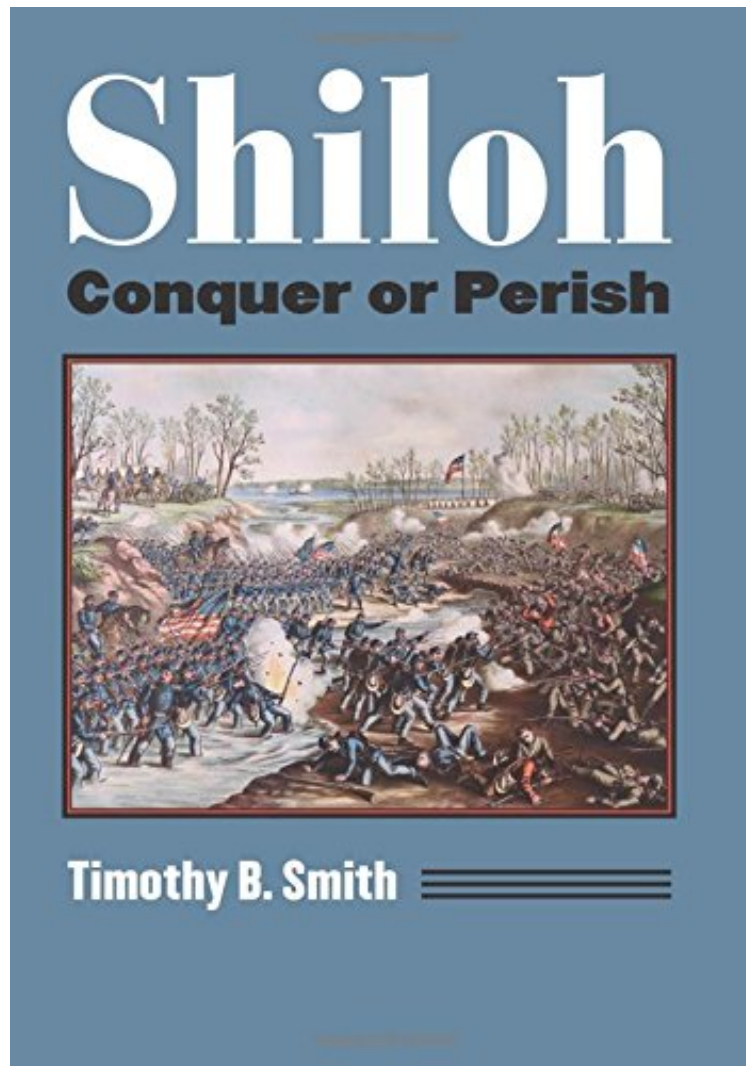


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Shiloh: Conquer or Perish (Modern War Studies)

Timothy B. Smith

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Timothy B. Smith : Shiloh: Conquer or Perish (Modern War Studies) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shiloh: Conquer or Perish (Modern War Studies):

21 of 22 people found the following review helpful. This one meets all of the best expectations from a highly-accomplished author and historian By Jedidiah Smith This one meets all of the best expectations from a highly-accomplished author and historian. The coverage of Day 2 is unprecedented - Cunningham, McDonough, Sword, and Daniel all spend far less attention on that important combat, as if the battle really ended on April 6 and April 7 was a simple "mop up" operation by the Federals. Smith gives the second day almost equal attention, which alone warrants a purchase. He also provides a level of terrain analysis which is well beyond what the prior works have provided.

Terrain was always critical in 19th century combat and Shiloh's had a significant influence on the battle. The author's background as a NPS ranger at the battlefield means that he has an intimate knowledge of the "lay of the land" which is evident throughout this book. Whether you have none, one, or all of the prior books, you won't regret adding this to the collection.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Detailed view of a major battle--nicely done
By Steven Peterson
This is a well detailed telling of the fearsome battle of Shiloh, the first mega-battle of the Civil War. What had gone before included significant battles--Wilson's Creek and First Bull Run and Fort Donelson, for example. But none of those battles came close to approaching the ferocity and deadliness of Shiloh. Shiloh has the good fortune of being rendered nicely by several authors--such as Daniels, Cunningham, and Groom. What sets this volume apart is the detail. At the same time, some of the other volumes provided a more strategic perspective. Bottom Line, though? Shiloh is well chronicled by good historians. Thus, one can get a well grounded viewpoint on this sanguinary struggle by reading several volumes. The book begins with the collapse of the Confederate line with the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson. Under the overall command of General Albert Sidney Johnston, a number of units of Confederate forces from throughout the region began to gather in Corinth--with the intent to attack General Ulysses Grant's Army of the Tennessee at Pittsburg Landing in Tennessee. Grant positioned his divisions on the land above the Landing. Neither he nor his colleague, William T. Sherman, had any sense that the Confederate Army might move on them with the intent of attack. A major failure on their (and others') parts. Against all odds (with their troops firing rounds from their guns) the Southern forces attacked, surprising the Union forces. A strength of this volume is the detailed discussion of the role of many units--down to the regimental level--and the unfolding battle, hour after hour. Although stung at the outset, as the Union forces retreated, the width of the battlefield decreased, increasing their strength in terms of troops per mile. One gets a good view of decisions by division and corps commanders. The book also does a nice job of capturing key aspects of Day Two--when the Union forces began their own attack, after the Confederates had sputtered out the day before. There is a nice discussion of the role of the much maligned General Lew Wallace, whose flank attacks helped loosen the Confederate lines. The aftereffects of the battle are well told. Pluses: order of battle if helpful; the detailed accounting of the battle--down to the regimental level. Minuses: the maps are not as useful as they could be. All told, a fine volume on a bloody battle. . . .

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Battle Among the Fields and Dogwoods
By Amanda Warren
This is a thoroughly-examined, beautifully-told narrative of the Battle of Shiloh. We can only wish that more historians would take the approach of Timothy B. Smith who refreshingly refrains from repetitive blame, finger-pointing, slant and excessive partisanship. First, he assumes as a general rule that the major players did the best they could under stressful circumstances. Then he focuses on facts which have a way of dispelling many emphatic opinions and assertions canonized over the years. Aspects of the battle that others have overemphasized (for example, the Hornet's Nest and Bloody Pond) are shown not to be quite so significant. Other phases traditionally passed over are given a second look, such as the entire second day which, lo and behold, was much more than just a simple matter of the Yankees' overrunning the Confederates. And it will surprise you indeed whom he shows to be primarily responsible for that ultimate result! By refusing to adopt the caricatures and prejudices passed down from earlier authorities, commanders emerge as complex individuals, in many cases wrongly faulted. For example, General McClellan actively led alongside Sherman, and his troops consistently fought well both days. General Beauregard is shown to have been wrongly pilloried for calling off the first day's attack; instead, his shortcoming resulted from believing a false report on Buell's whereabouts and consequently failing to prepare adequately for the following day. In my opinion Smith is overly reverential of Grant, whose unjust destruction of Lew Wallace's career he attributes only to the "PR machine" of Grant's staff. But this kind of malice was a personal pattern of Grant's: witness Rosecrans, Warren, and Thomas and many other lesser luminaries. He refutes the notion of Buell's saving Grant's Army by a hair-splitting rationale that his timely arrival made no difference on the first day. However, it clearly did on the second, and that is when the battle was won. Smith wrote often of the "confusion" of Shiloh and does a beautiful job of dispelling it for us, but there was one matter that left me confused. He refers to a Confederate commander Jones on a couple of occasions such as p. 223. On p. 348 he associates Jones with the 17th Louisiana, but the Jones brigade on the map on p. 297 does not include the 17th Louisiana. The index was no help. So who was this Jones? (Interestingly, Charles Jones who commanded the 17th La. was involved in a long-running feud against General St. John Liddell and murdered him in 1870.) I also question why General Polk remained almost invisible throughout the book. I found one inaccuracy. Smith states that Albert Sidney Johnston was buried in Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans, but the Metairie Race Course did not become a cemetery until the 1870s. At the outbreak of War it was turned into a Confederate training camp. When Johnston's body was brought to New Orleans Mayor Monroe provided a tomb in St. Louis Cemetery, Johnston's resting place until disinterred in 1867 and moved to Austin, Texas. Years later an equestrian statue of General Johnston was erected atop the Army of Tennessee tumulus of Metairie Cemetery, but he was never buried there. In the first sentence of the book, Timothy Smith states that Shiloh holds a special place in his heart. This indeed is a heartfelt treatment of the battle, the earth on which it was fought, the men who fought it, and its history and legend. His work stands as a masterful tribute honoring the heroism and sacrifice of those two spring days in April. One participant said that for the rest of his life he would think of Shiloh whenever he saw dogwoods blooming. In that vein, Shiloh: Conquer or Perish conveys an unforgettable sense of the

poignancy of this terrible, great event of history.

A critical moment in the Civil War, the Battle of Shiloh has been the subject of many books. However, none has told the story of Shiloh as Timothy Smith does in this volume, the first comprehensive history of the two-day battle in April 1862—a battle so fluid and confusing that its true nature has eluded a clear narrative telling until now. Unfolding over April 6th and 7th, the Battle of Shiloh produced the most sprawling and bloody field of combat since the Napoleonic wars, with an outcome that set the Confederacy on the road to defeat. Contrary to previous histories, Smith tells us, the battle was not won or lost on the first day, but rather in the decision-making of the night that followed and in the next day's fighting. Devoting unprecedented attention to the details of that second day, his book shows how the Union's triumph was far less assured, and much harder to achieve, than has been acknowledged. Smith also employs a new organization strategy to clarify the action. By breaking his analysis of both days' fighting into separate phases and sectors, he makes it much easier to grasp what was happening in each combat zone, why it unfolded as it did, and how it related to the broader tactical and operational context of the entire battle. The battlefield's diverse and challenging terrain also comes in for new scrutiny. Through detailed attention to the terrain's major features—most still visible at the Shiloh National Military Park—Smith is able to track their specific and considerable influence on the actions, and their consequences, over those forty-eight hours. The experience of the soldiers finally finds its place here too, as Smith lets us hear, as never before, the voices of the common man, whether combatant or local civilian, caught up in a historic battle for their lives, their land, their honor, and their homes. "We must this day conquer or perish," Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston declared on the morning of April 6, 1862. His words proved prophetic, and might serve as an epitaph for the larger war, as we see fully for the first time in this unparalleled and surely definitive history of the Battle of Shiloh.

"One of the nation's leading Civil War historians, Tim Smith has produced what may be his best work yet. This volume is the definitive book on the critical battle of Shiloh. Its stirring prose and exhaustive research will stir the historical imagination of scholars and the general public both."—John F. Marszalek, Executive Director of the Ulysses S. Grant Association's Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University "Well written, highly readable, and a great improvement over previous studies, this is easily the most comprehensive account yet written of the Battle of Shiloh, and it's hard to imagine it being superseded within the next several decades. Indeed, this may still be the definitive account when the battle's bicentennial rolls around."—Steven E. Woodworth, author of *Shiloh: Confederate High Tide in the Heartland* "Smith's exhaustive and uniquely complete study is the first truly great treatment and is unquestionably the new standard bearer of Shiloh battle histories."—Civil War Books and Authors "Smith's study is unquestionably the new standard treatment of the Shiloh battle. It is very highly recommended reading."—*On Point: The Journal of Army History* "With lucid prose, Smith has successfully bridged the frustratingly elusive gap between exhaustive scholarly research and good storytelling. . . . A well-narrated story of battle that has too often been overshadowed by the engagements that followed it. By placing it in context, Smith convincingly argues that Shiloh was one of the most critical contingency points of the war."—*Journal of Southern History* "Smith has provided an easily accessible narrative on how the Battle of Shiloh unfolded. His balanced treatment of both days of combat and his emphasis on how the terrain impacted the proceedings presents an authoritative text valuable for both historians and Civil War enthusiasts."—*Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* "One of the nation's leading Civil War historians, Tim Smith has produced what may be his best work yet. This volume is the definitive book on the critical battle of Shiloh. Its stirring prose and exhaustive research will stir the historical imagination of scholars and the general public both."—John F. Marszalek, Executive Director of the Ulysses S. Grant Association's Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University "Well written, highly readable, and a great improvement over previous studies, this is easily the most comprehensive account yet written of the Battle of Shiloh, and it's hard to imagine it being superseded within the next several decades. Indeed, this may still be the definitive account when the battle's bicentennial rolls around."—Steven E. Woodworth, author of *Shiloh: Confederate High Tide in the Heartland* About the Author Timothy B. Smith served as a park ranger at Shiloh National Military Park for six years and now teaches history at the University of Tennessee at Martin. He is the author of eleven books about the Civil War, including *Corinth: Siege, Battle, Occupation* (also from Kansas), which won the Fletcher Pratt Award and McLemore Prize.