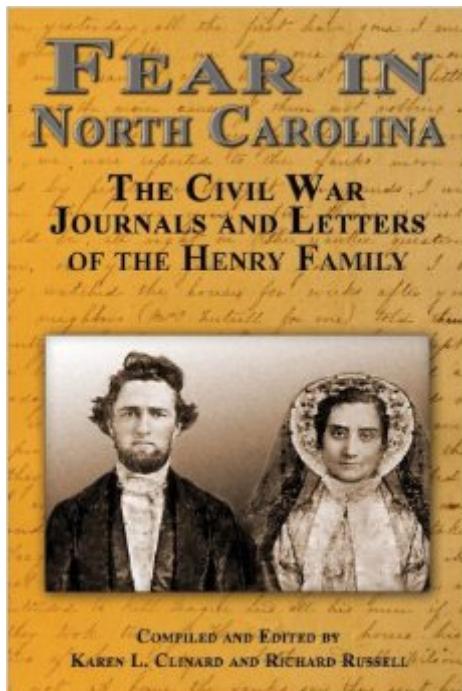


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Fear In North Carolina: The Civil War Journals And Letters Of The Henry Family



Synopsis

Cornelia Henry, April 1865: They were Kirk's men and said . . . they intended to kill you. These yankees are at the Murray place on the watch for you. Try to get out of the country tonight. I will not be easy till I know you are gone. May God protect you and watch over you in this trying hour. Stay away from the road. Go way off. I will come to you at Pa's if the yankees stay. Disguise yourself and pass under a fictitious name. Oh yes, leave and try to get out! -- Cornelia Henry's three journals, written between 1861 and 1868, provide an excellent source of information on western North Carolina prior to, during, and following the Civil War, and present us with an intimate and personal glimpse into the lives of a struggling Confederate family. Throughout her writings, Cornelia reveals her innermost thoughts and fears as she describes her daily routines, rumors and news of the war, raids by Union soldiers, occupation of Asheville by Union troops, activities of newly freed slaves, and finally, troublesome times after the war. -- Cornelia Henry, September 1865: The war has broken us up. I can't see how we are to pay our debts and still retain a home. Mr. Henry worries about it a good deal. He is prematurely ten years older in the last eight months . . . I try to cheer him but he is gloomy nearly all the time. I feel so sorry for him. He loves his old homestead so dearly. May God in his love, spare us the trial of giving it up and may we be more prosperous. -- Fear in North Carolina combines Cornelia Henry's journals into a single volume, which is supplemented with additional family letters, documents, and photos. In addition, newspaper advertisements and period photos have been inserted to augment the reader's experience, and to provide historical perspective.

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Customer Reviews

The American Civil War: a war-torn south, Generals Meade Lee Jackson and Grant, Gettysburg, marching through Georgia, Andersonville, Elmira, Just Before the Battle Mother...These are the images that flash through most people's minds when the Civil War is mentioned. Rarely do folks think about the every day life of those left behind to mind the homestead as the war raged on nearby. But, life did carry on as best and as normal as it could during those trying years from 1861 through 1865. And "Fear In North Carolina - The Civil War Journals and Letters of the Henry Family" gives us a first hand account of life lived of an average middle class southern family shortly before, during, and a few years after the war ended - reconstruction. I absolutely love books of this sort - words written about historical events and everyday life as it happened. A dream for any social historian or genealogist. One would think that the Battle of Gettysburg (for instance) would be such a major event - north and south - and be upon everyone's lips. Well, here is all of what Mrs. Cornelia Henry writes concerning that most famous of battles: "Saturday July 11th - Mr. Henry sent Tom to Asheville soon this morning after news. Vicksburg surrendered the 4th July being in a starving condition. We hear it rumored that New Orleans is taken back by Gen. Taylor & McGruder but it's not confirmed. Also that Gen. Lee has taken 40,000 prisoners in Penn. We have heard none of the particulars of the fight yet. I made Tom's pants today, fixed Zona's hoop, and washed the children this evening..." First off, notice a couple of things here - Cornelia refers to her husband throughout her journals as 'Mr. Henry'. That was a part of the etiquette of the period.

Social history is very much in fashion these days and much of it frankly a bit tedious, especially when accompanied by a lot of interpretation. What I do find interesting, however, is reading the primary source material. What did the people think then, as opposed to how we see it now? Richard Russell, a fellow Ashevillian, compiled and edited the journals and letter of the Henry Family, leading citizens of Asheville during the Civil War. Although there is a great deal of family material in the book (Russell had the active cooperation of the Henry family descendants) like photos, letters, etc. the bulk of the book is three daily journals kept by Cornelia Henry between 1860 and 1868. These constitute an invaluable look into an era forever gone. It was, for example, a much more formal age. In her diary, and presumably in person, Cornelia refers to her husband as "Mr. Henry." William L. Henry and his wife Cornelia ran an inn/resort at Sulphur Springs, just outside Asheville. They were slave owners. There was no plantation economy in the mountains, but the

Henrys had a sprawling spread with mixed agriculture, animal husbandry and orchards. Most of this they used either themselves or for inn, and sold the excess on the market. Some slaves were "learned a trade" such as carpentry and hired out. Still, the life of a slaveholder was no bed of ease. Although Cornelia was spared many of the most odious domestic tasks, she still filled her days with cooking, sewing, and a lot of domestic work, plus having and raising several children. Then there was the management of the slaves. On Dec. 11, 1861, Cornelia notes: "Nothing of interest going on...Jim Parker had to thrash some of the negroes yesterday evening & Jim [a slave] ran away last night. Jim Parker started after him this morning.

A long time ago I was contacted to review this book. Things happened; time passes and this book was found again. I must apologize for this lapse. This book is a summation of diaries kept by Mrs. Cornelia Henry from the years of 1860 to 1868. There was an effort to include letters, newspaper stories, some photos and drawings which enhance it's reading especially if you don't know the area. This is not a book for people looking for battle stories, adventure, and imagery of the events of the Civil War. It is more or less a personal log of events of the Henry family. The reader will find it's a view of a woman's perspective to the happenings of home, neighbors, friends and family. There are numerous comments of sewing, comments of children's bowels and their illnesses. Comments of the war center mainly about people she knew and a couple comments about major events. I can't say I was able to get a full image of Cornelia. She had numerous headaches, tooth aches, and definitely loved her family. One of things that was interesting was how hard day to day life was in that era. How often children died. A comment stuck with me was children dying of a cough (diphtheria?). Mr. Henry was a reasonably wealthy man being a miller, having the farm and the boarding house for the Sulfur Springs which at the time was considered good for health. Mr. Henry seems to have been excused from fighting in the main army. Probably because he was a miller and produced food. I did get the impression; he didn't always tell her things. Especially during the war and the times he was in the field with the militia. Possibly because of her propensity for headaches and worry.

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