

# H-Net Reviews

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Steven E. Woodworth, ed. *The Shiloh Campaign*. Civil War Campaigns in the Heartland Series. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009. vii + 167 pp. \$24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8093-2892-5.

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## Remembering Bloody April

In April 1862, reports of carnage at the Methodist meeting house of Shiloh at Pittsburg Landing along the banks of the Tennessee River in the wilderness of southwestern Tennessee stunned the citizens of both the Confederacy and the Union. At Shiloh, the first significant battle of the Civil War, the Rebels attempted to stem the Federal advance into the Confederate heartland and shore up the collapsing defensive line in the western theater. They failed. Yet the Union army did not win; it merely survived. Mounting casualties and other events soon overshadowed Shiloh, as the great national tragedy of the war continued unabated for three more years. The campaign, however, stands as one of the most influential of the war and deserves close scrutiny by students of the conflict. *The Shiloh Campaign*, edited by Steven E. Woodworth, part of the Civil War Campaigns in the Heartland series, provides eight chapter-length essays by notable Civil War historians on various aspects of the battle.

The first essay by John R. Lundberg delves into Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston's conduct in the campaign from the fall of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson until his mortal wounding at Shiloh. Alexander Mendoza follows Lundberg's piece with an examination of Union Colonel David Stuart's brigade in General William Tecumseh Sherman's division. This brigade's stand on the extreme Federal left flank delayed the Confederate advance through the day of the battle and proved a key factor in the Army of the Tennessee's survival. Next, Timothy B. Smith's essay explores the myth of the "Hornet's Nest." If the Confederates directed most of the pressure at the flanks of the Union army on the first day, is there any validity to the idea that the center of the line was a focal point of the fighting? The fourth chapter by Woodworth analyzes Union General Lew Wallace's delay in reaching the battlefield and the subsequent effects of this event on his military career. Gary D. Joiner's essay focuses on the important role of Union gunboats to the

overall campaign and specifically the battle itself. Joiner demonstrates the effectiveness of the gunboats as floating batteries as well as weapons of terror. The sixth essay is a reproduced article from the *Journal of Southern History* by the late professor Grady McWhiney, who argued that the Confederates had a realistic opportunity for victory the first day of the battle had General P. G. T. Beauregard not ordered a halt to the advance in order to reorder his lines and reestablish command and control. Charles D. Gear's essay in chapter 7 investigates what the battle meant to the average Confederate soldier. By examining the writings of these men, Gear demonstrates how time altered perceptions of the battle. Brooks D. Simpson closes the book with his essay on how the battle affected the relationship between Sherman and Ulysses S. Grant and on the futures of these two prominent leaders.

The book is an excellent companion piece for those already familiar with such works as *Shiloh: Bloody April* (1974) by Wiley Sword; *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862* (2007), edited by Edward Cunningham, Gary D. Joiner, and Timothy B. Smith; and Larry J. Daniel's *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War* (1998). However, this work is not for the novice since it is neither an introduction to nor a detailed examination of the Shiloh campaign. Indeed, even if read in sequence, the essays do not present a comprehensive view of the battle. What they do, instead, is focus on some unique aspect of the engagement. As a result, the essays serve to broaden the knowledge of those already familiar with the key people and events associated with the battle. This is good news for Shiloh and Civil War historiography as a whole. For too long, historians have assumed that everything that needed to be addressed about Civil War battles had already been discovered, written about, and analyzed. Such is obviously not the case. Indeed, this anthology of well-written, well-conceptualized, and well-argued essays challenges our current understanding of

Shiloh and its significance, or offers new and interesting positions to be further analyzed and debated. It is to be hoped that future volumes in this series will appear for all of the major battles and campaigns of the war. Historians have long noted that each generation has something to add to the understanding of a historical event.

This volume stands as testimony that the current generation of Civil War researchers still has something to say on the subject of Shiloh. All scholars and enthusiasts of the American Civil War should add this volume to their collections.

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