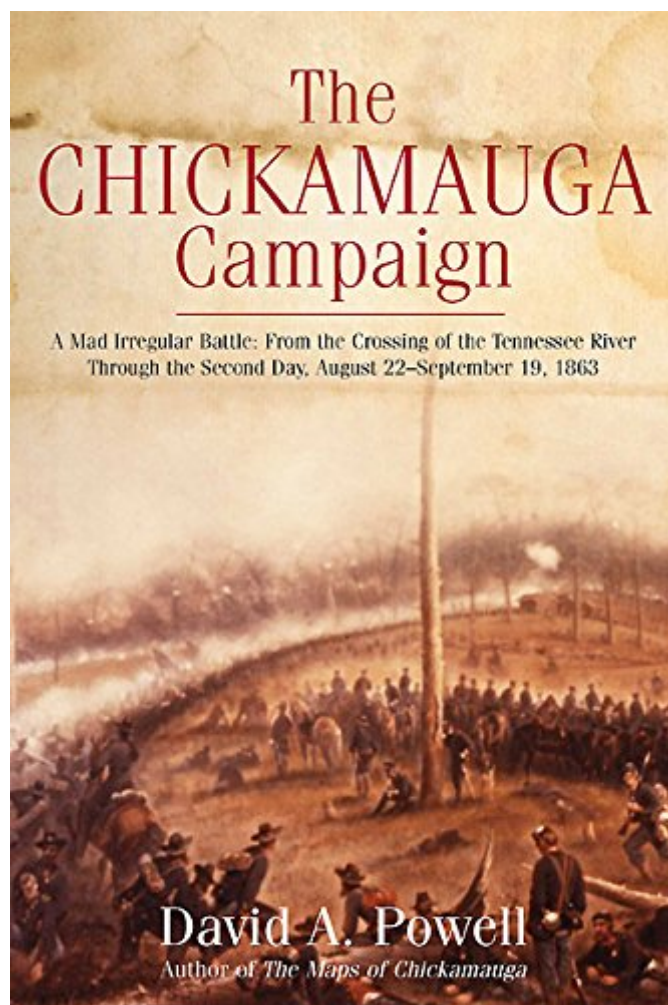


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# The Chickamauga Campaign - A Mad Irregular Battle: From The Crossing Of Tennessee River Through The Second Day, August 22 - September 19, 1863





## Synopsis

Chickamauga, according to soldier rumor, is a Cherokee word meaning "River of Death." It certainly lived up to that grim sobriquet in September 1863 when the Union Army of the Cumberland and Confederate Army of Tennessee waged bloody combat along the banks of West Chickamauga Creek. Long considered a two-day affair, award-winning author David Powell embraces a fresh approach that explores Chickamauga as a three-day battle, with September 18 being key to understanding how the fighting developed the next morning. The second largest battle of the Civil War produced 35,000 casualties and one of the last, clear-cut Confederate tactical victories—a triumph that for a short time reversed a series of Rebel defeats and reinvigorated the hope for Southern independence. At issue was Chattanooga, the important "gateway to the South" and logistical springboard into Georgia. Despite its size, importance, and fascinating cast of characters, this epic Western Theater battle has received but scant attention. Powell masterfully rectifies this oversight with *The Chickamauga Campaign: A Mad Irregular Battle: From the Crossing of the Tennessee River Through the Second Day, August 22 to September 19, 1863*. The first of three installments spanning the entire campaign, *A Mad Irregular Battle* includes the Tullahoma Campaign in June, which set the stage for Chickamauga, and continues through the second day of fighting on September 19. The second installment finishes the battle from dawn on September 20 and carries both armies through the retreat into Chattanooga and the beginning of the siege. The third and last book of the series includes appendices and essays exploring specific questions about the battle in substantially greater detail. Powell's magnificent study fully explores the battle from all perspectives and is based upon fifteen years of intensive study and research that has uncovered nearly 2,000 primary sources from generals to private, all stitched together to relate the remarkable story that was Chickamauga. Here, finally, readers will absorb the thoughts and deeds of hundreds of the battle's veterans, many of whom they have never heard of or read about. In addition to archival sources, newspapers, and other firsthand accounts, Powell grounds his conclusions in years of personal study of the terrain itself and regularly leads tours of the battlefield. His prose is as clear and elegant as it is authoritative and definitive. *The Chickamauga Campaign: A Mad Irregular Battle* is Powell's magnum opus, a tour-de-force rich in analysis brimming with heretofore untold stories. It will surely be a classic must-have battle study for every serious student of the Civil War.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After years of waiting for the updated account of the Chickamauga Campaign it has finally arrived. Dave Powell has incorporated a mountain of new primary research material into his account which is now replacing Cozzens as the definitive work on the battle. The book is well written and detailed to the level that makes it possible to understand the complexities of this very confusing campaign which is quite an achievement. This is the first of three volumes and covers the preliminary movements leading up to the second day of battle, September 19th, 1863 (September 18th is actually the first day). It also includes enough maps to follow the action and some modern photographs of the battlefield along with the men who fought there. The Order of Battle is excellent and includes Strengths and Losses which is difficult to find regarding the Battle of Chickamauga. Dave's writing style fits well with military history which makes the reading quite enjoyable which is unusual for this type of book. I recommend it without reservation to anyone with an interest in one of the most important and least understood campaigns of the Civil War.

As a Civil War history buff who had an ancestor fight at Chickamauga, I've enjoyed reading as much as I can about this battle. Unfortunately, while Chickamauga was the largest battle in the Western

Theater and second in Civil War casualties only to Gettysburg, there has been a relative paucity of material written about this fascinating but often confusing conflict. Compared to Gettysburg, which has had hundreds of books written about all aspects of the 3-day fight, Chickamauga can claim only a smattering of books. The two primary full-length modern treatments of the battle were Glenn Tucker's "Chickamauga: Blood Battle of the West" and Peter Cozzen's "This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga" (part of his trilogy of western battles which also covered Stones River and Chattanooga). Other worthwhile books include Steven Woodworth's "Six Armies in Tennessee" (a campaign-level treatment), "The Chickamauga Campaign" (a compilation of essays, including one by Dave Powell), and "A Deep Steady Thunder" (a short battle summary); William Lee White's "Bushwhacking on a Grand Scale" (a short battle summary written by a National Park Service Ranger at Chick/Chatt NMP); the battlefield guides/tours by Matt Spruill and Robert L. Carter; and the excellent Blue & Gray magazine series written by the eminent historian of Chickamauga, William Glenn Robertson. And then up came David Powell. A graduate of VMI, Dave has been studying the battle of Chickamauga for years and has compiled a vast collection of primary and secondary source material. He has also spent many hours leading in-depth tours covering all parts of the Chickamauga battlefield and thus has become intimately familiar with the terrain, the personalities of the leaders involved, and the actions they directed, from the strategic view down to the unit tactical level. Based on his encyclopedic knowledge and wonderful storytelling abilities displayed in one of his battlefield tours I attended, when I heard he was writing a multi-volume treatment of the Chickamauga Campaign I knew it would be great. This impression was enhanced by my reading of his two previously published books on Chickamauga, "Failure in the Saddle," which delves into the performance of the Confederate cavalry throughout the campaign, and "The Maps of Chickamauga" (maps by David Friedrichs), which walks the reader through the potentially confusing campaign with a large series of in-depth maps and accompanying narrative. Dave Powell's "A Mad, Irregular Battle," published by Savas-Beatie like his two previous works, not only meets but exceeds the extremely high standards set by "Failure..." and "Maps..." Dave has the envious ability to produce a cogent battle narrative that ranges from strategic level implications to unit level actions and captivate the reader's attention throughout. He also has the knack of adding just the right amount of detail to make the narrative clear and engaging but without getting bogged down in minutia. But added to his fine writing ability, what makes his book first rate are his keen analysis and refreshing intellectual honesty. Dave didn't accept on face value all the secondary material and post-war analyses of the battle but dug deep into the primary sources with an open mind, not limited by preconceived notions, and let the facts mold his conclusions. His narrative therefore isn't just

interesting reading but is scholarship of the finest sort, tamping down some old, hoary myths and bringing to light a new understanding of some key facets of the battle. All this leads to "A Mad, Irregular Battle" setting the new standard in Chickamauga history. Savas-Beatie has done a great job of presenting Dave's book to the reader. There are numerous maps and pictures which greatly assist in understanding the unit positions and the terrain features. As I am a very visual learner, I would have enjoyed more maps, but then again, with Dave's "Maps of Chickamauga" alongside his soon-to-be-multivolume history, you have all the maps you could ever want. I eagerly await the second book in the set, "Glory or the Grave," which will cover the end of the battle from Sep 20th to the faceoff of the Union and Confederate forces at Chattanooga. Powell's third volume will be a compilation of additional facts, lists of sources, etc, that didn't fit into the narrative but that add even more substance to his historical analysis. Bottom line: If you are looking for an in-depth book on the Battle of Chickamauga, you can't get any better than David Powell's multivolume set.

This is an outstanding work, providing great deal of information about the chaotic battle of Chickamauga. I have read about this battle before, including as a part of biographies of generals involved as well as descriptions of the battle itself. However, I will venture to say that this is the best work on this battle that I have read. And it is only Part 1 of a 3 book work. Other works have been published on this battle, but Powell's access to information provides this with a greater depth. A story of Chickamauga is made complex because of the very nature of the battle itself--confusing with many small units (that is, brigade level) being critical. Reading the tale of the first two days--Friday, September 18 and--even bloodier--Saturday, September 19 is bracing. There was no overall guiding hand. Army generals, corps commanders, and division commanders on both sides sent in troops piecemeal. Many accidental confrontations. A brigade that was victorious was flanked at another point and had to retreat. Chaotic is not a bad term to describe events. The commanding generals of the two armies (the Army of Tennessee for the South and the Army of the Cumberland for the North) were the irascible Braxton Bragg (Confederate) and William Rosecrans (for the Union). Because of the confusion of the two days of combat, neither was able to impose his will on the respective armies. Worse from the Confederate side, Bragg was in continuing conflict with generals such as D. H. Hill and Leonidas Polk. Other generals took heed of their fears and refused to carry out orders (an extraordinary example being their fear of attacking Union forces in McLemore's Cove, when the Union faced disaster if the Confederates had been aggressive). The story begins with preparation for the campaign. This began with the Tullahoma Campaign in late June, 1863 when Rosecrans used a sweeping flanking strategy to force Bragg to retreat and assume new positions

around Chattanooga. It was a fairly bloodless campaign. Then, Rosecrans performed a similar flanking movement to oust Bragg from Chattanooga. However, the movement of federal troops was such that forces were often out of supporting range. That is, they were too far apart to come to one another's aid if attacked. Then, the forces began to gather at Chickamauga. Included in this gathering for the battles on Friday and Saturday was John Bell Hood's division of James Longstreet's First Corps, traveling from Virginia via trains to reinforce Bragg. Rosecrans came to understand the danger that faced him and concentrated his corps and divisions. One point that I had not been so aware of before--the complete failure of Confederate cavalry to do their job, with failures by both Joseph Wheeler (not so surprising about his shortcomings) and Nathan Bedford Forrest (rather surprising to me). The fighting on Friday was about developing a sense of the other side. Saturday was a quantum leap more ferocious. Brigades were fed into combat; there was little sense of what was actually going on on the ground. Losses were heavy. Brigades that were triumphant at one moment were battered the next, when an enemy force appeared on their flank. The next volume details the critical final day of Chickamauga, and I am eagerly awaiting the work. Some pluses beyond the text: Appendix I provides the order of battle--and the casualties down to the regimental level. Corps commanders for the North: George Thomas (a Virginian), Alexander McCook, Thomas Crittendon, and a so-called "reserve corps" under Gordon Granger. Corps commanders for the South: Leonidas Polk, D. H. Hill, Simon Bolivar Buckner, and a reserve corps under William Walker. On the other hand, maps were sometimes not so revealing. I tried finding a really useful map to go with the text about the danger to Union forces in McLemore's Cove and it was not apparent to me. At any rate, an excellent volume. I eagerly await the next. . . .

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