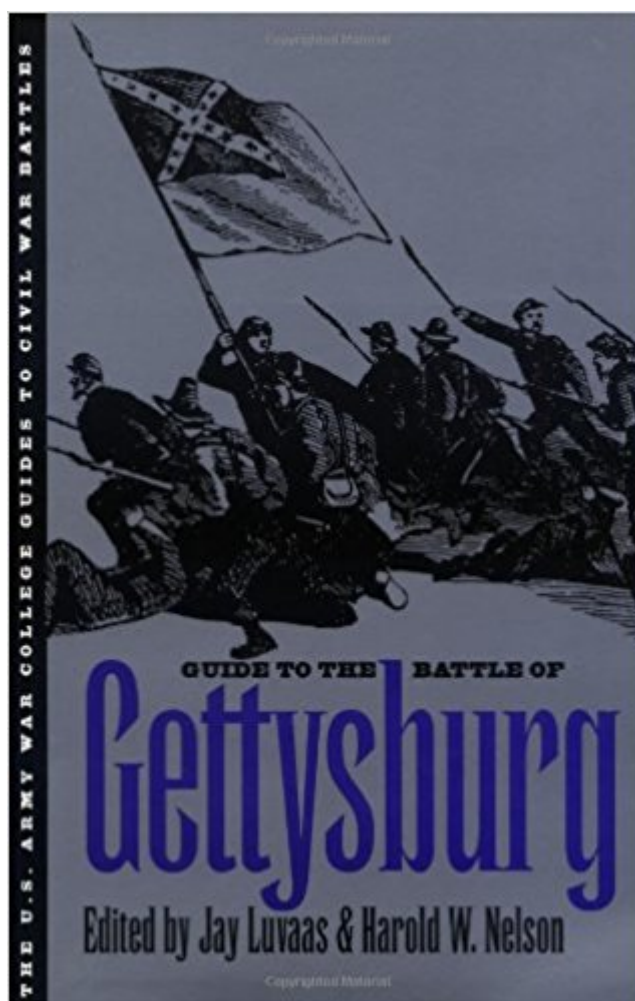


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Guide To The Battle Of Gettysburg (U.S. Army War College Guides To Civil War Battles)



Synopsis

This is a day-by-day, hour-by-hour account of one of the bloodiest and most momentous battles in history. The text is a blend of documentary sources and terrain descriptions, combining official reports and observations of the commanding officers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"These guides are the most thorough, detailed, and accurate books of their kind. Indeed, they are unique. I have used them to lead guided tours of several battlefields, with great success."--James M. McPherson, author of *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Era of the Civil War* "I most highly recommend this important and valuable series of guidebooks."--Herman Hattaway, coauthor of *How the North Won the Civil War* and *Why the South Lost the Civil War* "These guides bridge the gap between sound military history and battlefield touring literature. They can be enjoyed without ever leaving the easy chair or they can become indispensable companions on tramps over the scenes of the greatest engagements of the Civil War."--William C. Davis, author of *Jefferson Davis: The Man and His Hour* and former editor of *Civil War Times Illustrated*

This is one of the entries in a series of battlefield books/guides by the U. S. Army War College (AWC). AWC is an important institution in the American military. One effort undertaken since its founding in Carlisle PA has been assisting in (Page iv) ". . . in the historical research and then

benefited from the results by taking extensive staff rides over the old battlefields, discussing leadership, decision making, tactics and strategy."The organizational structure of the book is straightforward. Primary sources are used to illustrate from commanders reports from the field, day by day for the three days' carnage on the battlefield at Gettysburg. Then, some reflections from the authors on infantry, artillery, and cavalry. The final two sections? The "order of battle," in which the units involved and brigade commanders and above (up to the commanding generals--George Meade and Robert E. Lee) are listed. Last, casualty estimates (Page 231).Officers' reports can often be misleading, but they do provide a sense from those on the ground as to what happened. As such, this volume represents officers' views of what was happening, day by day.Some of the entries are well stated. One of my favorite quotations is from Brigadier General John Buford (who called Rock Island, IL, near my home town, as his residence for a time), as he wrote (Page 5): "I had gained positive information of the enemy's position and movement, and my arrangements were made for entertaining him until General Reynolds could reach the scene."Other quoted from Day One at Gettysburg: Henry Heth, commanding a division in A. P. Hill's corps that began the attack on Buford's forces; James Hall, leader of the Second Maine Battery, ordered to use his artillery to slow the Confederate advance; Rufus Dawes, Colonel of the 6th Wisconsin regiment, as he sprung a trap at the unfinished rail cut--at heavy expense to his force; Robert Rodes, one of Ewell's division commanders, on the beginning efforts at flanking the Union position. . . .And so on.On Day Two, it is interesting to look at the various views of participants, such as McLaws' report on a disagreement between James Longstreet (commander of the First Corps) and Lee himself. And on the events at Little Round Top, including Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's rendition.And then the third day. . . .All in all, a useful volume. Maps and suggested movement by readers on the battlefield itself make this a useful work if one is visiting the battlefield. It can be part of an interactive and educational effort. I wish that I had had this with me when I visited the battlefield this summer. It would have added to the experience.So, if you are interested in primary sources, a sense of the battlefield itself, and some reflection on strategy and tactics, this could prove a useful little volume for the reader.

I bought this book on the suggestion of Matt Spruill's book and have no regrets. I visit Gettysburg every several years and find the guides to be invaluable to the process of learning the complexities of what happened on that battlefield in 1863. My personal opinion is that it was truly the critical turning point of the Civil War and as Lincoln said, "...the birth of a new nation." In visiting the battlefield and seeing first hand the ground it was fought on many of my decades long questions as the why things went the way they did have been answered. If one plans to visit the battlefield I can

highly recommend this book as a reliable resource.

I have a strong interest in American history but have never been one to be interested in battle or military strategy. This book was recommended to me by a retired military colonel upon hearing of my family's future visit to Gettysburg. I am so happy I picked the book up. It is a tremendous help in understanding the battle of Gettysburg from a strategic perspective and really puts you in the moment. I recommend taking the book to the battlefield and reading the entries at the specific sites on the field.

I have read and participated in the AWC staff rides of the battlefields and from that light these books can be instructive as they relate to events and field conditions. They are not for the casual reader or tourist. It is essential that the reader be versed in both the theory and tactics of the time before visiting the site and that you are to read these books while standing on the actual grounds. These books supplement case studies at the AWC in tactical and strategic thinking. Observe the battleground as a military officer would and try to put yourself in the mind of the writer. What you will be reading are the after action reports written by the officers assigned to write them, of their viewings of events on the field. Beware sometimes these reports can be self-serving so take that in mind. Reading the reports and standing on location will help to give you an insight into field situations and problems that the military officer must see, recognize and solve. One key point to remember is that of communication is not what it is today. The field of battle only existed as far as the individual officer could see. He generally knew nothing of events occurring several hundred yards away let alone a mile or so away in real time. All he knew was what was right in front of him. He never sees the big picture that today's communications can provide or seek instant clarification of orders. With this in mind and a knowledge of the methods of Civil War fighting these books are very instructive.

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