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Gordon B. McKinney. *Zeb Vance: North Carolina's Civil War Governor and Gilded Age Political Leader.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. viii + 477 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2865-6.

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Zeb Vance: North Carolina's Greatest Nineteenth-Century Governor

Zeb Vance (1830-94) was North Carolina's Civil War governor and one of the state's leading political figures throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. He hailed from the western mountainous region of the state and always identified with that region and its people. Educated at the University of North Carolina, Vance was taken under the wing of the university's president, David Swain, who served as his lifelong mentor. From there Vance went on to become an attorney, then state legislator, then U.S. Congressman. He was a Whig who later associated with the Know Nothing Party, and worked with the Constitutional Unionists to keep North Carolina out of the Civil War. Like many, though, he felt betrayed by the firing on Fort Sumter and only reluctantly joined the Confederacy. He served in the Confederate Army with the famous 26th North Carolina Regiment. He left the army to win the governorship of the state at age thirty-two in what the author calls the first true landslide in North Carolina history. Vance turned the state around in his first nine months in office and introduced some rather unique policies such as direct state aid to supply North Carolina troops; he also organized the state's blockade runners himself rather than wait for the slow-moving Confederate government in Richmond. After the war he went on to emerge from a forty-seven day stay in a Union prison to rise to U.S. Senator and was honored after his death by President Grover Cleveland and the British ambassador as well as monuments, a statue in the U.S. Capitol, schools named for him, and more.

Since 1965, Glenn Tucker's classic work, *Zeb Vance: Champion of Personal Freedom*, has been the standard work on Vance. Gordon B. McKinney has taken scholarship on Vance to the next level by incorporating new studies on Vance as well as new scholarship on the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, race, and gender. For instance, the author takes to task Frank Owsley's 1925 work, *State's Rights in the Confederacy*, which advocated that Vance and other governors, like Georgia's Joseph Brown, destroyed the Confederacy with their states' rights obsession. Building on the views of George C. Rable and Joe A. Mobley, McKinney shows that Vance was a strong Confederate nationalist who consistently fought for Confederate independence. Vance simply opposed many of the specific policies of Jefferson Davis and their negative impact on the people of North Carolina.

The problem, he maintains, is that the Lost Cause cult, with its emphasis on Confederate unity, has undervalued the creative contribution of Vance because of its efforts to promote Confederate unity. Thus, men like Vance have been unfairly criticized.

McKinney is obviously impressed by Vance and his achievements, noting that he was a great speaker, a great leader and a man of courage, who was honest and sincere, who spoke out for the persecuted Jewish community, and who did much to promote education for all races and genders in the post Civil War years. Yet he sees Vance's weak points as well, such as his mediocre performance as a lawyer and military leader, his advocacy of the old spoils system even after it had outlived its usefulness, and most damning for the author, Vance's consistent belief that African Americans were morally and intellectually inferior to whites.

In conclusion, Gordon B. McKinney's new book on Zeb Vance is critical, balanced, very well written and researched, and will no doubt become a standard classic for years to come.

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