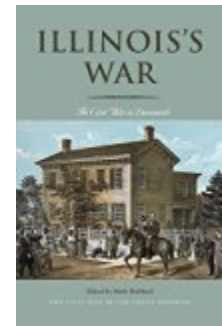


Mark Voss-Hubbard, ed. *Illinois's War: The Civil War in Documents*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013. xviii + 244 pp. \$18.65 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8214-2010-2.

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From Home Front to Front Line: Illinois and the Civil War

Mid-nineteenth century Illinois has often been referred to as a microcosm of the country. The ideological clash between the increasing number of foreign-born and Yankee transplants in northern Illinois and the more established Southern-oriented population in the lower reaches of the state reflected mounting tensions on the national stage. Yet, as Mark Hubbard illustrates in this edited collection of primary sources spanning the Civil War era, Illinois was not simply the country in miniature. *Illinois's War: The Civil War in Documents* ably demonstrates the complex and distinctive challenges faced by Illinoisans from the antebellum years through Reconstruction.

This book is the latest release in the Ohio University Press's *The Civil War in the Great Interior* series, which has published similar volumes on Ohio, Missouri, Indiana, and Kansas. Hubbard explains in the preface that his goal is to "present the story of the state's social, economic, and political development in relationship to the sectional crisis" (p. xv). He achieves this aim throughout the book's eight chapters and more than seventy documents. The chapters are organized chronologically, although many coalesce thematically. For example, chapter 1 focuses principally on the politics of slavery in 1850s, chapter 5 examines the bitter partisan strife on the home front in 1863, and chapter 6 takes the reader to the front line through soldiers' accounts of the war. Hubbard's desire to portray "contingent choices and volitional possibilities" (p. xvi) comes through most compellingly in the penultimate chapter, "Hearts and Minds

in the Days of Total War." These documents evoke the tumult of labor strikes, urban boom, and deadly riots as Northern morale for the war flagged during the long summer of 1864. Each chapter begins with an introduction that provides valuable historical context for the subsequent documents.

The success of an edited collection such as this rests heavily upon the selection of documents. Hubbard has chosen texts that embrace rather than evade the multiple and often messy narratives of Illinois's past. Through newspaper editorials, diaries, legislation, memoirs, letters, and public speeches, the reader is given a rich view of the ways Illinoisans shaped the war. Alongside familiar sources, such as Abraham Lincoln's House Divided speech and his James Conkling letter, are less familiar ones. Mary Livermore's account of the 1860 Republican National Convention provides the unique perspective of a female reporter on an otherwise well-known event. Excerpts from two of the colored people's state conventions, before and after the war, offer important insight into the aims and methods of Illinois blacks to abolish discriminatory legislation. Letters written by soldiers and civilians to the military commander of the District of Illinois reveal the strength of antiwar sentiment in the state and support recent scholarship that takes seriously the Copperhead threat in the lower Midwest.[1] Hubbard highlights women's wartime activity, from expanding economic roles to coordinating relief efforts, and connects it to postwar activism through selections from the 1870 Illinois Woman Suffrage Association meeting. Together,

the sources in this volume chronicle the numerous ways that war transformed life for Illinoisans.

If there are any criticisms to be made of this work, they lie less with the choice of documents than with how they are edited. By necessity, many of the sources are abridged, but the manner in which this is done does not always do them justice. The excerpt from the 1853 Black Exclusion Law, which prohibited African Americans from moving to the state, omits the sentence that allowed masters the right of free passage with their slaves through the state. The insertion of this proviso into the law was significant because it overruled an earlier state supreme court decision that affirmed the presumption of freedom for anyone on Illinois soil, regardless of color. Due to this legislation, Illinois was one of only three Northern states in 1860 that permitted such slave transit.[2] Less consequential but similarly vexing is the passage from Lincoln's debate with Stephen Douglas in Ottawa, which begins, "[T]his is the true complexion of all I have ever said in regard to the institution of slavery and the black race. This is the whole of it ..." (p. 41). The rest of the text discusses these themes, but it is nonetheless a jarring starting point and gives the impression that what Lincoln said immediately prior to this also merits inclusion. Another example where the editing could be strengthened is with the newspaper account of the 1855 Lager Beer Riot in Chicago. The copy of the *Chicago Tribune* article used for transcription was of such poor quality that a few words are here marked as illegible. While this does not detract from the overall meaning of the document, it would have been worthwhile to consult one of

the available microfilm copies of the *Tribune* that is fully readable in order to fill in the gaps.

These minor objections in no way seriously diminish what is an important and much-needed addition to scholarship on Illinois history. In the almost one hundred years since it was published, Arthur C. Cole's *The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870* (1919) remains the principal work on Illinois during the Civil War.[3] Hubbard's volume shows how fertile the ground is for further research into this pivotal time in Illinois's past. This book stands on its own as a valuable resource for educators who want to introduce their students to the process of historical interpretation, as many of the documents are paired to offer contrasting viewpoints on an issue. It will also appeal more broadly to readers interested in Midwestern, gender, ethnic, labor, African American, and political history, and to anyone seeking better to understand the impact of the war on the Northern home front.

Notes

[1]. On this, see Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[2]. New Jersey and Indiana were the other two. Paul Finkelman, *An Imperfect Union: Slavery, Federalism, and Comity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 150-155.

[3]. Victor Hicken's *Illinois in the Civil War* (1966) might be considered an exception to this although its focus is primarily on military campaigns.

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