

Voices from Cemetery Hill: The Civil War Diary, Reports, and Letters of Colonel William Henry Asbury Speer (1861-1864)

Editorial Reviews

Product Description

Colonel William Asbury Speer fought in sixteen major battles of the Civil War. He was wounded twice in combat, served time in Northern prison camps, participated in Pickett's charge, marched with Jackson around the Union Army at Chancellorsville, and only weeks before his death, was elected to the North Carolina Senate. His Civil War diary and letters provide vivid accounts of battles at Hanover Court House, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania, all of which will interest scholars, military historians, and Civil War buffs. The story appeals to a rather broad reading audience because of the poignant, often poetic, power of the narrative. Speer was something of a philosopher. Because of his pensive nature, he was predisposed to suffer greatly as he wrestled with conflicting loyalties. Though he opposed slavery and secession, he was proud to be a Southern patriot. He attempted to honor his father and mother, who adamantly condemned the war, yet he believed it dishonorable to betray the South. Speer acknowledged that there was "some national sin hanging over us, and reasoned that "if the South would agree to emancipate the slaves in thirty years, the war would end." Most of his countrymen, at least those serving in the Confederate Army, were "on the other side of the question." However, many from Yadkin County had little sympathy for secession, which adds an interesting twist to the story. According to Speer's letters, there was a rather large contingent of deserters and recalcitrant conscripts nesting in the woods of Yadkin County. Speer's two brothers, one being the high sheriff and the other serving in the home guard, were charged with rounding up these Union men. For Speer's family and friends, it was incredibly difficult to watch the people they loved, many of them Union sympathizers, endure a war fought on two fronts: the battlefields of northern Virginia and the rolling hills of the Yadkin River valley. *Voices From Cemetery Hill* describes this war within a war. It is a story of love, suffering, and endurance; but most of all, it deals with Asbury Speer's commitment to home, family, and religious faith.

About the Author

Dr. Allen Paul Speer is a professor of education and an associate professor of social studies at Lees-McRae College and is the ninth generation of his family to have lived in the Boonville area. He lives in Banner Elk, North Carolina.
