



The Encyclopedia of Civil War Usage: An Illustrated Compendium of the Everyday Language of Soldiers and Civilians

Webb B Garrison

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There are few systematic guides to the language used by the generation that fought the American Civil War. In the 150 years since the great conflict, our language has changed, and as meanings have become obscure or lost, links with this vibrant past have dissolved and much of that which had meaning to our forefathers no longer has the same meaning to us.

What did it mean to cross the bar""? What did it mean ""to see the elephant"" or ""to go South""? Why did the armies have so-called ninety-day men and hundred-day men? What were soldiers supposed to do when their commander shouted, ""Let her go, Gallagher""? How did one ""pay tribute to Neptune""? What was a ""picket pin""? Could one make a passable meal of ""possum beer"" and ""secession bread""? How did one ""vibrate the lines, "" and why would anyone want to attempt such a maneuver?

To address this need, Webb Garrison has pored over his notes from more than thirty years of research and study to produce this dictionary and encyclopedia of words and phrases (including nicknames and slang) commonly used during the war. Where appropriate, examples and anecdotes are included to illustrate meanings. Often overlooked naval terms and esoteric formal and informal military expressions are addressed as well as short descriptions of oceangoing vessels and river craft.

More than 2,500 entries and 250 illustrations cover the terms, equipment, and organization of the three million soldiers who fought in the war.

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