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Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse by
Lawrence A. Babits & Joshua Howard, University of North Carolina
Press, 2009

George W. Geib
Butler University, ggeib@butler.edu

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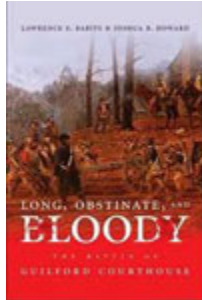
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Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse

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Reviewed by George Geib

In recent years we've seen a number of new approaches to the history of combat, called by some a "new military history." The old emphasis upon great commanders and heroic incidents has slipped away. It's been replaced by the dynamics of small units, the sociology of recruitment and training, the psychology of violent combat, the role of military medicine, and a careful attention to the memories and the points of view of the authors of our surviving documents. Babits and Howard offer a good example in their study of the American revolutionary battle of Guilford Courthouse in North Carolina, 15 March 1781. The battle is a good choice. In earlier studies it featured two famous commanders, Nathaniel Greene and Lord Cornwallis, and a famous artillery fire incident. It was extensively documented by participants, many of whom were common soldiers writing later pension applications. It was fought in at least four very distinct stages, involving identifiable soldiers, companies and small regiments. Casualties were high. Leadership, morale, and violence itself can be studied in detail. And the battle decided control of much of the American South in the War for Independence. The conflict is better known than the hype on the dust jacket suggests, but the new military history is here at its best.

- George Geib is Professor of History at Butler University.