

### Uncharted Terrain: Maps Created For Military Purposes Also Possess Historical, 'Sthetic Richness

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#### Recommended Citation

Little, William E. (2000) "Uncharted Terrain: Maps Created For Military Purposes Also Possess Historical, 'Sthetic Richness," *Civil War Book Review*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 .

DOI: 10.31390/cwbr.2.1.26

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol2/iss1/26>

## Review

### UNCHARTED TERRAIN

**Maps created for military purposes also possess historical, 'sthetic richness**

**Little, William E.**

**Winter 2000**

**McElfresh, Earl B.** *Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War.* Harry N. Abrams, ISBN 810934302

During the Civil War, a map of good quality had the potential to make the difference between victory and defeat on the battlefield. Earl B. McElfresh's **Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War** brings together the War's most notable, interesting, and beautiful maps, some of which have never before been reproduced in their original cartographic format. In addition, McElfresh not only describes how the maps of the time were created and used in the Civil War, but also gives brief descriptions of the men who created them.

At the outbreak of the Civil War much of the United States was uncharted terrain. Yet by 1865, the majority of the land over which the armies campaigned had been mapped.

The maps, which range from highly detailed color compositions to rough sketches done in pencil, are displayed as they were originally drawn. Although created for practical military use rather than as works of art, some of the maps possess great beauty -- something that holds true across the media used to draw and illustrate them.

One of many interesting sections of **Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War** details the lives of the mapmakers who served in the armies of both the North and the South. The text illustrates the daily activities of the mapmaker and discusses the topographical details they looked for when composing maps.

One of the mapmakers discussed in detail is George Armstrong Custer. His West Point training included several hundred hours of study in mapping and topographical engineering. As such, it is no surprise that at the onset of the Civil

War Custer was appointed as an assistant engineer on the staff of the army's chief topographical engineer, A.A. Humphreys. A colored pencil map created by Custer is included.

The majority of the maps are reproduced as close to their original size as possible, although due to size constraints only portions of some oversized maps could be displayed. One such example is Jed Hotchkiss's theater map of the Gettysburg campaign. This map is of great historical significance because it was utilized by Robert E. Lee as he directed the march of the Army of Northern Virginia into Pennsylvania. One wishes that the book might have shown maps of such historical significance in their full splendor.

This finely crafted album provides an insightful examination of the crucial role that maps and the men who crafted them played in the waging of battle, and ultimately in the outcome of the Civil War.

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