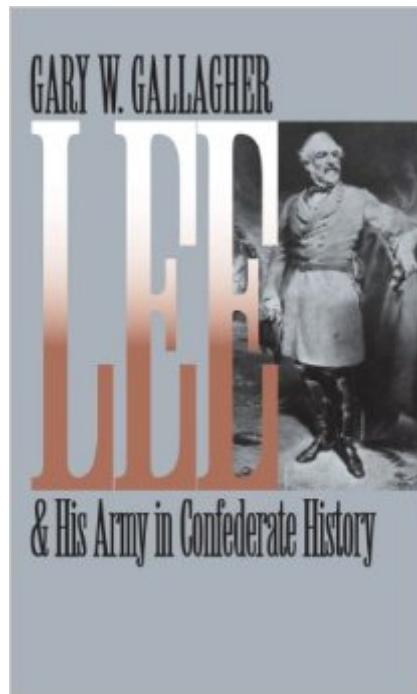


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# Lee And His Army In Confederate History (Civil War America)



## **Synopsis**

Was Robert E. Lee a gifted soldier whose only weaknesses lay in the depth of his loyalty to his troops, affection for his lieutenants, and dedication to the cause of the Confederacy? Or was he an ineffective leader and poor tactician whose reputation was drastically inflated by early biographers and Lost Cause apologists? These divergent characterizations represent the poles between which scholarly and popular opinion on Lee has swung over time. Now, in eight essays, Gary Gallagher offers his own refined thinking on Lee, exploring the relationship between Lee's operations and Confederate morale, the quality of his generalship, and the question of how best to handle his legacy in light of the many distortions that grew out of Lost Cause historiography. Using a host of contemporary sources, Gallagher demonstrates the remarkable faith that soldiers and citizens maintained in Lee's leadership even after his army's fortunes had begun to erode. Gallagher also engages aspects of the Lee myth with an eye toward how admirers have insisted that their hero's faults as a general represented exaggerations of his personal virtues. Finally, Gallagher considers whether it is useful--or desirable--to separate legitimate Lost Cause arguments from the transparently false ones relating to slavery and secession.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book is a collection of Gallagher's essays published elsewhere. In this format however, they

take on an added dimension and explanation of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and its commander, Robert E Lee. Gallagher begins by examining Lee's Maryland campaign, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg and the army's campaigns in 1864. His conclusions on the Battle of Gettysburg and its effects on the Confederate home front are particularly interesting. He concludes that the battle was not the overwhelming defeat to the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederate home front that it would later be portrayed as by historians. He makes the argument that the loss of Vicksburg was seen as a vastly bigger loss and Gettysburg was more seen as a small defeat or even a victory because of Meade's failure to chase the Confederates in retreat. Gallagher also includes an interesting essay evaluating the claims of some historians that Lee was not fighting a modern war with modern tactics and if he had done so, the Confederacy would have been better off. He ably demonstrates that indeed Lee did understand the difference in technology such as the minie ball and its impact on strategy and tactics. However, the best essay is Gallagher's essay on the Lost Cause "myth". Gallagher explains that many of the claims that were later associated only with Lost Cause historians such as Jubal Early or Douglass Southall Freeman, were actually developed during the war and immediately following the war prior to any claims made by Early and others. Thus some of the "myths" such as the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Union as part of the central cause of the Confederacy's defeat, is actually true.

With the skill of a surgeon, Gary W. Gallagher dissects the myths and legends surrounding Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia, past and current, to reveal a fascinating new look at the "marble man". Positioning himself squarely between the Lost Cause proponents and the current pack of revisionists, Gallagher relies on primary sources (newspapers, diaries and letters of civilians and soldiers, official correspondence) and careful, well-reasoned analysis to discover the real truth surrounding Robert E. Lee, and in the process lands an effective blow worthy of the general himself upon both sides. Gallagher's claims that Robert E. Lee was indeed an able proponent of modern warfare (though I would dispute the term modern) and also a capable administrator fully capable of being as strict or lenient with his subordinates as the case required breathes new life into the continuing quest to discover this fascinating man and effectively destroys the myths held by both sides (ironically enough, both sides often seem to wind up arguing both sides of the same coin) that Lee was first of all a member of the landed Virginia gentry far too short-sighted and stuck in the past for command of the Confederacy's main eastern army as well as being far too gentlemanly to deal strictly with subordinates. In fact, Gallagher presents Lee, through his own words and letters, as a man fully aware of the forces arrayed against him and as one who from the beginning knew full well

that the Confederacy needed to marshall all of its resources in order to win the war and gain independence and that tough decisions and hard sacrifices would be required, and that a strong government would be required to take charge in order to ensure this was done and coordinate everyone's effort.

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