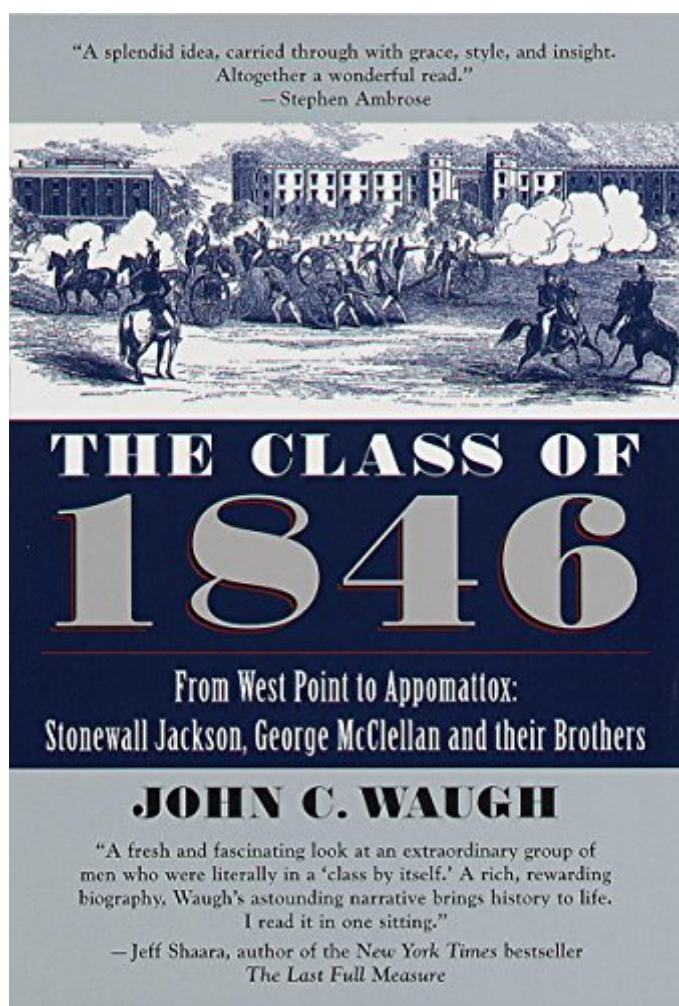


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The Class Of 1846: From West Point To Appomattox: Stonewall Jackson, George McClellan, And Their Brothers



Synopsis

No single group of men at West Point--or possibly any academy--has been so indelibly written into history as the class of 1846. The names are legendary: Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, George B. McClellan, Ambrose Powell Hill, Darius Nash Couch, George Edward Pickett, Cadmus Marcellus Wilcox, and George Stoneman. The class fought in three wars, produced twenty generals, and left the nation a lasting legacy of bravery, brilliance, and bloodshed. This fascinating, remarkably intimate chronicle traces the lives of these unforgettable men--their training, their personalities, and the events in which they made their names and met their fates. Drawing on letters, diaries, and personal accounts, John C. Waugh has written a collective biography of masterful proportions, as vivid and engrossing as fiction in its re-creation of these brilliant figures and their pivotal roles in American history. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Well-researched, immensely readable, and very highly recommended. I learned a lot of new things,

not just about the Civil War and West Point, but also the Indian wars. Maps would have been useful, especially for Jackson's Valley Campaign of '62 as another reviewer mentioned, but I have a regular Kindle Paperwhite and they most likely would not have been readable, so I googled everything. There are no photos mentioned in the ToC, and I searched for them, both by searching and paging through, but somehow did not find them until I finished the book. It would have been nice if there had been a link to them. Most of them are googleable, as is the Valley Campaign, etc. John Waugh made me feel some sympathy for Tom Jackson, and since he's one of my least favorite people, that's an achievement and points to the quality of his writing. McClellan is sympathy-proof as far as I am concerned, no matter how well John Waugh writes.

John Waugh's book is an account of the lives and careers of a number of the West Point graduates of 1846, but it is dominated by the Civil War, in which many of those graduates were prominent participants. Waugh begins by providing an account of their years at West Point and then moves on to their participation in the Mexican War, before reaching the main focus of this work. The exploits of many of the graduates are touched on, but two dominate the author's attention. They are, unsurprisingly, George McClellan and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. Waugh briefly follows the lives of graduates in the post-Civil War era, and provides some interesting commentary on the role of West Point from both a social and military perspective in 19th century America. There are two ways to view this book. One is to accept it for what the title suggests it is. The other is to view it as yet another Civil War book, where the author has cast about for yet another approach to one of history's most written-about subjects. Certainly the Civil War dominates this work, but that is to be expected. The author finds it necessary to shift his focus at times from his stated topic, as many major Civil War figures were not 1846 graduates. I found the book an interesting read, mainly for those sections which were not about the Civil War, a topic on which it had little new to say. I was particularly interested in the ambivalence 19th century Americans felt towards West Point and the various attempts to close the academy, which Waugh discussed but which I felt could have been given more attention. Civil War buffs (like me) will probably enjoy this book without finding anything new or startling in its content, but it does provide some interesting insights into non-Civil War topics in 19th century American history.

At its strongest at the beginning and end when the author treats the Class of 1846 as a group and reaches beyond the most famous of the graduates. The account of the Civil War years (the bulk of the book) is more or less a standard account of Jackson and McClellan's careers, with a bit of

Pickett thrown in and cameos from other class members. The prose is attractive and dynamic, but there's nothing new to be said about the Valley Campaign or Antietam at this level of detail, and I would rather have seen more on the war service of the rest of the class. (Incidentally, at least in the Kindle version there don't seem to be maps for a reader to follow the movements of the armies, which a casual reader is almost certain to need.) Well written, but ultimately a little disappointing in the focus on well-worn ground - even within the careers of the protagonists.

This book focuses primarily on the battles of McClellan and Stonewall Jackson. One the top in his West Point class of 1846 and the other with great instincts on the field of battle. And entertaining book and worthwhile read which is best read if you already have some knowledge of the Civil War.

The content was not earth shattering from a historical prospective, but it was very interesting and informative, as part of the complete picture of The continuing Civil War now available. Also shed light on the ever enduring ties of former students of West Point.

Incredibly readable history. I couldn't it down. Waugh doesn't offer a lot of new information but presents the stories of George Meade, Stonewall Jackson and a multitude of others in a different and thought provoking format. Not only was this the War Between the States but also the War Between Classmates and Colleagues. The author delves into some of the greatest military minds this country has ever produced as they first meet at West Point, then fight together in Mexico and on the western frontier, and finally on the Civil War battlefields at a time when when being an officer also meant being a gentleman. The class of 1846 studied together, fought and died together, and then fought against each other and died. They prayed for victory and wept when they won. This book is a profound emotional experience.

A very interesting proof that, once again, truth is stranger than fiction. The coincidence of these fellow classmates coming together time and again, and under circumstances of great import for the future of the United States, is well-documented by the author. I did not give the book a fifth star because of the limited reach of the biographies. So much of the book was focused on Jackson that the quality of the writing seemed to fall off when discussing the personal lives of the others, with the exception of McClelland. So many other biographies are intertwined but are mentioned only in agonizingly sparse sentences.

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