1-1-1997

Guide To Louisiana Confederate Military Units, 1861-1865, by Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr.

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Publication Info
Published in Military and Naval History Journal, Volume 6, 1997, pages 61-63.
This is a review of the title book, Guide To Louisiana Confederate Military Units, 1861-1865, by Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., as well as a review of an additional book, Military Record of Louisiana, by Napier Bartlett
James M McPherson’s 1994 *What They Fought For*, Jimerson found similar answers to the question of why societies went to war, citing the ideological concepts of liberty and patriotism. African-Americans and the issue of slavery play a significant role throughout the work, but two chapters are devoted exclusively to a discussion of racial attitudes and the treatment of blacks by North and South. One of those chapters details the debate over the use of African-American soldiers by the Union, and the vicious atrocities of outraged southern troops that sometimes attended such use.

The book’s final two chapters constitute Jimerson’s most important contribution to the study of sectional consciousness. In them, he discusses sectional stereotypes, yet accurately points out that the war was fought by individuals "who shared their section’s political and ideological values in varying degrees and who had significantly different personal experiences" (126). He thus uses a series of six brief biographical sketches to illustrate how personal experiences may have impacted sectional viewpoints and the way in which the enemy was perceived. Broadening his scope, Jimerson then moves on to examine the many ways in which Americans of the Civil War era remained more alike than different, despite the bitter sectional conflict in which they were engaged. Both sides, he maintains, adopted similar responses to a wide range of issues. "Sectional identity never fully subsumed other personal loyalties," he claims. "Nor did it completely overcome internal conflicts within each section" (180). Focusing on such issues as loyalty to one’s state, social class resentments, and faltering morale, among others, he shows that a number of factors contributed to the limitations of sectional consciousness. Those limitations, however, were insufficient to deter each side from a relentless pursuit of its goals for four long, bloody years. Jimerson’s work is bolstered by exceptionally thorough research in a large number of manuscript collections, which has enabled him to exploit much previously ignored material. It is the viewpoint of the common soldier or civilian that he most often presents, much on the order of Bell I Wiley’s or James I Robertson’s works. Jimerson’s book differs greatly from Robertson’s 1988 *Soldiers Blue and Gray* or Wiley’s earlier *The Life of Johnny Reb* and *The Life of Billy Yank*, however, in that Jimerson relies on a much larger number of civilian sources and limits his topics to those outlines above. As a result, he is able to present a more detailed and cogent analysis of those themes. In that respect the work is more akin to that of Reid Mitchel’s whose 1989 *Civil War Soldiers* draws on an equally diverse array of sources to explore his own topics. Jimerson’s work, however, despite the passage of nearly ten years since its publication, remains the finest example of "intellectual history from the bottom up" (xiii). It is both a well written and persuasively argued thesis that has, in conjunction with the other works mentioned here, provided us with a more thorough understanding of the ways in which common citizens and soldiers viewed the momentous events that affected their lives.

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These two paperback reprints from Louisiana State University Press are, essentially, stylistically different companion reference volumes for scholars of Louisiana’s distinguished Civil War history. O.K., let’s get the cliché over with—yes, these two books are essential works for Louisiana Civil War scholars. If any book fits that overused phrase, these do, and now they are available in an affordable form.
Both of these volumes provide detailed information on Louisiana's artillery, cavalry, and infantry units that served in the Confederate forces. Bergeron's work is better organized, indexed, and far more thorough, with the advantage of being first published in hardback 1989—114 years after Bartlett's 1875 effort. But Bartlett has a charm of its own, not the least of which is Bartlett's memoir of his service in the Washington Artillery that is attached to the end of his book. Louisiana State University Press is to be commended for reprinting both.

Part of the charm of Bartlett's work is that LSU Press did not waste any effort on editing or reformatting the original. Back in 1964, LSU Press had the late, legendary, historian T. Harry Williams write a brief foreword to Bartlett's book. They also added a table of contents. This time, LSU Press simply reprinted the 1964 version in paperback form. Thus, we have a book of multiple fonts, including endless rows of soldier's names in tiny type, mixed with reminiscences and reports from various participants. It is somewhat frustrating to read as a reviewer because of its uneven coverage, but one must understand Bartlett's original purpose. That purpose was to gather together in one volume as many reminiscences, regimental histories, regimental rolls, and narratives by Louisiana's veterans as he could find in 1875, and publish them before they were forgotten or lost, with the hope that a more complete history would be written later. Bartlett succeeded in that goal and scholars are better-off for it. Genealogists will find the rolls useful also. Of course there are errors and omissions, he wrote it during Reconstruction when Louisiana was in chaos. But I find that the value of this work is in its curious, sometimes sorrowful, sometimes humorous first-hand accounts. These are the incidents that made up the daily lives of soldiers in the field. Bartlett's work is, practically speaking, a bound and convenient package of primary sources on Louisiana's regiments. In case there is some confusion, this is not a history of what happened in Louisiana during the four years of the war. It is a series of partial regimental histories written by native Louisianians in gray, and as such, most of the action takes place in Virginia. One humorous incident takes place at Port Hudson where the twin brother (rank-Private) of an officer (rank-Lieutenant) was mistaken for his brother and told to attack. He did and did well, until his brother came up to relieve him of his "command." The issue was resolved by the Private being transferred to another regiment.

In contrast to Bartlett, Bergeron's guide attempts to answer the question "Where was grandpa when...?" In concise, well-organized fashion, and using all of the primary and secondary references now available, Bergeron has answered that question. Arthur W. Bergeron Jr., is one half of a dynamic duo—Art Bergeron and Larry Hewitt. They are ultimate examples of a modern movement of young talented Civil War scholars who have over the last ten years consistently produced high quality studies eagerly awaited by a growing number of lay and professional historians. Bergeron and Hewitt concentrate their considerable talent on the Louisiana region. Together they have published three books, and many others separately, all meticulously researched, well-written, and thoroughly engaging. This book is another in that series.

This particular book, by its very nature, can not be "fun to read" cover to cover like a narrative, but is the kind of reference work that when it is needed by the scholar, it is needed desperately, and its format is quickly appreciated. One reviewer on the cover is quoted as stating that it "should serve as a model for studies of other states in the Civil War" and I very much agree. In numerical order, starting with the artillery and working through the infantry and cavalry, the book provides a summary of every Louisiana Confederate unit Bergeron could identify. Each summary begins with a list of field officers and company commanders. This is followed by a brief historical sketch of where they were formed, where they went and under whose command they were subsumed. Their principal battles are also included, and where possible, other important facts like unit casualties. Each sketch usually ends with where and when the unit surrendered. Bergeron put together
this book by pouring through Record Group 109 at the National Archives, the Official Record, Bartlett's book and the state's Annual Report of the Adjutant General--to name just a few of his sources. When special sources were used to supplement this information, Bergeron lists the source in a bibliography at the end of the appropriate unit sketch. Like the scrupulous scholar he is, Bergeron also provides a discussion of his sources at the end of the book. The guide does not include sketches of militia, home guard, reserve corps, and irregular units, but a list and roster of officers is provided for Louisiana's Volunteer State Units as an appendix. Where confusion exists in the records, like the fact that there were two 28th Infantry regiments and three 3rd Cavalry units, Bergeron attempts to clarify who was who and where, or acknowledges that it can't be done. As another cover quote states, "Bergeron has brought order to the chaotic records and compiled the most complete guide yet produced." It is also the most easy to use.

In a strange sense, these two very different books complement each other. Bergeron is the most accurate, orderly and scholarly, while Bartlett has a delight all its own, full of that ornamental 19th-century style of writing, and with the grandeur and poignancy of those who lived the southern tragedy. Get both--Bartlett for dipping into on those occasions when your Ken Burn's tapes have been borrowed (you can hear that darn violin on every page of Bartlett's memo) and Bergeron when you need to know where the 21st (McCown's) Infantry was on March 17, 1862. They were on their way to Fort Pillow actually, and thanks to Art Bergeron, it took only a second to find that out.

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Located in the Mississippi River near the Tennessee-Kentucky border, the Confederate position at Island No. 10 was one of great natural strength. The defenses served to back up the larger Confederate stronghold at Columbus, Kentucky. Island No. 10 gained a new importance in early March 1862 when the Rebels evacuated Columbus after Union forces drove up the Tennessee River following the capture of Confederate forts Henry and Donelson. The Federal drive to Pittsburg Landing also put Island No. 10 in jeopardy, but the Southern commander in the west, Albert Sidney Johnston, planned to recover much of the lost territory by concentrating his forces at Corinth, Mississippi, and soundly defeating the Federal army building up on the banks of the Tennessee River. The Campaign for Island No. 10 was primarily a holding action, and the Confederate position acted as the western flank of Johnston's forces east of the Mississippi. In a very real sense, control of the upper Mississippi River would be won or lost at the Battle of Shiloh on April 6-7, 1862.

The authors have produced a well written and provocative narrative of the struggle to capture Island No. 10. Island No. 10 is the first book length study of the campaign, and the authors make extensive use of diaries, letters, newspapers, official documents, and other primary sources. Both authors appear to be active in Civil War historical organizations, and Larry Daniel has authored at least three other books on the Civil War, including a new work on the Battle of Shiloh.

The authors provide a suitable context for their detailed narrative, and claim that Island No. 10 is an example of the weakness of Confederate strategy in the Western Theater. Jefferson Davis (according to Daniel and Bock) insisted on defending far too much territory, especially along navigable rivers, where Southern garrisons were vulnerable to superior Union forces supported by the U.S. Navy. What Davis should have done (apart from abandoning territory near major rivers) is unclear, and reveals the authors' lack of appreciation for political