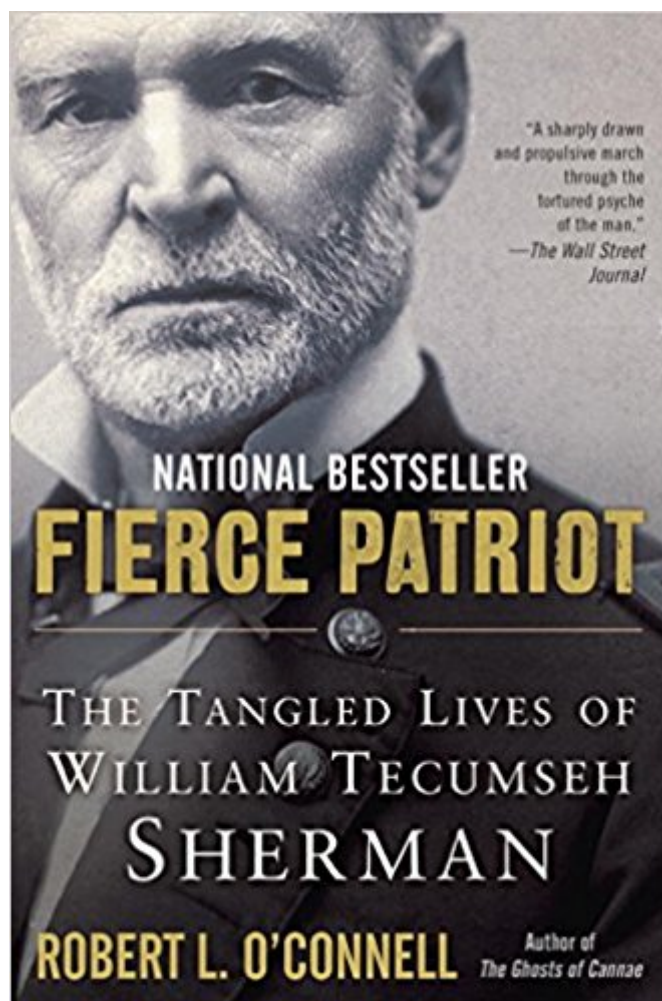




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Fierce Patriot: The Tangled Lives Of William Tecumseh Sherman



Synopsis

NATIONAL BESTSELLER William Tecumseh Sherman was more than just one of our greatest generals. *Fierce Patriot* is a bold, revisionist portrait of how this iconic and enigmatic figure exerted an outsized impact on the American landscape and the American character.

As America's first "celebrity" general, William Tecumseh Sherman was a man of many faces. Some were exalted in the public eye, others known only to his intimates. In this bold, revisionist portrait, Robert L. O'Connell captures the man in full for the first time.

From his early exploits in Florida, through his brilliant but tempestuous generalship during the Civil War, to his postwar career as a key player in the building of the transcontinental railroad, Sherman was, as O'Connell puts it, the "human embodiment of Manifest Destiny."

Here is Sherman the military strategist, a master of logistics with an uncanny grasp of terrain and brilliant sense of timing. Then there is "Uncle Billy," Sherman's public persona, a charismatic hero to his troops and quotable catnip to the newspaper writers of his day.

Here, too, is the private Sherman, whose appetite for women, parties, and the high life of the New York theater complicated his already turbulent marriage. Warrior, family man, American icon,

William Tecumseh Sherman has finally found a biographer worthy of his protean gifts. A masterful character study whose myriad insights are leavened with its author's trademark wit, *Fierce Patriot* will stand as the essential book on Sherman for decades to come. Praise for *Fierce Patriot*

"A superb examination of the many facets of the iconic Union

general." —General David Petraeus "Sherman's standing in American history is formidable. . . . It is hard to imagine any other biography capturing it all in such a

concise and enlightening fashion." —National Review "A sharply drawn and propulsive march through the tortured psyche of the man." —The Wall Street

Journal "[O'Connell's] narrative of the March to the Sea is perhaps the best I have ever read." —Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post* "A

surprising, clever, wise, and powerful book." —Evan Thomas, author of *Ike's Bluff* From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Sherman remains one of the most celebrated and controversial military icons in American history. Adored by his Union troops during the Civil War as Uncle Billy, he was despised by Southerners as the monster who mercilessly waged war upon the civilian population in Georgia and the Carolinas. Praised by some for his effective campaigns against the Plains Indians, he was condemned by others as a proponent of genocide. O'Connell, an author, analyst, and professor of history, views Sherman's controversial legacy as a reflection of the contradictions and complexities within his character. By nature and inclination, he despised the pretensions and affectations of the wealthy, but he mixed with them freely and aspired to match their financial success. He claimed to hate politicians and journalists, yet he talked incessantly in their presence, and his off-the-cuff remarks often served to distort his true views. Despite the apparently wanton destruction of Sherman's March, he actually kept tight discipline over his troops. This is a well-written and revealing reexamination of the character and career of an undeniably great American. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"A superb examination of the many facets of the iconic Union general who emerged as Ulysses S. Grant's most trusted battlefield commander. [Robert L.]

O'Connell's biography of Sherman brings to life an enigmatic, fascinating figure who emerged a brilliant strategist and a master of maneuver, and whose victories in 1864 helped to ensure Abraham Lincoln's re-election and ultimately turned the tide of the Civil War. "General David Petraeus, *Politico* "Sherman's standing in American history is formidable. . . . It is hard to imagine any other biography capturing it all in such a concise and enlightening fashion. "National Review "A sharply drawn and propulsive march through the tortured psyche of the man. "The Wall

Street Journal

“[O’Connell’s] narrative of the March to the Sea is perhaps the best I have ever read.”

Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post*

“William Tecumseh Sherman is one of the great characters in American history—protean, highly effective, cunning, outrageous, and in every way memorable. He has found just the right biographer in Robert L. O’Connell. *Fierce Patriot* is a surprising, clever, wise, and powerful book.”

Evan Thomas, author of *Ike’s Bluff: President Eisenhower’s Secret Battle to Save the World*

“For those who think they know a lot about William Tecumseh Sherman, this book will be a revelation. Those who are meeting him for the first time will be equally mesmerized.”

Thomas Fleming, author of *A Disease in the Public Mind: A New Understanding of Why We Fought the Civil War*

“To his family and friends he was Cump; to his soldiers he was Uncle Billy; to generations of Southern whites he was the devil incarnate. But to biographer Robert L. O’Connell, William T. Sherman was the quintessential nineteenth-century American: full of energy, constantly on the move, pragmatic, adaptable, determined to overcome all obstacles, a nationalist and patriot who teamed with Grant and Lincoln to win the Civil War and launch America as a world power. This readable biography offers new insights on Sherman as a husband and father as well as a master strategist and leader.”

James M. McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*

“A fascinating dissection of the multifaceted lives of William Tecumseh Sherman—military genius, brilliant organizer, inspired observer, and occasionally wayward husband. Sherman, O’Connell reminds us, was as brilliantly unpredictable on the battlefield as he was off it.”

Victor Davis Hanson, *The Hoover Institution*, author of *The Soul of Battle* and *Ripples of Battle*

“William Tecumseh Sherman has to be our premier grand strategist, who set unexpectedly bold boundaries, not just for war but for peace, and kept to them. In *Fierce Patriot*, Robert L. O’Connell has fashioned a remarkable, and remarkably original, portrait of one of the people who truly defined America.”

Robert Cowley, founding editor of *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*

“William Tecumseh Sherman was the most fiery, complicated, and inconsistent of America’s great generals. In Robert L. O’Connell’s aptly titled *Fierce Patriot*, he brings this conflicted American hero vividly to life. For both the Civil War buff and the general reader, *Fierce Patriot* offers new and arresting insights into this remarkable figure and his impact on the world in which he lived.”

Charles Bracelen Flood, author of *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship That Won the Civil War*

From the Hardcover edition.

Mr. O'Connell has written a very readable overview of the Life of William Tecumseh Sherman. Written in a conversational style, the author says Sherman was a complex individual and the best way to understand the man is to review his character along three different story lines. The first story line is Sherman as the "general contractor" and the strategist of continental expansion. Essentially the author argues that Sherman was part of the generation that built the United States to the west coast. In the first section, beginning with Sherman's boyhood and continuing through the Civil War, O'Connell covers the general's life as a soldier in the Second Seminole War, his time in California, as a banker, and, of course, his Civil War experience. The theme is that Sherman saw the United States as "under construction" and he was part of the crew to build it. Even his wartime experience fits into this theme as he was driven to save the United States from dissolution, while his post-war years were spent subduing native tribes and supporting building the transcontinental railroad system. The second story line focuses on Sherman the soldier and the army he built and used in the west to bring an end to the Civil War. O'Connell reviews how Sherman evolved as a commander, how he developed his army, and how his strategic views solidified. The third story line takes a look at Sherman the man. The author takes a look at Sherman's personnel life examining his family upbringing and the impact it had on him. It continues looking at Sherman's personal side through his post-war years and retirement, his relationship with his wife and his mistresses, and his relationship with his children. Unfortunately "Fierce Patriot" doesn't provide anything new on Sherman. What it does do well is provide a very readable book on Sherman while taking a look at the man from a variety of viewpoints. Most Sherman biographies, and I think this applies to most biographies of military leaders, focus on their battles. In a way, the biography becomes just another way of presenting the battle and not the man. However, "Fierce Patriot" does not take this approach. You do learn about the man and not just his military exploits. And if O'Connell covers the same ground twice, it's only because he's viewing the subject from a different perspective. In the end the author paints an image of a strategic thinker and a goal-oriented pragmatist in his professional life, while sharing a disjointed personal life with a woman he loved and knew very well (he married his foster father's daughter), but with whom he had several key differences (primarily religion).

I selected this because I was interested in learning more about Sherman. I expected a solid and informative book. This turned out to be much more than that. It is first-rate. First, it is always interesting. The author has a lightness in style and an unusual ability to organize and summarize topics. To pick a few examples; he explains the developments in rifles and the resulting impacts on how commanders positioned troops and soldiers adapted in a compact way that is striking and very clear. Again and again, this skill enlivens the flow of the narrative without disrupting it. I can't recall a book on military history that made the details of campaigns and battles so easy to follow. The core of the book is, of course, the presentation of Sherman's career and personality. The writer made a unusual choice that I think works very well; he separates the military phase of his life as the first and main part of the book and addresses his later career and the very complex psychodramas of relationships within his family circle in other ones. This helpfully unclutters the flow of the narrative, though it is quite arguable that it obscures interactions and is selective in choosing events. Sherman comes across as not particularly self-aware, limited in his empathy and insight, and in many ways not an interesting character. But he was the opposite of this in his growth as a commander. The resulting portrayal abstracts the key historical threads of his life very vividly and convincingly, without neglecting the personal dimensions and resonances. There are a few themes that may be a tiny bit artificial -- a distinctive view of "strategy" as the core of what made Sherman different and a categorization of him as always seeking to be the Number 2 in his relationships with, most obviously, Grant. These are minor demurrals and queries. The analysis seems reliable and the sources and scholarship solid. What stands out is the book is so, so interesting. It flows vividly with a superb sense of the reader -- examples, phrasing and explanation really make this a conversation not a presentation. I loved it. It leaves a sense of enhanced understanding and a rich reading experience.

This is a remarkable book: a literary and historical achievement. Extremely well written, it captures the reader with such phrases as "Studying Sherman in detail can be compared to a really bad day at the beach." The organization is clear. Using an analytical approach, the author looks at Sherman from three perspectives: his contribution to the preservation and expansion of the country, his contribution to military tactics and strategy, and his personal life. The book is a historical achievement leading. The author cuts through both the hype and the hysteria surrounding Sherman. For example, Sherman's March to the Sea was composed of two parts. The first part was a conventional military campaign using traditional logistics to move from Chattanooga to Atlanta. The second part was Sherman's unconventional travel from Atlanta to Savannah. And, the author points

out that this difficult march would have been impossible but for superbly conditioned troops who believed in and loved Sherman. The reader comes away from the book with a mixture of awe, respect, and affinity for Sherman. He has strong convictions, but was hardly intolerant. Like everyone, he had faults, but rose above them to serve his nation at a crucial juncture.

I'm an old Civil War Buff, & have read much on Sherman @ least 2 prior biographies. This is the best I have ever read. It really puts flesh on his bones. A very deep man with many inconsistencies which the author covers & explains. The only complaint I would have is the March To The Sea. I felt it was too brief & not descriptive enough. The relationship between Sherman & Grant a new & full telling better than anything I have ever read or heard at any lectures. It was a hard book to put down, R.Roland Brockmeyer.'

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