

### Tribes And Tribulations: Barbara Cloud Explores Issues Of Family And War

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#### Recommended Citation

Ng, Laura (2002) "Tribes And Tribulations: Barbara Cloud Explores Issues Of Family And War," *Civil War Book Review*. Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 .

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol4/iss2/5>

## Interview

### TRIBES AND TRIBULATIONS: BARBARA CLOUD EXPLORES ISSUES OF FAMILY AND WAR

Ng, Laura  
Spring 2002

*Civil War Book Review (cwbr): You mention in the introduction of Minister to the Cherokees that you are a descendant of James Anderson Slover. How does your relationship to Slover affect this project?*

**Barbara Cloud (bc):** The main impact is that it gave me access to the primary documents without leaving home. I never met the man or heard anyone talk about what he was like. He was just "Grandpa Slover" to my father. Actually he is my father's great-grandfather.

*cwbr: What motivated him to write his memoirs?*

**bc:** His children begged him to write the story of his life. He undoubtedly had told them about his adventures and they, like I, thought them interesting enough to be recorded. I do not think Slover intended them for an audience beyond his own family. Interestingly, my own father was moved by Slover's memoir to write his own.

*cwbr: Slover does not reveal a great deal about his family life. Is this typical for war memoirs?*

**bc:** I cannot speak for war memoirs in particular, but I think his approach is typical of 19th-century men writing about their lives-maybe 20th-century men as well because my father's memoir does not say much about family either. I suspect this relates to the public/private life issue that has often been raised about the respective roles of men and women. I have tried to persuade my mother to write her memoir so that I could place it next to my father's- I think she would include very different events and much more about family.

***cwbr: What impact, according to Slover, did the Civil War have on the Cherokee nation? What issues besides slavery drove the division among the Cherokee? Do they mirror the larger crisis between North and South?***

**bc:** The Cherokees had been split since the Treaty of New Echota, when part of the nation was willing to give up ancestral lands in Georgia and North Carolina to the U.S., but others were not and objected. They were already divided between the so-called full bloods and half bloods before slavery aggravated the division and the nation became involved in the Civil War.

***cwbr: Slover briefly served as a chaplain for a Confederate Cherokee regiment. What was his experience? How did this affect his views regarding separation of religion and politics? How do his views on separation match the sentiments of other faiths during this time?***

**bc:** He says almost nothing about the period in which he was a chaplain, so I can only speculate about his experience. I would love to know why it was so short, since he apparently replaced a colleague who was willing to be a courier for General Stand Watie; it may be that Slover was asked to do something similar and refused. I suspect his insistence on separating religion and the politics of slavery was his way to avoid confronting the issue of slavery. Most of the other missionaries working among the Cherokees were anti-slavery. The northern Baptists Evan Jones and his son had a great deal of influence among the Cherokee leadership and noted that they had hoped Slover would work with them in converting the nation. Instead, when they found he was not anti-slavery, they spread rumors about him-or so he says.

***cwbr: Is there a single moment that sticks out in your mind as exemplifying the Cherokee experience during the Civil War?***

**bc:** The thing that stands out in my mind as exemplifying the experience during the Civil War-and afterward-is the raiding and marauding that went on, sometimes from the Union side, sometimes from the Confederates. People living in the area, whether they were Cherokees or whites, were not safe from theft or worse. In one of the few times he talks about how his family shared his experiences, Slover tells how they hid their food from the raiders and how they had to make clothing from the curtains. I suspect such experiences were worse for the Cherokees whose nation was nearly destroyed during the war.

***cwbr: How powerful a tool was religion when it came to recruiting for the North and the South?***

**bc:** The missionaries took sides in the war, mainly based on the slavery issue that had already split the Cherokee nation. There is nothing to suggest that Slover helped recruit people to fight for the South, so I think recruiting success resulted more from the personalities of the leaders on each side. Both Chief John Ross, who was eventually on the side of the North, and Stand Watie, a Confederate, had their own followings separate from religious issues.

***cwbr: You comment in the Minister to the Cherokees that individuals from Tennessee, due to its promotion of "democracy, autonomy, giving frontiersmen an opportunity to participate actively in their own salvation, embraced the Baptist faith." Do these same principles attract the members of the Cherokee Nation, or were there different qualities that appealed to them?***

**bc:** Slover makes it sound as though the respective success of the northern and southern Baptists among the Cherokees came primarily from their stands on slavery. Slover labored quite some time as a missionary in the Cherokee nation before he made any converts, and by then, 1858-59, war was near. Because of the strictness of a few of the other missionaries, some of Slover's conversion success may have come from the problems certain Cherokees had keeping employment if they did not disavow slavery. The southern Baptists "converted" a number of the Cherokee preachers who had previously joined other faiths but were dismissed because of their acceptance of slavery.

*Barbara Cloud is the associate provost for academic affairs at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Her latest work, Minister to the Cherokees: A Civil war Autobiography (University of Nebraska Press, ISBN 0803242832, \$47.50, hardcover) is the memoir of James Anderson Slover on his years during and after the Civil War as a minister.*