

Asians and Pacific Islanders and the Civil War

Carol A. Shively, ed.

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There have been an incredible amount of studies of immigrants and immigration patterns during the Antebellum period and Civil War period but most of them focus only on the people who had come westward such as the Irish and the Germans. Very little is ever studied about the immigration from the east. Now, thanks to the National Park Service, a book has recently come out concerning the Asians and Pacific Islanders who fought during the Civil War. Not only does this book deal with their actions during the war, but gives glimpses into the lives of the people before and after the conflict and other aspects about their immigration which is not usually covered. What is produced here is a book that not only informs but educates the masses about a lesser known aspect of the people who fought this horrible war.

Carol A. Shively is the editor of this work about the many Asians and Pacific Islanders who fought in the Civil War. Among the contributors of this work are Dr. Gary Y. Okihiro, Ruthanne Lum McCunn, Ted Alexander, Dr. Justin W. Vance, Anita Manning and Terry Foenander. Among the contributors were many other experts on the subject of Asian Americans in the Civil War including Jack Kuo Wei Tchen, Steve Phan, Carol A. Shively and Irving Moy.

The overall format of this book is quite easy to pick up and dive right into. Many other works on immigration during the Civil War become bogged down in details to the point where the actual combat narrative of these people does not come into the text more than halfway through the book. But here, the work is sectionalized with easy to read just tidbits of people you may have heard nothing about before. Because of this, the reading is fast and keeps you interested. The many contributors have put in a labor of love to not only tell you about these people, but inform you about the culture which was prevalent during the time of the Civil War when it came to the Asian Americans who arrived in the country. Some of the stories of these men might leave you shocked as you learn the way in which the United States Government treated Asians and Pacific Islanders during the reconstruction period. But overall, it is hard not to be inspired by the acts of these men during the heat of combat.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the subject of immigration during the American Civil War. Very rarely do we hear about eastern immigration during the nineteenth century, but now with this book from the National Parks, that void has been filled. The overall format of the book makes it an easy but informative read and the presentation of the book is of the highest quality. With high resolution pictures and a glossy finish, this book definitely shows the great care in which it was produced. When asked about a good source for any book on immigration, this will be on the top of my list for a suggestion. A fine work that all who participated should be proud of.

Matthew Bartlett