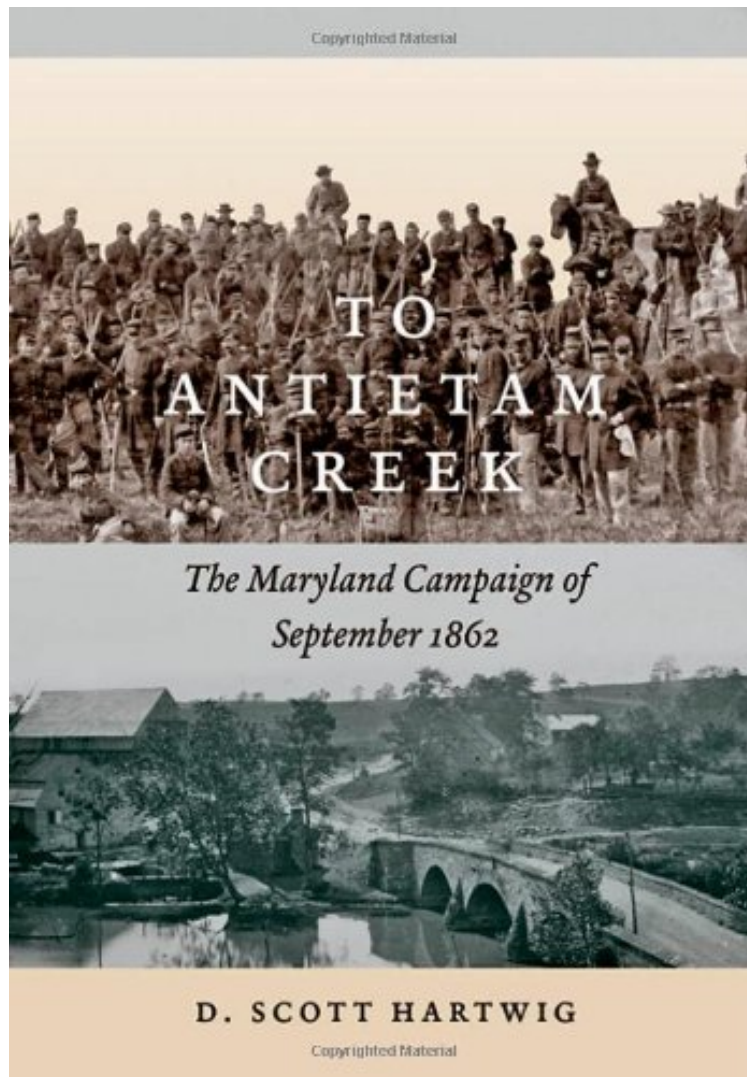


(Download pdf) To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862

# To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862

*David S. Hartwig*

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**David S. Hartwig : To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862:

47 of 50 people found the following review helpful. The Definitive Work on the Maryland Campaign By James A. RosebrockI knew from day one that I wanted to write a review of this book. I probably have not said anything different from many other reviewers. But I think my experience as a long time Antietam Battlefield volunteer and guide who has walked the battlefields of the Maryland Campaign, give me a different and useful perspective from the usual rank and file book reviewer. My battlefield tours wont fundamentally change as a result of reading TAC. Like

this book, I attempt to interpret the Maryland Campaign and Battle of Antietam objectively and factually. But the book's completeness, numerous insights, deep analysis and great stories will add a new richness and depth to my tours and programs that I would not otherwise have had I not read the book. Mine was not a cursory skimming of the book but a thorough note-taking margin scribbling underlining and highlighting expedition. Over the past three months, I have read it thoroughly, looked at virtually all the footnotes and scoured the bibliography. I can now say unequivocally that this is the best book I have ever read on the Maryland Campaign. And I have read many books. My small 400-volume library contains primarily studies of the Maryland campaign and the leaders and soldiers who fought there. What Scott Hartwig has done is to put it all together. He incorporates first person, primary source material not typically seen. He acknowledges and uses the foundational work of Carmen. He refers to events in the Antietam Studies at the National Archives that I have not seen elsewhere. He acknowledges and integrates the scholarship of Harsh, Rafuse and Sears in a fair and meaningful way. He disabuses many myths. The result is a balanced, readable, evocative, and thoroughly enjoyable work. For the first time, there is a complete telling of the Battle of Harpers Ferry. All the gap battles of South Mountain are covered. I was very pleased to see that the fighting at the Frosttown Gap that sometimes seems to take a back seat in some studies was prominently treated. While serious civil war students will learn much, general readers will benefit from the fact that Hartwig takes the time to explain many of the technical terms that would otherwise be lost to them. He explains what a column of divisions is, and thoroughly describes artillery organization, just to name two examples. What is particularly important for a margin scribbler like me is the immense detail. One is never left in any doubt how many infantry, cavalry or guns are in a particular fighting organization. We experience every fight from the first cavalry skirmishes around Poolesville through Solomon's Gap, and Quebec Schoolhouse to South Mountain and Harpers Ferry. One of Scott's talents is to clearly depict fighting at the tactical level. We visualize every bend in the road, clump of trees, or row of fences on the field. We smell the gunpowder and hear the cries of the men. It is great battlefield story telling no doubt polished by years as Gettysburg's Chief Historian. Essential to the book are its seventeen well-crafted maps. Hartwig takes on many of the interpretive myths. The size of McClellan's army is smaller than many think. The Federals suffered just as much as the Rebels from straggling and disorganized logistics. Union staff officers were outstanding. The ANV with several major exceptions was markedly inferior in this category. Sumner and Burnside may not have been the greatest wing commanders but they receive their dues here. We understand the superior organization of the Confederate artillery at the time of the battle. And we learn that there were several very good Union cavalry regiments that fought well in the Campaign and they are not the ones who fought their way out of Harpers Ferry. Jackson, Stuart and Longstreet were arguably among the greatest battlefield leaders of the war but we also see them for the human beings who they are. McClellan, the perennial whipping boy of the Civil War at long last gets the treatment that he deserves. Hartwig is unforgiving in many ways but he is objective and balanced. No one on either side of the McClellan debate (myself included) should argue with this. The analysis is excellent. You have to read it yourself. Hartwig beautifully describes the overall condition of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac in two stand-alone chapters. These are so good that I use them as a primary reference source for training of potential Antietam Battlefield Guides. There has never been as good a description of the movement to contact of the armies on September 15th and 16th as I see here. And the final hours before the armies begin their death struggle, on a pitch-black rainy night have never been told so well. The narrative harkens back at some level to Bruce Catton's own masterful description of the moments before the Battle of Antietam begins. There are some great extras. Appendix B Strength of Union and Confederate Forces is the best one-stop resource available to the general reader on the numbers. Don't overlook the notes. There is a veritable Sounding the Shallows here in the 84-page collection of 1,422 notes. You will miss out if you skip them. To some who would dismiss this book as just a story of the events up to Antietam, I would answer that this book is a necessarily foundation to understanding the tactical battle that Hartwig will treat us to when the second volume comes out. If you want to learn more about the Maryland Campaign than you can from any other book, you must move this one to the top of your reading list. If you have hesitated to get this book because of its massiveness, get over it and buy the book. From the first to the last, *To Antietam Creek* will reward you with the best-told story of the Maryland Campaign ever produced. Now we wait for Volume Two.

36 of 39 people found the following review helpful. all other treatments of The Antietam Campaign may well stand in the shadow of Scott Hartwig's *To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Civil War*. Librarian *To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862*, D. Scott Hartwig, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012, 8 black and white images, 17 maps, 3 appendices, bibliographic notes, essay on notes, index, 794pp., \$49.96. Release date: October 15, 2012. Both literally and figuratively, all other treatments of The Antietam Campaign may well stand in the shadow of Scott Hartwig's *To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862*. Having 800 pages and weighting three pounds, nine ounces, *To Antietam Creek* will be larger than any other book on most bookshelves. And . . . this is only half the campaign. Chapter one begins on August 30 with George McClellan smoking a cigar and requesting by telegram to rejoin the elements of the Army of the Potomac that are under the command of John Pope. The final chapter concludes with infantrymen and artillerymen in a restless sleep on the Henry Piper farm, George Line farms and the German Lutheran Church in Sharpsburg during the hours before dawn of September 17. The narrative style is reminiscent of Bruce Catton's *Army*

of the Potomac trilogy. The maps are clear, precise and well labeled. The September 14 Battle of South Mountain is described in seven chapters covering 221 pages. The capture of Harpers Ferry is covered in four chapters totaling 128 pages. Tom Clemens of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation states "By far the best work done on the Maryland Campaign . . . [it] will set the standard for many, many years to come." Yes, it looks that way. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Worth the Wait By John H. Clark III don't know that I can add much more to the plaudits that Hartwig's work has (deservedly) received here, but I am compelled to offer my own praise nonetheless. To Antietam Creek is outstanding. It is well written, exhaustively researched and presented in a lucid manner (which is easier said than done when it comes to the Maryland Campaign). It is an outstanding work of history that is also a commendable work of literature. To Antietam Creek has many stand-out features. Among them is how fair and judicious Hartwig's conclusions are throughout the work. Although I do not count myself as a fan of George McClellan, I do submit that it is time to take a closer look at his tenure with the Army of the Potomac and, if merited, challenge the conventional wisdom that surrounds and informs the historical view of his generalship. Consequently, I was very pleased to see that Hartwig is not out to "bash" McClellan and that he is instead interested in writing a work of history as opposed to a polemic. Thus, McClellan's initial moves in pursuit from Washington in early September 1862 generally, his actions in the wake of receiving special order 191, his movement to and plan for battle at South Mountain, and some of his movements on the 15th and 16th of September (particularly in view of the limitation imposed upon him by subordinates, time and weather) are, in contrast to their treatment in the hands of many other historians, viewed in a generally favorable and sympathetic light. However, Hartwig is not afraid to level criticism when it is due and McClellan (often), along with Burnside, Franklin, Hooker, Lee, Miles and others are rightly taken to task when the occasion warrants it. I was also very impressed with Hartwig's presentation of the battles at South Mountain (which is as good or better than any of the works devoted solely to that subject—some of which are very good) and Harper's Ferry. As I read his description of the fighting at South Mountain I realized that Hartwig has a gift for describing the landscape of a battlefield clearly and the ability to weave that description into the battle narrative. I've been to South Mountain several times but I don't know if I ever "saw" it more clearly than I did when it was set before me by Hartwig. As to Harper's Ferry, while it is true that it has all too often received short-shrift in Antietam studies, that is not the case here. Hartwig details the travails of the garrison, the misadventures of Dixon Miles (while at the same time giving Miles high marks for the use of his cavalry in gathering intelligence as the Confederates forded the Potomac) and lays out the tactical situation in clarifying detail. I found the presentation of the fighting for Maryland Heights and the break-out of the Union Cavalry from Harper's Ferry under Grimes Davis particularly riveting and informative. Furthermore, Hartwig led me to truly appreciate the outstanding performance of Lafayette McLaws in relation to Harper's Ferry and to grasp the extent that William Franklin's loss of moral courage helped to seal the garrison's doom. Finally, Hartwig's writing with regard to the eve of battle is a thing of beauty—it compares favorably to Bruce Catton's work in *Mr. Lincoln's Army* (to me there is no higher praise) and paints a picture of a night of foreboding before that which was arguably the worst day in American history. The only negative I have is with the lack of maps—but I was able to get around that by reading *To Antietam Creek with the Maps of Antietam* (another great work) next to me. I know people were waiting for this work for a long time. In my opinion the wait was worth it. This is simply the best book ever written on the pre-battle of Antietam stage of the Maryland Campaign. I can't wait for the sequel.

In early September 1862 thousands of Union soldiers huddled within the defenses of Washington, disorganized and discouraged from their recent defeat at Second Manassas. Confederate General Robert E. Lee then led his tough and confident Army of Northern Virginia into Maryland in a bold gamble to force a showdown that would win Southern independence. The future of the Union hung in the balance. The campaign that followed lasted only two weeks, but it changed the course of the Civil War. For the sesquicentennial of Antietam and the Maryland Campaign, D. Scott Hartwig delivers a riveting first installment of a two-volume study of the campaign and climactic battle. It takes the reader from the controversial return of George B. McClellan as commander of the Army of the Potomac through the Confederate invasion, the siege and capture of Harpers Ferry, the day-long Battle of South Mountain, and, ultimately, to the eve of the great and terrible Battle of Antietam.

"The first volume of this two volume set is so very well written and all-inclusive on the detailed facts of this Maryland Campaign that it looks like this two volume set just might be the very best ever written on this campaign and battle." (Lone Star Book) "It is difficult to imagine that a future study on this campaign could supersede Hartwig's work." (Harry S. Laver Civil War Book) "By far the best work done on the Maryland Campaign, *To Antietam Creek* will set the standard for many, many years to come." (Thomas G. Clemens, Save Historic Antietam Foundation) "A new and monumental study of the origins and initiation of the Maryland Campaign of 1862... *To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862* is a tour de force which will stand as the preeminent and final word on the subject... A must read for any serious Civil War student interested in the crucial events leading up to the Battle of Antietam. It is an instant classic on the subject, superbly written, and a ready preface to what will be an equally

important and fresh approach to the battle in a second book." (Arnold Blumberg Blue and Gray Magazine)"Hartwig has unquestionably produced the most thoroughly researched book published in this Civil War sesquicentennial period." (James I. Robertson Jr. Journal of Southern History)"[ To Antietam Creek's] sheer comprehensiveness makes it indispensable for studying the Maryland Campaign. For the first time, the entirety of the campaign, from the end of the Second Battle of Bull Run on August 30 to the night of September 16 is covered in detail... The narrative is clear and strikingly vivid, making for a compelling read... Hartwig offers a wonderful study on the battlefield commanders as well, maintaining a fair and balanced account... Hartwig's work on the text is clear, and the result is a comprehensive, engaging, and informative study." (Ryan Gregornik Southern Historian)" To Antietam Creek is a masterfully detailed and exceptionally well-written narrative of the Union and Confederate perspectives on the Maryland Campaign leading up to the bloodiest day in the history of the Western Hemisphere. It skilfully examines the armies and the men who both commanded and served in them. It disentangles complicated battle narratives and provides balanced coverage of the personalities and major decisions of the campaign. Finally, it deconstructs many persistent myths about the campaign and uses abundant evidence to support its conclusions. It should serve as a definitive work on the buildup to Antietam, and its companion volume should be eagerly awaited." (Robert Sidwell H-Net s)" To Antietam Creek makes a very substantial contribution to the scholarship on the Maryland Campaign. It is thoroughly researched and taps previously unused sources. As the most comprehensive work available on the campaign leading up to Antietam, it will inform both historians and casual readers; its gripping narrative forcefully conveys some [of] the excitement that participants in the campaign must have felt. We should look forward to D. Scott Hartwig's concluding volume on the Battle of Antietam itself." (Vince Armstrong Michigan War Studies )About the AuthorD. Scott Hartwig is Supervisory Park Historian at the Gettysburg National Military Park. He is author of The Battle of Antietam and the Maryland Campaign of 1862: A Bibliography.