

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

**Thomas Lawrence Connelly.** *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001. xviii + 305 pp. \$17.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8071-2737-7.

**Thomas Lawrence Connelly.** *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001. x + 558 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8071-2738-4.

Reviewed by Michael B. Ballard (Mississippi State University)  
Published on H-Tennessee (July, 2004)



Thomas Connelly's two-volume study of the Confederate Army of Tennessee has remained in print for many years for a simple reason—it is a classic study that has stood the test of time. Few Civil War historians would consider Connelly's work outdated, despite the fact that it has been more than three decades since publication. This is due, in part, to a fact that infuriated and frustrated Connelly: the focus of most historians continues to be on the eastern theater of the war at the expense of the west. An additional fact, however, is that Connelly's research and writing was so sound and masterful, few have seen fit to challenge him.

Connelly wrote his history of the South's second most famous army (always taking a back seat to the more successful and eastern theater-bound Army of Northern Virginia) from a command point of view. He spent much time in manuscripts, preferring to focus on what commanders knew at the time, not what they reflected upon later. Like all Civil War military historians, he did delve into the Official Records, but his footnotes reflect the depth of his research in original sources often more reliable than reports tailored to make commanders look better on paper than their performances on battlegrounds.

The main theme that runs through both of Connelly's books is that the western theater's main army was grossly mismanaged by incompetent commanders such as Braxton Bragg, and, to a lesser extent, Joseph Johnston. Connelly also points to Jefferson Davis and his Richmond government as creators and perpetrators of a flawed command system in the west, and an even more flawed logis-

tical morass that sometimes kept soldiers in the Army of Tennessee from getting adequate food, while plentiful supplies from the heartland were funneled to Robert E. Lee's army in Virginia.

Connelly's arguments have been echoed by others who have expanded the notion that no one, including Davis, seemed to know what to do in the western theater to counteract ever-shrinking Confederate lines. Suffering from mediocre commanders from the top down and from vague, reactionary strategic concepts, the Army of Tennessee faced challenges that the faraway Richmond government never seemed to understand or appreciate.

Connelly connected with his subject and near the end of *Autumn of Glory*, he writes what he surely believed the army's veterans felt: "Lingering ... was that constant frustration which tormented the army—the feeling that the government and others neither understood nor appreciated them. Some believed the government saw things through Lee's eyes only and considered the hills around Gettysburg more important than those at Perryville or Chickamauga. Who would remember that the Army of Tennessee defended an area almost ten times the size of that in which Lee fought? Who would remember that the western army had a double burden—to defend the geographical West and to protect the Rebel heartland of raw materials, munitions, and foodstuffs which often supplied Lee as well" (p. 535).

Connelly expanded his disgust with the focus on Lee's army in later works entitled *The Marble Man* (1978) and *God and General Longstreet* (1982). Connelly's bitter-

ness about the lack of proper historical attention to the western theater became almost a passion, to the point that he sometimes went too far in his negative critiques of Lee and others. His attitude no doubt stemmed from his years of work on the Army of Tennessee.

Connelly rarely brought into his study any of the so-called "new" military history concepts. He did not focus directly upon soldiers' experiences, though he certainly reflected upon the impact that bad leadership had on the army's battles and food supplies. Nor did Con-

nolly dwell upon the army's impact on civilians and local areas where the men marched and fought.

With the publication of his history of the Army of Tennessee, Thomas Connelly established himself as a premier military historian of the Civil War. If he did not anticipate future historiographical trends, he nonetheless captured the essence of the times in which the army fought and the tragedy of its war years in a way previously unmatched and since unchallenged.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

`/~tenn/`

**Citation:** Michael B. Ballard. Review of Connelly, Thomas Lawrence, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* and Connelly, Thomas Lawrence, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865*. H-Tennessee, H-Net Reviews. July, 2004.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=9634>

Copyright © 2004 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at [hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu).