

Penitentiaries, Punishment, and Military Prisons: Familiar Responses to an Extraordinary Crisis during the American Civil War, and Crossing the Deadlines: Civil War Prisons Reconsidered

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Penitentiaries, Punishment, and Military Prisons: Familiar Responses to an Extraordinary Crisis during the American Civil War, by Angela Zombek. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2018. xv, 287 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45 hardcover.

Crossing the Deadlines: Civil War Prisons Reconsidered, edited by Michael P. Gray. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2018. xxxix, 232 pp. Illustrations, graphs, notes, index. \$45 hardcover.

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Civil War prison historiography has enjoyed a kind of renaissance over the past two decades, using new sources, new research methodologies, and new theoretical frameworks. Both of these works from Kent State University Press are among the efforts in these new directions.

Angela Zombek's monograph *Penitentiaries, Punishment, and Military Prisons* is the more ambitious of the two works under review. Zombek approaches her subjects in a complicated manner. The structure proceeds from background and general overview through specific investigations to a Reconstruction postscript. The introduction summarizes the entire work. The first chapter provides a deep background analysis of theories of penology before and during the American Civil War, which reaches from the European Enlightenment to the Lieber Code of the early 1860s. The second chapter centers on the overall continuities of practices of penology throughout the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. The last full chapter (not the conclusion) looks at postwar legacies in terms of the triumph of continuity. The conclusion ably restates her findings.

Zombek's book is a tough read, certainly not intended for the general public. She establishes a well-designed but complex comparative framework that she maintains throughout every subsection of every chapter in her specific investigations. These particular investigations range from the viewpoints and goals of prison administrators, to the inmates' world (and variations thereon), to various interactions between inmates and non-inmates, and to the particular issues associated with female inmates. Each subsection of every chapter maintains a loose chronological structure, emphasizing the inherent continuities of experiences, attitudes, and challenges of those persons associated with penology before and during the war. The author scrupulously constructs each chapter almost as if it should be able to stand alone. Thus, tiresome repetition occurs. Moreover, a bewildering number of individual actors emerge in several chapters, witnesses she uses in different ways depending on the points toward which she strives—and that

often proves disorienting. I found that reading the work one chapter at a time to be the best mode, allowing for thought and reflection between reading bouts; otherwise I tended to become confused and weary.

These remarks, I know, sound overly critical. Yet as I have examined the task Zombek set for herself, I can find neither better ways nor better methods than the ones she has employed. Her theoretical sophistication and structural integrity are vital models for those of us working in Civil War historiography. The vast sweep of her subject matter, when examined clearly, is breathtaking. She goes where her sources take her, within the bounds of her goals and frameworks. Her research is impeccable. And on second and third examinations, I noticed endearing elements of humor and pathos, of ethical dilemmas and structural failures, of humans at their best and at their worst. The struggle to make available means (including the humans involved) meet the noble ends of penology in this era is both excruciating and fascinating. All in all, Zombek's work possesses an importance that transcends her content and subject matter; all serious students of modern-era institutional history should persist through its density and study it carefully for her innovative approaches and robust theoretical elements.

Crossing the Deadlines is a collection of essays about Civil War prisons that also reveals new source materials, new research methodologies, and new theoretical ideas; it contains an essay by Zombek that is unlike her monograph on penology, although related tangentially. As indicated in the foreword by John T. Hubbell, this set of essays represents a significant departure from more traditional approaches to the topic, yet the work is more accessible to general readers of Civil War history than is Zombek's monograph.

Editor Michael Gray has included nine essays divided into three sections. The first two sections include only articles that maintain a framework seeking general and comparative conclusions about Civil War military prisons. The first section is eclectic ("New Encounters: Sensing Nature, Society, and Culture in and out of Prison") and appears to reflect a "catch-all" non-theme. The thread running through the second section is the complicating factor of race in Civil War military prisons. The last section contains two essays concentrating on archaeological investigations at just one prison site and one essay that looks at the roles of Civil War prisons in postwar remembrances that inhibited sectional reconciliation.

Almost always, readers are left wanting more information; these essays tend to introduce topics more than explore them satisfactorily. One might wish that the editor of the volume and the editors at Kent

State University Press would have performed their editorial duties at a higher level of sophistication. Gray's intriguing and excellent essay on Civil War prisons as "dark" tourist destinations is beyond reproach, as are a few other articles (among them Zombek's contribution on the impact of Catholic clergy and laity in Civil War prisons). But too many of the other essays in this collection are marred by simple but jarring grammatical errors and misspellings. Professional standards call for a better proofreading effort. More annoying are the needless repetitions across several of the included essays of the same events, dates, and persons, inevitably explained as if the reader is encountering them for the first time. Erudite editing (with authors' permissions, of course) would have added much to the satisfaction of readers by eliminating these redundancies.

Moreover, the thematic inconsistencies are irritating. The original idea (I perceive) to collect several essays that eschew the single-site, narrow-beam approach to Civil War prison history in favor of broader views and comparative methods is admirable. Yet something went awry along the way. Although the archaeological essays are interesting in their own right, they fit ill with the intentions and methods of the other contributions. The whole, somehow, feels weaker than the parts, even considering the sloppy errors of a couple of the inclusions. Yet some of the essays are really rewarding reading and worth coping with the other less meritorious elements in the collection. All of the articles appear to be well researched. The collection, however uneven the individual essays, holds a few real gems.

Although both Zombek's monograph and Gray's edited collection make reference to particular places in the Midwest, neither Iowa nor the Midwest as distinct states or regions appear. Those of us interested in regional variations of action, attitude, and response in the Civil War will find little of value on that score. Zombek's already complex model might have profited in some ways from an additional comparative element—regionalism in both warring sections—but that inclusion would have created difficulties and complexities that are boggling to consider. Gray's collection, if I understand the original intent aright, deliberately eschews such variations in favor of the more general overall themes of Civil War prisons. Some essays include passing reference to Iowa military units, but little more. Thus these works lack noticeable midwestern flavor or Iowa elements; even the notorious Rock Island Civil War military prison does not appear anywhere of importance in these books.