

InTall Cotton & In Taller Cotton Review from The Free-Lance Star, Fredericksburg, VA September 23, 2006

IN TALL COTTON: THE 200 MOST IMPORTANT CONFEDERATE BOOKS FOR THE READER, RESEARCHER AND COLLECTOR, by Richard B. Harwell. Broadfoot Publishing Co., 2006. 82 pages. \$50.

IN TALLER COTTON: 200 MORE IMPORTANT CONFEDERATE BOOKS, FOR THE READER, RESEARCHER, AND COLLECTOR, by Gary W. Gallagher, Nathaniel C. Hughes Jr., and Robert K. Krick. Broadfoot Publishing Co., 2006. 90 pages. \$50.

THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERACY continues to interest and entertain readers 141 years after the American Civil War ended. Each year, scores of new titles devoted to the study of that failed political experiment appear in print to the joy of historians and enthusiasts. Many of these books further our understanding of those pivotal years in our nation's history, while others merely seek to capitalize on the public's craving for new material on Southern history. For many readers, it can be difficult to discern the worthy publications from those less valuable to their pursuit of increased knowledge on the subject.

From time to time, leading historians are asked to list their favorite books on the subject to help guide prospective readers toward the better works that have reached publication. **Many of these bibliographies exist, but none, perhaps, more influential than the late Richard B. Harwell's "In Tall Cotton: The 200 Most Important Confederate Books for the Reader, Researcher and Collector."**

A respected Georgia librarian and historian, Harwell wrote and edited numerous books on the Civil War and the Confederacy. "In Tall Cotton" appeared in print in 1978 and is an annotated list of what he felt were classics in Confederate history. His inventory contains books of poetry, diaries, narratives and works of fiction, each accompanied by a brief explanation as to their importance.

Douglas S. Freeman's Pulitzer Prize-winning biography "R.E. Lee: A Biography" (1934-1935) and multivolume "Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command" (1942-1945), Mary B. Chestnut's "A Diary from Dixie" (1905), John O. Casler's "Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade" (1893) and James Longstreet's "From Manassas to Appomattox" (1896) are just some of the histories that appear on Harwell's list.

So influential is Harwell's bibliography that copies are much sought-after, though only 28 years old, and command as much as \$700 on the used-book market.

Historians continue to refer to "In Tall Cotton" for advice on what to read, while publishers frequently consult this venerated list when determining what books might be worthy of reprinting. One such publisher is Thomas Broadfoot of Wilmington, N.C.

For years, the Broadfoot Publishing Co. has kept many of the titles on Harwell's list available to the public, creating faithful reprints complete with facsimiles of the original dust jackets. This year, Broadfoot has gone a step further by **bringing "In Tall Cotton" back into print. This new project includes the issuance of a new list, designed to build upon Harwell's.**

"In Taller Cotton: 200 More Important Confederate Books, for the Reader, Researcher, and Collector" is a valuable addition to its predecessor. Since 1978, many worthy books have been written on the Confederacy, and Harwell's decision to limit his list meant quite a few wonderful titles were left out.

Broadfoot approached three leading historians and bibliophiles and asked them to contribute their favorites to this new inventory. Gary W. Gallagher of the University of Virginia, Nathaniel C. Hughes Jr. of Tennessee and Fredericksburg historian and author Robert K. Krick are all experts in the field of Confederate history and excellent choices for the project. The three historians identified those books that they felt were the most unique, influential and important on the subject. The result is a wonderfully comprehensive guide that complements Harwell's early effort.

Working under the agreement that none of the books that appear in "In Tall Cotton" could be listed, the three contributors have created a nice compilation of Confederate literature. The result obviously mirrors their own personal interests, with Hughes' expertise of the war in Georgia, Tennessee and areas far away from Virginia, Gallagher's understanding of the wide spectrum of Confederate historiography, and Krick's knowledge of obscure pamphlets and rare, yet useful publications.

Understandably, included among the rich tomes on this list are some of the authors' own contributions, such as Hughes' biography of Confederate Gen. William Hardee and his narrative of the Battle of Belmont, Mo.; Gallagher's masterfully edited version of Gen. E. Porter Alexander's memoirs; and Krick's studies of the battles of Cross Keys and Port Republic, as well as his useful biographical register of field officers who served in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

Between the two volumes, authors with ties to Fredericksburg are well-represented. Harwell found Betty Herndon Maury's rare, yet insightful memoir "The Confederate Diary of Betty Herndon Maury" (1936) worthy of inclusion on his short list.

Gallagher nominated Krick's two books mentioned above, while also including "Staff Officers in Gray: A Biographical Register of Staff Officers in the Army of Northern Virginia" (2003), a tremendous reference book compiled by Krick's son, Robert E.L. Krick, who grew up on the area battlefields and is now a historian in Richmond.

Peter S. Carmichael, who as a young historian spent his summers working on Fredericksburg's battlefields and is now a professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, is among Gallagher's picks with his latest study, "The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion" (2005).

Donald C. Pfanz, a historian with the National Park Service in Fredericksburg, appears alongside the entry for his mammoth biography of Confederate corps commander Richard S. Ewell.

Taken together, these two volumes represent the best that Confederate literature currently has to offer: battle narratives, personal memoirs and diaries, rare county histories that contain useful information, seminal studies on the home front and social and political aspects of the war in the South.

Harwell's list, now back in print and at an affordable price, and the update contributed by Hughes, Gallagher and Krick, will find a ready audience among readers and historians who desire some assistance as they wade through the mountain of material available to them.

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