

*Guard Wars: The 28th Infantry Division in World War II.* By MICHAEL E. WEAVER. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. 384 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.)

Military historians occasionally invoke the age-old adage that “generals prepare to fight the last war.” In the case of the U.S. Army between the world wars, however, generals did not adequately prepare to fight *any* war—especially not one that would extend to the farthest reaches of the globe, tax American manpower and industrial production capabilities to their limits, and usher in the age of nuclear warfare. Michael E. Weaver, a military historian at the U.S. Air Force Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, uses the Pennsylvania National Guard (Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division) as a lens through which to examine U.S. Army mobilization, training, and combat before and during World War II. His primary focus is on the unit’s activities from 1939 until it came ashore in Normandy near Bricqueville on July 27, 1944.

*Guard Wars* is a work of both “old” and “new military history.” Weaver focuses on troop movements and explains the course of various engagements in discussing the unit’s advance across France and into Belgium and Germany, but he also evaluates the impact of social and cultural factors on the division. He finds that the majority of enlistees were young members of the urban working class motivated by patriotism and a desire to serve their state’s unit. Most were native born, and there were few whites from the lowest economic strata, almost no upper-class whites, very few farmers and men from rural areas, and no African Americans in the division’s ranks. Federalization of the National Guard in 1940 and 1941 reduced the “local flavor” of these units. By mid-1943, the guard, renamed the Twenty-Eighth Infantry Division, had lost much of its Pennsylvania identity as it became fully assimilated into the regular army.

Weaver discusses the division’s 1939 to 1943 training maneuvers in great depth. Division commanders (who included Major General Edward Martin, later governor of Pennsylvania) had their work cut out for them. The War Department lacked sufficient supplies for training its divisions, men used steel pipes and rubber bands to launch flour sacks (as there was a shortage of mortars), cigar boxes and blocks of wood substituted for mines, metal tubes and logs represented cannon, and sawhorses were used as machine guns. Light observation aircraft mimicked dive bombers, while training directors painted “Tank” on the sides of trucks during simulated combat exercises. These exercises revealed that the army as a whole—and National Guard units in particular—was not ready for combat. Weaver observes that “The National Guard’s failure to achieve competency in small-unit tactics and even individual skills was a severe indictment of the assumptions as to what a couple of hours of training a week could accomplish” (68).

Weaver’s work follows in the footsteps of such military historians as Michael

Doubler, Peter Mansoor, and Robert Rush, as he argues that “the American Army was an institution with a steep learning curve during combat and that it fought skillfully” (7). Divisions learned from their early mistakes, American soldiers and commanders were flexible, and the army became a rather effective fighting force as it gained combat experience. Like Mansoor and Doubler, Weaver shows that the United States did not win solely because of a massive application of firepower; rather, Americans were skilled fighters, particularly during the Battle of the Bulge.

Weaver has written an excellent account of the Pennsylvania National Guard’s role in the European campaign. He has also demonstrated that there is still much important work to be done on the U.S. Army’s participation in the “good war.”

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*America’s Longest Run: A History of the Walnut Street Theatre.* By ANDREW DAVIS. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010. 424 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$44.95.)

In this lavishly produced, beautifully illustrated, extensive study of Philadelphia’s famous Walnut Street Theatre, Andrew Davis offers scholars of American theater history, architecture, and drama a detailed account of more than two hundred years of survival and transformation in the nation’s oldest standing playhouse. The sixteen chapters trace the Walnut’s complex history. Among other things, the space has been a circus (before it was the Walnut Street Theatre), the acme of middle-class respectability in the mid-nineteenth century, a Yiddish theater in the 1930s, and the host to such stars as Edwin Forrest, Fanny Kemble, Edwin Booth, Lillie Langtry, Katherine Hepburn, Marlon Brando, and Sidney Poitier. *America’s Longest Run* brings the history of the Walnut Street Theatre from the eighteenth century up to the present day, closing with the theater’s bicentennial on February 2, 2009.

It is beyond the scope of such a sweeping study to provide detailed historical context for each transformation, so Davis anchors his work in an exploration of the personalities that shaped the playhouse’s history, from star performers to artistic directors. The result is a narrative history that infuses personality and interest into what might otherwise be a simple chronicle of events. For example, the first third of the book (chapters 1 through 5) focuses on the theater’s rise to legitimacy, following various managers whose dreams of financial triumph ended in disaster as the nation was overtaken by a series of economic and political crises. Chapters 6 through 8 examine the theater’s changing audiences. By the 1840s, managers turned their attention to capturing an audience with “the disposable