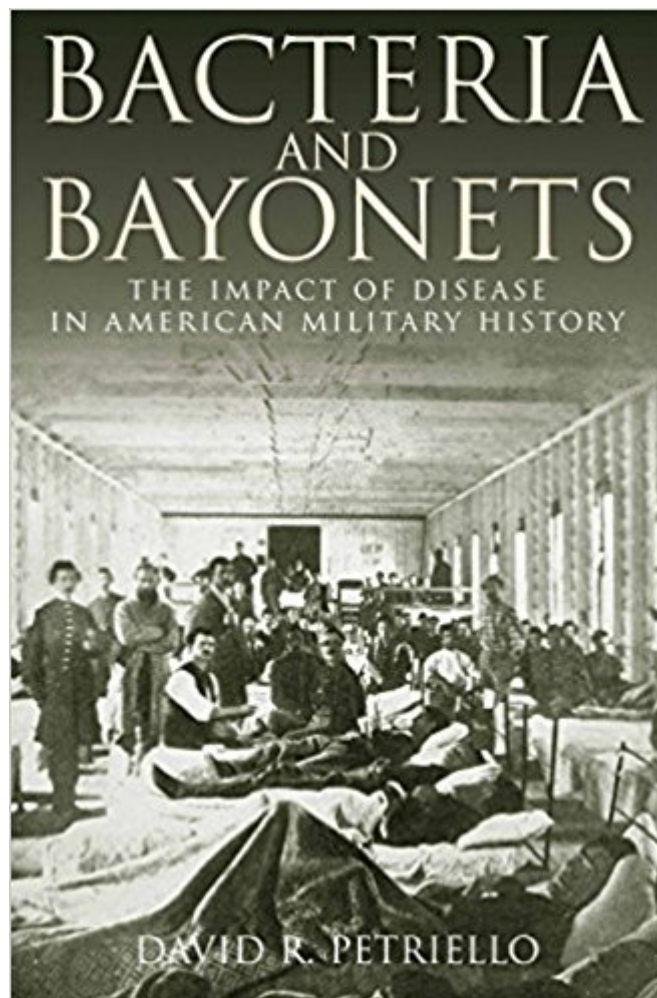




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# **Bacteria And Bayonets: The Impact Of Disease In American Military History**



## Synopsis

For hundreds of years men have fought and died to expand and protect the United States relying on martial skill and patriotism. Various powerful enemies, from the British to the Nazis, and legendary individuals including Tecumseh and Robert E. Lee have all fallen before the arms of the American soldier. Yet the deadliest enemy faced by the nation, one which killed more soldiers than all of its foes combined, has been both unrecognized and unseen. The war waged by the United States against disease, and by disease against the United States, has impacted the country more than any other conflict and continues to present a terrible threat to this day. Illness has been more than just a historical cause of casualties for the American military, in numerous wars it has helped to decide battles, drive campaigns, and determine strategy. In fact the Patriots owed pestilence as much for their victory in the Revolution as they did their own force of arms. Likewise disease helped to prevent the conquest of Canada in 1812, drove strategy in the Mexican War, handicapped Lee's 1862 advance, and helped lead to World War II. Disease also provided an edge in the wars against Native Americans, yet just as soon turned on the US when unacclimated US troops were dispatched to the southern Pacific. This book not only traces the path of disease in American military history but also recounts numerous small episodes and interesting anecdotes related to the history of illness. Overall it presents a compelling story, one that has been overlooked and under appreciated. Yellow fever, malaria, tuberculosis, glanders, bubonic plague, smallpox, and numerous other bacteria and viruses all conspired to defeat America, and are enemies that need to be recognized.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"...describes the impact of disease in American Military history from Columbus' early explorations through the recent terrorist activities...does a good job of telling the story of how battlefield medicine has evolved to keep up with changing tactics and different types of enemies..." (Civil War News)"Putting 400 years of history in under 300 pages is a daunting task. Doing a readable history on this subject is an equally daunting task. The good news is the author is able to accomplish both, producing an informative, enjoyable and readable history... both a history of how disease shaped America's wars and how we worked to conquer disease... a balanced historical account without lurid accusations or speculations. The author is always careful to point out the reasonable causes and impacts. The decimation of Native Americans is a result of two very different cultures meeting, not deliberate action. However, this did make settlement of the "New World" easier or even possible. The majority of the text, about 80%, covers through World War I. The balance looks at World War II and modern day problems. The book is full of historical tidbits that are interesting and thought provoking. Many problems result from tainted food, bad water or poor sanitation. An inaugural dinner party that almost killed the President, German agents trying to kill horses in 1916 for example. This is a serious history with endnotes, bibliography and a full index. Illustrations abound from woodcuts to photographs. This well-made handsome book is a pleasure to hold and to read." (James Durney)"... presents a concise history of the role of disease in shaping military conquests throughout American history. The broad historical importance of disease has long been an area of scholarly research, but this book focuses more narrowly on how disease shaped the outcome of battles and wars, such as the initial European conquest of the Americas in the 16th century and the World Wars of the 20th century. The narrative highlights the unpredictable and unintended consequences of epidemic diseases that often followed armies and provides the long history of attempts to use disease as a weapon. The final chapter explores recent research on weaponizing microbes and accompanying concerns about the potential use of disease by terrorists. The expansive historical sweep of this relatively short book makes it particularly well suited as a resource for undergraduate history students. Many of the incidents mentioned have been explored in more depth by other historians, yet Petriello provides a brief, well-organized synthesis of American medical and military histories. ..Petriello does provide an admirably extensive and current bibliography." (CHOICE)"... makes some interesting observations by noting, for example, instances in which a particular commander was laid low at a critical moment, or not taken ill despite epidemic conditions, which arguably influenced the course of events in ways we can but speculate about. Although the topic of disease and its influence on history has been dealt with before, this is a very

good, entertaining and thoughtful work." (NYMAS Review) "The impact of disease on military operations has long been recognized, but David Petriello has charted hitherto unexplored waters with his linkage of disease to American military history | Petriello has incorporated the fruits of prodigious research, and displayed commendable scholarship with this seminal and innovative study. The book is illustrated, endnoted, and contains a valuable bibliography. This volume should be in the library of any serious student of American military history." • (The Journal of America's Military Past) "One of the reasons Petriello's work is important to those who study war and warfare is because it helps us think about the role disease could play in the future of war... *Bacteria and Bayonets* is a well-researched book, based on a wealth of firsthand accounts, biographies, scientific studies and official government reports." (Maj. Joe Byerly, ARMY Magazine)

David R. Petriello was born in 1980 in Montclair, NJ. He finished his BA in Asian Studies at Seton Hall University before going on to receive a Masters in History from Montclair State and a Doctorate in History from St. John's University. Previous books include *American Prometheus: Ronald Reagan and the Modernization of China* (Published Dissertation, 2014) and *The Military History of New Jersey* (History Press, 2014). This book is the first major work to address the issue of disease and its impact upon the military history of America. It presents an interesting angle on the development of the nation from its founding to the present day.

Just what needed, excellent book. Delivered on-time!

Just one of the best books I've read on the subject. One book that's hard to put down. I highly recommend it.

Great book very well written.

A summary of the review on StrategyPage.Com' American military historian Petriello looks at the role of disease in American military history. He opens by reminding us that evidence from both the archaeological record and even Native American oral tradition indicates the presence of epidemic diseases in the Americas before the Columbian exchange. He goes on to discuss how "Old World" diseases played an important, if unintended role, in the European conquest of the Americas, and then focuses increasingly on the influence of disease on English settlement, the beginnings of the United States, and its wars from the Patriot victory in the Revolution, won in part

due to the introduction of inoculation, through to the present operations in the Middle East. Petriello at time makes some interesting observations by noting, for example, instances in which a particular commander was laid low at a critical moment, or not taken ill despite epidemic conditions, which arguably influenced the course of events in ways we can but speculate about. Although the topic of disease and its influence on history has been dealt with before, this is a very good, entertaining and thoughtful work.'For the full review, see StrategyPage.Com

Putting 400 years of history in under 300 pages is a daunting task. Doing a readable history on this subject is an equally daunting task. The good news is the author is able to accomplish both, producing an informative, enjoyable and readable history. For most of history, disease was a greater danger than combat for soldiers. Generals try to plan their campaigns around fever seasons as doctors can do little more than watch men die. This is both a history of how disease shaped America's wars and how we worked to conquer disease. This is a balanced historical account without lurid accusations or speculations. The author is always careful to point out the reasonable causes and impacts. The decimation of Native Americans is a result of two very different cultures meeting, not deliberate action. However, this did make settlement of the New World easier or even possible. The majority of the text, about 80%, covers through World War I. The balance looks at World War II and modern day problems. The book is full of historical tidbits that are interesting and thought provoking. Many problems result from tainted food, bad water or poor sanitation. An inaugural dinner party that almost killed the President, German agents trying to kill horses in 1916 for example. This is a serious history with endnotes, bibliography and a full index. Illustrations abound from woodcuts to photographs. This well-made handsome book is a pleasure to hold and to read.

Amazing book. It kept me reading for hours. I recommend for anyone who enjoys history.

Fascinating! I enjoyed reading this book immensely. This is a very talented author.

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