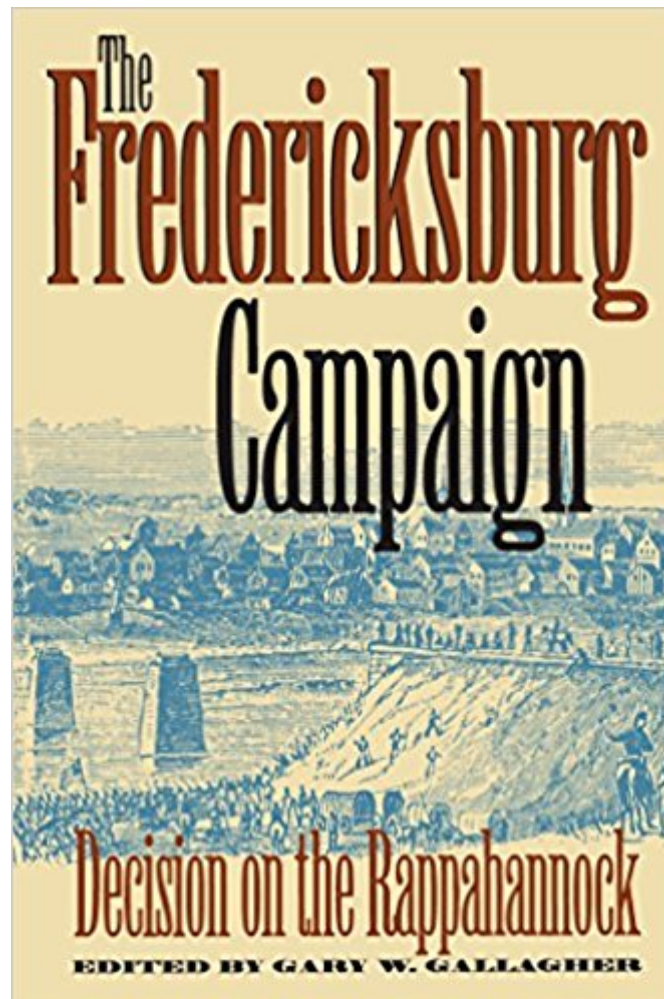


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The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision On The Rappahannock (Military Campaigns Of The Civil War)



Synopsis

It is well this is so terrible! We should grow too fond of it," said General Robert E. Lee as he watched his troops repulse the Union attack at Fredericksburg on 13 December 1863. This collection of seven original essays by leading Civil War historians reinterprets the bloody Fredericksburg campaign and places it within a broader social and political context. By analyzing the battle's antecedents as well as its aftermath, the contributors challenge some long-held assumptions about the engagement and clarify our picture of the war as a whole. The book begins with revisionist assessments of the leadership of Ambrose Burnside and Robert E. Lee and a portrait of the conduct and attitudes of one group of northern troops who participated in the failed assaults at Marye's Heights. Subsequent essays examine how both armies reacted to the battle and how the northern and southern homefronts responded to news of the carnage at Fredericksburg. A final chapter explores the impact of the battle on the residents of the Fredericksburg area and assesses changing Union attitudes about the treatment of Confederate civilians. The contributors are William Marvel, Alan T. Nolan, Carol Reardon, Gary W. Gallagher, A. Wilson Greene, George C. Rable, and William A. Blair.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In collaboration with the University of North Carolina Press, Gary Gallagher has produced an amazingly insightful series of anthologies on various aspects of the American Civil War. This

collection is one of the best. Its value is nicely summed up by a comment in the Introduction (p. xi): "Far from exhausted topics open only to increasingly minute dissection of tactical movements, the activities of Union and Confederate armies invite serious scrutiny by historians interested in a range of issues." Thank goodness that this new and refreshing way of examining the Civil War is moving us beyond an earlier romanticized guns-'n-glory focus. All of the essays in *The Fredericksburg Campaign* are quite good. But for my money, the three best ones--and the ones that dramatically represent the new approach championed by Gallagher--are written by George Rable, William Blair, and Gallagher himself. All three might be seen as trying to make sense of that odd cry of exultation attributed to Lee after the massacre at Marye's Heights: "It is well that war is so terrible! We should grow too fond of it!" Rable reminds us that the carnage from the vantage point of the soldier on the ground was nothing to crow about, and that even a momentary battlefield thrill is far outshadowed by the terrible reality of slaughtered men, wounds, amputations, sepsis, psychological trauma, and shattered morale. Blair's essay, which deals with the effects of the shelling and routing of their town on Fredericksburg civilians, brings home the lesson that neither is there nothing in war to grow fond of from the noncombatant's perspective. Too often, military historians tend to overlook what today is fashionably referred to as "collateral damage."

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