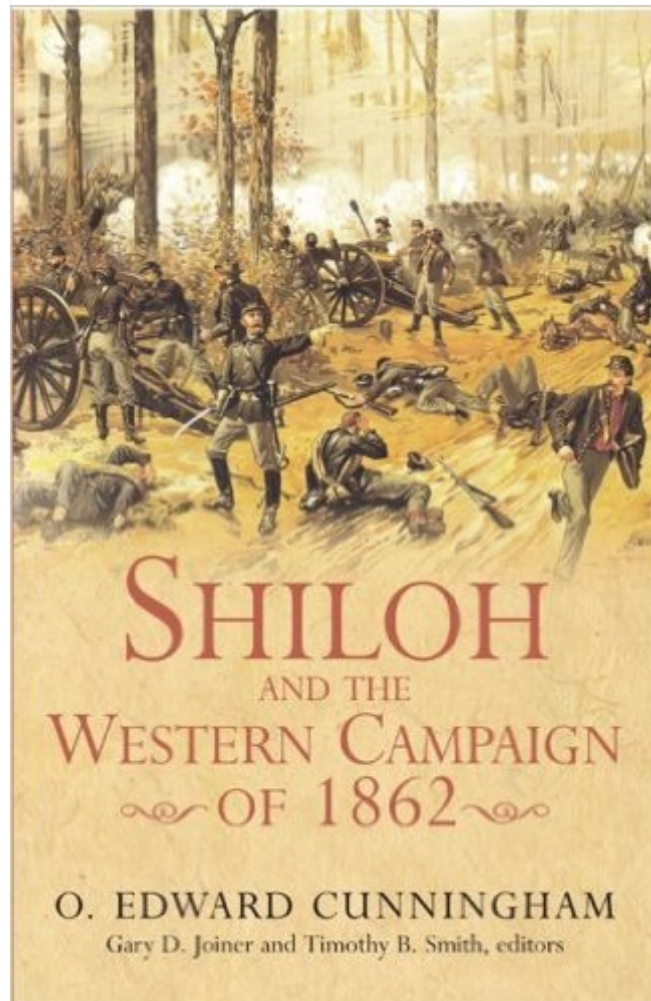


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# Shiloh And The Western Campaign Of 1862



## Synopsis

The bloody and decisive two-day battle of Shiloh (April 6-7, 1862) changed the entire course of the American Civil War. The stunning Northern victory thrust Union commander Ulysses S. Grant into the national spotlight, claimed the life of Confederate commander Albert S. Johnston, and forever buried the notion that the Civil War would be a short conflict. The conflagration at Shiloh had its roots in the strong Union advance during the winter of 1861-1862 that resulted in the capture of Forts Henry and Donelson in Tennessee. The offensive collapsed General Albert S. Johnston's advanced line in Kentucky and forced him to withdraw all the way to northern Mississippi. Anxious to attack the enemy, Johnston began concentrating Southern forces at Corinth, a major railroad center just below the Tennessee border. His bold plan called for his Army of the Mississippi to march north and destroy General Grant's Army of the Tennessee before it could link up with another Union army on the way to join him. On the morning of April 6, Johnston boasted to his subordinates, "Tonight we will water our horses in the Tennessee!" They nearly did so. Johnston's sweeping attack hit the unsuspecting Federal camps at Pittsburg Landing and routed the enemy from position after position as they fell back toward the Tennessee River. Johnston's sudden death in the Peach Orchard, however, coupled with stubborn Federal resistance, widespread confusion, and Grant's dogged determination to hold the field, saved the Union army from destruction. The arrival of General Don C. Buell's reinforcements that night turned the tide of battle. The next day, Grant seized the initiative and attacked the Confederates, driving them from the field. Shiloh was one of the bloodiest battles of the entire war, with nearly 24,000 men killed, wounded, and missing.

Edward Cunningham, a young Ph.D. candidate studying under the legendary T. Harry Williams at Louisiana State University, researched and wrote *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862* in 1966. Although it remained unpublished, many Shiloh experts and park rangers consider it to be the best overall examination of the battle ever written. Indeed, Shiloh historiography is just now catching up with Cunningham, who was decades ahead of modern scholarship. Western Civil War historians Gary D. Joiner and Timothy B. Smith have resurrected Cunningham's beautifully written and deeply researched manuscript from its undeserved obscurity. Fully edited and richly annotated with updated citations and observations, original maps, and a complete order of battle and table of losses, *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862* will be welcomed by everyone who enjoys battle history at its finest.

Edward Cunningham, Ph.D., studied under T. Harry Williams at Louisiana State University. He was the author of *The Port Hudson Campaign: 1862-1863* (LSU, 1963). Dr. Cunningham died in 1997. Gary D. Joiner, Ph.D. is the author of *One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign of 1864*, winner

of the 2004 Albert Castel Award and the 2005 A. M. Pate, Jr., Award, and *Through the Howling Wilderness: The 1864 Red River Campaign and Union Failure in the West*. He lives in Shreveport, Louisiana. Timothy B. Smith, Ph.D., is author of *Champion Hill: Decisive Battle for Vicksburg* (winner of the 2004 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Non-fiction Award), *The Untold Story of Shiloh: The Battle and the Battlefield*, and *This Great Battlefield of Shiloh: History, Memory, and the Establishment of a Civil War National Military Park*. A former ranger at Shiloh, Tim teaches history at the University of Tennessee.

REVIEWS "With their sparkling introductory essay, editors Gary Joiner and Timothy Smith give readers ample reason to want to read O. Edward Sullivan's 1966 dissertation.... Anyone with a serious interest in the early Western theater campaigns and the Battle of Shiloh will find this book essential reading. Casual readers will likely enjoy it as well (not something you can often say about a dissertation)." *Civil War Books and Authors*; April 15, 2007 "...it may well be the best, most perceptive and authoritative account of the Battle of Shiloh ..". *The Weekly Standard* 6/25/2007 "...an excellent scholarly work about the pivotal Shiloh Campaign." *Collecting Miscellany* 02/2008 "the best history of the most important battle in the West and is required reading. This is the best book on the battle." • *Civil War Courier*, 02/2009 "deeply researched" "puts into perspective the unexpected Northern victory at Shiloh" • *The Midwest Book Review* 10/2009

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## Customer Reviews

In the 1960's O. Edward Cunningham completed his Ph.D. at Louisiana State University with

"Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862". While unpublished, this paper did not gather dust lying forgotten in a desk drawer. Shiloh experts, park rangers, professional and amateur historians knew about this rich source of information. For years, they have consulted it and developed their ideas from it. While not a secret, the public did not have easy access to the manuscript and many never knew it existed. Forty years after being submitted Dr. Cunningham's manuscript is available to the public. This is not a dated, stuffy dissertation that only historians will be able to read. The writing is crisp, informative and stands with the best of battle histories. His style is as easy to read as Sears, Wittenberg or Woodworth. His views on the battle were ahead of the times and are just now finding acceptance. To complement his writing, Gary Joiner & Timothy Smith do an outstanding job editing the book. Both are accomplished historians with extensive knowledge of the subject. Their editing extends and explains Dr. Cunningham's work without changing his ideas. This results in a much stronger, more accurate book that combines the strength of the three men into a single informative volume. The editor's are very careful to document their changes and to supply reasons for them. In addition, they point out the differences in Cunningham's ideas and the standard battle story. Sword's "Shiloh, Bloody April", Daniel's "Shiloh the Battle that Changed the Civil War" and McDonough "Shiloh - In Hell before Night" were all written after this book. The editor's document the differences between these books in an extensive set of special footnotes. This effort provides the reader with a series of references and reminders while following this version of the battle. This is more than a battle history. The battle of Shiloh is the major part of the book but is not treated as an isolated event. We see Shiloh as part of a logical sequence beginning with Grant's attacks on the river forts and ending with the evacuation of Corinth. Politics, national, local and military influence the story. While they are not covered in detail, we have enough to understand the part they play. The book's examination of the two armies is something that I have not seen elsewhere. The standard "green armies" paragraphs are dropped and replaced with detailed evaluations. This section contains a series of word portraits of the major commanders with comments on their good and bad points. Coupled with a close examination of the training, equipment and experience of the men in ranks this produces some startling comparisons of the two armies. Having read the Shiloh books mentioned, I do not recall anything of this detail about the armies. A second unique item is the time spent on how the Union camp at Pittsburg Landing comes into being, giving the reader an understanding of site selection and the haphazard nature of the camp. The author avoids the "dig or drill" question, concentrating on what happened and not trying to assign blame. The heart of the book is the Battle of Shiloh. Over 250 pages cover the approach, the fighting and the aftermath. How different is the history of the battle in this book? Dr. Cunningham was very careful in

documenting what he wrote. He counted fewer attacks on the Hornet's Nest, less cannon on Ruggles' line and a slower battler than we are used to. In addition, he moves some of the emphasis to the West side of the field where Sherman and McClernand fight. This produces a more balanced view of the battle and a shift away from Prentiss in The Hornet's Nest as the focal point of the first day. Additionally, the Confederates have a much harder time of it. The bad weather, the long march, lack of food, poor weapons and loss of command & control take a greater toll and slow them more. This with the fighting on the western side of the field makes the Hornet's Nest more logical, understandable and less of the central theme. The question could Grant's last line be broken and did Buell save Grant, are dealt with in an intelligent and evenhanded manner. The editors do an outstanding job of placing the other books about Shiloh in the overall answer to these questions. Action during the night and the second day's fighting are well covered. The emphasis is on what is happening, not on what history feels should have happened. This is a refreshing change and avoids much of the blame game some authors are determined to play. After reading the detailed treatment of the first day, you will have a better appreciation for why things happened as they did. The coverage of the retreat and pursuit is sufficient to convey what happened. Halleck's advance on Corinth and the Confederate response complete the history. Footnotes are on the page where I feel they should be. The author's and the editor's footnotes are easy to identify. The editor's footnotes cover any changes they made to the original book and provide information about the author's views and the current ideas on Shiloh. Appendices cover the organization of the two armies, casualties and a photo tour of Shiloh. The photo tour is 22 pictures from the park with a map locating them in the field. A bibliography and index complete the book. This is a Savas Beatie publication meaning a high quality book with maps, maps and more maps. They seem to be the only publishing house that understands military history cannot be done without maps. The list of maps is three pages long, meaning that the reader is never far from one. At critical points in the battle, the maps are about seven pages apart. Maps add value expand our understanding of the battle, make it easier to follow the fighting and increased our enjoyment of the book.

Battle histories are not generally easy reads; by their very nature they are a detailed account of a specific battle. Some are more detailed than others. By and large battle histories are not, and should not be "quick reads." They do tend to be somewhat dry and tedious reading. Not so with O. Edward Cunningham's "Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862." Written as a doctoral dissertation in the 1960's Cunningham's manuscript remained unpublished for nearly forty years, though it has not been forgotten. The manuscript, a copy of which was housed in the library of the Shiloh National

Military Park, has been consulted by armature and professional historians alike. Now thanks to the efforts of editors, Timothy B. Smith and Gary D. Joiner, the manuscript has at long last been published by Savas Beatie Publishing Company. Cunningham's writing is a joy to read, his narrative flows with ease, and as editors Smith and Joiner, only needed to step in to update new information which has come to light during the 40 years since Cunningham wrote his dissertation or to clarify points here and there where Cunningham's narrative needed a little help... needless to say those times were few and far between. For a forty year old manuscript, Dr. Cunningham's work seems surprisingly fresh and vibrant; the writing does not date itself. The book contains many new ideas, and different approaches to interpreting and understanding this first, major, catastrophic battle of the American Civil War. For instance, Cunningham deemphasizes the importance of the fight at The Hornet's Nest while shifting the spotlight to the fighting at the crossroads on the west side of the field. Not only is Dr. Cunningham's narrative, a history of the Battle of Shiloh, but also the whole western campaign from the Confederate Army's invasion of Kentucky & Grant's twin victories and Forts Henry & Donnellson to Shiloh, Corinth and beyond. Mr. Joiner has drawn over 30 maps to assist the reader in following the action, and there many period photographs and even a photographic tour of the battlefield as it exists to day. Cunningham's notes are true footnotes, located at the bottom of the page, allowing you to quickly look down to see where his information came from without having to thumb to the back of the book which scores an A+ in my grade book. Being a Savas Beatie publication, "Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862" is a quality volume, printed in a nice easy to read font, on acid free paper, and the artwork on the dust jacket is just gorgeous. This book was a great read and I am proud to list this among the titles in my collection.

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