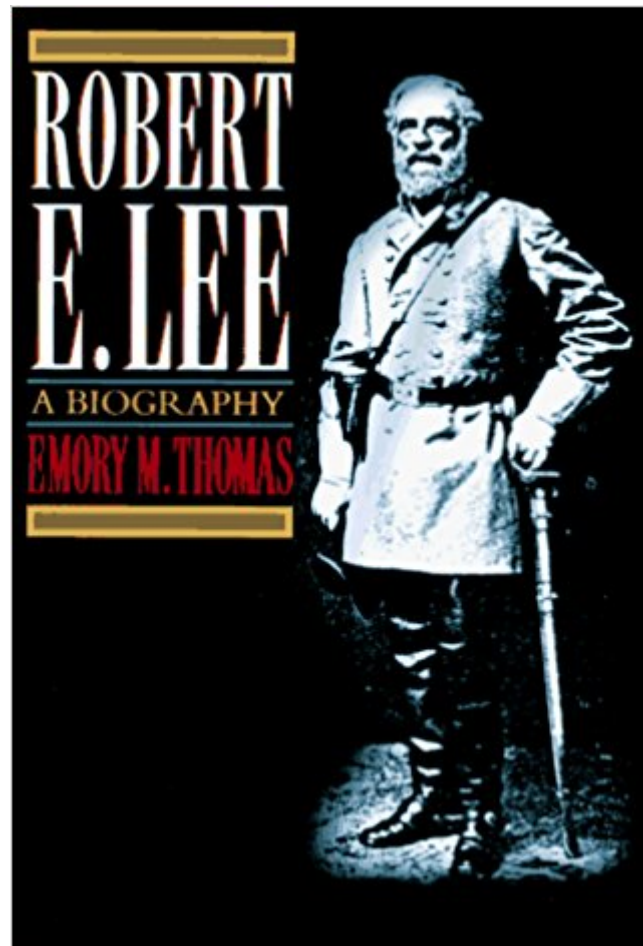




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Robert E. Lee: A Biography



Synopsis

The life of Robert E. Lee is a story of triumph - triumph in clearing his family name, triumph in marrying properly, triumph over the mighty Mississippi in his work as an engineer, and triumph over all other military men to become the towering figure who commanded the Confederate army in the American Civil War. But late in life Lee wrote what may be his most revealing phrase. He confessed that he "was always wanting something." This from perhaps the South's greatest hero, the man whose demeanor and presence in war were sufficient to inspire thousands to march to near-certain death. In this probing and personal biography, Emory Thomas's thorough examination of Lee's life reveals more than the man did himself, allowing us to find meaning in Lee's successes and failures. From his struggles as a youth with his father's humiliation, to his frustrating marriage into a proper and prominent family, and his lively relationships with young female friends and relatives, Lee - the uncertain scion, skilled engineer, consummate warrior, and college president - was actually an enigmatic person of latent passions. He lived in limbo between the self-control to which he aspired and the freedom for which he longed.

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Customer Reviews

Thomas, a distinguished historian of the Civil War (*The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience*), has written a major analytical biography of Robert E. Lee. Synthesizing printed and manuscript sources, he presents Lee as neither the icon of Douglas Southall Freeman nor the flawed figure presented by Thomas Connolly. Lee emerges instead as a man of paradoxes, whose

frustrations and tribulations were the basis for his heroism. Lee's work was his play, according to the author, and throughout his life he made the best of his lot. Believing that evil springs from selfishness, he found release in service to his family, his country and, not least, to the men he led. One of history's great captains and most beloved generals, he refused to take himself too seriously. This comic vision of life ultimately shaped an individual who was both more and less than his legend. Highly recommended. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Gen. Robert Edward Lee was a leader who inspired great devotion among the men who followed him, and he continues to inspire great interest to this day. Thomas (The Confederate Nation, 1861-1865, 1979) presents a fresh look at the general. By examining Lee as a person, the biographer renders him intensely human. Lee is shown to be the son of an unstable father, a frustrated husband, and a devoted parent. He encountered many hardships but became great not "because of what he did ...but because of the way he lived." Given the prodigious number of Lee biographies available, this may be an optional purchase, but it is nonetheless a valuable addition to the studies of the general. Robert A. Curtis, Taylor Memorial P.L., Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Much more detailed than anything you have read about General Lee in other publications. You would expect this since it is a biography. But, it takes you into General Lee as a person and not just a commander of the Army of Virginia. Some things like his penchant for communicating w/young ladies is a little off-putting. But, it is this kind of information that knocks Lee off of the marble pedestal a little. A brilliant tactical and strategic commander moving and reacting w/his fewer troops and supplies. He does make mistakes, and he admits this openly. This again is another facet of Lee you do not get by just reviewing individual battles. Like Grant, there is a command of an entire army that we tend to forget. Just because Lee is directly involved in Antietam for example does not mean he is not responsible for the western corps and those south toward Mobile and New Orleans as well as always worrying about the protection of Richmond.

A good clear look at the man - his brilliance in command tempered by his inability to be a tough commander. His experience in the Mexican-American War is particularly interesting. This is a good read except for the bits about his wife which go on and on and on. That part could have been summarized in one word, dysfunctional.

It Was A Good Book. I Really Enjoy Reading.

This is the first biography (since elementary school) that I have read on Robert E. Lee. Emory Thomas obviously knows the subject matter well and while it is hard to condense such an important life into 400 + pages, Dr. Thomas has produced an erstwhile account of THE tragic figure of the South. I would have liked a little more digging (how, for example, did Lee feel about the Wilmot Proviso or the Compromise of 1850) but again, to cover every aspect of the General's life would have required another volume. I enjoyed this and recommend anyone who wants a studied portrait of a true southern gentleman.

Very enlightening. Shows RELee as human not god or devil.

Very interesting biography of a great man in history as a soldier for the US, a general for the confederacy and then a president of a college who lived a life beyond reproach. At all phases of his life he cared for those around him and practiced christian values. While he may not have agreed that the emancipation of slaves was correct he accepted it as law and treated them as free men after the war. We need more like him today.

I know biographies are not meant to be action-packed, but....meh.

A very fine read! Very informative. It is fascinating to re-trace the experiences of such a great man. A fine, well researched narrative, very enjoyable.

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