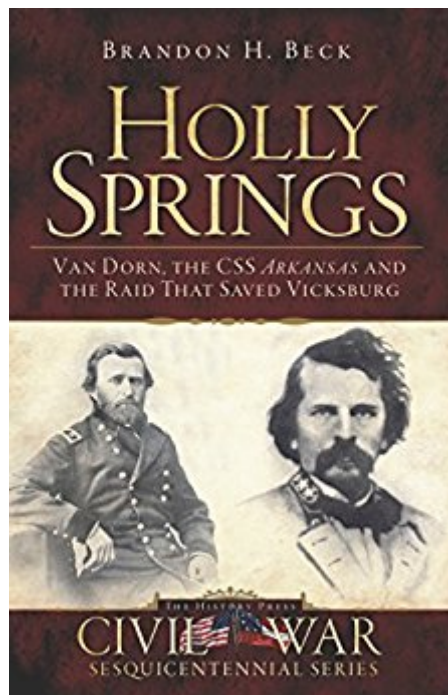




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Holly Springs: Van Dorn, The CSS Arkansas And The Raid That Saved Vicksburg (Civil War Series)



Synopsis

Midway between Memphis and New Orleans along the Mississippi River, Vicksburg was essential to both Confederate and Union campaigns. With both sides bent on claiming the city, Vicksburg, and the fate of the nation, lay in the balance. General Ulysses S. Grant began his campaign on the city in November 1862, but he was forced to abandon the operation in December when the fiery General Earl Van Dorn made a daring raid on Grant's main supply depot at Holly Springs, Mississippi. With the help of the CSS Arkansas, Van Dorn's single day raid on Grant's supply base saved Vicksburg from Grant's forces for an entire year. Historian Brandon H. Beck recounts the tactics, leaders, and legends involved in this exciting, if overlooked, chapter of Civil War history.

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Customer Reviews

A wonderful background story to the Vicksburg Campaign. Because of this raid, Vicksburg was able to stand an additional six months.

I learned a lot that I didn't know about the 1st Miss Cav. that my great grandad was in during the war.

Very good book series

Brandon Beck's "Holly Springs: Van Dorn, the CSS Arkansas and the Raid That Saved Vicksburg" is a short account of the roles played in the defense of Vicksburg by the Confederate ironclad CSS ARKANSAS and Major General Earl Van Dorn's cavalry raid on Grant's supply base at Holly Springs, Mississippi. The combination of these actions thwarted the second campaign against Vicksburg. The U.S. Navy considered the peril posed by CSS ARKANSAS as serious, but in fact her career as a warship lasted less than a month. The vessel's operations were handicapped by such poor engines that she destroyed no Union vessels before being blown up by her own crew. CSS ARKANSAS was more effective as a threat than a reality. The colorful Earl Van Dorn, with his reputation tarnished by defeats at Pea Ridge and Corinth and recurrent charges of drunkenness and debauchery, accepted a descent from corps command to lead the cavalry raid against the Union depot at Holly Springs. Van Dorn found his niche as a cavalry raider. His three small brigades, about 3,500 men, rode 500 miles in two weeks, surprised and routed the defenders of Holly Springs, captured and paroled 1,500 Federal troops, plundered warehouses, cut telegraph lines, and tore up vital railroad tracks. After putting the torch to those supplies they could not carry off, the Confederates withdrew to their own lines with impunity. In one day at Holly Springs, Van Dorn's force destroyed \$1,500,000 worth of supplies (\$66,000,000 in today's dollars) and burned many buildings, including a new 2,000-bed hospital (unoccupied). The Confederate success at Holly Springs, followed quickly by Sherman's repulse at Chickasaw Bayou, forced Grant to retire to southwestern Tennessee. His next campaign against Vicksburg would not rely upon vulnerable supply depots. What he could not carry with him, he took from the local inhabitants. And only eight months later, Vicksburg fell. Beck's book, at only 99 pages of text, is like an extended journal article. It is not comprehensive, but brief and well-written. On the subject of CSS ARKANSAS, I recommend "Iron Afloat: Story of the Confederate Armourclads" by William Still. The definitive look at Earl Van Dorn remains Robert Hartje's "Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General." It includes a thorough chapter on the Holly Springs expedition.

The Confederacy was a new country fighting for its survival against a ruthless invader. First, there is the story about how Vicksburg was able to keep the Mississippi River from becoming a highway for

the invaders for over a year. Second, there is the story of how, against all odds, the Southerners were able to put together an ironclad ship and use it to sink and disable several Union ships. This gave the South hope when hope was sorely needed. Third, here is the story of Van Dorn. He had made serious mistakes, but he redeemed his reputation with his raid on the Union storage depot at Holly Springs. Grant and his invading army were made to look weak and unprepared. And more time was bought that the South needed to prepare defenses. If Lincoln had only been a diplomat and negotiated a peaceful end to slavery and a peaceful separation with the new country to his south, hundreds of thousands of lives could have been saved. May God forgive him.

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