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The Valley Campaign conducted by Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson has long fascinated those interested in the American Civil War as well as general students of military history, all of whom still question exactly what Jackson did in the Shenandoah in 1862 and how he did it. Since Robert G. Tanner answered many questions in the first edition of Stonewall in the Valley in 1976, he has continued to research the campaign. This edition offers new insights on the most significant moments of Stonewall's Shenandoah triumph.

Stonewall in the Valley: Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign, Spring 1862 Details

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Avis Black says

There is a particular reason why I prefer this earlier, 1976 first edition of Robert Tanner's book to the 1996 rewrite. Even though the later book includes more information, it also suffers from 'cleansing' of the viewpoint. In the earlier book Tanner felt free to criticize Jackson's generalship. Apparently this was not popular in Civil War circles, and Tanner sanitized the 1996 version. The 1976 book also has a more agreeable style than the later version, which is awfully wooden in comparison. Stonewall in the Valley has long been one of the great Civil War classics, and it's a shame that the version people are most likely to encounter is the one where the author pulls his punches.

Jay Wright says

This is a well researched book. I found that Jackson, while powerful, exercised very little control over his army. It is interesting to see the letters from the soldiers. While I am not usually a "Civil War Guy", I found this book entertaining. Warning, it does not give you much about what was going on in the Union Army.

James Murphy says

Before reading Tanner's history I had little real knowledge of Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign. I knew only a general overview of the campaign, including its strategic purpose within the wider war in Virginia, and the names of the battles fought. The history is told from the Confederate point of view with enough details of Union movements and thought involved to explain their response to Jackson. It's a history full of personality and anecdote and wise in its military analysis so that the campaign can be understood in the context of the war as a whole in the spring of 1862. It lives up to its claim of stripping away the romanticism of Jackson's accomplishments. In fact, it exposes a few weaknesses in Jackson's generalship and serious mistakes made during that spring in the Valley. If being hard on Jackson the book lauds the troops who overcame the hardships of weather, hunger, and exhaustion in marching 400 miles in 30 days from one end of the valley to the other twice, fighting 6 major engagements. I was a little surprised that the actions fought by the Valley Army were so small considering the size of the Valley Campaign in Southern legend.

Jim Netzbund says

This is an updated version of the author's original book published in 1976. Since that time, new primary-source information was discovered that shed new light on the author's original premises, specifically in the form of private papers of several Confederate commanders. This book uses these new insights to update the original work. In general, the book is written from the Southern point of view; however, a high degree of objectivity is maintained without a corresponding bias that might otherwise be present. In fact, Tanner treats

both sides in a very matter-of-fact manner in terms of military decisions and personal characteristics of the leading figures. This isn't a biography of Jackson; instead, it's a well-researched account of Jackson's Valley Army in its efforts to keep Union forces there from linking up with the larger Federal force threatening the Confederate capital of Richmond. The campaign itself, a series of battles within a confined geographical area, is interesting enough as a stand-alone period of the war from a tactical standpoint. However, the author adds to its importance by consistently weaving in details of the more far-reaching Confederate strategy regarding the defense of Richmond. As with most good books, it creates more interest in its subject in addition to providing a detailed account. Recommended not only to those with a casual interest in the subject but also to anyone studying the Peninsula Campaign, which was largely affected by Jackson's actions in the valley.

Nathan says

A thoroughly researched and comprehensive account of the 1862 Valley Campaign. Tanner not only gives an account of the events and personalities involved, but also provides a thorough analysis of the campaign: overall successes and failures, as well as the effects--by accident or design--on the Peninsula Campaign.

Rick says

I read this shortly after it came out in 1976 (I was 11) and loved it. In fact, I took it with me on my first trip to the south (not that we got near the Shenandoah valley). I'd be interested to know what academic historians think of it, but it was a formative book for a young amateur.

Al says

Very good book on how Jackson was able to effectively use operational maneuver in support of Confederate strategy in 1862. Good appendices on the Valley Army MTOE, Jackson's state of mind at the close of the campaign. I highly recommend this book.

Stevelee says

Enjoyed this book, read it at the same time as the 150th anniversary of the 1862 Valley Campaign. Was even able to take it with me and read the appropriate sections onsite at Cross Keys and Port Republic. Thought Tanner did a good job of covering the tactical, operational, and strategic aspects of the campaign. As he states up front, the book was written from a Southern perspective, so one will need to go elsewhere for a North-South balanced narrative. I was worried that Tanner would attempt to gloss over some of Jackson's weaknesses and mistakes, but was pleasantly surprised to find this was not the case. Would certainly recommend this book to anyone wanting to learn about the events that transpired in the Valley when leaders from both sides were still learning their craft.

Alex Nelson says

This is the authoritative text on Stonewall Jackson's fabled "Valley Campaign". The author dispels the myth that the campaign is (in the words of one of Jackson's aides) "as innovative as Napoleon's Italian campaign". The truth is less dramatic: Jackson simply made fewer mistakes than his opponents, and barely outmanoeuvred them.

There's a lot packed into this book, and I'll have to return and re-read this text later on.

Les says

Not a light read by any stretch but an interesting, and detailed, account of one of the American Civil War's lesser known campaigns and, by extension, a study of one of the war's most fascinating characters, Stonewall Jackson. And by no means a hagiography, but a walts and all depiction.

Robert Jones says

That's what I'm talking about. This is as good as it gets. Stonewall Jackson's entire Shenandoah Valley Campaign - including the battles of Kernstown, Cross Keys, and Port Republic - are all included in a single narrative. Several maps guide the reader into understanding troop movement and key geographical details. This was a Confederate victory, and is therefore told from a Southern point of view - but one that doesn't shirk the shortcomings of the heroes of the Confederacy. Well researched, it exposts when necessary (I was particularly pleased with the first chapter dedicated entirely to explaining to us just why, exactly, the Shenandoah Valley was so important), but doesn't get bogged down in details. This is perhaps my favorite part of the Civil War, and I'm so happy that Robert Tanner did such a phenomenal job reporting on it.

Matthew Dambro says

Insightful analysis of Jackson's Valley campaign of 1862. Military history does not get any better than this. In this earlier version of the volume Tanner has given a picture of Jackson's performance that is balanced and realistic. There is no hagiography present.

Monte Lamb says

This is a very good book that gives the story of the 1862 Valley Campaign. It is clear and very understandable. My only criticism would be that he takes the tact that ambition is the driving motivation for Jackson and drove him to do the things he did. I get the sense that he tries to make facts conform to his theory at times. Not too badly, but still it seemed noticeable to me.

Joe says

An interesting account concerning this little-known event in the early stages of the Civil War. In addition to descriptions of troop movements, battles and skirmishes, there is a portrait of Jackson revealed. Although a brilliant tactician at times, his personality traits often became more of an enemy than the Union troops he fought. Worth reading for those interested in the Civil War and strategies and tactics. Jackson's exploits in the Shenandoah Valley became a must read in military academies in America and throughout the world.

Vincent O'Neil says

This is a fantastic history of an important campaign in the early years of the Civil War. Tanner's grasp of the Shenandoah Campaign, as well as events in the larger war that it influenced, is extraordinarily detailed. He makes convincing arguments and provides insightful analysis, while also writing in a fashion that is eminently enjoyable.
