

**AN AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION:
ENVIRONMENT AND CIVIL WAR IN CHEROKEE
AND MACON COUNTIES, NORTH CAROLINA**

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A Thesis

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**AN AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION:
ENVIRONMENT AND CIVIL WAR IN CHEROKEE
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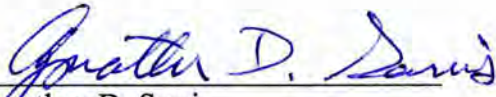
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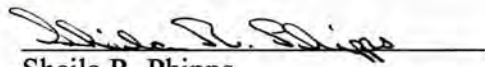
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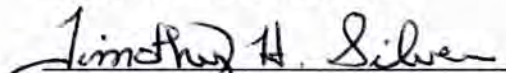
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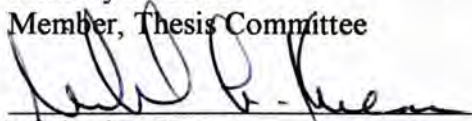
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ABSTRACT

AN AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION: ENVIRONMENT AND CIVIL WAR IN
CHEROKEE AND MACON COUNTIES, NORTH CAROLINA. (August 2001)

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Although the Civil War never came to the southwestern corner of North Carolina in any conventional capacity, Cherokee and Macon counties were nonetheless affected. This thesis examines a particular entity, the environment, and explains how it was altered within the two counties and to what extent the Civil War was involved in the change. By examining primary sources, agriculture census records, and pertinent secondary sources, it becomes clear that the Civil War and the social changes it induced were major factors in affecting the agricultural productivity of the land. This negative impact is further felt in the years following the Civil War with the coming of commercial industrialization to the region. With the information presented in this examination, it is clear that there is more to the Civil War than political and social change, such as transformation of some natural environments

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Jennifer E. Stertzer

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INTRODUCTION

When the decision was made to join the other states in secession from the United States, North Carolinians could not have possibly known what the future held for them. For the next four years, war would rage in and around the borders of North Carolina, affecting the way of life many of its residents had known all of their lives. One region in particular experienced a breakdown in the way of life it had known, a change that dictated the future of the region. Known today as "Appalachia", this distinct region is officially composed of thirteen states. In western North Carolina there are twenty-nine counties that are considered part of this Appalachian region, most of them characterized by mountainous and rugged terrain. Two counties in particular, Cherokee and Macon, will be the focus of this study. These two counties were chosen because of their location within North Carolina as well as their proximity to East Tennessee, a Union stronghold throughout the war. Although these two counties would be further divided into other counties as time passed, they originally were comprised of a large amount of diverse terrain, including the present-day North Carolina portion of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Past examinations of the Civil War, both in Western North Carolina and the rest of the United States, have focused on economic, social, or military topics. One topic, however, has been for the most part ignored. The Civil War's impact on the natural environment may seem, at first glance, an obvious issue. Terrain that hosted military engagements was subsequently affected. But other natural environments throughout the United States were also affected, although never seeing war in any conventional capacity.

This examination of Cherokee and Macon counties in North Carolina will uncover what effect the Civil War had on the natural environment there.

Cherokee and Macon counties are located in the southwestern tip of North Carolina. Lofty mountains, rolling hills, numerous rivers, and valleys make up the majority of the natural terrain throughout. Although location did limit contact with the rest of North Carolina, the region was not completely isolated. Writing about the region after the Civil War, Horace Kephart, in his classic work *Our Southern Highlanders*, gives an excellent example of this isolation theory. Kephart explains that “no one can understand the attitude of our highlanders towards the rest of the earth until he realizes their amazing isolation from all that lies beyond the blue, hazy skyline of their mountains.”¹ Kephart traveled to the mountains around Bryson City, North Carolina, in 1904, and resided in the mountains until he moved into town in 1913. What he believed he discovered, namely complete isolation, sums up the conclusions of most past, as well as some present, scholarship on the Appalachian region. This supposed isolation the mountaineers experienced was believed to be caused by many factors, one of them being the natural environment. Kephart saw a connection between the residents of the region and their surrounding wilderness, but it was not a friendly relationship. In his chapter entitled *The Law of Wilderness*, Kephart asserts that:

To all pioneer men--to their women and children, too--life has been one long, hard, cruel war against the elemental powers. Nothing else than warlike arts, nothing short of warlike hazards, could have subdued the beasts and savages, felled the forests and made our land habitable for those teeming millions who can exist only in a state of mutual dependence and cultivation. The first lesson of pioneering was self-reliance. “Provide

¹ Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlanders: A Narrative of Adventures in the Southern Appalachians and a Study of Life among the Mountaineers* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 17.

with thine own arm," said the Wilderness, "against frost and famine and skulking foes, or thou shalt surely die!"²

Assuming that mountain terrain is more severe than that of the piedmont or the coast, the residents of the area did have more rugged "wilderness" to deal with than the rest of the state. However, this did not cause a backward culture, but instead a unique relationship between the residents and the surrounding natural environment. Unlike many areas in the country, the residents of these counties not only used the environment for supplies, but also lived among what many Americans at that point in time would have termed wilderness. Residents depended on the environment to supply them with necessary products such as food, building materials, and marketable goods. Before the Civil War began, the natural environment also provided the means to connect the region with outside markets, not isolate them from the rest of the country, as Kephart had assumed.

The environment, however, was not always viewed in the same way. Just as the American view of wilderness and nature has gone through many significant changes since colonial times, the residents living in the two counties during the Civil War held different views of the environment than those who inhabited the region years before the war. As a result, their relationship was also different. The Civil War brought many changes to the relationship the residents of the two counties had with the environment, whether they looked to the environment for material wealth, viewed it as a fearful place, or depended on it for survival.

² Ibid., 379.

When examining how the relationship between the environment and the residents changed, it is necessary to define what the environment consisted of. For the purpose of this examination, nature, wilderness, and the natural environment will be intertwined. In order to capture the changing relationship effectively, the idea of the natural environment, including forests, mountains, and valleys, will be broadened to also include land used for agriculture. This natural landscape within the two counties was not only viewed as a place of immense beauty and natural wonder by outsiders, but also as a means of living and way of life for the residents. But the residents' view of their region would change after the war. This changing perception of wilderness by Americans in general deserves recognition before exploring the natural environment of Cherokee and Macon counties any further.

Up to the beginning of the Civil War, the American opinion of the natural environment had gone through many changes. This is not to say that wilderness itself changed. Instead, people who came into contact with the wilderness were changing; wilderness was not so much an entity as it was a state of mind.³ Wilderness began as something feared and hated, something that had to be dealt with. When the first European peoples came over to develop settlements, wilderness stood in the way of production. Forests had to be pushed back, different types of buildings had to be erected, animals and Indians had to be kept in their place; the wilderness of the "newly discovered" land had to be made civilized by the incoming Europeans. Wilderness not

³ Roderick Nash, *The Big Drops: Ten Legendary Rapids of the American West* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Books, 1989), 162-164. Nash best explains this idea of wilderness as a state of mind. Examining the run down the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, Nash explains that Glen Canyon Dam looms in the distance and disturbs those who come to the river for a "wilderness experience." Although most river runners never see the dam, its known presence is troublesome. Applied to the early settlers, as well as the generations that followed, the idea of wilderness passed through many "states of minds," always present, but representing something very different from time to time, person to person.

only stood in the way of civilization, but was also something that the first settlers feared. These fears were deeply rooted in early European beliefs and views of wilderness. Mythology contained stories of gods and demons who lived in “wild places.”⁴ There were folk beliefs that told of supernatural beings that made their home in the forests. The Bible also painted wilderness in a negative light, something to be feared and hated.⁵ All of these factors permeated the European mind and made wilderness a hated and fearful place. These beliefs came with the explorers to America, and with these beliefs the settlers went about carving civilization out of the wilderness.

As the New World settlements expanded, more people began to venture out into the wilderness, pushing towards the West. The natural environment was still not something that the settlers viewed as a beautiful and relaxing place. For most, wilderness stood in the way of progress. Roderick Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind* gives a good summation of the components in the American pioneer’s bias towards the wilderness.

On the direct, physical level, it constituted a formidable threat to his very survival. The transatlantic journey and subsequent western advances stripped away centuries. Successive waves of frontiersmen had to contend with wilderness as uncontrolled and terrifying as that which primitive man confronted. Safety and comfort, even necessities like food and shelter, depended on overcoming the wild environment. For the first Americans, as for medieval Europeans, the forest’s darkness hid savage men, wild beasts, and still stranger creatures of the imagination. In addition civilized man faced the danger of succumbing to the wildness of his surroundings and reverting to savagery himself. The pioneer, in short, lived too close to the wilderness for appreciation. Understandably, his attitude was hostile

⁴ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3d ed. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1982), 11-16.

⁵ For a thorough account on American views of ‘wilderness’ throughout history, see Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

and his dominant criteria utilitarian. The *conquest* of wilderness was his ultimate concern.⁶

As settlers began to trickle into western North Carolina, attitudes like these clung to them and were carried in like baggage. At a point in history when the natural environment is deemed a sacred place worth protecting by many, it is hard to imagine people having these attitudes towards the wilderness. In today's society, people from all over the United States come to vacation in the mountains of North Carolina. Hiking, climbing, and river running have become popular activities for those who wish to experience nature up close and conquer it. But most early settlers did not venture west looking for a wilderness adventure. Instead they were looking to begin a new life in the American frontier.

On the eve of the Civil War, the idea of wilderness had many faces. Some travelers appreciated it for beauty and went to it to escape everyday life. For others, wilderness could only be viewed in terms of dollar signs. Others viewed it as something that should be honored and protected. Turning attention once again to Macon and Cherokee counties in North Carolina, the wilderness here also took on many forms. Wilderness not only included forests, valleys, and mountains, but also included farmland, which in many cases was the only link some had to outside markets, and the Civil War was a key factor in determining the fate of the "wilderness" in the two counties. Residents looked to the environment for materials in which to survive, a relationship much different than those who came to the region in search of pleasure and recreation. This thesis will examine what affect the Civil War had on the natural environment, particularly agriculture, in Macon and Cherokee counties. By examining the hardships

⁶Ibid., 24.

the war brought to the region, evidence will suggest that the Civil War was the determining factor in the environmental devastation that occurred in the region after the war. In order to answer this question thoroughly, a varied selection of materials has been put to use. Since nothing has been written on the subject specifically, the secondary sources encompass relevant scholarship, including the Civil War in Appalachia, women's history, southern agriculture, general Appalachian history, and environmental history. Manuscripts are also scarce for the two counties. Most of the primary sources come from women in the counties in the form of letters. Since most men left the counties to fight in the war, the women were left with the responsibility of home and fields. These sources not only provide an insight into life in the counties during the Civil War, but also show the various relationships people had with the natural environment. Other works, including travel accounts, census records, and various surveys, complete the sources.

Although nothing specific has been written on the topic, there has been important scholarship on associated topics. The best two works dealing with women of Western North Carolina during the Civil War are John C. Inscoe's article entitled "Coping in Confederate Appalachia: Portrait of a Mountain Woman and Her Community at War"⁷ and Gordon B. McKinney's "Women's Role in the Civil War Western North Carolina".⁸ Both articles examine women's role in the community and at home and how the Civil War affected those relationships. Inscoe's article focuses on one woman in Macon County, Mary Bell, and traces her experiences during the war. The author goes one step

⁷ John Inscoe, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia: Portrait of a Mountain Woman and Her Community at War," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (October 1992): 388-413.

⁸ Gordon McKinney, "Women's Role in the Civil War Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (January 1992): 37-56.

further by putting her situation into the greater context of other Appalachian women as well as southern women. McKinney's article takes a broader approach to include all the concerns women in western North Carolina faced during the war from violence to starvation. Inscoc and McKinney also collaborated on a book entitled *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War*.⁹ This book also examines women of the region along with other important topics including the decision to secede and the effects that it had on the Appalachian region, Unionists within Confederate Appalachia, guerrilla warfare, slavery, economic problems, and the aftermath of the war. Between the two scholars, their work is the most thorough on the subject of western North Carolina during the Civil War.

While the works previously mentioned touch on the issue of agriculture during the war, the examination is not complete. For more thorough accounts, two books by Cornelius Oliver Cathey entitled *Agricultural Developments in North Carolina, 1783-1860*¹⁰ and *Agriculture in North Carolina Before the Civil War*¹¹ contain valuable information. For the status of agriculture in North Carolina during the Civil War, John Solomon Otto's book *Southern Agriculture During the Civil War Era, 1860-1880* is the best source.¹² All of these books go into great depth about the types of crops grown, agricultural revolutions that occurred, as well as agricultural societies that formed. While

⁹ John Inscoc and Gordon McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Cornelius Oliver Cathey, *Agricultural Developments in North Carolina, 1783-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956).

¹¹ Cornelius Oliver Cathey, *Agriculture in North Carolina Before the Civil War* (Raleigh: Department of Archives and History, 1974).

¹² John Solomon Otto, *Southern Agriculture During the Civil War Era, 1860-1880* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994).

these three books provide a great deal of pertinent information, the agriculture of western North Carolina is only touched upon briefly. To compensate for this lack of scholarship in the area of Western North Carolina agriculture, agriculture census records for the two counties from the years 1850, 1860, and 1870 have been used extensively in this thesis.

With the aid of scholarship that surrounds the subject in question, along with the primary source materials that are available, this thesis will examine and answer specific questions. First, the way in which outsiders viewed the region will be examined. These insights not only paint a romantic image of the two counties, but also prove that wilderness was a commodity for these outsiders, ideas that would eventually come back to the region after the war in the form of outside investment. The next chapter will examine the county's position within the market economy as well as the numerous price and output fluctuations agricultural products experienced from before to after the Civil War. The third chapter will examine the causes of agricultural and environmental decline in the counties that were a direct effect of the war. The final chapter will examine the opportunity the Civil War provided for outside investors, specifically lumber companies, and the effect these practices had on the environment. In conclusion, this thesis will not only illustrate the decline of agriculture in the two counties caused by the Civil War, but also how this decline paved the way for a singular view of the environment to permeate the residents' ideals, that of the wilderness as a commodity.

CHAPTER 1

ENVIRONMENT

The counties of Cherokee and Macon are located in the southwestern tip of North Carolina. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Cherokee and Macon counties included within their boundaries what are today Graham, Jackson, and Swain counties. For the purpose of this examination, the 1861 county boundaries will be used. (See Map 1 on page 12) This chapter will situate the counties geographically as well as describe the natural assets each county embraced. In addition to this description, outsider's accounts of the region will be examined. Long before the region had been opened up to industrial capitalism, many travelers were recording detailed chronicles of the environment. All had the similarity of reading like an advertisement, inviting investors to come and experience the wonders for themselves. But these ideas of a commodified wilderness in the region would not take hold until the residents embraced the idea fully, not until after the Civil War.

Macon County is positioned in the Appalachian Mountain region, in a cross-range between the Great Smoky Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains. J.A. Deal, a traveler to the region in 1891, described the area as a "magazine of wealth which nature has stored up for the development of the South in the mountains which extend from Pennsylvania to Northern Georgia and Alabama-and Western North Carolina is the aerie and Macon county the nest-egg of the GREAT APPALACHIAN CHAIN."¹³ Macon County indeed holds a mountainous position within North Carolina; included in the Appalachian chain are the Nantahala Mountains and the Cowee Mountains. The major

rivers include the Little Tennessee and the Nantahala, which drain every part of the county. Located along the Little Tennessee River are the county's lowest elevations, approximately 1,970 feet above sea level.¹⁴ Today, the county reaches heights averaging almost 6,000 feet above sea level. During the Civil War, however, the county contained the peak Clingman's Dome, 6,643 feet above sea level.

¹³ J.A. Deal, *Western North Carolina. "Utopia": the centre of the finest belt of magnetic iron and hard wood timber to be found in the continent* (Franklin, North Carolina: Franklin Press, 1891), 5.

Map 1.

Western North Carolina Counties in 1860¹⁵

¹⁴ United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Macon County, North Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929), 1.

¹⁵ From John Inscoe, *Mountain Masters: Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 26. Used with permission from the author.

Macon County was carved out of Haywood County in 1828. The residents of the territory previously had to trek to Waynesville, the county seat, to do business. Bad roads, distance, and weather made this trip extremely difficult. The formation of Macon County alleviated this problem by removing the need to travel such great distances for commerce. On February 10, 1855 the town of Franklin was named the county seat for the recently established Macon County. Franklin, a historically significant place for many years before it became the county seat, occupied the sight of the Cherokee Indian's "sacred city."¹⁶ Wilbur Zeigler and Ben Grosscup, visitors to Franklin in 1883, described the town as "situated in the heart of one of the most fertile sections of the mountains-the valley of the Little Tennessee."¹⁷ Franklin did indeed have an advantageous position within the county, noted by many. Charles Lanman, in his book *Letters from the Alleghany Mountains*, commented that "the little village of Franklin is so romantically situated on the Little Tennessee. It is surrounded with mountains, and as quiet and pretty a hamlet as I have yet seen among the Alleghanies."¹⁸ After the formation of the county and the town of Franklin, the process of building roads, public buildings, homes, and stores began. Residents and visitors were equally content and impressed with the county seat. J.A. Deal described the town as "destined to be the great town of Western North

¹⁶ Fred A. Olds, *Story of the Counties of North Carolina, with other data* (Oxford, NC: Oxford Orphanage, 1941), 41; Jessie Suttan, ed, *The Heritage of Macon County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Hunter Publishing Company, 1987), 15. Nathaniel Macon, from Warren county, held the positions of speaker of the United States House of Representatives, U.S. Senator, and President of the State Constitutional Convention of 1835. The county seat of Franklin was named in honor of Jesse Franklin.

¹⁷ Wilbur G. Zeigler and Ben S. Grosscup, *The Heart of the Alleghanies* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Alfred Williams and Company, 1883), 82.

¹⁸ Charles Lanman, *Letters from the Alleghany Mountains* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1849), 75.

Carolina.” He went on to comment that “in every sense of the word it has the situation. Here is a site for a large place, and no city could be more beautifully situated, or amidst grander or more beautiful scenery, surpassing that about Asheville.”¹⁹

Macon County’s neighbor Cherokee is also beautifully situated. Wilbur Zeigler and Ben Grosscup, visitors to the area in 1883, described the position of Cherokee in their book *Heart of the Alleghenies*:

Down further on the Valley River the landscape grows more open, and the rugged mountains become softened down to undulating hills, drawn far back from the stream, and leaving between them wide vales, rich in soil, generous in crops, and in places over three miles in width.²⁰

Cherokee, the most southwestern of the North Carolina counties, consists of the Valley River Mountains in the east, the Snowbird and Unaka Mountains in the north, and the Payne and Pack Mountains in the west.²¹ The elevation in the county ranges from 1,300 feet above sea level to about 5,000 feet above sea level. At the time of the Civil War, Cherokee County also possessed a lofty peak that is now within the boundaries of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Thunderhead. The peak is located along the Tennessee/North Carolina State line and has an elevation of 5,530 feet above sea level. The major rivers in the county include the Valley, Hiwassee, and Nottely. John Preston Arthur, in his book *Western North Carolina: A History*, stated that the preeminent advantage of the county seat of Murphy was its “location between two clear rivers.”²²

¹⁹ Deal, *Western North Carolina*, 8.

²⁰ Zeigler and Grosscup, 88.

²¹ United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Cherokee County, North Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924), 305.

²² John Preston Arthur, *Western North Carolina: A History, 1730-1913* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1914), 1.

Cherokee County was formed in 1839 from Macon County and contained parts of present-day Graham and Clay counties. At the time of formation, Cherokee consisted of 938 square miles. It too was formed because of the distance between it and the closest county seat in Macon. Murphy, only a hundred miles from Asheville, was created as the county seat of Cherokee County. Murphy was not the first choice of names for the newly established county seat, however. "Many persons are in favor of calling it Junaluska, in honor of a Cherokee Indian of that name who now lives in the Nation, and who distinguished himself greatly at the Battle of Horse Shoe. ... As to the name of the county all agree, that it should be called Cherokee."²³ Cherokee too began to grow and prosper as a newly formed county. Although there are not many travelers' accounts dealing with Murphy, one in particular painted a rugged picture. Augustus Summerfield Merrimon, an Asheville attorney, traveled to the county seat in 1853. He was impressed with the scenery on the way there, commenting that he traveled through a "romantic valley...every thing around us is unsurpassingly beautiful."²⁴ After spending the night in a resident's house, however, his opinion changed somewhat. Merrimon recorded that:

The county is very beautiful, the soil verry productive, the mountain rich and the range in summer unsurpassed. The County deserves to be improved and it will be. Murphy is a small place and poorely improved. There are several small stores here that seem to do a small business. All of them together would not make one good one. The situation of the village is beautiful, and a most beautiful town might be built here. I hope this will be done before a great while.²⁵

²³ Alice D. White and Nell A. White, eds., *The Heritage of Cherokee County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Hunter Publishing Company, 1987), 16. Murphy was named after Archibald D. Murphey a strong supporter of education who helped lay the foundation of North Carolina's public school system.

²⁴ A.R. Newsome, ed., "The A.S. Merrimon Journal, 1853-1854," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (July 1931): 314.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

Whether Murphy was in as bad of condition as Merrimon describes is hard to know. Merrimon clearly believed however that in order for the wilderness to be worth something, it needed not only to be beautiful, but also civilized to a certain degree.

Macon and Cherokee counties abound in a productive natural environment. Before and after the Civil War, people traveled from all over to visit and explore the region. Although they came for many different reasons, all were struck by the richness of the land. The accounts left by these visitors are not only interesting and valuable for their obvious content, but more so for the different perceptions of wilderness each individual traveler portrayed. Whether searching for adventure, escape, or a healthful atmosphere, all were fascinated with the environment. These visitors kept detailed accounts of the scenery as well as their experiences with the local people. These accounts make it clear that this region was highly regarded by many because of its natural attributes. Not only do the accounts paint a picture of the region before and after the Civil War, but also prove that there was outside interest in the natural resources of the region.

The Scenery of Western North Carolina and Northwestern South Carolina by Henry Colton is an excellent example of such interest. Traveling through the mountains of North Carolina in 1859, Colton recorded detailed and insightful accounts of all he encountered. Colton described the mountain region as a “mass of country that remains relatively unknown: a section of country covered with grand mountains, lovely and fertile valleys, and traversed by streams which, like everything emanating from the heavenly region, are pure and spotless as the crystal.”²⁶ The natural beauty and ruggedness of the region thrilled Colton. As he traveled, Colton made it a point to comment on all he

²⁶ Henry E. Colton, *The Scenery of Western North Carolina and Northwestern South Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: W.L. Pomeroy, 1859), 14.

encountered. For him, the wilderness was something to be admired and explored. In his preface, he encouraged others to do this as well, stating “that persons unacquainted with its beauties may be induced to go to the mountains of Western North Carolina,” and Colton would make this possible by providing “such items of information as may enable them the more to enjoy a trip there.”²⁷

Popular magazines and journals also offered depictions of North Carolina scenery. In August of 1860, the *Southern Literary Messenger* printed an article entitled “A Week in the Smoky Mountains” by a man calling himself only R. Coming to the region because of his doctor’s advice, R. sought pleasant weather, exercise, and fresh air to aid in the recovery of his ailments. Traveling from Knoxville, Tennessee, into the mountains, R. took notes on all he encountered. The writing reflects attention to detail underlain with a strong curiosity about those people who were considered different and backward by the rest of the country. Traveling along the west fork of the Little Pigeon River, R. reflects how impressed he is with the scenery of the environment, writing that a “more beautiful stream than the Pigeon is scarcely possible to imagine. The farms are very fine, the farm-houses good, and the cultivation of the land above the ordinary tillage of East Tennessee.”²⁸ As the author traveled further into the backcountry of the region to Alum Cave, he recorded that it was “useless to attempt to describe the wild and romantic scenery through which we passed. We went the whole day through laurel thickets, with no path to guide us, passed over rapid mountain torrents by springing from rock to rock, many times at places I should never have thought of attempting, climbed up steep

²⁷Ibid., preface.

²⁸R., “A Week in the Smoky Mountains,” *Southern Literary Messenger*, 31 August 1860, 120.

mountain sides by pulling ourselves along by the bushes overhead.”²⁹ For R., this was wilderness adventure at its best. His comments reflect contemporary beliefs, that wilderness was something romantic; within it not only lie adventure, but also escape.

As the author traveled in the region, he met many men and women along the way tending to their chores, “making molasses out of sorghum,” and working on small garden plots.³⁰ R.’s observations shed light on the lives of mountain families and gives hints of how they interacted and made use of their surrounding environment. Staying the night with some of those he encountered, R. described the living conditions of his hosts: “Mrs. Huskey’s passions seem to be cleanliness, comfort, and economy-not bad qualities in a housewife. The sugar she uses is maple-sugar of her own make, but so thoroughly clean and white that it has lost the distinctive taste of tree-sugar.”³¹ The account of the author’s travels also portrays the local people in a self-sufficient light. While attending a church function with one of his hosts, the author comments that “the mountain people, drest in every variety of costume-some in hunting shirts-some in roundabouts, and others in the shirt-sleeves, garments worn by men and women seemed all to be of homespun, manufactured by the fair hands of the mountain women themselves.”³² While staying at the Huskey residence, the author experienced this firsthand, commenting that “while the

²⁹Ibid., 126.

³⁰Ibid., 120.

³¹Ibid., 122-123.

³²Ibid., 124.

old woman and her pretty daughter sat sewing around the fire, the old hunter would recount over to me all his hunting adventures.”³³

Natural beauty was not the only thing to catch the eyes of the travelers. While the accounts spend much time defining the region as a place of recreation and beauty, there were also promoting the land and the many natural resources it possessed. Many accounts spent much time detailing the natural wealth of the region, explaining the agricultural situation of the two counties thoroughly because of all the different aspects they touch upon, such as different timber, mineral, and soil resources, as well as climate and precipitation.

Within the boundaries of Macon and Cherokee counties lie numerous acres of diverse forests. Even today the Great Smoky Mountains National Park alone contains more tree species than in northern Europe. Over the years the two counties have contained a number of different forest types. At higher elevations (above 4,500 feet) the spruce-fir forest, the northern hardwood forest, the cove hardwood forest, the hemlock forest, and the pine-and-oak forest dominate. The lower elevations consist of many types of oak, hickory, yellow poplar, white ash, wild cherry, black and white walnut, blackgum and sweetgum, maple, persimmon, dogwood, chestnut, and birch.³⁴ J.A. Deal wrote a piece entitled *Western North Carolina, "Utopia": the centre of the finest belt of magnetic iron and hard wood timber to be found on the continent*, praising the richness of the land in 1891.³⁵ This piece reads like an advertisement, its main purpose being to attract people and money to the region. Deal comments on the timber in the region extensively,

³³Ibid., 125.

³⁴ United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Cherokee County*, 7.

writing “this area is covered with the finest growth of timber available to be found on any like area in the United States.”³⁶ Trees were important commodities for the residents. Since the first settlers had arrived in the region, trees had been cleared to make way for fields and used in the construction of homes and public buildings. Trees were also occasionally cut to be sold to local sawmills. Ronald Eller, in *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, points out that “prior to the 1890s..., the market for sawed lumber had been localized; the technology employed was simple, and the amount of timber cut made only a slight impact upon the region’s vast forest reserves.”³⁷ Although timber did provide the residents with an additional source of income, it did not sustain them in the way agriculture did. The timber boom that wiped out much of the old growth forest in the region did not begin until shortly after the Civil War.

Another resource that became a profitable commodity after the Civil War was minerals. Macon and Cherokee counties possess many minerals. The soil surveys for the two counties give detailed analyses of the geologic formations. The rocks in the upland areas in the county contain metamorphosed sedimentary rocks from the Cambrian age, most being of the Ocoee group. The western and northern parts contain conglomerate, graywacke, gneiss, slate, and mica schist. The southern part contains fine-grained mica schist, talc schist, and slate.³⁸ Minerals with commercial value include marble, limestone, brown iron ore, and talc. Cherokee and Macon counties did not contain as

³⁵ Deal, *Western North Carolina*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 86.

³⁸ United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Cherokee County*, 4-5.

many minerals with commercial value as other counties in Western North Carolina did. As a result, this area did not see a giant mining boom as did Yancey and Mitchell counties, which in the 1920s were producing seventy-five percent of all mica mined in the United States.³⁹ Travelers to the region did however notice the minerals that were present. In his weeklong excursion to the Smoky Mountains, R. recorded that he “passed by a vein of most beautiful Breccia marble and also noticed a quarry of slate which one day must become valuable for covering houses.”⁴⁰ Other visitors saw a more commercialized future for the minerals in the counties. J.A. Deal had the vision of commodifying the wilderness of the two counties, including the minerals located there. Deal, in a section of his advertisement-like book, wrote of “minerals in lavish profusion,”⁴¹ listing the minerals and assuring those who were interested in developing the region that it also contained a “never-failing supply of the clearest and purest water, its pure bracing mountain air and its extreme healthfulness fulfill all the conditions for the comfort as well as for the prosperity of man.”⁴² Deal was quick to attest that the development of the environment was a step in the direction of the betterment of society. In *Letters from the Alleghany Mountains*, Charles Lanman offers an interesting section of letters written after the first edition. One in particular was addressed to the editor of the *Highland Messenger* from a J.S. Skinner. After reading accounts of the region’s natural resources, Skinner wrote to tell his, commenting that he too would like to make known to the public “the existence of Western North Carolina, of such minerals as might

³⁹ Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 124.

⁴⁰ R., “A Week in the Smoky Mountains, 120.

⁴¹ Deal, *Western North Carolina*, 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

be valuable in a commercial point of view, or interesting to the scientific world.”⁴³ He hoped that in light of all of the material that was coming out dealing with the wealth of the region that it would interest legislators and entice them to perform a geologic survey of the area. Whatever the outcome of his suggestions, he hoped that any publicity afforded to the area might prove beneficial. Charles Lanman was also hopeful that further investigation would be done in the counties, commenting that:

To the botanist and the geologist, this section of the Union is unquestionably the most interesting eastward of the Mississippi, for we have nearly every variety of forest trees known, as well as plants and flowers in the greatest abundance, while the mountains, which are of primitive formation, abound in every known variety of minerals.⁴⁴

Interest in the region eventually did heighten, and did so to an extent few thought would ever happen. Macon and Cherokee counties were just two pieces in a huge puzzle of a region whose future would lie in environmental commodities. While these natural attributes were interesting to read and write about, most of the residents were more concerned with other environmental elements, including soils, climate, and precipitation.

The two counties are host to a number of different soil types. All accounts examined for this thesis comment extensively on the fertility of the region. Traveling through the southwestern most counties, Haywood, Jackson, Cherokee, and Macon, Colton wrote that “there are many beautiful and exceedingly fertile tracts of country, whose rich virgin soil yields a large harvest of the natural crops.”⁴⁵ And indeed there were. Cherokee County contains soils that can be divided into two general groups:

⁴³ Lanman, *Letters from the Alleghany Mountains*, 187.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴⁵ Colton, *The Scenery of Western North Carolina*, 89.

residual soils and alluvial soils. Residual soils are those derived in a place through disintegration and decomposition of the underlying rocks. Alluvial soils are those formed by the deposition of soil material along the streams by flowing water.⁴⁶

The two general groups can be further divided into eight series: Porters, Cecil, Talladega, Ranger, Hagerstown, Habersham, Altavista, and Congaree. Finally, the series can be divided into thirteen separate soil types. Porters loam is located in the western section of the county in coves and on mountain slopes. This type of soil supports corn and wheat crops, but most of it contains pasture or forest cover. Talladega slate loam occurs for the most part in the eastern and southern portions of the county on steep mountain slopes and the tops of low mountains. This soil is not very productive and therefore is covered mostly by forests. The little cultivation the soil supports includes corn, rye, potatoes, sweet potatoes, cabbage, and garden vegetables. Also located in the southern and eastern sections of the county, Talladega silt loam occupies low mountain slopes and foothills near stream courses. This type of soil can be extensively farmed, most of the crops being corn, rye, wheat, and sorgo. Ranger gravelly loam is located in the southern and western parts of the county on low mountaintops and foothills. This soil type is not extensive and is mostly forest. The only crops grown successfully are corn and wheat. Hagerstown stony loam occupies only a small section of the county. Not well suited for agriculture, most is covered with forest, although wheat and corn can be grown. Cecil clay loam is located in the west-central part of the county. This soil type occupies valleys and lower foothills. Because it is favorable for agriculture, corn, wheat, rye, potatoes, sorgo, cowpeas, clover, garden vegetables, and fruit can be grown with

⁴⁶ United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Cherokee County*, 312.

much success. Located in the northeastern, northern, and southern parts of the county, Habersham stony loam is used for cultivation and forest. Mostly occupying tablelands in the valleys, corn, wheat, and rye can be grown. Altavista silt loam is located in the eastern and northeastern sections of the county. While corn and wheat can be grown, most of the land is used as pastures. Congaree fine sandy loam is located along the Hiwassee River. Corn can be grown, but most of the land is used as pastures. Congaree silt loam occurs in floodplains throughout the county. This soil type is the most important in the county, yielding corn, hay, rye, wheat, cowpeas, and soybeans. Rough stony land includes areas that have a steep and rough topography. Because of its location and the amount of rocks in the soil, it is unsuitable for agriculture. Mostly located in the northeastern and northern parts of the county, it is covered with forest. The last soil type in Cherokee County is rock outcrop. It is composed of exposed rock and therefore has no agricultural value.⁴⁷ Macon County also has a number of different soil types.

When Wilbur Zeigler and Ben Grosscup traveled to Macon County in 1883, the natural surroundings impressed them, commenting that “as a traveler, approaching from the east, winds through the lands lying along the banks of the slow-flowing stream, he will be attracted by the broad, level farms, and, if in summer or early fall, by the wealth of the harvest.”⁴⁸ The diverse soils located in Macon County allowed for such plentiful harvests to occur. Because the county is mountainous, most of the land suited for agriculture is located along the Little Tennessee River, on mild mountain slopes, in coves, and on some of the flatter mountain tops. A soil survey divided the county into

⁴⁷Ibid., 312-322.

⁴⁸ Zeigler and Grosscup, *The Heart of the Alleghenies*, 82.

three groups: farming soils of the Little Tennessee Valley, farming and grazing soils of the mountains, and nontillable or forest soils of the mountains.⁴⁹ The soils of the Little Tennessee Valley include all types within the Cecil, Davidson, and Congaree series. These types of soils occur on rolling and hilly areas of the intermountain valleys. These series contain four types of soil in Macon County. Cecil clay loam occupies land around the various rivers in the county. This soil type is ideal for pastureland as well as the production of corn, oats, rye, soybeans, cowpeas, red clover, sorgo, and vegetables. Davidson clay loam occupies land north and south of Franklin as well as in the Little Tennessee River Valley. This soil type is ideal for the production of wheat. Congaree loam also lies along the Little Tennessee River. This productive soil yields corn, potatoes, and hay. Congaree fine sandy loam occupies land along small streams, and is best used for the production of garden vegetables.

The second group, farming and grazing soils of the mountains, contain six soil types. These soils occupy mountain slopes, tops, and ridges and cover a large portion of Macon County. Because of the high elevations the soil occupies, most of the land is forested or used as pasture. Porters loam occupies most of the county, especially to the north and northwest of Franklin. This soil type is well suited for the production of corn, potatoes, cabbage, snapbeans, buckwheat, and pumpkins. Porters loam, in the colluvial phase, located at the bases of mountain slopes, yields corn, cabbage, and potatoes. Ashe loam is located in the southeastern part of the county. Because rock outcrops frequently occur in this soil type, the land is best suited for pasture or forest. Some crops, including corn, potatoes, cabbage, and small grains can be grown, however, in the smoother areas.

⁴⁹ United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Macon County*, 10.

Ashe sandy loam occurs in the southeastern section of the county as well. These soils are located at higher elevations; therefore the land is best suited for pasture and the production of apples. Rabun clay loam occurs in the mountains. Grazing and forestry are the best uses of this soil type. The third soil group, nontillable or forest soils of the mountains contain three soil types. Rough stony land, porters stony loam, and rock outcrop all contain exposed rocks and therefore hold no agricultural value. The land is instead used for its timber or as pasture.⁵⁰ The soil types of Macon and Cherokee counties are diverse. But without the ideal climate and the right amount of precipitation, the production of agriculture would be greatly hindered, if not obsolete.

Many people traveled to the mountains of North Carolina to escape the damp and hot summers of the lower areas. Places like Flat Rock and Asheville became popular destinations. As with all the natural attributes of the region, the climate also received attention in the accounts of travelers to the region. Colton, in his book on the mountains, wrote that “the elevated situation of this table-land, its bracing atmosphere, fertile soil, and excellent water, all combine to make it a region of interest to any one who would seek refreshment for a care-worn body, or a place whereat to while pleasantly away the hot summer months.”⁵¹ The region does indeed have a pleasant and temperate climate. The summer temperatures do not get excessively high, and the winter temperatures are reasonably cool. Although the temperatures vary greatly depending on elevation, the following two tables give an idea of the climate of and amount of precipitation Macon and Cherokee counties receive.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8-17.

⁵¹ Colton, *The Scenery of Western North Carolina*, 14.

Table 1. Annual Temperature and Precipitation Readings for Macon County, North Carolina.⁵²

Month	Temp. Mean (Far.)	Temp. High (Far.)	Temp. Low (Far.)	Precip. Mean (Inches)	Precip. (Driest Year 1926)	Precip. (Wette st Year 1906)
January	38.1	73.0	-8	6.81	8.53	12.94
February	38.3	71.0	-13	3.69	3.34	1.70
March	46.6	84.0	-1	7.52	3.78	9.95
April	53.5	87.0	21	6.31	3.38	3.91
May	62.0	89.9	30	6.10	5.05	4.09
June	63.0	93.0	35	7.90	3.41	8.83
July	70.4	91.0	48	9.30	3.41	15.30
August	70.0	92.0	50	8.35	.86	12.09
Sept.	65.5	93.0	33	6.70	.67	22.46
October	56.0	82.0	19	5.40	7.69	8.80
Nov.	46.8	73.0	5	4.66	7.81	6.11
Dec.	39.6	72.0	-5	7.90	7.67	7.67

⁵² Information recorded by the United States Weather Bureau Station at Rock House in Macon County, North Carolina from United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Macon County, North Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929), 4.

Table 2. Annual Temperature and Precipitation Readings for Cherokee County, North Carolina.⁵³

Month	Temp. Mean (Far.)	Temp. High (Far.)	Temp. Low (Far.)	Precip. Mean (Inches)	Precip. (Driest Year 1933)	Precip. (Wettest Year 1932)
January	41.2	78	-6	5.40	3.39	6.88
February	42.3	80	-4	5.50	8.62	9.83
March	48.7	86	6	6.60	4.42	5.44
April	56.9	88	15	4.61	4.84	4.52
May	64.0	95	27	5.00	6.38	3.01
June	71.0	99	38	6.10	2.09	5.36
July	73.8	99	44	6.10	4.08	6.16
August	73.0	98	44	5.00	4.49	4.16
Sept.	69.5	95	33	3.80	.48	3.71
October	57.9	90	18	3.40	2.00	6.63
Nov.	47.4	83	8	4.00	1.29	5.04
Dec.	42.0	73	-1	6.80	3.57	16.83

⁵³ Information recorded by the United States Weather Bureau Station at Andrews in Cherokee County, North Carolina from United States Department of Agriculture, *Soil Survey of Cherokee County, North Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), 6-7.

As evidenced by the charts, both of the counties have temperate climates as well as a decent amount of rainfall that allowed for fertile fields. Visitors who came to the region to escape the heat of the lower areas in the South found the mountains of western North Carolina refreshing. J.A. Deal even went so far as to claim Macon the healthiest county in the United States and went on to say that the region was “free from both malarial and pulmonary troubles, and where persons suffering from disease of either of these great classes receive immediate and remarkable relief and benefit.”⁵⁴ The climate of western North Carolina was even compared to such locales as Paris, France, Venice, Italy, and Munich, Germany.⁵⁵ Some accounts make it clear early on that this region was to become the next vacation mecca, although other forms of capitalism would take over first. Western North Carolina was established as a rich and wonderful region to visit before, as well as after, the Civil War. With its wide array of timber and mineral resources, as well as its temperate climate and beautiful scenery, it was only a matter of time before outside investors would take notice of this profitable wilderness.

Henry Colton sums up the overall feeling most of the visitors had towards the region when he commented that “this whole country is one of vast resources. It contains water-force enough to turn the machinery of the United States. Its mountain sides and gorges, and its valleys will afford pasturage for innumerable cattle. Its mineral wealth, though unhappily thus far more fruitful of litigation than anything else, is said to be great. Its agricultural resources are not insignificant, and it possesses a mine of wealth in the

⁵⁴ Deal, *Western North Carolina*, 9.

⁵⁵ Lanman, *Letters from the Alleghany Mountains*, 374.

energy and life of its inhabitants.”⁵⁶ Colton was correct in his estimation of the wealth of western North Carolina. In general, the entire region we term Appalachia mirrors western North Carolina in that it too held large quantities of natural resources. But before the Civil War, this natural wealth was for the most part untouched by those not living in the region. The Civil War not only brought hard times to the region, it would eventually lead to the destruction of the environment in order to extract the natural wealth that abounded throughout the region.

While travelers to the region were amazed with the natural wealth that abounded, for the residents of the region, these resources were what they needed in order to survive. Insights from early tourists of the region paint an interesting and rich picture of western North Carolina. Even today, an outsider’s perception of the land can be extremely different than that of a person who calls the region home. The visitors to the region thought it wonderful because of its untouched wilderness and promoted it in such a way as to draw more people, and potential investors, to the region. Whether in search of adventure, health, or resources, the region was the place to go. When this interest in the environment as a commodity was mixed with the effects of the Civil War, the future of the environment darkened. In order to better understand what changes occurred during the Civil War, it is necessary to examine agricultural census records. These records prove that there was a serious decline in most agricultural productivity during the Civil War. In addition to the census records, the agricultural situation of the two counties will be examined to determine what products were key not only for consumption, but also for interaction in the market economy.

⁵⁶ Colton, *The Scenery of Western North Carolina*, 90.

CHAPTER 2

MOUNTAIN AGRICULTURE

Western North Carolina has been recognized as a place of immense natural beauty from the time it was settled. The region's diverse environment attracted visitors from all over the United States who, in return, left a wealth of material describing the land. The agricultural productivity of the land was one commodity that was noted in all of the accounts reviewed. This attribute also held a special importance for the residents of the region. Agriculture in the mountains of western North Carolina was not dominated by one chief crop as it was in the eastern part of the state. Instead, the mountains were host to a variety of crops, depending almost entirely on the location of the field and the soil types found within the terrain. This chapter will examine briefly the important historical views of agriculture in the region, the land and farm situation in the mountains, the different crops yielded by the residents, the livestock industry of the mountains, and how agricultural production changed as a result of the Civil War. Agricultural census records for Macon and Cherokee counties and other primary sources germane to the region reveal some important truths about this topic.

Aside from accounts and manuscripts left by people who visited and resided in the region, the agricultural situation of western North Carolina has been for the most part ignored by scholars until recently. One reason for this trend found in the early histories of the colonies is due to the fact that mountain regions were not settled as quickly as the lowland portions of the colonies. *American Husbandry*, edited by Harry J. Carman, is a perfect example of the early bias towards the eastern part of the North Carolina.⁵⁷ First

⁵⁷ Harry J. Carman, ed., *American Husbandry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

published anonymously in 1775, the book did not attract many interested readers in America nor Great Britain. It was not until the twentieth century that scholars began to realize the importance of the book and the information it both provided and overlooked.⁵⁸ The author detailed the agricultural landscape of all the colonies and provided reasons for shortcomings of each as well as explaining the worth of the colonies to Great Britain.⁵⁹ The sparsely populated mountain region of North Carolina, as well as the mountain regions in the rest of the colonies, was ignored. This leads the reader to believe that nothing productive was happening in the region at the time. Wilma Dunaway's conclusions in her book *The First American Frontier*, however, disproves that theory.⁶⁰ Since the colonial powers had "discovered" this land, the Appalachian Mountains had indeed been a region of great importance. The expansion of capitalism into the new frontiers, in this case the mountains of what would become North Carolina, was a result of competition between core nations to obtain a hegemonic status within the world system. Dunaway points out that there were three reasons why the European nations were competing for the American colonies: the colonies provided monetary wealth; they acted as a market for European exports; and they provided areas to absorb the surplus population of Europe.⁶¹ Southern Appalachia did not escape this process of expanding

⁵⁸ Ibid., foreword.

⁵⁹ The author of *American Husbandry* had interesting comments pertaining to the lack of fences in colonial North Carolina, writing that "their fences are extremely incomplete, and kept in very bad order". The author's comments mirror the feelings of fear towards wilderness that were prominent during the 1700s. Fences not only delineated between wilderness and civilization, but also kept the feared creatures of the wilderness out, see Ibid., 190.

⁶⁰ Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁶¹ Ibid., 10-13.

capitalism. From the beginning of the settlement process by Europeans in America, the natural resources of the region had been commodified and proved to be an obvious asset to the colonial powers. The first transactions the region saw involved deerskin trading between the Cherokee Indians and the European merchants. This idea that the environment of the mountain region was a commodity would continue through its history, and still continues today. The reasons the mountain region was ignored in early scholarship are hard to understand. Whether the perceptions fostered by people, regarding the manner by which they reacted towards the wilderness, hindered them from seeing this western frontier as anything but evil or unproductive, or more recently, embrace the prevalent idea that the Appalachian region was, and continues to be a backward society, the region was ignored and erroneous assumptions were made.

The mountain region of North Carolina and its agricultural productivity are briefly addressed in a later work by Lewis Cecil Gray titled *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*.⁶² This substantial work on southern agriculture is for the most part thorough, the exception being that the mountain region is only mentioned when the author discusses the historical barrier to the productive farming regions west of the Appalachian Mountain chain. What little information Gray proffered about farming in the mountain region before the Civil War was misconceived. Some of these myths remain popular with some today. Gray asserts that the mountain region, due to the rugged terrain and lack of transportation routes, was completely self-sufficient.

This would imply that not only did the region not have contact with outside markets, residents lived in complete isolation from the rest of the country. This romantic

⁶² Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, Volume 2 (New York: Peter Smith, 1941).

myth ignores all the progress that residents in the area had made. Recent scholarship on the subject has taken large steps to dispel these myths. John Inscoe, in *Mountain Masters*, points out that almost all mountain region residents had some occasions for commercial transactions, regardless of whether their products consisted of farm goods or forest-gathered goods.⁶³ Some residents also had an opportunity to participate in markets outside of the region, made possible by roads that traversed the mountain areas.⁶⁴

Durwood Dunn, in his examination of the Cades Cove community in Tennessee, now located in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, also found evidence that the community was linked to the market economy. Cades Cove had an advantageous position environmentally in that it lay in an extremely fertile area.⁶⁵ Because of the community's location, the rich soil, and the yields that were produced, the residents were able to establish economic ties with eastern Tennessee. Even though the community had strong ties with eastern Tennessee, which likewise bound the community to the fluctuations of American culture, this model, according to Dunn, was the exception, and not the rule. Dunn indicates that most small communities in western North Carolina did not mirror Cades Cove. On the one hand this opinion is true; there were not many communities within western North Carolina that lay entirely in a fertile valley and also had access to transportation routes to the market centers. But when the examination widens to focus on individual counties, the assumption cannot be made that the residents had no interaction with outside markets or commercial transactions within the region. A

⁶³ Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 39.

⁶⁴ These important transportation routes will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

⁶⁵ Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 88-89.

more realistic approach to the economic situation experienced by the areas within western North Carolina during the Civil War is accomplished in Gordon McKinney's article "Economy and Community in Western North Carolina."⁶⁶ McKinney asserts that residents of the region were involved in the market economy at different levels depending on their economic situation, or the amount of surplus that each farmer was able to produce to sell. Although not everyone participated in the production of goods for market, most farmers depended on the local and outside markets to some degree. Supplies that were not easily produced at home, such as pots and cloth, as well as food supplies that farmers could not grow themselves, ensured that most everyone in the county was connected in some way to the market system. McKinney points out several facts that prove the region was linked to the outside: the existence of adequate transportation, the demand for commercial cloth-making equipment and yard goods, the belief that during the war families would be able to continue to purchase food at pre-war prices, and the fact that western North Carolina experienced the same shortages and price increases that plagued the rest of the Confederacy.⁶⁷

While recent scholarship has concluded that self-sufficient farms were not as predominant as once believed, there were secluded places within the mountains where people lived and, due to natural barriers, had no continuing active relationships with markets. In addition to this, small farms made large surpluses of agriculture difficult to come by and therefore affected the degree to which some farmers were involved in the

⁶⁶ Gordon B. McKinney, "Economy and Community in Western North Carolina, 1860-1865," in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, Mary Beth Pudep, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 163-184.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 171-173. The fact that the residents of the region were dependent on the local and outside markets will become important later in the thesis when the reasons for environmental degradation are discussed.

market economy. The fact that the transportation network in the mountains did not match that of the rest of the state made market accessibility even more difficult. Therefore, the fact that the counties were integrated but at the same time isolated are important to keep in mind when examining western North Carolina. To what degree the mountain region of North Carolina, or the rest of Appalachia, was linked to the outside market and commercialized before the Civil War may never be agreed upon. That the mountain region of North Carolina, in this case Cherokee and Macon counties, were able to produce relatively significant agricultural yields in a mountainous landscape is indisputable, regardless of whether or not the counties were linked to the outside market.

Western North Carolina's agricultural situation was much different than that of the rest of the state. In the eastern part of the state, large one-crop plantations dominated the landscape and, unlike its western neighbor, small farmers were sparse. Bill Cecil-Fronsman points out in *Common Whites* that, while many modern historians have been reluctant to characterize the eastern part of the state as modernized, they do accept this dual framework of the South: commercialized large plantations that specialized in one crop and semi-subsistent farms that produced diverse agriculture.⁶⁸ Cherokee and Macon counties fit into this framework by producing a wide variety of products. The major crops included wheat, rye, Indian corn, oats, Irish and sweet potatoes, as well as orchard and garden products. The diverse topography and soil allowed each farmer an opportunity to grow a number of these products. The following examination makes use of fifty random samples from each county during the agricultural census years of 1850,

⁶⁸ Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 98. For more on this idea of economic dualism in the South before the

1860, and 1870.⁶⁹ While it is difficult to reach conclusions with agriculture census records on exactly what percent of agricultural products were used for immediate consumption and what percent were sent to market, they do give insight on how production of certain products fluctuated before and after the Civil War.

The agricultural census records present useful information dealing with the agricultural situation in the counties for the years examined. Not only do they contain amounts of farm products; they also list counts of livestock as well as cash values for homemade manufactures, slaughtered animals, and farm equipment and machinery. The first part of the census evaluation will focus on numbers for each county during the three censuses examined. By examining this information, each county's agricultural productiveness and how it changed become evident. The second part of the examination will determine whether samples from the 1850 and 1860 censuses affected or predicted the agricultural situation in the two counties after the Civil War. To begin with, the average number of acres, both improved and unimproved, along with the average cash value of the farm during the census years, sets the scene for just how diverse the situation was in both of the counties.

Most farms in the two counties were comprised of both improved acres (those that produced a harvest yield) and unimproved acres (acres not useful for crop production, but forested or used for grazing). Because of the topography it was not uncommon, nor necessarily unfortunate, to have numerous unimproved acres. Farmers

Civil War, also see Morton Rothstein, "The Antebellum South as a Dual Economy: A Tentative Hypothesis," *Agricultural History* 41 (1967): 373-382.

⁶⁹ The Census of 1870, and particularly the agriculture section of the census, is lacking in accurateness due to the unreliability of the census workers as well as many other problems encountered with making a thorough data collection of this magnitude. Although the records are not as reliable as one might desire, they are the only source of its kind. Using random samples from the census also helps to make the data more useful by representing general fluctuations in data over a thirty-year time span.

could be prosperous and have only a few improved acres due to the fact that the livestock industry in the mountains was established and profitable. Indeed, some farmers in the two counties focused solely on livestock. Both improved and unimproved land was valuable in the mountains because of the agricultural variety produced. By comparing the averages of the 1850, 1860, and 1870 census years, a decreasing trend in numbers appears in almost every case, which had devastating consequences for the two counties. The tables below illustrate the differences expressed over the three census years.

Table 3. Comparison of the Average Cash Value of Farm from a Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁷⁰

County	1850	1860	1870
Cherokee	\$1326.00	\$941.00	\$529.00
Macon	\$1172.00	\$2478.00	\$558.00

⁷⁰ Averages computed from United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, and *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Macon and Cherokee Counties, North Carolina*.

Table 4. Comparison of the Average Number of Improved Acres from a Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agriculture Censuses.⁷¹

County	1850	1860	1870
Cherokee	67.68	48.14	22.46
Macon	78.8	64.2	43.10

Table 5. Comparison of the Average Number of Unimproved Acres from a Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agriculture Censuses.⁷²

County	1850	1860	1870
Cherokee	227.5	244.6	126.4
Macon	300.8	602	235.8

While these numbers can lead the reader to believe that everyone in the county was relatively well off in terms of land ownership, it is important to note the extremes of acreage in both cases. Land ownership varies greatly depending on the economic status of the owner, from the wealthy landowner to the tenant. These gaps in economic status began early in the history of the region. The earliest inhabitants in the region settled along rivers and farmed the rich fertile soil of the bottomlands. Prime geographic locations were passed down to descendents, allowing them to become the social, political, and economic elite within the various counties. As the region became more

⁷¹ Averages computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, and *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Macon and Cherokee Counties, North Carolina*.

populated, prime tracts became scarce and the land at higher elevations began to be settled. As land was divided among descendents, most ended up with small farms that were not very fertile or accessible. These farms, which were mostly composed of unimproved acres, are where the mountain livestock industry thrived. The following three tables illustrate the extreme differences between improved, unimproved, and cash value of the farm within the sample population.

Table 6. Maximum and Minimum Number of Improved Acres within the Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁷³

County/Date	Maximum Number of Improved Acres	Minimum Number of Improved Acres
Cherokee/1850	400	10
Macon/1850	600	12
Cherokee/1860	120	0
Macon/1860	800	0
Cherokee/1870	75	6
Macon/1870	250	3

Because most of the improved farmland was located in valley floors and along rivers it was limited to those who owned that type of terrain within the boundaries of their land.

⁷² Averages computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, and *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Macon and Cherokee Counties, North Carolina*.

⁷³ Numbers taken from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, and *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon Counties, North Carolina*. Tables 6-8 are included within the body of the thesis in order to show the extreme cases in the two counties of improved and unimproved acres and cash value of farm. Comparisons similar to this for the rest of the census information examined will be included in the appendix.

And because the surrounding terrain was steep and rugged, expansion of improved land into other areas was difficult. Compared to the percentage of improved acres in the eastern region of North Carolina, the mountain region's percentage was low. Gordon McKinney calculated that, while 17.9 percent of the farmland in the mountains of western North Carolina was improved, 29.5 percent of land was improved in the rest of the state. He states further that Cherokee and Macon Counties had only ten percent of their land in improved acres.⁷⁴ Limited land forced farmers to produce diverse crops and, although the percentages were much different from the rest of the state, the mountain region was able to produce sufficient amounts of yields and then some. Unimproved acreage was also a large source of agricultural productivity for the mountain region. Within the sample populations taken from the three censuses, there were major differences between the maximum and minimum number of unimproved acres, as Table 7 illustrates.

⁷⁴ 8th *Census of the United States, 1860: Agriculture* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864) 104, 108, from Gordon McKinney, "Women's Role in the Civil War Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 69 (January 1992): 41.

Table 7. Maximum and Minimum Number of Unimproved Acres within the Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁷⁵

County/Date	Maximum Number of Improved Acres	Minimum Number of Improved Acres
Cherokee/1850	1186	0
Macon/1850	1300	0
Cherokee/1860	1300	0
Macon/1860	7453	0
Cherokee/1870	625	0
Macon/1870	950	7

The largest of extremes occurred in the difference between the maximum and minimum cash value of the farm. Table 8 illustrates that, although the average cash farm value for both counties in the three censuses seems reasonable, not every sample in the population acquired the mean, while some were worth a considerable amount more.

⁷⁵ Numbers taken from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon Counties, North Carolina*.

Table 8. Maximum and Minimum Cash Value of Farm within the Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁷⁶

County/Date	Maximum Cash Value of Farm in Dollars	Minimum Cash Value of Farm in Dollars
Cherokee/1850	\$10,000.00	\$100.00
Macon/1850	\$10,000.00	\$50.00
Cherokee/1860	\$3,500.00	\$0.00
Macon/1860	\$60,000.00	\$0.00
Cherokee/1870	\$6,500.00	\$40.00
Macon/1870	\$5,000.00	\$15.00

The crops and livestock that occupied both the improved and unimproved acreage in the two counties, as well as partially composing the cash value of the farms, were diverse. The most predominant crop in both counties was Indian corn. Corn had been the most popular crop in North Carolina since settlers first arrived. In the mountain region, settlers quickly learned the Indian cultivation skill of planting corn on the slopes of hills. Once harvested, corn dishes such as hominy, hoecakes, grits, corn pone, and mush could be made. Corn, though, was not only important for consumption by humans. Draught animals, cattle, poultry, and swine consumed large portions of corn as part of

⁷⁶ Numbers taken from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon Counties, North Carolina*.

their diets.⁷⁷ Table 9 illustrates how the amount of bushels produced by farmers in the two counties dramatically changed from before to after the Civil War.

Table 9. Comparison of the Average Number of Bushels of Indian Corn Produced by the Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁷⁸

County	1850	1860	1870
Cherokee	515.1	340.3	146.6
Macon	579.2	394.4	165.4

Although corn was a staple crop in the mountains, the production had disastrous effects on the soil quality. Not only did corn crops require large amounts of fresh soil at almost every planting; it also exposed the land to the elements making way for erosion. A farmer in the hills of Georgia in 1867 recollected that “in a rolling country..., the life of the soil was very brief, and a few years of this cultivation rendered it useless, and it was then turned out to be grown up with briars, broom-sedge, and old field pines.”⁷⁹ Once the soil was depleted and no longer useful in the production of crops, the forest was allowed to take over. This unimproved land was perfect for grazing livestock.

⁷⁷ Cornelius Oliver Cathey, *Agricultural Developments in North Carolina, 1783-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), 126.

⁷⁸ Averages computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon Counties, North Carolina*. For the minimum and maximum number of bushels of Indian corn for the three census years, see the appendix.

⁷⁹ C.W. Howard, Condition and Resources of Georgia in USDA, *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for the Year 1866* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867), 567-580 in John Solomon Otto, *Southern Agriculture During the Civil War Era, 1860-1880* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 13.

Charles Lanman proclaimed that “there is no region more favorable to the production of sheep” than western North Carolina.⁸⁰ Many people were convinced that the mountain region was an ideal location for the rise of the wool industry. In an article to the editor of the *North Carolina Planter* in 1860, J.S. Goe expressed that the legislature should give experienced sheep farmers three thousand acres of “worthless” mountain land so that a sheep industry could be developed. Goe went on to say that the sheep’s presence would be valuable to the land, “as sheep tramping over and grazing its now scanty grasses would soon give to the surface a smoother aspect and also enrich the soil, therefore making the perceived useless soil valuable.”⁸¹ Although sheep farming never took hold as much as Lanman believed it could and Goe thought it should, most farmers in western North Carolina raised a few sheep; their main asset being that their coat provided wool for clothing. Table 10 below shows the differences in the number of sheep over the three decades.

Table 10. Comparison of the Average Number of Sheep Maintained by the Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁸²

County	1850	1860	1870
Cherokee	14.56	12.24	4.62
Macon	20.76	11.46	10.00

⁸⁰ Lanman, *Letters from the Alleghany Mountains*, 185.

⁸¹ J.S. Goe, “Sheep and the Mountains of North Carolina,” *North Carolina Planter* 3 (March 1860): 90.

⁸² Averages computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon Counties, North Carolina*. For the minimum and maximum number of sheep for the three census years, see the appendix.

Swine were by far the most profitable of all livestock in the mountains. Western North Carolina's abundance of unimproved land enabled farmers to graze swine in large amounts. When it came time to take the products to market, there were roads that ran through the western region and into Georgia and South Carolina. The most important road by far was the Buncombe Turnpike. Completed in 1828, the Turnpike was built along the French Broad River Valley from Tennessee through Madison, Buncombe, and Henderson counties into South Carolina where it joined highways into Charleston and Augusta.⁸³ Farmers who did not live directly in the path of the turnpike would bring their goods to various towns that were on the road so that they too could participate. To accommodate the drovers, as the herders were referred to, outposts that supplied goods as well as accommodations and food were erected along the road. But the road did not only help the local economy. People wanting to bring goods from the rest of the South into the mountain region to sell, thereby linking western North Carolina to its southern neighbors, also used the turnpike. The residents of Macon and Cherokee counties, as well as the other mountain counties, took part in the production of hogs as well as utilized the turnpike, and the production of livestock became the largest industry in the mountains before the Civil War. Table 11 illustrates how the profitable swine industry of swine decreased in the three census years.

⁸³ Inscoe, *Mountain Masters*, 46.

Table 11. Comparison of the Average Number of Swine Raised by the Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁸⁴

County	1850	1860	1870
Cherokee	30.26	23.90	10.72
Macon	44.40	27.64	14.50

The value of livestock in general, which composed some farmers only connection to the market, also fluctuated, as table 12 illustrates.

Table 12. Comparison of the Value of Livestock maintained by the Sample Population taken from the 1850, 1860, and 1870 Agricultural Censuses.⁸⁵

County	1850	1860	1870
Cherokee	\$351.1	\$445.2	\$153.3
Macon	\$599.0	\$545.4	\$340.0

In order to better understand the decreases that occurred in the census data, it is necessary to put a variety of statistical computations to work. The first statistical calculation used is the coefficient of correlation. This measures the index of relationship between two variables. Positive scores are measured from 0.00, indicating a low degree

⁸⁴ Averages computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon Counties, North Carolina*. For the minimum and maximum number of swine for the three census years, see the appendix.

⁸⁵ Averages computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon Counties, North Carolina*. For the minimum and maximum number of the value of livestock for the three census years, see the appendix

of relationship, to 1.00, indicating the highest degree of relationship. When there is no relationship at all, the correlation will be represented in negative numbers, which indicate the degree in which the two variables do not correspond. When evaluating the agricultural census records, a correlation can determine whether a variable, such as the cash value of a farm, is related to another variable, such as the number of improved acres. In order to make the each correlation as easy to understand as possible, tables and graphs are used.

Since Indian corn was the largest crop grown in both counties, the first correlations will examine whether or not the amount of corn grown by the sample population affected the cash value of the farms examined. Table 12 compares the correlation between Indian corn and the cash value of farms in Cherokee County during the census years of 1850, 1860, and 1870.

Table 13. Comparison of Coefficients of Correlation Between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Cherokee County during the Census Years of 1850, 1860, and 1870.⁸⁶

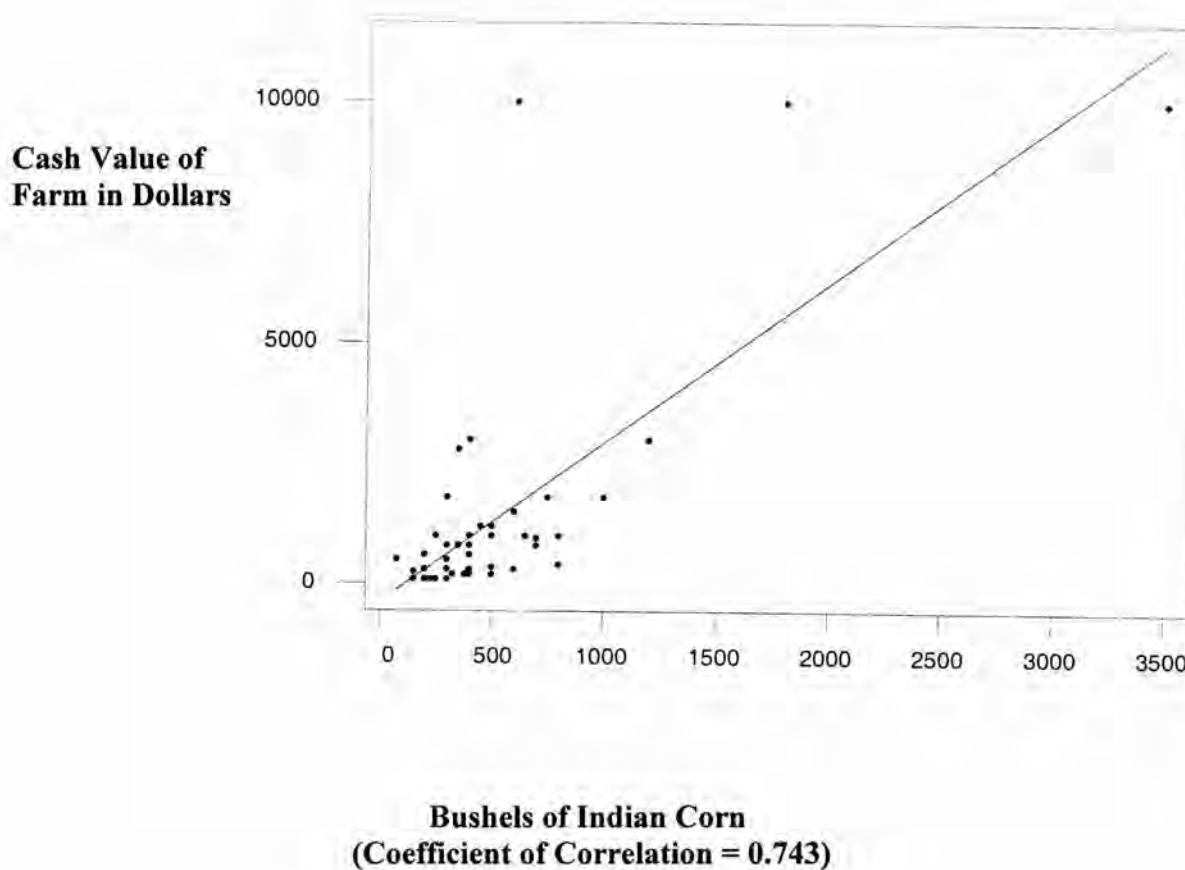
1850	0.743
1860	0.469
1870	0.370

These numbers can also be represented in graph form, called scatterplots. These graphs show positive and negative correlation relationships by forming a line that either ascends

⁸⁶ Correlations computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina*.

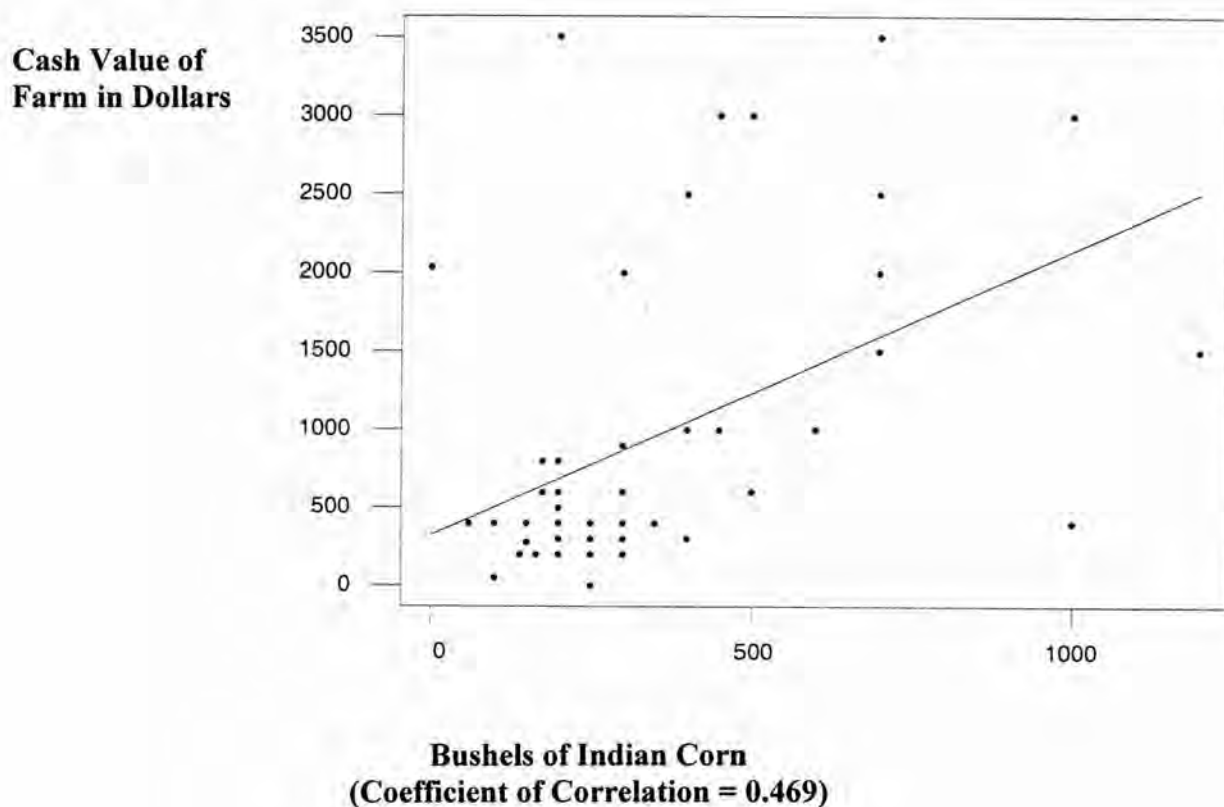
towards the top right corner of the graph, representing a positive degree of relationship, or descends towards the bottom right corner of the graph, representing a negative degree of relationship. The following three graphs correspond with Table 12 in displaying the relationship between Indian corn and the cash value of farms.

Graph 1. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Cherokee County during the Census of 1850.⁸⁷



⁸⁷ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina*.

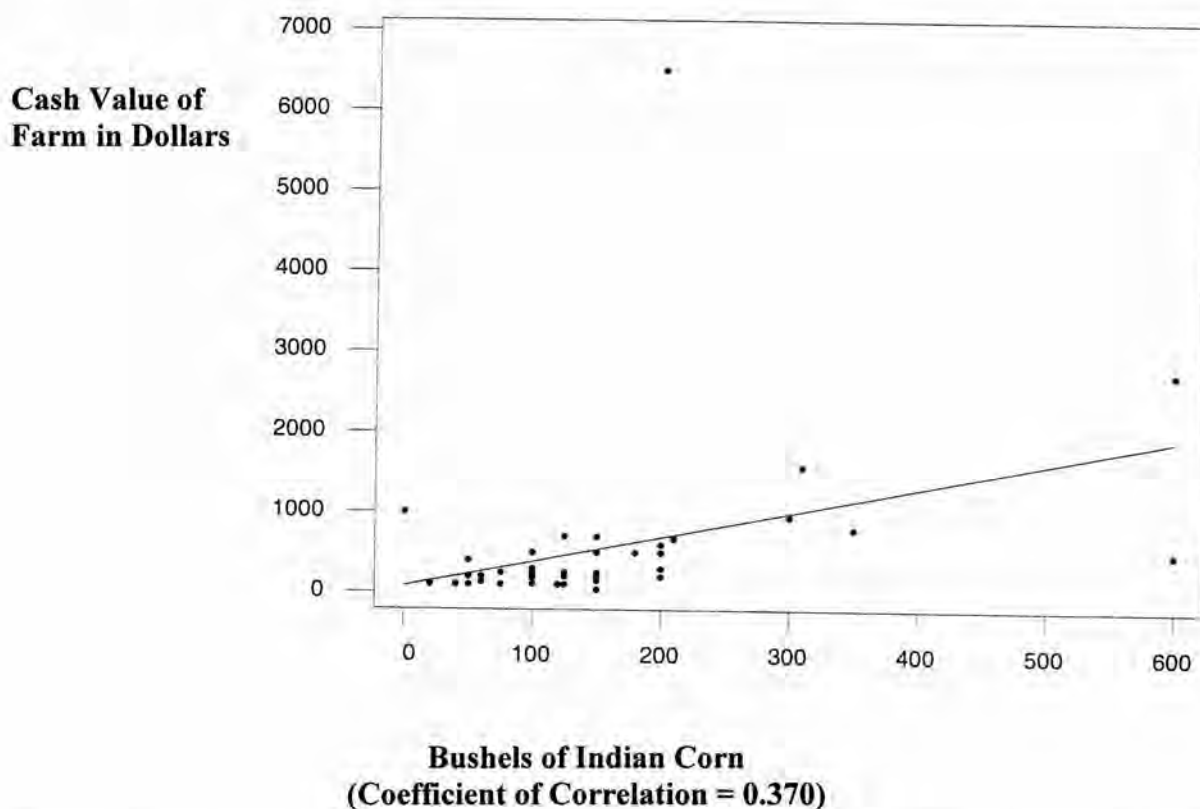
Graph 2. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Cherokee County during the Census of 1860.⁸⁸



While the scatterplots illustrate that there are positive relationships between the number of bushels of Indian corn grown and the cash value of the farms, the coefficient of correlation explains that there was a positive relationship. These numbers prove that within the sample population, the production of Indian corn was a major determiner of the value of a sample's farm. The next graph, which examines 1870, reports a different situation altogether.

⁸⁸ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *8th Census of the United States (1860), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina.*

Graph 3. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Cherokee County during the Census of 1870.⁸⁹



This graph also represents a positive relationship, but one much lower than that of 1850 and 1860. After the Civil War, the number of bushels of Indian corn did not make up as much of the cash value of a farm as it had before the war. Both tables three and nine above illustrate that the cash value of a farm, along with the number of bushels of Indian corn produced, declined on average from before to after the Civil War. Farmers now not

⁸⁹ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina*.

only had fewer crops to work with, but the average income derived from the crops had also diminished.

The residents of Macon County also depended on Indian corn as the most abundant crop grown in the county. Table 13 lists the different coefficients of correlation during the three census years and graphs four through six illustrate the correlations.

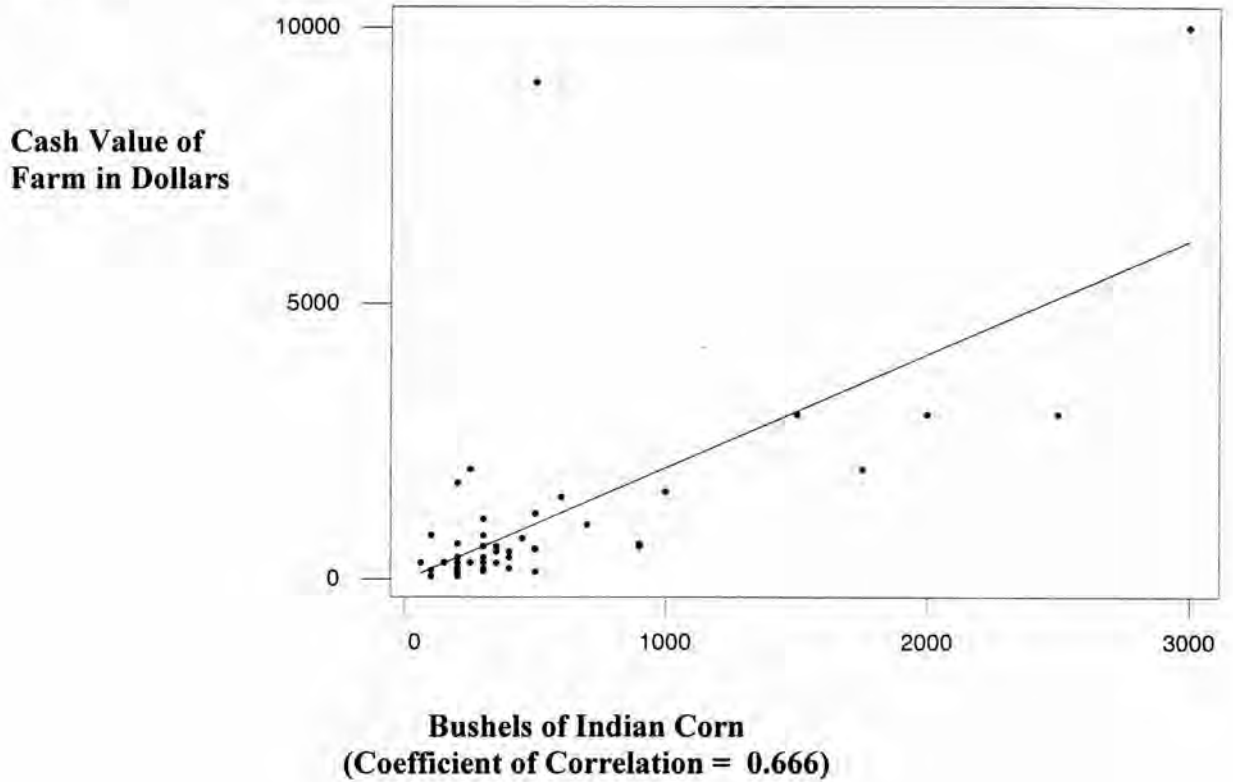
Table 14. Comparison of Coefficients of Correlation Between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Macon County during the Census Years of 1850, 1860, and 1870.⁹⁰

1850	0.666
1860	0.966
1870	0.398

The residents of Macon County were heavily dependent on Indian corn to compose a majority of the cash value of the farms. Like Cherokee County, the correlation became stronger between 1850 and 1860, and severely declined in 1870. The three graphs below illustrate how strong the relationships were before the war and how, after the war, the relationship became weaker.

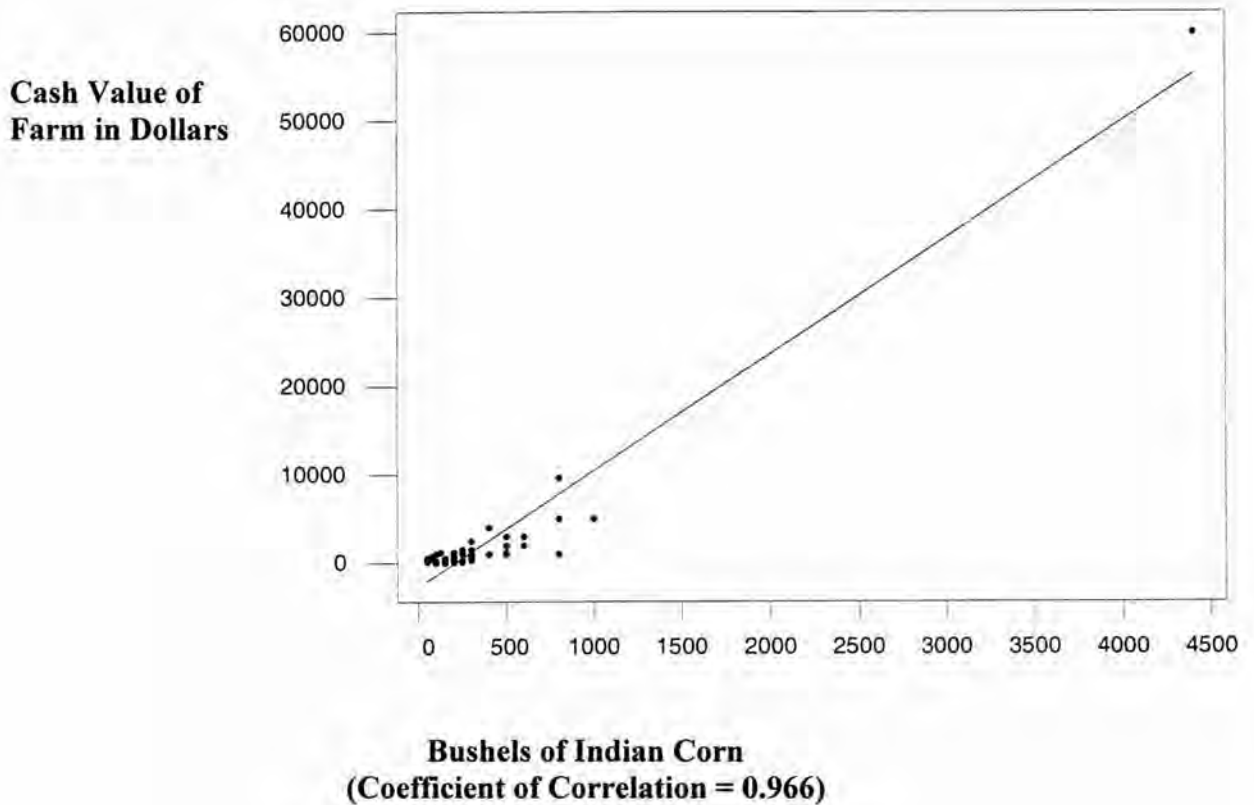
⁹⁰ Correlations computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina*.

Graph 4. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Macon County during the Census of 1850.⁹¹



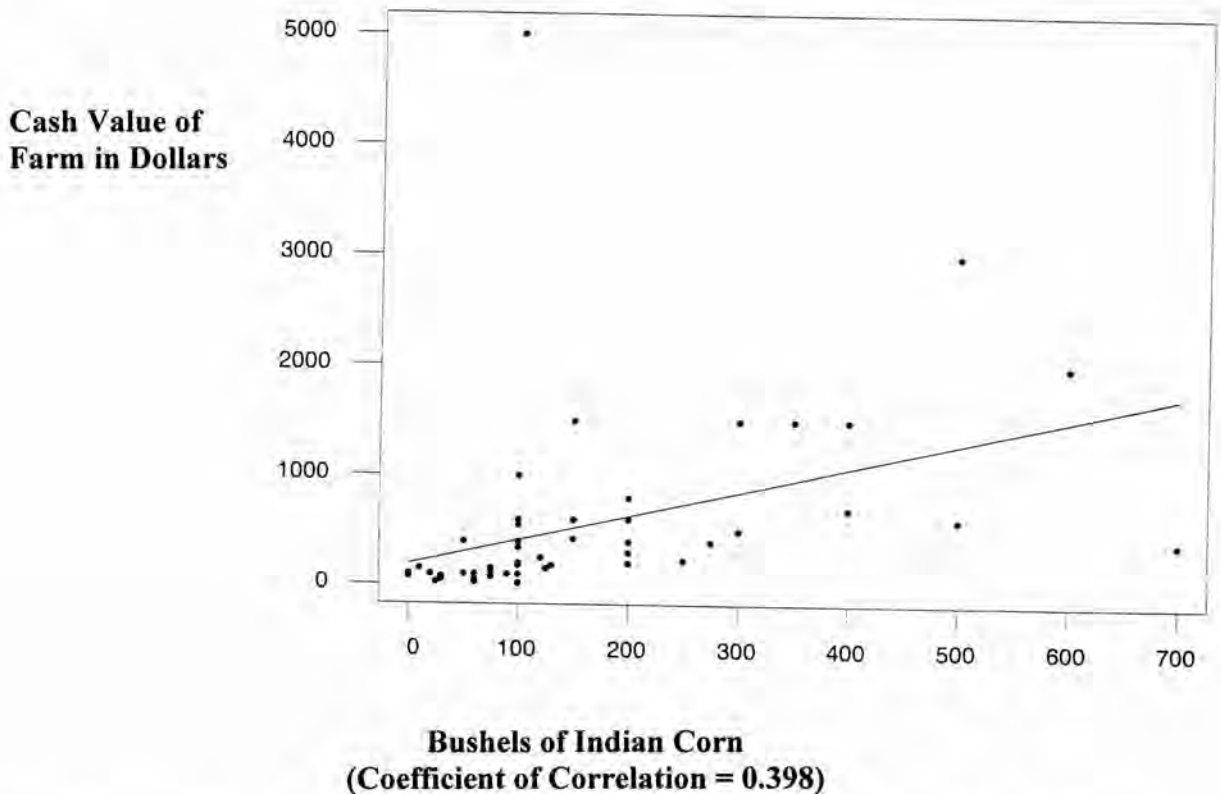
⁹¹ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina.*

Graph 5. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Macon County during the Census of 1860.⁹²



⁹² Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *8th Census of the United States (1860), Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina*.

Graph 6. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Indian Corn and the Cash Value of Farms in Macon County during the Census of 1870.⁹³



The change in the coefficient of correlation between the 1850, 1860, and 1870 censuses narrate a story of a major environmental change in Macon County. Before the war, the farmers produced enough Indian corn to make a significant impact on the cash value of the farms. After the Civil War, the relationship changed. This was the case in both counties and can be explained by examining the impact the Civil War made on the landscape within the two counties. This phenomenon will be thoroughly examined in chapter three. But before concluding the examination of the agriculture situation in the

⁹³ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina*.

two counties with the census information, it is necessary to illustrate more samples and the changes they incurred.

Swine production was a large industry within the mountains of western North Carolina. Some farmers raised hogs for their own personal consumption while others depended on them as their only source of income. Because the production of swine was so predominant in the mountains, the following tables and graphs illustrate the effect that the number of swine owned by each had on the value of livestock produced by each farmer. The value of livestock also consisted of animals such as sheep, cattle, and milk cows but, as the following shows, swine made up the majority of domestic animals.

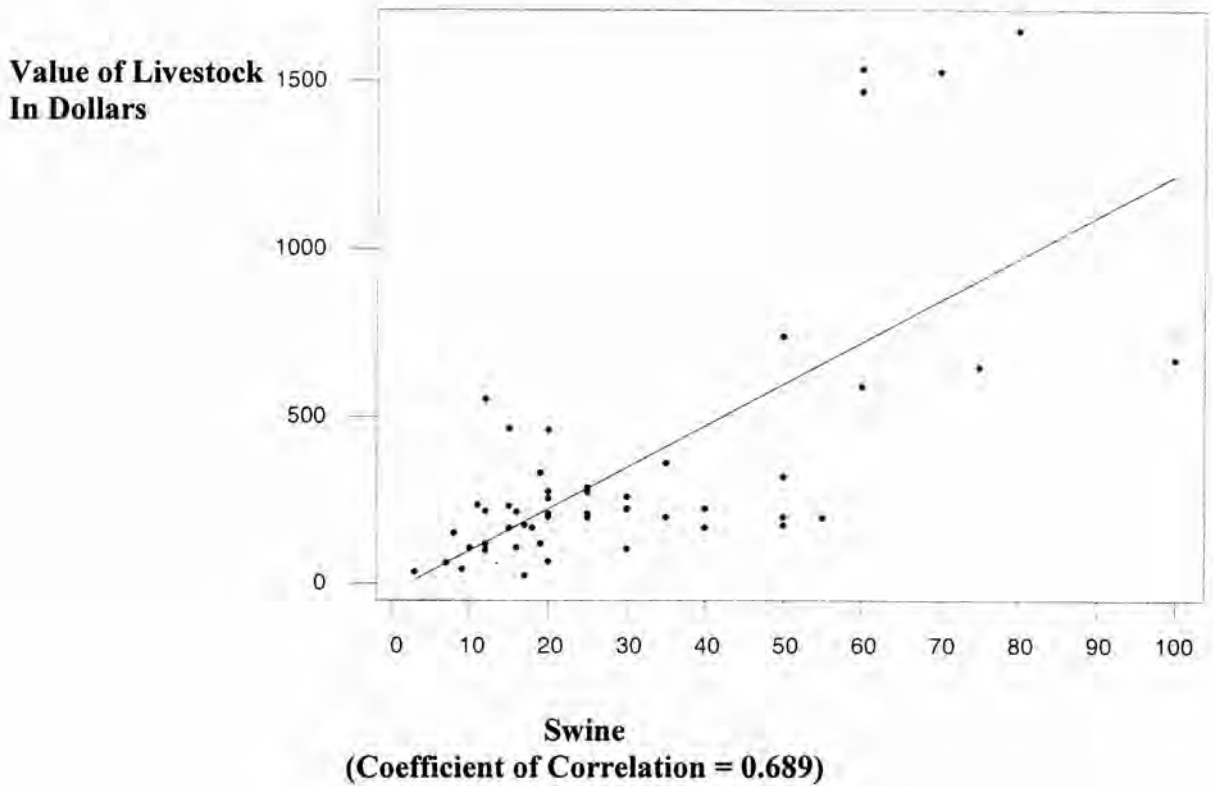
Table 15. Comparison of Coefficients of Correlation Between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Cherokee County during the Census Years of 1850, 1860, and 1870.⁹⁴

1850	0.689
1860	0.458
1870	0.343

These correlations correspond with the decreasing number of swine raised by the sample population as illustrated in table eleven. The largest decrease, however, as the following three graphs depict, happened between 1860 and 1870.

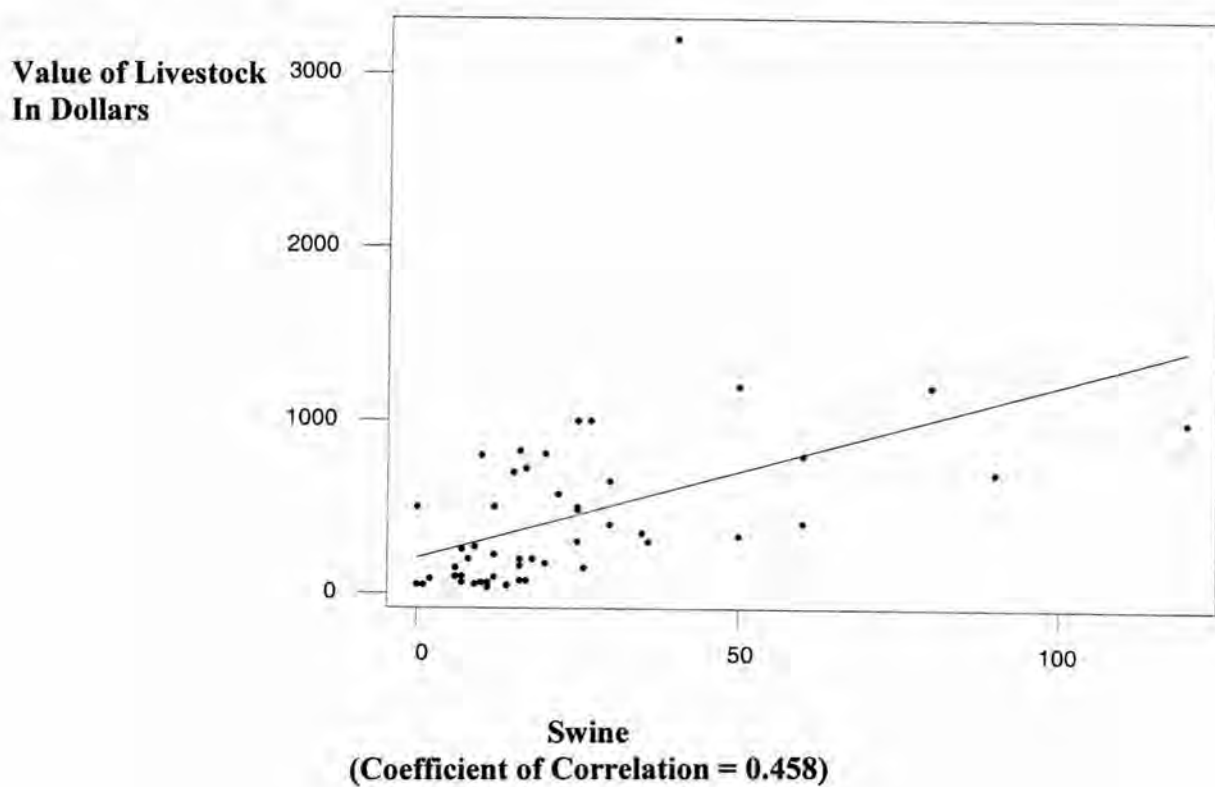
⁹⁴ Correlations computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina*.

Graph 7. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Cherokee County during the Census of 1850.⁹⁵



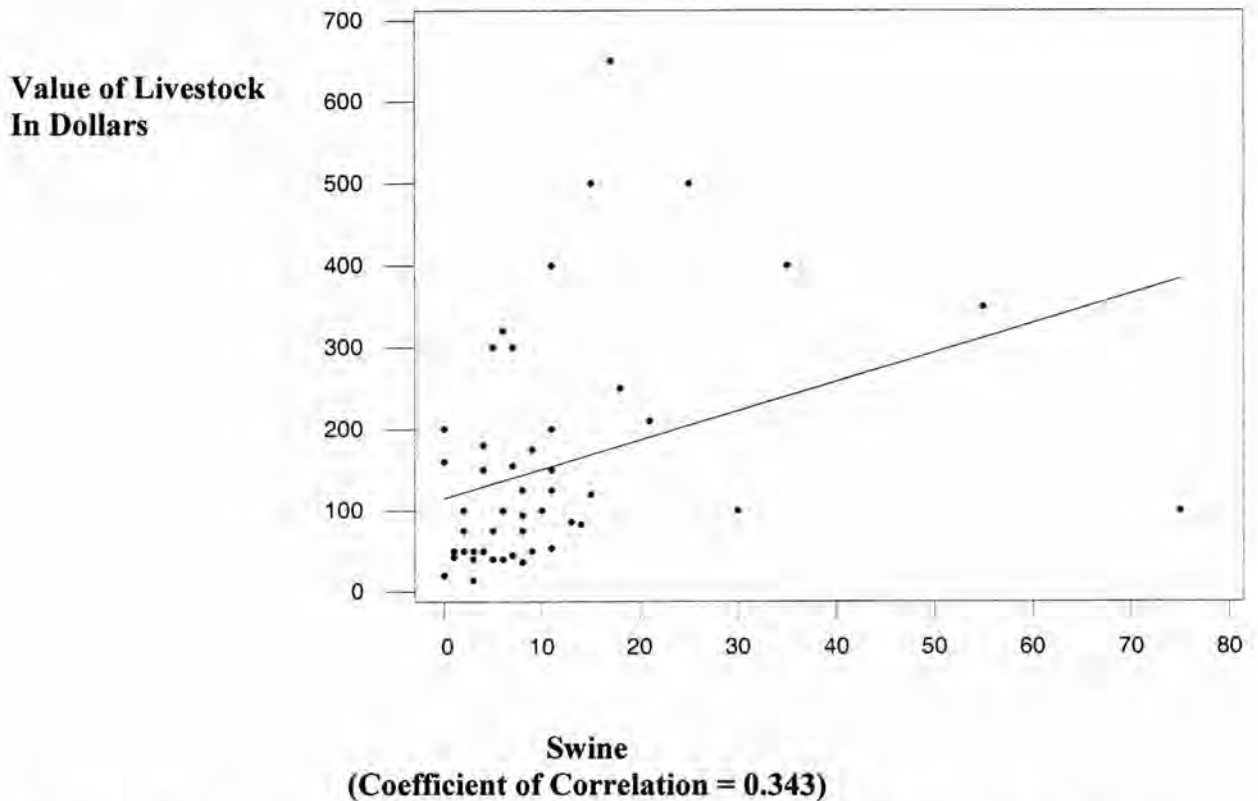
⁹⁵ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina.*

Graph 8. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Cherokee County during the Census of 1860.⁹⁶



⁹⁶ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *8th Census of the United States (1860), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina*.

Graph 9. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Cherokee County during the Census of 1870.⁹⁷



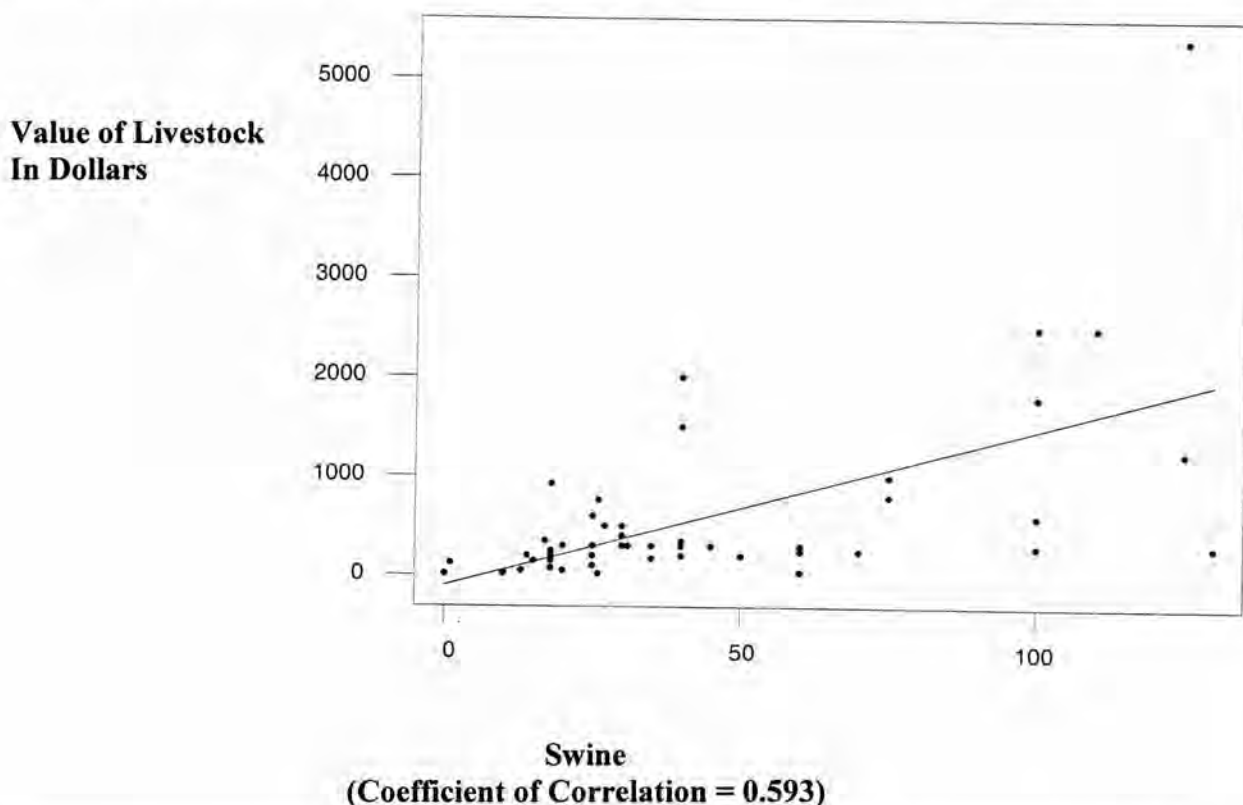
While these numbers are not extremely definitive, they are significant when all the other types of livestock that made up the total value of livestock are considered. Swine largely outnumbered all other types of livestock and, as the number of swine produced declined, so did the overall value of livestock. Macon County also experienced a decline from 1850 to 1860, but saw an increase in 1870. Table fifteen examines the correlations between the number of swine produced and the value of livestock, while graphs ten, eleven, and twelve illustrate the relationships.

⁹⁷ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina*.

Table 16. Comparison of Coefficients of Correlation Between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Macon County during the Census Years of 1850, 1860, and 1870.⁹⁸

1850	0.593
1860	0.344
1870	0.462

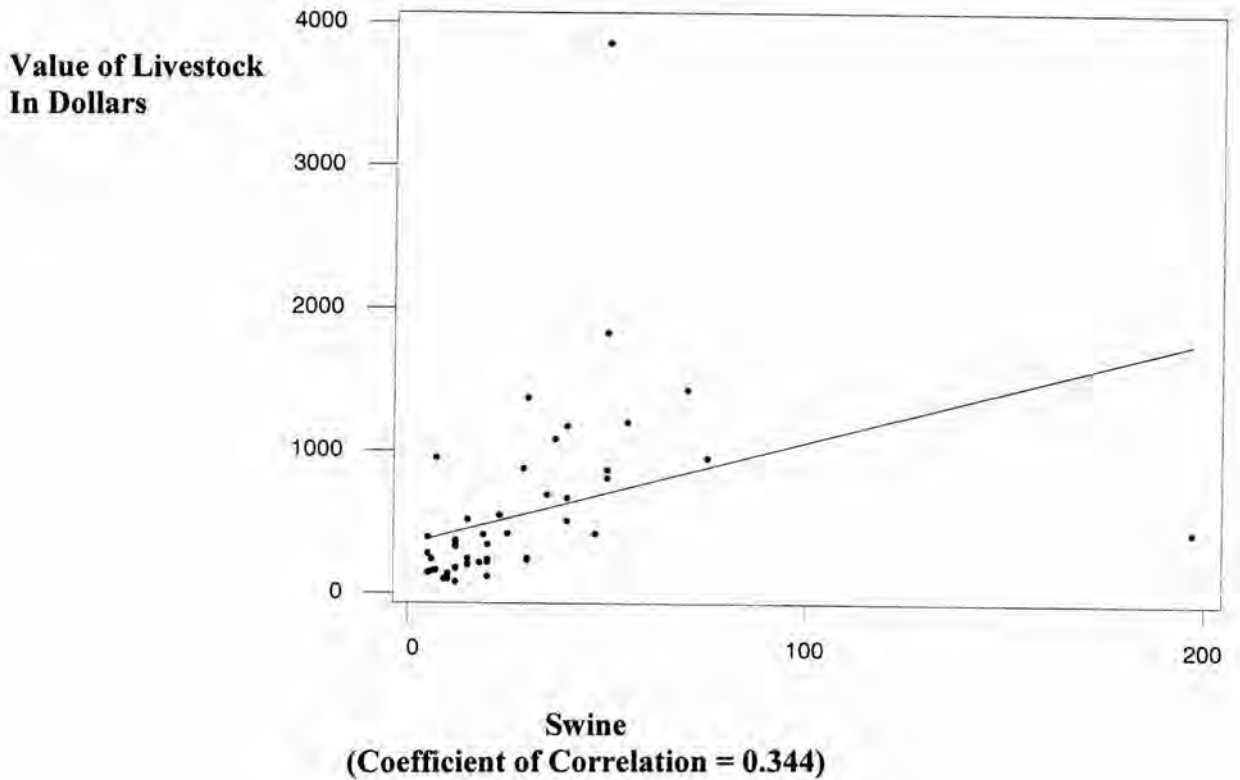
Graph 10. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Macon County during the Census of 1850.⁹⁹



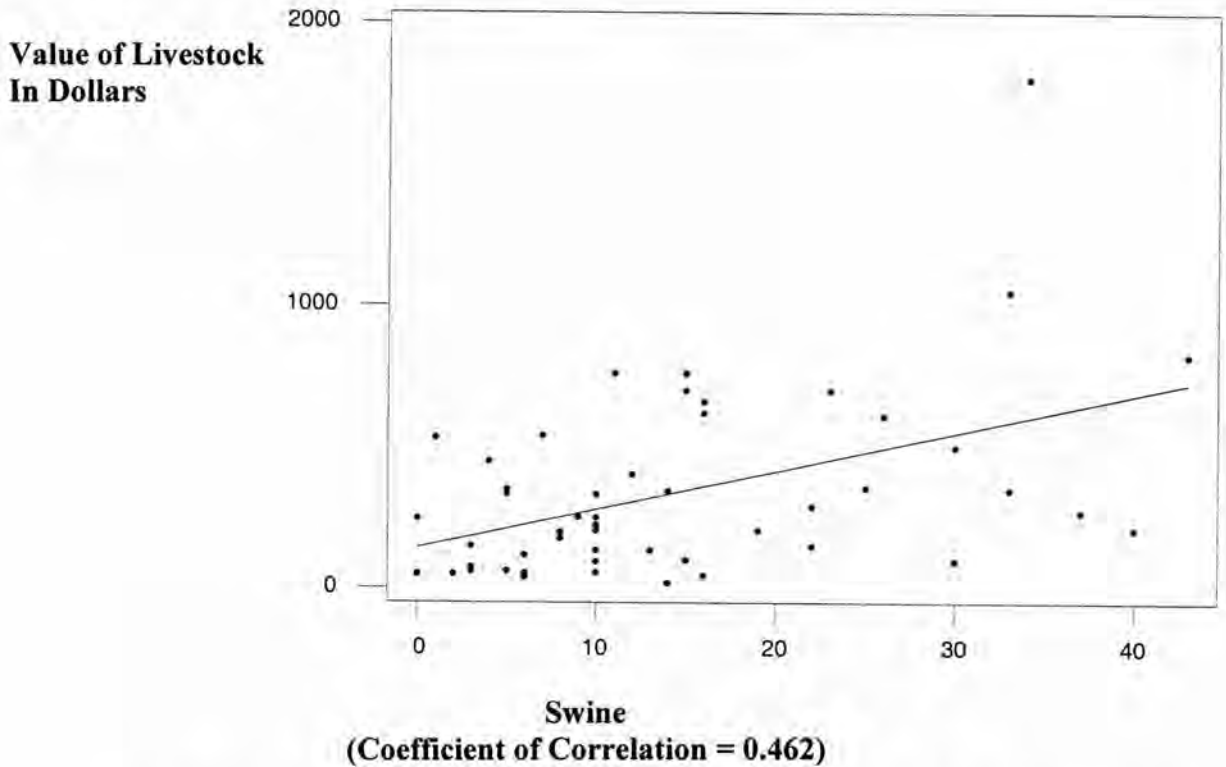
⁹⁸ Correlations computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina*.

⁹⁹ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina*.

Graph 11. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Macon County during the Census of 1860.¹⁰⁰



Graph 12. Scatterplot Representation of the Coefficient of Correlation between Swine and the Value of Livestock in Macon County during the Census of 1870.¹⁰¹



These correlations and scatterplots assist in the understanding of the differences in the two counties from before until after the Civil War. When comparing the averages of the amount of Indian corn and swine, both declined over the census years of 1850, 1860, and 1870. Both of these products made up a considerable portion of the overall general value of the farms examined in the sample population. The tables in this chapter, in addition to those in the appendix, illustrate a decreasing trend in agricultural products. This decline can be best explained in the fact that both improved and unimproved land, as

¹⁰¹ Scatterplot computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina*.

well as the cash value of farms, decreased from before to after the Civil War. Although tables three, four, and five all show a decline, it is necessary to determine if these differences are significant. By using a two-sample t-test, the significance of the difference in averages can be concluded. In the instance of the two-sample t-test, the closer the result is to 0, the more significant the difference is, while the highest the result can be to still be significant is 0.05.

Table 17. Significance of Difference of Means in the Cash Value of Farms in Cherokee County.¹⁰²

Between 1850 and 1870	Between 1860 and 1870
0.021	0.229

Table 18. Significance of Difference of Means in the Cash Value of Farms in Macon County.¹⁰³

Between 1850 and 1870	Between 1860 and 1870
0.042	0.117

The difference in means between the 1850 and 1870 censuses are more significant in both counties. While there was a decrease in both counties in the cash value of farms between 1860 and 1870, the t-test proves that the difference was not statistically significant. When the two-sample t-test is applied to the number of improved acres in both counties,

¹⁰² Two-Sample t-test computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), 8th Census of the United States (1860), 9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina.*

¹⁰³ Two-Sample t-test computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), 8th Census of the United States (1860), 9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina.*

the difference in the means of improved land is more significant as tables nineteen and twenty illustrate.

Table 19. Significance of Difference of Means in the Number of Improved Acres in Cherokee County.¹⁰⁴

Between 1850 and 1870	Between 1860 and 1870
0.000	0.000

Table 20. Significance of Difference of Means in the Number of Improved Acres in Macon County.¹⁰⁵

Between 1850 and 1870	Between 1860 and 1870
0.029	0.036

While the numbers for Macon County are not as statistically perfect as those for Cherokee, the decreases in the number of improved acres over the three census years are significant. These decreases affected the quantity of crops produced as well as the cash value of farms within the sample population. Unimproved acreage also decreased as illustrated in table four. Tables twenty-one and twenty-two represent the significance between the population means of unimproved acres.

¹⁰⁴ Two-Sample t-test computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), 8th Census of the United States (1860), 9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina.*

¹⁰⁵ Two-Sample t-test computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), 8th Census of the United States (1860), 9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina.*

Table 21. Significance of Difference of Means in the Number of Unimproved Acres in Cherokee County.¹⁰⁶

Between 1850 and 1870	Between 1860 and 1870
0.031	0.009

Table 22. Significance of Difference of Means in the Number of Unimproved Acres in Macon County.¹⁰⁷

Between 1850 and 1870	Between 1860 and 1870
0.218	0.032

All the statistical data, whether a comparison of averages, the coefficient of correlation, or the two-sample t-test, prove that there was a decline in the agriculture situation in the two counties from before to after the Civil War. For a region so highly acclaimed by visitors for its natural beauty and agricultural productiveness, the census information paints a different picture. The final section of this thesis will examine how the Civil War negatively affected the natural environment within the two counties by utilizing letters and diaries written by those who lived in the region during the war as well as important secondary sources pertaining to the issue. This information will explain the cause of the agricultural decline presented in this chapter.

¹⁰⁶ Two-Sample t-test computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), 8th Census of the United States (1860), 9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Cherokee County, North Carolina.*

¹⁰⁷ Two-Sample t-test computed from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850), 8th Census of the United States (1860), 9th Census of the United States (1870), Agriculture, Macon County, North Carolina.*

CHAPTER 3

CIVIL WAR

As chapter two illustrates, there was a major decline in agricultural productivity within Macon and Cherokee counties to after the Civil War. The reasons for this decline are numerous, but they all have one thing in common; they stem directly from the Civil War. Although the war never physically touched the region, except for an occasional raid by troops, it managed to leave a devastating impression in the mountains. The causes of environmental degradation that will be examined in this chapter include the Confederate government's imposition of morally and environmentally damaging legislation; conscription, and to a lesser extent tax-in-kind and impressment, and the unofficial war that plagued the region with raiding and bushwhacking. By examining the hardships and repercussions the war brought to the region, it will become evident that the war caused the agricultural decline within the two counties illustrated in chapter two.

When North Carolina seceded from the Union on May 20, 1861, the residents of Macon and Cherokee counties joined in with a strong Confederate spirit. The inhabitants of the counties could have gone in either direction, but most leaned towards the Confederate cause because they wanted life to be the same as it had been before. Issues such as state's rights and slavery were not at the forefront of everyday life in the two counties. The censuses of 1860 shows that there were 520 slaves in Macon County out of a total population of 6,004, and were owned by only eighty-three heads of household.¹⁰⁸ In Cherokee County, 94 households owned a total of 474 slaves in 1860 out of a total

¹⁰⁸ Slave Schedule for Macon County taken from the 1860 Federal Census in Jessie Suttan, ed., *The Heritage of Macon County, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Hunter Publishing Company, 1987), 46-47.

population of 9,166.¹⁰⁹ Slavery was obviously not as deeply imbedded as it was in other parts of the South. State's rights were also not a significant concern of the Macon and Cherokee residents; life centered predominately on the counties and their progress. Most felt that, by supporting the Confederacy, they would continue to be able to buy cheap land that formally belonged to the Cherokee Indians and pursue the way of life they had known. The concern of utmost importance to the residents in the two counties was internal improvements. Transportation routes that went to various markets in the South, as well as routes that connected the mountain region, made markets for buying and selling in and out of the region more easily accessible. Residents all over the mountain region were interested in the development of more transportation routes in the region, and especially in the expansion of a railroad line into the mountains. As early as the late 1830s, mountain residents became interested in political parties in Raleigh who were willing to champion western internal improvements.¹¹⁰ The issue of transportation continued to be of utmost concern for the residents throughout the duration of the war and into the postwar years. The most powerful incentive to join the southern cause, however, focused on economics. Transportation routes to the mountains would indeed allow the area to grow economically, but some residents believed independence from the North would force the southern states to depend on the mountain region for natural resources.¹¹¹ As chapter one makes clear, the region was full of natural riches waiting to

¹⁰⁹ Slave Schedule for Cherokee County taken from the 1860 Federal Census in Margaret Walker Freel, *Our Heritage: The People of Cherokee County, North Carolina, 1540-1955* (Asheville, North Carolina: Miller Print Company, 1956), 401, 8.

¹¹⁰ Inscoc and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 31-32.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

be used, and independence from northern markets appeared to be a good way to welcome the possibilities.

When it came time to raise troops to fight in the Confederate army, the residents of the mountain region were quick to provide. In the early months of the war, men and boys enlisted in copious numbers. Whether influenced by friends or the opportunity to serve under the command of local leaders, many left the region. The community also played a significant role in the enlistment of men. Towns throughout the mountain region held ceremonies to send off those going to war. Gordon McKinney and John Inscoe, in *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, point out that local ministers spoke at the ceremonies, bringing a sense of moral and spiritual authority to the events.¹¹² Whether they understood what they were leaving to fight for, all those who attended the ceremonies before they left for the war could not help but feel immense pride. The members of these various mountain communities were also proud to be sending troops to aid in the cause. This attitude is understandable since most of the early volunteers were not vital to the survival of the various communities.¹¹³ Most were young, unmarried, and did not have a family to support or a farm to tend. These men were expendable in a way; it would not be until the Confederate government imposed conscription that the absence of men in the counties would become a problem.

As the fall of 1861 began to pass, enthusiasm for war was beginning to diminish and the reality of war was setting in. It became evident to many that this was not going to be a conflict that ended in a few months. The residents still had many years of

¹¹²Ibid., 71.

¹¹³Ibid., 75.

unforeseen hardships looming in the future. Conscription was one of the first of these many hardships. On April 16, 1862, the Confederate Congress passed the first conscription law in the history of America. There were two parts to the law; all white, able-bodied males between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five years old were required to serve for up to three years, and if the war lasted longer, had to be available for the war's duration; and those already in service were required to serve two additional years. The second part of the law was especially devastating for those who were planning on exiting the war to go home and tend to their families and farms. Because they believed that they would be returning home in a year, few had made preparations for the future well being of their families.¹¹⁴ In addition, these men, for the most part, did not have slave labor to depend on and their families, who were already experiencing crop shortages and other hardships, sharply felt their absence. Another blow to the already labor-strained region came on September 27, 1862, when the conscription act age limit was extended to include those men up to the age of forty-five.

Conscription deeply agitated people throughout the region. Serving was no longer a choice; men now had to leave their families whether they were able to or not. The letters and personal reminiscence of North Carolinians reveal the hardships conscription brought. W.W. Stringfield, a Confederate captain who was recruiting troops in the Smokies called conscription a "desperate act of unwise if not desperate men, whose minds were not moulded after the manner or matter of our great Declaration of Independence but rather of the crafty politician and thoughtless slaveholder."¹¹⁵ To

¹¹⁴ McKinney, "Women's Role in the Civil War Western North Carolina," 42.

¹¹⁵ William W. Stringfield, "Unpublished Reminiscences," Typescript, Stringfield Papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, 51-52.

compound the problems conscription created, a law was passed five days after the first Conscription Act that exempted state workers, industrial workers, ministers, teachers, and other professionals from service and also allowed those with enough money to pay to send someone in their place. David Siler, an influential man from Macon County, wrote Governor Zebulon Vance and pleaded that such accommodations be made, stating that "I am requested by a number of our most respectable citizens...to ask you whether in your opinion any other alternative will be presented than conscription. We have no hesitation in believing that it our duty to stay here and provide for the helpless while it is in our power to do so."¹¹⁶

While it was important for some to stay behind and tend to the community, it upset many residents that those with money were the ones who did not have to go to war.

Siler went on to make a broader plea to Vance stating that,

for every able bodied man taken from this county, there ought to be an able bodied man retained. We have a number of men in the field now falling very little below the number of voters in the county. Our people having poor facilities for communication with other sections have learned to subsist mainly on the immediate productions of their own labor. Deprive us of that labor and the innocent and helpless must perish though their pockets were filled with current money.¹¹⁷

This was a common problem in both of the counties. Although many were willing and ready to fight for the cause, the thought of leaving home and forcing women, children, and older men to handle the home environment alone was very daunting. Siler realized this could be a major problem for the Confederacy. He believed that while the men and

¹¹⁶ David Siler to Governor Zebulon Vance, November 3, 1862, in Frontis Johnston, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance, 1843-1862*, Volume 1 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1963), 302.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

women within his county of Macon were ready to endure the hardships of war, he wondered “what consolation or encouragement can come to a mans heart in an hour of trial from a home where the helpless are perishing for want of his hand to provide?”¹¹⁸ But despite the questions he presented in his letter, Siler was sure that all the residents of his county were willing to make every sacrifice needed to win the war, assuring Vance that “we are willing to spare the last man down to point where women and children begin to suffer for food and clothing.”¹¹⁹ Although Siler was certain that the people of the region were ready to make whatever sacrifice was necessary for the betterment of the cause, letters also make it clear that the war was beginning to have a strong negative impact on the region. In a letter to Governor Vance, C. Henderson wrote, “i do wish this war would come to a close for wimon and children is suffrin and no men left to help them.”¹²⁰

This development is an important aspect in of the environmental degradation within the two counties. With most of the able bodied men away at war, women and children were left to not only tend to the household, but the fields as well. The task that women encountered was one that could not have been fully accomplished. It would have been impossible for the mountain region to continue down the same path after so many important community members were sent to war. There are some cases where women were able to keep the farm producing at a significant level during the war, but the loss of land to inactivity still prevailed. Mary Bell of Macon County is an example of a woman

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ C. Henderson to Governor Zebulon Vance, November 15, 1862, in Johnston, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 358.

who was able to run the farm efficiently after her husband went off to war. Some of her success stemmed from the fact that she never lacked for male help in the fields and never had to clear extensive amounts of land. Bell was able to hire tenants and day laborers to compensate for work she was not able to do herself.¹²¹ In order to keep her husband Alfred abreast of what was happening on the farm, Mary frequently wrote him informative letters. On August 29, 1862, Mary wrote that:

Father has had his thrashing done this week and had only 54 bushels of wheat. Jesse Guffee had 31. You had 4.5 of your own and 5 from Wm. Guffee. You have 16.5 bushels of very good rye. Pa says we should plant more rye. Grain is very high and can hardly be bought. There is a great cry for seed of both wheat and rye. Wheat is bringing \$4.00 in Haywood. Two bushels of your rye will have to go for thrashing and about two-thirds of a bushel of wheat.¹²²

Alfred was just as interested in what was happening on the farm while he was away. In a letter to his wife in June 1864, Alfred addressed a list of numerous questions to his wife dealing with the progress of the farm. This excerpt also provides insight on the number of agricultural activities Mary was involved in.

how is your wheat and rye doing. what ground have you in corn, is the oats any account. is your clover doing good...is there any apples or peaches. is your horses poor. who does your blacksmithing. Have you any lettuce or onions. have you old rye enough for coffee, do you get any milk. how does your coves look. Is the pasture good. have you plenty to eat.¹²³

All the agricultural products named in the letter, on average, declined in the two counties as illustrated by the second chapter and appendix. The fact that Mary Bell's situation

¹²¹ Inscoc, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia," 403.

¹²² Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, August 29, 1862, in Alfred W. Bell Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, & Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

¹²³ Alfred Bell to Mary Bell, June [n.d.], 1864, in Alfred W. Bell Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, & Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

remained relatively fortunate was rare within the two counties, as well as the rest of the region. She never experienced the hunger, poverty, or material deprivation that plagued most residents in the region.¹²⁴

Far more numerous than the somewhat positive accounts of farm life during the war are the many letters sent to Governor Vance describing the hardships brought on by conscription. Many wrote letters explaining that they needed someone to come home from fighting because they could not live without their services. On November 4, 1862, Cass Marlow wrote to Governor Vance making such a case.

Mr Govene Sir I take the present opportunity of dropping you a few lines to inform you that we have a cooper in the twenty sixth regiment that went as a conscript that we cant well do without he was all the man that followed this trade in the neighborhood...he is a splendid shoemaker too so when he cant work at one trade he can at the other when needed¹²⁵

Women wrote many letters to the Governor giving numerous reasons why their father, brother, son, or husband should be sent home. The letter from Cass Marlow is repetitive in its pleading for the return of her husband. In addition to the fact that she needed his assistance on the farm, the community also needed his skills. This was a common problem in many communities throughout the western portion of the state. Due to the small community sizes, there might only be one person to fill one or more skilled positions, thus weakening the community if that person was conscripted. Women were not the only ones to write to Governor Vance and request that someone be sent home. John Lonon wrote to Vance in 1863, requesting that his son be sent home from the army. Lonon stated that he not only had the farm to tend to, but also his son's and son-in-law's

¹²⁴ Inscoe, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia," 39.

wives to care for. The letter explains that there “is nothing made to sell” and with “money we could get some things we need for work.” The letter goes on to state that even with money, “there is no one to hire at all.”¹²⁶ Faced with the same problem of needing help to tend to the farm, Elizabeth Lunsford and Nelly Farmer collaborated on a letter pleading that one son each be allowed to remain at home. Both Nelly and Elizabeth were sixty-five year old widows and in desperate need of their son’s assistance and asked Governor Vance “to exempt the...boys to stay at home with us to help us.”¹²⁷ Vance did indeed take these letters seriously and made repeated attempts to suspend conscription in the western portion of the state. In a letter to James A. Seddon, Secretary of War for the Confederate States, Vance wrote:

Sir, I lean again to call your earnest attention to the importance of suspending the execution of the Conscript law, in the mountain counties of Western N. Carolina. They are filled with Tories & deserters, burning, robbing, & murdering: they have been robbed and eaten out by Longstreet’s command, and have lost their crops by being in the field nearly all the time, trying to drive back the enemy. Now that Longstreet’s command is removed their condition will be altogether wretched, and hundreds will go to the enemy for protection & bread. Please consider their condition & relieve them if possible.¹²⁸

Vance wrote many letters to Seddon expressing the same concerns, but Seddon, despite the pleading tones of Vance’s many letters, never allowed conscription to be suspended in the mountain counties of North Carolina. Seddon did suggest, however, that some

¹²⁵ Cass Marlow to Zebulon B. Vance, November 4, 1862, reel 15, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹²⁶ John Lonon to Zebulon B. Vance, April 21, 1863, reel 17, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹²⁷ Elizabeth Lunsford and Nelly Farmer to Zebulon B. Vance, March 23, 1863, reel 16, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

conscripts be used in western North Carolina to keep the peace “against the marauding.”¹²⁹

Most families experienced a certain degree of starvation during the war. McKinney points out that early frost, wheat rust, and drought¹³⁰ greatly hindered food production in the region, but there were other non-natural causes as well.¹³¹ Men were needed for the more physically demanding tasks on the farm, such as breaking the sod and hauling heavy objects, like rocks and timber. C.D. Smith recalled that in Macon County, most farmers did not use hired labor or slaves in crop harvesting. Instead “neighbors were invited and whole days and into the nights were often spent in husking one single crop.”¹³² But because most men were away at war, not even the help of neighbors could solve the impending problem. Farming in the mountains was a formidable task. In addition to the numerous chores that had to be preformed each day, perhaps the most difficult task was preparing the land for planting. During the Civil War, this became a problem because there was simply not enough people to help clear the land. Many residents had three different types of land on their property: cultivated, pastured,

¹²⁸ Zebulon B. Vance to James A. Seddon, April 11, 1864, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹²⁹ James A. Seddon to Zebulon B. Vance, March 23, 1863, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹³⁰ Mont. Patton to Zebulon B. Vance, October 12, 1863, reel 20, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance. In addition to the stress on the land the bands of raiders and bushwhackers produced, chaotic forces of nature were at work in western North Carolina during the Civil War. Governor Vance received numerous letters concerning the negative affects drought and frost were having on crop production. Also see James Whitaker, Jr. to Zebulon B. Vance, January 11, 1864, reel 21, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹³¹ McKinney, “Women’s Role in the Civil War Western North Carolina,” 45.

¹³² C.D. Smith, *A Brief History of Macon County* (Franklin: Franklin Press Print, 1891), 11-12.

and wooded.¹³³ The land was used for cultivation at different time intervals. Land would be cleared of trees and a crop would be planted. When the topsoil became exhausted, that land would become pasture and another field would be cleared.¹³⁴ While this style of land rotation suited the region, it could not successfully continue during the war. As a result of the women's understandable inability to accomplish every responsibility on the farm, many fields went fallow. Making use of the quickly forming tracts of fallow land, swine were once again used as a marketable item by the residents of mountain communities. Grain was in short supply in the western counties due to the fact that productive farmland was quickly disappearing. Vance took this opportunity to offer bacon in exchange for grain to help supply the western counties with the vital product. In a letter to James Seddon, Governor Vance explained that "the enemy has consumed anything they had...I will give bacon in exchange for it [grain]."¹³⁵ Bacon was even used in exchange for yarn from mills in South Carolina.¹³⁶

Governor Vance had realized early in the war that the western portion of the state would need to receive aid in order to survive. In a letter to Seddon, Vance explained that "the Legislature made a large appropriation of money to enable me to purchase corn and

¹³³ John Fraser Hart, "Land Rotation in Appalachia," *The Geographical Review* 67, No.2 (April 1977), 149.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 150-151. For further information on agriculture see J.S. Otto and N.E. Anderson, "Slash-and-Burn Cultivation in the Highlands South: A Problem in Comparative Agricultural History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24 (1982), 131-147 and Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald, "Celtic Origins of Southern Herding Practices," *Journal of Southern History* 51 (May 1985): 165-182.

¹³⁵ Zebulon B. Vance to James A. Seddon, February 9, 1864, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹³⁶ Wm. Lankford to Zebulon B. Vance, April 27, 1863, reel 17, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

transport it west to feed wives and children of soldiers.”¹³⁷ But the lack of transportation routes made the importation of food to the region extremely difficult. During the war, the transportation system in western North Carolina had been devastated. The fact that resources once supplied by markets throughout the South were no longer accessible increased the strain in the region. Not only did the residents have to deal with the loss of a major chunk of their workforce, they also had to compensate for markets no longer accessible to them. B.C. Washburn wrote to Vance on April 20, 1863, explaining that numerous bridges and roads between Asheville and Macon County were “entirely gone,” making travel treacherous.¹³⁸ Vance was aware of this problem because it had prevented him from sending corn to the western portion of the state. In the letter to the Secretary of War, he complained that while he had “secured about 50,000 bushels,” very little had been sent out due to the “want of transportation.”¹³⁹ Women also had trouble acquiring sufficient amounts of salt, which was essential for curing meat. B.C. Washburn wrote a letter to Governor Vance claiming that the price of salt in Cherokee County had risen from \$1.50 per bushel to \$2.00 per bushel. He went on to add “it seems strange to me...that our sister counties get it at \$1.50.”¹⁴⁰ The most violent result of the lack of salt

¹³⁷ Governor Zebulon Vance to James A. Seddon, February 28, 1863, in Joe A. Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance, 1863*, Volume 2 (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1963), 73.

¹³⁸ B.C. Washburn to Zebulon B. Vance, April 20, 1863, reel 17, McKinney and McMurry, eds., *The Papers of Zebulon Vance*.

¹³⁹ Governor Zebulon Vance to James A. Seddon, February 28, 1863, in Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 73.

¹⁴⁰ B.C. Washburn to Zebulon B. Vance, April 20, 1863, reel 17, Gordon B. McKinney and Richard M. McMurry, eds., *The Papers of Zebulon Vance* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1987).

in western North Carolina occurred in Madison County when a group of families raided Marshall to obtain salt, resulting in the infamous Shelton Laurel massacre.¹⁴¹

Conscription, though the most devastating, was not the only law issued by the Confederate government that created hardships for the residents of the mountain region. Two other morale damaging laws, impressment and tax-in-kind, also had an impact. In April of 1863, Congress passed a law to subdue the growing inflation of Confederate currency and state paper currency. The law allowed for a graduated income tax as well as a ten- percent tax-in-kind on agricultural products, which required families to give ten percent of their harvest to the Confederate government. While Southerners were content with the income tax, the tax-in-kind produced protest.¹⁴² In a letter to Vance, one Caswell County man asserted that “the Confederate Tax in Kind will produce dissatisfaction if not oppersition from the people. There seems to be no escape for use from these sore troubles but to make peace with the North on the best terms we can, and I solely beleave that three fourths of the people of Caswell desire peace now, while we have the power enough to assure our constitutional rights.”¹⁴³ This tax greatly affected the already stressed agricultural situation in western North Carolina. Farmers who produced a small surplus just in case they had a bad year were now forced to turn over their safety net. L. Gash, in a letter to Governor Vance, expressed his anger over the tax-in-kind stating that “the prospect for food is distressing indeed and now we are informed

¹⁴¹ For a complete handling of the Shelton Laurel massacre see Phillip Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

¹⁴² Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, xvii.

¹⁴³ Philip Hodnett to Governor Zebulon Vance, July 30, 1863, in Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 230.

that our taxes in kind are to be paid in grain...the law itself is a disgrace to humanity & commonsense."¹⁴⁴

Impressment also became a problem for the mountain residents. Passed by the Confederate Congress in March of 1863, the Impressment Act allowed Confederate officers to impress, with compensation to owners, food, forage, livestock, and other private property, as well as blacks, both slave and free. These resources were desperately needed for subsistence and assistance in the army,¹⁴⁵ but the Confederate government brought on many of its problems by enacting legislation that was devastating to the mountain communities. Communities that once supported the war whole-heartedly were now desperate for the soldiers to return home so that life could resume its normal character.

In the summer of 1863, an anonymous "Voice from Cherokee County" wrote a letter to the *North Carolina Standard*, protesting the Confederate government's oppressive policies and their impact in the mountains of western North Carolina. The writer proclaimed those who were hit hardest by the policies-women-declaring that the

Class of beings entitled to the deepest sympathy of the Confederate government...the wives, children, mothers, widows, and sisters. The ten thousand instances of women's patriotism, in resigning without a murmur the being in whom her affections centered, to all the horrors of war, and after her husband's departure, uncomplainingly assume all the duties of the sterner sex; accompanied by her little brood, labor from morn to night in the corn-field, or wield the axe to fell the sturdy oak."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ L.S. Gash to Zebulon B. Vance, December 25, 1863, reel 21, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹⁴⁵ Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, xvii.

¹⁴⁶ *North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh), August 19, 1863 in Inscoc, "Coping in Confederate Appalachia, 388.

But conscription, tax-in-kind, and impressment were not the only devastating misfortunes to plague the region. Second only to conscription, raiding and bushwhacking devastated the land and sapped the spirit of those whose duty it was to tend to the land. Bushwhacking and raiding along with the numerous deserters that roamed the mountains also tested the willingness of people to support the southern cause, in addition to straining the already stressed landscape. Problems in the mountains began when desertion rates began to soar in the Confederate army. After the Conscription Law was enacted, many men decided to leave the army and return home to their families. In a letter to Jefferson Davis, Vance wrote “I do not believe that one case in a hundred is caused by disloyalty—have no apprehensions whatever on that score. Homesickness, fatigue, hard fare &c. have of course much to do with it. The promise of the law of Conscription, that they *should* have furloughs, which has never been redeemed is one *principal* cause beyond a doubt.”¹⁴⁷ In addition to the many reasons Governor Vance gave for the increasing number of desertions among western North Carolinians, many soldiers deserted because of the situation at home. J. Johnston Pettigrew felt that he could “attribute these desertions to but one cause—the unfortunate state of public opinion” surrounding the war relayed to soldiers from home in letters.¹⁴⁸ The bad conditions at home found its way into numerous letters and affected many soldiers’ willingness to continue fighting. Governor Vance also realized that public opinion from home affected soldiers and

¹⁴⁷ Governor Zebulon Vance to Jefferson Davis, May 13, 1863, in Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 152.

¹⁴⁸ J. Johnston Pettigrew to Zebulon B. Vance, May 22, 1863, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., *The Papers of Zebulon Vance*.

requested that North Carolina regiments be moved further away from the mountains to prevent desertion.¹⁴⁹

But returning home was not as easy as many thought it would be. In response to the rising incidences of desertion, the Confederacy was forced to intensify the strength of the Home Guards so that they could gather men who had deserted. Governor Vance saw a need for a stronger guard early on because of the tense situation in the mountains. In a letter to the secretary of war J.A. Seddon in 1863, Vance explained that:

The vast number of deserters in the Western Counties of the State, have do accumulated lately as to set the local militia at defiance, & exert a very injurious effect upon the community in many respects-My Home Guards are poorly armed inefficient and rendered timid by fear of secret vengeance from the deserters-If Genl Lee would send one of our diminished brigades, or a good strong regiment to N.C. with orders to report to me, I could make it increase his ranks for more than the temporary loss of his brigade in a very short time-Something of this kind *must* be done.¹⁵⁰

Although the threat of being caught by the Home Guard loomed over many deserters, it was a risk many were willing to take. Men who were not subject to conscription formed the Home Guard; their purpose to “repel invasion, break up and arrest gangs of deserters, preserve order and enforce the laws.”¹⁵¹ One of the more time-consuming activities performed by the Home Guard was protecting residents from bands of deserters who roamed the mountainous landscape. But, as McKinney and Inscoe point out, they were

¹⁴⁹ Zebulon B. Vance to General Braxton Bragg, March 9, 1863, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹⁵⁰ Governor Zebulon Vance to James A. Seddon, August 26, 1863, in Mobley, ed., *The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance*, 255.

¹⁵¹ Governor Zebulon Vance to George W. Hayes, June 6, 1863, Vance Governor Papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.

unequal to the job because war had already strained them to a point that they did not want to pursue their targets, many of whom were neighbors and kinsmen.¹⁵²

Due to Cherokee and Macon counties' mountainous location, numerous deserters came not only to return home, but also to hide out in the rugged wilderness. In order to survive, many deserters depended on the residents for survival. That it not to say that the residents supplied them graciously, however; most were unwilling hosts. Raiders, bushwhackers, and deserters took food from wherever they could find it. Many residents of the two counties not only had to deal with the devastating affects the drought and frosts had on their crops, but also with the threat of bands of men who were apt to steal crops and domestic animals at will.¹⁵³ William Stringfield felt that the hardships of war, such as these incidents of raiding and bushwhacking, created strong and determined women. He wrote "no grander type of womanhood is developed anywhere than in these mountains...when the Federal Army occupied E. Tenn. And threatened North Carolina, the women in their lonesome mountain homes naturally became restless and timid, made more so when spies and forays of the enemy penetrated this region."¹⁵⁴ Though this unofficial war forced women to take on characteristics unknown to them before the war, most could have done without the tension. When men fled from the army, the mountains of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee provided a landscape in which hiding was easy. Some men hid in the less-populated areas for long periods of time and

¹⁵² Inscoc and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 129-131.

¹⁵³ T.M. Angel to Zebulon B. Vance, October 13, 1864, reel 25, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance. Angel even went so far as to say that "arms and ammunition" needed to be provided for the residents to defend themselves against the "thieves."

¹⁵⁴ William W. Stringfield, "Unpublished Reminiscences," Typescript, Stringfield Papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

survived with the help of sympathetic residents. Raiders also found the region attractive. Not only could troops search for deserters, but also for supplies such as crops and livestock, which could be taken from the residents with relative ease. Confederate soldiers were not the only ones looking for free supplies, however. Because of the region's proximity to eastern Tennessee, many Federal raids also occurred.¹⁵⁵ Governor Vance was aware of the threat Union soldiers coming from East Tennessee posed to the region, writing

The occupation of East Tennessee by the enemy and the great assemblage of tories and deserters in the mountains of the border, render Western N. Carolina with all its supplies of beef and pork, open to the invasion of the federals and tories.¹⁵⁶

The many people who fled to the region in search of refuge were concerned with survival, and were willing to do what it took to accomplish that, including robbing and terrorizing the people of the region. Because of the vast numbers of incidents between residents and raiders, deserters, and bushwhackers occurred, there are numerous accounts of how this unofficial war greatly affected the region.

The residents of Cherokee County experienced raids by Federal troops, as well as Confederate troops, soon after the war began. Most came looking for supplies, including crops, livestock, and the occasional slave. In a letter to James Seddon, Governor Vance vividly described the situation in the mountains as compared to the rest of North Carolina.

¹⁵⁵ For a thorough treatment of the occurrences in eastern Tennessee during the Civil War see Noel Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerrilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) and W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War, 1860-1870* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

¹⁵⁶ Zebulon B. Vance to James A. Seddon, September 21, 1863, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

But in the mountains of the west the case is different. The enforcement of the conscript law in East Tennessee has filled the mountains with disaffected desperadoes of the worst character, who joining with the deserters from our Army form very formidable bands of outlaws, who hide in the fastnisses, waylay the passes, rob, steal and destroy at pleasure. The evil has become so great that travel has almost been suspended through the mountains.¹⁵⁷

Most of those who Governor Vance described in the above letter roamed through the mountain communities in search of hiding areas in the dense forests of the mountains, and subsequently sought out food and supplies from the residents of the region. In a raid that occurred in Valley Town in 1863, at the Thomas Tatham household, the bushwhackers took everything possible. What they could not carry, they burnt to the ground.¹⁵⁸ Burning fields made a lasting impact on the land. Because some residents only owned small tracts of land, destruction at this level meant no food could be grown for quite some time. Another family that was terrorized by bushwhackers made a list of everything taken from their home, emphasizing the impact these activities made on the residents.

A LIST OF PROPERTY TAKEN BY THE YANKEES ON THE
 SUDDERTH PLANTATION, DECEMBER, 1863- 1 Bay Stud Hors and
 Bridle; 1 Bay Mare, Jane; 1 Bay Mare, Garer; 1 Bay Mare, Demount; 1
 Bay Mare, Sofine; 1 Brown Hors-Mule 4 years old; 1 Bay hors-Mule 4
 years old; 1 Bay Mare-Mule 4 years old; 1 Brown hors-Mule 3 years old;
 400 Bushells of corn; 7 oat stacks; 8 blade stacks; 50 Bushel Irish
 Potatoes; 10 Sheep; 9 bee stands; 50 Gallons of Brandy; half Bushel of
 Sault; 50 pounds of Tobacco; 25 Gallons of Surrup...¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Zebulon B. Vance to James A. Seddon, January 5, 1863, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., *The Papers of Zebulon Vance*.

¹⁵⁸ Margaret Walker Freil, *Our Heritage: The People of Cherokee County, North Carolina, 1540-1955* (Asheville: Miller Print Company, 1956), 225.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 226-227.

The list goes on to include items of clothing, crops, livestock, and farm equipment that the raiders took from the homestead. It is obvious that raiding and bushwhacking only added more devastation to the already declining agricultural yields, in addition to depleting an important source of income for the residents, domestic animals. Stories similar to the incident above were common throughout Cherokee and Macon counties. B.M. Edney wrote a letter to James Seddon explaining the desperate situation in his community, that “deserters—going round in the neighborhood & cutting the grain crops with armed guards...bid defiance to law & order, retiring at leisure, to their lurking places.”¹⁶⁰ The threat of crops and livestock being stolen was not the only fear residents had. There are also many accounts describing the outright destruction of property. In a letter to Governor Vance, L. Siler described an incident in which a group of soldiers came to a Cherokee County resident’s house in the middle of the night and “took thirty bushels of corn and destroyed all of his bee gums and killing cows and hogs.”¹⁶¹ In a letter to James Seddon, J. Rogers explained that Tories and bushwhackers had “driven off two hundred & thirty heads of Cattle...and are now ravishing the county as they please”.¹⁶² It is clear that although the mountains of western North Carolina were far from the battlefields of the Civil War, the people and their surrounding environment were not going to escape the trials and tribulations of war unscathed.

¹⁶⁰ B.M. Edney to James A. Seddon, July 27, 1863, reel 18, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹⁶¹ L.F. Siler to Zebulon B. Vance, February 8, 1864, reel 22, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹⁶² J.V.B. Rogers to James A. Seddon, October 3, 1863, reel 20, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

As more and more deserters continued to flee to the area, residents began to write more specific letters as to the number of people who were hiding out in the region. This attention to detail, whether a slight exaggeration or not, suggests that the situation was getting out of hand, and the residents were aware who was to blame. H. McCoy, writing to W.S. Winder, wrote, "It becomes my duty to inform you of the large numbers of deserters now making this way, with arms in their hands to the mountains of Western North Carolina averaging at least 50 to 60 a day."¹⁶³ This number, even if slightly exaggerated, would prove disastrous for the environment. Not only was the amount of improved acreage decreasing as a result of a lack of people to work the land, these deserters, raiders, and bushwhackers were taking most of what little was left in the way of food and supplies. G. Logan, in a letter to Governor Vance, proclaimed that "various good citizens have been deprived of their property...last year was a very bad crop year for our county, & if more of the grains had been taken, the people would not have had enough."¹⁶⁴ D.F. Ramsaur, living in Cherokee County, also wrote of the problem, claiming that "our county & town is in great danger there is a force in the mountains some 12 to 20 miles of this place & the tally them is from 150 to 200 Deserters and Union Men."¹⁶⁵ Rumors of large numbers of deserters and bushwhackers were enough to scare any resident in the mountains because they knew the danger and devastation associated with them. McCoy summed the situation up by adding, "unless some steps are

¹⁶³ H. McCoy to W.S. Winder, May 25, 1863, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹⁶⁴ G.W. Logan to Zebulon B. Vance, February 9, 1864, reel 22, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹⁶⁵ D.F. Ramsaur to Zebulon B. Vance, July 19, 1863, reel 18, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

immediately taken to arrest this growing evil, the mountains will be overrun and possessed entirely by these armed deserters.”¹⁶⁶

In an account entitled *Recollections of Bushwhacker Rule*, H.A. Eller described hardships and fear caused by raiding. Eller was between nine and ten years old at the time of the raids. Recalling a raiding incident, Eller wrote “in the winter of 1864-1865... these bushwhackers took meat and flour where they could find them and drove away pigs and cattle.”¹⁶⁷ The situation even drove residents from their homes. A letter written by Ann Ramsaur to her brother describe raiders who would first terrorize their victims by “shooting two or three times in the air.”¹⁶⁸ She did not want to endure the situation any longer and mentioned later in the letter that she was going to move away from the area. Many people in Cherokee County were also driven from their homes by the raider’s activity. In a letter to Governor Vance, M. Fain explained that “a portion of the citizens have been forced to leave their homes to save their lives. We are no longer safe here we have a force guarding this place now and have been for over a week and we are now looking to be attacked almost every hour.”¹⁶⁹

While the raids devastated some residents, others were only slightly affected. Mary Bell of Macon County seemed oblivious to the situation in the mountains. Writing her husband in 1864, Mary proclaimed “I guess you have heard of the great yankee and

¹⁶⁶ H. McCoy to W.S. Winder, May 25, 1863, reel 13, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

¹⁶⁷ H.A. Eller, “Recollections of Bushwhacker Rule in Western North Carolina, 1864-1865,” in Paul E. Hubbell Papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

¹⁶⁸ Ann Corpening Ramsaur to brother, July 19, 1863, in Corpening Family Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, & Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

¹⁶⁹ M. Fain to Zebulon B. Vance, July 18, 1863, reel 18, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

tory raid we had or at least expected to have...It was one of the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of. I think evry man in Macon Co., except those that were too old to get away, skidadled-home guards, preachers, doctors and all, except Cousin William Roane and he ventured far enough to find out they were not coming."¹⁷⁰ Although the rumored raiding party never made it close to Franklin, most of the residents were fearful. This is understandable when previous raids and devastation to the area is considered. Mary Bell's attitude towards the other women in the county was equally harsh. She could not understand why, that at the rumor of a raid, families were quick to hide their belongings. Her attitude stems directly from the fact that she never experienced loss to the degree other residents did.

Confederate laws, conscription in particular, in addition to the numbers of deserters, raiders, and bushwhackers that occupied the region, were the causes of not only the decline of morale among the population, but more importantly caused the agriculture decline that occurred from the Civil War. A region that was not entirely self-sufficient had no chance to go unscathed as the Civil War erupted all around. The fact that western North Carolina was dependent on other parts of the South became clear when the war made it impossible for the region to import goods. Surviving on the diverse agriculture of the region would have been possible if problems such as conscription and raiding were not present. William Holland Thomas sums up the situation in the mountains in a letter to Governor Vance, writing that "the western counties are in danger of being overrun by deserters and renegades who by the hundreds are taking shelter in the Smokey

¹⁷⁰ Mary Bell to Alfred Bell, February 19, 1864, in Alfred W. Bell Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, & Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Mountains.”¹⁷¹ Though these bands of men never drove all of the residents from their homes, their impact on the land was sharply felt. Chapter four will briefly explore what happened after the Civil War ended and the region was forced to once again change their views toward the natural environment that surrounded them.

¹⁷¹ William H. Thomas to Zebulon B. Vance, November 22, 1862, reel 15, McKinney and McMurry, eds., The Papers of Zebulon Vance.

CHAPTER 4

AFTERMATH

In *Letters From the Alleghany Mountains*, Charles Lanman posed the question “how much longer will the great South continue to buy, in the markets of the North, what can be produced more cheaply and of better quality in her own highlands?”¹⁷² Lanman, asking this question in 1849, could not have possibly foreseen the events that would take place a little more than ten years later. As chapter one illustrates, there was much interest in the region before the Civil War, and all accounts written realized the same dilemma; western North Carolina contained a variety of natural wealth that was barely touched by the residents.¹⁷³ All foresaw a future for the region in the commodification of the natural wealth, but none of the accounts outlined a reasonable plan to extract and sell the resources. While outsiders to the region saw the surrounding wilderness in terms of capital, the residents of the region depended on the wilderness to provide them with land for crop and livestock production, and for both personal consumption and market items. But during and after the Civil War, all agricultural commodities declined in number, from land to corn. Residents were now faced with the problem of rebuilding what had been devastated by the war. For the residents of the mountain region, this would be more difficult than for the rest of the state, mainly because the western portion of the state did not have a reliable transportation network and the agricultural situation was much different; the western portion of the state did not produce one cash crop, but a variety of small crops. The environmental devastation wrought by the war was followed by major

¹⁷² Lanman, *Letters From the Alleghany Mountains*, 190.

¹⁷³ Residents of course used the natural resources to meet their needs, but not to the degree the resources would be used when industrial capitalism moved into the region.

environmental and economical change that shook the region following the close of the Civil War. This closing chapter will briefly examine postwar western North Carolina and the changes the region underwent in terms of the environment.

Before beginning an examination of Cherokee and Macon counties, it is also important to note that farms all over the South experienced varying degrees of devastation as well.¹⁷⁴ John Solomon Otto points out that many of the returning soldiers found their homes in ruins, slaves missing, and finances in arrears.¹⁷⁵ Those who lived in areas that experienced war firsthand had the additional task of not only rebuilding their lives, but also their physical property. There were many cases in which returning soldiers and families found only ruins where their homes once stood. Julia Morgan, traveling to her home in Nashville, Tennessee, passed through a landscape of “burned houses, felled forests, and torn fences.”¹⁷⁶ Cavalryman Nathaniel Harris returned to his Mississippi home to find most of his slaves gone, his plantation home ruined, and his wife living in a dilapidated cabin amidst the ruins.¹⁷⁷ These areas had been dependent on slave labor to produce the cash crops that made the agriculture in the South profitable. Many regions in the South now faced the long and difficult task of rebuilding and establishing a labor force that not only was effective, but whose makeup also complied with civil and human

¹⁷⁴ For more information examining the post-war South, see Howard N. Rabinowitz, *The First New South, 1865-1920* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992 and John Samuel Ezell, *The South Since 1865*, 2nd Edition (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978).

¹⁷⁵ Otto, *Southern Agriculture During the Civil War Era*, 44.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 45.

rights.¹⁷⁸ Although some residents owned slaves in Cherokee and Macon counties and were forced to look for labor elsewhere, environmental devastation was of main concern to most of the residents.

The environmental devastation the mountain region experienced was not isolated to the decline in agricultural production. Linked to agriculture were many other issues, including the economy and a way of life. There was extreme damage to the economy and to the relationship between residents and the surrounding landscape. When men returned from war, they encountered fields that were either fallow due to lack of labor during the war or bare due to constant raiding, and many were forced to sell some of their land in order to obtain some money. Many women were forced to run the farm and household without any male assistance, and many sold their farms to look for work elsewhere or to move in with relatives.¹⁷⁹ The impact the Civil War had on the region was not a passing phenomenon. Improved acreage, number of livestock, most importantly swine, and the cash value of the farms had all declined. It was clear that the end of the Civil War did not mean an end to the hardships faced by the residents. Although after a few months of peace the threat of raids no longer lingered, residents were still faced with a devastated environment. This decline in every aspect of agricultural productivity can still be seen in the 1870 census as chapter two illustrates.

But devastation from the war was not the only factor in the environmental problems faced by the residents after the war. In her article “Women in Agriculture during the Nineteenth Century,” Elizabeth Fox-Genovese makes the point that the

¹⁷⁸ This is not to say that the South began respecting Civil Rights immediately, only that they were under careful watch by the government.

¹⁷⁹ Inscoe and McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, 268-269.

outcome of the Civil War ensured the triumph of industry, not agriculture.¹⁸⁰ After the Civil War, all regions of the United States succumbed to the expanding national market, and western North Carolina was not an exception.¹⁸¹ Once dependent on agriculture as a commodity in the national market, the South now needed to look for ways to produce industrial commodities. Ronald Eller argues that throughout most of the antebellum period, transportation difficulties, a lack of any real market, and the “deep agrarian biases of Southern leaders” had prevented the exploitation of the riches in the Appalachian region.¹⁸² When the necessity for industrial capital arose, Southerners turned their attention to the western regions. As evidenced in chapter one, many people were aware of the natural riches the region held. Extraction of this wealth never happened because there was never a need and the time and money involved in opening the region up to industry was more than many were willing to invest. After the war, as Eller points out, “among a new generation of southern leaders, the road to wealth seemed no longer to lead to the plantation but rather to the coal and iron fields of the Appalachians.”¹⁸³

The years proceeding the Civil War saw a major change in attitude of Southern leaders. No longer was agriculture seen as the most profitable form of capital. Industrialization and an opportunity to become wealthy from it penetrated the thoughts of many politicians. For those who believed that the New South’s future lay industrial growth, southern Appalachia and its natural resources needed to be promoted and

¹⁸⁰ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, “Women in Agriculture during the Nineteenth Century,” in *Agriculture and National Development: Views on the Nineteenth Century*, editor Lou Ferleger (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 267.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 268-269.

¹⁸² Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 44.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

utilized. Ronald Eller points out that much of this pro-industrialization spirit came from urban areas, where local newspapers presented strong arguments of why internal improvements, most importantly railroad lines, needed to be made in order to extract the great wealth located in the mostly mountainous portions of southern Appalachia.¹⁸⁴ While the private sector, such as newspapers, promoted the region, local governments were eager to entice investors to the region. Immigration to the southern Appalachian states was encouraged and tax exemptions and liberal charters were granted.¹⁸⁵ In addition to these measures, railroad lines were eventually expanded to penetrate far into the interior of Appalachia. Residents of southern Appalachia, included those who lived in Cherokee and Macon counties, welcomed the idea of industrialization. The Civil War had had devastating affects on the environment and economy of the region. Many believed, and were reinforced by eager politicians, that industrialization would bring wage labor to the region, supplementing the meager amounts made in agriculture. Paul Salstrom argues this point concluding that a combination of low food production, a reduced standard of living, population growth, and resource depletion softened residents for industrial exploitation.¹⁸⁶

Southerners were not the only ones who would benefit from the opening of the region to outside investment. Many investors from all over the country came in search of wealth. In the case of Macon and Cherokee counties, many came to extract the valuable timber contained within the boundaries of the two counties. Timber reserves in the

¹⁸⁴ Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 45.

¹⁸⁵ Howard N. Rabinowitz, *The First New South, 1865-1920* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992), 31.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Salstrom, *Appalachia's Path to Dependency: Rethinking a Region's Economic History, 1730-1940* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

northeast were beginning to dwindle and new tracts of timber-stocked land were in demand.¹⁸⁷ Southern leaders welcomed this outside investment in the region, believing that with outside interest in the natural environment came northern capital.¹⁸⁸ Southern leaders were quickly sold on the idea of western North Carolina wilderness as a commodity. Accounts of the region had been very influential in whetting the appetites of many before and immediately after the war. Those who looked to the region for natural resources and wealth saw wilderness as a commodity. But the residents of the region had had a different view of wilderness before the war. Because of their intimate relationship with the land, the environment was more of a tool of existence. In order to survive, residents utilized the environment for materials for shelter, food, and market items. But after the Civil War, residents' perceptions of the wilderness were bound to change. The environment was not what it was before the war. It was becoming more difficult to exist off the yields of the land. McKinney and Inscoe make the point that mountain families continued to be large after the war. The demands for land became greater than was available, and thus farms became smaller and smaller.¹⁸⁹ In addition to the decreasing size of farms, the population of the region doubled from between 1860 and 1890.¹⁹⁰ As land was further divided between family members, the ability of the land to produce as it once had before was challenged. Residents now had to make a decision as how to

¹⁸⁷ Donald Edward Davis, *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 164-165.

¹⁸⁸ Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 45.

¹⁸⁹ John Inscoe and Gordon McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 267.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

survive in the changing environment. Some became tenant farmers,¹⁹¹ some moved to various areas to work in textile mills, and some decided that the commodification of wilderness by outside investors would better their economic situation.

In the case of Cherokee and Macon counties, the timber industry prevailed from 1880 until 1930. Because there were no railroad lines in the counties before or immediately following the war, extensive industrialization came slower to this portion of the region. The first phase of lumber extraction was selective. Only certain trees were cut, including black walnut, yellow poplar, and ash trees.¹⁹² The second phase, however, proved to be the most destructive to the environment. Vast amounts of trees were cut, leaving the sides of the mountains empty. Teamed with the railroad companies, lumber companies pushed further into the depths of the mountains.¹⁹³ After much of the timber had been extracted, the residents were once again left with a barren landscape.¹⁹⁴

Much has been written dealing with the Appalachian region after the war. One of the most complete works on the coming of industrial capitalism to southern Appalachia is Ronald Eller's *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*. Eller points out that there was a serious decline in mountain agriculture, farm productivity, and income after the war, followed by a shift in income to nonagricultural employment.¹⁹⁵ He goes on to discuss what occupied the employment resources of the residents instead of agricultural pursuits,

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁹² Howard N. Rabinowitz, *The First New South, 1865-1920* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1992), 42.

¹⁹³ Richard B. Drake, *A History of Appalachia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 131, 134-135.

¹⁹⁴ For a more thorough treatment of the timber industry, see Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 23-31 and Barry M. Buxton, ed., *The Great Forest: An Appalachian Story* (Appalachian Consortium Press, 1985).

¹⁹⁵ Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, xix.

namely industries such as timber and minerals. What made this region so poor was something Eller termed the “selling of the mountains.” The fact that the land was rich did not ensue that the residents would become automatically wealthy. Investors from outside the region came in and purchased the land from willing farmers, who needed to earn what little money they could.¹⁹⁶ This put outside investors, who essentially can be termed the core, in control of the periphery, thus making the inhabitants who did not own a piece of the action extremely poor. In addition to devastating the region economically, industrial capitalism had disastrous affects on the environment. The Reverend Dr. A.E. Brown, superintendent of the mountain school department of the Southern Baptist Convention, was keenly aware of the negative impact the timber industry was having on the forests of western North Carolina. In an interview with the *Manufacturers' Record*, Brown observed:

While this work, of course, has given employment to the natives of the mountains since it has been going on, it is destroying the future for them, because the sides of the mountains have been denuded of their top soil and the bottom lands have been overflowed and swept away, thereby destroying their value for agricultural purposes.¹⁹⁷

This environmental devastation would lead to the concern of the region by many. The creation of the National Forest Service also grew out of this concern and interest in conserving natural resources.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Another important area of research that's still needs examination are the outside investors, particularly how they came to know of the region where they invested their money.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 111.

¹⁹⁸ Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, 112-120.

The future of Cherokee and Macon counties, western North Carolina, and the Appalachian region might have been dramatically different if the Civil War never occurred. There would have always been outside interest in the region looming very close in the distance, but actions might not have been so accelerated. The purpose of historical research is not to dwell on the what-ifs, however, but to examine the evidence and conclude why certain events happened, as best as can be concluded by those who did not experience it first hand. In the case of Cherokee and Macon counties from before to after the Civil War, there are a few good sources that aid in the examination of the region. Accounts kept by outsiders set the scene of the riches of the area as well as heightening interest in those who had never ventured to the area. From these accounts, it is clear that the region was greatly regarded for its natural wealth. But while outsiders saw the region for its numerous environmental commodities, residents depended on the region to provide them with goods necessary to survive. Manuscripts and letters written by the residents also paint a picture of the region, although they are scarcer in number, and prove that the Civil War greatly affected the surrounding landscape, although the war never physically touched the region. Residents of Cherokee and Macon counties endured numerous hardships during the war. Not only did conscription and other Confederate legislations make life difficult, but raids and bushwhacking also had devastating affects on the agriculture. Other sources of countless information are census records. In this thesis, the agricultural census records for Cherokee and Macon counties proved, with the help of statistical computations, that there was a significant decline in the agricultural situation from before to after the Civil War. When all the sources of evidence are combined, the conclusion that the Civil War was the determining factor in the agricultural production

decline within the two counties becomes obvious. When the devastated environmental, economic, and social situations were mixed, an opportunity for a new era in the regional history was able to begin, that of the commodification of the environment. J.A. Deal sums up the situation, writing:

The world is at last beginning to get its eyes opened to the infinite riches of Southern resources. Nowhere on all God's beautiful earth is there a region blessed with so many and such vast natural advantages. Acres of land as fertile as ever the sun shone on; land that yields almost spontaneously every grain, grass, fruit, vegetable of the temperate and subtropical zones. Mountains ribbed with inexhaustible stores of coal and iron, gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, and every other metal known to commerce. Quarries of marble of every hue, building stone of every variety, in quantities sufficient to supply the world. Mighty forests of all the most valuable timbers. Grand rivers and crystal streams tumbling and foaming everywhere, bubbling of water power enough, long wasted, to turn all the wheel and spindles of the universe. And over it all, skies as bright, and a climate as mild and healthful as ever blessed Primeval Paradise. What more could be asked? *What more indeed could be asked?*¹⁹⁹

Nothing more could be asked of the region, for it was blessed with natural resources that impressed both residents and outsiders alike. The Civil War was key in opening up these riches quickly to investors. While the residents would have been content to see life the way it was before the war, it became necessary that in order to survive in the new industrial landscape, they too would have to see the environment only in terms of commodity.

¹⁹⁹ Deal, *Western North Carolina*, 12.

APPENDIX¹

Average, High, and Low Values of Farming Implements and Machinery in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$45.00	\$400.00	\$4.00
1860	\$51.56	\$300.00	\$0.00
1870	\$15.80	\$100.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Farming Implements and Machinery in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$197.00	\$5,000.00	\$5.00
1860	\$96.30	\$980.00	\$0.00
1870	\$44.90	\$500.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Homemade Manufactures in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$39.66	\$150.00	\$0.00
1860	\$37.86	\$150.00	\$0.00
1870	\$14.46	\$180.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Homemade Manufactures in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$70.90	\$400.00	\$0.00
1860	\$90.90	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
1870	\$80.30	\$550.00	\$0.00

¹ All information in appendix obtained and computed from the sample population taken from the United States Bureau of the Census, *7th Census of the United States (1850)*, *8th Census of the United States (1860)*, *9th Census of the United States (1870)*, *Agriculture, Cherokee and Macon counties, North Carolina*.

Average, High, and Low Values of Slaughtered Animals in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$70.20	\$470.00	\$0.00
1860	\$84.54	\$300.00	\$0.00
1870	\$52.52	\$300.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Slaughtered Animals in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$199.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00
1860	\$92.30	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
1870	\$346.90	\$1,350.00	\$30.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Products in Market Gardens in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
1860	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
1870	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Products in Market Gardens in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$8.20	\$400.00	\$0.00
1860	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
1870	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Orchard Products in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
1860	\$1.94	\$50.00	\$0.00
1870	\$8.20	\$100.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Values of Orchard Products in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	\$2.68	\$90.00	\$0.00
1860	\$4.50	\$50.00	\$0.00
1870	\$5.44	\$50.00	\$0.00

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Horses in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	2.48	10	0
1860	2.7	15	0
1870	0.74	7	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Horses in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	5.24	41	0
1860	3.4	24	0
1870	2.78	20	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Milk Cows in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	4.26	21	0
1860	2.88	11	0
1870	2.12	6	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Milk Cows in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	6.82	92	0
1860	3.96	36	0
1870	3.12	21	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Rye in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	31.02	200	0
1860	11.82	100	0
1870	6.36	50	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Rye in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	24.84	300	0
1860	13.2	100	0
1870	7.56	40	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Oats in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	99.1	500	0
1860	20.12	200	0
1870	41.7	1500	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Oats in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	127.5	1000	0
1860	24.64	200	0
1870	27.74	300	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Irish Potatoes in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	6.42	50	0
1860	14.7	50	0
1870	13.18	100	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Irish Potatoes in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	18.86	300	0
1860	22.52	250	0
1870	11.54	50	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Sweet Potatoes in Cherokee County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	52.4	200	0
1860	30.6	100	0
1870	5.42	25	0

Average, High, and Low Numbers of Bushels of Sweet Potatoes in Macon County.

Year	Average	High	Low
1850	40.86	150	0
1860	53.6	1000	0
1870	17.86	100	0

High and Low Values of Livestock in Cherokee County.

Year	High	Low
1850	1650	25
1860	3200	35
1870	650	14

High and Low Values of Livestock in Macon County.

Year	High	Low
1850	5400	15
1860	3853	80
1870	1800	20

High and Low Numbers of Bushels of Indian Corn in Cherokee County.

Year	High	Low
1850	3500	75
1860	1200	0
1870	600	0

High and Low Numbers of Bushels of Indian Corn in Macon County.

Year	High	Low
1850	3000	60
1860	4400	50
1870	700	0

High and Low Numbers of Sheep in Cherokee County.

Year	High	Low
1850	100	3
1860	120	0
1870	75	0

High and Low Numbers of Sheep in Macon County.

Year	High	Low
1850	130	0
1860	197	5
1870	43	0

High and Low Numbers of Swine in Cherokee County.

Year	High	Low
1850	1650	25
1860	3200	35
1870	650	14

High and Low Numbers of Swine in Macon County.

Year	High	Low
1850	5400	15
1860	3853	80
1870	1800	20

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