

HST 209: History of the Civil War W18 (Escobar 31595)

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Week 8 - 1864 - Most Hallowed Ground ► Week 8 Forum ► Petersburg Documentary

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Petersburg Documentary

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Petersburg Documentary

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, February 24, 2018, 8:16 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Petersburg Documentary topic.

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The end of the Confederacy?

by Jonathan Wheeler - Monday, February 26, 2018, 9:08 PM

I found the documentary "Petersburg: Graveyard to the Confederacy" quite informative to watch. I liked the breakdown of the chapters to help walk us through the events leading up to the battle of Petersburg, the actual final battle, and the aftermath. To really understand the Battle of Petersburg we have to study all the events surrounding it. For example, Brewrey's Bluff, Cold Harbor, the Tunnel and the Crater. The documentary also gave me a good perspective of the different types of commanders involved in the 9.5 month battle. It seemed as though the Union would just "throw" soldiers into battle, whereas the Confederates tried to conserve men as much as possible. Neither General's Grant nor Lee was however willing to

retreat. It was also interesting to note how a lot of the Union generals under Grant seemed to be incompetent. General Butler who took Bermuda Landing, but could not hold it while Grant engaged Lee, or General Ledlie who was back at camp getting drunk, while his men assaulted Petersburg's defenses through "the crater". It was interesting to note that brand new Union soldiers were used for the assault through "the crater"; even though, they had no previous combat experience. Overall the documentary showed me what the leadership of the Union army was willing to do to destroy the Confederacy.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: The end of the Confederacy?

by Sydney Hall - Saturday, March 3, 2018, 11:50 PM

I also really enjoyed having the documentary broken down into chapters too! It was like a notification of a new subject coming up with a wealth of information. You mentioned the Crater and I personally found it really fascinating about the depth of the details given on each little portion of the battle, something that I thought *Battle Cry of Freedom* didn't have too much of. It was a bit mindboggling learning more about how incompetent Ledlie was with his behavior and involvement in the Union army, pretty much allowing confused and unguided Union troops to rush into the Crater. Because of that, I personally believe there were many Union casualties that could've been prevented if there had been more leadership during the battle (of Crater), granted that the battle of Petersburg eventually became a crushing defeat for the confederates months later.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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The quality of soldiers: Petersburg

by Hannah Cartwright - Tuesday, February 27, 2018, 4:42 PM

After watching Petersburg: The Graveyard of Confederacy, I learned more about the dedication, tactics, and quality of the soldiers fighting both on the union side and the confederate side. From beginning to end of the Petersburg campaign, it seemed that the soldiers and generals fought each battle and thought through every attack as if it was the first, until of course, the confederates were defeated. Though, the chapters in the book *Battle Cry of Freedom* talked about Petersburg and of course helped me gain knowledge about the campaign, *The Graveyard of Confederacy* and episode 7 of the *Kens Burns* series had many examples of soldiers and the dedication they had to their side of the war and helped my knowledge the most. One example of the quality of the soldiers, told by James I Robertson Jr. in the documentary *Petersburg: The Graveyard of Confederacy* is after the battle of Cold Harbor. A union soldier was walking the field after the union defeat and heard a fatal cry. When he looked down he saw a young teenage boy who was wounded from the battle and about to pass away. Before he died, the first thing he said was "Is the day ours? Is the day ours?". Though, the union was defeated, the soldier didn't have the heart to say that they had loss. So the soldier told the young boy that they had won. The teenage soldier then said "well then, I am willing to die." The fact that, instead of the teenage boy wanting his last words to be a goodbye to his family, he wanted to make sure he died on a victorious battle field for the union. Another example is from episode 7 *Most Hallowed Ground*, when Shelby Foote talks

about Nathan Bedford Forrest, a confederate army general. He says that Nathan Bedford Forrest was a "natural genius" and was "born to be a soldier the way John Keats was born to be a poet". I feel that this comment in itself just shows the dedication of Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: The quality of soldiers: Petersburg

by Jonathan Wheeler - Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 9:34 PM

I really enjoyed both the video documentaries as well. The historians that are interviewed makes the audience feels they are listening to firsthand accounts of the battles. I did also find that the dedication and quality of the soldiers was admirable. I however did feel that after watching "Petersburg: Graveyard of the Confederacy" that Grant was let down by many of his commanders. Which ultimately led to more deaths for the Union army, and possibly the prolonged (9.5 months) campaign? An example would be those Union officers in charge of the assault of Petersburg's defenses. Specifically generals Burnside and Ledlie, who needlessly lost many soldiers in "the Crater" because of their incompetence.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Petersburg Documentary

by Heather Saxon - Friday, March 2, 2018, 1:34 PM

The documentary I think added largely to my knowledge of issues concerning Petersburg because it does go incredibly in depth about the singular battle and events surrounding it. We learn more about the methods of making The Crater, including that the men had to fashion their own wheelbarrows (a detail not included in the Ken Burns episode or McPhearson's textbook) though some other details, like the length of the tunnel being 511 feet were available in both the textbook and the Petersburg documentary, but not in the Ken Burns episode-and the Petersburg documentary left out a sentence from McPhearson's book that explains that, before the Union soldiers made the crater, no one had made a tunnel longer than 500 feet (which I believe must be for the certain type of tunnel they were making, considering the length and cross-sections of mining tunnels otherwise), and never with the primitive equipment the Union men had.

Far as the narrow focus on Petersburg, considering they managed to make an hour long documentary on a single battle, I personally found it to be a reasonably worthwhile task. It added some detail on the practices of various officials and gave greater depth to the reasons for mistakes, such as that Ferraro's troops were *completely* fresh and had never seen combat, so his negligent command was not the only reason for the disaster at the Crater. It gave greater detail of the siege itself, the soldiers, and otherwise. While hour-long documentaries could be made on any of the major (and some minor) battles during the Civil War, I think the fact that we did watch at least one beneficial to give a better idea the actual impact of the war on the soldiers and civilians, especially when the focus was put on a 10 month siege.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Battle of Petersburg Focus

by Sydney Hall - Saturday, March 3, 2018, 3:25 PM

Confusion was a key problem involved in this battle for both sides. What was supposed to be a grand strategy turned into 4500 union casualties due to incompetent leaders (i.e. Leslie). Exhausted soldiers fought on the battlefield in which would turn into a siege, something that both armies had not endured before. The Confederates were used to marching and fighting and were now forced to stay idle and play a waiting game. The battle lasted 9^{1/2} months and one of the reasons leading to it lasting that long was because of the constructed fortifications from both armies that went on for 45 miles.

After watching this documentary, I was left astonished with the amount of detail and information that was presented in the 56 minutes. Compared to *Battle Cry of Freedom* and Ken Burns series, the Petersburg Documentary left them in the dust. Prior to this documentary, I knew that Petersburg was an important battle (and siege), but not to this depth. The details were almost overwhelming in a sense of so much information: from the casualties, black troop involvement, lack of engaging leaders, confusion, battle engagement, fortifications, the list goes on and on. In my opinion, focusing on one critical battle to see the importance was really fascinating because of all these little details that the summarized battles don't really give us.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Military performance

by Jackson Peterson - Sunday, March 4, 2018, 7:32 PM

I found the video to be very interesting learning about the military performances and their positions. It was easier to follow then past videos in my opinion and made the knowledge of their positions, failures, and successes all in one clip rather than being talked about here and there throughout many videos.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

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Petersburg Documentary ▶

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