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***Thunder on the River: The Civil War in Northeast Florida* by Daniel  
L. Schafer**

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he describes, the military equipment he visualizes, the industry and machinery in his surroundings, and the clothing styles and food preparation that he recalls. Additionally, she analyzes the traditions and the way of life that Sitiki describes in his firsthand account, especially around the St. Augustine area.

This book is highly recommended for anyone who dares venture into the experiences of a young child captured and forced into the barbaric world of human bondage. This recounting of his “adventures” spans nearly one hundred eventful years across two continents. First-person slave accounts are extremely rare, especially narratives from Florida, thus making *Odyssey* historically relevant as well. The book is also recommended for individuals who want to learn more details about the early setting, history, customs, and architecture of St. Augustine, “America’s Oldest City.”

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*Thunder on the River: The Civil War in Northeast Florida.* By Daniel L. Schafer (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010. xi, 348 pp. Preface, maps, photographs, illustrations, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95, cloth)

Readers of Florida history over the past generation or so have become familiar with the scholarly inquiries of the University of North Florida historian Daniel L. Schafer. Although his studies have extended to a variety of times and subjects within the general context of northeast Florida’s experience, many would point to his innovative – not to say pathfinding – works on race relations, slavery, and African American heritage as holding special interest. Schafer’s commitments to these subjects and to creative, in-depth research perhaps found their greatest expressions in his *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner* (2003).

Two decades prior to the publication of Anna Kingsley’s biography, however, Schafer teamed with the local historian Richard A. Martin to hone the Civil War-era portion of a two-volume Martin manuscript on Jacksonville’s past. Their collaboration resulted in the publication of *Jacksonville’s Ordeal by Fire: A Civil War History* (1984). That volume ranked upon its release as Florida’s most ambitious examination of the Civil War experience within a local community or region. Little wonder that its print run of five thousand sold out within five days.

Now, Schafer has revisited that earlier effort in order to present its story “with a more scholarly focus” (ix). Had he done nothing more than add an index to a new printing of the difficult-to-obtain older volume, his undertaking would have been applauded. Fortunately for Florida and Civil War history enthusiasts, he has done much more.

First, a word of caution. The book's subtitle suggests that it covers the Civil War in all of northeast Florida, but that is not quite the case. As with its predecessor volume, the narrative focuses primarily on Jacksonville, although care has been taken to offer supplementary material addressing the various military initiatives and activities directed from or to that war-beleaguered community. The reader seeking detail on Fernandina, St. Augustine, Palatka, Lake City, and other locales outside Jacksonville must continue to look to other sources.

Fans of Schafer's work will not be disappointed in how he addresses the material he does include. His signature in-depth research shines through with utilization of rarely cited and previously unknown sources. He states that he has endeavored "to balance use of Confederate and Union sources" (x), although the reader is left to resolve whether such a balance of sources actually furthers the author's scholarly purpose.

The book's impact comes most profoundly in its vivid exposure of the myriad complexities inherent in one community's Civil War travails as well as the pitfalls inherent in any historian's failure to recognize change over time or in otherwise oversimplifying history's stamp. As would be expected, Schafer's exploration of those complexities tellingly involves black people, whether slaves, soldiers, or refugees. He has added a helpful final chapter entitled "A Troubled Transition to Freedom: Life for Jacksonville's Black Residents during the Federal Occupation," which concisely addresses the subject while sprinkling related material through his narrative. Similarly, a penultimate chapter entitled "'The Storm Has Ceased': Life for Jacksonville's White Residents during the Federal Occupation" points toward the signal importance of social history as a necessary component of any wartime study.

Tampa Bay-area readers will find little of direct relevance to their region's Civil War experience. Schafer does incorporate references to issues involving supply of central and south Florida beef to Confederate armies. He points out that, while beef supply operations factored into Union decision making, they often took a subordinate place to other factors or, put another way, offered an excuse for a predisposition to act. This particularly becomes important for the author when analyzing Brigadier General Truman Seymour's decision to advance toward the Suwannee River in February 1864, an initiative that resulted in disastrous defeat at the Battle of Olustee. Included also is helpful context on the spring 1864 Seventy-fifth Ohio Mounted Infantry expedition to the headwaters of the St. Johns and Kissimmee rivers.

*Thunder on the River* by no means constitutes the final word on the Civil War in Jacksonville or northeast Florida. It does immediately emerge, however, as the starting point for all serious inquiries on those subjects. It comes as a welcome addition to Florida's Civil War historiography and stands as a distinct credit to its respected author.

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