

The Confederate Surrender at Greensboro, the Final Days of the Army of Tennessee, April 1865.

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Review

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Dunkerly, Robert M. *The Confederate Surrender at Greensboro, The Final Days of the Army of Tennessee, April 1865.* McFarlnad and Company, Inc., \$35.00 ISBN 9780786473625

A New Look at an Important Surrender

In the writing of Civil War history the Eastern Theater has long dominated the field. To the casual reader, and the occasional academic, the war barely existed west of the Appalachian Mountains. This can be very frustrating. This concentration on the east is perhaps best demonstrated by the surrender of Confederate forces. All too often the end of the war is dated as the surrender of Lee's army at Appomattox. Although obviously an extremely important event there were still organized troops in the field and warships at sea. Robert M. Dunkerly's *The Confederate Surrender at Greensboro* highlights the largest of the post Appomattox surrenders.

Dunkerly begins with the reorganization of the Army of Tennessee following the defeat at Bentonville. The battle is not examined and barely mentioned. The negotiations between Confederate general Joseph Johnston and Union general William T. Sherman that bring about the formal surrender were also not examined in any detail. This, however, is not a shortcoming of the book. Dunkerly has portrayed what those final days were like at Greensboro, North Carolina for the soldiers and civilians. They would not have known beyond rumor what was happening in the meeting between the leadership of the two armies. The battle of Bentonville had blended into numerous other battles in there memory by this point. A close examination of Bentonville and the surrender negotiations does not help us understand what it must have been like in those final days of the war. Confusion and rumor reigned. The army shrank as men abandoned the army, either to go home or with the forlorn hope of continuing the war in Texas. This was a time of chaos, boredom, frustration, despondency and uncertainty.

Dunkerly has done an incredible amount of research into this subject. The location of most units and what they were doing is here but all too often the reader finds himself lost in minutia. Dunkerly relies heavily on the writings of the participants to tell the story. Rarely do you find a page without large block quotes. This can be both a positive and a negative. First person accounts are always important and add significantly to a work. However, when it is overdone it can seriously break the flow of the writing and thus hurt the overall value of the book.

The city of Greensboro is a major character in *The Confederate Surrender*. This would be a lot more interesting to a resident or visitor to the city. Not that is uninteresting to a nonlocal audience but there is way too much of the local guidebook to this work. The photographs of parking garages or subdivisions where an important site once stood adds nothing to the book.

The examination of the end of the Army of Tennessee is an important addition to the literature. What occurred at Greensboro is much more representative of how the Civil War came to an end than the more organized surrender at Appomattox. I have to compliment Dunkerly for taking on this project. In his final chapter Dunkerly concludes with why this work was important and needed to be written. Unfortunately, the rest of the book did not make the same argument. What is really missing in *The Confederate Surrender at Greensboro* is any real synthesis of the material. I hope that Dunkerly or other scholars will reexamine this subject with more of an eye toward how this affects our understanding of the Civil War and the transition to the uneasy peace that followed.

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