



The Civil War: Strange & Fascinating Facts

Burke Davis

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Wonderfully entertaining look at some intriguing oddities, unusual incidents, and colorful personalities connected with the Civil War. Includes 25 names the war was known by, personal quirks of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, and more,

The Civil War: Strange & Fascinating Facts Details

Date : Published December 12th 1988 by Wings (first published 1960)

ISBN : 9780517371510

Author : Burke Davis

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : History, Military History, Civil War, Nonfiction, American History, American Civil War, War

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From Reader Review The Civil War: Strange & Fascinating Facts for online ebook

John Cress says

The book is exactly what it says, short stories of the civil war. For me, this wasn't a book to read in one sitting but rather off and on when one has 10-15 minutes to kill. The stories were interested and easy to follow. I really enjoyed the one of the submarine and wondered how the caption kept finding new crews to sink.

Sadie says

It's a great book for anyone interested in the Civil War. There are plenty of stories that you might have heard, and even more of those that you might not have (for example, 'The Machine Gun', 'Imported Warriors', or 'Lincoln's Subs').

Nathan Albright says

This book mostly lives up to its name. The anecdotes and comments in this book are certainly strange and fascinating, although they are not necessarily facts. The author passes along some old canards about the rebels looking for shoes in Gettysburg, for example [1], and the fact that the author gives false facts does not exactly inspire a great deal of confidence in his veracity, as does the fact that he declines to cite his sources.

This is an entertaining book on the Civil War, and it is certainly odd, and contains a great deal of interest. However, it should be noted clearly that this book is not reliable and therefore must be considered as a lesser work. The fact that the author operates from a clear pro-Southern bias, which he is at least honest enough to admit, suggests that there may be some general reliability concerns based on the slant that the writer has. It is especially notable, for example, that the author praises both the gallantry of rebel soldiers as well as their inventive use of landmines, which would appear to be in tension with each other, and example of an a priori bias on the part of the author.

The oddities and curiosities of this book, which is between 200 and 250 pages and was published in 1960, are divided into various chapters according to the whim of the author. The chapters deal with firsts, with divided families, with areas of special interest to the writer--Abraham Lincoln's beard, the grammar of Nathan Bedford Forrest, the machine gun, riots, the Rains brothers, youth, the Albemarle, whether or not Stonewall Jackson was a hypochondriac, the widow Fritchie, submarines, sex and the Civil War, atrocities, the human side of Robert E. Lee, and so on. As a book this volume is wildly inconsistent in tone, as it shifts from a high-minded discussion about documentary evidence concerning the health of generals to a salacious discussion about the ubiquity of prostitutes and women of low virtue in the armies to a praise of military technology and its development. One does not really know where the author is going to go from one chapter to another, and whether the discussion will include often-forgotten sources of a high degree of historical value or whether they will include unsubstantiated rumors which are in fact inaccurate. There simply is no way to tell.

It should go without saying that this book is not a scholarly reference about the Civil War or the sort of book

that a professor or even high school teacher would consider worthwhile as a reference material. If one is reading this book for entertainment and is not offended by the author's pro-rebel boosterism, then this book can be read with at least some enjoyment, but one should temper one's expectations and not demand too much from it. The lack of citations means that the quality of the author's sources is impossible to tell even when, as is sometimes the case, the author himself comments that he did a great deal of original research to find obscure and neglected areas of Civil War technology to recount. Since the book isn't too long and the bias is not nearly as offensive as is sometimes the case, I still found this book to be at least moderately amusing and slightly enjoyable, as I tend to be somewhat hostile to pro-Southern writings. Even so, most readers will probably be a good deal less picky about such matters than I am, and probably more interested in the author's fascination with prostitutes and dueling and people hiding out trying to escape capture.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2016...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2017...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2017...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2017...>

Pam says

As someone who is interested in the Civil War but no means a Civil War buff, I found this book to be very interesting. It covers many stories and facts that I had not found anywhere else in my reading. Each chapter was a stand alone story so it was easy to pick up the book for a short read. I especially appreciated its focus on numerous technological innovations done at the time. Unfortunately the book has a very small bibliography and no footnotes.

Nicholas says

This book presents a number of chapters which focus on several pinnacle events and people of the Civil War. Burke Davis grants readers an enjoyable experience as they learn about some lesser known points concerning the Union and Confederates.

Mickey Monroe says

This is one of those books wherein I read a chapter and put it down and come back to it later. It took a few weeks to finish. Almost anything written about the Civil War is worth reading. Interesting information and some fact correcting. For example, Grant's alleged alcohol consumption was exaggerated but he did have a problem with alcohol. I enjoyed the book for the most part.

Scott Klemm says

I bought a used copy of *The Civil War: Strange & Fascinating Facts* by Burke Davis, because it sounded like it had the potential of being a very interesting read. I was not disappointed. It was entertaining and a great source of Civil War trivia. The book consists of 38 chapters including *Firsts*, *Mr. Lincoln's Beard*, *The Machine Gun*, *Imported Warriors*, *Riots on the Home Front*, *Was Stonewall Jackson a Hypochondriac?*, *Spies at Work*, and *Sex in the Civil War*. I found in the *Sex in the Civil War* chapter something that pertained to Steven Spielberg's recent award winning "Lincoln." Near the end of the movie Thaddeus Stevens is shown going home, taking off his wig, and climbing in bed with his black mistress. Well, I found a mention of this in Burke's book. He wrote, "There was talk of the Abolitionist leader, Thaddeus Stevens, and his handsome quadroon housekeeper, Lydia Smith, or 'Mrs. Stevens,' the widow of a Negro barber from Gettysburg – a case in which an investigator finds no supporting documents." Who was this investigator? Unfortunately Burke uses no footnotes. This is the book's greatest fault. One can get a rough idea of his sources through his acknowledgements and bibliography, but will not be able to track down a specific fact. Equally frustrating is that the book does not contain an index.

Kate S says

An interesting collection of anecdotes about the Civil War. I liked the section about the bystanders (including Louisa May Alcott). There were a ton of names which may not be many other places easily accessible to the public at large. This book is a few years out of date, so some of the edge may have been lost, but I felt there was a lot of research behind this story and I enjoyed the personal touches in this work.

Geoff Sebesta says

A collection of trivia, mostly outdated at that.

The most useful thing about the book is that it confirmed that I've read a lot about the Civil War and can now spot omissions and mistakes.

I guess I got some useful factoids, but the view of history in this book is not holding up to modern scrutiny very well.

Dale says

Fun to read, but be warned...

...you had better be up on your Civil War basics before attempting to read this book. It assumes that the reader is well aware of the main battles, campaigns, personalities and relative strengths and weaknesses of both the North and the South.

As the title suggests, the book is primarily a collection of facts and oddball "did you know?" type of stories that are not really intended to re-tell the story of the Civil War but are mostly aimed at people who know the

story fairly well and are looking for some new stories (in my case, these are new stories I can use to bore my wife in new and different ways with the Civil War).

There's bound to be something new in here for everyone but the hardest of the hard core Civil War aficionados. Well-written, breezy, although oftentimes disjointed and random.

This book is also published under the titles *Our Incredible Civil War* and *The Incredible Civil War* by the same author.

<http://dwdsreviews.blogspot.com/>

Ashlee says

I'm not really interested in this era, but I did learn some interesting facts that I hadn't known before I read this.

Jerry says

Originally written in 1960 in time for the Civil War Centennial, this book is a little out of date with some facts (such as the Confederate H. L. Hunley), but it is still an interesting read. That is why I didn't give it an extra star rating. Recommended.

Steve says

The other book I was reading was soooooo ill-written I picked this up to read as a quick "shot in the arm". As per the description/review cited "Wonderfully entertaining look at some intriguing oddities, unusual incidents, and colorful personalities connected with the Civil War"; that covers it very well. A great read when constant interruption may occur as each chapter deals with a topic, with near each paragraph a new or differing fact; perfect for "Stop and Go" reading.

As noted by another reader, you'd best have some knowledge of the Civil War as the author appears to write with this assumption. In general, good information is given however at times the numbers he references between the North and South are either not related and seem to be just filler. Overall, still a good read for the Civil War buff with good facts.

Terry says

was an entertaining read.

Margaret Tiddy says

This would be interesting to anyone who enjoys reading about history. It is mentioned that the Civil War begins in a gentleman's yard and then ends in the yard of his new house. Some soldiers might have brother-in-laws who fought for the other side. An Army private got \$11 a month but a free slave in Virginia got \$30 a month. A young Confederate officer was fatally shot on the same horse that his three brothers were killed on. These are but a few of the very interesting facts.
