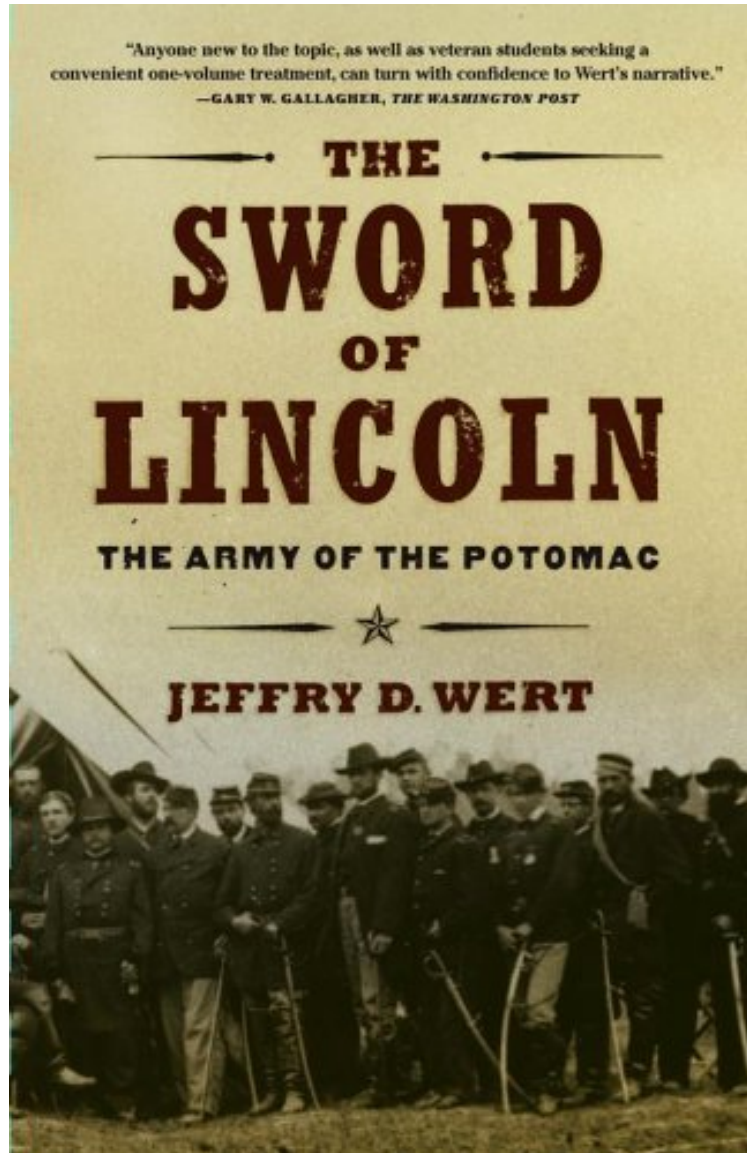


The Sword of Lincoln: The Army of the Potomac

Jeffry D. Wert

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Jeffry D. Wert : The Sword of Lincoln: The Army of the Potomac before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sword of Lincoln: The Army of the Potomac:

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Just Another Book about the Army of the Potomac? NOTBy Alan RockmanYou might be saying that this is a subject Bruce Catton covered so well in his Civil War trilogy about - yes, the Army of the Potomac which culminated in "A Stillness at Appomattox".What is significant in what Wert does,

however, is that he sheds light on things that Catton didn't cover, and with hindsight has also provided a more human perspective on the commanders of Lincoln's army in the east. Example - Wert describes Lincoln's frustration and anger at George McClellan following the battle of Second Manassas, yet allowed McClellan to resume command of the army, if only for the battle of Antietam and a short time thereafter because the soldiers were in McClellan's pocket. Example - it is Wert, not Catton who elaborates why William French was such a lousy corps commander who should have been removed at the time of Gettysburg. Meade kept him on - but soon found to his dismay how incompetent French was when the hard-drinking incompetent muffed a chance for a major Union victory at Mine Run. One of the stories Wert describes is of a soldier in French's corps who upon hearing that French took a bullet in his cap wistfully wished that the bullet had gone down two inches...it would have filled him and many of his fellow soldiers with joy. Wert also sheds light on the Meade-Sickles controversy, and why Lincoln, however pleased with Meade's command of the Gettysburg battle was subsequently displeased when Meade failed to follow up and trap Lee at the Potomac. Meade's cause was not helped when he tried to endorse a monument to former Army commander McClellan over the strenuous objections of Lincoln. Wert also discusses why Grant endorsed Meade's desire to get rid of Cavalry Commander Alfred Pleasanton, but why Meade wasn't thrilled with Grant's choice of Phil Sheridan to replace him. All of the major commanders, the campaigns and battles, and even the common soldier are covered in this work in an easy narrative and index of 560 pages. Maybe not as riveting or solid as Catton - but deserves to be placed alongside the master historian's works as a perfect overall view of the history of the Union Army in the East.

16 of 18 people found the following review helpful. How the Army of the Potomac Overcame Adversity By Robin Friedman 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 Appomattox 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 Appomattox. 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 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. good memory. By Tabthis 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.

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. Jeffrey 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 Army of the Potomac endured a string of losses under a succession of flawed commanders -- McClellan, Burnside, and Hooker -- until at Gettysburg it won a decisive battle under a 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 would finally trap and defeat Lee and his forces. Wert's history draws on letters and diaries, some previously unpublished, to show us what army life was like. Throughout the book Wert shows how Lincoln carefully monitored the operations of the Army of the Potomac, learning as the war progressed, until he found in Grant the commander he'd long sought. Perceptive in its analysis and compellingly written, *The Sword of Lincoln* is the finest modern account of the army that was central to the Civil War.

.com Created at the outset of the Civil War to defend Washington, D.C., the Army of the Potomac had to contend not only with the skilled Army of Northern Virginia under Robert E. Lee, but the political pressures of the capital as well. In reading Jeffrey Wert's *The Sword of Lincoln*, it's sometimes hard to determine which was worse. Though the largest and best-equipped Union army, the Army of the Potomac lost more battles than it won, certainly due in part to poor and inconsistent leadership. Yet in the end, the army prevailed due to the dedication of the foot soldiers who held on until final victory. Wert analyzes the battles of Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, and others, but his main focus is on the army itself. Based on diaries and letters, many never before published, Wert closely examines the motivations, morale, and fortunes of the enlisted men and junior officers and shows how and why they held on despite dismal circumstances. He also studies the generals who led the army and offers fresh critiques of their service. Abraham Lincoln's role is also a major theme in the book as Wert discusses how the success of the Army of the Potomac was closely intertwined with Lincoln's own political fortunes. This cut both ways--Lincoln was able to directly inspire and encourage the troops stationed near the capital, but he also became so involved with day-to-day operations that he often interfered with commanders, creating resentment and ineffectiveness in the process. *The Sword of Lincoln* is the first in-depth study of the Army of the Potomac in over 50 years, and Wert has done an admirable job of condensing a substantial amount of scholarship into one lively volume. --Shawn Carkonen From Publishers Weekly A Civil War historian distinguished for biographies of Longstreet and Custer, and for several campaign histories, now offers this excellent overview of the Army of the Potomac. Charged with the defense of Washington, D.C.—and therefore under the eyes of the politicians from first to last—the Army of the Potomac was blessed with a rank-and-file firmly committed to defending the Union. It was not so fortunate, Wert shows, in its high command. The charismatic George McClellan was an excellent organizer but an overly cautious commander who, the author argues, set the pattern for his successors' habit of avoiding defeat rather than aggressively seeking victory. The book is filled with portraits of the divided upper ranks—both heroes (Winfield Scott Hancock and Phil Kearney, the latter killed before he could realize his potential) and not (the author is absolutely scathing on Third Division Gen. William French). It is also filled with exceptionally vivid accounts of battles, some of them well known (Burnside's bloody fiasco at Fredericksburg) and others less so (the Spotsylvania campaign, particularly its climax at the "Bloody Angle"—trench warfare at its worst). Finally, Wert shows President Lincoln's bond with the army he saw more often than any other, and which felt a personal tie to him. Wert assimilates the half-century of research that has appeared since Bruce Catton wrote his classic trilogy and condenses this mountain of material into a single readable and accessible volume. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist History buffs might wonder where Wert's history of the Army of the Potomac fits with canonical classics such as Bruce Catton's *Mr. Lincoln's Army* (1951) or with Russel H. Beatie's multivolume history in progress (*Army of the Potomac: McClellan Takes Command*, 2004). It suits nonspecialists who do not enjoy military minutiae but are curious about the famous, controversial organization. Wert, an experienced Civil War author (this is his sixth work), strikes an admirable balance between battle narrative and analysis. He is especially skilled, even within a single paragraph, at linking the ordinary soldier's experience, which was more often than not demoralization by the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, with his commander's qualities of leadership. Although McClellan might have been beloved by his men, his caution conflicted with Lincoln's evolving conception of the war, while Grant's relentlessness accorded with it. With his leaders-and-led theme, Wert clarifies the crowded history of this army, crafting an excellent overview of the historic battles as well as Lincoln's supervision and how officers reacted to it. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library

