

Book Notice: *The Civil War at Perryville: Battling for the Bluegrass*. Christopher L. Kolakowski. Columbia SC: The History Press, Civil War Sesquicentennial Series, 2009. 188 pages, paperback. \$21.99, <http://historypress.net/>. Reviewed by Daniel H. Reigle, originally written for the *Ohio Civil War Genealogy Journal*, www.ogs.org.

This is an excellent “brief” overview of the 1862 Confederate Kentucky campaign and its culminating event, the battle at Perryville on 8 October 1862. The author spent three years (2005-2008) as executive director of the Perryville Enhancement Project, a public-private partnership that focused on adding to the amount of battlefield land preserved at Perryville, offering him the opportunity to experience first-hand and study the complicated terrain on this battlefield. It also offered him extensive contact with Kurt Holman, Park Manager of the Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site, and the PBSHS manuscript collections, on which Kolakowski draws heavily, even in this short book. The book also relies appropriately on the superb complete treatment of Perryville by Dr. Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001.)

I became familiar with the book while preparing for publication of an article in *Ohio Civil War Genealogy Journal* by Bert Waits and Stefani Hennessee on Peter Harris, 121st OVI, who was mortally wounded at Perryville. The authors and I found it to be a very clear overview of the essential ingredients of a complicated campaign and a complicated battle that allowed the article to put the 121st’s participation in the battle of Perryville in proper context, as illustrated by the number of references to the book in the article. Although it is an overview, the book’s selective use of primary sources, such as the manuscripts in the PBSHS collection and the Harlan Papers at the University of Louisville, allow it to provide selective details that enhance the history of the campaign and battle as they unfold.

In the process, Kolakowski is able to provide a new interpretation of a meeting of officers in the troubled III Corps that prepared to send a telegraphic message to the President requesting the removal of General Buell. While this meeting has been believed to have occurred on the evening before the battle, Kolakowski uses an excerpt from the transcript of the Buell Commission in early 1863 along with an unpublished transcript in the papers of Colonel John Marshall Harlan (a future Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court) to confirm that the meeting actually did not occur until late in October, and that Harlan never actually sent the message because when he arrived at the telegraph office, he learned that General Buell had just been relieved of command by the President.

As we approach the 150th anniversary of the battle at Perryville, this book will be an excellent resource for descendants of the participants, Civil War students, local residents, re-enactors, and others among us who will gather at Perryville on 6-7 October 2012 to commemorate the Sesquicentennial.