

Women During the Civil War: An Encyclopedia

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Review

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Harper, Judith E. *Women During the Civil War: An Encyclopedia*. Routledge, \$95.00 ISBN 041593723X

Singular source

Wealth of diverse women's experiences explored

Women During the Civil War: An Encyclopedia is a reference that includes information on women and their roles during the turbulent period of the Civil War. Judith E. Harper, an independent scholar and professional writer, gives the reader more than just a snapshot of each entry. She shows that women functioned in the mainstream and not just on the periphery of society.

This book is packed from cover to cover with an enormous amount of information, neatly organized alphabetically. Included are over 120 entries and numerous photographs and illustrations. The best way to enjoy this study is to take advantage of the many cited sources at the end of each entry. The diaries and journals that were consulted for this work add a personal flavor to each entry. Secondary sources tie it all together in a very readable reference that is a must for any student of history. In addition, Harper has provided an extensive bibliography, index, and a glossary.

Women During the Civil War includes women from all regions with a variety of nationalities, education and beliefs. Many students are familiar with Susan B. Anthony, Louisa May Alcott, Clara Barton, Harriet Tubman and Mary Ellen Pleasant. Lesser-known women described in the book are Belle Edmondson, Mary Edwards Walker, Eugenia Levy Phillips, Vinnie Ream (the first woman artist to be awarded a Congressional commission), and Edmonia Lewis (the first African-American sculptor to achieve success internationally). Entries are devoted to anti-slavery writer *Lydia Maria Child*, political writer *Anna Ella Carroll*, African-American poet and writer *Frances Harper Watkins*, and songstress *Julia Ward Howe*, lyricist of The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Harper's work emphasizes the fact that women were artists, writers, doctors, nurses, mothers, wives, astronomers, spies, smugglers, teachers and soldiers. They ran businesses, hospitals, farms and plantations. Some women used their talents to organize and manage relief agencies such as the United States Christian Commission, United States Sanitary Commission, Soldiers' Aid Societies, Women's Central Association of Relief, Contraband Relief Association, and sanitary fairs. And they suffered through war.

The individuals in this book represent a small portion of the female population during the Civil War. Though their experience was varied, all shared the fear and sorrow that comes with living through war. **Women During the Civil War** brings their hopes, fears and dreams alive, making an excellent addition to any Civil War library.

Jory V. Reedy has a BA in History from Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas and is the Editor of The Trans-Mississippian newsletter for the Civil War Roundtable of Eastern Kansas