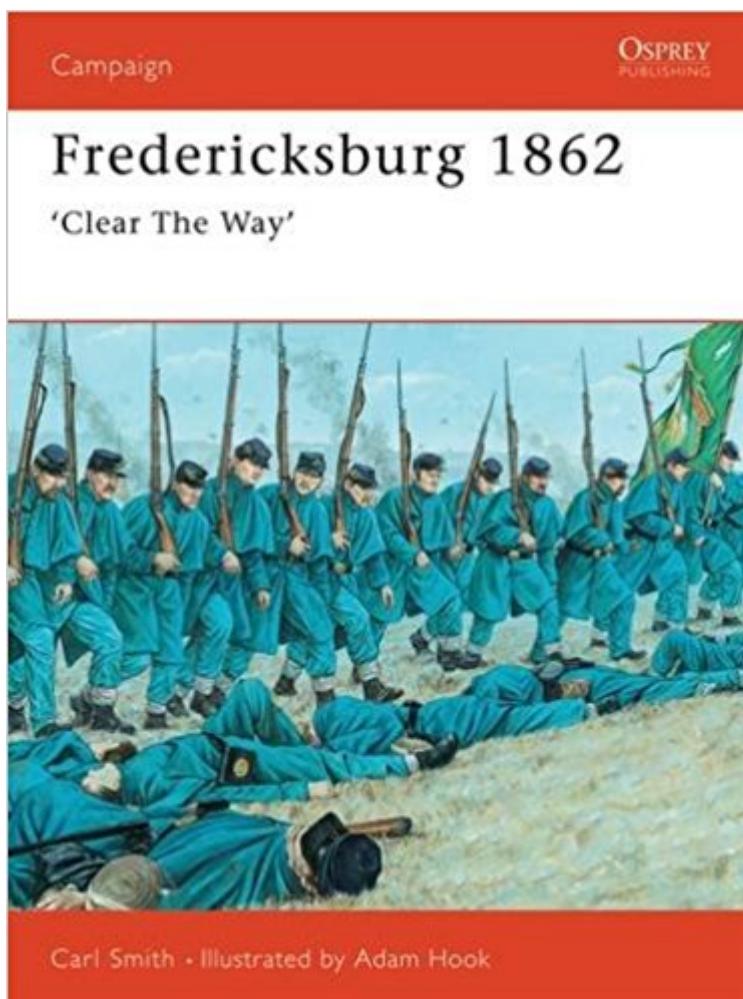


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Fredericksburg 1862: 'Clear The Way' (Campaign)



Synopsis

Osprey's examination of the Battle of Fredericksburg of the American Civil War (1861-1865). In December 1862, things were still confused for the Union. Antietam had been a failure for both sides, and although the battle showed that the Union army could bring the Confederates to bay, it couldn't pin them in one place long enough to destroy them. In December 1862, General Burnside, newly appointed to command the Army of the Potomac, planned to seize and secure the town of Fredericksburg, and then take the Confederate capital of Richmond. Carl Smith's book details the epic struggle that engulfed the Union side as it crossed the Rappahannock on December 11, encountering stiff opposition from Lee's men.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Highly visual guides to history's greatest conflicts, detailing the command strategies, tactics, and experiences of the opposing forces throughout each campaign, and concluding with a guide to the battlefields today.

Carl Smith has had a life long fascination with many aspects of the military history of the United States. A specialist writer of many years experience, Carl has worked for several popular military magazines. He has written several volumes on the key battles of the Civil War in Osprey's Campaign series. Carl lives and works in Virginia, USA.

Smith's is one of the better Osprey volumes, with some evocative Hook 'paintings' (I hesitate to use the word "art") and nicely detailed maps of the fighting in and around the town and Marye's Heights. While the narrative is a bit choppy, in terms of style, it makes its point. The detailed OoB is quite valuable . . . and would be more so if it weren't for the disturbing number of typos (The 22nd Mass regiment with 2100+ men? A battery with 21 Napoleons.) Not definitive, nor is it intended to be, but valuable nonetheless.

Great book relating not only the Irish Brigade but entire campaign. Colored pictures greatly enhance experience. I would recommend it's purchase.

I hate to nit-pick, but I found Fredericksburg 1862 and Chancellorsville 1863 to be replete with errors, at least the versions I read, both Military Book Club editions. The lists of errors I sent to Osprey went on for a three and six pages respectively. Many of them were relatively minor, but there were enough of them, and some not so minor, to cause me to consider the books greatly flawed. Let me note here that I live near Fredericksburg and volunteer once a month at the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center, so I am fairly familiar with the battles in question. I also want to point out up front that Osprey was very receptive to my comments and implied that future editions may incorporate some changes. I own more than 75 Osprey titles and that this is certainly not the norm for their products, many of which are excellent. Some types of problems I noted with the books included:- spelling errors such as Sedgewick for Sedgwick (not always, but several times), Siegel for Sigel and Hero Van Borke for Heros von Borcke.- geographic errors such as inaccurate descriptions of the road net, an incorrect locations for geographic features, and faulty relative positions.- graphical errors such as inaccurate troop dispositions (multiple instances), incorrect unit symbology and faulty depiction of vegetation on maps.- factual errors such as placing events on the wrong date, incorrectly identifying unit commanders and referring to Chancellorsville as a farmhouse rather than an inn. I recommend waiting for a revised edition.

Another typical Carl Smith Osprey book, which is to say it is full of factual errors and has a confusing description of the battle. I really feel that the book should be 1.5 stars; the maps and gaining a general feeling for the battle are worth more than 1 star, but 2 is being a little too generous. The maps in the book are good, particularly in showing the layout of the town. The rest of the book is suspect. Smith makes a lot of errors, most of them minor, but enough that anyone using this as the only reference to the battle will get much of it wrong. For instance, he gets such basic

details as the date of the Mud March wrong. The two generals that went to Washington after the battle in a revolt against Burnside were Newton and Cochrane; Smith says it was Newton and Brooks. These are just two of the many errors found within the text. The description of the battle itself is somewhat confusing. It's as though the original manuscript was too long and needed to be shortened, but the editing work was done in a rush. The assault on Marye's Heights -- which units attacked when and did what -- is particularly confusing and incomplete. This confusing narrative style is also found in Smith's other Osprey books. These are just a few of the problems, which is unfortunate as Fredericksburg is an under reported battle. Most of Osprey's books are reasonably good, but stay far, far away from Carl Smith's books (Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and this).

Carl Smith's latest book is useful for the military historian, the reenactor, the wargamer and the general public. The book provides a useful order of battle that allows one to determine what units participated in the battle. In a very readable manner, the book covers the famous charges by Union troops against Confederate positions on Marye's heights. More notable is the book's coverage of the savage street fighting that took place prior to these famous charges. The book has three splendid 3-dimension maps as well as a host of smaller ones. The book is also well illustrated by Adam Hook; Hook's best work perhaps being the picture of Sgt. Kirkland giving water to wounded federal soldiers. All in all, I heartily recommend this book.

The diagrams and orders of battle are very good. Some of the diagrams, including that of the attack on the town, are invaluable. However, if using this as a serious reference, make sure you have a second source. There are a number of disturbing errors. A quote credited to Longstreet was actually by Alexander Porter. The dates on the Mud March are wrong (or perhaps this section is just poorly written). The name of one of the two generals who criticized Burnside in Washington is wrong! These errors throw into serious question the editing and validity of the work.

Carl Smith does a decent job, but the book is confusing to follow. I am an avid Civil War researcher, and this is my first in-depth look at the Fredericksburg Campaign. OK for starters. A lot of good detail in specific areas, but difficult to follow in the whole scheme of things. Maps could incorporate a larger area for an easier way to follow along. Again, a good beginner book.

I have an earlier version by Osprey but the internal contents are no different. Nicely detailed. Well illustrated. Nice graphics. Good maps. The unit descriptions are good. A good book on this particular

bloody battle.

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