

The Chattanooga Campaign

David Graham

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr>

Recommended Citation

Graham, David (2013) "The Chattanooga Campaign," *Civil War Book Review*. Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 .

DOI: 10.31390/cwbr.15.2.11

Available at: <https://repository.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol15/iss2/9>

Review

Graham, David

Spring 2013

Woodworth, Steven and Grear, Charles. *The Chattanooga Campaign*. Southern Illinois University Press, \$29.95 ISBN 978-0-8093-3119-2

A Collection of Essays About an Important Campaign

While historians and scholars of the Civil War are familiar with the fall 1863 Chattanooga Campaign, the collection of essays assembled in *The Chattanooga Campaign* provides new insights and delves deeper into multiple aspects of the armies' maneuvering. The introduction provides a solid overview of the campaign and, when appropriate, indicates where several essays in the collection fit within the broader narrative and where they challenge previously accepted claims within Civil War military historiography. Multiple essays meticulously recount the movements of various units as well as the decision making process of their commanding officers. A handful of the contributors also offer maps to help the reader more fully grasp the strategies and actions they describe.

Although there are many strong essays featured in the book, a few stand out as particularly novel. In his piece, Ethan Rafuse once again shows us the significance and importance of studying the connections between the battlefield and the home front. He traces the reactions and responses of the press to the battle over Chattanooga and the power the press leveraged in their coverage of the conflict. Brooks D. Simpson puts forth an impressive, thoroughly researched essay on the ordering of the attack on Missionary Ridge. His contribution not only strengthens our understanding of the Chattanooga Campaign but also offers thoughtful reminders on broader methodological issues. Simpson's work highlights the complexity of military history. The strict tactical descriptions of more traditional military history obscure the indecisiveness and thought processes of those on the battlefield. By using the decision to attack Missionary Ridge as a case study, Simpson is able to add another historical layer to the Chattanooga Campaign. His research approach of utilizing a variety of sources

from several historical actors points to the value in listening to multiple historical voices and analyzing them alongside one another. Finally, Timothy Smith argues that it is not only the campaign's history that is understudied and valued by historians but scholars have also neglected the significance of the Chattanooga battlefield after the war and the history of its preservation. He argues that the preservation of the Chattanooga battlefield is particularly important because it paved the way for not only preservation plans at Gettysburg and Antietam but also served as a template for the preservation of battlefields in urban spaces.

Taken as a whole, the essays in *The Chattanooga Campaign* offer a rich analytical history of a critical series of battles during the Civil War. The diversity adds to the historiographical contribution of the book by approaching the campaign from different angles and from different points chronologically. The variety and diversity of the essays also extends the book's reach and relevance. Those who are looking for more in-depth military analysis will find it in several of the book's chapters. Those who wish to know the larger implications of the battle will be satisfied with the Rafuse chapter as well as Charles D. Gear's essay on "trans-Mississippian" reactions to the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga. *The Chattanooga Campaign* will undoubtedly make a lasting contribution to the field of Civil War history.

David K. Graham is a doctoral candidate in American history at Purdue University. His research focuses on American Civil War memory. Email: graham50@purdue.edu.