

Gustav Tafel, *The Cincinnati Germans in the Civil War*. Translated and Edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann. Little Miami Publishing, 2011. 198 pages, illustrations, maps, tables, charts, appendix. ISBN: 978-1932250862. \$16.95.

Reviewed by Robert Grandchamp

Many Civil War buffs automatically assume that the Irish were the largest ethnic contingent to fight for the Union, when in reality it was the Germans, many of whom settled in the Midwest following the failed revolution of 1848. Serving mostly in ethnic regiments such as the 9th Ohio, 26th Wisconsin, and most of the units of the XI Corps, the Germans made a lasting contribution to the Union victory. Unlike the Irish, however, few Eastern papers touted the German troops, and because they spoke a language other than English, most of their heroics went unrecorded. It is only now through translated documents that the full story of the German contribution can be appreciated. In a new translated and edited volume of the memoirs of a German colonel, Don Tolzmann has told the story of the German-American troops from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Emigrating to America in 1847, Tafel quickly became a leader in Cincinnati's large German-American population. A journalist before the war; he enlisted in the all-German 9th Ohio and ended the war as colonel of the 106th Ohio. After the war, Tafel was active in veterans' affairs and served as mayor of his adopted city. Tafel originally wrote his book as a pamphlet after the war, discussing the German units from southern Ohio. As a superb researcher of original German material, Tolzmann has expanded the original narrative to include the voices of other German regiments from throughout the Midwest.

The combination of Tafel's original work and Tolzmann's modern work is seamless and presents a good overview of what these regiments did in the war. Because of the

German to English translation, much of the material is presented for the first time, presenting a good overview of the war in the West as seen by the various German regiments. An interesting supplement is how the German-American troops remembered their participation in the war, as Tolzmann includes many interesting photographs of the Grand Army Hall in Cincinnati, complete with the relics that the troops carried, and a listing of the dead. Many images throughout the book are a welcome addition, showing the men listed in the narrative.

In conclusion, *The Cincinnati Germans in the Civil War* is an interesting and welcome addition to the realm of Civil War literature. With the additional discovery of works produced by German-American soldiers, a new understanding of their pivotal role in the Civil War is understood. Richly inscribed with images, this book belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in the Union Army's ethnic regiments, or wanting a better understanding of the war in the West.
