

Andrew S. Bledsoe, Andrew F. Lang, eds.. *Upon the Fields of Battle: Essays on the Military History of America's Civil War*. Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions of the American Civil War Series. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018. 320 pp. \$48.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8071-6977-3.

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The emergence of new subfields of history have motivated historians of the American Civil War to examine topics that take readers beyond the battlefield between 1861 and 1865. In the process, traditional topics of military history have seemed to fade from the realm of serious scholarship. Andrew S. Bledsoe, an assistant professor of history at Lee University, and Andrew F. Lang, an assistant professor of history at Mississippi State University, have brought together ten scholars, as well as contributing their own essays, to provide insight into new histories of Civil War military history in *Upon the Fields of Battle*. Even with all the ink spilled on the conflict's battles and campaigns, the historians in this collection both suggest and explore ways to expand our knowledge of the four years of fighting, providing a blueprint for new studies.

While collections of essays can suffer from divergent topics with little relation between them, Bledsoe and Lang have successfully structured the chapters to avoid that pitfall. The book is broken into three main parts, with a foreword by Gary Gallagher that argues for the continued study of the military history of the Civil War within academia. After a brief introduction from Bledsoe and Lang that opens part 1, Earl J. Hess challenges scholars to once again embrace military history. If

those topics are left as a secondary piece of Civil War history, he argues, it will become exclusively the domain of untrained amateurs with little hope of breathing new life into the military actions of the era. Through an overview of the state of the field, Hess suggests new avenues for military historians, such as the connection between war and the environment, the operation of administrative bureaucracies, and the battlefield effectiveness of soldiers. The essays that follow Hess's treatise address some of his recommended topics.

Part 2 examines topics related to military forces, both regular and irregular. The first three essays by Kenneth W. Noe, Jennifer M. Murray, and Bledsoe center on new approaches to understanding battlefield command and addressing the reality behind the decisions of typically unpopular Civil War generals. Noe, Murray, and Bledsoe contest the standard perspectives of the failures of George B. McClellan, George G. Meade, and Braxton Bragg, respectively. Typically, historians have seen the botched operations of McClellan in the Peninsula Campaign, Meade in the Gettysburg Campaign, and Bragg during the fighting at McLemore's Cove during the Chickamauga Campaign as evidence of poor commanders failing to complete their mission. Noe, Murray, and Bledsoe, however, look at other factors—the weather, mili-

tary intelligence and soldier readiness, and the interpretation of written commands, respectively—that affected the operations. Each factor prevented the officers from fulfilling their ultimate objectives in their campaigns. Some readers may see all three essays as insufficiently critical of their subjects, but these authors illustrate how eliminating hindsight from the study of campaigns and battles can transform our understanding of Civil War commanders.

Chapters by John Hennessey and Brian McKnight, which center on the experiences of civilians when the conflict came to their doorsteps, round out part 2. Hennessey explores traditional civil-military relations, specifically in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in December 1862, while McKnight examines civilians' challenge to guerrilla warfare. The operations around Fredericksburg, Hennessey argues, exemplified the increasing turn toward a harder war than any civilians or soldiers ever imagined. This situation strained the relationship between the two groups beyond repair after the Union bombardment and occupation, which became the norm for the rest of the conflict. While the actions of irregular forces had military implications, McKnight argues, limiting studies on guerilla actions to those outcomes turns civilians caught in the communities engulfed in guerrilla warfare into helpless actors. By taking the perspective of those civilians, their control over the community and the irregular conflict comes to the forefront, as they resisted the military actions and pressured politicians to restrict and prevent further irregular fighting. Both essays push the topic of civil-military relations forward and reflect the complexity of that issue during the conflict.

Part 3 focuses on Civil War soldiers' experiences during and after the conflict. Lang, Kevin M. Levin, and Keith Altavilla examine the soldiers' understanding of the war and their place in it through the concept of American exceptionalism, the witnessing of military executions, and partici-

pation in the election of 1864, respectively. Occupation duty for federal troops, the witnessing of executions of Confederate soldiers, and preparations for an election all influenced how soldiers perceived themselves. Occupation duty and the election of 1864, Lang and Altavilla argue, respectively, reflected the soldiers' perspectives of the war. Those who occupied the South believed they maintained American exceptionalism through the destruction of slavery, while Democratic soldiers who voted against Abraham Lincoln in 1864 were motivated by a fear of an abolitionist future and a longer war under the Republicans. In the opposing army, rebels used public executions, especially of deserters, to strengthen their cohesion with their comrades while also seeing them as a necessary sacrifice for the ultimate goal of Southern independence. These three authors avoid the problem of overgeneralizing the soldiers' experiences through focused arguments and strong research while also providing new perspectives on common issues for them.

Brian Matthew Jordan and Robert L. Glaze close out part 3 with studies on how the war did not end for many Americans in 1865. Jordan introduces a new methodology for examining Civil War memory through the perspective of individuals after the war. He centers on the 107th Ohio Infantry Regiment, one of the many regiments from the Union Army of the Potomac's hard luck XI Corps that suffered flanking attacks in both the Battle of Chancellorsville and the Battle of Gettysburg, losing over 50 percent of their force during the first day of the latter fight. Many of the regiment's survivors and family members who waited for or received news of the death of sons and husbands suffered from severe mental trauma throughout their lives. These problems lasted for decades, with some succumbing to conditions, such as alcoholism, that extended from their responses to the stress. Glaze complicates common understandings of Lost Cause heroes, usually limited to Robert E. Lee, Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, and Jefferson Davis. For many former Con-

federates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Albert Sidney Johnston was also counted among those heroes, with many white Southerners, including Davis, considering Johnston's death at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6, 1862, as the central turning point of the conflict. Jordan and Glaze bring new ideas for Civil War memory to the forefront through their focused essays.

Bledsoe and Lang assembled an excellent group of scholars to provide inspiration for additional studies of the military history of the Civil War. They include both established names, such as Hess and Noe, and rising scholars, such as Murray and Jordan. In addition, Hennessey, the chief historian of Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park, shows the quality of scholarship that can come from public historians, at times an underappreciated and overlooked group that has much to contribute to conversations about military history. The quality of research and writing in each chapter leaves few weaknesses in this anthology. These historians all challenge common perceptions and establish frameworks for new insights on the conflict. Of course, limitations prevent the inclusion of every new possible avenue, such as transnational issues for the United States or comparative studies of contemporary conflicts. Nevertheless, Bledsoe and Lang have compiled a study that contributes new and insightful scholarship and should further inspire important work on military history in the Civil War era.

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