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W. Craig Gaines. *Encyclopedia of Civil War Shipwrecks.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008. xi + 231 pp. $35.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-3274-6.

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The High Property Costs of War

It is perhaps an oversimplification to state that wars cause damage. The loss of life, wealth, and property is the inevitable result when peoples and nations decide to wage hostile conflict. The ability to define and explain the scope of loss, however, is often difficult to conceptualize. Casualty lists or monetary measures of physical damage are a detached means of realizing the true cost of conflict. A more direct representation is often better, and W. Craig Gaines provides one with *Encyclopedia of Civil War Shipwrecks*. The book offers a litany of ship losses, from both natural and manmade causes, that puts the physical cost of the Civil War into stark reality. Although intended as a reference work, the book is a fascinating collection of combat operations and natural obstacles that led to the destruction of a vessel, often with the loss of life. When possible, Gaines relates the post-sinking fate of the wreck and, when possible, the wreck's current condition. Some wrecks received attention, such as salvage or recovery, immediately after the ship sank, while others languished on the bottom of the ocean, river, or lake where they sank for years, but Gaines relates the ships' fates when records exist.

In Gaines's work, a reader finds the oft-ignored element of the mundane in war. The vast majority of the ships in his book are not well-known vessels, they did not go down in epic sea battles, and when they slipped beneath the waters they often escaped notice. Instead, the vessels were shipwrecked performing the boring, but necessary, tasks that keep a nation and an army functioning in wartime. Famous Civil War vessels, such as USS *Monitor* or CSS *Alabama*, each receive their due accounts in the book, but the much greater number of incidents involve the loss of an unknown and uncelebrated craft that met an unfortunate end. The loss of the CSS *Virginia* is well documented, but Gaines's listings of unknown and unfortunate craft, like the *Minnesota Belle*, the *Antonica*, or the *Nimrod*, casts a light on the freighters, transports, and steamers that met an unexpected end while plying their trade in wartime.

As a reference work, *Encyclopedia of Civil War Shipwrecks* has relatively little text or narrative. Gaines provides only a brief preface to explain the work, followed by accounts of sinkings that contain only the most minimal amount of information. In most cases, there is little to relate or is known about the sinking, and Gaines does not postulate upon what he cannot document. He cites the sources of his information at the end of each passage, a welcome feature that allows the reader to access the source without digging through endnotes or footnotes. Although not a traditional Civil War work, this book is a well-written, interesting, and thorough listing of the cost of waging war.

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