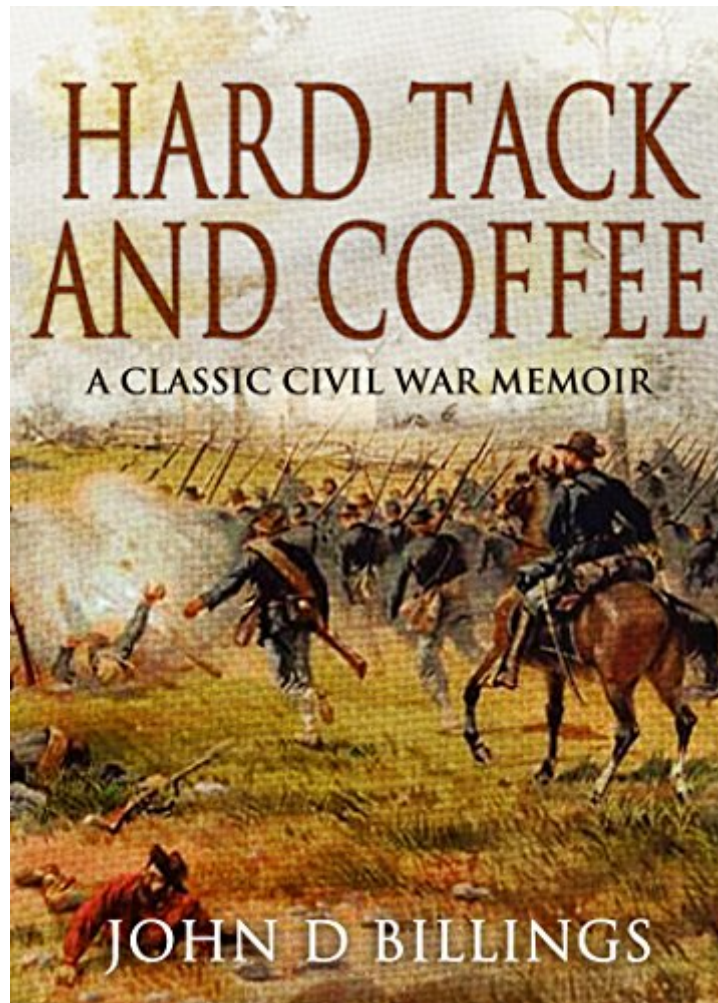




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Hardtack & Coffee Or The Unwritten Story Of Army Life



Synopsis

First published more than 100 years ago, *Hardtack And Coffee* is John Billings's absorbing first-person account of the everyday life of a U.S. Army soldier during the Civil War. Billings attended a reunion of Civil War veterans in 1881 that brought together a group of survivors whose memories and stories of the war compelled him to write this account. It is set in November, 1860. Lincoln has been elected as President of the United States. The Democrats split into two factions, divided over the issue of slavery. As early as October, Southern politicians decide that the state of South Carolina should withdraw from the union. Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi are among the states who seceded from the Union, creating the South Confederacy. On the 15th April, Lincoln issues a proclamation that will send 75,000 militia to suppress the rebellion for three months. *Hard Tack and Coffee* is the story of one of those "Minute Men". John D Billings describes in rich detail the daily routine of a foot soldier as the Civil War developed. Recruitment became conscription, provisions became rations, tents became "bomb-proofs", and the muzzle-loading rifle became breech-loaded. In this unique account, we are given the first-hand account of life as a Massachusetts soldier, from conscription and training through to camp-life at discipline. First published in 1887, *Hard Tack and Coffee* is a gripping military memoir that promises to deliver a new insight into the Civil War. Albion Press is an imprint of Endeavour Press, the UK's leading independent digital publisher. For more information on our titles please sign up to our newsletter at www.endeavourpress.com. Each week you will receive updates on free and discounted ebooks. Follow us on Twitter: @EndeavourPress and on Facebook via <http://on.fb.me/1HweQV7>. We are always interested in hearing from our readers. Endeavour Press believes that the future is now.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a ground level view of everyday equipage and logistics problems experienced by the rank and file in the Union Army during the Civil War. It is interesting in many regards, but the author became bogged down in minutia way too many times. He spent a whole chapter describing various badges of cloth used on caps and flags to distinguish one unit's personnel from another, and the ensuing prattle was enough to let the reader fall off for a good night's sleep. I often appreciate detailed descriptions, but some of the subject matter was so insignificant it hardly required more than a few sentences, not whole chapters. I read the book from cover to cover, but I found that I was really looking forward to the end chapter, and then it just ended as though in mid thought. The price was right on this Kindle edition, and I would not liked to have paid any more.

Hardtack is a detailed look at army life in the Army of the Potomac during the American Civil War. Even more specifically it is from an artillery soldier although he does mention often how his experiences compared to that of the cavalry and infantry. The author was a member of an artillery unit in Federal Army, a volunteer rather than a regular army man I think. The topics covered do not include battle experiences but rather the routines of army life in between combat events. Many aspects of army life are covered in some detail (e.g. enlisting, camp life and shelter, rations, offences/punishments among others); detail is the key word here. Much of this material is more briefly (and succinctly?) covered in other Civil War compendiums (e.g. authors like Bruce Catton, Shelby Foote, etc). But if your are military buff or more particularly a civil war buff (or a participant in reenacting Civil War events) this book would be for you. For the average individual with general historical interests (like me) this is probably a little much--hence the 3 star rating.

Written 15 after the war, the author is well educated and well read. He enlisted as a teenager in 1862 in a Mass. artillery unit and served for the duration. The book is about the day to day life of an ordinary soldier and covers all aspects of their existence such as food, clothing and shelter. What the author does not discuss is the actual fighting. Additionally he has chapters on each of the other branches of the army that are not normally covered such as medical, engineers, quartermaster, signals, and transportation (mules and wagons). These chapters are some of the most interesting and amusing of the book. The author had a very readable style, not too elementary but also not too technical. All in all, the best book of its genre that I have read. Easily 5 plus stars.

For those who hate history because of all the dates and names here is your book. It is a book about everyday life for the everyday soldier caught in a tragic moment in history. The amazing thing about this book is if you have served in the military you can see how timeless this is and how each generation of soldiers in each unique conflict are remarkable similar in how they strive to stay sane in the madness about them. The simple complaints and grouching that are so much about of being in the military. We often forget that war is not mostly about the battles and generals, it is about the many men and now women who stay the course, serve faithfully for their families and just want to come back home. Bless all who give so much so we can have so much!

A wonderful and insightful book about what it was like for a Civil War soldier (northern). Not an officer. Part of his survival technique was to maintain his sense of humor. The chapter on mules will make you laugh out loud. On the other hand there is the grim chapter on how turncoats and spies were executed. The book is replete with descriptions of the living conditions, food, weather, armament, supply trains, foraging, clothing---really, there is nothing left out. A valuable tool for in-depth historians as well as the armchair variety. Or merely the casual reader. Billings is a very learned and articulate writer. Charming in his lack of pretension.

Indulge your latent historian! I'm re-reading this book which I'd read in hardcopy years ago. The author's account of life in the Union army is enlightening. I'd recommend purchasing a copy as this scanned copy has apparent OCR transcription errors and lacks illustrations found in the original.

First person history is the only real source of history. This account is a must read for anyone interested in The War Between The States. Mr Billings was there, on the ground, as a grunt, from the start to finish. He sets his story down objectively and clearly, with no particular passion

involved. The details this book reveals are fascinating. He focuses on what life was like for those in the Northern Army, and how they lived it. If you want combat, you will not find it here. If you are interested in this time of trauma our nation survived, you should read this book.

The book is about how the Union army came to exist. I had no idea that officer commissions were bought or came about through various other non-merit or martial skills means. Fascinating! Otis essentially a diary, written simply, which has its own merit. I hold back one star because it is somewhat dry prose. It is too much like something I would have written. Still, I owe the author for having recorded what life was like for a rank-and-file soldier. Perhaps if we had more war stories written this way, no glamor or heroics even though there are many heroes, we might have fewer wars. Not a "can't put it down" book, but worth reading.

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