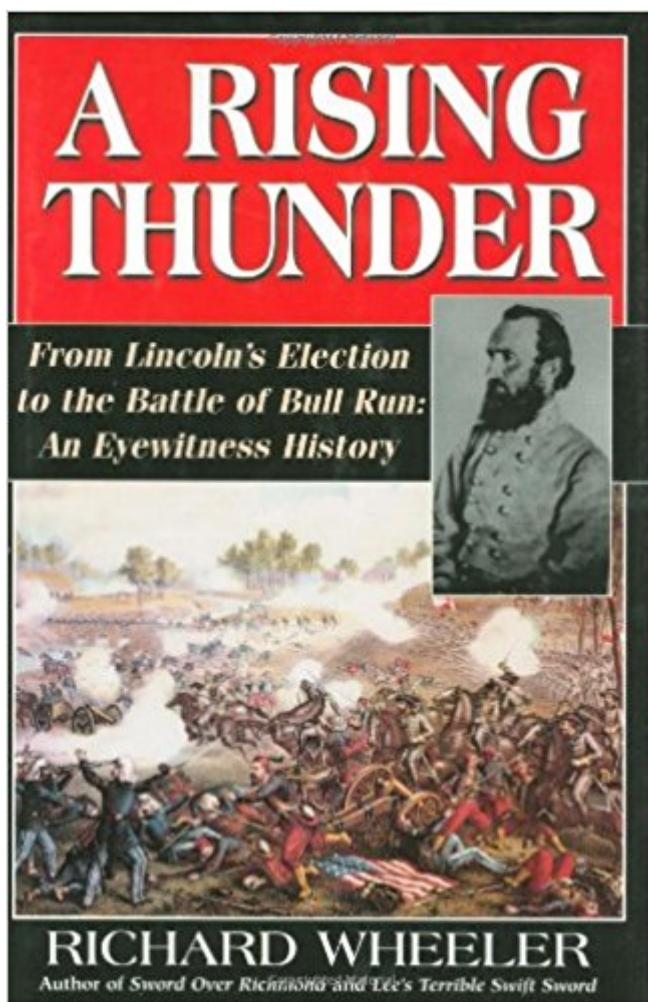


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A Rising Thunder: From Lincoln's Election To The Battles Of Bull Run: An Eyewitness History



Synopsis

From President Lincoln's election to the Battle of Bull Run, here is a powerful and moving account of the coming of this tragic conflict in America's history, as told by the people who witnessed it.

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Customer Reviews

From President Lincoln's election to the Battle of Bull Run, here is a powerful and moving account of the coming of this tragic conflict in America's history, as told by the people who witnessed it.

Richard Wheeler has penned an interesting work on the events that led up to the Civil War, through and including the first Battle of Bull Run. But his reliance on eye witness accounts, quite an excellent tool for enabling the reader to delve into the time and place is, well, a little too much. Whole chapters are comprised of "eye witness" accounts linked by short, one sentence transitions. Certain of these accounts are quite excellent, enlightening in their detail and tied directly to the subject matter at hand. Others, however, lose the reader. They are relevant, yes, but are often, too often, tangential to the topic under discussion. As a result, the passion and the stress of the events that led to the unraveling of the United States of America, Wheeler's main message, becomes choppy and, at times, loses continuity. That said, this is a worthwhile effort, one to be taken seriously. Wheeler's approach to the first Battle of Bull Run, the final chapters in this work, are the very best I have ever read. Most histories gloss over this confrontation in their rush to get to the more dramatic and lurid battles that followed. But since this event is the culmination of this book, Wheeler has left no stone unturned. While casualties as compared to subsequent actions were

relatively light, Bull Run was a huge event, involving 36,000 troops over a nine mile front. Moreover, Wheeler's supporting maps are quite excellent and materially aid in the understanding of this multi day event. As a result, I came away from his analysis with the best understanding of this first major action of the war that I have read anywhere. This part of the book is wonderfully done and to be honest, it makes you want to read the next work in this series. Just be aware that the earlier portion of the work wanders and can at times be a bit bumpy.

Being a devotee of "eyewitness" accounts I have long been drawn to Civil War memoirs including letters home and diaries. Most give a snapshot of a time or place or a number of interrelated snapshots leaving it to the reader to connect the accounts to others in an attempt to synthesize a picture of the whole or enough of the whole to be meaningful. Luckily for me and many others I hope, the author, Richard Wheeler took an interest in Civil War history and began writing about it in a way that provides what I think of as a 3 dimensional view. Wheeler takes the accounts of people who were there and joins them in a way that provides a chronicle of a time segment vital to our understanding of the Civil War. In "A Rising Thunder: From Lincoln's Election to the Battle of Bull Run: An Eyewitness History" the title spells out the time segment to which this book is devoted and emphasizes the eyewitness approach. What sets this history apart from others, is the care with which Wheeler sews together the personal accounts into a seamless fabric which then seems to pull you in, making you feel that you are there. Much better than Walter Cronkite's "You Are There" sketches and more like stepping through the looking glass into another reality Wheeler has produced a "page turner" that makes a living present out of what we know to be history long dead. In the pages of "A Rising Thunder" we discover how people really behaved and what they felt as our disunited republic swept toward the war that would finally create the United States of America and set the stage for this country to become the great nation of the 20th century and beyond.

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