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Race and Radicalism in the Union Army (review)

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The Journal of the Civil War Era, Volume 1, Number 1, March 2011, pp. 112-115 (Review)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cwe.2011.0006>

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sources often contain wildly exaggerated accounts, and Benedict's book is a forceful reminder of how misleading some primary sources can be. One example Benedict gives is a speech that Lane delivered in the U.S. Senate in July 1861. On that occasion, Lane accused the "slave oligarchy of Missouri" of routinely torturing, murdering, and mutilating Free State men. Lane's accusations were ridiculous, but public discourse was full of similar allegations.

Second, the book provides an interesting perspective on the nation's unpreparedness for war in 1861. The Union army eventually gained control of units like Lane's, but not without difficulty. The border troops had been fighting their own war for months, and the temptation to reject army discipline and become bushwhackers must have been strong. As it was, Lane's Brigade entered the regular service only after some striking instances of insubordination. Officers ignored orders, and enlisted men circulated petitions and in one case formed a committee to wrest control of a company from its officers. Yet despite its unseemly behavior, in some ways Lane's Brigade was ahead of its time. From the brigade's earliest days Lane took runaway slaves into his camp and refused to return them to their masters. On the negative side, as the war progressed and attitudes hardened, better and more senior commanders than Lane ordered their troops to destroy civilian property, or allowed them to steal it. Lane's Brigade was hardly a model unit, but in historical memory it is a scapegoat for abuses that were widespread.

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Race and Radicalism in the Union Army. By Mark A. Lause.
(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Pp. 208. Cloth, \$45.00.)

In the vicinity of Checotah, Oklahoma, off U.S. Route 69, lies a remarkable relic of multiracial collaboration to save the Union. This mostly forgotten icon of history, overshadowed by Checotah's most famous export, the country music singer Carrie Underwood, is the battlefield of Honey Springs. Here, Mark Lause argues, the spirit of John Brown led a Union army of white radicals, American Indians, and African Americans to

victory over the Confederacy on July 17, 1863, only to be overwhelmed in America's collective memory by the myth of Dixie's "lost cause." For Lause, Honey Springs epitomized the revolutionary possibilities and ultimate failures of total war on the Union's western frontier.

Lause's narrative of race and radicalism in the Union army adds twists to several key themes in the historiographies of the American West and the Civil War. While Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier drew its liberating potential from the exploits of ruggedly individualistic white men, Lause's West owed its democratic promise to its diverse population and communitarian reformers. Lause maintains that the era of armed sectional conflict offered a unique opportunity for real change in American social relations. He writes American Indians into the Union side of Civil War history in a way that few others have done.

Lause's story begins in territorial Kansas. There, the invitation to white settlement and a bloody contest over slavery drew an assortment of "socialists, abolitionists, land reformers, trade unionists, woman suffragists, and spiritualists" (3). These reformers combined resistance to slavery with a radical "free labor" vision of a "decentralized and democratized civilization" liberated from the tyranny of "capital as well as slaveholding" (3). They saw equality in class and race relations as integral to republican institutions and followed John Brown in their resolve to resist unjust laws with the force of arms. The western theater, Lause argues, provided a laboratory for testing these principles: Indian slaveholders less attached than whites to rigid racial hierarchies; many Indians opposed to slavery, and others, like the Delaware and the Ottawa, sympathetic to anti-slavery; African Indian autonomous communities on the edges of white settlements; abolitionist land reformers opposed to the expropriation of Indian lands.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Confederates relied on chicanery and force to persuade the "civilized tribes" to renounce neutrality in favor of the South. Yet the specter of conscription plus coerced assimilation drove battalions of Indians into Unionist ranks. Meanwhile an exodus of black refugees from Indian lands north to Kansas, unleashed by the repressive policies of pro-Confederate political authorities, built up support for raising two Indian Home Guard regiments to reclaim the Indian Territory from the secessionists. These regiments—under the guardianship of John Brown's friends—enlisted an array of Indian groups, including the Creeks, Seminoles, Delaware, Osage, and Kickapoo, and pioneered the use of black soldiers in racially integrated units as both foot soldiers and officers. From these beginnings, loyalist Cherokee and Creek governments became

the first slaveholding administrations to abolish slavery and extend citizenship rights to all male residents.

Lause offers a spirited account of the courage of civilian-soldiers of color in the West, despite supply shortages, poor pay or none, federal abandonment of Indian lands following Union victories, and the attempts of whites, radicals included, to play African Americans against Indians. These tribulations were harbingers of even greater betrayals by Union military authorities beholden to monopolistic business interests and railroads. The Civil War eventually looked like no more than “a brief hiatus in the centuries-long subjugation of the Indians” (129). Ultimately, Confederate sympathizers conscripted Indians into the myth of a multicultural “lost cause,” ostensibly against the Union dispossession of Indian lands, even as Honey Springs Depot disappeared into the surrounding farmlands appropriated from loyalist Creek territory.

Lause contributes to recent interpretations of Civil War military history emphasizing the interaction of the home front and the battlefield, of civilian and soldier, in shaping the nature and outcome of war. His focus on the border crossings of Indian and African American refugees confirms current wisdom about how the agency of the marginalized invested the violence of sectional confrontation with new meaning.

Yet the author falls somewhat short in explaining the so-called free labor radicals’ subsequent retreat from the revolutionary promise of the Civil War in the West. He never fully untangles the complex ideological and partisan configurations underlying both antislavery and agrarian radicalism. The connections among slavery politics, republican ideals, opposition to capital, and land reform were more multifaceted than suggested here. Their dialectic with the Republican Party’s ideology of free labor requires careful analysis. Jonathan Earle has pointed out that free soil Democrats—rather than free labor Republicans—tapped into Jacksonian hostility to monopolies and banks to offer a genuinely radical antislavery vision by linking freedom with land rights (*Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil*, 2003). In this context, the political genealogy of Lause’s Republican radicals is not quite clear. How did their “free labor” vision, premised on opposition to the stranglehold of capital, relate to the Republican Party’s championing of mere self-ownership in a free market for labor and harmony between capital and labor? Moreover, antebellum proslavery Kansans championed a different version of republican opposition to “Yankee” capital, based on the very foundation of racial inequality: they claimed that black slavery guaranteed democracy among white men. More attention to the varieties, origins, and permutations of populist, Whiggish, as well as republican impulses in the West might have shed

greater light on why the Civil War did not live up to its promise of frontier social revolution.

Yet Lause's work marks a significant contribution to nineteenth-century U.S. history, suggesting new ways to investigate intersections among race relations, domestic politics, and the Civil War battlefield. It invites more detailed examinations of how abolitionism, race, economics, and intratribal conflicts over removal shaped Indian political loyalties. For instance, did the Union connote a cultural pluralism as much as land rights for full-blooded Cherokee advocates of cultural preservation? Did the inclusive vision of many abolitionists pry away Indian Confederates from their biracial, wealthier, often racist commanders descended from pro-removal parties? Lause establishes an impressive foundation for incorporating Indian civil wars into the Union's triumph over disunion.

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Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals.

By Clay Mountcastle. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009. Pp. 202. Cloth, \$29.95.)

Clay Mountcastle focuses on the Union army reaction to Confederate guerrillas and develops the thesis that guerrilla warfare forced soldiers and their commanders to adopt hard war against Confederate civilians. Union soldiers, he writes, were driven to desperation by guerrilla attacks and retaliated with more summary executions and house burnings than scholars have heretofore recognized. This punitive war contributed to the Union victory because it convinced Robert E. Lee and the southern people to surrender. Traditionally, historians have regarded the Confederate guerrilla war as a sideshow that had no significant impact on the outcome of the war. But Mountcastle's book supports an outpour of recent studies that have presented the interpretation that the Confederate guerrillas changed the nature of the war.

One of the first books to describe the Union's change in policy from conciliation to punishment was Stephen V. Ash's *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (1995). Benjamin Franklin Cooling, in *Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky*