

PLENTY OF BLAME TO GO AROUND: JEB STUART'S CONTROVERSIAL RIDE TO GETTYSBURG

By Eric J. Wittenberg and J. David Petruzzi
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With the possible exception of Little BigHorn, more has been written about the Battle of Gettysburg than any battle in American history. So much, in fact, that we have a section here at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop devoted just to that engagement. Part of that enduring appeal are all the “What ifs” and controversies of Gettysburg, with perhaps biggest among them JEB Stuart’s role in the campaign. Was Robert E. Lee’s Cavalry Chief on a self aggrandizing joy ride, ignoring his orders to keep Lee informed of the enemy’s whereabouts, or was he simply doing the best he could in hostile territory, against an increasingly able mounted arm of the Army of the Potomac?

PLENTY OF BLAME TO GO AROUND: JEB STUART'S CONTROVERSIAL RIDE TO GETTYSBURG by Eric J. Wittenberg and J. David Petruzzi, published by Savas Beattie, is the most comprehensive telling yet of this eight day, 200 mile excursion by Stuart’s 6000 Southern horsemen, which featured five skirmishes and two battles along the way. The authors, both of them experts and prolific writers on Civil War Eastern Theatre Cavalry, having combed through numerous primary sources, including contemporary newspapers and unpublished correspondence, have really produced two books in one. The first part is an excellent narrative, which takes into account both Rebel and Yankee perspectives, shows an understanding of the needs and capabilities of horses and how that effected Stuart’s progress, gives due to the brave 1st Delaware Cavalry at Westminster, covers the tough fight at Hanover, and details the Confederate shelling of Carlisle.

The second part of the book is a historiography of the Stuart controversy, which began raging soon after Lee reprimanded his Bold Cavalier upon his arrival at Gettysburg. Charles Marshall, Lee’s aide, thought Stuart should have been court-martialed, maybe even shot. John Mosby, on the other hand, vigorously defended Stuart’s conduct. The authors examine the postwar writings and conflicting viewpoints of the participants, both Union and Confederate, and cite and discuss the evolving and competing views of historians up to the present day.

Plenty of Blame to Go Around also includes a driving tour of Stuart’s ride, orders of battle, extensive and helpful endnotes, maps, and portraits of key combatants.

As to what conclusions the authors themselves come to on the issue, while the title gives a hint, you will have to read the book to find out. Signed copies of *PLENTY OF BLAME TO GO AROUND: JEB STUART'S CONTROVERSIAL RIDE TO GETTYSBURG* by Eric J. Wittenberg and J. David Petruzzi, published by Savas Beattie, are available here at the Abraham Lincoln Book Shop. \$32.95