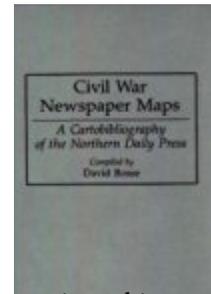


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

David C. Bosse, ed. *Civil War Newspaper Maps: A Cartobibliography of the Northern Daily Press*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993. xv + 253 pp. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-28705-3.

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The Civil War map world is a small one, and David Bosse seems to be pretty much on top of it. He has published two books, *Civil War Newspaper Maps: A Cartobibliography of the Northern Daily Press*, the primary focus of this review, and *Civil War Newspaper Maps* (1993). The publication of news maps flourished during the Civil War period, when maps became a prominent and continuing part of news coverage. Maps, map making, map makers, and the study of influences and consequences of maps and map making are all subjects of numerous books and articles, but journalistic maps have not been a hot area of research. Mark Monmonier's *Maps with the News* (1989) might be the only, or the most accessible, other major work on news maps.

Unfortunately, neither Monmonier nor Bosse brings much excitement to the subject. And it is a subject with some potential for excitement. Civil War maps are astonishing in their detail, and apparently their accuracy, given the circumstances under which they were created. They can resemble modern road maps, and sometimes they are wonderfully goofy. Many are filled with symbols, lines, and arrows, and the more you know about a battle and its geographical context, the more sense such maps make.

These complex and accurate maps and scenes were created despite conditions that seemed to doom them to failure. Most correspondents were unskilled in drawing and certainly in map making, and they had to work in sometimes unfamiliar, hostile environments under hurried conditions. Some maps were drawn by civilians and even military personnel. Sketches that were sometimes crude had to be transported back to editors, who passed them to engravers, who had to create battle scenes and representations of geography from materials at hand.

Further, the engravers were often inexperienced in map making. Yet the results were often richly detailed and, given the materials (usually multiple sections of joined hardwoods, such as mahogany), tools, deadlines, and inexperience, even remarkable.

The maps themselves are usually more interesting in the original newspapers than on microforms or in books, and certainly Bosse's reproductions leave something to be desired. In the cartobibliography, he reproduces only seven maps while identifying, without explanation or description, hundreds of Civil War maps published between April 1, 1861, and April 30, 1865, in twenty newspapers from Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Missouri, Ohio, New York, and Philadelphia. The newspapers came from J. Cutler Andrews' study, *The North Reports the Civil War* (1954). Some four hundred daily newspapers existed during the war; therefore, it is likely that some other northern newspapers published campaign maps.

The book is precisely what its title suggests: a bibliography. It has only four pages of text—a preface—to put the listings in any context. As a compilation, the Bosse book is impressive. The seven illustrated maps are from the New York *Herald* (June 17, 1861, March 12, 1862; July 6, 1863), the New York *Tribune* (Jan. 21, 1862); the Chicago *Daily Tribune* (Dec. 19, 1862), the *World* (June 12, 1862), and the Philadelphia *Inquirer* (Jan. 18, 1865). They amply illustrate the breadth and styles of wood engraved maps. Some maps located the site of battles in a larger area; others detailed positions of troops, vessels, and/or fortifications; and others provided details of battles or strategic movements.

Bosse's earlier book, an atlas, is far more satisfying to those who want to learn about the maps. It provides a brief history of journalism map making and a straightfor-

ward description of the creation, design, and production of Civil War maps. The “atlas” part of the book, almost two-thirds of its 162 pages, provides illustrations of forty maps, each with one-page descriptions and explanations. These reference the full range of Civil War map reproductions and are a joy to peruse. The first quarter of the book has about half again as many maps illustrating various parts of the text.

Civil War maps were surprisingly accurate, given the limitations of their creators and the production process, which required that engravers work from often sketchy drawings. Some maps in both books are reproduced quite clearly, but often even the best of them are confusing, at least for those unfamiliar with the area or the battles. Some defy everyone’s logic, and Bosse’s atlas includes a small section of criticism that samples wartime complaints about their clarity and style.

It is interesting to contrast Civil War maps from Bosse’s books with those found in books such as James McPherson’s *The Atlas of the Civil War* (1994), in which modern illustrators appear to have created their own maps. They do resemble original Civil War maps, but their uniformity, color, and precision make them less interesting and less passionate than the cruder maps produced under wartime conditions with far less sophisticated resources. Scientific accuracy and precision were not always foremost in the renderings of the Civil War correspondents, who were as subjective in their maps as they were in their dispatches.

This, in fact, makes the maps interesting. Denis Wood notes in *The Power of Maps* (1992) that maps accumulate the thought and labor of the past, and in doing so they facilitate the reproduction of culture and naturalize the world. Further, he notes that maps serve interests. While we might see a map as a reflection of the natural order of the world, it includes certain things and leaves certain things out. These kinds of understandings make maps more interesting, and it is these understandings that a reader must bring to Bosse’s cartobibliography.

This is not a book from which to learn about maps, even Civil War maps. It says almost nothing about maps; but it does tell where to find them. Bosse’s atlas tells us more about maps, and it is far more likely to gain the attention of people with some interest in the subject. But in both works, Bosse’s interests seem to be mechanical and technical. Readers and researchers can use these valuable resources to lead them to maps with rich cultural implications, maps that tell us a lot about ourselves and how we have seen the world, and therefore how we see it now. Together, his books constitute a valuable resource for historians in a field historians have left largely untended.

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