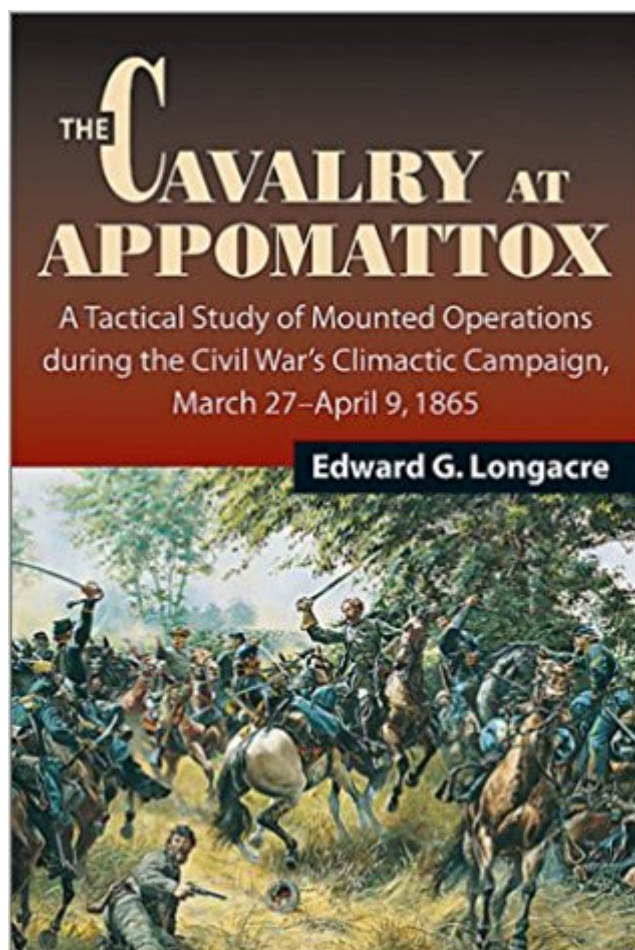


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Cavalry At Appomattox



Synopsis

The final campaign of the American Civil War in the eastern theatre witnessed the zenith of American cavalry warfare, the salient aspect of the operation. The Appomattox Campaign not only determined whether the conflict would continue, but also which army had better assimilated the intricate, difficult lessons of mounted service. The outcome indicated why the Union troopers emerged victorious. They displayed greater tactical versatility - the ability to fight mounted and afoot - whereas the Confederate horsemen considered the outdated 'saber charge' the essence of mounted battle.

Book Information

Hardcover: 2 pages

Publisher: Stackpole Books; 1 edition (July 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0811700518

ISBN-13: 978-0811700511

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 6.3 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 2.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #177,954 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 inÂ Books > History >

Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields > Appomattox #1628 inÂ Books > History > Military > United States #2415 inÂ Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local

Customer Reviews

Longacre's narrative covers the actions of the Union and Confederate cavalry in the last two weeks of the Civil War in the east. The text accounts for 200 of the book's 272 pages, the rest going to notes, an impressive 33 page bibliography and index. The book begins with a brief discussion of the development of both forces during the course of the war in the east, and highlights effectively the rise of the Union forces, and the decline of the South's, during the last 2 years of the war, and the why's of it all. Then the focus turns to the strategic setting and battles that ended the Siege of Petersburg, including Dinwiddie Court House and Five Forks. The last half of the book takes the reader through the Union pursuit of the retreating Army of Northern Virginia, to the Surrender at Appomattox. Though the cavalry's operations are his focus, Longacre renders well the context of their operations. He particularly pays attention to the Army of the James and its role in bringing Lee

to ground. The author clearly has an extensive knowledge of Civil War Cavalry, and has written many books on the subject. This isn't a bad book, but it won't go down as one of his best. It has a certain assembly-line quality to it. It covers the subject adequately enough, although some portions cry out for more detail, like the fighting at Paineville, Virginia. It is written well enough, albeit ending rather abruptly. It is organized well enough. In fact, the only severe problem is the inadequate maps, especially for a book titled a tactical study. Those few there are lack detail, and over and over again, I had to dig out other sources to find more complete battle maps and maps where I could actually find locations cited in Longacre's book.

I enjoyed this small book at the final stages of the war particularly some of the minor battles of the campaign. I particularly enjoyed the section on Five Forks that was very large in scope in contrast with most of the described battles and the map was well laid out in that although not complex, it demonstrated well where the V corps was in relation to Sheridan's cavalry and the east angle of the Confederate line. The book does not over awe the reader in detail but for someone familiar with the retreat, it was refreshing that the book moved along at a pretty good pace. And I particularly enjoyed finding the occasional nugget of information that I did not know, such as the animosity between Rosser and Mumford, or know very well. I also enjoyed reading about the battle of High Bridge, which was a modest battle by most standards but a desperate battle fought earnestly by both sides with devastating loss as the war was coming to an obvious end. My own personal visit there recently made that section exciting to read. It would have been exceptional if the author did provide maps showing more geography to better understand the different routes that Lee and Grant took along with their cavalry. The strength of the supplied maps was their small scale presentation of battles that were quite good such as the final battle for the road to Lynchburg just outside Appomattox Station. Perhaps the only criticism besides maps of a greater scope was explaining how Lee's Army seemed to constantly be blind as the Army seemed to stumble into traps (Sailor's Creek) and never seemed to know when Sheridan was going to cut them off (Jetersville) or capture their trains.

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