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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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Norman Demarais, whose name is no stranger to readers of Against the Grain, has written this guide about battlefields and monuments of the American Revolution. A man of wide-ranging interests, Desmarais draws upon his avocation as an avid Revolutionary War reenactor as inspiration for this book. In fact, he appears front and center in the photo on the book’s cover in full period uniform.

This is a great book for buffs who wish to visit battlefields of the American Revolution. It is one of several books written since the Bicentennial in 1976. As Desmarais states, a good number of these battlefields are no more than plagues in the midst of urban areas. Yet, there are many battlefields that have been made into historical parks administered by Federal and state governments, and even by private organizations as in the case of Fort Ticonderoga, New York.

For someone who might meander from Maine in the north to Georgia in the south with the occasional foray west as far as Illinois and Indiana, the arrangement of this guide is perfect. For the librarian (and other users) seeking the comfort of an alphabetical arrangement, the Table of Contents and the Index become essential tools. Once the state has been established, an alphabetical sequence of battlefields still eludes the user. This time, Desmarais arranges battles chronologically. And further, in New York and South Carolina, where there is a heavy concentration of Revolutionary battle sites, there are geographic subdivisions that are then chronologically arranged. Keep the T of C handy.

Desmarais truly excels with his detailed annotations of the battles and their sites. It is the reenactor’s intimate knowledge of these battles showing through. What is even better, the wording of his annotations indicates he has been to a lot of these battle sites. The length varies with the importance of the event with the longest coverage appearing to be given to Yorktown in 1781. Each entry begins with an inset box providing information of the battlefield as it exists today. Fairly explicit directions are provided. Following the URL for the Website, such information about interpretive centers, markers, and extant buildings and fortifications is included. What are especially fascinating are the detailed descriptions of the battles themselves. A typical entry includes the generals of both sides, the number of soldiers fighting, and then, the strategy they used within the battles themselves. It is really intriguing reading.

The final chapter is Desmarais’ word on reenacting. He is very frank about the amount of commitment one must make to be a reenactor. Not only is it a commitment in time, but a commitment in expense. He provides URLs for contacting Revolutionary reenactor organizations. The bibliography of books describing a soldier’s life at the time of the War of Independence could be valuable to someone looking to becoming a reenactor.

Finally, detailed maps and photographs complete this volume that should become a manual for those people who have a deep interest in the American Revolution.


Reviewed by Phillip P. Powell (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston) <powellp@cofc.edu>

Of course, all of this is on the Web and there are Web gateways like the Federal Web Locator and FirstGov that provide access. But having the URLs of more that 2000 quality sites, with thorough descriptions of their content, all nicely indexed in an easy-to-use format makes this title worth considering.

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this reason) and are generally only interested in authors who demonstrate excellent potential for producing more than one book (and therefore agents want to see more than one idea you are working on). Although I can't be certain yet, it's quite possible that publishing fiction may prove to be considerably more difficult than publishing nonfiction. So once again the self-publishing option may be called upon to come to the rescue. By the time an author learns all the wrinkles of writing and publishing in various genres, he or she will no doubt have acquired a few grey hairs and a lot of rejection slips. In the end, what I think this means is that those who have found their way into publication, whether by the traditional way or the self-publishing way, show a great love for writing combined with a lot of perseverance.

Greg's work can be previewed at his Website at www.gregorydesilet.com (including a sample of his novel in progress). He can also be contacted through his Website.

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reader is drawn into the world of collaboration within the academic library. Each of the four chapters emphasizes a specific type of collaboration — peer, internal, external, and collaboration between librarian and faculty. At first, the reviewer wondered why so much was written before the academic library was brought into the scheme of things. It is apparent, though, the authors needed to establish clarity and definition about collaboration before they could speak to it specifically. The format for these chapters is straightforward. There is a brief overview defining the type of collaboration. This is followed by an example of a collaborative group and a "case narrative." In the end, questions are presented to the reader for further reflection. The reviewer's favorite case narrative concerned planning a library-wide party. Such an example may appear trite, but many readers have experienced difficulty planning activities that genuinely bolster group morale and well being.

A few final words. Administrators would be well-served reading this book. The publisher may be British, but the authors are all from North Carolina and write from the perspective on this side of the Pond. Each chapter is followed by a significant bibliography. Despite the hefty price, this might become required reading for anyone who feels that "two (or more) heads are better than one.”

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