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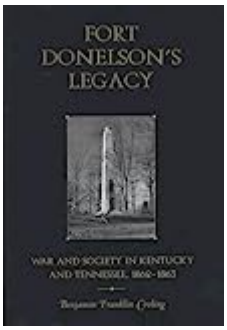

Benjamin Franklin Cooling. *Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862-1863.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997. xx + 408 pp. $38.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87049-949-4.

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In recent years, Civil War scholars have departed from the traditional mold in which military is generally cast. Although the "New Military History" is much like the modern American South in that one does not really know what it is (or where it is), but one knows it when one sees it (or is in it), Benjamin Cooling has clearly given us a work that should be considered the "New Military History." *Fort Donelson's Legacy* has the essential markings of a keen social and military history of the war in Kentucky and Tennessee in 1862 and 1863. His work adds to those that seek to bring the war into proper political, social, and cultural context, among them Cooling's earlier book, *Fort Henry and Fort Donelson: The Key to the Confederate Heartland* (1987).

Cooling develops a conceptual framework around the relationship between people and place, or what he calls "the confluence of war and society" (p. xiv) in the context of the Civil War in the West. Within this broad context, he also develops themes of command relationships, political-military relationships, and, most importantly, the relationship between the home front and the battle front.

If, as the Prussian theorist of war Karl von Clausewitz contended, war is simply the extension of politics–or politics by other means as some contemporary scholars have phrased it–then Cooling finds in Kentucky and Tennessee perhaps the best case study of the elements that reflect the essence of Clausewitz's maxim. As Cooling argues, the war in Kentucky and Tennessee in 1862 and 1863 would have pleased Clausewitz because it mirrored his wisdom about the waging of war itself and the societies that wage it.

Cooling's work illustrates what he calls the "symbiosis of war and society as the principal legacy of spectacular Union victories at Forts Henry and Donelson in February 1862" (p. xiii). These victories on the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers in Middle Tennessee might have ended the war, he contends, if the Union high command had exploited them properly. The Union's failure to do so produced a ruthless war that transcended armies and cut deep into the social foundations. According to Cooling, the war after Henry and Donelson bore the legacy of an amphibious conquest of the Mississippi Valley that ultimately produced the army-navy Union leadership combination that reclaimed the trans-Appalachia West for the nation. In the process, however, the Union's penetration into the southern heartland resulted in civilian defiance, guerrilla warfare, and destruction of property. This socially and culturally destructive legacy reflected the consequences of the war's transitional phase.

The war in the West was from the beginning a war of occupation involving distance, logistics, cavalry raids,

and battles, but the Confederate loss of the twin river forts heightened the political and social consciousness of the devastating implications of military defeat. The battles of Shiloh, Perryville, Murfreesboro, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, and Chattanooga, as well as numerous bloody sideshows, demonstrated that heightened awareness of the perils of military occupation. Although the Union managed to re-open and regulate commercial and communicative intercourse on the western rivers, neither political nor social stability developed as a result. Instead, Cooling argues, in what he considers a little acknowledged legacy of the Fort Donelson loss, the loss of the fort initiated political reconstruction, suppression of civil disobedience, and the restoration of cultural and economic institutions by outside authority.

Because the war in Kentucky and Tennessee in 1862 and 1863 was one of occupation after Donelson, it remained preeminently a river war. Henry Halleck, Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, and Don Carlos Buell considered rivers quite useful in campaigning during this period. Sherman and Grant had no doubt learned something about the usefulness of the river at the expense of Buell, whose Chattanooga campaign in the summer of 1862 demonstrated the inadequacy of campaigning by railroads. Nonetheless, Buell's Chattanooga campaign produced valuable lessons about the need to depart from limited war and embrace unlimited war. That war consisted of a persisting strategy of occupying the country in order to deprive the Confederates of agricultural and industrial resources, as well as manpower. These lessons led both sides, according to Cooling, to resort to a raiding strategy during the final year and one-third of the war that reflected an almost complete transition from soft to hard war.

Cooling argues that the confluence of war and society formed an important second legacy of the Fort Donelson campaign. Herein lies the major contribution of his work to Civil War scholarship. The fall of the river forts in February set in motion a process that fundamentally and irrevocably transformed the heartlander's way of life. Civil-military decisions were linked to social, political, and economic processes, and soon a people's war about defense of the homeland was also a contest about civil authority. The use of slaves in the Confederate effort prompted the Union to take action against property rights. Union commanders responded to the Confederate use of slaves by adopting emancipation measures that preceded political policy decisions by the Federal government. These measures provided the basis for considerable animosity between southern civilians and the Union's civil and military leaders who controlled occupation of the heartland during 1862-1863. When heartlanders hardened their attitudes and manifested their animosity by opposing such measures, Union leaders resorted to the suppression of civil liberties and to the confiscation of property.

Although these legacies unfolded slowly after Forts Henry and Donelson, the years 1862 and 1863 nonetheless became a transitional phase in the war in which failure taught both the Union and the Confederacy as much as success in moving into an unlimited societal conflict.

There is so much to recommend this book. The research is prodigious, the writing fluid, and the examination of the complex interplay of war and society in Kentucky and Tennessee through a transitional period is masterful. The result is a timely contribution that not only advances the scholarship of the war in the West, but that, by combining social and military history, also commendably serves as a model for what is both good and needed in Civil War studies.

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