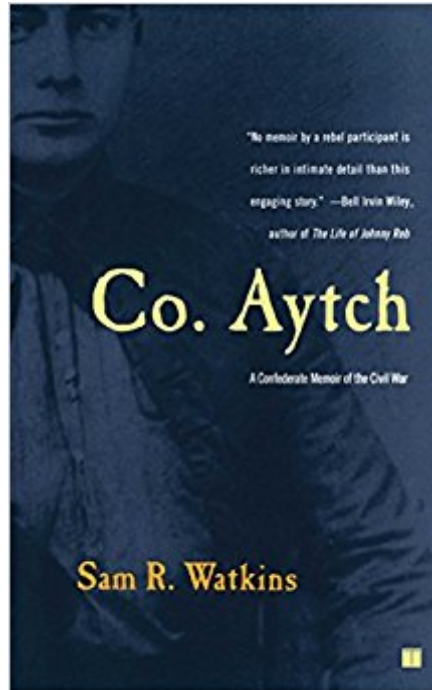


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Co. Aytch: A Confederate Memoir Of The Civil War



Synopsis

A classic Civil War memoir, is the work of a natural storyteller who balances the horror of war with an irrepressible sense of humor and a sharp eye for the lighter side of battle. It is a testament to one man's enduring humanity, courage, and wisdom in the midst of death and destruction. Early in May 1861, twenty-one-year-old Sam R. Watkins of Columbia, Tennessee, joined the First Tennessee Regiment, Company H, to fight for the Confederacy. Of the 120 original recruits in his company, Watkins was one of only seven to survive every one of its battles, from Shiloh to Nashville. Twenty years later, with a house full of young rebels clustering around my knees and bumping about my elbows, he wrote this remarkable account "a memoir of a humble soldier fighting in the American Civil War, replete with tales of the common foot soldiers, commanders, Yankee enemies, victories, defeats, and the South's ultimate surrender on April 26, 1865.

Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Touchstone; Reprint edition (November 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0743255410

ISBN-13: 978-0743255417

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (91 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #93,659 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Confederacy #104 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Civil War #937 in Books > History > Military > United States

Customer Reviews

Sam Watkins did not intend to write a detailed history of the war, but rather to write of his personal experiences as a private soldier. And what experiences he had! As you read this book you wonder how he ever came out of the war alive - most of his friends and comrades did not. This is one of the most humorous, and one of the saddest, books I have ever read: the political humorist Will Rogers would be jealous. At times Watkins' stories had me convulsing with laughter, at other times near to tears. He tells of how, caught behind enemy lines, he figured out a way to get the Federal password/countersign: simply demand it of a Federal officer (they were stupider than the privates).

Once he had that, he could roam around at will behind Federal lines for the rest of that day. He tells of how he and a friend were sitting on a log sharing a meal from the same plate when a someone yelled for him to "look out". In turning his head he was just missed by a solid shot. His friend, not so lucky, had all but his face swept away by the cannon ball - his brains fell into the plate from which they had been eating. Watkins also tells of the demise of a friend's pet rooster named "Fed" and the "election speeches" of two friends for the rank of corporal. Tears of laughter will run down your face as you read these.....This is a wonderful book by a heroic man. I recommend it without reservation.

Twenty years after participating in the war that reshaped American history forever, Sam Watkins sat down to write his memoirs, without benefit of journal or notes. He commenced his tale with a short, folksy parable of the cause of the war, as Southerners saw it. He then quickly launched into telling the tale as he viewed it - not from the heights of a general officer, but from the mud and dust covered ground-eye view of a common "webfoot" infantry soldier. In doing so, he created what is perhaps the best, most readable, and most compelling account of a Civil War infantry man that has ever seen print. Watkins told his tale in an easy, conversational style. The book is not written as a single narrative, but as a collection of tales and memories, just as he might have told them to friends and family around his hearth. His antidotal style put side by side humorous tales and the horrors of war that he observed, showing how casual a thing gruesome death became to a soldier. He wrote with great feeling, telling the reader when recalling a particular incident left him overwhelmed with emotion still after twenty years, and constantly referencing his religious faith that he would someday see all of his fallen comrades again in a better world. He hid nothing of himself, and that candid emotion sets his book apart, and gives it its greatness. This book is not a history, per say. Watkins constantly reminded his readers of this. It is a collection of impressions of what it was like to be one of the little men doing the shooting and killing - the men who history mostly overlooks. "Co Aytch" fills in the yawning gaps of how war is really fought and experienced that you will never find in any general's memoirs. This book is essential for a full understanding of the Civil War, and it is a pleasure and a joy to read. I highly recommend it. Theo Logos

This is the perfect civil war book and will satisfy the greenest novice or the most accomplished historian. Watkins writes brilliantly, naturally and in colloquial tones that have scarcely aged in the 130 years since he penned this memoir. It's exactly as if this marvelously likeable and funny soldier is sitting in your rocking chair, personally spinning yarns about his civil war experiences. It's that

immediate and that real, as if you are accompanying him on every train, bivouac or battlefield. Watkins becomes part of you as you read on, like a treasured friend or talisman. It doesn't matter what side of the conflict you're on, whether you're a confirmed Yankee or passionate Rebel, it's simply impossible not to adore Watkins and his deft touches with the pen. He describes the terror of going into battle, the strange exhilaration of the battles aftermath and the realization you are still alive. His best moments are describing a visit to a field hospital where he sees his best friends intestines opened up in a gaping wound, with only minutes to live. His pathos and deep sentiment are prevalent throughout the book. Buy this book *now,* don't wait another moment. It's a book you will read and re-read throughout life, a deserved and enduring classic. Whether you care little or nothing about the American civil war, it matters little. This is a little masterpiece, pure and simple.

As the great author Bell Irvin Wiley put it, "No memoir by a Rebel participant is richer in detail than this engaging story..." There are plenty of Civil War memoirs available to us Civil War buffs today but those written by Confederate privates are few and far between. As another reviewer already stated, many memoirs that have survived are those by Union officers. This is simply the best Civil War memoir ever written in my opinion. It is brutally honest, tragic, & sometimes humorous, & is filled with rich details of the everyday life of the Confederate soldier: hard marches that never seemed to end, picket duty, the bloody battles he experienced as a private in the 1st Tenn. Regt. of the (Confederate) Army of Tennessee, etc. The combat descriptions are vivid & shocking: the desperate hand-to-hand combat in the trenches around Atlanta -"We were killing them by scores...", the bloodbath at Shiloh, the Confederate disaster at Nashville, etc. I'll never forget his descriptions of the "Dead Angle" at Kennasaw Mountain where Union regiment after regiment hurled themselves at the Confederate lines -"I am satisfied that on this memorable day, every man in our regiment killed from twenty to one hundred each". For anyone who wants to know what it was like to fight in the Civil War, this book is an absolute must-have!

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