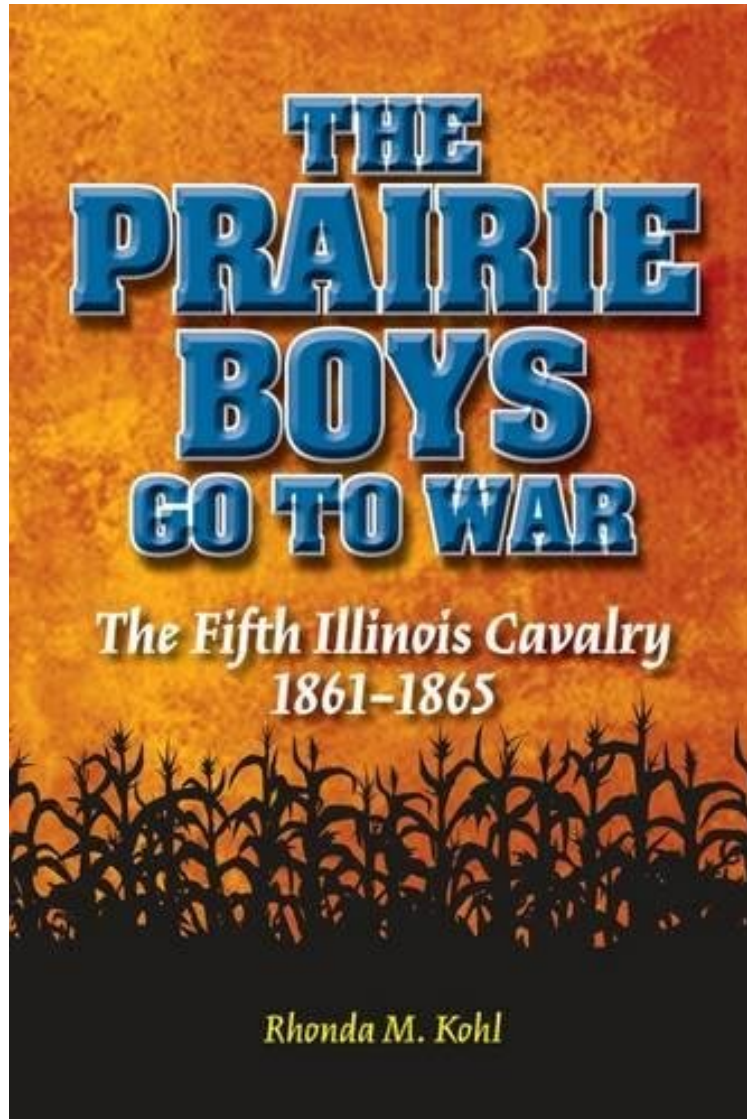


(Download) The Prairie Boys Go to War: The Fifth Illinois Cavalry, 1861-1865

## The Prairie Boys Go to War: The Fifth Illinois Cavalry, 1861-1865

*Rhonda M. Kohl*

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**Rhonda M. Kohl : The Prairie Boys Go to War: The Fifth Illinois Cavalry, 1861-1865** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Prairie Boys Go to War: The Fifth Illinois Cavalry, 1861-1865:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The best Civil War regimental history yetBy Karen P. RhodesWhen we think of Civil War regimental histories, we think of dry-as-dust accountings of where the regiment went and who they fought when they got there, along with lists of casualties. There is not much about the men themselves, their hopes, their politics, their longings for home. This regimental history is a warts-and-all description of one regiment,

and of the men who comprised it. This book not only describes the military actions undertaken by the Fifth Illinois Cavalry, but also the personal lives of the men. Not in any other regimental history is there such a detailed account of the politics of the men in it, which reflects the divided politics of Illinois at the time. The internal politics of the unit also receives examination, showing from the men's point of view which officers were worth anything and which were not. In other histories, we read second- and third-hand statements that in the Civil War, troops suffered more from disease and malnutrition than from combat. This excellent account of the Fifth Illinois Cavalry shows us in great detail just what that statement entailed. We read the words of the men themselves, in addition to the factual data from medical reports and other documentation, which brings the picture into sharp focus. The suffering was amazing, and that more did not die is probably nothing short of a miracle. Author Rhonda M. Kohl made extensive use of diaries, letters, and other writings by the soldiers themselves, providing an intimate portrait of these men. The bonus for me in all this is that one of those diaries that Ms. Kohl used is the one kept by my paternal great-granduncle, Thaddeus B. Packard, a member of the regiment. *The Prairie Boys Go to War* needs to be in the to-read queue of every Civil War buff.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. *Civil War Cavalry AS IT REALLY WAS !* By Frank Crawford  
A truly authentic coverage of cavalry during the war as it really was. No grand rides around or through enemy lines. No grand heroic participants. No officers of highest honor. Simply Illinois boys that wanted to save their country, as they knew it, led by officers that were not gods, but men that wanted to be home and had ego enough to desire higher command. As was said, "Kohl shows us the real war, and it's not one that anybody will ever want to reenact." If reading about the "glamorous" war is what you want, don't read this. If reading about the real war, as seen by most cavalry units, this is by far, the best you will find. Four years of Hell, with an occasional week or two of Hades.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Boots In The Saddle: How Arkansas, Missouri and Mississippi Was Won* By Civil War Librarian  
The Trans-Mississippi Theatre probably does not receive the attention from scholars and buffs that it deserves. Without fanfare and notoriety, essential work was done by the Federal cavalry throughout the four years of war. The 5th Illinois Cavalry was organized and trained throughout the late summer and fall of 1861 and by February 1862 they were serving in Missouri. The regiment became riven by internal dissent. The differences stemmed from religious, political and geographic diversities. Roughly 60% of the troopers were from northern and central Illinois and generally Republicans; about 40% hailed from southern Illinois and generally were Democrats. Those families from southern Illinois had migrated generations before from Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and the Carolinas. In many instances politics, religion, family incomes, social values and education separated the officers from the enlisted men. Throughout 1862 they fought and chase guerrillas throughout southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. In the late fall the 5th Illinois left Helena, Arkansas to participate in Grant's late 1862 and first half of 1863 campaign to capture Vicksburg, Mississippi. Keeping Confederate guerrillas out of Grant's path and guarding the paths of supply to the Federal army were the regiment's primary tasks. During the latter half of 1863 and until the summer of 1862, the regiment raided central Mississippi and performed garrison duties. Constantly the 5th Illinois Cavalry suffered from poor leadership, low morale, camp discipline and health issues including alcoholism and yellow fever.

Rhonda M. Cole's work is unique in that it combines military and cultural history with a narrative that is both precise and enjoyable. She has balanced military adventures with explosive cultural issues. There are varieties of racism, religion, and politics contained in the soldiers' lives. Cole sets aside stereotypes and offers a complex but accessible narrative of civilian soldiers in a civil war. Her training in anthropology is a strength. Her deeply researched *The Prairie Boys Go To War: The Fifth Illinois Cavalry* relies upon diaries, letters and memoirs to reveal the rubbed-raw emotions of the cavalrymen.

"This book is well documented and well written. It should be in the library of every serious student of the Union cavalry in the Civil War."—Journal of Illinois History