

Weekend Warriors: A New Edition Of A Definitive Reenactment Manual

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Review

WEEKEND WARRIORS

A new edition of a definitive reenactment manual

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Hadden, R. Lee *Reliving the Civil War: A Reenactor's Handbook, Second Edition*. Stackpole, ISBN 811729125

Several years ago I received a copy of the first edition of this book as a present from a non-reenactor friend. Having seen several earlier books and videos by earnest folks trying to explain reenacting to newcomers, I could only shake my head wondering what these guys had missed or gotten wrong. As it turned out, I was the one who was mistaken.

Having been an infantry reenactor since the mid-'70s, I was confident that I pretty much "knew it all." So I was surprised at what I found within the pages of R. Lee Hadden's book. This guide tells you everything you need to reenact the role of an infantryman in the Civil War. A person or small group of people wishing to take up the hobby can do it using just the information presented in **Reliving the Civil War**.

There is nothing lacking here. The section on "Reenactment for Infantry" covers the usual items -- from uniforms and equipment to tobacco, medals, and military courtesy. "Camp Life" includes not just the military camp, but also civilian, sutler, and support camps. Hadden does not avoid touchy issues such as women in uniform. And he discusses rationally, unlike others I have heard, the different groups within the reenactment community.

The issues between casual reenactors and the hard-core "authentics" are addressed appropriately. Other chapters are devoted to "Reenacting Etiquette," "Health and Comfort" (remember it is *living* history, folks!), and "Hosting a Civil War Reenactment."

The second edition includes expanded coverage of trends within the reenactment community, including roles for men, women, and children (yes, gentlemen, women do have a role in reenactments!), updated appendices (including Web site and e-mail addresses), and a new index with subject headings.

Reliving the Civil War does an excellent job of covering the infantry, and even has a large section for civilians. It does not cover artillery or cavalry very well (but these topics would require a book of their own to do them justice). And it must be said that, compared with infantry reenactment, artillery or cavalry reenactments attract smaller numbers of reenactors and involve a lot more expense.

At the end of the book are nine very useful appendices, such as: "National Park Service Safety and Standards," "Antietam National Battlefield Rifle-Musket Misfire Plan," "Reenactors and Taxes," and even "Reenacting Periodicals." Each is a gem of information in itself.

I highly recommend **Reliving the Civil War** as a *must have* for anyone thinking of getting into reenactment, as well as for those who are already involved.

Dave Arneson first began reenacting in 1976 with the 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. He serves as an associate of the United States Civil War Center, delivers talks at conventions and to Round Tables, plays "way too many" war games, and is an instructor teaching computer game design at Full Sail University in Orlando, Florida.