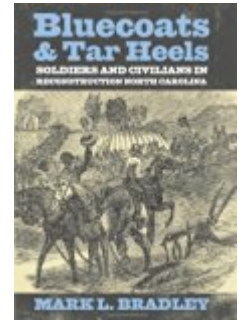


**Mark L. Bradley.** *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009. xi + 370 pp. \$50.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8131-2507-7.



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**Commissioned by** Judkin J. Browning (Appalachian State University)

Mark L. Bradley's *Bluecoats and Tar Heels* is a careful study of the Union Army's role in facilitating Reconstruction in North Carolina. In the prologue, Bradley frames his examination of Reconstruction in the Old North State in the broader context of Albion W. Tourgee's best-selling novel *A Fool's Errand* (1880)—an apt positioning for a study of this kind for complexity, resistance, fatigue, and apathy characterize the story of Reconstruction in North Carolina from beginning to end. Reconstruction historiography is rich with seminal works. Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (1988), Michael Perman's *Reunion Without Compromise: The South and Reconstruction, 1865-1868* (1973), and Paul D. Escott's *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (1985) are but a few of the many studies that come to mind. Bradley's book, however, is unique in that it focuses exclusively on the Union Army's occupation and the difficulty of being caught between radicals in Congress, lawlessness among the un-Re-

constructed, and its charge to protect the newly won rights of freedmen.

From the outset, Reconstruction in North Carolina was an awkward and difficult process that moved in fits and starts and Bradley does an excellent job demonstrating this point. *Bluecoats and Tar Heels* opens with Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston's surrender to General William Sherman at the Bennett farm near Durham. Sherman's lenient terms for the surrender of the Army of Tennessee proved too lenient for his superiors and the Northern public. Suffering the invective of the Northern press, Sherman was ordered to secure Johnston's surrender under harsher terms. Though condemned for his lenience toward the foe, Bradley asserts that Sherman's gentle approach may have been the "best blueprint for peace" (p. 23). Indeed, Bradley tells us that Sherman rejected the notion of a harsh Reconstruction policy as one the Northern people would soon abandon. "Sherman believed that a harsh Reconstruction policy would necessitate a substantial occupation force in the former Confederate states,

and he doubted that the North would want to maintain a large peacetime army to 'hold them in subjugation'" (p. 23). Indeed, Bradley demonstrates that throughout Sherman's brief stay in North Carolina he pursued a policy of conciliation and generosity, issuing rations and supplies to returning veterans and the destitute. Although Sherman left North Carolina in April of 1865, the awkward position the army was to occupy for the next several years in the Old North State was already developing.

Sherman's subordinate, Major General John M. Schofield, assumed command of the Department of North Carolina in April 1865. Like his predecessor, Schofield also favored conciliation. In Bradley's account Schofield's conciliatory inclination was conveyed in general orders. "Schofield urged soldiers and civilians alike to 'cordially unite in honest endeavors.'... [He] also promised to issue provisions and loan draft animals and wagons to the destitute" (p. 27). Schofield's greatest frustration was the lack of civil government in North Carolina, which necessitated martial law. The army was required to keep the peace, administer justice, protect freedmen, and encourage the resumption of commerce—all without specific direction or the articulation of official policy from Washington.

Although many Tar Heels were willing to accept occupation and defeat, there were some districts where bitter resentment gushed to the surface. According to Bradley, "the commanding officer at Franklinton in Franklin County confided to his superior that it required 'all his forbearance at times to endure the arrogance and insolence daily exhibited by a part of the community'" (p. 33). Within weeks of Schofield's assuming command the state was descending into chaos. The roads were choked with thousands of soldiers and freedmen roaming about. The situation was ripe for violence. Outbreaks of violence between Union soldiers and civilians were relatively rare, but those that did occur usually were sparked by

the presence of black soldiers. "Near Clinton in Sampson County, a detachment of the 1<sup>st</sup> USCT briefly skirmished with a band of mounted guerillas, who avoided capture by outracing their pursuers" (p. 34). Bands of guerillas became a common phenomenon in North Carolina throughout Reconstruction, especially in the eastern counties. Bradley demonstrates that Schofield struggled to maintain order and protect blacks during his tenure as commander of the Department of North Carolina. Ultimately Schofield was disappointed to be skipped over as military governor, but he "left North Carolina in better condition than he found it" (p. 46).

Between 1865 and 1867, white North Carolinians grew rather cold to the social revolution unfolding before their eyes. The army, as the guarantor of that revolution, became the object of wrath for many Tar Heels. During this period the number of black troops in the state more than doubled, comprising slightly more than half of the total of the occupation force. Bradley tells us that women in particular tended to vent their displeasure toward Union officers and men alike. Snubs and cold shoulders were the most common form of female protest at the presence of Union soldiers, but sometimes more organized displays occurred. "In May 1865, an entire community of white women shunned Union soldiers. At Goldsboro, officers ... decided to hold a ball in the town hall. They printed about a hundred invitations and left them the homes of the 'best families in town.'... The officers hired musicians and decorated the hall. On the night of the dance, they arrived at the hall in their dress uniforms and waited for the young women of Goldsboro to arrive ... but they never came" (p. 52). Bradley's treatment of social relations is compelling and captures the complexity of North Carolina society seized in the grip of military Reconstruction.

Even when the brash and politically savvy Major General Daniel E. Sickles assumed command of the Second Military District, which in-

cluded both North and South Carolina, in March of 1867, resistance to congressional Reconstruction mounted. Not all forms of resistance were peaceful. Bradley tells us that guerrillas and regulators in the eastern counties committed frequent acts of violence against freedmen and poor whites alike. In the western counties federal efforts to halt the production of illegal liquor resulted in frequent violence against military and revenue officials in the region. Moreover, in the western and central portions of the state former Unionists were being tried and punished for acts of espionage and sabotage against the Confederate forces. Sickles and his successor, Brigadier General Edward R. S. Canby, were drawn ever more into the fray in their struggle to enforce the letter and spirit of congressional Reconstruction in North Carolina.

Bradley's examination of political developments is masterful—capturing the nuance and shifting political currents in the troubled Old North State with remarkable accuracy. General Canby oversaw the constitutional convention and the general election that resulted in William W. Holden's return to the office of governor. Holden rode to power with the force of the newly organized Republican Party, whose constituency was drawn from among the ranks of the state's freedmen and poor whites. Conservatives objected violently to the removal of voting restrictions and land requirements for holding high office. With the restoration of civil government and North Carolina's re-entry into the Union, conservatives unleashed a reign of terror in the form of the Ku Klux Klan. Simultaneously, the army's role in keeping the peace and supporting civil government diminished significantly. Bent on undoing not only the work of Reconstruction, but also the bonds between the state's black and white Republicans, Klansmen launched a campaign of intimidation while conservative politicians and editors fanned the flames of racism. U.S. forces were again drawn into the battle that would determine

the fate of political and legal equality in North Carolina.

Bradley's study would be aided by a brief introduction to regional politics within the state before and during the war. The reader is left to assume far too much about antagonism between Unionists and secessionists caused by the secession crisis and the war. Nevertheless, Bradley remains true to his overall purpose. *Bluecoats and Tar Heels* is a wellspring of useful information and a valuable contribution to Reconstruction studies.

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