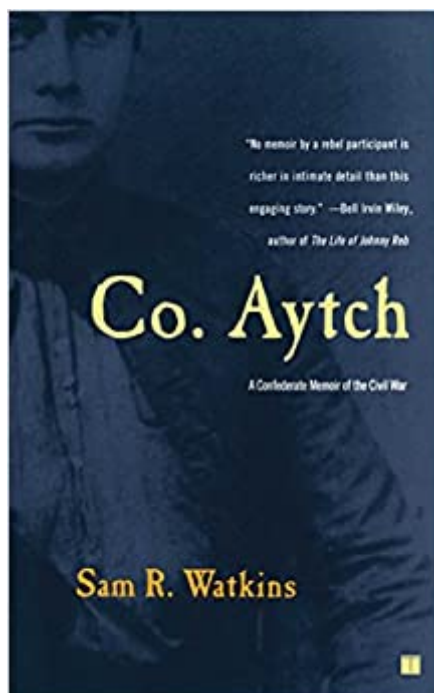


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Co. Aytch: A Confederate Memoir Of The Civil War



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

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Customer Reviews

Bell Irvin Wiley Author of The Life of Johnny Reb No memoir by a rebel participant is richer in intimate detail than this engaging story. Margaret Mitchell From Gone With the Wind Letters A better book there never was.

Samuel "Sam" Rush Watkins (June 26, 1839 - July 20, 1901) was a noted Confederate soldier during the American Civil War. He is known today for his memoir Company Aytch: Or, a Side Show

of the Big Show, often heralded as one of the best primary sources about the common soldier's Civil War experience. Watkins was born on June 26, 1839 near Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee, and received his formal education at Jackson College in Columbia. He originally enlisted in the "Bigby Greys" of the 3rd Tennessee Infantry in Mount Pleasant, Tennessee, but transferred shortly thereafter to the First Tennessee Infantry, Company H (the "Maury Greys") in the spring of 1861. Watkins faithfully served throughout the duration of the War, participating in the battles of Shiloh, Corinth, Perryville, Murfreesboro (Stones River), Shelbyville, Chattanooga, Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, Resaca, Adairsville, Kennesaw Mountain (Cheatham Hill), New Hope Church, Zion Church, Kingston, Cassville, Atlanta, Jonesboro, Franklin, and Nashville. Of the 120 men who enlisted in "Company H" in 1861, Sam Watkins was one of only seven alive when General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee surrendered to General William Tecumseh Sherman in North Carolina April, 1865. Of the 1,200 men who fought in the First Tennessee, only 65 were left to be paroled on that day. Soon after the war ended, Watkins began writing his memoir, entitled "Company Aytch: Or, a Side Show of the Big Show". It was originally serialized in the Columbia, Tennessee Herald newspaper. "Co. Aytch" was published in a first edition of 2,000 in book form in 1882. "Co. Aytch" is heralded by many historians as one of the best war memoirs written by a common soldier of the field. Sam's writing style is quite engaging and skillfully captures the pride, misery, glory, and horror experienced by the common foot soldier. Watkins is often featured and quoted in Ken Burns' 1990 documentary titled The Civil War. Watkins died on July 20, 1901 at the age of sixty-two in his home in the Ashwood Community. He was buried with full military honors by the members of the Leonidas Polk Bivouac, United Confederate Veterans, in the cemetery of the Zion Presbyterian Church near Mount Pleasant, Tennessee.

I have read many books on the Civil War and its era. It is a fundamentally fascinating saga. Sam Watkins, protagonist of Company Aytch, is a character that stands out in my memory. As a Confederate infantryman in the often-overlooked Western theater of the war, he tells of matters and beliefs you will rarely read about elsewhere, in a manner that is both humble and highly perceptive. His is the tale of everyman; how he and his contemporaries persevered in the face of carnage, terror, heartache, tedium, shortages, and hopelessness is difficult to imagine.

I don't think I've read a book that is as moving about the horror's of war since Phil Caputo's " Rumour of War " about his Vietnam experiences. This book is at times funny, and at times horendous. God must have been sparing Mr Watkin's life to tell his story. A must read for Civil War

history readers.

This particular publication of this book is terrible. It is cheaply done. The type is smaller than a pocket bible. I don't wear glasses but I had to acquire some magnifying glasses just to keep track of the skinny, tightly packed sentences and tiny words. Order another version published by someone else. That said, the content of the book is phenomenal and a must-read for any history buff, particularly those interested in the Civil War. Watkins is a talented and entertaining writer. He captures the blood and gore of the Civil War, in which he participated, from his lowly fighting man's viewpoint. He wrote this book 20 years AFTER the war and continually buys himself grace from strict historical scrutiny by re-stating this. I cannot help but feel some degree of skepticism, however, in that he describes participating in a large number of very prominent battles and he recounts quite a collection of encounters with very famous leaders of the Confederacy. For a lowly private, he sure gets around. Whether it is all honest and not somewhat stretched in an effort to gain public interest and the serialized publication he sold, does not negate the poignant portrait he paints of this terribly brutal part of American history. The death counts of the Civil War battles make modern conflicts seem small in that regard. Get a better publication and read it.

I've read several diaries by Civil War Veterans. This is my favorite. Sam Watkins was a Confederate private in a lot of major battles. One of few to live thru so many, from the start of the war to the finish. He is often quoted in Ken Burns' "Civil War" series. He keeps the reader interested by his many tales of things the troops did to occupy time, as well as telling his personal picture of the battles in which he fought. He talks of desertion and of morale of soldiers throughout the war. I also learned a lot comparing his own experiences to those of my own; having been a veteran of the Viet Nam war. For instance men were shot & killed by firing squads then for what since has become known as "Shell Shock" or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder! He wrote this book several years after the end of the war; but still remembers a lot of detail, hardships, fun times, and so on. I would recommend this book to anyone. I'll probably reread it myself sometime.

What a great insight into the life of a Confederate hero. I had read this book as a young teenager and was hoping that I would find another copy of it 35 years later. What a great surprise to find it in the "store" for just .99 cents.

Mr. Watkins tells a humble and epic story. A confederate private shares his unique perspective.

Reveals the grim realities of a glorious cause going from bad to worse and back again. It is truly amazing he survived four years of warfare. Most often death was easier than survival. General Bragg routinely court martialed his troops with a firing squad for deserters. Further punishments like barreling, whippings and deprivations were routine. It got better under General Johnston and worse again under General Hood. The soldiers alternatively cursed and praised the war, its' cause and the Generals. Yet like in all wars, the men fought for each other. So many soldiers met their Maker, whereby Watkins extolls their virtues and praises. Eloquently written and graphically descriptive. Sam's survival is a testimonial to God's protection. Written in the 1880's. READ the book and you will find a friend from the ages.

It was an easy read and yes it was enjoyable. The thing that I did not like was how apologetic the author was in almost EVERY chapter about being "only that of a private." After a few times I found myself, when he would start this, just skipping the paragraph. Short of that it was quite informative with a few instances for a chuckle. Enjoy!

I think Sam's a whole lot brighter than he let on. He had the eye and the brain to record and report on the Civil War better than any private soldier up until Lester Atwell in Private about World War II. His way of telling his story was unique, respectful of fallen comrades, callus about death, and made good sense. By the end of the book you had to admire the guy for his durability and dedication even if it was for the wrong cause - not that he didn't bluster about Southern generals, statesmen, and the war itself along the way.

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