

The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War

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Review

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Cashin, Joan E., Editor *The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*. Princeton University Press, \$17.95 ISBN 691091749

Benchmark anthology'

Comprehensive study of civilians during the war

In **The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War**, Joan E. Cashin has assembled an admirable collection of scholarly articles by professors from all over the United States. Their common goal is to shed light on the impact of the Civil War on civilians, a subject Cashin accurately describes as under-studied during the last decade. For despite the wealth of primary sources written by civilians about their wartime experiences, only Maris Vinoskis, Catherine Clinton, and Nina Silber have published detailed studies of the ways in which the Civil War shaped the lives of Americans often (but not always) removed from the roar of battle. Vinoskis edited *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays* in 1990, while Clinton and Silber edited *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* in 1992. While each book is important in its own way, their relatively narrow focus and the dearth of publications on similar subjects over the last ten years leaves a gaping chasm in the historiography of the Civil War, one which Cashin and her team of writers have begun to finally fill.

An Associate Professor of History at Ohio State University, Cashin is the author of *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier*, and the editor of *Our Common Affairs: Texts from Women in the Old South*. Her previous experience as an author and editor serve her well in **The War was You and Me**, for it avoids the tendency of many anthologies to drift too far from its stated theme, and includes excellent writing on men, women, slaves, children, whites, and free blacks during the Civil War. The result is an interesting and illuminating look into the powerful social forces unleashed in the United States between 1861 and 1865, one that researchers and educators are sure to use as a

reference work for years to come.

Cashin organized the book into fifteen chapters and three sections, one section each on the North, the South, and the Border Regions. An established scholar specifically commissioned for their expertise in the field wrote the essays that form each chapter. Superb illustrations accompany the text, which ranges over a wide variety of topics including Anna Elizabeth Dickinson, Virginia Civil War widows, women teachers who moved south to teach free blacks during the war, slaves views of the war in Mississippi, and Mary Surratt's role in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

As with any anthology, there are gaps in the material presented and the quality of the writing is hardly uniform. **The War Was You and Me** barely touches on the ways in which the Civil War affected the major ethnic or religious groups, and makes no mention of Native Americans at all. Two of the essays are very weak, while others struggle to show the connections between local or regional events and trends and the larger national issues which dominated the era. And yet, as with all good anthologies, the work as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and several of the chapters are simply outstanding. Of particular importance are William Blair's chapter entitled *We Are Coming, Father Abraham - Eventually: The Problem of Northern Nationalism in the Pennsylvania Recruiting Drives of 1862*; Margaret S. Creighton's *Living on the Fault Line: African American Civilians and the Gettysburg Campaign*; and Cashin's own *Deserters, Civilians, and Draft Resistance in the North*. Each incorporates new material in an innovative way that will be a boon to historians and educators and an inspiration to scholars considering research projects of their own which focus on the trials and tribulations of civilians during the Civil War.

The War Was You and Me is ultimately a satisfying work, one that should set the benchmark for anthologies on Civil War civilians for the foreseeable future. It will be of special interest to historians concerned with the impact of the Civil War at home; to educators seeking material besides battle histories or biographies for courses on the Civil War; and for those who appreciate the unheralded and very real skill Cashin demonstrates as an editor.

Lance Janda is an Assistant Professor of History at Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma, and the book review editor for H-Minerva and Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military. His first book, Stronger Than

Custom: West Point and the Admission of Women, *was published last year, and he writes regularly on a wide range of military topics for encyclopedias and historical journals.*