

Historians can argue about McFeely's interpretations, but his biography should become one of the most important works on its subject.

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

EARL J. HESS

Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg, by Richard J. Sommers. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981. pp. xxiii, 670. Photographs, maps. appendixes, bibliography, index. \$22.50.

When General Ulysses S. Grant, in cooperation with his subordinate, George G. Meade, began moving tens of thousands of soldiers, hundreds of wagons, and tons of supplies toward General Robert E. Lee's weaker Army of Northern Virginia in the spring of 1864, Northern expectations were high. One or two great battles hopefully would finally end the war and restore the Union. The slaughter of thousands of boys and men at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor along with the terrain and earthworks near Richmond, however, forced the Union army to settle into a long, sometimes boring, sometimes bloody siege of the Confederate capital and Petersburg, from June 1864 to April 1865. In those forty weeks of alternating inactivity and attack, federal forces launched ten offensives against Lee's entrenched army. The gray general, brilliant to the end, managed to beat back nine of the assaults before his forces finally cracked and retreated in early April 1865, a retreat that shortly ended with surrender at Appomattox Court House in southern Virginia.

Richard J. Sommers, archivist historian at the United States Army Military History Institute, has written a well-researched, highly detailed account of one of the ten offensives against Petersburg, the assaults of late September-early October 1864. This sixth offensive, like most of these before it, was a two-pronged attack. General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James struck first on the north bank of the James River, attempting to break through the outer defense of Richmond and thereby either capture the rebel capital or divert enough Southern troops north of the river to enable federal forces south of Petersburg to smash Lee's weakened right wing. Then General Meade's Army of the Potomac poured out of Grant's earthworks south of the river to take advantage of Lee's preoccupation with the threat near Richmond. Somewhere, the theory went, blue forces had to be stronger than Lee's outnumbered grays, and a decisive breakthrough could be achieved. While Grant's army did manage to

capture a few square miles of disputed territory, the ultimate objective of breaking through or around Lee's lines and defeating his army or capturing Richmond or Petersburg was denied him once again by Lee and his lieutenants. Ultimately, then, Lee must be considered the victor in this sixth offensive against Petersburg and Richmond. He had redeemed his capital for another six months. Still, as Sommers astutely recognizes, Grant had tightened his grip on Lee's army and made future Union success more likely.

Sommers follows the offensive chronologically, from its planning stages in late summer to its conclusion in early October. Devoting about 180 pages to the Union attack north of the James River and roughly 230 pages to the subsequent assault near Petersburg, the author traces troop movements down to the regimental (and sometimes lower) level. Indeed, so closely does Sommers follow the action that his narrative too often bogs down in detail. For example:

Only a handful of experienced troops now remained in garrison on the minor sectors: the 2nd New Hampshire, E and H/16th New York Heavy Artillery, M/4th Massachusetts Cavalry, I/1st USCT Cavalry, and the 33rd New York Battery with Marston; and C/1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery and a section of the 7th New York Battery, together with 150 Negro recruits. . . . (p. 8)

A final thirty-page chapter outlines the author's conclusions about the offensive. As mentioned above, Sommers regards Lee as the victor but recognizes that Grant made later Union success more likely by pressing up against Lee's lines more tightly. Sommers also considers the late September offensive "a key phase" in Grant's evolution of siege strategy, but here the writer is less convincing. The two-pronged attack on both sides of the James River, he claims, was eventually abandoned in favor of a one-pronged grand assault, the approach that finally triumphed in April 1865. But since this sixth offensive was neither the first nor last time the two-pronged method was employed by Grant, it is somewhat difficult to regard it as a "key phase" in the general's evolution of strategy.

While this is indeed a fine contribution to Civil War military history, it is not without flaws. The scope of the book is rather narrow. It covers only one of the ten offensives against Petersburg and Richmond—and requires 670 pages to do it! The narrative drags at times under the weight of excessive detail, and most of the maps are cluttered with too many lines and markings. It appears to be exactly what it is—an excellent doctoral dissertation that has not been pared and streamlined enough for publication. Still, the book's strengths make it worthwhile: its wide and deep research (1,234 sources actually used, 71 percent of them un-

published), its attention to every facet of the campaign, its elaborate reference features (22 maps, 82 photographs, 2 detailed appendices, a 38-page bibliography, and a useful index), and its usually solid conclusions. It will doubtless stand for many years as the last word on this aspect of the Petersburg campaign.

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

RICHARD LOWE

The Atlanta Papers, compiled by Sydney C. Kerksis, biographical sketches of the authors by Lee A. Wallace, Jr., indexed by Margie Riddle Bearss. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1980. pp. 907. Photographs, index, maps, supplementary reading. \$35.00.

This volume is a compilation of twenty-nine personal narratives by Federal participants in the campaign for Atlanta in 1864, plus an account of the action at Gilgal Church by Sydney C. Kerksis who compiled and edited the collection. Most of the papers originally appeared in publications of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, a veterans organization founded in 1865 which yet survives in Philadelphia. Others came from northern state historical societies and posts of the Grand Army of the Republic. Until this compilation and reprint by Morningside Bookshop these materials were rare and obscure.

Most general readers would probably care not at all if these papers remained rare and obscure. Scholars and Civil War "buffs," however, should much appreciate *The Atlanta Papers*. Only relatively recently have the western campaigns in the Civil War begun to receive a parity of scholarly attention with those in Virginia. And as Kerksis notes in his introduction, there still exists no full-scale, modern study of the campaign for Atlanta. These reminiscences provide some of the pieces for the larger mosaic. The authors range in rank from enlisted men to a major general. They treat topics as broad as grand strategy and as narrow as a single engagement. *The Atlanta Papers* is an interesting and valuable collection.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

EMORY M. THOMAS

The Milwaukee Road East: America's Resourceful Railroad, by Patrick C. Dorin. Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1978. pp. 175. \$14.95.

About once a year for the past decade or so another of Patrick Dorin's books on an American railroad, produced for Superior Publishing Co., appears on the market. Dorin, a school administrator in a small town

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