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The diary of Fannie Fain of Blountville : defining allegiance in Civil War era East Tennessee

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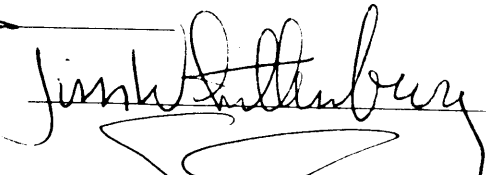
THE DIARY OF FANNIE FAIN OF BLOUNTVILLE:
DEFINING ALLEGIANCE IN CIVIL WAR ERA EAST TENNESSEE

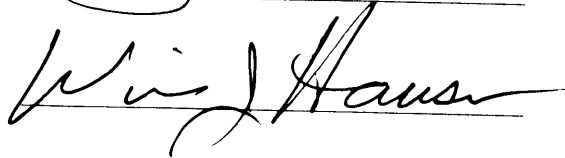
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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by

Jennifer M. Brickey

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 Director



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THE DIARY OF FANNIE A. FAIN OF BLOUNTVILLE:
DEFINING ALLEGIANCE IN CIVIL WAR ERA EAST TENNESSEE

“Soon the year will have forever taken its flight, and buried with those of the past, time is forever on a swift wing and in its flight brings many changes. Some to use are pleasant, others sad, but so it is with the cup of life, made up of the sweet and bitter...” mused Fannie Anderson Rhea Fain as she contemplated the tragic losses, violence, and upheavals in her small East Tennessee community in December of 1863.¹ Thirty years old when she started writing in her diary in early 1863, Fannie Anderson Rhea Fain was a mother of five children in Blountville, Tennessee and a member of what the historian John N. Fain calls the “cousin network of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who dominated business and culture in East Tennessee from its settlement to the Civil War” and worshipped “both God and learning in about equal parts.”² There were equally ardent Unionists and Confederates sentiments among the Fain and Rhea families of Blountville. However, Unionists in the two families often hid their loyalties to succeed as merchants and to avoid punishment for disloyalty. After the war, insufficient loyalty to the Union cause for some and vehement spouting of Confederate sympathies for others would limit future success in East Tennessee. In her diary, Fannie fervently wishes the war to favor the federal government and for her husband to return home, but spends relatively little time speculating about the movement of armies and generals unlike the more polished narratives meant to be read by a wide audience such as Cornelia Peake McDonald’s *A Woman’s Civil War* or Mary Chestnut’s *A Diary from Dixie*. She remained a Northern sympathizer throughout the war, both worrying for her brothers in the Confederate army

¹ Fannie Anderson Rhea Fain, *The Diary of Fain A. Fain of Blountville*, (Johnson City: Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University, 1986) 16.

² John N. Fain, “Introduction,” *Sanctified Trial: The Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, a Confederate Woman in East Tennessee*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004) xxix.

and yet rejoicing at news of Confederate defeats. Younger members of the family readily joined the Confederacy, but Fannie and her two older brothers, John and Samuel, belonged to an older generation that tended to stay loyal to the Union.

The feminist scholar Amy Wink recognizes women's diaries as a significant form of autobiography in *She Left Nothing in Particular: The Autobiographical Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Women's Diaries*. She praises the accessibility of the diary as an autobiographical form for women "whose emotional, intellectual, and practical lives are fragmented by domestic responsibilities that leave them little leisure time to contemplate or integrate their experiences."³ Fannie's diary leaves little doubt to the never-ending and challenging nature of her domestic and spiritual duties. She demurely describes how she "dried, starched and ironed my clothes all by the fire...wishing to butcher some hogs tomorrow...had bread baked and churning done."⁴

Unlike Mary Chestnut or Cornelia McDonald's accounts of the Civil War, Fannie's narrative was written for herself and not consciously for an audience of either relatives or the general public. Nor was her work ever edited to present a more polished and publishable manuscript. Although Fannie expresses Unionist sentiments, her writing is not an account of unwavering loyalty or inflamed rhetoric toward the other side in the bloody conflict. Although hoping for a restored Union, she repeatedly longs for the return of her husband and devours any potential news of peace. Fannie wrote in November of 1864 "if they would only do something to give us peace, I should rejoice. Our country is much ruined already. 'Tis time for peace."⁵ The diary simply stands as a testament to her

³ Amy L. Wink, *She Left Nothing in Particular: The Autobiographical Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Women's Diaries*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001) xi.

⁴ Fannie Fain 9.

⁵ Fannie Fain 40.

thoughts, feelings, and daily actions between 1863 and 1865. Inferences and speculation toward events and people in the diary play a vital role in producing a compelling and clear picture of Fannie's struggles in Blountville from 1863 to 1865. However, Amy Wink warns that "too often, we see the blanks, the white space, rather than the words, and choose to speculate on what has been left out rather than paying attention to what has been included."⁶

Nevertheless, a picture slowly emerges in her diary of mercantile East Tennessee Unionists who maintained strong connections with Confederate family members throughout the war. Although the war effectively destroyed her hometown of Blountville, the strong ties between kin could not be as easily broken. The family could exemplify two extremes in antebellum American thought, as shown in the writings of her Cousin Hiram Fain and Brother Samuel Rhea. Samuel wrote in 1857 to a missionary friend stationed in Mosul that "the blood shed in Kansas, I believe, is but the beginning of blood-shedding in connection with the accursed system. I have no idea that the exodus of three millions of slaves out of the house of their bondage will be effected without bloodshed...it will come in terrible judgment on the heads of slaveholders."⁷ In contrast, her cousin Hiram Fain wrote in 1861 that "our brethren in the free states having drunk deep of this infatuation have determined to deprive the Southern states of their rights under the Constitution in the election of a black Republican President... for the very express purpose to bring the federal government in conflict with the rights of the

⁶ Wink xx.

⁷ Dwight W. Marsh, *The Tennessean in Persia and Koordistan: Scenes and Incidents in the Life of Samuel Audley Rhea*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1869) 356.

Southern States.”⁸ Yet overt family conflict does not appear to have occurred in Fannie’s diary in spite of obviously passionate and opposing feelings. Cousin Hiram visited Blountville and the Fain home frequently during the war without voicing complaint. Containing a weaker form of anti-slavery rhetoric than normal, Brother Samuel’s letters to Confederate family members were read with eagerness.⁹ Fannie’s experiences in regard to continuing familial and community support stand in sharp contrast to many Unionists in other parts of the South, as related by the historian Thomas Dyer in *Secret Yankees: The Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta*.¹⁰

Oddly, Fannie’s diary has been overlooked entirely or quickly skimmed by most historians, researchers, and newspaper writers looking for a quick story. Although a small amount of work has been undertaken on the religious and daily life aspects of her diary, it has not yet been used to reveal the tensions and commonalities existing between Unionist and Confederate mercantile families in East Tennessee during the Civil War. The *Kingsport Times News* and the *Johnson City Press* occasionally turn to the diary to provide quick, happy stories. The two newspapers often mangle events in the diary or outright lie whenever unpleasant behavior, such as desertion, is mentioned. The Watauga Association of Genealogists briefly mentions the diary in several of its short newsletters.¹¹ Darcy Martin spoke about the diary’s religious significance to the Holston Valley Unitarian Universalist Church on March 23, 2003 and called his presentation “Harbingers of Change: The Civil War Diaries of Mary Paerre Hamilton and Fannie

⁸ Hiram Fain, “The Diary of Hiram Fain of Rogersville: An East Tennessee Secessionist,” John N. Fain, ed. *Journal of East Tennessee History: 1996-1999*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000) 97.

⁹ Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, *Sanctified Trial: The Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, a Confederate Woman in East Tennessee*, John N. Fain, ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004) 103.

¹⁰ Thomas G. Dyer, *Secret Yankees: The Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

¹¹ “Contents of WAGS Bulletins,” *Watauga Association of Genealogists of Upper East Tennessee*, 8 Dec 2005, < <http://www.rootsweb.com/~tnwashin/documents/bullcont.htm> >.

Rhea Fain.”¹² Julie Shepherd of Appalachian State University has presented research on domestic labor in East Tennessee during the Civil War by analyzing the diary. She presented “ ‘Tis Time for Peace’: Survival and Innovation in Southern Appalachian Women’s Domestic Labor During the Civil War – *The Fannie A. Fain Diaries*” at the 2005 Appalachian Studies Conference.¹³ John N. Fain, the editor of a *Sanctified Trial: The Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain*, only spends a long footnote on Fannie and her husband. John N. Fain’s lack of coverage on Fannie is puzzling as *Sanctified Trial* is the diary of Fannie’s cousin that grew up in the same home in Blountville. The family’s Unionist sentiments could have provided an excellent foil to Eliza’s strong Confederate sympathies.

Along with an analysis of the numerous primary sources left behind by the Rhea and Fain families, a close reading of Fannie Fain’s diary provides insight into the loyalties of one family, and by connection to numerous other mercantile and professional families in the towns of East Tennessee. Oliver Temple in *Historic Sullivan* remarks that “the Rheas, Andersons, Fains, Dulaneys, Maxwells, Tiptons, Rutledges and Gammons are some of the settlers who came here with liberal educations, and this, with the wealth many acquired here, enabled them to dispense a hospitality that was rare in its refinement and culture.”¹⁴ Blountville became the center of a commercial activity in the early nineteenth century that drew into its coffers tremendous wealth and formed the nuclei of later fortunes. In 1795, the Great Stage Road, running from Washington D.C. to New

¹² “Past Services,” *Holston Valley Unitarian Universalist Church Website*, 10 Jan 2006, <<http://hvuuc.org/pages/hvoldser.htm>>.

¹³ “Vital Words and Vital Actions: Partnerships to Build a Healthy Place,” *Appalachian Studies Association*, 20 March 2005, <<http://www.appalachianstudies.org/2005-conf/>>.

¹⁴ Oliver P. Temple, *Historic Sullivan: A History of Sullivan County*, (Bristol: King Printing Company, 1909) 140.

Orleans, was routed through Blountville, the county seat of Sullivan County and located a few miles from the Virginia border. Lacking the shipping facilities Kingsport had, three stage lines entered the town and the government recognized the town as a center of postal services in East Tennessee. Unlike the heavily pro-Unionist counties in East Tennessee, only thirty percent of the eligible population in Sullivan County voted to remain in the Union.¹⁵

The historian William Trotter in *Bushwhackers: The Civil War in the North Carolina Mountains* remarks that “the fall of Knoxville effectively terminated the already shaky Confederate hold over the central part of eastern Tennessee, although the rebels would hang on grimly to the northeast corner of the state for months to come.”¹⁶ Although federal troops made several incursions into the area, the Confederacy held Sullivan County until the end of the war because of the vital importance of the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad which connected the upper and lower South. The Confederacy’s desperate hold on Blountville, based on a desire to control the East Tennessee and Virginia railroad running through Sullivan County, caused Fannie to pray for an end to the war and imagine ways to reach her husband in Knoxville. Periodic federal raids into the town exposed wavering loyalties, allowing both blacks and whites preferring federal control to escape to Knoxville. Fannie notes that Mr. Snapp had “took his family out when the Federals were in, leaving his farm & slaves without making any disposition of them.”¹⁷ Although she only briefly comments on black desertions, Fannie’s own slave made the bold choice to leave with federal troops. Her lack of commentary on the

¹⁵ W. Todd Groce, *Mountain Rebels: East Tennessee Confederates and the Civil War*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999) 40.

¹⁶ William R. Trotter, *Bushwhackers: The Civil War in North Carolina*, (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1988) 86.

¹⁷ Fannie Fain 9.

departure of her own servant reflects her own family's ambivalence toward slavery and the fact that many white East Tennesseans desired to believe their slaves still loyal.

The historian Stephen Ash in *When the Yankees Came* believes that "because Union troops were not always close enough to deter secessionists and guarantee the safety of Unionists in no-man's land and on the Confederate frontier, Unionists there all remained fearful of secessionist reprisals, and most continued to avoid open expressions of loyalty."¹⁸ Fannie and John H. Fain of Blountville did not have to openly declare their loyalties until the Confederate Congress repealed the substitute leave portion of the Conscription Act in 1864. John H. Fain joined a small band of Unionist men from Blountville on a dangerous journey to Cincinnati, Ohio and eventually the federally occupied Knoxville where he could avoid conscription. Fannie wrote to her husband frequently, worrying about his health and bemoaning their separation over a fifteen month period. Although her husband had fled conscription, little evidence suggests that the family remaining in Blountville suffered for his disloyalty to the Confederacy. Held at an unusually unhealthy union prison, Camp Chase, with a fifteen percent death rate in Columbus, Ohio, her brother Brainerd happily passed on information about the healthy and safety of her husband in Cincinnati, Ohio.¹⁹

Historians have interpreted John H. Fain's avoidance of conscription as either the actions of a cowardly Confederate or an unwavering Unionist. Local newspapers avoid having to choose between the two motives by fabricating a fifteen month tour of duty at the end of the war. W. Todd Groce in *Mountain Rebels* takes the view that Fain lacked

¹⁸ Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995) 111.

¹⁹ John Preston Sheffey, *Soldier of Southwestern Virginia: The Civil War Letters of Captain John Preston Sheffey*, James Robertson, ed. (New York: Louisiana State University Press, 2004) 220.

courage when he remarks that “despite his Southern sympathy, John H. Fain of Blountville hired a substitute to fight for him. When the Confederate Congress repealed the substitute law in 1864, Fain fled from East Tennessee to avoid conscription. What his brother-in-law, Maj. James Rhea of the Sixtieth Tennessee, thought of Fain’s actions is unknown.”²⁰ John N. Fain, the editor of *Sanctified Trial: The Diary of Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, a Confederate Woman in East Tennessee* believes Northern sympathies forced Fain to leave Blountville to avoid conscription.²¹ Local papers, such as the *Johnson City Press* and *Kingsport Times News*, have still steadfastly avoided mentioning her husband’s avoidance of conscription into the twenty first century. The *Johnson City Press* describes John H. Fain as “away at war” in an article of November of 2004.²² The *Kingsport Times News* details a “fifteen month tour of duty” which never existed in a special Christmas edition for December of 2005.²³

The following chapters will explain the background of Fannie’s family, describe the events in her diary from 1863 to 1865, and show the aftermath of the war. The motivation for Fannie and her husband to remain loyal Unionists throughout the war and avoid the Confederate draft can hopefully be found in this manner. Discoveries from Fannie’s family can perhaps be applied to a broader understanding of East Tennessee before, during, and after the Civil War.

²⁰ Groce 95.

²¹ John Fain “Sanctified Trial” 309.

²² Ben Ingram, “Jonesborough’s Fannie Fain Kept Remarkable Records in her Diary,” *The Johnson City Press*, 1 Nov 2004 <<http://www.johnsoncitypress.com/PrintStory.asp?SectionID=DETAIL&ID=40495>>.

²³ Hank Hayes, “Diary Paints Picture of Life during Civil War,” *The Kingsport Times News*, 25 Dec 2005, <http://www.timesnews.net/article.dna?_StoryID=3583297>.

The Fain and Rhea Families of East Tennessee before the War

Parson Brownlow growled in the *Knoxville Whig* on May 4, 1861 that “merchants, Railroads and others largely indebted to the North are the most clamorous for secession. Wherever a merchant is found largely indebted to the North...they are throwing up their hats for Jeff Davis.” Although her family did not support the Confederacy full-heartedly, Fannie Anderson Rhea Fain certainly belonged to the class of merchants that Brownlow maligned in his newspaper. Fannie’s childhood home “of brick, two full stories, with a front of forty feet, and an L back...situated on a slight eminence rising from a small stream which flows through the town” spoke powerfully of the family’s prominent social position and the economic rewards for hardworking merchants in Blountville.²⁴ The 1860 census listed John H. Fain, her husband, as a thirty-five year old merchant with 1,800 dollars in real estate and a personal estate of 6,800 dollars. Standing in sharp contrast, his father-in law and Fannie’s father, Samuel Rhea, held real estate valued at 16,500 dollars and personal property of 50,000 dollars. The Rhea and Fain families invested heavily in cotton in 1862, although investment in relatively durable cotton bales could have been meant to function as a store of value during a time of rising inflation instead of a signal of Confederate support. The historian Thomas Dyer in *Secret Yankees* comments that “many in the South and North believed that the war would not last long and that by acquiring cotton at a time when the international prices of the commodity were escalating, they would be advantageously positioned, perhaps even wealthy, when the war did end.”²⁵ Statistically, W. Todd Groce in *Mountain Rebels* has shown that merchants and professionals in the East Tennessee valley towns tended to side with the Confederacy.

²⁴ Marsh 20.

²⁵ Dyer 116.

Groce's predictions hold true for Fannie's younger brothers, but the older members of the family chose loyalty to the Union in spite of their immense wealth.

Proximity to the railroad was cited by the historian W. Todd Groce in *Mountain Rebels* as highly significant in increasing the likelihood of rebel sympathies. Until the arrival of the railroad, goods from large American cities and Europe came into East Tennessee on large wagon trains or small watercraft. East Tennesseans made money in the market through driving hogs and cattle to neighboring states.²⁶ Samuel Rhea, a Unionist with several sons serving in the Confederate army, is frequently listed in memoirs and letters as a principal investor in the railroad that opened East Tennessee to the frequent intrusions from the outside world. Throughout her diary, Fannie remarks on her family's attempts and failures to plant a large wheat crop during wartime. East Tennessee led the state in wheat production in the 1850s. Wheat grown in East Tennessee could be shipped easier to bustling antebellum cities thanks to the arrival of the railroad in the 1850s.²⁷ Noel Fischer remarks in *War at Every Door* that "wheat merchants established business contacts and friendships with Southern merchants in Georgia and other states."²⁸ These connections with Southern merchants could have influenced some East Tennesseans to side with the Confederacy.

The relative decline of East Tennessee to Middle and Western Tennessee likely upset the older generation in Blountville and made them already at odds with the more secession prone portions of Tennessee. Parson Brownlow fumed in January of 1861 that

²⁶ Robert Tracy McKenzie, *One South or Many?: Plantation Belt and Upcountry in Civil War-Era Tennessee*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 17.

²⁷ Donald L. Winters, *Tennessee Farming, Tennessee Farmers: Antebellum Agriculture in the Upper South*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994) 13.

²⁸ Noel Fisher, *War at Every Door: Partisan Politics and Guerilla Violence in East Tennessee, 1860-1869*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 20.

the people of East Tennessee “are a grain-growing and stock raising people, and we can conduct a cheap government and live independently inhabiting the Switzerland of America.”²⁹ The historian Noel Fisher describes the move of the Tennessee state capital from Knoxville to Nashville as “deep and painful.”³⁰ In the period from 1819 to 1860 only one East Tennessean became governor, Andrew Johnson. The state legislature overlooked T. A. R. Nelson, a respected East Tennessee Whig, several times for a seat in the United States Senate in favor of a candidate from Middle Tennessee. Projects desired by East Tennesseans, such as road improvements, were less likely to be undertaken. In the late 1830s, East Tennesseans charged that Middle Tennessee was monopolizing state funds to build its own road network. According to Noel Fisher in *War at Every Door*, “the road dispute became so severe that East Tennessee congressmen introduced bills in the Tennessee House and Senate authorizing the eastern counties to form a new state. These bills received the support of both Whigs and Democrats, including Parson Brownlow and Andrew Johnson.”³¹ The idea to form a new state in East Tennessee recalled the agitation to form the State of Franklin in the 1780s and separate what would become Tennessee from North Carolina and Virginia. The Tennessee Senate approved the statehood measure in 1842, but the House added an amendment requiring a referendum on the issue of separation and the measure died.³²

Slaves formed only ten percent of the population in East Tennessee in comparison to one fourth of the population in the state overall. Between 1850 and 1860, slaves as a proportion of the total population increased greatly in East Tennessee counties

²⁹ Groce 4.

³⁰ Fisher 37.

³¹ Fisher 38.

³² Samuel Cole Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin*, (Johnson City: Overmountain Press, 1994).

experiencing an upswing in wheat production. Indeed, slaves formed over thirty percent of the population of Sullivan County by 1860 following the boom in wheat production.³³ The Sullivan County Slave Schedule for 1860 shows several of Fannie's uncles owning over thirty slaves, a huge number anywhere outside of the Mississippi River Delta and certainly almost unheard of in mountainous East Tennessee. However, Fannie's father freed his slaves in the 1840s and her husband's family were staunch Whigs and later Republicans that did not believe in slavery even though they owned several slaves.³⁴ Fannie's missionary brother incidentally mentioned to a missionary friend that "his father has long before liberated his slaves that they might join the colony in Liberia; 'and on that day,' said the young missionary, 'my father took me to the stables and said to me, Sam, now you must take care of the horses.' This, of course, was the key that explained the whole subject of his interest in the freedom and welfare of the colored race."³⁵ Samuel Rhea's deep devotion to the Presbyterian faith and anti-slavery sentiments surely led him to choose Union Theological Seminary, Amherst College, and Maryville College for his sons to attend. His involvement with anti-slavery groups or indeed the involvement of any Southerner with an anti-slavery group might appear somewhat puzzling at first glance. Anti-slavery sentiments were not incredibly radical for a Tennessean, especially a pious Presbyterian from East Tennessee, to hold in the antebellum period. The historian Richard Drake notes in *A History of Appalachia* that "the log cabin colleges' in Tennessee--schools built alongside Presbyterian churches,

³³ Groce 12.

³⁴ William S. Speer, *Sketches of Prominent Tennesseans: Biographies and Records of Many of the Families who Have Attained Prominence in Tennessee*. (Nashville: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1888) 218.

³⁵ Marsh 356.

both being served by the same seminary trained minister—almost always taught a strong anti-slavery doctrine.”³⁶

Fannie’s great uncle was John Rhea, an early settler in East Tennessee and a congressman from 1802 to 1823. Rhea was a devoted Jacksonian Democrat, described by his enemies as “a man never of much reputation, who is remembered in history only as one of Andrew Jackson’s constant parasites.”³⁷ Rhea was a supporter of early antislavery societies in Tennessee. He presented a memorial of the eight convention of the Manumission Society of the State of Tennessee, praying that Congress will take the situation of the people of color of the United States, held in slavery, into their consideration, and provide by law for their relief.³⁸ He also presented a memorial of citizens of that state praying that “provision may be made, whereby all slaves that may hereafter be born in the District of Columbia, shall be free at a certain period in their lives.”³⁹

Other men of John Rhea’s generation espoused antislavery sentiments in Tennessee. In 1815 eight Quaker men met at Lost Creek in East Tennessee and formed the first antislavery society in the state, the Tennessee Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves. Elihu Embree, the son of a Quaker minister who came to East Tennessee from Pennsylvania in 1790 and first published *The Emancipator*, a monthly periodical devoted to antislavery, in 1820 in Jonesboro. Embree called slaveholders “monsters in human flesh” and argued against more slaveholding states being admitted to

³⁶Richard Drake, *A History of Appalachia*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2003) 88.

³⁷James Schouler, *History of the United States under the Constitution*, (New York: Dodd Mead Company, 1917) 69.

³⁸Caneta Skelley Hankins, “John Rhea: 1753-1831,” *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, 11 March 2006, <<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=R027>>.

³⁹*Journal of the House of Representatives: 1821-22*, (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1822) 142.

the Union.⁴⁰ More anti-slavery newspapers began to be published in Jonesboro and Greeneville, such as the *Manumission Intelligencer* and *Genius of Universal Emancipation*. Frances Wright, the Scottish reformer, founded the colony of Nashoba near Memphis in the 1820s as a place where freed blacks could learn self-reliance. After a few years the colony failed, however, and Wright took her colonists to Haiti.⁴¹ The Presbyterian Reverend John Rankin, born in Dandridge in East Tennessee in 1793, published a series of public letters to his slaveholding brother, attempting to convince him of the error of his ways in 1824 which William Loyd Garrison republished in 1833. In 1829 the Tennessee Colonization Society organized to send emancipated slaves to Liberia, transporting 870 former slaves to Africa in the period that ended in 1866. By the 1830s there were twenty-five anti-slavery societies in Tennessee with a total membership of about a thousand people. As late as 1827, East Tennessee contained nearly one-fifth of the antislavery societies in the United States. However, the movement began to lose strength by 1840 in the face of laws against agitation for abolition in Tennessee and the antislavery newspapers either quit publishing or moved north. However, thirteen of the twenty delegates that supported a revision to the Tennessee constitution in 1834 for a gradual abolition of slavery came from East Tennessee.⁴²

Samuel Rhea's endorsement of colonization of former slaves in Africa was certainly liberal, but by no means unheard of in the antebellum South. He began his donations to the American Colonization Society with two dollars in the 1830s before quickly starting to give an annual donation of ten dollars until the 1860s. The American

⁴⁰ Durwood Dunn, "Elihu Embree: 1782-1820," *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, 10 March 2006, <<http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=E018>>.

⁴¹ Celia Morris, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992) 1.

⁴² Durwood Dunn, *An Abolitionist in the Appalachian South: Ezekiel Birdseye on Slavery, Capitalism, and Separate Statehood in Tennessee, 1841-1846*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

Colonization Society did not represent the radical fringe of the anti-slavery movement and attempted to avoid connection with the bold proclamations of Garrison on immediate emancipation and the peaceful co-existence of races. Anti-slavery societies were used by the government of East Tennessee to transport freed slaves out of the state. *The African Repository* noted in 1835 that “the legislature of Tennessee passed an act at their last session granting to the American Colonization Society, or any other Society, ten dollars for every free person of color it shall remove from that State to Africa.”⁴³ The Society’s journal further notes that sundry individuals in Sullivan County, Fannie’s home county, had given 6.75 for promoting anti-slavery work.⁴⁴ In Fannie’s own Sullivan County, social turmoil had erupted earlier in 1833 when Abigail and Phebe Morrell desired to free their six slaves upon their deaths and give the former slaves their home and land to inhabit.⁴⁵ The results of this case are unknown but under normal circumstances freed slaves were forced to quickly leave the state. Andrew Johnson in his role of governor of Tennessee used the American Colonization Society with the aid of his son to send two slaves to Africa in 1854.⁴⁶ Johnson donated 10.00 to the Society in 1851 in the name of Samuel Rhea, Esq. of Blountville, suggesting a political or social connection between the two Tennesseans. However, Johnson usually deprecated antislavery agitation and favored the denial of the right of petition for abolition as it threatened the dissolution of the Union.

Samuel Rhea’s involvement the American Colonization Society must be considered against his other reforming activities. Serving as a ruling elder in the

⁴³ R. R. Gurley, ed. *The African Repository of the American Colonization Society*, Vol. XI, (Washington: James Dunn, 1835) 344.

⁴⁴ Gurley 32.

⁴⁵ Denise Oliver-Velez, “Morrell Slaves, Sullivan County Tennessee 1833,” *AfriGenea Slave Research*, 10 Nov 2005, <<http://www.afriGeneas.com/forumd/index.cgi?noframes;read=6748>>.

⁴⁶ Hans L Trefousee, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997) 101.

Presbyterian Church for over forty years, he gave liberally of his time, money, and influence. The Reverend R.P. Wells of Jonesboro remarked that Fannie's father, Samuel Rhea, "loved the Bible and the duty of prayer; and morning and evening he called around the family altar his large household, not excusing the clerks in his store, even when business was pressing, nor the servants in the kitchen. On all occasions his systematic, clockwork plans gave time for family devotion."⁴⁷ Influenced by his son's missionary activity in Persia, Samuel gave generously to foreign missions and once gave over one thousand dollars to the American Bible Society. Although not mentioned in her brother's biography, Fannie casually mentions her father's membership in a Masonic lodge in 1865 when another elderly member of the lodge, Abram Tipton, died unexpectedly. Samuel proudly shared Masonic activity with the relatively impious Andrew Johnson and other prominent East Tennesseans. The Rhea family had been ardent proponents of temperance since the 1840s, a movement for which they raised money and spoke about well into the 1870s. A devoted Union Democrat, the destruction and strife caused by the Civil War would have surely hurt him deeply if he had lived to see its destruction on his hometown. Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain remarked after the partial destruction of Blountville in late 1863 that "I had felt so anxious that my Father Uncle should live to see this struggle but now how glad I am that he sleeps peacefully. The sound of cannon, the tramp of horse, the read of the soldier, the firing of arms disturbs not the sweet repose of the grave."⁴⁸

The Presbyterian Church split into the New School and Old School branches in 1837. Fannie belonged to the New School of the Presbyterian Church in Blountville, presided over by Reverend King and also served by visiting ministers of varying views

⁴⁷ Marsh 23.

⁴⁸ Eliza Fain 91.

toward slavery and other moral issues. The majority of New School Presbyterian supported the Union cause.⁴⁹ Fannie's Confederate cousin, Eliza Fain, rejoined the Old School Presbyterians in Rogersville after the start of the Civil War for this reason.⁵⁰ While a more missionary church than the Old School, the Reverend John Rankin of East Tennessee had failed to press the New School Presbyterians to take a harsh stand on slavery and exclude slave owners from membership in the church as was his desire. In 1843, angered at the New School's failure to even affirm the General Assembly's resolution of 1818 on slavery being inconsistent with the laws of God he began to contact some Old School abolitionists about creating a new anti-slavery Presbyterian Church. Eventually, in 1847 he was the founder of what was called the Free Presbyterian Church of America, which excluded slaveholders from membership.⁵¹

The Fain family worshiped religion and education in equal parts. Jefferson Academy, a school established and supported by prominent Blountville families such as the Rheas, educated both the girls and boys in Fannie's family in separate sections divided by gender. Fannie referred to herself as educated at the "Female Academy in Blountsville."⁵² *History of Tennessee* comments that "about 1830 a female department was opened in a small building standing upon the Masonic Institute lot. This was succeeded by the latter institution a few years before the war. The Masonic Female Institute was established jointly by Whiteside Lodge. No. 13, F. & A. M., and the trustees

⁴⁹ Ezra Hall Gillett, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1873)191.

⁵⁰ Eliza Fain 6.

⁵¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004) 307.

⁵² Fannie Fain 60.

of Jefferson Academy.”⁵³ Samuel Rhea often paid for his daughters to attend more advanced schools for women for several years in Knoxville after graduating from the local Female Academy. He held high hopes that his sons would be called to preaching or missionary work in the Presbyterian Church and sent them to excellent schools in the north to that end. After listening to a Confederate preacher abuse Northern society, Fannie angrily wrote in her diary that “now this was to me a strange sermon, & coming from a man of Theology acquired at the Northern seminaries. It once was that our best preachers & teachers in the South hailed from the North, but not it seems that nothing too bad or too unchristian can be said of them by their brethren in Christ’s ministry.”⁵⁴

Fannie’s eldest brother, educated at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and a missionary in Persia, arguably held the most radical views in the Rhea Family. According to the Reverend R.P. Wells of Jonesboro, Samuel entered Union Theological Seminary “a Southerner, he left it an American.”⁵⁵ Despite his Northern education, Samuel felt little disdain for his family, friends, and the mass of the Southern people fighting for the Confederacy. Yet, Dr. Perkins wrote to Dwight Marsh, Samuel’s biographer, that “he was from the beginning to end a thorough-going Union man. Though a native of Tennessee and though he loved the state of his birth with a devotion second to that of no other citizen...” Dr. Perkins added that “and though some of his dearest friends were drawn into the ranks of Secession, his attachment to the Union never wavered.”⁵⁶

⁵³ *History of Tennessee: From the Earliest Time to the Present together with an Historical and a Biographical Sketch of from Twenty-Five to Thirty Counties of East Tennessee*, (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1887) 912.

⁵⁴ Fannie Fain 60.

⁵⁵ Marsh 27.

⁵⁶ Marsh 355.

Intimate knowledge of Samuel Rhea's thoughts and feelings comes mainly from the *Tennessean in Persia and Koordistan*, published after his death in 1869. Showing some evidence of bias from family members trying to prove loyalty to the Union to receive compensation for property taken during the war, the contents of the book should be taken with a grain of salt. However, his biographer noted that deep personal love he bore to those friends and relations in the Southern armies "gave a tenderness and solemnity to all his words, and showed his adherence to the national cause to be the result of self-sacrifice as really as his love of Christ."⁵⁷ Further, his biographer noted that "his faith in the triumph of the government and the ultimate overthrow of the oligarchy of the South were remarkably strong and clear."⁵⁸ Samuel was a staunch supporter of Abraham Lincoln, an oddity in a Southern man. His fellow missionaries remembered in 1869 "the tender, enthusiastic admiration with which he spoke of our fallen President, and the still deeper emotion with which he responded to the sentiment, 'The loyal men of the South.'"⁵⁹ Although a devout advocate of anti-slavery, Samuel corresponded regularly with slaveholding and Confederate relatives from his station in Persia. He gave his Confederate friends and relations no reason to be upset with him for the vituperative rhetoric common to many Northern abolitionists. Confederate relatives, such as his cousin Eliza, were shocked to discover the depths of his antislavery and pro-Union sentiments when his biography was published in 1869. Samuel's harsh declarations against slavery and his missionary work in Persia can perhaps be tied to his lifelong struggle with debilitating cardiac problems. According to Sheila Rothman in *Living in the Shadow of Death*, "invalidism and a sense of impending death made abolitionists

⁵⁷ Marsh 354.

⁵⁸ Marsh 354.

⁵⁹ Marsh 355.

altogether impatient with compromise” and missionary travels to warm climates were frequently recommended for better spiritual and bodily health in the nineteenth century.⁶⁰

John Lynn Rhea, Fannie’s second oldest brother, presents an enigma when tracing Union and Confederate allegiances in Blountville. Possessing a draft exemption certificate, John stayed in Blountville throughout the war and continued pursuing his ill father’s mercantile interests although he was involved with the Home Guards and helped search for bushwhackers. Holding an office under the Confederacy, he applied and quickly received a pardon from Andrew Johnson in 1865. Almost carried off by federal troops in an incursion into Blountville, the influence of friends, perhaps of the Unionist variety, saved him from a potentially long stay in a prison camp. Fannie remarks in September of 1863 that “they arrested several persons in Bristol, guarded them in the Court house that night. Next morn they started off early to Zollicoffer to take it, having first arrested several persons here. Among others they took Bro. John, but was soon released through the influence of Friends.”⁶¹ Any of John’s letters and remarks on his activity during the war to biographers and legislatures must be subjected to close scrutiny as he desired to win twelve thousand dollars for his father’s cotton taken by Sherman in Atlanta, a claim which he pursued until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The governor of Massachusetts wrote to Dr. Stearns, President of Amherst College, on April 21, 1861 that he had “the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter concerning the...young gentlemen, students of Amherst College, --Mr. James A. Rhea and Mr. Joseph B. Rhea of Blountville, Tenn....who, you assure me, are loyal to the Government, and who, on account of the perils of the times, are summoned by their

⁶⁰ Sheila M. Rothman, *Living in the Shadow of Death: Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994) 65.

⁶¹ Fannie Fain 17.

friends to return to their homes.”⁶² The governor went on to proclaim that “no persons who are loyal to the Government need any ‘passport or testimonial,’ from me or from any other person, to travel freely through the Commonwealth.”⁶³ Showcasing again his religious and liberal reforming nature, Samuel Rhea had elected to have two of his sons educated at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Amherst was known for both the relatively large number of Southerners enrolled at the school and its rising and failing levels of antislavery agitation which started in the 1830s. William Tyler, a graduate of Amherst and amateur historian, remarks in *A History of Amherst College* on the “anti-slavery excitement. This affected Amherst more than it did most of the Eastern colleges; for while it had an unusual number of Southern students between 1830 and 1840, it had also a larger proportion than most of the colleges of that class of students who were strongly, and some of them violently, opposed to slavery.”⁶⁴

Amherst prepared many missionaries for the Middle East and Samuel Rhea likely sent his sons there in the hopes that they would be infected by the missionary spirit like their brother in Persia or at the very least become ministers or prominent church members in East Tennessee. On a visit to America in 1860, Fannie’s brother witnessed at Amherst the ordination of A. L. Thompson who had been designated to the Nestorian mission and was destined to die there only two months after his arrival.⁶⁵ He also preached for forty minutes on his missionary activities in the Middle East before an enraptured audience. The Rhea family was connected to Amherst through Reverend Perkins. Graduating from Amherst in 1829, Reverend Justin Perkins was a missionary to Persia for thirty-six years

⁶² William Schouler, *A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War*, (New York: Digital Scanning, 1998) 125.

⁶³ William Schouler 125.

⁶⁴ William Seymour Tyler, *A History of Amherst College during the Administration of Its First Five Presidents*, (New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, 1896) 83.

⁶⁵ Marsh 260.

at Seir, six miles from Rhea's station, and also taught at Amherst where he was noted for the large variety of antiquities he brought back from his expeditions. He was the author of *Eight Years Residence in Persia* and *Missionary Life in Persia* and he translated the Bible into modern Syrian.⁶⁶

During their two years in Massachusetts, Jimmy and Brainerd joined the Psi Upsilon fraternity at Amherst and interacted mainly with Northern students. Brainerd and James's classmates at Amherst nearly without fail became valuable recruits for the Northern army. One fellow classmate and Psi Upsilon member, Warren Burzillar Stickney, was a lieutenant in the 99th U.S. Colored Troops and served in the Freedman's Bureau in northern Louisiana. Another classmate, Henry Orlando Marcy, served as the surgeon for the 35th Colored Troops.

Joseph Brainerd Rhea, commonly called Brainerd by his family, was the eldest Rhea that attended school at Amherst in 1860 and likely named after the Reverend David Brainerd. The American Tract Society distributed seventy thousand copies of Jonathan Edwards' *An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd*, a spiritual classic, between 1833 and 1892. The reverend, determined to serve God despite poor health, became a missionary for the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge and traveled extensively through the mid-Atlantic in the eighteenth century spreading the Christian faith.⁶⁷ Twenty-two years old in 1860, Brainerd could hardly imagine that he would spend several months trapped in Camp Chase, a Union prison camp in Ohio, with a fifteen percent death rate. From the Ohio prison camp, Brainerd wrote Fannie in Blountville to inform her of the health and location of her draft-dodging

⁶⁶ Rick Peterson, "Rocks in His Socks," *Amherst Magazine*, Fall 2002, 10 Jan 2006, <<http://www.amherst.edu/magazine/issues/02fall/collegerow/rocks.html>>.

⁶⁷ Rothman 63.

husband. Puzzlingly, no mention of military service exists for Brainerd while ample evidence exists for his other brothers' activity with the Confederate army.

James Alexander Rhea, frequently called Jimmy or Jim by Fannie, was nineteen years old in 1860. Jimmy became a major and then a lieutenant colonel in the 60th Tennessee for the Confederacy attached to Vaughan. He participated in many bloody battles far from his East Tennessee home and was nearly always wounded or thought dead throughout the war in Fannie's diary. James would attempt to use his influence to allow Fannie's husband to return home several times. Both brothers show no evidence of shunning Unionist family members, even though they joined the Confederate army.

Robert Morrison Rhea, seventeen years old when the war broke out, clearly shows the generational allegiance gap in the Rhea family. The historian W. Todd Groce reports in *Mountain Rebels* that "Robert M. Rhea delivered at Maryville College one of Yancey's speeches calling for the establishment of a Southern Confederacy. The defiant act so enraged Rhea's professor that the young man was saved from expulsion only by the timely intervention" of a professor.⁶⁸ Perhaps Robert was only testing the teachings of Dr. Anderson, the President of the College. Anderson had solemnly pronounced that "the Union is the only safeguard these States have against anarchy and civil discord, with all their horrors. The Union is the hope of the world, and under God, promises to break down civil and religious tyranny." Gaining steam, Anderson had roared that "I used to say as far back as 1832, 'the man who silently thought of dissolving the Union, ought to be hung, and if he spoke it, deserved some fate severer.'"⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Groce 22.

⁶⁹ "An Appeal from the Loyal College, Maryville, East Tennessee: 1867," *An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broad-sides and Other Printed Ephemera*, The Library of Congress, 7 Jan 2006, <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.17503300>>.

Maryville College was located several miles below Knoxville and a large number of students at the college professed anti-slavery sentiments. The abolitionist sentiments of Maryville College can hardly be overstated. Founded in 1819 by the Reverend Isaac Anderson, the school was an antislavery bastion from its founding. The Reverend George Erskine, the first black man to receive a liberal education in Tennessee, was educated at Maryville. Students at Maryville in the 1850s openly declared their opposition to slavery and began to educate local blacks for their roles as free citizens.⁷⁰ Historians have noted that “there developed such an antislavery sentiment in Maryville that half of the students of the Maryville Theological Seminary became abolitionists by 1841. They were then advocating the social uplift of Negroes through the local organ, the *Maryville Intelligencer*.”⁷¹ Parson Brownlow in 1867 remarked that Maryville College, heavily damaged by the war and low on funds, was “one which for many years was anti-slavery in character and influence. No Institution in the South deserves more sympathy or aid at the hands of Northern friends.”⁷²

Martha Lynn Rhea, Fannie’s mother was a respectable Christian lady from a prominent local family. Dwight Marsh, the biographer of Fannie’s missionary brother, called Martha “a lady of mature Christian character” and other sources express the same conclusion.⁷³ Fannie’s mother, Martha Lynn, came from a prominent Kingsport family. Located in the same county as Blountville, Kingsport was known as the “Boat Yard” and large amounts of salt, iron, and produce were shipped on flatboats downriver before the advent of the railroad. *History of Tennessee* notes that “among the merchants of the town

⁷⁰ “An Appeal from the Loyal College.”

⁷¹ Dunn *An Abolitionist* 33.

⁷² “An Appeal from the Loyal College.”

⁷³ Marsh 20.

at that time and subsequently were John Lynn, Lynn, Wall & Co... The water power at this point is exceptionally fine, and three or four factories, of considerable extent for this time, were established. Lynn, Wall & Co. had a cotton spinning factory...⁷⁴ Besides the Lynn factory, the Ross factory created cotton sheeting of a coarse grade and the Meyer factory specialized in hemp.

The Fains of Blountville, the family Fannie married into in 1858, were long-time Whigs and believers in the abolition of slavery even though they themselves owned over five slaves according to the 1860 census. Relatives note in Speer's *Prominent Tennesseans* that her husband's brother "has a reputation unblemished, and is noted for his charity and unostentatious behavior. Although a slaveholder, he was a Union man during the civil war and is now. In politics he is a zealous Republican. He is a man of great firmness and has long been distinguished as an earnest advocate of temperance."⁷⁵ Thomas Fain, Fannie's brother-in-law, moved from the town of Blountville to a countryside area in Sullivan County called Arcadia in 1836. Thomas served as Arcadia's first postmaster in 1846, ran a profitable store, and built a ten room brick house with four wooden outbuildings outside Blountville in 1860. A vocal Union sympathizer, Confederates searched Thomas Fain's house many times during the war. In addition to memories of the Revolutionary War battle at King's Mountain and reverence for the Union, the promise of favorable industrial and trade policies attracted Whigs like the Fain family to the national government in East Tennessee.

Her husband's family owned five slaves in 1860. John H. Fain had a 10 year old male slave in 1860, but was renting Phebe from Uncle Bob, likely Robert Preston Rhea.

⁷⁴ *History of Tennessee* 925.

⁷⁵ Speer 218.

Phebe would later marry Jim, a slave of the Spurgeons. According to the 1860 Slave Schedule, Uncle Bob had thirty-two slaves with three females in the right age range to be Phebe. Thomas Spurgeon had five slaves with two males, ages twenty and eighteen, in the 1860 census. Fannie remarks in a later section of her diary that “Phebe bought of Uncle Bob Nov. 1860. Had her hired for several months before. After we had owned her about a year, she and Jim belonging to Mr. Spurgeon married the next Feb. one year after, Feb./62, her child was born Oct. 16th, 1862, not yet named.”⁷⁶

Fannie lived after her marriage with her in-laws and their children in a large house not far from her childhood home in Blountville as her husband had not yet accumulated enough assets to build a house of his own. She would not have a household of her own to run until 1869 when her father-in-law died and left over forty thousand dollars that went toward the purchase of an expansive brick house on the main street of Jonesboro. Fannie had taught school in Blountville before her marriage to John Fain in 1858. She complained in early 1865 that “since I have been married & c’d not attend regularly, I gave it up to others, but they still seem to have much partiality for me & still wish me for a teacher.”⁷⁷ Fannie described her brother John attempting to take her youngest sister, nicknamed Puss, to boarding school in Virginia in her diary. Sarah Foster, Fannie’s sister-in-law and a member of a prominent East Tennessee family, had been educated at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in Massachusetts and taught among with Nestorian Christians in Persia where her husband was stationed as a missionary.⁷⁸ Founding in 1837 as a school promoting the rigorous education of women, “as the nation expanded, frontier schools and seminaries looked to Mount Holyoke for teachers and educational leaders,

⁷⁶ Fannie Fain 61.

⁷⁷ Fannie Fain 61.

⁷⁸ Marsh 266.

thus fulfilling Lyon's original objective of educating women to teach. Mount Holyoke's influence spread still further as alumnae taught in foreign missions in such far-flung places as China, Turkey, and Africa.”⁷⁹

⁷⁹ “History of Mount Holyoke College,” *Mount Holyoke College Website*, 10 April 2006, <<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/cic/about/history.shtml>>.

1863: The Beginning of Fannie's Diary

The accounts of writers other than Fannie must be relied on to describe how the first two years of the war stirred the emotions of her hometown and drastically changed both her life and the lives of other residents in her small East Tennessee community forever. Elkenah Rader, a Union Democrat from strongly Democratic Sullivan County, had “never Seen Sutch a revolution” in Blountville in March of 1861. Tennessee would choose a new legislature and congressional delegation in August. In addition, Tennessee Unionists from East Tennessee had the opportunity to oust Governor Isham Harris, a Southern Rights Democrat and Middle Tennessean that had won the office instead of an East Tennessean and Unionist. The local “Union Party” was “gaining strength.” Leading Union Whigs, such as Fannie’s husband, promised to support “any Union Democrat for any office.”⁸⁰ Whig Congressman T.A.R. Nelson had just made a speech, Rader reported to Andrew Johnson, in which “he sustains you like a brother.” Although local secessionists boasted that they would “egg” Johnson if he tried to speak there, Rader and the Unionists promised that “blood will be spilt” should any such indignity occur.⁸¹ Robert Morrison Rhea, Fannie’s younger brother, describes in his *Reminiscences* the volunteer companies arriving in Blountville clad in all sorts of uniforms and carrying a variety of weapons, “looking like anything else than soldiers,” to form the Blountville Guards.⁸² Although rumors and fear swirled constantly through the small town, the

⁸⁰ Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 265.

⁸¹ Crofts 266.

⁸² Robert M. Rhea, “Reminiscences of Robert M. Rhea,” Typescript, (Ft. Ogelthorpe: Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park Library, 1900) 10.

movement of troops and the sight of death remained somewhat remote from Blountville until mid-1863.

Fannie writes sporadically and shortly in her diary before the fall of 1863. She spends her limited time describing the birth of a sickly child, expressing her deep sorrow over the death of her pious and Unionist father, and commenting in limited detail on routine daily activities. A brief but poignant pause to her normal lax journalistic nature occurs in mid-June of 1863. Fannie complains that “Mr. Fain is from home, having very unexpectedly been summoned to appear at the Military Court in Knoxville as a witness in Mr. Snapp’s case. He left very reluctantly.”⁸³ The Snapp family lived next door to the Fain family in Blountville and small clues suggest a Unionist background for the family. Members of the extended Snapp family would flee to Knoxville under the protection of federal troops during the first federal incursion into Blountville in October. A Snapp would return later in the diary with federal troops to give her news of her husband in Knoxville during a federal raid in mid-December of 1864. A Unionist Snapp family from the Virginia-Tennessee border region appears subject to personal scorn in the young Confederate diarist Ellen Renshaw House’s writings.⁸⁴ Fannie does not describe the case against Mr. Snapp, but Knoxville was occupied by the Confederacy until September of 1863 and a James Snapp had joined the Confederate unit that went to Mississippi and surrendered easily to Union troops showing lack of discipline and perhaps Unionist sentiment. In addition, William C. Snapp served as county clerk from 1865 to 1866 during the early period of federal control of Blountville.

⁸³ Fannie Fain 4.

⁸⁴ Ellen Renshaw House, *A Very Violent Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Ellen Renshaw House*, Daniel E. Sutherland, ed. *Voices of the Civil War*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996) 102.

Fain finally lifts her pen in mid-November of 1863 after several months of inactivity to describe the awful late summer events in Blountville in extensive detail. Burnside, commander of the Department of Ohio, undertook an expedition into East Tennessee in 1863 to clear the road to Virginia and secure the saltworks past Abingdon. The Union Colonel John Foster attacked Blountville and the Confederate troops of Colonel James Carter at noon. Foster shelled the town, initiated a flanking maneuver and compelled the Confederate troops to withdraw. The battle at Blountville was the start of the Union's attempt to force Jones to retire from East Tennessee.⁸⁵ Fannie notes that "we have had wars & rumors of wars, fighting and bloodshed in our little quiet town. During the months of June, July and August nothing special took place...."⁸⁶ The harsh clash of Union and Confederate troops in Blountville in 1863 bore little resemblance to the gaiety, certainty of success, and drilling of immature Confederate soldiers in 1861. Ellen Reenshaw House, a nineteen year old Confederate diarist from Knoxville, wrote down four short words to describe the partial destruction of Blountsville by federal troops: "Blountsville has been burnt."⁸⁷ Four simple words can hardly describe the confusion and wavering allegiances of the Fain and Rhea families brought about by this obscure and unimportant to military history battle in September of 1863. A military observer of the battle, James O. Wood, wrote more accurately and descriptively than Ellen Reenshaw House.

Col. Carter then got about 500 reinforcements and fought them at Blountville the fight commenced at 11 o'clock and ended at 7 o'clock but Carter was compelled to retreat. Blountville was all burnt west of the CH. including the C.H. [courthouse]. Hugh Fain ran into a seller to protect himself from the shells & was burnt to death.

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⁸⁶ Fannie Fain 16.

⁸⁷ House 20.

In the several engagements there was a good many killed & wounded on both sides.⁸⁸

The Reverend R. P. Wells of Jonesboro, Tennessee attempts to delicately capture the sentiments and the feeling of utter loss of the Fain and Rhea families.

. The roar of thundering artillery has since broken its quiet, and the fiery wave of war has swept over it; and when I last looked upon it, the blackened, crumbling walls stood in the midst of surrounding desolations; but the memory of its inmates—their words, their kindness of manner—will not soon pass out of mind.⁸⁹

Fannie's diary expresses the chaos and fear enveloping the hearts of the Fain family. The Fain and Rhea families knew that several families were likely still hiding in their cellars when the shelling of the town began and fire spread throughout the town.

To add still more sorrow to our troubles, while we were at Shrite's, Mr. Fain and others went to the top of the hill & there beheld another house & Father's & all below them in flames, Mather's being the first to catch, caught from a shell. This was the saddest of all events, the moreover we thought probably some if not all our friends were consumed amid the flames, as they were in the cellars.⁹⁰

Although the townspeople at first hid in their cellars, leaving Blountville behind proved to be the safest route in the face of a bombardment and was quickly taken by those well enough to travel. Fannie noted that “our family, Brother Hugh, Mother & Mary, the black ones, with a wagon of plunder, started off again for Brother George's, reached there about twelve...”⁹¹ Suggesting the family was well-known for Unionist ties, Mr. Fain returned when the town was still full of federal troops. Unionist connections proved crucial for John, Fannie's brother, to avoid a trip to a military prison. Soldiers “arrested several persons in Bristol, guarded them in the Court house that night. Among

⁸⁸ James O. Wood, “Blountville Letter,” *First Frontier Journal of Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia*, 10 March 2006, <http://firstfrontierjournal.org/letter_confederate.htm>.

⁸⁹ Marsh 23.

⁹⁰ Fannie Fain 7.

⁹¹ Fannie Fain 6.

others they took Bro. John, but was soon released through the influence of Friends.” Fannie noted that “Mr. Fain still in town. He retired to the east of town during the fight then came in, found our kitchen had been opened & some things taken out. Mother & Brother Hugh came in the next morning, found Mr. Fain & John here, and the town full of Federals.”⁹² When the rest of the Fain family returned to Blountville, they made the gruesome discovery of two elderly townsmen, Mr. Gaines and Uncle John, killed in their cellars. Several buildings in the town had been engulfed by flames, including the Court House and her childhood home. Blaming the Confederate army for the town’s ills, she huffed a few days later that “we have had no fighting since, but the Confederate Army all the time consuming & destroying everything in the country.”⁹³

While Fannie blamed the Confederacy for the destruction, her cousin Eliza fixed the blame solely on the Union. Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain, writing from Rogersville, despaired over the loss of her childhood home in Blountville when she heard the news of the destruction several days later from William Gammon. Eliza, Fannie’s older cousin, had lived as a young girl in the house of her uncle, Samuel Rhea, when her father died. Eliza noted that “the courthouse and jail both destroyed. The third shot which the enemy fired struck Aunt Martha’s house. The next the courthouse setting all in flames and was burnt he says intentionally as they could have avoided it if they wished.”⁹⁴ She bitterly continues that “I have no doubt Blountville was one of the marked spots. There they gained ascendancy in East Tenn. The inhabitants were not able to save anything, the town was burned and sacked by the foul invader.”⁹⁵

⁹² Fannie Fain 7.

⁹³ Fannie Fain 8.

⁹⁴ Eliza Fain 90.

⁹⁵ Eliza Fain 91.

The chaos of the first federal intrusion into Blountsville allowed both Unionists and slaves to escape to the relative safety of Knoxville. Her diary makes a short aside describing how Mr. Fain had “rode out to Brother Henry’s place, sent the black boy to Mr. Jno Snapps to get some hogs. (He by the way took his family out when the Federals were in, leaving his farm & slaves without making any disposition of them).”⁹⁶ Fannie had noted previously that federal troops “on their way to Zollicoffer...had a fight, found they could not succeed in hills, so they retreated... Mr. Easley, Mr. John & William Snapp joining them here, many others from the surrounding towns. Soon after here came the Confederates in hot pursuit. All day Monday they were coming and going.”⁹⁷ John and William Snapp appear to have been solid Unionists, but their younger relative, James Snapp, had joined the Confederate army early in the war.

Fannie’s bitterness toward the Confederacy increased with the repeal of the substitution act in January of 1864 and her husband’s avoidance of the draft by fleeing from East Tennessee to Cincinnati. She remembered vividly when she first heard of the repeal and how the news hurt her husband. Fannie stated boldly several months later that “that day at Mr. Neill’s we heard of the repeal of the ‘substitute leave.’ Just then Mr. F said he w’d leave the country.”⁹⁸ She complained in January of 1864 that “the Congress is still in session passing some very unpopular laws for the government of our people. The last and meanest law passed was to put in all those who had furnished substitutes, a most complete violation of all contracts, and perfectly unconstitutional.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Fannie Fain 9.

⁹⁷ Fannie Fain 6.

⁹⁸ Fannie Fain 51.

⁹⁹ Fannie Fain 44.

Fannie's husband had other reasons to avoid the army besides general cowardice or Unionist resolve. Troops from East Tennessee were notoriously distrusted in the South by both the general population and the military leadership. The distrust stemmed in part from a disgruntled army commander assigned early in the war to East Tennessee. Kirby Smith, grudgingly taking military control of East Tennessee, bitterly complained early in the war about the population's Unionist tendencies and believed that by sending the soldiers to the Confederate heartland the troops would fight harder and be protected from Unionist treachery. He complained in 1862 that "it is not an individual opinion that some of the regiments from this region are disloyal, but it is the conviction of many of our friends."¹⁰⁰ Pushing to removing soldiers from the bad influence of Unionists, Kirby Smith noted that "the advantage of this change was, it transfers the East Tennessee, which, though good troops, are better away from the Union influences by which they are here surrounded."¹⁰¹ On April 8, 1862 Jefferson Davis formally declared East Tennessee as enemy territory, suspending civil jurisdiction except in civil litigation and suspending the writ of habeas corpus.

The Sixtieth Tennessee Infantry was organized in October 1862 from companies that had been enrolled in August and September, and was mustered into service at Johnson City in November 1862. Major James Rhea, Fannie's brother, was wounded at Shiloh, convalesced for four months, and then began the organization of the Sixtieth Regiment, one of the last units created in East Tennessee by reluctant volunteers avoiding the stigma of being drafted. Rhea was elected major and subsequently promoted to lieutenant colonel. Although the new soldiers had been told that the unit was for home

¹⁰⁰ Peter S. Carmichael, "Biographies," *All Right Let Them Come: The Civil War Diary of an East Tennessee Confederate*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003) 17.

¹⁰¹ Carmichael 17.

defense, the call quickly came to travel to Mississippi for the defense of Vicksburg and to provide assistance for General Pemberton.¹⁰²

The military disaster at Vicksburg caused by East Tennessee troops proved to the Confederate government and the Southern populace that the stories of East Tennessee Unionism and unreliable nature were true. The troops were indeed green, untrained, undisciplined, often drunk, homesick, and dying in droves as they were exposed to malaria and bad water on the outskirts of Vicksburg. The leadership of their commanding officer and a native East Tennessean, General Vaughn, was lacking. The loyalty of Vaughn to the Confederacy was ironically great as he fought steadily and loyally on to the end of the war, taking part in escorting Jefferson Davis who was fleeing from Richmond to Georgia in 1865 after the loss of the Capitol, and participated in the war's first battle at Bull Run with volunteers from East Tennessee. However, Peter Carmichael notes in *All Right Let Them Come* that John Crawford Vaughn, an East Tennessee general and distant relative of Fannie, was "personally brave in battle and stubbornly combative against overwhelming numbers and resources. He was also irredeemably inept at meeting the disciplinary and organizational challenges posed by large scale warfare."¹⁰³ His ineptness at large scale warfare was shown vividly at Vicksburg.

General Pemberton watched from the other side of Big Black River as Vaughn's troops abandoned the prepared defenses near Vicksburg at the first sight of Grant's army to flee or surrender and leave the vital railroad bridge unprotected. Unlike the Sixty-first, the Sixtieth under James Rhea did not feel the full force of the first assault, but the unit nevertheless surrendered readily to the attackers in front of them. Andrew Johnson, then

¹⁰² Donague Bible, *From Persia to Piedmont: Life and Death in Vaughn's Brigade*. (Mohawk: Dodson Creek Publishers, 1995) 23.

¹⁰³ Carmichael 13.

the military governor of Tennessee, arranged for Unionists from East Tennessee to be enrolled in the Federal army and not be forced to serve the Confederacy again after a prisoner exchange. Vaughn complained to Jefferson Davis that “our Vicksburg prisoners in East Tennessee are not reporting to duty.”¹⁰⁴ Exchanged in October of 1863, Vaughn reluctantly formed his remaining men into a mounted infantry.

James Alexander Rhea, Fannie’s brother, held an important position in the army and probably could have secured Mr. Fain a decent position in the army. Indeed, when Mr. Fain was facing the real threat of being drafted into the army in early 1864, James Rhea held almost autonomous command over the Second East Tennessee Brigade outside of General Vaughn and Breckenridge. He took the Sixtieth, Sixty-first, and Sixty-second Tennessee as a detachment, called the Second East Tennessee Brigade, from under Vaughn’s direct command by late December of 1863. However, a May of 1864 report lists forty-eight men under the command of Major James Rhea. According to Peter Carmichael, “these forty-eight men were all that remained of the brigade that arrived in Vicksburg in December 1862 with a total strength of 2,734.”¹⁰⁵ Further, James Rhea was often confined to bed with a wound earned at Shiloh and provided a gruesome sight and reminder of the consequences of war to family members and friends in Blountville. While visiting her mother, “Jimmie came home, used up by his old wound, it had been swelled for three or four days, & became so painful that he had to ask leave of absence. On Wednesday he had it lanced & has improved some. Yesterday he started back to Army, but too soon for his own good.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Carmichael 16.

¹⁰⁵ Carmichael 26.

¹⁰⁶ Fannie Fain 39.

Cincinnati was a common destination for prominent East Tennessee Unionists and thus an appropriate location for Fannie's husband to stay until the danger of being drafted into the Confederate army passed. Ellen Reenshaw House, a Confederate diarist in Knoxville, wrote in October 1863 that "Captain Morrow has gone to Cincinnati, as have several prominent Union men here. I wonder if it is because they think our forces will get possession here and they want to be out of harms way. I hope so. Mr. Powell left today for the same place."¹⁰⁷ Daniel Sutherland, the editor of Ellen Renshaw House's Civil War diary, comments that in the later part of 1863 "many Unionists in addition to Baxter and Temple began to flee Knoxville...often headed for Cincinnati" as Confederate forces threatened to re-take the city.¹⁰⁸

Mr. Snapp, Fannie's neighbor, returned to the town during a federal raid in mid-December of 1864. "Mary & I had just lain down when Mother heard riding on the street. She looked out & said, 'Fanny, they are federals' Seeing was believing."¹⁰⁹ Fannie comments that "while they were round & about, some one knocked at the door. Mother asked who is there, the replay was 'a friend.' I knew the voice was Mr. Snapp. I jumped out of bed, drew on my dress & went out to see him. I thought may be Mr. Fain was with him, but no, not so. He had not left Knoxville. Then I was disappointed."¹¹⁰

Fannie dreamed of moving to Cincinnati or Knoxville to be with her husband and helping him set up a mercantile business in his exile from Blountville. She sadly commented after several months with her husband's absent from Blountville that "Jennie Fain (of Wash and Jefferson) wrote to her Aunt that 'he was the most homesick man she

¹⁰⁷ House 22.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel E. Sutherland, "Notes," *A Very Violent Rebel: The Civil War Diary of Ellen Renshaw House, Voices of the Civil War*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996) 221.

¹⁰⁹ Fannie Fain 48.

¹¹⁰ Fannie Fain 48.

ever saw.’ This overcame me so after reading it that I had just to take a good cry...”¹¹¹ Usually, Fannie communicated with him most reliably through intermediaries traveling through army lines and bushwhacker territory to Knoxville. However, Fannie became frustrated when her letters did not reach her husband for several months. She remarked that “I was sorry & surprised to hear he did not receive my letters, for I have written frequently on an average two at least every month, since he came to K. & sometimes oftener, can’t tell where they are.”¹¹²

Although she thanked God for her family’s continued health and welfare, Fannie faced an uphill battle to maintain her household without her husband in Blountville. She faced the harsh reality of sick or absent slaves, unruly children, and unforeseen money problems. She once noted that “Phebe was sick all that wk until Saturday, leaving a good deal for me to do. Last Wednesday night of that wk we had quite a discussion on home matters, about hiring out Jim, etc. Bro H wound up saying that Mr. F owed him \$3,000 if he would exact it off of him.”¹¹³ However, her husband did help her anyway he could. Fannie proudly noted that she “received six lbs. of sugar from Mr. Fain last Wednesday through Jonnie.”¹¹⁴ Fannie would sometimes receive a small reprieve from caring for her children when a relative would take them for a week or so at a time.

Fannie’s worries for her husband were mollified when she finally received news that he was well and in Ohio. She wrote that “I have heard from Mr. Fain twice since he left, from Baltimore through Wilson & Bruns, and through Dr. Sevier from Cincinnati.

¹¹¹ Fannie Fain 47.

¹¹² Fannie Fain 61.

¹¹³ Fannie Fain 45.

¹¹⁴ Fannie Fain 46.

He was then in fine health.”¹¹⁵ Dr. William R. Sevier had a distinguished East Tennessee political lineage as his great uncle was John Sevier, the first governor of Tennessee. Educated in medicine in New York, he practiced in Jonesboro until his death in 1883. Sevier’s father-in-law was Dr. Samuel Cunningham, the first president of the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia railroad.¹¹⁶ Although he likely wrote many letters to her and vice versa, letters actually received by Fannie were few and immensely treasured. Reading letters from her husband caused Fannie both great joy and pain.

Wd is be that he could be returned to his family and his own little home, there to remain in quietness. For this I have prayed daily...this overcame me so after reading it that I had just to take a good cry, to think he was denied from those he loved & by whom he was loved, his home & its comforts, by this wicked, sinful & most unholy war. When, oh! When, I ask, will it end, with its vast & innumerable consequences, & peace that sweet boon be restored to us? May it soon come is my daily prayer and wish.¹¹⁷

She seized any opportunity to send communication to him through people traveling to Knoxville or Cincinnati. In early 1865, Fannie notes that “Tuesday night I wrote to Mr. Fain. Sent it off by a Mrs. Caldwell who was going within 15 miles of Knoxville. Her husband was captured on the last raid, his Father & family are all Union & in Federal lines.” Through his letters, Fannie gained the courage to try to cross into Union held territory. In early March of 1865 she wrote that “I had a letter from Mr. Fain Saturday. He was then after goods at Cincinnati, left the 20th of Feb., next day after writing. He wants me to go through. I may go in the course of a few weeks.”¹¹⁸

Constantly concerned about her husband’s health, Fannie rejoiced when she received news that he was well and grew glum when she learned of any illness. Her worst

¹¹⁵ Fannie Fain 24.

¹¹⁶ Speer 338.

¹¹⁷ Fannie Fain 47.

¹¹⁸ Fannie Fain 63.

fear was that her husband would sicken and die among strangers. Thus, she was very happy when Henry Hughes, a man that had left with her husband to avoid the draft, was allowed to come home to die. She wrote that “on Wednesday 13th of July, Henry Hughes died (one of the company out where Mr. F went). Sister Hannah & Bro Hugh attended his burying at Bro H’s place. He had been home three wks., sick all the time with fever. It was fortunate that he was permitted to sicken & die at home.”¹¹⁹

Numerous other families from the region were allowed to go to Union-occupied territory to find family members, but Fannie was not given permission by local Confederate authorities to join her husband in Knoxville. Fannie gave a letter for her husband to Mrs. Caldwell in January of 1865 as she was going within fifteen miles of Knoxville. Her husband had been captured on the last raid, but her father-in-law’s family were all Union and in federal lines. In the later part of January, Fannie heard the Ella Lucky had safely returned from Knoxville. Because of her travels she “should love to see her a few hours at least & have a long talk. I hope to hear from her soon, & also receive a letter from Mr. Fain thro’ her.”¹²⁰ In February, Fannie noted that “Mrs. Parshall started to go through the lines yesterday, having come out about six months since, & left her only child with her mother who lives at ‘Sweet water’ somewhere below Knoxville.” She was trying to be exchanged for Mrs. Stover who had lost her husband and wanted to come back to Carter County to her home. Hearing that her husband had bought goods at Cincinnati in February and had started toward Knoxville, she noted that “he wants me to go through. I may go in the course of a few weeks.”¹²¹ Fannie came incredibly close to

¹¹⁹ Fannie Fain 30.

¹²⁰ Fannie Fain 56.

¹²¹ Fannie Fain 63.

leaving Confederate-held territory, but was turned back for lack of a pass at the last minute.

Fannie encouraged her family and friends to write to those with political and military influence in the Confederacy to allow her husband to return home to East Tennessee. Although James Rhea appears to have had a good relationship with General Vaughn, Fannie's request in November 1864 for her husband to return home was sarcastically returned. Vaughn laughed that "he can come, provided he risks his chances for keeping out of the Army."¹²² Fannie noted that her brother, James, "is trying to do something to get him home. This is what I hear. May be there is not much in it, but I trust there may be some means provided by which he can return to his family or his family go to him."¹²³ She noted in December of 1864 that "Jim has written to Cecil Breckenridge to see if he can effect anything towards getting Mr. F home & some protection were he to come, but I fear nothing permanent can be done."¹²⁴ Fannie attempted to persuade important Confederate officials to allow her husband to return without being drafted into the Confederate army failed miserably and likely only hardened views of East Tennessee as a land of draft-dodging Unionists in the minds of the Confederate leadership.

Unionist sentiments were hard to hold in Blountville after several federal raids on the town. Fannie moaned in late 1864 that "what destruction & depredations they have committed, too numerous to tell. I was deceived in them, never thought they would treat us so, have no confidence in them whatever."¹²⁵ Federal raids into Blountville became common after the first intrusion in the fall of 1863. These raids often tried Fannie's faith

¹²² Fannie Fain 38.

¹²³ Fannie Fain 38.

¹²⁴ Fannie Fain 47.

¹²⁵ Fannie Fain 50.

in the goodness of the federal Union and mankind in general. She appears to have defended the Union army to her Confederate friends and to have been deeply stung when soldiers did not behave respectfully or honestly. Watching her brother Brainerd, wounded and downtrodden, marched through Blountville en route to Camp Chase, a Union military prison in Ohio, hurt her deeply. Fannie wrote that “soon they came on with the mule & wagon, took them from the wagon loaded with wood, then the force came on with about two hundred prisoners, my poor brother Brainerd was trudging along with them.” The Union soldiers had “took his horse, saddlebags, watch & hamsack, but some kind Major had all given up but his horse. He left his watch with Mary, poor fellow. He was cut down & wounded in feelings, almost given out. He had been marched to Abingdon & back. His feet were blistered.” Worse still, Fannie saw several men from Blountville with Brainerd as prisoners. She remarked that “some asking with tears in their eyes for something to eat, but none of us had any provisions on hand. I sent up home, I was at Mother’s, & got what cakes I had for Brainerd.” Fannie sadly noted that “fifteen of the prisoners were released. All the rest were started to Camp Chase, Brainerd among the number, poor fellow.” She wished that Brainerd could “only he can have his health, will not be as bad. I trust his life may be spared & the lives of all the dear ones who are from their homes on account of this wicked war.”¹²⁶

Fannie noted the endless supplies that troops extract from her family without pay. During the December raid in 1864, Fannie noted that “as soon as they halted that night in town & struck up their fires, they were heard in Mother’s cellar, carried off all her milk & milk vessels, salt, some pork out of the smokehouse.”¹²⁷ However, her family was able at

¹²⁶ Fannie Fain 54.

¹²⁷ Fannie Fain 48.

times to secure money for supplies taken by troops and this money often smoothed over harsh feelings.

Her family attempted to use their known Unionist leanings to recover stolen property, such as her horse, taken during a raid. She spoke with Union soldiers eating at her home and received promises for the return of her property taken earlier by federal troops. Fannie wrote “that night seven with sixteen horses fed & slept in our barn & took supper. The very rascal was here that stole Pet. He said he w’d get her back for me. Col. O’Neal promised me she should be sent back.” However, she endured the humiliation of being told that the stolen horse would be given, not to her in Blountville, but her husband in Knoxville. Fannie noted sadly that “Bro. H. followed them to camps, he found pet & told the Col. If he w’d give her up, he w’d not try for the others. He s’d he w’d not get her, she w’d go on to Knoxville & there he w’d hand her over to my husband, but he will never see her.”

She had little sympathy for preachers that mixed politics and the pulpit. Fannie’s complaints toward a preacher in March of 1865 are typical of her general attitude. She noted that “this evening Mr. Oliver Caldwell preached. His subject was Prayer, & he made a very good discourse, tho’ he is a very big rebel.”¹²⁸ The biggest offender in Fannie’s mind was Mr. Alexander, a chaplain in the army and a refugee from New Market. His sermon in mid-February of 1865 particularly annoyed a war-weary Fannie. Annoyed after he ruined a good sermon, Fannie mused in her diary that “he prayed a most excellent prayer to-day, & I had prepared myself to listen to a good sermon, but I must confess I was much disappointed. When it came, it was nothing but heaping abuses,

¹²⁸ Fannie Fain 63.

railed out against the North & Northern people.”¹²⁹ The army chaplain started his sermon by saying that “the war now going on was not only affecting the country in a political point, but the church of God was being effected.” He believed that the war had been brought on by “the fanatics & abolitionists of the North.” East Tennessee had a distant tradition of anti-slavery, but the chaplain pressed ahead about how the war had “been written & preached up in the North, that there they called for an Anti-Slavery Bible, that if our Bible recognizes Slavery, then we will reject it.” Further, he insisted that radical Northerners “wanted an Anti-Slavery Government and an Anti-Slavery people, that fanaticism & infidelity were the ruling principles of the North, and all kinds of ‘isms’ thrown in, Universalism, Unitarianism, Woman Rightism, etc.” Alexander further described the shocking fact that the Sacramental meetings in Troy, New York “where the table of the Lord was spread & on the United States flag was hoisted, that they said represented a piece of space snatched from the ethereal region, and bestudded with stars.” Alexander concluded with the fact that “the North w’d not be satisfied with the blood and lives of the men, but that the women & children had to suffer in this war on the part of the South, that their lives w’d be required” and told chilling tales of the atrocities of Beast Butler in New Orleans and General Sherman in Memphis toward innocent women. Fannie was upset that Alexander thought the South “comparatively speaking...faultless.” She was further appalled when he attacked Governor Brownlow. The vituperative chaplain lashed out that “just such a state of affairs our church w’d have when Gov Brownlow & the military authorities took possession of it, that the Federal authorities had gone so far as to enquire of the condition of churches in some places where they held sway, & when they found a disloyal preacher, he was abandoned...” Fannie concluded

¹²⁹ Fannie Fain 58.

her tirade against the Confederate chaplain by noting that “now this was to me a strange sermon, & coming from a man of Theology acquired at the Northern seminaries. It once was that our best preachers & teachers in the South hailed from the North.” Fannie sighed bitterly that “now it seems that nothing too bad or too unchristian can be said of them by their brethren in Christ’s ministry. Oh! This vile, wicked war, what a division it has made, what wickedness & unkindness it has brought about. Enough of this kind of preaching for me.”¹³⁰

Whig families in the South like the Fains did own slaves and this did not prevent them from being Unionists. Fannie tried to encourage her “black family” to join the Presbyterian Church, both out of concern for their souls and to improve their behavior. She proudly remarked in October of 1864 that “there were eleven additions to the church...Aleck & Jim (our Blk boys) joined. I talked to them on the subject. They both seemed very penitent & determined to try to do better, which I hope Jim may do.”¹³¹ However, joining the Presbyterian Church and belonging to a Unionist family did not mean that everything was fine between master and slaves. She complained that “Burr went off with the Federals when they were here about two weeks since.”¹³² Although Phebe’s complaints could have existed in reality, slave resistance likely expanded in Blountville in early 1865. Fannie complained incredulously in March of 1865 incredulous that “Phebe is still in her house, don’t come out to do anything. Sister H & I have done mostly all the cooking & work this week...has been laid up with tooth ache.”¹³³ However, Fannie’s slaves likely had many reasons to be upset with her. Notably, Fannie could write

¹³⁰ Fannie Fain 60.

¹³¹ Fannie Fain 34.

¹³² Fannie Fain 37.

¹³³ Fannie Fain 62.

pages of poignant prose about the death of family members and her hopes for their soul. However, she responded differently to the deaths of her black family. Seemingly more concerned about missing a church service, she complained that “last Sunday night Phebe had child born. Friday night about nine o’clock it died. They are now just about fixing to bury. It suffered a good deal the night & day before it died. Father & Sister Hannah have gone to preaching. I could not attend as all the black wanted to go to the burying.”¹³⁴

Fannie rejoiced when she heard rumors that the Confederacy was faltering and peace would once again return to East Tennessee and the nation. She noted that people in Blountville were speculating in 1864 that “the Federals may be in again as soon as the weather admits & probably hold the country. ‘This also rumored of some probability that Richmond may soon have to be evacuated on account of provisions are running short.’”¹³⁵ In January of 1865 rumors began to spread of a potential armistice. Fannie noted that “some reported there was to be one, for 10 days, but this turns out to be false. I wish it could be so, then I should think we might have peace soon.”¹³⁶ Disappointment is evident in Fannie’s words in February of 1865. She moaned that “all the news for peace have proven a failure. Sorry to hear nothing can be done to bring this unhappy war to a close, but I feel that God who controls all things will in his own good time bring order out of confusion by saying to the troubled political waters, Peace, be still.”¹³⁷ Fannie ended her diary in mid-April of 1865. She thanked the “Heavenly Father that this war has wound up as it has. My husband who has been from his family and home for 15 months can return and all my friends. I have looked for Mr. Fain every day for a week. He will surely come

¹³⁴ Fannie Fain 54.

¹³⁵ Fannie Fain 52.

¹³⁶ Fannie Fain 55.

¹³⁷ Fannie Fain 56.

soon.”¹³⁸ The reader leaves Fannie’s diary wondering about her life after the war and how her Unionist sympathies affected her life after the war.

¹³⁸ Fannie Fain 3.

After the War: Peace at Last in East Tennessee

The historian W. Todd *Groce*, the foremost expert on Confederates in heavily Unionist East Tennessee, comments in *Mountain Rebels* that former Confederates that wished to stay in East Tennessee “went to Sullivan County, which, while not completely safe, offered some measure of security for those who wished to remain in the region.”¹³⁹ Blountville, Fannie’s home, was the county seat of Sullivan County. Perhaps this is why Fannie’s immediate family moved to Jonesboro, twenty miles south of Blountville in neighboring Washington County, in 1866 where her husband started a retail dry goods establishment. More likely, the family moved for economic reasons: Blountville was half-destroyed and the East Tennessee and Virginia railroad had bypassed the town in the mid-1850s.

Recovering money from the federal government for material taken by the army required proving Unionist allegiance throughout the war to the Court of Claims. The Rhea Papers in the Hoskins Library at the University of Tennessee contain a large amount of materials dealing with cotton transactions such as transporting, insuring, selling, and making a claim against the federal government for destruction of cotton during the Civil War.¹⁴⁰ East Tennesseans frequently invested a large amount of their personal wealth in securer resources than inflation-prone paper money or property facing an onslaught of Union or Confederate troops during the war. Charles Vance, a young lawyer in neighboring Bristol, sold his house for ten thousand dollars in Confederate money in 1863, invested the money in tobacco at Lynchburg, and shipped the tobacco to

¹³⁹ Groce 149.

¹⁴⁰ “Finding Aid for the Rhea Papers,” *Knoxville Special Collections Library*, 10 Jan 2006, <<http://www.lib.utk.edu/spcoll/manuscripts/ms0002fa.html>>.

Bristol to ultimately be burned during Stoneman's raid.¹⁴¹ Instead of tobacco, the Fain and Rhea families invested thousand of dollars in Georgia cotton. Although cotton production was uncommon in East Tennessee, several textile mills had developed in Sullivan County at Kingsport a few miles from Blountville where water power was plentiful. Fannie's maternal grandfather had owned for many years a small factory devoted to cotton spinning.

John H. Fain brought suit in the Court of Claims for the whole amount of the net proceeds of the 58 bales of cotton in 1867, and the court held that the facts in the case did not establish a partnership. The court believed that the ownership of the cotton before its seizure was joint and each party had the right to control his interest at discretion. John Kerr of the United States Court of Claims wrote to the lawyer Oliver Perry Temple in Tennessee to discuss the procedure and witnesses to be examined to establish his loyalty record and right to recover fifty-eight bales of cotton.¹⁴² The historian Thomas Dyer in *Secret Yankees* comments that "to be sure, many of the transfers of property were voluntary, although some of what the Unionists provided was taken under conditions of compulsion...receipts were issued and promises of compensation made when Unionists surrendered property to the officers of Sherman's army."¹⁴³ The merchant Robert Lowery of Atlanta provided evidence that Mr. Fain had bought several bales of cotton early in the war.

I had on storage in my house, to the credit of Samuel Rhea, 251 bales of cotton. I received it in the months of October and November, 1862. Twenty-five bales of this cotton was sold in November, 1863, to pay taxes, storage, etc.; burned in the

¹⁴¹ Speer 336.

¹⁴² "MS 0021: The O.P. Temple Papers, 1832-," *Knoxville Special Collections Library*, 10 Jan 2006, <<http://www.lib.utk.edu/spcoll/manuscripts/ms0021fa.html>>.

¹⁴³ Dyer 237.

warehouse during the shelling by General Sherman, 43 bales; shipped to Gaines & Co., Macon Ga., 125 bales, to be stored to the credit of Samuel Rhea.

Captain and quartermaster Hade provided the evidence that showed the cotton had been transferred to the Union army.

I certify that I have this day taken possession of the following property, for and in behalf of the United States, for Government purposes. Said property was found in the city of Atlanta immediately after its capture by United States forces, viz, (63) sixty-three bales cotton, marked D. [L.], weighing (31,424) thirty-one thousand four hundred and twenty-four pounds, and will be duly accounted for on my return of quartermaster stores for the month of September, 1861. No payment has been made or tendered for said property.

Almost all the Unionists who sought reimbursement from the court had been business men of means before the war and maintained or even improved upon their economic standing during the conflict.¹⁴⁴ John Fain easily proved his unwavering allegiance to the Union in 1867, receiving \$8,360 for his share of fifty-eight bales of cotton taken from a warehouse in Atlanta by Sherman in 1864. Dyer in *Secret Yankees* notes that “loyalty to the Union was not subjected to in-depth, searching inquiries of the sort that would characterize claims filed in later years with the Southern Claims Commission”¹⁴⁵ Prospering in the mercantile business and inheriting a large sum of money from his father in 1869, John bought a large house in Jonesboro and became a leader in the town’s Presbyterian Church.¹⁴⁶ Her husband died in 1873 while Fannie lived until 1903. Buried in the Jonesboro Cemetery, a simple stone marks their resting place with the words “them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him” carved in stone.

Samuel Rhea, Fannie’s missionary brother, died in September of 1865 at Ali Shah, Persia from an apparent case of cholera that overwhelmed a body weakened already by

¹⁴⁴ Dyer 248.

¹⁴⁵ Dyer 241.

¹⁴⁶ Sonya A. Haskins, *Jonesborough, TN*, (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2005) 9.

cardiac problems and several weeks of dangerously high fevers. A monument was erected in the village graveyard for him near the tombstone of his father.¹⁴⁷ Dwight W. Marsh, a fellow missionary at Mosul, began to collect correspondence and recollections of Rhea immediately after his death. Family and friends sent in old letters and described Rhea in a highly positive light. The Presbyterian Board of Publication published *The Tennessean in Persia and Koordistan: Scenes and Incidents in the Life of Samuel Audley Rhea* in 1869.

John Lynn Rhea applied for and quickly received a pardon from Andrew Johnson in 1865 for holding office under the Confederacy, but he would have a harder time proving to the federal government his right to monetary compensation cotton taken from a warehouse in Atlanta by federal troops in 1864.¹⁴⁸ Rhea would unsuccessfully attempt to prove his loyalty and right to \$12,825.61 from the federal government until 1903 in claims made to the House of Representatives, numerous letters to officials and lawyers, *The Tennessean in Persia and Koordistan: Being Scenes and Incidents in the Life of Samuel Audley Rhea* in 1869, and family autobiographies published in *Speer's Sketches of Prominent Tennesseans in 1888*. Moving to Knoxville after the war, John bought real estate in Iowa and Wisconsin and held stock in the Ohio Central Railroad and the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad. Following in his father's footsteps, he became involved in the Sons of Temperance and Associated Charities. Dying in 1910, John Lynn never saw the twelve thousand dollars from the federal government that he had so relentlessly pursued.

¹⁴⁷ Marsh 351.

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan T. Dorris, *Pardon and Amnesty under Lincoln and Johnson: The Restoration of the Confederates to Their Rights and Privileges*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

Even though many other prisoners were being exchanged, Brainerd remained at Camp Chase near Columbus until the end of the war. Fannie wrote in March of 1865 that “after we came home, Sam Gammon and Nick Fain came up and went with us to church. They have been prisoners in the North for twenty-two months. There has been a general exchange going on & many have returned. We have been expecting Brainerd home, who was captured on the 13th of Dec. 1864, but he comes not.”¹⁴⁹ Brainerd came home from Camp Chase and then moved to Marion, Virginia to work as a merchant until his death in 1902. He married Ellen Sheffy in 1866 and the 1880 Census describes him as merchant and farmer with three children.

After serving in the Confederate army, James Rhea studied law with Governor Watts of Alabama, the former attorney general for the Confederacy, and practiced law in Montgomery Alabama until his death in 1871 where he was one of three men to revise the code of Alabama in 1867.¹⁵⁰ The 1870 Census shows him living in a boarding house with 5,400 dollars in assets. John Lynn Rhea, perhaps always loyal to the federal government, waited until after James Rhea’s death to start pressing claims for federal reimbursement for his father’s lost cotton. Just as publishing a biography of his Unionist brother likely helped his claim, the existence of an unabashedly Confederate brother in Montgomery, Alabama with a partial claim to the Georgia cotton money likely made him wait to avoid the recriminations of local Unionist citizens during the loyalty investigations of the 1860s.

¹⁴⁹ Fannie Fain 63.

¹⁵⁰ Robert S. Fletcher and Malcolm O. Young, ed. “Amherst College Class of 1866,” *Amherst College Biographical Record of the Graduates and Non-Graduates: Centennial Edition (1821-1921)*, 10 Nov 2005, <<http://www.amherst.edu/~rjyanco94/genealogy/acbiorecord/1866.html>>.

Fannie's cousin Joseph Anderson was on the board of directors for the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad during the war and yet claimed loyalty to the Union. Loyalty problems can clearly be observed for Fannie's cousin, Joseph Anderson, in his autobiography in *Prominent Tennesseans* in 1888 as he deftly tried to sidestep his involvement with the Confederacy and paint his actions during the war in a positive light. Her cousin noted that "both businesses were abandoned in 1862, in consequence of the war, and he kept out of the strife as long as he could, but finally acted as assessor and collector of war taxes, collecting only Confederate money, from 1862 to 1865... Colonel Anderson was a railroad director from 1863 to 1865, having at that time charge of the funds of the East Tennessee and Virginia road."¹⁵¹ The railroad, especially visible in the bridge burning incidents at the start of the war, was at the heart of many protests from loyal East Tennesseans during the war and unlikely to be ever forgotten.¹⁵² As shown in the case of Fannie's cousin, Joseph Anderson, loyalty to the Union during the war was partly perceived as a means to financial enrichment. As the historian Dyer notes in *Secret Yankees*, "Unionists who sought compensation for lost property saw loyalty at least partially in terms of financial self-interest. Attachment to the Union thus had more than intangible patriotic value."¹⁵³

Eliza Rhea Anderson Fain despaired at the victory of the federal government over the Confederacy. She blamed defeat on miscegenation and believed that God would have continued to support the South's peculiar institution if masters had conducted relations with slaves properly. Both her husband's health and fortune was worn down by the war.

¹⁵¹ Speer 209.

¹⁵² Cameron Judd, *The Bridge Burners: A True Adventure of East Tennessee's Underground Civil War*, (Johnson City: The Overmountain Press, 1995).

¹⁵³ Dyer 238.

She struggled through an increasingly difficult life until 1892. As she belonged to a family of pack rats, her numerous diaries would be discovered in a trunk by John N. Fain while searching for stamps in an upstairs closet of his parent's home as a child.¹⁵⁴

The diary of Fannie Anderson Rhea Fain of Blountville likewise languished in obscurity for over a century. Hal Smith gave the diary to the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee in 1982. Gertrude Toncray transcribed the handwritten diary and gave permission for the Archives of Appalachia to copy the transcribed version. J Shelton completed processing and the diary was opened for research in October of 1986.¹⁵⁵ The diary is currently inspiring more investigation into life in East Tennessee during the Civil War.

¹⁵⁴ Eliza Fain 230.

¹⁵⁵ "Fannie A. Fain Diary," *Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University*, 10 March 2006, <<http://cass.etsu.edu/ARCHIVES/AFINDAID/a133.html>>.

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