

This article is protected by copyright, East Tennessee Historical Society. It is available online for study, scholarship, and research use only.

Suggested Citation:

Stasser, William A. "A Terrible Calamity Has Befallen Us." *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 71 (1999): 66-88.

"A TERRIBLE CALAMITY HAS BEFALLEN US": UNIONIST WOMEN IN CIVIL WAR EAST TENNESSEE

William A. Strasser*

On June 20, 1861, a convention of Unionist East Tennesseans met to write a petition to the state government which had recently seceded from the Union. In that petition, they complained that the state's bigoted, overbearing, and intolerant spirit has already subjected the people of East Tennessee to many petty grievances; our people have been insulted; our flags have been fired upon and torn down; our houses have been rudely entered; our families subjected to insult; our peaceable meetings interrupted; our women and children shot at by a merciless soldiery; our towns pillaged; our citizens robbed; and some of them assassinated and murdered.¹

Conditions would only worsen for the residents of East Tennessee, both Union and Confederate. Women of both sides experienced the challenges that war brought with it, including labor shortages and destruction by invading armies. As one contemporary writer noted, the men who would ordinarily be working in the fields were now in the armies; without production or protection, homes and families throughout the entire region were subjected to hardships such as had never been known. And, he wrote, the "present and prospective victims of this extreme destitution were women and children." In many instances, their sufferings would become still more tragic, as shown in 1864, when a Knoxville resident reported a murder in her journal:

About two weeks ago either some soldiers or Union men went to a man's house a few miles out of town, I think his name was Duncan, at night and called him out and killed him (his wife was very sick, had a young infant only a few days old, and it excited her so much she has been at the point of death almost ever since) & then went and burnt his mother's house. . . . The

*The author has recently received the Masters of Arts degree in history from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and is presently employed with the National Park Service. He gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Stephen Ash and Mr. Nick Wyman in the preparation of this manuscript.

¹ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols. in 128, Washington, D.C.: 1880-1901), ser. one, 52/1: 175 [hereafter cited as *OR*].

military take no noti

Neither side was safe as a captain in Confederate general Tennessee in the fall of 1863 about equally divided and then A study of Western North Carolina were "worn as a target over t attract both dangerous friends react to these divided loyalties as a result of wartime hardship

With the approach of had to decide which side they many women to make. East which had stemmed from the rest of the state. East Tennessee by 1860 it comprised only 26 recently developed West Tennessee cal power as Democratic Middle addition, East Tennessee was t and in 1860 only 9.2 percent cent in Middle Tennessee and economic factors contributed t ple: they harbored a growing h and to a slave system that clear ing isolation and poverty of the and personal antagonisms; fur deep South, they feared a polit interests. These political, econo Unionist leadership of *Knoxville* Andrew Johnson, congressm Knoxville attorney O. P. Temple

² Thomas William Humes, *The Life of Daniel E. Sutherland*, ed. Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., *A Very* *House* (Knoxville, 1996), 104.

³ Charles M. Blackford, III, *Letters from the Army in Virginia During the War Between* Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the*

⁴ Charles Faulkner Bryan, Jr., "The Economic Study" (Ph.D. dissertation) 16-19.

ITY HAS NIST WOMEN TENNESSEE

trasser'

Unionist East Tennesseans met to write a
which had recently seceded from the
that the state's bigoted, overbearing,
the people of East Tennessee to many
killed; our flags have been fired upon
we entered; our families subjected to
our women and children shot at by a
citizens robbed; and some of them

residents of East Tennessee, both
experienced the challenges that
rages and destruction by invading
the men who would ordinarily be
without production or protection,
region were subjected to hardships
the "present and prospective vic-
and children." In many instances,
tragic, as shown in 1864, when a
journal:

Some soldiers or Union men
of town, I think his name
out and killed him (his
t only a few days old, and
the point of death almost
mother's house. . . . The

ts degree in history from the
employed with the National Park
of Dr. Stephen Ash and Mr. Nick

Records of the Union and Confederate
01), ser. one, 52/1: 175 [hereafter

military take no notice of it at all.²

Neither side was safe as an internal civil war broke out in East Tennessee. A captain in Confederate general James A. Longstreet's corps passing through East Tennessee in the fall of 1863 commented that "In East Tennessee the people are about equally divided and there rages a real civil war, which causes great misery." A study of Western North Carolina during the Civil War noted that allegiances were "worn as a target over the heart, amid armed enemies, and loyalty could attract both dangerous friends and mortal enemies."³ How did Unionist women react to these divided loyalties and dangerous conditions? Did their roles change as a result of wartime hardships?

With the approach of the Civil War, East Tennessee men and women had to decide which side they would support. This was a difficult decision for many women to make. East Tennesseans had a long tradition of Unionism, which had stemmed from their sense of geographical and political isolation from the rest of the state. East Tennessee had once been dominant in state politics, but by 1860 it comprised only 26 percent of the state's population, slightly less than recently developed West Tennessee. This led to a proportional decline in political power as Democratic Middle Tennessee began to dominate state politics. In addition, East Tennessee was the least productive agricultural region in the state and in 1860 only 9.2 percent of its population were slaves, compared to 29 percent in Middle Tennessee and 33 percent in West Tennessee.⁴ Other social and economic factors contributed to Unionist tendencies among the mountain people: they harbored a growing hostility to slaveholders, who tended to be wealthy, and to a slave system that clearly failed to benefit them. They also felt the growing isolation and poverty of the mountains and the influence of family traditions and personal antagonisms; furthermore, lacking the economic structure of the deep South, they feared a political economy which would be detrimental to their interests. These political, economic, and social factors, combined with the strong Unionist leadership of *Knoxville Whig* editor William G. Brownlow, Senator Andrew Johnson, congressmen T.A.R. Nelson and Horace Maynard, and Knoxville attorney O. P. Temple, all helped the region remain loyal to the Federal

² Thomas William Humes, *The Loyal Mountaineers of Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1888), 303; Daniel E. Sutherland, ed., *A Very Violent Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Ellen Renshaw House* (Knoxville, 1996), 104.

³ Charles M. Blackford, III, *Letters from Lee's Army, or Memoirs of Life In and Out of the Army in Virginia During the War Between the States* (New York, 1947), 226; Philip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville, 1981), xi.

⁴ Charles Faulkner Bryan, Jr., "The Civil War in East Tennessee: A Social, Political, and Economic Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1978), 12-13, 16-19.



Horace Maynard, member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Tennessee and outspoken Unionist. Courtesy of UTK Special Collections.

government in 1861.⁵

Women who supported the Union in the Civil War tended to live on small, self-supporting farms and usually did not own slaves. The poor and yeoman non-slaveowning women who lived on these East Tennessee farms worked hard to contribute to the family's self-sufficiency, and they relied on their families for support. Horace Keaton of McMinn County remembered that his mother "did the cooking, spinning, carding, dying, [and] weaving [of] all the cloth for the whole family." Daughters usually aided their mothers, and sons sometimes helped with these chores as well. Occasionally, impoverished wives worked as

⁵ Paludan, *Victims*, 62; Noel C. Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 31-32; Bryan, "Civil War in East Tennessee," 30, 34-35; W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870* (Knoxville, 1999), 38-45; Eric Lacy Russell, *Unvanquished Volunteers: East Tennessee Sectionalism From Statehood to Secession*, 2nd ed. (Johnson City, TN, 1971), 184-91. For other explanations of the long tradition of East Tennessee Unionism, see Mary Emily Robertson Campbell, *The Attitude of Tennesseans Toward the Union, 1847-1861* (New York, 1961) and Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill, 1989).

Confederate
Tennessee du

domestic servants out

Although it wou
remained loyal to the
of women in East Ten
backgrounds, they un
from schools and lack
other hand, wealthier
tion and tended to sym
more first-hand accou
Unionist women.

When secession o
men resisted the mov

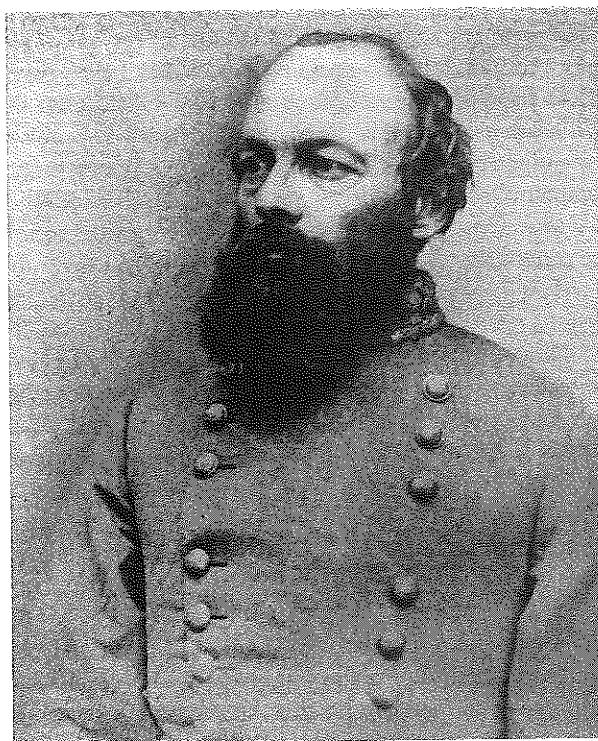
⁶ Fred Arthur Bailey, *Cl*
35-37; Bailey, "Class Co
Combatant Responses to
Quarterly 45, no. 4 (198



House of Representatives from
courtesy of UTK Special Collections.

the Civil War tended to live on small, own slaves. The poor and yeoman non-East Tennessee farms worked hard to and they relied on their families for ty remembered that his mother "did [d] weaving [of] all the cloth for the their mothers, and sons sometimes nally, impoverished wives worked as

every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerilla ill, 1997), 31-32; Bryan, "Civil War in untain Rebels: East Tennessee ville, 1999), 38-45; Eric Lacy Russell, sm From Statehood to Secession, 2nd ed. planations of the long tradition of East e Campbell, *The Attitude of Tennesseans* and Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant a Crisis* (Chapel Hill, 1989).



Confederate General E. Kirby Smith, commander of the Department of East Tennessee during 1862. Courtesy of UTK Special Collections.

domestic servants outside the home to add to the family income.⁶

Although it would be difficult to estimate the number of women who remained loyal to the Union cause, historians generally assume that the majority of women in East Tennessee did so. Mostly poor and yeoman women with rural backgrounds, they unfortunately left few diaries and letters, since the distance from schools and lack of money for tuition left them largely uneducated. On the other hand, wealthier women who lived in the cities had more access to education and tended to sympathize with the Confederacy. As a result, there are many more first-hand accounts from East Tennessee Confederate women than from Unionist women.

When secession came to Tennessee in 1861, many East Tennessee Unionist men resisted the movement by joining the Federal armies in Kentucky; those

⁶ Fred Arthur Bailey, *Class and Tennessee's Confederate Generation* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 35-37; Bailey, "Class Contrasts in Old South Tennessee: An Analysis of the Non-Combatant Responses to the Civil War Veterans Questionnaires," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1986): 280-81.

who remained were forced to hide in the mountains for fear of pro-Confederate bushwhackers. Andrew Johnson decried the fact that East Tennessee Unionists had been driven from their homes, "compell[ing] them to desert their wives, their children, and all that man holds dear on earth." With the men hiding out and fighting in the mountains, East Tennessee was left without a sufficient labor supply, thus compounding the residents' misery. A concerned Confederate in East Tennessee wrote Confederate congressman Ben Hill, complaining about Confederate conscription in East Tennessee and its effect upon the region's male labor:

Nine-tenths of the producing labor of East Tennessee is white labor, hence, when led by conscription or stampeding the men subject to military duty leave, the labor of East Tennessee is gone. There are within our borders at this time thousands of families left without any male members capable of labor. These helpless women and children are to become a charge upon the public, for whatever may be the sins of their fathers or husbands the Southern people cannot deal cruelly with them.

Hill forwarded the letter to Confederate president Jefferson Davis, who responded unsympathetically to the plight of civilians in East Tennessee. He wrote that "if we are to have the hostility of the class called in East Tennessee Union men, it were better that they should be in the ranks of the enemy than living as spies among us and waiting for opportunity to strike. The commanding general of the department will, I am sure, be as lenient as is proper, and mindful of the need we have that the fields be cultivated."⁷

Davis's lack of concern for East Tennessee Unionist families is typical of Confederate policy in the region. E. Kirby Smith, the Confederate commander of the region, established martial law shortly after the war began. As the war progressed, Confederate commanders became frustrated with protecting a hostile population and in 1862 issued a proclamation stating that they would welcome back Unionist men who had fled north if they laid down their arms in thirty days. The proclamation went on:

At the end of that time, those failing to return to their homes and accept the amnesty thus offered, and provide for and protect their wives and children in East Tennessee, will have them sent to their care in Kentucky, or beyond the Confederate States' line at their own expense.... The women

⁷ LeRoy P. Graf, Ralph W. Haskins, and Paul H. Bergeron, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, 15 vols. to date (Knoxville, 1967-), 4:699; *OR* ser. four, 2/1: 367-71.

⁸ *OR* ser. one, 1

Daniel Ell
Adventures

and ch
either

Although
nent Unionist l
struck fear in th

Unionist w
an active role i
petitioning loca
the outbreak of
wrote Andrew
Federal troops
who are in Ken
We would like
in the glorious
love Tennessee
In December 1

mountains for fear of pro-Confederate
fact that East Tennessee Unionists
[ng] them to desert their wives, their
th." With the men hiding out and
s left without a sufficient labor sup-
A concerned Confederate in East
n Ben Hill, complaining about
nd its effect upon the region's male

labor of East Tennessee is
ription or stampeding the
e labor of East Tennessee
at this time thousands of
ers capable of labor. These
ecome a charge upon the
of their fathers or hus-
al cruelly with them.

e president Jefferson Davis, who
civilians in East Tennessee. He
he class called in East Tennessee
n the ranks of the enemy than liv-
unity to strike. The commanding
lenient as is proper, and mindful
d."7

Unionist families is typical of
ith, the Confederate commander
er the war began. As the war pro-
strated with protecting a hostile
stating that they would welcome
d down their arms in thirty days.

iling to return to their
ffered, and provide for
n East Tennessee, will
ntucky, or beyond the
xpense.... The women

geron, eds., *The Papers of Andrew*
ser. four, 2/1: 367-71.



Daniel Ellis, an East Tennessee "pilot" during the Civil War. From *The Thrilling Adventures of Daniel Ellis*. Courtesy of the McClung Historical Collection.

and children must be taken care of by husbands and fathers,
either in East Tennessee or in the Lincoln Government.⁸

Although Confederates only enforced this order on the families of prominent Unionist leaders William Brownlow and Horace Maynard, the order itself struck fear in the hearts of all East Tennessee Unionist women.

Unionist women were not merely victims in this dangerous time; they took an active role in trying to change their circumstances and help their cause by petitioning local political leaders. Catherine Melville, an East Tennessean who at the outbreak of the war worked in the Washington quartermaster general's office, wrote Andrew Johnson to encourage him to send supplies to East Tennessee Federal troops in hospitals: "Can we get Boxes sent to the East Tennessee men who are in Kentucky? Mr. Maynard told us that *you* had got them clothing. . . . We would like to do some thing for the noble men of Tennessee who have stood firm in the glorious cause. . . . Let us know if we can do anything to show that we love Tennessee and honor the men who have stood unflinchingly in her defence." In December 1861, Elizabeth Self, the daughter of a Unionist bridge burner con-

⁸ OR ser. one, 10/1: 641.



Melvina Stephens, described by Daniel Ellis as a "true heroine." From *The Thrilling Adventures of Daniel Ellis*. Courtesy of the McClung Historical Collection.

demned to death, wrote Jefferson Davis pleading for her father's life. Her telegram apparently made an impression, for Davis pardoned Self two hours before he was scheduled to hang.⁹

Women also took matters into their own hands to provide for their families. Evidence is seen in the Washington County court records, where on January 8, 1862, the court indicted Margaret Timpkins for grand larceny for stealing from Debra Leab and Elizabeth Parrington and sentenced her to jail. What is interesting are the items she stole: a pair of shoes, four pair of stockings, a calico dress, a shoulder of bacon, eighteen pounds of flour, and other items totaling \$14.75. She was sent to jail for her crime.¹⁰ Her plight was not atypical, for with the

⁹ Graf, Haskins, and Bergeron, *Papers of Andrew Johnson*, 5:38; Oliver P. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War* (Cincinnati, 1899), 397-98. On the night of November 8, 1861, Unionist "bridge burners" attacked and burned five key bridges along the East Tennessee railroad. Hundreds of suspects were arrested by Confederate authorities. Although Elizabeth Self's efforts saved the life of her father, five others were executed for their part in the attacks. See David Madden, "Unionist Resistance to Confederate Occupation: The Bridge Burners of East Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 52-53 (1981-1982): 40-60.

¹⁰ Washington County Criminal Circuit Court Minutes, February 23, 1862, Tennessee

shortage of ma
such crimes too

Historian
Unionist wom
couriers, safe h
common way fo
ed East Tennes
teered to delive
to General Am
ments were con
Love announce
was arrested by
on to Louisville
of the way to
comparatively e
cate young lady
through a cour
watchful enemy
Longfellow ma
ing woman."¹¹

When the
for Unionists t
road was based
travel northwar
activities in hel
worked with he
network expans
ly, Union soldie
turned to black
Carolina prison
night at the cal
shelter, held a
sack and a hus
friends by the
farms rather th
help.¹² At thos
soldiers, taking

State Library an
¹¹ Fisher, *War at*
Burns, *History of*
rev. ed. (Evansvi
¹² W. B. Hessel



... a "true heroine." From *The Thrilling*
... Clung Historical Collection.

pleading for her father's life. Her
for Davis pardoned Self two hours

... hands to provide for their families.
... court records, where on January 8,
... for grand larceny for stealing from
... sentenced her to jail. What is inter-
... four pair of stockings, a calico dress,
... and other items totaling \$14.75.
... light was not atypical, for with the

... Johnson, 5:38; Oliver P. Temple, *East*
... 7-98. On the night of November 8,
... ed five key bridges along the East
... ested by Confederate authorities.
... her father, five others were executed
... Unionist Resistance to Confederate
... e," East Tennessee Historical Society's
... nutes, February 23, 1862, Tennessee

shortage of male labor and the destruction wrought by invading armies, many such crimes took place in wartime in East Tennessee.

Historian Noel Fisher notes in *War At Every Door* that East Tennessee Unionist women played a critical role in the resistance movement, serving as couriers, safe house operators, and spies. Courier work, while dangerous, was a common way for women to use their sex to their advantage. The most celebrated East Tennessee courier was Blount County resident Mary Love, who volunteered to deliver a message from Union general Ulysses S. Grant in Chattanooga to General Ambrose Burnside in Knoxville, informing Burnside that reinforcements were coming. When the army courier could get no further than Kingston, Love announced that she would get the message to Knoxville. In the process she was arrested by Confederates, talked her way out of arrest, and took the dispatch on to Louisville (in Blount County), where a 13-year-old boy carried it the rest of the way to Knoxville. Historian O. P. Temple contrasted her ride with the comparatively easy twelve-mile ride of Paul Revere: "Here was a ride, by a delicate young lady, of 35 miles or more, in bitter cold weather, over rough roads, and through a country of high ridges and hills, patrolled in every direction by a watchful enemy, with a wide river to cross. . . . Let us hope, at least, that some Longfellow may arise some day, who shall in verse give immortality to this daring woman."¹¹

When the war began, East Tennessee developed an "underground railroad" for Unionists to travel northward to safety in Kentucky. This underground railroad was based on the networks that slaves developed for helping escaped slaves travel northward. Guides or "pilots" such as Daniel Ellis became famous for their activities in helping Unionists escape to the North. One woman, Kate Summers, worked with her husband as a pilot in East Tennessee. As the war progressed, the network expanded to include helping Confederate deserters and, more frequently, Union soldiers who had escaped from Southern prisons. Often these escapees turned to blacks for help. Captain Willard Glazier, an escapee from a South Carolina prison, reported that a slave hid him during the day and he spent the night at the cabin of an "Aunt Katy," who, in addition to providing him food and shelter, held a prayer meeting for him. He was then equipped with a full haversack and a hunting knife and sent on his way. When they could not identify friends by the color of their skin, escapees often looked for small cabins and farms rather than large houses and towns where they would be less likely to find help.¹² At those small cabins, white Unionist women often sheltered escaping soldiers, taking huge risks upon themselves and their families as they helped the

State Library and Archives [TSLA].

¹¹ Fisher, *War at Every Door*, 72; Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 524; Inez Burns, *History of Blount County, Tennessee: From War Trail to Landing Strip, 1795-1955*, rev. ed. (Evansville, IN, 1957), 63.

¹² W. B. Hesseltine, "The Underground Railroad from Confederate Prisons to East

men on their way. In addition to housing the escapees, women also left food along the escape routes for the pilots and their fugitives.¹³ Historian Durwood Dunn argues that this underground railroad was possibly the East Tennessee Unionists' greatest contribution to the war effort, for the participants tied up Rebel troops in preventing escapes, helped Federal soldiers return to their units, and passed important information on enemy troop locations to Federal authorities. Union sympathizer Jeanette Mabry, wife of Confederate colonel George Mabry, ran a regular message drop for Union pilots passing through. "No guide considered his mission complete unless he stopped going and coming to trade intelligence with Mrs. Mabry. Many a Federal soldier was astounded at the amount of information she gave them to relay to the first headquarters they reached in free territory," commented one pilot. Women played a very important part in keeping this underground railroad in operation, as most men were absent either in hiding or with the Union army. Daniel Ellis praised one of his assistants in the underground railroad, Melvina Stephens: "She had often arisen at night where she obtained intelligence of importance, and communicated it to loyalists some miles distant, preventing their capture or murder by the enemy." This work constituted a new role for women during the war, and as one historian has written, it showed "just how capable they were of crossing the lines of traditional gender roles to meet the new demands imposed on them by war."¹⁴

In the isolated mountain communities of East Tennessee, women also had an important role in protecting their homes. "Home guards" were made up of women and children who organized and served as pickets for their community. When a stranger approached, the sentinel would ascertain the stranger's sympathies and could then sound an alarm if danger threatened. These home guard units increased morale in the community, as they let everyone contribute to the common defense. The units also demonstrated the local population's approval of the underground railroads, for they cooperated with the pilots. An escaping Federal prisoner described his approach to Cades Cove in Blount County: "We entered the Cove about 3 p.m. and very unexpectedly caused quite an alarm. A

Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications* 2 (1930): 63; Paludan, *Victims*, 73; Paul Whelan, "Unconventional Warfare in East Tennessee, 1861-1865" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1963), 132.

¹³ For stories of women sheltering escapees, see Paludan, *Victims*, 75; Daniel Ellis, *Thrilling Adventures of Daniel Ellis, the Great Union Guide of East Tennessee for a Period of Nearly Four Years During the Great Southern Rebellion* (Johnson City, TN, 1989 [1867]), 123.

¹⁴ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community 1818-1937* (Knoxville, 1988), 137; Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 427-28; John C. Inscoc, "Moving Through Deserter Country: Fugitive Accounts of the Inner Civil War in Southern Appalachia," in Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson, eds., *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville, 1997), 173, 176-77.

girl was on duty as a sent
[the Cove] was alive. Th
man had a gun on his s
Cades Cove fed and clo
ing the community, the
stranger should deman
was that she should tell
sentinel on duty, I am v
eration of women in th
the success of the unde

Besides passing p
railroad, women took a
In his memoirs, pilot D
unteering to inform hi
famous case of an East
of Greeneville, whose
his death, Thompson o
recruiting information
Morgan's men came t
could and a bused the
that would not be prop
himself came into her
"used a grate deeel of
me for I disliked it ve
tified Morgan to som
went on to work as a r
her war experiences. S

Some Unionist v
Blount County, six wo
in spying and informi
eral William T. Sher
that Confederate ger
Loyal Ladies Home
one member, Harrie

¹⁵ Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 1
Western North Carolin
Whelan, "Unconventio

¹⁶ Ellis, *Thrilling Adve*
Sarah E. Thompson P
Collections, Duke Un
questioned by Noel F
claimed responsibility

girl was on duty as a sentinel. She gave the alarm with a horn. . . . In an instant [the Cove] was alive. The men were driving their cattle before them, and every man had a gun on his shoulder." The "loyal, liberty-loving men and women" of Cades Cove fed and clothed the men and piloted them to Knoxville. Before leaving the community, the soldier asked the young sentinel "what she would do if a stranger should demand the horn of her before she could use it. . . . Her reply was that she should tell him to go to 'Hell!' And from my knowledge of her as a sentinel on duty, I am very sure that she would have done so."¹⁵ The active cooperation of women in the internal escape network served as a significant factor in the success of the underground railroads in East Tennessee.

Besides passing prison escapees and information along the underground railroad, women took an active role in undermining Confederate military efforts. In his memoirs, pilot Daniel Ellis thanks Melvina Stephens of Bulls Gap for volunteering to inform him of any pickets at a bridge he needed to cross. The most famous case of an East Tennessee female Union spy is that of Sarah Thompson of Greeneville, whose husband was killed by Confederates in 1864. Spurred by his death, Thompson continued her husband's work of delivering dispatches and recruiting information to Union officers. When Confederate general John Hunt Morgan's men came to Greeneville, she wrote, "they pilfered and stole all they could and abused the wives and darts [daughters] of union men on many ways that would not be proper for me to state here for more than one reason." Morgan himself came into her house, took the tomato butter she had been making, and "used a grate deal of flattery as it made me mad and it did him good to tantlise me for I disliked it very much." In retaliation, she slipped out of town and identified Morgan to some Union soldiers, who subsequently killed him. Thompson went on to work as a nurse in Knoxville and then gave lectures in the North about her war experiences. She is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.¹⁶

Some Unionist women worked in plain view in support of their cause. In Blount County, six women formed the "Loyal Ladies Home Guard" and engaged in spying and informing on Confederates. In December 1863, when Union general William T. Sherman came into their county, they rode out to inform him that Confederate general James Longstreet had quit his siege of Knoxville. The Loyal Ladies Home Guard was so effective that the Confederate army arrested one member, Harriet McTeer, for spying and the spying activities of Dora

¹⁵ Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 135, 137-38; Gordon B. McKinney, "Women's Role in Civil War Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (1992): 37-56; Whelan, "Unconventional Warfare," 128.

¹⁶ Ellis, *Thrilling Adventures*, 357-58; "Sarah Thompson's Account of Morgan's Defeat," Sarah E. Thompson Papers, 1859-1898, Online Archival Collection, Special Collections, Duke University. Thompson's responsibility for Morgan's death has been questioned by Noel Fisher, who points out that James Leahy and Lucy Williams also claimed responsibility (Fisher, *War at Every Door*, 186-87). However, Thompson's claim



Miss Martha [sic] Brownlow; or the Heroine of Tennessee.
 Courtesy of The McClung Historical Collection.

Jackson Birdwell led to her husband being killed.¹⁷ Confederate nurse Kate Cumming reported that in Chattanooga the Unionist women gave the best food they had to Union prisoners, but refused to give a mouthful to the hungry Rebel guards. And when Union general Ambrose Burnside was defending Knoxville

is corroborated by Andrew Johnson and others. A letter by a Knoxville woman (Rhoda Williams to Rufus Morgan Williams, September 22, 1864, Col. John and Rhoda Campbell Williams Papers, Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library [hereafter cited as McClung Collection]) also denies Williams's claim and reinforces Thompson's.

¹⁷ Wilma Dykeman, *Tennessee Women, Past and Present* (Memphis, 1977), 21; Burns,

against Longstreet's siege flatboats loaded with supplies for the Union army.¹⁸

East Tennessee Unionist occupiers. An 1864 tribune reported the Union cause:

Although they did not protect the property and gave [the] mouths of husband, cow, sheep, horse, and ed them, because they got out of them by

These were not the women of the Union army, and in fact they were torturers and grave diggers. At Bulls Gap, "His mother [from northeast Greece] came back in that wagon. She stood a marker bearing the threat. Daniel Ellis testified in Carter County, where she was of her entirety, and that was her waist." Mrs. Elbert Thompson but managed to escape the night. Apparently these women were not Unionist. These women were not Unionist. They refused to reveal the names of Samuel and Elizabeth. One came along and seemed useless, because she would retaliate with

History of Blount County
¹⁸ Richard Barksdale (1959), 193; Temple, *The French Broad* (Knoxville, 1919)
¹⁹ Report to the Confederate Commission Sent by the Loyal and Suffering

against Longstreet's siege, men and women along the French Broad River sent flatboats loaded with supplies down the river at night to the surrounded Union army.¹⁸

East Tennessee Unionist women suffered mightily at the hands of the Rebel occupiers. An 1864 tribute to East Tennessee women honored their work to support the Union cause:

Although the government, which owed them protection, did not protect them, [these women] broke their last biscuit, and gave [the Federal soldiers] the biggest half, out of the mouths of hungry children. They gave up the last horse, mule, cow, sheep, hog, everything they had to the soldiers that needed them, because they were Union soldiers, or were plundered out of them by the enemy.¹⁹

These were not the only losses that they suffered. Many mothers lost sons in the Union army, and in some cases women were forced to serve as funeral directors and grave diggers. When a boy named Marvin was killed at the Battle of Bulls Gap, "His mother took a wagon to Bulls Gap, approximately thirty miles [from northeast Greene County], for the body of her son and transported him back in that wagon. He was buried in Providence Cemetery and at his grave stood a marker bearing, 'Murdered By the Rebels.'" Robbery was also a constant threat. Daniel Ellis tells of several women attacked by Rebels: "One lady living in Carter County, who was the wife of a Federal soldier, had her clothes torn off of her entirely, and the belt containing her money and jewels taken from her waist." Mrs. Elbert Treadaway's home was broken into and she was forced to strip but managed to escape with her nearly naked children into the cold January night. Apparently the Rebels only robbed her because she was a "Lincolnite." These women were lucky, for robbers tortured and hanged other women. When they refused to reveal the location of their savings (hidden in a five-gallon jar), Samuel and Elizabeth Kelley were hanged, apparently upside down, until someone came along and cut them down. Fighting back against the thieves often seemed useless, because the robbers were most often Confederate soldiers who would retaliate with more vengeance. When some Rebel soldiers came to take

History of Blount County, 63.

¹⁸ Richard Barksdale Harwell, ed. *Kate: The Journal of a Confederate Nurse* (Baton Rouge, 1959), 193; Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 500. See also Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad* (Knoxville, 1965), 105.

¹⁹ *Report to the Contributors to the Pennsylvania Relief Association for East Tennessee by a Commission Sent by the Executive Committee to Visit that Region, and Forward Supplies to the Loyal and Suffering Inhabitants* (Philadelphia, 1864), 6.



Susan Brownlow, daughter of William G. "Parson" Brownlow.
Courtesy of the McClung Historical Collection.

their horse, Elijah Oliver's wife stopped her husband from resisting because, she said, "it would never do, that the whole army might come and kill us all, and so she constrained him to let them go, saying it would be better to lose the horse, than it would be to lose some or all of our lives."²⁰

In addition to robbery, expulsion was also a threat to East Tennessee Unionist women. The Confederates expelled only two East Tennessee families, the Maynards and the Brownlows, from the region, but Unionist women feared that this practice would become more widespread. Susan Brownlow, the 23-year-old daughter of the vituperative editor of the Knoxville *Whig*, made the most of her expulsion experience. After the Confederate army banished the Brownlows from Tennessee, Susan accompanied her father on his speaking tour of the North in 1862. While she was at home in Knoxville in early June 1861, she had confronted two men at her house who were attempting to take down the family's Union flag. Brandishing a gun, she forced the men to retreat. The story was embellished for Northern audiences, who were told of her solo defense of the flag against ninety or more soldiers. Susan was received as a heroine in the North.

²⁰ Carl N. Hayes, *Neighbor Against Neighbor, Brother Against Brother: Greene County in the Civil War* (no pub., 1966), 6, 7; Ellis, *Thrilling Adventures*, 367; Fisher, *War at Every Door*, 89; Dunn, *Cades Cove*, 133.

The Colt factory in
brochures were printed
Martha [sic] *Brownlow*
German for native im

The Unionist wo
Union army to end th
early as October 1861
Blount Carter reporte
sions they have to be
them that the day of c
hardships for two an
arrived in East Tennes

"Glory
come back to
road, and as
The people
Love of Lib
mattresses a
every staff is
it! Little chi

The Unionist w
arrival. When troops
eighteen miles on hor
To celebrate the oc
Sherman's honor in I
able, the women prep
ed with anger; he ha
relieve Burnside in K
men returned to Ch
clean in revenge.²⁴ T
East Tennessee wom
diers, they would con

²¹ E. Merton Coulter,
(Knoxville, 1971 [1937]
Saucy and Malicious De
NC, 1978), 261.

²² *OR* ser. one, 4/1: 32

²³ *Harper's Weekly*, Oct

²⁴ *Report to the Contriv*
and the Civil War in E

The Colt factory in Connecticut presented her with a revolver and several brochures were printed about her exploits. One of these brochures, entitled *Miss Martha [sic] Brownlow; or the Heroine of Tennessee* (1862), was translated into German for native immigrants.²¹

The Unionist women of East Tennessee long awaited the arrival of the Union army to end their fears of robbery and expulsion from their homes. As early as October 1861, in a report to Union general George H. Thomas, William Blount Carter reported that "the loyalty of our people increases with the oppressions they have to bear. Men and women weep for joy when I merely hint to them that the day of our deliverance is at hand."²² After they had endured these hardships for two and one-half years, the Unionists' day of deliverance finally arrived in East Tennessee in the fall of 1863.

"Glory be to God, the Yankees have come! 'The Flag's come back to Tennessee!' Such were the welcomes all along the road, and as we entered Knoxville, it was past all description. The people seemed frantic with joy. I never knew what the Love of Liberty was before. The old flag has been hidden in mattresses and under carpets. It now floats to the breeze at every staff in East Tennessee. Ladies wear it—carry it—wave it! Little children clap their hands and kiss it."²³

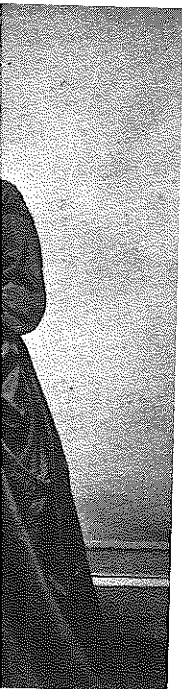
The Unionist women of East Tennessee rejoiced at the Federal troops' arrival. When troops came into Knoxville, one man reported, his mother "went eighteen miles on horseback to Knoxville, 'just a purpose to see Burnside's army.'" To celebrate the occasion, the women of Knoxville arranged a dinner in Sherman's honor in December. Scouring the countryside for the best food available, the women prepared a feast for the general. Unfortunately, Sherman reacted with anger; he had just put his men on a forced march from Chattanooga to relieve Burnside in Knoxville, and this display of plenty sickened him. He and his men returned to Chattanooga in a leisurely manner, picking the countryside clean in revenge.²⁴ This unfortunate incident is symbolic of the experience of East Tennessee women; though they felt redeemed by the arrival of Union soldiers, they would continue to suffer from the emotions and anger which the war

²¹ E. Merton Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Knoxville, 1971 [1937]), 154, 223-44; Steve Humphrey, *That D---d Brownlow: Being a Saucy and Malicious Description of Fighting Parson William Gannaway Brownlow* (Boone, NC, 1978), 261.

²² OR ser. one, 4/1: 320.

²³ *Harper's Weekly*, October 24, 1863.

²⁴ *Report to the Contributors*, 16; Digby Gordon Seymour, *Divided Loyalties: Fort Sanders and the Civil War in East Tennessee*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville, 1982), 213-15.



G. "Parson" Brownlow. Collection.

husband from resisting because, she might come and kill us all, and so would be better to lose the horse,"²⁰

also a threat to East Tennessee only two East Tennessee families, region, but Unionist women feared d. Susan Brownlow, the 23-year-old Knoxville *Whig*, made the most of the army banished the Brownlows on his speaking tour of the North in early June 1861, she had conspired to take down the family's men to retreat. The story was told of her solo defense of the flag received as a heroine in the North.

Against Brother: Greene County in Adventures, 367; Fisher, *War at Every*

generated.

It was difficult for East Tennessee Unionists to rebuild when bushwhackers and robbers remained a threat. A Madisonville Unionist reported to a friend, "Major Love, Willie and I were sitting in the parlor last night, Willie was thumping on the piano, and some one knocked at the window blinds—The first thought was bushwhackers of course, but I opened the blind and who should I see but Mollie Johnston." This fear of bushwhackers was well founded, for as times worsened, so did the robberies. Adeline McDowell Deaderick of Jonesborough reported that in one case, women had become bushwhackers themselves: "The women had become so emboldened that they shaved their heads, don'd mens apparel, and entered the pilfering traffic' ... They betrayed themselves to their victims when they began to quarrel over dishes and bed quilts and silk dresses. This looking glass is mine, t'other is yours." In most cases, however, the thieves were soldiers foraging for food or supplies. Susanne Fillers Tramel of Greene County once got into a tug-of-war with a Union soldier who tried to steal a saddle hanging on her fence. She kept pulling on the saddle until the soldier gave up.²⁵

Because of the lack of food, the male labor shortage, and pillage and robbery by invading armies, many Unionist families left their homes during the Civil War. When possible, they headed for cities where they were more likely to receive aid from the military. One Unionist family from eleven miles east of Knoxville reported that no one from their town was receiving aid, but many were leaving for Knoxville in hopes of drawing rations from the army quartermaster. Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and other Federal-held towns boomed with an influx of wartime refugees. Nashville reported receiving 9,000 refugees (many of whom were from East Tennessee) during two months of 1864, including 2,500 in one week. A visitor to the refugee barracks in Nashville reported finding them full of "sick, poorly clad, and dispirited women and children" from East Tennessee, Western North Carolina, North Georgia, and North Alabama. In Chattanooga in early 1864, refugees, mainly white women and children, received a total of 5,000 rations each day. In April 1864, even though Sherman ordered an end to the distribution of rations, refugees continued to pour into the cities. The *Louisville Journal* reported that "every day women, marriageable girls, children, cripples, and needy of every age and both sexes may be seen here [in Chattanooga] in rags and wretchedness, barefooted and in tears" looking for food that the army could not supply.²⁶

Many families left the desolation of their war-ravaged homeland altogether. As early as December 1863, thousands of East Tennesseans fled into

²⁵ Mary Caldwell to Carrie Stakely, June 18, 1865, Hall-Stakely Papers, McClung Collection; Dykeman, *Tennessee Women*, 21; Hayes, *Neighbor Against Neighbor*, 8.

²⁶ *Report to the Contributors*, 18 B20; William C. Harris, "The East Tennessee Relief Movement of 1864-1865," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 2 (1989): 86-96.

EAST TENN

TABULAR STAT

THE PROC

PRIN

Report to the Contri
Courtesy of UTK SP

Kentucky and the Ohio Valley. While one Knoxville family headed as far north as New York, Ohio Valley locations such as Cairo, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Jeffersonville seemed more popular to the refugees. Some travelers in Nashville reported meeting a group from Knoxville heading for the Ohio Valley: "we approached a group of refugees decently, but poorly dressed, huddling round a fire. There were three families, thirteen in all. They were going to Vincennes, Indiana, where they had friends. One old man, dressed in homespun, with a straw hat on his head, said, simply, 'All's gone.'"²⁷

When the East Tennessee refugees arrived in these new locations, Midwesterners met them with mixed receptions. Many residents welcomed the families, but some in the Midwest could not put aside their prewar stereotypes of nonslaveholding Southerners as ignorant and uncouth, nor their resentment of blacks among the East Tennessee refugees. But refugee relief associations and women's auxiliaries in these towns responded to the crisis with aid, at least for the white refugees. By February 1864, the Cairo Relief Association dealt with the 2,000 refugees a month who were arriving in the town, some nine-tenths of whom were women and children. It did not provide aid to black refugee families; their aid came from the Freedmen's Commissions.²⁸

Some Northerners who observed this influx from East Tennessee feared that it could upset the postwar political makeup of the state. The president of the Nashville Refugee Relief Association contended that "it is important to keep the loyal population at home on account of their labor and their votes. They are wanted to reorganize the State on the old basis of harmony with the Federal government." Motivated, then, by both politics and philanthropy, a group of concerned Northerners founded in 1864 the East Tennessee Relief Association (ETRA) for the benefit of the "poorly clad, well-nigh starved, and well-nigh heart broken" people of East Tennessee. Ultimately, the ETRA would distribute more than \$250,000 in aid to East Tennesseans. Unionist families who had suffered at the hands of the Rebels on account of their loyalty received the largest portion, followed by other Unionist families, then by formerly secessionist families who had taken the oath of allegiance to the Union, and finally to the old men, women, and children of families that had members in the Confederate army. None of this money went to black families. No efforts seemingly were made to provide relief for blacks, as a circular published in the North to raise funds stated that "A Refugee Relief commission has just been organized to receive contributions of money, clothing, and other articles needed for *white*

²⁷ William C. Harris, "East Tennessee's Civil War Refugees and the Impact of the War on Civilians," *Journal of East Tennessee History* 64 (1992): 3-19; P.O. Cowan, *James H. Cowan: A Tribute of Affection* (Boston, 1883); *Report to the Contributors*, 18.

²⁸ Harris, "East Tennessee's Civil War Refugees," 3-19; Harris, "East Tennessee Relief Movement," 86-96; *Report to the Contributors*, Appendix E, "Their Situation in Cairo."

Refugee sufferers from the Rebel suffering, let us extend them im

A look at the women applying of these women. In Hancock C from the Union army. They had walked sixty-five miles to Straw also robbed of everything by R returned home disappointed wh arrived. Mary Jane Henry of Jef in the hospital, and she was sic was in a Rebel prison, two of h third was sick, and Rebels l Washington County had four s fits and cannot support her. Say and her daughter and child." Sh the clothing she requested fro goods, the ETRA in 1864 secu of refugees arriving in the Tennesseans outside of the cit Chattanooga received a dispr with no rail connection receive stated that nothing had been o ties because of their inaccessib of goods and provisions reach before many farmers chose to l relief supplies.³⁰

Black East Tennessee Un the population of East Tennes farms with no more than ni wartime experience for Africa nificantly from that of those i lation was small and most of contact enhanced relationshi were as prejudiced against bla

²⁹ *Report to the Contributors*, 21, ETRA, 12. Emphasis added.

³⁰ *List of Applications Made Thro Association in 1864*, MM-1997- the East Tennessee Relief Associat Mountaineers, 330; Robert Tracy *Upcountry in Civil War-Era Ten* 105.

Refugee sufferers from the Rebellion ... Now, when the women and children are suffering, let us extend them immediate and abundant relief."²⁹

A look at the women applying for aid gives some insight into the experiences of these women. In Hancock County, seven women received food and clothing from the Union army. They had been robbed by Rebel bushwhackers and had walked sixty-five miles to Strawberry Plains to receive aid. Nine other women, also robbed of everything by Rebels, walked eighty-five miles to Knoxville but returned home disappointed when they found that the ETRA's goods had not yet arrived. Mary Jane Henry of Jefferson County had six children, her husband was in the hospital, and she was sickly and unable to work. Mary Lenter's husband was in a Rebel prison, two of her children had died since her husband left, the third was sick, and Rebels had destroyed her property. Mary Odom of Washington County had four sons in the Union army and a husband who "has fits and cannot support her. Says she has no chemise. Wants clothing for herself and her daughter and child." She, like all of the other women cited here, received the clothing she requested from the ETRA. In addition to supplying needed goods, the ETRA in 1864 secured a building in Knoxville for the large numbers of refugees arriving in the city daily. Delivering supplies to needy East Tennesseans outside of the cities proved difficult. Cities such as Knoxville and Chattanooga received a disproportionately large amount of aid, while counties with no rail connection received little or none. An 1865 report of the association stated that nothing had been delivered to Carter, Johnson, and Hancock counties because of their inaccessibility. Finally in 1865 fifty thousand dollars' worth of goods and provisions reached the most eastern counties of the state but not before many farmers chose to leave the region rather than wait on undependable relief supplies.³⁰

Black East Tennessee Unionists comprised a unique case. Nine percent of the population of East Tennessee in 1860 were slaves, and most of them lived on farms with no more than nine other slaves. Despite the small numbers, the wartime experience for African Americans in East Tennessee did not differ significantly from that of those in the rest of the South. Although the slave population was small and most of the slaves worked in households where personal contact enhanced relationships between slaves and owners, East Tennesseans were as prejudiced against blacks as were whites in other areas of the South. East

²⁹ *Report to the Contributors*, 21, Appendix C: A circular spread for support of the ETRA, 12. Emphasis added.

³⁰ *List of Applications Made Through Thomas A. R. Nelson to the East Tennessee Relief Association in 1864*, MM-1997-103, McClung Collection; Thomas W. Humes, *Report to the East Tennessee Relief Association at Knoxville* (Knoxville, 1865); Humes, *Loyal Mountaineers*, 330; Robert Tracy McKenzie, *One South or Many?: Plantation Belt and Upcountry in Civil War-Era Tennessee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 105.

Tennessee was predominantly Unionist, but not abolitionist, and its white residents saw slavery as a necessary form of social control.³¹

Motivated by the desires to gain new opportunities and to escape cruel owners, some East Tennessee slaves ran away during the war. There is also evidence that slave women used the threat of running away to obtain better treatment. Martha of Loudon County asked her owner to start paying her \$50 a year and, when he refused, she left to work for someone else who would provide her compensation. Nancy, a slave who escaped from Mary Jane Reynolds, later wrote to inform Reynolds that she was in Knoxville attending school and had "everything that [her] heart could wish." Some runaway women and children were captured in Loudon County but were freed by angry male fugitives who went on to beat the would-be captors severely. Most escapees fled northward to Kentucky or to Union-occupied cities such as Nashville, where they were able to find personal development and job opportunities with the federal government. Many of these fugitives returned to East Tennessee after the war, where, as was common throughout the South, they confronted discrimination, hostility, or worse.³²

It is difficult at best to find traces of slave women in Civil War East Tennessee. Their important role in assisting Union sympathizers and escapees to safety has already been noted. But no diaries remain, for the restrictions of slavery denied literacy to most blacks. An exception was Laura Cansler, a free black woman who had attended the only school for free blacks in the South, in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1863, she obtained permission from Union general Ambrose Burnside to open a school for blacks in Knoxville. She became a teacher there, and the Burnside School she founded was the first school in Knoxville with black teachers. The church records also do not provide significant insight into the lives of black women during the war.³³ Evidence does exist, however, which describes the constant threat of enforced servitude they endured within the institution of slavery. In August 1862, an issue of the *Chattanooga Daily Rebel* advertised "For Sale or Exchange a Negro Woman, good cook, ironer, and Washer." The Greene County court records show several cases in which female slaves were delivered to the court to be bound to slaveholders, even

³¹ Bryan, "Civil War in East Tennessee," 299-343; Robert J. Booker, *The History of Blacks in Knoxville, Tennessee: The First Hundred Years, 1791-1891* (Knoxville, 1990), 11.

³² Wiley, *Confederate Women*, 197; John Cimprich, "Slavery's End in East Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 51-52 (1980-81): 78-88.

³³ Mary V. Rothrock, ed. *The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1946), 316; Booker, *History of Blacks in Knoxville*, 37-38. The first black church in Knoxville was Greater Warner Tabernacle A.M.E. Zion Church, founded in 1845; several other churches were established prior to the end of slavery, including St. Paul Independent Methodist Episcopal Church (1848), Mount Zion Baptist Church (1860), Logan Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church (1865), and Shiloh Presbyterian Church (1865); see Booker, *Blacks in Knoxville*, 22-23.

as late as May 1863. Running but the presence of Confederates by the fact that prewar East Tennessee slave advertisements than Confederate occupation.³⁴

Slavery legally ended in Tennessee when the constitution was amended to abolish slavery in the state. The peculiar institution in Tennessee, due to the rise in the region. Freedmen's schools were established and their own churches. Yet conditions in Tennessee were in some respects better than elsewhere after emancipation. White East Tennessee blacks in an inferior position, so they turned to sharecropping as the norm. Many blacks protested such persecution and a policeman beat a black woman. "whether this brutal outrage has ever been seen a white woman, or a black woman."³⁵ White East Tennessee blacks differed little from their racial

East Tennessee Unionist. On January 1, 1866, Kate Livingston wrote in her diary, "It has never been since New Year has dawned that we have forever remain in peace." The threat, as did the bands of ruffians in the countryside for foodstuffs. For those who remained in exile rather than

The East Tennessee Rebels through 1866. Much of its energy was besides issuing clothing, the sale of land to widows at reduced prices, and the ETRA continued to rely on the women reported that the women in 1867, although Northern n

³⁴ *Chattanooga Daily Rebel*, 1863; Knox County Court Minutes, November 1863; Cimprich, *Slavery's End in Tennessee*.

³⁵ Bryan, "Civil War in East Tennessee," November 26, 1868.

³⁶ Kate Livingston Diary, January 1, 1866.

not abolitionist, and its white residential control.³¹

opportunities and to escape cruel ownership during the war. There is also evidence of running away to obtain better treatment, and to start paying her \$50 a year and, if possible, to find someone else who would provide her comfort. Mary Jane Reynolds, later wrote to her mother, "I am attending school and had 'everything' done for me. My women and children were captured and I am a male fugitive who went on to beat the others. I fled northward to Kentucky or to Tennessee where they were able to find personal protection from the federal government. Many of these people were killed during the war, where, as was common, was the result of discrimination, hostility, or worse."³²

Slavery ended in Tennessee on February 22, 1865, when the state constitution was amended to declare the immediate emancipation of all slaves in the state. The peculiar institution had been finished for a long time in East Tennessee, due to the rise in runaways which followed Federal occupation of the region. Freedmen's schools were established in the area, and blacks formed their own churches. Yet conditions for freed men and women in postwar East Tennessee were in some respects not much better than they had been before emancipation. White East Tennesseans were determined to keep blacks in an inferior position, so they burned freedmen's schools, lynched blacks, and instituted sharecropping as the norm throughout the region. Black leaders frequently protested such persecution and harassment, as demonstrated when a Knoxville policeman beat a black woman in 1868. One black citizen demanded to know "whether this brutal outrage was perpetrated on account of color? For I have never seen a white woman, when under arrest, treated as that officer treated this black woman."³⁵ White East Tennesseans, even those with Union sympathies, differed little from their racist Southern counterparts.

East Tennessee Unionist women greeted the end of the war with relief. On January 1, 1866, Kate Livingston reflected: "1866 is now upon us, how long it has been since New Year has dawned with peace in our land. Oh! May we as a nation forever remain in peace." Unfortunately, bushwhackers continued to pose a threat, as did the bands of returning soldiers who felt free to forage in the countryside for foodstuffs. For these reasons many Unionist refugee families chose to remain in exile rather than return to such uncertain conditions.³⁶

The East Tennessee Relief Association continued to help Unionists in need through 1866. Much of its aid went to widows and children of Federal soldiers; besides issuing clothing, the ETRA sold bacon, flour, and other provisions to widows at reduced prices, and provided half-rate fares for tickets on the East Tennessee and Virginia and the East Tennessee and Georgia railroads. The ETRA continued to rely on women to help the agency with its work and in 1866 reported that the women in Knoxville were still actively distributing aid there. By 1867, although Northern money ceased to flow into the ETRA, the organization

as late as May 1863. Running away was an option for slaves to escape the system, but the presence of Confederate forces in the region discouraged this, as indicated by the fact that prewar East Tennessee newspapers ran many more fugitive slave advertisements than the four per month which appeared during Confederate occupation.³⁴

Slavery legally ended in Tennessee on February 22, 1865, when the state constitution was amended to declare the immediate emancipation of all slaves in the state. The peculiar institution had been finished for a long time in East Tennessee, due to the rise in runaways which followed Federal occupation of the region. Freedmen's schools were established in the area, and blacks formed their own churches. Yet conditions for freed men and women in postwar East Tennessee were in some respects not much better than they had been before emancipation. White East Tennesseans were determined to keep blacks in an inferior position, so they burned freedmen's schools, lynched blacks, and instituted sharecropping as the norm throughout the region. Black leaders frequently protested such persecution and harassment, as demonstrated when a Knoxville policeman beat a black woman in 1868. One black citizen demanded to know "whether this brutal outrage was perpetrated on account of color? For I have never seen a white woman, when under arrest, treated as that officer treated this black woman."³⁵ White East Tennesseans, even those with Union sympathies, differed little from their racist Southern counterparts.

East Tennessee Unionist women greeted the end of the war with relief. On January 1, 1866, Kate Livingston reflected: "1866 is now upon us, how long it has been since New Year has dawned with peace in our land. Oh! May we as a nation forever remain in peace." Unfortunately, bushwhackers continued to pose a threat, as did the bands of returning soldiers who felt free to forage in the countryside for foodstuffs. For these reasons many Unionist refugee families chose to remain in exile rather than return to such uncertain conditions.³⁶

The East Tennessee Relief Association continued to help Unionists in need through 1866. Much of its aid went to widows and children of Federal soldiers; besides issuing clothing, the ETRA sold bacon, flour, and other provisions to widows at reduced prices, and provided half-rate fares for tickets on the East Tennessee and Virginia and the East Tennessee and Georgia railroads. The ETRA continued to rely on women to help the agency with its work and in 1866 reported that the women in Knoxville were still actively distributing aid there. By 1867, although Northern money ceased to flow into the ETRA, the organization

Robert J. Booker, *The History of Slavery in East Tennessee, 1791-1891* (Knoxville, 1990), 11. "Slavery's End in East Tennessee," *Journal of Negro History* (1980-81): 78-88.

Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee, 37-38. The first black church in Knoxville, the First African Baptist Church, founded prior to the end of slavery, including Mount Zion Baptist Church (1848), Mount Zion Baptist Church (1865), and Shiloh Baptist Church (1865), 22-23.

³⁴ *Chattanooga Daily Rebel*, August 9, 1862; Inman Diary, February 26, 1865; Greene County Court Minutes, November 5, 1861, May 5, 1863, McClung Collection; John Cimprich, *Slavery's End in Tennessee, 1861-1865* (University, AL, 1985), 17.

³⁵ Bryan, "Civil War in East Tennessee," 316, 336-43; *Knoxville Press and Herald*, November 26, 1868.

³⁶ Kate Livingston Diary, January 1, 1866; *East Tennessean* (Kingston), July 2, 1868.

continued to help families. Refugees continued to arrive in Knoxville and "except in a few cases, [they] have consisted of women and children—a large part of these being the families of deceased Federal soldiers." When the ETRA ceased operation in 1867 having distributed \$250,000 worth of goods to needy East Tennesseans during the war, there was still a need for relief, and the Freedmen's Bureau assumed responsibility for distributing foodstuffs among white and black East Tennessee women. As early as 1866, a Freedmen's Bureau report recorded that Chattanooga was still crowded with the cabins and huts of refugees, and "the condition of the women is even worse than that of the men. They outnumber the former at least three to one. These women are also less regularly employed than the men, a majority of them being prostitutes of the lowest order."³⁷

After the war, prosperous Northerners and federal authorities seemed to forget about the sacrifices of East Tennessee Unionists. Ironically, the Unionist residents, who were on the winning side, were left to fend for themselves in a region shattered by war. They had a difficult time getting started again; veterans who returned home in 1865 found smaller fields which had been planted by women and children. The East Tennessee postwar economy was further hindered by the shift among landless whites from wage labor to tenancy, and the postwar rise in population brought on an agricultural crisis as families became less self-sufficient with more mouths to feed. The rural regions of East Tennessee would not recover completely from the devastating wartime losses until the New Deal.³⁸

A survey of the census records shows that in rural East Tennessee the number of women listed as heads of households almost doubled as a result of the war. This holds especially true in Johnson and Greene counties, where Unionist sympathies—and army casualties—were high. Widows in those counties would continue to struggle as they had during the war to provide for their families, but since Confederate authorities had not forced them to leave their homes, the numbers of single women with some property remained fairly constant. In contrast, the plight of secessionist women was very different. The 1860 census of Knox County includes a sizable number of single wealthy women, some of whom were listed as slaveholders, but by 1870 this number had dramatically declined. To some extent, this can be explained by the increased number of men who arrived to seek jobs in the post-war industries of Knoxville, thereby allowing single women more opportunities for marriage. But most wealthy, urban women who

³⁷ Bryan, "Civil War in East Tennessee," 161; *Reports to the East Tennessee Relief Association at Knoxville, 1865, 1866, 1868*; Harris, "East Tennessee Relief Movement," 95-6; Thomas B. Alexander, "Neither Peace Nor War: Conditions in Tennessee in 1865," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 21 (1949): 39.

³⁸ Robert Tracy McKenzie, "The Economic Impact of the Civil War in Upper East Tennessee," Noe and Wilson, *The Civil War in Appalachia*, 207-16. See also W. Todd Groce, "Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates in the Civil War, 1860-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1999), 219-20.

had been listed as heads of families, many were Unionist sympathizers and had fled to the North. After the war, the departure, Unionist women (many of whom lived in East Tennessee) would begin to return to their homes, including the urban centers.

Postwar East Tennessee women created for themselves a variety of social and educational opportunities, including women's academies that were more inclusive. Tennessee as coeducation became more common. The Mountain Educational Institute, which had been founded in 1866, was one of the first to admit women in 1867.

Other social changes included the formation of musical organizations, the Women's Musical Society and the Martingale Society. The woolen cloth factory opened in 1867, providing women along with five other women. The Association formed as an aid directed by a board of trustees in Knoxville. In 1874, the association was renamed Home for orphan girls aged 7 to 14.

Clearly, then, East Tennessee women were affected by the War. The departure of their husbands and the social relations to which they were subjected had to be adjusted.⁴¹ Women made their own way, providing for their family and seeking economic security. A new "sphere" of activity and autonomy and order.⁴² Tennessee's political leaders, spied for the Union, and the underground railroad for fugitives, moved their families to the North.

³⁹ William A. Strasser, Jr., "Women in the Civil War Era," *Women in the Civil War Era* (Knoxville, 1999), 60-66.

⁴⁰ Dykeman, *Tennessee Women*, 100.

⁴¹ Nancy Grey Osterud, "Reconstruction in the Valley, 1861-1865," *New York Times*, 1865.

⁴² Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women* (Chapel Hill, 1992), 100.

ed to arrive in Knoxville and "except
n and children—a large part of these
rs." When the ETRA ceased opera-
d) worth of goods to needy East
need for relief, and the Freedmen's
g foodstuffs among white and black
Freedmen's Bureau report recorded
cabins and huts of refugees, and "the
at of the men. They outnumber the
re also less regularly employed than
s of the lowest order."³⁷

nd federal authorities seemed to for-
ionists. Ironically, the Unionist res-
ft to fend for themselves in a region
getting started again; veterans who
which had been planted by women
onomy was further hindered by the
to tenancy, and the postwar rise in
families became less self-sufficient
of East Tennessee would not recov-
esses until the New Deal.³⁸

it in rural East Tennessee the num-
most doubled as a result of the war.
ene counties, where Unionist sym-
dows in those counties would con-
provide for their families, but since
to leave their homes, the numbers
ed fairly constant. In contrast, the
erent. The 1860 census of Knox
althy women, some of whom were
er had dramatically declined. To
eased number of men who arrived
Knoxville, thereby allowing single
most wealthy, urban women who

had been listed as heads of household in 1860 were almost certainly Confederate sympathizers and had fled the region during the last years of the war. With their departure, Unionist women (who had always constituted the majority in rural East Tennessee) would begin to exert a stronger influence throughout the region, including the urban centers.³⁹

Postwar East Tennessee soon reflected the new roles which the Unionist women created for themselves. Education for women changed from the antebel- lum women's academies that favored the wealthy to coeducational institutions that were more inclusive. The women's colleges declined in number after the war as coeducation became more popular in the 1880s and 1890s. The Lookout Mountain Educational Institution, a nondenominational coeducational school that pioneered in the field of home economics, opened in Chattanooga in May 1866. Several other schools in the region, such as Maryville College, began admitting women in 1867.⁴⁰

Other social changes occurred that offered new experiences for women. Musical organizations involving women were founded, such as the Philharmonic Society and the Martingale Club, both established in Knoxville in 1867. A woolen cloth factory opened in Kingsport shortly after the war, employing ten women along with five men. In December 1873, the Knoxville Benevolent Association formed as an organization to extend aid to the worthy poor, with the aid directed by a board of managers composed of women from each church in the city. In 1874, the association established and supported the Girls Industrial Home for orphan girls aged three to eighteen.

Clearly, then, East Tennessee women's roles changed as a result of the Civil War. The departure of the majority of men from the region caused a shift in social relations to which women, older people, and children left at home had to adjust.⁴¹ Women made this adjustment and accepted their new responsibilities, providing for their family's immediate economic needs and protecting their long-term economic security. As one historian has suggested, they ignored the boundaries of their "sphere" during the war in the struggle to preserve community autonomy and order.⁴² The Unionist women of East Tennessee petitioned political leaders, spied for their cause, nursed and cooked for soldiers, operated an underground railroad for Unionists and prison escapees, visited prisons and hospitals, moved their families to safer locations, and even robbed and threatened

ts to the East Tennessee Relief
East Tennessee Relief Movement,"
ar: Conditions in Tennessee in
ns 21 (1949): 39.

of the Civil War in Upper East
alabria, 207-16. See also W. Todd
ates in the Civil War, 1860-1870"
lle, 1999), 219-20.

³⁹ William A. Strasser, Jr., "Our Women Played Well Their Parts': East Tennessee Women in the Civil War Era, 1860-1870" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1999), 60-66.

⁴⁰ Dykeman, *Tennessee Woman*, 6-7, 53-54.

⁴¹ Nancy Grey Osterud, "Rural Women During the Civil War: New York's Nanticoke Valley, 1861-1865," *New York History* 71, no. 4 (1990): 357-85.

⁴² Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1992), 149.

their fellow citizens.

Women thus bore the brunt of the domestic mountain war as they dealt with separations, divided families, closed churches and schools, famine, pillaging, shortages of necessary goods, relocations, and the overall breakdown of kinship and family ties. These conditions produced major changes in the social roles of East Tennessee women as they became the primary decision makers for their families.⁴³ Not surprisingly, these developments had some influence after the war, providing new options for East Tennessee women and allowing them to enter the public sphere in ways unimaginable in antebellum years. Ultimately, however, these wartime changes did not prove lasting. The Civil War in East Tennessee was not a "springboard from which [women] leaped beyond the circumscribed 'women's sphere' into that heretofore reserved for men." Instead, we find conditions in East Tennessee similar to what one study has shown to be true for women of the South in general: "change without change." Women took on new, traditionally male roles during the war and enjoyed new opportunities immediately afterwards; but eventually, women retreated to prewar roles in an attempt to recreate antebellum normalcy and stability.⁴⁴

Even so, the Civil War hardships and triumphs of Unionist women in East Tennessee were essential in the preservation of their families and communities, and had a significant influence on the overall war effort. If they produced no radical social changes in their own time, their experiences certainly served as an indication of future changes.

⁴³ McKinney, "Women's Role," 37-56.

⁴⁴ Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Bonnet Brigades* (New York, 1966), 367; George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Chicago, 1989).

A TOPICAL BIB THE EAST TENN PUBLICATIONS, N OF EAST TENNES

With this issue, *The* year of publication. Its st interest in and appreciatio tory of the State of Tennes eral." A review of the artic cates an impressive comm the articles which have a predecessor the East Tenn East Tennessee, but these several articles which rel tain to the Appalachian t topic of the South as a range of disciplines and valuable insights and res

As a means of fac Historical Society has p index will appear in 200 tion to these, a topical b Wetherington, appearo issue.² The usefulness comprehensive index, v effort to provide a simi mentary topical bibliog headings utilized by B easy integration of the ed at that time remain during the last twenty

¹ *Cumulative Index to Num* Society, 1966). For earlier *Annual Publications of the* Tennessee Historical Soc indexed.

² Theodore Baehr, Jr. and from *Publications* Nos. 1- 163-178.