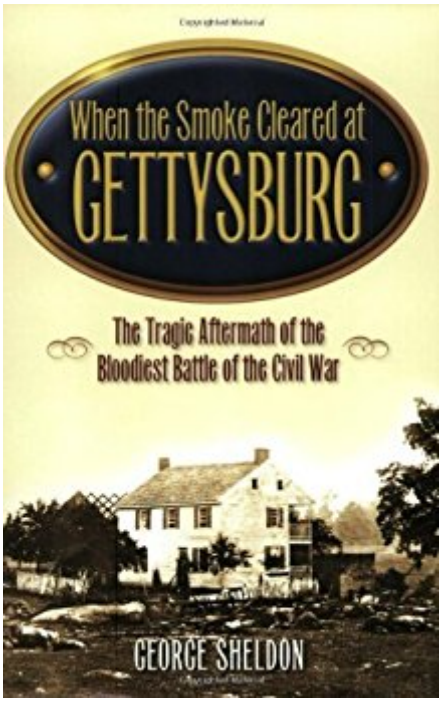
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When The Smoke Cleared At Gettysburg



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Synopsis

In July 1863 the bloodiest and most decisive battle of the Civil War was fought near the sleepy town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. While many books have been written about the landmark battle, When the Smoke Cleared at Gettysburg differs from the rest by detailing the horrific aftermath of the battle, detailing what it takes to put a town back together after two armies have fought through its streets and across the surrounding countryside. The small town of 2,400 inhabitants was faced with the enormous problem of burying more than 7,000 dead soldiers and caring for 20,000 wounded men who had been left behind by both armies. Fields that just days earlier maintained crops and livestock were now littered with firearms, munitions, and swords, and nearly every building still standing was turned into a field hospital with mounds of amputated limbs left behind after the surgeons had completed their grizzly work. When the Smoke Cleared at Gettysburg provides firsthand accounts of life in the town and on the battlefield in the days and months following the brutal fighting. Included are stories and vivid descriptions from soldiers, reporters, civilians, doctors, and nurses. Good Samaritans came to help the wounded and the dying, and profiteers and souvenir hunters were not far behind. Then came the politicians, followed by legions of families seeking the remains of their fallen sons. When the Smoke Cleared at Gettysburg presents the heart-breaking human misery resulting from his battle and by the ongoing war wherever it went. From the backbreaking chore of clearing the battlefield of the wounded and dead to nursing the amputees, one can learn much of the battle by seeing what ordinary people who were pulled into the war did to survive and rebuild their lives.

Book Information

File Size: 6196 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Publisher: Cumberland House (June 1, 2003)

Publication Date: May 31, 2003

Sold by:Ã Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B001HBI45E

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #439,458 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #80 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields #164 inÃ Â Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields > Gettysburg #427 inÃ Â Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Military > Other

Customer Reviews

I really do not understand some of the very negative reviews written by some here. I have read most of the 'After Battle' books that are out there along with a great many books of all types about Gettysburg. I began reading them in 1957. The author has written for the Gettysburg novice and very well read alike. For the novice he starts briefly with Native American times, the founding of the town by Gettys son and brings it rapidly up to the time of the Civil War, then he very briefly describes the battle. If one's interest is stirred the reader can get into battle details buy the plethora of books on the 3 day battle available. The author then takes us to the immediate aftermath of the battle on July 4 and continues it on until the founding of the National Cemetery and Lincoln's Address. He then again briefly takes us through the founding of the Park and up to modern times. He does all this through documentation written by eyewitness, both townspeople and military. For the well read, even ones like myself who have read most every book regarding the battle aftermath, I found much new material of great interest. From the early history of the town, to the founding of the National Cemetery and in-between I expanded my knowledge greatly. The only way for me to go now is to read some of the townsfolk diaries published or collected at various locations from which the author quotes. I suspect that some of the negative reviewers were nit-pickers, like arguing about the shoes as the MO for Heath, yet I learned from this book that no shoe factory - in the modern sense - existed at Gettysburg , but I was surprised at the very large number of cottage industry shoemakers that worked in the town. Another possible reason for negative reviews is the authors treatment covering the Negro people of the area, both free and runaway slaves. This, I suspect, is the larger issue for negative reviews as a great many in the South today do not want this story told. So this may be their way to suppress it and try to punish the author for telling the truth that free Negroes were kidnapped and taken for auction in Richmond under Gen Lee's permission. The implication is that R E Lee is not the moral hero of the Lost Cause fantasy created 20+ years after the War. Remember that in the South today the Civil War is not in the past, it's not even over. Every boyhood dream of a Southern boy today is that he wakes up and it is 2 PM on July 3rd and Pickett's Charge has not yet failed.

Currier and Ives might well have selected this prosperous small town for a romanticized lithograph. Gettysburg prospered as a hub of trade for the multiple highway spokes and railway tracks connecting in all directions. By that second sultry summer of the Civil War, this Pennsylvania hamlet would import 172,000 armed men and export 51,000 casualties, minus arms, minus legs, minus life itself.The tale of those first 3 days of July, 1863, has oft been told in print and celluloid. But what of the everyday townsfolks? As the battle raged and the spectacle that is war moved on, how did the some 3000 residents cope with the terror, the dead and dying left in the fields, indeed, in their very homes? And what traumatic memories did a child carry from that day and on into the next century? What must it have been like to be attending class in the morning, only to be in the middle of a pitched battle down the main streets by the afternoon? Twenty year old Ginny Wade prepares a meal while worrying about her fiancÃƒÂ© on a distant battle front, only to have a bullet pass through the door behind her, making her the only direct civilian casualty. A girl steps out on her porch to warn Union soldiers that they will be shot by Confederate snipers at the corner. Bullets fly in her direction as she jumps back inside but continues to shout her warnings.Public buildings, churches and private homes in town fill with the dead and dying. Gettysburg becomes a rebel held town. Citizens lend aide and food voluntarily or at the point of a gun. In a macabre twist of fate, the local cemetery on a hill just south of town, becomes the very focus of the conflict and later the whole nation as a president with a stove-pipe hat delivers words long remembered.George Sheldon’s book reads much like a diary you or I might have written if such an event happened in our neighborhood. The mental diagrams of the ebb and flow of battle I have in my head were soon supplanted by the minute by minute experience of dodging stray bullets while slipping on the living room floor made slick by the blood of the wounded. My recommendation would be to have a map of Gettysburg at hand while reading this book. Google Earth on a screen before me was invaluable. Streets, intersections, and buildings are referred to often in this work. Following a person along a street and around the corner as she breathlessly describes the action, or a boy quickly climbing back down a tree on a ridge to avoid the first shots of the war is made very vivid. And of course, Google Earth has those little photos you can click on at many locations mentioned.How a small town community dealt with having the Civil War brought into its very homes brings the war experience right to home.This reviewer, Dr. Charles Dusenbury is the Kindle-published author of COMPUTER BRAIN and MOLASBA.MOLASBACOMPUTER BRAIN

Good Book

Much of the content simply repeats the familiar horrific details of military medicine during the Civil War as described by a variety of contemporary witnesses and could have have referred to the aftermath of any major Civil War battle. There are far better researched books available on the aftermath of Gettysburg, this one simply picked the low-hanging fruit.

If you are a Gettysburg buff as am I, then this book will appeal to you. As much as I enjoy the battle tactics, strategy, and personalities that made up the Battle of Gettysburg, I also thoroughly enjoy reading about the aftermath and what the poor citizens of Gettysburg had to deal with once the armies departed, leaving thousands of wounded men to be cared for, not to mention the decomposing carcasses of horses and mules in sweltering Pennsylvania July heat.

Wow! I can usually breeze through a book on the Civil War in 2-3 days. This one is very graphic and is a lot of food for thought. Took about a week to digest.

Whether it is the politicians, the farmers, the children or the wounded, you get a clear picture of what it was like to be caught up in the aftermath of this huge battle.

This book was filled with actual accounts of what happened during the Gettysburg battle and how the people of the town had to deal with the aftermath. It is not a book about strategies of the North and South. It is about the people of the town. Worth reading if you are a student of the Civil War and especially Gettysburg.

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