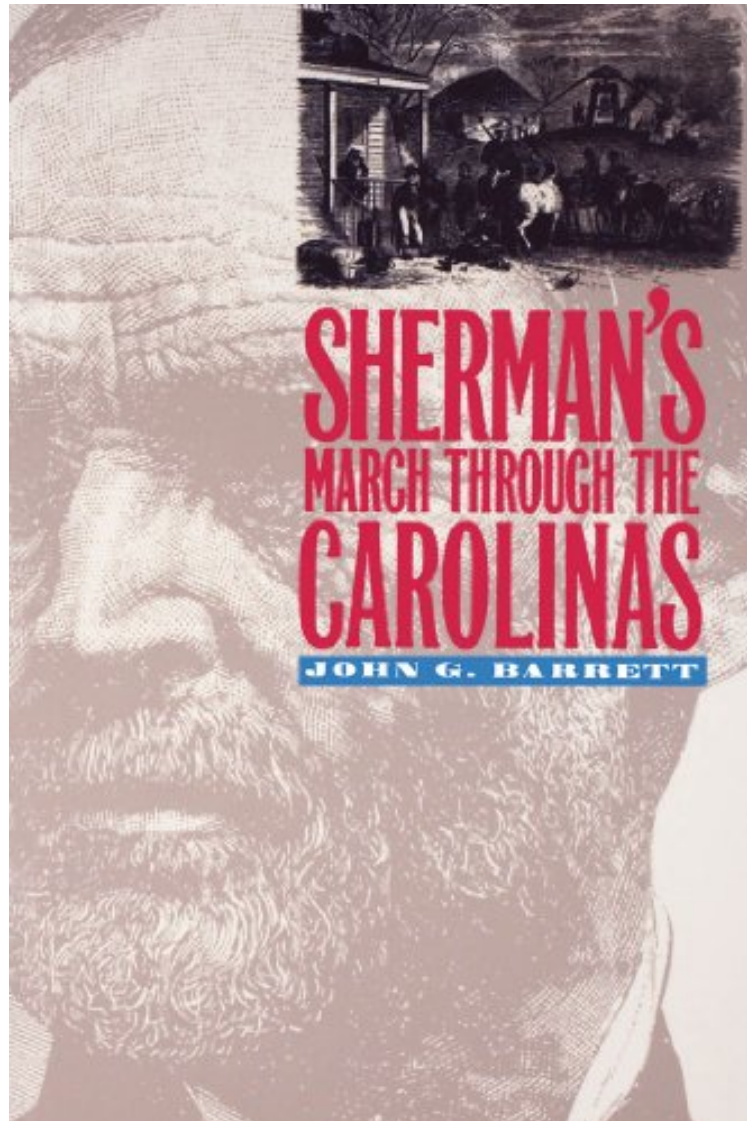


Sherman's March Through the Carolinas

John G. Barrett

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John G. Barrett : Sherman's March Through the Carolinas before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sherman's March Through the Carolinas:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Good Study but Lacks Maps/Illustrations By
KJAGSYNOPSIS This book chronicles the destructive march of General William Tecumseh Sherman's Army from Savannah, GA through the Carolinas beginning in Feb 1864 and ending in April 1865. Sherman left Savannah with the intention of joining Gen Grant in Virginia to defeat Robert E. Lee's Army boxed in around Richmond and Petersburg. Sherman set out with his 60,000-plus Army divided into two infantry wings commanded by Generals Howard and

Slocum, along with a cavalry division commanded by Gen Kilpatrick. His initial objective was to reach the railway junction of Goldsboro, NC (by way of Columbia, the SC capitol) where a supply line and additional forces under command of Gen's Schofield and Terry were to join him prior to pushing on to Richmond. Sherman, responsible for the campaign and its outcome, is the central figure and the book starts out by providing insights of his personal and early military life (much of it in the South), including his evolving views that shaped his "Hard War" strategy to facilitate the end of the war. The book also covers the politics and stakes of both sides associated with this campaign, along with the personalities, strategies and tactics involved, the armies' movements, engagements and battles, and the impacts on civilians and resources supporting the Southern war effort. The book follows Sherman's path as piecemeal forces under General Beauregard—Confederate, state, and local—establish defensive positions in and around Augusta and Charleston, but Sherman simply bypasses them after feints and demonstrations toward them. By keeping his columns constantly on the move and avoiding these two cities, Sherman is able to prevent opposing forces from concentrating against his army, thereby avoiding delay to Goldsboro and heavy casualties, while conserving ammunition and enabling his large army to be kept sufficiently supplied with food, animal forage, and fresh animals as he moves northward. At Lee's insistence, Davis replaces Beauregard with General Joe Johnston in North Carolina, who concentrates all available troops in an effort to stop Sherman. Ample attention is given to the controversial destruction and pillaging South Carolina, particularly the capital of Columbia, considered the cradle of secession. The state was also where the first official shots of the war were fired on Federal Fort Sumter. These facts were not lost on Union troops angered by the blood spilled and hardships endured over the course of the war. Military engagements such as the cavalry battle at Monroe's Crossroads and the Battles of Averasboro and Bentonville in North Carolina are also covered. Subsequently, Sherman meets with Grant and Lincoln to strategize the end game. Grant no longer needs Sherman and wants him to focus on Johnston instead. Sherman then captures Raleigh, the NC capitol, but spares the city. Lee surrenders to Grant and Lincoln is assassinated, and details of reactions on both sides are covered. The book then covers in detail Sherman's and Johnston's negotiations for terms of surrender in April 1865. Sherman offers generous terms including political ones, believing they will promote long term peace, and out of concern that Confederate forces will escape and resort to guerilla warfare. Johnston is motivated to surrender because of Lee's capitulation, supply issues, low morale and mass desertions, combined with facing Sherman and now Grant's army, and a realization that Union armies will continue to inflict destruction on the South. Initially, Sherman's terms are agreed to by Johnston and Jefferson Davis, but rejected by the Federal Government because they cover political terms they do not agree with, and Sherman was not authorized to give. Sherman then presents restructured terms that cover only military issues identical to those Grant offered Lee, but Davis refuses them and orders Johnston to break up his army and reassemble it elsewhere, and provide him with a large mounted escort to make his own escape. Johnston disobeys Davis and accepts the terms, surrendering Confederate forces in North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, with assurances from Sherman that his men will receive extra rations, transportation assistance, and can keep personal property, mounts, and some guns. Sherman also makes good on his promise to assist civilians. Davis subsequently goes on the lam. The book ends with a discussion on Sherman's legacy after the war, including views on the impact his Carolinas Campaign had on the outcome of the war. Sherman and Johnston became close friends after the war. Ironically, while serving as pallbearer at Sherman's funeral in bad weather, Johnston caught a cold that turned into pneumonia, and died shortly after.

HARD WAR According to the book, Sherman's concept actually had its beginnings in 1860 while superintendent of a new military school in Louisiana (now LSU), as he witnessed first-hand the wheels of secession turning with the active support of civilians for a war against the democratically elected federal government, including efforts to impede federal activities in the South many months before the war even began. As Sherman later stated, "We are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people..." and "...the people of the South having appealed to war are barred from appealing to protection to our Constitution which they have practically and publicly defied." There was actually a method to his "madness." After capturing Atlanta, Sherman determined his strategy—which encompassed military, political, economic, and psychological factors—made the best use of his army to bring about the end of war as quickly as possible, vs. chasing Hood endlessly while trying to hold onto large swaths of territory and protect his own supply lines. He also reasoned this form of warfare was necessary, since Davis and his administration were still willing to spill more blood on both sides despite the following:--Lincoln and his party had been reelected with a mandate to prosecute the war to a decisive end.--Lee's and Hood's armies were becoming weaker by the day as Union armies continued to get larger and better technologically.--European nations no longer considered coming to the aid of the South. Sherman's objectives were threefold: 1. War-Supporting Resources: Destroy or deny use of factories, armories, foundries, mills, military equipment and supplies, government buildings, crops, food, cotton, horses and mules, etc. Sherman also surmised (correctly) that Confederate soldiers, the South's most valuable resource, would increasingly desert their units out of concern for their families and property in his army's path. 2. Logistics and Communications: Destroy or deny use of railroads and infrastructure, locomotives and rolling stock, roads and bridges, waterways, ships and boats, telegraph equipment, etc. 3. Civilians: Sherman's "shock and awe" campaign was designed to demonstrate to secession-supporting civilians that living in the Union was a better option than living with hostile armies roaming the countryside relatively unopposed by Confederate, State, or local

governments. Civilians in the army's path were hit hard economically as personal property and crops were destroyed or confiscated, and nearby factories, foundries, mills, and businesses were destroyed. For slave owners, much of their personal wealth was tied up in slaves, which fled to Sherman's army in droves. Sherman (as well as much of his army) was particularly adamant that South Carolina should experience the hard hand of war, which had largely gone unscathed by Union military operations. Sherman's general orders instructed soldiers not to enter private homes or threaten civilians, and to discriminate between the rich, "who are usually hostile," and the poor and industrious, who were usually "neutral or friendly." Despite efforts by many officers, troops (typically foragers and stragglers) did overstep these boundaries and even looted personal property and treated civilians rudely. Guards were often posted outside homes, including those of the wealthy, at the request of owners; however, protection was not given to outbuildings, food, mounts, forage, cotton, crops, and other property. Steps were also taken to discourage and discipline foragers not part of designated foraging units. Soldiers often allowed poor civilians, female factory workers, and blacks to take what they wanted before they set fire to factories, military depots, and stores. Homes destroyed typically encompassed certain wealthy slaveholders considered guilty of prosecuting the war, such as Generals H. Cobb's and Hampton's plantation homes, homes of civilians caught burning bridges or other hostile acts, homes found abandoned and considered owned by secession supporters, and those homes close to factories, mills, or government buildings that were consumed due to the spread of fire. Over the course of both campaigns, there were very few credible reports of rape, and almost none of murder. In one substantiated case of rape and one of murder in NC, both soldiers were executed by their respective commands. Ironically, there were numerous reports by citizens and formal complaints by State and local Governments in GA, SC, and NC of Confederate cavalry, soldiers, and even civilians plundering businesses, government buildings, stores, and homesteads, including valuables, horses and mules, food, etc. Soldiers in the Army of Tennessee brought east to fight Sherman reported in letters back home of comrades partaking in looting. The book includes excellent source notes with additional details at the end of each chapter. The bibliography is extensive. There is no roster of opposing forces or order of battle.

GRAMMAR AND READABILITY Editing is very good, with only a couple of grammatical or typographical errors that I noticed. The book is easy to read and comprehend, transitions are smooth, and the information flows well chronologically. This is not a battle study book, and although it does not provide blow-by-blow details of battles or a "you are there" experience, it does a good job of describing the lead-up to them, the strategy and tactics employed, major highlights of the action, and the outcomes and aftermath. Some first-person accounts on both sides give the reader a sense of what it was like from the perspective of participants and observers. I detected no notable bias towards individuals or sides, or attempts to manipulate or distort facts in a manner that changes their context. Mistakes and unflattering behavior on both sides are described. The book includes many personal observations by soldiers on both sides and civilians, gleaned from journals, letters, memoirs, regimental histories, official war records, newspapers, and other sources. Many first-hand accounts describe the difficulties, hardships, and emotions of soldiers and civilians alike, as well as foraging, pillaging, and destruction, and acts of kindness and charity. Included are interactions between soldiers and civilians (white hostiles and Union sympathizers, as well as slaves). Some eyewitness and newspaper accounts seem highly biased, exaggerated, or even fantastic (not surprising given the extreme events, attitudes, and emotions). But the author simply provides them along with their sources, and leaves it to readers to judge their credibility. The chapter titles are generally a quip or quote from the chapter's text. This method makes it difficult to determine what to expect or what information is covered in each chapter—the whole purpose of organizing a lot of information into blocks—and makes it more difficult to go back and find certain information regarding a particular event, subject, or time period. Sometimes the old tried and true method works best: chapter titles by topic and/or timeframe.

ILLUSTRATIONS This is the book's glaring weakness as it does not include any period drawings or photographs, or maps of the theater of operations or military engagements to provide perspective and aid readers in visualizing what and how it occurred where. This is in contrast to most Civil War campaign books, such as "Southern Storm," or "The Confederacy's Last Hurrah: Spring Hill, Franklin, Nashville," which provide multiple visual aids including maps of the theater of operations and military engagements that depict army and unit positions and movement, and typically include dates, times, population centers, major road, water, and railways, geography, and other key features.

CONCLUSION AND AFTERTHOUGHTS This is a good, relatively comprehensive book documenting Sherman's march through the Carolinas. Although lacking in some aspects, it is still better than Burke Davis' newer "Sherman's March," which I also read. Davis' book is absent of end notes and footnotes to trace the source of "facts" in his book, some of which have been distorted or manipulated in a manner that changes their context, or otherwise are highly questionable as to their credibility. Bias is sprinkled liberally throughout. Most of the information in this particular book is still highly relevant, although more modern books such as "Sherman and the Burning of Columbia" or battle study books on Averasboro and Bentonville provide fresher perspectives and more details on these particular aspects of the campaign. At the end of the book, the author provides an analysis of the campaign, some of which I disagree with, particularly regarding its impact on ending the war, which the author downplays. Sherman's army captured or destroyed the last major sources of food and war materiel for both Lee's and Johnston's forces, as well as the railways and roads that transported them. Charleston was closed permanently as a

blockade-running port, one of the last remaining. Columbia alone was a significant war manufacturing center and rail hub, with a line to Augusta, the South's primary powder works. In Columbia alone, Sherman's army destroyed or confiscated approximately 10,000 rifles and muskets and thousands more unfinished arms, 43 artillery pieces, 1.3 million small arms cartridges and 20 tons of cartridge paper, approximately 9,000 artillery rounds, 13 tons of rifle and cannon powder, thousands of cartridge boxes and sabers, 900 fuses, and 2,000 knapsacks and haversacks, and much more war materiel. The factories and machinery were also destroyed. As well as destroying three train depots at Columbia, the railways in and around the city were destroyed, as well as 19 locomotives and 20 freight cars. Tons of stored food slated for use by the Confederate Army was confiscated or destroyed. Furthermore, Lee, Johnston, and many of their officers and men reported mass desertions—much of it attributed to concern over the men's loved ones and property back home in Sherman's path. Troops that could have aided Lee against Grant, such as the remnants of Hood's broken Army of Tennessee, were instead diverted to confront Sherman's march north through the Carolinas. Lee himself sent Hampton and his cavalry to aid South Carolina, further weakening his own army. Finally, soldiers and civilians alike, including state and local governments, lost confidence in Jefferson Davis as he provided no answer to Sherman's rampage throughout the South, which Johnston and Lee knew would continue, and they were powerless to stop. All of these factors attributed to Sherman's Carolinas Campaign played into the decisions of Lee and Johnston to surrender their armies and end the war, and ignore Davis' pleas to revert to guerilla warfare or to break up their armies to escape and reassemble them elsewhere. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Very Good Book By Rotha Frye Makes entertaining and informative reading for Civil War history buffs as well as those interested in the history of the Carolinas. However, it would benefit from the addition of some relevant maps. 1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Andy Mack Too many references to other books and notes on different happenings. Otherwise interesting reading.

In retrospect, General William Tecumseh Sherman considered his march through the Carolinas the greatest of his military feats, greater even than the Georgia campaign. When he set out northward from Savannah with 60,000 veteran soldiers in January 1865, he was more convinced than ever that the bold application of his ideas of total war could speedily end the conflict. John Barrett's story of what happened in the three months that followed is based on printed memoirs and documentary records of those who fought and of the civilians who lived in the path of Sherman's onslaught. The burning of Columbia, the battle of Bentonville, and Joseph E. Johnston's surrender nine days after Appomattox are at the center of the story, but Barrett also focuses on other aspects of the campaign, such as the undisciplined pillaging of the 'bummers,' and on its effects on local populations.

A good story as well as a good scholarly and temperate account. "New York Times Book " A good story as well as a good scholarly and temperate account of a part of the Civil War which even yet can hardly be viewed without emotion.--New York Times Book From the Back Cover In retrospect, General William Tecumseh Sherman considered his march through the Carolinas the greatest of his military feats, greater even than the Georgia campaign. When he set out northward from Savannah with 60,000 veteran soldiers in January 1865, he was more convinced than ever that the bold application of his ideas of total war could speedily end the conflict. Before him lay South Carolina, the birthplace of secession. Beyond were North Carolina and Virginia, where Grant and Lee stood deadlocked. John Barrett's story of what happened in the three months that followed is based on printed memoirs and documentary records of those who fought and of the civilians who lived in the path of Sherman's onslaught. The burning of Columbia, the battle of Bentonville, and Joseph E. Johnston's surrender nine days after Appomattox are at the center of the story, but Barrett also focuses on other aspects of the campaign, such as the undisciplined pillaging of the "bummers", and on its effects on local populations. Sherman himself, at the culmination of his military career, emerges here in an appealing portrait. His prewar sympathy for the South and its cause were in conflict with his love of the union and his theory of the least painful way of bringing the war to a conclusion. His unsuccessful attempt to offer the South a peace treaty that would restore the region to its prewar status is masterfully told and invokes a new and sympathetic understanding of the man.