



Not War But Murder: Cold Harbor 1864

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Ernest Furgurson, author of **Ashes of Glory** and **Chancellorsville 1863**, brings his talents to a pivotal and often neglected Civil War battle—the fierce, unrelenting slaughter at Cold Harbor, Virginia, which ended the lives of 10,000 Union soldiers.

In June of 1864, the Army of the Potomac attacked heavily entrenched Confederate forces outside of Richmond, hoping to break the strength of Robert E. Lee and take the capital. Facing almost certain death, Union soldiers pinned their names to their uniforms in the forlorn hope that their bodies would be identified and buried. Furgurson sheds new light on the personal conflicts that led to Grant's worst defeat and argues that it was a watershed moment in the war. Offering a panorama rich in detail and revealing anecdotes that brings the dark days of the campaign to life, **Not War But Murder** is historical narrative as compelling as any novel.

Not War But Murder: Cold Harbor 1864 Details

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From Reader Review Not War But Murder: Cold Harbor 1864 for online ebook

Jeffrey says

One of the better war history books I've read for getting across personalities of the protagonists (although it really only covers Grant and Meade) that I've read. It was a little bit schizophrenic about who he liked less Grant or Meade, but given how complicated the situation was, it is certainly understandable. I already had some understanding of the situation due to a wonderful magazine article by Mike Rinella, so I can't really judge how well this book taught the basics.

Joe says

For a drier history book this was well written and for the most part did not bog down too much in an overwhelming number of trivial facts.

David Elkin says

A very different look at Grant, Meade and the campaign. Some very excellent points made. Quick and easy read. I was reading a pre-pub edition so I did not have any maps in the book. I enjoyed the candid appraisal of how the "dual-command" of the AotP by Grant and Meade led much to the terrible decision to attack a fortified position head on. Grant really did underestimate Lee's ability to respond.

Worth a look

Brian Miracle says

Good account of the events surrounding the disastrous Union attack at Cold Harbor. Although Grant himself expressed regret for this attack, it did not deter him from his goal to defeat Lee's army.

Sean Chick says

The combat portion is a bit short but there is plenty on the lead up to the battle.

Glenn Robinson says

Superb account of one of the bloodiest one sided battles of the war of rebellion. Cold Harbor cost the North thousands of men that needlessly died. Some of the Northern Generals viewed this battle as pure murder on

the part of Meade and Grant. Excited to know that my great great grandfather fought here and did well against the South. Well researched, well written. General Grant did not like this one battle brought up and rarely spoke of it afterwards. This battle saved Richmond and was one of the prime reasons why the war went on for almost one more year. General Lee did a superb job at marshaling his meager resources and his troops out fought, out maneuvered and outlasted the North.

Tom Darrow says

Great book. Well researched. Focuses on the command struggles between Grant and Meade and how it could cause problems. Walks that fine line between the "Grant was a genius" and "Grant was a butcher" camps. There is a collection of source materials (army command structure, casualties, etc) that would be very useful for someone interested in this specific battle over others.

Gregory Strong says

A good survey of one of the most controversial and terrible engagements in the Civil War.

Shelly♥ says

I really enjoyed this book. Although I've visited Cold Harbor several times, even taking a guided tour through part of it, this book brought the story to life and gave me an understanding that I'd not yet had on the actions there in 1864.

It's well written, combining first person accounts with the historical record. The author has a steep bibliography. He has managed to pull out the bits that explain the action without getting bogged down in overtelling the story. He especially addresses the command issues that the Union army faced, and how they contributed to the heavy losses. Cold Harbor was a brutal and vicious action, and this book will definitely help clarify what happened in those days.

I recommend for all my Civil War friends and really anyone who loves military history.

Mark Saha says

This is an excellent book for professional historians, but a real slog for the more casual reader. There is almost too much information dumped on the reader. Letters from participants are compelling, but slow the forward progress of the narrative. The book also assumes more familiarity with the various military units and chains of command that the average reader is likely to have patience with.

Again, an extremely well researched book. Readers who feel are well read on the battle will be most likely to appreciate this.

Mark Klinepeter says

A very good book about one of the worst battles of the Civil War. I like the mixing of what the generals are saying and what the common soldiers did and saw. Well researched and written.

Cary Kostka says

An excellent description of the events that took place just prior to, during, and shortly after the conclusion of the Cold Harbor campaign. Highly recommended for those with an interest in Civil War events, or for those getting their feet wet in this time period.

The book was a chilling view into the many disconnects that led to so many unneeded deaths. I would have hoped this lesson would have been learned by now, but unfortunately it has not.

Jim says

As I stated last year, I think I've read more books about the American Civil War than any other historical event. And here is yet another book on the ACW. This one is about the Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia, in 1864. Not as famous as Gettysburg or Shiloh or some other battles, Cold Harbor was second to no other battle for sheer horror. It was a part of Gen. Grant's Overland Campaign in 1864 to push on to Richmond and destroy Gen. Lee's army. After pressing forward after the Wilderness and Spotsylvania at terrible cost, Grant faced Lee at Cold Harbor less than ten miles from Richmond. Grant believed that with one more push, he could break Lee's army and take Richmond, ending the war before the 1864 election in November (and assuring Lincoln's reelection). Instead, Grant's army assaulted Lee's well-entrenched army on June 3, 1864, and it was a slaughter. It was the most useless, one-sided battle of the war-Grant's worst defeat and, as it turned out, Lee's last victory. Ferguson tells the story giving us a lot of anecdotes that reveal what life -and death-was like for the common soldiers on both sides. He also examines the thinking of the commanders on the ground. He explains that the disaster of Cold Harbor was due very much to the friction between Grant and George Meade. Meade, the victor of Gettysburg, was the commander of the Northern Army of the Potomac, but Grant was overall commander of all Union armies, and by traveling with Meade, was looking over his shoulder continuously. This led to a divided command. As far as I know, no one has ever discussed this issue. It seems to me it would have been more efficient for the command structure if Grant had replaced Meade with one of his own men, such as William F. "Baldy" Smith. Perhaps the war would have been shortened, perhaps not. As it was, due to Cold Harbor, morale plummeted in the AoP, but then Grant pulled off a coup. He swiftly crossed the James River with his army to get to the south of Richmond. Ferguson says Lee was not surprised by the move, but he was surprised by the speed with which Grant executed that move... In the end, Lee was trapped in Petersburg, besieged by Grant. The end was only a matter of time...

Charles says

The author's apparent thesis is that command relations between Grant and Meade, aggravated by Grant's placing his headquarter with the Army of the Potomac and the dotting press coverage afforded to Grant (and not Meade), cause a break down that resulted in the disaster

