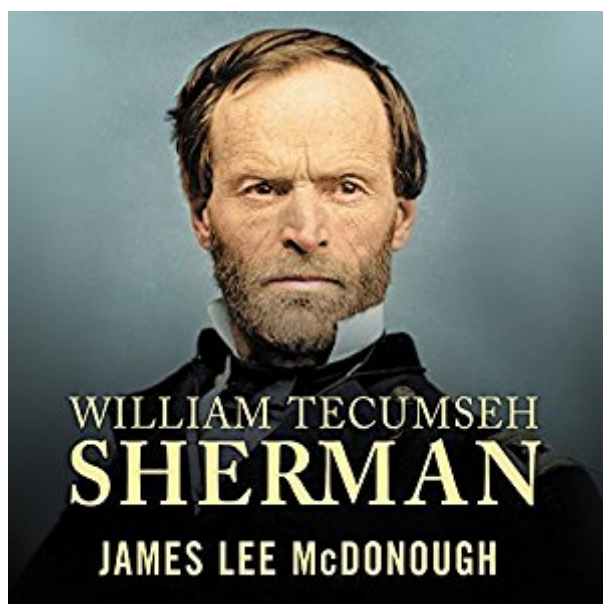


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William Tecumseh Sherman: In The Service Of My Country: A Life



Synopsis

General Sherman's 1864 burning of Atlanta solidified his legacy as a ruthless leader. Yet Sherman proved far more complex than his legendary military tactics reveal. James Lee McDonough offers fresh insight into a man tormented by the fear that history would pass him by, who was plagued by personal debts, and who lived much of his life separated from his family. As a soldier, Sherman evolved from a spirited student at West Point into a general who steered the Civil War's most decisive campaigns, rendered here in graphic detail. Lamenting casualties, Sherman sought the war's swift end by devastating Southern resources in the Carolinas and on his famous March to the Sea. This meticulously researched biography explores Sherman's warm friendship with Ulysses S. Grant, his strained relationship with his wife, Ellen, and his unassuageable grief over the death of his young son, Willy. The result is a remarkable, comprehensive life of an American icon whose legacy resonates to this day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A very easy to read, well researched, from mostly primary sources, biography of arguably the best union general in the civil war. The sources the author uses are mostly letters (Sherman wrote an a large number of letters). While this biography does not really break new ground, it is so easy to read (the author writes as if he were writing a novel) that I had trouble putting the book down and found myself getting out of bed at night to finish "just one more chapter". I suppose the Sherman biography I like the most (maybe because I read it in school) is the biography by BH Liddell Hart, this work holds up well to that work. I highly recommend this biography and especially if you dont

want to get bogged down in small unit moves during battles, this biography is for you. The author does a good job of cutting down on battle details and he tends to give good short summaries. If I could make one negative comment it is that I wish the author had spent more time (this would have made the book longer obviously) on Sherman after the Civil War

A massive book about one of America's greatest military captains. Such is a succinct description of the new behemoth of a biography of William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-1891) by Dr. James Lee McDonough professor emeritus of History at Auburn University. The book reads with the literary excellence of a well written novel. I received this book for Father's Day and have enjoyed every page of it! The book is well designed, free of annoying footnotes and is printed in large easy to read type. The over 800 page biography contains extensive footnotes and is illustrated with period photographs and a few well drawn and easy to read maps. The life of "Cump" Sherman is the stuff of Horatio Alger American legend. He was born to the son of a Judge of the Ohio Supreme Court in Lancaster Ohio in 1820. He was one of a large family. His father died and Sherman was brought up in the home of future US Cabinet member and Senator from Ohio Thomas Ewing (a friend of the boy's late father). He would later marry Ellen Ewing his stepsister. Though the couple loved one another and produced a large family she disapproved of Sherman's refusal to convert to Roman Catholicism. Sherman was basically a free thinker and thought little of spiritual matters. Sherman graduated high in the class at West Point in 1840. He fought Seminole Indians in Florida and spent several years in California during the Gold Rush and Vigilante era. He at times owned a store, dabbled in law and managed a bank in San Francisco. He lived for years in St. Louis where he was running a street car company when the guns of Fort Sumter burst into action. Sherman also served as the President of a military school in Alexandria, La. and lived for a time in Charleston South Carolina. He was well acquainted with Dixie and had many southern friends. He did not like slavery but didn't think it would lead to Civil War. During the Civil War he became known for his courage at Shiloh and in the Tennessee campaigns. Sherman will be forever known for the famous Atlanta Campaign and the March to the Sea which brought home war to the Confederacy in the heartland of the South in Georgia and the Carolinas. After the war he served as Commander of the United States Army and participated in the Indian wars. He and US Grant were the two soldiers who were, arguably, the most decisive weapons of war in the hands of President Lincoln in defeated the South in the spring of 1865. Sherman was a fierce red headed man of war. He loved horses, the theatre, literature and enjoyed painting in his youth. He was well read, a good mathematician and was a born soldier. He smoked big cigars, talked constantly, hated newspaper reporters and was always

on the move. Sherman refused to run for President of the United States and did not like politics. He loved visiting West Point and embodied the restlessness of the young nation. This is an excellent biography of one of our greatest generals William Tecumseh Sherman. Highly recommended and destined to become a classic biography of a major Civil War figure.

In contrast to Robert O'Connell's book that divides up Sherman's life analytically into three parts, McDonough takes the more conventional linear approach. The result is a more organic view of Sherman's life combined with a captivating narrative. Even readers who already have an appreciation for Sherman's place in 19th century history should read this book. It presents a very detailed examination of Sherman's childhood, education, early military career, civilian banking career, Civil War service, and post Civil War career. The reader learns that Sherman's March to the Sea was actually a march from Atlanta to Savannah. This much celebrated, unconventional march was launched by a prior conventional military campaign that followed railroad lines extending from Chattanooga to Atlanta. Also, Sherman believed and said repeatedly that his march from Savannah to Columbus was much more noteworthy than the better known March to the Sea. McDonough differs as well from O'Connell's analysis of Sherman's character. O'Connell states repeatedly that Sherman preferred to remain second on command because he had an aversion to both being in charge and being ultimately responsible. McDonough's more believable thesis is that the upper ranks of the military were viciously political. Because of Sherman's general aversion to politics, he chose to remain in a context where military rather than political considerations prevailed. Another difference, O'Connell presents Sherman as somewhat inept as a banker in civilian life---returning to the military because he could not make it anywhere else. In contrast, McDonough presents Sherman as a consummate military man, but also as a successful and accomplished, trusted banker who only failed because of the very unstable economic environment in the 1850s. This is a marvelous book. I came away from it admiring both Sherman and McDonough's presentation of this larger than life character.

I enjoy historical biographies as they anchor to a name I'm familiar with and then provide details of a life. This book did a great job of not just providing facts but also painting a full picture of the man, not just what he was but also how he got there. I started off knowing a bit about Sherman's March to the Sea and ended up with real respect for the man and his accomplishments. His views on race and his treatment of American Indians are disappointing but are pretty much consistent with and probably a bit more charitable than the common wisdom of his times.

Fantastic book. Extremely vivid and worthy of the praise. If not for Sherman convincing Grant to stay in the Army I wonder what would have been the consequence of the US ARMY minus US Grant in the long run. I am three-quarters into the book and I cannot put it down. An excellent read.

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