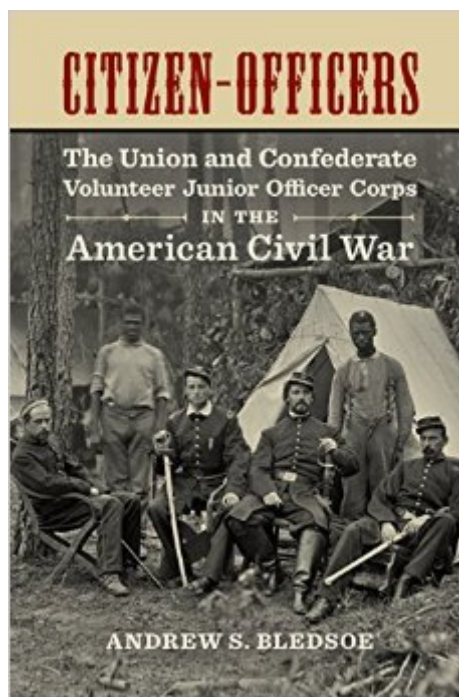


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Citizen-officers: The Union And Confederate Volunteer Junior Officer Corps In The American Civil War (Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions Of The American Civil War)



Synopsis

From the time of the American Revolution, most junior officers in the American military attained their positions through election by the volunteer soldiers in their company, a tradition that reflected commitment to democracy even in times of war. By the outset of the Civil War, citizen-officers had fallen under sharp criticism from career military leaders who decried their lack of discipline and efficiency in battle. Andrew S. Bledsoe's *Citizen-Officers* explores the role of the volunteer officer corps during the Civil War and the unique leadership challenges they faced when military necessity clashed with the antebellum democratic values of volunteer soldiers. Bledsoe's innovative evaluation of the lives and experiences of nearly 2,600 Union and Confederate company-grade junior officers from every theater of operations across four years of war reveals the intense pressures placed on these young leaders. Despite their inexperience and sometimes haphazard training in formal military maneuvers and leadership, citizen-officers frequently faced their first battles already in command of a company. These intense and costly encounters forced the independent, civic-minded volunteer soldiers to recognize the need for military hierarchy and to accept their place within it. Thus concepts of American citizenship, republican traditions in American life, and the brutality of combat shaped, and were in turn shaped by, the attitudes and actions of citizen-officers. Through an analysis of wartime writings, post-war reminiscences, company and regimental papers, census records, and demographic data, *Citizen-Officers* illuminates the centrality of the volunteer officer to the Civil War and to evolving narratives of American identity and military service.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the most outstanding new works of Civil War history I have encountered in a long time. It is quite astonishing to me that there has not been an in-depth study of Civil War captains and lieutenants until now. Fortunately, this book fills that space and then some. One of the strengths of Citizen-Officers is that the author is able to gather so many different ideas and concepts, weave them together into a coherent story, and present plenty of primary source evidence along with what I feel are extremely convincing arguments to give us a clear picture of what challenges and struggles that young officers must have faced during the Civil War. In particular, I found the story of the Ohio regiment at Shiloh, falling apart under fire and barely surviving because of the company commanders who held the unit together, to be very compelling. Also, I thought the author's description of the process by which inexperienced officers hardened and began to adopt more "regular army" methods of leadership over time was fascinating, and it makes a lot of sense. To summarize, the author begins with a chapter on the ideological origins of volunteer officers and places them in the American military tradition. It is easier to understand why so many officer had such a difficult time leading when one realizes the Revolutionary War and Jacksonian America traditions that so many Civil War soldiers came from. The second chapter explains how and why Civil War armies retained officer elections for so long, and also how appointments, promotion, and patronage in the armies worked, and how corrupt the whole process could be.

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