

Soldiering for Freedom: How the Union Army Recruited, Trained, and Deployed the U.S. Colored Troops

By Bob Luke and John David Smith

(Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. Pp. ix, 107. Illustrations, index. Paperbound, \$19.95.)

Soldiering for Freedom is part of Johns Hopkins University Press's new series, *How Things Worked*, which aims at college students. This series examines the practices and practical effects of things that the editors believe are often missed in lectures and college textbooks. Anyone who has attempted to explain complex processes in a concise and readable fashion understands just how difficult this challenge can be. John David Smith and Bob Luke undertake to describe how and why African Americans, both slave and free, were recruited and transformed into soldiers; how they served in the war effort, and what were its legacies both for themselves and for society. *Soldiering for Freedom* is a useful study that synthesizes recent scholarly works not just on military history and the soldier's craft, but also on race, masculinity, emancipation, and the struggle for full black citizenship.

In five short chapters, the authors effectively encapsulate a series of key questions: What were the complex factors that moved the Lincoln administration, and much of the Northern population, from seeing the conflict as "a white man's war" to a grudging acceptance of a biracial army? What motivated African Americans to join an army that treated them as second-class

soldiers and devalued their potential? The complex motivations that led white soldiers to seek commissions in black regiments, and the Bureau of Colored Troops' success in selecting competent officers to lead the black soldiers, together comprise the focus of the third chapter. The long struggle to get commissions for black officers provides a litmus test of changing racial attitudes. The transition from black recruits to trained efficient soldiers was a challenging and difficult process that the authors handled concisely. Many black soldiers had substandard muskets and second-hand equipment, and they endured a disproportionate amount of fatigue duties, while being led by white officers unconvinced of their value as soldiers. In the final chapter we learn how well African Americans demonstrated their courage and fighting abilities, and the price they paid in doing so. Their contributions and sacrifices to Union victory, as the epilogue makes clear, was only partially recognized and remembered by Americans in the decades after the war.

The series editors' call for volumes of a size for classroom use puts real constraints on the authors. Smith and Luke limit citations primarily to direct quotations. The result is that much of the extensive primary

and secondary research upon which the book is based is hidden from the reader's view. Students fascinated, for example, by the engaging account of the raising of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment or the struggle for black commissions will not have easy access to the authors' sources, should they wish to pursue further research. Fortunately, the authors' excellent annotated bibliography mitigates part of this problem.

Overall, the authors do an excellent job in revealing the complexity of the black soldiers' war in a concise and readable fashion. As in most books, some minor errors slip in. The authors twice claim that Martin Delaney was the first African American to hold the rank of major. Yet the claim that his appointment in

February 1865 was the "highest rank to date to an African American" is immediately followed by the account of the complaints, made the previous year, of six white surgeons concerning "Dr. Alexander T. Augusta, a black surgeon commissioned a major." Indeed, Augusta became major in April 1863 and, at war's end, was breveted lieutenant colonel. These minor quibbles, however, should not overshadow the considerable value of this book as a college text.

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Northern Men with Southern Loyalties: The Democratic Party and the Sectional Crisis

By Michael Todd Landis

(Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014. Pp. 1, 299. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

This study is the fullest account of the Northern Democrats in the 1850s since Roy F. Nichols's prize-winning *The Disruption of the American Democracy* (1948). Both studies focus on politics, especially party machinery and the distribution of patronage, and locate the coming of the Civil War in political decisions that disastrously misfired. However, unlike Nichols—who examines both the Southern and

Northern wings of the Democratic party in the context of the Buchanan administration, and who is more attuned to the disruptive economic, social, and cultural forces that contributed to the chronic political turmoil and factionalism—Landis covers the entire decade of the 1850s and is concerned almost exclusively with the political infighting of Northern Democrats both at the national and