



Passing in Review

Tribute to Alabamians Is a Tentative First Step

BY RONALD S. CODDINGTON

John Wallace Comer, a second lieutenant in the 57th Alabama Infantry, strikes a casual yet confident pose in his gray uniform. His father, a wealthy planter, owned 61 slaves. Comer took one of the slaves, Burrell, off to war as his servant. At some point the two posed for a photograph. Burrell stands slightly bowed next to his young master, who is seated.

This portrait—an identified master and slave—is among the most unusual of wartime images. And, it is one of the photographs featured in *150 Faces of Alabama Confederates on the 150th anniversary of the Civil War* by Willis Downs.

The volume, one of many prompted by the sesquicentennial of the war, brings together portraits of soldiers that range in rank from private to general. The collection also includes, for instance, a picture of Scottish-born nurse Kate Cumming of Mobile, Ala., and a navy man, Lt. Sardine Graham Stone, who was captured on the sloop-of-war *Florida* in 1864.

Author Downs notes, "Some of the soldiers inside were farmers, some were governors. ... They



150 Faces of Alabama Confederates on the 150th anniversary of the Civil War

By Willis Downs
Softcover, 162 pages
CreateSpace Independent
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\$14.00

posed proudly in uniform, some brandishing a gun, a sword, or both."

Downs likely spent a significant amount of time searching for all of the photographs featured in the book. But, the photographs are accompanied by bare bones captions that include the individual's name, rank and organization. Some selections contain a smattering of additional information, such as life dates and very basic service records.

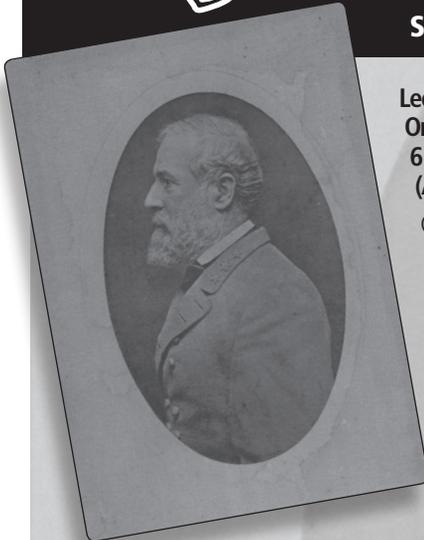
The book suffers from serious flaws more common among independently published works than university and commercial publishing houses. Many images are not credited, and the manuscript lacks page numbers and an index. Moreover, the quality of the image reproduction is uneven. Most are low resolution. When considered as a simple survey of images of Alabamians who served the Confederacy, *150 Faces of Alabama Confederates* is unique.

One should not deem this as the definitive book of Alabama faces of the Civil War however, but rather, a tentative first step. ■



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Lee, Robert E. Albumen Photograph with Autograph Signature of Mary Custis Lee. On the Vannerson "Blockade" Portrait of Robert E. Lee by Anderson Studio, 1864. 6 1/2" x 5 1/2" (sight), in matte; inscribed on verso and signed by Mary Custis Lee (April 9, 1901).

General Lee's daughter inscribed this famous left profile portrait to Mrs. St. John Alison Lawton. Inscription reads in full "General Robert E. Lee/of Virginia/C.S.A./To dear Mrs. Lawton/from/his daughter,/Mary Custis Lee/(date partially obscured). Accompanying card identifies Lawton as President General of the U.D.C., in 1925.

Very light stain on photo mat. A vivid image, handsomely framed.

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