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Book Review: Yankee Blitzkrieg Wilson's Raid Through Alabama and Georgia, by James Jones

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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YANKEE BLITZKRIEG Wilson's Raid Through Alabama and Georgia, by James Jones (The University of Georgia Press, \$12).

There are many reasons why this is a MUST book for anyone interested in Southern, Alabama, Civil War or military history. It should be acquired by all libraries, both public and institutional.

The Civil War was almost over when young General James Wilson crossed the Tennessee River with almost 14,000 cavalymen armed with repeating rifles, which gave them almost the firepower of infantry. Wilson's "raid" in just two months, twice defeated the cavalry genius Forrest, captured Selma, Montgomery, Columbus and Macon and destroyed the military potential of the deep South to continue the war. In addition, Wilson's men captured Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the Confederacy.

Military historians still study Wilson's tactics, for he believed in the most rapid movement of troops possible, and his raid has been accurately described as a blitzkrieg, using horses instead of machinery for mobility.

"Yankee Blitzkrieg" is the only work to focus solely on Wilson's raid. Well documented, it describes the feeble attempts of Confederates to protect such invaluable cities as Selma, the arsenal of the deep South. Jones, professor of history at Florida State University, provides full page maps of Selma and Columbus which enable the reader to keep abreast of Wilson's movements.

Wilson's raid is also still fraught with controversy in history. Many historians blame Wilson for wholesale depredations, yet Jones reminds us that "charges of brutality and unnecessary destruction against Wilson and his men should be shared with the governors of Alabama and Georgia and Confederate military leaders in the region." In contrast to Sherman on his "march," Wilson destroyed little of non-military value.

