

Grant, a Biography

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they are in essential agreement with the conclusions reached by the more recent studies of W. Eugene Hollon and William Goetzmann. They all agree that Long disregarded orders, failed to achieve some of his assigned tasks, and usually hurried his men so they could not do competent work. The authors adopt Goetzmann's distinction between a discoverer who finds things more by chance than design and an explorer who searches for particular objectives in an organized, planned manner. For Nichols and Halley, Stephen H. Long is the classic early nineteenth-century example of an explorer doing a little discovery work.

This is an attractive, readable account of a short phase in the career of a prominent western figure. It is not an attempt to write a full scale biography; that has already been accomplished in admirable fashion by Richard Wood. The text is enhanced by three maps that delineate the route of Long's major expeditions and by several portraits and sketches. The notes and bibliography indicate the authors' use of a substantial volume of both primary and secondary sources, including an appendix listing of the papers, books and articles that included material gathered during Long's trips. There are, however, several interesting omissions, particularly Francis Prucha's *Broadax and Bayonet*, Nichols' own article about Long in *Nebraska History* (Spring 1971) and *The Northern Expeditions of Stephen H. Long*, edited by Lucile Kane, June Holmquist, and Carolyn Gilman. Those interested in western history and the integration of scientific exploration with military expansion should enjoy this book.

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DAVID A. WALKER

Grant, A Biography, by William S. McFeely. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1981. pp. xiii, 592. Photographs, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$19.95.

A new, one-volume biography of Ulysses S. Grant is a worthy addition to studies of nineteenth-century America. Because of its quality, McFeely's book is doubly welcome. A personal biography that emphasizes the man rather than the events with which he was associated, this latest effort to explain the Grant enigma offers a well-conceived and mainly convincing evaluation of his life and personality.

McFeely is well qualified for such a task. He has taught at several English and American schools. He has also authored a previous study of another Civil War general, Oliver Otis Howard. His sources on Grant cover an impressive number of manuscript collections and an adequate range of published, mostly secondary, works.

Previous authors have covered Grant so well that McFeely cannot offer anything new concerning the facts of his life and career. The real worth of his biography lies in his interpretation of those facts. McFeely views Grant as a man striving to be recognized as worthy of success. In developing that theme, he does much to set Grant in his social context in mid-nineteenth-century America. Julia, Grant's wife, shared his longing for comfortable lodgement in the upper levels of society and the adulation that confirmed the couple's public success. As McFeely explains, Grant possessed the capability to make a name for himself. He was shrewd in military moves against the Confederates, adept in handling political generals in the army, and masterful in securing nomination and election to the presidency.

McFeely devotes half his study to Grant's post-Civil War life. His treatment of that period, when the general remained a national and international celebrity, is his best. McFeely's discussion of Grant's pre-Civil War days is short, and his analysis of Grant as military commander is adequate. But in examining the general's *Memoirs*, he offers a fascinating insight into his subject's personality. McFeely contends that Grant needed to write to prove his personal worth, to tell the story of his life, and to show the country that he could transcend the war's ugliness and foresee a positive future. He sympathetically evaluates Grant as president, but offers no apologies. McFeely objectively explains aspects of Grant's career that considerably muddy his image, such as the president's failure to more actively aid blacks, one of the author's particular interests. Grant's care not to become identified again as a common man after he had achieved higher social status also exposes a less attractive, although understandable, side of his character.

McFeely's attempts to psychoanalyze the Grants cannot be so easily accepted. He connects Julia's naming a bedpost for Ulysses with a Freudian sexual symbol, a verdict that appears somewhat shallow and is of questionable relevance. Another assessment, one of the few that does not ring true, is McFeely's judgement of what Grant's career implies about his country. He indicates that only the Civil War provided Grant and many others a "chance for fulfillment" (p. xiii) that was otherwise lacking in America. Such an observation is of more value in understanding the individual than the society, and possesses dubious value as a cultural implication.

Despite those questionable aspects, McFeely's book stimulates reassessment of Grant's image as a simple, ordinary man. Julia appears as interesting as her husband. The story of their married lives, sometimes pathetic and at other times touching, is a strong asset of the book.

Historians can argue about McFeely's interpretations, but his biography should become one of the most important works on its subject.

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

EARL J. HESS

Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg, by Richard J. Sommers. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981. pp. xxiii, 670. Photographs, maps. appendixes, bibliography, index. \$22.50.

When General Ulysses S. Grant, in cooperation with his subordinate, George G. Meade, began moving tens of thousands of soldiers, hundreds of wagons, and tons of supplies toward General Robert E. Lee's weaker Army of Northern Virginia in the spring of 1864, Northern expectations were high. One or two great battles hopefully would finally end the war and restore the Union. The slaughter of thousands of boys and men at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor along with the terrain and earthworks near Richmond, however, forced the Union army to settle into a long, sometimes boring, sometimes bloody siege of the Confederate capital and Petersburg, from June 1864 to April 1865. In those forty weeks of alternating inactivity and attack, federal forces launched ten offensives against Lee's entrenched army. The gray general, brilliant to the end, managed to beat back nine of the assaults before his forces finally cracked and retreated in early April 1865, a retreat that shortly ended with surrender at Appomattox Court House in southern Virginia.

Richard J. Sommers, archivist historian at the United States Army Military History Institute, has written a well-researched, highly detailed account of one of the ten offensives against Petersburg, the assaults of late September-early October 1864. This sixth offensive, like most of these before it, was a two-pronged attack. General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James struck first on the north bank of the James River, attempting to break through the outer defense of Richmond and thereby either capture the rebel capital or divert enough Southern troops north of the river to enable federal forces south of Petersburg to smash Lee's weakened right wing. Then General Meade's Army of the Potomac poured out of Grant's earthworks south of the river to take advantage of Lee's preoccupation with the threat near Richmond. Somewhere, the theory went, blue forces had to be stronger than Lee's outnumbered grays, and a decisive breakthrough could be achieved. While Grant's army did manage to

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