

Six Days In September: A Novel Of Lee\'s Army In Maryland, 1862

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Review

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Rossino, Alexander *Six Days in September: A novel of Lee's Army in Maryland, 1862*. Savas Beatie, \$18.95 ISBN 9781611213454

A Different View from South Mountain

Author Alexander B. Rossino, Ph.D. is not only an award-winning historian usually working in the area of WWII, but also a lifelong Civil War buff. He currently lives in western Maryland at the foot of South Mountain, and that geographic area has worked its magic once again, giving us *Six Days in September*, a novel of Lee's army in Maryland.

Beginning on September 13, 1862, and continuing through the Battle of Antietam, Rossino reconstructs the Army of Northern Virginia from the top down. His "characters" are drawn from the letters, orders, and experiences of the men who were serving under General Robert E. Lee and include Lee himself. Lee's interactions with Longstreet are of particular interest. Most readers are familiar with the issues between both men that surfaced at Gettysburg. Rossino plants the seeds for the distance in their relationship as early as '62. The military triumvirate of Lee, Longstreet, and Jackson guide a large part of this dialogue. All three men were, by this time, accomplished at leading men and completing missions. Yet they were also caught unaware by the Union response at South Mountain. No one pointed fingers . . . yet. The way the author handles this is skillfully done, weaving just enough pride into each man without creating a scapegoat.

Henry Kyd Douglas, Porter Alexander, and "Jeb" Stuart are examples of characters about whom much information is available, but Gilbert Farney, Billy Dennis, and Pat Cannon, although based on real members of the 6th Alabama Infantry, Company D are different. Their characters are created from the reading of countless letters from private soldiers in the Confederate Army. Every person is believable, from the citizens of Sharpsburg to the top commanders. Publisher Ted Savas adds, "I also thought the 'fog of war' technique was brilliantly done.

You only know what Lee and the main characters knew at the time of the events. And because we know what happened in real life, the decisions they make and how they make them is all the more exciting. "

Additionally, there are three maps drawn by Gene Tharpe. One presents the entire Maryland Campaign, September 2-20 1862; another shows the Battle of South Mountain on September 14, 1862; the third details the Battle of Antietam on September 17 1862.

It is impossible to read this book without making a mental comparison with another "novel of the Civil War, " *Killer Angels*. When asked about this, author Rossino replied, "When considering writing the book I thought Sharpsburg/Antietam deserved treatment in a novel like Mike Shaara gave Gettysburg in his book. My choice of following the 6th Alabama Infantry Regiment was in part a tip of the hat to Shaara as the 6th fought on the far left of the Confederate line at South Mountain like the 20th Maine fought on the far left of the Union line at Gettysburg. Things turned out differently for the 6th, though. "

Personally, I would love to see a movie made out of this novel. It is a terrifically entertaining, knowledgeable read with realistic dialogue, and the movie sort of plays itself in one's mind anyway. As to reviewing a work of fiction in these pages, I would like to remind each of us that more often than not, a work of fiction--be it a movie or a book--is what got many of us here in the first place. *Six Days in September* is definitely not one's average Civil War novel.

Meg Groeling received her MA in Military History, with a Civil War emphasis, in 2016, from American Public University. Savas Beatie published her first book, The Aftermath of Battle: The Burial of the Civil War Dead, in the fall of 2015, and she has written First Fallen: the Life of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, which Southern Illinois Press has contracted for publication sometime within the next two years. She is a regular contributor to the blog Emerging Civil War.