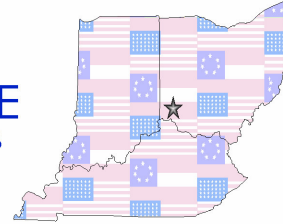




CINCINNATI
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
SERVING OHIO, KENTUCKY AND INDIANA SINCE 1956



Book Review by Thomas L. Breiner

General Ulysses S. Grant: The Soldier and the Man by Edward G. Longacre. De Capo Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006. 338 pages, Hard cover \$26.00.

The author of *General Ulysses S. Grant: The Soldier and the Man*, Edward Longacre, has now contributed a new manuscript to the inventory of work on Grant. In my opinion, this is one work that should never have been written. The author is focusing on only one issue: Grant's drinking. Here is a topic that has been beaten to death over the years and certainly does not warrant book length coverage. Yes, Grant drank. That fact has already been established. He certainly was not the only Civil War soldier or general that drank.

In the past, I have always found Edward Longacre to be an outstanding historian and I have always looked forward to reading any and everything that he wrote. However, I may have to change my opinion. This work reminds me more of tabloid journalism than the scholarly work of the dedicated historian. The author has provided no new insights or supplied any data that changes the image of this man who was responsible for engineering the Union victory. The information relayed in this book is the same hackneyed stories that have been presented before with no more substantiating research. I guess that the only redeeming value is that our author has made a sincere effort to bring every story ever told about Grant's drunken behavior to one location. There are no significant pronouncements that show how Grant's drinking habits ever had a negative influence on his decision making or hampered his ability to carry out his duties.

This biography of Grant covers the period of his life from birth until the end of the Civil War. Maybe Mr. Longacre ran out of tales of Grant's drinking after that time. One good thing I can say is that the book appears to be well-written and even well-researched. These are the skills that are readily apparent in the author's other biographies on Wade Hampton, John Buford and Joshua Chamberlain. If Mr. Longacre needed to produce another book, he could have selected a more worthwhile topic. I think an in-depth look at the relationship between Ulysses and Julia Grant and how it contributed to his success would have produced a more valuable, interesting, and meaningful work. I firmly believe that Julia was a greater influence on Grant than alcohol.

Finally, here is a book, as I said before, that should never have been written. The quality of the writing and research fails to overcome the sensationalistic material that is presented. I certainly cannot recommend that anyone add this book to their library on Grant or the Civil War. Don't waste your time or money.