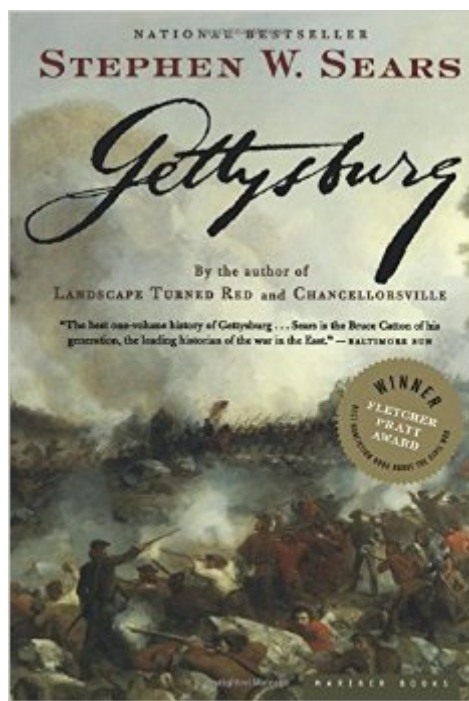


The book was found

Gettysburg



Synopsis

A masterful, single-volume history of the Civil War's greatest campaign. Drawing on original source material, from soldiers' letters to official military records of the war, Stephen W. Sears's *Gettysburg* is a remarkable and dramatic account of the legendary campaign. He takes particular care in his study of the battle's leaders and offers detailed analyses of their strategies and tactics, depicting both General Meade's heroic performance in his first week of army command and General Lee's role in the agonizing failure of the Confederate army. With characteristic style and insight, Sears brings the epic tale of the battle in Pennsylvania vividly to life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are two Civil War writers who concentrate on the Eastern Theater of the war, and are prominent enough to garner attention outside their field. One is Stephen W. Sears, the other is Noah Andre Trudeau. Sears has concentrated on the first half of the war, mostly writing about the campaigns of George McClellan, while Trudeau has worked in the last half of the war, making a name for himself as the best-known chronicler of Grant's Overland Campaign in 1864. Last year, Trudeau presented us with *Gettysburg: A Testing of Courage*, a long and very good account of the battle and its consequences. It seems these two historians have met in the middle of the war, because we are now presented with Stephen W. Sears' simply titled *Gettysburg*. Sears is a different writer than Trudeau, and he presents the battle in a different fashion, the book in a different manner. While Trudeau's book is long and dense (no illustrations, ca. 600 pages of text), Sears' book is considerably shorter, and more accessible. It has illustrations, either photographs of the participants

or artwork done by participants or witnesses. Since they take up space on the page, and I would judge the font to be a point or two larger, my guess is this book is a good 25% shorter than Trudeau's. That makes it more accessible (as does the inclusion of illustrations, one shortcoming of Trudeau's book) and easier to read. It's not, however, a book for beginners. Sears is of course interested in the battle and why it came out the way it did, not just recounting what happened during the fighting. He echoes many of Trudeau's judgements, differs with some others, but makes some of his own. Most of his verdict on the battle and the performance of the generals involved is nothing new to Civil War buffs, and won't make fans of R.E. Lee happy.

I'm not exactly sure why every book on Gettysburg "has" to plow new ground in order to be accepted. Perhaps it's because the grognards feel they have to read everything written about the battle and are disappointed if they don't learn something new. Not everyone wants, or needs, to delve into new research. New research, after all, can be flawed. Unless you follow Civil War scholarship through the peer review process, you may take as gospel something that doesn't stand up to scrutiny. Sears' *Gettysburg* doesn't have much in it that's new, but that's not necessarily a bad thing! Those of us who have studied the Civil War for some time tend to forget that every few years we *need* an easy to read, single volume history of important battles that utilizes current research. *Gettysburg* by Stephen Sears is such a book. The first book I read about Gettysburg was *They Met at Gettysburg* by Gen. Stackpole. It was a bit out of date even when I read it, and it was terribly slanted against certain historical figures, but at the same time it was engaging and very easy to read. That book started me on a 15 year discovery of the American Civil War. Reading *Gettysburg*, I was reminded of how I felt when I read Stackpole's book. I really wish that this book had been my first introduction to the battle. It may not be a must read for every Civil War enthusiast, and it is certainly *not* as detailed as Pfanzer or Hess' books (nor is it meant to be) but it's definitely an important contribution to the field. Someone coming at Gettysburg for the first time could do *much* worse than this volume. The book begins where *Chancellorsville* leaves off, with Sears showing the opening moves of Lee and Hooker.

The Civil War, particularly the Battle of Gettysburg, retains its hold on the imagination of Americans. We seek to understand our country by studying the events of these terrible but formative years. The Civil War did indeed lead to a "new birth of freedom" in the United States. We still struggle to understand and to develop the implications of this "new birth". Stephen Sears is a distinguished military historian of the Civil War who has written in this book an outstanding account of the pivotal

battle of Gettysburg (July 1 -- July 3, 1863). This battle ended the Confederacy's second invasion of the Union (the first invasion ended with the Battle of Antietam in September, 1862). Coupled with the Confederacy's surrender of Vicksburg, Mississippi on July 4, 1863, Gettysburg ended the South's ability to wage an offensive war and probably ended as well its chance of winning the war. Sears gives a full account of the battle and of the events leading to Lee's second invasion of the North, beginning with Lee's victory over the Union Army at Chancellorsville in May, 1863. Sears explains well how the invasion was linked to the impending Confederate loss at Vicksburg. General Lee put forward the invasion to Jefferson Davis as a calculated gamble and a means to counteract this loss. The book offers detailed pictures of the march into Pennsylvania of the prelude to the Battle of Gettysburg, of the battle itself, and of Lee's subsequent retreat into Virginia.

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