

### Crossing The Potomac: Lee's Maryland Cavalrymen Defied Odds And Allegiances

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## Review

### CROSSING THE POTOMAC

#### Lee's Maryland cavalrymen defied odds and allegiances

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**Driver Jr., Robert J.** *First and Second Maryland Cavalry*. Rockbridge Publishing, ISBN 1883522242

Robert J. Driver's **First and Second Maryland Cavalry, C.S.A.** provides an in-depth look at Maryland during the War, her divided loyalties, and the brave men and boys who left their native state to serve the South. Their departure from hearth and home was no mean feat. At great personal peril, they crossed the Potomac to join Confederate ranks. If caught by Federal authorities, they often would be imprisoned; the less fortunate were either shot or hanged. Yet, those who successfully crossed into Virginia served with the best the Confederacy had to offer. The book's narrative gains momentum as the two Maryland units are formed. For the most part, the book describes in great detail activities of the 1st Maryland. Due to the short duration of the 2nd Maryland Cavalry, less time is devoted to that unit's history. The Davis Battalion of Maryland Cavalry is also covered, but its history is short and the unit eventually was assimilated into the 1st Maryland.

The history of the 1st Maryland Cavalry parallels that of the Army of Northern Virginia. The 1st Maryland saw action during the Peninsula campaign, served with Jackson in the glory days of the Valley, raided Union supply lines and conducted raids in both Virginia and Maryland during the middle years of the War, and saw action at Gettysburg. From Gettysburg on its men continued to share the fate of their fellow confederates and by 1864 the unit was greatly reduced in ranks, though small numbers of new Marylander recruits continued to cross the Potomac. Finally, it served as rear guard for Robert E. Lee's infantry during the Appomattox campaign and, when the balance of the Army of Northern Virginia surrendered, many of the Maryland cavalrymen chose to remain in the saddle. Driver's work is meticulously researched, and he weaves an interesting and compelling narrative. It is loaded with quotes by the men who

served in these units. His thorough grasp of the subject matter is evident, and his book offers a lasting contribution to the study of border states, orphan brigades, and specifically -- Maryland. One point of contention: the reader would be greatly aided were subtitles placed throughout the text to highlight changes of events as well as battles.

About one-third of the book is devoted to muster rolls of the men who served in the 1st and 2nd Maryland and is a work in itself. While browsing through the rolls one reads of every possible fortune that could await a soldier: death, imprisonment, desertion, court-martial, bravery, honor, and particularly survival.

Supplemented with ample maps and photographs, **First and Second Maryland Cavalry, C.S.A.** offers a rich reading experience -- well worth its \$34.95 price.

*Timothy Daiss is a journalist, freelance writer, and author of In the Saddle: Exploits of the 5th Georgia Cavalry During the Civil War (Schiffer Publishing).*