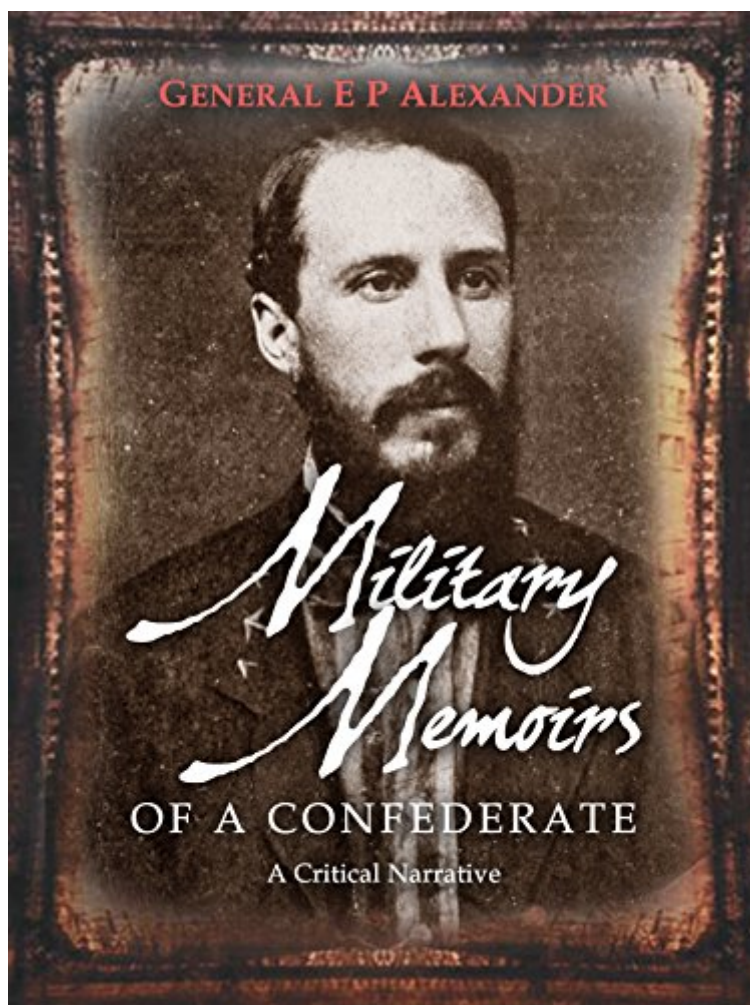


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# Military Memoirs Of A Confederate: A Critical Narrative



## Synopsis

“If I don’t come and bear my part, they will believe me to be a coward. And I shall not know whether I am or not. I have just got to go and stand my chances.” Hearing that his home state, Georgia, had declared its secession, with these words 2nd Lieutenant Edward Porter Alexander resigned his commission in the U.S. Army and left to join the Confederates. Over the four years that followed he would play an important role in many of the important battles of the conflict, notably under Maj. Gen. James Longstreet and Gen. Robert E. Lee. At the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, although the Confederates had established an army “modelled after that of the Union” its organisation was almost non-existent, as was a wider infrastructure. Similarly comprised of volunteers, and later conscripts, as the war progressed various reforms and reorganisations were enacted in a gradual development of the Confederacy’s war machine. Despite its title, Alexander’s work also serves as a critique of each campaign, highlighting the good plays and the bad, the moves that influenced the outcome and a suggestion that might have altered the course of history. *Praise for Military Memoirs of a Confederate* “altogether the best critique of the operations of the Army of Northern Virginia.” — Douglas Southall Freeman

Edward Porter Alexander (1835-1910) was a military engineer, planter, railroad executive and author. Graduating from West Point in 1857, he was participant in a number of weapons and experiments; he would become the first man to use signal flags to convey a long-distance message in combat. Having joined the Confederate States Army in 1861 he ended the war a Brigadier General, and “the South’s greatest artillerist.”

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## Customer Reviews

I read the ebook version and it seemed to miss some maps or tables that the author referred to in the text. As some reviewers mentioned, if you dont have a map and are somewhat familiar with the civil war it might be hard to follow. On the other hand, if you have a good understanding of battlefield geography and are somewhat acquainted with some of the key command players this book provides a good insight into the confederate side of the Army of Northern Virginia. Some of his bias does come thru for instance he seems to not like Lincoln -- probably understandable. The end of the book seems rushed as if it was heavily edited or the author had a time limit to finish the book. Having mentioned some problems with the book, overall I found it a delightful read and I liked the frequent summaries of casualties and number of captured cannons, etc. The author is good at pointing out errors made by some confederate generals, including Lee, and good at pointing out good things from leaders less well thought of for instance DH Hill and Pickett. All in all I found the book an enjoyable read and well worth the time invested. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the ins and outs of the civil war, especially the war in Va.

I enjoyed the book as Porter Alexander is a fascinating part of the Civil War milieu. As others have said, I wish that it had more of his personal observations in it. One thing I particularly enjoyed was his analysis of different movements and battles. This is something not often seen in these sorts of books. For example, early on he discusses the six approaches to Richmond that the Union could have taken and which he felt was the best (hint, it was tried in 1862). I also like some of his analysis of the battle of Gettysburg, particularly the poor use of the Confederate position. Finally, I did not realize that it was Alexander who suggested to Lee that he dissolve the army and retreat to the hills

and continue the fight. I am going to read "Fighting for the Confederacy" next as this is supposed to have more of Alexander's personal insights.

A very informative read if you are looking to learn about the complex ins and outs of army movements and strategies of the Civil War. It is also very unbiased - the author gives intelligent notes on both sides and critiques when necessary. Being confused on so many things about the Civil War, I finally felt like I was starting to grasp it after reading this book. I would say it is truly a must-have for any serious student of the Civil War. I would recommend having a Civil War atlas handy while reading, as it helps to be able to follow along.

Alexander's narrative is well written and easily flows from one Civil War campaign to the next. He was very insightful and critical of some of the decisions made by both the Federal and Confederate commanders. I learned some things that were not covered in other first hand accounts of the war, such as Longstreet leaving the ultimate decision for Pickett's charge at Gettysburg up to Alexander who was in command of the artillery fire being put on cemetery hill. This put Alexander in a moral and practical bind because Longstreet told him when he felt he had put enough fire into the enemy, signal Pickett to charge. Alexander knew he didn't have enough 'fire' and would be sending Pickett to slaughter, but was following orders. Highly intelligent author and highly recommended.

Alexander provide a critical analysis of many of the major battles of the Civil War from an officer's perspective. He is not sparing of criticism of some of the biggest names in the War, including his beloved Gen. Robert E. Lee. His eyewitness account of the negotiations leading to Lee and Grant's meeting at Appomattox is insightful and compelling.

Very interesting reading material, a different view and explanation by CSA officer who was with Lee. Well written and explained by the author from his point of view.

This book is the work of one of Lee's Lieutenants, General Edward Porter Alexander. Alexander was Longstreet's artillery commander for most of the Civil War. As such, he saw action in the Eastern Theater from 1st Manassas, through to the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse. After the war, he was encouraged by General Longstreet to write a history of his Corps. Unfortunately after completing most of the primary research, very few of the officers he contacted were willing to give him the first person authoritative accounts he wanted. What he instead was to write a memoir that

almost 100 years later is still the model of historical writing. For historians the danger of memoirs is twofold. First, many authors have an axe to grind and will suffer from "selective memory" in retelling their experiences. Also, but less deliberately, we are all the leading stars of our lives (if you aren't you oughta be). Taking center stage, authors can appear to have a larger role in the subject than they should otherwise have. With General Alexander's book though, there is no romanticism of the "Lost Cause", nor hero worship of the Lee/Jackson pantheon. Alexander dispassionately relates the campaigns he saw, with insightful critiques of the leaders of both sides. He doesn't spare himself from criticism either; you don't often see that in a memoir. Anyone with a serious interest in Civil War campaigns should have this book in their library. However, if you are looking for a Confederate mea culpa, or a social history you should look elsewhere. Highly recommended.

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