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The Uncompromising Diary of Sallie McNeill, 1858-1867 (review)

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cause. He largely ignored the first year of the war, choosing instead to focus on his business interests. In 1862, however, he grudgingly joined Spaight's Eleventh Battalion, which later became the 21st Texas Infantry. Duncan, a natural leader and widely respected among the men in his unit, was eventually elected an officer. The vast majority of the book covers Duncan's Civil War years and highlights many important themes central to Civil War history: the uncertainty of enlistment and service, morale, national identification, defeat, and life after the conflict.

The lengthy depiction of Duncan's Civil War experience presents a refreshing departure from the many narratives that tend to emphasize glory won on large battlefields, grand campaigns, and larger-than-life leaders. Rather, the reader is offered a glimpse into the war's often-forgotten underside: messy camps, miserable garrison duty, monotonous drills, and general distaste for war. More importantly, though, Duncan's service along the Texas Gulf Coast and in southwestern Louisiana reflects the book's central theme. He endured severe bouts of low morale and thus wavered constantly in his dedication to the Confederate cause. The lack of military activity, in addition to feelings of uselessness and time boringly wasted, sapped any energy Duncan might have directed toward the war effort. Civil War historiography rarely highlights these emotions as central elements of the Confederate experience. Caudill, however, embraces the opportunity to reveal the deep-seated and negative sentiments expressed so candidly in Duncan's diaries.

Caudill's contribution is undoubtedly welcome, yet he seems to translate Duncan's brand of sour morale into an answer for the Confederacy's defeat. By adopting the outmoded "loss-of-will" thesis, seemingly based on the sentiments of one individual's diary entries, Caudill concludes that "Southern unity in support of the Confederacy was in widespread disintegration by 1863" (44). Moreover, he maintains that a "consensus" exists among Civil War historians who argue that Confederate morale peaked at the beginning of the conflict and diminished consistently thereafter until the surrender. These interpretations neglect the significance of recent scholarship from William A. Blair, Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Gary W. Gallagher, James M. McPherson, and Jason Phillips who collectively submit that Confederates possessed the will to win *despite* low morale, disgust with the Confederate government, or battlefield reverses. Duncan's instantaneous and war-wearied sentiments were clearly sincere and exposed the nature of service in a Trans-Mississippi backwater. However, they hardly reflected the totality of the Confederate military experience and did not accurately reveal the causes for Confederate defeat. Thus it is questionable to use an individual who was not necessarily representative of the Southern war effort in order to endorse a mode of analysis that has been successfully displaced by recent literature.

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ANDREW F. LANG

The Uncompromising Diary of Sallie McNeill, 1858-1867. Edited with an introduction by Ginny McNeill Raska and Mary Lynne Gasaway Hill. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009. Pp. 214. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781603440875, \$32.50 cloth.)

By revealing the inner world of Sallie McNeill, a young woman of the planter class living in Brazoria County, Texas, this diary provides rich insights into life in south central Texas in the turbulent years surrounding the Civil War. This watershed event and the South's ultimate defeat prompted Sallie to write, "Slowly, we are awakening from the feeling of utter despair, which overwhelmed all classes, upon receipt of the 'news' of the fall of the Confederacy" (125). For the South (and Texas specifically), in the span of a few short years, everything had changed. In addition to insights on the war and its aftermath, this diary is especially valuable in exposing the often-unexplored world, or "*terra incognita*," of a young woman who described herself as "not remarkable for anything" (1). On the contrary, Sallie's diary is an indispensable resource for those interested in the gender and class dynamics present in the Old South, including both the opportunities and limitations afforded young elite woman during this period.

In their brief introduction, Raska and Hill describe Sallie as both a typical and atypical Southern lady. According to the editors, Sallie held typical attitudes on slavery and plantation slaves—although these attitudes evolved over the course of the diary, hardening in regard to the freedmen during the early years of Reconstruction. Rooting her experiences in the post-Second Great Awakening era, the editors also characterize Sallie's quest for spiritual improvement as typical of antebellum Southern ladies. Sallie's "atypical" decision not to marry challenged the pervasive social expectation of marriage so prevalent in the period, particularly in the South. Further, Sallie's commitment to learning, evidenced by the successful completion of her program at Baylor University as well as her voracious appetite for literature, also proved atypical to the interests of most marriage-centric Southern belles. Throughout the diary, Sallie demonstrates her vast knowledge of books, consistently interweaving references to classic works of literature and relevant Bible verses into her diary entries.

Beginning with her years at Baylor (then in Independence, Texas), when she was in her late teens and ending with her vacation on the Texas Gulf coast, a month before her untimely death at age twenty-seven, the diary covers nearly a decade of Sallie's life. Her diary is divided into four uneven sections: Baylor, antebellum years, Civil War, and Reconstruction; however, much of the diary recounts Sallie's struggles with the tedium of plantation life. In the pre-Civil War years, Levi Jordan's plantation (Sallie's grandfather) produced primarily sugarcane and cotton, relying heavily on the labor of 134 slaves, according to the 1860 census. In recent decades, the Jordan plantation has been excavated and preserved, producing a veritable treasure trove of artifacts on slave life in antebellum Texas. The epilogue focuses heavily on the revelations uncovered by this excavation, a shame in part, since it shifts the focus away from the life and foremost concerns of the book's central figure, Sallie McNeill. While she certainly opined on slavery and the impact of emancipation, Sallie spent much of her diary pondering her own spiritual development (and lamenting her shortcomings), relaying the goings on of her circle of family and friends, and offering important glimpses into life in early Texas (including the constant threat of death and disease).

As a member of the state's most elite class, Sallie's diary provides a decidedly upper-class perspective of mid-century Texas life, including the material world,

excursions, and proprieties of her contemporaries. All said, the diary's greatest gift to the present is Sallie herself—the joys, sorrows, and observations of a truly remarkable woman.

University of Texas—Pan American

LINDA ENGLISH

Class and Race in the Frontier Army: Military Life in the West, 1870–1890. By Kevin Adams. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009. Pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780806139814, \$34.95 cloth)

Austin American-Statesman columnist Mike Kelley wrote about the aftermath of a Christmas gift, a kitty, inflicted on an acquaintance. The recipient's litany of "budgetary hemorrhage" included vet bills, shredded drapes, and gourmet cat food. "You can look at this as having played a major part in stimulating the economy," Kelley offered. "Or you can look at it from the vantage point of the boat I could have bought if I hadn't had the cat," mused the friend—a matter of perspective.

"A new vantage point from which to look . . . over the meaning of immigration, industrialization, and the evolution of Gilded Age culture and society" through a "social and cultural history of daily life in the frontier army," (10) is Professor Kevin Adams's aim in *Class and Race in the Frontier Army*. It was a remarkable army, he argues, largely disregarded by Congress, relegated to missions in a neglected theater of operations. Indian wars did not comprise the Army's primary mission. While the Army recorded 2,713 deaths from diseases over a nine-year period, Indian war deaths (1865–1890) numbered 948 (210 of whom died with General George Custer at the Little Bighorn). The Gilded Age Army's broader task included "guaranteeing the social order" (Adams's idiom for assisting local law enforcement to chase outlaws and keep order during civil unrest), running surveys, and intervening after natural disasters (blizzards, droughts, insect infestations). The frontier Army even enabled the U.S. National Weather Service to begin operations in 1890 thanks to data compiled by the Army Signal Corps.

Adams argues that these accomplishments are all the more remarkable of an institution plagued, like the rest of Victorian America, by issues of class and race. As America's industry and commerce grew, so did divisions between working classes and corporate management. Class issues in the frontier army likewise troubled enlisted soldiers who resented fatigue duty (including army post construction and maintenance, a job for laborers, not soldiers) and personal chores for officers. "Native-born soldiers . . . were more concerned about the challenges to their working-class identity . . . posed by army practices that treated them as ordinary laborers" (10). Immigrant recruits hoping to escape European caste oppression felt particularly the sting of social distinctions. Moreover, the small frontier garrisons made it difficult to maintain a physical distance "to preserve lines of authority and class" (152). Proximity of enlisted troops to officers provoked resentment against these "gentlemen" and class distinctions.

Commissioned officers were the Victorian elite, better educated (West Point or civilian college) and better paid, comparing favorably to 90 percent of American