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## CIVIL WAR IN WORDS AND DEEDS

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**Date Range:** 1860-1865

**Content:** 144,069 images

**Source Library:** Lost Cause Press

### **Detailed Description:**

On December 20, 2010, the nation will begin the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War. On this date in 1860, South Carolina voted to secede from the Union; what followed was the struggle for a united America.

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Mid-nineteenth century America was a lusty, growing nation that created both the war and the armies that fought it. For the three million soldiers involved, the Civil War exceeded their

wildest expectations about life. A majority of those men were farmers who had literally never been out of sight of their homes prior to the 1861 bombardment of Fort Sumter. An even larger number left for war fully convinced that the contest between the North and South would be brief and comparatively bloodless. No one at the beginning had the faintest thought that the Civil War would last four wrenching years, or that the seven hundred thousand fatalities it produced would make it the most traumatic event in our nation's history. Indeed, more Americans perished in the Civil War than in all of our other wars combined.

Enchantment with the war has not ceased; if anything, it has grown with each passing decade. Continued interest has sparked continued examination, which in turn has uncovered more facts and insights. The result has been to make the four-year conflagration between Union and Confederacy the most documented of all of America's wars. The sesquicentennial of the Civil War presents a significant opportunity for Americans to recall and reflect upon the Civil War and its legacy in a spirit of education, reconciliation and reflection.

The Civil War was the defining experience in the development of the United States. America continues to struggle with the issues of race, civil rights, the politics of federalism, and heritage which are legacies of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

The Civil War armies were youthful, high-spirited, sentimental, and for the most part moral. They endured extreme hardships—heavy woolen clothing in the summertime, for example, or leaky tents or maggoty food—but they managed to enjoy themselves, indulged in rough sports and horseplay, fixed up their winter quarters with "all the comforts of home," sang romantic songs, enjoyed religious services and revivals, and generally acted like civilians when not in battles or on parade. Individually and collectively, the publication of these regimental histories and personal narratives constitute a source of great historical value. These first-person accounts, compiled in the postwar period and early 20th Century period, chronicle the highs and lows of army life from 1861 through 1865. The reasons why individuals volunteered, the wonderment of first leaving home and entering camp, the excitement of initially going to the front, the clash of arms, the drudgery of camp life, the boredom of garrison duty, and the anguish of imprisonment are expounded in these accounts. Soldiers' attitudes are expressed with a fullness found in very few other kinds of sources. Attitudes toward army life, toward officers and fellow soldiers, toward the enemy, and toward the political questions of the war are recorded with a richness and retrospective glance. Comparable perspectives are also available concerning officers' insights into relations among themselves, views on those they led, efforts to secure promotion, and motivation behind their planning and conduct of operations. Such characteristics make these regimental histories and personal narratives one of the most useful sources available to historians of both local and Civil War history, as well as to genealogists.

*Publisher's Note:* This collection comprises, in its entirety, the Primary Source Media microfilm collection entitled *Travels in the Confederate States*. In addition, a small number of selected titles were included from the microfilm collection entitled *Travels in the New South I, 1865-1900*.