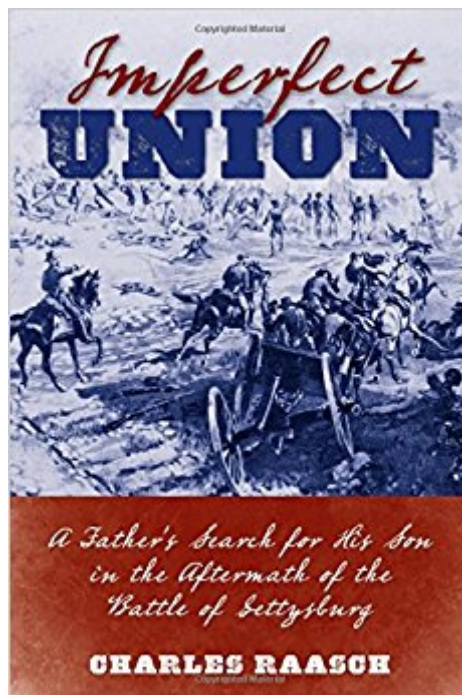




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# Imperfect Union: A Father's Search For His Son In The Aftermath Of The Battle Of Gettysburg



## Synopsis

On the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, Union artillery lieutenant Bayard Wilkeson fell while bravely spurring his men to action. His father, Sam, a New York Times correspondent, was already on his way to Gettysburg when he learned of his son's wounding but had to wait until the guns went silent before seeking out his son, who had died at the town's poorhouse. Sitting next to his dead boy, Sam Wilkeson then wrote one of the greatest battlefield dispatches in American history. This vivid exploration of one of Gettysburg's most famous stories--the story of a father and a son, the son's courage under fire, and the father's search for his son in the bloody aftermath of battle--reconstructs Bayard Wilkeson's wounding and death, which have been shrouded in myth and legend, and sheds light on Civil War-era journalism, battlefield medicine, and the good death.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Much has been written about Civil War journalism—and not just by me—but too little about Civil War journalists. Chuck Raasch has helped fill that void with an exhaustively researched yarn that not only sheds new light on the operations and operatives of the 19th-century press, but also tugs at the heart with a story of gut-wrenching loss and inspiring faith. (Harold Holzer, Jonathan F. Fanton Director, Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College, Author of *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* (Winner, 2015 Lincoln Prize)) This unique book tells the poignant story of Sam Wilkeson, a war correspondent who wrote one of the most eloquent reports of the battle of

Gettysburg, and his son Bayard, an artillery commander who was killed in the battle. But *Imperfect Union* is a great deal more--an often poetic reflection on the meaning of war and peace, love and death, sacrifice and regeneration. Even if you think you know everything there is to know about Gettysburg, you will find something new here. (James M. McPherson, Civil War historian and Pulitzer Prize-winner for "Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era") Chuck Raasch has written an important book, one that contains both an aerial and intimate view of the human cost of the greatest battle ever fought in North America. (Ken Burns, director of the Emmy Award-winning documentary *The Civil War*) The story of Sam Wilkeson and his son Bayard and what happened to them at Gettysburg stands as one of the most dramatic and compelling of the entire Civil War. And yet it is largely unknown. With exceptionally wide-ranging research, Chuck Raasch has performed a great service in restoring this heroic saga to modern-day students of the period. (Matthew Pinsker, Pohanka Chair in American Civil War History at Dickinson College and author of *Lincoln's Sanctuary*) A memorable book which is all the more compelling because of the humanity he invests in the kind of young men who went to war through the ages. (Muriel Dobbin, *The Washington Times*)

Chuck Raasch is the chief Washington correspondent for the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. He was one of the five original long-form writers for *USA Today* when it began in 1982 and a national correspondent for Gannett News Service for twenty-five years. A graduate of South Dakota State University, Raasch completed a journalism fellowship at Stanford and is a member of the National Press Club and the Gridiron Club. He lives in the Washington, D.C., metro area.

Raasch has written so much more than another battle story. You'll learn more than you knew about the battle for sure, but you'll also learn about the rise of American war correspondents, the impact of the battle on the citizens of Gettysburg and the incredible saga of a *NY Times* reporter's search for his fallen son in the aftermath of the fight. One of the reviews I read used the word "poetic" to describe the book. It is surely that. This is a great addition to canon of Civil War literature.

This book is impressively researched and written in a manner that brings you back to the Civil War - the time, its people and the battles being fought between what the combatants thought was good and evil. Chuck Raasch has a well-developed storytelling voice he uses to bring home the agony of a father searching for his wounded son while also trying to convey the impact of one of the most important battles of the Civil War. This is one of the most in-depth and well-written books about the

Civil War I have read. My father had a lifelong interest in Civil War history. I wish he was still alive to read this book.

this was a very interesting book. Loved reading about the birth of the war correspondent and the role the press played in the sway of public opinion about the War of Northern Aggression. The tender story of a father's quest for his nephew and son as they lay dead on the battlefield and the horrid realities of the war were well written. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the Civil War.

Chuck Raasch has instantly joined the front ranks of historians with his ability to hold readers' interest and provide context and balanced analysis. General readers should not shy from this book. It is an easy read that goes beyond a compelling personal story and an important chapter in journalism. Imperfect Union also captures the ebb and flow of the Civil War as well as the war's most important battle. Raasch richly deserves whatever recognition comes his way.

Ideal Father's Day Present - a wonderful story of a father's love for his son and the challenges, heartbreak of the civil war. Chuck Raasch also does an excellent job of writing about the journalists who covered the war and how journalism evolved and grew in that time period. Engaging and informative story on several levels.Â Imperfect Union: A Father's Search for His Son in the Aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg

I agree with the reviewers who call Imperfect Union a great story, but the book has maddening flaws. Raasch often repeats phrases or observations, sometimes even within the same page or two. In one instance, he writes about the correspondent Whitelaw Reid being lucky in reaching Gettysburg in time for the battle, then repeats the same 'lucky' comment a paragraph or two later. The worst example is a quotation from General O.O Howard. On page 211 in the hardcover edition, Raasch quotes Howard speaking about Gettysburg to veterans in 1888. Then he uses the exact same quotation--and the same reference--on page 232. He also a couple of times lists regiments--the 25th and 75th Ohio--as brigades. There are other errors and repetitions, too. Almost all of what I've complained about could have been cleaned up with competent editing. And, despite my complaints, Imperfect Union remains a good story. It just could have been better.

Raasch's fine book provides a fascinating account of war-time journalism and gives a

unique perspective of the Battle of Gettysburg. A must read for Civil War buffs.

There's a reason why James McPherson and Ken Burns have given this book rave blurbs: It is better researched and written than Bruce Catton or Michael Shaara, and on one of the possible turning points of the the battle that was the turning point of the war in the East. Civil War aficionados aren't the only ones who need to read this. Reporters should read it. It's an introduction to modern battlefield coverage, which hasn't progressed as much as battlefield medicine. And it's an enlightening and compassionate look at those army and battlefield followers, who came to search and bury their dead. "Imperfect Union" is going to go down as a must-read book on our Civil War.

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