

Book Reviews

A German in the Yankee Fatherland: The Civil War Letters of Henry A. Kircher, edited by Earl J. Hess. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983. xi, 169 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.50 cloth.

Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel, edited by Frank L. Byrne and Jean Powers Soman. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985. xi, 353 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$22.50 cloth.

Henry Kircher, the son of German natives, was nineteen years old when the Civil War began. Like thousands of other volunteer officers, he contributed a creditable career to the Union effort. Kircher served briefly in the Ninth Illinois and then with the Twelfth Missouri. In March, 1862, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and later he was promoted to first lieutenant and captain. After the young soldier's first combat, at Pea Ridge, he served in two major campaigns, Vicksburg and Chattanooga.

Earl J. Hess provided a well-edited volume of Kircher's letters with a clearly written commentary that connects the letters to excerpts from his four diaries. Hess struck a balance that eludes some editors: he illuminated without being obtrusive. His annotations draw on both primary and secondary sources. Hess developed at least one recurring theme in his notes: the contrast of the cold prose of the reports in the *Official Records* with the stark battle descriptions of Kircher's letters.

Kircher's writings were candid, filled with a young man's blunt opinions about the events sweeping around him. He was direct in his criticisms and honest about his war-weariness. Kircher sometimes offered the canny insights of a frontline infantryman. By the time of the Vicksburg operations, he had learned, perhaps better than some of his commanders, the dangers of making frontal assaults in a rifle-and-trench war. Kircher showed an appreciation of Grant's daring strategy for the Vicksburg campaign, and, in an April, 1863, letter, the young lieutenant outlined the total-war policy that the Union high command was to adopt the following year.

Henry Kircher's personality enlivens this volume and makes it interesting reading. His letters display a sense of humor and a youthful longing to travel. Kircher was a sensitive young man, who was grateful for the upbringing his parents gave him, loved his family, and was hurt by his brother's death from a sudden illness. This work is an important source in nineteenth century social history. Kircher's writings provide evidence about the tensions between Anglo-Saxon and German Americans, which he observed in his first regiment, the Ninth Illinois. He also described the rivalry within the Twelfth Missouri between Anglo-Saxon soldiers from St. Louis and their German American com-

rades from Belleville, Illinois. Kircher himself was not above the ethnic pride he saw around him. When evaluating commanders, he consistently praised German American generals.

Like the Kircher volume, *Your True Marcus* is a valuable and well-edited collection of officer letters. Frank Byrne and Jean Powers Soman were more conservative in their editing than Hess. This restraint has the disadvantage of leaving some difficult passages for the reader, but carries the advantage of preserving the style of the original manuscript. Marcus Spiegel's letters well deserve the effort that Byrne and Soman gave them. Their author was an intelligent man, a sharp observer, and proficient writer. Spiegel served in Jackson's valley, the Peninsula, Vicksburg, and Red River campaigns, and his letters contain animated descriptions of march and battle. They also convey the realities of field service: sickness, lice, boils, wounds, and death. Spiegel's life is an interesting story of a successful businessman and an excellent line officer. Born in Abenheim, Germany, in 1829, Spiegel came to the United States in the late 1840s, part of the sizeable migration of German Jews to antebellum America. In 1853, he married Caroline Hamlin, who converted to Judaism, and the young couple began raising a family. On the eve of the war, Marcus was a prospering Ohio retailer. (His younger brother, Joseph, also a Civil War veteran, founded the Spiegel Catalogue Company after the war.) In January, 1862, Marcus Spiegel mustered as a captain in the 67th Ohio. He proved an exceptional leader, an officer who genuinely cared for his men and who could motivate them in battle. In October, 1862, he was advanced two grades, to a lieutenant colonelcy with the 120th Ohio. Four months later, he was given command of the regiment, and soon after, promoted to full colonel. Spiegel's outstanding career argues that, if not mortally wounded during the Red River campaign, he would have become one of the few Jewish general officers of the nineteenth-century army.

A careful reading of Spiegel's letters suggests some reasons why their author became a successful leader. His politics were consistent with the war effort. He was a war Democrat and believed that a military victory was necessary to preserve the Union. Like many Northerners, Spiegel held a low opinion of blacks and abolitionists, but during the course of the war, he became opposed to slavery. He was an officer who was sincerely concerned about the welfare of his troops. When on leave, Spiegel carried letters and packages for his soldiers. Soon after taking command of the 120th Ohio, he reduced the regiment's sicklist by insisting that his men wash themselves and clean up their camps. Above all, perhaps, this officer succeeded because he was a brave combat leader who was fond of commanding. Spiegel liked the

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life of a field officer, for all its hardships. In return, he found possibilities for advancement in the Civil War army that had not existed for Jewish Americans in the old army; and Marcus Spiegel understood his opportunities. "I am a Soldier," he declared, "and desire to be treated as such."

These two books are valuable sources, furthering our understanding of the relationship between social and military history, a subject of growing importance. The influence of social factors on military affairs has been explored in the 1980s by works such as John Keegan's *Six Armies in Normandy*, which considers the national character of each of the armies that fought in the D-Day campaign, and the studies of Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald, which show how the ethnic heritage of the Old South influenced Confederate military policy and, moreover, all of southern history. *Your True Marcus* and *A German in the Yankee Fatherland* are intelligently edited volumes that add to our knowledge of America's military and cultural past.

USAF HISTORY PROGRAM

PERRY D. JAMIESON

Swedish Place-Names In North America, by Otto Robert Landelius. Translated by Karin Franzén; edited by Raymond Jarvi. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985. xvii, 372 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

Swedish Place-Names in North America is a comprehensive, scholarly, and interesting volume of almost 1,400 items, arranged by states in the United States and by provinces and territories in Canada. The entries vary in length from a few sentences to detailed descriptions which present valuable biographical, geographical, and historical information. The author's aim "has been to present a portion of Swedish cultural history on North American soil based on the Swedish place names that are or have been found there" (xiii). He accomplished that goal and far more in a volume that evaluates the modest amount of previous material on this subject and enlarges and enriches the scope through creative and thorough assessment of the vast array of printed sources.

Otto Robert Landelius, a native of Gothenburg, traces his interest in Swedish North America to boyhood days when he saw from his home the stream of emigrants converging on shipping offices and the harbor of his native city. Extensive study tours in the United States and Canada in 1919-1920 and 1929 provided insight into the life and history of Swedish immigrants and their descendants. He was a correspondent for Swedish and German newspapers; a staff member of the

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