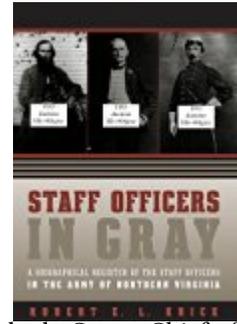


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robert E. L. Krick. *Staff Officers in Gray: A Biographical Register of the Staff Officers in the Army of Northern Virginia*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. xiii + 406 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2788-8.

Reviewed by Robert J. Havlik (University of Notre Dame)
Published on H-CivWar (October, 2004)



The military organization of the Confederate Army was basically modeled after the antebellum U.S. Army. It also, however, inherited its largely ineffective staff system. Confederate States of America President, Jefferson Davis, himself a graduate of West Point, struggled throughout the war to bring some semblance of order to his armies without success. The lack of adequate definitions of rank and duties, as well as haphazard record keeping, has kept the picture of what really went on still a puzzle today. This book focuses on the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) and presents valuable insight and biographical data on a large majority of the staff officers in that Army.

The book is organized into several sections: abbreviations, a very valuable introduction, the roster, and two appendices that list Confederate staff officers other than those of the Army of Northern Virginia, and a General-by-General List of the Army of Northern Virginia staff officers. The volume also contains a section of photographs of selected officers. The list of abbreviations is a very integral part of the work, for it supplies all of the abbreviated terms used in the condensed biographies, which can get quite complicated with the fluid mobility of some of the officers.

The introduction, which is entitled, "A Short History of Confederate Staff Officers," is also organized into sections. It first offers a general discussion of the role of the staff officers in the army and how, through a laxity in understanding those roles, the staff system developed as a separate entity.

The second section identifies nine major jobs within the staff system, discussing what the jobs usually entailed and how they were viewed by others around them. These

jobs include Adjutant General, Aide-de-Camp, Chief of Artillery, Engineering Officer, Inspector General, Judge, Ordnance Officer, Supply Officers (Quartermaster and Commissary), and a miscellany which discusses cadets and military store keepers.

The third section, "Statistics", is one of the most intriguing of the group. Using the available biographical data from the roster of staff officers, seven statistical tables are derived, which give new insights into the men who served as staff officers. The first three tables contain statistics concerning the age, birthplace, and date of death, followed by table 4, "Prewar Occupations of Staff Officers," table 5, "Postwar Occupations of Staff Officers," and table 6, "Prewar Education of Staff Officers." While most battle buffs will find table 7, "Nepotism by General," possibly of value for interpreting commands and actions in battles, sociologists and historians will be attracted to tables 4 and 5 to get an idea of the social changes the war hath wrought. The latter is also valuable for tracking down war records of various post-war scientists and professionals for the plethora of indexes of scientists that continue to appear.

The roster is, of course, the heart of the book. The roster consists of approximately 2,300 short biographical sketches profiling every staff officer in the ANV. The profile includes the officer's full name, exact dates and places of birth and death, education, occupation before and after the war, burial information, and a summary of his wartime career. Even with such comprehensive coverage, the author warns that there are omissions of some groups of officers who were not normally recognized as staff officers. These include physicians and surgeons, tax collectors, enrolling officers, drill masters, provost mar-

shals, and contract engineers. In the author's words, "riding a horse beside a general did not automatically qualify someone as a member of the staff" (p. 46). In addition, the author was burdened by having to eliminate hundreds of bogus claimants. Nevertheless, such maintenance of standards enhances the value of this book as a reliable and seminal reference work. The section on using the roster is very helpful in interpreting the biographical entries as well as reasons for attaching the two appendices.

Although this volume is limited to biographies of staff officers in the ANV, other Confederate Armies operating outside of Virginia had similar staff systems. Three thousand additional staff officers have also been identified in appendix 1. However, the data on such individuals is necessarily sketchy and incomplete and begs for future work, as was done on the roster.

Appendix 2 returns to data on the ANV. For this section, the author has listed, in alphabetical order, every general who served in the ANV or operated in Virginia. After each general, he lists a full roster of his known staff.

By cross-checking the biographies, one can get an idea of a general's intentions or methods of operations as reflected in his appointments.

Robert E. Lee Krick, the author, is a Civil War historian based in Richmond, Virginia. He has written widely on Civil War topics and conducted tours for *History America*. He specializes in research on the ANV. His father, Robert K. Krick, is an esteemed Civil War scholar who has also written and edited numerous books on Confederate military history.

In summation the book is remarkable for the long and detailed work that went into it. Searching out names in unpublished and official documents, verifying their legitimacy, then tracking down not only the officer's military record but also facts about his life before and after the war, leaves researchers with nothing but admiration. Even if you are not a follower of the activities of the Army of Northern Virginia, this volume will serve as a model for future research of this type.

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

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-civwar>

Citation: Robert J. Havlik. Review of Krick, Robert E. L., *Staff Officers in Gray: A Biographical Register of the Staff Officers in the Army of Northern Virginia*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. October, 2004.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=9896>

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.