

George C. Rable. *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism. Women in American History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. Pp. xv, 391. Paper, \$13.95.

Despite the enormous quantity of Confederate historiographical material, every now and then a fresh piece of solid scholarship appears and enhances our knowledge of this painful period of American history even more. *Civil Wars* is such a book.

Topically, *Civil Wars* is kindred to Bell Wiley's 1975 path-charting volume, *Confederate Women*. But when the two tomes are compared, *Civil Wars* easily emerges as the new standard work in the field because of its breadth, scope, and analytical quality.

Fundamentally, Professor Rable has produced a traditional steady-handed social history narrative that focuses on the activities, attitudes, feelings, and lifestyles, of Southern white women during the Confederate period. By relying on a heavy mix of primary source data (diaries, correspondence, memoirs, etc.), he has succeeded in mirroring the tragic tone and temper of daily life on the rebel domestic scene. But what further distinguishes the monograph's dimension and application is that female endeavors are not studied solely in hearth-centered isolation. Rather, the feminine sphere and perspective are meaningfully woven into the broader fabrics of military, economic, family, and societal affairs—thereby underscoring the important connection between home front and battlefield during those four long years of trauma, turmoil, and upheaval.

The book opens with a synoptic chapter highlighting the general role, status, and position of women during the antebellum era. By itself, this segment could fit nicely into supplementary reading formats in a variety of survey courses. Moreover, the book as a whole has a decided value outside the purely historical realm in that it can be seen as a mandatory preliminary reading experience for those seeking contrasting insights into the psychological, sociological, and behavioral patterns and characteristics of latter-day Southern women and their Old South counterparts.

The next ten textual subdivisions essentially chronicle the day-to-day trials and tribulations of all types of women, both rural and urban, as they monumentally struggled to cope with and adjust to the multitudinal miseries generated by wartime conditions and cultural collapse. Yet, even amid such overpowering dismalness, there is underlying cause for a sort of ironic celebration in that one cannot help but admire the female fortitude and perseverance exhibited in the face of so much physical and mental suffering. Indeed, a strong case can be made to the effect that women constituted the backbone and bulwark of the Confederate civilian sector.

The remaining two chapters deal with postwar and Reconstruction times. These are a bit too general to be very useful, but not to have included them would have left the story dangling. Still, there is at least one profound finding revealed in these pages; namely, that even though the conflict demanded sudden and dramatic shifts in the roles and responsibilities of Southern women, once the clouds of war had passed, womenfolk returned to their traditional status and place. It was "change without change," as Rable put it.

For all its achievements, *Civil Wars* does harbor a few shortcomings. There is, for example, a certain amount of subject overlap, redundancy, and repetitious phraseology. Further, on a more substantive plane, the reader may well question whether the evidence presented on given occasions always justifies the conclusions offered. And in this context perhaps the most troubling issue is the author's handling of the matter of class conflicts and tensions between and among upper class, yeoman, and poor white women. This theme runs like a subplot throughout most of the work. While jealousy, envy, and snobbishness, most certainly did exist (What age has been without them?), their importance and relevance are assuredly overblown as far as their impact on the flow of events. The space accorded such things might have been better used elsewhere.

Minor flaws aside, Professor Rable has brought us a vivid behind-the-scenes look at Confederate womanhood. What remains to be done next is a thorough and final canvas of the same ground on a state-by-state basis with considerable emphasis placed on the grassroots level. This would seem to lend itself to a multi-author enterprise similar to the 1985 *Confederate Governors* volume.

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**Laurence Ivan Seidman.** *Once in the Saddle: The Cowboy's Frontier, 1866-1896.* Library of American History. 1973. Reprint. New York: Facts on File, 1991. Pp. xvii, 137. \$16.95.

*Once in the Saddle*, the title quoted from a familiar line of a cowboy ballad, is a reprint of an earlier work that appeared in Alfred A. Knopf's fifteen-volume series titled *The Living History Library*. The series, targeted for an audience of high school students and college undergraduates, concentrated on pivotal events and personalities of American history; as such, there had to be a book on the cowboy of the Last West.

This book is composed of a thread of narrative that connects and introduces quotations, many of them quite lengthy, of persons who experienced the birth, expansion, and death of the great Cattle Kingdom that exploded from Texas immediately following the American Civil War and then expired about thirty years later. It also contains quotations from secondary sources. Many of the latter are interpretative, of course, and add to the original sources quoted, and, with the narrative, blend to make a pleasing and informative, if brief, survey of the industry and the era. All chapters but one conclude with the words and score for piano accompaniment of a cowboy song illustrative of the text of that chapter. Many of those included are but one version of that song. The combination of narrative, quotations from the literature, and then the music make this book particularly adaptable to classroom use, and, with appropriate application by the teacher, at any level of instruction.

The chapters begin, appropriately, with a review of geography and how physical characteristics shaped the cultural and economic development of the area. Some might quibble with the area assigned as the Great Plains on the map provided, but it is certainly adequate. A subsequent chapter deals with the development of the cattle industry in Texas with significant credit to its Spaniard progenitors, but, possibly due to the time it was written, does not address the argument that equal credit should be given to the impact of Anglo-Celts coming from the East for the cattle kingdom's genesis. No matter; the old, old story is still worth telling.

Seidman's story of how Chicago became the shipping goal from Abilene—he was thrown out of the railroad president's office in St. Louis when he asked for a rail line—shows how important is the role of accident in history. His descriptions of cattle drives, and the men, animals, and methods involved are consensus history and are told well both in narrative and in quotations. His story of the annihilation of the buffalo and resulting consequences for Indians, cattlemen, and the Army reminds us of why the Sierra Club calls our wasteful gobbling of the frontier a "cowboy" attitude, although cowboys actually killed few buffalo. And his accounts of the demise of the Kingdom and the reorganization of the cattle industry, rooted in overproduction, bad management, and worse weather, are clear and precise. There are but two things of a negative nature to be said: I do not believe the King Ranch was ever owned by a British syndicate but remains, as it was from the beginning, a family affair; and the gentleman mentioned on page 111 should be Oliver Loving, not Loring. This would not be mentioned except for his considerable role in the development of the industry.

The best part of the book is the story of Nate Champion, the cowboy who refused to be bullied by ranchers, although the story of the black cowboy Nate Love would be a close