

The Artillery Service in the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865

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Recommended Citation

Fowler, John Derrick (2012) "The Artillery Service in the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865," *Civil War Book Review*: Vol. 14 : Iss. 2 .

DOI: 10.31390/cwbr.14.2.16

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol14/iss2/15>

Review

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Spring 2012

Tidball, John C. and Kaplan, Lawrence M. *The Artillery Service in the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865*. Westholme Publishing, LLC, \$30.00 ISBN 978-1-59416-149-0

Understanding Union Artillery through the Eyes of an Artillerist

John C. Tidball (1825-1906) was a career U. S. Army officer noted for his service in the artillery during the American Civil War. Throughout the war, Tidball earned numerous brevets for his bravery, skill, and daring. He later served as Superintendent of Artillery Instruction at the Artillery School from 1874 to 1881. When he finally retired from the army in 1889, he was perhaps the nation's foremost artilleryman. Certainly, no one knew more about field artillery and its use in combat. Tidball penned a comprehensive study of the use of Union artillery during the Civil War in a series of essays titled "The Artillery Service in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-65," which appeared in the *Journal of the Military Service Institution* from 1891 to 1893. Lawrence M. Kaplan has collected and edited these essays here for the first time since their original publication. Kaplan, the chief historian of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, has also served as a staff historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington, D.C. and as a staff historian at the U.S. Army Field Artillery Center in Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Tidball examines the conflict through the eyes of an artilleryman, describing the organization, equipping, and manning of the Federal artillery service. He illustrates the proper as well as the improper use of artillery during many of the war's major battles and is especially critical of the early war tactic of assigning batteries small infantry commands that diluted the overall firepower advantage that the Union enjoyed. The essays cover three Federal armies and many of the war's most significant battles including the Army of the Potomac at Fair Oaks, Gaines's Mill, Mechanicsville, Malvern Hill, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg; the Army of the Tennessee at Stones River and

Chickamauga; and the Army of the Ohio at Shiloh.

Kaplan's edited volume includes not only Tidball's original essays but also material from an unpublished paper he wrote in 1905 that offered further insights into the artillery service as well as a general overview of the Petersburg campaign. *The Artillery Service in the War of the Rebellion* is an excellent new resource that examines the use and misuse of Federal artillery during some of the most important battles of the Civil War. It also sheds new light on these battles by examining them from a different perspective. Kaplan has done the Civil War community a great service by making what was once rare material available to a wide audience. Thankfully, he does not edit the material with a heavy hand, instead allowing Tidball's own words to speak across the century and a half since the war engulfed the nation. In sum, this is a valuable new book, detailing in clear language how the Union forces maneuvered and directed their artillery forces. It should find a place on many bookshelves.

Dr. Fowler is the author of Mountaineers in Gray: The Nineteenth Tennessee Volunteer Infantry Regiment, CSA (2004) and editor of The Confederate Experience (2007). His most recent work is entitled Breaking the Heartland: The Civil war in Georgia an anthology he co-edited and contributed to.