

its insight into soldier life and into the vicissitudes and false horizons of camp morale. Each year brought renewed optimism that it would be the war's last, but the "improbable and stunning" news of Vicksburg proved particularly hard to absorb. Musing in July, 1863, about his unit's experiences over the previous twelve months, Barber noted that "the elastic step of hope" had now been "exchanged for the slow tread of doubt and despondency" (p. 141).

What finally distinguishes Flavel Barber's narrative is its literary merit. Barber the schoolteacher writes honestly about his own frustration and discomfort and with often vivid compassion about the sufferings of his fellow soldiers. Especially sympathetic is the description of a terrible night's endurance on the battlefield at Chickasaw Bayou, where the groans of the wounded men "soon drove away what little propensity I had for sleep" (p. 85). But Barber can also wield a sharper literary scalpel, and his sardonic comments on General Gideon Pillow's conduct at Fort Donelson, where the Third Tennessee was forced to surrender, will scarcely redeem that hapless commander's reputation. In short, *Holding the Line* proves a valuable addition to the Civil War bookshelf and can be recommended with confidence to scholars and enthusiasts alike.

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Andersonville: The Last Depot. By William Marvel. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994. Pp. xi, 337. Map, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Andersonville was certainly the most infamous of all the Civil War prisons, North or South. The controversy surrounding the place has inspired numerous accounts, ranging from the bitter memoirs of its survivors to a famous novel by MacKinlay Kantor to a scholarly study by Ovid Futch. William Marvel, however, has written a book that far outpaces all previous work on Andersonville. He has produced the definitive history of this prison, shorn of hidden agendas, thoroughly based on exhaustive research, and written in a style that approaches a cross between traditional scholarly language and the immediacy of journalistic accounts. It is difficult to find fault with this book, which was written as much from the heart as from the head.

Marvel did his work with an admirable attention to detail. He covers all aspects of the construction, administration, and dismantling of the prison in addition to creating vivid pictures of the personal experiences of those involved in the history of Andersonville. Marvel finds fault where it is justified, but he is not motivated by a desire to indict, only to understand. He has furthered his own

understanding of the history of this prison by examining the site, which, in 1864, was nothing more than a stockaded camp where 41,000 Union prisoners of war were housed.

The strength that carries this book is Marvel's uncompromising desire to find all relevant material on Andersonville and then to evaluate the usefulness of that data. The author has concluded that politically motivated stories about the atrocities allegedly suffered at the prison were generally unreliable. Overall, Marvel indicates that the immense suffering of the inmates was overwhelmingly the result of mismanagement and lack of resources on the part of their Rebel captors. He also suggests that the northern government, through its refusal to exchange prisoners in 1864, bears some of the responsibility for the overcrowding that plagued the Confederate prisoner of war system during the last year of the conflict. These are not new interpretations, but no one has proved them as well as Marvel has.

There were numerous Indiana soldiers at Andersonville, but the book's slim index is not detailed enough to enable the reader to find quickly their stories. African-American soldiers were held there as well, and southern slaves were instrumental in the building of the prison. Women found their way to Andersonville as well; some were prostitutes, others were relatives of the prisoners, and still others were residents of the area who came to look at the Yankees. Marvel briefly discusses the aftermath of this brutal episode of Civil War history—the trial and execution of Andersonville's commandant, Henry Wirz, as a war criminal. He does not, however, examine the role of Andersonville within the wider context of post-war politics. Some observations on the place of the prison in the nation's collective memory of the war would be interesting, but Marvel, who surely will be acknowledged as Andersonville's historian, does not attempt it. Nevertheless, this is a rich history deserving to be read.

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April '65: Confederate Covert Action in the American Civil War.
By William A. Tidwell. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi, 264. Illustrations, tables, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00.)

In *April '65*, William A. Tidwell develops and elaborates on a thesis first presented in his 1988 book, *Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln*. Together these two books reopen the question of whether there was a connection between Confederate secret service operations and the