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Army Of The Heartland: The Army Of Tennessee, 1861--1862



Synopsis

Most of the Civil War was fought on Southern soil. The responsibility for defending the Confederacy rested with two great military forces. One of these armies defended the heartland of the Confederacy - a vital area that included the state of Tennessee and large portions of Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Kentucky. *Army of the Heartland* is the story of that army. It details obstacles this army faced, including ineffective leadership and conflicts between leaders. Connelly also analyzes the impact of each successive commander of the army.

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Customer Reviews

Connelly wrote this excellent account of the first year of the Army of the Tennessee from the viewpoint of the high command and it is a very thorough and pretty damning one. Starting with the Tennessee militia, then on to Forts Henry and Donelson, then on to the surprise counterattacks at Shiloh and Corinth and Bragg's remarkable but pointless invasion of Kentucky in the fall of 1862, Connelly relentlessly describes and criticises the actions or inactions of the generals and shows how most of Tennessee was lost to the Union in a few months at comparatively little cost through the sheer incompetence of the Southern generalship. Polk, Floyd, Pillow, Albert Sidney Johnston, Beauregard, Kirby Smith, Van Dorn, Bragg, and especially Jefferson Davis all receive lashings at the hands of this historian, whose research and conclusions are impeccable and damn near irrefutable. On the downside, the maps in this book are atrocious (but usable) and sometimes Connelly is rather ignorant about the Union Army. By staying in the command tent, Connelly ignores the story of the common soldier. The biggest flaw is that Connelly is so fierce in his criticisms of the

Confederate high command that I found it hard to believe they did ANYTHING right.

Although Connelly wrote this book in the 1960s it remains the top book about the Army of Tennessee in 1861 and 1862. Much of this book deals with the formation of the army largely from the state army/militia of Tennessee, characters who helped form the army like Governor Isham Harris, and early leaders of the army such as Polk, A.S. Johnston, Bragg, E.K. Smith, and others. The book also delves into the strategies, policies, and politics of the army and the army's dealings with the Confederate government and President Jefferson Davis. Connelly also discusses topics that deal with the ineptitude of some early AOT leaders. Much of the discussion centers on these topics, but there is also discussion of early battles such as Shiloh, Richmond (KY), and Perryville. I believe the second volume of Connelly's work on the AOT (Autumn of Glory) is superior to Army of the Heartland, but this is still a well-written, informative, and interesting look at the formation of the Confederacy's largest army in the Western Theater. It is not a surprise this book, and Autumn of Glory, was named one of the 100 essential Civil War titles by Civil War magazine.

"Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee 1861-1862", by Thomas L. Connelly. This is a very thoroughly researched examination of the Confederate Army in the Western Theater from the beginnings of Secession to the Confederate retreat from Kentucky at the end of 1862. It is the first of a two-volume set by Connelly about this army - the other volume being titled "Autumn of Glory" and about twice as long. Of the two volumes, I enjoyed this one more because it displays how a group of everyday peacetime people managed to evolve into an organized (more or less) machine of resistance and War. A very interesting part of Connelly's effort is to debunk many of the long-standing (and cherished) myths about the Civil War, its' leaders and its' armies - and many of his assessments are quite convincing. This volume and its' sequel are an engrossing treatment of an important and long-neglected element of the Civil War.

The Lost Cause Tradition revolves around Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. Most of books written on Civil War history are about battles that occur in the Eastern Theater. This was the case during the war and has not improved in the years since. If the Confederacy had a chance to win, if they had heroic figures they were in the battles and leaders of the AoNV. From 1861 to the end of the war, a second army fought and died for the South. These men gave as much as the men in the East without inspiring leadership. Time after time, they saw victory taken from them. Often they endured forced marches to save themselves only to repeat the cycle of defeat. Their story is

largely ignored or told as the "other army" in histories of Union armies. The was the Confederate States of America's Army of Tennessee, brave men badly lead who saw the war through. Army of the Heartland, first published in 1967, is the history of the building the army. Isham Harris, the CSA governor of Tennessee delivers an army to hold his state. Jefferson Davis sent Albert Sidney Johnston, his best general, to lead it. However, the army was not much more than an unarmed semi drilled mob. Johnston was unequal to the task and Leonidas Polk demonstrated a willingness to do his own thing. Facing them was an unknown Union General named U.S. Grant. This is the story of Grant's move to Corinth Mississippi as seen by the army he defeated. After Johnston's death, Braxton Bragg assumes command. Bragg is a close personal friend of Jeff Davis, who has great confidence in him. However, Davis is even closer to Leonidas Polk and has great confidence in William J. Hardee. Add in an endemic of "Kentucky Fever" and we have the Perryville Campaign. Autumn of Glory, published in 1971, takes us from Perryville to Nashville. While the AoT still existed after Nashville, it was no longer an army. The author covers this time but rightly considers the survivors to be more a collection of veteran units than an army. This is the years when they fight and lose central Tennessee under Bragg. The Georgia campaign under Joe Johnston and the return home under Hood. 1862 to 1865 are the years of the big battles and the political infighting that paralyze this army. No American army was ever as poorly lead or suffered government indifference on this scale. Richmond was paralyzed unable to choose between pro and anti Bragg factions. Unable to consider removing either faction, Davis dithered, as Tennessee was lost. This is a hard book to read as the army is doubly damned for not winning and for losing its' supply base. In the end, John Bell Hood leads this army to death in the largest charge of the war at Franklin and destruction at Nashville. Connelly wrote these books years ago. The maps are not great and they are not highly detailed. They are one of the most readable army histories ever written. Classic is a very over used word and one we see often. This is one of the few times that it applies and should be used. On publication, these were seen to be special and needed books. That has not changed and shows no sign of changing. The only improvement would be to publish them as one book. You can do that with a single purchase and reading one after the other. Enjoy them; they are a great and informative read.

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