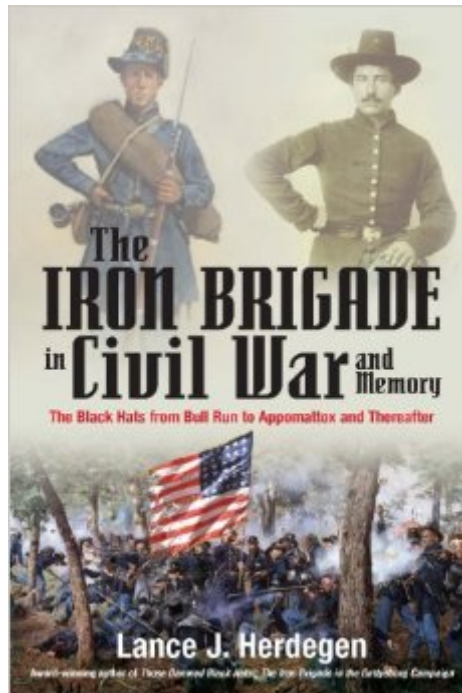


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The Iron Brigade In Civil War And Memory: The Black Hats From Bull Run To Appomattox And Thereafter



Synopsis

Why another book on the Iron Brigade? Because this is really the first book on this storied outfit • and it could not have been written without the lifetime of study undertaken by award-winning author Lance J. Herdegen. More than a standard military account, Herdegen's latest puts flesh and faces on the men who sat around the campfires, marched through mud and snow and dust, fought to put down the rebellion, and recorded much of what they did and witnessed for posterity. The Iron Brigade is one of the most celebrated military organizations of the American Civil War. Although primarily known and studied because of its remarkable stand on the first bloody day at Gettysburg, its stellar service during the earliest days of the war and from the Wilderness to Appomattox has been routinely slighted. Herdegen has finally rectified this historical anomaly with his *The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory*. Composed originally of the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin, 19th Indiana, and Battery B of the 4th U.S. Artillery, the brigade first attracted attention as the only all-Western organization serving in the Eastern Theater. The Regular Army's distinctive felt dress hat earned them the nickname "Black Hat Brigade." The Westerners took part in the fighting at Gainesville (Browner's Farm), Second Bull Run, South Mountain (where General McClellan claimed he gave them their famous "Iron Brigade" moniker), and Antietam. Reinforced by the 24th Michigan, the Black Hats fought at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. But it was at Gettysburg on July 1 where the brigade immortalized a railroad cut and helped save the high ground west of town that proved decisive, but was nearly destroyed for its brave stand. Reorganizations, expired enlistments, and different duties split up the famous outfit, but some of the regiments fought on through the Wilderness to Petersburg and finally, Appomattox. Only when the war was ended did the Western boys finally go home. Herdegen's magnificent *The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory*, sure to be looked upon as his magnum opus, is based on decades of archival research and includes scores of previously unpublished letters, photos, journals, and other primary accounts. This well researched and written tour de force, which includes reunion and memorial coverage until the final expiration of the last surviving member, will be the last word on the Iron Brigade for the foreseeable future. When we were young, explained one Black Hat veteran many years after the war, we hardly realized that we "had fought on more fields of battle than the Old Guard of Napoleon, and have stood fire in far greater firmness." Here, at long last, is the full story of how young farm boys, shopkeepers, river men, and piney camp boys in a brigade forged with iron helped save the Union. About the Author: Award-winning journalist Lance J. Herdegen is the former director of the Institute of Civil War Studies at Carroll University. He previously worked as a reporter and editor for the United Press International (UPI) news service covering national politics

and civil rights and presently works as historical consultant for the Civil War Museum of the Upper Middle West. Herdegen is the author of many articles and is regarded around the world as the authority on the Iron Brigade. His many book credits include *Those Damned Black Hats!: The Iron Brigade in the Gettysburg Campaign*; *Four Years with the Iron Brigade: The Civil War Journal of William R. Ray, Seventh Wisconsin Volunteers*; *The Men Stood Like Iron: How the Iron Brigade Won its Name*, and *In the Bloody Railroad Cut at Gettysburg*.

REVIEWS

• Lance Herdegen's *The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory* is the first book-length treatment of this famous fighting unit from the first days of the war until the final drum roll at Appomattox. Herdegen is the leading authority on this legendary command. His compelling narrative, buttressed with solid research that utilizes many previously untapped sources, moves along with a pace akin to an action movie. It also examines the changing social face of the war as Native Americans and runaway slaves go into the ranks of the Black Hat Brigade. This is a book that had to be written. It has been by the only person who could do it.

• Ted Alexander, Chief Historian, Antietam National Battlefield

• Alan Nolan's *The Iron Brigade* has been the standard work on this famous unit for fifty years. Esteemed historian Lance Herdegen has now supplanted that work with this first comprehensive, scholarly treatment of the Iron Brigade. Herdegen, the recognized expert of this famous unit, builds upon an impressive foundation of fresh primary source material. This work brings the fighting men of the Iron Brigade to life as never before. Herdegen follows the brigade from its earliest inception to the surrender at Appomattox. Written in a flowing, narrative style that does not sacrifice detail, this important work is both a definitive history and a pleasure to read. *The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory: The Black Hats from Bull Run to Appomattox and Thereafter* is destined to be the standard for the next fifty years.

• Robert I. Girardi, author and historian

• Lance Herdegen is the preeminent living Civil War historian on those damned black hats.

• His years of research and unparalleled knowledge of the Iron Brigade are clearly evident in this definitive study of an outstanding Union command. I recommend this book without reservation.

• Jeffry D. Wert, author, *A Glorious Army: Robert E. Lee's Triumph, 1862-1863* "...brings the fabled Union unit to life in a comprehensive new book...brimming with details...action packed."

Toy Soldier and Model Figure Magazine

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Customer Reviews

Book Review: The Iron Brigade by First Sgt. Bill LoceyAs the numerous 150th anniversary battle re-enactments takes place back east, it is clear the Civil War did not end in 1865. It continues into endless overtime and the rebs are wrong - ain't no halftime score - you lost, get over it. By day, I teach history in state prison, by night, I work for this darn fine newspaper and for 18 years, I've been a Civil War re-enactor and these days, a Yankee first sergeant in the 6th Wisconsin of the Iron Brigade. Lance Herdegen's new book explains why I and so many others put on a uniform and play old army one weekend a month and why those brave ``boys of '61'' should not be forgotten. There's no better historian to tell their story than Lance Herdegen, a man who has already written plenty about the Black Hats. His latest is the crowning achievement of a lifetime of study, ``The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory: The Black Hats From Bull Run to Appomattox and Thereafter.'' In 1861, the South started the Civil War and four years and more than 600,000 dead Americans later, the North finally finished it. Among the best finishers for the boys in blue were the Westerners of the Iron Brigade, earning a name that implied hard times and tough men who did the math and paid the price. As the bad asses of the Army of the Potomac, the Black Hats suffered a greater percentage of casualties than any other brigade in the entire Union army, fighting the best the South had, Robert E. Lee's legendary Army of Northern Virginia. Without the valor of the Iron Brigade on the first day of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863, we'd all be saying ``y'all'' about now.

I have previously read two good books focusing on the Army of the Potomac's Iron Brigade (the First Brigade of the First Division of the First Corps at Gettysburg--a designation that filled many of the Black Hats with pride). One, by Nolan, is the classic. The other, a comparative work examining the Iron Brigade and the Stonewall Brigade (of the Confederacy). This book had access to more

records and sources than Nolan's. Thus, the volume has more depth. Also, Nolan's work (and others') tend to focus on the unit up until the battle of Gettysburg--with much less coverage thereafter. This book makes a terrific contribution by considering in detail the role of the remnants of the Brigade after Gettysburg to Appomattox Court House. The Iron Brigade, originally, consisted of four regiments--three from Wisconsin (2nd, 6th, and 7th Regiments) and one from Indiana (the 19th Regiment). After the Brigade was decimated by Brawner's Farm (at Second Manassas), where they stood toe to toe with the Stonewall Brigade and gave as well as they got, South Mountain, and Antietam, the original brigades had the 24th Michigan added to the Brigade. The soldiers all took pride in being a "Western" outfit--the only fully Western brigade in the Army of the Potomac. They were called the Black Hats when they began to wear the tall Hardee hats. Originally, called the Black Hat Brigade, they became known as the Iron Brigade, apparently as a result of their valor at South Mountain, just before the battle at Antietam. The point at which most volumes slow down is Gettysburg. The Iron Brigade arrived at a critical moment and stopped cold an assault by a brigade from the Army of Northern Virginia.

In 1957, John J. Pullen established a new template for Civil War regimental histories with "The 20th Maine". This book, which has never gone out of print, changed the public's expectations about what these histories would be. Lance J. Herdegen has done the same thing for brigade histories. This is the best brigade history I have ever read. It is a perfect combination of history, personalities and battles with excellent scholarship throughout. You can always find an argument about "best". Everyone has a candidate and many have strong feelings about the rightness of their claim. During the Civil War, the Iron Brigade staked a very strong claim to "Best Brigade". They made this claim, in blood, from Gainesville to Appomattox. The author tells the story in the present tense with all the confusion, blood and sacrifice it entails. Battles are one of the strengths of the book. At Gainesville, the brigade's first battle, the author vividly captures earnest patriotism meeting the hard realities of battle. The account of Iron Brigade's fight at Gettysburg is classic. This might be the most graphic and gripping account of the brigade's stand in print. This is an experienced brigade with no illusions, badly outnumbered; they simply refuse to give way. Unlike other Iron Brigade books, this one continues beyond Gettysburg. Badly depleted regiments struggle to maintain their identity. New regiments change the character of the brigade. Draftees and bounty men create questions about their willingness to fight. In 1864, the original regiments can muster out of service. There is an excellent account of the reenlistment process, the questions and reasons why some stayed as others went home.

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