

## P.G.T. Beauregard, Napoleon in Gray

*T. Harry Williams*

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**T. Harry Williams : P.G.T. Beauregard, Napoleon in Gray** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised P.G.T. Beauregard, Napoleon in Gray:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Fair, Balanced, and Enjoyable Account of the Confederacy's Most Enigmatic and Perplexing General. A True GEM Among BiographiesBy Dr.M.LawickiThis is one of the best biographies I've read on any American historical figure. The author T. Harry Williams, an accomplished historian and biographer from Louisiana, first published this book in 1955. Despite its age, this biography has held up remarkably well over the years and never feels 'dated' or antiquated. The book is very well written and in the end I feel as though I came to understand the personality of the man the Chicago Tribune referred to as, 'always dramatic and often perplexing.' Even without the skill of Mr. Williams, it is easy to become fully absorbed in the fascinating and complex life of the South's most enigmatic general as the pages of his life turn before us. There were no lapses of interest in the subject matter on my part, for Beauregard led an interesting life in the most tumultuous of times. His academic brilliancy at West Point was impressive, as was his prodigious talent in engineering. This book is more than fair in its assessment and presentation of Beauregard's various commands as a General in the Confederacy, contrasting effectively his many strengths as a leader with his various pitfalls as a human being. My interest was definitely piqued when I learned of the various important roles Beauregard played in helping to reconstruct and reconcile the South after the war--much of which is overlooked by many modern day myopic historians. As I was reading this entertaining biography, I was shocked at the similarities between Beauregard's Civil War conundrums and those of a Federal officer whose personality and disposition was so very similar to Beauregard's own; Union General George B.

McClellan. Interestingly, both McClellan and Beauregard were insubordinate and disrespectful to their superior officers and civilian leaders. McClellan's hatred for Lincoln was surpassed only by Beauregard's enmity towards Jefferson Davis. The opposing generals were also supremely gifted intellectually, deficient in humility, and styled themselves after the great Napoleon. The last and most profound similarity is that both men excelled at burning (personal) bridges over issues that by today's standards seem trifling. Beauregard's inflated pride and dignified responses to all rebukes (real or imagined) invariably got him into trouble with his superiors--particularly Jefferson Davis. The personal feud between Davis and Beauregard was intense during the Civil War, and continued unabated into the postwar South. I anticipated that Beauregard's venomous hatred for Davis would lead him to challenge Davis to a duel during the war. Fortunately for both men, it did not. Another subject that interested me very much was Beauregard's generalship. Why did Robert E Lee and many of Beauregard's other contemporaries have so little praise for a man who was clearly a brilliant and inspirational leader? Beauregard's vainglorious nature, volatile temperament, and outspoken personality probably contributed to his ostracization, but the more likely reason relates to his strategizing. Beauregard's battle plans were often grandiose in scope (like Napoleon's own) and impractical when the scant resources and numerical inferiority of the Southern cause is taken into consideration. Whereas Lee, Davis, and many other Confederate Generals were cognizant of the near-insurmountable forces arrayed against them, Beauregard at times seemed oblivious of the South's dwindling prospects against the rapidly replenished Union Armies. Nevertheless, in hindsight and in Beauregard's defense there WERE times when his advocacy of troop concentration might have won the day in several important battles, had his counsel been taken seriously. Unfortunately, Beauregard never had the full confidence of Lee, Davis, the Confederate Government, or any of the other Southern Generals. Despite the fact that he was one of only seven full generals in the Confederacy, Beauregard was considered too reactive, too emotional, and untrustworthy to be given an independent command. Nevertheless, his talents and inspirational leadership could not be ignored-- even by a vindictive and spiteful Jefferson Davis. Beauregard himself contributed greatly to several important Confederate victories and, to my knowledge, is only held accountable for the loss of Shiloh. It is my own opinion that Beauregard may have made a fine Corps commander had he been capable of restraining his passions and keeping his ego in check when dealing with Davis and his ilk. This is the rarest of biographies pertaining to a Southern Civil War general. The reason is that the subject of this story, unlike all the others, actually lives 'happily ever after'. The vast majority of Beauregard's fellow Confederate officers, by contrast, were unable to find work or employment after the war. Sadly, nearly all of the nationless generals and colonels of the Confederacy fell upon hard times, forbidden from soldiering and completely unprepared for the challenges of civilian life. The vast majority of these men languished in poverty. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, on the other hand, adapted successfully to the new south, utilizing his prodigious engineering talents to run railroads and help industrialize his own Louisiana. His prior investments in property and businesses came to fruition as well, and he was able to retire a very wealthy man. He did share some of this wealth with friends and family, and even helped his fellow veterans from time to time in various fundraising events. It is reassuring to know that in the end the enigmatic General and bon vivant had generosity to add to an already lengthy list of known character traits. This is a great biography and I highly recommend it. Five Stars!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very good biographyBy Phillip R. RossVery good biography of an important figure in the War for Southern Independence and also very important after the War.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It's amazing that this is the "latest" on such an important ...By CustomerWell written and balanced. It's amazing that this is the "latest" on such an important historical figure.

Reprint: 1991 printing. F/f. Fullbound in blue with gilt-stamped titles along spine. Light shelfwear, else fine in like, unclipped dustjacket. Clean and unmarked textblock. [ xiii, 345 p., [3] leaves of plates : ill., maps, ports.; 9 x 6 x 1 inches ]