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**Clarence R. Geier, David Gerald Orr, Matthew Reeves, eds.** *Huts and History: The Historical Archaeology of Military Encampment during the American Civil War.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. xviii + 279 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2941-2.

**Robert K. Krick**. *Civil War Weather in Virginia.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007. 178 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8173-1577-1.

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**Place, Environment, and the Civil War Soldier**

A significant amount of mystery still enshrouds the lives of common soldiers during the Civil War, surprising as that may seem given the profusion of literature on the topic. Since the 1970s, scholars have pored over soldiers' letters, diaries, and memoirs in pursuit of comprehending their activities, beliefs, and emotions. While it is natural for historians to focus on people, we have not yet adequately analyzed environment as an interactive force in the Civil War. A soldier's day was profoundly shaped by the rain, cold, or heat, whether he lifted his rifle or not, and his health and happiness utterly depended on the quality of his living and sleeping conditions. Yet answering how physical place shaped Civil War soldier experience requires untraditional historical approaches, which *Huts and History* and *Civil War Weather in Virginia* both embrace. The former employs historical archeology to investigate the makeup and geography of soldier camps, while the latter uses an environmental approach to report on meteorological conditions in Washington DC and Virginia for each day of the war. Both works are important additions to our broadening literature on soldier experience as we consider that most soldiers spent very few days of the year engaged in actual combat and far more time pondering their comfort, safety, and wellbeing in the monotony of camp and on the march. Although not exhaustive texts, the books serve as references for expanding further inquiry into the role of environment in soldiers' experiences.

The contributors to *Huts and History* present the troubling reality that while excavations of Civil War encampments and their material culture may reveal intimate realities of soldier life such as religion and ethnicity, and illuminate aspects of military planning such as the locations of hospitals and supply trains, they are nevertheless "among the least protected, understood, and interpreted of military sites" (p. 1). Thus the collection embarks on two levels of inquiry: historical descriptions of camps and the challenges of historical archeology as a trade. The essays that pursue the first goal illuminate the numerous and highly individualized expressions of Civil War encampments and how they were shaped foremost by terrain and topography and, secondarily, by human decisions. Generals and quartermasters made the major decisions regarding camp location and layout, building on earlier military models, such as Frederick W. A. von Steuben's Revolutionary War diagrams or General Winfield Scott's 1834 translation of the French *Infantry-Tactics* regulations. The final shape of camp was based on the idiosyncrasies of officers, personal decisions made by individual common soldiers, available housing or building supplies, duration of encampment, defensive strategies, and a host of other circumstantial factors. The possibilities were limitless, and the essays sample a stunning variety of camps, from temporary bivouac structures to elaborate winter constructions to urban headquarters, all meticulously illustrated with blueprints based on excavations and written records.

The second level of inquiry, perhaps even more important to the editors, addresses the tools, techniques, and problems of historical archaeology. One issue the authors raise is the problem of locating sites that are sufficiently intact to allow for proper interpretation. As author Joseph G. Balicki explains, hundreds of surface features were present at the excavation of Evansport, Virginia, where the 1861-62 Confederate blockade of the Potomac River took place, allowing for the rare chance to

thoroughly consider how terrain, disease, and military loss affected the evolution of the encampment. Evansport is the exception, however, as most Civil War camps have been picked over by relic hunters, built on, or otherwise destroyed and may be impossible to accurately decipher. However, in an interesting twist, another essay by Balicki, coauthored with Bryan L. Corle, asserts that relic hunters, who rely on local contacts and trade secrets, frequently have more luck locating camps than do professionals. The success of relic hunters suggests a need for professionals to combine resources with these old rivals in order to uncover vanishing sites. An even more important partnership for the editors is the continued collaboration between military historians, who lack material data, and archeologists, who neglect written data. Overall, the volume serves as a call to action for further investigation of place in soldier studies and for better preservation of neglected Civil War campsites.

Also centered around place is Robert K. Krick's *Civil War Weather in Virginia.* It amasses daily weather records chronicled in Georgetown, Washington DC, by local minister C. B. Mackee, with the exception of three weeks that are supplemented with Richmond readings when Mackee's thermometer malfunctioned. Each of fifty-seven monthly weather data tables complete with the times of sunrise and sunset from October 1860 to June 1865 is accompanied by snippets of lively commentary from soldiers and Virginians who lived the mercurial days of the Civil War. Although the author admits that it may be inaccurate to entitle a book about Washington weather readings *Civil War Weather in Virginia*, his scholarly focus has always been on Virginia as the site of the most important Civil War events, and therefore it is no mistake that he wishes to recreate meteorological events there using the best available records.

Yet as Krick asserts, his book "makes no attempt to evaluate the unmistakable effect of weather on Civil War activities in Virginia" (p. 6). Rather, it serves as a launching point for future analysis of environmental effects on the daily progress of the war. While such historians as Harold A. Winters have shown how weather could be determinative in military combat, scholars have not adequately engaged the question of how weather shaped Civil War battles and have even less considered how weather shaped soldiers' daily lives. Krick's judiciously selected quotes already display evidence of how weather records might be expanded into analytical works. For instance, he quotes soldiers recalling the torrents of rain at the September 1, 1862, battle of Chantilly and other men stuck in the trenches of Cold Harbor on June 5, 1864–who lamented, "plenty of rain and no rest"–suggesting that weather considerably influenced battle experiences (p. 130). Soldiers filled their letters and diaries with such details about weather, and some of us are finally beginning to ask why.

When read together *Huts and History* and *Civil War Weather in Virginia* seem to signal a new trend in Civil War literature toward using interdisciplinary techniques and ideas to explore neglected aspects of soldier life. Krick inches mainstream military history toward environmental analyses, while editors Geier, Orr, and Reeves give historians access to archeological tools. However, neither book is a typical Civil War read. *Civil War Weather in Virginia* is expressly a reference source that does not weave a story from one month to the next. *Huts and History* samples themes without advancing an integrative analysis, as its essays move back and forth from historical moment to modern-day excavation, which can be dizzying. Yet both texts' greatest strengths are that they are data-rich beginning points of inquiry that should serve to inspire continued cooperation among historical fields and innovation among scholars. Further, the ideas and techniques of environmental and archeological history can shed light on other American conflicts, both before and after the Civil War.

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