

A Thrilling Narrative: The Memoir of a Southern Unionist

Kathleen Gorman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr>

Recommended Citation

Gorman, Kathleen (2008) "A Thrilling Narrative: The Memoir of a Southern Unionist," *Civil War Book Review*. Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 .

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol10/iss1/20>

Review

Gorman, Kathleen

Winter 2008

Haynes, Captain Dennis E. and Bergeron, Arthur W., Jr., ed.. *A Thrilling Narrative: The Memoir of a Southern Unionist*. University of Arkansas Press, \$29.95 hardcover ISBN 9781557288110

A Southern Unionist's Story

Part of the *Civil War in the West* series, *A Thrilling Narrative: The Memoir of a Southern Unionist* presents a unique look at a Unionist in western Louisiana during the last years of the Civil War. Captain Dennis E. Haynes is uncompromising in his discussion of secessionists and the unfairness he sees in his own treatment. He also provides a rare look at the First Louisiana Battalion Cavalry Scouts and their Red River Campaign of 1864. While southern Unionism is not an unfamiliar topic in the history of the South, the actual lives of ordinary Unionists are largely unknown.

The public life of Haynes is relatively short. He helped organize a company of southern Unionists in 1863, served as a captain in the First Louisiana Battalion Cavalry Scouts, and as a district attorney and surveyor in post-war New Orleans. His memoir covers from 1863 until 1866. Haynes himself disappears from the public record in about 1873.

Bergeron, an archivist and author or editor of a number of works on the Civil War in the West, has attempted to identify the multitude of people named in Haynes's work. But many of them remain anonymous as Haynes seemed to have named anyone he came into contact with. The annotation does provide verification of the story wherever possible. The places and names discussed can become overwhelming but the action itself never lags. Haynes is always on the move and always battling with someone. He was captured, shot, and generally mistreated by his secessionist neighbors throughout the war. Haynes's worst treatment occurred after Union forces left the Red River region in 1864 and Confederate sympathizers punished those who had helped the Union troops. Haynes is especially unhappy with the irregular forces that patrolled the region,

but he saves his greatest antipathy for Bloody Bob Martin who appears repeatedly as the author of numerous violent acts. One of the many things that angers Haynes is that Martin remained free and unscathed while Haynes lost everything: his freedom, family, and property.

About 40 pages are devoted to Haynes's correspondence with everyone from the Governor of Louisiana to President Andrew Johnson along with a short excerpt from the journal of C.S.G. Clifton, another Unionist refugee. Haynes's 1865 letter to Johnson details his general disgust with the violent situation in his home state and his hope that more information will provoke some response from the federal government.

This is not a work for everyone or even everyone interested in the Civil War. Haynes has a very limited perspective, primarily western Louisiana, and the bitter tone can get a little repetitive. However, for those interested in the lives of southern Unionists this work provides a valuable service. Bergeron has provided extensive notes, a bibliography, and a short, but useful introduction.

Kathleen Gorman is associate professor of history at Minnesota State University, Mankato.