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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 7, 2015

Historic Chattahoochee Commission re-releases Civil War Letters Book

The Historic Chattahoochee Commission (HCC), in cooperation with Mercer University Press, has re-released In the Land of the Living: Wartime Letters of Confederates from the Chattahoochee Valley of Alabama and Georgia. This unique book was originally published in a limited edition in 1981 and has been out of print for many years. It is the most comprehensive collection of Civil War letters written by residents of southeast Alabama and southwest Georgia to be published.

Poignant in emotion, informative in detail, and broad in scope, the correspondence contained herein provides the reader with a unique opportunity to understand the Civil War and its effect on individuals and families from an intensely personal perspective. The writers collectively paint a compelling portrait of a watershed moment in national history from a regional viewpoint. They make well-known events tangible and lesser-known sidebars illuminating. Appropriately, this volume reaches Americans as our nation contemplates the Civil War and its impact on American history during the war's sesquicentennial anniversary.

“This edition juxtaposes the writing of commissioned officers alongside those of the private soldier,” writes Doug Purcell, former HCC executive director. “While the Chattahoochee letters are a small sample, they indicate a correlation between military rank and literary skills. There is, however, a less clear relationship between rank and humane sensibilities. Some of the most compassionate and poignant letters were written by the private soldiers who had the least education or literary ability.”

Ray Mathis (1937-1981) was a professor in the department of history at Troy University. He was the author of Pilgrimage to Madison, College Life in the Reconstruction South, “Uncle Tom” Reed’s Memoir of the University, and John Horry Dent: South Carolina Aristocrat on the Alabama Frontier.

The book contains 244 pages, maps, and an index. It is in hardback format and retails for \$35 plus \$5 for postage and handling. Books may be ordered from HCC, P. O. Box 33, Eufaula, AL 36072-0033. Please add \$1 postage for each additional book ordered.

The HCC is a state agency of both Alabama and Georgia charged with promoting heritage tourism, history education, and historic preservation in the 18-county region that borders the Chattahoochee River. For further information, contact HCC at 334-687-9755. Inquiries are welcomed by email at deborah.shaw@chattahoocheetrace.com.

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