

### Walker's Texas Division, C.S.A.: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi

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## Review

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**Lowe, Richard** *Walker's Texas Division, C.S.A.: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi*. Louisiana State University Press, \$39.95 ISBN 080712933X

Commendable contribution

Texans bolstered Confederate cause

Dr. Richard Lowe, Regents Professor of History at the University of North Texas, has crafted a superb and much-needed history of one of the great military units of the Confederacy in his **Walker's Texas Division: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi**. Initially about 12,000 men strong, the unit was the largest single entity of Texas troops that served during the war. It also is unique in that it was the only division from either North or South that was manned entirely by soldiers from a single state throughout the war. The division was formed in 1862 and served with distinction until disbanded at the end of hostilities.

The unit fought in 1864 during the Red River Campaign where Walker's Greyhounds played a pivotal role in the Battle of Mansfield on April 8. The division formed the Confederate right flank, and the Texans' charge absolutely crushed the Union left wing, leading to a rout of the Federal troops. The following day at the Battle of Pleasant Hill, Walker's Division charged into the center of the Federal line in an effort to disrupt the Union 19th Corps. Although the Texans succeeded, other Confederate units wheeled too early and ran into an unexpected Union formation. The ensuing battle ended in a costly tactical tie.

The division was then diverted into Arkansas to halt another Union column descending from Little Rock. In the Battle of Jenkins' Ferry on April 30, the division fought valiantly to trap the Union force under Major General Frederick Steele against the Saline River. Commanded to make a futile frontal assault, the division lost two of its three brigade commanders and took a large number of casualties. The attrition caused by incredibly hard marches and three major battles fought in quick succession left the division with only about 1,500 men.

The division was then sent back to Louisiana to assist in trapping the Union forces under Major General Nathaniel P. Banks. After an incredible march of over 370 miles, the unit reached Pineville, located in central Louisiana, as the last Union forces left the Red River Valley.

After the campaign, their commander, Major General John G. Walker, was promoted to the post of District Commander of Western Louisiana. The men were disappointed and desertions followed. For the remainder of the war, they marched and countermarched in Louisiana and Arkansas, and finally returned to Texas, informally disbanding in May 1865.

Divisional histories of Trans-Mississippi units are exceedingly rare, as are histories of the Civil War in this region. Dr. Lowe has created an exceptionally fine piece of research and writing. The author has crafted much more than a unit history, which in itself is superb. Dr. Lowe utilizes a large sample database of information on 2,200 soldiers who belonged to Walker's Division. The result is a very personal story of the men who fought with this remarkable unit. His research reveals that the majority of the unit's members were financially stable home and landowners, heads of families who were fighting for more than kith and kin. Many of these men could have sat out the war and let others do the fighting for them. These hard-fought veterans were the epitome of the patriot, whether blue or grey. They were protecting their homeland from invasion and to secure the rights of their new nation.

This book is a worthy addition to the library of the professional historians and history buffs alike. It is well written, superbly researched, and adds greatly to the body of knowledge in Civil War literature. Dr. Lowe is to be commended for this fine effort.

*Gary D. Joiner is director of the Red River Regional Studies Center at Louisiana State University in Shreveport. He is also an Assistant Professor of History at LSU-S. His publications include One Damn Blunder From Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign of 1864 (Scholarly Resources: 2003). He is the co-author of numerous books, articles, and technical reports in the areas Civil War, naval history, archeology, regional history, and cultural resources.*