



Audacity Personified: The Generalship of Robert E. Lee

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Despite the literary outpouring on the life of Robert E. Lee, the southern chieftain remains an enigma. The existing scholarship is so voluminous, complex, and contradictory that it is difficult to penetrate the inner Lee and appreciate him as a general. Peter S. Carmichael has assembled a formidable array of Civil War historians who rigorously return to Lee's own words and actions in interpreting the war in Virginia. This is the first collective volume to scrutinize specific aspects of the general's military career.

Carmichael's opening contribution confronts Lee's supposed drive for a victory of annihilation and takes issue with claims that he was too aggressive. William J. Miller's novel analysis of Lee's leadership during the pivotal Seven Days battles reconstructs his strategic thinking and corrects old assumptions. Gordon C. Rhea overturns the common notion that Lee anticipated his adversaries with uncanny precision in the Overland campaign of 1864. Robert E. L. Krick takes aim at the oft-repeated criticism that Lee was not attuned to the demands of modern warfare because he failed to surround himself with enough subordinates to ensure the smooth operation of the army; in fact, Krick argues, Lee continually fine-tuned the performance of his support staff, striving to eliminate deficiencies. Finally, Max R. Williams's examination of the relationship between Lee and North Carolina governor Zebulon B. Vance, and Mark L. Bradley's portrait of Lee's relationships with Jefferson Davis and Joseph E. Johnston, offer contrasting views of the soldier as both politically assertive and reticent, respectively.

Falling easily into neither the pro- nor anti-Lee camp, *Audacity Personified* challenges long-standing beliefs accepted since Douglas Southhall Freeman's influential biography of Lee was published seventy years ago. These diverse scholarly visions of the great Confederate general move beyond cliché, illuminating Lee's career with fresh interpretations.

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