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Guarding Greensboro: A Confederate Company in the Making of a Southern Community

G. Ward Hubbs

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Historian G. Ward Hubbs first encountered the Confederate soldiers known as the Greensboro Guards through their Civil War diaries and letters. Later he discovered that the Guards had formed some forty years before the war, soon after the founding of the Alabama town that was their namesake. *Guarding Greensboro* examines how the yearning for community played itself out across decades of peace and war, prosperity and want.

Greensboro sprang up as a wide-open frontier town in Alabama's Black Belt, an exceptionally fertile part of the Deep South where people who dreamed of making it rich as cotton planters flocked. Although prewar Greensboro had its share of overlapping communities--ranging from Masons to school-improvement societies--it was the Guards who brought together the town's highly individualistic citizenry.

A typical prewar militia unit, the Guards mustered irregularly and marched in their finest regalia on patriotic holidays. Most significantly, they patrolled for hostile Indians and rebellious slaves. In protecting the entire white population against common foes, Hubbs argues, the Guards did what Greensboro's other voluntary associations could not: move citizens beyond self-interest.

As Hubbs follows the Guards through their Civil War campaigns, he keeps an eye on the home front: on how Greensborians shared a sense of purpose and sacrifice while they dealt with fears of a restive slave populace. Finally, Hubbs discusses the postwar readjustments of Greensboro's veterans as he examines the political and social upheaval in their town and throughout the South. Ultimately, Hubbs argues, the Civil War created the South of legend and its distinctive communities.

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