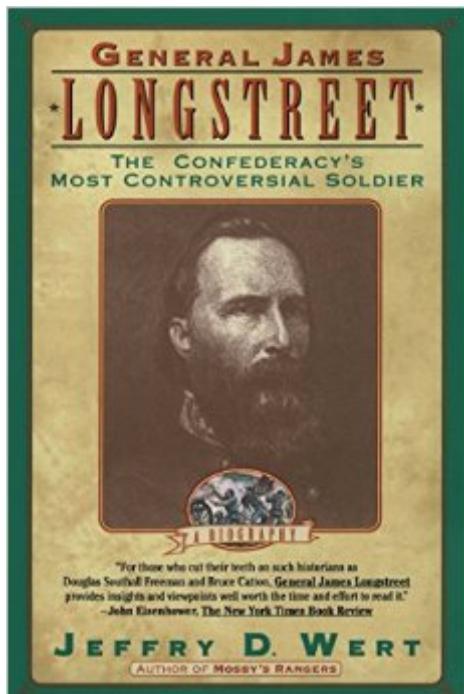


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General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier



Synopsis

General James Longstreet fought in nearly every campaign of the Civil War, from Manassas (the first battle of Bull Run) to Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chickamauga, Gettysburg, and was present at the surrender at Appomattox. Yet, he was largely held to blame for the Confederacy's defeat at Gettysburg. General James Longstreet sheds new light on the controversial commander and the man Robert E. Lee called "my old war horse." •

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Customer Reviews

Villified or (recently) greatly admired, James A. Longstreet sparks strong assessments among Civil War enthusiasts. Wert explains why. This biography tells the story of the rise and military career of the general Lee referred to as "my old warhorse." A superb fighter - perhaps the most tenacious of Lee's Corps commanders, Longstreet had a preference for the defense, or at least a defensive posture awaiting an opportunity to counter-punch. His one independent fighting command, against Burnside in East Tennessee, revealed that the General was best suited to Corps command under a Lee or other officer of strategic vision. Yet Longstreet served his cause well. Unwilling to join in the deification of Lee after the war (and even criticizing him on some matters), Longstreet also became a Republican and accepted an appointment from his old pre-war friend (now president) U.S. Grant. These moves caused a significant anti-Longstreet backlash across the South -- which taints his reputation even to this day. I must say that Wert does a good job of exploring the controversy over his reputation and examining the highlights of his career. The information in the book is significant, if

less than thorough and somewhat unevenly presented. I also found the voice of the author too present in the reading -- something in the way the book is written doesn't allow it to reach its own voice or a consistently even flow. I would give this four stars for the subject and facts and three stars for the quality of the writing. All in all, not bad and worthwhile if someone wants to acquaint themselves with Longstreet.

Wert's biography of Longstreet is one of the most balanced and thoroughly researched books about any Civil War general that I have ever read. Wert presents in detail the many sides of Longstreet - and those with whom Longstreet served. From the first chapter Wert shows that Longstreet was a soldier to be both praised and criticized - and Wert does not hesitate to do either..... One of the many features that I liked was Wert's willingness to present many sides of an issue. Even when Wert later offers his personal opinion, the reader is made aware of evidence that would support the opposite opinion. Most refreshing in an author of military history!..... The book is packed with information and Wert obviously conducted very exhaustive research. Not the usual dry biography, I found it hard to put down each night. My only complaint with the book was that it was not longer - I longed for more..... This is a great work and most ceratinly a MUST read.

"General James Longstreet, The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier: A Biography" is a candid, fair and balanced portrait of a man who should, but doesn't, rank at the top of any list of the greatest American military leaders. James Longstreet's place in history has always been shrouded in controversy, much of it of his own making. In the decades since the Civil War, he has traditionally been blamed by historians for the Confederate army's loss at Gettysburg, and condemned for his service in the Grant administration as a traitor to the "Lost Cause." Jeffry D. Wert's able pen (he writes in a very clear, concise and easily comprehensible style) and obviously meticulous research presents Lee's "old war-horse" as a general possessed with great strategic vision, an outstanding ability to lead troops in the field, and with tactically conservative, yet sound, instincts. Longstreet's personal flaws - his inability to control his emotions and support his superiors when he disagreed with them, and his vindictiveness toward his subordinates when they disagreed with him - are also fully explored. The author's admiration for his subject is evident throughout this book. The overall portrait that emerges is favorable - a general beloved by his troops and depended upon for his wise counsel and military skills by his boss, General Robert E. Lee; but also a military leader capable of serious misjudgments both on the field of battle, and in his dealings with both his superiors and subordinates. This is one of the better biographies of one of the major figures of the Civil War, and a

book I enjoyed thoroughly. I would have preferred a bit more detail on Longstreet's life after the Civil War, but that is my only (and very minor) reservation. Highly recommended for all Civil War enthusiasts!

I was fourteen years old, and we were discussing the Civil War in history class. I had an especially enthusiastic teacher and several well-informed friends, and a desire to learn about the War Between the States was fast budding within me. By the strangest stroke of luck, I found this very same book on a bookshelf at home. Was it my fathers? Was it divine intervention? I don't know the answer, but I started to read it, and I didn't put it down. Several years and countless books later, I'm considering pursuing a PhD in history (specializing in the Civil War era.) Fate? This book is wonderful both as an account of Longstreet's life and, surprisingly, as a general introduction to the war in the East (plus a bit about Longstreet's stint in the West.) Wert provides well-detailed descriptions of the tactical elements of each battle involving Longstreet without becoming boring, even to the inexperienced reader. His views on Longstreet are intriguing and thought provoking, and a more balanced and objective account is, as far as I've read, not to be found. I apologize if my rather sentimental past with this particular tome has skewed my analysis of it, but this book will always hold a special place in my heart.

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