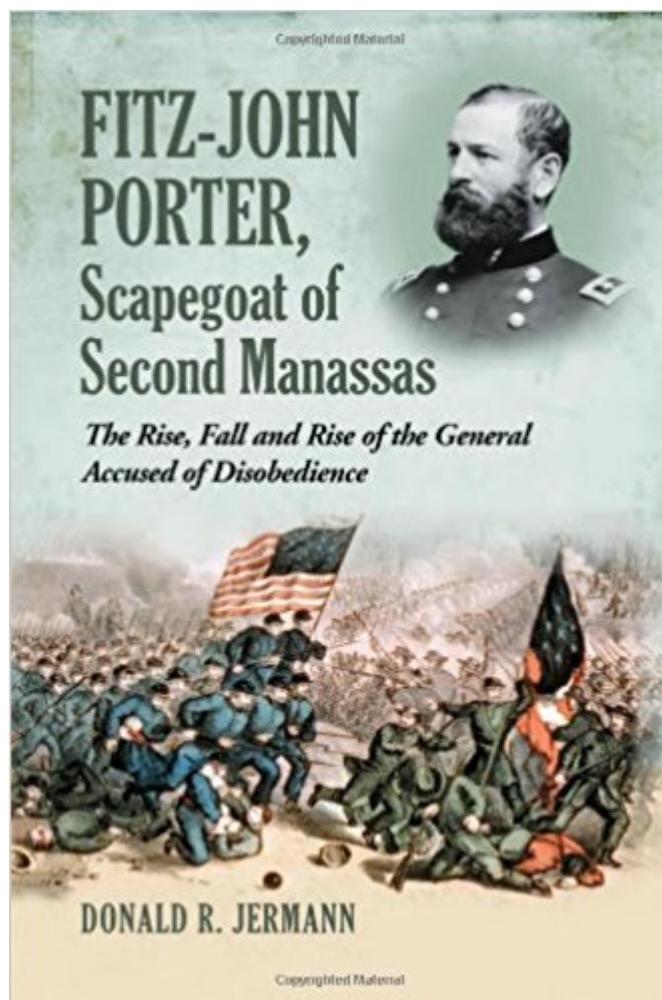


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Fitz-John Porter, Scapegoat Of Second Manassas: The Rise, Fall And Rise Of The General Accused Of Disobedience



Synopsis

One of the darkest days in United States history since Valley Forge was August 30, 1862. On this date the Confederate army smashed the United States army at Manassas, on the outskirts of Washington. To many, including the president and press, it appeared that Washington was all but lost. The defeat was all the more galling because it was inflicted by a numerically inferior and inadequately equipped Confederate force. Someone, it was assumed, had to be responsible. Union commander Major General John Pope blamed the loss on charismatic and popular Major General Fitz-John Porter, whom he charged with disobedience of orders and shameful conduct before the enemy. A court-martial found him guilty. But was Porter really guilty or did he save the country from an even greater disaster? This book addresses the question of Porter's guilt or innocence, examining the trial and its aftereffects from several perspectives.

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Customer Reviews

A great gift for a Civil War buff or anyone doing Civil War research. Good condition and prompt delivery. Very satisfied.

This is an interesting review of the Union loss at Bull Run II/Second Manassas. It is written from the premise that General John Pope was, thorough out, wedded to the concept that he had the forces of Jackson trapped -- which he did -- and that he was in the process of forcing a retreat -- which he did not. Fitz John Porter was singled out by Pope as failing to follow orders, and failing to respond appropriately in the face of the enemy. The original Court Martial found Porter guilty, a finding that Porter vigorously disputed for the rest of his life. His conviction was reversed just days before his death. The author presents the case against Porter quite well, and gives reasonable assessments as to his belief of Porter's guilt or innocence. He analyzes from the perspective of the present, and in doing so, has the benefit of hindsight and a hundred and fifty years of information gathering and review. His analysis of the re-hearing, however, suffers from a lack of diligence in applying the same standards as he review the original trial, and as in the re-hearing, he relies upon the the reports and testimony of some of the generals against whom Pope and Porter were arrayed. Two major flaws are the author's reliance upon what others would do in similar situations, without a nod to the fact that Pope was neither a Jackson, a Lee, or a Longstreet; and no one can possibly synthesize what either of those three might choose to do when faced with similar situation. The most inexplicable flaw is that the author did not use Gen. Pope's Military Memoirs, as biased as they might be, to assist in explaining what it was that Pope thought he saw and what he thought was his best tactic. No one can say that Jackson's tactical maneuvering wasn't dynamic and highly successful, and to any trained military man of the generation, somewhat baffling. In spite of the success that Jackson achieved, however, one cannot say that Pope didn't fight a reasonable battle given the choices as he saw them. Jackson was at serious risk until the last day, and Fitz John Porters actions -- or in Pope's eyes, inactions -- had a marked bearing on the battle's outcome. Well worth reading. And I hope that the author chooses to published a revised edition to provide a more complete, and therefore more balanced, treatment of the subject. Down to four stars until the author corrects his oversights. The most distressing omission by the author is any review of Gen John Pope's Military Memoirs in defense of what Pope understood and the decisions

This is a detailed book that will serve the needs of anyone interested in learning about the Porter court martial and its aftermath, from the novice student to the well-seasoned Second Manassas afficiano. I highly recommend the book. The only minor criticism I have is the author's penchant for relying on Lost Cause-type arguments to analyze the actions of the various Union actors in the saga. For example, when analyzing the issue of whether Porter complied with an order to march in

the early morning hours of August 28, 1862, the author carefully explains the complete situation: status of Porter's forces, timing of the delivery of the order, road conditions, weather during the night, etc. but then veers off into a couple of statements describing how Stonewall Jackson would have responded to receiving the same order. Why not describe your fantasy about how George Patton or Ceasar would have reacted to receiving the order while you're at it? The author only indulges in these type of counter-factual analyses a couple of time, so in no way do they ruin the book or his otherwise spot-on analysis. Perhaps that is why they seem so annoying when they do creep in.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading "Fitz-John Porter, Scapegoat of Second Manassas". This book tells the story of the humiliating Union defeat at the battle of 2nd Manassas which resulted in the court-martial of Major General Fitz-John Porter who was accused and found guilty of disobeying orders and shameful conduct in the face of the enemy. The book then follows the dogged determination of General Porter to clear his name, an effort that took over 20 years, and by the end of the book two important questions are answered, was General Porter guilty? If not, who was responsible for the Federal defeat at 2nd Manassas? The author's innovative writing style has resulted in a book that offers much more than just a re-telling of interesting history, instead this work presents the prosecutions' case, the defense case, and a detailed analysis of the facts. The author then invites the reader to draw their own conclusions as to General Porter's guilt or innocence and offers his own conclusions. This well researched book of almost 300 pages features 10 pictures of important personalities and 18 maps that assist the reader in understanding the disposition and movement of troops as well as important terrain features. There are 9 appendices that offer additional information concerning order of battle, list of witnesses, reports, and important correspondence. More than just an historian, the author is a retired military man who served more than 32 years on active duty covering the period from World War II through Vietnam. During the course of his career he has served as a member of courts-martial and presided over courts-martial, that only serves to add great credibility to his conclusions and brings a unique prospective to his narrative. Michael A. Hamilton Major, CmIC, USAR, Ret.

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