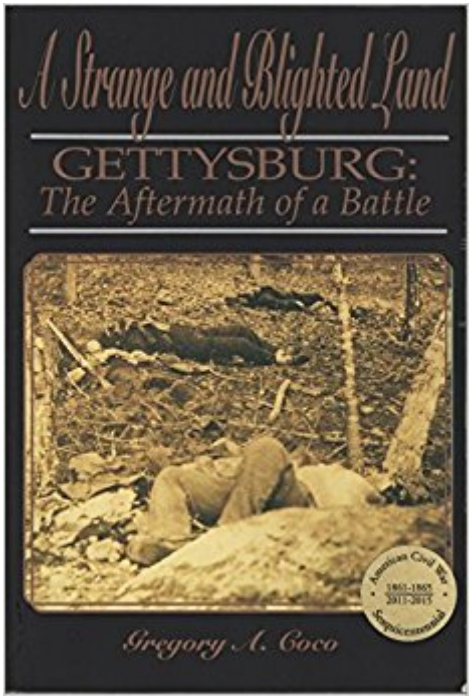
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A Strange And Blighted Land - Gettysburg: The Aftermath Of A Battle



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Synopsis

The more dismal side of the Gettysburg campaign is covered: burials of Union and Confederate corpses, removal of the 3,000 horses killed, care of the wounded, descriptions of field hospitals, disposition of POWs, cleanup of the battle ground, collection of weapons, early relic hunters, battlefield guides, and a tour of the grim and bloody fields as described by a host of early visitors.

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Customer Reviews

Gregory Ashton Coco, born and raised in Louisiana, lived in the Gettysburg area for nearly 35 years. In 1972, after serving in the U.S. Army, he earned a degree in American History from the University of Southwestern Louisiana. While in the military, Greg spent a tour of duty in Vietnam as a prisoner of war military interrogator and infantry platoon radio operator with the 25th Infantry and received, among other awards, the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. During his years in Gettysburg, Greg worked as a National Park Service Ranger and a Licensed Battlefield Guide. He wrote sixteen books and a dozen scholarly articles on Gettysburg and the Civil War. His A Strange and Blighted Land. Gettysburg: The Aftermath of a Battle was voted #12 in the Top 50 Civil War Books ever written. Greg died at age 62 in February of 2009. In his words, he was Ã¢â ¬Å“the happy husband of Cindy L. Small for 26 years. He was the fortunate father of daughter, Keri E. Coco. He loved them both with all his heart.Ã¢â ¬Â• Keri is married to Cail MacLean and they have a daughter, Ashton MacLean Coco. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I liked this book because it contains information which I haven’t been able to find elsewhere. The style of writing is strange so it is a little difficult to read, in a sort of Dostoevsky meets Yoda kind of way, Description of the physical characteristics if the land after the 3 days are worth the price of the book. The author spends very very little time on what is usually common knowledge for the average Civil War buff which I found nice.The book doesn’t draw you in to the scenes, if that what you are looking for, however there are a good selection of letters and diary entries which I found revealed some things about Gettysburg I had never considered. The collection of photographs is fairly unique in that they are not the same 7 photographs splashed around every other publication. Here you see whole forests stripped of bark, branches shattered by weaponry, photos of survivors returning months or years later contemplating recognizable sections of the battlefield.I could go on. Worth having in any collection on the Civil War (or the War of Northern Aggression, if you will). The first hand accounts are priceless.

The Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863) was the largest ever fought on the American continent and the pivotal battle of our Civil War. Following the battle, with the retreat of Lee’s Army and the pursuit by Meade’s, there was a pressing need to take care of the dead, wounded, and destroyed that the armies left in their wake. There also was, and remains, a need to reflect upon the significance of the Battle and the lessons to be learned from it.Gregory Coco’s book, "A Strange and Blighted Land" (1995) gives a comprehensive account of the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg. Mr. Coco is a Park Ranger at Gettysburg, and he hasa written extensively and well about the battle. He is also a Vietnam veteran. His history in this book stresses eloquently, the carnage of war, its terrors and pain, and its irreplaceable cost in human life and treasure.The book is arranged in five rather lengthy chapters. In the first chapter, Mr. Coco offers his readers a tour of the Battlefield in which he presents eyewitness accounts of the death and destruction evident over the 25 mile square Battlefield. The second chapter discusses the dead of Gettysburg and their burials. There is excellent historical material here about the establishment of the Gettysburg National Cemetery. In his next chapter, Mr. Coco discusses the Gettysburg wounded, both North and South, the medical and surgical practices of the day, and the camps set up in haste to care for the masses of grievously wounded soldiers. In his fourth chapter, Mr. Coco discusses the treatment of prisoners of war, and the fate of the many stragglers and deserters which followed in the wake of the battle. In his final chapter, Mr. Coco discusses preservation efforts for the Battlefield, culminating in the establishment of the Gettysburg National Military Park in 1895.I have read several other accounts of the aftermath of Gettysburg. Mr. Coco’s book is by far the most thorough. He has the factual details

at his command and presents them in a convincing manner. He shows great familiarity with the Battle itself, and discusses well the controversies and issues in determining the numbers of the killed, wounded, and missing.But there is much more to this book than a factual recounting of the aftermath of a battle. The book is written in an appealing, personal, sometimes buttonholing style in which Mr. Coco seems to be at the readers side offering observations and commentary on the significance of the events set forth in his story. He offers opinions on a variety of topics emanating from his reflections on Gettysburg and on war. (Specifically, Mr. Coco shows a healthy skepticism in matters of religion.) Mr. Coco focuses on the meaning to be drawn from Gettysburg and from our Civil War. His own perspective is clear. Mr. Coco is opposed to efforts to glorify or romanticize war. Again and again, he stresses the horrors of war and tries to impress upon his readers that the greatest lesson to be learned from Gettysburg is -- to try to prevent such things from happening. Thus his book concludes (p.373)"Let us now leave behind the aftermath story with this hope: that for each and every attempt to parade the 'pomp and circumstance' of war, we give equal time to the corrupt and merciless monster shielded smugly within, because, 'if the bugler starts to play, we too must dance.'"This book is both an excellent history and a deeply-felt attempt to think about the meaning of Gettysburg.

Greg Coco's "A Strange and Blighted Land" is, as far as I know, a uniquely intimate and yet comprehensive look at the aftermath of Civil War combat. The Battle of Gettysburg left 6000 soldiers dead on the ground (with thousands more to later die of their wounds) and 20,000 seriously wounded. When the two great armies that had fought there marched away, the dead and the wounded remained in and around Gettysburg, creating a horror worthy of an inner circle of Dante's Hell. This is an unflinching look at the days, weeks, and months that followed. I see that a previous, anonymous reviewer at this site complained about the "author's incesant anti-war sermonizing." To the contrary, I consider that Coco did little "sermonizing". Rather, he lets the eyewitnesses speak for themselves, quoting liberally from a vast array of primary sources. The result is a powerful, fact-packed book that is certainly grim, even gruesome, and far removed from the conventional romanticing and glamourization of the very deadly consequences of genuine 19th century warfare. I think that anyone who finds him- or herself thinking back to the supposed glory of Civil War battle where everyone dies heroically and cleanly should read Coco's book as a strong antidote against such a false picture.

Excellent read.

Excellent and thoroughly researched work on a rarely discussed aspect of civil war battles, and war and it’s aftermath in general.

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