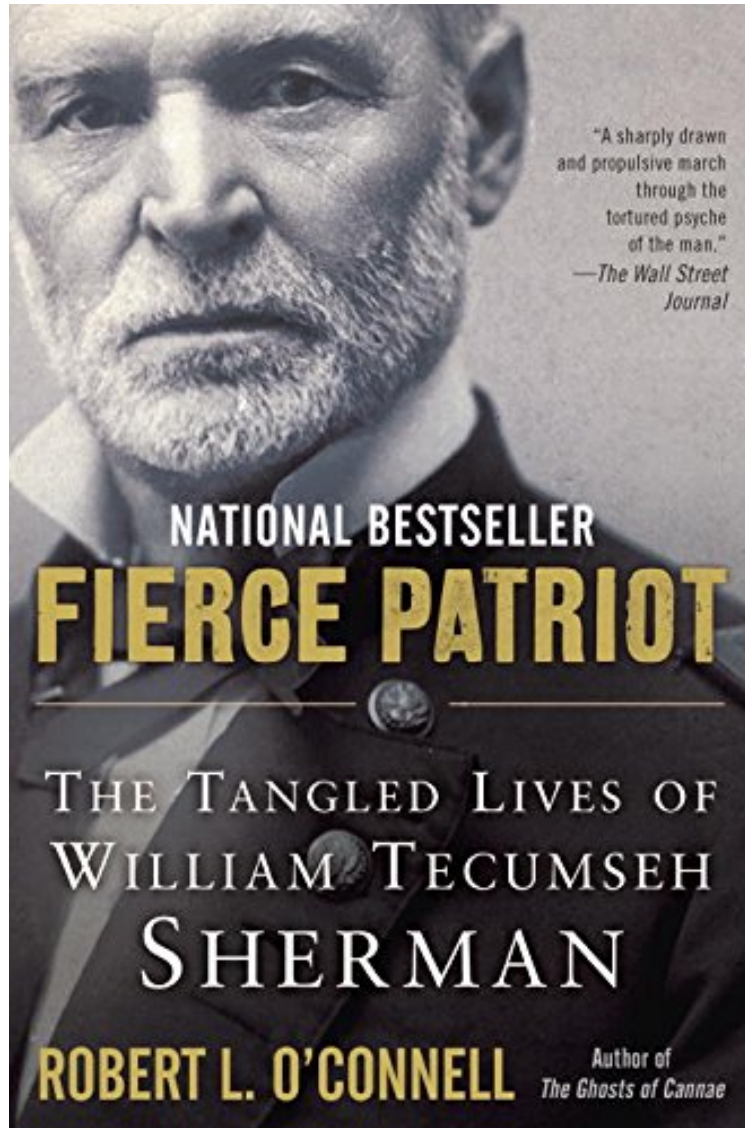


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## Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman

Robert L. O'Connell

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**Robert L. O'Connell : Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives of William Tecumseh Sherman:

115 of 120 people found the following review helpful. First-rate in terms of narrative, insight and interest By Peter G. Keen I selected this because I was interested in learning more about Sherman. I expected a solid and informative book. This turned out to be much more than that. It is first-rate. First, it is always interesting. The author has a lightness in style and an unusual ability to organize and summarize topics. To pick a few examples; he explains the developments in

rifles and the resulting impacts on how commanders positioned troops and soldiers adapted in a compact way that is striking and very clear. Again and again, this skill enlivens the flow of the narrative without disrupting it. I can't recall a book on military history that made the details of campaigns and battles so easy to follow. The core of the book is, of course, the presentation of Sherman's career and personality. The writer made an unusual choice that I think works very well; he separates the military phase of his life as the first and main part of the book and addresses his later career and the very complex psychodramas of relationships within his family circle in other ones. This helpfully unclutters the flow of the narrative, though it is quite arguable that it obscures interactions and is selective in choosing events. Sherman comes across as not particularly self-aware, limited in his empathy and insight, and in many ways not an interesting character. But he was the opposite of this in his growth as a commander. The resulting portrayal abstracts the key historical threads of his life very vividly and convincingly, without neglecting the personal dimensions and resonances. There are a few themes that may be a tiny bit artificial -- a distinctive view of "strategy" as the core of what made Sherman different and a categorization of him as always seeking to be the Number 2 in his relationships with, most obviously, Grant. These are minor demurrals and queries. The analysis seems reliable and the sources and scholarship solid. What stands out is the book is so, so interesting. It flows vividly with a superb sense of the reader -- examples, phrasing and explanation really make this a conversation not a presentation. I loved it. It leaves a sense of enhanced understanding and a rich reading experience.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A perfect example of this is that O'Connell spends several chapters ... By Robert Pekich Not sure how this book became a national bestseller. The author seems to be out to prove that Sherman won the Civil War with little or no help from any other Union General and was the innovator of almost every tactic and strategy the North used. Ignoring that many of the strategies and tactics he used were merely adopted or adapted from other commanders isn't a problem because in these cases the author gives no mention that they were ever used until Sherman employed them. A perfect example of this is that O'Connell spends several chapters detailing how original and unheard of it was for Sherman to march away from his supply lines during the March to the Sea, ignoring entirely that it was merely adopting the same strategy as Grant's Vicksburg campaign. O'Connell also perpetuates previous myths of the Civil War (Grant's drinking in combat) despite the fact that they have revealed as myths for some time. The end result is to present all other commanders' faults while passing Sherman's off as either overblown or twisted to make him look bad. When one reads history it's important to remember that heroes have faults too, this book seems determined to remove all faults from Sherman and present him as the true reason that the Union won the American Civil War.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Follow Uncle Billy Sherman as he marches to the sea, courts women, attends the theatre and raises Cain in 19th century America. By C. M. Mills William Tecumseh Sherman was born in Lancaster, Ohio in 1820. His father was an Ohio Supreme Court Justice who died while the red-headed lad was young. His mother had to tend to a large family so "Cump": was sent to the home of Thomas Ewing. Ewing was a close friend of his late father and a man of wealth, intellect and influence. Ewing served as US Secretary of the Treasury and as the nation's first Secretary of the Interior. He also served as US Senator from Ohio. Sherman wed Maria Ewing the daughter who was bright and opinionated. The couple would have several children; she became a Roman Catholic; their son Tom became a Jesuit priest but Sherman was an agnostic disdaining Catholicism. Sherman graduated from West Point in 1840 rooming with George Thomas the future Rock of Chickamauga Sherman served in California, St. Louis, New York and other posts prior to the Civil War. During the Civil War he won lasting fame for his conquering of Atlanta, and the March to the Sea. He was friendly with General Grant. Following the Civil War Sherman was the chief commander of the United States Army. Sherman was a man of contradictions and complexity. Consider the following aspects of his character": 1. He considered African Americans and native Americans to be lower in intellect than white people. 2. Sherman hated politics and refused to run for office. His brother John Sherman, however, served as US Senator from Ohio and US Secretary of State among many other influential positions in government. 3. Sherman was an adulterer having a rocky though long marriage to his wife. 4. Sherman liked Southerners but believed the South's will to continue fighting must be squelched; this resulted in the March to the Sea in which he "made Georgia Howl!": 5. Sherman had a brilliant mind and a photographic memory regarding topographical features which aided him in his military campaigns. 6. Sherman often suffered from depression; he was moody and very talkative. 7. Sherman was devoted to the Western armies he commanded relishing in public speaking at countless veteran reunions. Dr. Robert L. O'Connell has written a fairly short book on the great Sherman. This book will not replace such classics as those by Lloyd Lewis and John F. Marzalack. Yet it is a fine addition to the Sherman literature. The author divided the tome into three major sections each one devoted to an aspect of Sherman the man and soldier. Part I - This section provides an examination of Sherman's war career as we follow him from First Bull Run to Shiloh to Vicksburg and the March to Sea culminating in the defeat of General Joseph Johnston in North Carolina. Part II examines Sherman's army and how it was organized, the weapons it fought with and other aspects of Union military life during the Civil War. Part III - A keen look at Sherman's complicated personal life with his wife and many children. This is a fine biography well worth your time and money. I enjoyed it learning much about Sherman and the ever fascinating topic of the American Civil War. Recommended for both Civil War buffs and the general reader.

**NATIONAL BESTSELLER** William Tecumseh Sherman was more than just one of our greatest generals. *Fierce Patriot* is a bold, revisionist portrait of how this iconic and enigmatic figure exerted an outsize impact on the American landscape—and the American character. America's first "celebrity" general, William Tecumseh Sherman was a man of many faces. Some were exalted in the public eye, others known only to his intimates. In this bold, revisionist portrait, Robert L. O'Connell captures the man in full for the first time. From his early exploits in Florida, through his brilliant but tempestuous generalship during the Civil War, to his postwar career as a key player in the building of the transcontinental railroad, Sherman was, as O'Connell puts it, the "human embodiment of Manifest Destiny." Here is Sherman the military strategist, a master of logistics with an uncanny grasp of terrain and brilliant sense of timing. Then there is "Uncle Billy," Sherman's public persona, a charismatic hero to his troops and quotable catnip to the newspaper writers of his day. Here, too, is the private Sherman, whose appetite for women, parties, and the high life of the New York theater complicated his already turbulent marriage. Warrior, family man, American icon, William Tecumseh Sherman has finally found a biographer worthy of his protean gifts. A masterful character study whose myriad insights are leavened with its author's trademark wit, *Fierce Patriot* will stand as the essential book on Sherman for decades to come. Praise for *Fierce Patriot* "A superb examination of the many facets of the iconic Union general."—General David Petraeus "Sherman's standing in American history is formidable. . . . It is hard to imagine any other biography capturing it all in such a concise and enlightening fashion."—National Review "A sharply drawn and propulsive march through the tortured psyche of the man."—The Wall Street Journal "[O'Connell's] narrative of the March to the Sea is perhaps the best I have ever read."—Jonathan Yardley, The Washington Post "A surprising, clever, wise, and powerful book."—Evan Thomas, author of *Ike's Bluff* From the Hardcover edition.

From Booklist Sherman remains one of the most celebrated and controversial military icons in American history. Adored by his Union troops during the Civil War as Uncle Billy, he was despised by Southerners as the monster who mercilessly waged war upon the civilian population in Georgia and the Carolinas. Praised by some for his effective campaigns against the Plains Indians, he was condemned by others as a proponent of genocide. O'Connell, an author, analyst, and professor of history, views Sherman's controversial legacy as a reflection of the contradictions and complexities within his character. By nature and inclination, he despised the pretensions and affectations of the wealthy, but he mixed with them freely and aspired to match their financial success. He claimed to hate politicians and journalists, yet he talked incessantly in their presence, and his off-the-cuff remarks often served to distort his true views. Despite the apparently wanton destruction of Sherman's March, he actually kept tight discipline over his troops. This is a well-written and revealing reexamination of the character and career of an undeniably great American. --Jay Freeman "A superb examination of the many facets of the iconic Union general who emerged as Ulysses S. Grant's most trusted battlefield commander. [Robert L.] O'Connell's biography of Sherman brings to life an enigmatic, fascinating figure who emerged a brilliant strategist and a master of maneuver, and whose victories in 1864 helped to ensure Abraham Lincoln's re-election and ultimately turned the tide of the Civil War."—General David Petraeus, Politico "Sherman's standing in American history is formidable. . . . It is hard to imagine any other biography capturing it all in such a concise and enlightening fashion."—National "A sharply drawn and propulsive march through the tortured psyche of the man."—The Wall Street Journal "[O'Connell's] narrative of the March to the Sea is perhaps the best I have ever read."—Jonathan Yardley, The Washington Post "William Tecumseh Sherman is one of the great characters in American history—protean, highly effective, cunning, outrageous, and in every way memorable. He has found just the right biographer in Robert L. O'Connell. *Fierce Patriot* is a surprising, clever, wise, and powerful book."—Evan Thomas, author of *Ike's Bluff: President Eisenhower's Secret Battle to Save the World* "For those who think they know a lot about William Tecumseh Sherman, this book will be a revelation. Those who are meeting him for the first time will be equally mesmerized."—Thomas Fleming, author of *A Disease in the Public Mind: A New Understanding of Why We Fought the Civil War* "To his family and friends he was Cump; to his soldiers he was Uncle Billy; to generations of Southern whites he was the devil incarnate. But to biographer Robert L. O'Connell, William T. Sherman was the quintessential nineteenth-century American: full of energy, constantly on the move, pragmatic, adaptable, determined to overcome all obstacles, a nationalist and patriot who teamed with Grant and Lincoln to win the Civil War and launch America as a world power. This readable biography offers new insights on Sherman as a husband and father as well as a master strategist and leader."—James M. McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* "A fascinating dissection of the multifaceted lives of William Tecumseh Sherman—military genius, brilliant organizer, inspired observer, and occasionally wayward husband. Sherman, O'Connell reminds us, was as brilliantly unpredictable on the battlefield as he was off it."—Victor Davis Hanson, The Hoover Institution, author of *The Soul of Battle* and *Ripples of Battle* "William Tecumseh Sherman has to be our premier grand strategist, who set unexpectedly bold boundaries, not just for war but for peace, and kept to them. In *Fierce Patriot*, Robert L. O'Connell has fashioned a remarkable, and remarkably original, portrait of one of the people who truly defined America."—Robert Cowley, founding editor of *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* "William Tecumseh Sherman was the most fiery, complicated, and inconsistent of America's great generals. In Robert L. O'Connell's aptly titled *Fierce Patriot*, he brings this conflicted American

hero vividly to life. For both the Civil War buff and the general reader, *Fierce Patriot* offers new and arresting insights into this remarkable figure and his impact on the world in which he lived.”—Charles Bracelen Flood, author of *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship That Won the Civil War* From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author Robert L. O’Connell received a Ph.D. in history at the University of Virginia, and spent thirty years as a senior analyst at the National Ground Intelligence Center. He is presently a visiting professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, and was a contributing editor to *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Ghosts of Cannae: Hannibal and the Darkest Hour of the Roman Republic*; *Of Arms and Men: A History of War, Weapons, and Aggression*; and *Soul of the Sword: An Illustrated History of Weaponry and Warfare from Prehistory to the Present*. From the Hardcover edition.