

mile march of the 500-man Mormon Battalion from western Iowa to San Diego as part of the U.S.-Mexican War, "this study seeks to place the larger political and military role of the Mormon Battalion in the context of the history of the American West" (18). Besides carefully selected new documents on the march itself, there also are entire chapters on the battalion's loyal service to General Stephen W. Kearny in California as he laid claim to command, its key role in finding gold at Sutter's Mill in January 1848, the controversies among the sick detachments left back in Pueblo, and the return march of many battalion soldiers to Salt Lake City and, for some, all the way back to Winter Quarters, Nebraska. Along the way are splendid descriptions of new wagon trails, Indian life, Spanish California, gold mining, the discovery of the remains of the ill-fated Donner Party, and much more.

In the best editorial tradition of Juanita Brooks, Bigler and Bagley have incorporated into their panoramic study scores of previously unpublished letters, journal entries, field officer reports, and other mainly contemporary sources of the men (and a few of the women) of the battalion found at the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the National Archives, and several other repositories. Besides introducing the documents and explaining their overall significance to the battalion's story, the editors copiously footnote and colorfully interpret key issues, controversies, and personalities. Adding a few fine maps and photographs to the mix, they have produced a comprehensive, interpretive documentary edition that is a pleasure to read and is without peer in the study of the Mormon Battalion.

*Rebels at Rock Island: The Story of a Civil War Prison*, by Benton McAdams. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000. xiv, 260 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, appendix, index. \$32.00 cloth.

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In Margaret Mitchell's classic, *Gone with the Wind*, southerner Ashley Wilkes is captured and shipped to Rock Island Barracks, Illinois, where he endures barbaric treatment at the hands of his Yankee captors. So dreadful was Mitchell's depiction of the Rock Island prison that it earned the title, "Andersonville of the North." To assess whether Mitchell was right, Benton McAdams examines camp life, prison operations and administration, and the role of a local anti-Republican newspaper in revealing and propagandizing the miserable conditions behind the walls.

McAdams uses official camp records and inmate diaries to provide an insider's view of prison life and to observe the conduct of the guards. Mostly from the Union army's third string, the guard units included the 108th USCT, an African American unit whose presence on the island inflamed racial tensions in the area; the 37th Iowa, known as the "Greybeard Regiment" because of the age of the recruits; and the 133rd Illinois, a short-term regiment called the "trigger happy boys" by prisoners. The author attributes this last group's aggressive behavior, especially the unprovoked shooting of prisoners, to their lack of combat experience. The guards, he argues, "suffered vainglory, fear, and an abiding hatred of an enemy they had never met in battle" (210). They also caused headaches for local citizens who gladly accepted their money but loathed their alcohol-induced carousing.

McAdams's main focus is on several key personalities, especially William Hoffman, Federal Commissary General of Prisoners. Although Hoffman was responsible for the misery at Rock Island, the author contends that his actions "stemmed not from monstrosity but from rigidity" (204). The weight of his responsibilities and an obsession with fiscal discipline—symbolized by his "prison fund"—simply overwhelmed him. "William Hoffman was not evil," writes the author. "He was merely blind" (205).

Perhaps the most interesting character was Joseph Baker Danforth, the Democratic editor of the *Rock Island Argus* and chief nemesis of the camp's commander, Col. Adolphus Johnson. Danforth condemned the commandant for the harsh treatment of southern prisoners, and for months Johnson silently endured these assaults. When Johnson finally replied, he foolishly proclaimed that, if given the power, he would treat the prisoners even worse. That response, according to McAdams, cemented Rock Island's enduring image as the "Andersonville of the North," even though the camp's mortality rate was far below that of the Georgia prison.

Several minor problems mar the book. The author overuses the annoying phrase "sucking its claws." He also states that Fortress Monroe was "outside Washington" when, in fact, the installation was located on the tip of the Virginia peninsula more than one hundred miles from the Union capital. These quibbles aside, McAdams clears a path for others to follow in answering why Civil War prisons became charnel houses despite the best intentions of those in charge. Moreover, this study addresses the impact the prison had on local communities and how homefront civilians dealt with the enemy at the gates, or more appropriately, with the enemy *behind* the gates. Both scholars and enthusiasts will enjoy this book.

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