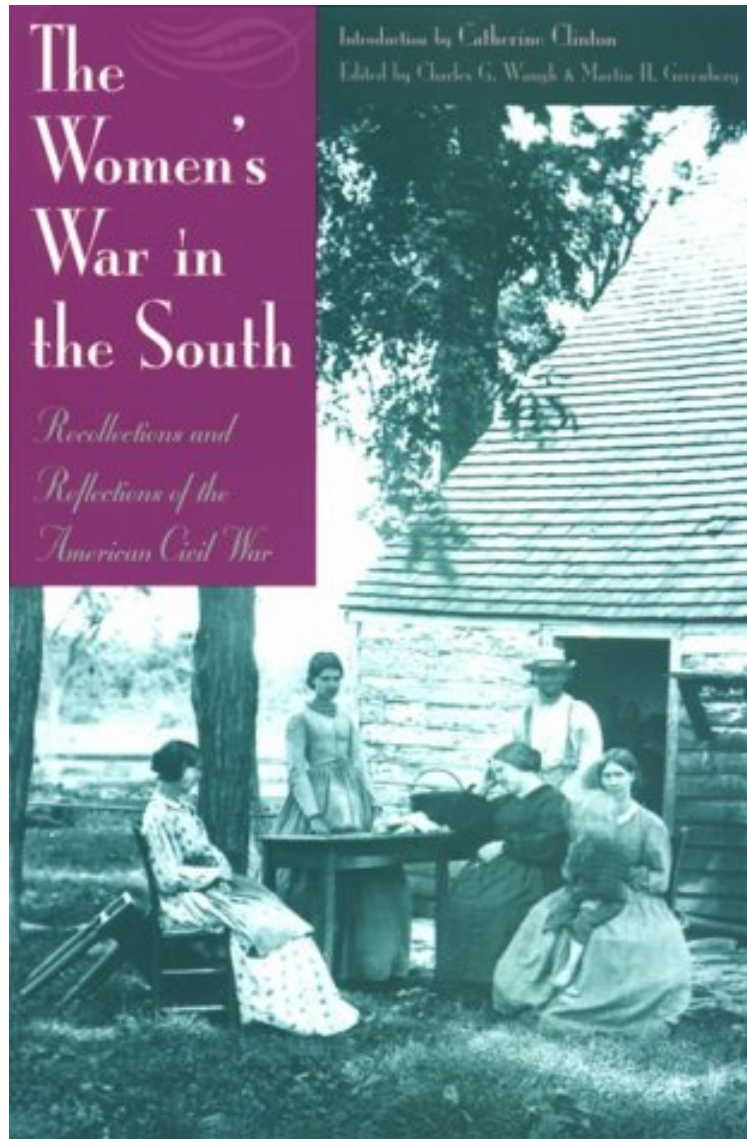


The Women's War In the South: Recollections and Reflections of the American Civil War

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From Cumberland House Publishing : The Women's War In the South: Recollections and Reflections of the American Civil War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Women's War In the South: Recollections and Reflections of the American Civil War:

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was eye opening in that their style of living is much different from the way we live in this century and how our wars are fought. There was war so close to them that they could hear the guns firing then they were surrounded by the soldiers sleeping on their property! How scary was that! And to think that they were The same Americans that they were!

The Women's War in the South: Recollections and Reflections of the American Civil War, edited by Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg, recounts the manner in which Southern women experienced the war and the changes it brought about in their lives. Filled with excerpts from the letters, books, diaries, and postwar writings the women left behind, it reveals the other side of the war -- the women's war -- through first-person accounts of women running farms, buying and selling goods, working outside the home, serving as spies, and even participating in combat in disguise.

The editors endeavor to provide a close look at how a variety of women from the South were affected by the war and how they chose to cope with it. The strengths of this anthology make it an entirely valuable and worthy addition to the literature of the American Civil War. The firsthand accounts bring a bygone era to life in a way that is not possible with secondary sources. The individual narrations are always engaging and frequently gripping. The subject matter is well documented in the appendix, and commentary is succinct. The editors have allowed the stories to speak for themselves and thus bear witness to the many intimate thoughts, emotions, fears, and everyday struggles experienced by these Southern women. -- Civil War Book These "recollections" by Southern women of their experiences during the Civil War are historically important and individually interesting. Taken from diaries, letters and family journals, the 28 stories reflect on the experiences of women in Southern states as their men went off to fight. The organization of The Women's War is chronological so the reader can read straight through and get a sense of the order of events in the lives of these people. [The 28] accounts are engrossing, and their different styles of writing create a fascinating volume of history. (Cookeville (Tenn.) Herald-Citizen) -- Cookeville (Tenn.) Herald-Citizen Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Prior to the Civil War, society dictated that women were to stay at home, prepare the meals for their household, bear children, and be seen and not heard. This ideal was called the "cult of domesticity," which maintained that women's natural abilities were limited to the home and that they certainly lacked an aptitude for political issues. The war, however, changed that by forcing women into several roles vacated by the men who had taken up arms. The manner in which women met this challenge was the first step toward equality. The letters, books, diaries, and postwar writings these women left behind reveal this other side of the war--the women's war--excerpts from which make up most of this volume, including first-person accounts taken from late-eighteenth- and early-twentieth-century sources. The greatest contribution of the women in the South, however, was probably the most difficult to see: They kept things going at home. They did what their husbands had done before the war. As the war progressed, women ran the family farms and those with slaves worked with their overseers to keep the crops growing. When their livestock was confiscated, women hitched themselves to the plows. They bought and sold goods. Hands that had known only cooking and needlework became blistered and calloused. Many women in the cities came to be employed by the government and the factories trying to keep the armies supplied in the field. As the war intensified and casualties mounted, women found themselves entering the nursing profession. In 1862 Confederate nurse Kate Cumming noted: "The foul air from this mass of human beings at first made me giddy and sick. We have to walk in blood and water, but we think nothing of it." Another nurse described finding maggots in the wounds of the soldiers under her care. In one instance she claimed to have pulled a pint of them from a single wound. Some of the more adventuresome served as spies because the prejudices of the times placed them above suspicion; men did not expect women to take up this dangerous work. Among the most notable and successful Southern spies was Rose Greenhow, a Washington socialite who coaxed incredible information from the politicians and officers who enjoyed her company and conveyed it to Richmond. Details of her story appear in the pages that follow. A few hundred women surreptitiously joined the ranks of the armies and endured combat. Malinda Blalock from Grandfather Mountain, North Carolina, followed her husband, Keith, into uniform. She cut her hair and enlisted in the Twenty-sixth North Carolina as his sixteen-year-old brother, Sam. When her husband was discharged from the army for disease, Malinda revealed herself and was discharged at the same time. A more sweeping epic concerned Loreta Janeta Velazquez, whose "adventures" span the whole war according to the memoirs excerpted in this book and whose truthfulness has been doubted often. Southern women had strong feelings about this war and often confronted invading Yankees face-to-face without weapons. Their frustrations were furiously recorded in their diaries, such as Sarah Morgan wrote in 1864: "If I was a man. Oh, if I was only a man! For two years, that has been my only cry. Blood, fire, desolation--rather than submit we should light our own funeral pyre as a memorial to our sorrow and suffering." The war was something that Southern women supported patriotically, but the war meant shortages and sacrifice. The women of the Confederacy quickly focused on survival, notwithstanding the legend of their willingness to do anything for the cause. When William Tecumseh Sherman's soldiers marched across Georgia, the desperate situation took a turn for the worse as a quarter of a million Southern women became refugees and fled from the invading Yankee army. As Sherman's

army foraged liberally across the countryside from Atlanta to Savannah, it laid waste to the land itself, burning barns, killing livestock, and destroying crops. The only opposition was the Southern women intent on maintaining their property as their husbands had left it. For these women, the war was on their doorstep. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of men who died in the war, untold numbers of women lost their lives to disease, starvation, and battle. For the survivors, the grieving would not end quickly, but amid their sorrow emerged a legacy of independence and freedom. Women emerged from the wreckage and carnage of the war into a new society, where a woman's place was not always confined to the home. Women were engulfed by the war, and they were eyewitnesses to the events of 1861-65, recording those memories in letters and diaries. During the decades after the war and into the next century, many recounted these recollections in popular magazines like Harper's and Century. Many of the articles reproduced in this book come from these sources, recalling their experiences for a new audience.