



The Journals of Josiah Gorgas, 1857-1878

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Josiah Gorgas was best known as the highly regarded Chief of Confederate Ordnance. Born in 1818, he attended West Point, served in the U.S. Army, and later, after marrying Amelia Gayle, daughter of a former Alabama governor, joined the Confederacy. After the Civil War he served as president of The University of Alabama until ill health forced him to resign. His journals, maintained between 1857 and 1878, reflect the family's economic successes and failures, detail the course of the South through the Civil War, and describe the ordeal of Reconstruction. Few journals cover such a sweep of history. An added dimension is the view of Victorian family life as Gorgas explored his feelings about aspects of parental responsibility and transmission of values to children--a rarely documented account from the male perspective. His son, called Willie in the journals, was William Crawford Gorgas (1854-1920), who was noted for his fight to control yellow fever and who became surgeon general of the United States.

In his foreword to the volume, Frank E. Vandiver states: "Wiggins has done much more than present a well-edited version of Gorgas's diaries and journals; she has interpreted them in full Gorgas family context and in perspective of the times they cover. . . . Wiggins informs with the sort of editorial notes expected of a careful scholar, but she enlightens with wide knowledge of American and southern history. . . . Josiah Gorgas [was] an unusually observant, passionate man, a 'galvanized Rebel' who deserves rank among the true geniuses of American logistics."

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