



# For Slavery and Union: Benjamin Buckner and Kentucky Loyalties in the Civil War

*Patrick A. Lewis*

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**For Slavery and Union: Benjamin Buckner and Kentucky Loyalties in the Civil War** Patrick A. Lewis Benjamin Forsythe Buckner (1836–1901) faced a dire choice as the flames of Civil War threatened his native Kentucky. As an ambitious Bluegrass aristocrat, he was sympathetic to fellow slave owners, but was also convinced that the Peculiar Institution could not survive a war for Southern independence. Defying the wishes of his Rebel fiancée and her powerful family?yet still hoping to impress them with his resolve, independence, and courage?Buckner joined the Twentieth Kentucky Volunteer Infantry in 1861 as a Union soldier. President Abraham Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 ultimately destroyed Buckner's faith in his cause, however, and he resigned his commission.

In *For Slavery and Union*, Patrick A. Lewis uses Benjamin Buckner's story to illuminate the origins and perspectives of Kentucky's conservative proslavery Unionists, and explain why this group eventually became a key force in repressing social and political change during the Reconstruction era and beyond. Free from the constraints and restrictions imposed on the former Confederate states, men like Buckner joined with other proslavery forces to work in the interest of the New South's brand of economic growth and racial control.

Other studies have explored how Kentucky cultivated a Confederate identity after the Civil War, but *For Slavery and Union* is the first major work to personify this transformation. Lewis's important book transcends biography to provide a deeply nuanced look at the history of the commonwealth in the nineteenth century and the development of the New South.

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