

H-Net Reviews

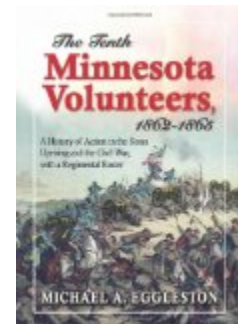
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Michael A. Eggleston. *The 10th Minnesota Volunteers, 1862-1865: A History of Action in the Sioux Uprising and the Civil War, with a Regimental Roster*. Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2012. 229 pp. \$40.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-6593-4.

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Published on H-CivWar (July, 2013)

Commissioned by Hugh F. Dubrulle



From the Yellowstone to the Gulf of Mexico: A History of a Minnesota Regiment

The sesquicentennial of the Civil War has brought forth a number of new publications in the crowded field of Civil War history. Among these are new regimental histories of units not previously studied in detail. *The 10th Minnesota Volunteers, 1862 - 1865* by Michael A. Eggleston deals with one of the state's lesser known organizations but one with potential interest for historians. The 10th Minnesota began its career in the midst of the Dakota War, one of the bloodiest conflicts in the long history of America's Indian wars, and later saw service against the Confederacy, as part of the XVI Army Corps in the western theater, fighting at Tupelo, Nashville, and Mobile. The only previously published history of the regiment is a relatively brief narrative found in *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars* (1890-1893), so a good study of this regiment might prove useful to students of the Dakota War as well as those studying the last year of the Civil War in the West.

The actual narrative of this slender volume is only 110 pages long, with an additional 100 pages of appendices. The latter includes a reprinting of the "Narrative of the 10th Regiment" from *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars* and a copy of the regimental roster appearing in that work. There is some value to including these sources, but others, such as a copy of the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, are at best tangential to the history of the regiment.

The story of the 10th Minnesota as presented here is a

straightforward description of events with relatively little analysis. Much of the work deals with the Dakota War of 1862 and the punitive expedition of June - September 1863. This emphasis is entirely appropriate as the 10th Regiment saw a good deal of service in these campaigns. That said, Mr. Eggleston's discussion of events in Minnesota leans heavily toward earlier interpretations, particularly that of William Watts Folwell. The latter's account, contained in volume 2 of his four-volume *A History of Minnesota* (1924), has long been among the most objective and thorough analyses of the conflict. Yet much scholarship has taken place in the decades since Folwell's work was published, and more insights from the work of later historians like Gary Clayton Anderson would have added much to the background information on this important conflict.

The narrative then switches to the war in the South, with emphasis on the 10th Minnesota's pursuit of Sterling Price's forces in both Missouri and Arkansas during the fall of 1864 and details of its participation in the Nashville campaign. Like the description of the Indian campaigns, these are fairly straightforward accounts of events without much detail regarding what transpired with the Minnesotans. Some of the narrative seems tangential at best to the history of the regiment. There is, for example, a fairly long and somewhat dubious account of a mackinaw boat which is an interesting story but unrelated to the topic, as well as a long description of the Battle of Franklin, at which the 10th Minnesota was not

present.

In general, this work offers a “top down” perspective on the career of the 10th Minnesota. While there is nothing wrong with the author’s descriptions of the campaigns, they seem largely based on secondary sources and offer no new perspectives. More disappointing is the lack of any description of the internal life of the 10th Minnesota. Aside from a few scattered quotes, we are told little of what men of the regiment experienced, and still less about the personalities and ambitions of the commanding officers. For example, Colonel James H. Baker was active in Republican politics in Ohio and Minnesota before the war, serving as Minnesota’s secretary of state from 1859 to 1862. His appointment as colonel of the 10th Minnesota undoubtedly came through his political

connections, so it would be useful to know more about Colonel Baker and his background. There is little in this history about Baker’s personality, his relationship with subordinates, or his effectiveness as a commander. He was brevetted to brigadier general and served as provost marshal of the Military Department of Missouri after the war, so we might assume that Baker was held in high regard by his superiors.

For readers wanting to trace the career of the 10th Minnesota, this book is adequate and its appendices somewhat helpful. Those looking for an in-depth study of the internal workings of the regiment and its relationship to the wider history of Minnesota in the Civil War period will be disappointed.

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Citation: Hampton Smith. Review of Eggleston, Michael A., *The 10th Minnesota Volunteers, 1862-1865: A History of Action in the Sioux Uprising and the Civil War, with a Regimental Roster*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. July, 2013.

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