Virginia Reviews


Leland, a professor at Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, has collected a set of his essays on the natural and human history of Rockbridge County and the surrounding area. His effort will please most readers who already appreciate the interesting character of the place, as well as those who are curious about one of Virginia's most interesting geographic regions. Leland combines research with personal experience and careful description of many engaging scenes in a manner that makes the science easy to digest.

In the first essay, the author serves notice that he understands the tradition of American nature writing—influenced so much by Thoreau—that often uses analogies between the natural world and human conduct to make moral points. Leland's analogy here is a stream that runs hidden in a limestone cavern with the secrets that human lives often conceal. Fortunately, the author's description of the setting and the science that explains it whets a reader's appetite for more natural history, which is found in abundance in the succeeding essays. Leland combines research with personal experience and careful description of many engaging scenes in a manner that makes the science easy to digest.

In fact, the book is well worth reading, especially for those of us who have had the pleasure of being in some of the unique places Leland lovingly describes. It will also entice many readers to visit those places for the first time.

—Cy Dillon, Hampden-Sydney College

Occasionally...his prose becomes as exuberant as the fraternity members he compares to mating insects.

LELAND REVIEW


In The Tinsley Family of Totomo, Hanover County, Virginia, 1755–1920, Maria Wornom Rippe traces the history of the Tinsley family over the course of four generations. Beginning with the first Tinsley who settled in James City County in 1638, she follows the family through the colonial period, the Revolution, the Civil War, and into the early twentieth century. In relating the family history, Rippe also illuminates the larger context of rural landowners through Virginia's first two and a half centuries.

Rippe begins with Thomas Tinsley, an indentured servant who emigrated from England in 1638. While family lore claims Tinsley...
ownership of Hanover County property on Totopotomoy Creek as early as 1650, Rippe questions the accuracy of that claim and discusses the difficulty in verifying seventeenth- and eighteenth-century landholdings. In a chapter entitled “Missing Connections,” Rippe disavows the family tradition and provides full disclosure of the problems in the family genealogy. Through thorough and well-researched scholarship, Rippe is able to confirm the family’s ownership by 1747 of the land later known as Totomoi.

After discussing the early genealogy, Rippe tells the family’s story, beginning with Thomas Tinsley’s operation of a well-known tavern in Hanovertown during the time of the Revolution. Living and working in the same community as Patrick Henry, the Tinsleys were likewise deeply involved in revolutionary activities. Rippe describes the service of various Tinsleys in county militias, the Continental Army, and Virginia’s General Assembly.

The middle portion of the book discusses slavery at Totomoi and the farm’s survival during and after the Civil War. Rippe does not shy away from the brutal details of slavery as she reveals the tragedy and distress it caused for both slave and owner. She effectively juxtaposes census records with family wills and diaries to tell the stories of specific individuals, both slave and free, grounding them in the context of time and place.

The final section traces the life and work of James Garland Tinsley. After working with explosives as a soldier during the Civil War, he returned to Totomoi and used his expertise to develop and manufacture fertilizers. Targeting a Southern market, Tinsley named his fertilizer products after Confederate heroes and soon had a thriving business. In 1889, he cofounded Richmond Chemical Works, which later became the Virginia-Carolina Chemical Company. Rippe chronicles the growth of the corporation and the antitrust suit that was brought against the company in 1906.

Rippe is adept at weaving the family narrative into the larger story of the Revolution, Civil War, and growth of the young nation. She makes skillful use of a large body of primary source documents such as military commissions, account books, family personal papers, census and church records, journals, land and tax records, state papers, and extensive genealogical and secondary source publications. Full bibliographic documentation of her sources and annotative endnotes lend an authoritative feel to the book, while the thorough index further enhances its usefulness.

Beautifully produced by the Dietz Press, The Tinsley Family of Totomoi, Hanover County, Virginia, 1755–1920 is illustrated with period maps; family portraits; reproductions of deeds, diaries, and account books; and photographs of homes and family artifacts. Rippe’s work combines thorough genealogical research with lively local history and will serve collections devoted to either discipline.

—Lynda Wright, assistant professor and head of technical services, McGraw-Page Library


If during the Civil War 54% of the Confederate Army enlisted in 1861, what motivated 46% to enlist after 1861? Kenneth Noe exposes one of the common assumptions in research on Civil War soldiers—namely, that the late arrivals shared similar motives for enlisting as those in 1861 and also shared the same experience (xii, 12). In contrast to the initial roster of volunteers, 15% would begin entering the army in spring 1862 as conscripts; 9% would enter tardily as substitutes (healthy men who were not already eligible to be drafted and could be paid to “substitute” for newly drafted men) (112); and 22.5% would enlist after 1861 to fight for the Confederacy (2). To test assumptions and to understand the full range of experience of Confederate soldiers, Noe engages in a study of what he terms “reluctant rebels,” those who enlisted in the Confederate army after 1861. These are the soldiers who did not enlist when war fever gripped the South after war was initially declared. Noe concludes that “reluctant” enlistees chose not to join at the outset of war mostly for personal reasons (209). Yet, as a group, their reasons to enlist later do share common pressures such as conscription, money, and local concerns for families, property, and neighborhoods (209).

Noe prepares the reader with a survey of historians’ perspectives on Civil War research and then takes the reader on his own tour of discovery through the correspondence of 320 soldiers who enlisted after 1861. An informative introduction enables new researchers to understand the context and complexity of his undertaking and allows experienced researchers to compare his study with previous ones. His methodology demonstrates the difficulties of extracting specific themes from wartime correspondence from a twenty-first-century vantage point. To support his research and help guide readers through his work, he includes an appendix with four tables, a list of notes arranged by chapter, a Works Cited section, and an index.

Noe divides his study into three parts. In Part One, entitled “When Our Rights Were Threatened,” his two chapters study the ideological assumptions that these soldiers enlisted out of a sense of duty to
defend honor and country and/or to protect slavery. Part Two, entitled “Fighting for the Property We Gained by Honest Toil,” evaluates the assumption that enlisting was primarily to defend one’s home. That, says Noe, often serves as a counterpoint to ideological reasons for enlisting (10). The three chapters in this section focus on Women, Hatred, and Pay, respectively. Part Three, entitled “We Are a Band of Brothers and Native to the Soil,” examines assumptions about the sustaining elements of religion, comrades, weariness, and the battle itself that kept these later enlistees in the army.

While broad historical generalizations remain faceless, Noe personalizes the accounts with the authors’ names and allows the reader to wrestle with the complexity of individual human behavior and motivation combined with recognizable actions in the face of extreme duress. The reader meets Alabama sergeant John Crittenden, who fusses about a lazy messmate (156); Private G. H. Burns, who urges his wife not to live with her parents, “for they would insult him in his children’s presence” (84); and Georgian private William Ross Stilwell, who writes about the carnage on a battlefield: “God deliver me from ever seeing another battlefield” (199). Then there’s North Carolina private William P. Cline, who, tired of the fighting, deserted, only to return a month later. He faced forty days’ imprisonment, was released, and then, after rejoining his unit, died in a later engagement (182). Noe’s sampling serves to create a situation in which the reader can more easily empathize with the motivations and actions of the men in question. The reluctant rebels evade clear historical categorization by what they did write, what they did not write, and what they wrote at one time that differed from what they wrote at another time. The personal dimension Noe offers in his study is also a sobering reminder to any who see the Civil War as a “glorious pageant.” “We would do well to remember,” Noe writes, “that for them [the reluctant rebels], it was instead a devastating horror ripe with pain, fear, loss, and loneliness, soaked in mud and the blood of kin and neighbors” (211). Noe’s study also reminds contemporary readers who have perused accounts of other wars that the distance in years between conflicts does not lessen the horror of war and its effects on those men, women, and children who experience it.

Noe writes Reluctant Rebels as an academic study that will be more appealing for historians than for recreational readers. The structure of his study and the conscientious approach to his research offer an excellent model for undergraduate and graduate students as well as for independent researchers. On the other hand, general readers may be drawn to the personal accounts of wartime experience during the Civil War.

—Andrew Pearson, director of the library, Bridgewater College


When discussing how slavery led to bloody conflict, the average American history book will usually stick to two things: John Brown’s raid at Harper’s Ferry to steal weapons for a slave uprising (and then his subsequent hanging) and the Civil War. A few will include Bloody Kansas, in which Brown was also a player. But while politicians and newspaper editors were discussing whether or not to extend slavery into new states, hammering out famous compromises, and debating whether or not fugitive slaves who escaped to Northern states should be returned to the South—all events that get the standard history-book play—Harrold has dug deeper to tell the stories of when politics, religion, and beliefs in human rights and dignity turned bloody in the American border states.

While there had been slave owners in the North and abolitionist societies in the South, the border states between North and South—not just in the East but also the Midwest—could be particularly cruel places to live when the flames of the slavery issue were fanned. The potential for bloody clashes both where slavery was allowed—Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—and where it was outlawed—Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois—simmered for nearly as long as America had been an independent republic, but in the early decades it was generally only blacks who were the targets of violence, including the Western territories before they became states. For whites, the battles were primarily confined to words. Upper Southerners saw the Lower Northerners as the aggressors—political invaders, and sometimes physical ones, who were coming into slave-holding territory to aid slave escapes. Southerners moving into the Lower North were considered rabble-rousers, often by their mere presence if not their actions. In some cases, they were disparaged...
as a group, called lazy and shiftless, and prevented from staying in the South because they couldn’t compete with slave labor.

Nor were the battle lines distinctly drawn between North and South; coming from one region or the other didn’t guarantee a belief system. Harrold recounts the story of a Pennsylvania slave named John Davis who became free under state law in 1780, but whose master held onto him by force before Davis was freed by abolitionists; Virginia editors accused abolitionists of “seducing” away Davis and other slaves. After the Fugitive Slave Law passed in 1850, a group of Ohio bigwigs expressed solidarity with their Kentucky slave-holding neighbors by saying that this marked a new era in cooperation between the states, and — with an unknown irony at the time — declared that the law struck a blow against those who would try to break apart the Union.

But two events stirred the pot of bloodshed more than any others before the firing on Fort Sumter: Nat Turner’s 1831 uprising in Virginia, during which several slave-owning white families were killed, and the Fugitive Slave Law. In the South, the slave laws became stricter and more tightly enforced after Turner’s hanging; farther north than Pennsylvania, much of the abolitionist resistance was peaceful. But in the border states, which politically allied with the North and denounced both sides’ “extremism” and any talk of secession, the neighbor-on-neighbor conflicts at last exploded into war. Kansas, with its roving armed “militias” that did everything from twisting elections to burning towns, was by far the worst, but it was hardly isolated. Vigilantes on both sides organized and attacked their opposition. Resistance to slave-catchers, kidnappers, and slave-owners bringing slaves through abolitionist territories turned violent. Slaves were freed at gunpoint, often resulting in mob fights afterward. Courthouses and other public buildings were torched. Calls for blacks to arm themselves increased. Masters in the border states and deeper into the South alike called for federal intervention, which was rarely forthcoming, or perceived as too lacking; this apparent lack would be remembered a few years later, when the Southern states voted to secede.

Harrold has accomplished multiple tasks with his book. First, he has put names and motives to generalities found in many textbooks. Famous men like Henry Clay still play their parts here, but others, like Pennsylvania slave John Davis, are salvaged from a nearly forgotten limbo. There is humanity built into this history. Second, Harrold draws numerous examples from every sort of primary source of how many shades of gray the slavery debate had in America’s geographical middle ground. Or at least in the early years, for eventually those who tried finding a middle ground and compromising, on the local as well as federal levels, were shouted down by both sides.

Which leads to Harrold’s third accomplishment. The firing on Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s call for troops did not rise out of sterile ground. Harrold’s scholarship implies throughout that the Civil War was never not about slavery: that arguments about states’ rights and free commerce from the South always tied back to the slave economy; that arguments about secession, from both North and South, were plentiful and often came back to either defending the slave economy’s rights, or arguing that a free United States could not tolerate slaves in its borders. Harrold almost portrays a sense of historical inevitability — the inevitability of a Civil War, a nationwide bloodbath that got underway decades before at the grassroots level. He also concludes at one point that the war itself could have gone very differently, in the South’s favor, if border residents siding with the North hadn’t managed to gain the upper hand — often driving many of their proslavery neighbors south — in the years leading up to 1861.

Border War is a must-have for anyone seeking to understand the small-scale underlying fights that snowballed into the Civil War; to better know the local faces, both white and black, who fought each other while politicians argued in Washington and state capitols; and to learn how concession, compromise, and standing firm all contributed when moderate voices were choked off. Textbooks and many leading historical works leave gaps by portraying the sweeping movements, but Harrold fills in the details without which a true and thorough understanding of the slavery issue and the Civil War is impossible.

—Danny Adams, evening services librarian assistant, Ferrum College

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“The Negro is... by nature subservient and believes himself inferior to the white man; he is most susceptible to the influence of crowd psychology; he cannot control himself in the fear of danger... He has not the initiative and resourcefulness.... He is inferior to the white man.” Mein Kampf was published in Germany on July 18, 1925, but these words come not from European Fascists. They
come from the United States Army on October 30, 1925, barely three months later, in its official report on the use of African American soldiers during the First World War.

Chad L. Williams (Hamilton College) presents a scathing account of the maltreatment of African American soldiers before, during, and after World War I that compels even the most cynical, disillusioned reader. Starting in 1914, he depicts African American life during the buildup of war fever. He follows the lives and stories of several soldiers in the U.S. Army’s eight segregated infantry regiments (365th-372nd). He also follows perhaps the most outspoken supporter and critic of the war, W. E. B. Du Bois.

Williams retells one documented story after the next, anecdote after anecdote, fact after fact: African American troops in training harassed while taking leave on Southern military bases or thrown in jail and beaten under dubious circumstances; race riots before the U.S. had even entered the war. Williams shows how the U.S. military under Woodrow Wilson attempted to implement Jim Crow laws in dealing with African American soldiers, who were denied basic amenities on base, including running water, toilets, and even uniforms. Southerners wanted African Americans on Northern bases for fear of interracial relations with white women. Military officials were afraid to issue guns during training.

During the war, most African American troops were used as dock laborers and stevedores. They became the custodians of the army. Two of the regiments saw combat under French command. The French viewed them as civilized counterparts to their Algerian cousins, and thus reacted with less trepidation than white American officers. Very few African Americans passed through the prejudiced training camps back in the U.S., and most of the select few were removed from service in an equally racist battlefront. And once again, fearmongers in the U.S. Army used the specter of interracial relations to assert control. Eight of the eleven soldiers court-martialed and hung were African American, all of them accused of raping white French women.

Finally, Williams covers the period of postwar America in which African American soldiers returned home to a country not so ready to accept them and their empowerment. The army dismantled their eight infantry regiments almost immediately after the war, sending them home quickly and quietly. The soldiers received very few welcomes back in the states. In fact, over sixty-five African American veterans were lynched between 1919 and 1920 (yes, American soldiers killed by Americans). The bitterness and irony was not lost on a single one of these soldiers. It’s no surprise that African Americans created and mobilized several political and social activist groups after the war. Perhaps even the Harlem Renaissance was inspired by the empowerment and dignity that African American soldiers felt after the war (despite the contrary efforts of a largely racist society and military).

But Williams does not tell a one-sided story. He includes stories of African American soldiers going AWOL (often unable to cope with racism in the barracks) and reacting against racism and violence with racism and violence of their own. He acknowledges times when African American soldiers may have been guilty of the crimes they committed. He does not sugarcoat the contradictions of American “equality” any more than he does the words and actions of men like W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey.

_Torchbearers of Democracy_ is not a story with heroes and villains, only victims. And Williams tells the story with the requisite skill of a scholarly storyteller. He blends academic research with easy narrative prose to illuminate a previously dark chapter in American history, spotlighting this important struggle for true equality and democracy.

—Joseph Yamine, English, Ferrum College

Over sixty-five African American veterans were lynched between 1919 and 1920.

WILLIAMS REVIEW


Hagy, a native Virginian who is now an award-winning professor of writing at the University of Wyoming, returns to short fiction in her sixth book, giving readers the opportunity to enjoy a master’s mature but restless exploration of the techniques and possibilities of her craft. While reading and rereading the eight stories this reviewer was often left with that feeling between surprise and shame that we experience when we see just a bit more of a scene than the participants intended for us to observe—a kitchen door left open too long, a pistol half-hidden in a car. These accidental intimacies, which may wear a reader out in a novel, work particularly well in stories like Hagy’s where the characters are easy for us to inhabit, at once outside our daily experience
but well within the range of our sympathetic imagination. Even with the common thread of intense characters in harsh settings and at difficult junctures in their experience, the stories in *Ghosts of Wyoming* represent a broad range of form, tone, and narrative voice. They leave a reader inclined, after finishing and thinking over a story’s outcome, to return to the pivotal scene to be sure no hints at the author’s intent were missed among the conversations and settings. Hagy told me in an email exchange last fall that this book was “an experiment” for her, and the variety of approaches to narration and plot in this collection justify that characterization. On the other hand, the stories all succeed so well in communicating the experience of life in Wyoming that they are obviously carefully planned and under the author’s control. As in her novel *Snow, Ashes*, setting, plot, and characters complement one another perfectly. Every word or gesture is an organic part of the whole effect; nothing is out of place or would mean the same thing in another setting. This integration is a product of Hagy’s maturity as a writer, and makes the short fiction here even more impressive than that in her first three collections.

The experimental nature of Hagy’s writing in *Ghosts of Wyoming* is noticeable from the start, as is the fact that it is not a collection of what are commonly called ghost stories. The first piece, “Border,” for instance, is an example of a story that was written to be a bit disorienting to the reader with its unusual protagonist who isn’t the narrator but whose point of view controls what the reader is told. Having us experience the events through the eyes of a young thief—and, we finally learn, murderer—and yet leading the reader to identify with him and hope he finds a way to keep the dog he has stolen is no simple feat. Rereading the last scene of “Border,” I realized that Hagy had gotten me to see events from a perspective close to opposite my usual vantage point as a mildly benign authority figure, and I had to admire her skill.

“Brief Lives of the Trainmen” gives us, as its plot is revealed in fits and starts, a series of portraits of working people from a more strenuous and dangerous age of work in America. The dense and fragmented exposition, meant for readers to follow through the character sketches like old tracks through sand, ends in a slapstick scene worthy of *Blazing Saddles*. “How Bitter the Weather” has a ghost, but that is the least of the problems of Melanie, the reporter who looks for a missing acquaintance, the mysterious Armand, knowing all along that he will most likely be a suicide. Melanie explains her situation by saying, “You aren’t supposed to strive in Wyoming. You take what’s available.” She and her circle of friends in Laramie are studies in the effects of taking the available to its logical extreme. Then the book’s tone shifts dramatically to a tongue-in-cheek ghost story, “Superstitions of the Indians,” which makes fun of grad schools and their students, librarians and archives, the reverence with which the current age treats Native American mythology, and even Frisbee golf. This piece really is a departure for Hagy, coming across like a satyr play after Greek tragedy, but it is easy to enjoy and there is nothing mean-spirited in the humor.

With “Oil and Gas,” the next story in the collection, Hagy returns to having the working people of Wyoming—welders, men working in the extraction industries, nurses, federal regulators, and ranchers—describe their lives in their own conversations and unvoiced thoughts. Their matter-of-fact acceptance of the difficulties of their lives has an undeniable appeal, and sets the stage for the striking maturity of young Livia, the central character in “The Little Saint of Hoodoo Mountain,” which is the most perfectly realized story in the book, though perhaps the most conventional in narration and plot. Livia’s ability to deal with the unavoidable weaknesses of the people around her is not enough to protect her from the tragedies they set in motion. It is a gripping piece of short fiction that leaves the reader no easy way out. “Lost Boys” lets us observe another set of Wyoming citizens as they arrive at the same cliff face for a variety of reasons and with a variety of outcomes. Then, in the final entry, Hagy turns to the nineteenth-century history of Wyoming in “The Sin Eaters,” a story with a would-be missionary encountering the worst in human nature and violence, and finally having to accept what is possible and what is not in a place unlike anything he had encountered elsewhere. The theme of people discovering what they can accomplish and what is not available to them runs clearly through *Ghosts of Wyoming*, and touches all the times, individuals, and places Hagy depicts with her spare but polished prose. As noted earlier, as enjoyable as they are on first reading, these stories are worth reading more than once.

—Cy Dillon, Hampden-Sydney College