

Grant's Gamble: Pemberton's Blunders Allowed Grant To Crack The Gibraltar Of The Confederacy'

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Review

GRANT'S GAMBLE

Pemberton's blunders allowed Grant to crack the Gibraltar of the Confederacy'

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Winschel, Terrence J. *Triumph & Defeat: The Vicksburg Campaign.* Savas, ISBN 1882810317

Although much more important than the Battle of Gettysburg in determining the outcome of the Civil War, the Vicksburg Campaign has been the subject of far fewer books and articles. A three-volume work by Edwin C. Bearss remains the only detailed study of the operations against the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." In this book of essays, Terry Winschel explores several facets of the campaign.

"Unvexed to the Sea: An Overview of the Vicksburg Campaign" briefly sets the stage for the essays that follow. In "The Only Viable Option: Grant's March Through Louisiana," Winschel demonstrates the Union commander's audacity and boldness, which proved to be a prelude for the Federal campaign east of the Mississippi River. Grant chose a little-known, non-professional officer to lead an important cavalry operation because he saw Benjamin Grierson as daring and aggressive. "Playing Smash with the Railroads: The Story of Grierson's Raid" shows how the strike confused Confederate commander John C. Pemberton and cut vital Confederate supply lines.

Even after Grant and his army got across the vital river, they were not yet safe. In "The Inland Campaign Begins: The Battle of Port Gibson," Winschel describes the Union victory in that engagement and shows how it allowed them to secure their foothold and forced the Confederates to evacuate the strategic position at Grand Gulf. The most decisive battle of Grant's campaign prior to the siege occurred at Champion Hill. "Disaster and Disgrace: John C. Pemberton and the Battle of Champion Hill" examines the fighting and describes Pemberton's utter incompetence as a field commander.

"The First Honor at Vicksburg: The 1st Battalion, 13th U.S. Infantry" details that unit's part in the Union assault of May 19, 1863. The battalion placed the first national and regimental flags on the Confederate earthworks that day. Union engineers played a significant role in the siege, which Winschel summarizes in "Spades Are Trump: Siege Operations." He argues that the successful placement of Federal approach trenches near the Southern fortifications made the Confederate surrender inevitable. In "Shut Up as in a Trap: Citizens Under Siege" readers can get a fine picture of the hardships and privations of the city's residents.

Some historians have argued that the Confederates might have done more to hamper Grant's operations prior to his investment of Vicksburg. Winschel explores one of those possibilities in "To Rescue Gibraltar: Efforts of the Trans-Mississippi Confederates to Relieve Fortress Vicksburg." He presents the details of the surrender negotiations in "Triumph and Defeat: Vicksburg Surrenders." Winschel's "Epilogue" includes an assessment of the strategic importance of the campaign and summaries of the subsequent careers of many of the major players.

Winschel's essays read well and show his firm grasp of the many facets of the Vicksburg Campaign. The book contains a number of excellent maps and numerous illustrations. Anyone interested in the topic will enjoy this addition to the literature.

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