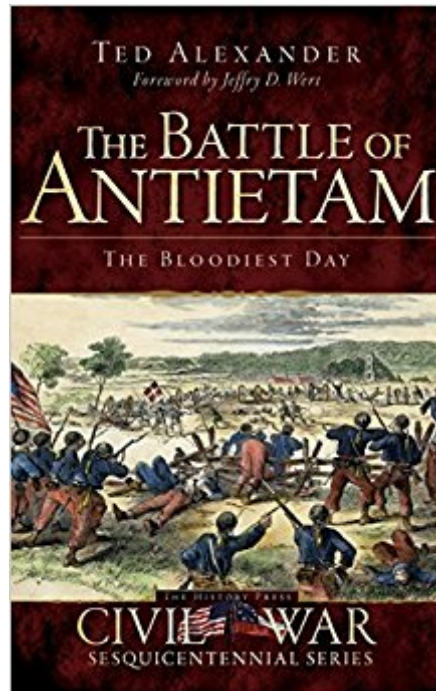




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The Battle Of Antietam: The Bloodiest Day



Synopsis

The heavy fog that shrouded Antietam Creek on the morning of September 17, 1862, was disturbed by the boom of Federal artillery fire. The carnage and chaos began in the East Woods and Cornfield and continued inexorably on as McClellan's and Lee's troops collided at the West Woods, Bloody Lane and Burnside Bridge. Though outnumbered, the Rebels still managed to hold their ground until nightfall. Chief historian of the Antietam National Battlefield, Ted Alexander renders a fresh and gripping portrayal of the battle, its aftermath, the effect on the civilians of Sharpsburg and the efforts to preserve the hallowed spot. Maps by master cartographer Steven Stanley add further depth to Alexander's account of the Battle of Antietam. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Ted Alexander is the chief historian at the Antietam National Battlefield, where he has worked for more than twenty-six years. He is the author, editor or contributor to ten books on the Civil War and other aspects of American history. Ted is also the author of more than two hundred articles and book reviews for publications such as the Civil War Times, Blue and Gray, North and South and the Washington Times. Ted has a BA in history from the University of Maryland, College Park, and an MA in history from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Ted is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam, where he served a tour and a half and was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat V. He is the founder and coordinator of the very popular Chambersburg Civil

War Seminars. Through these events, Ted has been instrumental in helping to raise more than \$150,000 for battlefield preservation. Currently, he is serving as a consultant for the upcoming HBO miniseries *To Appomattox*. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

It was a gift & my grandson loved it

No comment.

Great read.

Great

The subtitle of this book - "The Bloodiest Day" - refers to fact that on September 17, 1862 more American soldiers died in the Battle of Antietam than were killed on any other single day of battle in United States history. Indeed, the deaths at Antietam exceeded the combined number of deaths in combat of all other wars from the 19th Century (the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War, and all the Indian wars). The number of casualties (deaths and wounded) over the twelve hours of fighting was a staggering 23,000 -- one casualty every two seconds. Antietam (which in the Confederacy was known by the name Sharpsburg, the town where the battle was fought) also proved to be the turning point of the Civil War. The Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Antietam falls this coming September. In recognition of that fact, the History Press has issued this volume as part of its Civil War Sesquicentennial Series. It is written by Ted Alexander, who is the chief historian at the Antietam National Battlefield, where he has worked for more than twenty-six years. So I think one is safe in assuming that *THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM* is authoritative. The information in the book generally is consistent with what I have read elsewhere. Alexander adds a few new details and he defends the performance of several generals against conventional criticism. A considerable plus is that the book contains dozens of illustrations, photographs, maps, and schematic diagrams of different areas of the battle. But the narrative itself is not particularly distinguished or graceful. The book gets off to a slow and less than enthralling start; the tone is very matter-of-fact; there are some defects in organization; and the writing at times is awkward or cliché. Still, *THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM* is the best brief introduction to *The Bloodiest Day* that I know of. James McPherson's *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* is better written, but it deals more with Antietam in the overall context of the Civil War and contains only about thirty pages on

the battle itself. The two classic books on the battle - "Landscape Turned Red" by Stephen W. Sears, and "The Gleam of Bayonets" by James V. Murfin - are both over 400 pages. So there definitely is a place for Alexander's contribution to the literature.* * * * *A curiosity -- On the copyright page at the front of the book, there is the following disclaimer: "The information in this book is true and complete to the best of our knowledge. It is offered without guarantee on the part of the author or The History Press. The author and The History Press disclaim all liability in connection with the use of this book." Lord, save us all from the lawyers!

If you desire a short history of the Battle of Antietam, read this outstanding book. In less than 200 pages Ted Alexander paints a well composed and balanced story. You are offered enough depth of detail to give you some particulars of local area history, wartime personalities and tactics, but the brush stroke of the book is wide enough to present the big picture. The maps are clear and orderly. Photos and graphics are abundant and placed in appropriate sections of the book. I especially enjoyed the personal collection pictures near the end. His bibliography serves as jump off to more extended study of the Battle and is surprisingly comprehensive considering the size of the publication. Ted Alexander is a master author and tells a compelling story.

An excellent primer on the Battle of Antietam. Having just visited the site, I wanted to learn more about the bloodiest single day in US history. Alexander juggles the need for information and facts without overloading the reader very well. The driest part for me was the history of Sharpsburg and environs. Some may like to know when the town was founded, who lived where, etc but not so much for me. The best part are the maps. Really good visuals to help see the battle as it unfolded. Very good B&W period photos of the area capture the terrain and key points such as Burnside Bridge and Bloody Lane. The discussion on whether or not Union troops realistically could have pursued the Confederates is interesting as is the discussion of the medical care of the wounded, disposition of the dead. Appendix has the order of battle for both sides. An excellent start for those interested in this one day of battle but don't want to get bogged down in vast amounts of information.

Ted Alexander is the chief historian for the Antietam National Battlefield. In this role it would be expected that he would be able to write a clear and concise work on the battle. Overall he has succeeded. While by no means is this work going to supplant Stephen Sears massive work Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam that is not the goal of works from The History Press. For those looking for a good introduction to the battle this may be your best option. The book starts

out with a history of the Sharpsburg area and its surroundings. The town was originally founded in 1763. After losing a close vote to become county seat the area of Sharpsburg remained mostly rural farm land while the town of Hagerstown became more industrialized. On September 17, 1862 this farm land would see some of the most violent fighting our country has known. Mr. Alexander covers the major areas of fighting near Antietam Creek well: chapters cover the Cornfield and the East Woods, West Woods and the Dunker Church, Bloody Lane, and Burnside Bridge. Each are covered in good depth but not to a point where an unfamiliar reader is confused. While pointing out many of the "highs and lows" Alexander tends to stay away from the finger pointing and the blame game that often occurs in books. Union General George McClellan is spared the beating he is given by many historians for his slow reactions and General Edwin Sumner is spared the criticism often dealt his way in regards to his early morning actions at the West Woods. In his book Alexander does more than cover just the military aspects of the battle. As the subtitle to the book says this was America's bloodiest day. With over 23,000 total casualties both armies took a beating. An excellent chapter covers the aftermath of the battle including dealing with the dead, both human and animal, hospitals and the civilian aid given to the injured, the spread of disease to both military and civilians, and the huge amount of property damage caused. All was not doom and gloom however as Mr. Alexander points out the medical advances brought about by Dr. Jonathan Letterman. Many of these were first implemented at Antietam. The Confederate army, tired and defeated, retreat across the Potomac on the evening of September 18. McClellan rather clumsily sends a rather small grouping of soldiers after Lee. This leads to the Battle of Shepherdstown, where Union troops are defeated by a Confederate force led by Stonewall Jackson, thus sustaining another 363 casualties the majority suffered by the 118th Pennsylvania. With the fall of 1862 being a major Confederate disappointment, and General McClellan not following up Abraham Lincoln had seen enough and removed "Little Mac" from command. While having been relieved of command there can be little doubt that McClellan and the Union army achieved a great victory that September day. So great in fact that it paved the way for President Lincoln to unveil his Emancipation Proclamation. While the proclamation's value to slaves in seceded areas can be debated its longer term value to the Union cause can not be. The book wraps up nicely with a chapter covering post battle events such as the founding of the Antietam National Cemetery, the founding of the Antietam National Battlefield, soldier reunions, improvements to the battlefield, and more. The book is really helped along by the wonderful maps provided by Steven Stanley. There are dozens of b/w photos helping visually further the story. Also included are an index, bibliography, notes, and an order of battle. This is not a book for those with a good knowledge of the battle. I doubt you will find anything new here. For

those just coming to the battle, or like me have a bit of knowledge but want to know more, this is a book I can heartily recommend. It will help when you move on and read Sears, Harsh, or Carman.

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