

# Gettysburg: The First Day - A Turning Point in Civil War America

The Battle of Gettysburg, fought from July 1 to July 3, 1863, is one of the most significant battles in the history of the United States. Situated in south-central Pennsylvania, Gettysburg became the epicenter of a conflict that would shape the future of the nation. This article delves into the events of the first day of the battle, exploring its impact on the Civil War in America.

## A Prelude to Gettysburg

The Battle of Gettysburg originated from General Robert E. Lee's ambitious plan to invade the North and deliver a decisive blow to the Union forces. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia clashed with General George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac, resulting in a series of bloody engagements on the picturesque fields of Gettysburg.

## The Opening Salvos

On July 1, 1863, the first shots of the battle were fired around 8:00 a.m. in the outskirts of Gettysburg. Confederate forces led by General Henry Heth clashed with Union cavalry under the command of General John Buford. The skirmish soon escalated into a full-scale confrontation, rapidly drawing in more troops on both sides.

### Gettysburg--The First Day (Civil War America)

by Harry W. Pfanz(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 6615 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported



Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 492 pages



## **Key Moments on the First Day**

One of the most significant events of the first day was the death of General John Reynolds, the esteemed leader of the Union's First Corps. During the initial fighting, Reynolds was mortally wounded, causing a momentary setback for the Union forces. However, General Abner Doubleday assumed command and rallied the troops, ensuring the defensive line held strong.

In the afternoon, the Confederate forces unleashed a ferocious assault on the Union-held position at Cemetery Hill. Despite their gallant efforts, they were unable to break through the heavily fortified Union lines. The Union troops maintained their defensive advantage, repelling multiple Confederate attacks.

## **A Turning Point in the Civil War**

The first day of the Battle of Gettysburg marked a critical turning point in the Civil War. The Union troops' resilient defense prevented the Confederates from achieving their initial objectives of swiftly capturing the town. The unexpected resistance gave General Meade the time he needed to bring more troops to reinforce the Union lines.

The battle's outcome hinged on the successful defense of Cemetery Hill by the Union forces on the first day. Had the Confederates managed to break through and secure control of the high ground, the battle might have taken a different turn, potentially leading to a Confederate victory.

## Gettysburg's National Significance

Beyond its impact on the Civil War, Gettysburg holds great national significance. The battle resulted in a staggering number of casualties, with an estimated 51,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing. President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered in November 1863 during the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, immortalized the sacrifices made by the soldiers on both sides and highlighted the importance of preserving the Union.

The first day of the Battle of Gettysburg was a pivotal moment in Civil War America. It showcased the determination and resilience of the Union forces, setting the stage for the intense battles that followed in the subsequent days. The overall outcome of the battle would ultimately shape the trajectory of the Civil War and solidify the resolve of the United States in preserving its unity and abolishing slavery. Gettysburg stands as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made and the bloodshed endured to secure the nation's future.



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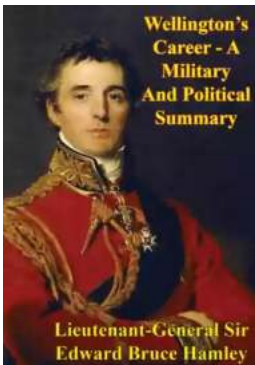
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For good reason, the second and third days of the Battle of Gettysburg have received the lion's share of attention from historians. With this book, however, the critical first day's fighting finally receives its due. After sketching the background of the Gettysburg campaign and recounting the events immediately preceding the battle, Harry Pfanz offers a detailed tactical description of events of the first day. He describes the engagements in McPherson Woods, at the Railroad Cuts, on Oak Ridge, on Seminary Ridge, and at Blocher's Knoll, as well as the retreat of Union forces through Gettysburg and the Federal rally on Cemetery Hill. Throughout, he draws on deep research in published and archival sources to challenge many long-held assumptions about the battle.



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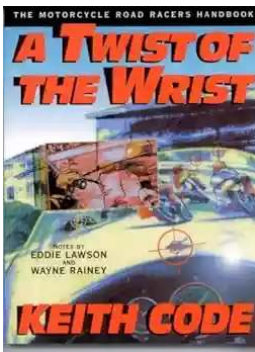
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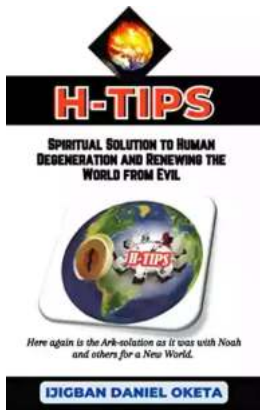
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