

“The Supply for Tomorrow Must Not Fail”: The Civil War of Captain Simon Perkins Jr., a Union Quartermaster. By Lenette S. Taylor. (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2004. xvi, 264 pp. Cloth, \$35.00, ISBN 0-87338-783-x.)

A curiously neglected sub-genre within the abundant body of Civil War literature is that which recognizes the important, indeed critical, role played by logisticians in support of the land armies that ranged across a continent from 1861 through 1865. A modern military axiom declares boldly that “amateurs study tactics, while professionals study logistics”. Even so, there are scant comprehensive scholarly works devoted to Union or Confederate supply systems and even fewer that examine the efforts of individual quartermaster, commissary, or ordnance personnel whose existence was essential to the conduct of successful military operations. Lamentably—though perhaps inevitably—the trumpet blast and the roar of musketry continue to trump the army invoice, the railroad schedule, and the bill of lading as topics ripe for serious historical inquiry. Lenette S. Taylor, in *“The Supply for Tomorrow Must Not Fail”*, details the day-to-day activities of a heretofore-anonymous Federal quartermaster officer; in so doing she has created an important study in what remains a fledgling field.

Captain Simon Perkins, Jr., was the scion of a distinguished Western Reserve family. The Perkins clan established its roots in Ohio near the turn of the nineteenth century and in short order engaged in numerous lucrative business and civic enterprises. The family cemented its lofty status in the region in 1833 when Perkins’s father—also called Simon Perkins, Jr.—wed Grace Tod, the daughter of Ohio political, legal, and entrepreneurial giant George Tod. The Perkins-Tod union produced eleven children, the third of whom, young Simon, was born in 1838 within the family’s stately Akron mansion. Gaining practical occupational experience through the extended family’s many connections within the railroad, iron, and banking fields, Simon Perkins by age twenty-three had already amassed an impressive résumé for an aspiring professional. After first enlisting in Company B of the Nineteenth Ohio Volunteers, a ninety-day regiment that served faithfully during the 1861 western Virginia campaign, Perkins, his budding business acumen acknowledged among influential relations and other well-connected friends, gained appointment as an assistant quartermaster on the staff of Major General Don Carlos Buell within the Army of the Ohio. Once arrived in Nashville, Tennessee, early in 1862, Perkins began there his two-year duties that aided materially the ultimate Federal success in the Western (trans-Appalachian) operational theater.

Perkins maintained a busy, at times Herculean work regimen at or near the top of the supply hierarchy within each of the organizations he toiled: the Ohio Army—subsequently redesignated the Army of the Cumberland—and, by 1864, the Department of the North. His responsibilities included the securing and distribution of forage and other vital provisions, the management of supply depots, and the myriad accounting tasks inherent to quartermaster service. Disbursing army wares along intricate (and often dangerous) routes of supply in occupied territory often entailed the best organizational and interpersonal talents available. Throughout this well-written and scrupulously researched volume, Taylor demonstrates that Captain Perkins, despite his youth, was an officer who possessed extraordinary talent and ingenuity in managing the succor of tens of thousands of Union troops and hundreds of thousands of draft and other animals. Indeed, Perkins’s talents drew the notice of all superior officers with whom he came into contact, including Buell, who granted the young captain more and more organizational responsibilities throughout 1862, and Major General William Starke Rosecrans, upon whose staff Perkins worked as the Department (Army) of the Cumberland’s Assistant Quartermaster.

Peculiarly, Perkins's military service came to an abrupt end by the summer of 1864. Citing "private affairs [in Ohio being left] in a very disordered state" (185), the captain tendered his resignation, which was at length approved on July 12, 1864. Returning home, Perkins over the next forty-seven years amassed a large fortune in banking, iron manufacturing, railroads, gas and water works, and real estate in Sharon, Pennsylvania, located just across Ohio's common border with the Keystone State; doubtless his experience as an army quartermaster, handling millions of tons of supplies valued at countless millions of dollars, prepared the erstwhile captain for success during the tumultuous Gilded Age.

The chief virtue of this volume is the great mass of official materials detailing the actions of Captain Perkins and the military departments he helped manage. Benefiting from the 1990 acquisition by the Summit County (Ohio) Historical Society of eight crates of Captain Perkins's army correspondence from family heirs, Taylor not only organized and catalogued the entire collection—consisting of some twenty thousand one-of-a-kind items—she has produced a first-rate narrative study that will likely serve as a model for future scholarly forays into the Civil War supply arm. There are, however, a few deficiencies that limit the work's general effectiveness. First, the regrettable dearth of private family correspondence leaves the reader yearning to know more about Perkins the individual in addition to Perkins the competent professional. For example, adequate explanation and analysis of the captain's sudden resignation from army life even goes unexplained within Taylor's text. This shortfall is of course as unavoidable as it is lamentable. What is not is Taylor's failure at times to contextualize the captain's activities more thoroughly within the larger history of trans-Appalachian military operations, as well as more conclusively to demonstrate—utilizing the work of organizational and occupational historians—Perkins's role in parlaying his acquired expertise into lasting professional success during the post-bellum years. Nevertheless, Taylor's work should without question stand on its own considerable merits. *"The Supply for Tomorrow Must Not Fail"* is an invaluable addition to any serious Civil War scholar's library. It should be especially welcome to those who focus their research/reading interest upon the conduct of the war's important (and still sadly underrepresented) Western campaigns.

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