

(Free pdf) Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography

Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography

Craig L. Symonds

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Craig L. Symonds : Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. sheds great light on how the smothering micromanagement and unrealistic expectations ...By Faustus RexPulls no punches on his hesitation to commit to battle and the sometimes lack of assertiveness in command style. However, sheds great light on how the smothering micromanagement and unrealistic expectations by Davis were culpable to his "failures" and how his nature was not up to overcoming backstabbing manipulations by Hood, Bragg and other Davis sycophants.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Joseph E, Johnston: A Civil War BiographyBy Manray9"Joseph E, Johnston: A Civil War Biography" is another worthwhile effort by Craig Symonds. It is a straightforward, even-handed, and well-researched volume assessing Joseph E. Johnston's storied military career. Symonds does not gloss over Johnston's numerous shortcomings, his bad judgment or lack of political sensitivity, and he examines well his successes as a battlefield tactician, a leader of men and a builder of armies. Symonds exposes Johnston's crucial failure to grasp that war is politics by other means. His purely tactical approach to campaigning on the Virginia peninsula and across Northern Georgia prevented his coming to appreciate the limitations imposed by geo-political realities upon the prickly Jefferson Davis. Couple this failure with his unwillingness to placate Davis' delicate ego, and Johnston's tenure in command was shaky from the start.The peak of Joseph E. Johnston's career was his Fabian campaign across Northern Georgia in 1864. It was brilliantly executed in the face of enormous odds. Sherman's forces dominated the field in

manpower, war materiel, provisions, and livestock. Johnston adroitly maneuvered his inferior army so as to avoid pitched battles, minimize losses, and maintain his army in the field as a force in being. This is not at all dissimilar to the contemporaneous Overland Campaign conducted by R. E. Lee in Northern Virginia. The major difference was Lee's willingness to engage in preemptive assaults (Battle of the Wilderness) in vain attempts to forestall Grant's offensives. Lee was unsuccessful and, like Johnston, was eventually pushed back into his defensive works and inevitable defeat -- but Lee suffered considerable casualties en route to the same end. The campaigns were comparable, but Lee was hailed as a hero and Johnston was castigated for failing to fight. With "Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography," Craig Symonds makes a valuable contribution to Civil War history by providing a comprehensive portrait of a consequential, but often neglected, figure. "Old Joe" was flawed, but history has not allotted him the credit he deserves. Craig Symonds does. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The First General of the South. By CustomerGen. Joe E. Johnston, along with Gen. Beauregard, fought the Battle of Bull Run, and won it. But gen. Johnston was not to enjoy continued success. He was wounded in the battles of the Peninsula Campaign. He was replaced by Gen. Robert E. Lee. He did not get along with President Davis, feeling that the President had slighted him with regard to promotions. He regained command in the western theater, but could not stop Gen. Sherman from marching to the sea. He took command in North Carolina at the war's end, and he and Gen. Sherman reached amicable surrender terms. But the federal government rejected the surrender terms. He lived to attend Gen. Sherman's funeral, and died not long after that event. I don't think he can be considered one of the South's great commanders. But I think he was an able and competent leader of his men. JRV

General Johnston was in command of the Confederate forces from the South's first victory in July 1861 to its last in April 1865. Many of his contemporaries considered him the greatest Southern field commander of the war, and yet he remained an enigma. His battlefield victories were never decisive. He failed to save Confederate forces under siege by Grant at Vicksburg, and he retreated deep into Georgia in the face of Sherman's march. His intense feud with Jefferson Davis ensured the collapse of the Confederacy's campaign in 1864, and made Johnston the focus of a political schism that would further undermine the Southern cause. This study provides a narrative of Johnston's Civil War, as well as a portrait of the general as a public and a private man.

From Library Journal Symonds offers a well-written annotated biography of one of the more controversial generals of the Civil War. Johnston is often considered to be the greatest Southern field commander, while others rank him second only to Robert E. Lee. Yet his personal faults deprived him of many opportunities for leadership. He fell into disfavor with Jefferson Davis due to Johnston's insistence that he should be the senior field commander rather than Lee. Johnston also tended to be very vague and indefinite in giving orders to his subordinates, and this cost him victory in several battles. Johnston was a military person and did not understand or appreciate the importance of political factors in military planning. He also believed that cities should be sacrificed to save manpower, which brought him into disfavor with the loss of Vicksburg. This is the best biography that has been written about Johnston, as it treats his war and political experiences evenly and without bias. Academic libraries as well as those with Civil War collections should purchase. - W. Walter Wicker, Louisiana Tech Univ., Ruston Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus In a significant contribution to interpretive Civil War scholarship, Symonds (History/US Naval Academy) paints an engrossing portrait of one of the most enigmatic and important figures of the war. Contemporaries regarded Joseph E. Johnston as one of the greatest military talents in the Confederacy, in some estimates outranking even Johnston's friend and West Point classmate Robert E. Lee. Nonetheless, posterity remembers him only for commanding Confederate armies in a few inconclusive battles, including some nominal Southern victories--First Manassas (1861), Seven Pines (1862), Kennesaw Mountain (1864), and Bentonville (1865)--and for his failure to stop Grant at Vicksburg and Sherman at Atlanta. Johnston lacked Lee's brilliance, and his victories were more the result of careful planning and diligence than of genius. Yet without endorsing Johnston's tactic of avoiding battle with superior Union forces, Symonds articulates the case for Johnston's strategy: Johnston's army suffered considerably fewer losses than Lee's, and but for Jefferson Davis's giving the aggressive but foolhardy John Bell Hood command of the western army after the fall of Atlanta (which caused disastrous Confederate defeats at Franklin and Nashville), Johnston's Army of Tennessee would have remained intact longer than Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. While Symonds shows that the intensely reserved Johnston enjoyed close friendships with his brother officers, he also recounts the general's tragic failure to work harmoniously with the prickly Davis, which resulted in open enmity by the end of the war. Symonds relates how Johnston entered into the unseemly "Battle of the Books" after the war, denouncing Hood and Davis (whom Southerners regarded as a martyr) in his memoir and suffering denunciations in turn. A stimulating and absorbing biography of an undeservedly neglected warrior. (Illustrations; maps.) -- Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. "The most readable and interesting biography yet on Joe Johnston." - Journal of American History "A significant contribution to Civil War scholarship. . . . An engrossing portrait." - Kirkus s "Riveting. . . . A thoughtful biography." - New York Times Book "A splendid, even-handed biography." - Byron

Farwell, Washington Times