

Virtual Tour Guide: A New Series Provides Visitors With Battlefield Excursions Around Chickamauga

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Review

VIRTUAL TOUR GUIDE

**A new series provides visitors with battlefield excursions around
Chickamauga**

Russell, Jerry L.

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Woodworth, Steven E. *Chickamauga: A Battlefield Guide*. Bison Books, ISBN 803298021

The new series *In This Hallowed Ground: Guides to Civil Battlefields* started in 1998 with a guide to Gettysburg by Mark Grimsley and Brooks Simpson, two of the series editors. Now the third editor, Steven E. Woodworth, weighs in with his series contribution, which benefits greatly from his previous research on *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns*.

Serious military history buffs learn early on that one cannot completely understand a battle without understanding the battlefield. Reading alone, even by perceptive, insightful, and articulate authors, cannot provide as clear an understanding of a battle as walking the ground over which the soldiers fought. At least, not until now.

There was a slogan for some product or service years ago, "The next best thing to being there," and this book fits that description perfectly. I have visited Chickamauga and Chattanooga battlefields several times, always with a knowledgeable guide, and reading this book, I felt like I was almost doing it again.

Woodworth has divided the Chickamauga battlefield into 20 tour stops and seven "optional excursions," and practically leads the reader by the hand through every stage of the battle, the Confederacy's greatest victory in the West. (He performs a similar service for Chattanooga -- seven stops and one optional excursion: the Missionary Ridge Walking Tour.)

The book begins with instructions on using the guide, and then proceeds to the introductory section, "The Road to Chickamauga," which explains how the two armies got to this rolling countryside in north Georgia, barely south of the Tennessee line.

Each day begins with a succinct but thorough overview of that day's main developments, and then takes the reader through meticulous, often-checked driving and walking instructions to the various parts of the field in the order that the battle developed.

Each "stop" has a map, as well as the date and time of day, and offers Directions, Orientation, What Happened, and Analysis. At the completion of a particular stop (#20 -- Longstreet pushes north -- September 20, 1863, noon), the reader has as clear an understanding as the written word can provide. Photographs of the main commanders and period artwork decorate the guide, while adding to the mental images.

The Orders of Battle (a listing of all the units involved on both sides) and a general discussion of the operation of Civil War armies are found in the appendices.

If you can't actually go to Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park, buy this book; if you can go, get this book before you visit!

And watch for other books in the series.

Jerry L. Russell is founder and national chairman of Civil War Round Table Associates, the country's oldest national Civil War battlefield preservation organization.