



One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign of 1864 (The American Crisis Series: Books on the Civil War Era)

Gary Dillard Joiner

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In the spring of 1864, as the armies of Grant and Lee waged a highly scrutinized and celebrated battle for the state of Virginia, a no- less important, but historically obscured engagement was being conducted in the pine barrens of northern Louisiana. In a year of stellar triumphs by Union armies across the South, the Red River Campaign stands out as a colossal failure. General William Tecumseh Sherman's scathing summation describes it best, "One damn blunder from beginning to end."

Taking its title from Sherman's blunt description, *One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign of 1864* is a fresh inspection of what was the Civil War's largest operation between the Union Army and Navy west of the Mississippi River. In a bold, but poorly managed effort to wrest Louisiana and Texas from Confederate control, a combined force of 40,000 Union troops and 60 naval vessels traveled up the twisting Red River in an attempt to capture the capital city of Shreveport.

Gary D. Joiner provides not a recycled telling of the campaign, but a strategic and tactical overview based on a stunning new array of facts gleaned from recently discovered documents. This never-before-published information reveals that the Confederate army had laid a clever trap by engineering a drop in the water level of the Red River to try to maroon the Union naval flotilla. Only the equally amazing ingenuity of the Union troops saved the fleet from certain destruction, despite a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Mansfield.

The Red River campaign had lasting implications. *One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End* magnifies just how devastating the diversion of so many men and so much material to this failed campaign was to the Union effort in the pivotal year of 1864. Because of the Union Army's failures, Northern plans to capture Mobile were scrapped. Military careers were made and lost. And at time when the Confederacy was teetering on the brink of oblivion, Southern morale was bolstered.

Joiner puts together

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