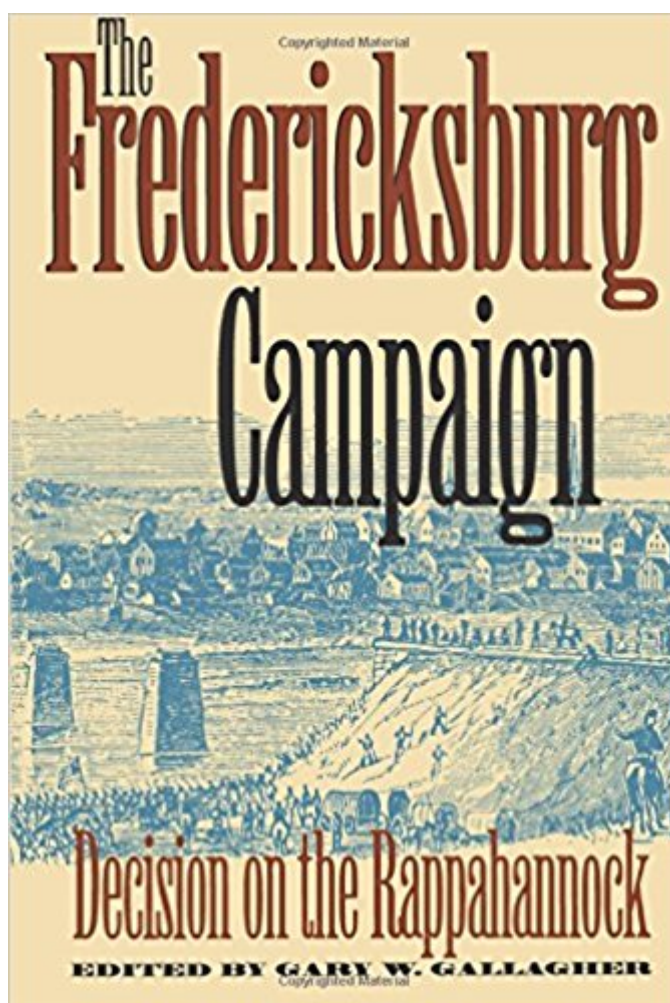


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# The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision On The Rappahannock (Military Campaigns Of The Civil War)



## 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 Frederickburg. 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

Overall, the essays are lively, interesting, and challenging, in the long tradition of historical revisionism. Civil War enthusiasts will no doubt be stimulated by the debate over whether Burnside

was inept, betrayed, disobeyed, or done in by the weather. Lee watchers will be captivated over whether defense or offense was the real Lee.--H-CivWarThis book will intrigue students and draw their attention to often-neglected dimensions of the Civil War.--History: Reviews of New BooksCollectively, the excellent essays challenge old assumptions about the campaign, introduce aspects of the battle and its aftermath that have received scant attention, and view military events within the framework of broader social and political issues. The fact that no fewer than three of the essays focus on civilians rather than soldiers suggests the freshness of this new approach to campaign history.--Newsletter of the Society of Civil War HistoriansThe essays in this volume . . . represent significant contributions on the subject from some of the most respected scholars in the field.--Military History of the WestSometimes controversial, always stimulating, The Fredericksburg Campaign is a 'cutting-edge' volume that will enlighten and please students of the Civil War. Indeed, one can hardly wait for Gallagher's next book.--Register of the Kentucky Historical SocietyEach of the pieces is well researched and well written, and the authors have presented their theses clearly. Well-drawn maps assist the reader in following the battle events. . . . Gallagher's book will be fun for Civil War scholars and enthusiasts. The authors have presented clearly written essays packed with ideas.--Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography[A] fine collection of essays. . . . This is a book well worth reading.--Blue and GrayThe new perspectives contained in this volume are almost all fresh and provocative and based upon admirable scholarship. No study of the war in the Eastern Theater will be complete without this volume.--Civil War Regiments

Some of the most important and innovative scholarship on Civil War battles and their political and social impact has appeared in the volumes of the Military Campaigns of the Civil War series. I strongly recommend these essays to everyone who is interested in the latest findings and interpretations.--James M. McPherson, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Battle Cry of Freedom: The Era of the Civil War[This] collection is imaginative, bold, sometimes controversial, but always crisply written and powerfully argued. . . . Will be a welcome addition to the book collection of Civil War enthusiasts, both professional and amateur, everywhere.--Joseph T. Glatthaar, University of Houston

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." But in the Civil War, and especially in Virginia, civilians suffered horribly during and for years after the war. Finally, Gallagher's essay points out that the famous Lee quote needs to be taken in context. Lee himself seems to have been extremely depressed by the Fredericksburg battle. The slaughter of Federal troops stopped the drive to Richmond, but it really gained the Confederacy (in Lee's estimation) no strategic advantage, and it hazarded artificially elevating Confederate self-confidence. Interestingly, Gallagher points out that Lee felt similarly about Chancellorsville: a "victory" that ultimately brought no advantage to the South. All in all, an excellent collection of essays. Highly recommended.

Good treatment of this campaign. Provides detail that is often lacking in other works. Fredericksburg is about more than fruitless frontal assaults, and the author shows that to the reader.

I just love these collections of essays that Gary Gallagher puts together. This is the third book I've read I love them all. Spotsylvania is very good as is the wilderness.

Great book- easy and fascinating read

This book goes beyond what you get in the big books aka MacPherson, Catton and Foote. It explores the battle at the individual level and explores the effects of the battle on those involved as well as the country as a whole. What seemed like such a bad choice from afar begins to make a

grim sort of sense as you see Burnside's original orders and his overall plan for the battle. His plan called for a Chancellorsville style flanking attack that was so massively ignored that it made the attack on Marye's Heights the debacle that it was. If this sounds intriguing then get the book, it is well written and engrossing. On the other hand, if you had to look up names to understand what I was talking about then go get MacPherson his is wonderful.

A great collection of essays by those historians most familiar with the Battle of Fredericksburg. Burnside's excellent biographer, William Marvel, writes a very balanced essay on Burnside and his high command that was still full of McClellan political generals and some that were inept. Burnside shares blame for failed opportunities but was primarily let down by Franklin who proved to be incapable or neglectful in providing a strong attack on the Confederate right that was necessary to attack the heights of the town on the Confederate left. The objective critic of Lee, Alan Nolan, writes an essay substantiating why this battle was Lee's greatest and how Longstreet was so capable that his great critic Douglas Freeman had to praise him. A. William Greene who spent many years with the park service at Fredericksburg (he's now at the new Pamplin Civil War Museum in Petersburg) writes of Burnside's last and lost attempt at continuing the campaign, the mud march. Difficult in bad weather but made worse by the political generals who contributed willingly to his failure. The other essays contribute to the realities of war, the carnage and the effect on Civilians and how the virtually destroyed Pennsylvania Division were later to shout "Remember Fredericksburg" at Gettysburg.

Your review of Gallagher's book on the Battle of Fredericksburg has the date wrong. It was fought on Dec. 13, 1862, not 1863.

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