
FACTS, NOT MYTHS

Kenneth W. Noe: *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1861*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. Pp. 317, \$35.00.)

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Kenneth W. Noe is the Draughon Professor of Southern History at Auburn University. He has authored and edited numerous books and essays on the American Civil War, and is best known for *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle*, a standard battlefield study. Demonstrating how social history has come to dominate Civil War historiography, this, his most recent book, says little about combat and instead analyzes the makeup of the Confederate army. It is a valuable monograph, which will stand with books by James McPherson and Bell Wiley among standard studies on Confederate soldiers.

From the very beginning, Noe demolishes the myth of Southern men enlisting *en masse* as soon as the Civil War began. He points out that some 120,000 Southern men had to be drafted into service from early 1862 on. Another 70,000 became soldiers by substituting for draftees. And, even more significantly, 180,000 Southern men did not join the army until after the initial wave of enlistees of 1861. In short, some 22.5 percent of all Confederate soldiers enlisted after the initial surge which, according to legend, was all-encompassing.

Noe decided to write this book because he believes that earlier historians, even those specifically writing on Civil War soldiers, ignored this group of late enlistees. He argues that the only Confederates studied were the most committed soldiers, those with the highest motivation to fight and even to die. But what about those who joined later? In some cases, they did so because they were too young to become soldiers without parental approval, but there were other reasons, too. Unfortunately for historians, most did not talk much about their late decisions, and this discouraged the study of them. The soldiers knew what their motivations were, of course, so they saw no reason to discuss them in letters home, or it was too distressing to discuss them with others in letters or in their own diaries.

Consequently, Noe realized early on that he would not find a body of information conveniently waiting for his interpretation. Yet he decided to proceed. He established a sample group of three hundred and twenty late enlistees, gathered information about them, and, despite the fact that only eight ever said anything specific about their reasons for not enlisting immediately, they did provide many clues. Noe interpreted these tidbits of information and concluded that "age, camaraderie, Christian duty, and the greater demands of home . . . were at least some of the motivating factors that inoculated men against the war fever of 1861" (9).

Yet the question remained: Were those who enlisted late less ardent in their patriotism and more willing to desert and goldbrick after they became soldiers? No, he concludes.

In this study of these individuals' motivations, Noe presents insight not only into these late comers, but also into those who came early and remained throughout the war. He concludes that those who entered early and those who came late differed little in their devotion to the war and in their perceptions of other factors, too.

Chapter titles indicate the areas that Noe utilized to study the Confederate soldier: "Duty, Honor, Country"; "Slavery"; "Women"; "Hatred"; "Pay"; "Religion"; "Comrades"; "Weariness"; and "Battle." His conclusions are convincing, and Lost Cause advocates will not be happy with many of them. They do not support the hagiography that too frequently passes as historical fact among neo-Confederates. For example, Confederate soldiers did fight to defend slavery, and they were infuriated at the mere sight of black Union soldiers. (There is no reality, Noe points out, as other historians have also shown, to the assertion that the Confederates welcomed blacks as soldiers into their ranks.)

Noe provides his insights in a fair-minded manner. In reality, the major contribution of this monograph, like that of any good historical analysis, is to point out that the past is not simple. Human beings are complicated, and they do not always act the way we would want them to. Such was the case with the soldiers who made up the Confederate army. They were hardly the band of virtuous heroes that Lost Cause historiography enshrines. They were like soldiers in every war: reluctant and motivated, heroes and skulkers, kind hearted and brutal. This seems like an obvious point, but it has to be repeated regularly to overcome the mythology that so many Americans believe is historical fact about the American Civil War.

The Civil War continues to intrigue the American public and attract historians to its study. The publication of books like this one demonstrates the vitality of such study and the potential for public learning. The Civil War is too important to the American psyche to be left to mythological inaccuracies. We need more books like this one to document facts.

—John F. Marszalek

NEUROSIS AND NATURE

Joachim Radkau: *Max Weber: A Biography*. Trans. Patrick Camiller. (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009. Pp. xix, 683. \$35.00.)

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Joachim Radkau's *Max Weber* is the first substantially new biography of the German scholar to appear since the publication of Marianne Weber's *Lebensbild* (1926). The novelty of Radkau's book derives in part from its source base, which includes a variety of archival materials previously