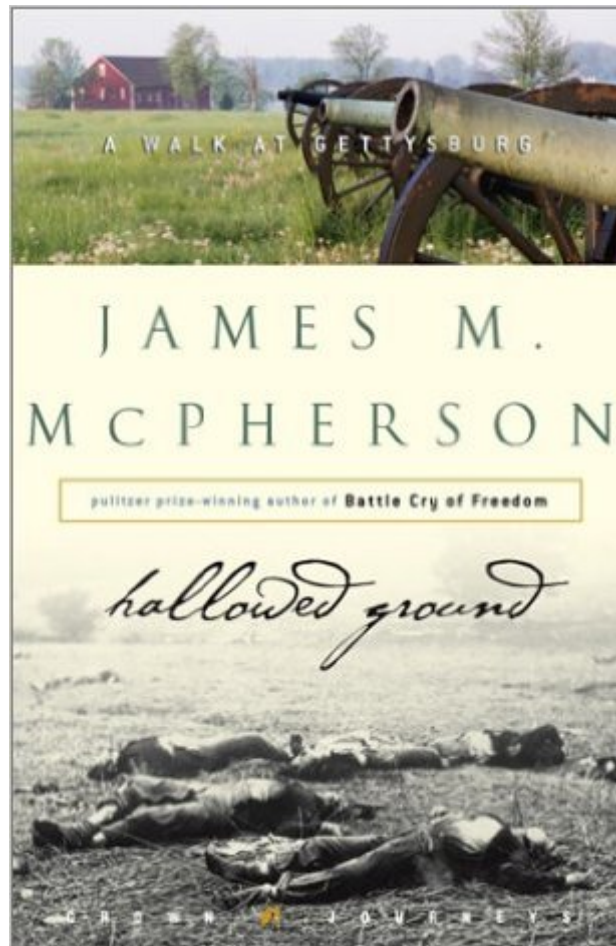


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# Hallowed Ground: A Walk At Gettysburg (Crown Journeys)



## Synopsis

In a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our power to add or detract. —President Abraham Lincoln

James M. McPherson, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*, and arguably the finest Civil War historian in the world, walks us through the site of the bloodiest and perhaps most consequential battle ever fought by Americans. The events that occurred at Gettysburg are etched into our collective memory, as they served to change the course of the Civil War and with it the course of history. More than any other place in the United States, Gettysburg is indeed hallowed ground. It's no surprise that it is one of the nation's most visited sites (nearly two million annual visitors), attracting tourists, military buffs, and students of American history. McPherson, who has led countless tours of Gettysburg over the years, makes stops at Seminary Ridge, the Peach Orchard, Cemetery Hill, and Little Round Top, among other key locations. He reflects on the meaning of the battle, describes the events of those terrible three days in July 1863, and places the struggle in the greater context of American and world history. Along the way, he intersperses stories of his own encounters with the place over several decades, as well as debunking several popular myths about the battle itself. What brought those 165,000 soldiers—75,000 Confederate, 90,000 Union—to Gettysburg? Why did they lock themselves in such a death grip across these once bucolic fields until 11,000 of them were killed or mortally wounded, another 29,000 were wounded and survived, and about 10,000 were missing—mostly captured? What was accomplished by all of this carnage? Join James M. McPherson on a walk across this hallowed ground as he encompasses the depth of meaning and historical impact of a place that helped define the nation's character.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've been lucky enough to live within thirty-five miles of Gettysburg almost my entire life and luckier still to have been a frequent visitor to the battlefield. While my knowledge of the field and the battle itself likely do not rival McPherson's, I know exactly what he means when he says the place is like a second home. I love Gettysburg. So, too, does McPherson, and his passion permeates this slim little book. Easily read in a couple of hours, *Hallowed Ground* is part travel journal, part guidebook, part history, deftly woven together by this gifted historian and storyteller. For those familiar with Gettysburg the battle and the place, reading *Hallowed Ground* is like visiting with an old friend. For those who have never been, it is an invitation. All the sites are there: the Round Tops, Seminary and Cemetery Ridges, Culp's and Cemetery Hills, the Wheatfield, Devil's Den, the Peach Orchard, the McPherson Farm (no relation to the author). But McPherson goes deeper, to the monuments and their stories, even to the observation towers that old hands will recognize. The emotions are here, too. The strange elation you feel driving beneath the trees on Seminary Ridge or climbing the boulders at Devil's Den (at least in your younger days), knowing that men, great and small, walked these same paths, stood on the same ground, fought here for cause and comrade. And yet, knowing that many of these men died here--maybe in the Wheatfield--you feel the solemnity of the place, the horror of tens of thousands of casualties. You sense your own smallness and are awed by the actions that took place here; you are both proud and grateful. None other than Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, who acted heroically at Gettysburg, captured these sentiments and emotions. "In great deeds, something abides.

James McPherson is no stranger to the American Civil War in general and the battle of Gettysburg specifically; his book on the war, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, won the Pulitzer Prize, and he has led many guided tours and walks of Gettysburg in the past. *Hallowed Ground*, in essence, is a short but compelling combination of both: a history of the battle and a walk/guided tour, worked into a small hardback book a little over 140 pages in length. Mr. McPherson's narrative takes the reader through a walking tour of the battlefield from the beginning of the battle on July 1, 1863 and sequentially leads the reader from one section of the battle to the next, nearly sequentially as they happened on

the battlefield. Occasionally there is a slight detour to other geographic or historic areas of note. At the same time, Mr. McPherson describes how that part of the battle took place, pointing out specific locations where there is a statue or interpretive marker and why it's there. Other odds and bits, like frequent Gettysburg myths, mentioned include the one about statue's hooves and the fate of the rider, or the ever-persistent "fought because of shoes" idea. Strangely enough, Mr. McPherson seems to take offense to various monuments and other events that, while providing stirring examples of Union and Confederate veteran unified nationalism, seemingly forgot what the war was all about in the first place. Such criticisms seem out of place given the context of the book. Book-ending the description of the battle and the guided battlefield tour is an account of the creation of the park itself, and some of the geographic changes that have occurred since 1863. At the end is Lincoln's poignant Gettysburg Address.

In the abstract, the notion of a book replacing an actual tour of the Gettysburg battlefield would seem a little far fetched...until one considers that this assignment is performed by the estimable Civil War author James McPherson. Under his pen, we get an amazingly new and unique perspective on this seminal battle that all Civil War readers should treasure as I certainly did. Taking a walking tour of the battlefield and having the many anecdotes and stories that McPherson has developed over time and developing it into a small book (about 175 pages), the reader is treated to an intimate session with the master Civil War historian and undoubtedly learns many new and unique things previously lost to time and history. A study devoted to the battlefield as opposed to the battle, McPherson lets us in on things that never made the campaign studies of Coddington, Trudeau, Phanz or Sears...like the fact that many acres of the battlefield are being judiciously reformed back into the state it took in 1863...from clearing land that has since grown over, to re-growing woodland that has been cleared since the battle, or even, amazingly, culling wooded areas to make them resemble the partially wooded areas in 1863, thus giving the touring historian a feel for what that particular area was like back then. An explanation of the many monuments that dot the fields and the many stories associated with their placement will surely entice Civil War buffs with many new stories that add to the Gettysburg legend. All this is interspersed with a summary level discussion of the battle and the main players...all told in McPherson's unique way that combines both the military and the political climates of the times.

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