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Book Review: "No Such Army Since the Days of Julius Caesar": Sherman's Carolinas Campaign from Fayetteville to Averasboro

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BOOK REVIEWS

Smith, Mark A. and Wade Sokolosky. *"No Such Army Since the Days of Julius Caesar": Sherman's Carolinas Campaign from Fayetteville to Averasboro*. Discovering Civil War America Series, No. 3. Ft. Mitchell, KY : Ironclad Publishing, 2006. ISBN: 0967377064. 260 p. \$19.95.

A masterfully written, nicely paced review – from the perspective of two career Army officers – of the physical, political and situational demands placed on the participants of the Carolinas Campaign near the end of the Civil War.

Both authors bring considerable real-world Army expertise and archival-digging and networking skills to the book. Maj. Mark Smith's knowledge of Sherman's "March to the Sea" and the Battle of Averasboro is considerable. And, Col. Wade Sokolosky, a Carolina native and life-long Civil War buff, wrote his master's thesis while at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College on "The Role of Union Logistics in the Carolinas Campaign of 1865." Their co-authorship brings together two talented writers whose knowledge of the Campaign is likely unsurpassed by any present writer or historian.

Opening with a discussion of the situation facing Gen. Sherman after his taking of Savannah, readers will find the authors' ability to get into Sherman's mind-set and consider with him, his options, fascinating. Risks, rewards, and challenges of each option are weighed and considered as Sherman designs and places in motion his strategy for the Union Army's expedition through the Carolinas.

Then, as Sherman moves into South Carolina, the authors switch their perspective to the situation facing the opposing Confederate officers; first profiling the careers of prominent decision-makers and then outlining the options they each faced. Just as we often find ourselves – in our daily work lives – having to "manage by personality," the actions and results of strategies implemented by the principal players of both side are examined in light of their personality, intellect, experience and predisposition to risk. The authors adroitly bring the reader into the mind-set of these generals and other soldiers as they played real-world chess with limited resources, difficult terrain and unknown outcomes.

While the principal focus of the book is on the fighting in and around Fayetteville and Averasboro, North Carolina, the authors provide a helpful, detailed, running narrative of the events leading to these battles. The book's presentation reminds this reviewer of a briefing he happened upon while visiting the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. The Park Historian was conducting a tour for a group of 25-35 military officers from Air University (the U.S. Air Force's equivalent of the Army's "War College.") and gave a detailed blow-by-blow briefing of what happened – one military expert to another – and, then responded to questions, not just from the printed historical record perspective, but with a detailed analysis of the motives and probable rationale as to why certain strategies were employed.

Maj. Smith and Col. Sokolosky treat their reader in the same manner – as a fellow expert – and one can't help but enjoy the vicarious pleasure and enthusiasm of listening-in as two very interesting career-Army, Civil War experts narrate the story of the campaign and the concluding battles that served as the closing chapters of the Civil War.

Profusely illustrated with photographs and maps and illustrations drawn by Col. Darrell Combs, USMC (Ret.), this book is a captivating read and is highly recommended for all academic and public libraries in the Southeast with an interest in the Civil War.

R. Neil Scott

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