

2019

Book Reviews

Nicol Allen

Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville

Andrew Harrison Baker

Auburn University

Ryan Anthony Smith

University of Arkansas

Christopher L. Stacey

Louisiana State University - Alexandria

Minoa D. Uffelman

Austin Peay State University

See next page for additional authors

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Nicol Allen, Andrew Harrison Baker, Ryan Anthony Smith, Christopher L. Stacey, Minoa D. Uffelman, Ian Varga, and Clay Williams

BOOK REVIEWS

Bound in Wedlock: Slave and Free Black Marriage in the Nineteenth Century.

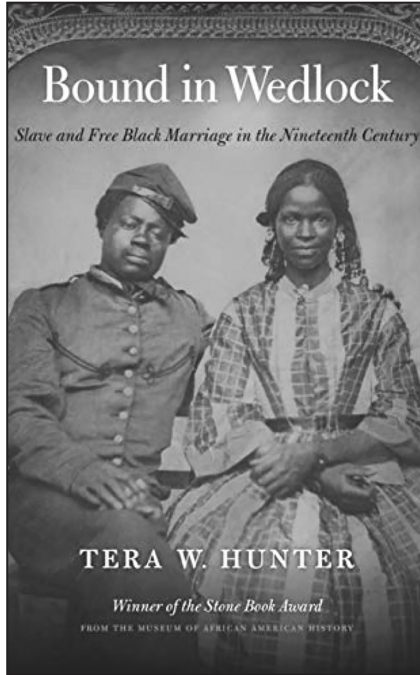
By Tera W. Hunter.

(Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017. 404 pp. \$29.95, cloth. ISBN: 9780674045712.)

Slavery not only challenged family formation for African Americans but it made a stable, secure family life difficult, if not impossible. Slave marriages had neither legal standing nor protection from the abuses and restrictions imposed on them by enslavers. The allowance of marriage and granting marriage rights became tools for enslavers to further control black bodies. In *Bound in Wedlock: Slaves and Free Black Marriages in the Nineteenth Century*, historian Tera W. Hunter examines the complexities embedded within enslaved marriages. Hunter describes how African Americans pushed back against white plantation owners' interference—even nullification—and fought to hold their families together. She does this by illuminating the connections between various notions of freedom and how marriage was intrinsically tied to that elusive concept.

Hunter traces these relationships and struggles starting at enslavement and concluding with the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Hunter notes that through perseverance, African Americans “created meaningful bonds of wedlock” that demonstrated “the power of marriage to challenge our understanding of what slavery wrought . . . and what freedom has rendered” (21-22). Hunter claims that, through the lens of marriage, a vision of triumph over adversity can be found.



By showcasing the various types of associations, Hunter is able to illuminate how the enslaved negotiated their space and defined their own relationships. By exploring complex classifications of relationships under slavery, Hunter creates a nuanced description of the lasting effects enslavement created on African Americans in a post-Civil War society. During

enslavement, African Americans utilized the bonds of marriage to hold family units together, avoid unwanted sexual relationships, and to create stability. These relationships were a way for the enslaved to resist their enslavers and control their space.

Hunter also highlights the hypocrisies tied to race and gender in the antebellum South. For example, double standards abounded as liaisons between white male enslavers and the female enslaved did not result in divorce at the request of the enslavers' wives. However, if a white female enslaver was accused of a sexual relationship with an enslaved male, divorce was immediately granted at the husband's request. These instances show that white males controlled the definition of marriage and other relationships to suit their own agenda.

Through the war years and Reconstruction, the author shows how military camps and the federal government offered hope for new liberties and rights to wedded African Americans. The term "marriage under the flag" characterized the complex relationships between the nation and the newly freed people. In order to maintain white racial superiority, the camps and government policy instituted policies that made it impossible for African Americans to succeed. At the end of the war, African Americans aimed to mend trauma, suffering, and the pain caused by separation and sought out formal marriage as the solution. Many African Americans believed that a legal form of marriage would afford them new rights and liberties. Unfortunately, this dream went unfulfilled.

Freed people were legally allowed

to get married and yet they were still subjected to racialized restrictions. Once African Americans gained their freedom, whites continued to use the laws concerning marriage to further control and oppress the African American race. The inequality of marriage rights can be seen through the actions of the Freedman's Bureau. One such action was demonstrated by attempts to force African Americans into monogamous marriages as outlined by "middle class Christian" ideals. By creating and applying a white definition of marriage to African Americans, whites were able to extend their legal control over them. This can be seen in the disproportionate prosecutions of African American in crimes that pertained to bigamy, fornication, and adultery.

Hunter shows how notions of respectability helped foster African American beliefs in a "bourgeois marriage model" that would promote racial progress. The author points out that this monolithic view of marriage was a product of white value systems that aimed to denigrate those who did not comply. Hunter notes that this type of marriage does not consider the legacy of enslavement and how the enslaved defied white traditions and created something of their own. *Bound in Wedlock* is a fascinating read that is well written and researched. This book is an exceptional piece that ushers the reader through decades of African American struggle by bringing to life the people who challenged and resisted both slavery and white supremacy.

Nicol Allen
Southern Illinois University-
Edwardsville

Delta Epiphany: Robert F. Kennedy in Mississippi.

By Ellen B. Meacham. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018. Acknowledgements, source notes, bibliography, about the photographers, index, Pp. xi, 293. \$28 cloth. ISBN 9781496817457.)

The civil rights era and President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" held cruel ironies for black residents of the Mississippi Delta. The widespread adoption of labor-saving agricultural machinery, fertilizers, and pesticides reduced the need for African American workers in the Delta's cottonfields, and gains from the civil rights movement were slow to arrive because of fierce resistance by many white Mississippians. Programs meant to help economically depressed residents in the Delta could not meet the need of poor residents due to the opposition of state leaders and an inadequate understanding of the realities of Delta life by national leaders. Scholars, including James C. Cobb in his *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (1994), have examined the glaring disparities between wealth and poverty in the Mississippi Delta and a host of other books detail the civil rights movement in the Magnolia state's most famous region.

In *Delta Epiphany*, Ellen B. Meacham tells a story in which poverty, civil rights, and national politics intersect. She is not the first writer to discuss Robert F. Kennedy's 1967 trip to the Mississippi Delta to examine the living conditions of poor black residents and its impact on his

political career. Many view it as an important moment in the younger Kennedy's political development that may have influenced his decision to run for president in 1968. Meacham concurs with this assessment and adds further evidence. Her principal contribution, however, is explaining the impact of the trip on Kennedy without losing sight of the Mississippians he met. The author contends that other accounts use suffering Delta residents as "little more than stock characters in a poverty backdrop for Kennedy, the main hero in a morality play" (xiii).

The Delta residents Kennedy met on his trip were indeed the victims of extreme poverty. Meacham's focus, as was Kennedy's, is on the children who wore tattered clothing, had little food to eat, and inadequate shelter. Although John F. Kennedy made a famous tour of Appalachia and Robert F. Kennedy had gotten a close-up view of inner city and rural poverty in New York, Mississippi's impact was jarring. The children that Kennedy encountered made a particularly lasting impression on him as he advocated new policies and made his 1968 run for the White House. Meacham interviewed a number of the children that Kennedy met in the Mississippi Delta. Their vivid memories of childhood despair adds to the power of the narrative. Photographs of Kennedy surveying conditions and meeting families, including one collection found buried in a closet, are also included. Meacham traces the stories of several children into adulthood and details the lasting consequences of childhood poverty.

This work also demonstrates a

mature understanding of the political context of Kennedy's trip. The desegregation of the University of Mississippi in 1962 and the Kennedy administration's role in that event made Robert Kennedy suspect among many white Mississippians. Leaders in the state's civil rights movement also distrusted Kennedy. Meacham details the enthusiasm of many black Mississippians for Kennedy and the softening impact of his visit on some critics within the civil rights movement. Marian Wright, who later married one of Kennedy's aides, was particularly moved by the compassion showed by the late senator. As Meacham deftly explains, political considerations also blunted the impact of Kennedy's poverty alleviation efforts. Members of the state's congressional delegation, particularly U.S. Representative Jamie Whitten, helped thwart Kennedy's efforts.

Meacham's argument is ultimately convincing. Through copious research, she has documented the impact of the Mississippi Delta on Kennedy and demonstrated that it played a major role in his emerging focus on poverty and the decision to seek the presidency. The people of the Delta and their struggles are brought to life through superb narrative writing. A memorable conclusion taps into perhaps the most important challenge of southern historiography: continuity versus change. In the Mississippi Delta, much has changed since 1967 but much has also remained the same. *Delta Epiphany* is a well-researched and exceptionally well-written book. Meacham situates Kennedy's visit to Mississippi in its local context without

losing sight of the larger picture.

Andrew Harrison Baker
Auburn University

Let the People See: The Story of Emmett Till. By Elliott J. Gorn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Acknowledgements, source notes, bibliography, index, Pp. xi, 400. \$27.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780199335122.)

At a June 29, 2019, Chicago White Sox game, a scoreboard graphic appeared noting famous Chicagoans. The feature is customary at games to note those who hail from the Windy City, but that night's lineup was strange. Flanked on either side by game show host Pat Sajak and actor/director Orson Welles was Emmett Till, the victim of a violent lynching that took place 650 miles south of Guaranteed Rate Field. The White Sox organization later apologized, admitting that including Till's photo was "poor form." The *Chicago Tribune* included in its story about the blunder minor details about Till's murder: that Till was lynched by two men in Money, Mississippi, that Carolyn Bryant lied about her encounter with Till at Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market, and that the event was a seminal moment in the long Civil Rights Movement.

These events are what most people know about Till's lynching, which has periodically been thrust back into the news since his death sixty-four years ago. Elliott J. Gorn's new book, *Let the People See*, is the most comprehensive and accessible volume on the Till lynching, its impact on the movement for civil rights, and—in

particular—how Till’s death has been remembered and misremembered. Gorn’s work, along with Timothy Tyson’s *The Blood of Emmett Till*, among others, draws on new evidence released by the FBI in 2005. *Let the People See* does not radically alter the narrative, but it does ask readers to reconsider the murder’s impact at the time, particularly among potentially sympathetic whites, and how this story has been remembered since. The now-famous images of Till’s open casket funeral were only released in African American publications at the time. Most whites did not see these horrifying pictures until decades after Till’s death—among whites, the Till lynching was not the major turning point in the civil rights struggle that many later believed it was. Only when the clips from the documentary *Eyes on the Prize* were shown on *Today* in 1985 were whites exposed to Till’s story on a large scale.

On the other hand, millions of African Americans saw the images in 1955 in publications like *Jet* and *The Chicago Defender*, and Till’s murder reverberated in the African American community. The lynching unified both urban and rural blacks as Till was a Chicago native murdered in the rural Deep South. The black press continued to cover the trial and aftermath of the lynching well into the late 1950s, long after the white press had forgotten about Till. Gorn argues that without persistent black journalists the true story of Till’s murder would have never come to light. Future freedom fighters like Rosa Parks and Malcolm X invoked images of Till’s murder to illustrate the brutality of racial violence and the apathy of

whites. What whites never cared to see, black leaders never forgot.

Gorn’s book is divided into four parts. In “Murder,” Gorn vividly reconstructs the cultural and political world that Till entered when he traveled to the Mississippi Delta. “Trial” and “Verdict” recount the events that led to the acquittal of the two white men charged in Till’s death. In “Memory,” the most rewarding section of the book, Gorn shows how Till’s lynching has been utilized by civil rights advocates to further their cause and how Till’s murder became one of most consequential crimes in American history. Scholars and novice historians alike will benefit from this work, and it would be a great addition to a syllabus on twentieth-century American history. But, at this particular moment in our history, the general public should read it as well.

Ryan Anthony Smith
University of Arkansas

The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction. By Mark Wahlgren Summers. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014. 528 pp., 21 halftones, notes, bibl., index. \$40.00 cloth. ISBN: 978-1-4696-1757-2.)

Although Mark Wahlgren Summers makes no pretensions to write the history of Reconstruction, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* provides a detailed political history of Reconstruction within the context of a nation’s rapid growth in the late nineteenth century. Organized thematically and chronologically and recognizing the existence

of other studies that examine race, labor, and class, this book surveys Reconstruction through the prism of politics, including foreign policy and westward expansion. The author argues that binding the Union together within republican, civil governments without slavery and avoiding another large-scale military conflict became the hallmark and success of Reconstruction, not its failure: "The place of blacks in the new order must change, but the essence of republic, federal and not consolidated, must not" (13). Summers also compresses the oft-referenced Reconstruction chronology, claiming that the Election of 1876 was merely symbolic in its final denouement for Reconstruction. Most reconstructed state governments showed weaknesses by 1868 and were well on their way to collapsing by 1873.

Southern Republican governments existed on tenuous political coalitions consisting of four groups: freedmen, former unionists, Carpetbaggers, and Scalawags. These groups had little chance of succeeding in creating lasting republican forms of governments which could withstand terrorism from white supremacists because, besides freedmen, no one group was serious about creating institutions and a political culture based on racial equality. Drawing upon post-revisionist literature of the conservative nature of Reconstruction, Summers reminds readers that "Black and Tan" governments were mostly white. Economically, the new constitutions "were ones that business interests could live with and, across the rest of the country, had been living with for years" (133). These groups also differed on other key issues, like

the disfranchisement of former rebels and integration of public facilities. The never-ending violence from white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan also undermined Republican attempts to create a bi-racial political order in the South.

Federal military occupation was not so much a new policy, but a continuation of a preexisting one to facilitate the creation of republican governments. Summers claims that military occupation was "pretty mild stuff" (109). Furthermore, the federal government withdrew most troops from the region by 1868. The continuing presence of the federal military still raised the specter of a tyrannical central authority, North and South. The expense and possible lack of civil authority in lieu of federal troops further galvanized political opposition to Republicans. The presence of troops also failed to diminish organized political violence against blacks. Federal district commanders showed considerable restraint and cooperated with southern governments. Federal troops acted mostly in a reactionary manner to the significant outbreaks of violence, particularly in Louisiana. Despite the limited impact and effect of a federal military presence in the South, their mere existence and re-appearance of troops in the wake of the bloodiest outbreaks of violence further eroded support for Republican governments.

Although Summers gives heavy attention to politics, several chapters cover westward expansion, foreign policy, and corruption. The author's political focus provides a fresh analysis of domestic and foreign policies which had nothing to do directly

with Reconstruction, but ended up shaping it nonetheless. Settling the “Trans-Mississippi” west was far more lucrative for corporate interests and capital yet expensive for the federal government. American Indians, rather than former plantation owners, had their lands confiscated and the federal government subsidized the rapid settlement and development of the West. The conquest of the West brought with it more opportunities for public corruption. Despite the desires of nationalists like William K. Seward to enact an expansionist overseas foreign policy, the costs of settling the Trans-Mississippi and reconstructing the South tempered ambitions. Summers writes, “All the government’s impulses were toward retrenchment: lower taxes, tighter spending” (211). The Panic of 1873 and growing concerns over public corruption dampened the remaining political will for reconstructing the South. Furthermore, federalism and the enshrinement of states’ rights, which codified institutional racism and the relegation of blacks to second-class citizenship, allowed states to stretch their powers to champion reforms in other areas, such as women’s rights, Prohibition, public education (for blacks and whites), institutional reform, and public health initiatives.

Summers’s book solidifies the post-revisionist treatment Reconstruction continues to get by reexamining politics and other topics in late nineteenth-century history.

Christopher L. Stacey
*Louisiana State University-
 Alexandria*

Stepdaughters of History: Southern Women and the American Civil War. By Catherine Clinton. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016. \$48.00 hardback. ISBN: 978807164570.)

Catherine Clinton’s *Stepdaughters of History* examines the varied and complex roles of women during the Civil War. Region, class, race, and willingness to expand or transgress traditional gender roles determined women’s behavior throughout the war. As one of the leading scholars of the Civil War era, Catherine Clinton has dedicated her professional life to researching and telling the neglected stories of women of the period. *Stepdaughters of History* is a sweeping overview of scholarship and a thoughtful meditation of topics and subjects that need further research.

Clinton’s vast experience and collaboration with eminent scholars uniquely qualify her to describe a half century of Civil War scholarship. Unlike a traditional monograph in history, *Stepdaughters* is written in first person. The chapters in this book are expanded articles of Clinton’s lectures at Louisiana State University’s Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History. She is a skilled and talented writer, and *Stepdaughters* is a joy to read.

Stepdaughters has three insightful chapters that each focus on different groups of women: privileged southern white women; white women who transgressed traditional gender roles; and women of color. The first chapter, “Band of Sisters,” describes white elite women of letters who conspired to promote the myth of the Lost

Cause through their various genres of writing. Featured in this section are Augusta Jane Evans, Sallie Pickett, Winnie Davie, Sarah Morgan, and perhaps the most famous American woman diarist, Mary Boykin Chestnut. As Chestnut struggled for years to edit her journal for publication it became a “form of hybrid” with “Perhaps the layers of meanings were too fluid to fix on the page” (37). Unable to complete it before she died, Chestnut entrusted her manuscript to a friend, Isabella B. Martin, who faithfully edited and pursued publication for years until the massive tome was finally printed. Collectively this “Band of Sisters” successfully created the mythical Confederate account of the Civil War that has endured even into the twenty-first century.

Chapter Two, “Impermissible Patriots,” focuses on women who went outside of traditional gender roles. Loreta Janeta Velasquez, for example, dressed as a man to fight and wrote a memoir describing her gender-bending daring exploits. Spies Rose O’Neal Greenhow and Belle Boyd provided southern partisans with valuable purloined information. Yet, because they stepped outside of southern society’s traditional roles for women, critics have tainted their successful clandestine methods by assuming they broke societal rules of purity and impugned their reputations with accusations of sexual impropriety. Most of these rebellious women suffered from such accusations that implied they must have used sex to obtain secrets because no reputable woman could have gotten men to reveal secrets without it. Whether warranted or not, accusations of sexual impropriety against

these transgressing women were all too common.

The last chapter, “Mammy by Any Other Name,” is a fascinating exploration of the African American women’s experiences and how popular culture engaged issues of race and gender. Clinton examines nurse Susie King Taylor and Harriet Tubman, whose Underground Railroad activities are chronicled in scores of books for young and old alike. Clinton, who wrote a biography of Tubman, chronicles her lesser known role as Union army scout. Again, bringing a personal touch to her essays, Clinton recalls how she was shocked when she once heard someone describe Tubman as a mammy. Clinton delves into the etymology of the word mammy and the enduring power the image holds on the American psyche. Intrigued by images of the southern slave mammy in gift shops in Ireland, where Clinton taught for several years, she asked experts in other fields to find the elusive history of this phenomena. In *Stepdaughters*, Clinton reaches no conclusion about the origin of the mammy archetype. Regardless, knowing the history of African American women is an essential key to understanding the period. Clinton offers a clarion call for scholars to uncover stories of women of color. The nature of source material makes this a challenge because most African Americans were denied education and few written sources exist by black women. Historians, however, must be creative in unearthing black stepdaughters of southern history.

Stepdaughters of History will appeal to all audiences, from the general reader to the specialist. It will be a perfect book for the classroom because

it can serve as a primer on more than a century and a half of Civil War historiography.

Minoa D. Uffelman
Austin Peay State University

Frontiers of Science: Imperialism and Natural Knowledge in the Gulf South Borderlands, 1500-1850. By Cameron B. Strang. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. Acknowledgements, illustrations, index. Pp. vii, 357. \$39.95 Cloth. ISBN: 9781469640471.)

Northeastern philosophers and associations, such as Benjamin Franklin and the Smithsonian Institution, often dominate the history of early American science. As Cameron B. Strang reveals, however, in *Frontiers of Science: Imperialism and Natural Knowledge in the Gulf South Borderlands, 1500-1850*, the Gulf South also contributed significantly to natural knowledge in America. Strang insists that historians can no longer ignore the way southern naturalists, native peoples, and slaves helped transformed natural science. Consisting of the present states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, the Gulf South from 1500 to 1850 was a borderland and battleground between imperial powers, including the French, Spanish, and eventually Americans. Strang argues that the Gulf South's violent, imperial nature affected how natural philosophers produced and disseminated their scholarship. He focuses particularly on "encounters," defined as personal interactions between individuals and their surrounding environment, soci-

ety, and cultures. These encounters, he argues, "shaped the production, circulation, and application of natural knowledge" in these contested borderlands (12).

The book consists of a series of case studies about individual naturalists or natural philosophers such as William Dunbar of Mississippi. Strang also examines various methods of analyzing the natural world, such as the collection of scalps to study natives during the Second Seminole War. Collectively, the case studies demonstrate the diverse ways locals in the Gulf South produced knowledge and subsequently constructed how others perceived the region in relation to its position as an imperial borderland. For instance, in the first chapter, Strang emphasizes the role natives played in knowledge production, highlighting how early settlers, particularly missionaries, competed with native chiefs as authorities on knowledge of the Gulf South. Additionally, Europeans exchanged goods with Native Americans for specimens of local flora or fauna, thus establishing an imperial network of knowledge dissemination. Strang pays special attention to the importance of local knowledge, namely the dependence on native peoples or settlers to distribute knowledge from the colonies to imperial centers. Furthermore, Chapter Two explains how the Spanish Empire relied upon local peoples, both natives and plantation owners, for information on natural resources, such as the utility of indigenous minerals and trees.

Frontiers of Science presents a narrative of gradual American encroachment and domination of

the Gulf South as the new nation overcame its imperial rivals, but it also highlights resistance to this expansion. Strang writes how enslaved people played crucial roles in the astronomical surveying teams on the Spanish-American border by clearing foliage or carrying astronomical instruments. Enslaved people also assisted with important geological surveys, such as those led by T.A. Conrad in the early nineteenth century. Individuals such as Thomas Power (a naturalist who conducted research in the South with Spanish support) also spied on the United States for Spain. Finally, Sprang points to the role of violence in the production of knowledge, particularly between Americans and natives. As American naturalists of that time debated whether natives were intellectually inferior to whites and formulated new theories on race, they relied on both ethnographic studies and physical samples from the Second Seminole War. American officers collected scalps from combatant Seminoles and sent them north to well-known phrenologists and craniologists for analysis. Thus, the violent practice of scalping, borrowed from the Seminoles, contributed to how American intellectuals understood indigenous peoples.

Frontiers of Science contributes to the underdeveloped historiography of American science in the South. The author rightfully reminds historians of science of the unacknowledged roles of natives and slaves as producers and distributors of knowledge. A few of Strang's case studies seem disconnected from this argument. For example Rush Nutt, an eccentric philosopher and critic

of structured religions, who appears exceptional, but whose broader contribution to natural philosophy is unclear. Despite its title, only one chapter deals with events prior to the eighteenth century, while the balance of the book generally focuses on the nineteenth century. For scholars of Mississippi's history, the state appears most notably in Chapter Three with a discussion of William Dunbar and his presence in Natchez, but Mississippi is not as prominent as Louisiana and Florida. Nonetheless, any scholar of the colonial or antebellum South or American science will appreciate this book for illuminating how violence, local peoples, and imperialism shaped the production of knowledge in the Gulf South.

Ian Varga

Florida State University

Vicksburg, Grant's Campaign that Broke the Confederacy. By Donald L. Miller. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019. Notes, illustrations, index. Pp. 663. \$35.00.)

Military historian J. F. C. Fuller wrote, "Vicksburg, and not Gettysburg, was the crisis of the Confederacy." (483) The Vicksburg campaign during the Civil War has been the subject of many studies and its importance to the conflict has been debated for years. Author Donald Miller has joined the conversation with his account that focuses on the Union perspective of capturing the Confederacy's key bastion along the Mississippi River.

Miller, the John Henry MacCracken Professor of History

Emeritus at Lafayette College, is most known for his works on World War II. He is a self-proclaimed late entrant to Civil War studies, but with Vicksburg, you would never know it. Miller has produced a solid, well-written narrative that covers the complexity of the Vicksburg campaign, which in the author's mind, began in 1861 with Ulysses S. Grant in Cairo, Illinois. Miller relates early maneuvers such as Grant capturing Paducah, Kentucky, and fighting at Belmont, Missouri, which all contributed to either the eventual capture of Vicksburg or helped forge Grant into the winning general he would one day become. Readers trace Union armies and naval actions at Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, Memphis, New Orleans, Iuka, and Corinth as part of the larger strategic endeavor to capture Vicksburg. Miller covers these campaigns expertly without ever getting too detailed and bogging down the reader, a skill unfortunately not all historians possess.

Following these initial episodes, Grant's attempts to capture the city met with many failures over five months in late 1862 and early 1863. His overland railroad campaign was stymied by Confederate cavalry and his trusted lieutenant William T. Sherman met defeat north of the city at Chickasaw Bayou. These reverses were followed by more setbacks as Grant attempted five different maneuvers through bayous and rivers to try to find a way to get his army into position to assault the city. Each attempt failed and left the army as well as the country to wonder if mighty Vicksburg would ever fall.

But eventually, Grant devised the winning strategy by sending his army south of the city and crossing the river in one of the most daring strategic military movements ever made. In eighteen days, his men marched 200 miles, won five battles to bottle up the main Confederate force in Vicksburg from which they would not escape. Miller emphasizes that Vicksburg only fell when there was joint army/navy cooperation because the city always seemed to withstand any challenge whenever the two military arms acted independently. Grant deserves immense credit for the campaign, but it would never have happened without the aid of the Union Navy led by David Dixon Porter.

Besides covering the basic military tactical maneuverings, Miller also emphasizes other important elements of this campaign to tell a more complete story. Miller devotes space to the struggles to supply the army, as well as, the deadly sickness that killed hundreds of Union soldiers forced to camp near swamps and rivers during the spring and summer. Miller also stressed the hardships suffered by white southerners caught in the Union army's wake or trapped in Vicksburg during the siege. Finally, Miller accentuates the massive social upheaval that the Union troop movements caused as hundreds and thousands of slaves broke away from captivity to follow the Union soldiers.

Miller also avoids a common mistake that many writers fall under when writing about a historic figure whom they obviously respect. Many writers fall into the trap of "hero worship" and fail to point out their subject's failures and weaknesses.

For example, Miller discusses Grant's mistakes at Fort Donelson and Shiloh and even heavily criticizes Grant for failing to call a truce to allow his dead, who had fallen in front of the Confederate trenches after the failed assaults on Vicksburg on May 19 and 22, to be buried. He also examines the many occasions when Grant may, or may not, have overindulged in alcohol during the campaign. Miller objectively lists the evidence in these instances and indicates that in many cases, the facts seem to indicate Grant's guilt.

All in all, Miller has written a superb overview aimed at a general audience, which this reviewer would recommend to anyone seeking one book to learn about the Vicksburg campaign. Although 500 pages, it never feels like it, and his prose style makes it an easy page-turner. The book's fault is that there is not enough information on the Confederate perspective, which would have aided the reader in getting a more complete understanding of the campaign from both sides. Miller is to be commended for this work, and this reviewer hopes that he does not end his Civil War interest with Vicksburg, but that he will choose to explore other aspects of our nation's most important conflict.

Clay Williams
Mississippi Department
of Archives and History

