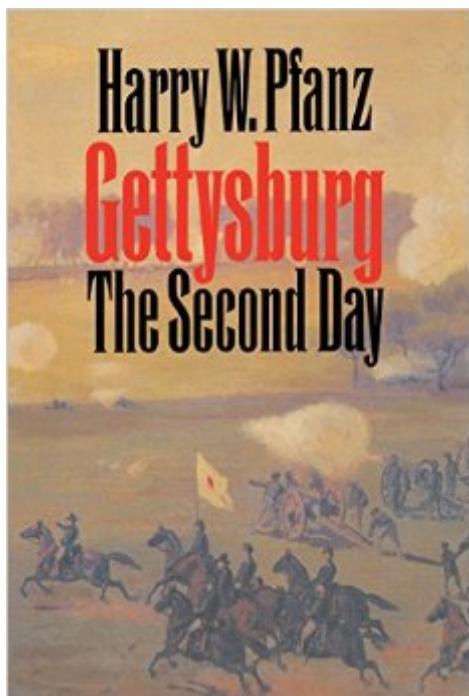


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Gettysburg--The Second Day (Civil War America)



Synopsis

The second day's fighting at Gettysburg--the assault of the Army of Northern Virginia against the Army of the Potomac on 2 July 1863--was probably the critical engagement of that decisive battle and, therefore, among the most significant actions of the Civil War. Harry Pfanz, a former historian at Gettysburg National Military Park, has written a definitive account of the second day's brutal combat. He begins by introducing the men and units that were to do battle, analyzing the strategic intentions of Lee and Meade as commanders of the opposing armies, and describing the concentration of forces in the area around Gettysburg. He then examines the development of tactical plans and the deployment of troops for the approaching battle. But the emphasis is on the fighting itself. Pfanz provides a thorough account of the Confederates' smashing assaults -- at Devil's Den and Little Round Top, through the Wheatfield and the Peach Orchard, and against the Union center at Cemetery Ridge. He also details the Union defense that eventually succeeded in beating back these assaults, depriving Lee's gallant army of victory. Pfanz analyzes decisions and events that have sparked debate for more than a century. In particular he discusses factors underlying the Meade-Sickles controversy and the questions about Longstreet's delay in attacking the Union left. The narrative is also enhanced by thirteen superb maps, more than eighty illustrations, brief portraits of the leading commanders, and observations on artillery, weapons, and tactics that will be of help even to knowledgeable readers. Gettysburg--The Second Day is certain to become a Civil War classic. What makes the work so authoritative is Pfanz' mastery of the Gettysburg literature and his unparalleled knowledge of the ground on which the fighting occurred. His sources include the Official Records, regimental histories and personal reminiscences from soldiers North and South, personal papers and diaries, newspaper files, and last -- but assuredly not least -- the Gettysburg battlefield. Pfanz's career in the National Park Service included a ten-year assignment as a park historian at Gettysburg. Without doubt, he knows the terrain of the battle as well as he knows the battle itself.

Book Information

File Size: 6557 KB

Print Length: 623 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press; New edition edition (June 15, 2011)

Publication Date: June 15, 2011

Sold by:Ã ª Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0057HB18G

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #458,421 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #82
inÃ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields #172 inÃ Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields > Gettysburg #2084 inÃ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Military History

Customer Reviews

Harry Pfanz's 457 page narrative of the battles that took place at Gettysburg on July 2 is sure to be a welcome addition to many libraries. Unlike many books that focus attention on Lee and Meade and their corps commanders, Pfanz focuses his attention on the brigades and regiments. The book is filled with interesting and colorful vignettes of those well known and others not so well known. The book is well written but too often Pfanz gets bogged down in minutia. A serious problem with this book is the lack of maps to help the reader follow troop movements. The 13 maps found in the book are of little help and I found myself constantly consulting Bradley Gottfried's Maps of Gettysburg. This book is a standard account of the battles fought on July 2 and there is nothing new or ground breaking in the book that would cause anyone to reconsider his understanding of the day's events. On numerous occasions, Pfanz makes questionable judgments in his discussion of the battles. Example: on page 161 he writes of the Confederate attack on the Union left flank, "Hindsight tells us that the key to the division's success or failure was John Bell Hood." The fact is that Hood was seriously wounded very early in the battle and played virtually no meaningful role in his division's attack. On page 212 in discussing the position of the 20th Maine at Little Round Top, he writes that they took up a position "near the base of the slope...[because] it had the advantage of a few boulders." He does not explain why the 20th Maine did not seek the higher ground that would have given them a significant tactical advantage. In the Epilogue he describes Daniel Sickles as a "competent" commander. This is surprising because Sickles decision to move his Third Corps forward created a gap in the Union line that nearly cost the Union army victory on July 2. Had Sickles not lost his leg in combat on that day, he may very likely been court marshaled for

insubordination. For those looking for a book that analyzes decisions made at the command level, I recommend works by Edwin Coddington, Stephen Sears and Allen Guelzo. If you wish to read the stories of the men who fought at the brigade and regiment levels, Pfanz's book is a good place to start.

I have visited the battlefield twice. I walked the key battle areas and after reading this book I can visualize through this book in great detail what I had physically saw there. The book is very detailed and I used a map of the battlefield to supplement the descriptions of the battles to enhance the reading. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the details of the second day of the battle.

The Greatest 3 hours of fighting during the Civil War Harry Pfanz's outstanding Gettysburg-The Second Day is the definitive study of that day's pivotal 3 hours of continuous battle on the Union's tenuous left flank. In 3 bloody hours the Confederates lost 6000 men while the Union had 9000 casualties: 15,000 men or approximately 83 soldiers a minute were killed, wounded, or simply became missing. The din of battle was breathtaking, and the smoke so fierce that at times the men found it hard to breath must less see. As General Longstreet said, his corps's assault of 2 July was the "best three hours' fighting ever done by any troops on any battle-field". It was simply a field of valor strew with carnage. Those that survived were never forget, and those that died so gloriously would never be forgotten. Death was like a shadow that stalked everyman until the sun went down. Harry Pfanz expertly followed the battle at the regiment level through the eyes and ears of the commanders and basic soldiers of both sides. Like his Gettysburg-The First day, his description of events although superb were a little out of order for ease of understanding how the actual battle flowed. A few more maps would have really helped. I strongly recommend the reader use Bradley Gottfried's The Maps of Gettysburg as an additional aid to help with the Order of Battle. I still don't know why most civil war historians do not include time stamps on their maps. A time stamp on each map would greatly aid in following the flow of battle. I thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Pfanz's little vignettes about both the major and minor participants. The strategically placed individual's photographs also made the battle more personal. All in all an extremely well done portrayal of the second day of battle of Gettysburg. Be forewarned that this history ONLY covers the 3 hour battle on the Union's left flank. A must read for Civil War history buffs. Might be a little over the top for the casual Civil War reader but worth the effort. A superb book in all respects.

Only the best

this is a wonderful book

Harry Pfanz's Gettysburg, The Second Day is no doubt one of the finest accounts of the second day battle. I am always amazed and exceedingly happy that such individuals have devoted their lives in writing such history. The book speaks for itself. For those who have not been to Gettysburg this may be more information than you want to process, however, once you've seen the battlefield this book will put all together for you and then some. Enjoy!

Interested in visiting or understanding the Battle of Gettysburg? A whole lot happened and Day 2 was the most important day. Forget Pickett's (should be called Lee's charge, it was his disaster) Charge. Book is riveting and very insightful. Be informed, separate book captures battle on Culp's Hill on Day 2.

I was already very familiar with the battle and really appreciated the detailed and descriptive abilities of Pfanz to give me a much better understanding. I was motivated by the desire to understand more of an ancestor's role and was not disappointed.

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