



Fiction as Fact: Horse Soldiers and Popular Memory

Neil Longley York

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Colonel Benjamin Henry Grierson led a cavalry expedition that General Ulysses S. Grant hoped would distract Confederate forces while the Union Army made its move toward Vicksburg. In the spring of 1863, setting out from La Grange, Tennessee, Grierson took a column of Yankee troopers south the length of Mississippi, destroying rail lines and rolling stock, torching supply depots, and disrupting Confederate communications. Sixteen days and five hundred miles later, he brought his men safely into Baton Rouge, Louisiana—a feat of great skill and good luck. *Fiction as Fact: The Horse Soldiers and Popular Memory* is a thorough examination of this famous military action through three genres—Dee Brown's 1954 historical account, *Grierson's Raid*; Harold Sinclair's 1956 novel *The Horse Soldiers*; and John Ford's 1959 film *The Horse Soldiers*. Neil Longley York demonstrates how historical truths are often omitted, fragmented, and altered before being assimilated into popular culture and how the events of our past are often molded to fit the constraints of the present. York researched the papers of Benjamin Grierson and other raid participants. His careful examination of the numerous drafts, scripts, and incarnations of the novel and film add a new dimension to the relationship of those portrayals to the larger problem of telling the historical truth.

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