Last of the Blue and Gray: Old Men, Stolen Glory, and the Mystery That Outlived the Civil War

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Abstract

A Civil War Mystery Almost 100 Years in the Making

Richard Serrano, newspaper columnist and author of several titles, has created an engaging narrative, which reads more like a mystery than a historical account of the passing of the last of America's Civil War soldiers. Whether they donne....

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Everyone loves a mystery, and here is an important one: Who was the last living Civil War veteran? Most Americans would be surprised to know that a handful of Civil War veterans lived to see the atomic age and almost made it to the war’s centennial. Los Angeles Times reporter Richard Serrano’s Last of the Blue and Gray assesses the candidates for this accolade; most seem to have been former Confederate soldiers. Both men were honoured in death as the last of the Blue and Gray, with dignitaries both political and military attending their last rites, with military honours, nationwide press coverage, state funerals. But there were doubts about the legitimacy of one man’s claims, doubts which are not yet resolved today. Many men in the years after the Civil War claimed battle honours they had not earned, for personal glory, for profit and a pension check, out of mischief or a simple desire for attention. Fascinating story of how several elderly men during the 40s and 50s duped everybody into thinking they were bonafide veterans of the Civil War; resulting in them stealing the limelight and receiving tax payer pensions.

Jim Blessing rated it it was ok. It is an attempt to steal glory, a recognition that much of the American public holds a special regard for those who have served. As Richard A. Serrano explores in his short, entertaining “Last of the Blue and Gray: Old Men, Stolen Glory, and the Mystery that Outlived the Civil War,” this kind of military fraud is nothing new. In the economic dark days of the Great Depression, “veterans” discovered that a few well-placed lies about serving in the Civil War, backed by a supporting letter from a bamboozled politician, could land a veteran's pension from the government. B