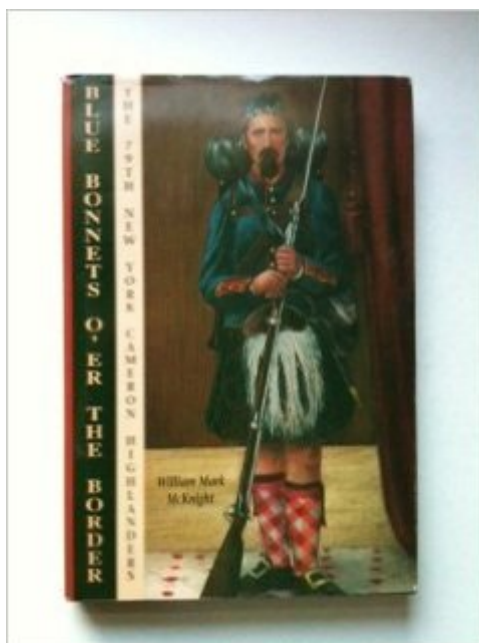


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Blue Bonnets O'Er The Border: The 79th New York Cameron Highlanders



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

McKnight's "Blue Bonnet's O'er the Border" fell well short of this reader's expectations. First, it is woefully brief: the text of the book is but 163 pages, at least 40 of which are occupied by illustrations or maps. As any student of the Civil War knows, a mere 120 to 130 pages is not nearly enough to cover the exploits of a three-year volunteer regiment. Second, the work is full of factual errors and misleading statements, too numerous to recount here. Two examples stand out in my mind. Clearly, the author, a 79th New York reenactor and self-proclaimed Scottish enthusiast, has used this book to prove the Scottish identity of the members of the 79th New York. To do so, he has taken liberties with historical fact. For instance, the regiment, contrary to McKnight's claims, was not comprised predominantly of Scots. Though at the core of the regiment were the Scottish members of the prewar 79th New York State Militia, these 300 men were eventually equalled--or even outnumbered--in the unit by Irish immigrants. The book is also advertised as the first history of this colorful regiment. It is not. 79th New York veteran William Todd published a history of the regiment in 1886. Unlike McKnight's flimsy book, Todd's work is refreshingly candid, objective, and thorough. If you really want to learn about the 79th New York, track down a copy of Todd's regimental history.

I was truly disappointed in this book. It is filled with inaccuracies, and frequently presents the author's assumptions and predispositions as fact, without sufficient documentation to back up his claims. The book is terribly biased towards providing "documentation" for those who wish to portray the 79th as a bunch of Celtic yahoos, when the original 79th was nothing of the sort. He consistently ignores the decidedly non-Scottish ethnic majority of the regiment. Again and again, he seems more determined to put a Scottish spin on the regiment, rather than contribute any worthwhile historical research on it. The only good thing that can be said of the book is that some of the photos are rather

interesting. Unfortunately, he also published many modern drawings and sketches without indicating that they are not contemporary to the Civil War, or made by members of the regiment. It is highly disappointing, as I hoped that the book would not be yet another example of the usual nonsense and drivel written about this fine regiment. As another reviewer commented, see Todd's regimental history for a real look at this highly honored regiment.

Most will agree that the 79th was in its day a very controversial unit and still is to this day. What I appreciated about this book was the fact that it challenged me to do some of my own research into this unit. It's interesting that most people have a preconceived notion about this unit. Break from the pack and don't just take the opinion of others and find out for yourself. I have found that most of the evidence that McKnight presented is readily available in most Public libraries, museums, or on the internet. Try to find reliable sources if you do research on the net. I challenge you to read this book and do some of your own independent research then make your own conclusion. I know if you do your homework like I did, you might reach some of the same conclusions as Mr. McKnight

This is a horrible book. I don't recommend it at all. The 79th New York "Highlanders" were mostly consisted of Irish immigrants and normal New Yorkers. Only 300 actual Scott's were in the unit. They never wore kilts/ trousers etc. Photos from the time period actually show this to be false about the kilt wearing. The stupidest mistake yet in the book, is how he refers to "lieutenant" Todd, when in actuality Todd only reached the rank of Sergeant. His misleading info is a horrible glance at this great unit. I'm ashamed to say I bought the book thinking it was historically accurate...only to find it was the worst book ever written. For a true glimpse at the 79th, get Sgt. Todd's book.

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