

Book Reviews

ultimately led to successful combined operations, and states that these lessons were not lost upon later military planners.

Civil War enthusiasts and military historians should find a great deal to interest them in Reed's book. Accounts of operations in the Mississippi Valley, including those which failed to open the river, will be of interest to Mississippi Valley historians. Reed makes the cogent argument that Vicksburg fell not by brilliant planning, but as a result of the situation in which the combatants found themselves. This leads her to suggest that what happens in war often comes out of the pressure of circumstances and only appears in retrospect to have been planned.

This eminently readable book provides an adequate portrayal of the politics and personalities involved and demonstrates how combined operations were affected by other theaters of the war. Although it skips over the tragedy of civil war, and frequently omits the casualty figures, the work has a place in any basic collection of Civil War books.

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The Orphan Brigade: The Kentucky Confederates Who Couldn't Go Home, by William C. Davis. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1980. pp. xv, 318. Illustrations, notes, source note, bibliography, index. \$12.95.

The First Kentucky Brigade was one of the most famous units in the Confederate army. Composed largely of Kentuckians who fought tenaciously but were impatient with discipline, the "Orphans" haunted the southern imagination. The unit's association with such noted leaders as John C. Breckinridge, Simon Bolivar Buckner, and John Hunt Morgan added lustre to its reputation.

Organized at Bowling Green in the autumn of 1861, the brigade and its auxiliaries numbered 3,680 men. Three years later the number was well under one thousand, despite the presence of such soldiers as John Mahon who was wounded five times but always recovered in time for the next battle. Some Tennessee and Alabama troops were a part of the brigade until November 1863, when it became an all Kentucky unit. Its history was confused for several months in 1862 when it was divided and each part claimed to be the First Kentucky Brigade.

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

The Orphans never knew just when they acquired their name, but it probably dated from the bloody battle at Stone's River. John C. Breckinridge saw over a quarter of the brigade become casualties in less than an hour, and he was said to have cried in anguish, "My poor Orphans! My poor Orphans! My poor Orphan Brigade! They have cut it to pieces!" (p. 160).

The Orphans spent themselves recklessly on many of the major battlefields in the western theatre. At Chickamauga their casualty list was over a third of their strength, and, as Davis says, "Their contribution to the victory was enormous; the price paid was ghastly" (p. 190). In a period of four months in the campaign before Atlanta, the Orphans' losses were 123 percent of their total strength. Joseph E. Johnston saw many troops in battle, but during and after the war he said repeatedly, "Yes, the Kentucky Brigade was the finest body of soldiers I ever saw" (p. 216).

In the fall of 1864 the sadly diminished brigade finally got permission to become mounted infantry. As a part of Alfred Iverson's cavalry division they stubbornly contested Sherman's march to the sea and through the Carolinas. They were attacking a federal force on April 21, 1865 when they learned that their war was over. Then they went home to play a prominent part in Kentucky's postwar politics and to cherish their memories of the war and their role in it.

The Orphan Brigade possessed individuality. It loved John C. Breckinridge and hated Braxton Bragg. Composed of volunteers, several companies nearly mutinied in 1862 when the conscription law forced their continuation in service. The men fought magnificently, but desertions were frequent. Their camps were notorious for gambling, drinking, and stealing, but their activities also included church services, extensive reading, and a glee club. They were the Kentuckians of the Orphan Brigade.

With this lively unit history William C. Davis, editor of *Civil War Times Illustrated* and president of the National Historical Society, continues his amazing output on Civil War topics. While he had few contemporary primary sources from which to work, he has produced a book that will delight Civil War fans. The text is superior to its appurtenances. Some battle maps would have been helpful, and the compound notes make it difficult if not impossible to match statements or quotations with specific sources. The index is confined to names and page numbers, a practice that is only slightly better than no index at all. Careful editing should have eliminated some errors. Cassius M. Clay was never an abolitionist, and James G. Birney was not one for a considerable part of his antislavery career (p. 4) and John

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C. Breckinridge was of Scotch-Irish descent, not Irish (p. 168). On one page Buckner rode at the head of the Confederates who marched to Bowling Green in September 1861, but on another page Buckner and his men boarded trains for the trip. Since Bowling Green is in Kentucky, the statement that food arrived there "from Kentucky" is somewhat confusing (p. 57). Such discrepancies detract from what is certain to be one of the best Civil War books of the year.

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Iron Frontier: The Discovery and Early Development of Minnesota's Three Ranges, by David A. Walker. St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979. pp. xi, 259. Photographs, maps, notes, index. \$16.00.

Throughout the late nineteenth century the West experienced a series of mining booms. Towns such as Virginia City, Nevada or Cripple Creek, Colorado were well known for their precious minerals, however, more significant for American industrialization were the iron mines then opening in northeastern Minnesota. The story of this less romantic, yet intriguing, mineral frontier is the subject of David A. Walker's *Iron Frontier*.

The three Minnesota ranges chronicled, Vermilion, Mesabi, and Cuyuna, were the last and richest iron fields to be opened in the United States. The existence of iron ore in the area had been known for over a century before the deposits were commercially utilized. The author details the exploration of the fields from the earliest French and British fur trappers through federal efforts of the early 1800s. The national and later state investigations of the nineteenth century were especially aware of the iron deposits and attempted to delineate them in detail. These catalogings provided would-be entrepreneurs with a solid data base for their operations.

Early promoters of the Vermilion range, spurred by the increased demand for iron ore after the Civil War and wartime depletion of Michigan's iron reserves, used the exploration findings to attract necessary capital. Conditions, including technological developments in steel production, had changed by 1880 to make pioneering the region economically feasible. The area was a virgin wilderness when

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