



Anne Cipriano Venzon, Martin Gordon, eds. *America's War with Spain: A Selected Bibliography*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2003. ix + 215 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8108-4493-3.



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A Splendid Little War

The “splendid little war” of the United States against Spain in 1898 was less than splendid in closeup view, but it was highly significant. The United States emerged from the brief conflict in possession of an oceanic empire in the Caribbean and the Pacific, and the war signaled to the world the arrival of America as a new “Great Power” on the international scene. Although eclipsed in both destructiveness and popular interest by the two world wars, the Spanish-American War has been the subject of a growing scholarly literature. America’s present-day engagement in “imperial” functions, such as peacekeeping and nation-building, has given new relevance to the events of 1898 and their colonial aftermath.

In *America’s War with Spain*, Anne Venzon provides a comprehensive bibliography of the most important English-language works published on the subject, as well as the principal printed collections of U.S. official reports and correspondence, with a brief note on the content and significance of each. Her listing includes books and articles produced during and immediately after the war and those published during the century that followed. Besides the brief conflict with Spain itself, Venzon

surveys the literature on the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) that followed the U.S. annexation of those islands.

The book is logically organized and easy to use. Separate sections cover general works, U.S. foreign relations, biographies and memoirs, the U.S. armed services, press and public opinion, and land and naval operations in the Caribbean and Pacific. Still other sections deal with medical and sanitary conditions, relief efforts for both American soldiers and indigenous war victims in Cuba, the role of African Americans in the conflict, imperialism, and anti-imperialism. The two final sections address literature and music inspired by the war. Besides the well-known writings of Stephen Crane, Richard Harding Davis, and others, the literature section lists dozens of wartime dime novels, many written under pseudonyms by Upton Sinclair, the noted Progressive “muck-raker,” as well as historical novels from the decades that followed the war. The music list features a sampling of the popular sheet music of 1898, including such titles as “My Sweet-heart Went Down with the *Maine*” and “Fighting Side by Side the Blue and Gray.”

Inevitably in a work of such scope, this reviewer found a number of errors. For example, the editor refers to Charles Johnson Post, author of *The Little War of Private Post*, a colorful memoir of the Santiago campaign, as serving with the Rough Riders (p. 45). Actually, Post was in the Seventy-First New York Volunteers, an infantry regiment. In some instances, notably my own *An Army for Empire*, the editors cite an early and superseded edition (p. 55). In their note on a biography of Colonel Charles Young, the first black graduate of West Point, the editors incorrectly state that he led the Tenth U.S. Cavalry, one of the four African-American regular Army regiments, at San Juan Hill (p. 148). In fact, all the commissioned officers of the Tenth Cavalry were white. Surprisingly, the editors omit entirely Walter Millis's *The Martial Spirit*, a dated but classic satirical view of the war.[1] No doubt other specialists in the field will find their own errors.

These caveats aside, *America's War with Spain* is a useful resource for anyone with a serious interest in the conflict or indeed the entire period. Especially valuable are the sections on the music and literature of the war, which constitute a rich trove of material for social and cultural historians. The listing of reports on the various volunteer organizations that worked to assist soldiers and their families, the nineteenth-century forerunners of the USO, contains items often ignored in war histories and bibliographies. In summary, this volume constitutes an excellent starting point for research on most aspects of the American side of the war, although it should be supplemented with listings of Spanish, Cuban, and Filipino works for a fully comprehensive picture.

Note

[1]. Walter Millis, *The Martial Spirit: A Study of Our War with Spain* (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1931).

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