

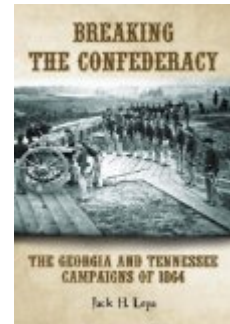
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jack H. Lepa. *Breaking the Confederacy; The Georgia and Tennessee Campaigns of 1864*. Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2005. v + 238 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7864-2178-7.

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As Jack Lepa notes in the second chapter of this book, the real story of the 1864 campaigns west of the Appalachian Mountains began with the Battle of Missionary Ridge in November of 1863. When the Confederate Army of Tennessee retreated here it “cost the Confederacy its last foothold in that state and began the slide toward defeat for the South that included the loss of Atlanta, Sherman’s campaign to Savannah, and the twin disasters of Franklin and Nashville a year later” (p. 12).

For three-quarters of this fairly slim volume the author provides a rather straightforward account of Sherman’s movement with the Western Federal armies in 1864 south from Tennessee into Georgia towards Atlanta, the capture of that city, and the subsequent advance across Georgia to Savannah. That successful campaign is examined in some detail, with extensive quotations from participants on both the Union and Confederate sides taken from published accounts and secondary sources.

The book next turns to Hood’s movements as he attempted to lure Sherman away from Atlanta toward the north. As history notes, this plan ultimately failed. Hood then moved north into Tennessee toward Franklin and Nashville and eventual disaster for the Confederate Army of Tennessee. Lepa covers these actions reasonably well in several short chapters, again using extensive

quotations.

When the reader finally wanders through the somewhat bland observations of the last chapter of this book—appropriately titled “The End in Sight”—and puts the volume down, there is an uneasy feeling that this is less an important contribution to Civil War history than an overgrown history term paper. Why the uneasiness? Certainly the book covers the topic adequately. However, a quick look at the bibliography shows a lot of secondary sources, but no research in original materials. The extensive quotations from those sources provide a certain amount of color to the book, but sometimes seem to stand in the way of the narrative. The narrative itself is often hindered by extensive descriptions of troop dispositions and movements that would have been unnecessary had the book contained adequate maps instead of the simple line drawings that pass for maps. While good books are expensive, \$45.00 does seem a bit steep for this not particularly extensive volume.

For the reader with a passing knowledge of the topic, this is all very familiar material. What Lepa has written here has been written elsewhere before and in a more readable style. All things considered, there is a very limited usefulness to this book for the general reader of Civil War history.

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