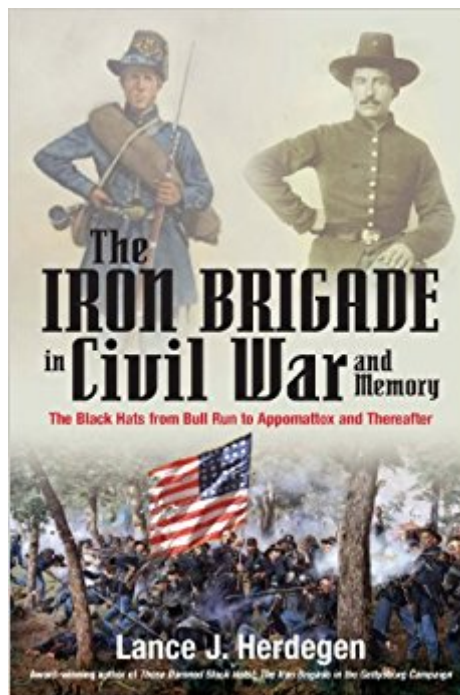




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# The Iron Brigade In Civil War And Memory: The Black Hats From Bull Run To Appomattox And Thereafter



## Synopsis

Why another book on the Iron Brigade? Because this is really the first book on this storied outfit and it could not have been written without the lifetime of study undertaken by award-winning author Lance J. Herdegen. More than a standard military account, Herdegen's latest puts flesh and faces on the men who sat around the campfires, marched through mud and snow and dust, fought to put down the rebellion, and recorded much of what they did and witnessed for posterity. The Iron Brigade is one of the most celebrated military organizations of the American Civil War. Although primarily known and studied because of its remarkable stand on the first bloody day at Gettysburg, its stellar service during the earliest days of the war and from the Wilderness to Appomattox has been routinely slighted. Herdegen has finally rectified this historical anomaly with his *The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory*. Composed originally of the 2nd, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin, 19th Indiana, and Battery B of the 4th U.S. Artillery, the brigade first attracted attention as the only all-Western organization serving in the Eastern Theater. The Regular Army's distinctive felt dress hat earned them the nickname "Black Hat Brigade." The Westerners took part in the fighting at Gainesville (Brawner's Farm), Second Bull Run, South Mountain (where General McClellan claimed he gave them their famous "Iron Brigade" moniker), and Antietam. Reinforced by the 24th Michigan, the Black Hats fought at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. But it was at Gettysburg on July 1 where the brigade immortalized a railroad cut and helped save the high ground west of town that proved decisive, but was nearly destroyed for its brave stand. Reorganizations, expired enlistments, and different duties split up the famous outfit, but some of the regiments fought on through the Wilderness to Petersburg and finally, Appomattox. Only when the war was ended did the Western boys finally go home. Herdegen's magnificent *The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory*, sure to be looked upon as his magnum opus, is based on decades of archival research and includes scores of previously unpublished letters, photos, journals, and other primary accounts. This well researched and written tour de force, which includes reunion and memorial coverage until the final expiration of the last surviving member, will be the last word on the Iron Brigade for the foreseeable future. When we were young, explained one Black Hat veteran many years after the war, we hardly realized that we "had fought on more fields of battle than the Old Guard of Napoleon, and have stood fire in far greater firmness." Here, at long last, is the full story of how young farm boys, shopkeepers, river men, and piney camp boys in a brigade forged with iron helped save the Union.

About the Author: Award-winning journalist Lance J. Herdegen is the former director of the Institute of Civil War Studies at Carroll University. He previously worked as a reporter

and editor for the United Press International (UPI) news service covering national politics and civil rights and presently works as historical consultant for the Civil War Museum of the Upper Middle West. Herdegen is the author of many articles and is regarded around the world as the authority on the Iron Brigade. His many book credits include *Those Damned Black Hats!: The Iron Brigade in the Gettysburg Campaign*; *Four Years with the Iron Brigade: The Civil War Journal of William R. Ray, Seventh Wisconsin Volunteers*; *The Men Stood Like Iron: How the Iron Brigade Won its Name*, and *In the Bloody Railroad Cut at Gettysburg*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Lance Herdegen’s *The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory* is the first book-length treatment of this famous fighting unit from the first days of the war until the final drum roll at Appomattox. Herdegen is the leading authority on this legendary command. His compelling narrative, buttressed with solid research that utilizes many previously untapped sources, moves along with a pace akin to an action movie. It also examines the changing social face of the war as Native Americans and runaway slaves go into the ranks of the Black Hat Brigade. This is a book that had to be written. It has been by the only person who could do it.” (Ted Alexander, Chief Historian, Antietam National Battlefield)

“Alan Nolan’s *The Iron Brigade* has been the standard work on this famous unit for fifty years. Esteemed historian Lance Herdegen has now supplanted that work with this first comprehensive, scholarly treatment of the Iron Brigade. Herdegen, the recognized expert of this famous unit, builds upon an impressive foundation of fresh

primary source material. This work brings the fighting men of the Iron Brigade to life as never before. Herdegen follows the brigade from its earliest inception to the surrender at Appomattox. Written in a flowing, narrative style that does not sacrifice detail, this important work is both a definitive history and a pleasure to read. The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory: The Black Hats from Bull Run to Appomattox and Thereafter is destined to be the standard for the next fifty years. — (Robert I. Girardi, author and historian) — “Lance Herdegen is the preeminent living Civil War historian on — “those damned black hats.” — His years of research and unparalleled knowledge of the Iron Brigade are clearly evident in this definitive study of an outstanding Union command. I recommend this book without reservation. — (Jeffrey D. Wert, author, A Glorious Army: Robert E. Lee’s Triumph, 1862-1863)...brings the fabled Union unit to life in a comprehensive new book...brimming with details...action packed. (Toy Soldier and Model Figure Magazine)

Award-winning journalist Lance J. Herdegen is the former director of the Institute of Civil War Studies at Carroll University. He previously worked as a reporter and editor for the United Press International (UPI) news service covering national politics and civil rights. He presently is historical consultant for the Civil War Museum of the Upper Middle West.

I have read as many books on the Iron Brigade as I can find, and this one is by far one of the best!

A very complete telling of the history of one of the most famous units in the Civil War. I couldn't put it down.

Book arrived in a well packaged state. The book was as advertised. Perfect condition. It is the most exhaustive study of this famous brigade I have read in over 60 yrs of study. Also 2 members are family ancestors and it explains where they were and what fibbing they did. Buy the book. It is truly worth every penny.

The author has written a book that is enjoyable to read and not boring or overly statistical or in the alternative to weak statistically. He lays down the history of the Iron Brigade in an engaging way that keeps your attention. The story comes alive in his words as you read them..Having a library of many Civil War era books I must say this one will rank with one of the best,

Great book! Full of primary source citations. Great for a scholar or a history buff. The only book you'll ever need about the Iron Brigade.

This book really takes you to the scenes of that era and events occurring throughout the civil war, and is very informative.

Being from Wisconsin it kept my interest. If I were from some place else I don't know if it would of.

Book Review: The Iron Brigade by First Sgt. Bill Locey As the numerous 150th anniversary battle re-enactments takes place back east, it is clear the Civil War did not end in 1865. It continues into endless overtime and the rebs are wrong - ain't no halftime score - you lost, get over it. By day, I teach history in state prison, by night, I work for this darn fine newspaper and for 18 years, I've been a Civil War re-enactor and these days, a Yankee first sergeant in the 6th Wisconsin of the Iron Brigade. Lance Herdegen's new book explains why I and so many others put on a uniform and play old army one weekend a month and why those brave "boys of '61" should not be forgotten. There's no better historian to tell their story than Lance Herdegen, a man who has already written plenty about the Black Hats. His latest is the crowning achievement of a lifetime of study, "The Iron Brigade in Civil War and Memory: The Black Hats From Bull Run to Appomattox and Thereafter." In 1861, the South started the Civil War and four years and more than 600,000 dead Americans later, the North finally finished it. Among the best finishers for the boys in blue were the Westerners of the Iron Brigade, earning a name that implied hard times and tough men who did the math and paid the price. As the bad asses of the Army of the Potomac, the Black Hats suffered a greater percentage of casualties than any other brigade in the entire Union army, fighting the best the South had, Robert E. Lee's legendary Army of Northern Virginia. Without the valor of the Iron Brigade on the first day of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863, we'd all be saying "y'all" about now. There's thousands of Civil War books in print and nearly 40 on just the Iron Brigade alone - a few written by Herdegen; two of them are about Gettysburg, "In the Bloody Railroad Cut at Gettysburg," (1990) and "Those Damn Black Hats" (2008) plus he has a thin volume on Mickey Sullivan, the quirky and quotable 6th Wisconsin wise-guy warrior, "An Irishman in the Iron Brigade" (1993). Herdegen's credentials are impeccable - not only is he from Wisconsin and still lives there, but he was the former director of Civil War Studies at Carroll College - the oldest university in the Badger State. Herdegen is rightly regarded as the greatest living authority on all things Black Hat. It was Alan Nolan who wrote the initial history of the unit, "The Iron Brigade," published in 1961, and the two were pals for almost 50

years, recalled Herdegen in a interview when his new book was published last fall. ``I had provided some minor information to him at the time and we became lifelong friends and walked a lot of the battlefields together. It is difficult to grow up in Wisconsin and not be drawn to the story of the Iron Brigade, which included three Wisconsin regiments in addition to one from Michigan and one from Indiana. Over the years, I wrote a couple of books on the Black Hats that covered only a narrow portion of the story and expanded on Nolan's work with information that has come to light since 1961. Alan pretty much ended his book after the Iron Brigade lost its all-Western makeup in 1863, and included only a few pages on the rest of the war." So with this current volume, Herdegen has finished the story Nolan began, and having Herdegen write about his beloved Black Hats is like having Bart Starr tell Packer stories. ``I think it is because many of the soldiers were just regular folks from my home state who played such a key role in the Civil War. I can drive past their old farms and homesteads and through their hometowns on the same roads they traveled. I can stand at their gravesides. At speaking engagements in Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin, their great-grandsons and great-granddaughters and other relatives come up to say `Hello.' Often they know only a little of what their ancestors did between 1861 and 1865 and I have the wonderful opportunity to share information I have uncovered. The Black Hats left a remarkable record of service and patriotism at a critical time in American history and they deserve to be remembered." The Iron Brigade was composed of three regiments from Wisconsin - the 2nd, 6th and the 7th and the 19th Indiana. After Antietam, the depleted brigade was reinforced by the 24th Michigan. The map of the United States was different in 1861 - these were only 33 states and the Iron Brigade states were all considered Western states then and these woodsmen and farmers were not like at all like the New England Yankees. They were outsiders and would (and did) do anything to protect their Western heritage. Geography aside, the Westerners also looked different - they had been issued the M1858 dress hat worn by the regular army - the big Black Hat - while the vast majority of the Yankee soldiers wore the kepi or a forage cap, each sort of an old school baseball cap. The Black Hats fought in all those famous and terrible battles in the East from the summer of 1862 to the end of the war - each a good day to call in sick but that was not an option for a Civil War soldier. After drilling and drilling for more than a year, most intensely under a tough regular army officer, John Gibbon, the Black Hats were getting impatient for some action, having been left out of the Peninsula Campaign. At first, Gibbon was ``cordially hated" and referred to as ``the old tyrant." But the men learned well and long after the war, Iron Brigade survivors would buy Gibbon's headstone, standing on a shady hillside at Arlington National Cemetery. Be careful what you wish for - the Black were in four costly battles in just three weeks - Gainesville, Second Bull Run, South

Mountain, where they earned their name, and finally, the bloodiest day in American history, Antietam on September 17, 1862. The Black Hats kicked off the battle in Mr. Miller's 38-acre cornfield, known thereafter simply as "The Cornfield." McClellan promised his old friend Gibbon the next available Western regiment since the Iron Brigade now numbered less than a single regiment. The 24th Michigan joined not long after Antietam and got a cool welcome from the veterans. The 24th were not wearing Black Hats. Those had to be earned. The Iron Brigade avoided the worst of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville but are rightly remembered for their fight at Gettysburg on the first day, July 1, 1863, and Herdegen's description is worth the price of the book. The Black Hats, badly outnumbered, held off half of Lee's army before they were driven through the town, losing two thirds of their number. The 24th had their Black Hats by then and earned them, losing an astounding 80% of their number. The 6th Wisconsin, held back in reserve and operating alone, saved the entire Yankee army - including their Black Hat brothers - with their impetuous charge on an unfinished railroad cut, knocking the rebs for a loop as Cpl. Frank Waller captured the flag of the 2nd Mississippi and won the Medal of Honor. Without all that Black Hat blood and valor, the North could very well have lost at Gettysburg and shortly thereafter, the war itself. That's probably why there's Iron Brigade monuments all over the Pennsylvania battlefield. This is essentially, where Nolan's book ends but the war did not end at Gettysburg - it went on for a year and nine months more. And Herdegen was just getting warmed up. "First, as I noted earlier, no other study goes past Gettysburg in any depth. I think there are something like 150 pages just on 1864 and 1865. All of the attention has been the early part of the war, and especially their stand at Gettysburg. How the survivors reacted and performed in the 1864 and early 1865 fighting is a completely different story of a different kind of courage. The idealistic young men of 1861 are hardened combat veterans fighting a different kind of war. So I think this new book offers a conclusion--a final ending--to the endlessly interesting and revealing story of the Black Hats." The numbers told the tale. The 2nd Wisconsin lost 19.7% of its members killed - the most of any Federal regiment. Three other Black Hat regiments also were in the Top Eleven. The 7th Wisconsin had 281 soldiers killed in battle - third most of all Federal regiments - Iron and blood. The 6th and 7th Wisconsin had veteranized in 1864 and survived the war and got to march in the Grand Review down Pennsylvania Avenue on May 23, 1865 as part of 30 miles of victorious Union soldiers. Then everyone went home and tried to adjust to civilian life after this adventure of a lifetime. Many of the Black Hats stayed involved in veteran's groups for the rest of their lives. There's a poignant episode near the end of the book concerning Rufus Dawes, the commander of the 6th Wisconsin during the darkest days of the war. He was elected to Congress in 1880 but lost his re-election bid two years later and spent his last

day in the nation's capitol, wandering around Arlington National Cemetery until he found each of his two dozen 6th Wisconsin soldiers that are buried there. Herdegen with access to much more material that has come to light in the last 50 years, including newspaper and letters, plus scores of never before seen pictures, finishes the Black Hat story. It's not just a battle book - while it is that - it's also a people book. "Over the years, descendants have given me letters, diaries, photos, journals, and such. It was all this new material, plus some wonderful newspaper articles most historians have ignored, that made this book possible. The book also includes dozens of previously unpublished photos. Taken as a whole, these men finally come alive in a way that was simply impossible to create in the past." About once a month, I put on my period perfect uniform and dress up like some long gone Black Hat and wear shoes that are like skillets on my feet and am generally uncomfortable during and always sore after a re-enactment. We get to play army - everything looks and sounds like the real thing except we do not die. Herdegen's book reminds my friends and I why we continue to honor these long dead heroes who did such extraordinary things for 13 dollars a month. They deserve to be remembered. On to Gettysburg 150.

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