

**Traitors in the Service of the Lord:**  
**The Role of Church and Clergy in Appalachia's Civil War**

Master Thesis in Partial Fulfillment of the degree of Master of History

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Last but not least: the citizens of Floyd County, Virginia; past and present, who continue to make this place special, unique, quirky and deeply rooted to its incredible history. Floyd County is a place that has to be visited to be truly appreciated. This work is for you. It is time to lay the stigma of desertion to rest, it is time to acknowledge the men who faced death at home to save their families from starvation. There is no shame in men standing firmly by deeply held beliefs.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	Violent Targeting of Clergy and Churches	3
Chapter 1	Ecclesiastical Involvement in the Guerrilla War	4
Chapter 2	Growing Ecclesiastical Division and Secession Dispute Political Violence	34
Chapter 3	War and Active Church Participation	68
Conclusion		104
Bibliography		110

## Abstract: Violent Targeting of Clergy and Churches

Studies of the guerrilla war in the central and southern Appalachian Mountains reveal repeated instances of violence and threats directed at the pastors of mountain churches. Instances of churches being burned, pastors and laymen beaten and at times murdered are sprinkled throughout the primary source materials. The question raised here is why were pastors and specific churches being targeted for violence? The church was the center of the life for secluded Appalachian communities, church leadership carried tremendous weight in influencing loyalties. Research focused solely on the Dunkard Church in Floyd County, Virginia revealed that amidst a particularly violent guerrilla war, (irregular combatants engaged in partisan violence against opposing loyalists), involving massive numbers of deserters and a highly determined home guard the Dunkard Church became actively involved in aiding deserters and Union loyalists. Dunkards were not the only church being targeted for violence, nearly all clergy and churches experienced direct, dangerous interactions with guerrillas. Every congregation held loyalty to either the Federal government or the Confederate government. Therefore, every individual and congregation was traitor to either the Federal or Confederate government. A parishioner's belief system was a primary driving factor in the inclination of loyalties; applying belief system to the active aiding of either the northern or southern war effort made each person involved guilty of treason to the opposing government. The application of religious beliefs into loyalties and active involvement in the Floyd County, Virginia is the focus of this study. Floyd County experienced well above average rates of desertion, brutal guerrilla warfare and a definite shift toward Unionism late in the war. Clear patterns of congregational loyalties and church involvement can be found in the violent conditions the county experienced during the Civil War.

## Chapter 1

### Ecclesiastical Involvement in the Guerrilla War

I am threatened, they may take my life: but I do not  
fear them; they can only kill my body.”

-Elder John Kline

June 1, 1864

Church of the Brethren pastor John Kline recorded the continuing threats against his life on June 1, 1864; two weeks later while riding home from having his horse shod he was shot and killed near his home in Winchester, Virginia. No arrests were made. Kline spent the entire war ministering to his flock both north and south of the Mason/Dixon line, and recently been imprisoned and beaten before being killed by Confederate sympathizers. Kline was a devout Brethren, he did not carry a weapon at any time, did not fight or condone the war in anyway. He was killed for suspected treason against the Confederate government.<sup>1</sup>

On September 8, 1863 respected Brethren pastor John Bowman was assassinated at his home near Blountville, Tennessee. A highly regarded, pacifist pastor, Bowman had not participated in the war, did not carry a weapon. He was killed by Confederate sympathizers, no arrests were made.<sup>2</sup> In Floyd County, Virginia Bowman’s cousin, Elder Christian Bowman led his sons and congregants in increasingly open opposition to the Confederate government.

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<sup>1</sup> John Kline and Benjamin Funk, *Life and Labors of Elder John Kline the Martyr Missionary: Collated from His Diary* (Elgin: Brethren Publish House, 1900), Kindle Edition, 7901. Daniel Long Miller, *Some Who Led Or Fathers in the Church of the Brethren Who Have Passed Over* (Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1912), 44-47. Local testimony following Elder Kline’s death note he was found with multiple bullet holes, his valuables were on his person and local Confederate irregulars, (guerrilla’s) claimed he was killed for his devote stance against slavery and secession and active treason against the Confederate government.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Long Miller, *Some Who Led Or Fathers in the Church of the Brethren Who Have Passed Over* (Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1912), 87-89. Bowman’s Unionist sympathies had been widely known in the region. His family claimed he was assassinated by irregular Confederate sympathizers in retaliation for Union support.

Christian Bowman survived the war, one son survived threats and persecution to take a seat in county government near the war's end and the youngest son, Christian Bowman Jr. died of diphtheria during the devastating epidemic of 1862-63.

In Floyd County, Virginia the Church of the Brethren came under particularly brutal attack. Threats to “burn their churches and hang their ministers” became the anthem of pro-Confederate sympathizers as the number of deserters hiding in the county grew and wartime suffering triggered renewed Unionism. The Dunkers of Floyd, under threat of violence, continued to maintain their pacifist, albeit not neutral course. Some were attacked and beaten, some robbed and all lived under continuous threat. The crime was treason. The Dunkards of Floyd County had something in common with pastors' John Bowman and John Kline, they provided support to Unionist and deserters. John Kline provided medical aid to deserters and escaped Union prisoners, healing them then helping them cross Union lines. John Bowman was accused of giving Unionist speeches and was accused of aiding in communications and hiding of unionists. In Floyd, David and John Weddle, Christian Bowman and son Peter Bowman supported by multiple congregations of Dunkards, fed more than 150 deserters per week in the hollows of the Burks Fork area of Floyd and hundreds more in the Little River District. The pacifist Dunkards were involved in the war, no gun required.

The Civil War, as it developed in the Appalachian Mountains, affected every household with depravation, hunger, violence and death in countless forms. Mountain culture had developed for over a hundred years to place value in localism over nationalism, local church family and teaching over denominational doctrine, spirituality driven religion over traditionally trained clergy. Slavery was alive, well and growing in the mountains, expanding with the

development of industry, mining and cash crop agriculture.<sup>3</sup> The mountain population, divided by economics and belief concerning the role of the church in determining the morality of slavery; loyalty to either the Confederacy or the Union in second standing to family and local community, found itself splintered by the onset of hostilities. The eruption of partisan violence in the form of guerrilla warfare soon led to the targeting of some clergy members and, at times, entire congregations by units operating independently in the mountains. It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the connection between local churches and the guerrilla war in the southern Appalachian Mountains. The churches, and preachers, in mountain communities were targeted not only when they displayed partisan loyalties backed by active support for either the Union or the Confederate government but Unionist speech, encouraging of deserters and particularly rejoicing at the deaths of Confederate soldiers on the battlefield led to both legal and backwoods retribution. Pastors and active laypeople found themselves targeted when they were suspected of supplying material or informational support to opposing guerrilla groups. In a region where church was the center of community and localism a way of life, organization of food, communications, and at times, weapons could be achieved through the congregational network long established. Pastors, particularly non-pacifist pastors such as Methodists, occasionally took up arms in self-defense or counter guerrilla action but violence and executions were more often directed at pastors and laypeople who carried no arms.

Pastors risked death to provide humanitarian aid to deserters and Federal prisoners, support the Union, (later in the war as unionist sentiments increased pro-Confederacy congregations faced censure), and for some, support the fight against slavery and secession. The

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<sup>3</sup> Richard B. Drake "Slavery and Antislavery in Appalachia" (*Appalachian Heritage*, 1986) 25-34.

deterioration wartime conditions both on the battlefield but more significantly at home triggered reverses in the loyalties of many once loyal congregations. In Floyd County the Primitive Baptist congregations experienced dramatic reversals in loyalties much to the dismay of church leaders who often excommunicated traitors. Churches and pastors were directly involved in the guerrilla war in the mountain South and many paid the traitor's price for that participation.

The Civil War impacted, in some way, every region of the nation; perhaps none more so than the communities in the central and southern Appalachian Mountains. The rugged terrain, sparse population, close knit communities and fierce localism created conditions, which from a military perspective, approximated the worst-case scenario. Local divisions in loyalties, tied to both political and economic concerns merged with ecclesiastical disputes leading to hostile breaches in communities which erupted in guerrilla war soon after Lincoln's call for volunteers in 1861.<sup>4</sup>

The complexity of mountain partisanship is beyond the reach of this thesis, likely beyond the reach of any one project due to the dependence of partisan loyalties on local conditions. Perhaps the best approach to understanding mountain loyalties is to begin with regional and county focused scholarship; religious, economic and political factors fractured partisanship to such a degree that sweeping generalizations become absurd. Attempting to claim that eastern Tennessee and northwestern Virginia were wholly Unionist while southwest Virginia, (sandwiched between), was wholly supportive of secession becomes an unreasonable generalization, particularly in light of the tremendous number of lives lost in skirmishes that

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<sup>4</sup> Ralph Mann, "Ezekiel Count's Sand Lick Company: Civil War and Localism in the Mountain South", in *The Civil War in Appalachia* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997). 78-103; Jonathan Dean Sarris, *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006) The connection between the guerrilla war and localism has recently been insightfully explored by Civil War and Appalachian scholars. See also Insoe and McKinney, *In the Heart of Confederate Appalachia*.



were never documented as battle deaths during the guerrilla conflict.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the Appalachian chain the population's long history of individualism with social responsibilities extending first and foremost to the local community, there was not a wide-spread concern with aligning loyalties with the lowlands to the east or even one's neighboring community. The structure of community created an environment where families and close networks of like-minded people (such as congregations), formed a local opinion concerning first slavery then secession which was generally independent of outside influence with the significant exception of the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations in Floyd. Historians considering conditional Unionism and conditional secessionism certainly come closer to capturing the less than universal partisanship found in mountain communities. Loyalties were localized and prone to tremendous shifts based on conditions facing individual communities. The impact of local concerns ultimately affected even the denominational churches, particularly the Lutheran and to a lesser degree a small number of Methodist and Presbyterian. Wide-spread hunger, local partisan violence and a breakdown of public order began to erode the loyalty of the Confederacy's strongest local supporters. Desertion and accusations of assisting Union guerrillas began to appear in the Lutheran and outlying Burks Fork Methodist congregations by the spring of 1865.

When the war invaded the steep mountains of the central Appalachians military commanders were faced with the geographic complications of fighting a conventional war in rugged, remote mountains where supply and large troop movements became nearly impossible. The geographic realities of moving armies and fighting large battles were met with a deep-rooted

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<sup>5</sup> County death records during the war are rife with deaths noted in terms similar to: shot by bushwhackers out near Franklin, or killed and left in the road. Many of these men were buried in family plots, their killers unknown. Home Guard skirmishes accounted for a number of deaths as deserters' resisted arrest. A pitched battle between Home Guard and a large, armed band of deserters in 1864 resulted in 2 deaths and 75 arrests. Most of the arrested men were freed by armed men long before they were returned to their units.

localism which compelled men to defend their families and communities first.<sup>6</sup> Small units of loosely organized men could move easily and quickly through the rough terrain. Men born and raised in the community could strike at cumbersome armies, and disappear quickly. These men could, and did, target the families of men serving opposing units, destroying crops, seizing livestock and threatening wives and children. Under these conditions the war lost all resemblance to ‘civilized’ warfare by the summer of 1862.<sup>7</sup>

The survival skills required to live in the remote mountain regions, the very geography of the land itself, lent itself to guerrilla warfare. Large scale troop movements and direct assault battles were prohibited by the land itself. Independent guerrilla units, moving quickly along familiar territory, hit and run tactics which while taking lives took an even larger toll on the morale of powerless regular army units and an ability to blend back into the farming community a moment after operating against an enemy unit made guerrillas nearly impossible to fight. The retaliatory missions against guerrilla units often resorted to personalized tactics, threats and assaults on the families of suspected guerrillas, kidnapping, ‘confiscation’ of fodder, food supplies and livestock only resulted in a further destabilization of social structure, more violence and death.

The last devastating ingredient in the guerrilla war were deserters, eventually mixed with escaped Union prisoners making their way north toward Union lines. Confederate deserters formed their own paramilitary units, supported by family and community. These men were able

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<sup>6</sup> Brian D. McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia*, (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2006)

<sup>7</sup> Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Kenneth W. Noe, “Exterminating Savages: The Union Army and Mountain Guerrillas in Southern West Virginia, 1861-1862”, in *The Civil War in Appalachia*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 104-130.

to apply a life-time of mountain survival skills to live in remote areas where it became nearly impossible for them to be found or captured.<sup>8</sup> Floyd County reached staggering desertion rates by late 1863 and 1864, eventually exceeding 24% desertion of those enlisted and conscripted within the county. Coupled with a near collapse of social order and wide-spread hunger and hardship the conditionally loyalist county swung slowly back to conditionally unionist and eventually solidly unionist in sympathies. Local conditions, not sudden sacrifice of ideological beliefs or a sudden birth of American nationalism, drove this swing.

The border-states saw the initial and often most brutal aspects of guerrilla warfare, for the Appalachian Mountains western Virginia was drawn into this form of combat early, drawing General Henry Halleck out of Ohio to clear the northern region of Confederate guerrillas. This fighting constituted the early victories for the Union army, secured the path of West Virginia toward statehood but failed to stamp out the guerrilla contingent.<sup>9</sup> Fighters melted into the rural communities and down the spine of the mountains, picking up the fight near the military targets in southwestern Virginia while some continued to harass Unionist in the northern regions for the remainder of the war. The wide disparity in loyalties throughout the mountain south, particularly border-states, made discerning friend from foe nearly impossible, frustrating commanders and quickly leading to summary arrests, immediate field trials, imprisonments and executions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John C. Inscoe, "Moving Through Deserter Country: Fugitive Accounts of the Inner Civil War in Southern Appalachia", in *The Civil War in Appalachia*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 131-157.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth W. Noe, "Exterminating Savages: The Union Army and Mountain Guerrillas in Southern West Virginia, 1861-1862. In *The Civil War in Appalachia*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997) 104-130.

<sup>10</sup> Brian D. McKnight, *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia*; (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2006) p 111: Edward O. Guerrant. *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1999). Union and Confederate Armies both recorded expedient trials, imprisonments and executions of suspected bushwhackers. Edward Guerrant's war journal is replete with frequent examples of field trials and executions.

Pro-Union and Pro-Confederate guerrillas were difficult to distinguish for units moving through the mountains, even locals used a complex mixture of terms to describe the groups which formed: guerrilla, bushwhackers, deserters and basic criminals all moved under the guise of having a military purpose. Many of these groups used the guerrilla war to settle long standing disputes, commit crimes of every nature or avoid service in the regular army. Military journals and diaries record the habit of interviewing local pastors as a means to gauge local sympathies. Suspicion of unionist sympathies heightened the caution of military units operating through the southwestern counties. Contrary to established denominational stance regarding secession, southern nationalism and slavery many pastors from large denominations, particularly local Methodist pastors in the Holston conference, maintained loyalty, (not always vocalized) to the Federal government throughout the war, a factor which cost a number of pastors their pulpits and some their lives.

Confederate headquarters staff officer Edward Guerrant, assigned to the southwest Virginia, Cumberland Gap region, recorded the impression of loyalties of local pastors as a way of anticipating threat from guerrillas.<sup>11</sup> Pastors which seemed less than supportive of the Confederate government could signal local Unionist sympathies and a greater risk of snipping and attacks from pro-Union guerrilla groups. Home Guards, often equated with a similar level of violence as guerrillas, were units organized by the local Confederate government to address issues of deserter collection and conscription while theoretically addressing the crimes of armed thugs and Unionists which were considered an equal threat to social stability. In Floyd these units were comprised of men too old or unfit for regular military duty, as the war progressed a

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<sup>11</sup> Edward O. Guerrant. William C. Davis, Meredith Swentor, Editors. *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O. Guerrant*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1999).

number of men released from the army for chronic illness of debilitating injury volunteered with the Home Guard. Guerrillas, alternately, were organized at the community level, answered to local organizers if they answered to anyone at all, and while some operated with discipline as irregular units, some disintegrated into violence and picked up the title of bushwhackers. Although opposing military units seldom distinguished between the groups instead identifying all irregular troops as the dangerous foes they were, local residents certainly distinguished groups and individual members as either protectors or threats.

The predisposition of loyalties for any family or congregation was well known within the community well before the vote for secession in May 1861. Political and theological disputes had revealed key leaders of both Unionist and secession factions during the disintegrating national condition of the late 1850's. John Brown's attack at Harper's Ferry shook the fabric of social unity in the mountains to the same degree as the rest of the nation. Fear of insurrection as opposed to the morality of slavery revealed early who would cast loyalties for the Union or for the Confederacy. The sharp spike in criminal complaints of assault and battery between John Brown's trial and the mustering of the most outspoken Confederate loyalists speaks to open political violence in Floyd, County. The period from 1859 until late 1860 saw a tremendous number of assault and battery charges brought against men from every social class and religious designation. Floyd remained conditionally Unionist until late in Virginia's secession debate, only casting its vote for secession after tremendous pressure was brought upon heavily Unionist leaning factions combined with fear of imminent invasion from the north. Lincoln's call for use of force pushed Floyd to overwhelming support of secession.

In the May 23, 1861 referendum, Floyd County, Virginia voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession, with a final vote of 896-20. While this vote doubtless captured the overriding

sympathies of the county it is important to note that pre-vote violence and specific threats against known Unionists kept a number of men from the polls.<sup>12</sup> Court documents record a spike in criminal complaints for assault and battery in the months leading up to secession in Floyd County. Many of the accused did not stand trial for the criminal complaints. Court documents show many subpoenas marked as undelivered due to the accused having joined the Confederate Army.<sup>13</sup>

The mountains of southwestern Virginia, like much of the mountain south, contained a complex mixture of loyalties, with a variance in the importance of duty beyond the immediate vicinity of home. Notions of conditional Unionism and conditional Confederate loyalties often fluctuated with local conditions. The church schisms which touched nearly every church in the nation in some capacity further solidified partisanship in the mountain South. Instances of violence against clergy committed by loyalist to both the Union and the Confederacy demonstrate the heightened emotions being expressed by all members of society, clergy included.

The foundations of the dramatic shift toward Unionism in the mountain South late in the war has received academic consideration for nearly a century. The pinnacle work on southwestern Virginia loyalties, the guerrilla war and Unionism was produced by Henry T. Shank in 1944. Shank's work stands as the core investigation of loyalties and the associated violence in the region. "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwest Virginia, 1861-1865"

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<sup>12</sup> "Southern Claims Commission Disapproved Claims Record Group 233." *National Archives Catalog*. 1871-1880. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/566157> (accessed Feb-Mar 2018). "Virginia County Vote on Secession Ordinance May 23, 1861." *New River Notes: Grayson County Virginia, Heritage Foundation Inc.* 2017. [http://www.newrivernotes.com/historical\\_antebellum\\_1861\\_virginia\\_voteforsecession.htm](http://www.newrivernotes.com/historical_antebellum_1861_virginia_voteforsecession.htm) (accessed Feb 25, 2018).-

<sup>13</sup> Common Law Court Order Book 3 1858-1865, Floyd County Court House, Floyd County, Virginia.

considered the changing conditions of the war, ineffectiveness of the Confederate government and touched briefly on the impact of religion and community on the shifts toward Unionism. Shank depended heavily on the letters, military and government records from the Confederate government to arrive at the conclusion that by 1865 the southwestern counties had shifted almost entirely to Unionism with approaching 100% of the population affiliated with the Heroes of America or related Unionist organizations. The heart of Shank's argument is based on the steady erosion of loyalties, "grievances with the Confederate government resulted in a gradual change in sentiment from great enthusiasm for the Southern cause in 1861 to moderate loyalty in 1862, indifference in 1863, opposition in 1864 and open rebellion in 1865."<sup>14</sup>

In 1992 Kenneth Noe reexamined the erosion of loyalties in southwestern Virginia and the growing fear of wide-spread and irreversible Unionism in the mountainous southwestern counties. "Red String Scare: Civil War, Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America" considered the foundations of loyalty shift and the extent of the erosion of loyalties. Noe upheld Shank's work as the standing seminal investigation of the question with one significant revisit of the thesis. Noe maintains that the shift to Unionism was not as wide-spread as feared by the declining Confederate government. Noe explores the investigation and opposition to Unionism which argues that southwest Virginia, though sliding dramatically toward Unionism was far from 100% treasonous to the Confederacy as claimed by Shanks.<sup>15</sup> The large numbers of men who turned out to combat unionist guerrillas, attempted to arrest deserters and opposed Federal

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<sup>14</sup> Henry T. Shank, "Disloyalty to the Confederacy in Southwest Virginia, 1861-1865"; (Chapel Hill, The North Carolina Historical Review, 1944). Henry Shank is hailed as the first historian to undertake a Revisionist investigation of the shift in loyalties in the Appalachian Mountains. This investigation challenged the 'unionist mountains' historiography which had prevailed since the end of the war and undertook an investigation of the wartime dynamics which fueled the move toward unionism.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth W. Noe, "Red String Scare: Civil War, Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America": (Chapel Hill, The North Carolina Historical Review, 1992).

forces, including General Stoneman's raid in April, 1865, support the argument that there was a strong loyal core in Floyd County. Although Floyd, as well as neighboring counties, have been portrayed as adamantly oppositional to the Confederate government the evidence in Floyd County strongly supports Noe's argument of a weakened, and in some cases, nearly silenced but resolute secessionist population.

The late 1990's saw an increased focus on the unique aspects of the Civil War in the Appalachian Mountains. Several respected historians have covered key aspects of the war in the mountains, including Kenneth W. Noe, John Inscoe and Daniel Sutherland. The developing foundations for understanding the mountain war have been laid by these scholars. Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson compiled a collection of essays in *The Civil War in Appalachia* which sought to demonstrate the extreme differences in conditions and loyalties which were found throughout the mountains. Published in 1997, contained within this volume several essays stand out as being particularly on-point for helping to understand the complexity of the Civil War in Appalachia.<sup>16</sup> "The Dynamics of Mountain Unionism: Federal Volunteers of Ashe County, North Carolina" by Martin Crawford explores the groups of men who traversed the mountains into eastern Tennessee or Kentucky to join the Union Armies; risking the safety of their families and farms these men were willing to risk all to preserve the Union.<sup>17</sup> This is an important study of the non-conformity of mountain loyalties. Crawford's work gives balance to *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* by John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney which explores the complexity and violence of the war in the

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<sup>16</sup> Kenneth W. Noe, Shannon H. Wilson, Editors. *The Civil War in Appalachia, Collected Essays*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Martin Crawford. "The Dynamics of Mountain Unionism: Federal Volunteers of Ashe County, North Carolina".



mountains.<sup>18</sup> Sitting a short trip down the mountain from Floyd, Virginia, Ashe County's complex loyalties and guerrilla fighting were reflected in the conflict in Floyd. The impact of Lincoln's call for volunteers after the fall of Ft. Sumter caused many conditional Unionist to cast their loyalty with the South in Ashe County, a trend which was repeated throughout the mountain south. The political and religious influences which held groups of men loyal to the Union make Crawford's essay impactful upon the scholarship of the mountain war.

Included in Kenneth Noe's essay collection is Ralph Mann's consideration of local loyalties usurping ideas of Confederate nationalism or even Unionism. "Ezekiel Count's Sand Lick Company: Civil War and Localism in the Mountain South" explores the tendency of mountain populations to place protection of home and family above the drive to advance ideological agendas which had little perceived impact on mountain life.<sup>19</sup> The Sand Lick Company was mustered in the counties immediately to the west of Floyd, and like company D of the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia, the Sand Lick Company experienced mass desertion. Mann argues that rather than disillusion with the Confederate government or sudden surges in Union loyalty, it was the extreme hardships faced by families at home and an overriding localism which drove the high rates of desertion from mountain companies. This is a thesis picked up by Rand Dotson in his specific consideration of desertion in Floyd County. The men in these companies tended to enlist to protect their home counties or perhaps state, orders to join the regular army and march toward the battlefields to the east or west were met with a refusal to fight, often expressed by desertion.

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<sup>18</sup> John C. Inscoe, Gordon B. McKinney. *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Ralph Mann, "Ezekiel Counts's Sand Lick Company: Civil War and Localism in the Mountain South". In, *The Civil War in Appalachia, Collected Essays*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

The localized nature of the guerrilla war and dedication to family over Confederacy as a driving factor in desertion is examined specifically in Floyd County, Virginia by Rand Dotson. “The Grave and Scandalous Evil Infected to Your People”: The Erosion of Confederate Loyalty in Floyd County, Virginia” examines the effect suffering of families had on the morale of the Confederate Army, leading to high rates of desertion.<sup>20</sup> The high number of deserters in the county led to greater pressure from the Home Guard and several regular army companies moving through the county to round up deserters and men hiding from conscription. The violence against women and children committed in the effort to round up these men for the army only further fueled desertion and growing unionist sentiments.

The guerrilla war, as it developed in western Virginia, in both the region which became West Virginia as well as southwestern Virginia developed brutal tactics early in the war. Kenneth Noe has written two excellent essays which consider the guerrilla war in western Virginia, the bushwhackers and the downward spiral of fear and violence which facing an invisible enemy could cause in an army. In his essay, “Exterminating Savages: The Union Army and Mountain Guerrillas in Southern West Virginia, 1861-1862” Noe considers the pattern of violence which led to a guerrilla war with near ‘total war’ mentalities.<sup>21</sup> Hit and run tactics, executions without trial, threats and theft from women and children only increased as the guerrilla war heated up and Union armies eyed the iron and salt resources of southwestern Virginia. Kenneth Noe also addressed the make-up of bushwhacker units with his article, “Who Were the Bushwhackers? Age, Class, Kin and Western Virginia’s Confederate guerrillas”. Noe explores the previous historiographic notion that the bushwhackers were largely uneducated

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<sup>20</sup> Rand Dotson, “The Grave and Scandalous Evil Infected to Your People”: The Erosion of Confederate Loyalty in Floyd County, Virginia”. (The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth W. Noe. “Exterminating Savages: The Union Army and Mountain Guerrillas in Southern West Virginia”. In, *The Civil War in Appalachia, Collected Essays*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997)

hillbillies. Noe debunks the stereotype with strong evidence that many of the bushwhackers were middle-aged, landed men in strong community standing.<sup>22</sup> The factors driving men to join irregular Confederate units were much more complex than a simple taste for violence against Yankees. Political alliances made in the decade prior to the war and religious schism drove deep rifts in communities which translated into open hostilities when the war erupted.

Exploration of the unique wartime conditions found in the mountains was picked up in an investigation of the experience of escaped Union prisoners moving through the region. John Inscoe assessed 25 post-war manuscripts produced by deserters and escaped Union prisoners, compiling a portrait of the population and sympathies of the southern mountains, particularly of the Unionist, women and blacks who aided men in their trek north. “‘Moving through Deserter Country’: Fugitive Accounts of the Inner Civil War in Southern Appalachia” discusses the experiences, exaggerations and motivations for the particularly positive, strongly Unionist image that these narratives painted of the mountain South.<sup>23</sup> According to Inscoe the value in these manuscript is in the similarity of the portrayal of the mountain population presented by Union soldiers despite extremely independent experiences and movements. The willingness of Confederate deserters and Union escapees to work together to remain undetected by Confederate Home Guards and guerrillas provides insight into the role of war exhaustion suppressing the motives which initially drove these populations to join the ranks the Confederate Army. Acknowledging an inherent exaggeration, these narratives provide a portrait of the complex nature of loyalties and the war in the mountains.

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<sup>22</sup> Kenneth W. Noe. “Who Were the Bushwhackers? Age, Class, Kin and Western Virginia’s Confederate Guerrillas, 1861-1862”. (Civil War History, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> John C. Inscoe. “‘Moving Through Deserter Country’: Fugitive Accounts of the Inner Civil War in Southern Appalachia”. In, *The Civil War in Appalachia, Collected Essays*. (Knoxville. The University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

The concept that the Civil War in the mountain South was qualitatively different, with not only different tactics but also less defined loyalties and often fundamentally different motives for becoming involved in the conflict has circulated throughout recent scholarship. Jonathan Dean Sarris focused on two counties in northern Georgia to demonstrate the disparities in the war not only in the mountains as a whole but based upon extremely localized conditions. *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South* published in 2006 focuses on Lumpkin and Fannin counties to examine the role of local economics and politics in the sectional and highly partisan nature of the guerrilla war.<sup>24</sup> Sarris specifically chose these counties because they played host to no major military campaigns, were not the scene of any major battles between the regular armies, therefore the guerrilla war based upon local conflict can be examined in context of mountain life and not broader political influence. The role of localism is clearly visible in the conflict and guerrilla fighting in these two counties. Similarly, Floyd County experienced no pitched battles during the war, was host to only units focused on the collection of conscripts and deserters until April, 1865 when General Stoneman moved quickly through Floyd in his raid through southwestern Virginia and into western North Carolina. Floyd wartime conflict and violence occurred at the same localized level as the violence in rural northern Georgia in that local conditions complicated pre-established partisanship. Emotions and loyalties, running strong, when combined with the realities of war, led to outbreaks of local violence.

As the war neared its close in March and April of 1865 General Grant ordered a raid into the mountain south to be led by General Stoneman. *Stoneman's Raid 1865* written by Chris

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<sup>24</sup> Jonathon Dean Sarris. *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South*. (Charlottesville. The University of Virginia Press, 2006).

Hartley is both a military history with an examination of the social ramifications of General Stoneman's raid into Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>25</sup> General Stoneman's raiders moved through the town of Jacksonville in Floyd County (the town was renamed Floyd after the war), twice in April 1865, requisitioning horses, fodder and food for the quickly moving cavalry column. The mixed loyalties of the town were noted by soldiers traveling with the column and further documented by approved and disapproved claims made to the Southern Claims Commission following the war. The town of Jacksonville, (Floyd) was spared wanton destruction of property, land and court records remained untouched. Towns in North Carolina did not fare as well. When news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln reached Stoneman's column bitterness led the column to destroy private property and burn court and land records in nearly every town they marched through.

The Appalachian Mountains created a southern extension of the border state conflicts due largely to the localized partisanship which divided the region. The military interests and movements in the region must be understood before a fuller understanding of this unique expression of the Civil War can be grasped. Brian McKnight produced a comprehensive military history of the war in the mountain regions of Kentucky and Virginia. *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia* traces the war, commanders, military targets and the role of guerrillas in the indecisive mountain conflict.<sup>26</sup> The struggles of waging a conventional war in rugged mountain passes against an enemy who could disappear a moment after pulling the trigger is explored in McKnight's military history of the mountain Civil War.

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<sup>25</sup> Chris Hartley. *Stoneman's Raid 1865*. (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair Publisher, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Brian McKnight. *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006)

As the war progressed and Confederate loyalty faded with the realities of hardship, hunger and death the guerrilla fighters became marginally less numerous.

When considering the guerrilla war Daniel E. Sutherland has written perhaps the most comprehensive work on the topic. Sutherland successfully argues in *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* that the drawn out and locally brutal nature of the guerrilla war proved to be a significant detriment to the Confederate War effort.<sup>27</sup> Sutherland maintains that the guerrilla war brought the brutality into the homes of loyalists, affecting the wives and families of soldiers, eroding morale in the armies. The drastic spike in desertions, at least in Floyd County, it has been strongly argued was the result of the hardship faced by families. This would support Sutherland's argument that the nature of the war in the border-states and mountains had a significant impact on the ability of the Confederate government to effectively wage war. Generals of both armies became desperate to relieve the stress that guerrillas had on morale with the shoot and disappear tactics. In Mississippi, Union General Benjamin Butler took the extreme measure of putting a bounty on guerrillas, for slaves the offer of emancipation for the head of a guerrilla provoked deep fears of insurrection, further increasing the terror of guerrilla warfare.

Floyd County's guerrillas became extraordinarily well organized in the northern area of the county a large and dangerous group led by local brothers threatened social stability in their attempt to remain out of custody. The Sisson brothers' band functioned as a paramilitary unit, well-armed, moderately disciplined and difficult to confront in their home territory. Rand Dotson's "Sisson's Kingdom: Loyalty Division in Floyd County Virginia, 1861-1865" was an

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel A. Sutherland. *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War*. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

expansion of his previous work, “A Grave and Scandalous Evil...” in which he attempted to track the foundations for Floyd’s disintegration into violent guerrilla warfare.<sup>28</sup> Discrepancies in Dotson’s findings and several examples which have been highly contested by local historians. Well written and engaging the significant flaw in this thesis, similar to Shank’s, Dotson’s argument is that Floyd County experienced a total shift to Unionism. The steadfast loyalty which was displayed by core communities and congregations undermines this argument.

The erosion of the Confederate armies to disease, battle and desertion which eventually led to higher and lower age limits on conscription forced a large body of middle-aged men into the ranks who were often not as fit for military duty as younger conscripts. Kenneth Noe’s *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861* argues that these later recruits joined for a variety of reasons, but foremost a desire to protect their families from the war which was threatening their homes, and a desire to stop the threat to southern economic stability and liberty.<sup>29</sup> Noe refutes the historiography that later conscripts were less loyal to the Confederacy or more likely to desert. A well-argued look at the motivations and experiences of men who joined the ranks later in the war, this book is directly relevant to any investigation of Floyd’s Civil War as this second wave of conscription took many of the remaining food producers from their farms and onto the battlefield. The narrative of the importance of localism in the decisions and loyalties of mountain men is again explored as the best interest of home and family is argued to be the driving force behind the decision of many of these men to serve.

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<sup>28</sup> Rand Dotson. “Sisson’s Kingdom: Loyalty Division in Floyd County Virginia, 1861-1865”. (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech Electronic Thesis, 1997) <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/36663>

<sup>29</sup> Kenneth W. Noe. *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined After 1861*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

The assumption of Appalachia as the ‘other’ South, with vastly unrelated interests from the lowland regions was a major theme in Appalachia historiography for the first six or seven decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Arguments were often made of an antislavery, unionist mountain region which has largely been overthrown by recent scholarship. Research and statistical analysis has recently debunked many of the ‘mountains as staunchly Unionist, antislavery’ narratives. Richard Drake examined the sentiments of mountain populations finding a growing instead of declining approval for slavery. “Slavery and Antislavery in Appalachia” considers the real and growing presence of slavery in the mountains.<sup>30</sup> In the decades prior to the war the number of slaves in mountain regions expanded rapidly and only specific antislavery congregations such as the Mennonites, Quakers and Dunkards maintained firm antislavery stances. Drake maintains that the reduced numbers of slaves as compared to the lowlands did not reflect antislavery attitudes as much as the slow development of slave-based agriculture and industry in the mountains. Floyd County’s slave population was relatively small but growing in the final decade prior to the war. The biblical pro-slavery argument held sway in the county and even the Dunkard land-owners were often the holders of several slaves.

Tracing the extremity of denominational division prior to and throughout the war is essential for understanding the interaction between churches and guerrilla combatants. Understanding the nature of schisms associated with questions of slavery, abolition and secession; how churches were responding to and even actors in the national division is essential. The work of tracing the denominational schisms which occurred as a direct result of the slavery question began prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. In the decades immediately following the war scholars began to examine the individual denominations, tracking the rift which developed

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Drake. “Slavery and Antislavery in Appalachia”. (Appalachian Heritage, 1987).



between northern and southern churches over the question. In 1913 Mary Putnam produced an account of the ecclesiastical breach which led to the organization of a separate southern General Convention of the Baptist Church. *The Baptist and Slavery, 1840-1845* traces the inner-church controversy over slavery.<sup>31</sup> Putnam laid out a clear argument as to the foundations of the Southern Convention pro-slavery position. “The attitude of the churches was the greatest obstacle to the anti-slavery success.” Clearly establishing the role of the clergy in the 1840’s division over slavery, “...so far as moral means are concerned the system of slavery American slavery is now sustained chiefly through the influence of the pulpit.”<sup>32</sup> Putnam’s assessment of the influence of the pulpit carries across denominational lines. Southern congregations of national denominations began to take clear doctrinal stances on evangelical pro-slavery early in the century.

Walter Brownlow Posey undertook one of the first modern, substantial scholarly investigations of the development of mountain religion and denominational church planting in 1966. *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* traces the church planting and reasons for success of some groups over others in establishing congregations in remote areas. Posey devotes three chapters specifically to the relationship and results of the questions of slavery and abolition on the southern denominations. The foundations of denominational stance on the questions of slavery and secession are investigated against the backdrop of social demands. Particular attention is given to both the Methodist and Baptist relationships to the question of slavery and the slavocracy. “The total absence among Baptist churches of any great ecclesiastical governing body or cooperating agency left members,

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<sup>31</sup> Mary Putnam. *The Baptist and Slavery, 1840-1845*. (Ann Arbor: G. Wahr, 1913).

<sup>32</sup> Putnam, Mary B. *The Baptist and Slavery, 1840-1845*. (G. Wahr, 1913) Kindle Edition.

preachers, and congregations free to adopt independent and varying attitudes toward the slavery question.”<sup>33</sup> This analysis has received a significant amount of attention since Posey broached it in 1966. The independent nature of Baptists, particularly the Primitive Baptist in Floyd County combined with social localism combined to make this large group a deciding force in the placement of county loyalties.

Historians have undertaken examinations of the manner in which pastors managed growing questions of slavery and abolition while maintaining harmony within their congregations. A recent consideration of the border states struggle to reconcile denominational, spiritual and social rifts was published in 2017. April E. Holm’s *Kingdom Divided: Evangelicals, Loyalty, and Sectionalism in the Civil War Era* traces the way in which churches, particularly in the border-states, dealt with this dividing questions. Holm argues that rather than take a direct stance on these issues evangelical churches in the border-states sharply divided questions of slavery into the political arena and maintained that only questions of spirituality be entertained by the church. The attempt at neutrality and focus on a spirituality based worship was reflected in churches throughout the mountain south. The pressures of wartime allegiance to either northern or southern churches ultimately pushed many border-state churches to identify with the southern branches of their denominations.<sup>34</sup>

The effects of schism on the churches lasted long after the war, with ramifications still visible today. Richard Alan Humphrey covered the deep rifts and effects on congregations of the

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<sup>33</sup> Posey, Brownlow W. *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861*. (University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 1966).

<sup>34</sup> Holm, April E. *A Kingdom Divided: Evangelicals, Loyalty, and Sectionalism in the Civil War Era*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017).

mountain regions in “The Civil War and Church Schisms in Southern Appalachia.” His consideration focuses on the mountain region in a similar manner as Holm’s consideration of the border region, especially the attempt of mountain churches to separate the question of slavery to the political arena, maintaining the question was not spiritual or even within the realm of Christian morality. The destruction of denomination and inner-denominational unity and cooperation set the stage for the extreme levels of partisanship in the late 1850’s. *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery and the Causes of the Civil War* by John Patrick Daly explores the biblical proslavery argument and ideology which self-justified defense against government intrusion into the slavery question.<sup>35</sup>

Spirituality, over theology, connection with the Holy Spirit over specific church doctrine are the defining characteristics of Appalachian Mountains. *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History* written by Deborah Vansua McCauley delves into the development and growth of mountain religion as distinctive from the rest of the nation. McCauley argues that inner spirituality fueled by a close connection with the Holy Spirit is the core of all religion in the Appalachians’ denominational differences paled in import compared to the spiritual core of Christianity.<sup>36</sup> The slow planting of churches in the mountains, coupled with the extreme shortage of pastors, the long periods between visits by intenerates drove the populations to embrace untrained clergy, and supplant the importance of literacy and organized education with a need for spiritual connection with God from their pastors. Practices such as naming members of the congregation to the position of Elder despite lack of religious education grew out of the very nature of life in the mountains. Localism was a key factor in religious life, the community

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<sup>35</sup> John Patrick Daly. *When Slavery was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery and the Causes of the Civil War*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002).

<sup>36</sup> Deborah Vansua McCauley. *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

and congregation were close knit, often related by some means and dependent on one another far beyond spiritual needs. The impact of local conditions was particularly visible for congregations without deep ties to larger denominational bodies.

McCauley's argument underplays the growing impact of denominationalism in mountain communities after the Second Great Awakening. Floyd County, on the eve of the Civil War, was experiencing tremendous growth of southern denominations. Methodist and Presbyterian congregations were growing rapidly, Regular Baptists, however, were slow to organize and grow in the county and during the war Floyd hosted only one small Regular Baptist church. Social and denominational pressures affected the loyalties of members connected with strong presbytery organization. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, with strong ties to the powerful plantation families irrevocably tied itself to the biblical pro-slavery argument and eventually southern nationalism and secession with the 1840's split in the church.

In the decades prior to the Civil War the Methodist Church had made tremendous strides in planting churches and establishing a strong presence in the Appalachian Mountains. Southwestern Virginia, eastern Tennessee into northern Georgia became the Holston Conference. This conference experienced extreme schism and occasionally violence over the questions of slavery, abolition and particularly secession. Durwood Dunn's *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism* is the single, comprehensive history of the Civil War in the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>37</sup> The dismissal of pastors harboring Unionist sympathies, the influence of renowned Methodist abolitionist Parson William Brownlow and the

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<sup>37</sup> Durwood Dunn. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012).

martyr death of moderate antislavery minister Anthony Bewley were all key aspects of the complex interplay between politics, morality and evangelical Christianity.

Parson William Brownlow was a nationally known Methodist abolitionist who actively encouraged antislavery sentiment in eastern Tennessee. He maintained a national following through speaking and writing on the issues of slavery, abolition and secession, incredibly popular in eastern Tennessee he was a continuous problem for Bishop John Early. Anthony Bewley began his career in the Holston Conference where he maintained moderate antislavery sentiments. Bewley disagreed with rampant abolitionism but stood firmly in opposition to the institution of slavery. He was hung by a mob in Fort Worth Texas under accusations of abolitionism which he, in fact, did not profess. The conference found itself divided by loyalties with Unionist pastors summarily dismissed from their pulpits and sent north. The Holton Conference became extremely conscious of policing their ranks to assure only loyal Confederate pastors, pastors in the conference held no choice but to take the oath of loyalty to the Confederacy.

The Appalachian Mountains are home to Baptist, so understanding the differences in the many different Baptist Churches is essential to an understanding of both mountain religion as well as the role of Baptist in the Civil War. Howard Dorgan of Appalachia State University has written a comprehensive guide to understand the many worship practices of the Baptist denominations. *Giving Glory to God in Appalachia: Worship Practices of Six Baptist Subdenominations* considers the worship, doctrine and theology of the six primary Baptist Churches found in the Appalachian Mountains.<sup>38</sup> Many of these sub-denominations were

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<sup>38</sup> Howard Dorgan. *Giving Glory to God in Appalachia: Worship Practices of Six Baptist Subdenominations*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

formed during the antebellum period, often partially due to schism over slavery, abolition and secession. Denominations of Baptist are a key aspect of the antebellum partisanship over slavery and secession, it would be impossible to understand prewar partisanship or war-time loyalties and hostilities without first understanding the basic tenants and practices of the Baptist Church in all of its Appalachian Mountain expressions. Floyd County was home to only one small Regular Baptist church on the eve of the Civil War, however, it was home to a large, robust and widely spread Primitive Baptist population. Calvinist in theology, generally consisting of parishioners of lower economic standing, and planted among rural farming communities these congregations were the expression of mountain localism. These churches ultimately played a key role in the guerrilla war in Floyd County.

By the 1850's Floyd County Virginia was home to fifteen Primitive Baptists Congregations. The Primitive Baptist Church played a key role in the attempt to understand the congregational expression of partisan loyalties. In eastern Tennessee there were definite instances of Unionism at the onset of the war in Primitive Baptist Churches, this does not seem to be the case in Floyd, Virginia. For the Primitive Baptist the stance on loyalties was made by individual congregations based on local conditions. In 1886 Elder Cushing Biggs Hassell wrote a commanding work encompassing the history and practices of the Primitive Baptist Church. *History of the Church of God, From the Creation to A.D. 1885: Including Especially the History of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association.*<sup>39</sup> The Kehukee Association in North Carolina was made up of more than 40 congregations were one of the first churches to take a non-missions stance and maintain firm allegiance to the doctrine of predestination. This comprehensive

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<sup>39</sup> Elder Cushing Biggs Hassell. *History of the Church of God from Creation to A.D. 1885: Including Especially the History of the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association.* (New York: Gilbert Beebe's Sons, Publishers, 1885: Reprint Forgotten Books).

history, written in the two decades following the Civil War brings incredible insight to the practices of the Primitive Baptist throughout the region. In Floyd, Virginia the Primitive Baptist maintained a long reputation of individualism, localism and contributed a high number of eligible men to the Confederate Armies. Often at odds with the Brethren Churches, the Primitive Baptist were decidedly in favor of picking up arms to defend their homes. The deterioration of conditions during the second half of the war drove a shift in loyalties among these Primitives, contributing to shift toward Unionism. Previously at theological odds with the county's largest congregations, the Primitive Baptist joined the Dunkards in organized resistance.

The Church of the Brethren, commonly known as Dunkards, stood opposed to slavery, secession and the war. Pacifist, they willingly raised the money to pay bounty to the Confederate government to avoid conscription. John Kline was an active pastor for the Church of the Brethren, traveling hundreds of miles each year to preach the gospel. During the war he often crossed Union lines into Maryland and Pennsylvania. *Life and Labors of Elder John Kline, the Martyr Missionary Collated from his Diary* is an edited history of his life and death.<sup>40</sup> Arrested, harassed and beaten by the Confederate government, he continued to practice pacifism, refusing to take up arms or carry any type of weapon. John Kline, though, was an active participant in the war. He was often called to give aid to deserters and escaped Union soldiers, treating injuries and assisting them north toward Union lines.<sup>41</sup> The Dunkard Church, with its strong missions and antiwar stance, would not refuse assistance to men in need, regardless of loyalties. The

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<sup>40</sup> Local histories record the murder being the work of local Confederate sympathizers. Jake Ackers and Joe Riddle were suspected of the crime, having publically inquired from Elder Kline where he would be going earlier in the morning. The men supposedly spoke about the murder but no evidence to arrest or try the men.

<sup>41</sup> Funk, Benjamin. *Life an Labors of Elder John Kline, the Martyr Missionary Collated from his Diary*. (Elgin:Brethren Publishing House, 1900). Benjamin Funk collated then destroyed the original diary. The reason for the destruction of the original document are unknown.

Dunkard pastors were highly involved in providing aid to Unionist and deserters. John Kline was ultimately shot while riding near his home in Virginia.<sup>42</sup> The pattern of violence against Dunkard preachers and parishioners can be traced along the Appalachian range, treason against the Confederate government is often the reason given for the violence.

Scholarly investigation of the guerrilla war in the mountain South is solid and growing, significant works have brought to light the nature of this brutal aspect of the American Civil War. Historians have undertaken comprehensive military histories of the mountain war, considerations of military targets, battles, commanders and tactics have illuminated this previously overlooked aspect of the war. Political and economic historians have begun to reconsider the unique conditions which deepened partisanship and fueled the guerrilla violence. Likewise, the schisms which rocked American Churches in the antebellum and Civil War periods have also received significant and growing scholarship. Specific considerations of border state religion and spiritualism have shed light on the difficulties border-state churches faced in attempting neutrality in the face of growing sectionalism. Denominational histories have begun the tremendous task of exploring regional/conference church histories during the war. Far from complete, these histories, particularly those focused on Appalachian denominations, will aid in the cultural understanding of partisanship. To date no scholarly attempt has been made to explore the depth of ecclesiastical involvement in supporting the guerrilla fighters in the Appalachian Mountains. The degree of involvement, which churches were and were not

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<sup>42</sup> Funk, Benjamin. *Life and Labors of Elder John Kline, the Martyr Missionary Collated from his Diary*. (Elgin: Brethren Publishing House, 1900). On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1864 John Kline wrote, "I am threatened, they may take my life: but I do not fear them; they can only kill my body." On June 15<sup>th</sup> he was shot by Confederate sympathizers. No arrests were made in the murder. Under occupation of the Union army there was no sheriff in Fredrick County at the time of the murder.



involved and to what extent is all uncharted waters. There is a point of contact, a definitive interaction between churches in the Appalachian Mountains and partisan guerrilla activity. The involvement of these churches in support of localized guerrilla war is the subject of this research, and an area where no academic research has yet been attempted. The purpose of this thesis is to address this gap in scholarship.

The first step in discovering the extent of church and clerical involvement is to not attempt regional generalizations. This is not feasible. Therefore this study focuses on the county of Floyd, Virginia. Floyd was home to a high level of guerrilla violence, significant desertion rates and large numbers of highly partisan churches. Of particular, but not limited, interest will be the German Baptist Church of the Brethren, (often referred to as Dunkards), Methodist and Primitive Baptists.<sup>43</sup> The second chapter will consider the theology, spiritual stance concerning slavery and secession of Floyd's churches. Membership rolls will shed light on Unionist versus secession sympathies and begin to illuminate the connection between church and politics. The chapter ends with a consideration of the period of violence leading up to and through the vote on secession against the church membership of leading instigators and participants in violence.

The third chapter will be an investigation of Floyd's guerrilla war from the perspective of church involvement. Special consideration is given to members of both Confederate, Unionist and deserter groups; their church affiliations/families; and particular participation i.e. material/communication support, supply of weapons, active involvement or accusations of involvement in violence. The chapter also traces emerging information concerning the breadth

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<sup>43</sup> Church of the Brethren, Primitive Baptist and Methodist were Floyd County's three largest congregational bodies. At the onset of the war the Methodist congregations were growing at a rapid pace but would not supplant the Primitive Baptist until the decline of active Primitive congregations in the decades following the war.

of Dunkard involvement, and shifts in allegiance which occurred with escalations of violence and breakdown of social order.

The conclusion will be a consideration of any general patterns which are visible at the county level which could be contrasted against similar scholarly considerations of other communities in future studies. Cades Cove in Tennessee, for instance, would likely be of considerable interest for a similar study due to a documented Unionism among Primitive Baptist congregations and at least one documented clerical assassination.

## Chapter 2

### Growing Ecclesiastical Division and Secession Dispute Political Violence.

Upon the outbreak of the war, each church rallied, at once to the cause with which it, in fact, was already identified.

-Emory Bucke

*History of American Methodism, 207*

Virginia's pulpits had, in large part, shifted toward acceptance and then became proponents of the proslavery argument in the decades following the Revolution. Initial inroads against the institution made largely by the Methodist Church in 1790's had given way before a continuous advance of proslavery rationalizations which included heavy weight given to the Christians dedication to his God given station in life. The goal for the Christian, according to this theology, was not to cast off one's lot but rather to live the full Christian life within the bounds of ones' social station. Even while the polity of Virginia was moving toward a market economy, religious freedom and casting off the residual vestiges of aristocratic privilege, the family unit, which included bound servants, were being systematically sealed into a non-mobile acceptance of station.<sup>44</sup> God, essentially, was not concerned about the morality of slavery but rather that the slave accept his God given station and live with Christian virtue within the confines of that station. Biblical proslavery proponents relied heavily upon slavery, as an institution, dating to the earliest civilizations to rationalize its continuance.

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<sup>44</sup> John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery and the Causes of the Civil War*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002). John Daly explored the development of the evangelical pro-slavery argument. "Naturally, antebellum southerners applied evangelical moral concepts and free market economic science to the question of slavery." The result was a complete religious explanation for a successful market economy. The slave was taught just aspects of evangelical Christianity which may promote satisfaction with slavery as a God given station.

The decades immediately following the Revolution experienced a movement to phase out slavery from the nation. Pastors initially acting as proponents of the Wesleyan antislavery movement made significant inroads toward securing Virginia as a slave free state.<sup>45</sup> The introduction of larger cash crop agriculture combined with the opening of significant tracts of land to settlers resulted in increased demand for slaves. The tide of social and religious acceptance began to shift after 1800 with pastors beginning to advocate a neutral, non-political stance, largely as a means of maintaining a presence in the plantation and mountain south. Referred to as two-kingdom theology evangelicals chose to focus on saving souls and not solving social ills. Pastors and growing southern denominations feared that a hard line antislavery theology would have led to immediate expulsion from southern communities. The conscious decision to not confront deeply embedded social concerns such as slavery for the sake of maintaining freedom to evangelize dated to the first century A.D. and the Apostle Paul. Focus on the spread of Christianity with the desired side-effect being the resolution of social evils became the focus of many early Christians attempting to avoid censor, southern antebellum evangelicals adopted the same neutral approach to evangelizing in plantation society. Adversely for the growing evangelical movement a decidedly pro-slavery bent would have alienated slaves and yeomen farmers who comprised a significant portion of Methodist and Baptist memberships and were an evangelical target group.

The shift in ideology occurred in conjunction with the explosion of plantation single-crop agricultural which quickly increased the demand for slave labor. The theological justification followed the agricultural demand for slave labor, effectively silencing the pastors who

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<sup>45</sup> Christopher Owen, "To Keep the Way Open for Methodism" Georgia Wesleyan Neutrality toward Slavery, 1844-1861". In *Religion and the Antebellum Debate Over Slavery*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998).

maintained an antislavery stance. While the Wesleyan Methodists seldom blatantly condoned or censured slavery during the antebellum period, the 1844 breach in the Methodist Episcopal Church allowed southern clergymen to tighten their relationship with their congregations through the well-developed Biblical pro-slavery arguments. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South took a firm stand in support of slavery during the 1840's leading to pressure against anti-slavery pastors.<sup>46</sup>

In the decade prior to the onset of hostilities the churches throughout the border-states and Appalachian Mountain south had taken stances on the questions of abolition and slavery. Often that stance was the relegation of slavery to a solely political question, removing it entirely from critical analysis in the Christian theological perspective. The Christian pro-slavery advocates had taken years to perfect a logically tight biblical rationalization for the institution and attempts to unseat these arguments resulted in stalemate at best. For most churches throughout the Appalachian region if the question was minimized to either a choice between abolitionist or slave-holders the choice was became one of the lesser of evils: abolitionists were universally perceived as the larger threat to social stability. There were, however, denominations which solidly opposed slavery without throwing their support behind radical abolitionists. There were also, within every major denomination, dissenting pastors and congregations who refused to endorse the pro-choice slavery argument. These dissenting groups, denominations, specific churches and clergy would face censor immediately prior and during the early years of the war.

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<sup>46</sup>Dunn, Durwood. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 2013). Durwood Dunn explored the extent the Methodist Episcopal Church, South took to remove unionist pastors from within their ranks. The placement of fire-eater Reverend John Early as Bishop of the Holston Conference was a move to hold a firm pro-Confederate stance by the church. Methodist pastors in the mountains did occasionally stand as actively Unionist. Floyd County's Methodist congregation, strongly influenced by the powerful Early family, did not sway in loyalties but neighboring Montgomery County had at least one Methodist pastor identified by the Confederate government as an active member of the Heroes of America.

The tide would shift, though, for these groups as mountain loyalties shifted with extreme conditions later in the war.

Throughout the mountain South the sparse, wide-spread nature of population dispersion developed local self-sufficiency. Large portions of the population practiced scant subsistence farming supplemented by hunting, trapping, and sale of naturally produced commodities such as chestnuts and chestnut timber, wild raised hogs and free foraging beef which created a community centric culture which would linger well after the Civil War. Localism was not just a socio-economic practice, it was an entire cultural outlook.<sup>47</sup> The immediate family and community, encompassing the congregational church family was for many mountaineers the sole driving motivation for any political or religious decisions. Church was the center of the community, localism trumped nationalism in every instance and situations or threats to one member were undisputedly threats to the entire local community.

For mountain churches the decisions made by large synods or conferences in distant regions of the nation held little sway over opinions held at the congregational level prior to the establishment of paid clergy in denominationally planted congregations. Influential denominations were successful in pulling opinion when the pastors were able to connect church doctrine with local concerns. If socio-political questions were defined by localism, the antebellum religion of mountaineers was defined by spiritualism. Prior to the tremendous effort to provide itinerate preachers to remote communities, the opportunity for most communities to hear a traditionally trained, college educated minister occurred seldom. The arrival of itinerate

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<sup>47</sup> For discussions of mountain localism during the antebellum and Civil War periods see: Sarris, Jonathan Dean. *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006). Jonathan Sarris, "An Execution in Lumpkin County: Localized Loyalties in North Georgia's Civil War"; John C. Inscoe, "Moving Through Deserter County": Fugitive Accounts of the Inner Civil War in Southern Appalachia'.

pastors to a rural community during the antebellum period was cause for an immediate religious holiday. Thirst for religious education drove these communities to embrace men of pious character despite gaps in traditional education to lead small local churches. In Floyd County churches with lessened reliance on trained clergy flourished. Primitive Baptists, fiercely independent, retained congregational election of pastors, eschewing any presbytery beyond the loose local organization. Church of the Brethren in Floyd also developed a strong dependence on congregational appointed pastors and leading elders.

This early tradition of congregational independence was based upon need but for many churches became an essential aspect of doctrine. Elders, selected from within the congregation based not on education or even an ability to read the bible, but rather by an ability to bring a sense of spiritual connection with God were church leaders, these men gained tremendous influence over the moral interpretations of questions of slavery and secession. Elders did not need to know significant theology, church doctrine or even have more than a working understanding of scripture. Rather these men were chosen by their ability to serve as a conduit through which the Holy Spirit could teach the word of God.

Isolation from national congregations and cities, not due to geography but by choice of an isolated lifestyle created an environment where the schisms which split the national denominations would not split the congregations to the degree that the threats to local community which abolition and secession brought to the rural mountains. Congregations planted with minimum clerical structure were in a position to make decisions concerning secession and slavery within the perceived ramifications to that community.

Primitive doctrine was nationally accepted but locally interpreted, northern and southern Primitive Baptists followed the same doctrinal beliefs, core Calvinist doctrines of predestination

and non-missions which were followed in all regions where Primitive Baptists churches were being planted. Strong ties to a central governing body were eschewed by all Baptists, particularly Primitives, this trait held appeal to mountain societies with an aversion to central governing bodies in any form. Howard Dorgan succinctly explained the organization choices most common in Primitive congregations. “To a large degree, individual Primitive churches are autonomous religious units, but usually they are tied to associations composed of perhaps a dozen other fellowships in the respective geological location.”<sup>48</sup> Floyd County Primitive Baptist churches maintained a loose association, rotated meeting times and shared pastors. Mountain congregations planted by national denominations, alternately, would experience the tremendous impacts of the biblical pro-slavery argument as propagated by central denominational organizations and bishoprics.

Certain churches structures, such as the loosely organized Primitive Baptist, allowed for a higher degree of local ‘customization’ of doctrine and practices to reflect mountain culture and tradition. Floyd County churches, like most churches throughout the mountain south, made decisions concerning slavery, abolition and secession based upon both the teachings of church and specifically, the local pastor, and the imminent, local, social and political considerations. Floyd County’s Primitive Baptist Churches often replaced retiring or deceased Elders with the sons of those Elders. Two of the earliest planted Primitive Baptist Churches in the county, Head of River and Pine Creek, passed church leadership to sons who returned from the Confederate Army at the end of the war. Likewise, Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren, near Pine Creek

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<sup>48</sup> Howard Dorgan, *Giving Glory to God in Appalachia: Worship Practices of Six Baptist Subdenominations*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987).



Primitive Baptist, saw a passing of church leadership from the influential Christian Bowman to his Heroes of America leading son, Peter, following the war.<sup>49</sup>

Churches connected closely to a central denominational governing body demonstrated less local decision-making concerning slavery and secession. Floyd's Methodist took a firm stance in support of the Confederacy in April of 1861, in turn influencing the vote on secession; this stance did not waver as the leaders of this congregation chose to stand and fall with the Confederate government. Abolitionists were perceived by most Appalachian churches as a far larger threat to society than slavery. Slavery may be a sin, (depending on the prevalence of a proslavery narrative which had made a strong impact on some churches in Floyd), but abolition was seen as a threat to the very roots of society. This is one viewpoint shared universally by Floyd County Churches. Floyd's vocal Dunkards spoke out prior to and during the war on the dangers of immediate emancipation to social stability. Likewise, the surge of fear that Lincoln's call for volunteers brought of imminent invasion by northern armies pushed many churches, at least temporarily, to support secession.

Floyd County, on the eve of the Civil War, was decidedly not an anti-slavery county. Slaves were not owned in particularly large numbers but the wealthy, landed farmers and some craftsmen did own slaves. Floyd's large Dunkard population, soon to be a tremendous threat to Confederate support and decidedly anti-secessionist, contained members who owned small

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Bowman did not enlist in the Confederate Army, the slave owning family paid the \$500 bounty to keep their sons out of the Confederate Army. Peter Bowman became the pastor of Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren following the war. He was married to the daughter of unionist, Brethren Mill owner Samuel Spangler and is credited as being a leader in the Heroes of America in Floyd County. Peter Bowman was arrested for treason and Union support but was released with no jail time. The shift in sympathies was obvious by 1863 when 6 Dunkards, previously charged with treason, sat on the Grand Jury, including Peter Bowman and David Weddle. *History of Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren*; Primitive Baptist Church and Family History Research Assistance for Floyd County, Virginia. <http://www.pplib.org/FamHist-FloydVA.html>; Common Law Order Book 3, 1859-1868, Floyd County Court House, Floyd County, Virginia.

numbers of slaves. Floyd's leading Drunkards were as vocally opposed to abolition as they were to secession, a fact which stood them in opposition to many northern Brethren congregations. However, any disputes over abolition and slavery with northern Brethren would dissolve when these congregations began to function in active opposition to the Confederate government.

Anti-slavery (officially but not always in practice), pro-union Brethren congregations were seldom supportive of immediate abolition but rather sought to end slavery by creating a society more attuned to biblical, godly Christianity. Men who spoke out against slavery, such as a few of Floyd's large and vocal Brethren population, staunchly opposed immediate abolition. While Floyd County was home to a solid core of pro-Union congregations, particularly the large Brethren congregations, the few abolitionists left little record. Current research is being conducted by Floyd County resident and recently retired National Park Service historian Michael Ryan on possible members of the underground-railroad operating in neighboring Wythe County with the possibility of some small assistance in the western portion of Floyd County but if present it was a very small contingent.<sup>50</sup> Floyd's congregations varied between anti-abolitionist, anti-slavery, pro-Unionist to decidedly pro-slavery, pro-secession. Even these distinctions would shift for many residents during the course of the war.

Shifts toward denominationalism were occurring rapidly in the mountains during the antebellum period. Floyd County, Virginia was experiencing a period of rapid church planting in the two decades prior to the Civil War. Primitive Baptist and Church of the Brethren led the charge, planting churches in nearly every community within the county during the 1840's and

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<sup>50</sup>Michael Ryan has written several books focused on the history of the region surrounding the Blue Ridge Parkway in Floyd and Patrick Counties. These include: Michael Ryan, *Ed and Lizzie: The Mabry's and Their Mill, A Blue Ridge Mountain History and Life in Rock Castle, Virginia: In Their Own Words: A Blue Ridge Mountain History*.

1850's. Methodists had planted multiple congregations during the 1840's with a shared building with the Presbyterian congregation built in 1850 half a block from the Courthouse in the center of the county. Baptists, in every theological guise, were planting churches and unlike their Methodist neighbors, demonstrating less hesitancy about overt involvement in political questions. Both Methodist and Baptist congregations did not hesitate to expound the biblical pro-slavery/ patriarchal benefits of the institution. Floyd had relatively few large scale slave holders, but these men held a significant portion of the money and power in the county.<sup>51</sup> For the majority of residents the question of slavery was answered with general feelings that the institution was morally wrong but still biblically allowable, few men were willing to take anti-slavery stances for concern of being perceived as abolitionist, (considered a far greater evil than slavery).<sup>52</sup> For evangelical pastors of the major denominations in the south winning souls outweighed the risks involved in confronting the plantation society. "One's social position had little importance to God; therefore, slavery, in religious terms, offered as good a social system as any other."<sup>53</sup>

The first Lutheran congregation was planted in Floyd, near Jacksonville, by German immigrants who settled from the large migration down the Shenandoah Valley around 1791. The Zion Lutheran Church was formally organized in 1813 with services and records remaining in German until the 1830's. The dispute over slavery and abolition was slow to unravel the

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<sup>51</sup> The 1860 Federal Census recorded a population of 8,236 in 1,428 households in Floyd County. A total of 475 slaves were distributed among 130 slave holders. The percentage of the population held in bondage was 5.8% while with 9% of households owning slaves. Joseph Howard was largest holder with 22 slaves with 13 households owning between 9 and 20 slaves. Howard and Howell families combined were the largest slaveholders, this family is largely associated with both Primitive Baptist and Methodist Churches in the county.

<sup>52</sup> John Patrick Daly, *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery and the Causes of the Civil War*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002). The movement of the abolitionist groups toward secular arguments advanced southern evangelical positions that the abolitionist movement had no basis in scripture.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher H. Owen. "'To Keep the Way Open for Methodism': Georgia Wesleyan Neutrality toward Slavery, 1844-1861". (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998).

threads tying northern and southern portions of the Lutheran Synod together. Lutherans managed to avoid the questions dividing northern and southern branches of other denominations until after the vote on secession and the outbreak of war.

With the secession question, southern Lutherans were forced to rationalize their support for the Confederate government; here the question finally turned to biblical proslavery versus the abolitionist arguments. Northern Lutherans proclaimed slavery to be a blight, a national sin and all proslavery arguments merely an abomination of scripture. Southern portions of the synod in response deemed abolitionist as the distorters of the authority of scripture. Since abolition, they argued, had no scriptural foundation the entire concept was simply cast off as bad theology. In 1861 the churches of southwest Virginia met for the Southwest Virginia Synod, calling officially for the formation of a General Synod, South to accommodate the needs of the southern church separate from what was now unanimously viewed as an irreparable breach with the northern synod.<sup>54</sup>

Zion Lutheran Church in Floyd had taken a pro-slavery, pro-secession stance prior to the onset of hostilities. Zion Lutheran, sitting near Jacksonville in the Court House District, was the congregational home to many of the county's most influential citizens. A small number of slave owners as well as a smaller number of loyal unionists made this church their congregational home. When the vote on secession was called this congregation cast near, but not full, support behind the Confederacy. The combination of the Lutheran, Presbyterian and Methodist congregations would supply many Home Guard, war-time sheriffs and constables, and local government officials to the Confederate local government during the first three and a half years

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<sup>54</sup> Minutes, Southwest Virginia Synod, 1861

of the war.<sup>55</sup> A disproportionate portion of the early enlistments and volunteers for the Home Guard Units came from these three denominational churches near the Court House District of the county.

The dramatic shift in loyalties which occurred by the spring of 1864 would replace these Confederate loyalist with the professed 'Union men' who had hampered their wartime efforts. A portion of these 'union men' had counted themselves Confederates for a brief period during 1861 and 1862. A significant portion of the men who were considered Unionist leaning by 1864 spent 1861-1862 in the Confederate Army; notably Callohill Stigleman who organized Company A of the 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry in May, 1861.<sup>56</sup> Callohill Stigleman's brothers did not waver in Confederate support when their locally respected brother failed to rejoin Company A in the fall of 1862 after a prolonged sick leave.<sup>57</sup> Older brother James Stigleman joined Company D, 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia in October of 1861<sup>58</sup> and younger brother Andrew Stigleman was ultimately assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas Infantry and was killed on September 17, 1862 at Sharpsburg.<sup>59</sup>

Floyd's leading Methodist families established themselves as prominent landholders prior to the firm establishment of the Methodist congregation in the county. Influenced by Methodism and itinerate pastor tolerance of slavery, these families worked to accomplish the

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<sup>55</sup> Floyd County Court Records contrasted against membership records for the three Court House District Churches. Primary source documents reveal a variety of spellings and misspellings for Doctor/Captain Stigleman's name. Callohill Stigleman is the most common spelling in reference to this man, however, in certain local histories it is spelled 'Callahill' and his grave stone in Jackson Cemetery in Floyd, Virginia spells his name Calohill. I have used the most common spelling in all references to Captain/Doctor Callohill Stigleman. This man played an important role in Floyd County throughout his entire life and died highly respected and venerated. Many children were named Callohill in Floyd County in the decades following the Civil War.

<sup>56</sup> Ralph White Gunn, *24<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry: Regimental Histories Series*, (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, 1987).

<sup>57</sup> Captain Stigleman writing to his wife Ellen. Callohill Stigleman letters, Floyd County Historical Society Collection, CD0004-7728, 7728, 7730. Ridgemont Museum, Floyd County, Virginia. Callohill referred to his debilitating pain from 'Neuralgia' frequently in letters prior to his leaving the army. He spoke of the combination of disease and medicine leaving him prostrate for long periods. His self-proscribed medicine was "large doses" of "Belladonna and Morphia" followed by brandy. Certainly his medicine was capable of prostrating most people.

<sup>58</sup> Jeffery C. Weaver. *54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry: Regimental Histories Series*, (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, 1993).

<sup>59</sup> National Park Service, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System, online <<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/>>

planting of a permanent Methodist Church in Jacksonville during the 1830's and 1840's. The first Methodist Camp Meeting in Floyd County was held in 1804, organized by Rev Lorenzo Dow in the northern part of the county on the land of Major Goodson. Reverend Goodykoontz settled in the area of Montgomery County which would later become Floyd County. The Methodist Church spread south with a camp meeting near the Burks Fork area at the location where the Falling Branch Methodist Church would be built in 1833. The Goodykoontz family became strongly influential in Floyd County Methodism and held decidedly pro-slavery views.<sup>60</sup>

George Goodykoontz's son Henry also became actively involved in Floyd County Methodism, becoming a preacher and marrying into an influential local slave-holding family. Henry Goodykoontz associations would put him in direct confrontation with pro-Union guerrillas during the war. The Goodykoontz family quickly became one of the county's largest landholders, and one of the only plantations in the county involved with tobacco. Prominent Jacksonville citizen, land owner and original trustee in the Jacksonville Methodist Episcopal, South, George Godby also took a staunch stand with secession. Godby's son, Jackson Godby, organized the first Floyd company following the vote on secession, the Floyd Defenders.<sup>61</sup> Jackson Godby was a slaveholder and served as Captain of Company B, 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry. The founding families of the Jacksonville (Floyd) Methodist Church became part of the core Confederate loyalist upon the outbreak of war. The Kennerly, Godby, Goodykoontz and Stiglemen families were all key to the Confederate war effort, particularly the enlistment and

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<sup>60</sup> Jessie Peterman, History of Methodist Church. Floyd County Historical Society Papers, Ridgemont Museum, Floyd County, Virginia. Jessie Peterman was Floyd County's historian, collecting and writing extensive histories on the county, churches, families, mills and business. See also, Slave Population Schedule, 1860. National Archives 1860 Census Slave Populations, Floyd County Virginia.

<sup>61</sup> Jeffery C. Weaver. *54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry: The Virginia Regimental Histories Series*. (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1993)

organization of Floyd County's units, contributed significant numbers of young men to the early war effort and only show two significant members accused of shifting loyalties.

Southern Methodists found themselves under considerable pressure to maintain loyalty to the Confederate government following the vote on secession. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South had taken its definitive stand on slavery in 1844 and the vote on secession cemented the denomination's place as steadfast religious supporter of the Confederacy. Oaths of loyalty were strictly enforced by the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal, South. The Holston conference tried and dismissed 18 ministers during the war, one from neighboring Wythe County who was beaten and reported being lucky to survive his harrowing trip into eastern Kentucky.<sup>62</sup> Confederate spies claimed to identify one Methodist pastor in Montgomery County as being an active member in the Heroes of America Unionist organization. During the war Floyd County's Methodist congregations belonged to the Baltimore conference with the shift to the Holston Conference occurring after the war, however, relationships and communications were largely tied to ranking members of the Holston Conference. The influence in Floyd came from the Holston Conference and the powerful Bishop John Early. The Floyd Methodist congregation located in the town of Jacksonville strongly supported secession. Ranking laymen led the charge for approval of the ordinance of secession and organization of Floyd's first regiments.

With the question of the place of slavery within the realm of ecclesiastical discussions congregations throughout Appalachia became adept at evading the issue with the relegation of slavery to the purely political realm. Early Methodist evasion of direct confrontation of the slave question was ultimately replaced with a concrete pro-slavery argument, the issue was addressed

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<sup>62</sup> Dunn, Durwood. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville; The University of Tennessee Press, 2013)

in similar fashion by many Lutheran and Baptist congregations who feared the loss of slave owning members. The argument that each man must answer for his own sins, the church being the place for man to develop an understanding of his own sin nature and repent led logically to the understanding that expulsion of slave owner would smack of hypocrisy. Floyd County's small number of slave owning men were its largest landowners, politically powerful, and significant contributors to local churches, largely responsible for donations of land and material for church construction, therefore these were not men to be ostracized for 'political' questions like the morality of slavery. During the 1850's powerful and influential advocates of biblical pro-slavery skillfully tied evangelical Christianity to southern nationalism, among these slave rights advocates was the vocal Bishop John Early, with deep family ties to Floyd and neighboring Franklin County.<sup>63</sup>

The members of Methodist Church in Floyd were resolute advocates of the evangelical imperative to protect the institution; biblical pro-slavery, as advanced by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, became tied to southern nationalism during the antebellum period. Presbyterians, smaller in number but among Floyd's more affluent congregations, held strikingly similar beliefs. It should be noted that the proximity of the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations could not possibly have been closer. The two congregations shared the original Presbyterian Church on Main Street near the court house; membership in one congregation did not preclude regular attendance at services of the other denomination. During the war the Presbyterian Church lost their minister to the Confederate Army and did not regain a minister until after the war. The Methodist Church had been under construction less than a block away

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<sup>63</sup> Dunn, Durwood. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville; The University of Tennessee Press, 2013) Bishop John Early was the eldest brother of General Jubal Early. Jubal Early lived on the family plantation approximately 20 miles from the town of Jacksonville, (now Floyd), was commonwealth attorney prior to the war and held considerable influence in both Franklin and Floyd counties.



when the war began. Construction was halted and the half-finished building was used to house cavalry supplies, particularly hay and fodder, during the war. Weekly sermons for both congregations were usually held through the war by the Methodist ministers, often George Goodykoontz or Reverend Bishop, with occasional visits by the itinerate Presbyterian minister at the Presbyterian Church. The men from these congregations would prove to be Floyd's most loyal Confederates.

While evangelicals in the mountain South remained concerned with being expelled from their positions for outright condemnation of slavery, several denominations were settling in large numbers in Floyd County, Virginia and entertained no qualms about maintaining an antislavery dialogue. In the early years of settlement industrious yeomen farmers grew large plantations throughout the county, plantations exceeding a thousand acres were not uncommon. Some of these plantations used slave labor, others utilized free laborers. In the southwestern, Burkes Fork area of the county multiple Dunkard families built large plantations adjoining near the West Fork of the Little River. Corn was the crop which could produce during the shortened, cool high mountain summers of Floyd County and the Dunkard farmers industriously cleared and planted every hillside and ridgetop. During the Civil War the Brethren populated Burks Fork and Little River areas of Floyd would develop of reputation for being centers of anti-Confederate sympathies. The commonality between these districts was the close association between Brethren congregations, led by Rev. Christian Bowman Sr., Rev. H. P. Hylton and elder layman such as the irascible David Weddle.

The Primitive Baptist congregations, numerous and independent minded, threw their impressive collective weight behind the Confederacy for multiple reasons, some identical and some fundamentally different from those of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches.

Primitive Baptist base in the literal message and interpretation of scripture meant that biblical presence and acceptance of slavery justified the continuation of the institution. For these southern Calvinists the arguments of evangelical pro-slavery pundits held no appeal, however, the doctrine supported the acceptance of ones' station in life and the belief that slave souls, like white, were predestined to either salvation or damnation and the eradication of slavery would not affect God's determined outcome.

Floyd's Primitive Baptists combined traditional Calvinist thought with a strong acceptance of the biblical pro-slavery argument and viewed the entire crisis of approaching war from the view of protecting home and family. Perhaps more than any other Floyd County congregations the Primitive Baptists were the expression of mountain church localism. Floyd's Primitive Baptist were not the wealthiest of Floyd's congregations; these were primarily tenant farmers, small land-holding farmers and craftsmen. They planted churches in nearly every rural corner of Floyd County and held fierce loyalty to family, church family and local community, (often these groups were highly intersected).

Prior to the fall of Fort Sumter the Primitive Baptist were not politically distant from the Brethren congregations which were often planted within several miles of one another across the county. Both Primitives and Brethren were Unionist albeit the Primitives were conditionally Unionist based upon no threat to the slave system, the eradication of which threatened to encroach on the small farmers and rural poor with increased competition for tenancies and craftsman labor. Brethren were, in Floyd, morally opposed to slavery and were vocal about the moral evils but socially accepting of the institution. Although few Primitives in Floyd had the financial resources to own either large tracts of land or slaves, there were a small number of Primitive Baptist leaders who owned slaves. Respected Elder and Pastor of Head of the River

and Pine Creek Primitive Baptist Churches William Howard and son Peter Howard (pastor during the Civil War), were slave owners. The pastor and elders of White Oak Grove Primitive Baptist Church, Owen Sumner and Thomas Simmons were also slave-holders.<sup>64</sup>

Floyd's earliest settlers made their way south from the Shenandoah Valley during the late 1780's and 1790's. These early settlers established three churches in quick succession. The Church of the Brethren, Dunkard, was likely planted nearly simultaneously as the first Primitive Baptist Church near the headwaters of the little river. The Dunkards settled in large numbers during the 1790's, accumulating large tracts of land early in Floyd's settlement. The large plantations in the western portion of the county were largely the holdings of prominent Dunkards. This early acquisition of land placed these congregations a secure political position which became key to Floyd's late war election sweep by Unionist candidates. Church of the Brethren, Dunkard, doctrine took a decidedly anti-slavery stance, however, there is concrete evidence that small numbers of slaves were owned by some Brethren in the Burkes Forks section of Floyd.<sup>65</sup> Generally, the Dunkards in this region freed their slaves prior to the war, stood vocally opposed to secession and under threat to life and property, maintained Unionist positions throughout the war.<sup>66</sup> The Dunkard position on slavery and secession was widely understood

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<sup>64</sup> Census 1860 Slave Population, National archives, Washington D.C. United States of America; Primitive Baptist Church and Family History Research Assistance for Floyd County, Virginia. <http://www.pblib.org/FamHist-FloydVA.html>

Cross referencing known church membership within the Primitive Baptist Churches is limited to Pastors, Elders, and founding laypeople. General membership is often recorded only by surname.

<sup>65</sup>1860 Federal Census- Slave Schedule, Record Group 29; National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/2353568>

<sup>66</sup> Creed Hylton remained a slave at the thousand+ acre Topeco Plantation, owned by the Archelaus Hylton family until the official end of slavery. Creed remained with the family his entire life, when he died in 1910 local schools closed and the children walked to the funeral at the Topeco Plantation cemetery. The neighboring Weddle family also held their slaves through the end of the war, before conferring 40 acres of land to the freed couple upon which to raise their family. The Hylton and Weddle families founded Topeco Church of the Brethren where their descendants continue to worship today. Both the Topeco Church and Topeco Plantation Cemetery are less than a quarter mile and visible from my home in the Burks Fork District of Floyd.

throughout the county, with an identification as a Dunkard being equivalent to an identification as anti-secession. This identification served the Dunkards well when making claims to the Southern Claims Commission after the war. Testifiers always pointed out when the claimant was a Dunkard as proof of union loyalty with considerable success.<sup>67</sup> As the progression of tensions brought scrutiny to the loyalties of ones neighbors in the late 1850's through 1860 and 1861 the Dunkard congregations, large and relatively wealthy compared to the median population, came under increasing pressure to maintain a neutral position. Dunkard Elder David Weddle would come under repeated threats to "keep his mouth shut" to little avail both prior and during the war.<sup>68</sup>

During the 1850's the Church of the Brethren were the most dominant religious organization in the county, with the Primitive Baptist a close second, Lutheran ranked third. Methodist were still in the process of establishing the presence which came to dominate the county in the decades following the war, although several economically and politically strong congregations had been planted by prominent men who stood loyal to the Confederate government throughout the war.

Primitive Baptist loyalties were much harder to predict based upon denominational affiliation. Calvinist, independent, rural and among Floyd's lower economic groups these men were known as fierce fighters both prior to the war in civilian matters and fearless in battle. "Resistance is often motivated not by rational perceptions of class or interest but by emotional,

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<sup>67</sup> Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims for Floyd County, Virginia were all either Church of the Brethren claimants or had multiple witness who were members of the Church of the Brethren. For examples see: Southern Claims Commission Record Group 217 Approved Claims, Claim Numbers: 51402 (Rebecca Blackwell), 37020 (Elijah Hylton), 51461 (Jacob Moses). Approved Claims for Floyd can be found at: [https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=\\*&f.ancestorNaIds=566157&sort=naIdSort%20asc&offset=1900](https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=*&f.ancestorNaIds=566157&sort=naIdSort%20asc&offset=1900) on pages 96-97.

<sup>68</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 43092: David Weddle. National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

sometimes non-rational perceptions of threat to everyday habits, ways of life, or ‘folk cultures’.”<sup>69</sup> The Calvinist belief in predestination has been credited with the bravery in battle, the belief that each man would die at his pre-ordained moment regardless of where he was or what events he may be involved in at the appointed moment. Large numbers of Primitive Baptist joined the Confederate Army during 1861 and 1862, however, the Primitive Baptist did have groups, largely associated with congregations in the Burks Fork area of Floyd, with a higher number of men who refused service or were rounded up with the conscription laws if the Home Guard was able to discover their locations. With the erosion of Confederate loyalty late in the war the Primitive Baptist congregants were more likely to reverse loyalties than members of the denominational churches in the Court House District.

Churches provided a center for community, a meeting place to share thoughts not only on matters of religion, but also on matters of social and political concern. The pulpit was the place to share national and local news, denominational decisions, and a place to delineate what was ecclesiastical concern and which issues fell to the secular realm. How a church, at the local level, addressed issues of slavery, abolition, and secession held wide influence on the congregation. Congregations, after all, were comprised largely of kin and closest community members, one’s extended church family were the people who gave each individual their sense of belonging, sense of community. Therefore, the stances adopted by clergy and leading lay people were often shared by the larger congregation. When emergencies arose in a community it was through the network of the congregation that help was organized, information shared and families supported. When war brought anarchy to the county of Floyd, it was through the kin

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<sup>69</sup> Guthman, Joshua. *“What I am is hard to know”*: Primitive Baptist, the Protestant Self, and the American Religious Imagination. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2008).

and community ties of the congregation that alliances were upheld, material support provided and communications established. Churches relations were often reflected in a second important meeting place within the community; the mill.

Floyd County, Virginia was home to 140 mills, mostly focused on processing grist, corn flour and feed. These mills spotted the many waterways of Floyd's countless springs, streams and feeder creeks all flowing into the Little River which bisects the county. Mills, due to their centrality in survival in the remote mountains, were also meeting places. While grain was milled, loaded and unloaded information was shared, opinions expressed and political questions decided. Mills, specifically, their influential owners, are frequently mentioned in letters, diaries and post-war government documents as locations where men of a particular partisan group could share information with like-minded men.<sup>70</sup>

In the north-central portion of the county, near the convergence of the Little River with Pine Creek stood Spangler's mill. The earliest records of the county list a mill standing on this site by 1787. The original building was replaced to allow for modernization, probably in the 1830's, and stood until it collapsed in 2005. Samuel Spangler was a highly regarded local miller and businessman. He was also an outspoken Unionist. Known widely throughout the county, and owner/operator of one of the busiest and most successful mills in the county, Spangler became an early opponent of the ordinance of secession. Men of like opinion gravitated to

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<sup>70</sup> Letters from the front often contained directions for wives in managing farm matters usually overseen by male family members. This would include where and when to have grain milled. Floyd County's large number of mills allowed the unusual option of consumer choice. Political alliance, family relations and during the war religious and loyalty position all affected the mills. Spangler's Mill, sitting near the confluence of Pine Creek and Little River, sat in a center of Unionist supporters. The Spangler family was married into the family of the vocal Brethren Preacher Christian Bowman, both families were identified as staunch Unionist prior to and through the war.

Spangler to such a degree that he was one of the most cited Unionist listed in claims to the Southern Claims Commission.<sup>71</sup>

### *Vote on Secession*

When Floyd County held its vote on secession the results were a foregone conclusion. Marginal Unionism had collapsed for most residents with Lincoln's call for volunteers. On May 23 Floyd's voting population returned an overwhelming majority of 896 to 20 for secession.<sup>72</sup> Conditional Unionists, men who only months prior to the events of April 1861 had stood in support of the Union and the Federal government took Lincoln's move to suppress the secession of the Deep-South states as a threat to Virginia and reacted defensively. The inherent threat of an invasion of Virginia infuriated and terrified residents across the state who reasonably deduced their state would be the first target of northern aggression.

The shift toward Confederate loyalty was not as extreme as may first appear. Most Floyd County voters shifted loyalties just enough to vote for secession, when the realities of war came home to Floyd in the form of lawlessness, hunger and guerrilla warfare these conditional secessionist would begin to waver. There was, however, a loyal Unionist contingent in the county that was perceived to be a threat to a successful vote for secession. Brethren congregants remained vocal in their defense of the Union, upbraiding at ideas of a Confederate government and always outspoken about the morality of slavery. Letters, diaries and Southern Claims Commission testimonies give repeated examples of Dunkards being threatened, blatantly bared

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<sup>71</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Approved Claims; Record Group 233 Disapproved Claims. Samuel Spangler is listed as witness or Unionist on nearly a dozen claims. These claims also frequently mention Spangler's Mill as a meeting place.

<sup>72</sup> Virginia County Vote on Secession Ordinance; May 23, 1861. New River Notes: Grayson County Heritage Foundation, Inc. [http://newrivernotes.com/historical\\_antebellum\\_1861\\_Virginia\\_voteorsecession.htm](http://newrivernotes.com/historical_antebellum_1861_Virginia_voteorsecession.htm) Accessed Feb. 25, 2018.

and in some instances physically prohibited from voting against secession. After the war Dunkard Madison Reed recalled, “I refused to vote for secession and no person at my polling place was allowed to vote against it.”<sup>73</sup> A tenant farmer in the Indian Valley of Floyd, Reed utilized the remote hollows near his farm when his brother deserted from the Confederate Army shortly after being conscripted in 1861.

Andrew Stigleman Sr. recalled fearing he would be attacked, even fear of death, due to anger over his vote against secession.<sup>74</sup> Despite Stigleman’s Unionist sympathies three of his sons would join the confederate army during 1861, indicating the heightened emotions which pervaded the county following the vote on secession. Stigleman’s sons were all members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South near the Court House, and respected members of the community. Voting was by voice, not ballot, in Floyd, making it impossible to maintain a discreet Union sympathy. Fear for family and property prompted Dunkards Samuel Epperly and prominent mill owner Samuel Spangler to vote for secession despite anti-slavery and anti-secession sentiments. Both men lamented their vote for secession immediately and became active in aiding deserters and undermining Home Guard efforts within the county.<sup>75</sup> Both men frequented Spangler’s Mill and recorded meeting with fellow Unionists at this mill.

David Weddle, who would become a target for Home Guard and Confederate Army units attempting to collect deserters later in the war, recalled the presidential election as particularly contentious for Brethren. He claimed that he would have voted for Lincoln had he been an

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<sup>73</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217 Approved Claims, Claim Number 48776, Claim of Madison Reed; National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

<sup>74</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 2436, Claim of Andrew Stigleman. National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

<sup>75</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 37020, Witness for Elijah Hylton; Claim Number 14399, Claim of Samuel Spangler. National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.



option at his polling place. Early in the war he spoke against the Confederate government and what he considered the treason of secession. William Dillon recalled Weddle regularly speaking boldly to groups of men concerning his sympathies. Dillon recalled, “The old man talked boldly before three men that the war was unjust on the part of the rebels and if he had his way he would hang Jeff Davis and all his rebel crew.”<sup>76</sup>

The members of the Brethren congregation in the Burks Fork area of Floyd demonstrated considerable resistance to the vote on the ordinance of secession. These men voted against, attempted to vote against or were all blatantly prohibited from going to the polls. Joshua Weddle claims to have voted no to the ordinance of secession while Jacob Moses reported that he was prohibited from voting under threat of violence due to his unionist sentiments and membership in the Dunkard Church.<sup>77</sup> Jacob Moses did not attempt to hide either his sentiments or his active involvement in resistance to the Confederate government. Moses became actively involved in aiding conscripted Brethren when they deserted at the first opportunity. Samuel George Spangler, son of mill owner Sam Spangler and son-in-law of Jacob Moses, enlisted in September 1861. Sam Spangler Jr. deserted within months and spent the remainder of the war being hidden and protected by Jacob Moses and Unionist from the Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren.

In April, 1861 Floyd County voted in accordance with the state of Virginia’s secession ordinance. The county’s votes counted at 896 for and 20 against secession. It is impossible to count the number of Dunkards who stayed home to avoid confrontation, those who attempted to vote or the number of non-Dunkard unionist who did not vote on secession for the same variety

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<sup>76</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217 Approved Claims; David Weddle, Claim 43092: National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

<sup>77</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217 Approved Claims; Joshua Weddle, Claim 43093: National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

of reasons. It is highly unlikely that the vote would have shifted significantly due to the large support for secession riding on Lincoln's call for volunteers. Certainly less than two dozen men failed to cast a vote against secession and some who claimed to vote for secession despite opposition may have been caught in the wave of emotion following the fall of Ft. Sumter and Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers. Although the vote would not have been affected by the Dunkard and Unionist obstruction from the polls this certainly establishes the early presences of a core of Unionist sympathizers despite the overwhelmingly pro-secession decision. The presences of voting location enforcers and several documented instances of violence demonstrates established partisanship, however, this was the reality throughout the mountain South.

Floyd's violence and partisanship would escalate rapidly, causing the county to descend to near anarchy with a definitive shift toward Unionist sympathies. This shift was rooted in locally pressing conditions and supported by congregational support of deserters and Unionist activities.

As partisan loyalties deepened men aligned on both sides of the question considered opposing loyalties to be treasonous. Each man who took any action was committing treason either against the Federal or Confederate government and with the accusations of treason came the wartime answer to treason, often in the form of swift violence and execution. The very nature of Appalachian localism led to frequent confrontations between men who were either given or assumed the power to try traitors and bring swift justice. Unionists identified prior to the outbreak of war and religious pacifists were generally grouped together as traitors. With emotions running at their highest point following Lincoln's call for volunteers, any failure to adamantly support the burgeoning Confederate government was treated as treason. Dunkards in

Floyd County came under early scrutiny and abuse. The pacifist nature of the congregation and long and respected connections in the county protected some lives but not the property of these Dunkards.

During the war members of the Hylton, Weddle, Reed families in the Burks Fork area of the county reported repeated raids and visits from Home Guard units. John Weddle Sr. reported to the Southern Claims Commission that, “The Home Guard raided on me pretty regularly. I was forced to give half my crops one year.”<sup>78</sup> The Home Guard, being comprised of men local to the county and familiar with pre-war sentiments were able to focus on men they deemed likely to support unionist movements and hide men who were avoiding conscription. Many of the men active in the Brethren Church had sons and family members who either enlisted or were conscripted in 1862. John Weddle Sr. had four sons conscripted by the Confederate Army, all four deserted—three crossed Union lines and one returned to Floyd where he joined the groups of deserters hidden in the remote hollows in the southwestern portion of the county.<sup>79</sup>

The initial drive to organize Floyd’s units was fueled by the wave of fear and shock which swept the county following the events at Ft. Sumner and Lincoln’s call for volunteers. Floyd’s residents, perhaps for the first time, realized that the issue of slavery and secession could directly impact rural communities. The realization that southwestern Virginia held vital resources and rail links between the western and eastern portions of the south brought fear of federal armies marching through rural communities. Many volunteers sought merely to answer the perceived federal threat to local autonomy while protecting home and community. The

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<sup>78</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 14698: John Weddle.

<sup>79</sup> Service Records, N.J. Agnew, “A listing of Men from Floyd County Virginia...” A brief sketch of the destination of John Weddle’s sons following their desertion can be found in Weddle’s claim to the Southern Claims Commission:

Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 14698; John Weddle.

inability of the Confederate government to control wartime deprivations ranging from lawlessness to hunger fueled initial supporters of secession to rethink their positions and often recast their loyalties with the Federal government. The realities of camp life, even the initial experience of military discipline was enough to almost immediately dampen any nationalistic Confederate support among men who enlisted or were conscripted as conditional secessionist.<sup>80</sup>

Floyd County organized units beginning immediately following the vote on secession although the framework and planning for the first units was in place on the heels of Lincoln's call for volunteers. Jacksonville lawyer Henry Lane organized Floyd's one of the first companies, the Floyd Guards, which he enlisted May 25, 1861 at Floyd Court House. This first company was assigned to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Infantry on June 15, 1861. Lane was a member of the combined Presbyterian-Methodist congregation which shared the Presbyterian Church on Main Street in Floyd. Henry Lane would not survive the war; he died at Cedar Run on August 12, 1862. The Floyd Guards were followed by a stream of steady enlistments with five companies (A, B, D, H and I) contributed to the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia by the fall of 1861. Dr. Callohill Stigleman, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in the Court House District, organized Company A of the 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia. He would remain with the company only until 1862 when he returned to his practice for the remainder of the war.

Son of Jacksonville Methodist Preacher George Godby, Jackson Godby organized a unit which became company B of the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia. Godby, however, remained with the company only until 1862 when he was dropped when the unit was reorganized. Jackson Godby was a prominent local businessman and owned 1 slave at the onset of the war. By 1864 Jackson Godby

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<sup>80</sup> Hylton Letters, Floyd County Historical Society Papers, Ridgemont Museum, Floyd County, Virginia.

would be considered an active unionist and was linked with the Heroes of American, commonly referred to as the Red Strings.<sup>81</sup> Floyd County Methodist demonstrated an early dedication to secession and the Confederate war effort, although there were a number who did not reenlist following their first enlistment few actually shifted loyalties as far as active Unionism. Callohill Stigleman was the son of vocal unionist Andrew Stigleman Sr. Andrew Stigleman Jr. died on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1862 at Sharpsburg, there is little doubt this event contributed to the damping of loyalty Callohill displayed during the war. The realities of war combined with the pressure against his reenlistment from his father were the likely reasons Stigleman spent the remainder of the war in Floyd.

The loyalty of Floyd Methodist to the Confederate government was likely influenced by the proximity in Floyd from the family of Jubal Early. The Early plantation, near the Floyd-Franklin County line placed the Early family as key political figures in local politics. Jubal Early's elder brother John was a powerful and overpowering figure in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and a direct influence on the local and itinerate preachers in Floyd.

Bishop John Early was appointed to head the Holston Conference due to his resolute support of secession, southern nationalism and the evangelical imperative to promote the biblical pro-slavery argument.<sup>82</sup> Early was domineering in his beliefs and approach to 'ruling' the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. "If God and the Confederacy were the same in John Early's opinion, the slightest questioning of one was an attack on the

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<sup>81</sup> Census 1860 Slave Population, National archives, Washington D.C. U.S.A. For Accusations that Jackson Godby was tied to the HOA come from Southern Claims Commission denied claims: Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233 Denied Claims, Claim Numbers 8012, 8379; National Archives, Washington D.C. U.S.A.

<sup>82</sup> Durwood Dunn. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013).

other.”<sup>83</sup> The goal in his placement was the removal of the high number of unionist, including local Methodist preachers, in Eastern Tennessee. Union sympathies were not tolerated in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The majority of itinerates, with close connections with the conference leaders, adhered to Confederate loyalty. Local ministers with Unionist sympathies were literally run out of the region, on occasion these men did not escape with their lives. The Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was actively trying and dismissing Unionist ministers well into 1864.

Levi Carter, a local pastor and blacksmith in Eastern Tennessee was shot by Confederate bushwhackers for Union loyalty. Carter was found with six bullet holes; his son was tortured gruesomely before being shot. One Methodist Pastor for Wythe County, on Floyd County’s western border, recounted that he was fortunate to arrive at the Kentucky state-line alive after being threatened and harassed following his dismissal from the pulpit.<sup>84</sup> Incidents of violence against Unionist pastors were well understood in the county, news of the dangers faced by unionists in the Methodist conference circulated across southwestern Virginia. Itinerates would certainly brought news of pastors being killed or run out of the region to the county. Floyd County was not yet a member of the Holston Conference in 1864, the shift would not occur until 1876. However, the influence of the Holston Conference was based on proximity and connections with Holston itinerates.

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<sup>83</sup> Durwood Dunn. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013). p 88.

<sup>84</sup> Durwood Dunn. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2013).

During the war Floyd County, Virginia was the southernmost member of the Baltimore conference, bordering the northernmost county of the Holston conference. This border-state conference faced such dramatic schisms that persecution of either unionist or confederate sympathizers was only pursued at the congregational level, wide-spread dismissal for loyalties did not occur in the Baltimore conference to the extent that occurred in the Holston Conference. Baltimore's highly disparaging churches, like many border-state conferences, focused on the inner-spirituality of religious education, neatly bypassing the issue of slavery as a Christianity relevant moral question.<sup>85</sup> The question of slavery remained a question to be wrestled with on a personal level, as the war progressed pro-slavery arguments from the pulpit diminished but the shift toward Unionism did not seem to be based in the influence of any changes in doctrine but rather grew from mountain localism and the effects of the war on those local communities.<sup>86</sup>

Presbyterian congregations in the mountain south followed a similar pattern as Methodist. Avoidance of a direct confrontation of slavery as a moral question interspersed with pastors who maintained a strong proslavery biblical argument. The Presbyterian Church schisms led to the formation of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America in 1861. The newly formed General Assembly met in 1861 in New Orleans, and with difficulty following the shift in control of that city to federal hands, and threat to the city of Memphis, (the intended location of the second assembly), met in Montgomery, Alabama in 1862. Presiding Elder Eli Phlegar

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<sup>85</sup> Holm, April E. *A Kingdom Divided: Evangelicals, Loyalty, and Sectionalism in the Civil War Era*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017).

<sup>86</sup> Mountain Unionism: Crawford, Martian, "The Dynamics of Mountain Unionism: Federal Volunteers of Ashe County, North Carolina", in *The Civil War in Appalachia* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997). Ralph Mann, "Ezekiel Count's Sand Lick Company: Civil War and Localism in the Mountain South", in *The Civil War in Appalachia* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997). 78-103; Jonathan Dean Sarris, *A Separate Civil War: Communities in Conflict in the Mountain South*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006) The connection between the guerrilla war and localism has recently been insightfully explored by Civil War and Appalachian scholars.

represented Floyd from the Montgomery Virginia synod.<sup>87</sup> The Confederate States General synod threw its weight behind the Confederate States, contributing Presbyterian ministers to the armies both as pastors and as soldiers. Floyd County Presbyterian Church would not have a pastor for the duration of the war. Division of the nation and the Presbyterian Church was seen as ordained by God and undertaken as a great mission for the church. “We desire, at this, our second meeting to render devout thanksgiving to our Divine Lord and Head for the abundant favor which He has manifested to our Church in entering upon that new and solemn path of our duty to which His Providence has so clearly pointed her.”<sup>88</sup> The men who served the Confederacy in any military capacity gained the esteem of being perceived as martyrs for the cause. “They have parted, without a murmur, with those who constitute the hope of the Church, and have bidden them go forth to the support of this great and sacred case...”<sup>89</sup>

Floyd County’s Presbyterian congregation organized in 1848 and constructed the historic church on Main Street in 1854.<sup>90</sup> In the heart of Jacksonville’s Court House District, the Presbyterian Church, which shared the building with the Methodist Episcopal, South during the war years, was the heart of Confederate loyalty during the war. The schisms which split the Presbyterian Church aligned Floyd County’s Presbyterian congregation solidly with the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America. The branches of the national denominations which were centered in the Court House district remained the center of southern loyalty, the organizational center of anti-Unionist activity. The final breach of Lutheran unity was summarized by President of the General Synod Nicodemus Aldrich in 1863. “We meet, not

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<sup>87</sup> Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States, Montgomery, AL; 1862.

<sup>88</sup> Minutes General Assembly Presbyterian Church, South, 1862 p 21

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p 22

<sup>90</sup> The beautiful Presbyterian Church stands today on Main St in Floyd, the current home of the Masonic Lodge and protected on the Historic Register. The Church remains one of Floyd County’s iconic landmarks.



to rejoice, but to lament-not to speak of the prosperity of Zion, but to consider her distracted condition, and to behold her once fair proportions marred by the evil passions of misguided men.”

The Lutheran Church, in similar fashion to the Presbyterian Church, attempted to maintain unity until the onset of the war made cohesion impossible. The Lutheran General Synod held the northern and southern congregations together until the May, 1862 General Synod where the northern contingent, in a general absence of southern representation, passed a resolution concerning the war and slavery. The equation of sin, inferred to be slavery and secession, as being the root of the Civil War caused succinctly forced the southern congregations to break from the General Synod. The war was declared by the Northern Synod to be, “...a righteous judgement of God, visited upon us because of individual and national sin.”<sup>91</sup> The split resulted in the 1863 organization of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Confederate States of America.

Floyd Lutherans, led by regionally loyal pastors and laypeople, stood opposed to the biblically unsupported, therefore, theologically bad arguments of abolitionists. Coupled with fear and anger over the perception of increasing northern aggression the majority of Floyd’s Lutheran congregation stood in support of secession.

Floyd’s Zion Lutheran Church had been established in 1804 by a congregation which had been meeting informally since 1794. One the founding families of the Lutheran Church was the

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<sup>91</sup> “Proceedings of the Twentieth Convention of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States”, Assembled in Lancaster, Pa; May, 1862. (p 31.) E.L.C.A. Archives.  
[https://ar.elca.org/webcat/request/DoMenuRequest?SystemName=Archives+of+the+Evangelical+Lutheran+Church+in+America&UserName=wa+public&Password=&UniqueID=0&TemplateProcessID=6000\\_20820\\_6086&bCache=1&MenuName=Public+keyword+search&ControlLoc=T&ControlPer=20&\\_ga=2.15642166.1240435017.1539016337-481425396.1539016337](https://ar.elca.org/webcat/request/DoMenuRequest?SystemName=Archives+of+the+Evangelical+Lutheran+Church+in+America&UserName=wa+public&Password=&UniqueID=0&TemplateProcessID=6000_20820_6086&bCache=1&MenuName=Public+keyword+search&ControlLoc=T&ControlPer=20&_ga=2.15642166.1240435017.1539016337-481425396.1539016337)

Phlegar family, the same family whose cousin was the Presbyterian Elder at the first General Synod of the Southern Presbyterian Church. The devout Phlegar family traced its Lutheran roots from the population dispersions of the Protestant Reformation, the family arrived prior to the American Revolution and followed the German migration west into Pennsylvania and south down the Shenandoah Valley. The early records and services of Zion Lutheran Church were in German until the 1830's. Farmers and craftsmen, these men were devout in their pursuit of personal autonomy without government intrusion. Slave records from the 1860 Census reveal only one slave in the Phlegar family owned by Isaac Phlegar, who would serve the Confederate Army during the war.

The Phlegar family would experience its own breach over Union and Confederate loyalties, sending sons to both armies. This family provided six men to the Confederate Army and one who crossed Union lines to serve with the 51<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania.<sup>92</sup> Jacob Phlegar joined the 51<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, returning after the war to Roanoke. His brother George Phlegar joined Company G of the 4<sup>th</sup> Virginia, he was with the Stonewall Brigade when it assaulted Culp's Hill at Gettysburg.<sup>93</sup> He died on Culp's Hill and was interred in an unmarked grave on the battlefield. The Zion Lutheran congregation stood overwhelmingly in support of secession. Following the pattern of the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations in the Court House District the Lutheran congregation contributed several dozen early recruits to the companies organized immediately following the vote on secession.

The early organization of companies was led by the church elders who contributed sons and, depending upon age, themselves to the ranks of the Confederate Army. The pulpit, long the

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<sup>92</sup> Roster 51<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers, <https://www.pa-roots.com/pacw/infantry/51st/51storg.html>

<sup>93</sup> Robertson, Howard I. *Fourth Virginia Infantry: Regimental Histories Series*. (Lynchburg, H.E. Howard, 1982)

advocate of the pro-slavery, southern nationalism agenda, became a recruiting ground when evangelical duty to advance the Great Commission became tied to the call to arms to defend the Confederacy. Christian men were extorted to join the ranks in defense of a new nation ordained by God to be the protector of true Christianity. Decades of advancing the notion that true biblical Christianity was inseparably tied to the preservation of slavery added evangelical Christians, with no benefit to be garnered from either slavery or a separate Confederate nation, to the ranks of the Confederate army. Southern pastors of the Methodist and Baptist, (which in Floyd was primarily Primitive Baptist), and to a slightly lesser degree the Presbyterians and Lutherans had spent decades preparing an entire generation to protect the southern right to hold chattel slaves. In Floyd the effect on these congregations led to nearly 100% of military age men in these congregations to join the Confederate Army.

The combined congregations of Lutheran as well as Presbyterian and Methodist in the Court House District supplied men to the Confederate Army who were often the sons of trustees, local government officials and large landowners. Joining the 24<sup>th</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia in large numbers these men proved the least likely to desert as wartime deprivations drove men from other portions of the county to break for home.<sup>94</sup> The complex reasons for the high degree of loyalty from these congregations included the evangelical directive to protect true Christianity as well as the social factors of preserving the peculiar institution and the overwhelming economic-political drive to protect assets and political power.

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<sup>94</sup> N.J. Agnew, "A Listing of Men from Floyd County Who Served as Confederate Soldiers in the Civil War or Between the States, 1861-1865: Compiled from the Records of Camp III," typed manuscript, no date provided, Floyd County Historical Society Papers.

Pre-war church schisms as well as impending breaches allowed the congregations in Floyd County more than a decade to establish stances on abolition and slavery. While influenced by denominational decisions the ultimate placement of loyalties were also founded in the local perceptions of slavery as a political question, outside the realm of spiritualism centered Christianity. Abolition, at the local level, posed a far larger threat to social stability than the continuation of the institution whether the individual believed it to be a sin or not. The general consensus was that abolishing slavery was likely to cause more social strife, suffering and sin than the continuation of the institution. Conditional Unionist on the eve of the presidential election, loyal to a federal government which did not threaten social constructs with abolition, mountain communities would swiftly shift to conditional secessionism with the election of Abraham Lincoln, the surrender of Fort Sumter and the call for volunteers to the federal army.

Many of Floyd County's congregations swung loyalty according to the impact of events on the local community. The blazing exception was the large and robust Church of the Brethren congregations and the resolute Methodist-Presbyterian congregations. The largest single denomination in Floyd County, outnumbering even the independent minded and growing Primitive Baptist congregations, the Dunkards stood opposed to secession and war and many were morally opposed to slavery. This group was pacifist but not silent, their anti-slavery, pro-union position was well documented and about to play a catalytic role in the war-time chaos of Floyd County.

## Chapter 3

### War and Active Church Participation

“...that when I shall have made up my mind to go to Hell,  
I will cut my throat and go direct, and not travel by way  
of the Southern Confederacy.”

Parson Brownlow

In 1864 conditions had deteriorated in Floyd nearly to a shoot or be shot state. Methodist Episcopal pastor Reverend Benjamin Bishop was visiting at the home of church trustee David Goodykoontz near Falling Branch Methodist Church in the Topeco-Willis area of the county. This section of the county was the center of deserter hideouts and organized deserter support. The home was approached by a group of deserters who demanded provisions. Reverend Bishop, respected clergymen and married to Mr. Goodykoontz' niece July Goodykoontz, responded to the demands by shooting at the deserters. There is no record of deaths from the episode, however, the incident reveals the conditions of the county when respected clergy were responding to deserter bands with counter-guerrilla resistance. Reverend Bishop travelled armed at all times during the latter years of the war, Floyd had descended into a shooting gallery.

The progression of Floyd County from orderly, quiet Confederate mountain community, into a safe haven for deserters supported by the large Dunkard population and a violent center for guerrilla warfare between Unionist and Confederate loyalist is clearly traceable through court records, family letters and rapidly increasing rates of violence. Within weeks of the first regiments of Floyd County enlistees arriving at Camp Lee desertions began; the first test of loyalty was the immediate onset of disease sweeping the camps. All Civil War army camps were

beset by disease and when the camps began incurring high death rates before the first significant battles loyalties began to waver. Combined with the unexpected element of disease new recruits were not prepared for the drilling and discipline of Army life; raw recruits, unaccustomed to obeying orders on occasion slipped away from camp and made their way back to Floyd.

Jerimiah Hanes Slusher joined Captain Stigleman when he mustered Company A, 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia. During October, 1861 he returned to Floyd on sick leave, on the last day of that leave, unable to return, he wrote Captain Stigleman on October 20<sup>th</sup>. "I am sorrow to say that I am home sick. I have the typhoid fever & have not got much more business above ground than a mole at this time."<sup>95</sup> Despite his dire illness Jerimiah Slusher recovered and survived the war; he lived the remainder of his life in the Greasy Creek area of the Burks Fork District. He died at the age of 86 in 1904 and is buried in his father's cemetery.

"Floyd so far has acted a noble part, but I fear all virtue has gone out of her."<sup>96</sup> Erosion of support for the war did not immediately translate into Unionism. The strain on families first expressed itself in a general unwillingness to contribute to the war effort.

Support for secession and the Confederate government declined with discernable and traceable rapidity in many mountain communities. Subsistence based farming requiring every family member to contribute, localism based social structures and large numbers of congregations whose focus was on personal religious piety as opposed to evangelicalism all contributed to a rapid disillusionment with the ideology of secession.<sup>97</sup> Letters from home

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<sup>95</sup> Jerimiah Hanes Slusher to Captain Callohill Stigleman, Company A, 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry, Oct. 20, 1861. The Stigleman Letters, CG0004-7768. Floyd County Historical Society Papers, Floyd County, Virginia.

<sup>96</sup> S.D.L. to Capt. Callohill Stigleman, Floyd Virginia, Jan. 19, 1862. The Stigleman Letters, CG0004-7776. Floyd County Historical Society Papers, Floyd County, Virginia. This letter originates from the General Hospital in Warrenton, Virginia. S.D.L. is certainly a person familiar, likely a native of. Floyd but at this time remains unidentified.

<sup>97</sup> Kenneth Noe, "Red String Scare: Civil war in Southwest Virginia and the Heroes of America". (*North Carolina Historical Review*, July 1992, p 301-322).

requesting men come on home to help with fire wood and getting in crops put pressure on men already unhappy with the reality of army life. These letters from wives and mothers also revealed that family at home also had no perception of what the war would soon entail. The common perception that men could come and go from the army as the needs of their families dictated reveal a nation mentally and emotionally, not to mention logistically, truly unprepared for the war.

As desertion rates increased the Confederate government recognized the role of family letters detailing suffering in the decision of men to throw down arms, not return from furlough or sick leave. Letters poured into the ranks detailing the tribulations faced at home. As early as 1862 newspapers ran articles entreating women, “Don’t Write Gloomy Letters”.<sup>98</sup> The connection between home front, desertion and the erosion of Confederate support has been explored for regions across the South. Floyd County men receiving news of crop failure, widespread hunger, diphtheria deaths and increasing violence found themselves weighing loyalty to Confederacy against loyalty to family. “The desire to protect their households—was integral to their motivations to fight for Confederate independence.” This communication from home expounding desperate conditions, “drew tens of thousands of Confederate soldiers...undermining the war effort.”<sup>99</sup>

The production of subsistence crops became increasingly difficult with the majority of the county’s working age male population in the army. Floyd’s primary agricultural crop was corn. Floyd produced enough to feed the population, sell a portion east of the Blue Ridge in

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<sup>98</sup> Drew Gipin Faust, “Alters of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War”. (*The Journal of American History* 76, p 1200-1228: 1990). Headline from the *Huntsville Democrat*, August 28, 1861; *Countryman* 1862.

<sup>99</sup> Lorien Foote, “Rethinking the Confederate Homefront”. (*The Journal of the Civil War Era*, p 446-465: 2017).

Lynchburg and still held a sizable quantity for distillation into corn whiskey. Chestnuts, Floyd's second largest exported commodity were gathered every fall, usually by women and children. Due to the need for women and children to undertake much of the work generally done by their husbands, fathers and brothers there was limited time spent in gathering the valuable chestnut, further suppressing the purchasing power of poor mountain families. The devastating arrival of a diphtheria epidemic in the county further weakened the population's ability to effectively plant and harvest subsistence crops.

The first deserters were moving through Floyd by the end of 1861, the few that walked home during the summer were quickly returned to their units with minimum punishment. Rumors of rising Unionist sentiments in the county began to reach the Floyd Regiments in winter camp by early 1862. As early as January 1862, county magistrate Harvey Deskins, Floyd's representative to the secession convention, wrote to Captain Stigleman with a denial of decreasing support to the Confederacy. "You say it is reported in camp that the spirit of Unionism has become strong in Floyd." Deskins used three paragraphs to denounce the rumors, concluding: "I have no idea who started those reports nor do I care all that I have to say they are maliciously false."<sup>100</sup>

There is certainly no evidence to support wide-spread shifts in loyalties at this early stage in the war, the majority of Floyd's residents stood confident in early 1862 of an ultimate Confederate victory. New complications on the home-front would do more damage to Confederate loyalty than events on the battlefield.

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<sup>100</sup> Harvey Deskins, Floyd Court House, to Captain Callohill Stigleman, Company A, 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia. Stigleman Letters, CG0004-7778. Floyd County Historical Society Papers; Floyd County, Virginia.



By the late summer of 1862 the number of deserters and conscription evaders in Floyd County had drawn the attention of command in Richmond. Company A of the 24<sup>th</sup> Virginia was sent to Floyd in August with orders to return deserters and round up conscripts for the army. Special Order 207, recently rediscovered in Floyd County Criminal Court documents sent Company A to Virginia with minimal success aside from resulting in a murder charge for Floyd native Captain Darius Williams.<sup>101</sup> The wisdom of sending a company mustered in Floyd, comprised of men born and raised in the county, back to collect deserters, likely relatives to many men in the company, certainly was a questionable decision.

Special Order 207 returned no known deserters to the ranks and resulted in the conscription of less than a dozen men. Darius Williams was arrested and tried in Floyd County Criminal Court for the murder of an insane citizen who assaulted the column, striking Williams and posing an imminent threat.<sup>102</sup> Williams spent the remainder of the war in prison while attempting to prove justifiable homicide. The incident increased local resentment of conscription laws and further split Union and Confederate factions.

In 1862 Floyd's Dunkard population was still under the protection of the \$500 fee which the wealthy had paid to avoid service as religious objectors. However, the protection afforded from the bounty did not extend to protection from harassment and threat to life. Dunkards were under continuous danger of being assaulted both on the road and in their homes. The members of these Brethren congregations were the primary target for anti-unionist harassment, which soon

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<sup>101</sup> Floyd County Criminal Court documents, Floyd County Historical Society Paper, Floyd County, Virginia. Special Order 207 was rediscovered while working my way through cases of Court Documents which the Historical Society took possession of when the Court House was preparing to dispose of all old court documents. Hand written packets of all pertinent case documents had been put in acid free boxes and stored for years. The discovery of this original order has led to work to more carefully assess and preserve the County Court documents. No doubt Special Order 207 survived due to its placement with the murder trial documents.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

bred wider dissent. The Dunkard congregations, the largest denomination in the county, had contributed some members into the Confederate ranks in the first months of the war. Many entered Company D of the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia, largely enlisted/conscripted in the Burks Fork, Willis, area of Floyd. The largest congregation in the Burks Fork District was, and is today, the Topeco Church. Sitting between the large Hylton and Weddle plantations, this congregation dated to meetings in a single room Chestnut log cabin in the late 1790's. Led during the war by the devout and respected Elder Hardin Price Hylton, a man who actively opposed secession and was vocally pro-Union, the Topeco congregation maintained close ties with Brethren in the Little River District to the north and northeast led by Pastor Christian Bowman. Previously Pastor of Topeco, Bowman established the Red Oak Grove congregation during the 1850's, maintaining a close relationship between both churches. Southern Claims Commission testimony and Court Order Book charges of treason and support of deserter and unionist guerrilla activity repeatedly reference Pastor H.P. Hylton in connection with members of the Red Oak Grove congregation and meetings at Spangler's Mill.<sup>103</sup> The Dunkard population was purported by local magistrates and Court House District lawyers as actively working to undermine the Confederate war effort. Dunkards themselves would make the same claim following the war. Topeco congregant David Weddle put words into action from the onset of the war. "David Weddle was breaking down the Confederate Army by encouraging desertion," as well as feeding, supplying, hiding and providing communications for deserters.<sup>104</sup> Reports to Governors Letcher, then later, to

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<sup>103</sup> Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Groups 233, 217 Claims Numbers 15099, 4099, 7778; National Archives, Washington D.C. U.S.A.

<sup>104</sup> Records of the Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 43092 for David Weddle. Also, Floyd County Court Order Book 3, Floyd County, Virginia. David Weddle was charged in 1863 with aiding the Union in an invasion of the Confederate States, less than two years later he sat on the Floyd County Grand Jury.

Governor Smith, citing specific charges of treason by the Brethren congregations in Floyd were accompanied by witness accounts written by Presbyterian and Primitive Baptist ministers.

In Floyd County, at least, the Methodist and Presbyterians stayed overwhelmingly loyal to the Confederacy well into the final months of the war. The Home Guard worked upon information passed on by loyal ministers whose travels and close interactions in the community provided them with vital information as to the location of wanted men, such as deserters, and activities of pro-Union guerrillas. As Primitive Baptists Elders and Methodist ministers went about their frequent travels to farms and homes in their vicinity those loyal to the Confederate government became adept as collecting bits of information and idle gossip as to the location of deserters, escaped Union prisoners, local Unionists and even pastors who were involved with assisting the Union cause. Pastors vehemently loyal to the Confederacy did not hesitate to contact officials in local and state government to report suspected locations and activity.

Primitive Baptist minister Peter Corn reported to Richmond that Dunkard Esom Huff and County Magistrate Ferdinand Winston were actively aiding deserters, organizing routes for escaped Federal prisoners and participating in Unionist guerrilla activities. Post war testimony to the Southern Claims Commission validate the accusations brought against these men. Esom Huff is frequently referenced as being actively involved in Unionist guerrilla activities and aiding deserters. Corn, along with fellow elders in the county's robust Primitive Baptist congregations functioned as informants to Home Guard Units attempting to round up deserters and investigate Union sympathizers.

Jacksonville itinerate Presbyterian minister Lindsay Blanton, working out of Montgomery County, also actively sought to undermine the growing unionist loyalties in the county. In letters of collaboration with urgent pleas to Governor Smith in 1864 Reverend

Blanton identified the growing Heroes of America activity, and specific traitors to the Confederacy. Blanton specifically cited Winston as referring to secessionists as a “mob” who forced the South from the Union.<sup>105</sup> Blanton was adamant that Winston be arrested as a traitor. Winston had clearly stated his position on the war and secession in 1861 when he was newly elected county magistrate. He confidently wrote then Virginia Governor Letcher to inform him that he would not take the oath of loyalty to the Confederate government.<sup>106</sup> Having established himself early and vocally as having Unionist sentiments he faced continuous censor for the remainder of the war.

The continuous reports of treason against Ferdinand Winston led to his arrest and imprisonment in Richmond, unable to prove guilt on any specific charge beyond pro-Union speech he was eventually freed and returned to Floyd and an increasingly pro-Union county. However, Ferdinand Winston would remain outspoken and active in Unionist activities. He was repeatedly named in Southern Claims Commission testimonies as being an active loyalist through the end of the war and an organizer in the Heroes of America.

Among the most targeted in these letters were the more outspoken of Floyd’s Brethren elders. Aging Dunker Elder Christian Bowman continued to speak out strongly against the Confederate government, his poor health and advanced age likely being the reason he was not specifically targeted for violence. Christian Bowman Sr.’s sons Christian Bowman Jr. and Peter Bowman adamantly refused to join the Confederate Army at the onset of the war. Letters written to Captain Callohill Stigleman from his friend, fellow doctor and fellow member of the

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<sup>105</sup> Lindsay Bland to Governor William Smith, Executive Papers and Letters, Virginia Governor William Smith, The Library of Virginia, Richmond.

<sup>106</sup> Magistrate Ferdinand Winston, Floyd Court House to Governor John Letcher: Governor John Letcher [Richmond, Virginia], 16 November 1862, Executive Papers and Letters, Virginia Governor John Letcher, The Library of Virginia, Richmond. Also, Recorded in the Floyd County Court Order Book 3, Floyd County, Virginia.

Jacksonville, (Floyd) Methodist Church, A.J. Hoback, marked these men as early obstructionists to the Confederacy. On July 1, 1861, only weeks after Dr. Callohill led his company to join Confederate forces moving north of Richmond, Hoback updated him on the ongoing organization of Floyd's units. The notation of the Bowman brothers' refusal to muster seemed to not surprise Hoback.

“Peter and Christian Bowman refuse to muster. Peter says you pledged yourself to pay his fines if he had any to pay...of course you will do no such thing as it is now \$1 a week and will no doubt be increased.”<sup>107</sup>

-A. J. Hoback to Capt. Callohill Stigleman

Dr. Andrew Jackson Hoback lived and maintained an office in the Court House District of Floyd. Dr. Hoback cared for the patients of Dr. Stigleman when he organized the Floyd Rangers and actively worked with the mustering of additional companies from Floyd until his own enlistment in April, 1862. Dr. Hoback's letters provide valuable glimpses into the politics of secession and organization of Floyd units. Dr. Hoback served as a physician for Company I of the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry. A third Court House District doctor actively worked to both support the Confederacy and carry patient loads when Stigleman then Hoback joined Floyd regiments. Dr. John Stuart was the brother of General J.E.B. Stuart, both men had attended school in Floyd and continued to be both active in the Methodist Church and held influence in local politics. The connection between Floyd's landed, slaveholding congregants in the

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<sup>107</sup> A.J. Hoback to Capt. Callohill Stigleman at Manassas Junction. July 1, 1861. Stigleman Letters, CG0004-7751; Floyd County Historical Society Papers, Ridgmont Historical Society and Museum, Floyd County, Virginia.

Methodist Church and powerful men in the Confederate Army and government demonstrates the breadth of the Unionist Brethren-secessionist Methodist divide in the county.

Following the victory at Manassas Captain Stigleman wrote his wife Ellen in reference to the men who were refusing to join or support the Confederacy.

“I suppose some noisy cowards in Floyd begin to see now who are the submissionists of Virginia. In the army there is but one feeling and that is death to invaders and never, no never, unite the Confederate States again to the North.”<sup>108</sup>

-Capt. Callohill Stigleman

Peter Bowman, the son of Elder Christian Bowman, became an active member in the HOA, was accused of aiding deserters, Federal prisoners and unionist guerrilla groups. Peter Bowman was active in the Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren where his father was presiding elder and like his father, married into the Spangler family of the Spangler Mill- Little River district. While Peter Bowman was actively leading unionist support in Floyd County his cousin Rev. John Bowman was garnering the attention of Confederate guerrilla's in Blountville, Tennessee; the attention which would lead to his assassination. Peter Bowman's activities placed him in the center of counter-Confederate activities by late 1863 and in the center of the dramatic political shift in 1864. Peter Bowman survived the war, his brother Christian Bowman Jr. died in Floyd on February 4, 1862 under unexplained circumstances.<sup>109</sup> The tide of violence against outspoken Unionist was increasing dramatically by the winter of 1862 as the tide of Confederate support began its first discernable decline in the county.

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<sup>108</sup> Captain Callohill Stigleman to Ellen Stigleman. Written from Camp Pryor near Manassas Junction, August 10, 1861. Stigleman Letters, CG0004-7720: Floyd County Historical Society Papers, Ridgmont Historical Society and Museum, Floyd County, Virginia.

<sup>109</sup> Birth and Death records of Floyd County: 1853-1872 Birth and Death Records Floyd County, Virginia and the Zion Lutheran Church Register. Compiled by: Marjorie Fluor and Marguerite Tise, 1987.

Along with Burks Fork in the southwestern portion of the county the Little River district in the northwestern portion of the county was noted as being a center of Unionist sympathies and activities. Early meetings between union sympathizers began at Spangler's Mill soon after the vote for secession. Likely these early meetings were happenstance conversations between men of a like mind at a location known to be owned and operated by an outspoken Unionist and member of the Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren where Elder Christian Bowman held such tremendous influence. As the war progressed the designation of Spangler's Mill as a likely meeting and organizational location for the HOA and Unionist guerrillas led to close surveillance from the Home Guard and regular army units sent to suppress the rising tide of treason against the Confederate government.<sup>110</sup>

Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren was established loosely during the 1830's from the Topeco Congregation in Burks Fork by Christian Bowman. The congregation met in an old barn and homes until the first building was constructed in 1860. Christian Bowman helped with the organization and pastored at Topeco during the 1830's until the Red Oak Grove became more organized. Christian Bowman was a staunch Unionist, although there is evidence that he was not fundamentally opposed to slavery. His father, John Bowman, had settled in the community during the 1790's and slowly acquired a large farm which the family continued to enlarge in the Little River District of Floyd. Christian was the father of two son who became active in the growing Brethren congregation at Red Oak Grove.<sup>111</sup> Peter Bowman was born in

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<sup>110</sup> A partial listing of claims which reference Sam Spangler and Spangler's Mill include: Southern Claims Commission, Group Numbers 217, 233. Claim numbers: 5862, 37020, 43093, 17710, 7604, 14698. National Archives of the United States, Washington D.C.

<sup>111</sup> Melissa M. Naff. *Church History Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren*. (Radford: Commonwealth Press, Inc. 1974).

March, 1822, his brother Peter was born in July, 1835, neither of Christian Bowman's sons supported secession.

Ties of congregation as well as marriage connected the Spangler and Bowman families in the Little River District of Floyd. Red Oak Grove Church sits less than three miles from Spangler's Mill and was the closest Brethren Church to this mill. Between Spangler's Mill and Red Oak Grove sits Pine Creek Primitive Baptist Church, likely the second oldest Primitive Baptist congregation in the county, Pine Creek is the final resting place of both loyal confederates and several professed Unionist. A search of marriage and parental church memberships revealed that the professed Unionist who remained members of this Primitive Baptist congregation had close marital ties to Red Oak Grove Brethren. The majority of Pine Creek's military age men joined the Confederate army in the early months of the war. Largely married into the Red Oak Grove congregation and associated with Elder Bowman, the Pine Creek congregation became one of the first Primitive Baptist congregations to experience a shift to Unionist loyalties. The influence of Elder Christian Bowman extended out in a radius around the entire Little River District, limiting volunteer enlistment to the Primitive Baptist congregation while few of the Red Oak Grove congregants volunteered early, many who found themselves conscripted soon joined the numbers streaming home without leave.

Members of the Pine Creek Primitive Baptist Church who deserted or refused to muster were excommunicated during the war. This practice of excommunicating members of the congregations who did not remain loyal to the Confederate government became more widespread as members of the congregations streamed home and took up residence in the backwoods of the county. The formation of militant deserter groups, such as Floyd's infamous Sisson brothers and the establishment of set camps propagated by a combination of Primitive Baptist,



Brethren and a few Lutheran congregants led to skirmishes against Home Guards. The increasing organization of these deserter bands supported by families and community members, posed an ever-increasing threat to the Confederate governments ability to recruit and retain soldiers from the mountains. The need for regular army involvement in the suppression of militant deserter groups combined with an inability of the mountain counties to muster new recruits worked to increase paranoia of mountain Unionism in Richmond.

Floyd County residents entered the war unprepared for the loss of autonomy that military duty would bring to mountain farmers unaccustomed to the discipline. Wives and mothers found themselves without assistance for the hard manual labor which was required to survive in the Appalachian Mountains. Within weeks after entering service women in Floyd were writing their men asking when they would come home to harvest crops, bring in firewood, mend fence and a variety of other chores essential for survival and customarily not part of the heavy workload which mountain women carried. In April, 1862 Barbara Hylton wrote her husband serving in the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry with an expectation of his being free to assist with fall harvest. She informed him of the recent birth of their daughter then immediately focused on the realities of managing the farm.<sup>112</sup>

Your Father and Brothers will do all they can to get our corn in [planted]:  
it will be a bad chance to get help from Samuel Weddle, for another sons  
died the first of this week, and two more are sick. I want you to come home about  
harvest if you can. -Barbara Hylton to husband Lorenzo Hylton

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<sup>112</sup> Hylton Family Papers, Floyd County Historical Society, Floyd County, Virginia. Original letters housed: Special Collections Department, University Libraries, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia.

The Hylton and Weddle families owned adjoining plantations in the Topeca community of the Burks Fork district of Floyd. These founding Brethren families formed the nucleus of the Willis/Burks Fork community with tremendous landholdings. The illness which took the life of the Samuel Weddle's son was the devastating diphtheria outbreak which swept the county from 1862 thru 1863. Samuel Weddle lost four children in a four week period. One Lutheran family in the Courthouse District lost nine children in six weeks in the fall of 1862. Floyd's residents found themselves wheeling under the loss of men to the military and shocking death toll from diphtheria during the same period. Lorenzo Dow Hylton wrote frequently to his wife until he was wounded during the late January 1864 fighting in southern Tennessee and died on February 7<sup>th</sup>.

Lorenzo Hylton was Second Lieutenant of Company D, 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry at the time of his death. Company D was largely populated from the Burks Fork District and held the highest number of Dunkers of any company organized in the county. Conscripts and a number of sons of Burks Fork Brethren churches who joined in the initial excitement of secession comprised this Company, it had raised concern from army command by late 1863 due to suspected ties within the ranks to Red String organizers in Floyd. L. D. Hylton had himself been accused of anti-Confederate talk as the attrition of the western campaign wore down the resolve of men who were more concerned about starving conditions in Floyd than the success of the Confederate government. The death of Lorenzo Hylton only heightened agitation within the ranks of Company D to the breaking point as the army found itself pushed to Atlanta later that spring.

Contributing to the breach which swept the county as well as the companies comprised of Floyd County men was a deepening resolve of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. While connected to the Baltimore Conference during the war, Floyd's ministers were in close

association with the presiding members and itinerates of the Holston Conference whose northern section bordered Floyd on the south.<sup>113</sup> With the outbreak of war and deepening rift in the Holston Conference, spurred by vocal Unionist Parson Brownlow, led to a clear delineation between local pastors, (with largely Unionist sympathies), and itinerates who took a decidedly pro-secession stance. During the war hardline fire-eater Reverend John Early, brother to Confederate General Jubal Early, was appointed to lead the conference. The ruthless removal of all pastors with suspected Unionist sympathies led to the dismissal of eighteen Holston Conference preachers.

The Early family were closely associated with Floyd County, the family homestead sitting near the Floyd-Franklin County line. Jubal and John Early were influential in Floyd's political and Methodist ideologies, key social figures who influenced both the strong secessionist stance of the Methodist Church and the vote on secession. Jubal Early practiced law in Floyd, served as commonwealth attorney for the county prior to and after the war. Rev. John Early held tremendous influence on the Methodist circuit which included Floyd County. Bishop Early made his home in Lynchburg and was a Bishop in the Baltimore Conference prior to his appointment to the Bishopric of the Holston Conference. The rhetoric of secession as a God ordained mission interwoven with the strongest arguments for biblical pro-slavery shaped the southern Methodist stance concerning slavery and secession.

Floyd's Methodist Church, closely associated with the Early family living just a few miles beyond the county line, stood adamantly behind the Confederate government in rhetoric and action through the entirety of the war. When initially loyal members of other

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<sup>113</sup> Following the war Floyd was reassigned to the Holston Conference where it remains to this day.

denominations, particularly Primitive Baptist, began to waver and join the numbers of deserters, frustration among loyal Methodists increased dramatically. Already frustrated with the Dunkard congregations, Methodist in Floyd began to call for increased enforcement of conscription laws, requesting increased military presence in the county to return deserters and conscription evaders to the ranks.

Samuel Dobyms was an original trustee and organizer of the Jacksonville Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Along with Callohill Stigleman, Abram and Francis Hogan, and Nelson Stimpson the original land was deeded in 1854 and construction began shortly before the war. The Jacksonville congregation was closely affiliated the Falling Branch Methodist Church located about four miles southwest of town. Samuel Dobyms' son, Thomas Dobyms joined Company A of the 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry. During the battle of Kelly's Store on January 30, 1863 while the 54<sup>th</sup> attempted to halt federal moves toward Suffolk Thomas Dobyms was killed, his body was returned to Jacksonville where he was laid in the joint Methodist/Presbyterian cemetery.<sup>114</sup> The family did not waver in loyalties with this death, his sons stood firm in the belief that their loyalties were in accordance with the will of God. Samuel Dobyms had six sons all of whom joined the Confederate Army and served the duration of the war excepting illness and the death of Thomas. Trustees Nelson Stimpson, Abram Hogan and Callohill Stigleman, and Jackson Godby, son of Methodist preacher George Godby all joined the Confederate Army. These men were also the first to organize regiments for the Confederate Army from the county. Frequent correspondence between Captain (Doctor) Callohill Stigleman and Dr. Hoback, Samuel Dobyms, Abram Hogan confirm these organizing, and active involvement in the Confederate war

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<sup>114</sup> Jeffery C. Weaver, *54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry: Regimental Histories* (Madison, H.E. Howard, 1993). Floyd County Burial Records

effort by these men who were the powerful heart of the Methodist Church in Floyd. Samuel Dobyns kept these men apprised of conditions in the county when they were out of touch for extended periods, particularly reports of locations and actions of other Floyd regiments, deserters and union activity within the county. Early frustration with Dunkard refusal to muster came from Samuel Dobyns as well as Dr. Hoback. “When the time comes for the Laggards to step in, they are not to be counted. I don’t think they are to be feared either at home or on the battlefield.”<sup>115</sup>

The Methodist Holston region had a dramatic discrepancy, particularly in eastern Tennessee, between Confederate loyalty of intenerates and Union loyalty among local pastors.<sup>116</sup> Floyd County pastors, by contrast, displayed overwhelming support for the Confederate cause whether intenerate or local. Reverend William Thompson joined Company B of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Virginia as a private, although it seems he serving in some capacity of company chaplain. He remained loyal to the Confederacy through the end of the war. Washington Goodykoontz, the son of prominent local Methodist, farmer and trustee of the Falling Branch Methodist Church joined Company E of the 25 Virginia Cavalry. Joseph Kennerly, son of itinerant pastor Thomas Kennerly served with both the 1<sup>st</sup> then 6<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, being promoted to Captain by 1864. The trustees and sons of trustees from Floyd Methodist Churches provided no names to Floyd’s list of deserters.<sup>117</sup> The Methodist Church also provided many of the older laypeople to service

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<sup>115</sup> Samuel Dobyns to Captain Stigleman, January 19, 1862. Stigleman Letters CG0004-7776, Floyd County Historical Society, Floyd County, Virginia.

<sup>116</sup> Durwood Dunn, *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> Lists of deserters and service records compared against trustees and children of trustees reveal that all leading families provided men to the Confederate Army and all of these men served their full enlistments, most until the end of the war.

in the Home Guard and networks of informants who assisted with the identification of local Unionists.

Floyd County's Primitive Baptist congregation, in similar fashion as both the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations, followed allegiance to the Confederate government with action. Primitive Baptist elders and pastors joined the army in large numbers in the weeks and months following secession. Primitive Baptist preacher Peter Corn, although vocal about the unjustness of conscription laws, joined the 51<sup>st</sup> Virginia. Prominent layman Amos Dickerson from White Oak Primitive Baptist Church enlisted with Company A of the 51<sup>st</sup> Virginia. He survived the war and became minister of the White Oak Church until his death in 1920.<sup>118</sup>

The dramatic split in loyalties during the first two years of the war led to the eruption of violence between longtime neighbors as wartime charges of treason made even Unionist speech potentially a capital crime. Confederate loyalists, perceiving unionism to be a direct threat to both the Confederate war effort and the personal security of their families and farms, were quick to report and act upon Unionist activities. Letters poured into Richmond asking for assistance in suppressing deserter groups and enforcing conscription laws. These letters inflated the degree of Unionism in the county early in the conflict and established a foundation of distrust between the lowland and mountain counties. Dunkards were perceived as being traitors to the Confederacy and credited with influence that was beyond either their intent or power. Home Guards and men acting in loose association with these units and local government acted with autonomy against deserters, unionist and nearly all Brethren Church members who refused to take an oath of loyalty to the Confederate government. Hiram Dulany was one such Unionist.

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<sup>118</sup> Reden H. Pittman, *Biographical History of Primitive or Old School Baptist Ministers of the United States*. (London, Forgotten Books, 2017; Originally published by Herald Printing Company, 1909).

The threats to home and farm which had often been followed by brutal attacks and confiscation of personal property against the Brethren Church members soon led to increased proactive obstruction of the Confederate War effort. Attempts to enforce conscription laws, round up deserters and claim food supplies for the Confederate Army triggered active resistance, first among Brethren, then increasingly among friends and neighbors of Brethren and family members of deserters as well as a certain number of older men who resented being conscripted into an army they did not fully support. Anti-confederate talk became less concealed, men who had held staunchly Unionist positions since the secession vote began to actively voice their opinions in public venues. This increase in openly treasonous talk led to persecution, prosecution and arrests by a weakening Confederate-loyal local government, particularly during late 1863 and early 1864.<sup>119</sup>

The Confederate government developed a tremendous fear of mountain Unionism by 1863. Concerns over food confiscation, unwillingness to contribute bondsman to the Confederate service and rampant rumors of treason in the southwestern portion of the state created a distrust which soon affected all relations between mountain counties and Richmond. The needs of supply and growing unwillingness of mountain communities to cooperate soon prompted the redistribution of troops and the deployment of spies into the mountain counties to assess the state of loyalty. The resulting reports convinced lowland loyalists that the mountain counties had turned completely disloyal to the southern Confederacy.

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<sup>119</sup> Floyd County Court Records for July 1863-July 1864 list charges for treason against the Confederate government and brewing of corn whiskey in nearly equal numbers. The charges of treason were difficult to prove and most of these men walked free. The distillation charges were easier to prove but collecting the large fines associated with the crime proved nearly impossible with Confederate money nearly worthless. Floyd County Common Law Order Book 3, p 215-240, Floyd County Court House, Floyd, Virginia. Also, Floyd County Criminal Court documents, 1857-1867. Floyd County Historical Society Papers, Floyd County, Virginia.

Hiram Dulany was one of the most vocal in defying the authority of the Confederate government. Speaking out repeatedly against secession, conscription and confiscation of corn and livestock to support the army. Dulany seemed to take his anti-Confederate speech a bit too far when on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1862 Col. Henry Lane fell while leading his regiment at Cedar Run. Henry Lane was a pillar of the Floyd Court House District community, active member of the long-time magistrate and wealthy land holder. The court recorded a solemn eulogy for Henry Lane in the Common Law Order Book on September 7, 1862.<sup>120</sup> The first case recorded following the eulogy was a criminal complaint lodged against Hiram Dulany for speech against the Confederate government and Lane. The claimant recorded, “That he [Dulany] hoped he [Lane] was in hell where all secessionists ought to be.”<sup>121</sup> Hiram Dulany was shot while riding alone near his home, little record of Dulany exists following the incident. He survived the attack, moving to Missouri after the war. Dulany had been conscripted for service in the 21<sup>st</sup> Virginia Infantry but seems to have evaded any service. He had managed to remain in the county until he was shot, likely while the Home Guard was attempting to arrest him for return to service. Loyalist and Home Guards were more than willing to use Dulany as an example in an attempt to stop the talk and activities of county Unionists, particularly Dunkards.

Reporting to the Southern Claims Commission prominent Dunkard, land holder and vocal Unionist David Weddle reported that his neighbors had stopped a group of Home Guards on the road to Weddle’s farm with the intent of hanging him for treason against the Confederate government. Weddle reported that, “Hiram Dulany was shot for his Unionist sentiments and some of my neighbors waited for me and told me if I did not hold my tongue I would be treated

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<sup>120</sup> Common Law Order Book 3, p 225, Floyd County Court House, Floyd County, Virginia

<sup>121</sup> Common Law Order Book 3, p 226 Floyd County Court House, Floyd County, Virginia



like Dulany.”<sup>122</sup> The threats did not seem to affect David Weddle’s activities. Threats and assaults against the families of deserters and conscription evaders worked counter-productively to increase resistance and violence. David Weddle claimed that he would far rather be killed by the Confederate government than stop his work aiding deserters and Unionists.<sup>123</sup>

Floyd County, for the mountain wise, was a deserter’s paradise. The rugged terrain, with countless ridges, valleys and hollows; innumerable mountain springs and creeks and plentiful game and nut trees contributed to making Floyd a safe haven for Union loyalists who could not, or would not cross Union lines. The Home Guard and regular army units found their pursuit of wanted men frustrating at best and more often impossible. It is, therefore, not surprising that the emotions and anger involved in rounding up traitors of every sort bubbled over against the families, neighbors, and supporters of suspected unionist, deserters and Federal soldiers hiding in the mountains. Wives were harassed, robbed and threatened, barns burned, children kidnapped and men beaten, arrested, hung, shot and run out of the county. In retaliation the Union sympathizers became more than a loose association of like-minded men, Unionists became organized units, operating on planned patrols with specific Confederate targets. Officers were elected, discipline implemented and Primitive Baptist Charles Huff appointed to lead counter-Confederate operations.

Spangler Mill began operating at night, a tremendously dangerous undertaking. A second mill, Kinsey Mill, was likely much smaller and running at night as well. Kinsey Mill was likely small based upon the recorded location on Brush Creek, little information and the precise

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<sup>122</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233 Claimant David Weddle, Claim Number 43092, National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. Claim Numbers 43092, David Weddle and 43093 Joshua Weddle.

position on the property have been lost to history. Brethren Unionists operated their mills during regular daylight hours and overtly late at night. Otey Kinsey, local blacksmith and associated with these mills recalled running the mills at night and delivering subsistence rations to the families of deserters. The dangers involved in operating a water-powered grist mill during the daylight hours are well documented, the increased dangers of grinding by lamplight demonstrates the urgent need to provide grain to these families who were being continually harassed by Home Guards. If caught this would have been a capital treason charge of aiding the enemy of the Confederate government. These mills also provided the needed corn men like Henry Dangerfield, friend of Otey Kinsey, needed to run their stills. Dangerfield employed deserters to operate his still, Kinsey repaired and built the stills.<sup>124</sup>

The shift from Unionist sympathies to armed Union guerrilla resistance was met with an ever-increasing cycle of violent Confederate response. The logistical support became more complex as entire congregations of Brethren contributed to communications, spying, supply organization and actual harboring of wanted men. David Weddle alone, in response to increasing threats to life and farm, led the way by himself feeding up to 150 men per week.<sup>125</sup> At least eight men were hidden nearly in plain sight, being kept in the dilapidated supply shed behind the Topeco Church of the Brethren in the Burks Fork District.

The Topeco congregation was directly connected to the Red Oak Grove congregation through Pastor Christian Bowman Sr. The route between the two congregations is nearly ten miles of rough country, large farms and hidden hollows with the Little River flowing through the

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<sup>124</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740. Otey Kinsey, and Charles Huff for Otey Kinsey. National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, Joshua Weddle.

center. Difficult to travel by direct route, bisected during the Civil War by rough farming roads at best, the territory was ideal for deserters avoiding capture. The Brethren congregations, scattered across the county in rural, farming communities, were ideally placed to orchestrate deserter support. Utilizing the established congregational communications and organizational lines, the churches were able to hide, feed, and maneuver deserters around the remote areas undetected. Home Guard units were fully aware of the aiding of wanted men but the task of finding and successfully returning these men to the army was continuously undermined.

In late 1863 the Brethren congregation in Burks Fork, working in conjunction with Brethren congregations across the county, began to manage the counter-Confederate support of these men as a structured operation. Planned routes north or west to Union lines through pre-arranged safe havens turned the moving of non-Confederate men into a Unionist underground railroad. Lt. Rufus Woolwine of the 51<sup>st</sup> Virginia followed a set track through the counties of southwestern Virginia, arresting deserters and prisoners at known stopping points and river crossings. Woolwine's diary at times reads like a litany of stopping points and the tracking of particular wanted men. "July 29<sup>th</sup> arrested Fishers & took them before Esq. Henry Terry. August 1. Went to hunt the Belchers."<sup>126</sup> Men moving north from the armies and from the prisons in North Carolina and particularly the porous prison in Danville, Virginia were carried into Eastern Tennessee and Ohio. In reverse, the Brethren Church began to receive a flow of supplies: food generally but also medical supplies began to arrive in Floyd from Brethren congregations in Ohio.

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<sup>126</sup> Rufus Woolwine, *The Civil War Diary of Rufus Woolwine*. (Richmond, Virginia Historical Society, 1963).

Organized largely through the large Topeco congregation in the Burks Fork District, the congregation was able to distribute supplies through the closely connected Burks Fork and Red Oak Grove congregations. It is impossible to calculate the exact numbers of men fed through the supply organization of the Brethren Churches but David Weddle's claim to have been responsible for 150 men per week suggests that at times several hundred deserters may have been dependent on the Brethren churches for food and communications. The numbers of men being hidden in Floyd far exceeded the food supplies available in the county, the families of soldiers were receiving government issued food rations, therefore the need for outside supply lines became essential for men hiding in the backcountry of Floyd County.<sup>127</sup>

Noah Underwood knew the backcountry of Floyd County well, a farmer born and raised in the county he traveled between Franklin County on the northeastern border and Patrick County on the southern border with his brothers. Noah, Samuel and John Henry all refused to join the Confederate Army. In December, 1861 his brother John Henry was killed near the Franklin County line, not far from the home of General Jubal Early. The large deserter camp which formed in this area would be a continuous problem for the Home Guard in both Floyd and Franklin Counties, ending in a deadly skirmish in September, 1864. Deserters had established a fort on the rugged terrain of the Blue Ridge Mountain, difficult to assault the encounter ended in the deaths of two deserters, four Home Guards and the temporary capture of over sixty deserters. The next year Samuel was killed in skirmishes at Meadows of Dan on the Floyd-Patrick County

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<sup>127</sup> Harvey Deskins Letter to Governor Smith: Harvey Deskins, "Floyd Court House" [Floyd County, Virginia], to Governor William Smith [Richmond, Virginia], January, 1865, Smith Papers. Also: Common Law Order Book 3, Floyd County Courthouse, Floyd County, Virginia. This letter is with the Governor Smith Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond. A copy was recorded in the Floyd County Common Law Order Book 3.

The Topeco Church of the Brethren history room contains letters and information on the reception of supplies from Ohio Brethren congregations. The number and scope of these supplies was not recorded but the number of men supplied suggests a regular and reliable flow of food.

lines. Noah Underwood worked through the war assisting deserters and escaped prisoners, he drew maps showing the safest routes north to Union lines.<sup>128</sup> These maps usually took the men on the route through West Virginia and into Ohio, along the route the Brethren Churches utilized to move both men and supplies.

The work of feeding deserters and the families of deserters, who were often robbed of corn, pork, and essential food supplies by frustrated Home Guards, became one of the primary roles of the Brethren and active unionist in Floyd. Henry Dangerfield was arrested for desertion and running an illegal still, Otey F. Kinsey helped Dangerfield escape by providing the Home Guard unit with copious amounts of alcohol. After the Home Guard was thoroughly intoxicated Dangerfield made his escape. He spent the remainder of the war in hiding, helping Otey Kinsey run his mill at night and deliver grain to the deserters and their families. Charles Huff, leader of the armed Unionist guerrilla unit operating in Floyd testified to assisting with protection and distribution of grain while operating directly against the Home Guard.<sup>129</sup>

Led by Captain Charles Huff, the Unionist guerrillas, the H.O.A group in Floyd was extraordinarily difficult for the Home Guard to oppose. Officially pacifist, the war drove many Brethren members to operate with this armed unit. While many Brethren focused on the hiding and feeding of deserters, some men engaged in active nighttime operations. Esom Huff, David Hall and Levi Becklehermer all became actively involved. Jacob Walters would alert and gathered men for night operations. “He would wake me at night and go and fight the Home

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<sup>128</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Numbers 17710, 17604. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>129</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 233, Claim Number 8740; testimony for Charles Huff. National Archives, Washington D.C.

Guards.”<sup>130</sup> Organized through the congregants of the Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren these men did active damage to the Home Guard’s ability to effectively arrest deserters.

Hunger was wide-spread across the county by 1863. With a large percentage of the county’s male population in the Confederate Army and many more in hiding crops failed or were not planted at all, harvest found women and children desperately attempting to store enough for personal use through the winter. A second, devastating effect of lack of man-power on crops was the difficulty finding men or horses to move any excess crops down the mountains to market. The demand for corn liquor soared during the war, moonshine became Floyd County’s primary exported product. Corn was being distilled at such a rate that the families of men serving in the armies could not purchase enough corn to survive the winter. The distilling of corn whiskey was outlawed by the Confederate government in 1862 and in Floyd the number of prosecutions for running illegal stills exceeded the number for murder and assault despite the fact that Floyd had fallen into near anarchy. The Circuit Court heard and prosecuted more cases of illegal distillation of grain than any other complaint. July 1863 alone records seven men tried for illegal distillation and sale of corn whiskey.<sup>131</sup>

The operation of illegal stills, in remote locations near robust mountain springs and streams became a logical operation for men who had made hidden temporary homes in these locations. Shutting down illegal stills became as difficult as capturing the deserters themselves. Conditions deteriorated and letters flying to the men in the ranks carried a continuous stream of news involving loss of crops, death from disease, battlefield and murder, theft of horses and livestock and despair at a lack of assistance from a struggling Confederate government. Paranoia

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Record Group 217, Claim number 55266; testimony for Jacob Walters. National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>131</sup> Common Order Law Book 3, Floyd County Court House, Floyd, Virginia.

of mountain Unionism gripped the lowland south, further dividing the Confederacy. Mistrust of mountaineers had the adverse effect of splitting needed units from the main armies to suppress unionism which though present was overinflated by fear of disintegrating loyalties. The 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia saw a rapid drop in morale as letters from Floyd poured into the retreating army near Atlanta in the spring of 1864.

The drop in loyalty among mountain units further convinced the Confederate government that the mountains were irrevocably shifting loyalties. Animosity toward the war effort spread with hunger and the loss of husbands and sons. Edward Guerrant spent the war attached to the Confederate forces of Kentucky, Eastern Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia as secretary and adjutant under the revolving generals who attempted to lead the mountain war effort. Guerrant noted the declining support and general disinterest in supporting the Confederacy in the mountains. During 1862 he noted the loyalties of Eastern Kentucky as standing predominately with the Union. During early 1863 he complained that southwest Virginia was equally unappreciative of Confederate forces. “We may now be relieved of the monotonous duty of occupying such a vast scope of frontier & mountainous country, & defending an ungrateful people, S.W. Virginians & E. Tenn’s.”<sup>132</sup> The Confederate government distrust of mountaineers predated the war and eventually became in some respects a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Company D, 54<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry was organized from the Burks Fork District of Floyd. Nearly every man in the unit was counted as either a son of Brethren Church member or married into a Brethren family. Following the death of Lorenzo Hylton, from the propertied and respected Hylton family in Willis-Burks Fork, the morale of this Company collapsed. On June 6,

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<sup>132</sup> Edward O. Guerrant, *Bluegrass Confederate: The Headquarters Diary of Edward O Guerrant*. (Baton-Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

1864 Company D threw down their arms and deserted en masse. Breaking into small groups many of these men reached Eastern Tennessee, swore an oath of loyalty to the Federal government and either moved north into Ohio or northeast, home into the mountains of southwestern Virginia. The number of deserters in the Burks Fork District soared with the arrival of men from the 54<sup>th</sup>. The majority of men who deserted from the Confederate Army eventually returned to their home county and Floyd was no exception. Despite rampant food shortages and wide-spread violence, the support networks to protect and aid deserters was well established when the men from Company D began walking home. Organization by the Brethren Church maintained communications, food and spy networks to alert of the movements of Home Guard and regular army units.

The organization networks, food supplies and communications allowed deserter groups to form strong and open resistance to Home Guard and army units sent to arrest or subdue them. The Confederate Army worked in consort with local loyalist gain information on deserter movements and arrest wanted men.

Deny Sowers was feeding information to the Confederate Army. The large Sowers family provided twenty-one men to the ranks of the Confederate Army. Overwhelmingly Primitive Baptist farmers they were neither large landholders nor politically influential.<sup>133</sup> They were, however, adamant about the right to slave ownership and secession. It is likely that Sowers was feeding not only deserter information but also Unionist information to the Confederate government through Lt. Woolwine. Rufus Woolwine, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant of Company D, 51<sup>st</sup> Virginia Infantry spent much of the war assigned to special duties, including recruiting,

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<sup>133</sup> N.J. Agnew, "A Listing of Men from Floyd County who Served in the Confederate Army". Floyd County Historical Society Collections, Floyd County, Virginia.



(conscription) and rounding up deserters. Born and raised just a few miles from the Floyd County line, Lt. Woolwine knew the land, the people and the sentiments of the various congregations and districts of the county. He kept a journal of his daily travels during the war, largely in southwest Virginia, eastern Kentucky and eastern Tennessee. Woolwine was with General Floyd when he orchestrated his infamous night-time escape from the surrendered Ft. Donelson, served throughout Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. Woolwine was born and raised in Pulaski County, bordering Floyd. His special assignments to collect enlistees, conscripts and deserters took him through Floyd Virginia as part of his rounds. The farm of Deny Sowers was Woolwine's layover place, and source of information on deserters moving through the county. Woolwine's diary often mentions a stop at the Sowers farm followed by a rush to stop deserters on the trek north. Men arrested due to information garnered from Sowers were often executed shortly after capture.

As the breach in loyalties split the county in 1862 and '63 the local government began to actively arrest and try men suspected of Unionism. The Circuit Court records list a multitude of men charged with treasonous speech and activities against the Confederate government. Nearly all of these men belonged to the Church of the Brethren. John Hall was charged with threatening the life of Home Guard Captain William Lewis, assault and battery and assisting the United States in a hostile invasion of the commonwealth. Captain Lewis was murdered on the road on Floyd in late 1862. Lewis had recently brought Hiram Hall and Clayborn Lloyd up on charges of treason. Ultimately freed, these active unionist were suspected but never charged in the murder. Freeborn Hall, mill owner and active Dunkard Samuel Spangler, Andrew and Joseph Reed and James Dickerson all faced charges during the same period for, "counselling, aiding and abetting the government of the United States in an invasion and hostile action against the commonwealth

and the Confederate States of America.”<sup>134</sup> Freeborn Hall faced additional scrutiny for claiming to Esom Pughs that, “this war would bring his family and Mr. Esom Pughs’ to starvation and it would free the negros and be spread to your house soon.”<sup>135</sup> Freeborn, like many Dunkards in Floyd stood opposed to the peculiar institution but did not favor immediate emancipation. The persecution of Dunkards reached its highest level during 1863 when many Dunkards feared they were about to be forced from the county. Loyalist grumbling against the resolute opposition to the Confederacy seemed to have come close to forcing every Dunkard out of the county. Elijah Hylton remembered the threats as being articulated in the Jacksonville Press with the cry of, “run them out, burn their churches and hang their ministers.”<sup>136</sup> In early 1864 Esom Huff’s active participation in guerrilla activity against the Home Guard led to retaliation. Under imminent danger to the lives of him and his family he fled the county. He did not travel far, settling in neighboring Patrick County where he purchased land and remained the rest of his life.<sup>137</sup> The changing conditions in Floyd coupled with a turn in battlefield fortunes for the Confederate Army relieved pressure on the Dunkard Church by late 1863. Families with men in hiding in the mountains of Floyd found assistance and support from Dunkards who did not limit assistance to their own denomination.

The increase in Unionism, growing active guerrilla involvement of these unionists, and shift in support for the Dunker Church triggered a dramatic shift in local government. During early 1864 a Unionist shadow government formed, run essentially through the Unionist Brethren

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<sup>134</sup> Floyd County Common Law Order Book pages 214-215, Floyd County Court House, Floyd, Virginia.

<sup>135</sup> Floyd County Common Law Order Book pg 215, Floyd County Court House, Floyd, Virginia.

<sup>136</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 37020, Claimant Elijah Hylton; National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

<sup>137</sup> Floyd County Common Law Order Books3, Floyd County Court House, Floyd County, Virginia. Also, Southern Claims Commission Record Group 233, Claim Number 5649, Testimony of Esom Huff for Joseph Phares; National Archives, Washington D.C.

congregational polity. The election cycle of 1864 placed a majority of long-time Unionist into Floyd's local government. Men charged with treason less than eighteen months prior now controlled the county. The Methodist and Presbyterian power-hold was broken. Church of the Brethren leaders such as Peter Bowman, (son of the influential Brethren pastor Christian Bowman), David, Isaac and John Weddle, Andrew Reed and David Williams sat on Floyd's Grand Jury. Floyd elected a Unionist sheriff, which made further prosecution of conscription evaders nearly impossible. Floyd saw a progression of recruitment officers during the last eighteen months of the war. The last, Guerrant was from a large land holding family on the eastern fringes of the county, found himself in court with twenty men exempted from service by the Grand Jury in the March of 1865.<sup>138</sup> The Grand Jury, during 1865, was comprised of the devout leaders of the Brethren congregations, men who had refused to muster into the Confederate ranks. Their refusal to send conscripts to the army was highly expected. The common belief that the war was nearly over fueled the Unionist control, the Grand Jury based exemptions on any loophole they could find in the law. In March of 1865 Floyd County was done sending men into the Confederate Army.

The refusal to comply with conscription orders had an established precedent from 1864 when Floyd slave-owners blatantly refused the conscription of slaves into the service of the army. The need for manpower behind the battle lines had driven the order for each county to produce slaves for service, however, after repeated pleas and appeals the order stood. Floyd residents blatantly refused the order, no slaves from Floyd County were sent to the front. The conditional Confederate loyalty which had swept Floyd in the early years of the war shifted further with demands for men, white and black into service. Those devoutly loyal to the

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<sup>138</sup> Common Law Order Book 3, Floyd County Court House, Floyd County, Virginia.

Confederate government were centered in the Court House District with its strong, denominationally loyal Methodist and Presbyterian congregations. These families were largely, and temporarily, elected out of local government during the final phases of the war but they did not waver with the remainder of the county when Floyd became openly Unionist.<sup>139</sup>

For the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations the influence of denominational stance concerning loyalties held the Court House District firmly in support of the Confederate government. The tight connection woven between religion, particularly for Methodist, and southern nationalism became a connection which held beyond reconstruction. The premise that the slaveholding class, as the “wealthier and more influential class” offered better opportunity for the spread of the gospel became intricately connected with the distinctive southern nationalism. Richard M. Price stated, “they were among the more wealthy, the more cultivated and refined, the more moral, and, indeed, really the better friends of religion.”<sup>140</sup> Influenced by the powerful Early family and the strong pro-slavery, pro-secession arguments of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South the Goodykoontz, Godby, Kennerly, and Stuart families did not waiver with the majority of the county. The influence of the Early family on the founding families of the Methodist Church along with strong denominational allegiance speaks to the determination of the Jacksonville Methodist Church to stand and fall with the Confederacy.

The waning months of the war in early 1865 revealed an increase in prosecutions for assault and battery, a sign that the county was attempting to rein in the violence that had held sway during the war years. Charges against deserters wanted for blatant criminal behavior were

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<sup>139</sup> Men enlisted from the Court House District were the least likely to desert, were least likely to resist conscription. A comparison of deserters from Floyd County compared to enlistments and District of enlistments reveals a clear pattern of loyalty from the Court House District.

<sup>140</sup> Durwood Dunn. *The Civil War in Southern Appalachian Methodism*. (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2013).

equaled by charges against overzealous Home Guard and Confederate loyalists against the families of deserters and unionists. With a predominantly Brethren Grand Jury the attempt to move the county back to the realm of civilization resulted in less catering to ideology.

Shifts in the loyalty of previously loyal secessionist lent strength to the Unionist returns in the elections of 1864. Primitive Baptists, whose churches were only to be found in quiet, out of the way places, generally consisted of the small farmer: tenant farmers and small land holders. Floyd County Primitive Baptists had established, by the Civil War, a reputation as the more rowdy of congregations, less likely to adhere to redress from outside of their community whether that be from denominations or government authority. The Calvinist views of mountain Primitive Baptists found ready applications in political expression. Primitive Baptists were not out to save the world when they supported secession and joined the Confederate Army in droves during 1861, they were responding to perceived threats from multiple fronts. The threat of invasion, the belief that Lincoln's call for volunteers was a betrayal of loyal Americans; the threat to the autonomy to either own or not own slaves as individually decided; the threat to southern religion which had so long advocated the biblical pro-slavery argument all played a part in Primitive support for secession. These driving factors created conditional secessionist from conditional loyalists.

The changing tides of the war shifted the perception as to which combatants posed the larger threat to the Primitive Baptist congregations in Floyd. The Confederacy was not to be saved at the cost of the individual and local community any more than the souls of slaves could be saved by missions. Primitive Baptists, by their very focus on the local congregation, epitomized the localism, religious and social, which became the lynchpin in Floyd's irrevocable shift toward Unionism. Hunger, rising death tolls, both from battle and at home, conscription,

brutal Home Guard tactics all contributed to the perception that the threat to home and family rising from the Confederate government far outweighed any threat from Abraham Lincoln's armies. During the summer of 1864 the Primitive Baptist churches began to contribute more to the support of deserters. The Pine Creek Primitive Baptist church, located midway between Christian Bowman's home and congregation at Red Oak Grove Church of the Brethren and Sam Spangler's mill, was one of the first churches to become involved in the growing unionist movement.

Hannah Spangler, member of the Pine Creek Primitive Baptist Church through her late husband, was the only Primitive Baptist congregant to receive funds from the Southern Claims Commission following the war despite the fact that all four of her sons joined the Confederate Army. Her involvement in hiding deserters and assisting unionist and Red Strings was collaborated by Brethren living in her community.<sup>141</sup> The Pine Creek Primitive Baptist Church, one of the earliest planted churches in the county, is the burial place of veterans from the Revolution, War of 1812 and Civil War. Hannah Spangler lies among her family, many with Confederate markers on their graves, while her support of the Union is remembered only in the testimony recorded by the Southern Claims Commission. Likely Hannah, like many Floyd residents, was an early supporter of the Confederacy who found herself supporting the Union effort when conditions had deteriorated to a point of desperation during 1864.

The shift in loyalties among Primitive Baptists was in no way universal. When the call to arms had brought Floyd men into the ranks of the Confederate Army the Howard family responded in large numbers. The Salem-Head of the River Primitive Baptist Church was led by

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<sup>141</sup> Southern Claims Commission, Record Group 217, Claim Number 43066; Claimant Hannah Spangler. National Archives, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

respected slaveholders William and Peter Howard. Peter Howard and his brothers, James, Thomas and Monroe joined the Confederate Army where they remained for the duration of the war with the exception of James who was discharged late in the war on disability. James Madison Howard was in Floyd serving with the Home Guard when the Union Army in the form of General George Stoneman rode into Floyd on April 4, 1865. The Home Guard met General Stoneman's column near the village of Willis in the southwestern Burks Forks district. The brief skirmish on the road leading from Willis resulted in the death of James Howard.<sup>142</sup> This only death in the county resulting from Stoneman's advance. James Howard represented the large portion of Floyd County residents whose loyalty to the southern Confederacy did not break under the strain of wartime conditions.

Hannah Spangler's near neighbor William Lemon Whitlock lived in the home across the small, dirt road from Spangler's Mill. Whitlock voiced little early opinion in the public record on the issues of slavery and secession. As the war progressed, however, Whitlock became involved in aiding the Red Strings, is reported to have fed deserters in his home and assisted men attempting to move north toward Union lines when conditions in the county became too dangerous to negotiate.

Floyd's denominations responded to the downward spiral of social stability and impending collapse of the Confederate government as congregations based largely upon the weight of ingrained belief systems against the declining conditions. Brethren had opposed secession from the onset of the war. Pacifist and conditionally opposed to slavery, the large Dunkard population faced extreme violence and censor only to become key players in county

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<sup>142</sup> Chris J. Hartley. *Stoneman's Raid, 1865*. (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair Publishers, 2010)

politics by the end of the war, few of these men willingly joined the ranks of the Confederate Army, and those who did were among the most likely to desert early in the conflict. The Methodists and to a lesser degree, Presbyterians, made decisions concerning slavery, secession and the Confederate government in the decades prior to actual secession. For the Methodist Episcopal Church, South evangelical Christianity became closely entwined with southern, slave-holding nationalism. The Methodists of Floyd County did not waver in their dedication to the war effort. Lutherans, generally planting their churches in the same communities as the Methodists and Presbyterians, (although it must be noted that the Lutherans planted churches nearly fifty years ahead of the Methodists and Presbyterians) Primitive Baptists entered the war as conditional secessionists, however, the threat and depredations of war drove these rural, locally identifying congregations to support any effort to end the war quickly. In Floyd County the large-scale effort to support deserters and Unionists driven by the Dunkards became a beacon of hope; undermining the Confederacy became the quickest end to the war. The quickest means to recreate social stability was seen to be a concerted effort to overthrow the war effort by starving it of manpower.

Support for the Confederacy or the Union followed close on the heels of loyalties long established from the pulpit. There were no truly neutral churches in Floyd County, each congregation based its activities upon the deeper roots of belief systems responding to the deteriorating conditions in the county.



## Conclusion

Floyd County, Virginia experienced divided loyalties and brutal guerrilla warfare during the Civil War. The churches: the clergy and congregations were directly involved in the deciding of loyalties and the guerrilla activities. The theological disputes which divided the nation's churches in the decades prior to the Civil War saw expression in the churches of Floyd County, Virginia. The German Church of the Brethren congregations in much of the nation took hard stances against slavery during the early 1800's. Floyd County was, and is, home to a large population of Brethren (Dunkards). These congregations held that slavery was a blot of sin on the nation and stood in opposition to the realization of a more perfect Christian society. This official stance, however, did not preclude all of Floyd County's Brethren congregants from owning slaves to work large land-holdings. The Dunkards were loyal to the Federal government and when the secession crisis brought first the convention then the vote to ratify the Ordinance of Secession these congregations were vocal in opposition. The Dunkards' of Floyd County stood with the Union from the beginning until the end of the Civil War and followed vocal opinion with resolute action.

Nearly equal in number to the Dunkard congregations in Floyd were the Primitive Baptists churches. The theology of Primitive Baptists Calvinism held wide appeal to a mountain culture which had long established a desire and ability to function and prosper within a locally focused social structure. The Primitive Baptist were not overly concerned with the world beyond their community except when that world caused direct consequences within the community. There were few Primitive Baptist slave holders in Floyd County, Virginia. The pastors and founders of Head of the River and Pine Creek Primitive Baptist Churches, William Howard and son Peter Howard being the only confirmed Primitive Baptist slave owners. In 1860 and early

1861 these congregations stood firmly in support of the Federal government. The events of April 1861, ending with Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers instilled fear and anger in much of the undecided south including congregations with less political influence from the pulpit.

The interweaving of political activism as a means to support theology, or theology developed to support political activism found little purchase in Primitive Baptists pulpits where national concerns and economic elites held no influence. The perceived threat to home, and betrayal by the Federal government for threatening invasion of the South were deciding factors in the decision to support secession. Primitive Baptists joined the ranks of men calling for secession and followed the vote with large numbers of men enlisting in the companies mustering in Floyd.

The Civil War in the mountains of southwestern Virginia displayed irregular warfare in every way. In Floyd County guerrilla warfare combined with the hardships of war and an unrelated epidemic soon refocused many Primitive Baptist on the short-term goal of ending the war quickly. Perceived ineptness of the Confederate government and ever-growing casualty lists combined with the deteriorating conditions in the county all combined to send men streaming home--increasingly convinced that the southern Confederacy was the greatest threat to the security and well-being of families at home. Primitive Baptist loyalties among some congregations and certain families began to waver by mid to late 1863.

While Dunkards held the course in standing opposed to the Confederacy and the war effort, and a portion of Primitive Baptist congregants shifted loyalties and joined the growing Unionist movement in the county, the Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran congregations overwhelmingly held firm. Floyd's Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran congregations were centered in the Court House District of the county. Floyd's small group of influential, political

and propertied elite held considerable power in this district and generally attended one of these three churches. These denominational congregations had decades of exposure to the biblical pro-slavery argument and in general had more of a vested interest in the sustaining of the established economic system, including slavery.

Jacksonville Methodist Episcopal Church, South provided all of the organizers of Floyd's initial companies; these men, doctors, lawyers and propertied, economically secure, approached the vote on secession with professed, conditional loyalty to the union contingent upon no disruption to southern autonomy or economic security. Powerful men in the Confederate Army were connected by family to the rural county of Floyd. Local doctor and leading Methodist, Dr. John Stuart was the brother of General J. E. B. Stuart, both men had attended the Jacksonville Academy boys' school as children. General Jubal Early who owned a large plantation near the Franklin-Floyd County line, had served as Jacksonville Commonwealth Attorney and also attended the Jacksonville Academy. Jubal Early's brother was Bishop of the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and held influence over the Jacksonville congregations. Leading members of the Methodist congregation held close relations with these powerful Confederate leader, directly impacting the wartime loyalty of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in Jacksonville. Lincoln's call for volunteers coupled with the long established denominational connection between the evangelical imperative to perpetuate the souths peculiar institution and southern nationalism made the call for secession an unavoidable duty for the members of the Court House Districts southern denominational churches.

Southern Methodist and Baptist had developed and instilled the connection between evangelical Christianity, the Great Commission, the perpetuation of racial chattel slavery and southern culture based upon cash crop agriculture for decades prior to the Civil War. The men

who voted for secession, organized and joined regiments and marched off in the weeks immediately following secession had been raised on a theology with a deeply rooted political/economic agenda. There was little question for these men that theirs was not only a war for a separate southern nation, it was a religious war.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South tied southern nationalism to the larger goal of creating a perfectly godly society. Protecting southern culture had been closely tied with the evangelical imperative to bring the message of Christianity to all people. Floyd County, during the antebellum and Civil War period was home to only one small regular Baptist congregation, however, the influential Jacksonville Methodist Church answered the call to war in overwhelming numbers.

The erosion of social stability within the county, growing casualty rates from continuous attrition of the Confederacy's armies and impending doom of the Confederate government did little to sway the majority of the congregants from the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches while the Lutheran demonstrated a waning but not a reversal of loyalties. Divisions of loyalties in core families for this congregation at the onset of hostilities provide evidence that Lutheran determination to support southern nationhood may have been sparked by the events of April 1861 to a slightly larger degree than found in the Methodist or Presbyterian congregations. The late schism in the Lutheran synods certainly contributed to the dampened dedication to the Confederacy despite the long effort of the southern pulpit to support the biblical pro-slavery arguments.

Divisions of loyalties as expressed and maintained by the congregations in Floyd County were followed with direct action. Belief systems, closely tied to political opinion and community action led to violent disputes between Union and Confederate factions. These

loyalties were further pushed by the desperate wartime conditions which most southern families faced. Wide-spread hunger, disease and lack of manpower were complicated by high rates of desertion, a break-down of law and order and guerrilla warfare. Congregations based in national denominations with established stance on secession, slavery and nationalism tended to waver little from their viewpoint at the onset of hostilities. Congregations with high degrees of local autonomy responded to the disintegrating crisis with shifting loyalties based upon the most likely path to peace and social stability. Floyd County's large, robust and independent minded Primitive Baptist congregations became the wild-card in Floyd's wartime guerrilla disputes.

Dunkards took firm stances in support of the Federal government at the onset of hostilities and put words into resolute action. Floyd's Dunkards faced violence and loss of property squarely, becoming steadily more involved and organized in pro-Union and deserter supporting activities. In direct opposition to these congregations the Methodist Episcopal Church made a pre-war decision to stand or fall with the southern Confederacy, they stayed their determined course until the last Confederate Army capitulated. Floyd County's Primitive Baptist congregations split. While many leaders and some entire congregations remained loyal to the Confederate government many found wartime depredations took far too heavy a toll on home and family. Many of these men, along with conscripts from every denomination, found ways to evade the fighting by taking to the remote mountains and ridges for the duration of the war.

Floyd County was not nearly as isolated as sociologist and historians of the early 1900's maintained; the county was connected by long established trade networks and business ties to the plantation south. The mountain population of this county chose when and how to interact with the larger lowland populations. National denominational splits over the morality and theology of slavery, varying views on the construct of a godly, Christian society and economic realities all

played key roles in Floyd's wartime loyalties. The divisions found in Floyd County were in no way reflected universally across the mountain south. In Floyd each congregation, reflecting the closest community connections, placed loyalty along a combination of religious beliefs and local conditions. The assumption that each region, county, district and congregation throughout the Appalachians were equally determined to set their own loyalties based upon beliefs and local conditions opens the need for considerable scholarly attention to this uninvestigated aspect of the Appalachian Civil War.

Tremendous research has been conducted into the guerrilla warfare which developed in the Appalachian Mountain South. Equal attention has been given to religion, denominations, and church schisms in mountain churches prior and during the war. At this time little or no scholarly attention has been given to the active role churches played in both the placement of loyalties and the guerrilla war in the mountains. It is impossible to separate the actions of mountain communities from their respective churches; church was the center of community and carried overwhelming influence in the shaping of political ideas and action. This connection, the direct, active interaction between church and war needs to be further investigated if a true understanding of Southern Appalachia's extreme, brutal guerrilla warfare can be developed.

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