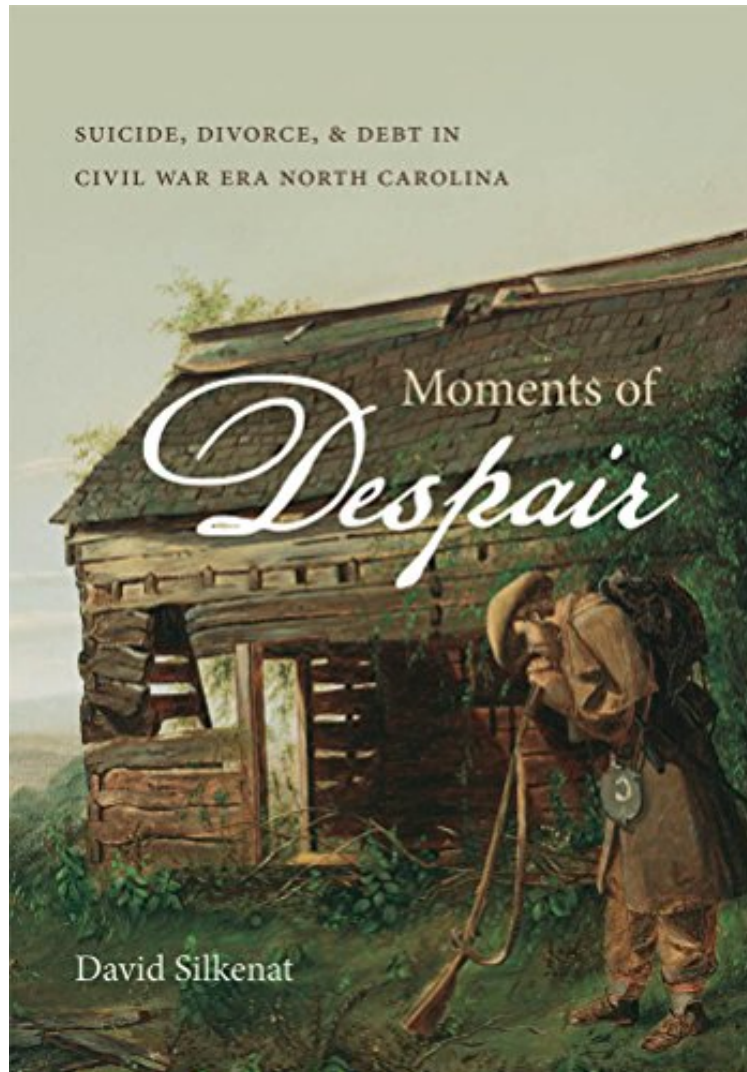


(Download) Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina

## Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina

David Silkenat

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**David Silkenat : Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Moments of Despair: Suicide, Divorce, and Debt in Civil War Era North Carolina:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. well researched and writtenBy Freeport saysA well researched, well written, and interesting book about a depressing topic. This is an academic book with 33 pages of footnotes, 30 pages of bibliography, an appendix, maps, and an index. It has no photographs. It is a combination of economic, legal and psychiatric history mixed in with racial and sex components. I recommend it for academics, mental health professionals and lawyers. Do not despair for there were those back then who were happy, content, prosperous and

successful in their marriage and business. This book reminds me of some of the work of legal historian James Willard Hurst. It is interesting to consider that with the end of slavery, the debt incurred by some slave owners in purchasing their "property" before the abolition was not abolished and was still owed. So the former slave owner still owed the debt and the entity or person that made the loan could not seize the collateral. The author sets out one example of suicide as follows: A 1892 suicide note, printed in the News and Observer: I married a widow with a grown up daughter. My father visited our house very often, fell in love with my step daughter and married her. So my father became my son-in-law, and my step daughter my mother, because she was my father's wife. Some time afterward wife had a son- he was my father's brother-in-law and my uncle, for he was the brother of my stepmother. My father's wife, i.e. my stepdaughter, had also a son. He was, of course, my brother, and in the meantime my grandchild, because he was the son of my daughter. My wife was my grandmother, because she was my mother's mother. I was my wife's husband and grandchild at the same time. And, as the husband of a person's grandmother is his grandfather, I was my own grandfather. The newspaper observed that the writer "can scarcely be blamed for killing himself under the circumstances." 9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Social History at its' best! By James W. Durney It is not often I find a social history that is fun to read, one that grabs my attention and holds it the way a good battle history can. This book manages to do that while being very informative and giving the reader an understanding of these issues in North Carolina. While focused in one state many of the attitudes are common throughout the South. This provides us with a detailed examination of the subject that carries into the larger picture. The author has an easy to read informative style that is almost conversational. However, he manages to provide a lot of information at the same time. The book covers approximately 1840 to 1910. A period of great change both socially and financially throughout the state. This tight focus allows detailed consideration of the attitudes of both Blacks and Whites on each item. This provides a unique look at the changes emancipation bring to the Black community. Credit in the Antebellum White community is a personal concern between friends acting as gentleman. Debit as understood in Northern financial circles is foreign to them. The hyperinflation of the Civil War and emancipation placed strains on this community that I had not considered until reading this book. Throughout the book are "fun facts" that both advance the discussion and add value. As an example, Indiana has the most liberal divorce laws in the 1850s. Emancipation did not wipe out the debts incurred purchasing slaves. Organized into sections of about 70 pages each, with a chapter on the subject prior to the war. Two chapters cover how the war affects the subject and changes after the war. A fourth chapter looks at the overall issue during the period covered. Each chapter presents the views of the White and Black community presenting a comprehensive discussion of the subject. This provides sufficient space to present a quality discussion without bogging down in details. This excellent book is a social history of the changing attitudes toward Suicide, Divorce, and Debt. It is a personal look at the South, how the people lived and the affects of the war. Overall, it is a fun and informative read providing background information that will help us understand both Secession and Reconstruction.

During the Civil War era, black and white North Carolinians were forced to fundamentally reinterpret the morality of suicide, divorce, and debt as these experiences became pressing issues throughout the region and nation. In *Moments of Despair*, David Silkenat explores these shifting sentiments. Antebellum white North Carolinians stigmatized suicide, divorce, and debt, but the Civil War undermined these entrenched attitudes, forcing a reinterpretation of these issues in a new social, cultural, and economic context in which they were increasingly untethered from social expectations. Black North Carolinians, for their part, used emancipation to lay the groundwork for new bonds of community and their own interpretation of social frameworks. Silkenat argues that North Carolinians' attitudes differed from those of people outside the South in two respects. First, attitudes toward these cultural practices changed more abruptly and rapidly in the South than in the rest of America, and second, the practices were interpreted through a prism of race. Drawing upon a robust and diverse body of sources, including insane asylum records, divorce petitions, bankruptcy filings, diaries, and personal correspondence, this innovative study describes a society turned upside down as a consequence of a devastating war.

It is not often I find a social history that is fun to read, one that grabs my attention and holds it the way a good battle history can. This book manages to do that while being very informative and giving the reader an understanding of these issues in North Carolina. --TOCWOC: A Civil War Blog Silkenat succeeds in challenging many of our assumptions about nineteenth-century North Carolina. --Journal of American Studies A highly polished, highly original study that deserves the widest possible readership. --Journal of Southern History To have a better rounded education on our American Civil War; you should consider adding this very interesting book to your library. --Lone Star Book An interesting new perspective on an incontrovertible old truth. --American Historical Silkenat's discussion of suicide has a made a major intervention into the scholarship of southern violence. --Journal of the North Carolina Association of Historians This excellent book is a social history of the changing attitudes toward Suicide, Divorce, and Debt. . . . It is a fun and informative read. --TOCWOC--A Civil War Blog A valuable contribution to our understanding of how the American Civil War affected the lives of ordinary people. --Journal of Interdisciplinary History Silkenat clearly

illustrates the social, cultural, and economical upheaval left in the war's wake.--Our StateSilkenat argues that the Civil War fundamentally changed southern culture for both black and white North Carolinians. Using suicide, debt, and divorce as tools of measurement, he traces these changes and the significant impact they had on society.--Southern HistorianWriting a book on such depressing topics that reads as easily and enjoyably as this one is a tribute to both Silkenat's scholarship and his abilities as a writer.--The South Carolina Historical Magazine[A] fast paced, well written book. . . integrat[ing] social and cultural history in an always intriguing, frequently brilliant, analysis.--Journal of Social HistorySilkenat's work deserves serious consideration for its broad, largely convincing claims and its deep archival base. This is an interesting, well-researched study that should confirm the importance of the Civil War in broadly transforming Southern society.--The Historian An excellent book full of wide-ranging, convincing research, Moments of Despair reshapes discussions of the Civil War, race, community, and personal strife in an innovative and convincing way. David Silkenat reveals that suicide, divorce, and debt form a fascinating triad on which rests important insight into postwar North Carolina, and by extension, the entire South. A book about many gloomy times, this is far from a gloomy read.--Steven Stowe, Indiana UniversityThis original and outstanding book is significant not just for scholarship about North Carolina but also for our understanding of southern culture as a whole in the Civil War era. The research is impressively thorough, and the analysis is wisely and thoughtfully done.--Paul D. Escott, Wake Forest UniversityFrom the Inside FlapDuring the Civil War era, black and white North Carolinians were forced to fundamentally reinterpret the morality of suicide, divorce, and debt as they became pressing issues throughout the region and nation. Drawing upon a diverse body of sources, including insane asylum records, divorce petitions, bankruptcy filings, diaries, and personal correspondence, Silkenat describes a society turned upside down as a consequence of a devastating war.