



Shadow of Shiloh: Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War

Gail Stephens

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Thirty-two years after the battle of Shiloh Lew Wallace returned to the battlefield, mapping the route of his April 1862 march. Ulysses S. Grant, Wallace's commander at Shiloh, expected Wallace and his Third Division to arrive early in the afternoon of April 6. Wallace and his men, however, did not arrive until nightfall, and in the aftermath of the bloodbath of Shiloh Grant attributed Wallace's late arrival to a failure to obey orders. By mapping the route of his march and proving how and where he had actually been that day, the sixty-seven-year-old Wallace hoped to remove the stigma of Shiloh and its slanders. That did not happen. Shiloh still defines Wallace's military reputation, overshadowing the rest of his stellar military career and making it easy to forget that in April 1862 he was a rising military star, the youngest major general in the Union army. Wallace was devoted to the Union, but he was also pursuing glory, fame, and honor when he volunteered to serve in April 1861. In *Shadow of Shiloh: Major General Lew Wallace in the Civil War*, author Gail Stephens specifically addresses Wallace's military career and its place in the larger context of Civil War military history. A central issue in the book is the tension between citizen-soldiers and West Pointers that occurred in the officer ranks. The general assumption in current Civil War histories is that the West Pointers were more competent at war than the citizen-soldiers. That was not true in Wallace's case. He had a talent for battle, which he demonstrated at Fort Donelson, Monocacy, and even Shiloh. But Wallace's disdain for military rules and protocol and his arrogance, fueled by early promotion, alienated his West Point superiors such as Grant and, especially, Henry Halleck, the general in chief of the Union armies. At Shiloh Wallace was merely one amateur in an army of amateurs. Grant and his staff made errors and Wallace's late arrival was only one mistake of many, but Grant focused on it to shift the blame for the enormous casualties at Shiloh from himself. After Shiloh Wallace left Grant's army and returned to Indiana, giving Halleck an opportunity to keep Wallace out of the field for almost two years. In 1864 President Abraham Lincoln gave Wallace a second chance, and he validated Lincoln's trust at Monocacy. Wallace was an extraordinary man lawyer, politician, general, author, inventor, and adventurer. It is hoped that this book sheds new light on the long-standing issues surrounding Wallace's Civil War career and puts his great service to the nation in perspective.

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