

**Lincoln Takes Command – The Campaign to Seize Norfolk and the Destruction of the CSS Virginia**, by Steve Norder; A Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table review: Ricardo Jaramillo

President Abraham Lincoln as a military strategist is articulately documented by Mr. Norder. It is no surprise that President Lincoln was a skillful politician, but his military skills are rarely as well documented as Mr. Norder has been able to accomplish. The day-to-day happenings from May 6 to May 12, 1862, President Lincoln's period of command as annotated in the book, allow the reader to follow and understand the President's rationale for his reasoning behind his orders and guidance provided to his commanders. As Mr. Norder mentions, no other seated President commanded his military forces in the field as did President Lincoln.

Not only does Mr. Norder document this period of Lincoln's command, but he also provides the details leading to Lincoln's seven-day command of all forces. The timeline allows the reader to fully understand the precarious military situation President Lincoln was in that led to his commanding all the Union forces. The state of the Union, as well documented in other writings, illustrates that his military leaders appeared to be stalling rather than take the offense thus causing the war to be prolonged unduly. Mr. Norder's ability to document the war effort leading to President Lincoln taking command provides a dire picture of military affairs and a playable justification for President Lincoln taking command. Mr. Norder also documents that President Lincoln executed his orders as well as if he had had professional military experience (which he had little to none).

The book layout provides numerous details not provided in other writings. To obtain these details, Mr. Norder delved into documents written during the time period, including soldiers' and politician diaries, both Confederate and Union archived newspapers, official military documents/orders, personal letters, books pertaining to this time period that were written by participating soldiers, and numerous other sources. Also, Mr. Norder extensively researched archived government documents and numerous internet civil-war related sources. The author portrays a clear picture of the war.

Mr. Norder provides pertinent details of the military leaders and ships of both forces. This allows a deeper understanding of the military leaders' military experience and the relevance to the seven-day command. The ships' information chapter is very useful allowing a better understanding of the ships' history, their capabilities, and weaknesses.

I highly recommend this book for both the novice and well-rounded civil war enthusiast.