

troops west to White House Landing on the Pamunkey River, soldiers of the IV and VII Corps commanded by Maj. Gen. Erasmus D. Keyes and Brig. Gen. George W. Getty, respectively. From here, the troops launched their raid on 23 June in what Newsome aptly calls “a story of might-have-beens, confusion, and failure” (5).

Dix developed a two-part plan of attack. The IV Corps under Keyes would advance toward Richmond by way of Bottoms Bridge on the Chickahominy River in a feint to hold the defenders of the capital in their trenches, while the VII Corps under Getty would move rapidly to destroy the railroad bridges in Hanover County. Getty’s “entire purpose was to generate a vigorous demonstration and prevent the Confederates from sending troops north to repel Gettys column at the railroad bridges in Hanover” (179).

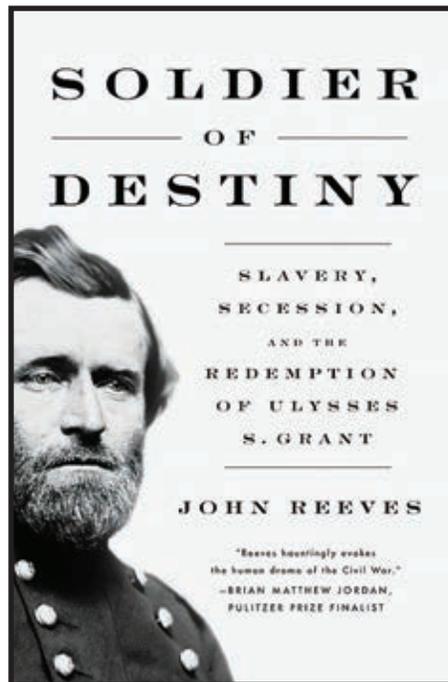
Newsome gives a highly detailed account of both columns’ movements and attacks and is adept at describing the marches and skirmishes. Col. Samuel P. Spear led the expedition to destroy Virginia Central’s South Anna River bridge with his 11th Pennsylvania Cavalry. Along the way near Ashland, this column captured rebel cavalry commander Brig. Gen. William Henry Fitzhugh “Rooney” Lee, who was recuperating from a wound in Hanover. The bluecoats attacked the bridge and burned it after pushing off rebel defenders. However, Spear did not destroy the wooden Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac trestle just a few miles away, which significantly limited the effectiveness of the expedition.

To the south, Keyes’ troops made little impression on Richmond’s Confederates under the overall command of Lt. Gen. D. H. Hill. Newsome provides details on an action at Crump’s Crossroads, between Bottoms Bridge and White House on 2 July, which stopped the Army forces in their tracks due to Keyes’s ineptitude. The rebels’ successful defense of the city is surprising, given that their command structure was overlapping and ineffective, the troops were spread out in too many locations, and several of their top generals were not up to the job.

Newsome concludes his study by noting that the Lincoln Administration was disappointed with the insignificant results achieved by Dix. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton likewise thought the operation was a “waste of force” (277), and there was even disagreement afterward about

whether capturing Richmond was the main objective of the expedition or not. “In the end, it was clear that the federal effort to cut Lee’s communications had failed to generate decisive results” (286).

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SOLDIER OF DESTINY: SLAVERY, SECESSION, AND THE REDEMPTION OF ULYSSES S. GRANT

BY JOHN REEVES

Pegasus Books, 2023

Pp. iv, 289. \$29.95

REVIEW BY MATTHEW J. MARGIS

Ulysses S. Grant has experienced a resurgence in the popular American imagination over the past decade. Initially considered a larger-than-life hero in the years following the Civil War, Grant’s reputation ebbed and flowed over the following century. Lost Cause supporters often portrayed Grant as little more than a drunkard who only achieved victory by brute force and sheer numbers. However, the diligent work of historians has corrected this inaccurate and unfair portrayal in recent years. Works such as Ronald C. White’s 2016 biography *American Ulysses*,

Ron Chernow’s 2017 *Grant*, and a 2020 History Channel miniseries have reshaped Grant in the popular imagination. This renewed affinity for the once-marginalized Grant culminated in a clause within the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act that promoted Ulysses S. Grant posthumously to General of the Armies, a rank held only by George Washington and John. J. Pershing. John Reeves’s *Soldier of Destiny: Slavery, Secession, and the Redemption of Ulysses S. Grant* fits this environment. Reeves set out to examine Ulysses S. Grant as a human being rather than as a mythical figure. What emerges is a character study that sheds new light on a figure who has been the focus of countless studies and historical debates.

Unlike most other works that cover Grant’s life, Reeves dedicates little time to the general’s military exploits, political pursuits, or childhood. All of this has been covered elsewhere. Instead, Reeves focuses on the ten years between 1854, when then-Captain Grant resigned his commission from the United States Army, and 1864, when Grant became the first person since George Washington to earn the permanent rank of lieutenant general in the Army. During this period, Grant’s life took many different turns. He left the Army, returned to his family living in Missouri, became a slave owner, struggled financially, faced internal demons, moved to Illinois to work in a leather goods store, reentered the Army, rose through the ranks, continued to struggle with alcoholism, possibly shifted his views on slavery, overcame numerous obstacles, and achieved the highest military honor one could. This amounted to a theoretical fall from grace capped by both personal and professional redemption.

Although this book is not without its flaws, its focus on this period in Grant’s life offers a unique, though often blurry, glimpse into his personal relationships, views on slavery, and struggles with alcohol. Reeves pays particular attention to Grant’s relationships with his wife, Julia Dent; his father, Jesse Root Grant; his father-in-law, Frederick Dent; the Dent slaves; his children; and various other friends and acquaintances. Reeves notes that Grant came from a northern antislavery family. Yet he married into a slave-owning family and owned slaves himself. Grant lived and worked on his father-in-law’s plantation and personally benefited from slavery. His wife, whom he

adored, continued owning slaves and even traveled with her enslaved nurse until late 1863. Although Grant offered freedom to one of his slaves (perhaps the only one he owned personally) in 1859, Reeves shows this was probably a move drawn less from moral convictions than from a pragmatic decision as he prepared to move to Galena, Illinois.

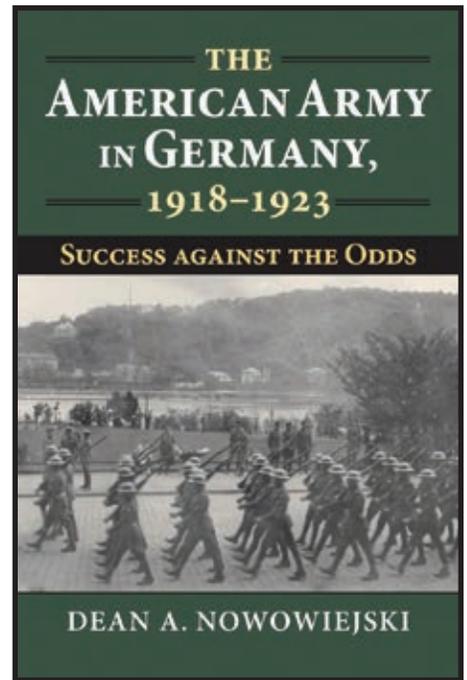
Throughout this book, Reeves digs into the often contradictory and complex nature of Grant the person. As noted above, he benefited from slavery. Eventually, he served as one of the key figures in emancipation as his armies broke the yoke of bondage in its wake. Reeves demonstrates that Grant was undoubtedly not an abolitionist like his father—at least not early in the war—and Grant even held some extremely prejudiced views, as evidenced by his antisemitic General Orders 11. Grant, however, evolved throughout his life and remained fiercely pro-Union and antisecession. This unyielding attitude drove him back into the Army in 1861. It served as the foundation of his wartime attitudes toward political issues, which were weighty and impactful. Grant was more than happy to see slavery end in exchange for preserving the country. Grant's philosophical redemption, then, was borne out of the violence of the Civil War.

In addition to Grant's relationships and views on slavery, Reeves dedicates significant time to discussing Grant's complicated struggles with alcohol. As with other aspects of Grant's life, his supposed alcohol abuse has been the subject of much scrutiny over the past century. Although Reeves does not go so far as to call Grant an alcoholic, he does discuss this issue with poise. He represents Grant as a man who struggled with sobriety and often had moments of weakness when faced with loneliness or prolonged stress. Grant found support from Julia and a trusted advisor, John A. Rawlins. They helped keep Grant on the straight and narrow. Others, though, could tempt Grant with drink, and many of his enemies were quick to spread rumors and gossip. Reeves does a masterful job of discounting unreliable stories while acknowledging the potential truth in others. As with the other aspects of Grant's life, his alcohol use was complicated and nuanced. Reeves's treatment of this subject is fair.

Although this book is wonderfully written and offers an in-depth look at Grant as a person, it is not without its

shortcomings. One is the author's lack of voice and interpretation. This reviewer waited for Reeves to provide context for Grant's internal contradictions. Reeves acknowledges that finding the real Grant is almost impossible, but Grant's theoretical redemption is somewhat ambiguous. Reeves hints at Grant's eventual move toward abolition. Those familiar with Grant will know how he treated freed persons as commanding general and president. Those with less familiarity, though, may tend to read this book and conclude that Grant was a typical slaveholder with an occasional drinking problem who hated secession. This is certainly not Reeves's intention, but a more extensive concluding chapter could have provided additional context for a character as complicated as Grant. Nonetheless, this book has the potential to change readers' understanding of Grant, offering a deeper look than most biographies offer into a flawed human who achieved greatness. Readers will have difficulty putting this book down. It is a fine addition to any Grant scholar's collection.

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THE AMERICAN ARMY IN
GERMANY, 1918–1923:
SUCCESS AGAINST THE ODDS

BY DEAN A. NOWOWIEJSKI

University Press of Kansas, 2021

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REVIEW BY JANINE M. HUBAI

In *The American Army in Germany, 1918–1923: Success Against the Odds*, Dean A. Nowowiejski tells the story of the American occupation of the Rhineland in Germany after World War I. Attempting to fill in gaps of scholarship in military governance, Nowowiejski moves away from a diplomatic history and focuses on the institutional history of post-World War I governance of the American zone in the German Rhineland by the U.S. Army. He breaks the occupation of the American Zone of the Rhineland into two major phases: (1) The Third Army's occupation in Germany from December 1918 to July 1919, and (2) the American Forces in Germany's (AFG) occupation from 8 July 1919 until its departure in 1923—although he dedicates the bulk of his book to the latter. Celebrating the ability of the commander of the AFG, Nowowiejski argues that Maj. Gen. Henry T. Allen's successful navigation of the complex relationships of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission (IARHC) and his skill in turning the recruits of the