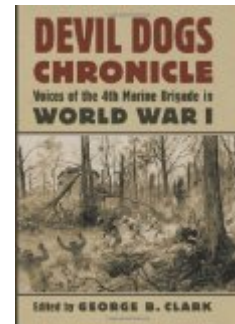


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

George B. Clark, ed. *Devil Dogs Chronicle: Voices of the 4th Marine Brigade in World War I*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013. Maps. ix + 411 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7006-1896-5.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey



The Marines Go Over There

This is a fantastic book that provides a tremendous opportunity to understand the experiences of the 4th Marine Brigade in World War I through the eyes of seventeen men. Editor George B. Clark has created a primary mega-source. By taking so many personal accounts (published and unpublished materials, letters, diaries, and insurance company war story anthologies), organizing them chronologically, and bundling them into time-sequenced chapters, Clark offers an in-depth and multifaceted story that retains its first-person feel. The book carries the brigade from initial training at Paris Island under construction, through postwar parades and demobilization. The editor's own service as a World War II marine and his extensive academic body of work on marine history, including *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (1999); *Battle History of the U.S. Marine Corps, 1775-1945* (2010); *With the Old Corps in Nicaragua* (2001); and *The Second Infantry Division in World War I* (2007) make him uniquely qualified to coherently knit together so many different narratives and create a true window to the past.

This book moves from the 4th Marine Brigade's training in 1917 to their 1919 return home after occupation duty. The previous years of war and the rest of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) are only mentioned when necessary for context. In particular, Clark's work covers the marines and the few army officers assigned to fill the United States Marine Corps officer shortfall. Clark adds short chapter introductions and the occasional framing

paragraph to connect the narratives, but without fail the voices of the men from the brigade form the core of the book. The performance of the marines in World War I is the stuff of legend. Through iron will and despite appalling casualties, they helped form the spirit that still drives the Marine Corps today. The marines from the 4th Marine Brigade helped to build Paris Island as they trained, fought sea sickness on the passage to France, were detailed as longshoremen and port security when the army did not want them, and were sent to the front when the Germans lit the Spring of 1918 on fire. With the writings of several people, officers and enlisted, grouped together describing the same time period, each chapter provides a multi-view description of a significant event in the life of the brigade.

The detail of these veterans' personal reflections are at times amazing, always insightful, and often funny. Private Melvin L. Krulewitch, for instance, recalled the lack of privacy in the recruits' latrine at Paris Island as "a dozen adjoining assholes operating in symphony" (p. 33). The examples in leadership, duty, and courage are still inspiring a century later. The descriptions of the battlefield often paint a vivid picture. First Lieutenant Elliot Cooke wrote: "All I knew is what I could see. Behind us was a forest. In front, a road bordered by trees at regular intervals, cut through rolling fields of wheat. On the horizon was a town of white stone houses with red tiled roofs. But the names of those places and the whereabouts of any troops other than our own two com-

panies was a mystery to me. Crabb and I regarded each other blankly. Commanders of two connecting companies, each so intent on liaisoning the other that we had completely separated from everybody else! And apparently we had busted right through the German defense and were somewhere in Heinie's rear areas. 'Bill,' I tried to grin, 'it looks as if we've got to take on the whole German army by ourselves.' 'Fair enough,' Crabb hitched up his belt, 'you knock 'em down and I'll count 'em'" (p. 226).

The scaffolding that supports these narratives is a tremendous amount of background research by the editor. His efforts are evident in the supporting prose and occasional correction of dates and places, but they absolutely shine in the endnotes. As the accounts unfold, peoples' names are mentioned constantly, the vast majority are graced with a superscript that guides the reader to whatever Clark had learned about the person in question. Some are sparse, a full name, rank, and date of death, but others give great depth to the story. For example, Gunner Sergeant A. P. Sheridan wrote about Belleau Wood, "We have a Lt Cates, the only old soldier left, and he has

been slightly wounded. He is our company commander now although only a second lieutenant, but a very capable man" (p. 171). The accompanying endnote on page 387 informs the reader that Second Lieutenant Clifton Bledsoe Cates was awarded a bucket full of medals, commanded the Fourth Marine Division in World War II, and was later the commandant of the Marine Corps. These types of connections that Clark provides place the personal accounts in historical context.

I have a couple of minor criticisms. Footnotes would have been better than endnotes; given the value and volume of the notes, the continual turning to the back became distracting. I needed two bookmarks to read this collection effectively. The book would have also benefited from better maps (I am a "map guy" who is rarely happy with maps in books). The maps are small, clustered in the front of the book, and do not contain enough detail to support first-person narration from the field.

Nonetheless, without a doubt, this carefully edited and well-assembled book, is a great read that preserves the World War I marine experience.

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