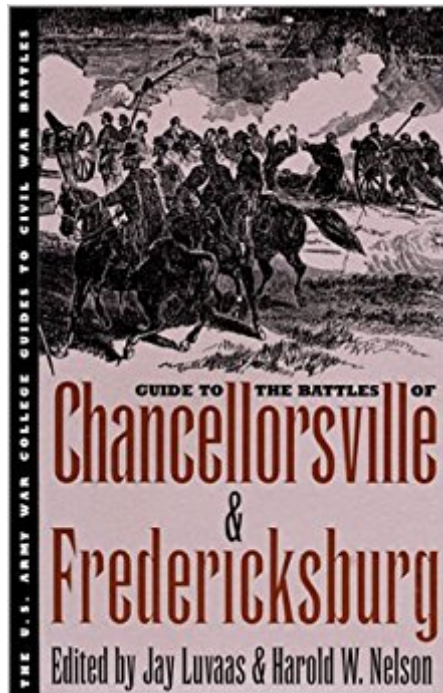




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Guide To The Battles Of Chancellorsville And Fredericksburg



Synopsis

The battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, 1862–63, were remarkable in several respects. Both revealed the problems of mounting a serious attack at night and provided the first examples of the now-familiar trench warfare. Fredericksburg featured street fighting and river crossings under fire. Chancellorsville was marked by Stonewall Jackson's death and the rare instance of mounted cavalry attacking infantry. In addition, the latter battle also demonstrated in striking fashion the profound influence of the commander on the battle. The Union committed more soldiers, supplies, money, and better equipment than did the Confederacy, and yet Lee won. Eyewitness accounts by battle participants make these guides an invaluable resource for travelers and nontravelers who want a greater understanding of five of the most devastating yet influential years in our nation's history. Explicit directions to points of interest and maps—illustrating the action and showing the detail of troop position, roads, rivers, elevations, and tree lines as they were 130 years ago—help bring the battles to life. In the field, these guides can be used to recreate each battle's setting and proportions, giving the reader a sense of the tension and fear each soldier must have felt as he faced his enemy.

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I live in Fredericksburg and it really makes it all feel more real.

Excellent book on the Battles of Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg. A must for anyone who lives in Spotsylvania County. The history that occurred on the land you call home is incredible and this book will help you to understand it better.

thanks

Two Confederate victories are profiled here--but the battles were very different. James Longstreet, at one point, noted the value of a Fredericksburg and the hollowness of the Chancellorsville triumph by Robert E. Lee. Why? The ratio of Confederate to Union casualties at Fredericksburg was 12,652:5,309 (Page 349), a clear and resounding victory for the South. Chancellorsville? 12,299 Confederate casualties versus 15,818 Union casualties. The problem? Confederate forces lost a larger percentage of their total number than did the Union. Some would say that this was a Pyrrhic victory (Longstreet among them). Anyhow, this is a volume in the Army War College series of guides to civil war battles. In this volume, two battles are explored--the horrific bloodletting of the Union Army at Fredericksburg and the apparently unlikely Confederate victory at Chancellorsville. The book notes that (Page x) "these battles represent a significant stage in the evolution of Civil War tactics." One of the features of these books is a depiction of where one ought to go to get a sense of the battlefield if one visits the actual site. I visited Gettysburg, for example, earlier this year and took in the first day's action for my first time. I wish that I had had the Army War College volume with me at that time (I bought it after the fact). Another feature is the use of the Official Records to get the views/perceptions of commanders on the field of battle itself. For instance, it is fascinating to compare the responses of different officers to Hooker's failure at Chancellorsville (e.g., pages 296-297). At Fredericksburg, take a look at Lee's evaluation of the battle after the fact (Pages 117-118). Also useful is the Order of Battle for the battles, where we see who commanded units at brigade level to corps level. And the casualty reports (already referred to) add an important piece of information. In sum, this is another good entry in the Army War College series on Civil War battles. If interested in visiting either or both of the battlefield sites, this would be a fine companion.

I have read and participated in the AWC staff rides of the battlefields and from that light these book can be instructive as they relate to events and field conditions. They are not for the casual reader or

tourist. It is essential that the reader be versed in both the theory and tactics of the time before visiting the site and that you are to read these books while standing on the actual grounds. These books supplement case studies at the AWC in tactical and strategic thinking. Observe the battleground as a military officer would and try to put yourself in the mind of the writer. What you will be reading are the after action reports written by the officers assigned to write them, of their viewings of events on the field. Beware sometimes these reports can be self serving so take that in mind. Reading the reports and standing on location will help to give you an insight into field situations and problems that the military officer must see, recognize and solve. One key point to remember is that of communication is not what it is today. The field of battle only existed as far as the individual officer could see. He generally knew nothing of events occurring several hundred yards away let alone a mile or so away in real time. All he knew was what was right in front of him. He never sees the big picture that today's communications can provide or seek instant clarification of orders. With this in mind and a knowledge of the methods of Civil War fighting these books are very instructive.

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