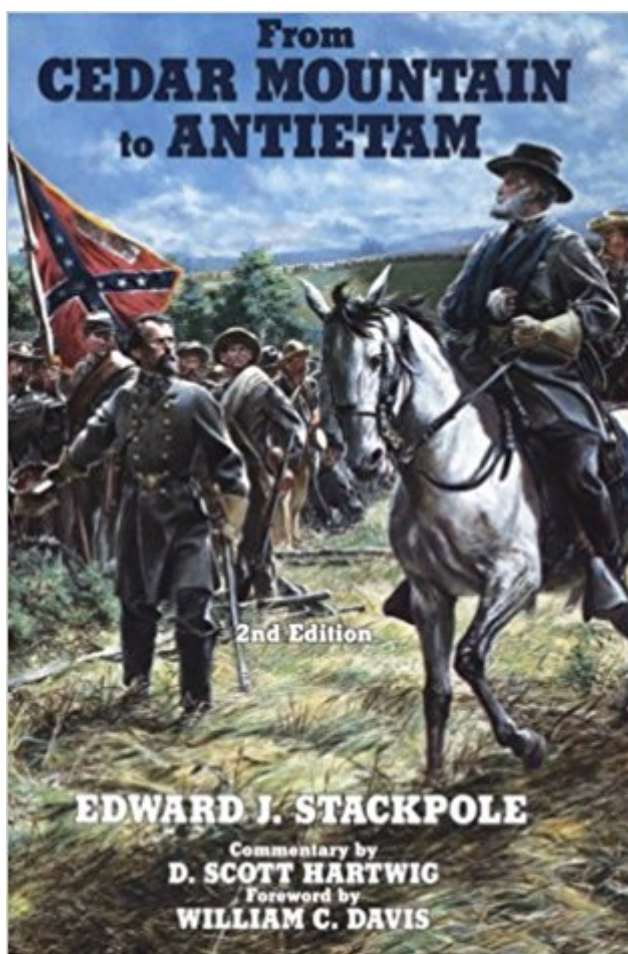


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From Cedar Mountain To Antietam (Stackpole)



Synopsis

Stated 2nd Edition - full number line.

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Customer Reviews

Stated 2nd Edition - full number line.

I've been a Civil War buff since I reached double-digits in age, and Edward J. Stackpole's *From Cedar Mountain to Antietam* was always my favorite Civil War book. I must have read it a dozen times as an adolescent and teenager, sinking my teeth into Stackpole's colorful retellings of the War Between the States. Revisiting it years later, I find a book that's still very well-written and entertaining, though not without flaws. Stackpole provides a combined depiction of the Second Bull Run and Antietam Campaigns, viewing them as two acts of the same story. John Pope's Army of Virginia, jerry-rigged together from the hodgepodge of commands defeated by Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley, is created after George McClellan's Peninsular Campaign fails. The aggressive Pope is completely outgeneralled by Confederate General Robert E. Lee, who boldly divides his army, outwits Pope and forces a battle before Pope can be reinforced, culminating in a crushing victory at Second Bull Run: Lee's most complete victory over a Union army. Seeking to retain the initiative, Lee invades Maryland, but his plans unravel when his campaign plans fall into McClellan's hands. This sets the stage for Antietam, the "bloodiest single day" in American history,

where Lee tries to prevent his army's complete annihilation. Stackpole conceives his book at a strategic level, providing a broad overview of campaigns and battles rather than a detailed ground-level view. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, as such books can easily become stale and obsessed with minutiae (looking at you, Stephen Sears). Stackpole instead provides a very readable general account that, while missing the "you are there" feeling of tactical depictions, gives a reader an easy understanding of the complicated battles in question. The ramifications of strategy, troop movements and the development of the battles depicted (Cedar Mountain, Second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam) are all made wonderfully clear, thanks to Stackpole's crisp prose and Wilbur S. Nye's marvelous maps. The analysis of major military figures holds up remarkably well. Stackpole doesn't bother hiding his opinions of Lee, Pope, McClellan and others, but he does a solid job making his argument. Like many authors, he has a strong contempt for George McClellan, whom he views as either hopelessly incompetent or criminal in his actions. It's hard for even a sympathetic reader to excuse McClellan's actions, whether dragging his feet in reinforcing Pope, his inability to take advantage of the "Lost Order" and failing to throw V and VI Corps into Antietam at crucial moments. Arguably no man was more responsible for the war's last as long as it did than McClellan, and Stackpole shows why in painful detail. John Pope and Henry Halleck are examined in some detail, and neither comes off very well in this account. Pope is a brash braggart, a Joe Hooker without that general's administrative talents, though to be fair Pope was put in an extremely difficult position, trying to weld three separate armies together and sold out by McClellan. Even worse is Halleck, a competent administrator out of his depth coordinating the activities of two armies led by generals who hated each other; the admonition of him as a "second-rate clerk" is most apropos. The few Union generals who come off well - cavalry generals John Buford and George Bayard, untimely fatalities like Phil Kearney and Jesse Reno - are division and corps commanders with limited impact. Stackpole lavishes heavy praise on Robert E. Lee, depicting him as a man with a shrewd, uncanny ability to judge his opponent's strengths and abilities. This seems a bit much, and Stackpole seems loathe to criticize Lee's lack of broader strategic skill, but on a tactical level his depiction of Marse Robert is spot-on. Certainly Second Bull Run was, in this reviewer's opinion, the Army of Northern Virginia's greatest victory, and just surviving at Antietam was a great accomplishment. His portraits of Stonewall Jackson and James Longstreet are fairly well-rounded, presenting them as skilled generals but not without faults. Most of the book's faults are inevitable for a fifty-two year old book. Much scholarship and original research has come to light since the book's publication, and Stackpole's depiction of some events and controversies - did McClellan have proper authority to lead the Army of the Potomac? Did Lee know about the Lost Order? - is dated.

Thankfully, the 1993 edition I purchased comes with an in-depth commentary by author D. Scott Hartwig, which corrects and clarifies much of Stackpole's narrative. Again, I would quibble with Stackpole's depiction of Lee as an unfettered genius: his Antietam campaign was daring, but foolish once the Lost Order fell into Union hands. Lee's escape from Maryland took a lot of skill, but also a fair share of luck and enemy incompetence. On the whole, though, *From Cedar Mountain to Antietam* remains an excellent account of two of the war's most interesting and important campaigns. It's a fine introduction for novice readers, and I'd recommend it even for seasoned Civil War buffs.

This is an older text on this battle period, but it is still valuable. The accounts are somewhat brief [the individual battles], but are sufficient to give the reader a sense of the nature of the battle and an adequate sense of what each side was attempting to achieve. If one is seeking in-depth knowledge on each battle the book will fall short. Otherwise, it will meet the demand of the reader.

In *From Cedar Mountain to Antietam*, Stackpole gives us the narrative of events from the end of the Seven Days, to Lee's retreat from Sharpsburg, two events delimited by McClellan's lack of resolve, hesitancy, treason or whatever theory you may believe. At Seven Days it's understandably disorienting to go from Joe Johnston's backpedaling to Lee's aggression north of the Chickahominy. But at Sharpsburg he knew Lee's plans, for goodness' sake, and then failed to press Lee until after the Army of Northern Virginia was reunited, for which Stackpole rightly takes *Lil Mac* to task. Stackpole covers a lot of ground in under 500 pages, with the actions at Cedar Mountain, Second Manassas and Sharpsburg. Good maps are here, showing major troop movements and dispositions. There is less analysis here than Stackpole gives in his book on Gettysburg, but then there are pitifully few things in this world which receive as much analysis as Gettysburg. This book is highly recommended for anyone wanting an introduction to the campaigns of Second Manassas or Sharpsburg before delving into more detailed works such as those of Hennessey on Second Manassas or Sears on Sharpsburg.

Originally published in 1959, Stackpole's book was revised and republished in 1993 as the 2nd (and current) edition..... Having read MANY books and articles on the Maryland Campaign (including the latest from Sears and Priest) and having visited each of the battlefields several times, Stackpole's book was a wonderful addition to my collection. His compact writing style, the inclusion of some rather obscure facts, and the numerous maps make reading the book a pleasure..... For the Civil

War neophyte, this book is a good means of learning about the "rebellion" without being overwhelmed with minutia. For the more "advanced" reader, the book is a delightful refresher course, with bits of new information thrown in from time to time.....In covering the Maryland Campaign (Cedar Mountain, Second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam), Stackpole - out of necessity - could not go into the detail found in some more recent texts. And he does miss the mark on some facts, as known today. But on the whole, this work is extremely well-researched and well written.....I recommend it highly.

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