



# Encyclopedia of the American Civil War [5 volumes]: A Political, Social, and Military History

By David S. Heidler

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**Encyclopedia of the American Civil War [5 volumes]: A Political, Social, and Military History** By David S. Heidler **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—In his foreword to this set, noted historian James M. McPherson characterizes this well-written encyclopedia as "the best" work of reference currently available on the Civil War. Many readers will concur. The editors and more than 250 distinguished contributors present some 1600 alphabetically arranged, concise articles on every aspect of the period, supplemented by informative battle maps and many of the most famous period black-and-white photographs in crisp, clear reproductions. Ranging from a few paragraphs to several pages, the entries create a comprehensive and compelling picture of the war. They include not only detailed discussions of the major and minor battles and military life in general, but also the war's effects on society, from government, politics, and technology to journalism, commerce, and home life. The first four volumes contain a wealth of cross-references, easing the way for research. The final volume offers a useful selection of critical primary-source documents, a chronology of the war, an extensive bibliography, and an index to all volumes. An all-together excellent resource for research or general browsing interest.

*Starr E. Smith, Fairfax County Public Library, VA*

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After more than 100 years, the Civil War still attracts more public interest than any other event in U.S. history. This fact is reflected in the inordinate number of books, well over 50,000, written about the conflict. ABCCLIO has published the most comprehensive reference work, offering more than 1,600 signed entries, over 300 contributors, more than 500 illustrations and 75 maps, and over 250 primary source documents. The encyclopedia provides in A-Z format information on the war's strategic aims, diplomatic and political maneuvering, key military actions (with descriptions of more than 60 engagements), key participants (civilian and military), and impact on American society and history. Mary Ann Ball Bickerdyke, a Union Army nurse; Matthew Brady, a photographer who accompanied the Union Army in the first main battle; and military leaders such as Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, and James Longstreet are just a few of the individuals covered. The encyclopedia not only treats the military aspects of the war but presents full coverage of the politics, literature, art, music, and homefront events. Every conceivable subject—from *Chickamauga*, *Battle of* to *Harper's Weekly* to *Gatling gun* to *Jews*-- receives consideration. Entries range from less than one-half page to more than eighteen pages for *Atlanta campaign*. Each essay is followed by *see also* references to related entries elsewhere in the set, as well as extensive suggested readings for deeper research on that particular subject. The final volume compiles more than 250 topically arranged documents, including Abraham Lincoln's famous "A house divided against itself cannot stand" speech, excerpts from Frederick Douglass' "My Escape from Slavery" speech, Jefferson Davis' "Proclamation of 1861," the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, and more. These primary source materials are an invaluable enhancement to the set. Following the documents, one finds five appendixes. Appendix I lists the Confederate States of America's general officers, followed by its government in appendix II. Appendix III lists the officers of the United States of America, followed by its government in appendix IV. Appendix V<sup>A</sup> is a directory of Civil War battlefield sites with addresses, phone numbers, and maps. Following the appendixes is a "Civil War Chronology" showing relationships between military actions and political, diplomatic, and social developments. A brief glossary provides definitions for the researcher unfamiliar with such terms as *cashier*

("dishonorably discharge an office") and *retrograde* ("an orderly retreat usually designed to move away from an enemy"). An extensive bibliography lists all the resources referenced throughout the volumes. The index indicates main entries in bold print, while illustrations are identified with italics. The index is detailed and comprehensive. For example, under *AfricanAmerican sailors*, there are references to individuals who relate to this category, such as Gideon Welles and Francis Shoup. Under *Gettysburg*, *battle of* one finds page references not only to information about the battle but also to related people, places, and events. The set is handsomely designed, with numerous period photographs complementing the text. There are some minor criticisms regarding layout, which makes maneuvering the set a bit cumbersome. The index to all volumes can only be found in volume five, which means the researcher has to use two volumes most of the time; a cumulative index in each volume would have made access easier. The index cites only page numbers, leaving the user to guess which volume a page might be in. Neither the bibliographies nor the directory to battle sites makes reference to the copious information that is available through the World Wide Web. However, these are small shortcomings. *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War* is the most comprehensive reference work written about its topic, providing both the novice and the expert an opportunity to expand their knowledge of this vital aspect of U.S. history. Recommended for high-school, public, and academic libraries. *RBB*

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#### Review

"*Encyclopedia of the American Civil War* is outstanding, and every serious Civil War historian will want access to it. . . . Historians of the Civil War era owe a debt of gratitude to everyone connected with this ambitiously conceived, wonderfully realized, new resource." - **The Journal of Military History**

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"*Encyclopedia of the American Civil War* is the most comprehensive reference work written about its topic, providing both the novice and the expert an opportunity to expand their knowledge of this vital aspect of U.S. history. Recommended for high school, public, and academic libraries." - **Booklist, Starred Review**

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"This impressive new encyclopedia should become a standard source for students, specialists, and others in the general public who either specialize in or are simply fascinated by the American Civil War. . . . As a Civil War historian, this reviewer is both impressed and pleased with this new work. . . . This is an important work that is highly recommended for any and all libraries and individuals with an interest in the American Civil War." - **American Reference Books Annual**

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