



Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Conflicting Worlds)

Margaret M. Storey

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A previously hidden corner of history reveals that the Palmer family of Alabama named their children after northern Union heroes like Sherman and Grant rather than Confederate favorites such as Jackson and Lee. Margaret M. Storey's welcome study uncovers and explores those Alabamians who, like the Palmers, maintained allegiance to the Union when their state seceded in 1861—and beyond.

Though slavery was widespread and antislavery sentiment rare in Alabama, there emerged a small loyalist population, mostly in the northern counties, that persisted in the face of overwhelming odds against their cause. Storey's extensive, groundbreaking research discloses a socioeconomically diverse group that included slaveholders and nonslaveholders, business people, professionals, farmers, and blacks. Narratives of their wartime experiences, culled by Storey from the papers of the Southern Claims Commission—a federal agency established in 1871 to consider the wartime property damage claims of loyal white and black southerners—indicate in astonishingly rich detail the chaos and destruction that occurred on the southern home front.

Storey considers the political, social, and military aspects of unionism in Alabama. And by treating the years 1861–1874 as a whole, she clearly connects loyalists' sometimes brutal wartime treatment with their postwar behavior. Ties among kin and neighbors as well as between masters and slaves shaped and sustained unionists' ability to oppose the Confederacy and aid the North. After the war, those same ties fueled loyalists' resistance to Democratic control and gave rise to their demands that only the "truly loyal" receive authority in the South.

By extending the study of unionism into the Deep South, Storey sheds important light on the internal strife of the Confederacy as well as the nature of resistance itself.

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