

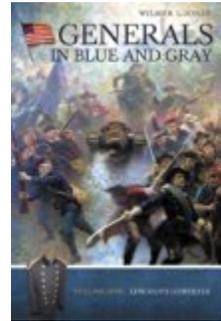
# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Wilmer Jones. *Generals in Blue and Gray*. Westport: Praeger, 2004. xi + 376 pp. \$124.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-275-98323-9.

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## The Men Who Won and Lost the American Civil War

In this two-volume set, author Wilmer Jones, an independent researcher, provides short biographical sketches of the lives and careers of forty-two of the most notable general officers of the American Civil War, twenty-one each for the Union and Confederacy. The author also includes cameos and analyses of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis as wartime leaders. While each of these mini-biographies can stand alone, the author has arranged them in a specific order in an effort to examine the actions of Lincoln and Davis as commanders-in-chief. Indeed, the author declares that taken together the careers of these men can tell a command history of the Civil War. Jones focuses on the personal characteristics of the individuals, their backgrounds, and their leadership qualities, all with an eye toward evaluating their skill as commanders. Jones includes all of the major commanders of the Civil War. The Union generals examined are Winfield Scott, Irvin McDowell, Benjamin Butler, George B. McClellan, Don Carlos Buell, William S. Rosecrans, John Pope, John A. McClernand, Henry W. Halleck, Ambrose E. Burnside, Ulysses S. Grant, Daniel E. Sickles, William T. Sherman, John Sedgwick, Joseph Hooker, George H. Thomas, Philip Sheridan, John Reynolds, George G. Meade, Hugh Kilpatrick, and Winfield Scott Hancock. On the Confederate side, the author presents biographies of P. G. T. Beauregard, Joseph E. Johnston, Robert E. Lee, Thomas J. Jackson, Albert Sidney Johnston, Braxton Bragg, Patrick Cleburne, Nathan Bedford Forrest, James Longstreet, J. E. B. Stuart, John Bell Hood, John C. Breckinridge, Leonidas Polk, John Hunt Morgan, A. P. Hill, Richard Taylor, Richard S. Ewell, Jubal A. Early, John

Brown Gordon, D. H. Hill, and William J. Hardee.

Each of the biographies/chapters averages ten to fifteen pages in length and is written in an engaging, somewhat sentimental fashion that will appeal to general readers and Civil War enthusiasts. All aspects of the generals' lives—their childhoods, romances, early civilian and military careers, and, of course, wartime experiences—are chronicled. A look at the pre-war backgrounds of the generals explains their effectiveness or lack thereof during the war. While the early experiences of these men could and did influence their wartime actions, the author correctly realizes and illustrates that the circumstances of battle also shaped and developed the careers of these men. Jones does a nice job of weaving all of this information into a few pages.

The sketches are designed to be read independently and in any order. In reality, this is the best way to read them. Although the author attempts to provide a command history of the war and an analysis of the effectiveness of Lincoln and Davis, he falls short here. The effort is basic in its approach. Moreover, other problems with the volumes stand out. Jones failed to use any primary sources, including published sources, to produce his sketches. This certainly limits the depth to which he can go in developing his biographies. Also, because of the connections between many of these officers, the biographies can be a bit repetitive at times, and Jones includes more detail on the Confederate commanders in volume 2 than their Union counterparts.

In sum, Jones has written a nice introductory study of the lives of the major commanders in the Civil War and the presidents who led them. While this two-volume set offers nothing new to scholars, it will appeal to a broad general audience. The sketches are generally well written, and serve as concise introductions to the most influential generals of the conflict. Moreover, his concept of a command history is sound, and although he fails to provide the in-depth analysis that many would desire, his basic analysis will provide interesting and informative reading for the novice.

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