

Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War. By Earl B. McElfresh. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999. Pp. 272. Illustrations, maps, index. Cloth, \$55.00)

Once largely neglected as a field of scholarly inquiry, the cartography of the American Civil War has enjoyed a remarkable revival in the past decade. The publication of essential cartobibliographies that describe the maps in the Library of Congress and the National

Archives have made those outstanding collections more widely known, thereby facilitating research. Other recent monographs have examined specific topics such as the life and work of Confederate mapmaker Jedediah Hotchkiss, or the publication of maps by Northern daily newspapers. General treatments of the subject of Civil War cartography have, however, been lacking. Christopher Nelson's *Mapping the Civil War* (Washington, 1992) and David Phillips' *Maps of the Civil War: The Roads They Took* (New York, 1998) employ period maps to illustrate military campaigns, but neither work seriously addresses the issues of map production and use during the war.

The publication of *Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War* goes far toward filling a significant void in the literature of the war. A mapmaker by profession, McElfresh examines his subject through the lens of a historian of cartography, rather than that of a military historian. The result is a wide-ranging study of the process of mapmaking and the types of maps produced during the war. In twelve brief chapters, McElfresh considers many aspects of Civil War cartography, beginning with a familiar review of the difficulties of conducting campaigns with insufficient or inaccurate maps. Drawing extensively on contemporary accounts, McElfresh addresses such topics as methods of field mapping, duties of topographical engineers, the representation of features such as roads, fords, and woods on military maps, the value of local knowledge, and map procurement and reproduction. While McElfresh is concerned with the content of maps, his account of mapmaking in the field goes well beyond that found in other treatments of Civil War cartography. Detailed information on gathering topographical intelligence through reconnaissance, sketching on horseback, or undertaking compass surveys under fire, and compiling map memoirs effectively underscores the dynamic nature of military mapping. All that is lacking is a look beyond the process to systematically examine what influence, if any, such maps had on military decisions made in the field.

The second, and by far largest, part of the book consists of an atlas of 156 manuscript and printed maps arranged chronologically by campaign, regardless of their date of creation. What must have

been a painstaking search of numerous repositories has yielded an exciting array of examples that illustrate the broad sweep of Civil War mapmaking. McElfresh has included influential (or available) maps made prior to the war, cartographic records of engagements done after the fact, and field sketches that convey a sense of immediacy, if not urgency. Virtually all theatres of the war are represented, with certain military actions, such as the Atlanta campaign and W.T. Sherman's march to the sea, receiving extensive coverage. Captions of varying length and content accompany the maps. Text may include information on the map's maker, the circumstances of the map's creation, assessments of its accuracy, or commentaries on the event it depicts. The quality of the reproductions is uniformly excellent, with most maps printed in color. McElfresh could have done an additional service to his readers by including the dimensions of the original maps reproduced in the atlas. The book concludes with sixteen biographical sketches of Union and Confederate mapmakers ranging from the famous (Gouverneur K. Warren) to the obscure (Rodney E. Harris).

Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War succeeds in portraying maps not just as objects that convey military, topographical or cultural data, but as the products of individuals created at a particular historical moment. McElfresh has carefully culled the published writings of the war's participants, and selectively tells their stories. Consequently, much of the narrative is anecdotal rather than analytical, and occasionally reads like a series of isolated facts strung together. Consumers of Civil War history and the far smaller audience interested in the history of cartography will, however, find the book highly informative. The study of Civil War cartography still affords opportunities for diligent researchers, particularly in the area of map use, but it is hard to imagine that a better survey will soon appear in print.

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