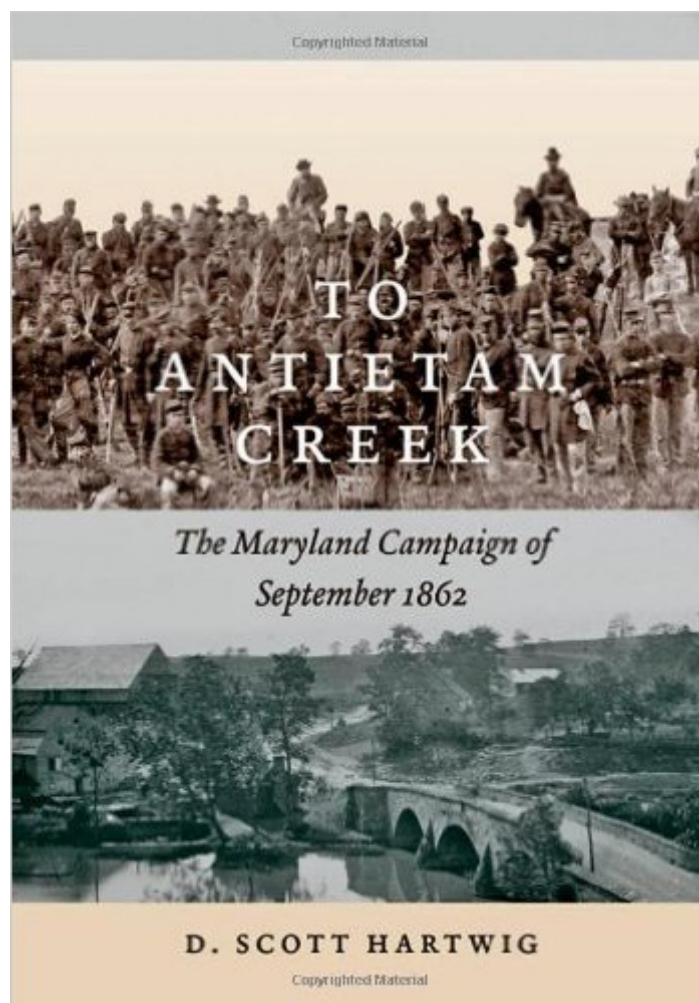


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To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign Of September 1862



Synopsis

In early September 1862 thousands of Union soldiers huddled within the defenses of Washington, disorganized and discouraged from their recent defeat at Second Manassas. Confederate General Robert E. Lee then led his tough and confident Army of Northern Virginia into Maryland in a bold gamble to force a showdown that would win Southern independence. The future of the Union hung in the balance. The campaign that followed lasted only two weeks, but it changed the course of the Civil War. For the sesquicentennial of Antietam and the Maryland Campaign, D. Scott Hartwig delivers a riveting first installment of a two-volume study of the campaign and climactic battle. It takes the reader from the controversial return of George B. McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac through the Confederate invasion, the siege and capture of Harpers Ferry, the day-long Battle of South Mountain, and, ultimately, to the eve of the great and terrible Battle of Antietam.

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Customer Reviews

I knew from day one that I wanted to write a review of this book. I probably have not said anything different from many other reviewers. But I think my experience as a long time Antietam Battlefield volunteer and guide who has walked the battlefields of the Maryland Campaign, give me a different and useful perspective from the usual rank and file book reviewer. My battlefield tours wont fundamentally change as a result of reading TAC. Like this book, I attempt to interpret the Maryland Campaign and Battle of Antietam objectively and factually. But the book's completeness, numerous

insights, deep analysis and great stories will add a new richness and depth to my tours and programs that I would not otherwise have had I not read the book. Mine was not a cursory skimming of the book but a thorough note-taking margin scribbling underlining and highlighting expedition. Over the past three months, I have read it thoroughly, looked at virtually all the footnotes and scoured the bibliography. I can now say unequivocally that this is the best book I have ever read on the Maryland Campaign. And I have read many books. My small 400-volume library contains primarily studies of the Maryland campaign and the leaders and soldiers who fought there. What Scott Hartwig has done is to put it all together. He incorporates first person, primary source material not typically seen. He acknowledges and uses the foundational work of Carmen. He refers to events in the Antietam Studies at the National Archives that I have not seen elsewhere. He acknowledges and integrates the scholarship of Harsh, Rafuse and Sears in a fair and meaningful way. He disabuses many myths. The result is a balanced, readable, evocative, and thoroughly enjoyable work.

The sequiscentenial of the Civil War had been pretty quiet for most of the year. It had even slipped up on me. I didn't realize it was upon us until last year when I read a review of a book in the NY Times book review and it mentioned it. But it seemed to be passing by pretty quietly, that is until the anniversary of the Antietam Campaign opened a floodgate of books upon us. Almost all these books comment in their introduction on the paucity of books on the subject considering it's importance. No more though. The beauty of many of these books is that they complement each other. Leading the way was the publisher SAVAS BEATIE, who this year produced Brian Jordan's work on the battles of South Mountain "Unholy Sabbath". Then there was the latest entry in Brian Gottfried's Atlas series "The Maps of Antietam", followed by the second volume of Ezra Carman's indispensable book on the Maryland Campaign. From other publishers came Richard Slotkin's "Long Road to Antietam" that focuses on the politics and strategy of the campaign. And last but not least the subject of this review Scott Herwig's "To Antietam Creek" which promises to be the last word on this campaign. This is a massive 800 page book that is easily the biggest book on my Civil War bookshelf, and this is only volume one! Chapter one starts off with a concise overview of the war in the East from the time McClellan took over as Union commander. The second chapter looks at the Army of Northern Virginia at the time the campaign begins. One of the advantages of a long book is being able to deal with things that are often ignored in most books, and Herwig takes advantage of that with the type of look at the Army that you rarely see in most books.

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