

Casualties Of War: The 'Tragedy Without A Name' Took Its Toll

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Review

CASUALTIES OF WAR

The 'tragedy without a name' took its toll

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Fall 1999

Garrison, Webb *Friendly Fire in the Civil War*. Rutledge Hill Press, ISBN 1558537147

Soldiers accidentally killing their comrades in combat has been an unfortunate and often under-represented aspect of nearly every war. The Civil War is no exception. In **Friendly Fire in the Civil War**, Webb Garrison chronicles incidents of friendly fire in over 100 Civil War battles.

Written in a style that will appeal to most Civil War enthusiasts, Garrison's exploration of friendly fire is both informative and readable. This unique work examines not only the Civil War's famous cases of friendly fire (for example, the mortal wounding of Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson during the Battle of Chancellorsville), but also little known episodes of men in the same army killing each other.

The author examined scores of diaries and memoirs to uncover instances of friendly fire. His research shows that from the smallest skirmish to the largest battlefield, the Civil War saw an astounding number of friendly fire incidents.

While Garrison writes that on occasion confusion, excitement, and obstructed views led to many episodes of misdirected attacks, he argues that better training, discipline, and leadership would have significantly lowered the number of these lamentable incidents. In the case of Jackson's wounding, Garrison describes how Major John Barry of the 18th North Carolina ordered his men to shoot, despite General A. P. Hill's shouting that they were hitting comrades.

Garrison also argues that with victory as the only goal for Yankees and Rebels alike, officers spent little time contemplating or correcting actions they

considered minor in comparison to the overall carnage seen in the Civil War. Some officers even became calloused to causing the injury or death of their comrades. In one case, Union General William "Bull" Nelson ordered the pilot of a steamship that was transporting Nelson's Ohio Volunteers to Pittsburg Landing to plow full speed through a mass of blue clad men who, after being defeated around the Shiloh Church, were attempting to swim across the Tennessee River to safety.

Though some of Garrison's examples may not rise to the level of friendly fire -- for instance, injury caused by wooden sabots falling off artillery shells and landing among allies -- his study sheds light on a little known, yet disturbingly prevalent, aspect of America's Civil War.

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