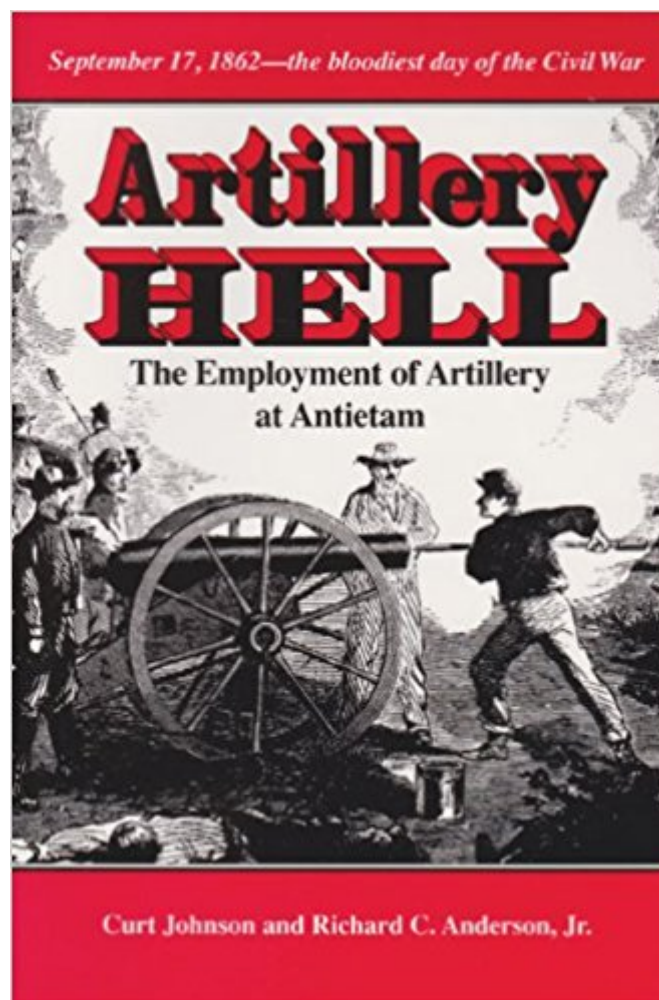




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Artillery Hell: The Employment Of Artillery At Antietam (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series)



Synopsis

September 17, 1862, at Antietam Creek was the bloodiest day of the Civil War, as both armies made heavy use of field artillery, the "long arm." In *Artillery Hell* Curt Johnson and Richard C. Anderson, Jr., provide a detailed examination of the role of field artillery in the Battle of Antietam. Johnson sets the context with an overview of organizational problems on the eve of a great battle. Anderson's concise discussion of different types of artillery and their capabilities and ammunition is presented in accessible language. The heart of *Artillery Hell* is Maj. Joseph Mills Hanson's unpublished 1940 report, "Employment of Artillery." It includes compilations of the batteries in the respective armies at Antietam, a review of the battle actions of the "individual batteries," and a "list of battery positions in a tentative order." Johnson and Anderson build upon Hanson's reports with individual chapters on the Union and the Confederate artillery at Antietam. Utilizing previously untapped or unavailable sources, especially the Henry Jackson Hunt Papers at the Library of Congress, they answer questions that have long challenged historians and others interested in the battle. *Artillery Hell* discusses virtually every aspect of field artillery used during the Civil War. Battlefield visitors can use it to identify and understand the different types of cannon and their capabilities, and historians will find in it the military perspective so many studies of the battle lack.

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Customer Reviews

CURT JOHNSON and RICHARD C. ANDERSON, JR., are historians and historical consultants in

the Washington, D.C., area.

Curt Johnson and Richard Anderson's "Artillery Hell" is a reference work for the artillery employed at Antietam. The authors bring forward a useful report by the now deceased Maj. Hanson, along with their own study of what armament each battery had, and they include After Action Reports from the Henry Hunt Papers not to be found in the Official Records. The specialized nature of this work would easily gain 4 or 5 stars and a strong recommendation if it was not so flawed and user-unfriendly. The two most evident problems are an unpardonable lack of maps, and disjointed structure. The third flaw is one the reader should take more careful note of: a general misunderstanding of some types of artillery and misidentification/erroneous grouping of pieces. If one is researching orders of battle this could cause grief. For the casual reader the lack of maps is very unfortunate. If you want to know where batteries were positioned you will have to bring maps from elsewhere and work it out yourself. The disjointed nature of the work emerges from its semi-essay format. It doesn't feel complete and requires copious time for data mining. The authors present the work in sections and they did not take care to note differences in interpretation between sections. They present Maj. Hanson's work without sufficient editing or notes to show where it differs from their later studies/chapters. How bad is this? I spent about 4 hours in a first list of differences in their scattered OOB and Hanson's table. Of 62 Union batteries listed, there were significant differences with Hanson in 29. Of 57 CSA batteries engaged there were significant differences in 34. Why didn't the authors include their own summary table as well? Shouldn't that have been the culmination of their work? Hanson's work includes handy reference tables that will attract many readers and researchers looking for quick answers, but the tables are superceded by later textual information. To add to the confusion, the authors' own modern text contains a number of incorrect categorizations and nomenclature for pieces. This brings us to another serious flaw: from the text and the bibliography it is apparent the authors have failed to avail themselves of more modern detailed reviews of ACW artillery and have therefore reached some erroneous conclusions. The bibliography does not include references to Hazlett, Olmstead, and Parks "Field Artillery Weapons of the Civil War" Ripley's "Artillery and Ammunition of the Civil War", or Daniel and Gunter's "Confederate Cannon Foundries." The authors' incomplete knowledge of artillery leads to some embarrassing or confusing statements that mar an otherwise superb introductory section to ACW artillery. This is particularly true when it comes to James Rifles and Confederate 3" rifles. Anderson refers to "brass liners" in James Rifles and fails to distinguish between the two primary calibers properly (3.8" known as 14 pdrs, 3.67" as 12 pdrs.) Elsewhere in the text McMullin's 3.8" rifles are described variously

and incorrectly as "10-lb James", "12-lb James, and Hanson's older unedited table refers to them as "10 pdr Parrotts (rifled)". (At least Hanson can be excused, for he did not have access to the Hunt papers that identified the rifles, nor to more modern treatments of ACW artillery.)The authors lump all un-banded 3" Confederate rifles as "3" Ordnance RML." The text states that the CSA made their own version of the 3" Ordnance rifle and also refer to cannon produced by "Burton and Archer." It is true that CSA officers sometimes referred to their CSA made 3" rifled pieces this way because of the projectiles of the name, but that doesn't make it accurate. Burton and Archer was not a cannon foundry. The 3" Ordnance rifle was wrought iron while the un-banded Confederate rifles were either cast iron or bronze. Tredegar's cast iron pieces did conform to the Ordnance profile, were not made of wrought iron, the key to their prodigious reliability and durability. So beware of all the CSA battery entries for Ordnance rifles: these might be 3" US Ordnance rifles, un-banded 3" cast iron rifles, or possibly even some un-banded 3" or 3.3" bronze rifles cast in western CSA foundries. Hanson simplified by labeling them generically as 3" rifles, as opposed to 10 lb Parrotts. In the end I can only give this work a mixed recommendation. It contains some great information, but it is "reader hell" trying to dig it out to put into summary format.

I have recently read 2 books on the Artillery @ Gettysburg. This work is shorter because it covers 1 not 3 days. It contains the information I was seeking with respect to what guns were used ,which unit used them, how the guns functioned and were served , but lacks detailed maps locating the batteries position(s). The photos are nice (if one had not visited, or does not remember the battlefield) but I like maps. The after action reports describing the action in the Battery commanders own words however, are a nice feature

Book is great! Service was even better!!!!

This book consisted of a lot of factual information. It was really a little too much history for me.

In what is essentially a reference work, Johnson and Anderson offer the definitive account of the Union and Confederate artillery at the Battle of Antietam. The various chapters play out more as essays than as part of a chapter by chapter book. In a nice set of introductions, Curt Johnson sets the strategic and operational stage while Richard Anderson gives neophytes an excellent rundown on Civil War artillery and projectiles. The previously unpublished 1940 report of Joseph Mills Hanson on the participation and deployment of the various artillery batteries of each side fills out the

center portion of the book. The authors then go through the artillery order of battle for each side and provide detailed numbers on gun types, number of tubes, and unit strengths, giving exhaustive documentation where sources differ. Reports of artillery commanders that did not make the Official Records serve to round out the last part of the book. All in all, this is a wargamer's and researcher's dream. In fact, I wish books of this type existed for more battles. If you are a Civil War wargamer and/or scenario designer, this is a must-own. If you are an Antietam fan, this is a must-own. Honestly, I consider this one a must-own for anyone interested in the battle of Antietam, artillery, and/or unit strengths and armaments. This is one purchase you will not regret.

This concise summary of the artillery action at the Battle of Antietam on 17 September 1862 is an excellent companion to other more general accounts of the campaign and battle. It is a specialist's treatment and helps to illuminate that aspect of the bloodiest day of the Civil War. All too often the role of artillery at Antietam is minimized by emphasis on the infantry actions by themselves. A good corrective - buy and read this book!

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