

Border Wars: The Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky

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Recommended Citation

Bailey, Joe R. (2016) "Border Wars: The Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky," *Civil War Book Review*. Vol. 18 : Iss. 2 .

DOI: 10.31390/cwbr.18.2.14

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol18/iss2/13>

Review

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Spring 2016

Dollar, Kent T. and Whiteaker, Larry H. and Dickinson, W. Calvin. *Border Wars: The Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky*. Kent State University Press, \$39.95 ISBN 9781606352410

Focus on Tennessee and Kentucky Sheds Light on the Broader Civil War

In *Border Wars: The Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky*, Kent Dollar, a professor of history at Tennessee Technological University, joins Professors Emeriti, Larry Whiteaker and W. Calvin Dickinson, of the same institution to write this sequel to their first joint project, *Sister States, Enemy States: The Civil War in Tennessee and Kentucky*. *Border Wars* returns to a familiar theme centered on the Civil War in these two pivotal states. In an extremely well-written introduction, the editors argue that narrowing the study of the Civil War to Tennessee and Kentucky highlights aspects of the war not necessarily revealed in broader studies of the conflict. Specifically, the editors contend that using this lens sheds light on the "larger story of the Civil War," and thus fills "a niche in the historiography of the Civil War in Kentucky and Tennessee" (16).

The book's essays are effectively organized into two parts. The first addresses battles, skirmishes, and campaigns in Tennessee and Kentucky, while the second focuses on Civil War leaders who operated in the region. Several strong themes emerge from Part I. Among them, Aaron Astor challenges conventional historiography and shows how pre-war militias in Lexington, Kentucky, and Clarksville, Tennessee, contributed to rapid mobilization for the armies of both sides once the war began and closely aligned their members with the communities they served. It also reveals how these militias provided soldiers with elementary training that also "...solidified networks of social allegiance, and channeled political mobilization" (36).

Essays by Scott A. Tarnowieckyi, Michael Toomey, Patricia A. Hoskins, and Derek Frisby expose another major theme flowing through Part I of the book. Their works describe the resistance to federal authority manifested by

frequent and extensive guerrilla activity and irregular warfare that emerged in areas occupied by U.S. forces. Unionist enclaves within Kentucky and Tennessee pressured the Lincoln administration to protect and liberate citizens in those areas with military force. In several regions of Kentucky and Tennessee, however, local residents frequently felt the wrath of Union soldiers who treated loyal and disloyal citizens with equal contempt. Loyal Unionist citizens in these regions also grew increasingly frustrated at the U.S. Army's inability to protect them from the constant depredations of irregular warfare. Additionally, the Emancipation Proclamation and subsequent use of African-American units in Tennessee and Kentucky, did not endear the Unionist citizens of those states to federal policy.

Part II focuses on military leadership in Tennessee and Kentucky. The essays in this section provide a framework for readers to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and personalities at work in the Kentucky and Tennessee areas of operation. Moreover, these essays provide a basis for reassessing leaders and military campaigns in this critical region.

Border Wars reaches a high point with Brian McKnight's reappraisal of Confederate General Felix Zollicoffer. McKnight challenges conventional historiography and convincingly argues that Zollicoffer, traditionally depicted as an incompetent and blundering officer, grasped the strategic situation of military operations in east Tennessee and Kentucky. McKnight also holds that Zollicoffer and other commanders in this region faced challenges, such as impassable roads and rough terrain, that were not experienced by commanders in other theaters.

An essay by Christopher Losson also adds a new layer to our understanding of the Civil War in the western theater. His essay explores the troubled relationship between Confederate Generals Braxton Bragg and Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, shedding more light on the political strife plaguing the Confederate Army of Tennessee, the principal force operating in Tennessee and Kentucky. Similar essays by Stephen Engle, Earl Hess, and Sam Davis Elliot contribute to our understanding of Don Carlos Buell, Braxton Bragg, and Tennessee Governor Isham G. Harris.

The book concludes with some valuable reflections on the war in Tennessee and Kentucky. Historian Benjamin Franklin Cooling, a scholar who has published numerous volumes on the Civil War in the two states, not only discusses the significance of military campaigns occurring within the sister states

but also comments on the roles they played in logistics. Finally, Cooling addresses the challenges that Kentucky and Tennessee citizens faced after the war's conclusion and suggest those vast economic, social, and political difficulties might form the basis of a third volume.

Although Wiley Sword writes an excellent chapter on the Battle of Franklin, and few speak of that battle's martial drama and ghastly carnage better than him, one is left to wonder how this essay fits within the book's overall theme. Moreover, retired journalist Jack Hurst delivers a thoughtful essay comparing the humble origins and magnificent rise of Nathan Bedford Forrest and Ulysses S. Grant. Hurst, however, identifies the United States Military Academy as a school that "at bottom, was established to teach fighting to men who did not know how..." (242). In reality, West Point predominantly served as an engineering institution through much of the nineteenth century. In his concluding paragraph, Hurst also addresses the legacy of Grant and Forrest as seen in leaders like Colin Powell and Dwight D. Eisenhower, who he identified as an "Iowa farm boy" (252). Eisenhower, in fact, was born in Texas before moving to Kansas. These relatively minor criticisms, however, do little to mar the book's overall effectiveness. *Border Wars* certainly belongs on the shelf of all serious students and scholars of the Civil War's western theater.

Joe R. Bailey is the Assistant Command Historian for the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth. He holds a Ph.D. in American History from Kansas State University and his current research focuses on the Battles of Franklin and Nashville in history and memory.