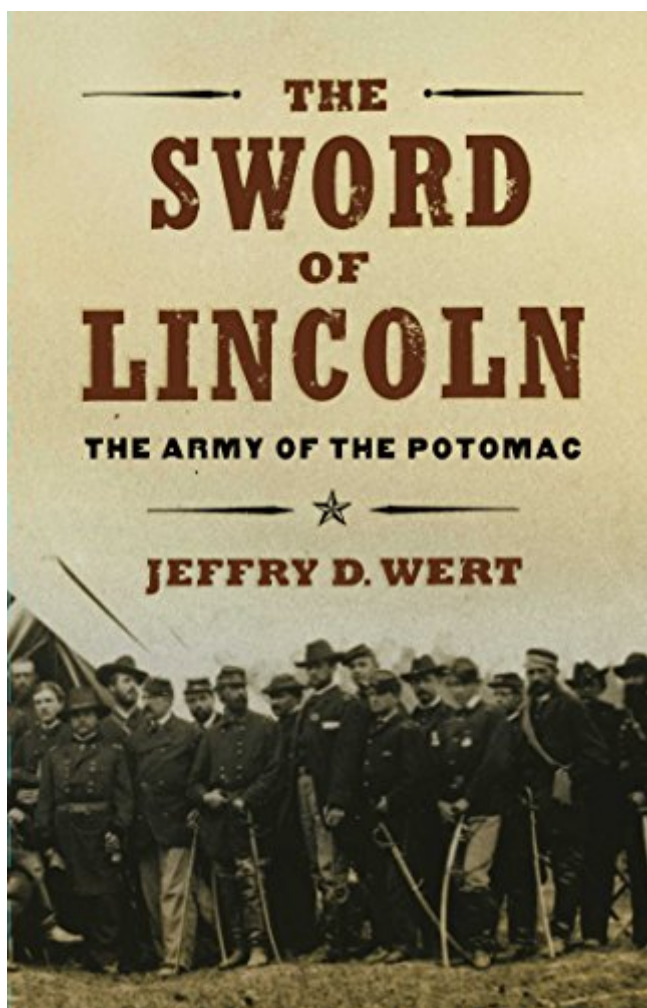


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The Sword Of Lincoln: The Army Of The Potomac



Synopsis

The Sword of Lincoln is the first authoritative single-volume history of the Army of the Potomac in many years. From Bull Run to Gettysburg to Appomattox, the Army of the Potomac repeatedly fought -- and eventually defeated -- Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia. Jeffry D. Wert, one of our finest Civil War historians, brings to life the battles, the generals, and the common soldiers who fought for the Union and ultimately prevailed. The obligation throughout the Civil War to defend the capital, Washington, D.C., infused a defensive mentality in the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac. They began ignominiously with defeat at Bull Run. Suffering under a succession of flawed commanders -- McClellan, Burnside, and Hooker -- they endured a string of losses until at last they won a decisive battle at Gettysburg under a brand-new commander, General George Meade. Within a year, the Army of the Potomac would come under the overall leadership of the Union's new general-in-chief, Ulysses S. Grant. Under Grant, the army marched through the Virginia countryside, stalking Lee and finally trapping him and the remnants of his army at Appomattox. Wert takes us into the heart of the action with the ordinary soldiers of the Irish Brigade, the Iron Brigade, the Excelsior Brigade, and other units, contrasting their experiences with those of their Confederate adversaries. He draws on letters and diaries, some of them previously unpublished, to show us what army life was like. Throughout his history, Wert shows how Lincoln carefully oversaw the operations of the Army of the Potomac, learning as the war progressed, until he found in Grant the commander he'd long sought. With a swiftly moving narrative style and perceptive analysis, The Sword of Lincoln is destined to become the modern account of the army that was so central to the history of the Civil War.

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Customer Reviews

Good book on the campaigns through Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Lots of letters, diary entries and other primary source contributions.

Excellent review of the civil war, helps reader to better know the commanding generals, appreciate Lincoln's leadership, and the struggle to find capable military leaders.

Great attention to detail. Prose that borders on the cinematic. Glad I found this, and even happier now that I've read it. Required reading for all Lincolnophiles.

I liked this book, was well written and held my interest throughout

Jeffrey Wert's books repose in my Civil War study. His books are always well written in a popular style appealing to general readers. In his new work Wert has done a good job of telling the tale of the Army of the Potomac from its inception in 1861 to its triumph over the Army of Northern Virginia in 1865. What a story of courage, valor and perseverance. What a tragic tale of carnage on a previously unknown scale! In vivid prose Wert quotes first person accounts written by soldiers who bathed in the blood baths of the battlefields in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. The Army of the Potomac was cursed by weak leaders. Consider: 1. Irvin McDowell-defeated at First Bull Run. He was not up to the job of wielding Lincoln's sword! 2. George B. McClellan-A pompous, ego-centric prima donna who could train and prepare an army. He was no warrior. After the stalemate of Antietam he was replaced. McClellan emerges in these pages as a nemesis to Lincoln who overestimated Confederate troop numbers, was slow and no match for the military genius of Robert E. Lee. 3. Ambrose E. Burnside-He failed miserably in command as the debacle of Fredericksburg proves! 4. Joseph Hooker-Hooker was a good organizer but he was bested by Lee and Jackson at

Chancellorsville.5. George Meade-This snapping turtle grouch but competent General won at Gettysburg but his pursuit of Lee was poor.6. US Grant-One imagines if Grant had commanded in the Eastern theatre from day one! Grant won the war as his blue clad ribbon of cold steel rolled through the sanguinary battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, the Petersburg siege, the Crater and ultimate victory at Appomattox. Grant was a great general who never quit until his sword destroyed the army of Lee, The picture of the Army of the Potomac limned by Wert is that of a brave, well equipped, patriotic army led by many incompetent commanders. Infighting among the brass and political interference in Washington DC also hampered the effectiveness of the Army of the Potomac. On Wert's work:1. This is a good volume for the novice to Civil War study. Wert explains all of the major campaigns fought on the eastern front in a clear, easy to understand style. Many veteran Civil War buffs will say this information is "old hat to me". It is still interesting and a good way to brush up on the personalities and battles fought in the east.2. The volume has good pictures and adequate maps.3. The best part of the book for this reviewer was the quotes (often colorful and profane!) written by the soldiers in blue during their long odyssey from Bull Run to Appomattox Court House.4. Anyone interested in the Civil War will profit by a day or two spent in Wert's company. I read the book in two days being riveted by the often told but always fascinating story of this star crossed but ultimately victorious army.5. Wert has done his homework as page after page of primary sources in the extensive bibliography will prove to the reader.6. Wert is good in quoting what modern historians such as Gordon Rhea, Kent Masterson Brown, James McPherson and others have written about a particular campaign. There is little that is new here for the veteran Civil War Buff but it is a good book for folks eager to learn more or as a great way to review the Army that was rarely quiet along the Potomac in the days when swords were removed from scabbards and Americans slaughtered one another on bloody battlefields.

Mr. Wert has written a serviceable one volume history of the army formed with a mission to both protect Washington, D.C. and defeat the Confederate army in Virginia. This dual role, plus the difficult political imperatives of the war, poor general officers, and almost constant interference from nearby federal politicians, led to less than stellar results especially in the first years of combat. However, the troops did win thanks to Lincoln, Grant, and their own dogged efforts. Again, a good history but not in the very top flight of books on this important era.

What is the appeal of a new book on the history of the Army of the Potomac which covers material that has been well-explored many times? This book by the noted Civil War historian Jeffry Wert is a

fast-paced, engagingly written one-volume account of the Army of the Potomac from the beginning of the Civil War until General Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomatox in April, 1865. This book is valuable for several reasons. As with any important historical event, the meaning and significance of the Civil War is something that each generation and each reader must discover afresh for themselves. Wert's account, even if it were found to include no additional factual information, encourages reflection on the Civil War, particularly on the role of the Union's most famous army, and on other histories of the conflict. Furthermore Wert's account has a specific focus. Wert discusses the special difficulties that plagued the Army of the Potomac over the course of the Civil War, explains the sources of these difficulties, and shows how the Army ultimately overcame them. It is an inspiring story showing the value of persistence, commitment, and effort finding a goal, struggling to achieve it, and working to overcome adversity. This approach to the Civil War is convincingly presented here. Wert's heroes are the fighting soldiers in the Army of the Potomac as opposed, in general, to their frequently blundering leaders. The Army of the Potomac's original mission was the defense of Washington D.C. That mission, and the proximity of the Army to the capital city, made the Army of the Potomac unduly visible and susceptible to political influence. Wert shows the importance of these factors to the performance of the Army of the Potomac in the field. The initial leadership of the Army, in particular the controversial General George McClellan, had a limited view of the aims of the conflict. McClellan did an outstanding job of drilling and training the Army and of instilling a spirit of camaraderie in the troops. But McClellan fought the war simply as a means of bringing the South back into the Union. This outlook, perhaps, was as responsible for his timid, cautious approach as a commander as was his view of military strategy. Wert shows how McClellan's approach to the conflict, military and political, influenced the views of his successors as commanding generals: Pope (commander of the Army of Virginia) Burnside, Hooker, and Meade. Leadership of the Army had a cautious, defensive spirit and was subject of political interference. President Lincoln took an active role with the Army and his specific decisions and criticisms were sometimes merited, but sometimes not. Wert gives a quick-paced account of the major battles of the Army, including First Bull Run, the Seven Days, Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredricksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Mine Run, the Overland Campaign, Petersburg, and Appomatox. In spite of the defeats or unsatisfactory results of most of these battles, Wert shows how the soldiers in the Army maintained their spirit, resiliency and sense of purpose. Although they faced many dark days, the troops sensed that their mission was greater than their leaders. They held on and continued against a spirited and well-lead opponent and ultimately were successful. One major turning point occurred following the Battle of the Wilderness when, after a

dreadful two-day battle on the field on which Chancellorsville had been fought, U.S. Grant (commander of the entire Union forces who became the de facto commander of the Army of the Potomac) turned the Army towards the South to pursue Lee's Army rather than retreat northward as had been the practice of his predecessors. Wert offers clear and short accounts of the major battles of the Army of the Potomac without becoming bogged down in the detail of more lengthy histories. His purpose is less to explain military history than to show the spirit of the troops and the actions of their leaders. Wert drives home well the hardships of the campaigns -- the sickness and unsanitary conditions of the camps, the terrors of battle, the long night marches -- and the determination of the troops to surmount them. His account of the overland campaign in the summer of 1864, Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, and Cold Harbor, is especially compelling. Thus, even though he tells a story that has been told before, Wert's story will inspire the reader with its focus on the perseverance shown by the ordinary soldier and the face of extreme and protracted difficulty. This book will make a good introduction to the Civil War for those readers new to the subject and also has much to teach those readers with a longstanding interest in this great conflict. Robin Friedman

this price is valuable. a present , I got it in the mail and it came in a nice case which I enjoyed. I love the feel and how heavy it is. When I got it, I immediately washed it and tested it out and it cut through some peppers like butter. I really liked it. very fast, receive it next day, awesome and very well.

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