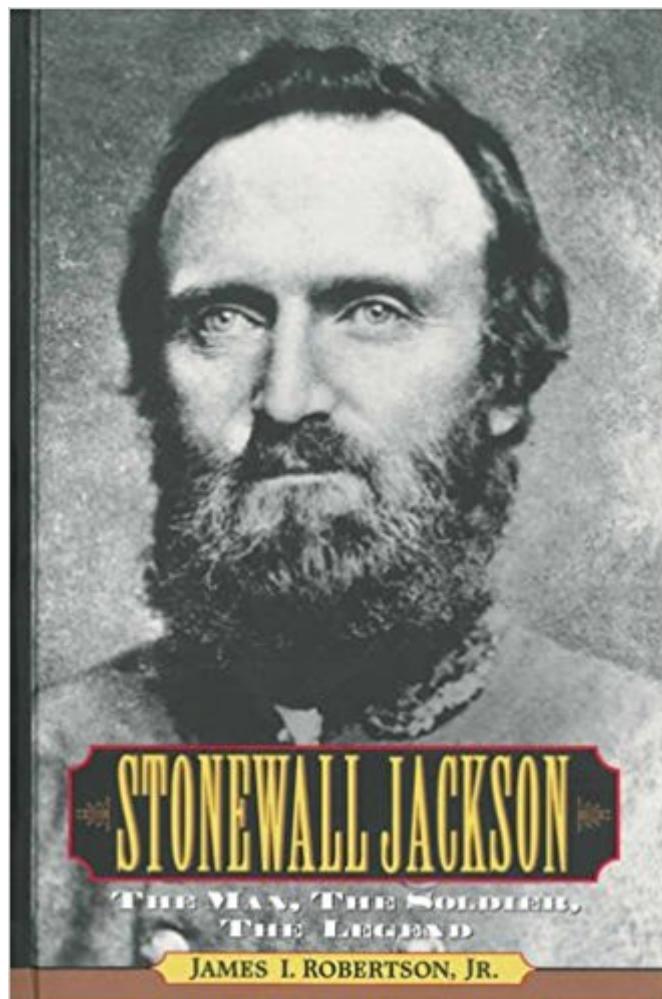


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Stonewall Jackson



Synopsis

The passage of 130 years has only deepened the fascination and reverence for Confederate general Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson. He ranks today as among the half-dozen greatest soldiers that America has produced. Military academies in both hemispheres still teach his tactics. Revered by his men, respected by his foes, Jackson became seemingly invincible. When he learned of the general's fatal wound, Robert E. Lee sent his "affectionate regards," saying, "He has lost his left arm but I my right arm." Jackson's early death in 1863 was the greatest personal loss suffered by the Confederacy and one that permanently crippled the wartime South. This eagerly awaited biography is based on years of research into little-known manuscripts, unpublished letters, newspapers, and other primary sources. It offers for the first time a complete portrait - not only of Jackson the brilliant military strategist and beloved general but also of Jackson, the man of orphaned background, unyielding determination to conquer adversity, and deep religious convictions.

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Customer Reviews

A distinguished Civil War historian unravels the complex character of the Confederacy's greatest general. Drawing on previously untapped manuscript sources, the author refutes such long-standing myths as Stonewall Jackson's obsessive eating of lemons and gives a three-dimensional account of the profound religious faith frequently caricatured as grim Calvinism. Though the author capably covers the battles that made Jackson a legend--Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, etc.--he emphasizes

"the life story of an extraordinary man." The result is a biography that will fascinate even those allergic to military history.

Robertson (Jackson & Lee, Rutledge Hill, 1995) has put together an exhaustive account of the life of Stonewall Jackson from his early years as an orphan until his death after being accidentally shot by his own troops. Robertson describes Jackson as "a man of arms surrounded by the tenets of faith," and so he was. He was a devout, reticent man who surrendered himself to the will of God. Even the deaths of his first wife and his children and his own agonizingly slow death didn't shake his faith. Yet he was also a great military strategist and stern disciplinarian who inspired great loyalty in his troops. Lee considered him his best general and was shaken by his death. Extensively researched and well written, this compares well with Byron Farwell's masterly *Stonewall: A Biography* (LJ 9/1/92). Recommended for Civil War and American history collections. Judy R. Reis, Cochise Cty. Lib. Dist., Bisbee, Ariz. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book literally covers Stonewall Jackson's whole life, up to the time when he was a kid till his death at the battle of Chancellorsville. The author also does a good job walking us through the book and telling us the whole story of Stonewall's life. It's like the author was there spiritually through Jackson's whole life watching him grow up. The author goes into every little detail of Jackson's life and does a good job telling a story about it. If you want a book about Jackson's Civil War career then get a different book. If you want a book that covers Jackson's whole life including the Civil War and the battles he was in during that time then this book is for you.

This was a very fine and well written biography that kept my attention the entire time such that by the end I felt I had lost a friend and wanted to read it again. That is quite an accomplishment given the amount of detail Robertson provides regarding all aspects of Jackson's life - from his humble beginnings in what would become West Virginia to his final hours. At times Jackson comes off as a bit of a dolt and almost a dullard as he repeated his lectures word for word at VMI, as if a cassette recorder were being rewound for the benefit of his uncomprehending students. Jackson was clearly a deeply religious man, but he is not made out to be either a saint or a grim religious fanatic one might find on the pages of "The Scarlet Letter." When Jackson finally decided it was time for some religion he went around shopping and decided upon Presbyterianism, for its Calvinism was most in line with how he himself viewed God and the universe: an orderly creation run logically, much akin to how he himself would drill cadets at VMI. That didn't keep Jackson himself from falling asleep

almost immediately as soon as the sermon began every Sunday, but that was but one of several idiosyncrasies. Robertson argues Jackson would have made a much better history teacher, for the man was deeply moved by great acts of history, especially military and biblical ones and it is noteworthy how moved Jackson was upon his visit to Quebec City while visiting the Plains of Abraham where General Wolfe had fallen in battle. Jackson ran his men ragged and so they were called his "foot cavalry," and Robertson's portrayal of Jackson at the Battle of Cedar Creek is both engaging and unintentionally amusing as the confederate general surprises the "Yankee invaders" by charging down the mountain as if he were a second Joshua driving out the Amalekites from Canaan. Others are more competent to judge how accurate or biased Robertson's portrayal of Jackson is, but this is certainly a standard work and a good place to begin given how eminently readable and detailed this bio is. A very fine contribution to "Civil" War scholarship.

This book was an absolute masterpiece. I was never bored throughout the 700+ pages. James Robertson also offers so much detail that you get a deep, personal look at General Jackson's life. I am not ashamed to admit that at the end of this book I had tears in my eyes. I felt like I had lost a brother and a best friend and as if it just happened. Felt like a novel more than it did as a biography as Robertson gives a back drop of every character and makes you feel as if you're actually there watching everything happen in Tom Jackson's life. Strongly recommend.

In my humble opinion, Robertson has written a masterpiece on a man who was and is one the best generals in our nation's history. Yes, Jackson had his flaws - eccentric behavior, secrecy, reticence, etc. but no one can deny his success. Since Robertson is a long-time history professor, one would think the book's tone would be over the head of the typical reader and overwhelming with its 762 pages. Quite the contrary! I thoroughly enjoyed the author's writing style and often found myself breezing through 40-50 pages in no time. Robertson covers all major areas of Jackson's life: 1. Ancestry, birth, and tragic childhood. 2. Challenging years at West Point. 3. Successes in the Mexican American War. 4. Both of his happy marriages. 5. Life at VMI and Lexington VA before the Civil War. 6. Civil War campaigns and battles. 7. Relationships with family members and fellow officers. 8. Account of his wounding at Chancellorsville and ultimate death from pneumonia. I have also read "Stonewall" by Byron Farwell but believe Robertson's title to be the better of the two. Ready and enjoy. Highly recommended as the most comprehensive and best biography of Stonewall!

It is the best biography of Jackson. Though my opinion of the book decreased after I saw that the author advised on Gods and Generals. That film was a butchery of the opening of the Civil War. If there is a fault, it has a bit too much hero worship and too little description of the tactical genius that Jackson was and the real reason we remember him.

This book presents the best biography of Jackson and does it without the myth that has grown up around the man. After reading most other biography's I am convinced that Robertson has done his homework and presented Stonewall not as a conquering soldier but as a human being. With all of his faults and shortcomings Jackson is the typical American hero, one that is quite ordinary in everyday life but one who takes his place among true American heroes when circumstances present themselves to represent the one of the best the South had to offer during this tragic conflict.

Good read, nice addition to my library.

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