

Wade Hampton:Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman

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Review

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Cisco, Walter Brian *Wade Hampton:Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman*. Potomac Books, \$28.00 hardcover ISBN 1574886266

Carolina Cavalryman

Stuart's replacement became governor and senator of South Carolina

The recent controversies surrounding the Confederate Battleflag flying over the State House of South Carolina ended in compromise with the Saint Andrew's Cross gracing a monument to the Confederate Soldiers of the Palmetto State on the capital grounds. Nearby is a statue to the subject of this book review. He rose from enlisted man to Lieutenant General. Very wealthy at the beginning of the conflict, he funded his first command from his own pocket. With virtually no formal military training, he became one of the greatest cavalymen of the war. He is not Nathan Bedford Forrest, but the Old Gamecock from South Carolina, Wade Hampton.

South Carolinian Walter B. Cisco's new biography of Wade Hampton fills a void in the historiography of the War Between the States. Making extensive use of manuscript sources including the treasures in the National Archives, the book has over 70 pages of endnotes, bibliography, and index. Scholars suffer from the loss of Hampton's personal papers in a postwar fire, but Cisco makes a valiant effort to unearth all the available primary source materials. Having spent many hours in the National Archives and the multitude of manuscript repositories across this nation researching James Ewell Brown Jeb Stuart, this reviewer wishes the author had made complete use of the materials in the National Archives such as Letters Received/Sent by the Confederate Secretary of War or the use of the Stuart Papers in places such as the Virginia Historical Society.

The first 54 pages of Cisco's work tell the ancestry and early life of Wade Hampton III, including his education at what is today the University of South Carolina. The father and grandfather who shared the name with the book's

subject built a large fortune based on plantations and slave labor in South Carolina and Mississippi. The author does not let the family history bog down the story, but does reveal the closeness of the Hampton family and several important personal relationships such as with the Confederacy's famed diarist Mary Chestnut.

The next 108 pages cover Hampton's career in the Civil War beginning with the formation of Hampton's Legion through his records as a subordinate and eventual replacement to Major General J.E.B. Stuart. Unlike Hampton, who criticizes Stuart at every opportunity, Cisco's book paints a fair picture of the relationship between the two very different men. Many who follow the plume of Stuart find Hampton an unlikable figure, but there is much to admire in Cisco's Hampton such as the job Hampton did as Stuart's replacement, especially at Haw's Shop and Trevilian Station.

Episodes such as finding a way across the White Oak Swamp that was ignored by the exhausted Stonewall Jackson during the Seven Days battles around Richmond in June 1862 show Hampton's worth as a cavalryman. In addition to the multiple wounds Hampton received in battle, the deaths of his brother and son show the human cost of the war Hampton fought. Cisco does not shy away from pointing out Hampton's unflattering concern over his rank, reputation and the credit he got for his exploits including deep disappointment with Stuart and Robert E. Lee.

The reviewer wishes for more about Hampton during the war. For instance, only two pages cover the Battle of Trevilian Station, where Wade Hampton blunted Philip Sheridan. The Gettysburg Campaign from Brandy Station beginning on June 9 until July 16 covers only seven pages. Considering there are mountains of material on that June-July, more could have been brought to the forefront considering Hampton's prominent role in Stuart's controversial raid and the fighting on July 3. In the author's defense, all other biographies of Hampton focus on his role in the war and ignore his life after it.

The strong part of this book is the 160 pages covering Hampton's postwar career as Governor and Senator from South Carolina. The character of Hampton, who accepted the reality of defeat and worked to bring the races together in South Carolina, speaks highly of the man considering his bleak financial condition after the war.

Walter B. Cisco has produced a well researched book that is an enjoyable read. Wade Hampton was an incredible human being who fought the good fight, accepted the loss with dignity and worked to reunite the nation, including reaching out to the former slaves of his native state as a moderating force for good, leaving the people of South Carolina the simple benediction, All my people, black and white, God bless them all.

Thomas D. Perry, the Founder of the J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace, is a graduate of Virginia Tech, and can be contacted at www.freestateofpatrick.com. He is the author of Ascent to Glory: The Genealogy of J.E.B. Stuart and the upcoming Free State of Patrick: Patrick County Virginia in the Civil War.