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Across the Divide: Union Soldiers View the Northern Home Front

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respects the book provides a model for linking the many local histories associated with the Underground Railroad to the national story. Notably, LaRoche recognizes the natural environment as an agent of history, and she deftly weaves the landscape into each story. In other respects, the book demonstrates the level of scholarship that is now possible thanks to research conducted in recent decades by federal archaeologists and by African American historical organizations, and the work that has been encouraged and guided by the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program of the National Park Service. It is hard to imagine this book having been written 20, or even 10, years ago, but it is a good example of what may be to come.

Across the Divide: Union Soldiers View the Northern Home Front, by Steven J. Ramold. New York: NYU Press, 2013. ix, 223 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$49.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Donald C. Elder III is a professor of history at Eastern New Mexico University. He is the editor of *Love amid the Turmoil: The Civil War Letters of William and Mary Vermilion* (2003) and *A Damned Iowa Greyhound: The Civil War Letters of William Henry Harrison Clayton* (1998).

In *A Stillness at Appomattox*, Bruce Catton related an incident from the Civil War involving Colonel Stephen Thomas of the Eighth Vermont Infantry. A staunch Democrat at the start of that conflict, by 1864 Thomas had embraced many of the wartime measures adopted by President Abraham Lincoln, a Republican. When Thomas returned home on leave, he was berated by his prewar associates for having forsaken his political principles. "Thomas, you've changed — we haven't," they stated. "Fools never do," was the colonel's reply.

That exchange illustrates the central thesis of Steven Ramold's *Across the Divide*. Ramold asserts that many of the men who served in the Union Army underwent a change in attitude similar to that experienced by Stephen Thomas. Believing that the suppression of the rebellion was a just cause, Union soldiers were willing to accept more expansive governmental policies designed to help accomplish that goal. Civilians, however, were not always as agreeable to those changes. This, Ramold suggests, left Union soldiers increasingly disconnected (both physically and psychologically) from those they had left behind.

Ramold identifies six issues that illustrate the chasm between Northern soldiers and civilians: (1) Union soldiers increasingly sensed that they faced opposition from people back home as well as in the Confederacy; (2) "a new gender reality" generated by the conflict alienated many Northern soldiers; (3) the issue of abolition proved problematic

for soldier-civilian relations; (4) the decision by the Lincoln administration to use conscription found a much different reaction among the troops than it did at home; (5) Union soldiers and Northern civilians perceived the danger posed by the antiwar movement in the North very differently; and (6) soldiers assessed the 1864 presidential campaign very differently than their civilian counterparts did. All of these issues culminated in an "us versus them" mentality that permeated Northern ranks throughout the war.

To support his thesis, Ramold consulted a wide range of primary and secondary sources. He also made a concerted effort to examine a wide spectrum of Northern opinion rather than simply focusing on individuals from the more populous states east of the Appalachians. As a result, Iowans will be able to read of the views expressed by soldiers from the Hawkeye state like Charles Musser and the Remley brothers. They will also find accounts of Iowans who opposed the war, notably Henry Clay Dean. This depth and breadth of coverage strengthens Ramold's conclusion that Union soldiers, by and large, developed an identity separate and distinct from the one they held before they enlisted.

Many readers will finish *Across the Divide* convinced that Ramold has made a compelling case for his argument. It should be noted, however, that other historians have examined the same subject and reached a very different conclusion. In *The Union War*, for example, Gary Gallagher asserts that Northern soldiers retained a belief from the beginning of the war to the end that they were fighting to preserve the republic. In his telling, Union soldiers held true to the same tenet that they had embraced before the war, undergoing none of the changes that Ramold finds. Melinda Lawson's *Patriot Fires* also represents a point of view at odds with Ramold's. Lawson argues that many Northern citizens' support for Lincoln's wartime measures was at least equal to, and perhaps greater than, that found by Ramold among Union soldiers. Readers interested in *Across the Divide* might therefore be best served by also perusing the works of Gallagher and Lawton.

Like virtually any book, *Across the Divide* suffers from a few flaws. Some of these, such as an unsatisfactorily brief index, may well have been beyond Ramold's control. Other drawbacks come from factual errors that made their way into print. Benjamin Butler, for example, served in the U.S. House of Representatives rather than in the Senate, and John Brown was executed in 1859 instead of 1860. The book's positive attributes, though, far outweigh its few faults. Skillfully written and thoroughly researched, *Across the Divide* represents a valuable contribution to the growing body of work focused on the social and cultural aspects of the Civil War as experienced by the Northern populace.