

University of North Carolina at Asheville

Colonel Joseph Cathey of Haywood County, North Carolina:
Nineteenth Century Merchant, Entrepreneur, and Community Leader

A Senior Thesis Submitted to
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by

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Col. Cathey,

Sir I must take the liberty of urging you to except (sic) the nomination for Senator for the sake of the greater Whig cause which cause I glory in and if you do not present your name to be used we are defeated...I say to you in candor that I have been in Cherokee and the people all most unanimous for you, if you do not run W. H. Thomas will be the representative. It is out of the question this Dect (sic-Democrat) to be elected. Therefore, I hope you will make some sacrifice for that noble cause and the gratification of your most earnest friends.

Let me hear from you soon and except (sic) my
Respects, J. S. Moore¹

This impassioned letter written on 16 June 1845 urged "Colonel" Joseph Cathey to run for North Carolina State Senate. J. S. Moore indicated that his fellow Western North Carolinians held Cathey, a Haywood County resident, in high esteem. Ten years earlier, Joseph Cathey had reluctantly agreed to represent Haywood County at the 1835 North Carolina Constitutional Convention. Once there, he fought alongside others from Western North Carolina to achieve a fair share of representation in the State Legislature.² The House of Representatives was apportioned with one seat per county and the balance of seats was allotted by a formula based on population numbers. North Carolina State Senators were elected on the basis of property taxes paid by each county.³ Seven years later, in 1842, Joseph Cathey was elected State Senator.⁴

This was the last elected office he would accept as explained by W. C. Allen:

He had no aspirations for public honors, preferring to live a quiet, peaceable life and follow those pursuits that would give peace and comfort to his family and add to the general improvement of the county.⁵

There were a number of men who came into prominence in the Western North Carolina area at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Historians John C. Inscoe and John Alexander Williams, in their respective works, refer to them as "the big

¹ From J. S. Moore to Col. Joseph Cathey, 16 June 1845, Folder 1, in the Joseph Cathey Papers #3430-Z, Southern Historical Collection (hereafter SHC), Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

² W. C. Allen, *The Annals of Haywood County*. (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1977), 121.

³ John L. Sanders, Director of the Institute of Government, University of North Carolina at Chapel, "Our Constitutions: A Historical Perspective," <<http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/nc/stgovt/preconst.htm>> (3 October 3, 2003).

⁴ W. C. Allen, 75.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.

fellows". They were men who ran things and created a viable economy in the area. Joseph Cathey, of rural Haywood County, North Carolina, was one of these "big fellows." The background, life, and career of Joseph Cathey as farmer, store owner, mill owner, politician, and community leader illustrate that people in rural communities in the Southern Appalachian region during the nineteenth century did not exist merely in isolation, but as an involved part of their region, state, and country.

According to John Williams in *Appalachia: A History*, "the big fellows" were a special elite of powerful individuals willing to settle in this frontier area and develop it into something resembling the thriving towns in other areas of the nation.⁶ Among these men were Zebulon Baird Vance, Thomas Love, James R. Love, William L. Love, James W. Patton, Nicholas W. Woodfin, William Lenoir, Thomas Lenoir, Thomas Isaac Lenoir, William Holland Thomas, and Joseph Cathey. These were the men who accumulated land, wealth, power, and influence.⁷ In common, they were descended from either Scots-Irish or English ancestors and their families followed the path many took from the Pennsylvania and Maryland areas to Virginia, finally to settle in Western North Carolina.⁸ In their book, *From Ulster to Carolina: The Migration of the Scotch-Irish to Southwestern North Carolina*, H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood used Joseph Cathey's ancestors as an example of the migration pattern of the Ulster-Scots along the growing American southern frontier.⁹ The ancestors of the "big fellows" recognized the possibilities of a successful life in the region. In *Mountain Masters, Slavery and Secession in Western North Carolina*, John C. Inscoe described these men as merchants, lawyers, doctors, innkeepers, real estate investors, politicians, manufacturers, and farmers. For the growth and financial betterment

⁶ John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 161.

⁷ H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood, "The Appalachian Frontier and the Southern Frontier: A Comparative Perspective." *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association* 3, *Southern Appalachia and the South: Region Within A Region*, John Inscoe, ed., 1991 "Appalachian Frontier", 43.

⁸ H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood. *From Ulster to Carolina: the Migration of the Scotch-Irish to Southwestern North Carolina*. (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, published in cooperation with The Appalachian Consortium, Boone, NC, 1998), 54.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

of Western North Carolina, these men believed strongly in the importance of improved infrastructure, both turnpikes and railroads.¹⁰

Inscoe maintained that while these "big fellows" were professional men, they were also farmers and the practice of slaveholding suited their other enterprises as well. Slaves worked on farms, at livestock stands, as teamsters, in the hotels, in mines, on turnpike and railroad projects, and in stores.¹¹ The small number of slaves owned by Joseph Cathey showed him to be different from most of "the big fellows."¹² No legal listing showed Joseph Cathey as owning more than three slaves at any time. William Holland Thomas held fifty slaves at the time of Emancipation in 1865.¹³ James Robert Love, the father of William Holland Thomas' wife, Sarah, had eighty-five slaves in the 1850 Haywood County Census.¹⁴ Nicholas W. Woodfin, lawyer and legislator, was second only to James Patton as the largest slaveholders in the region in 1860.¹⁵ Thomas Isaac Lenoir inherited a large number of slaves and although he found the institution hard to deal with, he kept the slaves.¹⁶ The small extent of his slaveholdings did not prevent Joseph Cathey from being considered one of the "big fellows." He qualified for this elite group by virtue of his entrepreneurial success and the efforts he made to help establish a thriving community at the Forks of the Pigeon River in Haywood County. Like these other powerful men, Cathey's influence was respected. A number of people sought Colonel Cathey's political support and influence and repeatedly urged him to take office.

In many ways, Cathey's enterprises most closely reflected those of William Holland Thomas, another Western North Carolinian. Both grew up in the early frontier stage of the region

¹⁰ John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters, Slavery and Secession in Western North Carolina*. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹² *Ibid.*, 62-65.

¹³ Stanley E. Gobold and Mattie U. Russell, *Confederate Colonel and Cherokee Chief: The Life of William Holland Thomas* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 51.

¹⁴ Betsy Farlow, ed. *Haywood County, North Carolina 1850 Federal Census*. Waynesville, NC: Haywood County Genealogical Society, Inc., 1990, 140-41.

¹⁵ Inscoe, 65.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

and functioned as merchants, traders, community promoters, economic boosters, politicians, and spokesmen.¹⁷ However, Joseph Cathey was a Whig and William Holland Thomas was a Democrat as the aforementioned letter indicated. Unlike Thomas, however, after his 1842-44 service as State Senator, Cathey chose to step out of the political spotlight in favor of his entrepreneurial, community, and family life in the Upper Pigeon Valley of Haywood County.¹⁸ Thomas remained in politics for most of his life representing the interests of both white settlers and the Oconaluftee (Cherokee) Indians in his area.¹⁹ Thomas' enterprises were more diverse and extensive than Cathey's. According to the 1860 Census, Thomas' property value was listed at \$150,000.²⁰ At this same time, Cathey's property value was listed at \$29,000.²¹

Until April of 1861, Thomas and Cathey differed strongly about the issue of secession. Thomas was a fire-eater who favored the secession of the South from the Union. The day after South Carolina seceded, Thomas introduced a resolution into the North Carolina State Senate declaring that states had the right to secede from the Union and the Federal Government could not coerce them to return. Additionally, he said that states had the right to call for a convention to hear from the people about secession. Thomas believed that the outcome of this split would be two countries coexisting and that Western North Carolina would be in a position to become a center for industry, trade and tourism.²² Colonel Cathey, by contrast, was a Unionist who felt that newly elected Abraham Lincoln should be given a chance to carry out his promises not to abolish slavery and to promote compromise within the Union. Cathey was finally forced to declare for secession when President Lincoln asked the states to provide troops to "coerce" South Carolina back into the Union after they fired on Fort Sumter. Cathey knew, too that if North Carolina remained in the Union, it would be surrounded by states that had seceded.

¹⁷ Godbold, 5.

¹⁸ W. C. Allen, 121.

¹⁹ Godbold, 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.

²¹ Betsy C. Farlow, trans. and ed. *Haywood County, North Carolina 1860 Federal Census*. (Waynesville, NC: Haywood County Genealogical Society, Inc., 1990), 12.

²² Godbold, 88.

Significant research has been done on William Holland Thomas by scholars such as Stanley Godbold and Mattie Russell in *Confederate Colonel and Cherokee Chief: The Life of William Holland Thomas*. They chronicled what they considered to be the three stages of Thomas' life: his work with the Eastern Band of the Cherokees, his Civil War service, and his extensive mercantile endeavors. Max R. Williams in *The History of Jackson County* examined Thomas' life and his role in the development of Jackson County, North Carolina.²³ John R. Finger wrote of Thomas' involvement with the Eastern Band of Cherokees in *Cherokee Removal: Before and After*.²⁴ In *Storm in the Mountains: Thomas' Confederate Legion of Cherokee Indians and Mountaineers*, historian Vernon H. Crow focused on the Civil War period and Thomas' regiment, the Sixty-ninth North Carolina, composed of Cherokee and Mountaineer troops.²⁵ The life and activities of William Holland Thomas provide a model for a more extensive examination of "Colonel" Joseph Cathey.

People, like the Catheys, of Scots-Irish, English, Irish, and German descent came to the mountains at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century in search of new land upon which to make a life and living.²⁶ Those traveling the Great Wagon Road to the Carolinas followed the Valley of Virginia to the Staunton River through the Blue Ridge Mountains. They crossed the Dan River into North Carolina and found land suitable for settlement between the Yadkin and Cattawba Rivers. From this point, settlers dispersed through the state.²⁷ The Great Wagon Road connected distant regions and created opportunities for trade between them.²⁸ As historian John Williams observed, "The market towns strung out along its

²³ Max R. Williams, *The History of Jackson County*. (Sylva, North Carolina: The Delmar Company, 1987).

²⁴ John R. Finger, *Cherokee Removal: Before and After*. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991).

²⁵ Vernon H. Crow, *Storm in the Mountains: Thomas' Confederate Legion of Cherokee Indians and Mountaineers*. (Cherokee, North Carolina: Press of the Cherokee Indians, 1982).

²⁶ Robert W. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle: Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier 1747-1762*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 47.

²⁷ Blethen, *Ulster*, 42.

²⁸ Williams, 144.

length like beads on a wire became the linear urban core of the emerging regional economy."²⁹ As with the Catheys, many settlers were granted land for service in the Revolutionary War or they purchased or claimed parcels as soon as the American government opened up the area west of the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains.³⁰

Settlers penetrated the more remote regions of Western North Carolina in search of arable land with good water.³¹ By locating and developing unclaimed acreage people could improve their economic status. They faced the task of clearing the land and earning a living from it. The trees they removed provided the basic material to build the first crude log homes, a style of house building the Ulster Irish borrowed from the Germans and Swedes of Pennsylvania.³² Settlers farmed, raised livestock, and discovered the natural bounty of the mountains. There were opportunities to hunt for food and hides, to gather herbs such as ginseng, and to rob honey from bees that fed on the wildflowers and tree blossoms.³³ Williams wrote that the area differed from the farms of the North and the plantations of the South in that "preindustrial Appalachia had a farm-and-forest economy."³⁴ People provided for their own needs from their farms, both produce and livestock, and from the woods, animals and plants. They traded the surplus for goods they could not produce. They traded with each other as well as with area merchants who in turn, traded or sold the settlers' surplus farm and forest gatherings to larger communities and states outside local regions.³⁵ However remotely located, people and their local economy were connected to the financial workings of the larger regions.

Robert B. Drake maintained that there were two distinct agricultural systems in the South. One was the southern plantation system, based on the feudal manor, in which the country

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Boyt Henderson Cathey, *Cathey Family History and Genealogy, Volume I (1700-1900)*. Franklin, NC: Genealogy Publishing Service, 1993, 168 (*Burke County, NC Land Records*, Vol. II, 1779-1790), 173.

³¹ Inscoc, 13.

³² Blethen, *Ulster*, 33.

³³ Inscoc, 38.

³⁴ Williams, 125.

³⁵ Blethen, "Appalachian Frontier." 39.

gentleman operated as an agricultural industrialist. The other was the system embodied by the yeoman “with roots in peasant medieval culture”.³⁶ Drake wrote, “for the yeoman desired only the land...and he aspired only to support himself on that land in a self-sufficient way.”³⁷

Examination of Joseph Cathey and his community, which included both slaveholders and yeoman farmers, tends to show that they resemble more closely John C. Inscoe's contention that the worlds of the two melded and were interdependent both locally in Western North Carolina as well as regionally in the entire South.³⁸

Since most people were not satisfied or able to function alone in complete self-sufficiency, there arose a need for certain people within the community to act as agents for the trade of goods. The man who was a good hunter had hides to trade. The farmer who had an abundant crop of corn had his surplus to trade. Women, who produced extra wool or yarn from their sheep, traded their surplus. The successful growth, prosperity, and longevity of communities depended upon the skills of merchants who performed a wide range of functions. A strong merchant acted as trader, agent for land, broker for labor, postmaster, pharmacist, politician, lobbyist, transporter, facilitator, and host. A merchant who was to remain successful branched into additional areas such as gristmills and blacksmith shops.³⁹ In the early days of settlement, during the development and growth of communities, merchants' motivating drive certainly was the pursuit of profits from their endeavors, but often success for both the community and the merchant depended upon his sense of service to his neighbors as well.

It is significant to understand that most people came to the mountains from more developed, settled areas. They had a keen desire to keep up with the progress and goods of the counties, states, and countries from which they came. The mountain communities did not

³⁶ Richard B. Drake, “Southern Appalachia and the South: A Region Within a Section”, *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association* 3, *Southern Appalachia and the South: Region Within A Region*, John Inscoe, ed., 1991, 22-3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁸ Inscoe, 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

develop in a vacuum, they wanted to provide for themselves and their children the benefits of their cultures, but in a new location. They wanted to make their own communities. People expected to be able to worship in a church and educate their children to learn to read and write not only from the Bible, but also from primers such as *McGuffey's Reader* which were used in more developed regions.⁴⁰ Similarly, they wanted the goods that could be purchased in Charleston, South Carolina or Savannah, Georgia, or from the North, whether they be calico fabric, scissors, knives, coffee, or tobacco. The mountain people were a part of North Carolina, the South, and of the United States.⁴¹ The majority of people settled there for the opportunities, not the isolation.

The Cathey family paralleled the trend of others in migration, settlement patterns, livelihood, and community development. James Cathey, Joseph Cathey's great grandfather, and his brothers, George and John, were the first of their line to come to America from Ulster, Ireland.⁴² Blethen and Wood maintained that because the Ulster Irish had moved from Scotland to Ireland, and then to America, continued migration was always a possibility for them. They actively sought better circumstances.⁴³ Populations were fluid and mobile along the southern Appalachian frontier, throughout which families often moved as the frontier shifted south and west. They survived and bartered or got money in the frontier through farming and raising livestock, especially hogs. In addition, when they decided to move on, they could sell the land they had purchased.⁴⁴

Once in America, James Cathey relocated five times. The first record of James Cathey in America is found in a land transfer he made to John Hogshead in Cecil County, Maryland, 10

⁴⁰ Joseph Cathey Store Ledger, 1849-1853 in possession of great, great, great grandson, Charles Cathey in Haywood County, NC, 28.

⁴¹ Inscoe,, 6.

⁴² Boyt Henderson Cathey, 7-9.

⁴³ Blethen, *Ulster*, 41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

March 1719.⁴⁵ James Cathey's son, George and his wife, Margaret, relocated to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina and reared four children including Captain George M. Cathey, who was in the army during the Revolutionary War.⁴⁶ He served with General Rutherford when the army marched west and destroyed the Cherokee towns of Big Bear Town and Cowee.⁴⁷ Later, Cathey and others brought Tennessee Territory troops to aid in the defense of the area against the British. The converging armies met in battle at Kings Mountain on October 7, 1770. Victory sent the English out of the Carolinas and allowed people to resume settlement of the region.⁴⁸

For his service, George M. Cathey received half of 640 acres of land on the French Broad River in Burke County, soon to become Buncombe County in 1791.⁴⁹ In 1798, the family relocated to the section of Buncombe County that became Haywood County in 1808.⁵⁰ It was here that Cathey's son, William, married Catherine Turner in the Pigeon River Valley.⁵¹ The couple's only child, Joseph Cathey, was born in 1803. Land grants could be obtained from the state of North Carolina for fifty shillings per one hundred acres at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁵² Like many other settlers in the region, the Catheys purchased a great deal of land.⁵³ William and Catherine Cathey laid the groundwork for the future enterprises of their son, Joseph Cathey.⁵⁴ They farmed and became active members of their community. In his book, *The Early History of Haywood County*, W. Clark Medford wrote that William Cathey was considered to be one of the best and most successful farmers in the

⁴⁵ Ramsey, 37.

⁴⁶ Margaret M. Hofmann, *The Granville District of North Carolina 1748-1763: Abstracts of Land Grants*, Vol. I, 1986, *North Carolina Patent Book* 11, 6.

⁴⁷ Boyt Henderson Cathey, 97.

⁴⁸ Blethen, *Ulster*, 50.

⁴⁹ Boyt Henderson Cathey, 168. (*Burke County, NC Land Records*, Vol. II, 1779-1790), 98, 109.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵¹ Joseph Cathey family Bible in possession of his great, great, great grandson, Thomas Arthur Cathey in Haywood County, NC.

⁵² Buncombe County Census, 1800. Old Buncombe County Genealogical Society. <<http://www.obcgs.com>> (29 September 2003).

⁵³ Allen, 177.

⁵⁴ Boyt Henderson Cathey, 72.

area.⁵⁵ He demonstrated his commitment to his community, state, and country when he formed a militia unit that was prepared to fight in the War of 1812, but was never called upon to serve.⁵⁶

We know little of Joseph Cathey's childhood, but there are certain things that can be inferred. The unusual circumstance of a household with a single child at a time when families often had seven or more children, may explain his lifelong appetite for learning. An inquisitive, lone child in a remote area would have found great amusement in books and knowledge. It is noteworthy that when he grew up and married, Joseph Cathey and his wife, Nancy Hyatt Cathey had nine children themselves.⁵⁷ Living in the Pigeon River Valley of Haywood County, he was surrounded by mountains, rivers, abundant wildlife, and extraordinary natural beauty. As the only child of a farmer, it is not likely that he would have been sent away to school. His father would have needed his help and taught him how to farm. In the 1850 Census, the earliest census to include a person's vocation, Joseph Cathey was listed as a farmer.⁵⁸

Although there were no schools in Haywood County during his childhood, he was taught to read and do mathematical calculations. That Cathey was a learned man was evident from the multiple correspondences he carried on throughout his life. He was tutored in penmanship since he wrote in an elegant Spencerian style of handwriting.⁵⁹ Cathey's meticulous daybooks and ledgers record transactions made at both his mill and his store and indicate an educated and organized mind. The oldest ledger available, dated 1849-1853, is a detailed book containing the names of his patrons, dates of transactions, lists of the exact items purchased, quantity, price, and balances on any accounts.⁶⁰ Joseph Cathey used daybooks at his store that covered purchases over a year's time. These transactions were totaled and entered under customer names in his

⁵⁵ W. Clark Medford, *The Early History of Haywood County*. (Asheville, NC: Miller Printing Company, 1961), 41.

⁵⁶ Boyt Henderson Cathey, 154.

⁵⁷ Joseph Cathey Family Bible.

⁵⁸ Farlow, 1850 Haywood County Census, 69.

⁵⁹ Manuscripts Research Tutorial, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Libraries. A sample of Spencerian writing is offered for use as an aid in historic research.

<<http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/manuscripts/using/spencerianpic.html>> (28 September 2003).

⁶⁰ Joseph Cathey Store Ledger 1849-1853. Charles Cathey, Haywood County, NC.

ledgers that covered longer periods of time. Besides accounting, Cathey must have sought access to material on a variety of subjects since each new venture he tackled demanded a certain amount of knowledge, such as milling, storekeeping, dispensing medical information, and politicking. Colonel Cathey was described through the years as a highly intelligent, knowledgeable man.⁶¹ Although he never served in the military, the honorific "Colonel" was given him by one and all as a form of respect for the position he held within the community.⁶²

As Inscoc noted in *Mountain Masters*, many settlers who prospered in the mountains were those who chose land on the forks of rivers.⁶³ "River bottoms became home to more prosperous and accessible valley communities."⁶⁴ The soil was bottomland and very fertile for farming. The convergence of rivers was ideal for trade because of the accessibility to other areas. It was also a location where other people would settle providing a natural clientele for trading posts and stores. The establishment of stores became central to the development of communities because these businesses provided a place for settlers not only to do their trading, but also to gather socially. A good current in a river, that was unlikely to be affected by fluctuations in water levels, was important for the operation of gristmills. The Catheys' choice of land at the Forks of the Pigeon River suited all of these purposes.⁶⁵ On his more than one thousand acres of land, in addition to farming, Joseph Cathey became a successful miller.⁶⁶

Cathey built a large and unique home, one that could house his growing family and act as a center and gathering place for the community as well. It was said to be just across the small road from his business, Cathey's Store.⁶⁷ Years later, the house was described by great granddaughter, Mrs. Evelyn Abel Osborne:

⁶¹ Allen, 120.

⁶² Boyt Henderson Cathey, 155.

⁶³ Inscoc, 13.

⁶⁴ Blethen, "Appalachian Frontier," 38.

⁶⁵ From Deed of Sale between Elijah Deaver and Joseph Cathey, 11 December 1854, SHC.

⁶⁶ Charles Cathey, interview by author at Cathey's home, Bethel Road, Canton, NC, 22 September 2003

⁶⁷ Ibid.

That old house was a jewel. There was a family dining room in the middle of the house, then, off the kitchen, going down towards the spring, there was a great big dining room, used as a public dining room. All the meals for public affairs, community gatherings and church affairs, were served here.⁶⁸

The inaccuracy of early census taking and recording has given an uneven picture of the extent to which Colonel Joseph Cathey was a slaveholder. Early census takers came to a household and had to rely for information on anyone who was at home, whether illiterate or a child. Often the interviewee was not well acquainted with the circumstances of the household. Much of the handwriting was illegible, names were spelled wrong, and facts were incorrect.⁶⁹ The Haywood County Census of 1830 stated that Joseph Cathey had one slave.⁷⁰ The Haywood County Census of 1840 showed no listing of slaves.⁷¹ In 1850, the Census listed Cathey with three slaves; two males, aged 38 and 45 as well as one female, aged 41.⁷² Neither Betsy Farlow's nor Robert Medford's transcription of the 1860 Haywood County Census indicated that Colonel Cathey still held slaves. However, the 1870 Census listed Henry Washington Lenoir, 24, as a house servant and Larkin Cathey, 14, as a teamster. Both black men were listed as boarders.⁷³ Because the earlier censuses did not list the names of slaves, it is not known if the boarder, Larkin Cathey, was a former Cathey slave. Many slaves took the surnames of their former masters, yet others took the names of local people or historic figures they admired. Cathey's ledger books indicate that he brokered the labor of people, both black and white, which could have made slave ownership unnecessary for him.⁷⁴ His daybooks and ledgers listed credit accounts for whites, slaves, and free blacks before and after the Civil War.⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Colonel Walter Kerr Cathey. *The Catheys, Haywood County, N. C.: Ancestral History and Decendancy* (sic) Records, informal document, Efland, NC: 1980, 12.

⁶⁹ Robert and Connie Medford, *The Families of Haywood County based on the 1810, 1820, 1830, and 1840 Census Records*. Canton, NC: Dr. Robert Medford, 2002, 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁷² Farlow, 1850 Census, 140.

⁷³ Robert and Connie Medford, *The Families of Haywood County based on the 1870 Census Records*. Canton, NC: Dr. Robert Medford, 2002, 128.

⁷⁴ Joseph Cathey Daybook, 1871-72, Charles Cathey Collection, 23, 28, 42-3.

⁷⁵ Joseph Cathey Ledger, 1849-1853 and Joseph Cathey Ledger, 1871-1890, Charles Cathey Collection.

The Cathey Store was the lifeline for the community of the East Forks of the Pigeon River.⁷⁶ Joseph Cathey's great grandson Tom described the Cathey store:

The store was a long building with a porch and banisters that ran all the way across the front from end to end. At both ends of that porch, there were steps with a gate at the top. Anyone coming into the store had to go up the steps and through the gate at one end or the other of that long porch.

Inside, at each end of the building, there were enormous fireplaces, in which great logs were blazing when the weather outside was chilly. People coming into the store on a cold or snowy day would gather around those big fires to warm and to talk of the weather, of crops, of their families, of politics, and of 'cabbages and kings'.

There were four rooms at the back where travelers who had no place to stay were given a place to sleep. Often, slaves who were free after the war, but had nowhere to go, were given a place to sleep in those rooms and were given food.⁷⁷

Functioning as a gathering place in a central location, the Cathey store naturally became the location for the post office called "Forks of Pigeon Post Office," or "Cathey's Store Post Office." Between 1849 and 1853, letter postage was five cents and an additional three cents could get the letter written for Cathey customers as well.⁷⁸ An entry in the 1872 Cathey Store ledger showed that Captain Thomas Isaac Lenoir was charged forty cents for thirteen postal stamps.⁷⁹ This indicates that the postal rate decreased from five cents in the 1850s to three cents by 1872.

As an example of a merchant's trading practices in the region, Inscoc followed one of Colonel Cathey's typical wagon trips. Cathey "planned his trips after consultation with agents in South Carolina and Georgia as to the prices on the bacon, lard, and feather markets." He left the mountains with varying sized herds of cattle and sheep that he bought from or traded with farmers from all over Haywood County. Cathey visited various towns and wholesalers to

⁷⁶ Cheryl Haney, Janice Freeman, and Alice Fisher, eds. *Pigeon Valley*, a research and oral history project by Bethel Middle School Students, Haywood County, NC, 1992, 53.

⁷⁷ Aurelia Cathey, "Cathey Home Rebuilt After Fire." Bicentennial Edition, *Waynesville Mountaineer*, July 1776.

⁷⁸ Haney, 72.

⁷⁹ From the Charles Cathey Daybook, 1872-3, 8 March 1872, Volume I, SHC.

purchase goods to take back up to his store in the mountains. He bought saddles, bridles, tools, druggist goods, coffee, sugar, candy, salt, rifle powder, paint, oil, and glass.⁸⁰

Colonel Cathey's store ledgers and trade correspondence present a vivid picture of life and trade during the mid nineteenth century. In a letter dated 23 October 1852 from Charleston firm "Wilmans & Price, Importers of Hardware, Cutlery, Guns, &c." the formality of language showed the tone of business:

Col. J. Cathey, Dear Sir-

Your esteemed order of the 16th Inst is at hand and on the other side you have Bill of hardware ordered--- We have sent the goods to the Rail Road consigned to Mr. A. M. Benson, Hamburg, S. C. and we hope they will arrive safe and open to please. Please sign the note enclosed & return it to us by mail.
Yours very Truly, Wilmans & Price

We shall be very happy to hear from you again, or to see you in Charleston this winter.⁸¹

The order accompanying this letter included items such as knives, forks, spoons, razors, ladies scissors, steel spectacles in cases, firmer chisels, shaving boxes with glass, wool cards, Sad Irons, shovels, German flints, buck shot, horse shoe nails, and gun locks.⁸² These items indicate just some of the goods Cathey brought into the Forks of the Pigeon to fill the needs of the community. A George Parrott from Hamburg, South Carolina did trade with Colonel Cathey, yet his tone was much different:

Bot. Of Geo Parrott 3 Bags Rio Coffee 444 lbs. for \$61.00
on four months (sic) credit

Dear Sir,

I rec'd the Bunch of Ginseng. But I do not know what I ought to allow you for it. I will try to find out and give you what I ought to for it. I send your bill of the Coffee as above. It is not as good, I think, as the cash; but I hope it will be satisfactory. 15 April 1842⁸³

The next month Cathey received shipment of an order from the Cherokee Iron Works of "57 pc. Iron asst." for \$85.90 and one small oven at fifty cents. He had a past due balance of

⁸⁰ Inscoc, 42-3.

⁸¹ From Wilmans & Price to Joseph Cathey, Forks of the Pigeon, Cathey Family, MSS 95-4, Special Collections, Hunter Library, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina (hereafter Hunter Library, WCU).

⁸² Ibid., from invoice attached to letter.

⁸³ From George Parrott to Joseph Cathey, Cathey Papers, SHC.

\$21.80 for a total of \$108.20 owing. An even trade to the Cherokee Iron Works satisfied this debt for 1,352.5 pounds of bacon.⁸⁴ The bacon would have been taken as a store account credit in trade from someone who raised livestock in Pigeon Valley. For example, \$10.30 was credited to J. Harrison Pless' account for one hundred and three pounds of bacon in an 1871 Cathey daybook.⁸⁵ The inside covers of Cathey's daybooks contained lists of the prices he paid for specific items such as grain, livestock, mountain herbs, and produce. The following list from Joseph Cathey's 1871-72 Daybook supports John A. Williams' contention that pre-industrial Appalachia was a farm-and-forest economy:

pork 130-160 (lb) @ 6; pork 160-200 @ 6 1/2; over 200 @ 07;
 Dry Hay_16; Grass_8; Tallow_10; Wheat @ 60 & over_1.25; Rye_10;
 B wheat (sic, buckwheat)_50; Butter (Good)_10; Bees Wax_25; Wool_40;
 Feathers, Duck_40; Rags_2 1/2; Furr (sic) Skins, Fox_20-25; Coon_15-
 25; Musk Rat_10-20; Mink_50-100; opossums_5-10; Wild Cat_20-30;
 Bear Skin Grown_2.50-3.50; Bear Cub Skin_.50; Otter_1.00-2.50.⁸⁶

Records indicate that most people preferred to be paid in credits to their store accounts, which in most instances, paid their past balances for labor used or goods and services purchased at Cathey's Store. Some applied the credit to their accounts to spend against in the future.⁸⁷

When Cathey expanded his enterprises into the milling of grain, Etheldred "Dred" Harris Blalock, a skilled carpenter in the Pigeon Valley, built the gristmill. He insisted that, except for the mill rocks, all parts of the mill be made of wood; the cogs and parts were hand-carved. Blalock designed the cog construction and how they would fit together. Later he submitted his drawings to Colonel Cathey whose calculations determined the size of the cogwheels to ensure a precise speed at which the wheels would turn.⁸⁸ The mill was three stories high with wheat ground on the top floor, corn on the second, and buckwheat on the first. A millrace was built

⁸⁴ Ibid., from R. Swain, Agent to Joseph Cathey.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Cathey Store Ledger, 1872.

⁸⁶ Joseph Cathey Daybook, 1871-72, Charles Cathey Collection, 52.

⁸⁷ Joseph Cathey Daybook, 1872, SHC, 12.

⁸⁸ Jerry Blalock, *The Dred Blalock Families of Haywood County, North Carolina*, Efland, NC: 2000, 90.

across the East Fork of the Pigeon River. Blalock insisted that the fourteen-foot water wheel operate by undershoot, a construction where the buckets to power it were filled with water at the bottom of the wheel.⁸⁹ He wouldn't tolerate the jerky motion of the machinery caused by an overshoot. The millwheel powered the first and second floors of the mill. A belt between the second and third floors ran the third floor machinery.⁹⁰ Although an exact date is not known, Cathey's Store and mill most likely began operation in the 1840s, when the first records document sales of store items and grain.⁹¹ It is noteworthy that the technology of a belted mill system was used in rural Haywood County before American inventor Oliver Evans was credited with the idea in 1850.⁹² Cathey's mill produced corn, flour, buckwheat, bran, and seconds. For the service of milling the grain, people who brought grist (grain) to be ground paid with a percentage of the final flour product.⁹³

Comparing the 1850 and 1860 Haywood County Census Reports, on the one hand and recognizing the length of operation of his businesses on the other, gives evidence of the success of Colonel Joseph Cathey's entrepreneurial efforts. In 1850, Cathey was worth \$8,000.⁹⁴ In 1860 Cathey's net worth was placed at \$29,000, a significant rise of over \$21,000 in ten years.⁹⁵

The three Cathey households held family and non-family members who were tied to the Cathey Store and mill and had a variety of skills and trades. This illustrated that familial and economic relationships intermingled. The 1850 Census listed three farmers, two merchants, a clerk, two blacksmiths, three domestics (Cathey wives or grown sisters), and four students (Cathey children).⁹⁶ Included in this list were two brothers, A. C. and John C. Hartgrove, both

⁸⁹ Sharyn Kane and Richard Keeton, "Chapter 17," *Beneath These Waters: Archeological and Historical Studies of 11,500 Years Along the Savannah River*, 2000.

<<http://www.cr.nps.gov/seac/beneathweb/ch17.htm>> (28 September 2003).

⁹⁰ Aurelia Cathey, "Cathey Home Rebuilt After Fire." Bicentennial Edition for the *Waynesville Mountaineer*, July 1776.

⁹¹ Joseph Cathey Ledger, 1849-1853, Charles Cathey Collection.

⁹² Kane, *Beneath These Waters*, Ch 17, 2.

⁹³ Joseph Cathey Daybook, 1872-73, SHC, 134.

⁹⁴ Farlow, *Haywood County 1850 Federal Census*, 69.

⁹⁵ Farlow, *Haywood County 1860 Federal Census*. 12.

⁹⁶ Farlow, *Haywood County 1850 Federal Census*, 69.

blacksmiths who were not Cathey relatives. It is likely that the Catheys provided lodging, financial backing, and space for them to practice their trade. On many occasions, Cathey documented customer payments for blacksmith work.⁹⁷ This illustrated his accounting practices as well as his brokering of labor. Economic relationships led to personal relationships when W. H. "Hack" Hargrove, son of A. C. Hartgrove, married Nancy Louisa Cathey, Col. Cathey's granddaughter in 1869.⁹⁸ In order to settle debts or reimburse people for their labor, customers paid amounts on other customers' store accounts or allowed other people to make charges on their accounts.⁹⁹ On 26 March 1872, A. C. Hartgrove, assumed a debt owed by his son, W.H. Hartgrove on his Cathey Store account.¹⁰⁰ There were also notations in daybooks in which Colonel Cathey debited someone's account for paying their property taxes.¹⁰¹ The many transactions shown in these ledgers and daybooks indicate that Cathey operated as a banker, loan officer, labor broker, postal worker, scribe, and purchaser of farm and forest goods.

An unwillingness to run for political office did not mean that Joseph Cathey was not involved in the political concerns of the day. Two big issues in the 1850s were the question of free suffrage for white males that would eliminate land ownership requirements and the ad valorem tax by which land and slaves would be taxed at the same rate.¹⁰² Cathey's friends such as Zebulon Vance, N. W. Woodfin and others felt that passage of free white male suffrage would give more power to the western part of the state. They also reasoned that even if the ad valorem tax meant they would personally have to pay tax on their slaves, its passage would bring more money to improve the region's infrastructure and build railroads. Others in opposition, like William Holland Thomas and Thomas Clingman, felt the passage of the tax would prevent the

⁹⁷ Cathey daybook 1872-72, SHC, 11.

⁹⁸ Robert and Connie Medford, 1870 Haywood County Census, 111.

⁹⁹ Cathey daybook 1872-73, SHC, March 8, 1872.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., inside cover.

¹⁰² Inscoe, 142-49.

planters in the eastern part of the state from allotting money to improve transportation systems in the west.¹⁰³

In 1853, Cathey received a letter from Tod R. Caldwell of Burke County, a powerful man who would become Governor of North Carolina in 1871.¹⁰⁴ Caldwell's great concern was that Thomas L. Clingman would be re-elected, so he solicited Cathey's help in Haywood County in stirring up support for Burgess S. Gaither. Caldwell wrote of Clingman:

Upon what meat doth this mighty Caesar feed that He hath grown so great?...Where in all this country is to be found any monument of his public service, already protracted to an unreasonable length when not a single meritorious deed can be shown?...

The eyes of the great Whig party are upon us, and the good wishes of all the lovers of our Glorious Union of both parties are with us and their prayers for us. Then let us rush to the hottest of the fight. Contest every inch of ground in the last ditch and with our latest expiring breath let us cry aloud, "Down with every man who does not love this Glorious Union and her priceless Institutions."¹⁰⁵

The fiery letter foreshadowed the turmoil that would encompass Western North Carolina for years to come. Both Thomas Clingman and William Holland Thomas were early secessionists whereas Zebulon Vance, Tod Caldwell, Colonel Joseph Cathey, and many others favored keeping the Union together.¹⁰⁶

As late as 23 February 1861, after South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had seceded, Joseph Cathey wrote a letter to Reverend L. F. Siler, a newspaper publisher. Cathey asked Siler to make a correction in his paper about a statement Cathey had made at a Waynesville secession meeting on 8 February 1861. Cathey wrote:

I did say I was identified (sic) with the South as stated in the Communication, and I further said that N. C. would not have her convention in session until after Lincoln would be in office, and would have indicated his policy, which if it should be to carry out the Chicago Platform, and we should fail to get an adjustment on the Crittenden Plan, or the Virginia Plan, or otherwise, then I thought Virginia and all the Border Slave States would go out of the Union

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ William S. Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 567.

¹⁰⁵ From Tod R. Caldwell to Colonel Joseph Cathey, MSS 95-4, Hunter Library, WCU.

¹⁰⁶ Inscocoe, 243.

and I would then be for N. C. going out as stated in the communication you published.¹⁰⁷

Joseph Cathey, like Zebulon Vance, favored keeping the Union together up to the point when President Lincoln asked states for troops in reaction to South Carolina's firing on Fort Sumter.¹⁰⁸

Once North Carolina committed to the Confederacy, Cathey, too old to fight, supported his friend and business associate Thomas Isaac Lenoir in raising a company of Confederate soldiers. Lenoir organized Company F, the "Haywood Highlanders," who became part of the North Carolina 25th Regiment.¹⁰⁹ Two of Colonel Cathey's sons, Joseph Turner Cathey and James Madison Cathey, joined Company F as did W. H. Hargrove, James A. Blalock, Dred Blalock, and others from the East Fork and Pigeon townships.¹¹⁰ According to Captain Thomas Isaac Lenoir's Civil War diary, when the Company was at Camp Beauregard near Charleston on 24 November 1861, Colonel Cathey arrived with a wagonload of supplies. He brought "butter, lard, bacon, apples and a great many things for the Company--something for almost every man." Lenoir reported that Cathey took Lieutenant E. H. (Dred) Blalock with him to Savannah to get more goods for the troops as well as his for mountain store.¹¹¹ Colonel Cathey made a notation that Blalock paid him \$200.00 at Savannah that he credited to Blalock's store account.¹¹²

By act of the Confederate Congress, officers in all units were changed through election by the men in each unit. On 30 June 1861, Colonel Joseph Cathey's son, James Madison Cathey, was elected Captain of Company F. His other son Joseph Turner Cathey was elected Lieutenant.¹¹³ After declining to "electioneer" to retain his captaincy, Captain Lenoir received a letter dated 13 January 1862 from A. C. Hartgrove, the caretaker of his extensive farm. He reported to Lenoir on the state of his farm and his slaves. Hartgrove wrote that Colonel Cathey

¹⁰⁷ From Colonel Joseph Cathey to Rev. L. F. Siler, MSS 95-4, Hunter Library, WCU.

¹⁰⁸ Inscoe, 251.

¹⁰⁹ John C. Inscoe and Gordon G. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 217.

¹¹⁰ Blalock, 78.

¹¹¹ *Captain Thomas Isaac Lenoir Diary*, in possession of descendent Emily Michal Terrell, Canton, NC.

¹¹² Joseph Cathey Ledger, 1859-1868. MSS94-4.2, Hunter Library, WCU.

¹¹³ *Captain Thomas Isaac Lenoir Diary*.

was also looking out for his interests, "Colonel Cathey is talking about buying you four mules...he spoke for 50 bushels of your wheat at one dollar per bushel."¹¹⁴ The close relationship between "big fellows" Lenoir and Cathey lasted until Cathey's death in 1874.

From the volume of letters written to Colonel Cathey during the Civil War, it was apparent that Cathey's Store functioned as the Forks of the Pigeon's gathering place for the disbursal of news and letters. Colonel Cathey received a number of letters from people reporting news of the Haywood Highlanders, stories of Yankees and bushwackers, and requests for help.¹¹⁵ On 30 March 1863, Emma A. Shoollred wrote from Flat Rock, "Though personally a stranger to you, I know that you are acquainted with my son James, and am induced to apply to you in a time of difficulty." She wrote that she was widowed, her three sons were at War, and she had slaves to care for. She asked to buy corn and an ox from Cathey.¹¹⁶ On 11 August 1863, James A. Rankin wrote because he heard that Cathey had been appointed a Director on the Western North Carolina Railroad Board. He wanted to put forth the name of Major James A. Wilson to replace the present Chief Engineer. Rankin indicated that it would please Governor Zebulon Vance if Cathey supported Wilson.¹¹⁷ Another letter to Cathey was from a relative who wanted help to relocate to Haywood County from Hiawassee, Georgia. He bemoaned the horrible war and the speculation that had ruined the country.¹¹⁸ During this time, Joseph Cathey experienced the loss of his son, Lieutenant Joseph Turner Cathey who died of a fever on 1 September 1863 at a hospital in Wilson, North Carolina.¹¹⁹ Cathey continued to receive mail about the boys at the front. A letter from G. W. Logan dated 30 May 1864, from Richmond, Virginia addressed the issue of men injured as well as provided political news:

¹¹⁴ From A. C. Hartgrove to Captain Thomas Isaac Lenoir, 13 January 1862 <docsouth.unc.edu/imls/lenoir/lenoir.html> (11 March 2003).

¹¹⁵ Joseph Cathey Papers, MSS 95-4, Hunter Library, WCU.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, from Emma Shoollred to Joseph Cathey.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, from James A. Rankin to Joseph Cathey.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, from J. L. Cathey to Joseph Cathey.

¹¹⁹ Allen, 557.

A few days ago I visited Camp Winder a Hospital near this place & saw some of your Countrymen & gained the following information of Casualties (sic) in the late battle. G. S. Ferguson was wounded in the head, not serious. Mr. Mann in the elbow L.W. Murray in the side H. P. Holland in the arm. The above are the only ones I have heard from.

I am sorry I cannot write you something of interest. Congress has done but very little, nor do I think it will do much. We are trying to modify the Tax System and impressment laws but I cannot as yet tell the result.

Genl Lee has fallen back near this place & it is believed his army will soon be within the entrenchments surrounding this city.

It is said Genl Grant is now coming up on the old ground of McClelland and will unite with Butler. Both armies (sic) are reinforcing largely & the next fight is expected to be the great battle of the War. In the late engagement the loss on both sides was immense, our loss must have been in killed wounded & prisoners at least 20 or 25,000 & the Yankees more than double that number.

There is little appearance of Peace, though the present Congress is much stronger for negotiations than the preceding one. The Destructors are determined not to have peace only in their own way & at (sic) their own time.¹²⁰

The scene of families gathered at Cathey's store must have been highly emotional as he gave this information to them about their sons. One month after Logan's letter was written, another son, Captain James Madison Cathey was shot through the head and killed at the Battle of the Crater at Petersburg on 30 June 1864.¹²¹ Logan's sentiments longing for peace must have appealed to the war weary Cathey as well as the rest of his neighbors.

Yet, some people in the Pigeon Valley did not trust Colonel Cathey. They felt he had failed to distribute the money sent to his care by soldiers who intended it be given to their families. This transfer of money is illustrated in J. W. Killian's letter from Davidson River dated 19 January 1863 in which he reported seeing the "Mountain Boys" in fine spirits near Fredericksburg and that:

Capt. James Cathey and a good many of his Boys sent a good large pack of money to your care and requested you to send an agent after it for them. I have directions in my possession how you are to dispose of it which directions I was to deliver to the agent who came after the money.¹²²

¹²⁰ From G. W. Logan to Joseph Cathey, Joseph Cathey Papers, MSS 95-4, Hunter Library, WCU.

¹²¹ Charles Cathey interview.

¹²² From J. W. Killian to Joseph Cathey, MSS 95-4, Hunter Library, WCU.

Other people were angered at what they perceived as Cathey's profiteering. Yet, a letter to Cathey from W. L. Love of the "Times" dated 17 October 1864 suggested that his paper:

might have done you absolute injustice, I beg you to write me and give me the facts, as to what you have done for the country, for soldiers' families...Be kind enough to give me a statement of what you have furnished, at what price & ...what was the ruling prices at those times.¹²³

Without more information, one can only speculate about these implied charges. Killian's letter indicated that the packet of money was to be transported from the eastern part of Virginia to Western North Carolina. This was not a safe trip in 1863 through war torn regions. Furthermore, if their money was applied to Cathey Store accounts covering past debt and future purchases like Dred Blalock's two hundred dollars mentioned earlier, people may not have understood the rampant inflation of up to 9,000 percent and the resulting devaluation of the Confederate dollar.¹²⁴ Speculators made large profits during the Civil War. Yet, merchants often lost money or broke even as items they had purchased decreased in actual dollar value by the time they were sold.¹²⁵ Furthermore, when so many people were in a desperate state of need due to the scarcity of supplies, someone in Cathey's position would have faced detractors. Nonetheless, it must have been a source of bitterness for Joseph Cathey who had lost two sons, two sons-in-law, and a number of friends to the Civil War to be accused of malfeasance. On the night of August 14, 1869, Cathey's mill burned down. The miller, George Bryson and his wife perished in the fire. They were buried in the slave cemetery across from the home Dred Blalock started building in 1860 for Colonel Joe Cathey's son, Joseph Turner Cathey.¹²⁶ It was rumored that the friends or family of a Confederate widow, who suspected Cathey of keeping money her husband had sent her, burned down the mill.¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid., from W. L. Love to Joseph Cathey.

¹²⁴ James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 226.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 411.

¹²⁶ Haney, 68.

¹²⁷ Cheryl Haney, interview by author at Bethel Middle School, Canton, NC, 8 October 2003.

During the post Civil War period, Cathey established credit accounts for freed slaves and allowed people who hired them to pay on their accounts for services performed.¹²⁸ For example, two freedmen, Henson Lenoir and Tolliver Langley lived in the community and traded at Cathey's Store. Langley, who owed \$11.00 on his store account, worked for Joseph Cathey as a teamster and was paid \$15.00 for a 24 January 1871 wagon trip to Columbia.¹²⁹ Since Cathey ran two wagons to South Carolina and Georgia as well as to the train station in Flat Rock, North Carolina, he hired a number of different drivers.¹³⁰ He frequently hired L. C. Hollingfield, a white man whom he paid \$15.00 for hauling merchandise to Flat Rock.¹³¹ While it appears that Langley made the same amount for hauling that Hollingfield did, in a later entry on 15 June 1872, Langley was paid only fifty-three cents a day for five days' labor.¹³² Another black man, Henson Lenoir, was paid \$20.00 for one month and twenty-one days of work, making a daily wage of about forty-seven cents.¹³³ In the same daybook, William Burrell, listed in the 1870 Haywood County Census as a white farmer, was paid one dollar a day.¹³⁴ As was common practice in the region, the black workers appeared to have been paid at a rate that was half of what white workers earned. However, without knowing the specific work that these men did, one can only guess at the uneven pay rate Colonel Cathey paid those of different races.

After the Civil War was over, Joseph Cathey received a letter from W. W. Stringfield, who served as a Major in William Holland Thomas' Company, the Sixty-ninth North Carolina. On 5 February 1866, he wrote Colonel Cathey that he missed everyone in Haywood County and felt that he could safely move back to the area. He informed Cathey that he knew the whereabouts of one of Cathey's ponies that had been confiscated during the War. "You would

¹²⁸ Joseph Cathey Daybook 1871-72, Charles Cathey Collection, 42, 43.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Charles Cathey interview.

¹³¹ From Cathey Daybook, 1872-73, SHC, 86.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³³ Joseph Cathey Daybook, 1871-72, Charles Cathey Collection, 43.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

have no difficulty at this time in getting back any such stock. The nearest way to get to your Poney (sic) would be via Burnsville through "Greasy Cove" and then down Buffalo Creek."¹³⁵

If life after the Civil War was made at all bearable for Joseph Cathey and others like him who suffered so many losses, it was due to their families and the continued friendship of people like W. W. Stringfield and Thomas Isaac Lenoir. An unnamed contemporary of Cathey's wrote, "He was an admirer of our government in its good days, but loss of his sons, and the bitterness of the reconstruction days were too much for him. He did not live to see a return to normalcy."¹³⁶

Cathey continued to operate his businesses until shortly before his death in 1874. An informal count of names in his pre Civil War 1859 store ledger and his post Civil War 1869 ledger shows a drop from six hundred to five hundred accounts. It is not known if that was due to the ravages of war and consequent changes or from payments made in cash. At this time, other stores began to locate in the area and Cathey lost some of his customers to them.¹³⁷ Nonetheless, his ledgers indicate that Cathey still made a good living from his enterprises. He was able to help his three widowed daughters-in-law and their families through an elaborate accounting system by which he kept track of their inherited shares in the profits and expenses of his business enterprises.¹³⁸

Following the fire, Colonel Cathey's mill was rebuilt of stone and James A. Blalock, who married Cathey's daughter, Nancy Louise in 1868, took over its management.¹³⁹ When Cathey retired, James A. Blalock also took over Cathey's Store.¹⁴⁰ Although the store eventually changed hands, it operated until the 1890s.¹⁴¹

Colonel Joseph Cathey saw the beginning of an era as well as its ending. The power of "the big fellows" as central to providing for the multiple needs and services of their communities was eroded by competition in the form of additional stores and innkeepers, new farming

¹³⁵ From W. W. Stringfield to Joseph Cathey, MSS 95-4, Hunter Library, WCU.

¹³⁶ Walter Kerr Cathey, 11.

¹³⁷ Haney, 60.

¹³⁸ Joseph Cathey Daybook, 1871-72, Charles Cathey Collection.

¹³⁹ Joseph Cathey Family Bible.

¹⁴⁰ Haney, *Pigeon Valley*, 68.

¹⁴¹ Boyt Henderson Cathey, 555.

methods, new kinds of manufacture, improved transportation that could bring in mail order goods, and traveling salesmen. Specialization also reduced the sphere of influence of “the big fellows.” As populations grew, businesses like the Cathey’s store and mill were no longer the hub of the wheel. There were others filling the needs once provided by someone like Colonel Joseph Cathey. Instead of Cathey going outside and bringing the larger world in, the world was coming inside and penetrating his base of power and center of influence.

Colonel Joseph Cathey's life did not end happily because of the devastation and dramatic changes brought by the Civil War. Yet the era in which he lived was the reason he was able to leave such an extensive legacy to the future generations of Catheys and Western North Carolinians. Out of frontier territory, he helped create a thriving community, a State Constitution, a meeting place for his neighbors, schools for children, a Methodist Church, and he helped facilitate the adjustment of freed slaves. Colonel Joseph Cathey’s life and enterprises illustrate that the citizens of even the most remote regions of Western North Carolina desired a productive life with all of the material benefits and advances found in the larger communities in the South and the rest of the United States.

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