



PROJECT MUSE®

Union Soldiers and the Northern Home Front: Wartime
Experiences, Postwar Adjustments (review)

Steven E. Woodworth

The Journal of Military History, Volume 67, Number 1, January 2003, pp.
248-249 (Review)

Published by Society for Military History

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jmh.2003.0085>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/40511>

Berkeley's ultimate imprisonment at Fort Delaware also offers a prisoner-of-war's experiences. The last of the soldiers, Alexander F. Fleet, performed garrison duty for most of the war (though he finally took a wound at Petersburg). Fleet comments incisively on what Selby identifies as one of the greatest enemies of soldiers—boredom, and another major foe, disease, also receives its due share of attention.

Selby's solidly researched and lucidly written book will appeal to scholars and buffs alike. Satisfyingly illustrated with portraits of its seven subjects (as well as a generous number of maps), *Virginians at War* offers a thoughtful, objective look at "ordinary people [who rose] to the demands of extraordinary circumstances" (p. 236). Deftly and convincingly, the book also places these seven lives fully within the context of the Virginia theater, from secession to surrender.

William Harris Bragg

Georgia College & State University
Milledgeville, Georgia

Union Soldiers and the Northern Home Front: Wartime Experiences, Postwar Adjustments. Edited by Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller. Bronx, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8232-2146-7. Tables. Notes. Index. Pp. xvi, 508. \$25.00.

This volume, unusually large for a book of essays by various authors, explores topics within the currently popular area of Civil War social history. Its purpose is to explore the relationship between the soldiers in the armies and the families and communities they left behind.

The book's fifteen chapters are divided into three parts. In the first section of the book, three chapters deal with problems of recruitment. Though relatively few men were drafted, conscription was an important tool in recruitment, serving as a threat to drive men to volunteer. Bounties offered another inducement, while commutation payments and the hiring of substitutes were means by which unwilling men could keep themselves out of the ranks. Not surprisingly, wealthy men were more successful in staying out of uniform than were their poorer contemporaries.

The second section, with six chapters, contains several outstanding pieces. To mention them all in a short review would amount to a recitation of the table of contents. Especially interesting are Earl J. Hess's discussion of northern civilians' desire to know what battle was like and David A. Raney's study of the United States Christian Commission. Other topics include the Veteran Reserve Corps and its work in rear areas, religion among Union sailors, and the Union soldiers' longing for female companionship. The last named essay, by Patricia L. Richard, is a fascinating study based largely on newspaper advertisements placed by soldiers and civilians, seeking pen pals of the opposite sex.

The third part of the book deals with postwar adjustments. Among sev-

eral unusually good essays in this section, Frances Clarke's chapter on northern amputees stands out as perhaps the best in the entire volume. This refreshingly innovative study focuses on the postwar writings of men who had lost their right arms in the war. Clarke uses these writings to gauge the attitudes of these badly scarred veterans toward the war, civilian society, patriotism, and the values for which they had fought. Eschewing presentism, Clarke brilliantly differentiates between the reactions of Civil War soldiers and those of some of the veterans of the wars of the twentieth century. Through their Christian faith, commitment to the Union cause, and belief that true manhood lay in self-discipline rather than in physical wholeness, most Civil War amputees retained a positive outlook after the war.

All students of the Civil War will find much of interest and value within this book.

Steven E. Woodworth

Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas

Die Kultur der Niederlage: Der amerikanische Süden 1865, Frankreich 1871, Deutschland 1918. By Wolfgang Schivelbusch. Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 2001. ISBN 3-8286-0165-0. Notes. Indexes. Pp. 464. €35.50.

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, one of popular history's most ambitious authors, has written his most ambitious book yet. His thought-provoking *Die Kultur der Niederlage* transcends established academic boundaries between American and European history in comparing the cultural impact of military defeat on the Southern States after 1865, France after 1871, and Germany after 1918. In order to come to terms with the enormity of the military débâcle, all three societies embarked on sustained and creative efforts to give meaning and purpose to the unexpected experience. Schivelbusch concentrates primarily on two facets of this process: first, the invention of political myths which smoothed over the humiliation of defeat, and, second, the proliferation of visions of modernization which promised national regeneration. The author likes to refer to collectives ("the public opinion," "the collective psyche"), but, effectively, he restricts himself to the analysis of elite discourses conducted by intellectuals, politicians, generals, engineers, and businessmen.

In the aftermath of war, the old élites were anxious to create myths which denied the finality of defeat or its moral implications. "The Lost Cause" in the Southern States reconfigured the war as a sacrifice, the Secession as a tragedy, and the reunification as catharsis. The French *Revanche* represented an equally redemptive myth featuring the restoration of French glory. While both the American and the French fabrications contributed to postwar social cohesion, their functional equivalent in Germany—*Im Felde unbesiegt*—undermined the legitimacy of the new post-1918 Weimar Republic. If Germany was indeed "undefeated in the field," why then had it lost the