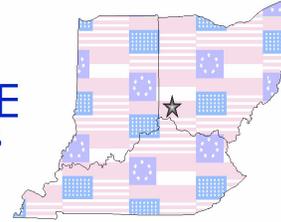




CINCINNATI  
CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE  
SERVING OHIO, KENTUCKY AND INDIANA SINCE 1956



Book Review by Thomas L. Breiner

*Donnybrook: The Battle of Bull Run, 1861* by David Detzer. Harcourt, Inc., Orlando, FL, 2004. 490 pages, Hardcover \$28.

*Donnybrook* by David Detzer is an excellently researched and written manuscript on the first battle of Bull Run. The author produced a work which clears away many of the legends and myths that have continued to surround the first major battle of the Civil War. In David Detzer's words, "History is often only agreed-upon myths." In this history, many of the past myths that we have all come to accept are blown away.

Some of the myths that Mr. Detzer erases are that JEB Stuart and his cavalry played a significant role in creating the Union panic and retreat, the evolution of the nickname "Stonewall" for Thomas J. Jackson, and the picnic atmosphere of the civilian populace observing the battle. Jackson was the hero that the Virginia press needed at the time. Fortunately for the press, Jackson was able to live up to the reputation they associated with his name during this battle. Our author also provides a clear understanding of General Robert Patterson's role in his efforts to hold General Joe Johnston in the Valley. David Detzer is quick to point out that Patterson was really too aggressive in his approach to his assignment, and that Winfield Scott prevented him from attacking Johnston. Patterson should not shoulder the blame for failing to keep Johnston in the Valley.

According to our writer, the primary fault for the defeat can be attributed to Major John G. Barnard, the Army's Chief Engineer, and Major William F. Barry, the Chief of Artillery. Barnard's reconnaissance of the approach to Bull Run and the Confederate left was incomplete and flawed. Had Barnard completed his job properly, the Union attack on the morning of July 21, 1861, would have occurred at least two hours earlier, and the soldiers would have been fresher by eliminating at least five extra miles of marching in the heat of the day. Major Barry failed to provide General Irvin McDowell with any benefit of his expertise on this day, but only followed instructions that he knew were wrong.

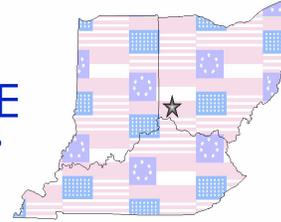
This book also provides the reader with a clear understanding of the level of training or lack of training experienced by various branches of the Army. You can feel how inexperienced the troops were at marching and the quality of leadership available to the fledgling army. David Detzer explains the decisions made by the leaders and the poor leadership in many of the units. The author also shows how well he understands the life of the soldier in the American Civil War and how the Army and its leaders approached this major event in their lives.

With *Donnybrook*, the author has provided an exciting and very readable account of the Battle of Bull Run. He attacks many of the accepted beliefs concerning the events of that day. Detzer is very convincing in his explanation of the actions on both sides and backs up his account with excellent research. This book needs to be read by all Civil War enthusiasts. When I first picked



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up this work I was expecting to see just another account of the battle that has been hashed and rehashed many times before. But to my surprise, this work proved to be a mind-opening manuscript. It will change your understanding of how Civil War battles were seen and understood by the participants.