



BROWSE



 ***Lee's Tigers: The Louisiana Infantry in the Army of Northern Virginia (review)***

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Civil War History

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

178CIVIL WAR HISTORY It is unfortunate that this book is so grossly overpriced. It contains enough ammunition for years of spirited debate. Robertson is not always convincing, and some of his arguments are extremely shallow; yet the detail alone of this study makes it henceforth a principal source book on the 1864 struggle for Richmond. James I. Robertson, Jr. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University *Lee's Tigers: The Louisiana Infantry in the Army of Northern Virginia*. By Terry L. Jones. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987. Pp. xiv, 274. \$22.50.) Louisiana made many contributions to the Confederacy during the Civil War. From a total white population of only 350,000 the state raised nearly 1,000 military companies and provided the South with approximately 56,000 troops. In this number were around 13,000 infantrymen

who served in the eastern theater from First Manassas to Appomattox and became known as the fighting Louisiana Tigers, the shock troops of the Army of Northern Virginia. Though fierce in combat, these Louisianians gained an unsavory reputation early in the war that was to follow them through four years of combat. Their drunkenness, thievery, brawling, and general disorderly conduct came naturally, it seems, since Louisiana probably had a higher percentage of criminals, drunkards, and deserters in its commands than any other Southern state. Many of these undisciplined individuals were very poor foreigners who, having little enthusiasm for the war, deserted when the first opportunity presented itself. Also, a large number of immigrants were recruited off the rough New Orleans waterfront. Known both as "wharf rats" and "the lowest scrapings of the Mississippi," these men brought their vices with them into the army. No single Louisiana unit was responsible for the infamous reputation of the Tigers although Major Roberdeau Wheat's 1st Special Battalion is most often given this dubious honor. Wheat's men, however, were no match for either the Irish, Germans, and Creoles of Coppen's Battalion or the 14th Louisiana Volunteers when it came to rioting, looting, and robbery. In an effort to glorify the exploits of the Louisiana troops, some historians have glossed over their criminal behavior, treating very lightly the negative aspects of the Tigers. According to the author such apologies are unnecessary because ". . . Confederate commanders time and again called on them in the most desperate situations." It was the Tigers who blunted the initial Federal assault at First Manassas, played an important role in Jackson's Valley campaign, held fast at Spotsylvania's BOOK REVIEWS 179 Bloody Angle, fought hand to hand at Fort Stedman, and led Lee's last offensive at Appomattox. "For all their vices, weaknesses, and failings, Lee's Louisiana Tigers emerged from the Civil War with one of the most respected military records of any southern fighting unit." For their heroics on the battlefield the Tigers paid a heavy price. They suffered a 23 percent mortality rate. Approximately 2,000 of them were killed or wounded in combat. Another 1,300 died from other causes. All units suffered extensive losses. This is an excellent work, thoroughly researched, and well written. Mr. Jones does a masterful job of retaining a constant focus on his major thesis—the role of the Louisiana infantry in the Army of Northern Virginia—while at the same time giving the reader a clear, concise picture of the setting for his story. Furthermore, Lee's Tigers is the first comprehensive study of all the Louisiana units operating under General Lee. "The wild looting Tigers . . . made not a pious crew, but they fought." A civilian who knew the Louisianians only by reputation wrote the above which happens to summarize perfectly the volume under review. John G. Barrett Lexington, Virginia Major Butler's Legacy: Five Generations of a Shveholding Family. By Malcolm Bell, Jr. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987. Pp. xxiv, 673. \$29.95.) This is a truly remarkable book, exciting, rapid paced, detailed, containing a wealth of information, and covering a century-and-a-half of American history. Nearly half of the book focuses on the fortune-hunting, Irish-born Major Pierce Butler, an officer in King George III's Twentyninth Regiment of Foot prior to the American Revolution, who married...

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JAMES I. ROBERTSON, JR.

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