

Wolford's Cavalry: The Colonel, The War In The West, And The Emancipation Question In Kentucky

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Review

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Lee, Dan *Wolford's Cavalry: The Colonel, the War in the West, and the Emancipation Question in Kentucky*. Potomac Books, \$34.95 ISBN 9781612348513

Revisiting the “Old Roman Nose, the First Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, and the War.”

Dan Lee is a Civil War historian and the author of *The L&N; Railroad in the Civil War: A Vital North-South Link* and *Struggle to Control* and *Thomas J. Wood: A Biography of the Union General in the Civil War*. In *Wolford's Cavalry: The Colonel, the War in the West, and the Emancipation Question in Kentucky*, Lee writes on the career, as a soldier, of Colonel Wolford in the context of a political ideology that split Kentuckians during the war. He framed the U.S. Civil War around a character having proved to be controversial for the Union political community, and the unit he commanded. Colonel Frank Wolford was pivotal about the question of emancipation and the service of African American troops in a state that sat on the border between north and south. The work does not excuse what Wolford felt about slavery, but it does put into perspective that soldiers in command could have had internal struggles with the political nature of the U.S. Government.

Wolford's Cavalry is for any avid Civil War Historian who has some interest in officers' positions on President Lincoln during the war, or a general interest in Kentucky military units. Readers need be aware that Wolford was critical of Lincoln and his stance toward the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Lee's inclusion of the General's images he identifies in work was useful, but there is a lack of maps to assist in geographic representation when referencing operations. Beginning with a brief examination of Wolford's familial heritage, Lee wastes no time by getting to the Mexican War and the 2nd Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, where Wolford set a precedent for service and then his between-war career of practicing law. Moving in sequence with the U.S. Civil

War, Lee attempts to balance the perceived image of Colonel Wolford by highlighting his tenacity as a military officer in combat and the 1st Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry throughout the western theater. References made to his unusual methods of drilling during camp and action in operations and battle depict an unconventional wisdom that Wolford brought as a leader within Union ranks. The operations he was responsible for leading proved that he was courageous and cunning. He was wounded fighting Morgan's Raiders, and would later depart as result of complications of that injury. (247) Lee devotes time to Wolford's 1st Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry throughout much of the work labeling chapters like Mill Springs, Soldiering in Tennessee, and Perryville.

The gallantry of Colonel Wolford, as Lee builds on throughout the first half of this book, would become oblivious to the public eye by a three-hour speech he gave to a general audience on March 10th 1864. In a three-hour rant, Wolford emblazoned an open crowd with his denouncing of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the use of African American troops. Lee pinpoints that Wolford's main grievance was the overreach of executive power by Lincoln in, what he felt, was a state matter.(174) Some military commanders overlooked the public cry of a military officer, who supported the notion not to enlist African American troops, because of his service record. Lee describes an astonishing point that one citizen wrote Lincoln personally advising that Colonel Wolford, who was loyal to the Union mission, be removed to another state to ensure that loyalty. The move would not occur due to General Schofield having him arrested as result of the speech and only to await a court-martial. However, Wolford dishonorably discharged instead of being court-martialled, was arrested on multiple occasions, and on one of those occasions he was transported to Washington D.C. to meet with President Lincoln.

While Wolford was in Washington D.C., he met with President Lincoln on many occasions. Lee specifically mentions that the details of these encounters are unknown. Lee uses the one well documented encounter between Wolford and Lincoln, where the President explained his reasoning for the Emancipation Proclamation, as a way to highlight Wolford's simultaneous loyalty to the Union and hostility toward emancipation.(183) Wolford, nearly being labeled a Confederate because of his harsh voice of criticism towards Abraham Lincoln, returned to Kentucky and supported General George McClellan's bid for the Democratic platform to the executive in 1864. Moving into the late war, Lee usefully juxtaposes the war of words between Wolford and Lincoln with Wolford's previous command. Wolford's old command of the 1st

Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry would carry on without Wolford in the Atlanta Campaign and eventually muster out of service in December of 1864.

The war ended for members of the 1st Kentucky Volunteer Cavalry, and for Colonel Wolford. However, their service would always remain with them. Lee acknowledges some members went west in the post-war years, but many stayed in Kentucky. Furthermore, some of them became lawyers, judges, and several entered politics. For Wolford, a life of service led him to various public positions like the Kentucky House of Representatives and then to Kentucky's Adjutant General, and finally a role in Congress in the 1880s. Wolford took his congressional position seriously and adamantly supported veterans and their families. When serving as Congressman during the Grant Administration, Wolford did not accept the position of protecting businesses but instead protected those having been a party to some injustice. (243) The political life of Frank Wolford came to an end with his defeat and eventual retirement from the political sector. He would depart as a result of age and complications from a wound he received during the war.

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