Hurst Nation and the State of Scott

*Standards: 5.6, 8.75*

*Essential Question: How did the presence of Unionists affect Confederate Tennessee?*

Hurst Nation and the Free and Independent State of Scott represent attempts by Unionists to separate themselves from Confederate Tennessee. Generally speaking, most Unionists lived in Eastern Tennessee, but pockets of Unionists could also be found in western Tennessee along the Tennessee River. In McNairy County, people living in the southern part of the county tended to support secession, while those in the northern half opposed it. The leading Unionist was Fielding Hurst. Hurst was a slave owner and large landowner in McNairy County. Hurst was imprisoned in Nashville for publicly speaking out against secession. Once released, he was made a colonel by Andrew Johnson and raised the 6th Tennessee cavalry. The land controlled by Hurst and his Unionist followers came to be called Hurst Nation. The division in the county led to brutal warfare between its residents. Many homes on both sides were looted and burned during the war years.

Similarly, in east Tennessee, residents of Scott County were strongly Unionist. On June 4, 1861 Senator Andrew Johnson gave a speech at the courthouse in Huntsville, the county seat, in which he condemned secession. The residents of Scott County voted against secession by the highest margin of any Tennessee county. However, their efforts could not stop Tennessee from seceding on June 8, 1861. The residents of Scott County responded by seceding from Tennessee and declaring themselves to be the “Free and Independent State of Scott.” Tennessee did not recognize Scott County’s independence. As in McNairy County, Scott County experienced guerilla warfare throughout the war years.

The Free and Independent State of Scott and the less formally organized Hurst Nation both represented attempts to fight secession and remain true to the Union. Consciously or not, both communities drew on Watauga and the State of Franklin as examples of communities formed by and for the people they represented. Both communities endured years of brutal guerilla warfare as they sought to uphold their Unionist beliefs. Like many communities in Tennessee, Hurst Nation and the State of Scott faced challenges in forgetting the horrors of guerilla warfare as they rebuilt.

Sources: “Scott County.” *Tennessee Encyclopedia and History and Culture* 1st edition. 1998. Print.

“McNairy County.” *Tennessee Encyclopedia and History and Culture* 1st edition. 1998. Print.

“Fielding Hurst and Purdy,” *The Tennessee Civil War Sesquicentennial.* Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. n.d. Web. 14 July, 2014. <http://www.tnvacation.com/civil-war/place/4470/fielding-hurst-amp-purdy/>