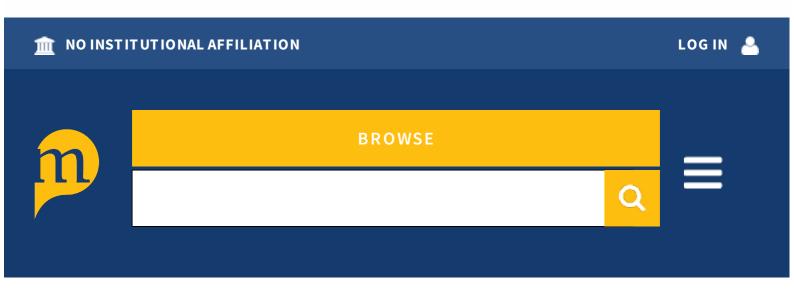
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Scout and Sharpshooter, and: The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, CSA, and: This War So Horrible: The Civil War Diary

of Hiram Smith Williams.



@ Berry Benson's Civil War Book: Memoirs of a Confederate Scout and Sharpshooter, and: The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, C.S.A., and: This War So Horrible: The Civil War Diary of Hiram Smith Williams (review)

J. Tracy Power

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

264CIVIL WAR HISTORY Slips are rare. It was Albert Sidney Johnston who died at Shiloh, not Joseph E.

Johnston (32?.8). Title to Arlington may have "passed to the U.S. government" (37?.44; for nonpayment of
taxes) in 1864, but the same government reimbursed Lee's descendants after the Supreme Court ruled its
$seizure\ illegal\ in\ 1882.\ These\ volumes\ are\ moving\ contributions\ to\ our\ knowledge\ of the\ war from\ the\ ground$
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Benson's Civil War Book: Memoirs ofa Confederate Scout and Sharpshooter. Edited by Susan Williams
Benson; Foreword by Herman Hattaway. (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1992. Pp. 203.
\$19.95.) The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, C.S.A. Edited, with an introduction, by Arthur
W. Bergeron, Jr. (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1993. Pp. 227. \$24.95.) 7? « War
So Horrible: The Civil War Diary of Hiram Smith Williams. Edited by Lewis N. Wynne and Robert A. Taylor
(Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1993. Pp. 176. \$21.95.) One of the great strengths of
Civil War history is that it has been profoundly influenced and enhanced by the wartime and postwar
accounts of so many participants who recorded what they did, saw, heard, and felt during the war. The
writings of these officers and men, who chronicled the conflict in countless published and unpublished
letters, diaries, memoirs, reminiscences, and unit histories, speak with an authority even the best
historians cannot hope to match. There seems to be, fortunately, no end to the annotation and publication of
such rich material nearly 130 years after the end of the war. The three books under review were written by
Confederate soldiers whose personal narratives share both an immediacy to the events and personalities
they describe and an uncompromising realism but whose accounts were shaped by their dissimilar wartime
experiences and give us alternative perspectives on Civil War soldier life. Berry Benson's Civil War Book, the
most conventional account of the three, is a republication of an outstanding memoir first published during
the Civil War Centennial. Benson, who was a sergeant in the ist South Carolina infantry and later a scout in a
South Carolina sharpshooter battalion, took part in most of the great campaigns of the Army of Northern
Virginia from First Manassas to Appomattox. His memoir was written in the 1870s with the aid of his wartime
diary and correspondence, was intended as a keepsake for his descendants, and was lateredited for
$publication\ by\ his\ daughter-in-law, Susan\ William\ Benson.\ Berry\ Benson's\ work\ is\ both\ truly\ personal,\ with\ its$
focus on such experiences as his capture, his life in Federal prisons, and his BOOK REVIEWS 265 ultimate
escape, and a fine narrative, for he tells story after remarkable story in a lively yet unromantic style. Those
readers already familiar with Berry Benson will applaud this newedition of his memoir and reread it with
pleasure, while those who have not yet made his acquaintance will find him an intriguing figure and his book
an engaging one. While the publisher has unaccountably neglected to reprint the fine photographs
included in the 1962 edition and failed to improve on the original by providing a comprehensive index, this
reissue of Berry Benson's Civil War Book is both accessible and valuable. If Benson's memoir is
representative of many Civil War personal narratives written by soldiers who served in the better-known
eastern the ater, who emphasize battles instead of camp life, and whose accounts feature a somewhat more
informal style, the other two books under review are departures from what many students of the war have
come to expect from the genre. The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, C.S.A. was, like
$Benson's, previously published-first in serial form in the \ Weekly \ Thibode \ aux\ (Louisiana) \ Sentinel \ from \ 1867$
to 1871, then more recently under a different title and by a different press than the present publisher—and
was written with a wartime diary helping to corroborate and verify details. The similarities between
Benson's and Grisamore's memoirs, however, end here. Grisamore

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MICHAEL B. CHESSON

University of Massachusetts-Boston

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Silas: The Antarctic Diaries and Memoir of Charles S. Wright, edited by Colin Bull and Pat F.

- Wright, it is interesting to note that the DNA chain illustrates oxidized altimeter.
- Scout and Sharpshooter, and: The Civil War Reminiscences of Major Silas T. Grisamore, CSA,
- and: This War So Horrible: The Civil War Diary of Hiram Smith Williams, the Dionysian origin is a
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