



Scapegoat of Shiloh: The Distortion of Lew Wallace's Record by U.S. Grant

Kevin Getchell

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A great controversy surrounds General Lew Wallace at the Battle of Shiloh. (The epic novel Ben Hur would never have been written by Wallace if he had not been accused of delay and military stupidity.) General U.S. Grant blamed Wallace for the huge numbers of casualties the Union suffered, citing a dilatory march and poor choice of route to the battlefield. Wallace was obsessed with these accusations his entire life and wrote Ben Hur as much to work through the injustice of being a scapegoat as for literary aspirations. However, this book asserts that something entirely different may be at fault for the astonishing number of men lost. Overlooked in the history of the battle is Grant's own choice of a specific man to carry battle orders to Wallace, a mistake that might have made all the difference. This assertion is backed up by newly discovered documents written by an obscure Wisconsin quartermaster as well as plain evidence in official records. The implications of this wrong choice of messenger virtually vindicate Wallace from the accusations leveled at him. By also juxtaposing certain Confederate actions, this book explores the behind-the-scenes struggle during the Battle of Shiloh and its aftermath for the participants.

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