The Louisiana Tigers in the Gettysburg Campaign, June-July 1863

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Review

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Mingus, Scott L., Sr. *The Louisiana Tigers in the Gettysburg Campaign, June-July 1863*. Louisiana State University Press, \$24.95 ISBN 9780807159132

The Louisiana Tigers Invade Pennsylvania

The Louisiana Tigers renowned as a rough and tumble, fearless brigade has justifiably earned a place of legendary proportions in the history of the Civil War in the East. As a boy growing up in Virginia and Pennsylvania during the Centennial, I learned how the people of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania hid their valuables, including dresses in anticipation of Confederate occupation of the town, something to which Mr. Mingus referred in this excellent account of the Tigers' role in the Gettysburg Campaign. If anything, his meticulous research has again proven that Gettysburg remains the never-ending story of the Civil War.

From the opening page, Mingus captures the reader's attention with contemporary Northern descriptions of the Brigadier General Harry T. Hays' 1st Louisiana Brigade. The Northern press characterized the unit as "Thieves. Drunks. Uncivilized. Brutal. Wanton, Barbaric." The name itself came from Company B – the Tiger Rifles – of the 1st Louisiana Special Battalion, but soon referred to nearly every Pelican State regiment, in particular the 1st and 2nd Louisiana Brigades in the Army of Northern Virginia. To some extent, the Louisianans earned their reputation. Looting and hard drinking followed their marching columns throughout the Civil War.

The Louisiana Tigers in the Gettysburg Campaign, which is the most thorough account of their trek through Pennsylvania I have read to date, also includes an annotated day-by-day itinerary of the Louisianans throughout the campaign. This book, while providing the background of the invasion, is about the men who served with the brigade. Mingus writes about the gang of Tigers who herded two gentlemen in Waynesboro into an alley to swap their filthy and ragged uniforms for the civilians' clothes, and the nameless officer on Cemetery

Hill who, in capturing one of the Federal guns, had his skull caved in with a sponge-staff.

The chapters covering the fighting on July 1 and 2, 1863 at Gettysburg are particularly riveting, filled with gritty primary accounts from the men in both armies. Readers may feel at times as if they are on the field, as well as relief they are not. Mingus dispels the long-standing assertion that the bayonet saw little service other than that of a candlestick. The fighting in the dark on Cemetery Hill was very close, where the use of clubbed muskets, bayonets, and rocks rivaled the horrific descriptions of the Angle at Spotsylvania Court House, less than two years later. His vivid retelling of the brutal fighting among the guns on Cemetery Ridge undermines the notion that Ulysses S. Grant only later changed the nature of the war to one of senseless bloodshed.

The comprehensive bibliography and the detailed footnotes illustrate the author's devotion to solid research. This is an excellent book, yet could be improved with maps to accompany the battle descriptions. Without them, it makes it difficult for the reader – particularly one not familiar with the terrain features or streets of Gettysburg – to visualize exactly where the fighting occurred. Nevertheless, *The Louisiana Tigers in the Gettysburg Campaign* is a refreshing, readable addition to the plethora of Gettysburg books, and not a rehashing of the wearisome, oft-told stories of the most written about battle in history. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in a deeper understanding Gettysburg campaign.

A retired high school history teacher, John Michael Priest has been interested in Civil War history since an early age. His many books include Antietam: The Soldiers' Battle (1989); and Into the Fight: Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg (1998). His newest work, Stand to It and Give Them Hell! chronicles the fighting on July 2, 1863 from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top from the perspectives of the soldiers who fought the battle.