to the newspapers to defend the Potters' mountain roots and to depict Price as an outsider. Without mentioning the victim directly, Alley waded into the editorial dustup between the *Observer* and the *Mountaineer*, arguing that his clients were not only innocent until proven guilty, but also had strong local ties. "Dewey, Clarence, and Wayne Potter are citizens and residents of Waynesville township, Haywood County, North Carolina," Alley noted, adding that the elder two "are entitled to vote, as electors, upon proper registration . . . and deserve the full consideration extended to any other citizens." He admitted that Ledford was a resident of Georgia, but attempted to elicit a degree of empathy for the accused by countering claims that the Potters were outsiders with few ties to the local community, opining, "I do resent insinuations that my clients are all foreigners." His silence on Price's ties to the community could be interpreted as an unspoken critique of the victim as an outsider. These warring editorials not only indicate that Appalachians were keenly aware of their reputation for violence but demonstrate that they were active in attempting to counter those perceptions. More significantly, the murder provided western North Carolinians with the opportunity to define and redefine mountain identity.<sup>17</sup>

Other regional newspapers drew clear lines between Price and the Potters. The *Asheville Citizen* lamented Price's death and posited that "as a citizen of Western North Carolina he was an exceedingly valuable acquisition." His social prominence, his philanthropic endeavors, and his tragic death allowed Price to transcend his outsider status. Simultaneously, his attackers, although natives of the mountains, lost their status as mountaineers by killing Price. The paper noted that "reports make clear that those who are accused of his death were not natives of the region, but newcomers to it."<sup>18</sup> The more conservative *Asheville Times* echoed these themes. In an editorial, the *Times* argued that "the violent doing to death of a man who had proved his devotion to this region and its people is an unmitigated tragedy." The paper reported that J. M. Long, a shopkeeper in Hazelwood and a friend of Price, believed that his death "would mean that this section of Western North Carolina will be set back ten or 15 years in its progress." An understandable fear, the editor noted, but "that the outside world will charge the death of a great-hearted lover of humanity to the lawlessness of

Haywood County citizens is negated by the facts of the tragedy. Mr. Price met his death at the hands of newcomers to the county." The murder was "an incident that runs contrary to the traditions of the Appalachian mountain people. For these people, even in their strong independence and peculiar individualism, are known to the world as hospitable and neighborly to all who come among them in friendship and good-will." Thus, the regional press stripped the Potters of their Appalachian identity due to their alleged actions and their lack of local ties.<sup>19</sup>

John Parris, a Jackson County native who would later become one of the most beloved newspaper reporters in the region, wrote a long feature for the *Raleigh News and Observer* that also sought to portray the Potters as "outlanders" and Price as a man who had come to the North Carolina mountains "in the radiance of friendship and good will." Like others, Parris argued that "the Potters, in jail awaiting trial for murder, are not natives," but rather "came from Georgia and lived in Oklahoma." The killing "gnaws at the hearts of the Appalachian people" as it "was so utterly foreign to the traditions of a people, who for all their independence and individuality, are noted for hospitality and neighborliness to all who come in friendship and good will." His death left the community "stunned," as "there's not a man, woman, or child in Haywood County who would have harmed a hair on Mr. Price's head." Parris's choices about what constituted Appalachianess ignored powerful images in the American imagination that linked the Appalachians and violence, choosing instead to focus on kinder, more positive regional traits such as neighborliness, kindness, and community ties.<sup>20</sup> The conflagration of identity continued as the trial approached. As it began, the *Raleigh News and Observer* reported on "the 62-year old mountaineer whose death is believed by officers to have been the result of a feud with the Potters following conviction of Clarence of poaching on the Price estate." In the rhetorical attack on the defendants, Price became a mountaineer, while the Potters became outlaws bent on revenge. So, far removed from the mountains, some writers were willing to grant mountain identity to the wealthy victim from New Jersey, while rendering the accused rootless, anything but Appalachian.<sup>21</sup>

Not surprisingly, this was not the only account to refer to the incident as a feud. Since the Hatfield-McCoy feud, the family conflict that raged along the Kentucky–West Virginia border between 1878 and 1891, Americans equated Appalachian violence with feuding.<sup>22</sup> In reporting the murder, the *New York Times* headline proclaimed, "Thomas Price Shot Dead by

Feudists in North Carolina.” The article alleged that, “reverting to the primitive law which Price had sought during the vacations of almost a quarter of a century to have abandoned by the hill-folk, Dewey Potter swore a blood feud against the section’s benefactor.” This report implied that Price had been deserted by the very people he had expended so much effort to help. Price “was widely admired in this section because of his interest in poor mountain children and his warm friendship with less fortunate neighbors.” He not only provided schoolbooks for them but also “entertained many guests at his home and most of them were mountain folk or working people from the town.”<sup>23</sup> Just as the trial commenced, the *New York Times Magazine* ran a long article by Jean Thomas, a New Yorker who had spent several years collecting ballads and reporting in eastern Kentucky. Thomas argued that incidents such as the Price murder, while once commonplace in the Mountain South, were fading into history. In fact, Thomas simultaneously defended southern mountaineers and condemned the Potters, noting that during her time in the region, “I know of no parallel to the Price case among the people with whom I have been associated [and] I can recall no betrayal of a benefactor and I have never known a mountain man, woman, or child who would accept a favor without returning one.”<sup>24</sup>

Just like the pretrial debates over the murder, the trial itself became a referendum on Appalachian identity. When the trial opened at the Haywood County courthouse, the proceedings attracted great attention from both locals and the press. The opening session saw the courthouse “thronged with residents of Waynesville as well as the people from the mountain section where Price had his summer lodge and met his death.”<sup>25</sup> In the state’s case against the Potters, Solicitor John M. Queen depicted the murder as a premeditated act of vengeance, an ambush of a prominent citizen by rogues seeking revenge for past transgressions. He laid the groundwork for this theory in a preliminary hearing held just four days after the incident. At this hearing, Queen called just four witnesses, the most powerful being Price’s employee and companion Charlie Buchanan. Buchanan testified that not only had he accompanied Price on the ride up Lickstone Mountain that September morning, but he also had been at the Potters’ home on Sunday, September 17, and witnessed an agitated Dewey Potter grab his .12-gauge shotgun and declare as he left the house that he was on his way to kill Price.<sup>26</sup>

At trial, Solicitor Queen continued to depict the killing as a premeditated act of revenge. Both Buchanan and Virge Williams testified that they



were certain that Dewey Potter had been the man who called on their riding party to halt and who had fired the shotgun blast that killed Price and wounded them both. Buchanan admitted that all three men were armed that morning, but only he managed to get off a shot at Potter, while Potter fired three times. Price's pistol, according to Buchanan, never left his pocket.<sup>27</sup> The state also called to the witness stand three of Price's African American employees, Jess Churchill, Sloan Irvin, and William Gray, all claiming that Dewey Potter had told them to warn Price not to leave his property again.<sup>28</sup> One of the state's most compelling witnesses was Robert Buchanan, "a 12-year-old red-headed mountain boy," who testified that while at Dewey Potter's home on the day of the murder he heard Dewey's son Wayne announce that "Mr. Price has just gone by on the mountain," to which Dewey replied that he was "going out to kill everyone of them."<sup>29</sup>

In the face of such evidence, the defense faced a difficult path to acquittal. On the stand, Clarence Potter proclaimed his innocence and argued that he was at "an old-time mountain singing convention" on Old Bald Mountain at the time of the shooting, which three witnesses, including his father, confirmed. He denied telling various people following Dewey's conviction for trespassing that Price "had better look out after this or a little Oklahoma justice will be taken." In fact, he refused knowing Price or ever having spoken to him.<sup>30</sup> Eric Ledford admitted to being at the scene, but denied firing any shots. In some of the trial's most dramatic testimony, Dewey Potter admitted to shooting at Price and his companions, but insisted that he did so in self-defense. He stated that the day before the murder he and his son Wayne had been fired upon by Virge Williams and Bill Gray and that this was not the first incident in which Price had acted violently toward the Potter family. Dewey knew Price and believed him to be a "dangerous and violent" man who often went around armed. He told the jury that in the weeks leading up to the shootings, Price had threatened "to kill my wife and said he was going to run the whole family off." He claimed that he did not leave his home that Sunday to kill Price, but that he and Eric Ledford had gone out to pick chestnuts and that he took his shotgun for protection against bears.<sup>31</sup>

Defense witnesses painted a much darker picture of Price than those local boosters and neighbors who recalled him as the benevolent "chewing gum man." In contrast to the regional press, they portrayed him as a mercenary elitist who demanded that his neighbors recognize his superior social

status. Cling Bumgarner told the jury that Dewey Potter had asked Price “not to go around my house arousing my wife and children.” Bumgarner became hostile under cross-examination, stating, “If a man abuses my wife and runs her off he had better make his tracks scarce in North Carolina,” clear support of Dewey Potter’s argument that he had acted to protect himself and his family.<sup>32</sup> Claude Rhinehart, a neighbor of both Price and the Potters, testified that Price had told him, following Clarence’s trespassing arrest, that “I had one Potter brought off the mountain today and I’ll have the rest brought off later. The Potters and I can’t live in the same community.”<sup>33</sup> The implication was clear. Price was a bad neighbor who was not above resorting to threats, intimidation, and even violence to achieve his ends. For the Potters and some of their neighbors, Price’s actions and demeanor were an affront to the traditions of kinship and neighborliness so common in mountain communities.

In the end, the Potters’ claims of self-defense fell on deaf ears. The jury found three of the men guilty of second-degree murder. Dewey Potter received a sentence of twenty to twenty-five years at hard labor, while his brother, whom witnesses placed miles away from the scene, received a two-to-four-year sentence. Eric Ledford garnered a sentence of fifteen to twenty years, but jurors found fourteen-year-old Wayne Potter not guilty of conspiracy.<sup>34</sup> Curiously, after pronouncing the sentences Judge Felix Alley noted that he “had never heard an abler defense in 35 years” and that “Mr. Price was evidently, according to the evidence, hunting for trouble. He had no business to go up there armed and with two armed men. Everyone who knows me knows that I am sorry for the defendants.” Perhaps Alley had come to understand that this was anything but a simple case of murder.<sup>35</sup>

How, then, should we interpret the murder of Thomas Price and the disparate reactions to it? It offers a way to understand the layers of Appalachian identity and the complex ways violence shaped that identity. The construction of Appalachian identity has too often been viewed as a process dominated by outsiders. Certainly outsiders shaped what it meant to be Appalachian in American culture. As Henry D. Shapiro argues, the work of missionaries, social reformers, and local colorists “involved an attempt to understand reality, or more precisely reality perceived in a particular way from a particular point of view.” But such perceptions, powerful though they were, constituted only one force shaping regional identity. Appalachians themselves also defined who they were, using traits, experiences, and

cultural denominators such as localism, ethnicity and race, economic status, culture, and even propensity toward violence to delineate who was Appalachian and who was not. As David C. Hsiung ably demonstrates, relationships between residents of valley towns and their more rural neighbors led to various characterizations among Appalachians even before the Civil War. Economics, town-rural dynamics, and social status helped create the images of mountain people that would become so powerful in the American imagination in the late nineteenth century. Hsiung concludes that “this sense of difference, articulated by the inhabitants themselves living within the mountain region,” often the result of social and economic differences, “in turn led to potent and enduring images of Appalachia.”<sup>36</sup> Image and identity are not mean expressions; they have power and real worth. The process of inclusion and exclusion by both outsiders and mountaineers—of defining Appalachianess—has been and remains a process of wielding and mediating power.<sup>37</sup>

The process of formulating identity rests on this complex mediation of inclusion and exclusion, of definition and ostracization. In this episode of Appalachian identity politics, an outsider could achieve near-native status, and mountaineers could be stripped of their identity by those bent on demonstrating that Appalachia was not the violent, benighted region of popular perception. For both Price and the Potters, their respective places in the social order not only contributed to the act that would forever link them, but also represented a case of the definition and redefinition of mountain identity that continued well into the twentieth century. In this case, and in incidents in other mountain communities, violence both acted as a component of Appalachianess and created a context in which identity could be redrawn and reinterpreted.

Why were the Potters stripped of their Appalachian identity? Why was Price granted, in life and in death, a level of social inclusion outsiders often did not receive in mountain communities? For the Potters, the loss of Appalachian identity in the eyes of their neighbors stemmed not simply from the fact that they killed a man, but rather whom they killed. By attacking Thomas Price, whether for a perceived wrong or out of self-defense, they killed a man who had carved out a place for himself in the local community due to his wealth and power. Their roots in north Georgia, their strong and clear kinship bonds, and the stark class differences between themselves and the victim should have granted them some degree of social inclusion

but did not. The Potters and their attorney attempted to win both their freedom and community approval by presenting the family as hardworking, God-fearing natives of the Mountain South. Despite such assertions, their act sacrificed their standing in a community with which they shared many commonalities, but in which they lacked the native status needed to gain acceptance. Although born in Appalachia, they remained, in Haywood County, according to John Parris, “outlanders.”

For Price, philanthropy allowed him to transcend outsider status in the local popular imagination, at least after his death. We know little about how neighbors viewed Price before the events on Lickstone Mountain, but we do know something about how he was remembered. Dissenting opinions about his benevolence, if they existed, were filtered by a popular press bent on celebrating his generosity, defending the honor of local residents, protecting regional reputations, and excoriating his attackers. In fact, the local opinion makers likely felt that they had much more in common with Price than with the Potters. Clearly the regional press used portrayals of the defendants and the victim to distance western North Carolina from the prevailing images of Appalachian violence. Editors at the *Waynesville Mountaineer*, the *Asheville Citizen*, and other newspapers had spent the first two decades of the twentieth century serving as boosters for their individual communities and for the region. They promoted outside investment, tourism, and economic development and worked to counter the more negative depictions of the Mountain South and its people. Thomas Price represented exactly the type of person whose opinion mattered to these boosters: wealthy, powerful, and interested in both the region and its future. The Potters’ action represented an unpleasant, even distasteful, reminder of the ways Appalachia had been viewed, and Price the region’s hopes for a brighter future.

Price died considered a member of the local community by his many neighbors, while his killers lost their status due to their violent actions. Why? Is it simply because, through his wealth and power, he had achieved a prominence in the local community that the Potters could not? The Price case is about more than simple language. It is about boosterism, regional self-perception, and a long and nuanced debate about the nature of Appalachian identity in which natives and outsiders played essential roles. The portrayals of this incident offer a way to ask broader and deeper questions about the link between violence and Appalachian identity, the image of Appalachia, and the ways in which a community views itself and its people.

## Notes

I am indebted to Kathy N. Ross for suggesting sources and to Christopher M. Bishop for research assistance.

1. *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Sept. 28, 1933; Maury Klein, *Union Pacific, Vol. II, 1894–1969* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 246. See also *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Aug. 9, 2002.

2. Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlander: A Narrative of Adventure in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life among Mountaineers* (New York: Macmillan, 1913, 1922; reprint, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 450. See also James Watt Raine, *The Land of Saddle-Bags: A Study of the Mountain People of Appalachia* (New York: Published Jointly by Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1924), 127–60.

3. Violence in Appalachia is inextricably linked to perceptions of Appalachian identity. For more on the genesis of Appalachian identity, see Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in American Consciousness* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); Allen Bateau, *The Invention of Appalachia* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990); and David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). Southern identity, of which Appalachia identity can be seen as something of a subset, rested on perceptions of innate violence. See Sheldon Hackney, “Southern Violence,” *American Historical Review* 74 (Feb. 1969): 906–25. For more on the role of violence in shaping Appalachian identity, see Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfield, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1–13, 77–78, 98–99; John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), esp. chaps. 5 and 10; Phillip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981); and Jonathan D. Sarris, *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2006). See also Gordon B. McKinney, “Industrialization and Violence in Appalachia in the 1890’s,” in *An Appalachian Symposium*, ed. J. W. Williamson (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1977), 131–44; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Racial Violence, Lynchings, and Modernization in the Mountain South,” in *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 302–16; Eric J. Olsen, “Race Relations in Asheville, North Carolina: Three Incidents, 1868–1906,” in *The Appalachian Experience: Proceedings of the 6th Annual Appalachian Studies*

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4. *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1933; *Raleigh News and Observer*, Sept. 25, 1933; “Milestones,” *Time Magazine*, Oct. 2, 1933; Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky: Tourism and Society in Western North Carolina* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 23–34, 48–63; Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), chap. 2; Ina W. Van Noppen and John J. Van Noppen, *Western North Carolina since the Civil War* (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1973), 253–68, 291–310, 354. See also C. Brenden Martin, *Tourism in the Mountain South: A Double-Edged Sword* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007).

5. *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Sept. 28, 1933. According to one report, shortly before his death, Price had given the Potters twelve dollars’ worth of food. See *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Sept. 26, 1933.

6. *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 26, 1933.

7. Fourteenth Census of the United States, Clay County, NC, Tusquittee Township, sheet 7B.

8. *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 26, 1933.

9. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 108–10; Van Noppen and Van Noppen, *Western North Carolina since the Civil War*, 308–9; *Waynesville Courier*, Mar. 17, 1921, Mar. 2, 1922, Jan. 4, Mar. 15, Apr. 5, 1923; Historical Census Browser, retrieved Sept. 5, 2009, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>. For more on the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, see Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From National Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000); and Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000).

10. *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 25, 26, 1933.

11. *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 26, 1933; *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Sept. 28, 1933; *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 13, 1933.

12. *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 26, 1933; *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Sept. 28, 1933.

13. *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Sept. 28, Oct. 12, Nov. 23, Dec. 7, 1933.

14. *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Oct. 5, 1933. Despite the editor's observation, the Gastonia strike has been far from forgotten. See John A. Salmond, *Gastonia, 1929: The Story of the Loray Mill Strike* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

15. *Charlotte Observer*, Sept. 28, 1933.

16. *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Oct. 5, 1933.

17. *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Oct. 12, 1933.

18. *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 26, 1933.

19. *Asheville Times*, Sept. 27, 1933.

20. *Raleigh News and Observer*, Oct. 1, 1933.

21. *Raleigh News and Observer*, Dec. 12, 1933.

22. In addition to Waller, *Feud*, see Altina L. Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype," in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 347–76; and Kathleen M. Blee and Dwight B. Billings, "Where 'Bloodshed Is a Pastime': Mountain Feuds and Appalachian Stereotyping," in *Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes: Back Talk from an American Region*, ed. Dwight B. Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 119–37.

23. *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1933.

24. *New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 26, 1933.

25. *Asheville Times*, Dec. 12, 1933.

26. *Asheville Times*, Sept. 29, 1933; *Asheville Citizen*, Sept. 29, 1933.

27. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 13, 1933.

28. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 14, 1933.

29. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 14, 1933.

30. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 14, 1933; *Asheville Times*, Dec. 14, 1933; *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Dec. 14, 1933.

31. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 15, 1933; *Asheville Times*, Dec. 15, 1933.

32. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 15, 1933; *Asheville Times*, Dec. 15, 1933.

33. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 16, 1933.

34. *Asheville Citizen*, Dec. 17, 1933.

35. *Waynesville Mountaineer*, Dec. 21, 1933.

36. David C. Hsiung, *Two Worlds of the Tennessee Mountain: Exploring the Origins of Appalachian Stereotypes* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 168–88, quotation on 188.

37. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, ix.

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