

*Penitentiaries, Punishment, and Military Prisons: Familiar Responses to an Extraordinary Crisis during the American Civil War*  
By Angela M. Zombek

(Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2018. Pp. xxi, 312. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

The Civil War disrupted society on both sides of the conflict and created unforeseen strains on existing systems of law and order. The necessity of controlling large populations of prisoners of war forced Federal authorities to create temporary facilities and to adapt precedents established at state penitentiaries to fit the extraordinary crisis. Arguing that “the Civil War represented the greatest crisis of imprisonment ever witnessed on American soil” (p. 21), Angela M. Zombek focuses on five penitentiaries and six military prisons, located in Washington, D.C., Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia, to compare Northern and Southern imprisonment. Antebellum, wartime, and postwar officials, she concludes, collectively managed “the cost of imprisonment, overcrowding, supply shortages, physical punishment, and inmates’ psychological and physical distress” (p. x). In Zombek’s telling, state penitentiaries established in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shaped public perceptions and expectations of self-sufficiency, cost effectiveness, corporal punishment, and reform through education, physical labor, and religious instruction.

Penitentiaries and military prisons shared common features and challenges. Officials adapted policies for

military prisons—such as the Lieber Code of 1863—from state penitentiaries that operated under quasi-militaristic discipline. The authorities insisted that physical labor brought convicts “back to a sense of duty and correct mode of thinking and acting” (p. 94). Inmates of both types of facilities faced isolation, endured physical punishment, suffered from disease, tolerated surveilled communications, and experienced limited visitation from loved ones. Women encountered inadequate facilities and gendered expectations related to behavior and work. Desperate prisoners sought pardons and engaged in daring escapes, with varying degrees of success. As the number of prisoners of war grew, Federal and Confederate authorities increasingly assumed responsibilities that state officials had managed throughout the antebellum years. Military law distinguished between criminals and prisoners of war, but soldiers often found it difficult to shake the stigma of imprisonment and were left haunted by the transformative experience. Zombek demonstrates that facilities on both sides struggled throughout their existence with massive overcrowding, high mortality, inexperienced leadership, political nepotism, tenuous security, shortages of guards, and financial instability.

If prisons reflected a nation's level of civility, democracy, and benevolence, as suggested by Enoch Wines and other reformers of the day, then the penitentiaries and military prisons that operated during the Civil War certainly tarnished the reputation of both the United States and the Confederacy. In summer 1867, the U.S. House of Representatives exonerated government officials from any guilt related to inmates' suffering, but strongly denounced Confederate officials such as Henry Wirz of Andersonville. Southerners manipulated the legal system in an attempt to reinstate control of free blacks throughout Reconstruction, and the population of African American inmates quickly outnumbered their white counterparts as a result. A brutal system of convict leasing spread across the South, insulating states from the cost of incarceration and providing cheap labor for infrastructure projects. The author

points out that "by August 1870, high population and leasing were the norm" (p. 192).

The depth of Zombek's research on each facility is exhaustive and impressive. She has consulted a trove of official war records, state congressional records, annual reports, prison registers, family papers, personal memoirs, and over one hundred newspapers to describe the histories, policies, personnel, and daily life of prisoners at each location. She organizes her work thematically to assist her comparative analysis of regulations, prison life, communication, and power dynamics at both penitentiaries and military prisons. This well-written book offers fascinating new material for scholars interested in antebellum, carceral, military, and social history.

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doi: 10.2979/indimagahist.115.4.05



### *Competition in the Promised Land: Black Migration in Northern Cities and Labor Markets*

By Leah Platt Boustan

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. xv, 197. Illustrations, figures, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

The Great Migration is a pivotal theme in African American and U.S. history. It also comprises one of the most dynamic fields of scholarship in American and African American Studies. Focusing on the impact of

mass migration on African American life and labor in the urban North and West, economic historian Leah Platt Boustan expands our understanding of black population movement, jobs, and housing in the twentieth century.