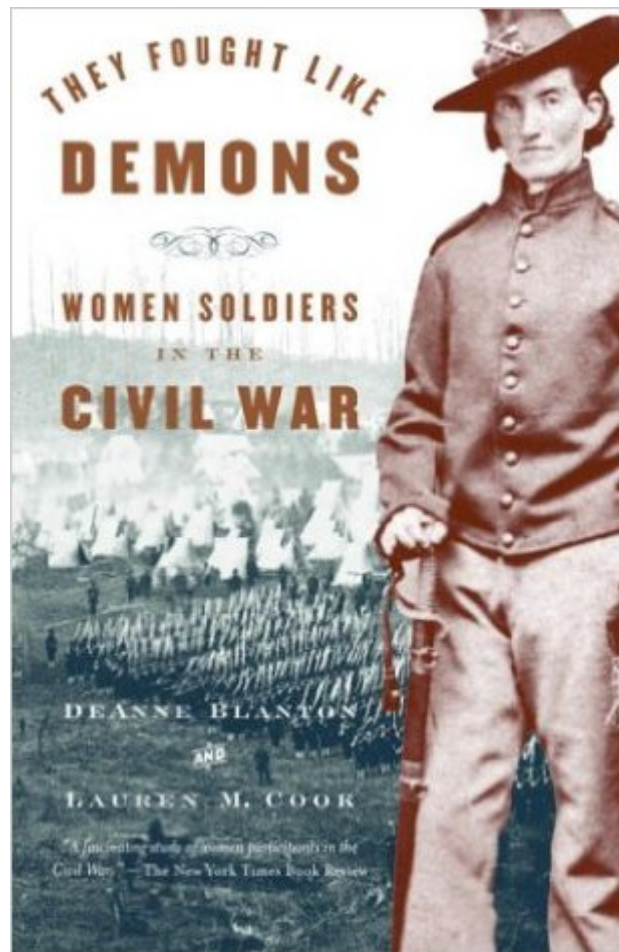


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They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers In The Civil War



Synopsis

â œAlbert Cashierâ • served three years in the Union Army and passed successfully as a man until 1911 when the aging veteran was revealed to be a woman named Jennie Hodgers. Frances Clayton kept fighting even after her husband was gunned down in front of her at the Battle of Murfreesboro. And more than one soldier astonished â œhisâ • comrades-in-arms by giving birth in camp. This lively and authoritative book opens a hitherto neglected chapter of Civil War history, telling the stories of hundreds of women who adopted male disguise and fought as soldiers. It explores their reasons for enlisting; their experiences in combat, and the way they were seen by their fellow soldiers and the American public. Impeccably researched and narrated with verve and wit, *They Fought Like Demons* is a major addition to our understanding of the Civil War era.

Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Reprint edition (September 9, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400033152

ISBN-13: 978-1400033157

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (48 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #97,435 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 inÂ Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Women #363 inÂ Books > History > World > Women in History #738 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Gender Studies

Customer Reviews

This account of female combatants in the War Between the States is quite fascinating. The notion of women fighting for the Rebs and Yanks was something I had never even thought about, so reading this book served as a significant learning experience for me. Clearly, a great deal of research went into this monograph, and the authors do an excellent job of describing the significant limitations imposed upon the researcher into this topic. Military records are incomplete, especially in the case of the Confederate Army, and some women served without ever being discovered at all. In the case of many, there is no record of their real names. The best substantive evidence comes from those whose actual gender was ascertained while being treated for serious wounds or who really let the cat out of the bag by giving birth. It is quite amazing to me to learn that women in the late stage of

pregnancy not only kept their gender a secret but actually fought fiercely in battle at the same time. Women soldiers were also captured and imprisoned along with men, many of them refusing to divulge their secret despite the fact it might well win them release from the terrible conditions of prison camps. Clearly, one must ask why women chose to fight. The authors devote a lot of attention to this important question. Many women took up arms in order to remain close to a loved one, be it a husband, fianc  , father, or brother; many fought for truly patriotic reasons, fuelled by the same motivations as men to defend their land and way of life. Some fought for economic reasons, knowing they could earn much more money as a soldier than they ever could as females at home; some loved the independence and removal of Victorian restrictions that a soldier's life offered them.

Neither the Union nor the Confederate Army in the Civil War authorized women to enlist or welcomed women combatants. Indeed, they were actively discouraged from the traditionally male preserve of combat. Yet a small number of women had the drive to assume male disguise and to enlist and fight. This book helps tell their story. The authors of "They Fought Like Demons" DeAnne Blanton, a military archivist, and Lauren Cook, of Fayetteville State University spent more than a decade in researching primary sources to recreate the role of women as Civil War combatants. Their book tells us something about roughly 250 women soldiers, who fought either for the Union or the Confederacy. The book spends a great deal of space on the motivations that caused women to disguise their sex and enlist. It finds that patriotism and devotion to their respective cause was the chief motive, as it was with men; but also finds that in many cases women enlisted to be with a male loved one, whether husband, lover, father, or brother. This latter motivation seemed important in the accounts and it seems to me different from the motivation of most male combatants. The book gives good detail on women soldiers and, in the process, of Civil War military life. It describes how many women managed to avoid detection (of course, many were unsuccessful in so doing, particularly if they were wounded), the strength with which they fought, how they were regarded by their peers, both when they were assumed to be men and following the discovery that they were women, how women were treated as prisoners of war, in hospitals, and the extent of female casualties in the war.

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