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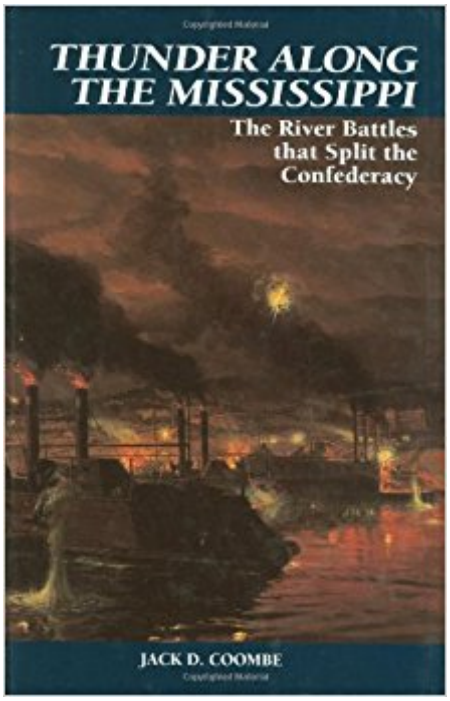
Thunder Along The Mississippi: The River Battles That Split The Confederacy



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Synopsis

To this day, there has never been a story quite like this. In telling the history of the river battles that split the Confederacy, the Civil War ironclads wrote a stunning new page in naval history.

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Customer Reviews

The squat river gunboats of the Civil War may have lacked the sleek majesty of oceangoing frigates, but undoubtedly they helped hammer home the North's victory as they successfully blasted their way up and down the Mississippi River. Jack D. Coombe presents the definitive account of these ironclad and wood-hulled warriors in the young country's western waterways, including the campaigns against Fort Donelson, New Orleans, and Vicksburg. The Union essentially built an inland navy, which pounded the Confederacy's heavily fortified towns and tried to dodge its mines. (Interesting piece of trivia: the Star of the West, the merchant ship attacked by Confederate batteries as it tried to reinforce Fort Sumter in January 1861 [the first hostile shots of the war], was later captured by Texans and converted into a rebel river steamboat.) Coombe argues that Federal control of the Mississippi made the South's defeat inevitable. His case is convincing, and his book is attractive--it includes dozens of black-and-white photos, plus several maps. It's one of the best naval histories of the Civil War available. --John J. Miller --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Historian Coombe (Derailing the Tokyo Express, LJ 9/15/91) provides a view of naval warfare from an often overlooked angle?the battles on inland waterways. By concentrating on the use of both

Union and Confederate navies on the Mississippi, Coombe demonstrates the importance of these river battles and how they brought about the demise of the Confederacy in the West. Coombe supplies background information on the development of the ironclads and how these emerging technologies became the basis for today's navy. Graphic accounts of the battles allow readers to understand conditions aboard these floating war machines, especially when under attack: "Added to this would be hits on the armor plate from enemy shots, the resounding heavy clanging would deafen ears, and in many cases would cause bleeding from them to add to the misery." Coombe's work is essential for anyone with an interest in Civil War naval operations or the war in the West. Recommended for public libraries.?Barbara A. Zaborowski, Cambria Area Community Coll., Johnstown, Pa.Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book offers the reader a general overview of the Federal campaign in the West using the great water-ways to cut the Confederacy in half. The author presents a well told and interesting story, covering the river craft and tactics used by both sides.Overall I found it a half decent book to read but it does not offer an in-depth account of the battles and campaigns fought to gain Vicksburg. If that's what your after you will have to look else where but the book is well suited for a general reader.

This book was an easy read. I am interested in the Mississippi Squadron so I bought this book. It was written by a Navy veteran and does a good job of reviewing the history of these gunboats and this is the strength of the book. There are good accounts of many of the river Navy's engagements, some well known and others obscure. I was disappointed in the author's attempts to tie the naval war into the ground war where I thought the author made mistakes, which I thought a more through treatment would have avoided. There are only a few maps. There are a good number of photos, and period lithographs that are placed on good paper for excellent reproduction, which looks much better than reproducing them on the ordinary paper with the text. If you can overlook some minor errors this is a good book about the naval war in the western theater.

Several mistakes, inconsistencies, and typographical errors belie its otherwise scholarly attempt to document an important event which determined many courses of action during the Civil War: the capitulation of the Mississippi River Valley and its major tributaries. Examples: 1) page 62 - Fort Donelson is actually on the West side of the Cumberland River, not the East as the book states. 2)

p. 96 - At the Battle of Shiloh, Sherman held the Federal right flank during the first day of battle, not the left flank as stated in this book. That honor fell to Hurlbut's forces. This is an error too basic to be made by anyone with any knowledge of the Civil War. This error tells me that the author is incompetent (or incomplete) in his research and/or the editor failed to catch the mistake. Either reason renders the book significantly less credible as a source of correct information regarding the Civil War. 3) p. 95 - the last sentence of the first paragraph contains a dangling preposition. There are, unfortunately, many instances of this type of error throughout the book which further lends to the notion that this is nothing but an amateurish, hastily constructed book. 4) p. 146 - the second paragraph on the page (which starts "After the battle was over...") is a run-on sentence. Unfortunately, there are more than just this one instance in the book. 5) p. 165 - "When the Union vessels hove into sight, Essex in the van, the fight was about to begin." This is an inane statement to make and insults the intelligence of the reader. What else would they be about to do? 6) p. 168 - I believe that the gentlemen's name is DAVID Dixon Porter, not DAVIS Dixon Porter. 7) p. 168 - Porter was appointed Commodore in April of 1862, not April of 1866 as stated in the book. The book is correct in stating that he gained command of the Mississippi River fleet in October of 1862 yet in the same paragraph the book states this occurred in October of 1861. These are troubling errors for a book which deals with a subject that was so pivotal in determining the course of the Civil War. The book is not credible, but readable nevertheless. My final criticism is the lack of detail surrounding some of the more important issues impinging upon the Union's successful prosecution of the Mississippi campaign: for example, there is only cursory treatment of the long-standing, bitter rivalry between the Army and Navy, exhibited with the battle over control of the Mississippi River Brigade (COL Alfred Ellet, Commanding) within ADM Porter's fleet. This controversy reached all the way into Lincoln's cabinet where a dispute raged between Stanton and Welles over influences exerted on the course of the war by their respective departments. This important controversy is not discussed but in a very cursory fashion which further calls into question the depth of research conducted or the knowledge desired to be disseminated. In any event, this book is not worth the time spent to read it for serious students of the Civil War, and specifically the Mississippi River Campaign. It is entertaining if only to discover what the editors overlooked but should be considered nothing more than an inept, incomplete treatment of an otherwise fascinating and important subject.

When I first purchased this book, I thought it was going to be a detailed accurate picture of the ever important naval account of the Mississippi river campaign. I knew a little of the battles, but was looking for something more then individual books. However, this book was a disappointment in

many ways.First; it was very dry. Not a James McPherson intellectual scholarly dry, but an uninspiring dry where I had to fight to keep reading it to the end. I do read slowly and this made me read slower for the other obvious reasons below. It was a bore and lacked exciting accounts of various naval battles.Second, it was hard to follow because Mr. Combs failed to give dates for certain battles and engagements. At one moment he was discussing events from 1861 and the next for 1863 and then back to 1862. If he stuck to the course of events, it would have been a better read. He makes it appear that the battle of New Orleans takes place closer in time to the battle of Vicksburg which they do not. New Orleans takes place a year prior.He jumps all over the map by discussing events that have nothing to do with the Mississippi campaign. The problem is that the title suggests that we are discussing the River Battles not the battles on the Atlantic Ocean.Fourth, he does not put the ship designations in front of the ship names which make it confusing. I had to continually look at other sources to find out which ships belong where. He also fails to mention the ship to ship activities which were as important as the ship to fort he dose mention. I got the impression that he was talking about the Union side of the war which made it hard to see the whole picture of the war.He did not spend enough time on the important battle like New Orleans and Vicksburg and makes them sound as if they were passing battles or skirmishes. Since New Orleans was much more captivating then what Mr. Combs eludes to in the book it short changes it. Vicksburg was a year long struggle for Grant and the Nave yet Mr. Combs makes it sound like it took only a few days. He fails to mention Grant's other movements on the City and that the Grant and the Navy Surrounded Vicksburg until her surrender.Finally, he uses too much slang or terminology which needs to be explained which wasn't. It gave the impression that Mr. Comb's research was poor, though he cites many references. He would have been better off with out the slang and just left everything in simple terms.While this is a good book for people who have a good knowledge on the Civil Naval battle and the history of the Mississippi, a beginner will be confused and mislead. This book was a disappointment because it added nothing short of confusion about this vital Civil War Operation.Enjoy

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