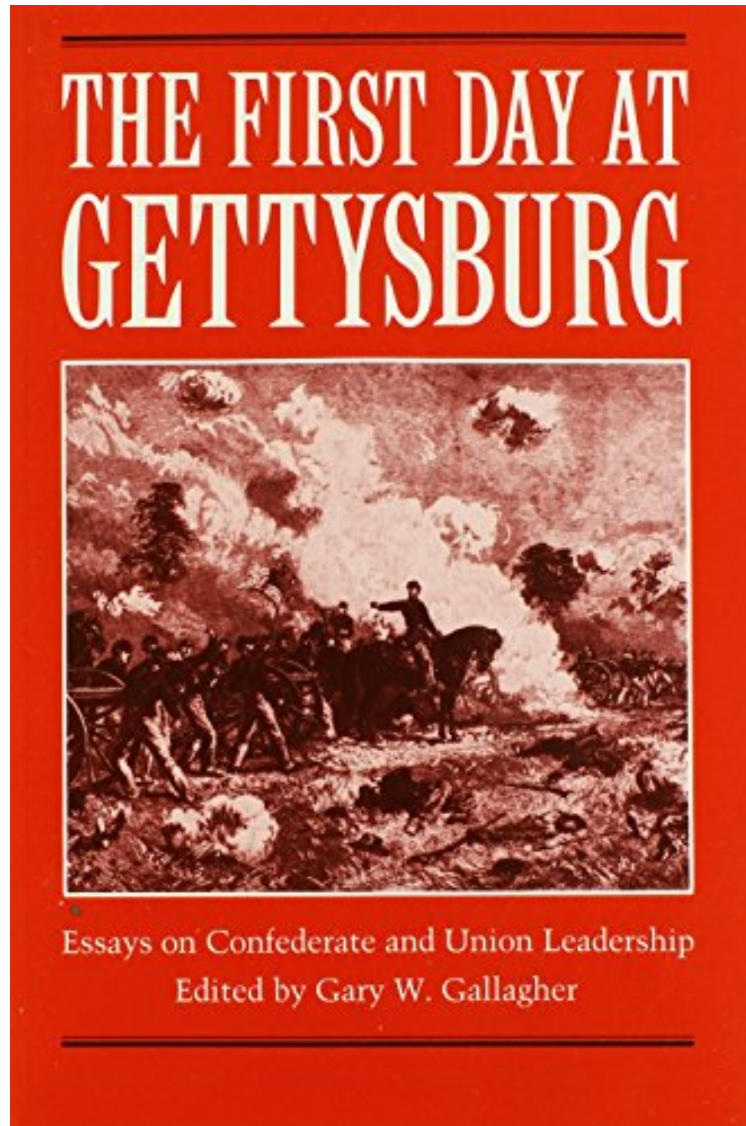


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The First Day at Gettysburg: Essays on Confederate and Union Leadership

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this book useful in that it firmly plants the blame for the Confederate loss with Lee. The opinions expressed are thoughtful and worth the read. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Studies of the First Day at Gettysburg By Robin Friedman The Battle of Gettysburg, (July 1 --July 3, 1863) is widely regarded as the pivotal battle of the Civil War and as one of the defining moment of our country's history. The battle ended Robert E. Lee's second invasion of Union soil and put the Confederacy in a defensive posture from which it never recovered. "The First Day at Gettysburg" is the first of three collections of essays edited by Professor Gary Gallagher devoted to the three days of the battle. It consists of four detailed and lengthy studies examining critical leadership decisions on both sides of the line. On the first day of the Battle, portions of the Union and Confederate armies collided north and west of Gettysburg. The fighting continued for most of the day. At the close of the day Union troops from the First and Eleventh Corps were pushed back through Gettysburg onto the heights of Cemetery and Culp's Hill northeast of Gettysburg. The Confederate command did not attempt, at the close of the first day, to take these heights, a decision that will be forever debated. Thus, ironically, the Confederate Army won a victory on day 1 at the cost of pushing the Union Army to an overwhelmingly strong position. This is the stuff of the discussion of the events of July 1. The first essay in this volume "R.E. Lee and July 1 at Gettysburg" is by Alan T. Nolan. Most of Nolan's work is critical of Robert E. Lee, and this essay is no exception. The essay argues that Lee erred fundamentally, after the Battle of Chancellorsville, by invading the North at all. Thus, for Nolan, there should have been no Battle of Gettysburg. He argues that any likely benefits of the invasion were not worth the risk to the Army of Northern Virginia and to the loss of manpower. Nolan also criticizes General Lee's role in allowing "Jeb" Stuart to ride around the Union Army and for failing to exert sufficient control over his Corps commanders, particularly General A.P. Hill on July 1. The second essay "Confederate Corps Leadership on the First Day of Gettysburg: A.P. Hill and Richard S. Ewell in a Difficult Debut" is by Professor Gallagher himself. This is a good follow-up essay to Nolan's study. As Gallagher emphasizes, Generals Hill and Ewell were new to Corps command. They received this responsibility following Lee's reorganization of the Army after the death of Stonewall Jackson. Both Hill and Ewell have been criticized for their conduct on the first day. Hill has been criticized for rashly bringing on the Battle and for failing to follow-through at the conclusion of day 1. Ewell has been criticized for his failure to attempt to take the heights -- Cemetery and Culp's Hills -- following the defeat of the Union Army. Gallagher offers a balanced account of the actions of the two Confederate Corps commanders during the first day together with an account of the command decisions of General Lee. He argues that both Hill and Ewell performed adequately, but not with any special distinction, and that responsibility for Confederate military decisions on July 1 ultimately rested with Lee as the commanding general. A. Wilson Greene's essay "From Chancellorsville to Cemetery Hill: O.O. Howard and Eleventh Corps Leadership" is the only essay in this volume that focuses on leadership. The Union 11th Corps and its commander, General Oliver Howard, have been much criticized for their role on July 1. As does Gallagher's essay on Hill and Ewell, Greene's essay attempts to rehabilitate the 11th Corps, its commanders, and General Howard. Greene offers an account of the disaster that befell the 11th Corps at Chancellorsville and emphasizes how that Corps was determined to redeem itself at Gettysburg. He argues that the Corps fought bravely on July 1 and was instrumental in the Union goal of delaying the Confederate attack to allow the concentration of the Union Army and the occupation of the heights. Although he is critical of certain decisions that General Howard made in placing the Eleventh Corps, and the First Corps as well, Greene argues that Howard's approach to the action on July 1 was sound and saved the day for the Federals. He also credits, as did Congress, General Howard with earmarking Cemetery and Culp's Hills for the anchor of the Union position. The final essay in this volume "Three Confederate Disasters on Oak Ridge; Failures of Brigade Leadership on the First Day of Gettysburg" by Robert S. Krick, offers a more straightforward description of events on the Battlefield than do the three companion essays. Krick explains how and why three Confederate brigades came to grief on July 1 amidst the Confederate victory. He also explains the consequences of these failures on the subsequent course of the Battle. Only two of the three disasters Krick discusses occurred on Oak Hill. The first disaster, involving the Brigade of Confederate General Joseph Davis occurred in the fabled railroad cut at Gettysburg in the morning fighting. Krick does a good job in explaining what happened, the consequences, and how the loss could have been averted. The two disasters on Oak Hill during the afternoon of July 1 involved the brigades of Colonel Edward O'Neal and General Alfred Iverson under the command of Major General Rodes of Ewell's Corps. Iverson's and O'Neal's attacks constituted two of the poorest led actions of any during the Civil War resulting in needless loss of life. The result was that Rodes took Oak Hill, the linchpin of Confederate success on July 1, but at an exorbitant cost in casualties that would haunt the Southern Army for the remainder of the Battle of Gettysburg. This book does an outstanding job in setting forth many of the controversies surrounding the Battle of Gettysburg. The essays will give the reader a good idea of the fascination this struggle continues to exert. The book will be of most interest to those students who already have a good basic understanding of the events of the Battle.

The Battle of Gettysburg exerts a unique hold on the national imagination. Many writers have argued that it represented the turning point of the Civil War, after which Confederate fortunes moved inexorably toward defeat. Successive generations of historians have not exhausted the topic of leadership at Gettysburg, especially with regard to

the first day of the battle. Often overshadowed by more famous events on the second and third days, the initial phase of the contest nevertheless offers the most interesting problems of leadership. In this collection of essays, the contributors examine several controversial aspects of leadership on that opening day including Lee's strategy and tactics, the conduct of Confederate corps commanders Richard S. Ewell and A.P. Hill, Oliver Otis Howard's role on the Union side, and a series of notable debacles among Lee's brigadiers. Drawing on a range of sources, the authors combine interpretation and fresh evidence that should challenge readers to reconsider their understanding of the vents of July 1, 1863.

About the Author Gary W. Gallagher is professor of history at the University of Virginia. He is a contributing editor of The Kent State University Press publications *Antietam: Essays on the 1862 Maryland Campaign* (1989); *Struggle for the Shenandoah: Essays on the 1864 Valley Campaign* (1991); *The Second Day at Gettysburg: Essays on Confederate and Union Leadership* (1993); and *Three Days at Gettysburg: Essays on Confederate and Union Leadership* (1999).