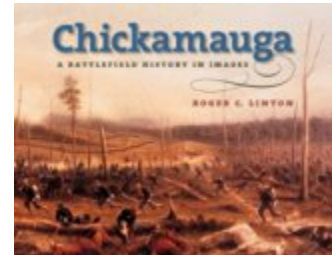


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Roger Linton. *Chickamauga: A Battlefield History in Images*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004. xi + 160 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-2598-9.

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## A Tribute to Our First Civil War Military Park

Military historians depend upon visual materials to strengthen their work. Without effective maps and illustrations, elegant prose and an encyclopedic retelling of a battle can confuse even the most knowledgeable reader. Roger Linton's *Chickamauga: A Battlefield History in Images* more than satisfies this need for supporting images. This collection of battlefield photos, drawings, and maps brings the Chickamauga battlefield off the written page. The book also serves a more practical function. Linton, the primary author of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park's audio driving tour, designed the book to broaden a visitor's experience at the battlefield. Future park visitors will benefit from the brief synopses of the fighting as well as the driving directions that link thirty battlefield sites into a well-organized tour.

The book's strength is obvious the moment one opens it. By compiling over one hundred wartime, postwar, and modern pictures, Linton has created a detailed visual record of Chickamauga's important landmarks and military positions. At the book's core, however, are the photographs taken after the government chartered the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park—the nation's first Civil War battlefield park—in 1890. Several pictures capture the community consumed in 1863 by the bloodiest battle of the Civil War's western theater. The Brotherton and Widow Glenn farms are well presented, and the postwar photo of the "Lost Corner School" on the Viniard farm, which Union soldiers may have converted into an impromptu fort on the battle's first day, is wonderful. On the military side, the photographs of the artillery position in the northern part of

the Poe Field, the Widow Glenn farm, and that of Eli Lilly standing amidst his old Union artillery station in the western portion of the Viniard farm are highlights. Aerial photos demonstrate the physical relationship between the various scenes of fighting and clarify the tactical situation confronting both armies. When used in conjunction with a more detailed military monograph on Chickamauga, these images enhance the reader's understanding of the battle and the terrain.

Of course, the author also designed this book as a driving tour for park visitors. He couples succinct summaries of troop movements and engagements at a comprehensive list of sites with a variety of images that elaborate upon the park's basic driving tour. For instance, at Snodgrass Hill, the final stop on the tour, visitors will profit from the three battle accounts and twelve images that describe how Major General George H. Thomas's hodgepodge Union force made a desperate stand after the Federal right wing collapsed. An aerial picture taken from Snodgrass Hill in 1928 shows the fields that soldiers from Major General Gordon Granger's reserve corps traversed in their critical march to the front on September 20. With these added images and text, visitors gain a greater sense of this portion of the battlefield and its place within the larger scope of the battle.

It seems somewhat nitpicky to suggest improvements to such a practical and useful work. There are areas, however, where the author could have strengthened it. Despite decent coverage of the farms and structures on what became the battlefield, Linton devotes the bulk of the text,

even the image captions, to the fighting itself. Full military studies provide greater detail on the fighting than Linton could hope to achieve, so here is where he might have adhered more closely to his particular niche. His coverage of the battle is solid and appropriately concise. But he could have added fuller accounts of the battlefield from soldiers, local residents, and others to supplement existing scholarship. By including such depictions of the landscape, Linton could have established a stronger comparative base. For instance, he includes a photo of Lilly's Union artillery's location on September 18 near Alexander's Bridge. The image reveals that woods later covered that area, but Linton mentions that it was open field in 1863 before describing an act of individual bravery there. Due to the changing nature of historic landscapes, before and after their preservation, a predominantly visual tour needs to help people recognize how the view today differs from what soldiers saw then. Bolstering his images and battle summaries with reports on the terrain in 1863 would allow visitors to better reconcile the present with the past.

Although these additions might have made this strong book even stronger, their absence does not detract from what is a useful and appealing volume. For scholars and Civil War enthusiasts, Linton has put together a number of photographs and illustrations that expand our appreciation of the Chickamauga battlefield. Pictures and detail on Lee and Gordon's Mill, Jay's Mill, the Widow Glenn's farm, Bloody Pond, Snodgrass Hill, and other tour stops reveal what written military history cannot. The book's most common use will likely be as a battlefield guide or keepsake, a purpose for which Linton seems especially qualified. His text and images offer an insightful analysis of the battle, while also offering a pictorial history of the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. Anyone interested in historic preservation knows all too well that battlefields both change over time and face continuous pressure from residents and developers. Linton's *Chickamauga* explains to a wide audience what made the ground along Chickamauga Creek so significant while performing a worthy visual tribute to our country's first Civil War military park.

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