

Inside Connecticut and the Civil War: Essays on One State's Struggles

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Review

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Warshauer, Matthew *Inside Connecticut and the Civil War: Essays on One State's Struggles*. Wesleyan, \$27.95 ISBN 978-0-8195-7396-4

Essays on Memories and Commemoration

This book's title aptly summarizes its nine unique essays that are ably introduced and edited by Professor Matthew Warshauer of Central Connecticut State University. Warshauer, who also co-chairs the Connecticut Civil War Commemoration Commission, has fashioned a readable volume of work by authors who trained at his university and who have pursued teaching or public history careers. These well-researched essays are accompanied by extensive endnotes, ample and appropriate photographs, and a solid index.

Warshauer poses the primary motivating question for the book's publication: "What will historians in another fifty years, at the Bicentennial Commemoration, say about what we did during the sesquicentennial?" (5) Present-day readers and future historians will find much to commend in well-crafted but occasionally constricted essays that lack a broader unifying theme. Still, this volume is a solid effort to advance new scholarship and to connect current historians' perceptions of the Civil War with those of a larger public audience.

Following a brief Introduction, James E. Brown fires the volume's first shot in a detailed essay that examines how Connecticut financed the Civil War. Brown offers useful comparative data about state and federal financing, provides a chronological overview of the state's financing strategies, and includes appendices that address the federal war claims recovery process and Connecticut's year-by-year war-related legislation. Following this overview of wartime fiscal matters, Diana Moraco's essay, "Mystic Shipbuilding and the Union Navy," explores how a small shipbuilding community managed to build more navy ships than another northern city except Boston. By the end of the war, Mystic had supplied fifty-seven steamers vessels to the Union navy, among them

the USS *Galena*, one the first ironclads launched to great acclaim in February 1862.

Moving into the realm of politics and ideology, the book's third essay examines the motivations of volunteers from sparsely-populated Windham County. Carol Patterson-Martineau suggests that the area's high levels of volunteerism and patriotism were prompted by the county's experiences in the American Revolution, pro-Union newspapers, and antislavery agitation that emerged in the 1830s. Basically, republicanism and egalitarianism spurred Union volunteers. Perhaps this sentiment explains the experiences and heroism of the state's stalwart regiment, the Fourteenth Connecticut, which is given its due in David C. W. Batch's finely written narrative. Mustered in for service in late August 1862, the Fourteenth stood as the state's most battle-tested and storied regiment, having fought in at least thirty-four battles or skirmishes that included Antietam and Gettysburg along with service at Appomattox Courthouse in April 1865.

Inside Connecticut and the Civil War delves into a few non-traditional topics that move beyond military history, including the fifth essay by Luke G. Boyd, "The Colt Armory Fire: Connecticut and the Great Confederate Conspiracy." Boyd contends correctly that Northerners (especially in coastal New England) remained fearful of Confederate invasion and sabotage throughout the war. The incendiary devastation of a huge firearms plant in February 1864 kindled such concerns, fueled further by local newspaper competition. Although conspiracies and arson were unlikely, Boyd suggests that the disaster and rumors helped to reinvigorate the state's pro-Union efforts. One of the volume's most astute and analytical pieces follows next: "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the Civil War: Connecticut Casualties and a Look into the Mind," by Michael Sturges. Reading perceptively in psychological literature and making effective use of state records and individual military pension files, Sturges notes the challenges of diagnosing PTSD through fragmentary historical records and changing conceptions of psychiatric disorders. He uncovered numerous cases of Civil War veterans who received pensions for conditions that today are associated with PTSD.

Biographies of military and political leaders are a popular staple among Civil War literature, and Todd Jones offers a succinct tale of General Joseph R. Hawley who played a vital role in shaping Civil War commemorations in the state. As Jones writes on page 183, "To fully understand Connecticut in this

[postbellum] period, one must look at the monuments. To fully understand the monuments, one must look at Joseph R. Hawley." A former general, a United States senator, and active veteran after the Civil War, Hawley was a skilled and popular orator and public figure who ensured that Americans would never forget the sacrifices of Union soldiers. The memory and meaning of the Civil War has become fertile ground for historians, and Emily E. Gifford summarizes how that terrain is often contested in "From Decoration Day to the Centennial Commission: Civil War Commemoration in Connecticut, 1868-1965." Gifford's most interesting points touch upon political controversies and public apathy toward the Centennial and state efforts between 1961 and 1965 to stimulate more interest.

In a final essay, Michael Conlin offers an interesting perspective about the Civil War from that of reenactors or "living historians," as some prefer to be called. Using surveys and reviews of relevant websites, Conlin concludes that, "On balance, Civil War reenactors in Connecticut, including those who portray both Union and Confederate, present a version of the Civil War that has more in common with the academic scholarship of fifty years ago than with the scholarship of today." (229) To overcome this dated worldview, Conlin offers helpful suggestions for bringing together reenactors and scholars.

While these disparate essays lack an interwoven theme, it is clear that active (and not just "living") historians in Connecticut and beyond continue to show great imagination in finding new ways to look at the Civil War. This collection adds many insights to our expanding knowledge of the Civil War as it impacted the North.

Earl F. Mulderink III is Professor of History and Director of the Community Engagement Center at Southern Utah University, where he has taught since 1995. He is the author of New Bedford's Civil War (Fordham University Press, 2012), published in paperback in 2014.