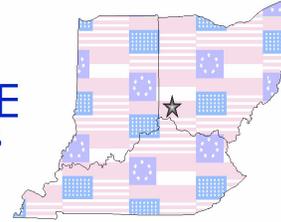




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Book Review by Thomas L. Breiner

U.S. Grant: The Making of a General, 1861-1863 by Michael B. Ballard. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, MD, 2005. 184 pages, Hard cover \$24.95.

The author of *U.S. Grant: The Making of a General, 1861-1863*, Michael Ballard, was asked to contribute to the American Crisis Series by Steve Woodworth. He should have refused. In writing this book, it seems that the author was so intent on having a manuscript to publish that he forgot to research and write an acceptable work. This offering is nothing more than a string of notes from Grant's *Personal Memoirs*, a literary version of connect the dots.

Michael Ballard appears to have put so little effort into this book that I cannot recommend this work to anyone, except possibly the person who is so enamored with U. S. Grant that they will read every word ever written either by him or about him.

In his haste to produce this title, our author showed that he is directionally challenged. In the very beginning he has Grant's birthplace of Point Pleasant, OH located in southeastern Ohio. Then he wants Sherman to march west from Jackson, Mississippi to reach Grant located in the vicinity of Edwards Station, which is in between Jackson and Vicksburg. These may be minor points but they caused me to look closer at the work. I found the majority of the endnotes to be taken from U.S. Grant's *Memoirs*. Based on this research, readers would be better served by reading Grant's *Memoirs* directly, so that they can develop their own ideas on how Grant grew into the general he became. So my recommendation is that you don't waste your time on this book. There are far better manuscripts available on the subject.

Lastly, I do have to give some credit to Mr. Ballard. The final chapter of the book is his summary and evaluation of Grant's character. I was impressed with his superb job of identifying Grant's strengths and weaknesses, and explaining how the adversities in Grant's life were instrumental in his development as a general. The author shows exceptional insight and understanding of his subject. It is a shame that he waited until the end of his work to display his talents.