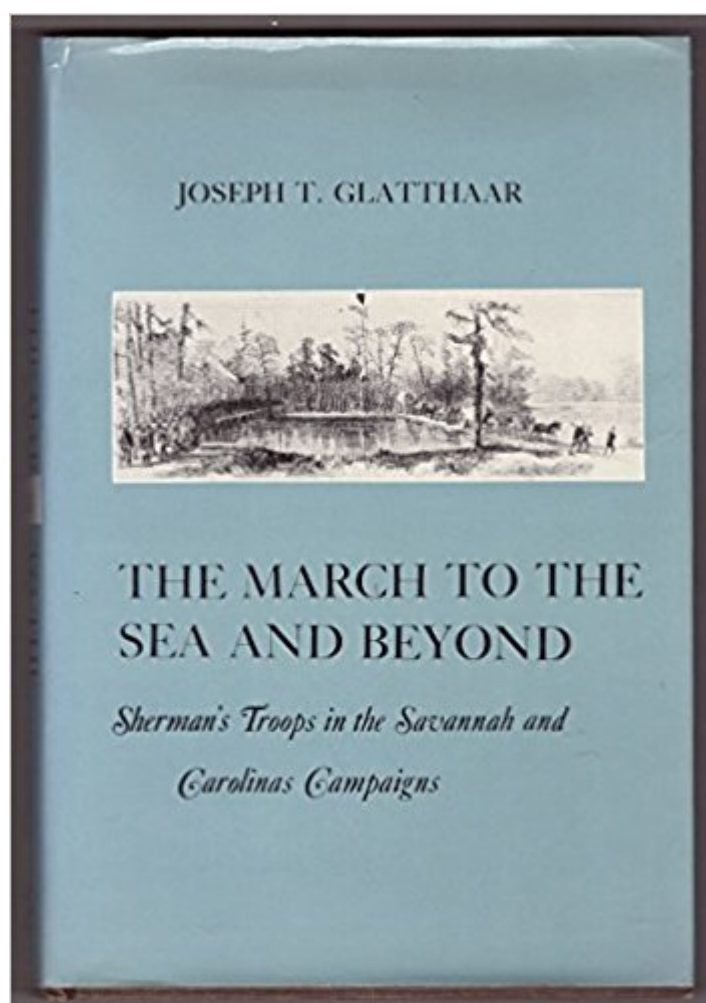


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The March To The Sea And Beyond: Sherman's Troops In The Savannah And Carolinas Campaigns (American Social Experience Series, Volume 1)



Synopsis

In November, 1864, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman led an army of veteran Union troops through the heart of the Confederacy, leaving behind a path of destruction in an area that had known little of the hardships of war, devastating the morale of soldiers and civilians alike, and hastening the end of the war. In this intensively researched and carefully detailed study, chosen by Civil War Magazine as one of the best one hundred books ever written about the Civil War, Joseph T. Glatthaar examines the Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns from the perspective of the common soldiers in Sherman's army, seeking, above all, to understand why they did what they did. Glatthaar graphically describes the duties and deprivations of the march, the boredom and frustration of camp life, and the utter confusion and pure chance of battle. Quoting heavily from the letters and diaries of Sherman's men, he reveals the fears, motivations, and aspirations of the Union soldiers and explores their attitudes toward their comrades, toward blacks and southern whites, and toward the war, its destruction, and the forthcoming reconstruction. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Joseph T. Glatthaar, professor of history at the University of Houston, is the author of Partners in Command: Relationships Between Civil War Leaders and Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

This is not the traditional campaign book. Most books written on Sherman's Savannah and Carolina Campaigns provide the backgrounds of key military leaders on both sides, discuss the politics, follow the Union army's movements, outline Union and Southern strategies and tactics, and cover notable events, including battles and other engagements. While touching upon those topics, this work instead complements those books for readers interested in a deeper understanding of those campaigns from the Union soldier's perspective. This book focuses on who these soldiers were, their experiences, and how they saw things. Much of the story is told through the words of Union soldiers, with additional observations from civilians and Confederate soldiers they encountered along their marches. Their stories are gleaned from personal journals, letters, manuscripts, memoirs, regimental histories, and other sources. Individual chapters include: organization and makeup of Sherman's Army (1) (including notable aspects of the senior commanders), soldiers' experiences and feelings concerning the Cause (2) Blacks (3) Southern Whites (4), Camp Life (5), The March (6), Foraging (7), Destruction and Pillaging (8), Battle (9), and The War's End (10). Appendices provide statistical information on the demographics of the soldiers. To get a sense of this book, I've included a sampling of what it includes:

THE ARMY--By the time of the campaigns, Sherman's army was a well-oiled machine of confident and battle-hardened veterans. Most officers through the ranks had proven abilities, with poor performers and most trouble-makers long gone.--There were key differences between the army and the Army of the Potomac in the east. The reenlistment rate was much higher, relations between officers and enlisted were less formal and more supportive, and the troops were more of an independent nature. The occasional abusive officer was not tolerated. There was less focus on bearing and appearance. Spit and polish did not win battles; competence and mutual respect were more important.--Sherman's army overwhelmingly supported Lincoln's reelection, with mostly disdain for the peace-seeking copperheads led by their candidate McClellan. They did not want their years-long absences from home, their hardships, and the deaths and maiming of fellow soldiers to have been in vain, and wanted complete victory.--Soldiers were surprised at the lack of a middle class and the clear distinctions between the rich and the mostly poor whites, and were irritated by observed segregation among them, including that between Southern enlisted soldiers and their officers.

THE CAUSE, SOUTHERN WHITES, AND SLAVES--Soldiers grew increasingly angered by the opulence, arrogance, and of the treatment of slaves by the aristocrats, blamed them for the war, and took special interest in taking and destroying their property, particularly in South Carolina.--Many were shocked, and agitated, by the number of bi-racial slaves, which indicated the level of depravity among slave owners.--Some also blamed

blacks for the war, but as a whole the army grew increasingly empathetic towards them.--Slaves took many risks to assist foragers, provide intelligence, act as guides, and aid escaped Union prisoners.--Soldiers destroyed slave trading businesses along their path, as well as whipping posts, slave pens, auction blocks, and any tools of the business, and killed hounds used for hunting escaped slaves.--Slave-owners were often shocked or surprised to see their slaves run to Sherman's army, ironically some calling them traitors.

THE MARCH AND CAMP LIFE

--The two army wings, and sometimes each of the four corps, took different but parallel routes to maximize speed and impact, and to keep the enemy from guessing primary destinations but close enough to support each other.--The Confederates were astonished at the progress of Sherman's wagons and artillery through mud and washed out areas. Sherman established pioneer units down to the division and brigade levels, which excelled at removing felled trees, repairing bridges, and corduroying, which often required two layers of trimmed logs laid down for them to roll over.--While marching, troops dreaded wagon train guard duty. The wagons were often the target of opposing cavalry, the soldiers were responsible for freeing them from mud and helping them ford waterways and climb hills, and they generally arrived late into camp.--Soldiers were particularly wary of land mines, called torpedoes, especially near Savannah and in S. Carolina. Other tactics used to impede them included felled trees, cutting water gates to flood rice fields and adjoining areas, fires, destroying bridges, and sending logs and debris downstream to break up their portable pontoon bridges.--Troops typically marched four abreast, often given a 10 minute rest each hour, with a longer stop for the midday meal.--An army marches on its feet, and this was especially true during the Civil War. Foot and footwear problems are discussed as well as how soldiers improvised and managed.--Sherman's army excelled at efficiency, such as group messes often consisting of 4 men who shared chores during mid-day meals and when camping for the night. When going into camp, one man typically cut tent poles, another fetched water, one gathered bedding material, and one made the fire and cooked.--Troops did a number of things in camp to relax and maintain their spirits and many examples of pranks, gags, games, and other activities are documented.

FORAGING

--Foraging goals including keeping wagons filled with 10 day's food supply for the men and three day's supply for animals.--An extensive explanation concerning the origin and definition of the term bummer is provided.--The uncanny abilities of foragers to find hidden animals, food caches, and other resources are discussed, as well as their other added benefits, e.g., gathering intelligence and maps, securing guides, seizing key towns, bridges, rail and roadway junctions, and essentially acting as mounted infantry and

skirmishers in protecting the army's front and flanks.--The dangers and countermeasures of foragers concerning Southern guerrillas and cavalry, who often targeted them, are discussed. Besides those captured and made prisoner, approximately 175 were found executed by hanging, being shot at close range, or with throats cut, with likely more executed but never found.--Southern cavalymen and mounted infantry were often frustrated between orders to burn crops and destroy food and animal forage ahead of the Union Army, and the backlash of the civilian population.

DESTRUCTION AND PILLAGING--Destruction and pillaging was focused on anything considered useful to the Confederacy's war efforts including war materiel, factories, warehouses, railroads including moving stock and infrastructure, government buildings (with the exception of state capitals), various businesses, cotton, grist, and saw mills, and crops including cotton, the South's primary means of financing the war.--Homes destroyed typically encompassed those of wealthy slaveholders associated with prosecuting the war (e.g., Confederate Generals H. Cobb and Wade Hampton), those of civilians burning bridges or engaged in other hostile acts, those abandoned and assumed deserted due to the owners' secessionist loyalties, and those adjacent to factories, mills, depots, or government buildings consumed by the spread of fire.--Generally, the homes of the poor and those found occupied, including those of the wealthy, were spared although more wanton destruction occurred in S. Carolina for obvious reasons. Owners who asked for guards to prevent home entry were often accommodated, but requests for protection of other buildings and resources on their lands were not.--Much of the most controversial destruction and pillaging was carried out by unauthorized foragers and stragglers.--Hard marching and scrutiny by officers in the ranks precluded soldiers from pilfering items of weight or that could not be concealed. Provost marshals examined wagons and packages to be mailed for contraband, and commanders held unannounced inspections of knapsacks and blankets. Arrests were made and some men were imprisoned or otherwise punished.--Ironically, there were many reports by civilians, and formal complaints by local and state governments, concerning pillaging and looting of businesses, farms, and homes by Wheeler's cavalry. Much of it was also done by marauding bands of Confederate deserters and civilians. A number in the ranks of the remnants of Hood's army reported like behavior by their comrades while in the Carolinas.--There were few reports of actual rape during the marches, and almost none of murder. One substantiated rape and one of murder in North Carolina resulted in the soldiers' execution by the Union army.

BATTLE AND THE WAR'S END--The author provides summaries of the notable battles and engagements during the marches, including Fort McAllister, Averasboro, and Bentonville.--Soldiers indicate the most trying and tense moments came

just before battle, especially when expected to move against fortified defensive works.--During the actual battle, their training and focus on what they were doing often occupied their minds, often to the point where they became oblivious to time, the sounds and sights, and even bullets whizzing around them.--Soldiers were often surprised to find bullet holes in their clothing after battle, sometimes numerous holes.--Logan's Corps turned back a mob of approximately 2,000 Union troops intent on razing Raleigh after learning of Lincoln's assassination.--Troops discuss in letters to friends and family of their wounds, some grisly and debilitating, along with the pain of losing friends and having to leave them behind.--Troops comment on their feelings of war's end and transitioning back to civilian life.

GRAMMAR AND READABILITYThis book is easy to read and comprehend, transitions are smooth, and the information flows well, organized effectively by topic. Editing is excellent, with almost no grammatical or typographical errors. I found the author's narrative to be even-handed and unbiased. The author indicates his objective was neither to condemn nor condone the often controversial actions of Sherman and his men.

ILLUSTRATIONSMaps of the theater of operations are provided, but they are a bit crude and do not outline the movements of the Union army, so they are only semi-useful. A rough sketch of the Battle of Bentonville is provided. A few period photographs and drawings are sprinkled throughout the book depicting Sherman and his staff, slaves following the army, a camp scene, troops tearing up railroad track, troops crossing a river, and others relating directly to chapter topics.

HARDBACK BOOK QUALITYThe hardback book is of average size (9 x 6), with a good quality dust cover. The binding is good but the pages are rather susceptible to tearing and absorption. The pages are rather difficult to keep open and the left hand pages do not want to lay flat. The text is dark, clean, and of average size.

CONCLUSION AND AFTERTHOUGHTSThis book should be of particular interest to students of the Civil War interested in the life of the Union soldier, and/or those looking for more perspective on Sherman's Savannah and Carolinas Campaigns. The research, readability, organization, editing, and objective analysis make this book a very good read and historical resource.

Well written, with great reliance on primary sources. I have read several books on Sherman's campaign to the Sea and through South Carolina. This one does the best job of understanding the men who made up Sherman's army. Those who demonize Uncle Billy as the sole perpetrator of southern woes should read this to understand why thousands of Midwest farm boys were so outraged about secession.

ok

I thought this a good book for anyone reading about or studying Major-General William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea and the March through the Carolinas. It captures the thoughts and personalities of the Army behind the man and gives the reader an insight to why they did some of the things that are so controversial today.

Great book. Highly recommend to anyone who is interested in the history of the Civil War and is very well written.

The March to the Sea and the subsequent traversing of the Carolinas was an early introduction in the United States to something like total warfare. When Sherman said later that "War is all Hell," he was well describing his army's depredations against the heart of the Confederacy. The book begins with context, the background of the forces that made the long march. The four corps that made up the force--the 14th, 15th, and 16th Corps, all from the Western armies. The 20th Corps, however, was an amalgamation of the old Army of the Potomac's 11th and 12th Corps, sent West to help Ulysses Grant break out of the siege at Chattanooga. Background information includes chapters in the Army and blacks, and the Army and southern whites. Discussion of camp life also occurs. But it is the march that is the centerpiece of this book (and it takes a while to get to that centerpiece). By Chapter 6, we get to the march. As the author, Joseph Glatthaar, says (Page 100): "Sherman's Savannah and Carolinas campaigns were very different from any other campaign in the War." The author explains why, and then describes that march, the foraging that accompanied the march, and the destruction (especially in evidence in South Carolina, the originator of secession). Toward the end of the Carolinas campaign, the Confederacy put together a force, with the remnants of the Army of the Tennessee (after John Bell Hood had largely destroyed the army in his self-destructive battles at Franklin and Nashville) and other forces based in the Carolinas (it would have been nice to have an order of battle so that one could clearly see the various units involved in battle). We see the final Confederate defeats at Averasborough and Bentonville. Finally, the surrender of Joseph Johnston's forces to Sherman and the Grand Review in Washington, D. C. as the federal troops marched through the streets. Overall, a nice work. Not overly detailed and lengthy and it takes a while to get started. But a good summary of what went on.

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