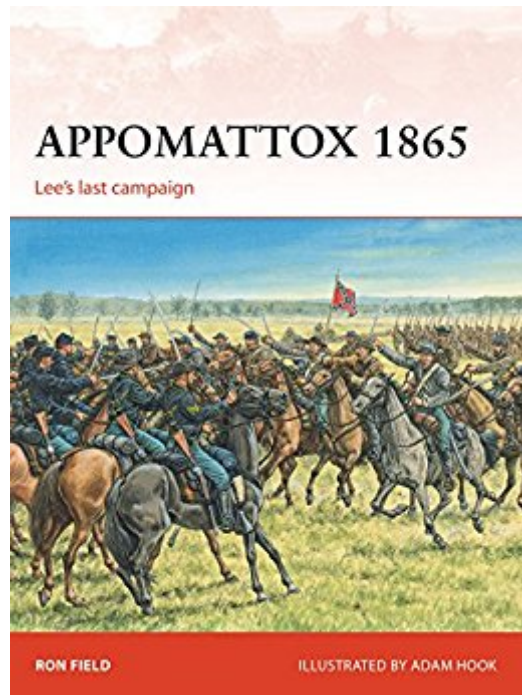




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Appomattox 1865: Lee's Last Campaign



Synopsis

From an internationally renowned expert on US history, this highly illustrated title details the curtain-closing campaign of the American Civil War in the East. Ulysses S Grant's Army of the Potomac and Robert E Lee's Army of Northern Virginia faced up to one another one last time, resulting in Lee conducting a desperate series of withdrawals and retreats down the line of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, hoping to join forces with General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee. This book, with informative full-colour illustrations and maps, tells the full story of the skirmishes and pursuits that led directly to Lee's surrender, as his frantic efforts to extricate his forces from ever more perilous positions became increasingly untenable.

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History

Customer Reviews

By the spring of 1865, General Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, long the scourge of its Union opponents, had been pinned to the trenches outside Petersburg and Richmond for months. Attrition had made it a wasting asset, while Union armies commanded by General U.S.

Grant continued to grow stronger. A time would come when Lee would have to make the decision to abandon Petersburg and Richmond if he was to save what was left of his army and of the Confederate cause..."Appomattox 1865" is an Osprey Campaign Series book by experienced historian Ron Field, with illustrations by Adam Hook. It captures, in surprising detail for the short length of this book, the final Civil War campaign in Virginia, as Grant's armies pursued Lee's dwindling force to a fateful meeting at Appomattox Court House. The narrative quickly sketches the opposing commanders, their forces, and their plans. The heart of the story is the short period time between March 29th and April 9th, as Confederate defenses collapsed and as Lee's army attempted to escape. A series of running battles on the roads between Petersburg and Appomattox are each described. The text is supported by a excellent selection of maps, battle diagrams, period photographs and art, and modern illustrations. Field's narrative captures the drama of the moment, and a sense of the inevitability of the conclusion, as Lee's options are foreclosed, one by one. In the scramble that followed the fall of Petersburg, both sides made mistakes, but Lee's army had less margin for error. Highly recommended as a very readable and informative introduction to the Appomattox campaign for the general reader and the student of the conflict.

nice book

thank you

This book was a disappointment compared to most other Osprey Campaign series. The concentration on the military events was expected as this is an operational, not a strategic history. As a quick introductory it was also satisfactory. The main issue for me was the definite Southern slant and non-substantiated claims in the illustrations and their concentration on the Confederate forces. The depiction of African-American wagon drivers in Confederate uniforms, armed and resisting the attack of Union cavalry was supported by not a single primary reference, only the lazy and inaccurate claim of the illustrator. Not a single memoir or biography, or the letters of the participants or the command reports indicate the presence of African-American combat troops or even armed civilian contractors. Confederate law forbid the use of slaves and "free men of color" as combat soldiers. The shortage of troops had forced the fuller employment of slaves and freemen in non-combat positions (bandsmen, etc) from Oct 62, but every suggestion for arming them was vigorously rejected (see the history of Cleburne's letter to the AG of the Army) until a few months before Lee had to evacuate Richmond. The Confederate Congress passed a law allowing the

recruiting of slaves and 200 were formed into two companies who were pelted with verbal abuse and trash by white civilians at their first public drill. During the retreat, they passed from history. This seems one of those attempts to create "black" Confederates through widely published media. I am surprised Osprey let this through their editors.

The final days of the American Civil War does not often get the attention of the big battles, such as Antietam, Shiloh and Gettysburg, but they were equally full of drama. In Ron Field's *Appomattox 1865: Lee's Last Campaign*, the author manages to capture elements of this dramatic ending of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, but only in part. Like many Civil War histories written of late, there is a growing sterility in the narratives, lacking the pathos that those of us growing up reading Catton and Foote are accustomed to see. As a military campaign, Appomattox was a foregone conclusion "when, not if Grant would run Lee to ground. The real story and unfortunately missing in these pages is how the manner in which the surrender occurred affected the post-war building effort. Indeed, I was surprised to see that the author spent virtually the entire volume on the military events leading up to the surrender, but then covered the surrender in just three pages. Only brief mention is made of Joshua Chamberlain's role in the surrender (in a photo caption) and Lee and Grant come across as almost ciphers. Grant's compassion and understanding of his defeated foe, and Lee's acceptance of the outcome and eschewing of calls for guerrilla warfare, are missing in these pages. Another omission: not all of Lee's troops wanted to surrender and he had to personally order the 1 MD CSA regiment to lay down its arms. Although the author provides an awesomely detailed order of battle, his introductory sections of opposing commanders, forces and plans says very little. In particular, the opposing forces section essentially describes the origin of each of the army corps involved, not really describing their condition. There is very little mention of the ragged condition of Lee's troops, which led to the surrender. A large chunk of the narrative deals with fighting around Petersburg, the Battle of Five Forks, etc; this is necessary, but tends to get bogged down in detail that is not that relevant to the outcome. For example, the author mentions Lee's intent to link-up with Johnston's Army of the Tennessee in North Carolina, but there is no discussing of their efforts to coordinate operations or what this might have meant. The pursuit of Lee's army westward is the best part of the narrative and does include some dramatic moments, particularly those involving Custer's role in the campaign. I found the maps in the volume to be of indifferent quality in terms of understanding the campaign; some useful, others not. The battle scenes by Adam Hook were technically very nice, but I found the depiction of

Confederate troops in April 1865 to be far too "perfect looking," with no torn/faded uniforms. Nor were any old men, boys. Many of Lee's infantry were in very rough shape by Appomattox, but you wouldn't get that impression looking at these color plates. I found the author's discussion of the battlefield today also somewhat flat. I've been to Appomattox Court House and there's not that much to see – it's disappointing. Overall, this is a decent volume but fell somewhat short of what I think could have been accomplished.

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