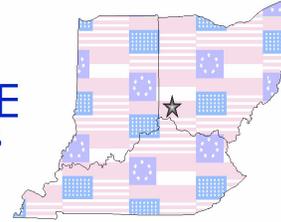




CINCINNATI
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE
SERVING OHIO, KENTUCKY AND INDIANA SINCE 1956



Book Review by Thomas L. Breiner

Civil War Petersburg: Confederate City in the Crucible of War by A. Wilson Greene. University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, VA, 2006. 363 pages, Hard cover \$34.95.

Civil War Petersburg: Confederate City in the Crucible of War by A. Wilson Greene is a superbly written and extremely well-researched work in the latest genre of Civil War manuscripts concerning the community and home-front studies. The author, Will Greene, has produced an excellent follow-up to his work, *Breaking the Backbone of Rebellion*. Here is the story of Petersburg, one of the most important cities in the Confederacy, even though it took a while for the Union generals to figure this out. Using a wealth of primary research material, the author has achieved a comprehensive look at this city from the earlier stages of the growing conflict through the final days of the Civil War in Virginia.

Through the capable work of Will Greene, the reader experiences the trials of this city and many of its citizens as the war progresses. We see a prosperous city develop as a conduit for the transfer of Confederate soldiers from the Deep South to the battlefields of Northern Virginia and the Peninsula. Then, the city becomes an armed camp as its importance as a rail center becomes evident. Finally, in the last year of the war, Petersburg is the center of the Union campaign to capture the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederate capital at Richmond. The book looks at life in the city through the eyes of many of its citizens, including many members of its large African-American population. Petersburg possessed the largest free African-American community in the state.

Petersburg was initially a conservative, pro-Union community. The attitude only shifted to pro-Confederate one month prior to Virginia's secession, but then Petersburg approached the task with whole-hearted enthusiasm. The work follows the city from its antebellum prosperity, through the rising inflation as goods become scarce and its once thriving industries in tobacco and cotton fail under the burden of war, and finally to a war-torn community damaged by the barrage of Union cannons from nine months of siege.

A. Wilson Greene has provided the Civil War community with a very valuable, highly readable and well-written manuscript looking at the home-front in the Civil War city of Petersburg, Virginia. Understanding the impact of the war on the lives of the non-combatants at home and how the inhabitants of this important city to the Confederate cause adds new insight into how the South was able to continue to fight in the face of the Northern strength and advantages of manpower and industrial wealth. This book is a must read for any scholar of the war.