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A Pocket History of the Civil War

Martin Graham
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Martin F. Graham's *A Pocket History of the Civil War* is a font of information that will interest a wide range of readers, including the ardent history buff. An expert on America's most divisive war, Graham has written or contributed to several Civil War histories. He is also a past editor of Blue and Gray magazine and a contributor to Civil War Times Illustrated.

Graham opens with explanations of the motivations behind each side of the conflict and outlines the organization of the two armies. He cites regulation sizes of companies, regiments, and brigades and gives accounts of the daily lives of soldiers.

In subsequent chapters, the author reports on the rations of soldiers fighting on both sides—with a full description of hardtack, a biscuit made from flour and water—and documents their uniforms, including hats, underwear, and boots. Graham also shows diagrams of the types of cannons used—muzzle-loading smooth-bore, muzzle-loading rifled cannon, and breech-loading rifled cannon—along with graphs indicating the numbers each side possessed. Accompanying charts list steps to load a musket and a rifle, including specifications and ammunition for each. The formality of the diagrams is relieved by captivating contextual anecdotes about the war.

The bulk of the text, graphs, and drawings in the book depict the main battles and campaigns of the Civil War. Tactics, positions, defeats, and victories are described; data include the numbers of men engaged in the fighting and the casualties. The battles are listed chronologically: Bull Run; the Monitor vs. the Virginia; Shiloh; Antietam; Fredericksburg; Chancellorsville; Gettysburg; Chickamauga; The Overland Campaign; the Atlanta Campaign; the March to the Sea; and Hood's Tennessee Campaign, among others. The book's final chapters cover efforts to attain peace as well as interesting characters and events of the war. The author quotes from dispatches between commanders, letters written by soldiers, and written commentary from President Abraham Lincoln and the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis.

Graham concludes with a glossary, recommended reading list, tests of knowledge, endnotes, and an index. Through a plethora of facts he paints a picture of the horror of war, particularly the fights of brother against brother. Convenient to carry for those visiting Civil War sites, with a trim size of about five by seven inches, *A Pocket Book of the Civil War* is an important reference to own and a reminder that war is not a glorious adventure, but an endeavor filled with death and destruction.
MARY POPHAM (June 13, 2011)

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