This title provides new insights into the Civil Wars bloodiest battle. Some 100,000 soldiers fought in the April 1862 battle of Shiloh, and nearly 20,000 men were killed or wounded; more Americans died on that Tennessee battlefield than had died in all the nations previous wars combined. Steven E. Woodworth has brought together a group of superb historians to reassess this significant battle and provide in-depth analysis of key aspects of the campaign and its aftermath. The eight contributors dissect the campaigns fundamental events, many of which have not received adequate attention before now. John R. Lundberg examines the role of Albert Sidney Johnston, the prized Confederate commander who recovered impressively after a less-than-stellar performance at forts Henry and Donelson only to die at Shiloh; Alexander Mendoza analyzes the crucial, and perhaps decisive, struggle to defend the Unions left; Timothy B. Smith investigates the persistent legend that the Hornets Nest was the spot of the hottest fighting at Shiloh; Steven E. Woodworth follows Lew Wallaces controversial march to the battlefield and shows why Ulysses S. Grant never forgave him; Gary D. Joiner provides the deepest analysis available of action by the Union gunboats; Grady McWhiney describes P. G. T. Beauregards decision to stop the first days attack and takes issue with his claim of victory; and Charles D. Grear shows the battles impact on Confederate soldiers, many of whom did not consider the battle a defeat for their side. In the final chapter, Brooks D. Simpson analyzes how command relationships - specifically the interactions among Grant, Henry Halleck, William T. Sherman, and Abraham Lincoln - affected the campaign and debunks commonly held beliefs about Grants reactions to Shilohs aftermath. The Shiloh Campaign will enhance readers understanding of a pivotal battle that helped unlock the western theater to Union conquest. It is sure to inspire further study of and debate about one of the American Civil Wars momentous campaigns. The Shiloh Campaign is the first volume in the Civil War Campaigns in the Heartland series, which showcases the decisive battles in the western theater, that immense
and varied landscape between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River.

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My Personal Review:
Many students of the Civil War develop their own passion for an aspect of the conflict -- be it a leader, an organizational unit, or a battle. It is a delight and a challenge to learn what can be learned about a subject of relatively restricted scope. In my studies of the Civil War, I have been fascinated by the battles of Gettysburg and Shiloh. Gettysburg has been studied extensively, but Shiloh somewhat less so.

Although it occurred early in the War (April 6-7, 1862), Shiloh was a pivotal moment in many ways. As a result of the failure of the Confederate attack, the South was unable to reverse the opening up of its heartland resulting from the earlier loss of Forts Henry and Donelson. The battle thus led the way to the large Confederate defeat in the West. The South lost a leader of promise in General Albert Sidney Johnston, while the Union found a team in Grant and Sherman that would carry them through the war. The Shiloh Battlefield is located in a remote part of South Central Tennessee between Savanna, Tennessee and Corinth, Mississippi. The Confederate attack was staged at Corinth. The loss of the battle opened the way for Corinth's seizure by the Union. The Battlefield remains in a virtually pristine condition. I visited it about five years ago, and I am looking forward to seeing it again.

This collection of eight essays, "The Shiloh Campaign" (2009) is for readers with a strong interest in Shiloh. The book is edited by Steven Woodworth, a scholar of the Civil War in the West who teaches at Texas Christian University. Woodworth also contributed an essay to the volume together with a brief introduction. With the exception of Timothy Smith's collection of essays called "The Untold Story of Shiloh", this is the first book of essays on Shiloh of which I am aware, and the first consisting of studies by several authors. (Smith's book includes only his own essays.) Of the essays in this Woodworth volume, only one was previously published. The essays are scholarly and thoughtful. They cast light on many of the controversial issues surrounding the Battle of Shiloh.

Of the eight essays in this collection, three involve studies of the commanding generals. John Lundberg's essay "I must save this Army" explores the role of the charismatic Confederate leader, Albert Sidney Johnston, who died on the first day of the battle. Johnston's military abilities remain a matter of dispute. Lundberg sides with those who consider his death a terrible blow to the Confederacy.

Upon Johnston's death, Pierre Beauregard assumed command of the Confederate Army. On the evening of April 6, Beauregard called a halt to
the Confederate attack upon Grant's Last Line at Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River. Grady McWhiney's essay "General Beauregard's 'Complete Victory' at Shiloh" examines this difficult decision of Beauregard and finds it wanting. There are many students of the battle who disagree.

The essay "After Shiloh" by Brooks D. Simpson examines the roots of the complex friendship between Grant and Sherman that developed as a result of the battle. Grant came close to dismissal or to resignation following the battle. Sherman, who defended against the Confederate assault brilliantly but who failed to plan for or discover it, stuck loyally with Grant. The two leaders formed a partnership and friendship that lasted throughout the remainder of the war.

Of the remaining essays, four describe specific action on the battlefield. Timothy Smith's essay "Anatomy of an Icon" examines the fighting in the central portion of the Battlefield known as the Hornet's Nest. For many years, the Hornet's Nest was considered the place where the Union made a heroic stand and saved the battle. Recent scholarship, which Smith explores, makes a strong case against the centrality of the Hornet's nest. This theme is also explored, indirectly, in Alexander Mendoza's essay "A Terrible Baptism by Fire" which describes the stout defense of the extreme left of the Union line which delayed for hours the Confederate advance. Steven Woodworth's own essay, "Intolerably Slow" takes a careful look at the controversy surrounding Lew Wallace. Located at Crump's landing only six miles north from the battle, Wallace was unable to come to Grant's assistance until the end of the first day's fighting. Finally, Gary Joiner's essay, "Gunboats at Shiloh" describes the sometimes overlooked effect on the battle on the bombardment of Confederate lines from two Union gunboats on the Tennessee River beginning mid-afternoon on April 6.

The final essay in the collection, "Victory for Neither Side" by Charles Grear examines how the Confederate soldiers perceived the result of the Battle of Shiloh. This essay helps bring perspective to the carnage and ferocity of the fighting and offers many quotes and perspectives from Southern troops. Although today the battle is almost uniformly viewed as a Union victory, for many years some viewed the battle as a draw. This division of opinion is evident in the reports of the views of Confederate soldiers. Grear's essay gives a good description of the chaotic character of the Confederate retreat. He also suggests, given the enormity of the casualties both Union and Confederate, that neither side could properly be regarded as winning the battle.

This book is a must for serious students of the Battle of Shiloh. James Durney's review above offers a good introductory list of books about the battle. Shiloh has also inspired considerable literary effort. I would suggest Herman Melville's short poem "Shiloh -- A Requiem" which includes the following famous lines:

Foemann at morn, but friends at eve-
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undeceive!"

In addition, readers with a literary interest might explore Ambrose Bierce's short story "What I saw at Shiloh" and Shelby Foote's early novel, "Shiloh".

Robin Friedman

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