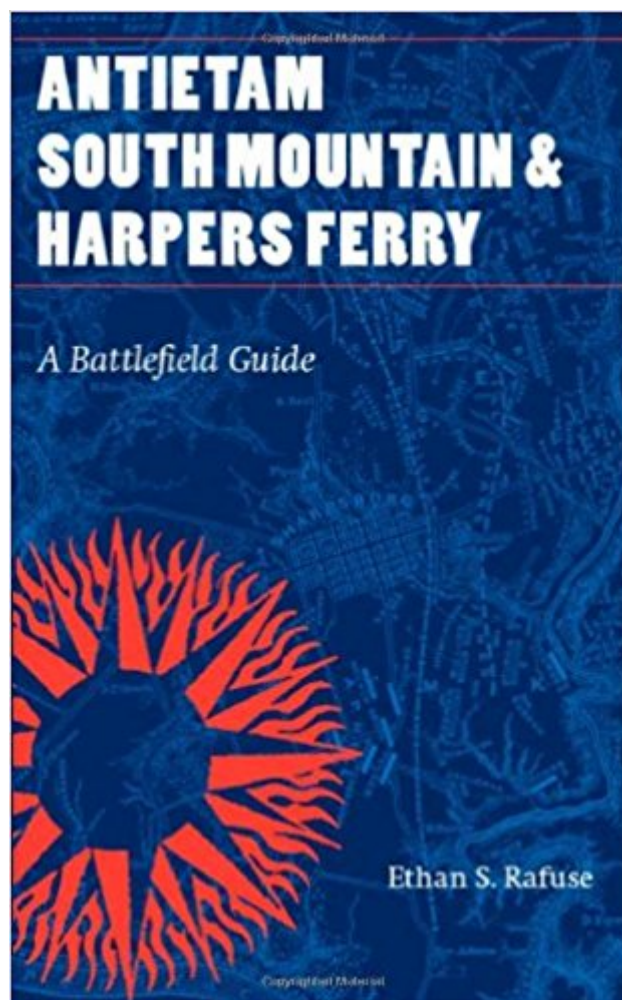




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# Antietam, South Mountain, And Harpers Ferry: A Battlefield Guide (This Hallowed Ground: Guides To Civil War Battlefields)



## Synopsis

In September 1862 the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and the Union Army of the Potomac conducted one of the truly great campaigns of the Civil War. At South Mountain, Harpers Ferry, and Antietam, North and South clashed in engagements whose magnitude and importance would earn this campaign a distinguished place in American military history. The siege of Harpers Ferry produced the largest surrender of U.S. troops in the nation's history until World War II, while the day-long battle at Antietam on September 17 still holds the distinction of being the single bloodiest day of combat in American history. This invaluable book provides a clear, convenient, stop-by-stop guide to the sites in Maryland and West Virginia associated with the Antietam campaign, including excursions to Harpers Ferry and South Mountain. Thorough descriptions and analyses, augmented with vignettes and numerous maps, convey the mechanics as well as the human experience of the campaign, making this book the perfect companion for both serious students of the Civil War and casual visitors to its battlefields.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A refreshing and original study of America's bloodiest day that is free of the clichés found in some previous works on this subject. Using original sources and consulting the latest scholarship on Antietam, Rafuse has written a superb battle and campaign study." —Ted Alexander, chief historian of Antietam National Battlefield (Ted

Alexander 2008-02-25)"Excellent guides at a reasonable price, written by experts on the battle." — James Durney, Suncoast Civil War Society Newsletter (James Durney Suncoast Civil War Society Newsletter 2008-11-01)"A necessary addition to any Antietam library." — James Durney, TOCWOC, A Civil War Blog (James Durney TOCWOC, A Civil War Blog)"I've often expressed my admiration for Nebraska's This Hallowed Ground series of Civil War battlefield guides, and this latest volume by Ethan Rafuse continues the series's tradition of consistent quality in information and presentation. . . . I would recommend this volume as the best general use touring guide for this campaign." — Andrew Wagenhoffer, Civil War Books and Authors blog (Andrew Wagenhoffer Civil War Books and Authors blog 2009-03-09)"Rafuse provides a helpful guidebook dedicated to this single campaign arena. Employing the latest research, he guides the visitor (in person or by armchair) through all the various stops associated with the fighting at South Mountain, Harpers Ferry, and Antietam." — M. J. Smith Jr., Choice (M. J. Smith Jr. Choice)"Antietam, South Mountain, and Harpers Ferry: A Battlefield Guide is a worthy continuation of the University of Nebraska Press series. . . . Meticulous maps as well as detailed sources and recommendations for further reading add to the experience of reading this volume." — Timothy B. Smith, Register of the Kentucky Historical Society (Timothy B. Smith)

Ethan S. Rafuse is an associate professor of military history at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He is the author of several books, including *McClellan's War: The Failure of Moderation in the Struggle for the Union*, and is the coeditor of *The Ongoing Civil War: New Versions of Old Stories*.

Antietam, South Mountain, and Harpers Ferry make up the three points of a triangle that encompasses much of the area covered by the Maryland Campaign of 1862, one of the most important campaigns of the American Civil War. For any student of the war era who is contemplating a visit to the area, with its battlefield parks and historic sites, Ethan Rafuse's "Antietam, South Mountain & Harpers Ferry: A Battlefield Guide" is a valuable book to take along. Rafuse, a professor of military history at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, writes authoritatively about the major figures and events from the Maryland Campaign, in a way that is likely to appeal to both specialists and casual visitors. This book, part of the "This Hallowed Ground" series of Civil War battlefield guides published by Bison Books/University of Nebraska Press, is clearly organized. Narrative introductions to each of the three major centers of the campaign — the Battle of Antietam (17 September 1862),

the Battle of South Mountain (14 September 1862), and the siege of Harpers Ferry (13-15 September 1862). The book is followed by an organizational schema that will make the book particularly helpful to the battlefield visitor. Precise and well-designed maps begin each new section. The "Directions" section takes the visitor from one stop to the next. The "Orientation" section instructs visitors where to look in order to understand how the action unfolded on each particular part of the three sites. A "What Happened" section offers a clear overall look at each site's battle action. Sometimes, though not always, a "Vignette" section provides engaging human-interest stories from the various battlefronts. And sometimes, though not always, an "Analysis" section will give Rafuse's own interpretation of the larger significance of what happened in each specific area. My only quibble regarding the overall organization of the book is that Rafuse starts with Antietam, then goes to South Mountain, and finally deals with Harpers Ferry. I would have put South Mountain first, followed by Harpers Ferry, and only then have brought in Antietam; doing so would have placed the events of the Maryland Campaign in rough chronological order, and would have emphasized the dramatic, even overwhelming, nature of the campaign's climax on those hilly, rocky fields near Sharpsburg, Maryland. Yet Rafuse's analyses and interpretations of the various aspects of the battle action are invariably judicious and well-grounded, as when he discusses the repulse by General John B. Hood's Confederate division of a Union attack through local farmer David Miller's cornfield: "Hood later complained that his men had not received any support until after the fight in the Cornfield was over. This, however, was largely a consequence of the ferocity with which Hood's men entered the battle. This saved the Confederate left, but also made it difficult to manage the battle" (p. 53). Characteristic, too, of this guide's (and series') attention to detail is the fact that the Union leaders' names are given in conventional print, the Confederate leaders' names in italics. This can be a helpful thing for Civil War "newbies," considering that the topic under discussion is a conflict in which most of the participants on both sides have similar-sounding, sometimes identical, Anglo-American surnames. Without that helpful typographic practice, a novice reader might have difficulty telling the Yankees from the Rebels without a scorecard. The "Vignettes" section, as mentioned above, is likely to be of greatest appeal to those readers who want to enjoy the piquant, quirky stories that give such a strong human-interest element to the grand epic of Civil War combat. One example that stood out

for me in that regard was the story of the 51st Pennsylvania Infantry, one of the regiments that successfully took the Lower Bridge or Burnside's Bridge at the southern end of the Antietam battlefield, after two prior attacks against the bridge had failed. As Rafuse tells it, Brigadier General Edward Ferrero asked his men if they could take the bridge. A 51st Pennsylvania corporal, acutely aware that the regiment's whiskey ration had been taken away for undisclosed offenses against good order and discipline, asked in reply, "Will you give us our whiskey, General, if we take it?" General Ferrero's response shows that he knew how to motivate his men at a critical moment: "Yes, by God!...You shall have as much as you want, if you take the bridge. If it is in the commissary or I have to send to New York to get it, and pay for it out of my own purse; that is if I live to see you through it." (p. 98). Suffice it to say that Burnside's Bridge was taken, and that the thirsty infantrymen of the 51st Pennsylvania Regiment did get their whiskey back. The book's illustrations, by and large, are reproductions of illustrations taken from the Century magazine's "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War" series. There are no points for originality there, but the illustrations are high-quality and, well, illustrative. Also helpful is an appendix that Rafuse provides; after the presentation of the orders of battle for the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia, Rafuse offers a helpful review of military organization, weaponry, and tactics for the Civil War era. So many authors of Civil War books seem to assume that their readers will be familiar with the distinctions among army, corps, division, brigade, and regiment; Rafuse recognizes that there will always be readers for whom those distinctions are new. I took this book along on a recent trip to Shepherdstown, West Virginia, where many of Antietam's Confederate wounded were treated after General Robert E. Lee led his battered forces back across the Potomac and ended his first attempt to invade the North; and I found it a useful re-introduction to a region and a history I have come to know well, over the course of many, many visits. Readers planning to visit the grounds of the Maryland Campaign would do well to take along a copy of Rafuse's "Antietam, South Mountain & Harpers Ferry: A Battlefield Guide."

This guide to the battlefields of Antietam, South Mountain, and Harpers Ferry is an extremely useful resource covering the principal battlefields of Lee's 1862 Maryland Campaign. The maps are detailed and comprehensive, especially in covering the action at Antietam on a virtually hourly basis. Historical overviews, descriptions of terrain and monuments, and engaging vignettes combine to

make this guide an essential handbook for the battlefield visitor.

I purchased this book for myself & my brother on our trip to Antietam in April 2011. We used this book every day of our week long tour of Antietam, Harper's Ferry & South Mountain. The book gives the reader step by step directions to all important aspects of the battle and informs with detailed descriptions of the battle and what happened at each stop point. If you are a civil war buff (like us) you will love this guide book of Antietam and the surrounding battles of Lee's invasion of Maryland.

I knew nothing about the Antietam Campaign my 1st trip to the battlefield two years ago, but I went well-informed and prepared on my most recent visit because I had this battlefield guide. Not only are you led step-by-step through the battle at Antietam, but also through Harper's Ferry, South Mountain and the surrounding Civil War sites in Western Maryland. This book is a must have guide before you visit!!!

Really helped as a field guide on the battlefield and is interesting to read before and after touring it.

I am a battlefield walker! I love to stand in the spot where ... happened. At these times, history becomes reality. To get the most from visiting a battlefield you need knowledge of the battle or a companion that has this knowledge or a good guidebook. Knowledge of the battle comes from study and discussion. It is almost impossible for the average person to gain enough in-depth knowledge to make visiting multiple battlefields a vivid experience. A companion paid or otherwise, is usually a good option. The problem is they may not be available or able to communicate their knowledge. Paid guides are expensive and money is not something we usually have in abundance. This makes the guidebook option one of the best for battlefield walkers. The book is always available, ready to go when you are and inexpensive. Most of the books vary from very good to excellent. Much of the difference depends on what you need from the guidebook. Brooks D. Simpson, Mark Grimsley and Steven E. Woodworth are the editors of "The Hallowed Ground: Guides to Civil War Battlefields". This series has always been excellent and this addition meets and exceeds that standard. Ethan S. Rafuse is an inspired choice as author for the Antietam guide. He has in-depth knowledge of the battle, studied under Joseph Harsh and is an expert on McClellan. Dr. Rafuse acknowledges "an enormous debt" to Thomas G. Clemens, Steve Stotelmyer, Mark Snell and Ted Alexander. Any student of the battle recognizes these names as subject matter expert this guide is put together by the A Team. What a guidebook it is! In addition to Antietam, we have South Mountain and Harpers

Ferry. Antietam is 14 main stops with several have two to four stops. In addition to the main tour, there are three optional excursions, Bloody Lane, Burnside Bridge and Boteler's Ford. South Mountain has five main stops, each having one to three stops. The Siege of Harpers Ferry is two main stops each having three secondary stops. These detailed tours will take hours to complete. The amount of time needed for each of the tours is listed. The "How to use this guidebook" contains all the information needed to make the tour an enjoyable experience. Directions are detailed and complete. I wish this were the book I had my last time on South Mountain! I would have found the Reno Monument instead of driving up n down farm roads. Once at the stop, Orientation places and faces you. What Happened gives you a couple of paragraphs on why this is a stop placing you in the overall battle. Vignette is a personal human-interest story from the battle, told by the men that were fighting at this stop. Analysis brings the historical aspects into play. Here the selection of Ethan S. Rafuse is inspired. He presents a balanced picture of Lee and McClellan at Antietam. This is very important after so much McClellan the fool school of history. Another strong point are the Burnside Bridge tours, again the book avoids much of the now discredited history of that action. A good four-page essay "After Antietam" places the battle in historical perspective. An order of battle with an essay on "Organization, Weapons and Tactics" completes the book. This book works on several levels: it is an outstanding battlefield guide and a good general overview of the Maryland Campaign of 1862. In either case, it is a necessary addition to any Antietam library. See you at South Mountain, with this book we can find the Reno Monument!

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