

### Madness, Malingering & Malfeasance: The Transformation of Psychiatry and the Law in the Civil War Era

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## Review

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**Lande, R. Gregory** *Madness, Malingering & Malfeasance: The Transformation of Psychiatry and the Law in the Civil War Era*. Potomac Books, Inc, \$18.95  
ISBN 1574888072

### Psychiatry and the Civil War

The transformation of the law and the treatment of the mind

In this volume, the author describes the struggle of both the medical and legal professions, along with the U.S. Government, to cope with insubordination, substance abuse, and crime in the Civil War-era military.

Dr. Lande discusses the fact that the scientific understanding of mental illness and substance abuse was in its infancy during the time of the Civil War. As a result, many soldiers who would have/should have been treated in mental institutions, were executed. Using a variety of actual cases from court-martials, the author demonstrates how good men traumatized by war were driven to their mental limits and beyond.

Dr. Lande states in his Preface that the intent...was not to catalog every example of these behaviors and their associated legal outcomes, but instead to present sufficient information portraying the embryonic origins of forensic psychiatry. The Civil War Era parents of forensic psychiatry û medicine and law û would barely recognize the modern fruits of their union.

This volume shows that the effects of war enveloped many compelling, tragic, and shocking events that went far beyond the battlefield. **Madness, Malingering and Malfeasance** is an important contribution to the growing literature and our understanding of the medical-legal aspects of America's Civil War.

War, any war, has casualties beyond the gaping wound, beyond the shattered limb. The emotional wounds can strike armies from within and the personnel losses can multiply causing a battle to be lost before it is even fought. Military commanders understood this threat but had no weapons to combat it. Those soldiers who suffered severe emotional problems were lost to hospitals or insane asylums, while others committed crimes such as desertion to escape their problems.

Through painstaking research at the National Archives, collections at the Pentagon, the Library of Congress and the National Library of Medicine, Dr. Lande has compiled a volume that explores stories where mental illness or severe alcohol abuse were present and contributed to misconduct.

**Madness, Malingering and Malfeasance** is well documented with endnotes and bibliography. This volume is highly recommended to all wishing to understand the intangible enemy that strikes an army from within.

*Peter J. D'Onofrio earned his Doctorate in American History in 1998. He has been involved in Civil War medical re-enacting since 1980 and is currently the President of the Society of Civil War Surgeons, as well as the editor/publisher of The Journal of Civil War Medicine. Dr. D'Onofrio can be contacted at [socwsurgeons@earthlink.net](mailto:socwsurgeons@earthlink.net).*