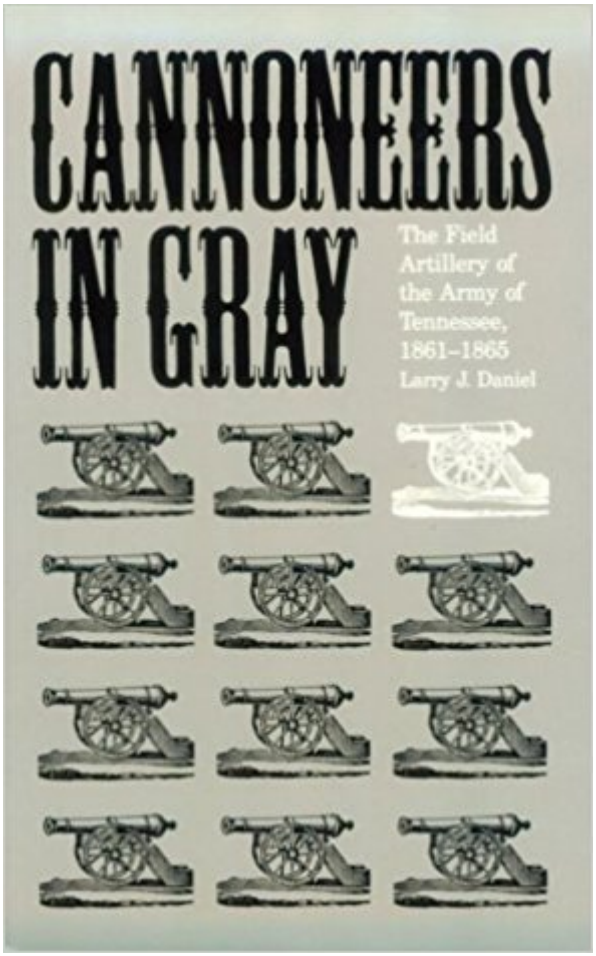
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Cannoneers In Gray: The Field Artillery Of The Army Of Tennessee, 1861-1865 (Alabama Fire Ant)



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Synopsis

The story of the 'Western long arm' -- the artillery of the major force of the Confederacy in the western theater. -- Southern Historian

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this review in brief, I'll be taking a look at Larry J. Daniel's Cannoneers In Gray: The Field Artillery of the Army of Tennessee, 1861-1865. Daniel's book seeks to take a look at this neglected arm of a neglected army. In other words, the redlegs of the Army of Tennessee appear to be red-headed stepchildren of a red-headed stepchild. I had high hopes for this particular book, as I am a fan of the western theater, but unfortunately it fell a little short of my expectations. Daniel simply does not cover the subject in enough detail, and the lack of any maps is a bit of a disappointment. Some of the editing lapses and typos almost drove me to distraction. I would say the book has a place on everyone's bookshelf, but I believe this could have been done better.The Army of Tennessee's artillerymen were faced with shortages of pretty much everything during the war. Almost all of the pre-war artillery militia units were sent to the Army of Northern Virginia when they reached battery strength. The Army of Tennessee had to make do with brand new units whose men had little or no artillery experience. If the Army of the Tennessee was bereft of experienced men, the types and numbers of guns was even worse. Early in the war, the western men had to make do with obsolete and nearly useless smoothbore 6-pounders, and rifled artillery was almost unheard of. Lastly, the

western theater was often hilly and full of forest, poor terrain for the proper use of artillery. Daniel says these were factors which the men and leaders of the Army of Tennessee could not control. However, he also points out that the Confederate government and military also mostly failed when dealing with factors they could control. Artillery doctrine was rapidly changing in the Civil War, and men such as Bragg (ironically an old Army artillerist) did not or would not recognize this fact. For far longer than other comparable armies on both sides, the Army of Tennessee continued to use the obsolete method of grouping one battery with one infantry brigade. This made it difficult for higher level commanders to quickly gather a large number of guns in the few effective spots for artillery on western battlefields. To add insult to injury, the western battery commanders rarely saw promotions throughout the war. Time and time again, men from the east were brought in over their heads to command them. This did not do much for the already poor morale of the army. Daniel believes that the only real breakthroughs came during Joe Johnston's tenure as army commander. He attempted to group the batteries in battalions assigned to each Corps, and kept an Army reserve as well. In addition, he tried to increase morale with constant drilling. Daniel says Bragg didn't understand the role of artillery and Hood simply didn't care.I really wanted to give this book high marks, but it simply falls short of that, in my opinion. The Army of the Tennessee's artillery deserved a more in-depth study than this. The Army of Northern Virginia received a two-volume history from Jennings Cropper Wise which totaled over 1,000 pages. Daniel, on the other hand, gives us a total of 234. To make matters worse, there are no maps which could have shown the positions of various batteries in the major battles of the army. To his credit, Daniel does have some tables showing types and numbers of guns for each artillery battalion in the army, but he could have gone further and done this for each battery where known. Likewise, he gives an artillery OOB for each major battle in an appendix at the back of the book, but he doesn't include numbers of men, or numbers and types of guns. The entire book is full of partial information like this. The chapters on major battles seem to focus on a few individual batteries and then Daniel calls it a day. Dennis Kelly (of Blue & Gray magazine) is quoted as saying "For Civil War enthusiasts who prefer the Western campaigns, for Southern partisans, academics, wargamers, or today's military personnel, this book should be must reading." This is definitely not a book that is going to help wargamers much. Those are my thoughts at least as a person who has played every Civil War computer game over the last fifteen years, and who has also dabbled in board games and miniatures.In addition to the above problems, the book (I am reviewing the gray-covered paperback, there is a newer revised paperback out as of May, 2005) is plagued by annoying, repeated typos. Stephen Hurlbut is referred to every time as "Hulbert". This continues to happen throughout the book. Other examples include Arnold Elzey being referred to as "Elzy",

Kenner Garrard as "Garrand", and in the most annoying typo of all, the town of Resaca, Georgia is referred to as "Reseca" at least 10 times (and probably more, I quit counting after awhile).To be fair, the book does an excellent job pointing out the struggles of the western long arm throughout the war. The fact that not a single battery remained to surrender with Johnston in North Carolina is a microcosm of their story as a whole. I consider the book to be a decent addition to my collection, but I really think Daniel (or someone else) could have done a much more thorough job with this subject.

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