

In the Presence of Mine Enemies: The Civil War in the Heart of America, 1859-1864 (Valley of the Shadow Project)

Edward L. Ayers

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Edward L. Ayers gives us a different Civil War, built on an intimate scale. He charts the descent into war in the Great Valley spanning Pennsylvania and Virginia. Connected by strong ties of every kind, including the tendrils of slavery, the people of this borderland sought alternatives to secession and war. When none remained, they took up war with startling intensity. As this book relays with a vivid immediacy, it came to their doorsteps in hunger, disease, and measureless death. Ayers's Civil War emerges from the lives of everyday people as well as those who helped shape history—John Brown and Frederick Douglass, Lincoln, Jackson, and Lee. His story ends with the valley ravaged, Lincoln's support fragmenting, and Confederate forces massing for a battle at Gettysburg.



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