

Fort Donelson's Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862–1863. By Benjamin Franklin Cooling. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997. Pp. xx, 408. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$38.00.)

It is now generally believed by historians that the fall of Fort Donelson to the Union in February of 1862 was a truly decisive event in the Civil War. Benjamin Franklin Cooling, one of the very best military historians of war in the West, is well aware of this. He writes, "The western defense perimeter of the Confederacy had crumbled, rebel forces from West Tennessee and northwestern Kentucky eventually withdrew all the way to northern Mississippi" (p. 26). The almost uninterrupted Union advance in the West—where the war was won and lost—may be said to have begun at Donelson, from which it proceeded, sometimes haltingly, to Corinth, Stones River, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and the March to the Sea. Cooling's intent, however, is not to tell this large story. As suggested by the book's subtitle, *War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862–1863*, his book concerns the relatively unknown, day-to-day war after Donelson in those states, and it tells an interesting and grim tale of bushwhacking, guerrilla warfare, and vengeance. The point is that this geography was strategically significant and contained a volatile mix of citizens with deeply felt and conflicting loyalties to North and South. Once the Confederacy's defeat at Donelson opened this area—the Mississippi valley—to further Union penetration, it became a donnybrook of regular and irregular warfare.

Federal forces in this western theater were dominated by soldiers from Indiana and the other states of the Old Northwest. Further, people from the upland South migrated to Indiana before, during, and after the war. Thus, Hoosiers have a special relationship to this area. Cooling has dug deeply to find this unknown story. It suggests a moral: civil wars are not nice for the combative people left at home anymore than they are for the soldiers. This book is highly recommended.

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Dear Poppa: The World War II Berman Family Letters. Compiled by Ruth Berman. Edited by Judy Barrett Litoff. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997. Pp. xxii, [317]. Notes, illustrations. Clothbound, \$29.95; paperbound, \$15.95.)

In her earlier books, most notably *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Home Front*, Judy Barrett Litoff collected previously neglected writings of women who were separated from loved ones by war. Now she has edited a unique and enjoyable volume of family letters. The Berman children of Min-

neapolis dictated hundreds of letters through their mother Isabel to their father, army physician Reuben Berman. *Dear Poppa* provides "the first significant opportunity to incorporate the actual wartime voices of America's children into accounts of the Second World War," since William Tuttle used *retrospective* letters in the acclaimed "*Daddy's Gone to War*": *The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (p. ix).

Litoff's excellent introduction describes the family's adjustment to relocation, separation, and other wartime hardships in the framework of the war's impact on millions, including many Hoosiers who will identify with the Bermans. Sammy, five, struggled to comprehend: "I wish you would come back. That's all I want to say" (p. 15). David, nine, worried shortly after Reuben left, "I hope you are not dead already" (p. 20). A mythical "perfect" father developed: "everybody is older, meaner, and generally not as nice as poppa" (p. 40). Sammy muddled fantasy with fear for and of poppa: "I hope you don't get killed in the invasion. If you come back and spank me I will have the right to make you feel badder than anything and tell you that you are not like Abraham Lincoln so you had better not come back and spank me . . . I hope you're not shot because if you're shot I'll feel very bad because I would like to have a poppa, you same poppa, that same poppa" (pp. 123-24). Isabel naturally hoped for Reuben's imminent return, acknowledging in November, 1943, "putting off the purchase of overshoes in the hope that you might come back and we would go someplace where overshoes are not needed" (p. 51).

The war shaped play and entertainment. The children bought war bonds, enjoyed gender-differentiated war toys, watched war movies, planted victory gardens, and even dreamed about the war. Thus generally these were very ordinary children caught in "no ordinary time." Yet while some aspects of their homefront experience were typical, others were not: these were semiprivileged officer's children, unusually attentive to music lessons and to their Jewish heritage. The Bermans should especially be saluted for their candor in depicting Isabel and Reuben's religious differences. When David disdained his mother's Reform Judaism, Isabel appealed to Reuben: "Now, you may have your views and I mine, but in your absence I am in charge. Some hint to David that his parents agree on where he should go might be in order" (p. 128).

Though Litoff might have illuminated the text more effectively with more annotation, she does frequently include the parents' accompanying letters as reference points. The pictures and illustrations include many poignant children's drawings. Daughter and compiler Ruth Berman also provides a prelude and all-too-brief postlude. This attractively packaged volume should inspire more families to dig through their attics and memories.

KEVIN SMITH, associate professor of history at Ball State University, is the author of *Conflict over Convoys: Anglo-American Logistics Diplomacy in the Second World War* (1996).