Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War
Letters of the Anderson, Brockman, and Moore Families, 1853–1865
Edited by Tom Moore Craig
Introduction by Melissa Walker and Tom Moore Craig

Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War chronicles through correspondence the lives and concerns of prominent families in piedmont South Carolina during the late-antebellum and Civil War eras. The 124 letters presented here were written by members of the Anderson, Brockman, and Moore families of Spartanburg County, neighboring planter-class families united by their shared Scots-Irish ancestry and their membership at Nazareth Presbyterian Church. Edited by Tom Moore Craig, a descendant of the volume’s subjects, and augmented with an introduction by Southern historian Melissa Walker and Craig, these letters offer valuable firsthand accounts of evolving attitudes toward the war as conveyed between battlefronts and the home front.

The majority of the letters were written by or to John Crawford Anderson, Andrew Charles Moore, and Thomas John Moore—contemporaries drawn together by their common dedication to the Confederate cause. The earliest letters in this collection were written by these young men and their relatives from boarding schools, South Carolina College, the Citadel, Limestone College, and the University of Virginia Law School. Andrew Charles Moore’s letters describing his travels to Washington, D.C., and New York in the spring of 1860 give insight into the prevailing politics of the nation on the cusp of division.

The wartime correspondence begins in 1861 as the men of service age from each family join the Confederate ranks and write from military camps in Virginia and the Carolinas. Letters describe combat in the battles of Five Forks, First and Second Manassas, the Wilderness, Secessionville, Spotsylvania, Petersburg, and Seven Pines. Though the surviving combatants remain staunch patriots to the Southern cause until the bitter end, their letters show the waning of initial enthusiasm in the face of the realities of combat, loss of lives, and supply shortages. The letters from the home front offer a more pragmatic assessment of the period and its hardships. Embedded in this dialogue are valuable elements of social and economic history, including references to popular music and literature, accounts of fundraising efforts to sustain the war, and laments on the fluctuating prices and availability of staple crops and commodities. Included as well are two letters by family slaves who accompanied their masters to war, rare finds as it was illegal in South Carolina to teach slaves to read and write. The collection ends with John Crawford Anderson’s letter home from Appomattox, Thomas John Moore’s poignant story of his return from a prison camp on Johnson’s Island on Lake Erie, and a letter from cousin John Cunningham outlining his plan to implement a sharecropping system on his plantation.

Emblematic of the fates of many Southern families, the experiences of these representative South Carolinians are dramatically illustrated in their letters from the eve of the Civil War through its conclusion.

Published in cooperation with the South Caroliniana Library

Tom Moore Craig is a retired history teacher and school administrator, a former legislator, and an active community volunteer in his native Spartanburg County. He is the great-grandson of letter writers Mary Elizabeth Anderson Moore and Thomas John Moore, whose marriage united the Anderson and Moore families represented in this volume.

Melissa Walker is the George Dean Johnson Jr. Professor of History at Converse College in Spartanburg. Her previous books include Country Women Cope with Hard Times: A Collection of Oral Histories and All We Knew Was to Farm: Rural Women in the Upcountry South, 1919–1941, winner of the Willie Lee Rose Prize of the Southern Association for Women Historians.
“Absorbing and enlightening, this well edited volume is a major contribution to the history of the mid-nineteenth-century South Carolina upcountry. This correspondence among some of the founding upper class families of Spartanburg District provides a unique perspective on their preoccupations just before and during the Civil War; the letters reflect mostly personal concerns with occasional comments on wartime triumphs and despair. In this important respect, the letters reflect the general atmosphere of a Southern community distant from yet intimately involved with the battles that would determine the nature of its future.”
—Philip N. Racine, William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of history, Wofford College

“Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War introduces readers to three families bound together by kinship; by the social, religious, and economic ties of their rural community before the Civil War; and by losses among their kin during and immediately after the war. Their correspondence chronicles the upheaval and disintegration of a world so different from our own that our best hope of understanding it and the people who lived in it is through letters as true to life—that is, as alternately compelling, mundane, nuanced, and ordinary as everyday life can be—as these.”—J. Tracy Power, historian, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, and the author of Lee’s Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox

“These poignant letters offer keen insight into the values and concerns of three prominent upcountry families in the years before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. Bolstered by a valuable introduction from Walker and Craig, the letters reveal a common focus on kinship, faith, farming, education, and the whereabouts and wellbeing of family and friends at war. Readers cannot help but become immersed in the lives of these mid-nineteenth-century Southerners as represented in this gem of a collection of letters. Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War will appeal to anyone interested in the social, economic, and military history of the nineteenth-century South.”—Courtney L. Tollison, historian, Upcountry History Museum, and assistant professor of history, Furman University

“Upcountry South Carolina Goes to War offers readers more than one hundred letters that tell the stories of prominent Spartanburg District families, their lives before the Civil War, and the lives of three of their sons whose education and ambitions are disrupted by the war. These letters are a poignant, personal, and rich narrative history of the Civil War and the Army of Northern Virginia from First Manassas to Petersburg. They capture snapshot-like renditions of the campaigns, the soldiers, and the famous generals who led them, all culminating in a particularly touching letter from Thomas John Moore to his sister, describing the discovery of his slain brother and his battlefield burial at the end of Second Manassas. This is a valuable collection for anyone interested in the history of South Carolina confederates and of the upcountry.”—W. Allen Roberson, director, South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum

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