



Intimate Strategies of the Civil War: Military Commanders and Their Wives

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From Robert E. and Mary Lee to Ulysses S. and Julia Grant, *Intimate Strategies of the Civil War* examines the marriages of twelve prominent military commanders, highlighting the impact wives had on their famous husbands' careers.

Carol K. Bleser and Lesley J. Gordon assemble an impressive array of leading scholars to explore the marriages of six Confederate and six Union commanders. Contributors reveal that, for many of these men, the matrimonial bond was the most important relationship in their lives, one that shaped (and was shaped by) their military experience. In some cases, the commanders' spouses proved relentless and skillful promoters of their husbands' careers. Jessie Frémont drew on all of her connections as the daughter of former Senator Thomas Hart Benton to aid her modestly talented husband John. Others bolstered their military spouses in less direct ways. For example, Ulysses S. Grant's relationship with Julia (a Southerner and former slave owner herself) kept him anchored in stormy times. Here, too, are tense and tempestuous pairings, such as William Tecumseh Sherman and his wife Ellen--his foster sister before becoming his wife--and Jefferson Davis's fascinatingly complex bond with Varina, further complicated by the hostile rumors about the two in Richmond society. Throughout, these historians paint remarkably intimate portraits of their subjects. Readers will see these famed men in a way that they perhaps never considered: not merely as famous leaders, but as lovers, husbands and fathers.

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