

H-Net Reviews

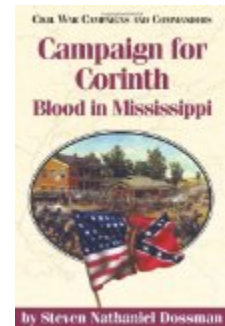
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Steven Nathaniel Dossman. *Campaign for Corinth: Blood in Mississippi*. Civil War Campaigns and Commanders Series. Abilene: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2006. 128 pp. \$14.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-893114-51-7.

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An Important Battle Packaged for Beginners

Steven Nathaniel Dossman, a McWhiney Fellow, has produced a simple yet important examination of the campaign and battle for the Mississippi rail junction of Corinth in 1862. From this work, the reader will obtain a basic understanding of the battle, major figures involved, and overall importance of this battle to the Civil War. The Corinth campaign was an important event in the Civil War that is worth studying as it allowed the Union army to push further into the Confederacy in the West. Dossman used many good sources, including the *Official Records of the War of Rebellion* (1880) and Ulysses S. Grant's memoirs, to provide the necessary information on the campaign.

This book has several great strengths. The first is its readability. The prose is simple and to the point; it does not bog the reader down. The reader is treated to more of a story than a typical scholarly analysis of a campaign, making the book especially valuable and refreshing for beginning students of history, although it may frustrate scholars who are looking for a new examination of the event.

Dossman includes numerous useful features—brief biographies, images, maps, and appendices—all of which will assist readers in gaining a better understanding of the campaign and battle. Biographical sketches of many prominent officers on both sides provide background for the men associated with the battle, campaign, the western theater, and the war as a whole. The biographies will

be helpful to readers unfamiliar with the leaders of the Civil War armies. In addition to the biographies, the book provides many images that detail battle scenes. These offer a visual break that complements the text and aids in comprehension of the battle. Furthermore, Dossman includes simple yet artistic maps to detail the movements of opposing forces in the various battles and skirmishes that were part of the Corinth campaign. Several appendices, which provide the orders of battle for the campaign, will also aid readers in understanding the battle. These additions discuss not only which units were involved, but also where and how the armies were organized.

The absence of a clear section on historiography hinders this book's usefulness to an academic audience. While Dossman does draw on some scholars, such as Peter Cozzens, he neglects others, like James McPherson and Steven Woodworth. His neglect of contemporary historiography may cause academics to ignore this work. However, general readers and students will breathe a sigh of relief at not having to wade through a review of the literature on the subject. Furthermore, many of his sources are older and reflect more traditional schools of historical thought. They do not, for example, discuss social history or issues associated with minorities. While this work provides necessary factual information surrounding the campaign, it presents an old-fashioned interpretation.

In addition, while the biographical sketches are use-

ful for persons unfamiliar with the war and battle, they also present a problem. They break the flow of the book, forcing the reader to constantly pause and take a detour from the narrative. A different location for these sketches would have solved this problem; such material is better suited for an appendix, where readers can look at it after reading the book.

Overall, Dossman has provided a simple work on an important campaign during the Civil War. This book is a good start for those new to history, as it presents the battle in an easy to understand format. It is also useful for

high school classrooms, as well as undergraduate classes, since it will provide students with basic knowledge of the battle. Academics may find elements of Dossman's work problematic, but perhaps it will lead other scholars to write more about the battle, incorporating social history and newer schools of thought while reshaping the existing historiography. *Campaign for Corinth* is a good start for this renewed examination of this event by future scholars. Yet, due to problems with scholarship, interpretation, and organization, this work shows room for improvement.

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