

CREATORS OF COMMUNITY:

CASSVILLE, GEORGIA 1850 - 1880

by

ALEXA ILENE CLAREMONT

(Under the Direction of Thomas G. Dyer)

ABSTRACT

The question of what makes and destroys a community is part of human curiosity. Although current scholarship points to a persistence of community, Cassville, Georgia would seem to be an exception. Antebellum Cassville was wealthy, educated, and slaveowning, but in 1864, Union troops occupied and destroyed it. In the Civil War's aftermath, railroad towns like neighboring Cartersville flourished while Cassville increasingly resembled an economic and social backwater. However, after the war, Cassville was spared some of the social trauma that rocked other Upcountry communities. During the 1870s, the economic instability which ruined many benefited Cassville. Merchants benefited from the increase in single-crop cultivation and many freedmen became landowners. The economic resurgence allowed white residents to fashion an identity based on the Lost Cause, while the growing black community founded organizations strengthening their own bonds. Although after the town's destruction the community was irrevocably changed, a new Cassville emerged and flourished.

INDEX WORDS: Community, Civil War, Georgia, Piedmont, Bartow county, Cassville, Slavery, Reconstruction

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DEDICATION

To William Augustus Chunn (1840-1921)

If it were not for his prolific and beautifully written Civil War era letters, I would have never discovered the town of Cassville. Thank you.

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I could not have finished this thesis without the assistance of many people. My mother, Ilene Claremont, has been a part of almost every step of the process, from the genesis of the project through the final version. She even traveled to Cassville numerous times with me and her willingness to listen and be a sounding board has been invaluable. My husband, Stefan Obenland, in addition to his unending patience, has prodded, nagged, and cajoled me into finishing; for this I am profoundly grateful. My best friend, Sona Joshi, took time out of her vacation to visit me to edit the first two chapters. Finally, I would like to thank my professors at both Emory University and the University of Georgia. Dr. Roark at Emory first introduced me to the vast world of Civil War social history and supported my graduate school goals. Dr. Inscoe at Georgia was always so supportive of my ideas and gave me valuable new avenues of interpretation. Finally, Dr. Dyer, my thesis advisor, had incredible patience with me throughout the entire process.

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CHAPTER 1

THE CREATORS OF COMMUNITY

The rugged and forested ridges of Georgia's Upper Piedmont are cut by numerous small waterways spilling from the Tennessee River to its north.¹ The valleys of the Piedmont are home to rich soil, and prior to European colonization, herds of buffalo, deer, and other game animals roamed freely throughout the area. The Etowah River traverses much of the Piedmont, starting from its headwaters in the foothills of the Appalachians and meandering in a southwesterly direction until it splits into the Coosa and Oostenaula rivers near present-day Rome. Beginning with the first colonists, bands of Indians who were drawn to the valley's fertile soil, its history would be marked by cycles of community development and transformation. Those cycles illustrate the interaction and struggle between the competing forces of community ties and societal and environmental change.²

Beginning in the tenth century, AD, members of the Woodland culture constructed semi-nomadic agricultural villages and used flint arrowheads to hunt for food in the valley. Today, the only tangible reminder of that culture lies in those flint arrowheads, which are still found along the Piedmont's waterways. Sometime in the twelfth century, the Woodland Indian groups were replaced by a more technologically advanced society known to archaeologists as the Mississippians. Part of a loosely

¹ Charles Flynn, *White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in Nineteenth Century Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 137.

² Thomas Bender. *Community and Social Change in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 17, 43.

connected people that stretched from western North Carolina to the plains of Illinois and from present-day Wisconsin to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippian culture's enduring symbol lies in the earthen mounds that they constructed. Located only a few miles from the valley in question was the town of Etowah, located on a gentle bend of the river that now bears that name. A flat river plain stretched around the town for several miles, and its proximity to the river and its rich soil led to prosperity for its inhabitants. The town of Etowah was grouped around one main mound which stood more than six stories above the surrounding countryside and provided a commanding view. The rest of the community grouped around the main mound, and lived in small earthen huts. Fanning out from the main town of Etowah were many other minor villages spread throughout the valleys of the Piedmont and linked to Etowah through trade, political allegiances, and kinship.

The town of Etowah had close to one thousand residents when the Spaniard Hernando de Soto visited there in the early 1540s. De Soto and his men marveled at the power and cohesiveness of the Mississippian culture, however, the diseases that he and his men left behind proved the undoing of that power. The vestiges of de Soto would ravage Indian populations throughout the Piedmont and North America and left nearly eighty percent of some populations dead.³ By the end of the sixteenth century, Etowah was abandoned, and the town's surviving people were scattered.

The end of the Mississippian culture and the abandonment of much of their land spelled opportunity for groups of Indians from some of the Iroquois tribes, who began to move south along the ridges of the Appalachian mountain range into the Piedmont.

³ Information from discussion with curator of Etowah Mounds State Historic Site, during author visit, February 8, 2005.

Coalescing with the remnants of the Mississippians, and merging some of the surviving culture into their own, this group became known as the Cherokee. Their strength and ferocity was known to the first European settlers of the backcountry, but over time, the Cherokees' agricultural society increasingly adopted European cultural attributes. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Cherokee were known as one of the "civilized" tribes of Indians. Many of their leaders had part-European ancestry, and some of the more affluent members of the nation lived in European-style housing, farmed in a European manner, and owned slaves. By the first years of the nineteenth century, the Cherokee nation boasted a democratic system of government; and their capital, New Echota, located near today's Calhoun, was a planned European-style town.⁴

The Cherokee lands encompassed much of Northern Georgia and stretched from the Tennessee and Alabama borders east to the towns of Hiawassee, Dahlonega, and Cumming. From Hiawassee, the nation snaked south along the Chestatee River to the present-day shores of Lake Lanier, all the way to Cumming, and then meandered south along the Chattahoochee River past Marietta to the northern border of present-day Fulton County. The land then went sharply west across the southern border of Paulding and Haralson Counties to the Georgia/Alabama state line.⁵ Within these borders, on the land that would become Cass County, some of the Cherokee people farmed numerous small plots of land gathered around compact villages.

The prosperity of the Cherokee and the fertile lands of their nation were looked at in envy by the European settlers of Georgia, who clung at first to the coastal areas of the

⁴ "A History of New Echota." From author visit to New Echota State Historic Site, Calhoun, Georgia, February 8, 2005.

⁵ Lucy J. Cunyus, *History of Bartow County, Georgia, Formerly Cass* (Atlanta: Tribune Publishing Co., n.d.), 12,13,14.

colony. As the population grew, white settlement moved west and north, and by the first part of the 1820s, white settlers from other parts of Georgia and the United States were routinely invading Cherokee land. Although the Cherokee tolerated these invasions, they recognized them as part of a greater plan by the government of the state of Georgia to eventually claim the lands of the Cherokee nation for themselves. This situation intensified in 1828, when gold was discovered in northern Georgia near present-day Dahlonega and triggered the nation's first gold rush. Whites from all over the United States began illegally settling in north Georgia and the prospect of even more gold made the Georgia legislature more desperate to claim the land once and for all as theirs.

The same year that gold was discovered in Dahlonega, Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States. Elected by a sweeping popular margin, Jackson had first gained fame during the War of 1812, when he led the American army to one of their few victories against the English and their native allies, during the Battle of New Orleans. Only a few years later, he participated in American fights against the Creek and Seminole Nations in southwestern Georgia, Alabama, and northern Florida. Jackson was recognized as having no love for Indians, and even as Secretary of War Lewis Cass appointed William Hardin in 1830 to negotiate with the Cherokee nation for the gold-rich lands around Dahlonega, most whites were confident that the result would be in their favor.⁶ Before the negotiations could even start, however, the state of Georgia, not wishing to wait, started dividing the Cherokee land into plots for white settlement. The Cherokee nation took their case for sovereignty to the United States Supreme Court, but even a decision in their favor was not honored by the state. By 1832, the state of Georgia's survey of the Cherokee nation was complete, and a lottery was set up to reward

⁶ Cunyus, 19.

the land. When the lots of the Purchase were divided, Cass County was formed, and in July 1833, the town of Cassville was founded in the fertile valley with the winding stream and surrounded by the forested hills that cut to the high cliffs of the Etowah River to the south.⁷ After several more years of resisting, the Cherokee were forcibly removed from their lands and sent west to what would become Oklahoma. The journey would leave over one-third of the participants dead and forced the Cherokee to reevaluate and alter their traditional ideas of community.⁸

The question of what makes a community, and conversely, what destroys a community, is part of natural human curiosity. By the time that whites began settling the land that would become Cassville, two different cultures and communities had already developed, flowered, and had been destroyed by outside societal and environmental forces. With the coming of the Civil War, Cassville's residents would witness similar events, as their community faced economic and physical ruin. The events of the Civil War and Reconstruction were a transformative event in the South, and traditionally were seen as marking the end of Southern community and culture.⁹ As twentieth century American society became more individualistic and suburban, scholars became more interested in the simpler times of smaller communities, and began to study the question of community survival, especially in the face of the physical or emotional destruction of the ties which bind community members to one another. Sociology, the discipline that originally embraced the study of communities, argued that dislocation and loss of community was the direct result of the urbanization of the late nineteenth and early

⁷ Cunyus, 10, 17.

⁸ Theda Perdue. *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1979), 70.

⁹ W.J. Cash. *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 25.

twentieth century. With the advent of historians into community studies in the 1970s, that theory has been continually refuted, and the current scholarship points instead to a persistence of community through time, even through transformative social events which would seem to destroy community ties.¹⁰

In the area of Southern community studies, much work has been done on the impact of the Civil War on social relations within individual communities.¹¹ Although community studies of the Civil War begin and end at various times, most argue quite eloquently for the persistence of community ties throughout the era. Even in works not concerned with particular communities, a consensus exists towards the persistence and solidification of Southern community ties both during and after the Civil War. Stephen Ash's *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South* argues that the twin traumas of invasion and occupation definitely shaped the postwar Southern landscape and mindset. Even as Ash demonstrates the devastation across the Southern countryside during the summer of 1865, he writes, "on the other hand, there was much to celebrate that summer . . . in the occupied South. With the disbanding of . . . armies . . . the suppression of banditry, and the return of refugees, dormant rural communities sprang

¹⁰ Bender, 102, 145.

¹¹ Significant work has been done on community in the antebellum and Civil War-era South. Notable works which were consulted for this paper include the following: Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield County, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Randolph Campbell, *Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850 – 1886* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983); Daniel Crofts, *Old Southampton: Politics and Society in a Virginia County, 1834 – 1869* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992); Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and The Transformation of the Southern Upcountry, 1850 – 1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Robert C. Kenzer, *Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849 – 1881* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Daniel Sutherland, *Season of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861 -1865* (New York: Free Press, 1995)

back to life.”¹² Looking more specifically at Georgia, Lee Kennett writes that in the wake of Sherman’s march, “Refugees came back and began picking up pieces of their former lives It’s easy to imagine want and desolation coloring everything, but there is evidence that against a backdrop of catastrophe Georgians continued to seek and find the customary pleasures in life.”¹³

Among studies concerned with individual areas, Daniel Sutherland’s *Seasons of War* demonstrated the persistence of community throughout the Civil War in Culpeper County, Virginia. This county, located at the entrance to the Shenandoah Valley, was arguably one of the most contested areas in the Virginia theatre. Despite four years of hardship and destruction, this community emerged from the war transformed but intact. Two more classic studies, Robert Kenzer’s *Kinship and Neighborhood in Southern Community*, about Orange County, North Carolina, and Randolph Campbell’s *A Southern Community in Crisis*, about Harrison County, Texas, explore the impact that war and defeat had on postwar community ties. Even though Kenzer finds tensions growing between rural and urban elements in Orange County extending into the 1880s, both he and Campbell agree on the presence of a greater solidification and homogenization among both the white and black communities as the South moved through Reconstruction and Redemption.

Despite the vast array of studies focusing on community and social change in the antebellum and Civil War era South, very little research has been done specifically on communities in the Georgia Upcountry. Although part of the Georgia Piedmont, the

¹² Stephen Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 230.

¹³ Lee Kennett, *Marching Through Georgia: Soldiers and Civilians in Sherman’s Campaign* (New York: Harper Collins, Inc. 1995), 314-315.

Upcountry is most easily defined geographically as the region north and west of present-day Atlanta, hemmed in by the northern borders of Cherokee, Bartow, and Floyd counties and a line that roughly parallels today's Interstate 20, and marked on the east and west by the Appalachian foothills and the Alabama border.¹⁴ What marked the Upcountry as a whole as distinct from the rest of the Georgia Piedmont was its lack of reliance on cotton cultivation, its stable minority slave population, and economically strong yeoman farmers prior to the Civil War.¹⁵ During the war, the Upcountry was devastated by successive waves of conflict, and was known for its large numbers of Unionists and deserters. Into the latter half of the nineteenth century, the economy of the Georgia Upcountry transformed into one that closely resembled most of the rest of Georgia, with a heavy dependence on tenancy, single-crop cultivation, and the crop-lien system.¹⁶ The transportation improvements and heavy railroad development that affected so much of Georgia's economy in the 1850s also had a limited impact on the Georgia Upcountry.¹⁷

Amid these regional similarities, the development of the town of Cassville marks it as an atypical Upcountry community. Cassville began its existence as a crossroads community, the seat of Cass county and serving as a way station for travelers traveling to Rome, some thirty miles west. However, the late 1840s brought the development of the Western and Atlantic Railroad, which ran from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Atlanta, Georgia and cut straight through the eastern half of Bartow County, an advancement that had a profound impact on the economic, political, and social development of Cassville.

¹⁴ Steven Hahn. *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of Georgia's Upcountry, 1850 – 1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 7 – 8.

¹⁵ Hahn, 9, 14, 20.

¹⁶ Hahn, 155.

¹⁷ Frederick A. Bode and Donald E. Ginter. *Farm Tenancy and the Census in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 75 – 77.

Bypassed by the railroad, but located only two miles from the tracks, many of Cassville's farmers were able to take advantage of the burgeoning cotton culture of the 1850s. As a result, Cassville's population became increasingly wealthy, educated, and slave-owning as the decade progressed. With the coming of the Civil War, the majority of Cassville's white population embraced the secessionist cause, although they tolerated the few Unionists within their midst.

The overwhelming evidence forwarded in other studies of the persistence of community through the Civil War and Reconstruction would seem to be misplaced when faced with Cassville's experiences during the Civil War. The town's experiences with occupation and destruction at the hands of Sherman's forces seemed to relegate it to the same fate as the communities of the Mississippians and Cherokee. After November 5, 1864, when the town was set ablaze by Union troops, Cassville simply ceased to exist. In the aftermath of the war, towns like Cartersville, built near the ruins of the Mississippian town of Etowah, flourished due to access to the railroad and wider markets, while Cassville languished and increasingly resembled an economic and social backwater.

Despite all of this, Cassville did not die with the lighting of the torches that burned the town. Instead, like other communities in the postwar South, Cassville was transformed, molding and reshaping itself for the challenges of a new political and economic system. For the people of Cassville, however, reinvention in the face of new economic and social conditions was not unknown. In the antebellum period, Cassville had been faced with irrelevance after the Western and Atlantic Railroad bypassed the town, and the community brought in a new focus, education, to assist in the town's resurgence. After the war, Cassville, unlike so many other towns throughout the

Upcountry, was spared some of the more egregious violence and social traumas. Then, during the 1870s, the economic instability that had ruined merchants and farmers and locked many into a web of tenancy and poverty had an unexpected benefit for Cassville. Merchants, drawn to the town for its close proximity to many small farmers, benefited from the increase in single-crop cultivation and resulting decline in agricultural self-sufficiency. Significant numbers of freed blacks looking to become landowners were able to realize their dream by capitalizing on the misfortunes of whites forced to sell their land in order to recoup debts. In the white community, the economic resurgence allowed prewar residents and others to fashion a new town identity based on the growing mythology of the Lost Cause, while the town's growing black community was able to found and support new organizations that strengthened their own bonds of community and kinship. Like in so many other towns across the South, the new identities fashioned by the white and black communities in the aftermath of the war point to a remarkable perseverance and persistence. Although in the wake of the town's destruction and the immense social dislocation of the Civil War, the antebellum Cassville community was irrevocably changed, a new Cassville emerged from those ashes.

CHAPTER 2

GLORY DAYS IN CASSVILLE: 1833-1860

The people who first settled Cassville represented a cross-section of Southern society. The Georgia legislature had only allowed Georgia residents to draw in the land lottery, but many of those who drew land did not settle in the area, or sold their land to emigrants from western North and South Carolina. After an initial boom in population, settlement in the county slowed after the Panic of 1837 and stayed low until the first half of the 1840s. Cassville was not formally incorporated by the Georgia Legislature until 1843.¹

Through the 1840s, Cassville grew to be a thriving center of government and commerce, as well as a popular place to settle. By 1849, Lucy Cunyus, who wrote a history of the county in the 1930s, claims that Cassville was “the largest and most prosperous town in Cherokee Georgia.”² The census of 1850 notes twenty-two carpenters of all sorts, eleven brickmasons, nine cabinet makers, and a shingle maker serving the community. They must have been kept busy with new construction as people settled the area. The stream of travelers coming to Cassville via one of the several stagecoach lines, or local citizens coming to town for court necessitated four hotels and other local businesses by the late 1840s. In the hotels, guests included lawyers, traders, and students, and had a mix of long-term and short-term residents.³ In 1850, for

¹ Lucy J. Cunyus, *History of Bartow County, Georgia, Formerly Cass* (Atlanta: Tribune Publishing Co., n.d.), 19.

² Cunyus, 20

³ *Seventh Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1850, Cass Co., Ga.

example, the census taker noted eight guests at the Eagle Hotel, including two students, a dentist, two brothers, BF and Benjamin Bennett, who were an editor and printer, lawyer William T. Wofford, and merchant Thomas A. Sullivan.⁴

The local businesses in 1850 Cassville were similar to those that would have been found in any small town in the United States at that time. Numerous merchants, many partners, ran eight dry goods and general stores. Enterprising young insurance agent John Burke did business out of his bookstore and printing establishment.⁵ Four physicians and dentist Joseph Headden tended to the physical health of the community, with their offices clinging to the periphery of the town square. Baptist ministers Alfred Buford and John Crawford, Episcopal Priest James George, and Methodist Minister William H. Felton, along with a non-resident Presbyterian minister, tried to meet the town's spiritual needs.⁶ Twenty years later, Felton, by then living in Cartersville, would be elected to the United States Congress during an Independent political campaign. Cassville's small and plain Baptist and Presbyterian Church buildings were located on the south side of the town, while the imposing Methodist Church, with its Roman columns, white frame construction, and green blinds in the windows, faced the courthouse square in the center of Cassville.⁷ The imposing brick courthouse in Cassville served as the center of community life and bustled with activity. On the days several times a year when the county superior court met, the merchants and hotels that clustered around the courthouse square would have been extremely busy as farmers from outlying areas and those with

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Cunyus, 20; *Seventh Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1850, Bartow Co., Ga.

⁶ James George was an Episcopalian minister, while Alfred Buford and John Crawford were Baptist ministers. William Felton was a Methodist minister. According to Cunyus (20) there was also a Presbyterian congregation in town, but there is no record of a Presbyterian minister in the 1850 census.

⁷ Cunyus, 127.

interest in the court cases traveled into town. The monthly property auctions at the courthouse door also drew large crowds. As the only town in the county containing over 150 persons, Cassville, with a population of over 2,400 in the town and surrounding countryside in 1850, was the dominant community economically and socially.⁸ Although not the largest community in Cherokee Georgia, even letters to Rome, forty miles to the west of Cassville, were directed “via Cassville.”⁹

Slavery as an institution was also more dominant in Cassville than in other Upcountry communities. Compared to the low percentage of slaves in other parts of the Upcountry, almost 32 percent of Cassville’s population was enslaved in 1850. The largest slaveholder in Cassville was John J. Rowland, who owned 103 slaves and 2,100 acres of land.¹⁰ Rowland’s land contained two mineral springs, located mere yards apart from each other, and by 1850, only seven years after he purchased the property, “Rowland Springs” was one of the most popular summer resorts in Georgia, containing a large hotel and other amenities. A more typical Cassville slaveholding was that of merchant and farmer Samuel Chunn, who owned ten slaves in 1850.¹¹ Born near Asheville, North Carolina, Chunn had moved to Cass County in the mid-1830s, where he met and married his wife, Elizabeth. After sojourns in southern Tennessee, where the couple’s son, William, was born, and Asheville, the Chunns had returned to Cassville only a couple of years prior to the census taker’s rounds. Samuel and Elizabeth’s home and farm was located only about half a mile from the store that Samuel owned.¹² Of his ten slaves, only

⁸ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1850, Cass Co., Ga.

⁹ Cunyus, 20.

¹⁰ Cunyus, 178.

¹¹ The typical slaveholding in 1850 Cassville was 8.22 slaves.

¹² *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1850, Cass Co., Ga.; Cunyus, 52; William A. Chunn, Collected letters; Duke University Special Collections, Georgia Department of Archives and History, and Emory University Special Collections.

four were adults, and their responsibilities would probably not have been nearly as specialized as those expected of the larger group owned by John Rowland. A young slave force would have been seen as an investment, however, as over time, it would experience natural growth. Chunn, with his thriving mercantile business, did not need a large agricultural force.

The nature and importance of slave owning in Cassville and the surrounding community would make a drastic shift with the events of the early 1850s. In 1851, the State of Georgia began to build the Western and Atlantic railroad through the Upcountry, a move which would significantly alter future economic conditions throughout the region. The railroad line ran southeast from the small Tennessee River town of Chattanooga to the community that would become Atlanta, paralleling the route that today's Interstate 75 takes on its way between Chattanooga and Atlanta. The railroad would link northwest Georgia with markets from Nashville to Savannah to Charleston and New Orleans; as luck would have it, it ran right through the center of Cass County.

With the advent of the railroad in the Georgia Upcountry, commerce began increasingly to focus around the railroads. As new markets were opened, the Upcountry's economy moved away from its traditionally self-sufficient emphasis and began mirroring the burgeoning "cotton culture" of Middle and Southern Georgia. Although the staple commodities of wheat and hogs were still common in Cass County, cotton production doubled and patterns of slave ownership began to mirror the cotton belt in the decade after the railroad's completion. The rapid expansion of cotton production resulted in

economic hardship for many farmers, as success increasingly became tied not only to slaveowning, but also to convenient access to the railroads.¹³

As one of the most prominent towns in the region, the residents of Cassville expected that the Western and Atlantic would run through the town on its way south. When the railroad surveyors came through Cass County in 1851, however, they discovered gravel ridges along the most practical route between Adairsville and Cassville.¹⁴ In addition, the village of Kingston, which was located almost due west of Cassville, was already the terminus of a railroad that ran to Rome, in Floyd County. The “State Road,” as the Western and Atlantic was called, needed to link with that line.¹⁵ When the railroad finally opened for business in 1853, the line angled southwest from Adairsville on its way to Kingston. The closest point to Cassville was nearly two miles from the town, at a depot that would become known as Cass Station.

Cassville’s population growth stagnated after the Western and Atlantic bypassed it, unlike the booming railroad towns of Adairsville, Kingston, and Cartersville. Of these three towns, however, only Cartersville emerged as serious competition to Cassville’s political prominence. Located seven miles south of Cassville, Cartersville was a village of only about 150 people in 1850. The coming of the railroad through the town, in particular the decision by the state to locate a roundhouse there, resulted in a population explosion. By 1853, Cartersville had a population of close to 2,500 people. In the same period, the population of Cassville had declined from 2,400 people to only about 1,800.¹⁶

¹³ Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 45.

¹⁴ Cunyus, 167-168; Adairsville is located approximately ten miles north of Cassville, on the northern border of the county.

¹⁵ Cunyus, 26.

¹⁶ Cunyus, 31; *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1850, Cass Co., Ga.

Many merchants who had previously done business in Cassville moved their businesses to Cartersville, while others maintained establishments in both places.

As the decade progressed, some merchants felt that Cartersville would be a better choice than Cassville as the county seat, and a competition emerged between the two towns. This type of competition was not unusual in the rapidly changing economy of the 1850s Upcountry. For those who sought to make money and gain power through the new uses of the market, Cassville was no longer important. Those people wished for Cass County's commerce and politics to be consolidated in one area.

The growing competition between Cartersville and Cassville over the location of the county seat reached a climax in 1858. By this point, some of the county leaders were so convinced that the county seat would be moved that they were not making necessary improvements to the courthouse and jail in Cassville. To resolve that issue, a vote was held in June 1858 over whether the county seat should be moved to another location within Cass County. The bill that had allowed for the referendum had also stated that the citizens of whatever town was chosen as the new county seat would be solely responsible for the costs of moving the courthouse and jail.¹⁷ Although Cartersville was the largest community in the county, its citizens balked at the idea of having to bear the financial burden of moving the county seat. By an overwhelming margin the motion failed, and the citizens of Cassville breathed a sigh of relief.¹⁸ The loss of the county seat would have resulted in a major economic blow to the town and the surrounding community.

Of course, the massive changes wrought by the advent of the railroad had already dealt an economic blow to Cassville. The community's leaders needed some way to

¹⁷ Joseph B. Mahan. *A History of Old Cassville: 1833 – 1864* (Cartersville, GA: Etowah Valley Historical Society, 1994), 73.

¹⁸ Cunyus, 114.

rejuvenate its image and draw businesses and new residents to the town. Founding a college in Cassville seemed to be a perfect solution. Although there had been numerous small private academies run out of people's homes in the twenty years since its founding, Cass County could boast no colleges in the early 1850s. Having a college, or better yet, two, was considered by many to be an integral part of progress in nineteenth century American towns.¹⁹ In the minds of Cassville's supporters, there could be no better way to boost Cassville's fortunes than by being the home of a college. Even better, the lack of railroad access could be seen as an advantage. Without the influence of the types of people that gathered in railroad towns, as well as the smoke and noise from the trains, Cassville was a healthier and safer environment for students.²⁰ The Cassville Female College and Cherokee Baptist College, both founded in 1854, were the first state-chartered colleges in the Upcountry. By 1860, the two schools were gaining a good reputation throughout Cherokee Georgia, and their enrollment was increasing every year.²¹

The Cassville Female College was supported by the Georgia Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the forerunner of today's United Methodist Church. The College's main instructional building was located on a hill immediately west of and overlooking Cassville, on land donated by prominent Cassville resident and Cass County ordinary Nathan Land. The imposing brick structure was finished in 1855, and offered classes in mathematics, natural sciences, and English and Latin literature. The trustees of the college were given the authority to grant degrees to graduates. In addition, the Cassville Female College offered courses that would have been expected from nineteenth

¹⁹ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Random House, 1973), 478.

²⁰ Cunyus, 135.

²¹ Cunyus, 147.

century female academies, like painting, music, and needle work. The college boasted a two-story boarding house for out-of-town students, run with the assistance of the Land family and their sixteen slaves.²² The Land's own home, a spacious frame farmhouse, was located only a few hundred yards from the college building. If they chose not to live in the boarding house, students could also board with the Lands' close neighbors, Samuel and Elizabeth Chunn, and their teenaged son, William.²³

The other collegiate institution in Cassville, the all-male Cherokee Baptist College, was associated with the Middle Cherokee Baptist Association. It was founded in 1854, and was also chartered by the state of Georgia. It offered a four-year college course and a preparatory department for its students, and granted the A.B. and B.Ph. degrees to its graduates. The land on which the college sat was donated by college trustee and longtime local Baptist minister John Crawford.²⁴ Located on a hill above the main road to Kingston, three-quarters of a mile southwest of Cassville, the large three-story brick building that housed the college was completed in 1856. The location afforded beautiful vistas of the surrounding ridgelines, and was perfect for the observatory that was constructed on the top floor of the main building. Also within the main building and the two-story wings that jutted out to each side were a large chapel, seven classrooms, two "apparatus rooms," a library, and two meeting rooms for literary societies.²⁵ By 1860, close to 100 young men from around Northwest Georgia were enrolled in classes ranging from English literature and rhetoric to natural sciences and higher mathematics.²⁶

²² *Eighth Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga.; *Cartersville Express*, May 2, 1872.

²³ Cunyus, 142.

²⁴ Cunyus, 53.

²⁵ Cunyus, 145.

²⁶ Cunyus, 146.

The gamble that Cassville's residents placed on the colleges was a large one. Many of these types of institutions failed in the mid-nineteenth century, and still others did not gain the reputation for quality education found in descriptions of either institution. Before the colleges were founded, middle and upper-class Cass County residents, if they wanted their children educated past the elementary level, were forced to send them to the more settled parts of eastern Georgia, where private institutions had been around much longer.

The colleges, however, were a success, and fed increasingly off of the wealth Northwest Georgia's residents were gaining from the burgeoning cotton markets as the 1850s concluded. In Cassville alone, although levels of adult literacy did not show an appreciable gain between 1850 and 1860, the number of children between the ages of six and fifteen enrolled in school jumped 22 percent.²⁷ This increase in school attendance can be explained two ways. First, the increased access to education from the existence of both the Cassville Female College and the Cherokee Baptist College resulted in more parents sending their children to school. Secondly, the wealth that poured into Cassville and the rest of Cass County due to the increase in cotton production translated into parents being more able to afford to educate their children. Higher levels of slaveholding also meant that the children of wealthier Cassville residents were not needed as much around the house as they were previously.

The wealth Cassville's residents were earning in cotton translated into significantly higher levels of slave ownership as the census taker again made his rounds through the community. Although the total number of residents in Cassville and surrounding area had declined by 473 people between 1850 and 1860, the percentage of

²⁷ See tables 2.1 and 2.2.

slaveholders as household heads had increased by 10 percent, to almost 42 percent. The typical slaveholding had increased by only a very small amount since 1860, although the profile of the typical slave owner had changed. In contrast to 1850, the typical slave owner in 1860 Cassville was a cotton farmer by sole trade. He was also older and more well-established in his business, despite owning almost the exact same number of slaves as in 1850. An example of a typical slave owner would be William Mercer, a fifty-four year old “gentleman” by occupation, who owned nine slaves.²⁸ The greater number of slaveholders, however, did not translate into a high percentage of planters, those who owned over twenty slaves. The percentage of planters in Cassville decreased between 1850 and 1860, while the percentage of small slaveholders increased dramatically.²⁹ In 1850, 88 percent of the slaveholders in Cassville owned fewer than twenty slaves. By 1860, that had increased to 91 percent.³⁰ The heady economic times of the 1850s were allowing more and more of Cassville’s residents to gain wealth through slaveowning.

This increase in the black population, however, only led to a slight increase in the free black population in Cassville. Throughout the 1850s, the racial climate throughout the south was growing more and more hostile toward free blacks. In 1850, there were no free blacks in Cassville. Ten years later, there was one free black family, headed by Pheraby Buff, a forty-year old mulatto woman who lived with her three children (also mulatto) next door to the elderly Richmond Burnley and his overseer.³¹

²⁸ *Eighth Census of the United States Slave Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga.

²⁹ Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 42.

³⁰ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1850, Cass Co., Ga.; *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga..

³¹ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga. Burnley owned thirty slaves, of whom 26 were mulatto.

With such a vested interest in the economy of cotton and slavery, Cassville residents were intensely interested in the divisive national election of 1860. Despite having Democratic leanings, the residents of the Upcountry as a whole were known for an independent streak in their politics. Cassville and Cass County were no exception to this general trend. Only one year before, in 1859, Cassville resident and lawyer Warren Akin had been nominated for governor against the popular Democratic incumbent Joseph Brown.³² Although Akin lost the election, his nomination, and the support he garnered in his hometown, is indicative of the independent spirit in the Upcountry. This independent spirit continued in 1860. As in all southern states, Abraham Lincoln was not on the ballot, but a fierce battle was waged in Georgia between the Democrat Stephen Douglas, the Southern Democrat John Breckenridge, and the Constitutional Unionist John Bell. This contentiousness was compounded, however, by the fear of a possible slave revolt instigated by abolitionists. The racial climate in Northwest Georgia had deteriorated in the aftermath of the John Brown raid in 1859 and continued to decline during the 1860 elections. A slave insurrection panic in Dalton in August, during which it was rumored that a group of slaves planned to seize a train and travel down the Western and Atlantic to Marietta, burning every town along the way, touched off similar panics in Cassville's neighbors of Adairsville and Cartersville.³³ In the aftermath, slave patrols were increased, and individual slave owners began to keep a close eye on their slaves' discussions about the elections.

Although the election outcome in Cassville is unknown, it seems as if many of Cassville's residents remained ambivalent to the idea of state secession, despite their

³² Cunyus, 162.

³³ Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 33-35.

fears of abolitionist insurrections. Cunyus writes in her county history that “there were so many South Carolinians living in the county that when that state seceded many wanted to enlist at once, and not wait until Georgia seceded.”³⁴ However, Cass County’s three delegates to the January Secession Convention in Milledgeville, Cassville residents William Wofford, Turner Trippe, and Hawkins Price, voted against secession.³⁵ This feeling of ambivalence was common throughout the Upcountry. Although the economy of cotton and slavery had entwined many Cassville residents; the independent political streak there prior to the Civil War was still present.

As in many other communities throughout the South, ambivalence toward the necessity of military action against the North faded once Fort Sumter was fired upon. Through the late spring and summer of 1861, support for the Confederacy grew exponentially among yeoman farmers and planters alike.³⁶ So many young men volunteered for Confederate service that the nascent government was unable to generate adequate supplies, and by the end of that year, four companies of soldiers had been formed in Cassville alone.

William Chunn was one of those who volunteered for service from Cassville in the early months of the war. Leaving his parents, Samuel and Elizabeth, behind, as well as his wife, Lila, and baby daughter, Helen, William set off with the First Regiment Georgia State Troops to Savannah in September 1861. Writing about his trip, William wrote his wife that “nothing unusual happened on our trip save the unusual profusion of ladies smiles, hearty cheers, and gifts of bouquets. I never saw a set of boys enjoy themselves better in my life, they were hollering and waving handkerchiefs the whole

³⁴ Cunyus, 163, 209.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 117.

time.”³⁷ Chunn’s biggest complaint during his time in Savannah was of the poor quality of the food that his slave prepared.³⁸ The men from Cassville who had joined the Phillips Legion Cavalry earlier in the year also had similar experiences as they traveled by train to Virginia and participated in the decisive victory over the Northern troops at Manassas in August. Jaunts to Savannah and Virginia to defend the South from Yankees were grand adventures for the young men who joined the army in 1861, but they, like so many Confederate supporters throughout the South, did not realize the deadly and overwhelming toll that the next four years would take on their community.

³⁷ William A. Chunn to Lila L. Chunn, September 8, 1861, William A. Chunn Collection, Emory University Special Collections.

³⁸ William A. Chunn to Lila L. Chunn, October 19, 1861. Emory University.

TABLE 2.1
ANALYSIS OF 1850 CASSVILLE POPULATION
FROM U.S. CENSUS POPULATION AND SLAVE SCHEDULES

| Population Data | | |
|---|---------------|--------|
| Total number of households | 283 | |
| Total number of whites | 1653 | 68.61% |
| Total number of free mulattos | 0 | 0.00% |
| Total number of slaves | 756 | 31.38% |
| Total number of inhabitants | 2409 | 100% |
| Slaveholders | | |
| Total number of slaveowning white households | 92 | 32.50% |
| Number of slaveowners owning 1-10 slaves | 74 | 80.43% |
| Number of slaveowners owning 11-20 slaves | 10 | 10.86% |
| Number of slaveowners owning over 21 slaves | 11 | 11.95% |
| Average slaveholding | 8.22 slaves | |
| Education | | |
| White literacy (21+) | 522 | 83.52% |
| Black/mulatto literacy (21+) | Unknown | |
| Total number white children 6-15 attending school | 184 | 25.84% |
| Total number black/mulatto children 6-15 attending school | Unknown | |
| Landowning and Wealth | | |
| Total number of white landholding households | 137 | 67.48% |
| Total number of black landholding households | 0 | 0% |
| Total Real Estate Wealth | \$ 524,218.00 | |
| Total Personal Wealth | \$ 927,389.00 | |
| Total Per Capita Wealth | \$ 1,295.06 | |

TABLE 2.2
ANALYSIS OF 1860 CASSVILLE POPULATION
FROM U.S. CENSUS POPULATION AND SLAVE SCHEDULES

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------|--------|
| Total number of households | 204 | |
| Total number of whites | 1121 | 57.90% |
| Total number of free mulattos | 4 | 0.20% |
| Total number of slaves | 812 | 41.90% |
| Total number of inhabitants | 1936 | 100% |

Slaveholders

| | | |
|---|-------------|-----|
| Total number of slaveowning white households | 96 | 47% |
| Number of slaveowners owning 1-10 slaves | 67 | 70% |
| Number of slaveowners owning 11-20 slaves | 20 | 21% |
| Number of slaveowners owning over 21 slaves | 9 | 9% |
| Average slaveholding | 8.46 slaves | |

Education

| | | |
|--|---------|--------|
| White literacy (21+) | 411 | 88.96% |
| Black/mulatto literacy (21+) | Unknown | |
| Total number white children 6-15 attending school | 136 | 47.88% |
| Total number black/mulatto children 6-15 attending school | Unknown | |

Landowning and Wealth

| | | |
|---|---------------|--------|
| Total number of white landholding households | 137 | 67.48% |
| Total number of black landholding households | 0 | 0% |
| Total Real Estate Wealth | \$ 524,218.00 | |
| Total Personal Wealth | \$ 927,389.00 | |
| Total Per Capita Wealth | \$ 1,295.06 | |

CHAPTER 3

THE WAR YEARS: RIPPING THE FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY APART

1861-1865

As in so many other communities throughout the South, the coming of conflict in the Civil War brought into sharp relief divisions within the fabric of Cassville's community life. The 1850s had proved to be a time of transition for Cassville. The railroad had spelled an end to the town's economic prominence within the county and reoriented farmers away from food cultivation and toward cotton. This increasing reliance on cotton production also led to an increasing reliance on slave labor. The slave population in the area rose by 10 percent during the decade.¹ Although many whites in the community had prospered during the economic boom of the 1850s, many others had not, and despite gains in landownership during the previous decade, close to 40 percent of Cassville households owned no land in 1860.² The gap between the richest and poorest members of Cassville society had grown. In 1850, for example, the richest 20 percent of white residents had owned 63 percent of the land value. By 1860, that number had grown to 69 percent.³ These divisions between the strata of Cassville society would be tested to the breaking point during the stressful war years. As dearly as many of Cassville's wealthy residents wished for the community to be united completely toward the

¹ The slave population of Cassville stood at 41.8 percent of the total population in 1860.

² Sixty-three percent of households owned land in 1860. In 1850, that number was only 51.6 percent.

³ *Seventh Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1850, Cass Co., Ga.; *Eighth Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga.

Confederacy, there was a minority who maintained their support of the Union even after conflict began.

Although the Georgia Upcountry as a whole has a reputation among historians as having had much Unionist sentiment through the Civil War, Cassville's active Unionist population was quite small, and its members were bound together by interlocking links of kinship and proximity. The two leaders of the Unionist community were carpenters Jesse James and William Sylar. Both Tennessee-born and in their mid-fifties in 1860, both James and Sylar had lived in Cassville for over twenty years.⁴ Although neither was destitute in 1850, both had prospered during the following decade. Although only James had been able to increase the worth of his land, Sylar had been able to purchase one fifty year old female slave.⁵ James and Sylar watched with dismay as their friends and neighbors adopted what they saw as a treasonous cause against the United States, and as any disagreement with the new government's policies were met with accusations of disloyalty. Secretly, the two men began gathering a small group of like-minded individuals who eventually included Jesse James' son-in-law, wagon maker Hiram H. Holmes, Holmes' fellow wagon maker Robert Nelson, the widow Nancy Russell and her hired man Thomas Nance, and Vermont-born Methodist Minister Thomas Kelsey.⁶ Although finding people who shared their beliefs was probably not too hard, given Cassville's small size, gathering them together unobtrusively was most likely quite difficult.

⁴ *ibid*; *Cartersville Weekly Express*, June 10 1871.

⁵ *Eighth Census of the United States Slave Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga.

⁶ Deposition of Jesse James, December 8, 1877, and Deposition of Thomas Nance, February 27, 1878, claim of Nancy Russell, Records of the Southern Claims Commission (Allowed Claims), Bartow County, Ga., National Archives, Washington DC; Bell I. Wiley, ed. *The Letters of Warren Akin, Confederate Congressman* (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 1959), 29. All further reference to the Records of the Southern Claims Commission will be assumed to be from Bartow Co, Ga.

That those meetings did occur, however, is not in doubt. From Jesse James' testimony to the Southern Claims Commission in 1874, corroborated by Thomas Nance, it seems that Cassville's Unionists usually met at Nancy Russell's home in rural Cassville. Rarer were meetings at Hiram Holmes' wagon shop, located across from the courthouse in the center of Cassville. However clandestine the Unionists meetings were, they were still well-known in the community. Both Sylar and Nelson had been outspoken opponents of secession in the days preceding the war, and the stain of Unionism probably spread to their families as well. In small communities, keeping one's beliefs secret would have been difficult, and like Nancy Russell, one's reputation as "a Union woman" could have been easily spread throughout the community by one's neighbors.⁷

Being a Unionist in Cassville was made even more difficult by the fact that Unionism was inextricably entwined in many Southerners minds with the dangerous crime of abolitionism. The institution of slavery had become essential to Cassville's farming economy during the 1850s, and any perceived threat to it could be seen as tantamount to treason. In addition, the large increase in the slave population had compounded the fear of a possible slave revolt instigated by abolitionists.⁸ In the psychological wake of the pre-war unrest, Nancy Russell's sentiments that "she would freely give up every Negro she had if it would stop the war," would have been considered dangerous in the extreme.⁹

⁷ Deposition of Thomas Nance, February 27, 1878, Records of the Southern Claims Commission (Approved Claims), National Archives, Washington, DC; Wiley, 29.

⁸ Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 33-35.

⁹ Deposition of Thomas Nance, February 27, 1878, claim of Nancy Russell, Records of the Southern Claims Commission (Approved Claims), National Archives, Washington, DC. Of Cassville's Unionists, only William Sylar and Nancy Russell were slaveowners.

On the other hand, the slaves who made up 42 percent of Cassville's population would have probably viewed Mrs. Russell's statement favorably. Located at the bottom of the southern hierarchy, slaves were the first to feel the privations of the war and the last to receive protection from its devastation. Although some of Georgia was able to avoid shortages of food and materials for the first two years of the war, families in non-plantation areas like Northwest Georgia felt the hardships both sooner and more keenly.¹⁰ The Confederate conscription laws passed in early 1862 affected non-slaveholders and those with small slaveholdings alike, and only 9 percent of the slaveholders in Cassville qualified for the exemptions granted to those who owned or oversaw more than twenty slaves. The adversity faced by white families was passed on to their slaves, and the slaves did not acquiesce quietly to the upheaval. Food shortages were countered with increased theft, and attempts by white women to control their husbands' slaves were increasingly met with resistance.¹¹

Some slave families were also forced to deal with the absence of a family member due to the burgeoning wartime industry in Cass County. The Etowah Manufacturing and Mining Company located south of Cartersville, which manufactured iron, and the Bartow County Saltpetre Works in Kingston were both integral to the Confederate war effort.¹² Some Cassville slaveowners found it to their advantage to hire their slaves out to the two businesses. By mid-1862, the two companies employed well over 100 slaves. In addition, some slaves had family members who accompanied their masters to the battlefield. Sip, who belonged to William Chunn's father Samuel, accompanied William to Savannah as

¹⁰ Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 124.

¹¹ Mohr, 213, 226, 227.

¹² Ibid, 153, 155.

his cook and manservant when he joined the First Regiment Georgia State Troops in September 1861. Nine months later, when William mustered into the Fortieth Georgia Infantry Regiment and was assigned to the Cumberland Gap region of Tennessee, Sip again went along. Sip's wife, Quin, and their four children, all of whom were under the age of six in 1861, were left behind in Cassville, their only contact with their husband and father through notes in William's letters.¹³

The hardships felt by Sip and Quin Chunn and other slave and free families were not unique, however. As 1862 continued, the level of destitution among many Piedmont families grew overwhelmingly. In December of that year, "the state legislature, acting upon the recommendations of Governor Brown, allocated \$2,500,000 for the indigent..." Over 1,500 people were listed as beneficiaries in Bartow County alone when the money was distributed in the spring of 1863.¹⁴

At the same time, the war was moving ever closer to Cassville's peaceful valley. In July 1862, General Braxton Bragg, who commanded the Confederate Army of Tennessee, moved his base of operations to Chattanooga, Tennessee. In anticipation of the casualties and illness that would accompany the army, a line of twenty-nine hospitals was built along the Western and Atlantic between Chattanooga and Atlanta.¹⁵ Cassville, although located nearly two miles from the imposing stone depot at Cass Station, was nevertheless the site of one of these hospitals. The Cassville Hospital was fully operational by the end of 1862, when it began to receive casualties after the Battle of Stones' River in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

¹³ Lila L. Chunn to William A. Chunn, September 7, 1861, October 19, 1861, William A. Chunn Papers, Emory University; Lila L. Chunn to William A. Chunn, May 20, 1862, William A. Chunn papers, Duke University; *Ninth Census of the United States Population Schedule*, 1870, Bartow Co., Ga..

¹⁴ Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 123.

¹⁵ Mohr, 129.

In May 1863 the Union Army of the Cumberland, working from their base in Nashville, Tennessee, began a major offensive south to cut the Confederacy's supply lines from Atlanta. As part of that offensive, the two armies met in September in the small town of Chickamauga on the Georgia and Tennessee border, only about fifty miles from Cassville. In the aftermath of that battle, three more military hospitals were quickly created. The pews were removed from the town's Presbyterian and Methodist Churches and replaced with hospital beds, and Doctor Weston Hardy's services were appropriated by the army, as well as his beautiful white home on the edge of town. As classes had already been cancelled for the year at Cherokee Baptist College and Cassville Female College, both of those buildings were commandeered as well.¹⁶ As the Confederate Army besieged Chattanooga throughout the unseasonably cold fall, the town became overrun with wounded and sick soldiers.¹⁷

The presence of the soldiers quickly made an indelible impression in the daily lives of Cassville's citizens. Many of the town's slaves were hired from their owners to work in the hospitals, and some of the town's women, like Lila Chunn, became volunteer nurses in the hospitals. Others, like Mary V. Akin, the wife of Confederate Congressman Warren Akin, attempted to assist some of the soldiers' families. Writing many years after the war about that time, Mary Akin recalled that, "through all this work there were the poor and wounded and sick soldiers in the nearby hospitals whom we tried to feed with such things as the Government could not supply, and we divided all we could spare to them and we were called on often to take into our houses . . . sometimes a convalescent one until he could travel or was sent for, and often to prepare a lunch for a soldier going

¹⁶ Joseph B. Mahan, *A History of Old Cassville: 1833-1864* (Cartersville, GA: Etowah Valley Historical Society, 2001), 103.

¹⁷ "History of Cassville," accessed from <http://hub.dataline.net.au/~tfoen/cassville.htm> .

to the front again or going home.”¹⁸ The psychological strain on some families, already coping with their own worry about loved ones at the front, as well as the increasing food and supply shortages, was exacerbated by the presence of the soldiers. In November, Nathan Land wrote his son-in-law, William Chunn, who was serving on the front lines in Chattanooga that “there is not scarcely an hour in the day but what some poor sick or wounded soldier is at our door begging for some small favor which . . . we are not able to grant.”¹⁹ As the war increasingly intruded on their lives, Cassville’s residents began to seek safety away from their home.

Even before the Confederate Army’s devastating losses at the Battle of Chattanooga in late November and subsequent withdrawal to Dalton, many of the more prominent families in town began weighing their options for leaving the area. The close proximity of the Union army caused panic among slaveholders in Cassville who feared their heretofore loyal slaves would try to escape. Following other slaveholders from eastern and coastal Georgia who had taken their families and property to remote Southwest Georgia, some Cassville residents, like Nathan Land, also began to search for refuge in that area of the state.²⁰

Fearing that “our Army will be under the necessity of falling back, and perhaps before six months we shall have to leave or be in the Enemy’s lines,” Nathan Land traveled to his birthplace in Twiggs County, located thirty miles southeast of Macon, in early November 1863 to find a farm to move his large family and his sixteen slaves.²¹ On

¹⁸ Sally Mae Akin, “Refugees of 1863,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 31 (1947): 113.

¹⁹ Nathan Land to William A. Chunn, November 17, 1863, Chunn-Land Family Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

²⁰ Mohr, 200.

²¹ Nathan Land to William A. Chunn, November 17, 1863, Chunn-Land Family Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

his first trip to Twiggs County, Mr. Land had no luck finding a suitable place, as land prices had skyrocketed in the county.²² Seeing Land's lack of success, other Cassville residents, like Warren Akin, searched for safe havens in the hill country northeast of Atlanta. Towns like Elberton, Akin's birthplace, eventually became small enclaves of Cassville society as multiple families found refuge there. As the threat of occupation became more of a reality, it became increasingly difficult for families who wished to leave Cassville to find buyers or renters for their land. As the winter progressed, more and more Cassville residents echoed Lila Land Chunn's worry that "I fear we will all have to run from here before the winter is through, and we will have no place to go."²³

As the spring of 1864 progressed, many Cassville residents' search for safe haven from the Union army became desperate. The orderly move of the Akin family, with their three boxcars of belongings, including "our stove for cooking . . . our two dogs and one cat, two servants, five children, myself and my husband . . . the Negroes, all their plunder . . . and . . . two mules, two horses, a buggy, one cow, one wagon, and all sorts of things . . ." was outweighed by the great majority of Cassville's residents who escaped only hours before the May 18 invasion.²⁴ Several months after her harrowing train trip to Newnan from Cassville on May 16, Lila Land Chunn, who fled with her mother-in-law's ten slaves and her two small daughters, wrote that in the face of the Union advance, "Atlanta was perfectly thronged with people, and they all panic stricken, all was fuss and

²² Mohr, 103; Ibid.

²³ Lila L. Chunn to William A. Chunn, November 5, 1863, William A. Chunn Papers, Duke University.

²⁴ Akin, 113-114.

confusion.”²⁵ Lila’s own parents were able to move their entire household in early May, having finally found haven in Twiggs County.²⁶

The dichotomy between those that were able to leave Cassville and those that did not illustrated the growing strain in the community between those with means and those without. In many respects, Cassville, like so many other communities in the South, was “already shaken, weakened, or transfigured before the first blue-clad regiment marched in . . . ,” for those that fled constituted the town’s leading citizens.²⁷ Those who chose or were forced to stay probably watched the panic among the wealthy with some interest. In Cassville, the wealthy families were among those that had supported the Confederacy and its goals most wholeheartedly, and had believed most sincerely in the nation’s ultimate victory. It is reasonable to believe that the more educated among Cassville’s yeomen would have understood the irony. In later years, the mythology of the Lost Cause would characterize those who fled as cowards, while those who stayed behind were commended for their bravery in the face of the enemy.²⁸ Cassville resident Elizabeth Gaines wrote that “our feelings [in the face of the invasion] can better be imagined than described. We had never allowed ourselves to believe that we would ever fall into the hands of the merciless enemy. Everyone had read of how unprotected females and men who remained

²⁵ Lila Land Chunn to Elizabeth Word Chunn, November 14, 1864, Chunn-Land Family Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

²⁶ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga.; *Census of the United States Slave Schedules*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga.; Lucy J. Cunyus, *A History of Bartow County, Formerly Cass* (Atlanta: Tribune Publishing Co., n.d.), 48.

²⁷ Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 20-21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

at home . . . were treated at their hands, and how the blood curdled in our veins at the recitals.”²⁹

The terror felt by those that were unable to leave Cassville was palpable. In the last days before the invasion wounded and sick Confederate soldiers were moved out of the town on stretchers to the Cass Station depot, and thousands of Confederate troops spread throughout the countryside.³⁰ Confederate General Joseph Johnston had decided that Cassville would be a good place to make a stand against the invading Union forces. Fooling Union General William Sherman into thinking that his troops were retreating along the Western and Atlantic Railroad, Johnston instead amassed close to 70,000 troops north and west of the town.³¹ The Confederate troops built defensive earthworks around the Cherokee Baptist College and the Cassville Female College, both of which were well-positioned for defense, and blocked any strategic streets and buildings.³² When it came time for Johnston’s troops to attack, the presence of Union troops in unexpected places and at unexpected strength along with other developments from Mississippi and Tennessee decreased Cassville’s strategic importance. Meeting at the large log home of William McElvy southwest of Cassville on the night of May 19, Johnston and his three corps commanders decided to retreat under cover of darkness. After the meeting, while detachments of Confederate soldiers cut down trees to cover the noise of the troop movements, most of the army retreated through Cassville, Cartersville, and across the

²⁹ Francis E. Gaines, ed. Frances J. Black. “ ‘We Begged to Hearts of Stone. . . .’ The Wartime Journals of Cassville’s Lizzie Gaines,” *Northwest Georgia Historical Quarterly* (Winter 1988): 1.

³⁰ Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence, KS: The University of Kansas Press, 1992), 200.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Castel, 207.

Etowah River in seven hours. By dawn on May 20, 1864, Cassville was solely in the hands of the Union army.³³

Those who remained in Cassville had prepared for the invasion and battle that they were sure was coming. The noise from the bombardment that Sherman ordered on a Confederate-held ridge east of town drove many people into hiding, fearing that stray shells would strike the town, which they did.³⁴ The most damage was done to the bell in the steeple of the Methodist Church, which was cracked from top to bottom when a cannonball hit it.³⁵ Most people hid in basements or barricaded themselves in their homes. Elizabeth Gaines and her mother congregated with several of their neighbors in their own basement, taking with them enough food, water, and blankets to last two or three days.³⁶

As Union troops first entered Cassville on that warm May morning, they found a town that looked as if it had been abandoned. Homes and businesses were barricaded and there was no life on the streets. Shortly after their arrival, however, people began emerging from their homes and hiding places. The first encounters between the hardened veterans of Sherman's Army of the Cumberland and the civilians of Cassville must have been fraught with uncertainty. The environmental stress that came with having close to 100,000 soldiers in the neighborhood had probably robbed much of the citizenry of their provisions and crops, and some looting by both Confederate and Union soldiers had already occurred. However, when a Union straggler set fire to one of the hotels in town, the main body of Union troops, some of whom were New York City firefighters, quickly

³³ Ibid; Mahan, 97.

³⁴ Castel, 204.

³⁵ Mahan, 96.

³⁶ Gaines, 2.

sprang into action and saved the town.³⁷ The hard part for the people of Cassville came in the uncertain behavior of the Union troops. While some were courteous, others perpetrated some of the worst behaviors that had been feared before they had come.

Instead of fear, the slaves in Cassville viewed the impending arrival of the Union army with uncertainty and excitement. Although many slave owners, like Nathan Land, transported all of their slaves when they fled, others, like Warren Akin, chose to leave some of their slaves behind in Cassville. When the Akin family refugeeed, they left Floyd and Charles in the care of their neighbor George Gilreath, who had made an agreement with Akin to hire them out.³⁸ In areas of Georgia, like Cassville, where a high percentage of slaves lived in small groups, the likelihood increased dramatically that slaves would form romantic relationships with slaves owned by different masters. Most slave owners did not take into account their slaves' family situations when they left Cassville, and the refugee experience that uprooted white families affected their black property just as dramatically.³⁹

Even for those slaves whose masters stayed in Cassville, the decline of the self-contained antebellum plantation community deteriorated quickly in the face of Union victory.⁴⁰ Although some slaves undoubtedly stayed with their masters, the Union army's arrival meant freedom was near, and many took the opportunity presented to them and left. Some owners, like the elderly Nancy Wofford, "felt confident they [her slaves]

³⁷ Castel, 207.

³⁸ Wiley, 72.

³⁹ Mohr, 104-105.

⁴⁰ Mohr, 113.

would remain with her,” for she had been “very indulgent.”⁴¹ However, within a few weeks of the invasion, all of her slaves went to the Union army and freedom.

To the small and embattled Unionist population in Cassville, the entrance of the Union army must have seemed like the answer to a prayer. The food and supply shortages that had affected the rest of Cassville had affected the Unionists as well, and the Confederate manpower shortage had also hit home. Early in 1864, Nancy Russell’s thirty-two year old son, Harvy, had been conscripted by the Confederate army into Company H of the Sixtieth Georgia Infantry and sent to Virginia.⁴² Although overjoyed to see their flag waving again over the courthouse in Cassville, the Unionists knew to keep a somewhat low profile under the occupation. Although Cassville had briefly assumed strategic importance for the Confederate army, under Union rule it became a town surrounded by what Stephen Ash deems a “no-man’s land” of no allegiances.⁴³ The closest Union occupying force was located in Cartersville, and, although Union troops made frequent patrols through Cassville, its citizens were at the mercy of any soldier or bandit who decided to pass through. The town and surrounding countryside were soon stripped of anything of value to the army. Although Unionists as a whole in Bartow County assisted the Federal army by caring for wounded soldiers, assisting in searches for Confederate scouts and guerrillas, and working to repair the Western and Atlantic, it was not until October, five months after the invasion, that William Sylar, Jesse James,

⁴¹ Gaines, 6.

⁴² Deposition of Martha Barrett, November 22, 1877, claim of Nancy Russell, Records of the Southern Claims Commission (Allowed Claims), National Archives, Washington, DC; Information on Harvy Russell’s military service accessed from www.researchonline.net.

⁴³ Ash, 99.

Robert Nelson, and Hiram Holmes traveled to the Union forces in Cartersville and took the oath of allegiance.⁴⁴

The great majority of Cassville's residents would grow to have no love for soldiers from either side of the conflict. Even with frequent Union patrols, the Western and Atlantic Railroad remained extremely vulnerable to attack by Confederate forces throughout the occupation, and the Cassville area's proximity to the railroad meant that the countryside between Cartersville and Adairsville became a popular hideout for guerrilla bands, Confederate irregulars, and bandits, as well as the occasional detachment of Wheeler's cavalry.⁴⁵ A resident of Rome, only twenty miles from Cassville, wrote in June that "the accounts from the country are terrible. . . . There are gangs of high way men taking all they can find in some sections compelling the people to stand guard over their property to retain any thing. They steal negroes, Horses & rob [People] no Traveling is safe."⁴⁶

The result of this lawlessness, as well as the loss of any type of transportation, for most horses had been commandeered, was that the people in Cassville and the surrounding community rarely were able to leave their homes. Stephen Ash writes that "Mobility was the lifeblood of the rural community. Without that vital circulation, without the ability to meet freely and often with one's neighbors and kin, rural communalism and institutions could not survive. Neighborly sharing and succor, barter and gossip, and all the other informal customs of mutuality that sustained rural life

⁴⁴ Karen R. Hamilton, "The Union Occupation of Bartow County, Georgia, May-November 1864." (M.A. Thesis, State University of West Georgia, 1998), 52; Wiley, 29.

⁴⁵ Lee Kennett, *Marching through Georgia: the Story of Soldiers and Civilians During Sherman's Campaign* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), 97.

⁴⁶ Reuben S. Norton Diary, June 27, 1864, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow, Ga., quoted in Ash, 106.

depended on unrestricted social intercourse.”⁴⁷ The longer the occupation continued, the more vital community resources suffered and dwindled.

Another result of the lawlessness in Cassville and the surrounding community was increasing retaliation on the part of Union troops. As the occupation continued, sabotage on the part of Confederate sympathizers and irregulars increasingly resulted in Union retaliation against civilian targets. In response to the increasing destruction of the Western and Atlantic, in July the Union army ordered all civilians living within two miles of the railroad tracks to abandon their homes. This order affected over forty families in Cassville, who were left with nowhere to go.⁴⁸ Finally, in October, ten Union soldiers were killed by Confederate irregulars while they slept outside of Cassville and their bodies left on the grounds of the Cassville Female College, where a detachment of Union troops was staying.⁴⁹ In retaliation for this act, Union soldiers burned the Cassville Female College and Cherokee Baptist College, as well as Nathan Land’s home.⁵⁰

Before the burnings, Union retaliation had been limited to threats and small-scale terrorism; however, the destruction boded a change in Union policy toward the civilian populace in the Piedmont. Throughout October, Confederate raids into Northwest Georgia intensified as General Hood began to concentrate his forces in northern Alabama in preparation for his November campaign to retake Middle Tennessee. At the same time, the occupying Union forces began to prepare to abandon their positions and supply lines in Northwest Georgia. As Sherman’s troops marched from Atlanta to Savannah, only a

⁴⁷ Ash, 104.

⁴⁸ U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (O.R.), vol 38, part 4, 634.

⁴⁹ Mahan, 104.

⁵⁰ Mark A. Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops During the Civil War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 310; Mahan, 103-105.

small garrison of Union soldiers would be left in Resaca to guard the tracks and the populace throughout the Upcountry.

As part of their withdrawal to Atlanta, the Union soldiers destroyed anything that would prove to be useful to the Confederates. Much of the track of the Western and Atlantic, which had been repaired multiple times during the occupation, was destroyed, and any food and provisions not already used were procured from the countryside. As a final blow, the departing soldiers were ordered to burn any buildings or towns that might prove useful to the enemy. Although parts of Kingston, Adairsville, and Cartersville were burned, the Union command, remembering Cassville's short-lived strategic importance during their invasion, ordered the complete destruction of the town. On October 30, 1864, the headquarters of the Third Division of the Union Army of Cartersville issued an order to Colonel Thomas Heath of the Fifth Ohio Cavalry to destroy Cassville. A week later, on November 5, a detachment from the Fifth Ohio entered Cassville and carried out the order.⁵¹ Elizabeth Gaines was one of those left in Cassville who saw her home and possessions destroyed that day. Many years later, she recalled the scene by writing the following:

[They] only gave us twenty minutes to get our things out. They offered us no assistance. Said they had orders to that effect. We were so frightened we scarcely knew what to do first. We . . . carried out all the things we could. Those we managed to save were very much damaged by the fire and the soldiers, for they were still not satisfied with plundering, but kept it up during the fire. They commenced firing the place between 2 and 3 o'clock. . . . In a short while the

⁵¹ *O.R.* part 3, vol. 39, 513.

Public Square was one vast sheet of flames. It soon spread all over town, and in a short time nothing was left but the smoky ruins and chimneys.⁵²

The few people left in Cassville were unable to stop the spread of the flames, and unlike in May, no Union soldiers assisted in putting out the fire. The weather, which was bright and sunny in the morning, deteriorated throughout the day, and by that evening, the temperature had dropped and a cold drizzle had begun to fall.

The destruction of Cassville was an immense shock to the town's residents, and their behavior in the immediate aftermath was not unlike that of victims of any disaster.⁵³ While some families wandered through the town looking for scraps of wood to construct makeshift shelters, others zealously guarded their few possessions. The three homes and three churches that were left standing by the troops were quickly overrun with the homeless, as neighbors attempted to shelter each other.⁵⁴ Some, however, did not know where to go. Mrs. James Milhollin, a widow with six children, the youngest only two, was devastated by the destruction of her home. While she sat by, helpless, her eldest son, who was only fourteen, constructed a shelter of blankets and boards over the grave of her husband, a soldier who had been killed in Virginia the year before. It was under that refuge that the family huddled throughout the first cold, rainy night.⁵⁵

The physical destruction of Cassville, however, was merely the culmination of a greater assault on community that had been occurring since before the first Union soldiers appeared in the hills north of the town. By the time the Union troops pulled out of the area, nearly the entire prewar community infrastructure had been destroyed,

⁵² Gaines, 6.

⁵³ Beverly Raphael, *When Disaster Strikes: How Individuals and Communities Cope with Catastrophe* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 171.

⁵⁴ Wiley, 61.

⁵⁵ Mahan, 109.

dismantled, or suspended. The lawlessness that had prevailed during the occupation continued unabated throughout the entire area as guerrillas and deserters took advantage of the lack of effective local government. In December, Warren Akin wrote from the safety of Richmond, Virginia that “The people of Cass could all go home now. There are no Yankees there, but there are few houses, mills, or any thing else left, and it will be difficult for them to live. Even the few that are there will find it difficult to get goods and shelter. . . .”⁵⁶ By January 1865, 62 percent of Bartow County’s population was on the verge of starvation.⁵⁷

The destitution faced by the Upcountry, however, did not go unnoticed by the Confederate government. Assisted by Cassville resident and Confederate Congressman Warren Akin, on January 23, 1865, President Jefferson Davis issued Special Order Number Fifteen creating the Department of North Georgia.⁵⁸ General William T. Wofford returned home to Cassville from Virginia to take charge of the new force and organized seven thousand men to protect the area.⁵⁹ Wofford even convinced the Union commander in Resaca to give thirty thousand bushels of corn and an indeterminate number of livestock to the needy.⁶⁰

With the infusion of desperately needed food, refugees began trickling back into Cassville throughout the winter of 1865. Slowly, some community institutions began to be reinstated; the Baptist and Methodist Churches, as well as the local Masonic Lodge,

⁵⁶ Wiley, 43.

⁵⁷ Gerald J. Smith, “One of the Most Daring of Men”: *The Life of Confederate General William Tatum Wofford*. Journal of Confederate History Series, ed. John McGlone (Murfreesboro, TN: Southern Heritage Press, 1997), 142.

⁵⁸ Hamilton, 88.

⁵⁹ Wiley, 93.

⁶⁰ Cunyus, 247.

began meeting again in February.⁶¹ In March, the Bartow County Superior Court and Grand Jury met at the Baptist Church in Cassville for the first time in over a year. William Sylar, along with two Unionists from Cartersville, served on the grand jury.⁶² Some refugees also found that, despite the destruction of their homes, some of their possessions had been saved by their neighbors. Cassville resident Elizabeth Chunn returned home in December, and although her home had been burned, found her “piano and carpet at Dr. Hardy’s house.”⁶³ How her piano and carpet found their way across town to the Hardy home, however, is a mystery.

As spring began in the Upcountry, many of Cassville’s residents began to return in earnest. Although there was very little to be had in Bartow County, conditions were almost the same throughout most of Georgia by 1865, and many wanted to start tilling their fields as soon as they were able. In the midst of their return, hostilities between the United States and the Confederacy ended. On April 9, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to Union General Ulysses S. Grant in Appomattox, Virginia. Confederate troops under General Joseph Johnston, including many Cassville men, surrendered in North Carolina on April 27, and General Wofford and his men officially surrendered to the Union garrison at Resaca on May 12.⁶⁴ Throughout the spring and summer of 1865, the soldiers began to return home, although those homecomings were tinged with sadness. Close to 30 percent of the male population in the South had died or been injured in the fighting, and the social relations in the community itself had

⁶¹ Minutes, Cassville Lodge, No. 136, F&AM, Feb. 7, 1865, May 2, 1865, Hargrett Library, University of Georgia.

⁶² Cunyus, 114-115.

⁶³ Wiley, 121.

⁶⁴ Hamilton, 90.

undergone immense changes after four years of hardship, dislocation, and physical destruction.⁶⁵

Wealthy communities like Cassville were left destitute not only by physical wreckage, but also by the economic collapse of the Confederate economy and the emancipation of the slaves. In their temporary home in Elberton, Warren Akin stood on his back porch and read the Emancipation Proclamation to his slaves as they stood in the yard and listened; similar scenes were played out by all of Cassville's slave owners.⁶⁶ For those returning home from service in the army or exile far from home, William Chunn's lament in May 1865 was apt. Soon after his return from service in the Confederate Army, he wrote about Cassville, "I would give anything that I had never seen it since its destruction. Then the bright reminiscences of the happy past would not have been marred by the charred ruins that greet the eyes by ruined hopes and broken associations."⁶⁷ The social fabric that had bound Cassville's community seemed almost torn beyond repair, and the town's population faced the future with trepidation and uncertainty.

⁶⁵ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2001), 64.

⁶⁶ Akin, 116.

⁶⁷ William A. Chunn to Elizabeth W. Chunn, May 30, 1865, Chunn-Land Family Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

CHAPTER 4
DEFEAT AND THE FAILURE OF COMMUNITY
1865-1871

Despite the unimaginable sorrow and changes that had been wrought through the countryside surrounding Cassville in the summer and fall of 1865, the end of the war did result in a return to normality. With the brick shells of both colleges and the county courthouse and jail standing as sentries over the town's ruins, crops, mostly wheat and corn, were planted, tended, and harvested, homes were rebuilt, and some businesses reopened. A lack of capital and collateral, however, made much rebuilding in the town impossible. The vast majority of the wealth in Cassville prior to the war had been tied up in slaves and land. Now, the slaves were free and the land needed much tending to go back to its previous fertility.

Any hope that remained to restore Cassville to its former glory was in rebuilding the county courthouse and jail and holding on to the county seat. Unfortunately, there was no money to be had in the county treasury to rebuild, nor were there enough funds left among the residents of Cassville to take on the monumental task. Seeing an opportunity, many of the businessmen in Cartersville and the southern part of the county began urging that the county seat be moved. After a conflict-ridden debate over the best course of action, Bartow County petitioned the state legislature in the fall of 1866 for the right to hold a referendum to move the county seat from Cassville to another site.

With the date for the referendum set for early January 1867, the debate over a new site for the county seat became even more acrimonious. Economic recovery and resurgence in Northwest Georgia as a whole was dependent on access to railroads.¹ The new county seat was required to be on the railroad, and Cartersville and Cass Station quickly became the two leading contenders. While a few businessmen in Cassville pledged money to assist in the construction of a courthouse in Cass Station, citizens in Cartersville went one step further, pledging “ample means to build a Court-House for the County, superior, in every way, to the old Court-House at Cassville.”² By the time of the referendum, on January 9, feelings were running so high among the county’s citizens that several fights broke out at polling places between different factions.³ Before the polling places closed that evening, over two thousand people had cast ballots, the largest election turnout since the end of the war. Cartersville was chosen as the new county seat by a majority of 166 votes.⁴ The demographics of the vote were split on purely geographical lines. By an overwhelming margin, the inhabitants of towns north and east of Cassville voted for Cass Station, while those located south and west favored Cartersville.⁵

After the election, the Cartersville newspaper wrote, “As the smoke of the contest clears away . . . even those who were most earnest in opposition admit it best for the whole people that the energy, resources and capital of the county should be concentrated to the greatest advantage. . . . The people of Cartersville feel that they have no word of reproach or bitterness . . . We must mix and mingle and trade as friends as in days of

¹ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986) 39.

² *Weekly Cartersville Express*, January 4, 1867.

³ *Weekly Cartersville Express*, January 11, 1867.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

yore.”⁶ As soon as it was decided that Cassville could no longer sustain the county seat, many of the more prominent citizens in town decided to cut their losses and move to Cartersville. Beyond anything else, the movement of the county seat sounded a death knell for the existence of Cassville as it had been before the war. In the eyes of the people of Cartersville, who were caught up in the economic good fortune that came with having the county seat in their town, Cassville ceased to be anything at all.

Without the county seat or closer access to the railroad, those people who had decided to remain in Cassville needed another economic avenue if their town was to remain viable. Businesses relied upon farmers and their need for goods, and prior to the Civil War, the high density of farmers located around Cassville assured most business owners of a steady stream of customers. For the farmers in Cassville, however, the early years after the Civil War proved extremely difficult. Northwest Georgia experienced drought conditions from 1865 through 1867 that seriously affected crop yields.⁷ By 1867, the drought conditions had caused destitution throughout Bartow County, and it seemed to some in Cassville that the town was located in “the most uncertain valley to crop in, in any part of Georgia.”⁸ William Chunn was not alone when he wrote his mother that “if there is a general drought we never miss it, and a special drought is always got up and specially dedicated to this ruined desolate and God-forsaken country.”⁹

In addition to the uncooperative weather, the loss of capital and credit forced many farmers to pour much of their available money into cash crops like cotton.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 64.

⁸ William A. Chunn to Elizabeth W. Chunn, July 7, 1867, Chunn-Land Family Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

⁹ Ibid.

However, the expenses incurred due to cotton's need for expensive fertilization and the loss of land needed for the cultivation of staple crops resulted in many farmers going deeply in debt. By 1870, according to Steven Hahn, "Upcountry farm values had declined by more than 25 percent from their 1860 levels, and although the population had grown by about 5 percent during this ten-year period, farmers raised 40 percent fewer bushels of corn, 45 percent fewer bales of cotton, and 35 percent fewer head of livestock."¹⁰

Compounding Cassville's agricultural problems was the keen labor shortage felt by farmers and planters throughout the South in the aftermath of emancipation.¹¹ Cassville's freedmen resisted any return to the gang labor system that had been almost universal under slavery, and the relocation to Cartersville by many of Cassville's more prominent whites left a power vacuum.¹² Some former slaves were even living on the land abandoned by their owners, without any day-to-day white supervision.¹³ Letters by Cassville residents bemoaned "a necessity for many more good active and energetic men . . . whose energy will be aroused to reconstruct and build up the country again."¹⁴

Much of white frustration over labor problems was directed toward the local officers of the Freedman's Bureau, responsible for a far-reaching mission that included providing food and assistance to needy whites and blacks, negotiating labor contracts, creating and maintaining schools, and protecting the judicial rights of freedmen.¹⁵ C.B. Blacker, the Bureau agent in Cartersville from 1867 through January 1869, was an

¹⁰ Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 141.

¹¹ Wright, 65.

¹² Edward Royce, *The Origins of Southern Sharecropping* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 6; Wright, 84.

¹³ Sally Mae Akin, "Refugees of 1863," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 31 (1947): 116.

¹⁴ William A. Chunn, letter to Elizabeth W. Chunn, n.d., Georgia Department of Archives and History.

¹⁵ Paul Cimbala, *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedman's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 21.

Englishman who had commanded black troops during the Civil War and was responsible for protecting the rights of freedmen in six counties throughout the Upcountry.¹⁶ Like agents throughout the state, Blacker had “white and black petitioners presenting cases to him before breakfast and after supper, through his window while he tried to complete his paperwork, and on his way into stores as he tried to run his errands.”¹⁷ Overworked and underpowered, Blacker nonetheless was successful in maintaining some of the rights of the freedmen in Bartow County. Nearly seventy years later, former slave owners like Sally Akin would remember the day her mother “was summoned to the Freedman’s Bureau and asked to explain why she had been ‘impudent’ to her Negro cook.”¹⁸ The local authorities, however, were only somewhat cooperative when Blacker attempted to bring justice to the freedmen.¹⁹ Nineteen of the twenty-six perpetrators who committed assaults on freedmen in Bartow County in 1867 and 1868 were at least arrested and bound over to the court.²⁰ However, of those nineteen, only two were reported as receiving prison sentences. Despite Blacker’s best attempts, he, like so many other Bureau agents, was never able to quite understand the point to which racism permeated every level of the postwar South.²¹

C.B. Blacker’s job as a Freedman’s Bureau agent was made even more difficult by the fact that the counties he was responsible for were located in a major hub of Ku

¹⁶ Lucy J. Cunyus, *History of Bartow County, Formerly Cass* (Atlanta: Tribune Publishing Co., n.d.), 249; Cimbala, 64; *Cartersville Express*, June 8, 1869, September 2, 1869; The six counties under Blacker’s jurisdiction were Pickens, Dawson, Cherokee, Gordon, Bartow, and Forsyth.

¹⁷ Cimbala, 65.

¹⁸ Akin, 116.

¹⁹ Cimbala, 68.

²⁰ Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Land, “Outrages against Freedmen,” District of Rome, 1867 – 1868, National Archives, Washington, DC.

²¹ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 77.

Klux Klan activity in the state of Georgia.²² Extralegal violence as a way of maintaining societal norms had been relatively common in the antebellum South. With the end of the Civil War and the massive social dislocation that resulted, this violence reinvented itself in the Ku Klux Klan. Although founded in 1865, the Klan did not really spread as an organization until 1867 and the beginning of Congressional Reconstruction. Increasingly, white Southerners thought themselves under attack from Northerners, Republicans, and blacks, all groups who were seemingly crossing the delicate racial boundaries set in place during slavery.²³

Congressional Reconstruction began in 1867. One of the first acts by Republicans in Congress was to grant freed slaves the right to vote. Eager to take advantage of their newly acquired rights, freedmen throughout the South organized political clubs and societies. By August of 1867, the black community in Cartersville had organized a local branch of the Republican Party, known as a “Union League,” which held regular rallies and meetings, much to the Democratically-controlled newspaper’s disgust. Discussing one such rally, the editor of the *Cartersville Express* noted derisively that “about two hundred negroes formed themselves in a line – a la militaire – marched through [the streets] up and down and back and forth during the whole evening . . . and filled the air almost incessantly with yells and screams without significance, to the annoyance of all quiet population.”²⁴ It is unknown if anyone from Cassville participated in this rally, but they would have surely known about the organization’s existence and may have even

²² Charles Flynn, *White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in Nineteenth Century Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 40.

²³ Flynn, 51.

²⁴ Ibid.

supported it financially or otherwise, even if they were unable to become actively involved.

As the election season of 1868 drew closer and freedmen became more politically active, Ku Klux Klan activity throughout Northwest Georgia grew and spread. Although portrayed as a secret and “otherworldly” organization, the Klan’s objectives were well-known and advertised. By April 1868, the Klan was making raids around Cartersville, threatening blacks who were active in the Union League or those out late at night “on the hunt for . . . the wood-pile of the citizen.” The *Express* editor also warned “Scalawags and Carpetbaggers” and people it named as “trembling stinkees who are redolent of the perfumes acquired by recent contact with the aromatic Nig” that they would be next to be visited by the local Klan organization if they did not desist in their activities.²⁵ Soon after this article, the general in charge of Reconstruction in Georgia, General George G. Meade, issued an order barring newspapers from publishing information about “secret organizations calculated to alarm and excite the public.”²⁶ Although the Cartersville newspaper protested the order, it held true to the prohibition. Although Klan activity may have occurred in Bartow County between April and August 1868, there is no mention of it in the local press.

As the presidential election effort escalated around Cartersville in August and September, the Klan again began receiving more mention in the newspaper. In August, the *Express* stated: “The Kuklux have been doing some good service in and around Cartersville recently, although no violence has been done to any one, or any one injured in anyway. We suppose, since the State has been restored, and Gen. [John] Pope departed

²⁵ *Cartersville Express*, April 3, 1868.

²⁶ *Cartersville Express*, April 10, 1868.

from our midst, they have crept from their holes, and are beginning to circulate more freely.”²⁷ The campaign of intimidation against politically active blacks also continued. C.B. Blacker reported shortly before the presidential election that: “‘I learn that a secret Democratic meeting held . . . at [Cartersville] . . . resolved that there should be no more than one ballot box opened . . . and that every colored voter shall be challenged. . . . If he has not paid all his taxes his vote shall not be taken and that the white man shall not be challenged. . . .’”²⁸ Whether or not this threat was carried out when the election actually occurred is unknown.

On Election Day, November 5, 1868, the *Cartersville Express* noted the large turnout that voted in Bartow County.²⁹ Although the newspaper did not break down the vote count by militia district, it did note that Horatio Seymour of New York, who had been nominated as the Democratic candidate, had won the county by a relatively large margin, despite losing dismally in the national election to war hero Ulysses S. Grant.³⁰ Despite Grant’s election, however, Klan activity began to dissipate in Cartersville and in Bartow County, while in other counties in the Upcountry, Klan activity increased in the months following the election.

In 1872, the Senate hearings into Ku Klux Klan activity in Georgia revealed that in the previous year, three white men were convicted and condemned in a Bartow County court for killing a black man.³¹ James McCoy, a white resident of Cherokee county who fled from the Ku Klux Klan to Cartersville, stated in his testimony during the hearings,

²⁷ *Cartersville Express*, August 7, 1868.

²⁸ Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 213.

²⁹ *Cartersville Express*, November 8, 1868.

³⁰ Information about Grant’s election accessed from:

<http://www.americanpresident.org/history/ulyssessgrant/biography/CampaignsElections.common.shtml>

³¹ U.S. Congress. Senate. *Reports*. 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871-72, 839.

“since the three white men killed the Negro and were convicted, you do not hear so much of the Ku Klux” in Bartow County.³² Finally, the county as a whole was known throughout the Upcountry for its low incidence of interracial violence. Rome attorney Z.B. Hargrove stated that the Ku Klux Klan violence was “not so much in Cass County as it is in [the neighboring counties of] Polk, Floyd, Chattooga, Walker, Gordon, and Murray counties.”³³

The decrease in Klan activity must have been a relief to the freedmen living in Cassville. Scattered in isolated dwellings, rural blacks were more susceptible to harassment by Klan members, especially if they were politically active or had violated the racial line in some other way. While land ownership violated this racial line, the desire “to become the ‘owner of a little piece of land’ ” would not be realized by Cassville’s freed blacks during the first five years after freedom.³⁴ While in the state of Georgia, only “one [black] family in 36” had acquired their own land by 1870, and in the South as a whole, “less than 5 percent of the black population was able to obtain land in the first few years after the war,” in Cassville, only one black household owned land in 1870.³⁵ Twenty-one year old Charley Brown owned 250 dollars in real estate according to the Census, and lived with his little brother Jessie in a small home next door to his former master, Mrs. Almonda Brown.³⁶

In contrast to the dreams held by many freed slaves in the immediate aftermath of emancipation, the tasks performed by blacks in 1870 were not that far removed from their

³² U.S. Congress. Senate. *Reports*. 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871-72, 397.

³³ U.S. Congress. Senate. *Reports*. 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871-72, 80.

³⁴ Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South: 1790-1915* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 145.

³⁵ Royce, 117; Scweninger, 147.

³⁶ *Ninth Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1870, Bartow Co., Ga. Charley Brown is listed as being 21 years old in that census. I have inferred that he was owned by A. Brown through the slave schedule of the 1860 census. Of Brown’s three slaves, one was an 11 year-old male.

slave occupations. Although in many parts of Georgia the practice of farming for shares of the crop was common by 1870, in Cassville, the vast majority of the black residents were employed as farm laborers.³⁷ The employment choices for those black men not employed in farming occupations was limited. There were very few skilled occupations open to freed slaves in the Upcountry, and in Cassville, only eighty-eight year old tanner Jerry Kennedy was able to eke out a living.³⁸

One of the greatest obstacles to the upward mobility of freed slaves in the postwar South, however, was widespread illiteracy. As in almost everywhere else in the South, the literacy rate for black adults in Cassville stood at 3.3 percent in 1870.³⁹ Although much has been written about the schools that were supported by the Freedman's Bureau, there was not a school of any sort for black children in Cassville.⁴⁰ Although there was a school for freed slaves supported by the Bureau in Cartersville, the same attention was not paid to Cassville's much smaller community. As a result, only eight children in Cassville's black community attended school at all in 1869.

Despite these clues, much about the lives of Cassville's black community in the first five years after emancipation remains unknown. Illiteracy and transience resulted in very little written history during this time period, and the clues left behind are ephemeral. Even the church, which formed the nucleus for the post-emancipation black community, was almost unknown in Cassville. Although the prewar integrated Baptist and Methodist congregations had segregated by 1868, the black community had not organized its own

³⁷ Out of 169 total black men and boys in 1870 Cassville, 102 were employed as some form of farm laborer; Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 155.

³⁸ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1870, Bartow Co., Ga.

³⁹ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1870, Bartow Co., Ga.; see Table 3.1; Adults are considered those over the age of 21 as reported at the time of the census. Eight children were reported as having attended school out of a total population of ninety black children between the ages of 6 and 15.

⁴⁰ Foner, 65.

congregations.⁴¹ Caught up in their own local preservation of the memory of their defeat at the hands of the Yankees, the white community in Cassville never stopped to think of the former slaves living in their midst. Faced with the psychological trauma of overwhelming social change, economic devastation, and military defeat, white Southerners fashioned a mythology which included worship of the fallen soldiers, public expressions of grief, and “a people forming a collective identity as victims and survivors.”⁴²

The shaping of the mythology which would come to be known as the “Lost Cause” began in Cassville in April 1866. The decorating of soldiers’ graves, which became the modern-day Memorial Day, was adopted throughout the United States as a way of coping with the grief and losses of so many communities.⁴³ In Cassville, a town which had physically paid an extremely high price during the war, Decoration Day events would take on an immense amount of meaning. Women began laying wreaths at the graves of the two hundred men who died in the town’s wartime hospitals in 1866, and the Ladies’ Memorial Association of Cassville (LMAC) was formed one year later. The LMAC was directed by those of Cassville’s prewar social elites who had not moved in the aftermath of the war. These women, like Elizabeth Chunn and her daughter-in-law Lila, had the social connections and the funds to partially fund the memorial events.⁴⁴ In addition, the LMAC hosted various bake sales, “tableaux” and other fundraisers directed both toward earning the money to erect a monument to the memory of the fallen soldiers and to maintain the cemetery. By 1870, the annual decoration of the soldiers’ graves and

⁴¹ *Bartow County Heritage Book*, vol. 1 (Cartersville, GA: Bartow County Genealogical Society, 1995), 34.

⁴² Blight, 38.

⁴³ Blight, 77.

⁴⁴ *Cartersville Express*, April 15, 1869.

the fundraisers that allowed it to happen drew large crowds to Cassville from around Bartow County.

Emboldened by the success of the Decoration Day events, certain members of Cassville's community began to lobby for a return to the focus on education that had characterized Cassville in the years preceding the war. Although by 1869, there was one white school in operation in Cassville, as well as a home and school for children left orphans by the war, the ruins of the Cassville Female College and the Cherokee Baptist College still stood as a reminder of what the town had been, and to its supporters, still could be. When the Georgia legislature granted the charters for both schools in 1854, it had made them irrevocable. This fact alone raised hopes among many in the white community that the schools could yet be resurrected, even as the land upon which they were located reverted to its original owners in 1868.⁴⁵ In an editorial to the Cartersville newspaper, one hopeful Cassville resident wrote that

“With . . . the necessity of such Institutions in our midst, I know of no better work in behalf of our children, nor better location than at Cassville.”⁴⁶ This impassioned lobbying was unsuccessful, however, despite a meeting by college trustees two years later to petition the United States Congress for the rebuilding of both institutions.⁴⁷

Finding no interest in the rebuilding of the two colleges, Cassville's white community attempted to draw settlers to the town by staging a land raffle. The raffle, held on June 1, 1870, consisted of an assortment of merchandise, buildings, and land, including, “one large store house, (new); three dwelling houses and improvements (all built within the last few years); lot of furniture; 400 bushels of corn; one hundred 100 lbs

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Cartersville Express*, October 26, 1871.

sacks . . . flour; 6000 lbs bacon; a number of town lots. . . . It is so arranged that every chance or ticket throws a prize.” The author continued, writing that “A man who has but a few dollars in his purse . . . may in the course of a short time be lifted from poverty and placed in affluent circumstances. Those who are homeless . . . may by taking a few chances . . . be settled in a cottage home, in a thriving little village, where all the great blessings of a courteous and refined society may be found.”⁴⁸ Although the raffle idea was unique, its success at bringing settlement to Cassville is unknown.

Despite attempts at revitalizing the town, throughout the latter half of the 1860s, Cassville faced competition, defeat, and population decline. The town’s Masonic Lodge still met, some of the prewar merchants had returned, and other shopkeepers, like Samuel Smith and Thomas Pitts, had moved to Cassville and set up shop.⁴⁹ However, other developments boded further deterioration for the town. The town’s post office had not been rebuilt in the aftermath of the war, and the town’s residents were forced to travel two miles to the Cass Station Depot to receive letters.⁵⁰ Even though their building was not destroyed when the town was burned, the Cassville Presbyterian Church dissolved itself soon after the war, and its members who remained in Cassville were absorbed into the congregations of the Methodist and Baptist Churches. By 1869, the Cassville Methodist Sunday School had 100 members and the Baptist Church boasted 155.⁵¹ Indeed, other than the yearly Decoration Day events, the church congregations seemed to be the only regular events that brought life to Cassville. In 1868, the *Cartersville Express* editorialized that Cassville “has been brought down to a pile of debris and ashes, and has

⁴⁸ *Cartersville Express*, March 31, 1870.

⁴⁹ *Census of the United States Population Schedule* 1870, Bartow Co., Ga.; *Cartersville Express*, August 14, 1869.

⁵⁰ Records of the United States Post Office, 1830-1879, National Archives, Washington, DC, M1126.

⁵¹ *Cartersville Express*, April 15, 1869.

become the rendezvous of owls and bats. . . . Nothing breaks the dull monotony but the voice of prayer and praise . . . from the hearts and mouths of those who once composed . . . that desolated and deserted village.”⁵²

As Cassville faced the beginning of the 1870s, and the census taker made his rounds through the area, only about one thousand residents made their home in the remnants of the town. Georgia’s census enumeration in 1870, unlike in 1860 and 1880, was not taken on the basis of one’s town or militia district. Instead, it was taken with respect as to a particular household’s proximity to the closest United States Post Office. Since, by 1870, Cassville no longer merited its own post office; its inhabitants instead were listed as the residents of various districts in Cartersville, a fact which made the reconstruction of the town’s population especially difficult.⁵³

It is by examining the reconstructed data of the community, however, that the full burden of the town’s population decline comes into sharp relief. The population of Cassville overall had declined over 50 percent since 1860; the black population alone dropped 61 percent. The town’s population decline was not confined to elite whites who moved to the greener pastures of Cartersville, either. In 1860, blacks made up almost 42 percent of Cassville’s population; in 1870, this had declined to only 31 percent.⁵⁴

Further, as a result of the war, family size had shrunk and the number of households

⁵² *Cartersville Express*, September 11, 1868.

⁵³ This type of enumeration in Georgia seems not to have been unique to Bartow County. In Lee Formwalt’s study of African American persistence in postbellum Dougherty County, he discovered that “unfortunately, the 1870 Census data are not separated by militia district....” Instead, Dougherty County also divided its residents into three geographical groups based on their proximity to Albany, the county seat. Formwalt, “Moving in ‘That Strange Land of Shadows:’ African American Mobility and Persistence in Post-Civil War Southwest Georgia.” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (Fall 1998): 524. These problems are in addition to other documented problems with the 1870 census (see Hahn, *The Rise of Southern Populism* and Ransom and Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom* for complete explanations of the shortcomings of the 1870 Census data).

⁵⁴ *Census of the United States Population Schedule*, 1870, Bartow Co., Ga.; see Table 4.1.

headed by women had risen. The average Cassville household only had 4.5 members in 1870, and fully 15 percent of white households and 24 percent of black households in 1870 were headed by women.⁵⁵

The rise in female-headed households, the difficult agricultural conditions, and the loss of wealth from emancipation all contributed to the most striking difference between the Cassville of 1870 and the Cassville of 1860. In ten years, Cassville's total real estate wealth fell by over \$400,000, and personal wealth declined by almost \$900,000. This decline was borne almost completely on the shoulders of the town's white residents. The average white resident of Cassville was worth about \$173 in 1870; the average black resident was only worth \$11.⁵⁶

While Cassville struggled to attract settlers by writing editorials and hosting raffles, and while its residents grew poorer and more isolated, the situation in Bartow County's burgeoning railroad towns was very different. In the same year as Cassville's property raffle, the Cartersville newspaper crowed, "Cartersville has risen, since the war, from debris and ashes to a live prosperous town--from a population of less than 700 to a miniature city of 2240 souls, and like the proud bird of liberty, her course is still onward and upward."⁵⁷ Many of Cassville's former inhabitants had moved to Cartersville, and Cassville's other neighboring towns, Kingston, Adairsville, and Cass Station, also on the railroad, continued to siphon off more and more of Cassville's residents. Cassville's population was disintegrating, and in order to maintain the town as a viable community, those that wished it to survive would have to reinvent the town's economy and relevance in the postwar environment.

⁵⁵ See Table 4.1.

⁵⁶ See Table 4.1.

⁵⁷ *Cartersville Express*, August 26, 1870.

TABLE 4.1
ANALYSIS OF 1870 CASSVILLE POPULATION
FROM U.S. CENSUS POPULATION SCHEDULES

| Population Data | | |
|---|--------------|--------|
| Total number of households | 221 | |
| Total number of whites | 683 | 68.30% |
| Total number of mulattos | 11 | 0.10% |
| Total number of blacks | 314 | 31.40% |
| Total number of inhabitants | 997 | 100% |
| Education | | |
| White literacy (21+) | 277 | 96.20% |
| Black/Mulatto literacy (21+) | 4 | 3.30% |
| children 6-15 attending school | 37 | 19% |
| Total number black/mulatto children 6-15 attending school | 8 | 8% |
| Landowning and Wealth | | |
| Total number of white landholding households | 49 | 33% |
| Total number of black/mulatto landholding households | 1 | 0.10% |
| Total real estate wealth | \$ 87,869.00 | |
| Total personal wealth | \$ 33,710.00 | |
| Total white per capita wealth | \$ 172.89 | |
| Total black/mulatto per capita wealth | \$ 11.01 | |

CHAPTER 5
REAWAKENING AND RESURRECTION IN THE NEW SOUTH
1872-1880

Beginning in 1872, the United States was swept by a series of economic panics that crippled the economy and overturned many of the political reforms put into place by the Republican Party.¹ In the Georgia Upcountry, weather conditions conspired to decrease crop yields, and crop prices fluctuated wildly. The growth of the railroads, on which had rested hopes for the South's re-emergence as a national power, was crippled by the economic problems, which caused towns like Cartersville, that had depended on the railroad access for their economic well-being, to fall on hard times. Desperate to make a profit, farmers in Bartow County and elsewhere increasingly turned to cultivating cotton as their sole crop. In Bartow County as a whole, cotton cultivation grew by almost 130 percent between 1860 and 1880.²

The increasing reliance on single-crop cultivation had an unexpected benefit for towns like Cassville, which was surrounded by small farmers and had few ties to the railroad economy. Cassville merchants like Robert Land and Julius Hawks saw their business increase greatly as farmers were forced to rely on them for their food and basic supplies. Often lacking cash to buy goods, farmers relied on credit systems that inexorably indebted them to merchants and tied them to the community. As a result of a

¹ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863 – 1877* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988), 227.

² Frederick A. Bode and Donald E. Ginter, *Farm Tenancy and the Census in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 168.

combination of these circumstances and others, Cassville's precipitous population decline began to reverse. By 1875, according to the *Express*, "Cassville . . . has now so far recuperated from the ruin and desolation which Sherman created, as to contain, within the old corporate limits, forty families, four stores, one buggy and wagon factory, one wagon and plow emporium, four blacksmith's shops, two shoe shops, one tailor shop, and three churches."³ By December of that year the town post office, which was removed in the aftermath of the burning, was restored and Robert Smith, who ran one of the local dry goods stores, was appointed postmaster.⁴ Five years later, when the census taker again made his rounds, the Cassville district contained almost two thousand residents.⁵

The increasing dependence on merchants and the debt traps that many farmers fell into during the early 1870s led many farmers to see mercantilism and commerce as running counter to their economic well-being. The prewar farming economy had been "transformed into a commercial economy peopled by merchants, tenants, farm laborers, and commercially oriented farmers," and had left many formerly self-sufficient yeomen floundering.⁶ Bartow County and the rest of the Upper Upcountry had a tradition of politically independent behavior from before the Civil War, and with the social and economic upheaval that accompanied Reconstruction, this tradition continued.

As the Democratic Party regained power nationwide, the Georgia Democratic Party was facing its own troubles. Battles between different factions of whites over control of the labor force combined with the strain between farmers, merchants, and industrialists combined to form "a loosely coordinated challenge of Independents" by

³ *Cartersville Express*, March 4, 1875.

⁴ *Cartersville Express*, December 16, 1875, January 6, 1876; *Tenth Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1880, Bartow Co., Ga.

⁵ See Table 5.1.

⁶ Foner, 171.

1874.⁷ The Independent movement attracted supporters spanning the racial and economic diversity of the entire region, including much of the Republican minority.⁸

In Bartow County, support for Independentism was rooted mainly in the growing economic antagonism between farmers and merchants. In an essay written for the Cartersville newspaper, Cassville resident William Chunn voiced farmers' concerns. "The legislation of our Country as a general thing," he wrote, "has . . . but tended [to] foster speculation and rig monopolies. The very instruments that have been working the destruction of the farming interest of our land. Let Legislators be for the interests . . . of home and in a short while the great agricultural and commercial interest of our state will work in harmony and go hand in hand to the highest state of prosperity. . . ."⁹ The election of 1874 proved to be the first showing of this new coalition between disaffected farmers, black Republicans, and others.

William H. Felton, a Cartersville Methodist minister and farmer, became a leader in the movement. He gained statewide exposure in 1874 as he ran for Congress against an entrenched Democratic candidate and won.¹⁰ In Bartow County, where Dr. Felton had had a reputation as a fine preacher and friend of the farmer, many blacks as well as whites flocked to the Independent movement.¹¹ During the 1874 election campaign, at least one mass meeting denouncing the Democrats and supporting Felton was hosted by the black community in Cartersville.¹² Even the Cartersville newspaper, which had long been a Democratic organ, noted admiringly that "Dr. Felton's equal as a pulpit orator is

⁷ Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 226.

⁸ Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 233.

⁹ William A. Chunn to *Cartersville Express*, n.d., Chunn – Land Family Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

¹⁰ Felton's wife, Rebecca Latimer Felton, would later become the first female U.S. Senator, in 1921.

¹¹ Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 228.

¹² Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 233.

rarely ever heard; and he is regarded by all who know him as one of Georgia's brightest ornaments," although they believed that he was better suited to religion than politics.¹³

In Cassville, the community became bitterly divided between supporters and detractors of the Independent movement. Throughout the 1874 election season, the town was inundated by office-seekers. The Cassville correspondent to the Cartersville newspaper wrote humorously three months before the election that "They [the politicians] appear to love every body. We have two or three little boys, who have been accustomed to play around the streets, whose mothers have had to pen them up at home, since the candidates have been coming around for fear that they will hurt them by their excessive affection."¹⁴

The effect of this incessant campaigning was to make the delineation between the Democratic and Independent candidates hazy. The men running for Congress were personally well-known to many in Cassville, and in the case of Dr. Felton's candidacy, residents were forced to choose between their knowledge of Felton's personal beliefs and their loyalty to the Democratic Party. To some, the Independent movement was tainted by the interracial character of its supporters, however attractive its arguments.¹⁵ Felton, however, a one-time resident of Cassville, had unwavering support from others in the community who respected his firm stand toward temperance and his work with the Cassville chapter of the Society of the Patrons of Husbandry, otherwise known as the Grange.¹⁶ Despite the divisive nature of the election, Felton was victorious in

¹³ *Cartersville Express*, April 27, 1874.

¹⁴ *Cartersville Express*, August 27, 1874.

¹⁵ *Cartersville Express*, September 2, 1874.

¹⁶ *Cartersville Express*, May 3, 1874.

November.¹⁷ Four years later, Felton was again victorious in a heated campaign against George Lester, a decorated Confederate war hero.¹⁸ In Cassville, Felton won by a margin of five to one.¹⁹

Some of Felton's success in Cassville can be attributed to his support of the Grange. Originally established in Washington, DC as a social and benevolence organization for farmers, it quickly became politically involved in agricultural matters and spread throughout Georgia in the early 1870s. The group made its first appearance in Bartow County in 1874, when chapters were formed in both Cartersville and Cassville.²⁰ In April of that year, the *Cartersville Express* reported that in Cassville, "The Grange is increasing in number, and working with harmony. They propose, in conjunction with . . . citizens, to build a Lodge Hall and an Academy."²¹ Members of the Cassville Grange gathered for regular meetings that were often followed by social events. In 1875, a correspondent to the *Cartersville* newspaper from Cassville wrote, "We are decidedly in favor of Grange dinners, not entirely for the variety and good things that were spread, and the pleasurable emotions aroused in eating them, but for the social feelings that are engendered and cultivated among friends and neighbors."²²

The birth of new organizations, such as the Grange, as well as the perpetration and expansion of older community groups clearly illustrates the growth and rebirth apparent in Cassville during the 1870s. One example of this renaissance is the story of the Cassville Masonic Lodge. In 1871, the Lodge, which had been active in the community

¹⁷ Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 233.

¹⁸ *Cartersville Express*, August 1, 1878.

¹⁹ *Cartersville Express*, November 7, 1878. In Cassville the vote was: Felton, 160; Lester, 32. Overall, Felton won the district by 1100 votes.

²⁰ *Cartersville Express*, April 1, 1874. Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 222-23.

²¹ *Cartersville Express*, April 29, 1874.

²² *Cartersville Express*, May 20, 1875.

since 1850, lost its charter and was merged with the Lodge in the community of Pine Log, several miles from Cassville.²³ Only three years later, however, a new lodge was proposed, and by early 1875, the Cartersville newspaper reported that “The Masons of Cassville have received their charter, and are fully organized and in working order. They propose during the year to build them a Hall suitable to the requirements of the Lodge.”²⁴

Another group to benefit from Cassville’s resurgence was the local militia group for the 828th Georgia Militia District, known as the Etowah Dragoons. Prior to the Civil War, maintaining a local military force was mandated by state law, and the local militia group in Cassville had formed the nucleus for some of the Confederate army companies that had been raised there once the war started. Although the military forces present in Georgia during Reconstruction did not allow the citizens to maintain militia units, this quickly changed after the state rejoined the Union. As it had been prior to the war, the militia served mostly social and ceremonial functions in addition to their required semi-regular drills. The Etowah Dragoons made the most of the social and ceremonial duties; picnics were regularly held as part of their drills, and they always served as escorts for the Ladies’ Memorial Association during the town’s Decoration Day celebrations.²⁵

By the mid 1870s, the Decoration Day celebrations that were spearheaded by the Ladies’ Memorial Association of Cassville had grown into spectacles that drew hundreds of people from around the county. For many people in Bartow County, like people throughout the United States, attending the Decoration Day ceremonies became, as the Cartersville newspaper wrote, “A duty which we all owe to the dead heroes of the lost

²³ Lucy J. Cunyus, *History of Bartow County, Formerly Cass* (Atlanta: Tribune Publishing Co., n.d.), 252-53.

²⁴ *Cartersville Express*, February 15, 1875.

²⁵ *Cartersville Express*, May 20, 1874, July 8, 1874.

cause.”²⁶ The event had much meaning in Cassville, where, even fifteen years after the town’s destruction, “Sherman’s chimneys” were still visible throughout the town.²⁷ Still living with the physical reminders of the war, the Decoration Day ceremonies became the defining annual event for the white community.

Preparations for the Decoration Day celebration began months in advance, with the Ladies’ Memorial Association meeting monthly and hosting numerous fundraisers.²⁸ Two or three weeks prior to the event, the entire community would gather for a cemetery cleanup.²⁹ Almost always taking place on the second Sunday in May, close to the date when General Joseph Johnston had surrendered his troops, the ceremonies began almost every year from the Cassville Methodist Church and processed from the church up the hill to the cemetery. The large procession of people carrying flowers and wreaths to drape on the graves was usually headed by the Cartersville Brass Band, and in the latter part of the decade, the Etowah Dragoons. Once at the cemetery, local leaders gave speeches, children recited poetry appropriate to the occasion, and prayers were given to the memory of the fallen. At the end of the ceremonies, the lady of the Memorial Association covered the graves with wreaths and bunches of spring flowers.³⁰ The Ladies of the Memorial Association also raised money for a large marble monument dedicated to the soldiers. When it was finally dedicated in 1878, the Memorial Association had raised over \$500 toward its completion, although the ladies were still lacking close to \$100.³¹

²⁶ *Cartersville Express*, May 9, 1878.

²⁷ *Cartersville Express*, May 16, 1879.

²⁸ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2001), 71.

²⁹ *Cartersville Express*, April 11, 1879.

³⁰ *Cartersville Express*, May 9, 1877.

³¹ *Cartersville Express*, May 16, 1879.

Along with organizations such as the Grange, the Masons, and the Ladies' Memorial Association, religious events and services served as an excellent way to foster community involvement during the 1870s. In Cassville, the Baptist and Methodist Churches served as a place where the white community could gather and find out news and gossip. When guest preachers like Dr. William H. Felton conducted services at the Methodist Church, the building often overflowed as members from both congregations flocked to hear the man speak. "Protracted meetings" or revivals were also held at least once a year and often drew blacks and whites from throughout the Cassville district.³² Finally, Sunday school picnics and special events were held for Cassville's children on a regular basis and served as another way for the community to gather together. These events, when combined with other, more informal gatherings like sewing circles and impromptu community picnics, went a long way toward reversing the wartime apathy that one Cassville resident wrote about in 1875 as being "a neglect of the social impulses of our natures . . ." and which had been revitalized by the renewed interest in community events.³³

Despite the renaissance of many of Cassville's community organizations, the town suffered from a lack of educational institutions throughout the 1870s. Despite efforts early in the decade, the prewar colleges were never re-established. In 1873, General William T. Wofford, who lived between Cass Station and Cassville, donated some of his land for a school.³⁴ Although the county appropriated money for public schools, it is apparent that the Wofford Academy was the only such institution for white

³² William A. Chunn to Elizabeth W. Chunn, June 20, 1867, Georgia Department of Archives and History.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gerald J. Smith, "One of the Most Daring of Men": *The Life of Confederate General William Tatum Wofford*. Journal of Confederate History Series, ed. John McGlone (Murfreesboro, TN: Southern Heritage Press, 1997), 158-9; *Cartersville Express*, November 15, 1875.

families in the entire Cassville District. By 1880, the Academy had “65 scholars,” and its boosters claimed that “several families have located here [in Cass Station] to educate their children. . . .”³⁵ In that same year, only 15 percent of white children in Cassville had attended school, a testament to the lack of educational opportunities available.³⁶ The children who were able to attend school, like the five school-age youngsters of native Cassville resident William McElvy, were almost universally from the upper economic strata of Cassville society. McElvy owned 150 acres of land in 1880 and employed three families to work his land and a man to teach his children.³⁷ Others, like Jeannie, Gertrude, and Eugene Chunn, the children of William and Lila Chunn, only lived about a mile and a half from the Wofford Academy. The three Chunn children probably walked or rode with their older sister, nineteen year-old Helen, who was a teacher in the primary department.³⁸

The lack of educational opportunities in Cassville also contributed to a decrease in social mobility among many in the community. When combined with the unstable economic conditions and social upheaval of Reconstruction and the growth of cotton cultivation throughout the Upcountry, these phenomena brought about “the inexorable growth of tenancy” for many whites throughout Cassville.³⁹ Although 42 percent of white households owned an average of 282 acres of land in 1880, these numbers stand in stark contrast to the 63 percent of white households that had owned land on the eve of the Civil War.⁴⁰ Those who suffered most were yeomen farmers and artisans in Cassville like

³⁵ *The Cartersville Free Press*, January 15, 1880.

³⁶ Table 5.1. In 1860, almost forty percent of children had attended school.

³⁷ *Tenth Census of the United States, Georgia Population Schedule*.

³⁸ *The Cartersville Free Press*, June 17, 1880.

³⁹ Schweninger, 162; Foner, 227.

⁴⁰ Table 3.1; Table 5.1; Table 5.2.

Jesse James, who was the leader of the Cassville Unionist community during the Civil War. In 1860, James, a carpenter, was worth about \$800, owning about \$600 worth of land and a small carpentry shop.⁴¹ Living within the town of Cassville, James' shop was burned when the town was destroyed, and fifteen years later, the now seventy-three year old James had no land, no home, and was living with his son-in-law, Hiram Holmes and Holmes' large family. He was so poor that he had not been charged county taxes for the previous five years.⁴² In contrast, men like Confederate General William T. Wofford emerged from the war mostly intact and were able to expand their holdings through the 1870s. By 1880, Wofford owned 4,700 acres of land and was worth close to \$40,000.⁴³

In contrast to the shrinking economic and educational opportunities of their white neighbors, the black community in Cassville experienced extraordinary growth and development between 1870 and 1880. A community which had a 3 percent literacy rate and one landowner in 1870 boasted 30 percent literacy and 17 percent of its households owning land ten years later. Many of Cassville's black leaders, like Dembo Legree, who with his 150 acres of land was the largest black landowner, moved to Cassville after the Panic of 1873.⁴⁴ During the Panic and the other economic downturns that followed throughout the decade, many white landowners, faced with economic ruin, were disposed or forced to give up their land cheaply. The country's overall economic problems led to a greater physical mobility on the part of many whites in the Upcountry, but the

⁴¹ *Eighth Census of the United States Population Schedule*, 1860, Cass Co., Ga.

⁴² State of Georgia, Tax Digests, Bartow Co., 1875 – 1880. *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1880, Bartow Co., Ga.

⁴³ State of Georgia, Tax Digests, Bartow Co., 1880.

⁴⁴ Legree's first appearance on the county tax digest is in 1873. Also, in the 1880 Census, Legree indicates his birthplace as South Carolina. He does not appear on the 1870 Census.

opportunity to buy land that was opened to blacks in Cassville resulted in an increasing number of people staying within the community for several years.

Many of Cassville's black landowners often settled in extended family units, with multiple members of the same family working adjoining small plots of land. When added together, some family units actually farmed 100 acres and more. One example of this use of shared resources is the extended family group of Alfred Branson and Scott Davis, who owned and farmed 178 acres of land near Cassville. Branson and Davis were married to two sisters, and their young families looked after the sisters' younger brothers, who lived in their own cabin in between the two men's land.⁴⁵ The emphasis on families banding together in their quest for land ownership is also reflected in the story of former slave Robert Lowe and his two sons, Calvin and Ned. Robert, who was seventy-four years old in 1880, had acquired a small plot of two acres of land just three years earlier. His two sons, Calvin, and Ned, purchased adjoining lots of forty acres each, which they farmed with their wives and offspring. Their labor helped support their elderly mother and father, along with their four unmarried sisters.⁴⁶

The significant numbers of Cassville's black community that owned land resulted in an increasing persistence of families through the 1870s. The transient nature of the black population in the immediate postwar period began to change through the decade, and Cassville's black community quickly formed community associations and networks of their own, almost completely separate from those of their white neighbors. The center of the black community was on the west side of town, on the road to Kingston and on the

⁴⁵ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1880, Bartow Co., Ga. The Branson and Davis families are census enumeration numbers 282, 283, and 284.

⁴⁶ *Census of the United States Population Schedules*, 1880, Bartow Co., Ga.; State of Georgia, Tax Digests, Bartow Co., 1880.

back side of a gentle rise known as Noble Hill. It was here, in 1873, that the black community constructed its first church, New Hope Baptist.⁴⁷ Although a small African Methodist Episcopal Church, St. John's, had been founded in 1867, it did not move into a building until 1874, when it took over the old Presbyterian Church building on the southwest side of town.⁴⁸ Until the two churches had buildings, both churches met in members' homes, like that of Charles Jones. Jones, who had a large cabin for his wife and nine children, hosted regular prayer meetings for Cassville residents throughout the early 1870s.⁴⁹ These meetings often took place in the evenings after the day's work was through, much like congregations had met during slavery.⁵⁰

The construction of a church building by Cassville's blacks marked the beginning of the growth that would occur in that community through the 1870s. Even as the civil rights of blacks throughout the South eroded with the resurgence of white political power, blacks still retained the right to vote and exercise their political rights. Although specific activities by the black community in Cassville are unknown, it is reasonable to assume that many supported the Independent political movement that swept through the rest of the Upcountry during the latter part of the decade and that they lobbied for a school for their children. The agitation for a school was successful, and by 1881, a county-supported school opened for Cassville's black children.⁵¹ It was located on Noble Hill, in the center of the black community, and was flanked by New Hope Baptist Church. Prior to the Noble Hill School's opening, the closest educational institutions for black children were

⁴⁷ From sign on New Hope Baptist Church, Cassville, GA, and from discussions with curator of the Noble Hill-Wheeler African American Cultural Center, Cassville, GA, February 9, 2005.

⁴⁸ From discussions with curator of Noble Hill – Wheeler Center, Cassville, GA, February 9, 2005.

⁴⁹ Flynn, 98-99.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ From discussions with curator of Noble Hill – Wheeler Center, February 9, 2005.

located in Kingston and Adairsville, both of which were located too far away for the vast majority of children to travel daily.⁵²

Despite the strides made by both Cassville's black and white communities toward a greater sense of community and an increase in community structures during the 1870s, the town in 1880 was almost unrecognizable from the one that had existed only twenty years earlier. The economic changes that had allowed for the town to recover some of its businesses and community organizations had also brought a different type of clientele into Cassville. Despite numerous efforts, the white citizens proved unsuccessful in reestablishing Cassville as an educational center, and the decline in wealth and overall economic status among Cassville's white population was compounded by lowering levels of literacy and education.

On the other hand, Cassville's black community, which had almost tripled since 1870, had levels of landowning and literacy that were uncommon among many Upcountry black populations. By 1880, the population of the Cassville district was 47 percent black, a rarity in a region where blacks had never constituted more than 25 percent of the population, and where the overall black population had declined in the fifteen years following the Civil War.⁵³ As the black community grew, institutions like churches and schools were created and perpetuated.

Increasingly through the 1870s, Cassville's white community held on to the ideal of what the town once had been before the Civil War. The ruins of the colleges and the courthouse became impromptu memorials as tenderly cared for as the silent graves on the treed hillside east of town, and the Decoration Day celebrations engendered

⁵² *Cartersville Free Press*, September 25, 1879.

⁵³ Hahn *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 155.

remembrances not only of the men that had been lost, but the community that had been destroyed by the war. On another hillside on the west side of Cassville, the black community, not fettered by the increasingly complicated web of Lost Cause mythology and ritual, began to build individual institutions which celebrated their own vision of the town.

TABLE 5.1
ANALYSIS OF 1880 CASSVILLE POPULATION
FROM U.S. CENSUS POPULATION SCHEDULES
AND GEORGIA PROPERTY TAX DIGESTS

| Population Data | | |
|---|---------------|--------|
| Total number of households | 362 | |
| Total number of whites | 1028 | 52.90% |
| Total number of mulattos | 26 | 1.30% |
| Total number of blacks | 887 | 45.60% |
| Total number of inhabitants | 1941 | 100% |
| Education | | |
| White literacy (21+) | 425 | 88.91% |
| Black/mulatto literacy (21+) | 107 | 30.14% |
| Total number white children 6-15 attending school | 27 | 10.67% |
| Total number black/mulatto children 6-15 attending school | 11 | 4.10% |
| Landowning and Wealth | | |
| Total number of white landholding households | 85 | 42.29% |
| Total number of black/mulatto landholding households | 28 | 17.39% |
| Total real estate wealth | \$ 166,199.00 | |
| Total personal wealth | \$ 119,219.00 | |
| White per capita wealth | \$ 267.41 | |
| Black/mulatto per capita wealth | \$ 11.50 | |

TABLE 5.2
BLACK LANDOWNING IN CASSVILLE IN THE YEARS 1872-1880
FROM GEORGIA PROPERTY TAX DIGESTS

| Year | Number of Landowners | Total Amount of Acreage | Average Number of Acres per Landowner |
|-------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1872 | 4 | 223 | 55.75 acres |
| 1873 | 9 | 392 | 43.5 acres |
| 1874 | 13 | 863 | 66.38 acres |
| 1875 | no data | no data | |
| 1876 | 21 | 1188 | 56.5 acres |
| 1877 | 26 | 1153 | 44.34 acres |
| 1878 | 24 | 1196 | 49.83 acres |
| 1879 | 21 | 1202 | 57.23 acres |
| 1880 | 19 | 1097 | 57.73 acres |

CHAPTER 6

EPILOGUE: THE “DISTANT MEMORY” OF CASSVILLE

A community's experience with any type of transformative event often simultaneously brings into sharp relief divisions in social relations, as well as accelerating gradual change. In Cassville, the community was forced to accept both the economic and social dislocations resulting from the Civil War, as well as physical devastation. By 1867, the institutions that had defined the white community prior to the war had been destroyed or removed, and post-Civil War trends toward urbanization seemed to sound a death knell for the community's resurgence. However, Cassville's residents, both black and white, reshaped the community's purpose and institutions to adapt to the changing economic and social conditions of the postwar Upcountry. During the 1870s, Cassville emerged from its destruction to become a living and productive community. Although it would never regain its status as the prominent community in Bartow County, Cassville's residents were able to maintain the town's viability. The informal and formal social institutions that were created and perpetuated throughout the decade played a major role in creating a sense of community. Organized activities like the Decoration Day celebrations, prayer meetings, and church congregations contributed to the stabilization and persistence of both the black and white communities.¹

This sense of commonality was also tempered by an acute awareness of the town's history. The white community continued its Decoration Day activities for many

¹ John M. Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 170.

years, even as the Ladies' Association was absorbed into the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the early twentieth century.² The town's identification with its Civil War heritage lives on today in the roadside park dedicated to the town's role during the Union invasion of North Georgia built by the Works' Progress Administration in the 1930s, in the Civil War historical markers that dot the surrounding countryside, and in the site of the once imposing county courthouse, which remains a vacant lot, surrounded by traces of the brick sidewalks that once surrounded it.³

Although Cassville was never able to again become an education center, the community's remembrance of its educational roots remained. While neither the Cherokee Baptist College nor Cassville Female College was ever rebuilt, the site of the Cherokee Baptist College still remains, on a windswept hill west of town. The foundations of the Cassville Female College remained until the 1950s, when its site was bulldozed when U.S. Highway 41 was widened. In the valley, near the Cassville Baptist Church, the Bartow County school system finally constructed a school for Cassville's white children in the 1890s, which was fiercely supported by the community through the integration era. In 1923, a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation helped to build the county's first modern public school for blacks. Housing first grade through seventh grade students, Noble Hill School was the only black school for the community until desegregation.⁴

All of the different groups of people that settled in the valley of land that would become Cassville shared basic traits. All moved to there looking for a way to support their families and their communities. No matter what their cultural heritage, the

² Lucy J. Cunyus, *History of Bartow County, Formerly Cass* (Atlanta: Tribune Publishing Co., n.d.), 255.

³ This roadside park observed from author's multiple visits to Cassville over the course of four years. It is located about 100 yards off of U.S. Highway 41 seven miles north of Cartersville, GA.

⁴ *Bartow County Heritage Book*, vol. 1 (Cartersville, GA: Bartow County Genealogical Society, 1995), 52.

successive communities that occupied the valley eventually were the victims of outside forces that required them to either adapt or be destroyed. The story of the peoples who inhabited Cassville's valley is a testament of how communities can wither and die when radically altered by circumstances beyond the control of the community members. In the valleys of the Etowah stand the relics of numerous human habitations, which through various interventions were destroyed and never lived up to their great promise. Today, the remains of Etowah, New Echota, and Cassville stand as roadside memorials to the inevitable human fascination with the relics of the past.

Today, Cassville is a minor bedroom community to Cartersville and the growing exurbs of Atlanta. Located between Interstate 75 and U.S. Highway 41, the town still nestles in the valley which it has occupied for 170 years, and like so much of the rest of the Georgia Upcountry, its farms and rural character are quickly being overrun with subdivisions and commuters. Two miles away, the splendid ruin of the Cass Station depot still stands alongside the current tracks of the CSX railroad, the only remnant of that once bustling community. Cassville attracts visitors, but those are mainly dedicated Civil War buffs that come to discuss the efficacy of General Joseph Johnston's decision to abandon the town in the face of Union resistance. Cassville's history lives on today in the names of local roads and subdivisions and in historic sites like the Noble Hill School and the Cassville cemetery, unknown to many of the community's present-day residents. However, the magnitude of the accomplishment made by Cassville's nineteenth century community remains unabated. Against the backdrop of transformative social change, the people of Cassville were able to re-fashion their community identity and endure.

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