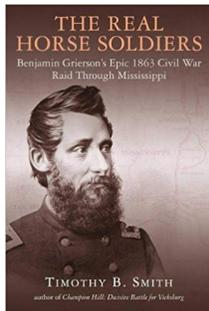


**The Real Horse Soldiers, Benjamin Grierson's Epic 1863 Civil War Raid Through Mississippi**, by Timothy B. Smith, Savas Beatie, 343 pages, a Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table Review by Arley McCormick



Dr. Timothy B. Smith, the author, wanted to tell a good story, describe the events in a social context, and include the operational considerations that fully illustrate the significance of the achievement. He achieved his objectives.

John Wayne's cavalry adventure "*The Horse Soldiers*" was entertaining but not exactly correct. Dr. Smith, also the author of "*Champion Hill: Decisive battle for Vicksburg*", explains the considerations and analysis leading to the operational faints and distractions orchestrated in Northwest Mississippi and North Alabama to confuse the Confederate commanders in Mississippi and Richmond allowing Grierson to execute the primary mission; destroy and disrupt the Mississippi Southern Railroad resupply of Vicksburg that passed through the rail hub at Newton Station and distract Confederate action from Grant as he crossed the Mississippi River south of Vicksburg.

Mr. Smith includes a number of simple yet clear maps of the area of operation, essentially Mississippi, that aid understanding the complexity of the operational situation and the audacity of Grierson's challenge. He provides an interesting character study of Grierson and other officers and men participating. He describes the task organization of the cavalry and detachments and the missions they were assigned and executed on their trek through Mississippi. All topics essential to a complete study of military operations. Readers will also enjoy the prologue that describes journalists, individual participants, Union military leaders, and even the Confederate response to the raid. The author also describes the impact of the raid on the lives of some soldiers during the remainder of the war and in life, providing testimony to how the hazards of war linger with its participants.

This book will not only impress cavalry enthusiasts, but anyone with a serious or casual interest in Civil War operations and the personalities that experienced it.