

Mr. Lincoln's Brown Water Navy: The Mississippi Squadron

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Review

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Joiner, Gary D. *Mr. Lincoln's Brown Water Navy: The Mississippi Squadron.* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, \$24.95 softcover ISBN 9780742550988

War on the Mississippi

In the growing body of literature on the naval aspects of the American Civil War a number of topics continue to get short shrift. One of these topics is the role of the U.S. Navy in the southern inland waterways, particularly those in the western theater. It seems that each week there is a new study on the CSS *Alabama*, CSS *Shenandoah*, USS *Monitor*, and any number of other popular subjects. The less glamorous and glorious are often forgotten. Gary D. Joiner makes a valiant effort at resolving this deficiency in this book. Joiner has spent much of his career bringing the war on the western waters to light, authoring or editing a number of works on the 1864 Red River Campaign. However, he has widened his scope for this work and has produced a fine book that anyone interested in the naval war or the war in the West should read.

The first chapter is a succinct yet thorough introduction to the state of the U.S. Navy at the beginning of the war, its focus on blue water operations, and how the navy was to fit into General Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan. Even readers with a vast knowledge of the naval history of the war will find this chapter useful in setting the scene for what follows. For novices in the field, it provides a solid introduction to the structure and politics of the navy in the mid-19th century.

Following this solid introduction, the author launches into a comprehensive account of the beginnings of what would become the Mississippi Squadron and the construction of the city-class ironclads. The sometimes strained relationship between the army and navy is fleshed out throughout the book, especially in the first few chapters. The rapport between the two services alternated between very bad and cordial at various times during the war. Individual personalities largely influenced the relationship, and at times when army and navy commanders were

on the same page, a great deal could be accomplished. When the relationship was at its worst, positive results often proved difficult to achieve. One of the better examples of this can be found in David Dixon Porter's relationships with various army officers. He was on good terms with Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman, but did not have the same level of trust with Nathaniel Banks, as shown by the results of their operations.

Organized chronologically, the book flows through the Mississippi Squadron's operations as the river itself flowed through the land. Beginning with early actions such as Forts Henry and Donelson, and the Battle of Shiloh, the book ends with the Red River Campaign and the eventual division of the Mississippi Squadron into ten districts of operation. Nearly one-third of the book is devoted to the Vicksburg and Red River Campaigns. If there is one criticism, it is that the story seems to bog down in these two chapters, whereas the rest of the book seems to move at a much faster pace. This may have been unavoidable simply due to the detailed nature of the operations against Vicksburg and the Red River.

Though the book has a chronological orientation there are many sidebars and human interest stories that will captivate the reader. The personalities involved include Andrew Hull Foote, Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, David Dixon Porter, and a cast of lesser-known figures such as James Buchanan Eads and Samuel R. Pook. The array of vessels involved is just as interesting, from the large city class ironclads to the smaller and more mobile tinclads, and finally David G. Farragut's blue water sloops and mortar schooners. There are unique stories throughout, such as that of the Mississippi Marine Brigade, quite possibly the most unique military organization in this country's history. Every reader can find something to appreciate in this book.

The book is well-written, thoroughly researched, and complemented by outstanding maps and illustrations. It would be difficult for most readers to comprehend much of what the author is describing without the numerous photographs and other images. Maps are included in almost every chapter and are very welcome to those readers who may not have a keen sense of the region's geography. A glance at the bibliography reveals a variety of primary sources, including many of the key participants' personal papers and correspondence, as well as the standard secondary sources one would expect of such a work. All of these factors contribute to making *Mr. Lincoln's Brown Water Navy* a well-rounded and thoroughly engaging book that serves as a fine introduction to

the Civil War on the western waters.

Andrew Duppstadt holds a BA and MA in History from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. He is Assistant Curator of Education for the North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites and serves as an Adjunct Instructor of History at two community colleges.