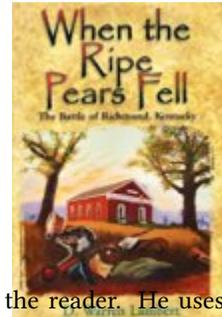


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

D. Warren Lambert. *When the Ripe Pears Fell: The Battle of Richmond, Kentucky*. Richmond: Madison County Historical Society, 1997. xi + 245 pp. \$35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-9615162-3-9.

Reviewed by Paul Leushcen (University of Arkansas)
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As a distinguished professor once explained to me, the number of works on the American Civil War is as numerous as the stars in the sky. One might think by looking at this vast array of titles and subjects that every topic has been examined, but as historians, we find this is not true. Books are published every month on new and, at least to the authors, exciting aspects of the war. *When the Ripe Pears Fell* by D. Warren Lambert has a quality that makes it stand out from the rest. Often works on such narrow topics fail to be significant because of a lack of research or a flawed writing style. Lambert transcends these problems with a well-documented and especially well written work that must be seen as a prime example on how a smaller battle should be examined.

In the late summer of 1862, Confederate forces under the command of Generals Braxton Bragg and Edmund Kirby Smith moved north from the Kentucky-Tennessee border area into central Kentucky in order to take the key crossroads area of Lexington and to draw Union troops from eastern and Mississippi valley campaigns. During the early stages of this campaign, units of the Army of Kentucky under Smith's command pushed back a large Union force under the command of Generals Mahlon D. Manson and William Nelson in a drawn out action now called the battle of Richmond. Although the forces on both sides numbered less than ten thousand, the battle was an important part of Bragg and Smith's successful summer campaign.

Lambert begins his examination of the battle with a brief description of the Confederate plans and early action in the campaign. This is followed by the heart of the work, the running battle that centered around Smith's advance to Lexington through Richmond. Lambert portrays the different stages of the battle in great detail, and

he does so without bogging down the reader. He uses an array of sources from both sides of the conflict to explain how the Union defense crumbled repeatedly in the face of superior force and quite a bit of Confederate luck, especially in the early stages of the battle.

Along with his excellent description of the battle, Lambert shines in other areas as well. On several controversial topics, he is quick to illustrate opposing viewpoints. An example is Manson's conduct during the early parts of the battle before Nelson's arrival. Several officers reported that Manson was drunk on duty, and they blamed him for the early tactical shortcomings that resulted in a premature retreat of the Union forces. Other people, including Lambert, have praised his conduct and explained that his hastily planned defense was sound in theory but, lacking sufficient support, collapsed in an early Confederate breakthrough. Although Lambert does state his opinion, he leaves all final judgments to his readers. Another area of interest to many historians will be the short selections at the end of this work that examine the historiography of the the battle and the controversy over casualty reports.

Anyone looking for a well balanced and critical account of the battle of Richmond need look no further. A fine example of historical writing, Lambert's overall presentation is flawed only by poor presentation of maps, and that can be probably be blamed on his publisher. Overall, this is an excellent work for both amateur and professional historians that balances in depth research with quality writing.

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