

*Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It*, by William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher III. Civil War America Series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. xix, 408 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$37.50 cloth.

Reviewer William B. Feis is assistant professor of history at Buena Vista University. He is the author of several articles and a forthcoming book on military intelligence during the Civil War.

The "battle book" remains a staple of Civil War literature. Some are scholarly and well written, but all too many numb the reader with tactical details and endless descriptions of camp life and bloody assaults. Some authors glance only briefly at the military and political contexts surrounding the battles, and even fewer grapple with the social dimensions of the conflict. William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher demonstrate, however, that combining military, political, and social perspectives can produce meaningful results.

Although arguably one of the best accounts of the battle of Wilson's Creek yet written, especially in its examination of the complex political situation in Missouri and the role of key participants, their book's most valuable contribution lies elsewhere. A rich body of literature has focused on the motivations of Civil War soldiers. Piston and Hatcher use the traditional "battle book" as a vehicle to test the conclusions other scholars have reached with regard to the importance of honor, courage, and community to Civil War soldiers. Whereas those scholars analyzed broad conceptual issues, however, Piston and Hatcher examine the men who fought at Wilson's Creek, paying special attention to their connections to the communities that sent them off to war. While verifying many of the conclusions reached by Gerald Linderman, Reid Mitchell, and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, they take issue with James McPherson and Earl Hess, who argued that profound ideological convictions inspired and maintained individual soldiers' will to fight.

Although ideology proved a powerful stimulus for many soldiers, write Piston and Hatcher, their "determination at the company level to uphold the honor of their hometowns deserves equal consideration as a motivating factor, at least during the first year of the war" (xv-xvi). An examination of units from Louisiana, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri reveals the strong ties between individuals and their companies and, by extension, the home towns that raised them. The ethnic homogeneity of some units, most notably German and Irish, strengthened those bonds. The penchant of volunteers to shun their regimental designation in favor of the original names given their companies—Pelican Rifles, Texas Hunters, Muscatine Light Guard, Iowa City Grays, Emporia Union Guards—is but one example of this devotion.

Especially interesting evidence of this communal attachment was the symbolic importance of the company flag. Sewn with care by women from the community, every stitch represented a physical bond between soldiers and the folks back home. Elaborate flag presentation ceremonies ritually solidified the link between soldiers and the townspeople, creating what the authors call a "social contract." In return for supporting their families during their absence, volunteers were expected to sustain and defend the town's good reputation on the battlefield. This contract compelled soldiers to act honorably and courageously, not just for themselves but also for the sake of their families and neighbors at home. Shameful behavior broke the pact because it reflected badly on the homefolk. The description of a church congregation weeping as the Second Kansas carried its battle-scarred banner down the aisle, still fastened to the pole stained with the blood of its fallen bearers, underscores the importance of this common bond. Similarly, the notice placed in the *Atchison Champion* in 1881 listing the names of deserters from the First Kansas reveals that the deep wounds caused by those who violated that sacred trust still festered years later.

According to Piston and Hatcher, the conflict in Missouri in 1861 was not so much a "war between the states" as it was a "war between communities," where both sides fought to uphold the good name of their home towns as well as for abstract ideals of liberty and justice. By weaving together military, political, and social history, the authors of *Wilson's Creek* have produced more than just another "battle book"; they have created a rich tapestry of insights into the mindset of nineteenth-century Americans who, when they marched off to war in 1861, fought for cause, comrades, and community—but not necessarily in that order. *Wilson's Creek* is a model for future scholarship and a must-read for Civil War scholars and enthusiasts.

*Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African-American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765–1900*, by Stephen A. Vincent. *Midwestern History and Culture Series*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999. xvii, 224 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Reviewer Leslie A. Schwalm is associate professor of history at the University of Iowa. The author of *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (1997), she is researching the wartime meaning of emancipation in the upper Midwest.

In *Southern Seed, Northern Soil*, Stephen Vincent reconsiders the process of midwestern settlement from the perspective of African Americans and free people of color. In telling the story of the origins and evolu-

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