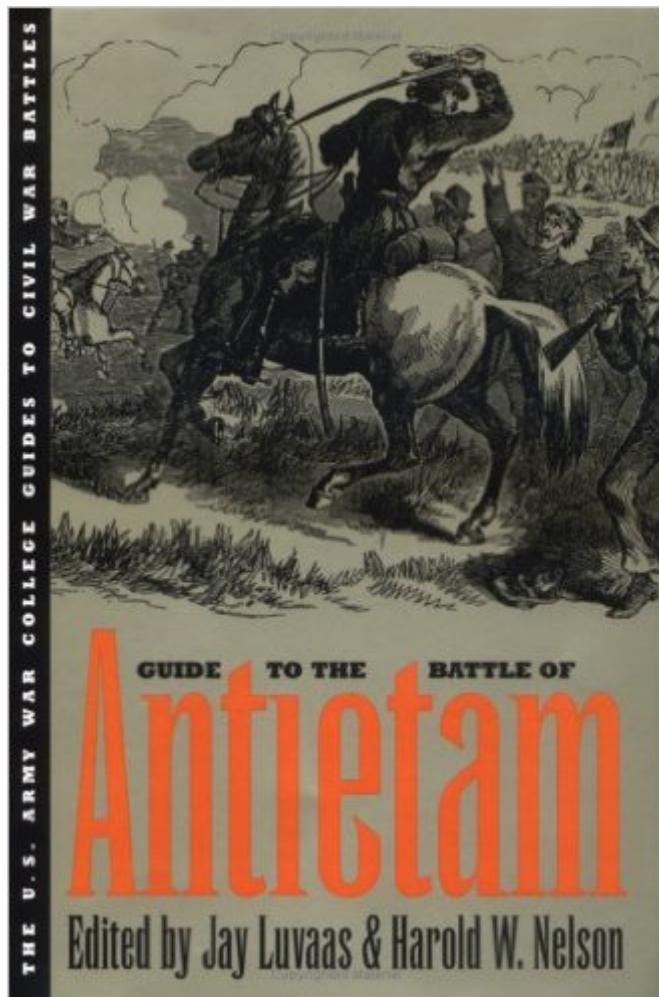


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Guide To The Battle Of Antietam



Synopsis

"America's bloodiest day"the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862left more dead American soldiers in its wake than any other 24-hour period in history. Antietam and the related battles of the Maryland Campaign that led up to the lethal confrontation did not result in decisive defeats for either side. But they did serve as a brutal warning to an out-gunned, out-commanded, and out-organized Union army. 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Antietam battlefield guide is the second of many Civil War guidebooks and continued setting the standard started in the Gettysburg guide. The book covers the bloodiest single day battle of the American Civil War and a Battlefield Park that has suffered very little from commercialization. In addition to Antietam, South Mountain and Harpers Ferry are included. This gives you a detailed understanding of the important battles leading up to Antietam. Antietam is a confusing battle; this is

not a battle history as such. My recommendation is to read Priest's book "Antietam" before visiting this field. This is one of a number of guidebooks on the battle and is an option to employing a guide or purchasing a park driving tour. The series format is directions to a point on the field, orientation, a general lesson on what happened in your view, followed by first person accounts of the action. These guides are designed using the general staff training concept of a Staff Ride. This is when a class is taken to a historic location, discuss what happened and see how the terrain influences the event. Staff Rides are designed to be intensive "on the ground" training coupled with physical observation in the hopes students will gain experience for later use. I am not saying this to frighten you away from this guide but to tell you this is not a walk about and look at the monuments type of guide. This guide will have several pages devoted to the action at this point. It may contain a critique of the local commander's actions with possible alternates. My experience is that reading the book prior to my visit works best. This allows me more time observing the field and less time reading the book. Of the tour options, a professional guide is usually the best but most expensive choice.

Antietam featured one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. This is another fine work in the Army War College Guides to Civil War Battles series. I think I'm getting hooked. . . . The norm with this series is to begin with a bit of context about the battle. Then, reports of key officers--both Blue and Gray--are presented, to provide a sense of events from the eyes of the participants themselves. Finally, a chapter that explores larger issues, in this case the logistics of battle. To complete the volume, there is the always helpful "Order of Battle" (in which the units and their commanding officers for each army are listed) and the grisly listing of casualties for both sides. The book covers the entire campaign, by the way, not just Antietam itself. That means that we get first hand reports from South Mountain, Crampton's Gap, Harper's Ferry, Bolivar Heights, and, finally, Antietam. One problem with using official reports, of course, is that those who took part may well not take accountability for any errors that they made in command. Nonetheless, their own views as to what happened is useful in itself. Since I was born in the Midwest, I always pay attention to troops from that region in battle. In this campaign, once again, the "Iron Brigade" catches my attention. Indeed, its performance at South Mountain, in helping the Union forces to clear the pass, led to General McClellan making a comment that produced the label "Iron Brigade." Pages 42-44 provide Gen. John Gibbons' comments (he commanded the brigade) and those of Col. Solomon Meredith, commander of the 19th Indiana regiment in the Brigade. And on it goes, with the bloodletting at Antietam, as the two armies bled one another down. Most sanguinary.

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