

Book Review By Thomas L. Breiner

Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea by Noah Andre Trudeau, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, NY, 2008, 667 pages, Hard cover \$35.00.

Southern Storm: Sherman's March to the Sea by Noah Andre Trudeau is a new work dedicated to a fair and factual coverage of Sherman's march across Georgia in the fall of 1864. The author has completed the most comprehensive research on the topic and is trying to debunk the many myths and fallacies that have surrounded Sherman's march. The first myth that our dedicated author attacks is the one that concerns Sherman's intentions upon his departure from Atlanta. According to the author, Sherman had not decided which of the many options he had available would he pursue. Would he attempt to capture Macon and Augusta? Was Savannah truly determined to be his final destination?

The march to the sea was not one long picnic. Major General William Tecumseh Sherman knew where a diligent foe could create havoc with his advance. The army needed to keep moving in order to gather the necessary food and forage. Supplies in any given area would be quickly exhausted if the army had to remain stationary for an extended period. Sherman was extremely concerned that the rebels would obstruct his advance, especially in trying to cross the Oconhee and Ogeechee Rivers. There were numerous places where a small, but determined foe could create a serious problem for Sherman's larger army.

Fortunately for Sherman, the Confederate high command was disjointed. Each commander was only concerned with his restricted area of operation. There was no overall command structure to analyze the larger picture and unify the efforts of the Confederates. Major General Howell Cobb focused on Macon, Lieutenant General William J. Hardee's primary concern was Savannah and General Braxton Bragg managed the defense of the Augusta area. Major General Joseph Wheeler was only concerned with harassing the Union cavalry. General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, the new regional commander, failed by not being on the scene where he could provide the overall command guidance necessary.

The author, Noah Andre Trudeau, has accomplished his mission. He has created a masterpiece on Sherman's march. The reader is able to understand the impact of Confederate movements in relation to Sherman's developing plan. We see how Sherman took precautions to counter potential obstacles and his concern for the weather. This march was not one large picnic. Keeping all the wagons moving was a major undertaking, especially in light of the numerous rivers and swamps that had to be crossed. Noah Andre Trudeau has created a manuscript that is well researched, well written and highly readable. If you think you understood the complexities of Sherman's march to the sea; think again as you read this magnificent work.