

VOL. I: FROM 1600 TO 1900

THE WARS OF AMERICA



A comprehensive
narrative of all
of America's
conflicts
from the
early Colonial
period through
the Spanish-
American War

ROBERT LECKIE

"Leckie's comprehensive account of the battles America has fought since its birth [is] the best."—*Dallas Morning News*

OF AMERICA

Volume I

Robert Leckie



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***To Charles Watters
Compassionate Priest and Brave Chaplain
Who Was Killed by Friendly Fire in Vietnam
While Hastening to the Side of a Wounded Soldier.
Simple and Direct, He Was, as Jesus Said of Nathaniel:
“An Israelite, Indeed, in Whom There Is No Guile.”***

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THE WARS OF AMERICA

Volume I

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Preface



Twenty years ago while discussing war with a Pakistani friend I was astonished to hear him, a Moslem, declare that Islam had never been aggressive. The sons of Mohammed, he insisted, had fought only in self-defense. A few minutes later I found myself maintaining that America had never been imperialist. "Not really," I said. "After all, we gave the Philippines their independence." Now it was my friend's turn to be scornful. "*You gave them their independence?*" he mocked. Blushing, I realized that my own chauvinism had been no lovelier than his: if I could look upon the Crescent as a bloody scimitar, he could regard the Cross as a sword carried upside down.

The point here is not so much to echo Robert Burns's plea for the gift "to see ourselves as others see us," but rather to accept Voltaire's remark that the study of one's nation's history makes one a better and more loyal citizen. Knowing his national history, a man is less likely to deny the undeniable and more inclined to take the good with the bad and put all into true perspective. This, then, is the purpose of this book: to put the wars of America into perspective.

It is an attempt to show not only how our wars were fought but also why they occurred, as well as to illustrate what this country has gained or lost by appeals to arms. Equally, it is an attempt to portray the men who made and fought in these wars. When military history becomes a dreary compendium of maps and maneuvers, of calibers and compass bearings, as it so often does, the reason usually is that the writer has left out the human heart. War changes, its materials and its methods change, but the hearts of men do not. That is why Marshal Saxe could say, "The human heart is the starting point in all matters pertaining to war," and that is why this book attempts to come down heavily on the human side. I agree with the Englishman who

said he liked geography less than biography "because that's about maps, but the other is about chaps." And if, in following this sublime lead, this book sends a few scales flying from the hides of those antediluvian myths—America, the peace-loving nation; man, the peace-loving animal—then I will consider myself to have performed a small service in the interest of international sanity. Obviously, during an age in which an exchange of pushed buttons might very well end mankind's career upon this planet, it would be helpful to understand men as fighting creatures and our own nation as perhaps the fightingest society since the advent of modern warfare. Yet, though America can become martial, she has never been militarist. The distinction is a great one, and it is hoped that a knowledge of American military history may help us to maintain it. To this end, once again, this book was written.

Space limitations in a book of this scope have precluded the listing of a bibliography. A comprehensive one was simply out of the question, while a selected bibliography could well have run to another forty or fifty printed pages. In its place, I have included a list of recommended books and would refer the reader to Colonel Vincent J. Esposito's excellent and longer list in *The West Point Atlas of American Wars*, two volumes, New York: Praeger, 1959. Much of the research for this book was based upon that list.

It should go without saying that, apart from World War II, Korea and Vietnam, in which I had a personal interest, this work depends upon published sources. Nor do I pretend to have read everything published about every American war. When it is considered that one may collect more than 25,000 volumes and articles on the Civil War alone, it may be seen that the problem was not one of finding material but of choosing from it. Therefore, to have gone over ground already spaded by abler men before me would have been not only impossibly time-consuming but also pretentious.

Space limitations have also compelled me to confine reference notes to direct quotations. To footnote every statistic or observation would have been to number every third or fourth sentence. In the interest of smoother reading, all spelling and punctuation has been modernized, except where a certain echo from the past seemed appropriate. All dates are for the Time Zone in which the event occurred, and, to avoid an impression of that precision so rare in warfare, figures for casualties, the size of armies or the number of their arms, as well as

the distances they have marched or sailed to battle, are usually rounded off to the nearest zero.

Finally, let me acknowledge my great debt to my editors: to the late Cass Canfield and to Norbert Slepian for their kindly assistance on the original edition of this work published in 1968; to Corona Machemer for the same reasons on the revised and updated edition of 1981; and to M. S. ("Buz") Wyeth and Daniel Bial for their suggestions, patience and tact on this new, updated revision of 1992—to Mrs. Clarice Browne, librarian at Roxbury (New Jersey) High School, who kindly lent me copies of news magazines I was unable to obtain—and, of course, to my dear wife, who actually runs this lash-up as top kick and mess sergeant, for typing the manuscript while wearing her third hat of company clerk.

ROBERT LECKIE

Polliwog Pond
Byram Township, N.J.
September 23, 1991

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