Thanks to Rhoda Sneller for hosting our website

Des Moines Civil War Roundtable

November 2024
Headquarters District Iowa
General Order No. 496

- The **Third meeting** of the Fall campaign will November 6 at the **The Machine Shed**

  The bar will open at 5:30 with the meal served at 6:30.

- Our program **Don Doxsie (Davenport) Iowans at Shiloh**
- Meal choices **Roast Turkey Breast and Stuffed Pork Loin**
- **Reservations & payment will be accepted until November 3.**

By command of Brigadier General Gordon McKenzie

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Our web address www.dmcivilwar.com

For many it is time to renew your membership in the DMCWRT.
$30.00 Newsletter via email

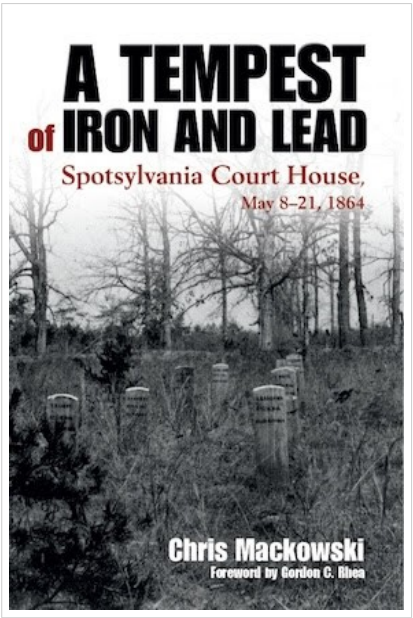
$35.00 Newsletter via USPS
$40.00 for Family

Payments can be combined with your dinner reservation. Contributions are always welcomed
Send to--
Ron Nurmi 1424 E. Walnut Street #4 Des Moines IA 50316
or notify me by email—dmcwrt@gmail.com phone 515-491-3626

Writing Tempest: One More Book on Spotsy?



By **Chris Mackowski** on October 14, 2024



"Why do we need another book about Gettysburg," I've heard no Civil War buff ask ever.
While the appetite for Gettysburg books seems insatiable, I've already had a couple folks ask, "Why do we need another book about Spotsylvania Court House?"

After all, there are already *four* of them out there: William Matter's *If It Takes All Summer* (1988), Gordon Rhea's *The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House* (1997), Jeffry Wert's *The Heart of Hell* (2012), and *A Season of Slaughter* (2013), which I co-wrote with Kris White. Beyond that, *Blue & Gray* magazine published a pair of issues written by Greg Mertz and another pair co-written by me and Kris.

Aside from that, Spotsy is covered in some single-volume overviews of the Overland Campaign, and that's pretty much it.

So why my new *A Tempest of Iron and Lead: Spotsylvania Court House, May 8–21, 1864*?
"I already have Gordon Rhea's book," one person said to me.

"Me, too!" I replied. Gordon's five-part series of the Overland Campaign will always remain the definitive account, and it's a set of books I value and adore deeply. It's why I asked him to write the foreword for my own book, which he was kind to do.

Based on the logic of "I already have Rhea's book," though, we could've all stopped buying Gettysburg books after Edwin Coddington's *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (1997). Who needs, for instance, all three volumes of Harry Pfanz's outstanding history of the first two days of the battle (1987, 1993, 2001)? Or Stephen Sears's smooth-reading *Gettysburg* (2004)? Why did Allen Guelzo

even bother trying with *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (2013)? And those are just the big studies, let alone the multitude of smaller actions that have gotten focused attention.

If you're one of the "one book per battle is enough for me" sorts of readers, then it might indeed seem that Gordon's book is enough. (And I will recommend it to people 10 days out of 10.) BUT, Gordon takes a book and a half to cover Spotsy, so if you're really just looking for *a* book, then I hope my single-volume treatment of the battle will serve the purpose for you. Otherwise, you need to get Gordon's *To the North Anna River* to get the story of the second half of the battle. (a book I consider my favorite microtactical Civil War study, period, and one I'll again recommend 10 days out of 10.)
One of my main objectives with *Tempest* was to cover Spotsy in a single book that would be both readable and manageable. Readability is always of utmost concern to me. I want people to read my stuff and find the experience pleasurable. I don't want them to have to fight—or slog—their way through one of my books. That focus on engaging prose is something, I hope, that sets my prose apart from other single-volume treatments of Spotsy. Bill Matter's book, for instance, is jam-packed full of great content, but its dense prose is something that requires effort to get through.
Jeff Wert's single-volume treatment of Spotsy is highly readable—one of many things I really like about it. My book is different from his, however, in that he hones in on the May 12 fighting at the Bloody Angle. I take a more comprehensive approach, from May 8–May 21, 1864. A lot of compelling action takes place in that span, and *Tempest* covers it all.

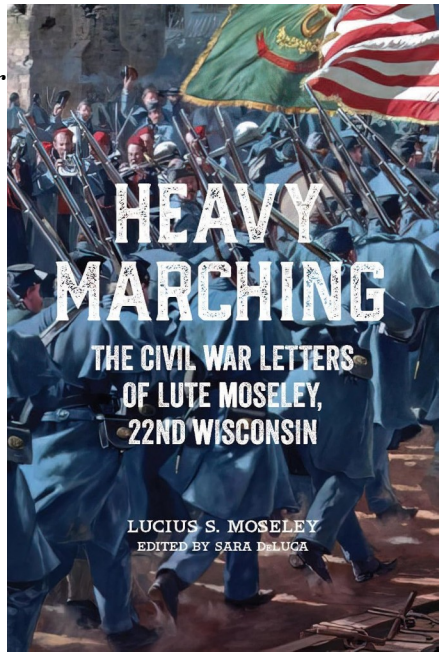
I would also argue that I have a degree of familiarity with the ground that makes me uniquely qualified to write about the battle. I live in the immediate area, I'm on the battlefield all the time, and my wife's family even owns a big chunk of it. That's a degree of access that other authors just haven't had. I tried to infuse the manuscript with what I've learned from being on the ground.

Tempest is the first full treatment of the battle in more than 25 years. New information has come to light, unavailable to Gordon or Bill, that I've been able to take advantage of. Some of my interpretations are a little different in spots.

So, it's a fair question to ask, "What makes your book different than other Spotsy books," and hopefully that's a fair answer. But as to whether we "need another book on Spotsy". . . .? I'd suggest that true students of the war would want to read a bunch of different sources, test them against each other, and then walk the ground themselves. That's how we can best engage history and get the most out of it.

Heavy Marching: The Civil War Letters of Lute Moseley, 22nd Wisconsin. Edited by Sara DeLuca. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2023. Hardcover, 306 pp. $29.95.

Reviewed by Tim Talbott



Editor Sara DeLuca calls *Heavy Marching: The Civil War Letters of Lute Moseley, 22nd Wisconsin*, "primarily the personal journey of one Union soldier, unique in the telling, yet representative of so many young men on both sides of the conflict, who fought with valor and determination, certain that God was on their side." (xv) It is indeed that, and so much more.

DeLuca became aware of Pvt. Lucius S. Moseley's letters when she met Esther Baer Moseley. Ms. Moseley, whose late husband was the grandson of Pvt. Moseley, was working on editing the letters and asked for DeLuca's assistance. Unable to get much done before Ms. Moseley passed away, DeLuca finally dug into the letters about a decade later with the family's blessing. What she found was a collection of common soldier's letters, "filled with detailed accounts of military drilling, exhausting marches, tedious waiting and watching, deadly battles, bitter conflicts between his company's officers, fears for friends and family, for his own survival, and always . . . always the longing for more news from home." (xiv) Lucius "Lute" Moseley was a mere 19 when he enlisted in Company B of the 22nd Wisconsin Infantry in the late summer of 1862. The 22nd Wisconsin was also known as the "Abolitionist Regiment" due to the anti-slavery sentiments that Col. William Utley and many of his men brought with them into the unit. Unwilling to return enslaved individuals who came into their camps or joined them on their marches, the 22nd faced their fair share of trouble while serving in Kentucky.

Not all of the soldiers in the 22nd came into the service as abolitionists or even emancipationists. Like many other Union soldiers, Pvt. Moseley's personal views about African Americans evolved over his service. For example, while camped in Danville, Kentucky, in December 1862, Mosely complained about them coming into camp claiming, "I don't want anymore, they are dishonest." (36). He also sometimes focused more on what he saw as exotic characteristics: "We have a white negro in our regiment. He is curiosity. He has sandy hair and is white as I am. . . ." (39) However, after having more interactions with people of color, and seeing the contributions that they were making to the cause, he tempered his views and showed empathy. After mentioning how thankful he was to be able to communicate across long distances by writing letters to his family, Moseley wrote that "I often think of those poor negroes leaving their families to go off and help in this great struggle, for few can either read

or write." In Nashville, in April 1864, Moseley wrote about helping a Black woman whose dress caught fire from their tent chimney when she returned his tent mate's laundry. When Moseley burned his hands in putting out the fire, the woman expressed her gratitude to him for saving her life.
After serving for several months in the Bluegrass State, the regiment boarded steamboats and made way for Tennessee, where they saw their first true combat at the Battle of Thompson's Station in early March 1863. Captured in the fight with several others in the regiment Mosley was marched to Chattanooga and then sent by rail to Libby Prison in Richmond. Receiving a rather quick parole he went to a holding camp in Annapolis and then St. Louis to await exchange.

Back with his regiment in Middle Tennessee by June 1863, the 22nd Wisconsin remained there, missing the Tullahoma, Chickamauga, and Chattanooga Campaigns. They were not so fortunate for the Atlanta Campaign in the spring of 1864. Fighting in the XX Corps, Moseley's battle accounts are descriptive and he maintains a rather good morale as long as he is able to communicate with those back home. For example, in a June 7, 1864, letter Moseley wrote, "I am well and contented, Uncle Sam owes me $70, and it will be more before it is less. I am dirty and ragged, but my ragged clothes cover a healthy contented body, and this is enough." (139) His descriptions of everyday camp activities while on the march and after the fall of Atlanta are entertaining and informative.

Moseley and the 22nd Wisconsin marched on from Atlanta to Savannah, and into the Carolinas. They participated in the Grand Review in Washington, but Moseley wanted to go home and was not amused with the waiting. Writing on May 25, 1865, he penned "We did not volunteer to remain in the service as required to parade and make big shows to gratify the ambition of officers, and to be reviewed and rereviewed, and kept in the field when no human being can see the least bit use for it." (215) His last letter was sent home on June 5, 1865. He mustered out in Washington D.C. a week later.

DeLuca divides the book into six chapters. Instead of putting the notes at the end of the chapters, or in a section at back of the book, they appear following each letter, which helps find them easily. The notes are thorough and informative without being burdensome. A few images are included of Col. Utley, Lt. Col. Edward Bloodgood, and a few other people and places that Moseley mentions in the letters. Also included are several appendices giving the officers of the regiment and a roster of Moseley's Company B, as well as Col. John Coburn's (brigade commander) farewell address at Atlanta.

Heavy Marching: The Civil War Letters of Lute Moseley, 22nd Wisconsin is an excellently edited collection that makes for enjoyable reading. Its rich content and Pvt. Moseley's insightful commentary are sure to appear in future campaign studies now that they are more readily available to researchers.