

helped readers not familiar with that region visualize the location of the communities that Haven refers to in his letters. But these imperfections should not deter potential readers of *A Punishment on the Nation*. It will be a valuable source of information for anyone seeking a greater understanding of the life of a Union soldier.

Standing Firmly by the Flag: Nebraska Territory and the Civil War, 1861–1867, by James E. Potter. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. xxi, 375 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paper.

Reviewer Kurt Hackemer is professor of history at the University of South Dakota. He is working on a history of the Civil War in the Dakota Territory.

Does the historical profession really need yet another book on the Civil War? After all, what more could possibly be said? In this case, the answer is a resounding “yes,” for James Potter has broken significant historiographical ground with his narrative of Nebraska Territory’s experience during this pivotal period in American history. The end result is informative and convincingly makes the case that much more remains to be done in connecting the Civil War to the people and places that occupied the country’s western periphery.

Potter tells his story chronologically, with chapters devoted to each of the war years, plus two additional chapters that take readers up to Nebraska Territory’s admission to the Union in 1867. Nebraska had been at the center of issues that were pivotal to the Civil War ever since the 1854 act that opened the territory for settlement and connected popular sovereignty to the ongoing national debate over slavery. Those issues, and the constant threat of conflict associated with them, are a consistent theme running throughout the book.

From the moment formal hostilities began with the firing on Fort Sumter, Nebraskans linked their concerns about internal security to the larger national context. The southeastern corner of the territory, where Nebraska abuts Missouri and Iowa, was particularly volatile, prompting the raising of the First Nebraska Cavalry (with many Iowa volunteers) as a counter to bushwhackers and potential secessionists. However, the regiment was quickly requisitioned by the federal government for service elsewhere, creating serious consternation that only grew over time as the threat expanded to include Native Americans who attacked the Anglo settlers threatening their way of life. This created an interesting dichotomy in Nebraska’s Civil War experience that is echoed in the way Potter has structured his story, which covers those who remained in Nebraska as well as the territory’s soldiers who confronted Confederates in Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas.

The First Nebraska fought in some of the western theater's early battles, most notably at Fort Donelson and Shiloh, but most of their service was devoted to garrisoning small outposts and fighting guerillas in Arkansas. For much of the war, disease and accident proved more deadly than Confederate bullets and artillery. Potter effectively mines soldiers' letters, diaries, and published accounts in making the point that their actual experience was quite different from the heady expectations of 1861. Despite the prestige of its early and important service, the First Nebraska always had a difficult time recruiting replacements because the other Nebraska units with whom it competed for manpower could promise service without leaving the territory, which meant that soldiers could stay closer to their families.

The book's strong suit is the nuanced portrait it paints of the way the war was perceived and experienced in Nebraska Territory itself. One might assume that the territory's relative isolation from the war kept Nebraskans focused on the challenges of life on the frontier. To be sure, those challenges were constant, but they became downright threatening with the 1862 Sioux War and the widespread attacks by raiding parties in the Platte River valley in 1864. However, the Civil War made its presence known even on the frontier. The bushwhackers who came to symbolize sectional strife in the antebellum years continued their depredations in the territory's southeastern corner for much of the war, ultimately requiring the raising of additional local troops to preserve order. The western trails were filled with draft dodgers and deserters from both the Union and Confederate armies who would resort to violence if challenged. More importantly, Potter documents the extent to which Nebraskans grappled with the war's ideological questions. Political affiliations were scrutinized, with members of any opposing faction often labeled as Copperheads, and the territory's citizens argued vigorously whether this was a war for the Union, a war to free the slaves, or some combination of the two. Discussion of those contentious issues, especially the political rights of former slaves, continued into the postwar period and was central to the political battle that resulted in statehood in 1867.

Potter incorporates a variety of sources, but he makes particularly effective use of materials from First Nebraska soldiers, official documents, and territorial newspapers in crafting his narrative. Given how much he uses them, the latter pose a special challenge because newspapers of the period were, by definition, partisan. In this case, they add a politicized tinge to Potter's story that may exaggerate attitudes about and reactions to the war. That is, however, a minor criticism.

Standing Firmly by the Flag is required reading for anyone who hopes to understand Nebraska's Civil War experience.

Lincoln's Forgotten Ally: Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt of Kentucky, by Elizabeth D. Leonard. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. xii, 432 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Christopher Michael Curtis is professor of history and department head at Armstrong Atlantic State University. His teaching and research focus on the Civil War and Reconstruction, especially nineteenth-century property law.

Colby College professor Elizabeth Leonard has written a captivating biography of Joseph Holt, one of the lesser-known members of Abraham Lincoln's "team of rivals." A slaveholding Democrat from Kentucky, Holt served in the Lincoln administration as judge advocate general beginning in September 1862 and continued to serve in that capacity until he retired during President Grant's administration in 1875. Holt's tenure as the chief officer of military justice thus spanned the transformative events generated by the expansion of military authority during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Leonard focuses on Holt's role in implementing the Emancipation Proclamation, the policy struggles between military and civilian authority arising from the occupation of the South, and the prosecutions of Jefferson Davis and the Lincoln assassination conspirators (the subject of Leonard's previous book, *Lincoln's Avengers*).

The book is not simply a political biography, however. Displaying the dexterity of an accomplished historian, Leonard reconstructs Holt's personal life to reveal a fascinating portrait of the type of representative—but not "great"—man who was instrumental in constructing the modern American nation. Leonard chose her subject well. Holt proves to be a complicated man, replete with the wonderful contradictions and pretensions of the Southern bourgeoisie. An upstart lawyer in a slave society, Holt was driven by a personal ambition that was exceeded only by that of his family members who were seemingly never satisfied with his accomplishments. He drifted between practicing law in Kentucky and Mississippi but remained a restive soul who sought solace in more traditional venues like dabbling in politics and marriage. Accordingly, one is hardly surprised to learn that political ambition finally engulfed Holt and he moved to Washington to seek office in the Buchanan administration. Success arrived in the somewhat disappointing form of an appointment as commissioner of patents, but he soon proved competent and loyal and was elevated to