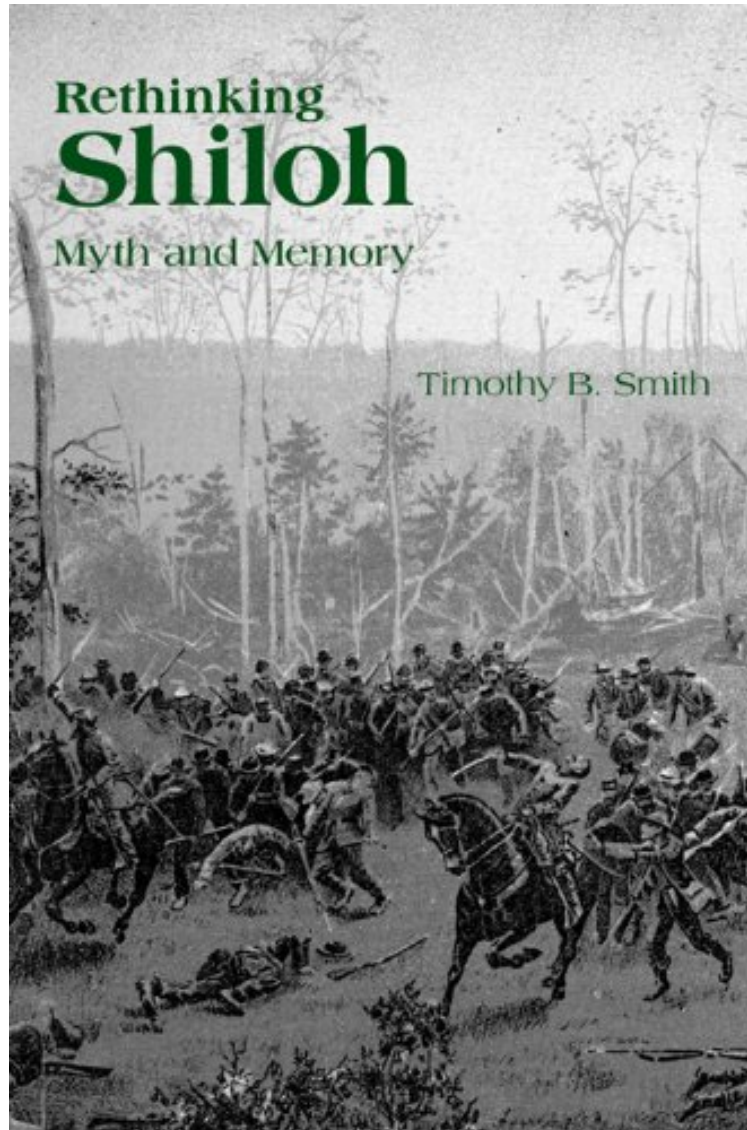


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## Rethinking Shiloh: Myth and Memory

*Timothy B. Smith*

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**Timothy B. Smith : Rethinking Shiloh: Myth and Memory** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rethinking Shiloh: Myth and Memory:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Robertpricey but can never get enough Shiloh, especially from 1 of the premier Shiloh historians0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy MisterTGreat service and value.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Insightful set of reviews on the Civil War battle at ShilohBy Steven PetersonShiloh was an eye opening battle for both sides in the Civil War. Sanguinary

and a close call as to who might triumph. We see here a central aspect of U. S. Grant--stubborn and unwilling to give up. And, with great timing, he was reinforced by General Buell at just the right moment. This book is a series of essays, some of which were published elsewhere. It makes a nice compliment to other books on Shiloh, such as those major works by Cunningham and Daniel and McDonough and Sword. Indeed, I consulted some of these works as I read Smith's volume. And that surely indicates that this is a book that provokes thought about this battle. In the following paragraphs, I will speak in a bit of detail about a sampling of the chapters, to give a sense of the coverage. The book opens with a chapter on terrain. Books on Shiloh have mentioned--normally in passing--the role of the terrain. For instance, Patrick Cleburne's brigade faced real challenges and hindered his offensive movements. But this chapter explores the issue in much greater detail and makes a strong case that geography was a major factor in the unfolding of the battle. Another example: Grant's final defensive line was much stronger because of the terrain, making a successful Confederate piercing of that line problematic. The second chapter is a leisurely discussion of Confederate commanding general Albert Sidney Johnston's last hours before his death in battle. Many (including me) have contended that he was not able to be in command because of his closeness to combat and subsequent inability to "get" the big picture. But this chapter also notes that his presence had value for the troops on his army. An interesting take on his final hours. The Hornet's Nest. . . . Some have argued that the defense here was critical for the Union Army's ultimate success. This chapter contends that that is erroneous (echoing Cunningham's argument). Indeed, a logical consideration of the heroic stand seems to indicate that this was a magnificent stand--but that it was NOT critical for the final outcome. What of the late arrival of General Lew Wallace into the struggle? Grant never accepted this and felt that Wallace had undercut the Union forces' struggle that day. Smith does a nice analysis of the route that Wallace probably took, in more detail than other depictions that I have read. Still, it does not answer the question as to whether or not he exhibited the "slows." Other chapters explore Benjamin Prentiss' role as "hero"; the inhabitants of Shiloh, the fate of Mississippi's delegates at the convention approving secession who fought, the New Deal's role in Shiloh National Military Park, and the making and effect of the movie "Shiloh: Portrait of a Battle." All in all, a worthwhile work.

Ulysses S. Grant once remarked that the Battle of Shiloh "has been perhaps less understood, or, to state the case more accurately, more persistently misunderstood, than any other engagement . . . during the entire rebellion." In *Rethinking Shiloh*, Timothy B. Smith seeks to rectify these persistent myths and misunderstandings, arguing that some of Shiloh's story is either not fully examined or has been the result of a limited and narrow collective memory established decades ago. Continuing the work he began in *The Untold Story of Shiloh*, Smith delves even further into the story of Shiloh and examines in detail how the battle has been treated in historiography and public opinion. The nine essays in this collection uncover new details about the battle, correct some of the myths surrounding it, and reveal new avenues of exploration. The topics range from a compelling analysis and description of the last hours of General Albert Sidney Johnston to the effect of the New Deal on Shiloh National Military Park and, subsequently, our understanding of the battle. Smith's careful analyses and research bring attention to the many relatively unexplored parts of Shiloh such as the terrain, the actual route of Lew Wallace's march, and post-battle developments that affect currently held perceptions of that famed clash between Union and Confederate armies in West Tennessee. Studying Shiloh should alert readers and historians to the likelihood of misconceptions in other campaigns and wars—including today's military conflicts. By reevaluating aspects of the Battle of Shiloh often ignored by military historians, Smith's book makes significant steps toward a more complete understanding and appreciation of the Shiloh campaign in all of its ramifications.

"This book contributes to a more complete and 'total' appreciation of the Shiloh campaign in all of its many ramifications." -James Lee McDonough, author of *Shiloh- In Hell Before Night*