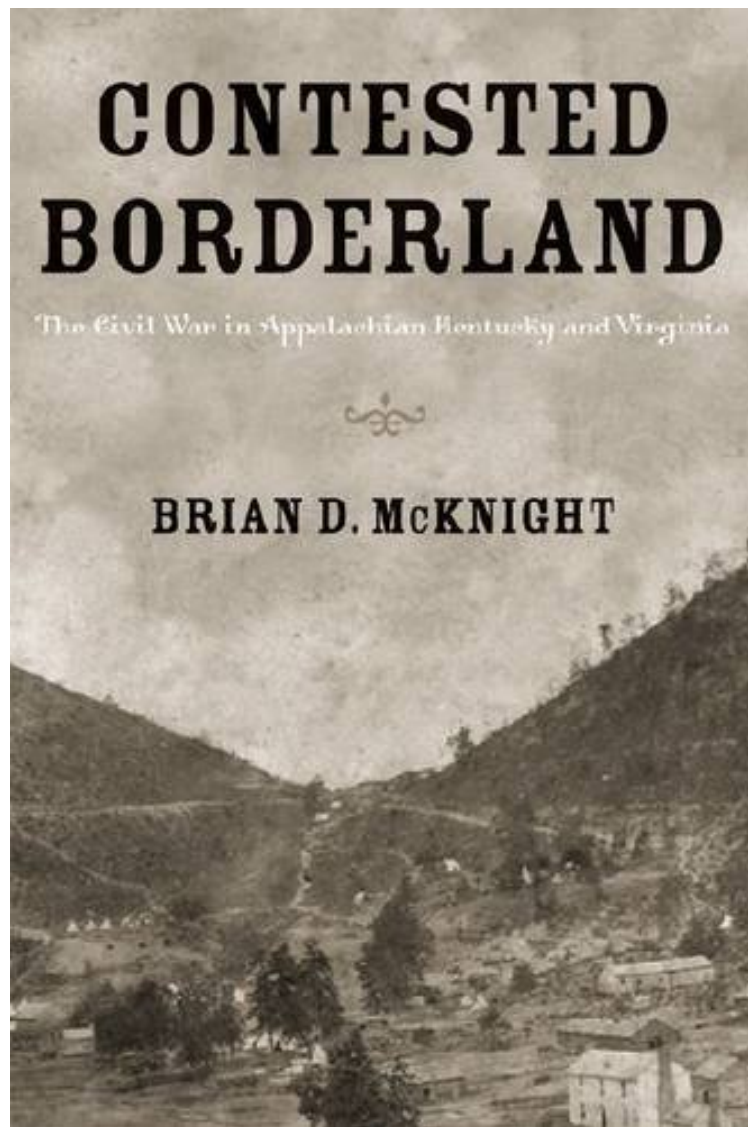


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Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia

Brian D. McKnight

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Brian D. McKnight : Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The author researched and covered an area often overlooked in ...By Carol BowlingThe author researched and covered an area often overlooked in Civil War history. The book will inform

readers of people as well as the terrain of this area.

During the four years of the Civil War, the border between eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia was highly contested territory, alternately occupied by both the Confederacy and the Union. Though this territory was sparsely populated, the geography of the region made it a desirable stronghold for future tactical maneuvers. As the war progressed, the Cumberland Gap quickly became the target of invasion and occupation efforts of both armies, creating a chaos that would strain not only the soldiers but all those who called the area their home. *Contested Borderland* examines the features of the region's geography and the influence of the attacks on borderlands caught in the crossfire of the Union and Confederate forces. The land surrounding the Kentucky-Virginia border contained valuable natural resources and geographic features considered essential to each army's advancement and proliferation. While the Appalachian Mountains barred travel through large parts of the region, the gaps allowed quick passages through otherwise difficult terrain and thus became hotly contested areas. Brian D. McKnight explores the tensions between the accomplishment of military goals and the maintenance of civilian life in the region. With Kentucky remaining loyal to the Union and Virginia seceding to the Confederacy, populations residing between the two states faced pressure to declare loyalty to one side. Roadside towns found themselves the frequent hosts of soldiers from both sides, while more remote communities became shelters for those wishing to remain uninvolved in the conflict. Instead of committing themselves to either cause, many individuals claimed a neutral stance or feigned dedication to whichever side happened to occupy their land. The dual occupation of the Union and Confederate armies consequentially divided the borderland population, creating hostilities within the region that would persist long after the war's conclusion. *Contested Borderland* is the first Civil War study exclusively devoted to the border separating eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia. McKnight's unprecedented geographical analysis of military tactics and civilian involvement provides a new and valuable dimension to the story of a region facing the turmoil of war.

"Winner of the James I. Robertson Literary Prize"? "The Civil War in southern Appalachia has received considerable scholarly analysis over the past few years, but until now there has been surprisingly little attention directed toward central Appalachia, which was fully significant militarily and suffered just as great a social and economic upheaval as did any part of the mountain South. Brian D. McKnight does much to fill that gap with his comprehensive new study of the war as experienced along the border of southwestern Virginia and eastern Kentucky. McKnight adeptly juggles the military, social, and political complexities of this border war in a meticulously documented and often compelling narrative."? *American Historical* "Comprehensive. . . . McKnight adeptly juggles the military, social, and political complexities of this border war in a meticulously documented and often compelling narrative."? *W* "This book makes a major contribution to the study of the Civil War in the mountain South by . . . [keeping] clear both the big picture and its smaller components. *Contested Borderland*'s integration of campaign histories with the social chaos and civilian suffering initiated by those campaigns has made for a very valuable study."? *Appalachian Journal* "McKnight shines a bright analytical light on mist-shrouded mountaintops, into darkened hollows, and along meandering creeks to illuminate the reasons why, from the earliest days of the war, commanders of both armies sought to recruit soldiers from among the region's insular and clannish population."? *Civil War Roundtable of DC Newsletter* "Engaging and eminently readable. . . . A compelling account of an isolated world turned upside down by a war fought over issues few of its residents understood or cared much about."? *Civil War Times* "A revealing and richly diverse account of the war in this too-neglected pocket of the South."? Daniel E. Sutherland, editor of *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* "Contested Borderland, Brian D. McKnight's well-researched narrative, represents one of the best recent, comprehensive examinations of the Civil War era in the mountain highlands of Kentucky and Virginia. . . . I recommend [it] to all serious Civil War scholars and enthusiasts."? *Journal of American History* "McKnight's work has much to offer in covering the war in the Central Appalachian Divide and in explaining why this region's inhabitants choose their respective allegiances."? *Journal of East Tennessee History* "Amplly supplies the reader with an enjoyable and informational read that attempts to bridge a gap in Civil War history."? *Journal of Military History* "Written in a clear and accessible style, this book will appeal to both general and scholarly readers. This book is essential for all Appalachian regional and Civil War collections."? *Journal of Southern History* "McKnight's book is an important contribution to the cumulative work of many other scholars who have explored the Civil War in Appalachia for the past two decades. His work adds to the geographic breadth and the thematic complexity of our collective understanding of the subject."? *North Carolina Historical* "Through firsthand accounts and original military documents, McKnight portrays a self-sustained population forced into a conflict from which they perceived they had little to gain and much to lose."? *Northern Kentucky Heritage* "McKnight deserves praise for his effort to shed light on the long-neglected war in the mountains."? *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* "Addresses an often-overlooked border conflict."? *WTBF Radio* "Contested Borderland is the first detailed study of the Civil War on the eastern Kentucky border. The author's analysis of military tactics, political realities, and genuine hardship, is first rate."? *West Virginia History* "As the only modern, comprehensive examination of the Civil War era in the mountain highlands of Kentucky and Virginia, McKnight's book makes a wonderful contribution to Civil War history. I heartily recommend

the book. *Contested Borderland* is a fine narrative history of a complex subject in a very complex region, and I hope it spawns more scholarship on the highland region during the Civil War." *Indiana Magazine of History*

About the Author Brian D. McKnight is a teaching fellow of history at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. His work has appeared in numerous books and journals, including *the Historian*, *the Smithfield*, and *Ohio Valley History*.