



Judith Ann Giesberg. *Keystone State in Crisis: The Civil War in Pennsylvania.* Mansfield: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 2013. 96 pp. \$14.95, ISBN 978-1-932304-41-1.

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Keystone State in Crisis: The Civil War in Pennsylvania is neither groundbreaking nor revolutionary. Nor is it likely to be assigned as the primary text in any graduate or upper-level undergraduate course. Judith Ann Giesberg never intended *Keystone State in Crisis* to be any of those things or to fill any of those roles when she wrote it. She wrote it “as an introduction to the social and political issues that emerged on Pennsylvania’s home front during the war—those that led to, helped to shape the nature of and determine the outcome of the national crisis” (p. 10). Only when it is viewed in its intended role, as an introductory text, does it stand out and shine.

As an introductory text of only ninety-six pages, it could prove quite useful if assigned to undergraduate students enrolled in a course on Pennsylvania history or the Civil War as a tertiary or even a secondary text. *Keystone State in Crisis* briefly touches on a number of aspects of Pennsylvania’s role in the Civil War that are commonly overlooked in most general texts dealing with either the Civil War or Pennsylvania history. It discusses such topics as the role of women in the war effort, labor relations, and the origins of the civil rights movement.

Giesberg organized *Keystone State in Crisis* thematically into five chapters. Chapter 1, “The Republican Revolution’: Pennsylvania Picks Lin-

coln,” delves into the presidential election of 1860 and examines Abraham Lincoln’s victory in Pennsylvania. According to Giesberg, prior to 1859 Pennsylvania had been a Democratic powerhouse. While the majority of Pennsylvanians viewed the institution of slavery with disdain, few were willing to lend support to anyone or anything that they felt would alter the status quo, fearing that any change would bring disharmony and discourse to their peaceful state. Yet Lincoln was able to win over the state by portraying himself as a man of the people, with ancestral ties to the state, who appeared to understand the needs of the state’s expanding industrial base.

The second chapter, “Mobilizing for War,” examines the state’s transition from peace to war and the role its population played during the Civil War, a population that largely supported the war effort but continually struggled to find meaning to justify that support. According to Giesberg, “while Pennsylvania enlisted the second greatest number of men in the army and supported the Union army’s war effort with its farms, factories, and financiers, the war did not resolve the difference of options among its diverse population on such issues as slavery, and states’ rights or the place of former slaves in a free society” (p. 23).

In chapter 3, “We will die in defense of our right to liberty’: The Civil War on Pennsylvania’s

Border,” Giesberg makes the argument that a state of war existed along Pennsylvania’s southern boarder long before Lincoln was elected president. The southern counties of Lancaster, Chester, and York with their Quaker heritage had long been seen as safe havens for free blacks as well as runaway slaves. Among the Pennsylvanians who called these counties home were quite a few abolitionists who actively helped runaway slaves on their journey north. Following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, residents of these counties, both black and white, took up arms to prevent slave owners and bounty hunters from capturing, with the intent of enslaving, not only legitimate runaway slaves but also members of Pennsylvania’s free black population.

The following chapter, “Combating the Threat Without and Within,” discusses the various ways that Pennsylvania troops were employed in the defense of their home state. Pennsylvania utilized its troops extensively to confront both external and internal threats. When Robert E. Lee invaded Pennsylvania in 1863, the 149th and 150th Regiments, Pennsylvania Volunteers, were among the first units to engage the Confederates at Gettysburg. These two regiments were soon joined by other Pennsylvanian units, including Philadelphia’s 69th Regiment, which suffered 143 casualties on the third day of the battle. Pennsylvania also utilized volunteers to combat local dissent and strikes. When the city of Philadelphia was gripped by fear that draft riots, like those unfolding in New York City, would befall them in July 1863, Harrisburg officials deployed two regiments of volunteers to Philadelphia in case of civil unrest.

Chapter 5, “Pennsylvania and the Second American Revolution,” reveals the various ways that wartime changes emboldened Pennsylvanians to sow the seeds of the labor and civil rights movements. Among those emboldened by wartime changes was Jonathan Fincher, president of the Philadelphia Trades Assembly and the Ma-

chinists and Blacksmiths’ International Union. In 1863, spurred on by the burgeoning labor activism, Fincher began publishing a labor journal entitled *Fincher’s Trades Review*. According to Giesberg, the *Trades Review* “played a role in keeping the interests of labor before the northern public and linking them to the progress of abolition” (p. 83). Also empowered were the over eight hundred federally employed Philadelphia seamstress who, during the summer of 1864, affixed their names to a petition, which they sent to the White House, supporting the radical concept of an eight-hour federal workday.

While *Keystone State in Crisis* is a well-written and enjoyable book, it does have a few faults, including the lack of a comprehensive bibliography that students could turn to guide them to more in-depth works. Also, on a number of occasions, the author chose to quote a quote taken from a secondary source instead of locating the source of the quote and quoting it directly. Fortunately, these negative attributes are so minor that they barely take away from the overall usefulness of the text.

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