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Otto Bond, ed. *Under the Flag of the Nation: Diaries and Letters of Owen Johnston Hopkins, a Yankee Volunteer in the Civil War.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998. 308 pp. $18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8142-0743-7.

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A Flag-Waving Soldier

Published in 1961 by the Ohio State University Press, a volume in the Publications of the Ohio Civil War Centennial Commission, *Under the Flag* has been reissued by the Press. The editor, Otto F. Bond, a professor of French at the University of Chicago in 1961, had access to the Hopkins' personalia through his wife, Julia Hopkins Bond, a descendant of Owen Hopkins.

Born in 1844 in Bellefontaine, Ohio, Hopkins enlisted in the Union army in September of 1861 and was soon a private in the Forty-Second Ohio Volunteer Infantry. His regiment was with the Army of the Ohio in campaigns in 1861 and 1862 in the Big Sandy Valley and around Cumberland Gap. A unit in the Army of the Tennessee, the regiment next fought Confederates in numerous battles in 1863 that led to the capture of Vicksburg. Assigned to the Department of the Gulf, the Forty-Second then saw guard duty in western Louisiana and engaged in some skirmishes with Confederates during Nathaniel Banks' unsuccessful Red River campaign in 1864. Evidently Hopkins conducted himself ably, though not heroically, in battle. His company, K Company, had but four men killed in the campaigns. Mustered out of the army late in 1864 with a sergeant's stripes, Hopkins reenlisted for a year in the 182 OVI, receiving a lieutenant's commission. He served as a quartermaster in Nashville until mustered out in June of 1865.

Hopkins created three kinds of documents dealing with his life in the army: two diaries kept through part of 1863 and 1864; a historical account of his experiences compiled in 1869, and letters written to his family and Julia Allison, whom he married in 1865. Bond managed to integrate these disparate sources fairly effectively into one chronological record. Usually–not always–he identified persons and incidents in them reasonably well. But, as H. Wayne Morgan noted in a review in *Ohio History* (Vol. 70, July 1961, 263), Bond shortchanged readers in failing to provide maps of any sort. He might have also included some of the ink and pencil sketches of persons and places that Hopkins produced. He failed, too, to construct an index.

In all of his writing, Hopkins employed rather sprightly prose. We find nothing dramatically new in his diurnal entries, which, however, offer good descriptions of supply problems, weather, and the soldiers' daily routines. He limned broad and sometimes wry accounts of combat; at one point he noted that his comrades wished that the Confederates possessed less grit and perservances, for "they cause us a great deal of daily inconvenience by such Stubborn Conduct" (pp. 67-68). In his historical recollections, often a good portrait of an army in movement, he could write in a humorous vein. He lamented, for example, that he suffered emetic effects from drinking the produce of a Kentucky still (p. 25). His letters to Julia Allison were sentimental and playful, often reflecting a soldier's insecurity in sustaining a relationship with a woman hundreds of miles from him. Morgan complained that the letters were intrusive and added little to the "larger story because they are much too personal." But one could argue that they yield interesting comments on political and military life of the day and that they reveal the universal heart of young men at war.

Historians may discover in Hopkins' personalia interesting aspects on why Americans were willing to fight and die during the Civil War–indeed why they still do. Repeatedly, Hopkins expressed his commitment to the flag and the Union–to liberty and freedom. He had only contempt for men who shirked their duties and often flayed the Copperheads, the Northern critics of the use of coercion against the South. He seldom commented, though, on slavery and emancipation proclamations, even declaring once that he hated abolitionists (p. 151), and never took a position on the use of black soldiers. Hopkins serves as a model for testing of recent arguments about what sustained soldiers in the war. In *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the Ameri-*

can Civil War (1987), Gerald Linderman asserted that as the war moved into its third and fourth years, soldiers experienced estrangement from civilians and that they turned into disillusioned skeptics questioning the worth of the war. But in his study, *For Cause and Comrade: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (1997), James McPherson typically saw soldiers who sustained their belief in duty and honor in republican liberty throughout the war. Clearly, Hopkins was such a soldier.

Students looking for a testament on what motivated a soldier to risk life and limb in the Civil War will find *Under the Flag* an instructive book.

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