

# H-Net Reviews

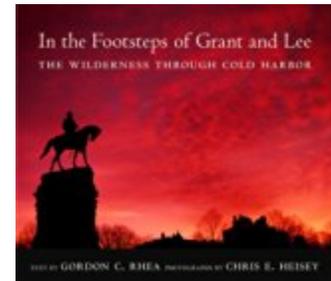
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Gordon C. Rhea. *In the Footsteps of Grant and Lee: The Wilderness through Cold Harbor*. Photographs by Chris Heisey. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007. viii + 134 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-3269-2.

Reviewed by Robert Thompson

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Commissioned by Hugh F. Dubrulle



## The Overland Campaign: A Summary with Pictures

In the course of the last decade, Gordon Rhea has become the de facto expert on the Overland Campaign of 1864. He has published four masterful volumes to date that dissect that critical campaign into slices based upon action at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, the North Anna River, and Cold Harbor. These books provide detailed studies of the movements, strategy, tactics, and critical decisions of a campaign that changed the face of the Civil War and matched two men who were, arguably, the war's greatest generals, Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant. Any historian seeking a scholarly study of the campaign simply must start with Rhea's works. However, if that is what you are looking for, then this latest book, *In the Footsteps of Lee and Grant: The Wilderness through Cold Harbor*, is one that you can perhaps overlook.

Rhea's newest book, done in partnership with photographer Chris Heisey, is what is referred to as a "coffee table book." Essentially, it offers a summary of the Overland Campaign by Rhea combined with new photography of the battlefields by Heiser, which are blended with a selection of wartime photographs. Rhea's summary is insightful and reflects his superb knowledge of the subject matter. Of course, it is lacking in detail, as befits the character of the book, and it also lacks any notes, bibliography, or even an index. Therefore, anyone doing an

analysis or research on the campaign will likely be frustrated by the book's contents.

It is recommended, therefore, that any reader simply accept the book for what it is and the value it does provide. Heiser's photographs are often stunning and combined with Rhea's knowledge of the campaign, the book provides wonderful feelings with its history. Many of these photographs are lush and, frankly, quite beautiful. They depict pastoral scenes of quiet, peaceful fields, glens, and rivers, which contrast dramatically with the horrific events that took place there 145 years ago. This is especially true in those instances where there is an accompanying photograph that was taken within days of the battle. In addition, the colorful maps depicting the key battles are some the best one might find and are worth the price of purchase alone. Unlike the maps one typically finds in many histories, these are detailed, clear, and large enough to permit one to analyze and gain a good understanding of the key movements during each battle.

In summary, while this book is far from being a major addition to the historiography of the Overland Campaign, it is more than worth the time required to peruse its pages. In its own way, it makes an interesting companion volume to Rhea's more scholarly works and, on that basis alone, comes highly recommended.

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