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Thomas P. Lowry. *Confederate Heroines: 120 Southern Women Convicted by Union Military Justice.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. xvii + 212 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-2990-6.

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Trying Southern Women

During the last decade and a half, Thomas P. Lowry, M.D., has carved out a distinctive place for himself among Civil War historians. He has done this by seeking out and uncovering previously unknown or relatively obscure sources and using them to produce informative studies on topics that have yet to receive much attention from historians. Included among these works are studies of military court-martials, an overview of sex during the Civil War, and an examination of how Abraham Lincoln dealt with cases from the military justice system that came to his attention.[1] In *Confederate Heroines*, Lowry applies his fine research and writing skills to the task of uncovering and chronicling over one hundred cases in which southern women were arrested and tried by Federal military courts for various crimes during the war.

Lowry has produced an interesting and informative book. He sets up his study with a preface and an introduction that briefly discuss nineteenth-century ideas regarding women's roles in Northern and Southern society, how scholarship has been distinguished by an increase in interest recently in the various roles women played in the Civil War, and how the stories of the women in his book in particular "can be seen as evidence of the tectonic, if temporary shifts in the dynamic between men and women" that occurred in the Civil War (p. ix). These are followed by a chapter on cases from Missouri, Maryland, and Tennessee in which readers are introduced to individuals such as Zeidee Bagwell of St. Louis; when her letter, expressing devotion to the Confederacy, happened to come into the possession of Union authorities in the city, she was sentenced to confinement in her home, directed to take an oath of allegiance to the Union, and forced to post a $1000.00 bond.

Readers also learn of the remarkable case of Mary S. Terry of Maryland, who was arrested for smuggling when she was found in possession of nearly $2000.00 worth of contraband goods. Even though this was not the first time she had come to the attention of the military justice system for such offenses, the military commission trying her case initially decided to impose a fairly light punishment, requiring only that she take the oath of allegiance, accept a parole on her honor, and stay north of New Jersey's southern border. When the commission's decisions were sent to Gen. Lew Wallace for review, however, they provoked an exasperated and interesting response. Wallace complained that the court had imposed much too light a sentence for a woman who was demonstrated to be "an intelligent, bold, defiant, energetic, masculine Rebel, bent on mischief," and he asked how the commission could possibly "give faith to the honor of such an unsexed merchant" (pp. 50-51), before compelling the commission to reconsider its findings. The commission responded by revising the sentence to a one-year imprisonment in a female prison in Salem, Massachusetts. As if this was not enough, it was soon thereafter discovered that there was no female prison in Salem. Consequently, Terry ended up being sent to the female prison in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, an institution that saw a number of the women whose experiences are chronicled in this book pass through its gates.

Entertaining stories similar to Bagwell's and Terry's are also found in a subsequent chapter on cases involving women such as Emily Sparks, Rebecca Field, Annie Egan, and Elizabeth Ball from the ten states south of the northern borders of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas. This is followed by a chapter on cases from Kentucky, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Although not all of the episodes chronicled in Lowry's book are as interesting as the one involving Terry, there is much here to satisfy those looking for good stories and information on an aspect of nineteenth-century America that has yet to receive much attention from historians.

Readers looking for more than good stories will be somewhat disappointed, though. Other than noting that the task of catching these women, trying them, and working through the appeals process in these cases con-

sumed manpower and energy that could have been put to better use for the Union cause, Lowry offers few insights that add much of great significance to our understanding of the course and conduct of the Civil War. Nor does he make much of an effort to build on observations contained in his introduction regarding how the war shaped or reflected social, cultural, military, political, or legal forces that were at work during the Middle Period. Lowry might have offered some analysis and insights of a general nature that could have placed his findings in the context of extant scholarship in his epilogue. Unfortunately, this section of the book instead consists solely of a summarization of his findings (that prosecutions for smuggling were concentrated in Tennessee, Louisiana, and Maryland; Missouri provided nearly all of the cases of active support for guerrilla activities, assistance to Confederate prisoners of war seeking to escape, and the largest number of women caught corresponding with rebel soldiers; and that Washington D.C. was the principle location where women were tried for assisting Union soldiers to desert) and a commentary on sources. Still, in the final analysis, Lowry deserves considerably more praise than criticism for this book. Readers who have enjoyed his previous works will find this a welcome addition to their libraries, for, in addition to providing further evidence of Lowry's keen abilities as a historical detective, *Confederate Heroines* is a well-written, entertaining, and fairly easy read that adds a great deal of interesting information to Civil War literature.

Note

[1]. Thomas P. Lowry, *Tarnished Eagles: The Court-Martial of Fifty Union Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1998); with Jack D. Welsh, *Tarnished Scalpels: The Court-Martials of Fifty Union Surgeons* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000); *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell: Sex in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994); and *Don't Shoot That Boy! Abraham Lincoln and Military Justice* (Mason City, Iowa: Savas Publishing, 1999).

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