



The Cavaliers of the Confederacy: The Lives and Careers of JEB Stuart and Nathan Bedford Forrest

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures of Forrest, Stuart, and important people, places, and events in their lives.

*Includes Bibliographies on each man for further reading.

Despite the fact that the Civil War was fought nearly 150 years ago, it remains a polarizing topic for the country to this day. While the Lost Cause celebrates the chivalry and virtue of men like Robert E. Lee, other Southerners celebrate the swagger, courage, and toughness of others.

No two men represent the dichotomy more than the Confederacy's two greatest cavalry leaders, JEB Stuart and Nathan Bedford Forrest. Indeed, just about the only thing the two men had in common was successful but controversial Civil War careers, Stuart in the East and Forrest in the West.

Alongside Lee, no one epitomized the chivalry and heroism celebrated by the Lost Cause more than JEB Stuart (1833-1864), the most famous cavalry officer of the Civil War. Stuart was equal parts great and grandiose, leading the cavalry for the Confederacy in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia until his death at the Battle of Yellow Tavern in May 1864. Stuart was a throwback to the past, colorfully dressing with capes, sashes, and an ostrich plumed hat, while sporting cologne and a heavy beard. But he was also brilliant in conducting reconnaissance, and he proved capable of leading both cavalry and infantry at battles like Chancellorsville. As the eyes and ears of Robert E. Lee's army, none were better, despite the fact that he was only in his late 20s and early 30s during the Civil War, far younger than most men of senior rank.

However, Stuart's role at Gettysburg was far more controversial. Given great discretion in his cavalry operations before the battle, Stuart's cavalry was too far removed from the Army of Northern Virginia to warn Lee of the Army of the Potomac's movements. Lee's army inadvertently stumbled into the Union army at Gettysburg, walking blindly into what became the largest battle of the war. Stuart has been heavily criticized ever since.

When the war broke out, Nathan Bedford Forrest enlisted in the army and was instructed to raise a battalion of cavalry. A self-made man with no formal military training, Forrest spent the entire war fighting in the Western theater, becoming the only individual in the war to rise from the rank of Private to Lieutenant General. By the end of the war, Forrest was known throughout the South as the "Wizard of the Saddle," and anecdotes of his prowess in battle were legendary. In addition to being injured multiple times in battle, Forrest has been credited with having killed 30 Union soldiers in combat and having 29 horses shot out from under him.

But Forrest was also at the head of Confederate troops accused of massacring a Union garrison comprised mostly of black soldiers at Fort Pillow, and he was also a prominent slave trader, an overt racist, and likely a leader of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War. When he died in 1877, in part due to various war wounds, he was the nation's most notorious unreconstructed rebel. John E. Stanchack, an editor of the *Civil War Times Illustrated*, aptly noted in 1993, "Everything...about [Forrest] is bent to fit some political or intellectual agenda." Ashdown and Caudill, authors of *The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest*, write that the story of Forrest "embraces violence, race, realism, sectionalism, politics, reconciliation, and repentance."

The Cavaliers of the Confederacy addresses the controversies and battles that made these two leaders famous and infamous. Along with pictures of the two generals and other important people, places and events in their lives, you will learn about the Confederacy's greatest cavaliers like you never have before, in no time at all.

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Dennis Mock:

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