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Recollections of the War with Mexico (review)

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Recollections of the War with Mexico. By John Corey Henshaw. Edited with an introduction by Gary F. Kurutz. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. Pp 268. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780826217998, \$44.95 cloth.)

In 1989, the University of North Carolina Press published *Fighting For the Confederacy*, the private memoir of General Edward Porter Alexander, artilleryist and staff officer to Confederate army commander General Robert E. Lee. Intended for a limited audience, *Fighting For the Confederacy* provided a closer analysis of men and events than did his earlier popular work, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*, and was critical of some wartime aspects rendered sacred by the "Lost Cause" syndrome.

Although Alexander embraced the Confederacy's *raison d'être*, John Corey Henshaw opposed the War with Mexico (1846–1848), referring to it as a "most unfortunate event . . . brought about by the foolish act" of committing U.S. troops under controversial circumstances (circumstances prescient of the Gulf of Tonkin or Iraq). Henshaw served as a line infantry officer in the United States Army's Seventh Regiment during the war, a training exercise for many American Civil War officers on both sides. Gary F. Kurutz has skillfully edited Henshaw's reminiscences, titled *Recollections of the War with Mexico*, by weaving Henshaw's manuscripts, memoranda, as well as portions of letters to his wife, Amelia, to provide a critical view of the United States's decision to invade Mexico prompted by the Texas-Mexico boundary dispute.

In spite of his reservations, Henshaw complied with orders and saw action at several key battles from March 1846 to December 1847, though claiming that during his entire combat tour, he never killed anyone. His account of the seminal confrontation between American dragoons and Mexican infantry at Fort Texas in April 1846 that opened hostilities leaves little room for doubt that American bungling rather than bravery characterized the initial clash. At the following action in Monterrey, Henshaw encountered depredations committed by militia and irregulars. Henshaw's indictments focus particularly on "Texians" guilty of various outrages and may have contributed to the disdain he felt for all southerners until his death. The Seventh Infantry saw action at Veracruz and later at Mexico City, where Henshaw had time to record his impressions of the exotic Latin theater that at once fascinated and repelled him. His descriptions of other engagements that he did not see firsthand are impressive digests from contemporary sources (newspapers, after-action reports, and interviews with fellow officers and with prisoners of war). Beyond Henshaw's military history is a fine travelogue of nineteenth-century Mexico, at war, and described by the reluctant participant.

Kurutz's introduction includes a brief biography of John Henshaw, a temperamental man given to quarrels that eventually resulted in his dismissal from the army in 1856 (although six years later, President Abraham Lincoln reinstated Henshaw who served another two years before poor health led to his honorable discharge). Henshaw had a difficult personality that resulted in several courts martial. Four of the twelve manuscript sources cited by Kurutz are transcripts

from four different trials involving Henshaw. His troubled career either colored his judgment or freed him to assess national policy as well as comrades in occasionally severe tones, heedless of recrimination. Kurutz maintains an evenhanded treatment of this officer, although one detects Kurutz's shrewd regard for this cantankerous man. Henshaw's recollections may have been therapy as well as a self-interested defense of his career. Whatever his motivation, he left behind for a larger audience than he anticipated, a colorful and critical record of Manifest Destiny without so much jingoistic panache.

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New Mexico Territory during the Civil War: Wallen and Evans Inspection Reports, 1862-1863. Edited with an introduction by Jerry D. Thompson. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008. Pp. 312. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780826344793, \$34.85 cloth.)

Jerry Thompson's introduction to this edited collection details events and conditions in Civil War-era New Mexico and focuses on Federal administration of the region after the ill-fated Confederate invasion led by Henry Hopkins Sibley. Union officers encountered several significant problems in their attempts to administer the Department of New Mexico. Amid constant preparation for another Confederate invasion that never materialized, the officers worried about the lack of trained physicians to care for their soldiers, while the isolated location created difficulties in securing the soldiers' pay. To make matters worse, rampant alcoholism plagued officers and enlisted men at the frontier outposts. As Thompson skillfully explains, the geographic isolation, loneliness, absence of a temperance influence, and the presence of post sutlers and whiskey peddlers all contributed to widespread alcohol abuse. Finally, racial tension persisted between the white American officers and soldiers and the region's Hispanic population, a problem exacerbated by the language barrier. The department's commander, James Henry Carleton, considered Hispanics and American Indians inferior and uncivilized obstacles to American expansion and never understood that Hispanic dislike for Confederate Texans did not necessarily equate to support for the United States.

Those conditions provide the context for the reports of Henry Davies Wallen and Andrew Wallace Evans, who briefly served as inspector general and assistant inspector general, respectively, in the Department of New Mexico during the Civil War. Both men were West Point graduates, and both were southern by birth but remained loyal to the Union. Both men served in New Mexico only reluctantly, and both sought service in the Army of the Potomac in the war's eastern theater. Evans eventually secured an assignment to that famous army in 1864 and fought in several engagements in the vicinity of Petersburg, Virginia. Wallen never served in the Army of the Potomac and remained bitter for the rest of his life, insisting that he was denied the appointment because he was born in the South. Both men remained in the Army after the war and served in multiple locations.