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BUSHWHACKER BELLES

Larry Wood



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In this fascinating look at an often overlooked subject, historian Larry Wood delves into the hidden lives of the brave belles of Missouri. Sometimes connected by blood but always united in purpose, these wives, sisters, daughters, lovers, friends, and mothers risked their lives and their freedom to give aid and comfort to their menfolk. They used subterfuge and occasionally sheer luck to feed, clothe, and shelter the guerrillas. These courageous women of every age and station acted as essential go-betweens, scouts, spies, guides, and mail handlers. They often joined in on the bushwhackers' campaigns, assisting them in any way possible. They even received and traded stolen property for their Confederate brethren. Many of the women were arrested or banished from their home state of Missouri; many were forced to give an oath of allegiance to the Union in order to gain their freedom; a few were able to carry out their clandestine missions undetected. Wood traces these women through their own diaries and other primary sources from the era. The poignant tales of these women are punctuated by images of many of them; the stiff, posed portraits give silent testimony to their resiliency and strength during tumultuous times.

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