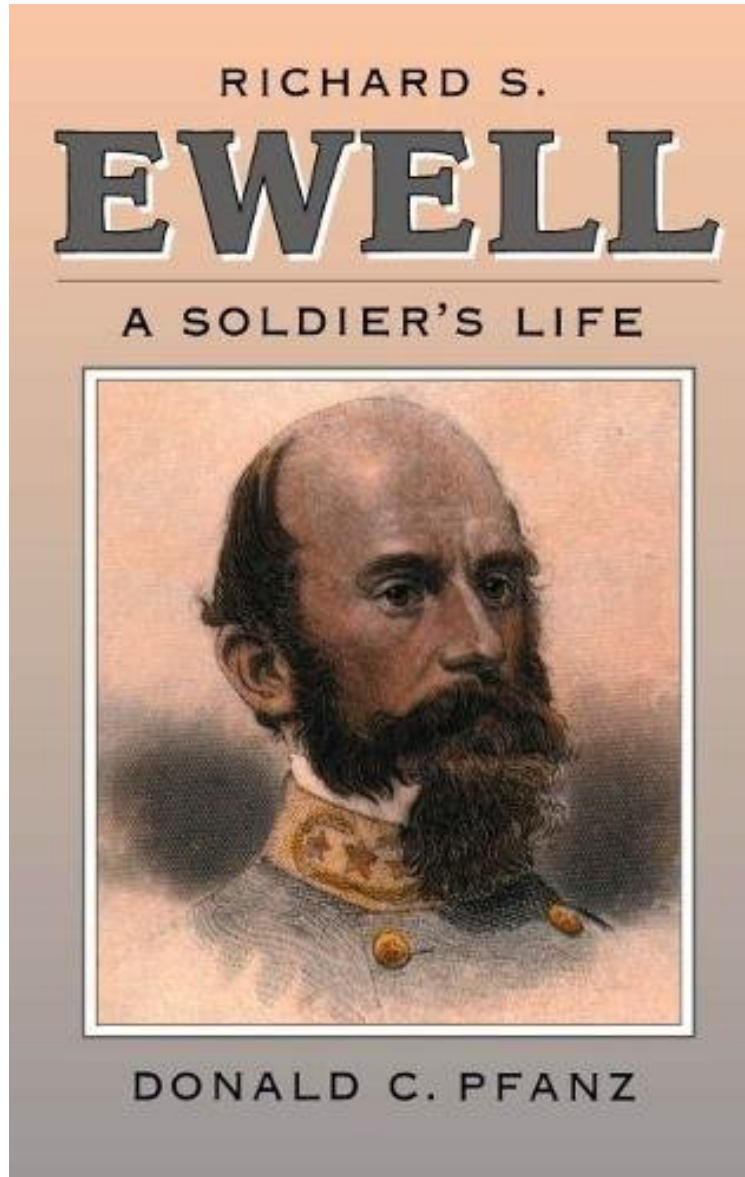


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Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life (Civil War America)

Donald C. Pfanz

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pages
Biography
Campaigns
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Civil War
Army | File size: 26.Mb

Donald C. Pfanz : Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life (Civil War America) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life (Civil War America):

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A Complete Look At Ewell: Modest but Dutiful Soldier
By Daniel Hurley
This is a refreshing and informative look at Richard Ewell, before, after and of course during the Civil War.

Often described as a failure after succeeding Jackson and becoming leader of the Lee's new 2nd Corp, Ewell has suffered severe criticism for the first day of Gettysburg and for his emotional response to the breach at Spotsylvania. Pfanz provides a fair and colorful look at the dependable soldier that fought the second half of the war with a wooden leg and overall served much better than superficial history would lead you to believe. Pfanz profiles Ewell's early life efficiently noting that Ewell's family as a whole were eccentric and Ewell himself a very thin and balding man who spoke with a lisp. Although lacking in military forbearance, Ewell completes West Point and serves gallantly as a dragoon officer in the west occasionally fighting Indians with high praise. Pfanz provides a full perspective of Ewell as a brave soldier who initially thought Jackson crazy and in a rather amusing historical telling, Pfanz describes how at one point several generals in Jackson's command think each other unbalanced. As Pfanz describes, Ewell fights extremely well for Jackson particularly at Cross Keys and at Winchester. Although literally pegged as an officer that follows explicit orders, Pfanz clarifies that Ewell fought extraordinary well particularly in the initial stages of the Gettysburg campaign in capturing Winchester and marching virtually to Harrisonburg. He also fought brilliantly at the Wilderness and for the most part at Spotsylvania. As Pfanz notes, Ewell saved Richmond during Butler's great onslaught attack in the fall of 1864, which is a little appreciated fact. After Butler captured Fort Harrison his attack is stymied by Ewell who masks his small force by using the woods to limit the view of his small defiant band. Richard Sommer's writes of this wonderfully in his book "Richmond Reemmed". Pfanz notes Ewell's one quality that may have not worked in his favor; he frequently asked the opinions of others in contrast to Jubal Early who frequently gave opinions. At Gettysburg, Lee's directives were not precise to Ewell who contended with his July 1 victory with rounding up 5,000 union prisoners, waiting for Johnson's division along with a report of union troops appearing on his left flank. On top of that, Early would not support an attack on Cemetery or Culp's Hill. Nor would Early support shifting Ewell's corps to the right to pull the lines together as Lee wished. Pfanz notes that communication failures appear to be the biggest command problem at Gettysburg along with a lack of forceful leadership from Lee along with the union's will to fight. Ewell also suffers a slight from Gordon, whose self serving personal history make him a questionable source, stung Ewell in Lee's eyes as Gordon relates how Ewell virtually squandered a surprise attack on the union right. Acting judiciously, Ewell orders the attack but may have looked inept to Lee after his brilliant attack and defense in the Wilderness. The almost humorous episode of Ewell trying to stop retreating soldiers at Spotsylvania, cussing at them and slapping them on the back with his sword appears too much for Lee and Ewell's ill advised attack that was suppose to be more reconnaissance in nature virtually keys Lee's decision to replace Ewell with Early when Ewell is momentarily ill. Unfortunately, Ewell's romance with his old flame and new bride caused a huge negative reaction with his staff particularly when she intervned with staff activities and her husband's time raising doubts about his focus. Pfanz provides fascinating detail on the correspondence between Ewell and Lee where Ewell sadly tries to return to command while Lee gently tries to tell him he is not needed at the front. Ewell finishes his confederate career in charge of the Richmond defenses finishing the war on the road to Appomattox at Saylers Creek when he is cut off and alone with Anderson's division. Pretty amazing story after the war that the man missing a leg, with several horses shot out from under him, and two horses roll over him, survives to live a life as a vigorous business man. Ewell was a modest man who, unlike Longstreet, died before Jubal Early rewrote his version of confederate history.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four StarsBy toothbunnyInteresting1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Book Even for those that Don't Like Bios.By John BenintendiI am not one to read a biography but was told that this was a very good one. I was told by a battlefield guide that this was the book that started her down the road of studying the civil war. She told me that if I wanted to learn about the movements of the Army of Northern Virginia, this would be a great place to start. And she was right. I was also told by some other friends that this was the best bio of Gen. Ewell going. I have not read any other bios on Gen. Ewell so I can't say if this is the best one, but this was a very good one indeed. I finished this book in a mere 5 days.Gen. Ewell is a general that is often overlooked as one of the best generals in the Army of Northern Virginia. After all, the Army had Generals Lee, Longstreet, Jackson, Early, and Stuart. Also, Gen. Ewell has the reputation of losing the battle of Gettysburg since he failed to take Cemetery Hill or Culp's Hill on July 1, 1863. This book explains much of that situation and demonstates why the reputation may be misleading. During Gen. Ewell's tenure under the Command of Gen. Jackson, his performance was almost flawless. However, once he took over the Second Corp., it seems as if he became more timid in his decision making.This book is very well written and is one that will keep your interest. I have a very difficult time with bios as most do not hold my interest but this one held my interest and then some. I learned not only about the man but also about the history of the Army of Northern Virginia. In a civil war bio, I did not want a great deal of background but enough to show the context in which the General come to be so high up in the chain of command. This book provides just enough of Ewell's background before the civil war to give you a very good understanding of his experiences without going into minute detail. Once the book gets into the time of the civil war, it reads much like history of the Army of Northern Virginia and not a bio. This, to me, is what makes this book great.I recommend this book as a study of the Army of Northern Virginia and about one of the most misunderstood of its high commanders. If you have an interest in the civil war, I highly recommend this book. If you have a particular interest in the Southern aspect of the war, especially in Virginia, this book is a must. You will not be disappointed.I hope you

enjoy.

General Richard Stoddert Ewell holds a unique place in the history of the Army of Northern Virginia. For four months Ewell was Stonewall Jackson's most trusted subordinate; when Jackson died, Ewell took command of the Second Corps, leading it at Gettysburg, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House. In this biography, Donald Pfanz presents the most detailed portrait yet of the man sometimes referred to as Stonewall Jackson's right arm. Drawing on a rich array of previously untapped original source materials, Pfanz concludes that Ewell was a highly competent general, whose successes on the battlefield far outweighed his failures. But Pfanz's book is more than a military biography. It also examines Ewell's life before and after the Civil War, including his years at West Point, his service in the Mexican War, his experiences as a dragoon officer in Arizona and New Mexico, and his postwar career as a planter in Mississippi and Tennessee. In all, Pfanz offers an exceptionally detailed portrait of one of the South's most important leaders.

.com Confederate general Richard Ewell has never received the attention he deserves, according to his biographer Donald C. Pfanz. Ewell's many impressive military achievements have gone largely unnoticed, and his few failures--among them arguably blowing an opportunity to turn Gettysburg into a Southern victory--have often served as reasons to blame Confederate losses on anybody but its more revered generals, such as Robert E. Lee. Ewell's greatest accomplishment, suggests Pfanz, was leading third-rate troops in defense of Petersburg when Federal soldiers broke through at Fort Harrison. "Had [Stonewall] Jackson been in charge rather than Ewell, historians would have touted the battle as a military masterpiece. But ... the episode was forgotten. Historians have all but ignored it since." Despite such assessments, *Richard S. Ewell: A Soldier's Life* is no hagiography; Pfanz cites shortcomings in both Ewell's personality (bad temper) and judgment (at Spotsylvania, for instance). Still, this book is mainly a robust defense of a second-tier general who deserves better than what he's received from other historians. From *Library Journal* Civil War historian Pfanz (*The Petersburg Campaign: Abraham Lincoln at City Point, March 20-April 19, 1865*) presents a favorable biography of Confederate General Richard S. Ewell. Although covering the full span of Ewell's life, Pfanz focuses most heavily on his Civil War years. He fills the lacunae regarding Ewell, reassessing the command and operations of the man who was Stonewall Jackson's right arm and who was an important, if underrated, military leader, succeeding Jackson to lead the Second Corps at Gettysburg, among other engagements. The author draws upon a number of primary sources and concludes that, overall, Ewell was a capable and successful general. Pfanz successfully conveys the personality, but more social and political contextualization would have been welcomed. Recommended for libraries with large collections of Civil War military history and biographies. Charles L. Lumpkins, Pennsylvania State Univ., State College Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* Confederate General Ewell is popularly regarded primarily as a fumbling eccentric who married a rich widow. That situation is partly the consequence of there having been only two previous biographies of him. Pfanz's long overdue third does much more justice to Ewell, who was a fascinating human being, if not an outstanding soldier. This scion of impoverished Virginia gentry graduated from West Point and had a long, distinguished career as an Indian fighter before the war. He was a division commander under Stonewall Jackson and a corps and department commander under Lee, who never forgave his mediocre performance at Gettysburg. Ewell became independently wealthy through marrying wealthy widow Lizinka Brown, a much more gifted and interesting person than former dismissals of her allowed. Although more conscientious than brilliant, and probably beyond his competence as a corps commander, Ewell on his good days was a formidable combat commander. He has long deserved the fine biography he now receives. Roland Green