



The Rebel Yell: A Cultural History

Craig A. Warren

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No aspect of Civil War military lore has received less scholarly attention than the battle cry of the Southern soldier. In *The Rebel Yell*, Craig A. Warren brings together soldiers' memoirs, little-known articles, and recordings to create a fascinating and exhaustive exploration of the facts and myths about the “Southern screech.”

Through close readings of numerous accounts, Warren demonstrates that the Rebel yell was not a single, unchanging call, but rather it varied from place to place, evolved over time, and expressed nuanced shades of emotion. A multifunctional act, the flexible Rebel yell was immediately recognizable to friends and foes but acquired new forms and purposes as the epic struggle wore on. A Confederate regiment might deliver the yell in harrowing unison to taunt Union troops across the empty spaces of a battlefield. At other times, individual soldiers would call out solo or in call-and-response fashion to communicate with or secure the perimeters of their camps.

The Rebel yell could embody unity and valor, but could also become the voice of racism and hatred. Perhaps most surprising, *The Rebel Yell* reveals that from Reconstruction through the first half of the twentieth century, the Rebel yell—even more than the Confederate battle flag—served as the most prominent and potent symbol of white Southern defiance of Federal authority. With regard to the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Warren shows that the yell has served the needs of people the world over: soldiers and civilians, politicians and musicians, re-enactors and humorists, artists and businessmen. Warren dismantles popular assumptions about the Rebel yell as well as the notion that the yell was ever “lost to history.”

Both scholarly and accessible, *The Rebel Yell* contributes to our knowledge of Civil War history and public memory. It shows the centrality of voice and sound to any reckoning of Southern culture.

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