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Book Review: Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War: Letters of the Anderson, Brockman, and Moore Families, 1853-1865

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Craig, Tom Moore, ed. *Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War: Letters of the Anderson, Brockman, and Moore Families, 1853-1865*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009. ISBN 978-1-57003-798-6. \$29.95.

In the final letter of *Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War: Letters of the Anderson, Brockman, and Moore Families, 1853-1865*, John Cunningham tells his uncle, former Confederate soldier Franklin Anderson, about the challenges of developing a viable sharecropping system in the wake of the Civil War. "Frank," he writes, "I feel as if I was commencing the world over and I can assure you it is anything but an agreeable thought" (p. 168). Although the modern reader may not sympathize much with hardships resulting from the rightful emancipation of an enslaved people, Cunningham's succinct expression of loss and fear nevertheless encapsulates a world in transition and turmoil, a world reflected in *Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War*.

Edited by Tom Moore Craig, a retired history teacher and descendent of the Andersons and Moores, this collection of correspondence among members of three upper-class planter families from Spartanburg County, South Carolina exemplifies the connection between the personal and the political, as individual lives shape and are shaped by difficult circumstances. One of two brothers, Andrew Charles Moore or Thomas John Moore, and their Spartanburg neighbor, John Crawford Anderson, wrote or were the recipients of most of the more than 120 letters in the book, which also features two short letters written by enslaved persons. Through short narratives focusing primarily on daily activities and private concerns, the collected letters map the larger cultural and political history of South Carolina and the Confederacy in the mid-nineteenth century. They document the horrors of war and the inhumanity of slavery, the politics of secession and the ideology of the Confederacy, in sometimes subtle, sometimes graphic ways. However, they also capture the details of everyday life in the midst of great change: romantic relationships, educational endeavors, unexpected illnesses, and much more.

Some of the most intriguing correspondence from before the start of the Civil War occurs between Andrew Moore and his mother, Nancy Montgomery Moore, in a series of letters written while Andrew was studying law at the University of Virginia. Among other things, Andrew seeks his mother's approval of his engagement to his second cousin, discusses his participation in moot-court, monitors activities on the family plantation, and refers to the "very threatening" (p. 19) political situation in Virginia after John Brown's raid. This group of letters as well as many others in the collection offer a vivid portrait of life during the period in all its aspects.

Unsurprisingly, after the war breaks out, the letters begin to emphasize the Confederate cause, violence on the battlefield, and the various disruptions to daily life caused by the conflict. The Moore brothers and John Anderson all served in the Confederate army, and their wartime letters are among the most disturbing in the collection. For example, even as he criticizes what he believes is the North's "wicked fanaticism," Andrew describes the "horrid spectacle" of the Union dead after the First Battle of Bull Run with solemn awe (p. 52). In many ways prophetic, this letter takes on a more tragic quality when, less than a year later, Thomas John Moore writes to his sister about finding and burying their brother Andrew's body after Second Bull Run. Though fortunate to be alive, Thomas and other survivors of the war still faced the trials of a new way of life, one that they did not entirely understand, nor consent to with happiness. *Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War* suggests, through absorbing personal accounts, that no one truly came home from the war, at least the home they knew before.

Complementing the letters themselves, Craig's introduction, coauthored with historian Melissa Walker, provides a brief history of the relevant families, an overview of the cultural and economic climate of South Carolina during the Civil War era, and a discussion of the war's impact and aftermath. Although they

contextualize the correspondence effectively, focusing on the destructive effects of the war and the complicated reality of slavery, Craig and Walker are perhaps too cautious in their attempts to achieve objectivity and avoid controversy. For instance, they describe a horrifying story about the punishment of enslaved people in one of the letters as simply "remarkable" (p. xix). While they are to be commended for allowing the letters to speak for themselves, Craig and Walker's unwillingness to engage with the moral implications of slavery and the war may be understandably off-putting for some readers.

That said, the introduction offers essential guidance for interpreting the letters, especially for non-specialist readers. Likewise, Craig's explanatory comments and footnotes throughout the text are quite helpful. The brief appendices, which feature relevant historical documents such as an 1866 sharecropping agreement from Thomas John Moore's farm, not only provide additional context but are also intriguing in their own right. Providing unique insight into the experiences and values of people writing history as they live it, *Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War* will be a fascinating read for anyone interested in the Civil War, professional scholars and lay enthusiasts alike. It would make an excellent addition to any library collection of historical works, particularly those collections emphasizing social or cultural history.

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