East Tennessee Historical Characters from the Civil War Era

**G.E. Eagleton and Ethie M. Eagleton**

Ethie M. Foute was born April 9, 1835, in Maryville, Blount County, in East Tennessee, to Dorcas King and Col. Daniel David Foute. Col. Foute opened a resort area where Ethie was exposed to the company of many prominent people. An educated woman, Ethie kept a close diary of her thoughts and experiences which provides a rare glimpse of life in East and Middle Tennessee during the decade and a half that preceded and included the Civil War. Her diary entries discuss education, social activities such as collective newspaper readings, church life, weddings, fares, concerts, and reform movements such as Temperance. Her readings in poetry, fiction, history, religion, and newspapers, as well as her strong religious inclinations are representative of Tennessee women fortunate enough to be included among the higher society.

On January 23, 1856, Ethie married George E. Eagleton, who had recently finished at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City as a preacher and teacher. He later volunteered to serve first as a private and then as a chaplain in the Confederate army. He was honorably discharged in June 1862 due to ailing health. He then accepted a call to the Presbyterian church in New Market, twenty-five miles from Knoxville. In August 1864, George was lured from his home and brutally beaten by Unionist vigilantes. Their situation grew so bad that he was forced to leave and pursue evangelic pursuits in upper East Tennessee. Ethie and their children were left behind to endure the pressures of war-torn East Tennessee. Later they all relocated to Western North Carolina before heading west to Arkansas and eventually Texas. Ethie’s diary gives a good report on these migrations and of their general lives before, during, and after the Civil War.

**Milford Clark Butler**

Milford Clark Butler, an educator and pastor, was born March 31, 1824 in Buckland, Massachusetts. He graduated from Amherst College in 1851. He was the principal and proprietor of Butler's Classical School in Knoxville, Tennessee (1853-57), and later appointed Professor of Ancient Languages and Literature, and an Instructor of Education at East Tennessee University (1858-1861). He left Tennessee because of the Civil War. Butler later returned to Knoxville to work at the East Tennessee Female Institute (1871-1878). He continued his work as an educator and later an ordained Presbyterian Minister (1881) throughout the Midwest. He died January 22, 1905 in Saint Louis Missouri.

# Andrew Johnson

Andrew Johnson (December 29, 1808–July 31, 1875) was the seventeenth President of the United States (1865–1869), succeeding to the presidency upon the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Johnson was a U.S. Senator from Greeneville, Tennessee at the time of the secession of the southern states. He was the only Southern Senator not to quit his post upon secession, and became the most prominent War Democrat from the South.

In 1862 Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor of Tennessee, where he proved energetic and effective in fighting the rebellion. Johnson was nominated for the Vice President slot in 1864 on the National Union Party ticket. He was elected along with Abraham Lincoln in November 1864, and he ascended to the presidency upon Lincoln's assassination on April 15, 1865.

Johnson faced the difficult task of reconstructing the nation in the wake of the Civil War and he soon clashed with Congress over control of Reconstruction. His conciliatory policies towards the South, his hurry to reincorporate the former Confederates back into the union, and his vetoes of civil rights bills embroiled the president in a bitter dispute with the Radical Republicans. Johnson became the first U.S. President to be impeached when the Radicals in the House of Representatives charged with high crimes and misdemeanors in February 1868; however, he was acquitted and his presidency spared by a single vote in the Senate.

Following his tumultuous presidency, Johnson returned to Greeneville, eager for vindication. In 1874, he became the first former President of the United States to win a seat in the United States Senate. However, four months after taking his seat in the Senate, Johnson suffered a stroke and died on July 31, 1875. He is buried wrapped in an American flag with his head resting on a copy of the Constitution.

**William G. Brownlow**

William Gannaway "Parson" Brownlow (1805-1877) was an influential East Tennessee minister, journalist, and governor. On the eve of the Civil War, his newspaper, popularly known as Brownlow's *Whig*, reached nearly eleven thousand subscribers across the nation. The Parson was a prominent spokesperson for the Whig Party and a staunch defender of the Union during the United States Civil War.

Born the son of yeoman farmers in 1805, William Brownlow was orphaned at the age of 11. In 1825, having tried his hand at farming and carpentry, he had a religious experience at a camp meeting and entered into a career as a circuit riding minister in the Holston Conference. After 10 years riding through the mountains preaching to all who would listen, Parson Brownlow married Eliza O'Brien and settled down to work for her father in the family iron mill at Elizabethton. Soon the former preacher, who had proved himself in the religious warfare carried on by Appalachia's Protestant churches a sharp man with a word, was approached by members of the local Whig Party to edit their failing newspaper, the *Republican and Manufacturer's Record*. Parson Brownlow accepted the offer and, as his biographer noted, found his greatest love—after his wife—journalism. Operating on the advice he gave another editor in dealing with enemies ("lather him with aqua fortis nitric acid and shave him with a handsaw"), Parson Brownlow became, because of his wit, venom, and violent rhetoric, one the most noted or notorious journalists in American history and the *Republican and Manufacturer's Record*, after name changes and moves to Jonesboro and Knoxville became known as Brownlow's *Whig*, the most famous newspaper in Tennessee.

With the coming of secession, Brownlow found himself a major force in the attempt to preserve the Union. Brownlow was more closely attuned to, and representative of, East Tennesseans than his contemporary or later critics were willing to admit. In East Tennessee, 69% of voters opposed secession in the statewide referendum of June 1861 even as 86% of voters elsewhere supported secession. Hardly the traitor to his community that his opponents made him out to be, he was more accurately a spokesman and leader for the strongly pro-Union inhabitants of East Tennessee.

Brownlow and many of his supporters were pro-slavery (he himself owned slaves used as servants at various times), but were willing to consider scrapping slavery if necessary to save the Union. With the *Whig* as his platform, Brownlow put all his effort and all his vituperative skills in the service of Unionism, but despite his efforts Tennessee joined the Confederacy. Losing the immediate argument with the secessionists did not silence him; Brownlow continued to use his paper to denounce the Confederacy and its leaders without restraint. At last, exasperated by his abuse and facing in East Tennessee a rebellion generated by Brownlow's vitriolic words, the Confederate authorities in Knoxville arrested him and ultimately expelled him from the South.

Exile did not end Brownlow's war with the Confederacy. Due to the publicity generated by his resistance and arrest in Tennessee, he found himself a hero to the North and used this newfound fame as a weapon against the South. He lectured across the North, urging the reconquering of the seceding states. Those people he did not reach with the spoken word he reached with the printed word through the medium of his famous *Parson Brownlow's Book*, which recounted with vivid language and self-dramatization the story of his resistance in Knoxville to the Confederacy.

With the war's end Parson Brownlow and fellow East Tennessee Unionists formed a state government with Brownlow as governor. Publicly, as governor, his attitude was one of unremitting revenge upon the Confederates, though privately his attitude was charitable and forgiving toward individuals. Unfortunately for his reputation this attitude of revenge, rather then reconciliation, put him in opposition to the overwhelming majority of Tennesseans, who were either former Confederates or Unionists, who wished to forgive and forget. Damaging also to his reputation was that fact that, while he was personally the most honest of men, many of his allies were not and proceeded to take advantage of his frequent illnesses to raid the state coffers and engage in massive fraud and corruption. Despite this, Brownlow, because his party and the Federal army controlled the state, was elected in 1868 to the Senate, where, due to his extreme weakness born of years of illness, he made little mark.

After his service in the Senate, Brownlow returned to East Tennessee, where, unlike the rest of the state, he remained popular. People had been expecting him to die while governor and senator because of his illnesses, but, almost through strength of will alone, Brownlow lived on, only to at last die in the spring of 1877.

**J.G.M. Ramsey**

J. G. M. Ramsey left an indelible mark on the political, economic, and social development of antebellum East Tennessee. He was a physician, public official, religious leader, banker, railroad advocate, scholar, and staunch secessionist, one of the most accomplished East Tennesseans of his era. Ramsey's schooling began at Ebenezer Academy in Knox County and continued at Washington College. Ramsey read medicine under Dr. Joseph Strong of Knoxville and completed his education at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. In 1821 Ramsey married Margaret Barton Crozier. The union produced eleven children, all of whom were raised at Mecklenburg, the Ramsey home built at the confluence of the French Broad and Holston Rivers. Ramsey's most enduring contribution came as author and historian of the state's early settlement history. In 1834 Ramsey supported the organization of the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society, which continues today as the East Tennessee Historical Society. As recording secretary, Ramsey assumed responsibility for cataloging and providing a home for the documents and relics owned by the Society. Mecklenburg served as the site for the library and museum for East Tennessee's past, with Ramsey as its historian. In 1853 Ramsey published his time-honored history, The Annals of Tennessee to the End of the Eighteenth Century.

In 1861 Ramsey was a staunch states' rights Democrat who publicly supported secession and served as a treasury agent and field surgeon for the Confederacy. The Civil War proved to be disastrous to the Ramsey family: a son was killed, and Mecklenburg was burned during the Union occupation of Knoxville. The fire destroyed his library of four thousand volumes and the museum collection. Ramsey and his family spent the rest of the war in exile, moving from Atlanta to Savannah, and on to Augusta, before settling in Charlotte, North Carolina, in a home they called "Exile's Retreat."

Ramsey returned to Knoxville in the early 1870s and to his life of public service. The Tennessee and East Tennessee Medical Societies, East Tennessee University (now the University of Tennessee), Tusculum College, and Washington College all benefited from his involvement and commitment. President of the Tennessee Historical Society between 1874 and 1884, he also continued his work with the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society until his death in 1884.

**T.A.R. Nelson**

Thomas Amos Rogers Nelson, a U.S. Representative from Tennessee, was born in Kingston, Roane County, TN, March 19, 1812. He completed preparatory school and was graduated from East Tennessee College in 1828. He studied law, was admitted to the Tennessee bar in 1832, and commenced practice in Washington County, TN. He served two terms as attorney general of the first judicial circuit, and was appointed commissioner (diplomatic) to China March 6, 1851. He resigned this position July 2, 1851. Later, he was elected as an Opposition Party candidate to the Thirty-sixth Congress (March 4, 1859-March 3, 1861), and reelected as a Unionist to the Thirty-seventh Congress.

While he was en route to Washington to take his seat, during the Civil War, he was arrested by Confederate scouts, conveyed to Richmond as a prisoner, paroled and allowed to return to his home. Upon the arrival of the Union Army to East Tennessee in 1863, he moved to Knoxville. After the war he became a delegate to the Union National Convention at Philadelphia in 1866 and to the Democratic National Convention in 1868. He was one of the counsel who defended President Andrew Johnson in his impeachment trial in 1868, and was elected judge of the state Supreme Court in 1870 and served until his resignation in 1871. Nelson died in Knoxville August 24, 1873.

**Oliver P. Temple**

Oliver Perry Temple was born on January 27, 1820 to James and Mary Craig Temple near Greeneville (Greene County) Tennessee. He graduated from Washington College in 1844 and studied law under Judge Robert McKinney before being admitted to the Bar in 1846. After an unsuccessful run for Congress in 1847, Temple moved to Knoxville, Tennessee. In 1850, President Millard Fillmore appointed him to serve on a commission to conciliate Native American tribes in New Mexico, Arizona, and California. After his return to Knoxville in about 1851, Temple married Scotia Caledonia Hume (1832-1889). The couple had one daughter, Mary Boyce Temple.

When the Civil War broke out, Temple remained loyal to the Union and worked tirelessly in aid of East Tennessee Unionists and the East Tennessee Relief Association. In later years, he organized the East Tennessee Farmer's Convention, was appointed Chancellor of Tennessee's 8th district (1866-1878), and served as a trustee for East Tennessee University. He was convinced of East Tennessee's economic potential and advocated regional development in addition to supporting higher education. Temple retired from law in 1881 and served as Knoxville's postmaster from 1881 to 1885. After his full retirement, he wrote and published a number of books, including *The Covenanter, the Cavalier and the Puritan* (1897), *East Tennessee and the Civil War* (1899), and *Union Leaders of East Tennessee* (1903). He died in Knoxville on November 2, 1907.

**Thomas W. Humes**

Thomas William Humes (1815-1892), born in Knoxville, TN, was a clergyman, college president, author, and librarian. He graduated from East Tennessee College (now the University of Tennessee) in 1831 and received a master's degree in 1833. He then spent a term at Princeton Theological Seminary but returned to Knoxville as a journalist. He edited the *Knoxville Times,* *Knoxville Register,* and the *Whig's Watch Tower.* He was ordained in 1845 then became a rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Knoxville (1846-61, 1863-69). He was Chairman of the East Tennessee Relief Association, which aided Unionists in East Tennessee. He served as president of East Tennessee University from 1865 to 1883. Humes served as librarian for the Lawson McGhee Library in Knoxville from 1886 until his death.

**Landon Carter Haynes**

Landon Carter Haynes, Sr. (December 2, 1816–February 17, 1875) was a prominent Confederate politician during the American Civil War. Haynes was born in Elizabethton in Carter County, Tennessee. He served in the Tennessee legislature in 1845, 1847 and 1849. He was senator from Tennessee in the Second Confederate Congress from 1862 to 1865.

**Horace Maynard**

Horace Maynard (August 30, 1814–May 3, 1882) was an American politician who served as attorney general of Tennessee, U.S. Representative in Congress and as U.S. Postmaster General in the Rutherford B. Hayes administration. Born in Westborough, Massachusetts, he was educated in local common schools and graduated from Amherst College in 1838. He was then a professor at the East Tennessee University, now the University of Tennessee, from 1839 through 1844. After studying law and passing the bar he became a lawyer in Tennessee and shortly thereafter a politician. He was elected with the Whig, American, Opposition and Unionist Parties to the United States House of Representatives. He remained loyal to the Union when Tennessee seceded and remained in Congress until 1863. During the last two years of the American Civil War, he served as attorney general of Tennessee. He was elected to the 39th Congress as an Unconditional Unionist in 1866 following the readmission of Tennessee into the Union. He then served in the 40th, 41st, 42nd and 43rd Congresses as a Republican. During the 43rd Congress he acted as chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Banking and Currency. He was also a presidential elector on the Whig ticket in 1852 and on the Republican ticket in 1864. In 1874 he ran for Governor of Tennessee as a Republican, but lost to James D. Porter, Jr. He was appointed Minister to Turkey and served from 1875 to 1880 in that post. He was appointed United States Postmaster General in the Cabinet of President Rutherford B. Hayes and served from June 2, 1880 to March 5, 1881. He died in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1882 and is buried in Old Gray Cemetery.

**Ellen Renshaw House**

A member of a middle-class family that had moved to Knoxville in 1860 from Georgia, Ellen became, like her parents, and siblings, a fervent Confederate—or, as she called herself, “a very violent rebel.” She was seventeen years old when the Civil War came to Knoxville.

**Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain**

Forty-five years old when the Civil War erupted, Eliza, a devout Christian of the Presbyterian faith and a pro-slavery southerner, lived with her husband Richard and their twelve children on a farm outside the village of Rogersville in upper East Tennessee. The Fain’s belonged to the county’s “second tier” of wealth holders, owning 200 acres as well as slaves. Her husband and five of her six sons fought for the Confederacy while many of her neighbors remained loyal to the Union. Eliza’s war diary demonstrates her belief that a leading cause of the war was attributed to Northern misinterpretation of the Bible with respect to the issue of slavery.