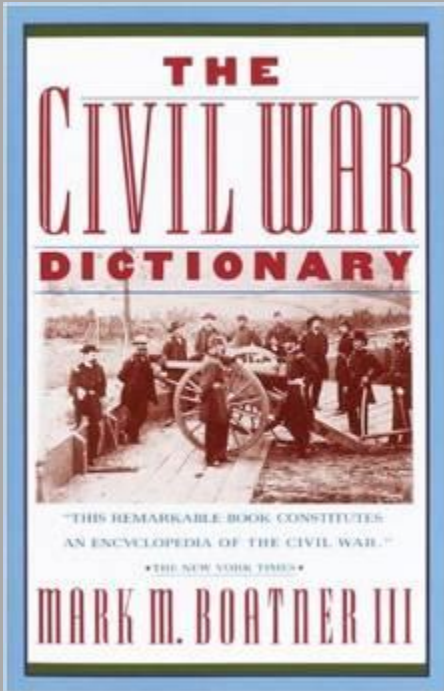


Book Review

The Civil War Dictionary (Revised Edition)
by Mark M. Boatner III
New York: Vintage Books (1991)



As someone who owns more books about the Civil War and/or Abraham Lincoln than I care to admit to my better half, I must say that the one indispensable book would be Boatner's little encyclopedic treatment of the Civil War. In one paperback volume of 969 pages, the late Boatner (1921-06) provided condensed information and data about almost every imaginable facet of that great struggle.

In alphabetical order, this book provides short biographical sketches about a wide range of Civil War personalities; it also describes hundreds of campaigns, individual battles and locations, as well as summary histories of major units. And there are ample cross-references; for example if a particular

general was in a battle or campaign, the section about that general often references the battle or campaign for additional detail. Dozens of maps are also included to further enhance understanding of battles.

The contents are mostly factual without bias toward either side. Some of the information is reasonably cryptic; Boatner also resorted to easily understood abbreviations. And by the author's own admission his book does not attempt to provide, or replace, the in-depth treatment that can be found in book-length biographies, regimental histories, or narratives about campaigns or battles.

Nevertheless, for handy, quick (and highly useful) reference, this book is an absolutely essential part of any Civil War library, regardless of size, and regardless of any reader's degree of interest or involvement in the Civil War. My copy, as shop worn and dog-eared as it might be, is undoubtedly the one book I would be unwilling to loan from my personal library of Civil War volumes,