



Albert C. Ellithorpe, the First Indian Home Guards, and the Civil War on the Trans-Mississippi Frontier

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The Civil War experiences of Albert C. Ellithorpe, a Caucasian Union Army officer commanding the tri-racial First Indian Home Guards, illuminate remarkable and understudied facets of campaigning west of the Mississippi River. Major Ellithorpe's unit—comprised primarily of refugee Muscogee Creek and Seminole Indians and African Americans who served as interpreters—fought principally in Arkansas and Indian Territory, isolated from the larger currents of the Civil War. Using Ellithorpe's journal and his series of *Chicago Evening Journal* articles as her main sources, M. Jane Johansson unravels this exceptional account, providing one of the fullest examinations available on a mixed-race Union regiment serving in the border region of the West.

Ellithorpe's insightful observations on Indians and civilians as well as the war in the trans-Mississippi theater provide a rare glimpse into a largely forgotten aspect of the conflict. He wrote extensively about the role of Indian troops, who served primarily as scouts and skirmishers, and on the nature of guerrilla warfare in the West. Ellithorpe also exposed internal problems in his regiment; some of his most dramatic entries concern his own charges against Caucasian officers, one of whom allegedly stole money from the unit's African American interpreters. Compiled here for the first time, Ellithorpe's commentary on the war adds a new chapter to our understanding of America's most complicated and tragic conflict.

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