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**Hubbard T. Minor**. *Confederate Naval Cadet: The Diary and Letters of Midshipman Hubbard T. Minor, With a History of the Confederate Naval Academy.* Ed. R. Thomas Campbell. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2007. vii + 216 pp. $39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-2645-4.

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**Lives on Hold and Property Lost**

Hubbard T. Minor was a young man whose time never came. As a cadet at the Confederate Naval Academy in Richmond, Virginia, Minor represented the future of a country that never came to be. When the Confederate States of America declared its existence in 1860, one of the important elements of new statehood was the trapping of legitimacy. The Confederacy created all of the things that "real" countries had. Obvious trappings included a government, a flag, a constitution, and a currency, but other less obvious institutions and devices also came into being. The Confederacy created a motto; a national seal; its own version of the White House in Richmond; and, of particular interest to Minor, a Naval Academy. Presuming that the Confederacy existed long enough to have a substantial navy, the Confederate government created a training school for future naval officers on the James River just below Richmond as a sign of the new nation's permanence. After serving in the 42nd Tennessee Infantry, Minor, a Virginia native, applied for a position as a midshipman at the new institution. In his subsequent diary, which Minor had to maintain as part of his formal training, the new officer trainee provided an intimate day-to-day look at the Civil War along with the more formal workings of the new and oft-struggling Naval Academy.

Using Minor's papers as an anchor, R. Thomas Campbell has crafted a brief but enthralling view of one man's search for a purpose in life. Minor's service in the 42nd Tennessee ended in August 1863, when he began his life in the Confederate navy. The tone of Minor's writings in his diary mark him as an intelligent and ambitious young man for whom naval service pointed the way to a better future. The war, however, had other plans for Minor's ambitions. Assignments constantly interrupted his naval education in Richmond, and Minor found himself in Savannah, Georgia, as a firsthand witness to the capture of the city by Union General William T. Sherman at the end of his infamous "March to the Sea." The loss of Savannah, however, meant that Minor returned to his studies in Richmond, only to have the war interrupt his plans again when the Confederate failure to hold Petersburg, Virginia, led to the capture of Richmond. Minor's description of the near-panic in the Confederate capital as the government evacuated the city is captivating, especially Minor's own role in protecting the Confederacy's gold reserves while nearly dying from dysentery. His dreams of a successful naval career came to an end a few days later when the Confederacy surrendered and the optimistic future he dreamt of disappeared.

As an account of wartime activities, Minor's diary is itself a worthwhile read. But Campbell also brings out the human side of Minor as a typical example of the tribulations of wartime. Minor discusses naval victories, both big and small, and the diary's passages relating his courting of the young lady in Savannah who eventually became his wife provide a human touch to this wartime narrative. Campbell supplements the diary with brief histories of both the 42nd Tennessee and the Confederate Naval Academy, along with eight short appendixes that provide supporting material. While the content is an interesting read, the overall presentation seems one of a collection of small items, none of which are extensive enough to merit their own publication. A reader will find these items interesting and compelling, but also wonder why Campbell did not create a more unified and extensive account of such a compelling story.

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