

# **‘Wargaming in History: The American Civil War’**

## **By Paul Stevenson**

### **Review by Paul Le Long**

The Wargaming in History series came out in around 1990 and comprised five books, all on different periods and by different authors. The series editor was Stuart Asquith. Argus Books produced the series, all of which were in a very attractive A5 format and were well priced at £5.95. The back cover of all volumes in the series said that the purpose of the series was “to offer, in detail, hints, tips and advice on specific periods and wars that are wargaming favourites. All the necessary information – campaigns, battles, weapons, tactics etc. – is included and the books are illustrated with tactical diagrams, maps, contemporary illustrations and photographs.” And I have to say that the series succeeded in its aims.



In this volume the author, Paul Stevenson, provides everything you need to know about the American Civil War. There really is a wealth of detail in this book; it is astonishing how much information the author has packed into just 105 pages of text.

First, we have a chapter on the organisation of armies, including advice on how to translate that into wargames units as well as tips for painting your figures. After a chapter on flags, we move on to tactics for infantry, cavalry and artillery, along with a couple of nice illustrations. The chapter on weapons is interesting because there is often confusion and controversy about this among historians and wargamers. The traditional view would have you think of troops in this conflict all armed with rifled

muskets blazing away at 500 yards range. Here the author produces a lot of statistics that disprove that myth: even by Gettysburg 25% of Federal troops were armed with 2<sup>nd</sup> class rifles (at best) or muskets, and fire-fights occurred at ranges little greater than those of Napoleonic times. The author also discusses artillery at length and cavalry small arms. In short, if you want to know something about civil war weaponry – ranges, percentage of a certain type of gun available to an army and so on, you will find it here.

The chapter on combat is also full of interesting data and discusses infantry versus infantry, artillery and cavalry, cavalry versus infantry and so on. We also have a section on combat performance and a long but very interesting description of brigade-level combat using the exploits of Kershaw’s brigade at Gettysburg as an example. This all constitutes an excellent soldier’s eye-level explanation of what battle in the civil war was like and is particularly useful given that most wargames are fought at brigade or at most, divisional level.

Then, we have a short chapter on commanders with 43 generals, all rated for charisma, reliability and aggression. The chapter on campaigns offers some useful advice on setting up a campaign before going on to talk about various things like railroads, march rates, supply, intelligence and more. The book ends with a chapter on naval operations (often neglected) which offers advice on how to reproduce the war at sea and on the rivers.

This is a terrific book. It's a data book in many respects and is invaluable as such. But there is plenty of interesting discussion too and lots of good advice on how to translate the civil war to the tabletop. Whether you are a civil war enthusiast or a beginner wanting to get into the period, this book should be on your shelf.



Very highly recommended.

Details:

- **Paperback:** 112 pages
- **Publisher:** Argus Books; 1st edition (Sep 1989)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 0852429908
- **ISBN-13:** 978-0852429907

The book is out of print but the current price on Amazon for used copies starts at £2.85.