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Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry

W. Poole

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Near Appomattox, during a cease-fire in the final hours of the Civil War, Confederate general Martin R. Gary harangued his troops to stand fast and not lay down their arms. Stinging the soldiers' home-state pride, Gary reminded them that "South Carolinians never surrender." By focusing on a reactionary hotbed within a notably conservative state?South Carolina's hilly western "upcountry"?W. Scott Poole chronicles the rise of a post-Civil War southern culture of defiance whose vestiges are still among us.

The society of the rustic antebellum upcountry, Poole writes, clung to a set of values that emphasized white supremacy, economic independence, masculine honor, evangelical religion, and a rejection of modernity. In response to the Civil War and its aftermath, this amorphous tradition cohered into the Lost Cause myth, by which southerners claimed moral victory despite military defeat. It was a force that would undermine Reconstruction and, as Poole shows in chapters on religion, gender, and politics, weave its way into nearly every dimension of white southern life. The Lost Cause's shadow still looms over the South, Poole argues, in contemporary controversies such as those over the display of the Confederate flag.

Never Surrender brings new clarity to the intellectual history of southern conservatism and the South's collective memory of the Civil War.

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