

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

JAN., 2016

VOL. 37, #5

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Join Us For Our Next Meeting

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2016

Drinks @ 6pm, Dinner @ 6:30

Judson Manor

East 107th St & Chester

Topic: The Dick Crews Annual Debate.

Resolved, What would a second Lincoln administration have been like?

Moderator: William F.B. Vodrey

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. Congratulations to One of Our Own

John Fazio's book, *Decapitating the Union: Jefferson Davis, Judah Benjamin and the Plot to Assassinate Lincoln*, has been getting some very fine reviews, which, according to the publisher (McFarland & Company, Inc., Jefferson, North Carolina) have had much to do with the book's brisk sales. Here is a sampling:

1. "...a must-read for Civil War historians and enthusiasts."—William John Shepherd, *America's Civil War*
2. "This is a thought-provoking look at the assassination and should be on your bookshelf...I found every page an adventure. You cannot come to a decision on who ordered the assassination without reading this book."—Joseph Truglio, *Civil War News*
3. "...probably the best (book) on the market on the American Civil War."—Amazon Customer
4. "...worth the time to read from cover to cover...The author has made great strides to correct false information that has been repeated as truth and to present ideas and back them up with hard evidence...I was greatly impressed."—Ionia Martin, readfulthingsblog.com
5. "In chapter after chapter of this complex but fascinating book, the author unravels the 'riddles, conundrums, enigmas and mysteries' (of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln)"—*Akron Beacon Journal*
6. "Impressively well and exhaustively researched, organized and presented, (the book) is a substantial and valued contribution to the growing body of historical literature with reference to the death of Abraham Lincoln...informed, informative and thoroughly 'reader friendly'...very strongly recommended..."—Michael J. Carson, *Midwest Book Review*

In addition, there are 24 customer reviews on the Amazon entry for the book, 22 of which give it five stars. Nationally prominent assassination scholar and author Edward Steers, Jr., said this of the book: "John Fazio's lucid narrative puts Booth's plan to decapitate the Union front and center...*Decapitating the Union* is both educational and entertaining, not an easy task for the historian."

For those who may have forgotten, John donates all royalties from the sale of the book to Roundtable members to the Roundtable.

Nice work, John.



Jefferson Davis Monuments: Being Removed?

By Dennis Keating

Confederate President Jefferson Davis is memorialized in monuments at various locations in the South. They have now come under fire, with demands that some be removed from public grounds.

In New Orleans, the Remove Racist Images coalition and others called for the removal of statues from city property (Lee Circle) honoring Davis, as well as well as Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and P.G.T. Beauregard. There is also a monument to the 1874 Reconstruction battle by mostly Confederate veterans to unseat the black-dominated city government. The city's Monuments Commission voted to remove them from public grounds and has been supported by Mayor Mitch Landrieu. On December 17, the City Council voted 6-1 to remove the monuments and to rename the site by its original title (<http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/12>). This came after heated public debates over the previous six months. An anonymous donor has agreed to pay the cost (\$170,000) to remove the monuments. However, a federal lawsuit has at least temporarily blocked the removal. Four organizations sued, claiming that the monuments had become an integral part of the city's landscape and that their removal would violate the Louisiana Constitution and federal laws as well.

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Jefferson Monuments cont.

In March, 2015, the student government of the University of Texas at Austin voted to have the university remove the status of Davis from the South Mall of the campus. There are also statues on the campus honoring Confederate military heroes Robert E. Lee and Albert Sydney Johnston.

None of these monuments have yet been removed. In Frankfurt, Kentucky, a group of 72 Kentucky historians called for the removal of the Davis statue from the rotunda of the state's capitol building. Davis was born in Kentucky (as was Abraham Lincoln). In August, 2015, the Kentucky Historic Properties Advisory Commission voted 7-2 against removal of the Davis statue.

Three of the most famous Davis monuments are probably unlikely to be removed. On June 3, 1907, his statue joined the statues of Robert E. Lee and J.E.B. Stuart (later joined by Stonewall Jackson) on Monument Avenue in Richmond, capital of the Confederacy. Davis rides along with Lee and Jackson on the face of Stone Mountain, Georgia (outside Atlanta). And, in 1931, his statue was installed as a representative of the state of Mississippi in the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol.

The protests against the continuing presence of Confederate leaders, including Jefferson Davis, will undoubtedly continue because of their association with the defense of slavery championed by the Confederacy which they served. Their defenders will also continue to defend their presence as historical figures.

Reference

CNN.com video:

"New Orleans' mayor wants Confederate monuments removed"

Lincoln Counter-Factuals

By Dennis Keating

Looking toward January's debate, these are two of the most interesting counter-factuals about "If Lincoln had lived and served a full(er) second presidential term":

Historian Eric Foner. "If Lincoln Hadn't Died". *American Heritage*, Vol. 58 (no. 6): 47 (2009).

Yale Law Professor Stephen Carter. *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*. Knopf. 2012.



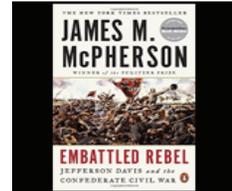
Jefferson Davis Monument

Lee Circle, New Orleans



Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Civil War by James M. McPherson
(2014).

Reviewed by Patrick Bray



James McPherson has done it yet again: published an insightful, fair, and very readable book on the Civil War. This time his subject is the wartime presidency of Jefferson Davis, a man whose reputation over the years has had more ups and downs than a stretch along the Appalachian Trail. In his introduction McPherson acknowledges the challenges of writing about a person who has occasionally been portrayed as a tragic hero, but more often has been a target for scathing criticism.

It is reassuring when an author discloses early on his potential biases which he seeks to overcome. Perhaps unnecessarily McPherson tells us that “My sympathies lie with the Union side in the Civil War”, not that we would expect any Neo-Confederate nonsense from a serious scholar like him. McPherson is also careful not to be unduly influenced by some of Davis’s disagreeable personal characteristics, a temptation which many Davis contemporaries and subsequent biographers have been unable to resist. Another pitfall which McPherson detours around is a comparison between Lincoln’s and Davis’s leadership to which the “apples to oranges” cliché was never more true.

While in no way minimizing Davis’s deficiencies as a Commander-in Chief (ground well plowed by others), McPherson writes convincingly of Davis’s honesty, intelligence, and indefatigable dedication to the quest for an independent Confederate nation based on racial slavery. He also points out the personal ax grinding of Davis’s critics who egos outstripped their talents. Recognizing that Davis has often come across as a remote and almost muffled historical figure, McPherson brings to life a man who suffered more than his share of personal tragedy plus a variety of physical ailments which guaranteed daily suffering. And yet Davis soldiered on for over four years never wavering during the war and subjecting himself to capture rather than surrender at the end.

As the title suggests, this book does not address Davis’s life before and after the Civil War which still leaves plenty of material to cover and McPherson does so in less than 300 pages in his characteristic concise yet somehow thorough style. When asked by friends wanting to get started on reading about the Civil War, I always recommend—as I’m sure many of you do—McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom* published in 1988. There are no doubt fewer interested in Jefferson Davis, but for those who are you can enthusiastically recommend *Embattled Rebel*, one book where Jefferson Davis gets a fair shake.

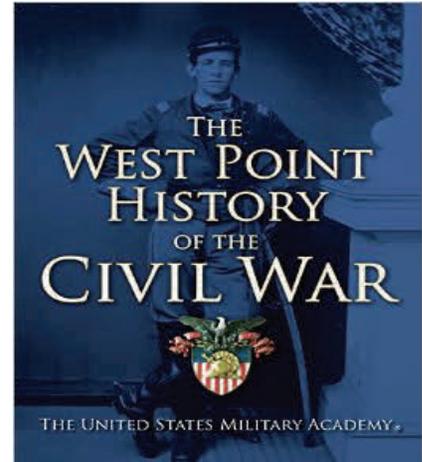
CIVIL WAR BOOKSHELF

By William F.B. Vodrey

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Who better to write a book about the Civil War than the faculty of the U.S. Military Academy? Well... yes and no.

The West Point History of the Civil War, edited by Clifford J. Rogers, Ty Seidule and Samuel J. Watson (Simon & Schuster 2014), is a big, handsomely-illustrated book. Intended to be the first in a series of authoritative, West Point-approved books on our country's major wars, it is an impressive – but far from flawless – volume.



The book was excerpted from a 71-chapter text used to teach the Civil War to cadets, and then tested and improved by feedback from faculty and cadets. It embodies a longstanding West Point boast, “Much of the history we teach was made by the people we taught.”

The early days of the Civil War were not easy ones for West Point. Although Cadet J.E.B. Stuart (Class of 1854) had praised the nationalizing influence of the school and said there was “no North and no South” among the cadets while he studied there, by 1859 the sectional divide had become stark. One observer said the Corps of Cadets had split “into two parties, hostile in sentiment and even divided in barracks.” Southern cadets burned President-elect Abraham Lincoln in effigy in late 1860. The first cadet left to serve the Confederacy on November 19, 1860, just weeks after Election Day. When high-profile graduates and faculty such as Robert E. Lee and P.G.T. Beauregard went south, critics in Congress blasted West Point as a breeding ground of traitors. Sen. “Bluff Ben” Wade of Ohio declared that “you can hardly find a graduate of West Point who is not heartily now the supporter of southern independence... the whole batch were imbued with... secession doctrine.” Bills were actually twice brought to the floor of Congress to cut off all funding and close the school. The Academy survived, but Congress imposed a new loyalty oath that is still used to this day.

I was pleasantly surprised that the book goes into considerable detail on the political, economic and social roots of the Civil War. Once the war begins, there are excellent graphics on the structure and composition of the armies. Important leaders in gray and blue are profiled in brief but engaging biographical sidebars. The authors thoroughly explore politics, logistics, recruiting, contrabands, military discipline, conscription, communications and other key issues. Members of the West Point faculty contributed meaty chapters on the origins of the war, the campaigns of the east and the west, coordinated strategy and “hard war,” the end of the war, and the ugly postwar realities of Reconstruction (which is especially well-covered) and Jim Crow. I found Prof. James K. Hogue’s chapter on why the U.S. won and the Confederacy lost to be particularly incisive and well-written. He makes an excellent case for the proposition – first suggested by Gary Gallagher - that we shouldn’t now ask why the Confederacy didn’t win, but rather, how was it able to last so long?

Bookshelf cont.

Soldiers live and die by maps, and the maps in this book are, as you might expect from a West Point project, almost uniformly excellent. There are both tactical and strategic maps, and foldout maps for such crucial battles as Antietam, Gettysburg and Chattanooga.

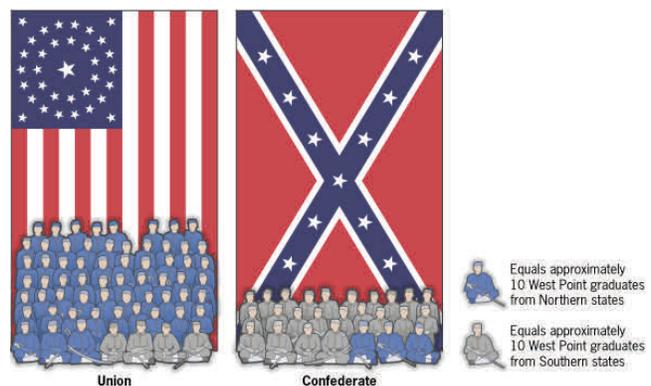
It is not a perfect book, however. Its coverage of the *Trent* Affair is somewhat repetitious. Stonewall Jackson is incorrectly implied to have been killed by Federal troops' fire. The authors repeat the old myth that Confederate troops came into Gettysburg looking for shoes on July 1, 1863. There are minor but troubling contradictions sprinkled throughout the text. The 1st Minnesota's battlefield losses at Gettysburg are said to be 82%, then 80% just three pages later. In the span of another three pages, Grant is said to have had either 36,000, 45,000 or 49,000 troops during the Vicksburg campaign. Sherman's March to the Sea is variously described as having begun on either Nov. 12, 14 or 15, 1864, and there are just too many other minor errors scattered throughout. The 432-page-long book's photo and illustration credits are also very poorly formatted, making it difficult to figure out their sources. Even the remarkable maps have their problems – the First Bull Run map, for instance, shows Washington, D.C.'s boundaries as a square, even though the southwestern part of the district had been retroceded to Virginia in 1846.



Still, despite these unfortunate shortcomings, *The West Point History of the Civil War* is an interesting and engaging way to learn about how Academy graduates such as Grant, Sherman, Thomas and Sheridan won the war, even as other graduates named Davis, Lee, Jackson and Longstreet did their best to keep them from doing so. West Pointers, Prof. Charles Larned of the Academy's faculty later rightly said, had played an outsized role in the Civil War, giving their all in a "mighty struggle for principle, which freed a race and welded a nation."

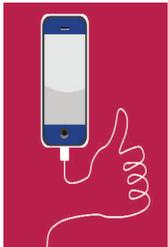


Photograph showing a group portrait of cadets possibly from West Point. 1861
demographics.cfm



Gettysburg by the numbers.

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/gettysburg/>



Cleveland Civil War Roundtable has new Facebook and Twitter Accounts

The CCWRT is expanding its presence on social media sites. “Like” us on the new [Facebook page](#) and “Follow” us on [Twitter](#). Remember to invite your friends and other members to Like/Follow the CCWRT.



FYI: Five important Civil War January dates

- January 1, 1863: President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which also outlined his plan for Reconstruction.
- January 2, 1863: The battle of Stones River ended with Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee withdrawing and William Rosecran's Army of the Cumberland holding its position.
- January 19, 1807: Robert E. Lee was born.
- January 21, 1824: Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was born.
- January 31, 1864: Congress approved the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. The next day President Lincoln submitted it to the states.