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**Des Moines
Civil War
Roundtable**

**January 2025
Headquarters District Iowa
General Order No. 497**

- The **First meeting** of the Spring campaign will **January 15** at the **The Machine Shed**

The bar will open at 5:30 with the meal served at 6:30.

- Our program **Michael Swanger (Iowa History Journal) Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument**-A Stunning Commemoration of Iowans who fought in the Civil War.
- Meal choices **Old Fashion Pot Roast & Grilled Chicken Breast** at **\$24.00**
- **Reservations & payment** will be accepted until **January 12**.

By command of Brigadier General Gordon McKenzie

Our web address www.dmcivilwar.com

Ronald R. Nurmi
Colonel & Adjutant
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1424 E Walnut St #4 DM 50316

For many it is time to renew your membership in the DMCWRT.
\$30.00 Newsletter via email
\$35.00 Newsletter via USPS
\$40.00 for Family

Payments can be combined with your dinner reservation. Contributions are always welcomed

Send to--

Ron Nurmi 1424 E. Walnut Street #4 Des Moines IA 50316

or notify me by email—dmcwrt@gmail.com phone 515-491-3626

The following have dues expiring in 2025 and I have included the expiration date.

Barber	Kent	02/01/24
Capps	Gene	03/01/25
Connon	Dave	05/01/24
Collins	Chuck	02/01/25
Hickman	Rick	01/01/25
Herwig	Steven	02/01/25
Hilliard	Kathy	02/01/25
Huston	Bernard	04/01/25
Ingrisano	Gerard	02/01/24
Kleuever	Jeff	01/01/25
Knueven	Pat	04/01/25
Krotz	Phil	03/01/25
McDougell	Larry	02/01/25
Miller	Bob	02/01/24
Miller	Mary	02/01/24
Morgan	Candy	09/01/25
Moraniec	Dave	03/01/25
Orr	Tim	02/01/25
Powers	Linda	04/01/23
Rittel	Ron	01/01/25
Rittel	Marilyn	01/01/25
Ripperger	Gary	01/01/25
Schmett	Kim	01/01/25
Voy	David	
Wilson	Wayne	05/01/25
Wymore	Lee	11/01/24



2024 Year in Review: The Top 25 Emerging Civil War Book Reviews

By **Tim Talbott** on December 28, 2024

1. [*The Boy Generals: George Custer, Wesley Merritt, and the Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, from the Gettysburg Retreat Through the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864*](#)

Reviewed by Bert Dunkerly

2. [*The Battle of Little Bighorn: A New Appraisal*](#) Reviewed by Dan Davis

3. [*The World Will Never See the Like: The Gettysburg Reunion of 1913*](#)

Reviewed by Jon Tracey

4. [*Longstreet: The Confederate General Who Defied the South*](#) Reviewed by Andrew F. Lang

5. [*Klan War: Ulysses S. Grant and the Battle to Save Reconstruction*](#)

Reviewed by Rich Condon

6. [*Sexual Violence and American Slavery: The Making of a Rape Culture in the Antebellum South*](#)

Reviewed by Sheritta Bitikofer

7. [*Abolitionist of the Most Dangerous Kind: James Montgomery and His War on Slavery*](#)

Reviewed by Tim Talbott

8. [*Soldier of Destiny: Slavery, Secession, and the Redemption of Ulysses S. Grant*](#)

Reviewed by John G. Selby

9. [*The Limits of the Lost Cause: Essays on Civil War Memory*](#) Reviewed by Patrick Young

10. [*Creating a More Perfect Slaveholders' Union: Slavery, the Constitution, and Secession in Antebellum America*](#) Reviewed by Kevin C. Donovan

11. [*In the Shadow of the Round Tops: Longstreet's Countermarch, Johnston's Reconnaissance and the Enduring Battles for the Memory of July 2, 1863*](#) Reviewed by Peter Miele

12. [*An Unholy Traffic: Slave Trading in the Civil War South*](#) Reviewed by Patrick Kelly-Fischer

13. [*The Civil War and the Summer of 2020*](#) Reviewed by Sam Flowers

14. [*Searching for Irvin McDowell: The Civil War's Forgotten General*](#) Reviewed by Kevin C. Donovan

15. [*"Tell Mother Not to Worry": Soldier Stories from Gettysburg's George Spangler Farm*](#)

Reviewed by Peter Vermilyea

16. [*The Iron Dice of Battle: Albert Sidney Johnston and the Civil War in the West*](#)

Reviewed by Sean Michael Chick

17. [*America's Unending Civil War: The Enduring Conflict from Jamestown through to Recent Elections*](#) Reviewed by Evan Portman

18. [*Building a House Divided: Slavery, Westward Expansion, and the Roots of the Civil War*](#)

Reviewed by Patrick Kelly-Fischer

19. [J. E. B. Stuart: The Soldier and the Man](#) Reviewed by John B. Sinclair

20. [Lincoln's God: How Faith Transformed a President and a Nation](#) Reviewed by Max Longley

21. [Pulpits of the Lost Cause: The Faith and Politics of Former Confederate Chaplains during Reconstruction](#) Reviewed by Max Longley

22. [Combee: Harriet Tubman, the Combahee River Raid, and Black Freedom During the Civil War](#) Reviewed by Rich Condon

23. [Adelbert Ames, the Civil War, and the Creation of Modern America](#) Reviewed by Brian Swartz

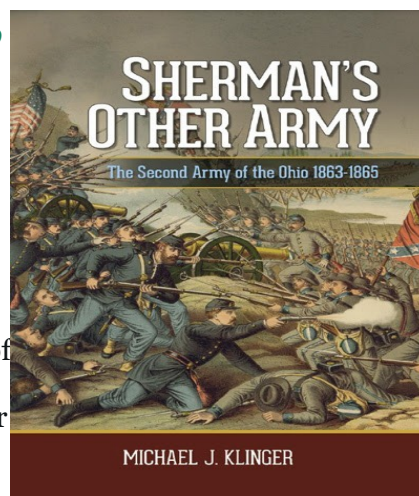
24. [Sleeping with the Ancestors](#) Reviewed by Sarah Kay Bierle

25. [Silent Cavalry: How Union Soldiers from Alabama Helped Sherman Burn Atlanta and Then Got Written Out of History](#) Reviewed by Doug Crenshaw

***Sherman's Other Army: The Second Army of the Ohio 1863-1865.* Michael J. Klinger. Milford, Ohio: Little Miami Publishing, 2023. Softcover, 308 pp. \$25.00.**

By Michael C. Hardy

Several armies during the Civil War gained fame, such as the Army of the Northern Virginia and the Army of the Tennessee. However, there were many other organizations that seemed to fall under the radar. The second incarnation of the Army of the Ohio was one of those groups. In *Sherman's Other Army: The Second Army of the Ohio 1863-1865*, author Michael J. Klinger sheds some light on this revived field command.



The first Army of the Ohio had its roots in the Midwest with the formation of the Department of the Ohio, the Department of Kentucky, and the Department of the Cumberland. There was also a list of successive commanders, including Generals George B. McClellan, Ormsby M. Mitchell, Robert Anderson, and William T. Sherman. In late 1861, the various departments were reorganized under Brig. Gen. Don Carlos Buell. He created five divisions, which became known as the Army of the Ohio. The first Army of the Ohio fought at Mill Springs, then captured Nashville. They also fought at Shiloh, Corinth, and Perryville. Buell's lackluster pursuit of Confederate forces after Perryville led to his removal, and the first Army of the Ohio dissolved with the reorganization of the Department of the Cumberland.

In April 1863, the IX and XXIII Corps reconstituted the Army of the Ohio. The IX Corps was composed of men from New England, New York, and Michigan, while the XXIII Corps had regiments from Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, and other places. Soon after formation, the IX was off to Vicksburg, leaving only the XXIII Corps. They chased John Hunt Morgan to Ohio and captured Knoxville after the Confederates abandoned most of East Tennessee in the late summer of 1863. Under Burnside's command, the XXIII Corps was able to withstand Longstreet's siege of Knoxville. Major General John G. Foster replaced Burnside, who headed back east. Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield, replaced Foster and held command through the Atlanta Campaign, and Hood's Tennessee campaign in late 1864. The Army of the Ohio participated in the Carolinas campaign, where the X Corps was added, and witnessed the surrender of Confederate forces at the Bennett Place, North Carolina, in April 1865.

Klinger jumps right into the history of the second Army of the Ohio, summarizing its various commanders and campaigns. Of interest is Maj. Gen. George Stoneman's role. During the Atlanta Campaign, Stoneman and his cavalry were attached to the XXIII Corps. Stoneman led his men on an ill-fated raid in July 1864 and was captured on July 31. After his release, Stoneman continued to command cavalry, leading a raid into western North Carolina at about the time that the Army of the Ohio arrived in the eastern part of the state.

Klinger could have delved more deeply into the subject matter. For example, a chapter on a corps level medical department would be a welcome addition, as would more information on the second Army of the Ohio's post-war veterans' reunions. Klinger mentions an Army of the Ohio veterans' group but gives readers no other details. How often did they meet? Did Schofield or any of the other commanders attend? Were they more memorial or political in their focus?

Sherman's Other Army breaks from traditional Civil War history conventions in a few ways. It contains two versions of an order of battle, but instead of being positioned in the rear of the book where one normally finds them, they are tucked in between chapters. It also seems that every map in the book is borrowed from a previously published text. A fresh set of maps detailing the movements of the brigades and divisions during various battles would have been helpful. Additionally, it is not clear why Klinger switches to a first-person narrative approach about half-way through the book, but it is little disconcerting.

The book contains numerous photographs of soldiers who served in the Army of the Ohio, which is always helpful to readers wishing to get a sense of the men who made up an army. It also includes the standard notes, bibliography, and index. Many of the chapters are short, some just a couple of pages.

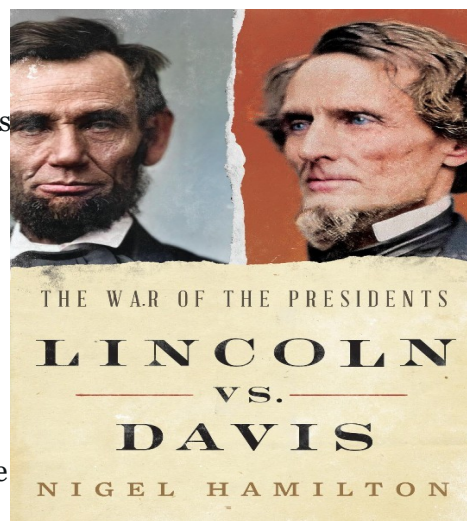
Overall, Sherman's Other Army is an adequate summary of the activities of the second Army of the Ohio during the war. While it seems like several opportunities to dive more deeply into a less-studied Federal army were missed, it still provides Civil War enthusiasts with a good introduction.

Lincoln vs Davis: The War of the Presidents. By Nigel Hamilton. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2024. Hardcover, 777 pp. \$38.00.

Noted WWII and presidential biographer Nigel Hamilton turns his focus to the American Civil War for the first time with this "dual biography" of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis during roughly the first two years of their administrations. He begins his story on February 10, 1861, the day that each ironically began journeys from their homes to Washington and Montgomery, Alabama, respectively, for their inaugurations.

Lincoln vs Davis: The War of the Presidents examines each of the leaders' strengths and weaknesses as Commander-In-Chief. Hamilton uses the date of the Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863, and its immediate aftermath as the ending for the book, believing the outcome of the Civil War at that point became a foregone conclusion. Given the dark days that still lay ahead, some might question this supposition.

The book is a hefty tome. The text is 714 pages plus endnotes, although it lacks a separate bibliography. It consists of ten "Parts" with 91 numbered chapters plus several unnumbered sections. There is little new information and, at least to this reader, no startling revelations. The endnotes sometimes reflect sparse sources, and there are places in the narrative when assertions are made without apparent documentary support in the endnotes.



Lincoln is certainly fair game for criticism for what some see as his slow, evolving views on race and for not making slavery a central issue earlier in the war. Hamilton, however, is unrelenting, contemptuous, and withering in his approach. He even questions Lincoln's "manhood" on the subject and calls Lincoln "craven." (338, 364, & 495)

Apparently due to his inexperience with the Civil War, Hamilton overlooks two important events in Lincoln's learning curve as Commander In Chief. The first is Lincoln's failure to appoint a commanding general to coordinate a cluster of Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley during Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's Valley Campaign, which allowed Jackson to engage them separately and elude their grasp.^[1] Although Hamilton briefly mentions the Union capture of Norfolk in 1862 in a 30-word clause as part of a 78-word sentence, (531), Hamilton misses a unique opportunity to examine Lincoln's growth as a military commander there.^[2]

As to Jefferson Davis, Hamilton often criticizes him for missing several opportunities to seek peace during the war and just before the Emancipation Proclamation was officially issued. According to Hamilton, Davis should have announced gradual emancipation in the South. Hamilton provides no details of how this radical change could be effectuated, ignores the political firestorm that would have erupted in the South, and does not consider the likelihood of Davis' impeachment.

With both Lincoln (whom Hamilton often strangely refers to as "Abraham") and Davis, the author has an unsettling tendency at times to delve into the supposed mindset of both without convincing documentary support. Some of his remarks seem guided by the benefit of perfect 20/20 hindsight and not by the at-the-time uncertain factors facing both Lincoln and Davis during the war.

Fact-checking could have helped this book. Hamilton claims Virginia holds the distinction of having the highest number of deaths (31,000) among its troops than any other Confederate state. (180) North Carolina would beg to differ. The American Battlefield Trust website lists both states as having equal amounts of deaths at approximately 31,000. The North Carolina total may well be even higher.^[3] Hamilton also claims without citation that the battle of Fredericksburg "was the bloodiest battle of the war" up to that point with 17,800 casualties noted (690), which are less than Antietam's casualties by at least 5,000. He is also apparently unaware of the earlier two-day battle of Shiloh in April 1862, where the total losses exceeded 24,000, including over 13,000 for the Union.^[4] It may seem picayune to note such discrepancies, but such simple factual errors raise doubt in readers' minds about the book's overall reliability.^[5]

There are also problems with interpretation. For example, Hamilton asserts that the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) gave the Army of the Potomac a "thorough drubbing" at Antietam. (641) A rather curious description given the serious damage done to the ANV and Lee's subsequent retreat from the field and Maryland.

Also troubling are Hamilton's subtle and not-so-subtle treason allegations against Maj. Robert Anderson, commander of Fort Sumter. Space limitations here prevent a full examination of these claims, but suffice it to say I find those charges wholly unconvincing. Hamilton's claim that Anderson's agreement to "evacuate" the fort was premature after "only" 1 1/2 days of artillery shelling is shortsighted. Though the exterior walls still held up, the interior of the fort was gutted by fire, food rations were low, only four barrels of gunpowder were left, and the main gates were blasted open, leaving the 75 or so Federals exposed to an amphibious attack. Short of an Alamo fight-to-the-last-man defense, what alternative does Hamilton propose?

Readers may find this book a difficult and exasperating experience. It is excessively long, verbose, has many run-on sentences, contains heavy doses of repetition, too often focuses on minutiae, and offers assorted, obscure references to British history, literature, and Shakespearean plays. In short, the book needed an aggressive and firm editing hand.