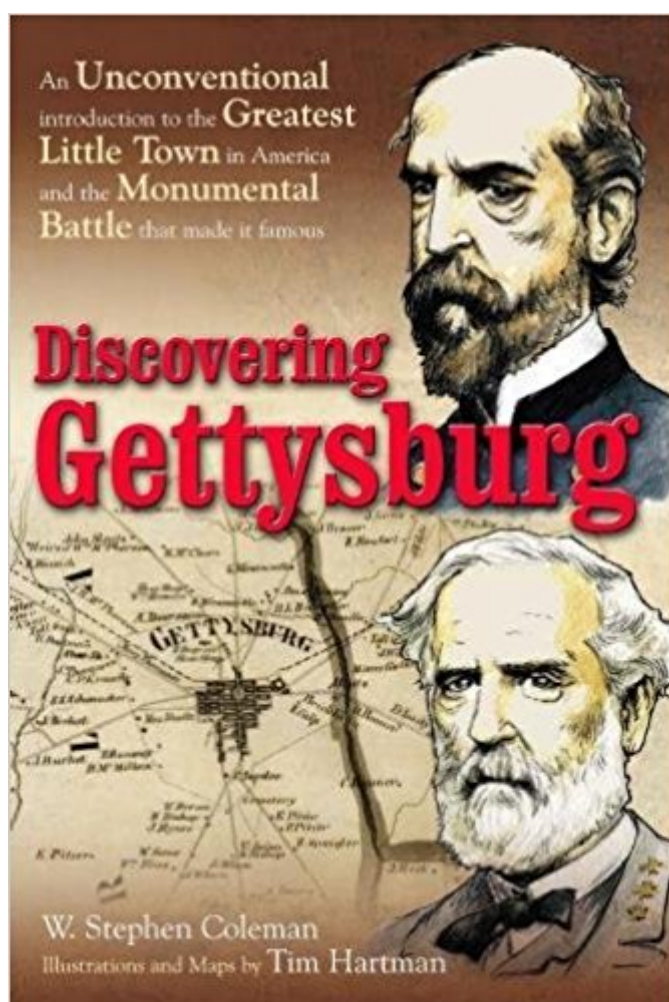


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Discovering Gettysburg: An Unconventional Introduction To The Greatest Little Town In America And The Monumental Battle That Made It Famous





Synopsis

Gettysburg. Does any other single word in any language invoke so much passion and angst, enthusiasm and sadness, as do those ten letters? But what IS Gettysburg, exactly? I am almost embarrassed to say I discovered the answer to that question—or at least approached an answer—only late in life. Of course, Gettysburg is a small charming city nestled in south-central Pennsylvania, but in so many ways it beggars description. For about half the year its streets are mainly empty, its businesses quiet, the weather cold and blustery. For the other months, however, the place literally teems with hundreds of thousands of visitors, bustling streets and shops, and more than a handful of unique larger-than-life characters whose fan base spans the globe. And then there is the battle—the event—of the Civil War. The battle that raged there during the first days of July 1863 at the price of more than 50,000 casualties decided much (just how much depending upon who you believe) and forever stamped that place with its passion and angst and enthusiasm and its lingering, forever sadness. Its monuments and guns and plaques tell the story of the colossal clash of arms and societies, just as its National Cemetery bears silent witness to at least part of the cost of that bloody event. And somehow this “greatest little town in America,” this mammoth battle, its influential characters (living and dead), its deep meaning and profound influence on our society largely escaped me for nearly six decades. That ended a couple years ago when I finally paid a visit. My journey from the uninitiated to the fully converted only took a short time, but I felt compelled to pen my experiences as they unfolded. And so you hold in your hands *Discovering Gettysburg: An Unconventional Introduction to the Greatest Little Town in America and the Monumental Battle that Made It Famous*. In it, you will visit with me a host of famous and off-the-beaten-path places on the battlefield, explore the historic town of Gettysburg as it is today, chat with some of the town’s fascinating “resources,” and follow along, as I did, with some of the most engaging storytelling I have ever had the pleasure of hearing. And nowhere inside will you be bothered with footnotes or stumble your way through academic mumbo jumbo. Thankfully, my friend and award-winning cartoonist Tim Hartman agreed to provide the magnificent maps and outstanding caricatures that grace this book. *Discovering Gettysburg* is, I fully admit, rather unconventional. But so is the place, the event, and the experience of that hallowed ground.

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Customer Reviews

"Discovering Gettysburg is witty, entertaining, educational, and downright fun!" (Scott L. Mingus, Sr., award-winning author of *Flames beyond Gettysburg*, and co-author of *The Second Battle of Gettysburg: The Confederate Victory that Opened the Door to Gettysburg*) "Reading it makes me want to jump in the car and drive on down for another visit." (Tom Huntington, award-winning author of *Searching for George Gordon Meade: The Forgotten Victor of Gettysburg*) "Discovering Gettysburg is an out-of-the-ordinary approach to the famous battlefield and town. If you want to see the park in a new light and take a peek behind the scenes this is the perfect book to accompany your journey." (Terry Reimer, Director of Research, National Museum of Civil War Medicine) "Insightful, occasionally humorous, and often deeply personal, *Discovering Gettysburg* is sure to entrance the novice and expert alike. Stephen Coleman has provided an eminently readable work that gets us a little closer to understanding why Americans are so captivated and fascinated by the Battle of Gettysburg. It is well worth the read." (Christopher Gwinn, Gettysburg, PA) "Stephen Coleman's *Discovering Gettysburg* is the most unique and entertaining book on the battle and its related personalities (then and now) I have ever read. The author's down-to-earth and often whimsical writing style is a breath of fresh air every reader will welcome. Even experienced students of the battle will smile and nod as they read along. And Tim Hartman's illustrations are simply first-rate. Be forewarned: After you read this book, you will almost certainly want to schedule a trip to visit Gettysburg." (J. David Petruzzi, author of *The Complete Gettysburg Guide: Walking and Driving Tours of the Battlefield, Town, Cemeteries, Field Hospital Sites, and other Topics of Historical Interest*)

Stephen Coleman has spent most of his adult life as a professor of theater at the University of

Pittsburgh. A specialist in Shakespeare, acting, directing, and stage combat, he taught for more than 30 years and practiced his craft on stage and screen, including roles in *Silence of the Lambs*, where he had the pleasure of being literally defaced by the epicurean Hannibal Lecter and in the PBS Series *The War That Made America*, where as the ill-fated General Braddock he was shot from the back of a horse. It was only after he retired that he discovered a new interest: The Civil War, and especially, Gettysburg. Tim Hartman is a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and has been professionally acting, singing, writing, cartooning, and storytelling since 1982. Though known primarily for his work on the stage, including nearly 300 plays and musicals, including appearances on Broadway in *A Tale of Two Cities* and the Tony nominated *Finian's Rainbow*, Tim's favorite job is performing his own brand of stand-up comedy storytelling for children and family audiences. He is also an award-winning political cartoonist and illustrator whose work has appeared widely in newspapers.

An alternative to the usual Gettysburg guide book. The author points out off the beaten track highlights of the town, interviews townsfolk to get their views of life in Gettysburg and does so in an amusing, informative way.

I have a lifelong interest in the Civil War but in about 2003-04 developed a passion for Gettysburg. I visited the battlefield as often as possible and read many books about Gettysburg and reviewed them here. I attempted the Licensed Battlefield Guide exam. Gettysburg has remained with me even though I haven't visited in some years. My passion for Gettysburg helped me understand W. Stephen Coleman and his book, "Discovering Gettysburg: An Unconventional Introduction to the Greatest Little Town in America and the Monumental Battle that Made it Famous" (2017). Coleman, a retired professor of theater and a professional actor and director, discovered Gettysburg only after his retirement. (In my own case, I was several years away) Coleman, his wife, and another couple decided one afternoon to take a short trip from their native Pittsburgh and hit upon Gettysburg. The trip changed Coleman's life as he went on to visit the battlefield more than forty times, in addition to 25 visits to other Civil War sites, during the years of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Coleman's fascination with Gettysburg resulted in this book. His friend and fellow-resident of Pittsburgh, the illustrator Tim Hartman, prepared the book's illustrations and maps. The most moving parts of this book are those in which Coleman writes on a personal level about his experience and about his love for Gettysburg. He writes of his growing realization that "the only way you could truly understand modern America was if you understood the Civil War." Coleman continues:

"Understanding the Civil War helps us define who we are as a people, who we were as a people, and who we would become. Consciously or unconsciously, we live with its effects almost every day of our lives. That conflict ... is a significant part of the foundation of modern America." In the Afterword, Coleman discusses falling in love with the town of Gettysburg. He finds the town, with its history, a uniquely American place which has assumed meaning and significance beyond its position as a small Pennsylvania town where a monumental battle took place. Together with his reflections on his experience, Coleman offers a broad and enthusiastically-written guide to the battle of Gettysburg, the town, and the people and institutions connected with them. With clear, simple writing, the book makes Gettysburg accessible to newcomers and also works as a reminder and refresher for those familiar with the places and events he describes. The book manages to teach even knowledgeable readers something new. The heart of the book offers a good, basic account of the battle, beginning with Lee's invasion of the north in 1863. The book includes insightful, surprisingly detailed chapters on each of the three days of the battle (July 1 -- 3, 1863), followed by a short chapter describing the Confederate retreat and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The remaining portions of the book discuss the town, including the author's recommendations of places to visit and restaurants to enjoy, and the people and entrepreneurs who call Gettysburg home. Coleman discusses the Gettysburg Visitors Center and to private organizations, the Gettysburg Foundation and the Friends of Gettysburg, which assist the National Park Service in presenting the battle to the public. The book has many attractions in addition to the text. Tim Hartman's illustrations are outstanding and unusual. He presents caricature sketches of many of the people involved in the battle as well as of current students of and writers about Gettysburg. The drawings are insightful and fun. They manage to give a snapshot interpretation of the character of their subjects. Another outstanding feature of the book is the interviews Coleman conducted with National Park Service Officials, including the late Clyde Bell who supervised the Licensed Battlefield Guide Program for many years, Licensed Battlefield Guides, and authors who have written well about Gettysburg including Scott Mingus, Eric Wittenberg, and J. David Petruzzi. I have learned a great deal from many of the individuals who are featured in Coleman's book. I was pleased to find them featured in this book, and their comments, as well as the comments of many other knowledgeable individuals, enhance the work. Coleman observes several times that individuals come to study and understand Gettysburg in their own ways. Some become reenactors, others read, while others visit and walk the battlefield and get to know it intimately. The same point could be made in a broader way about how individuals find what matters to them about their country or about their own lives and about how they pursue their passions. Coleman has learned a great deal about Gettysburg in a relatively short time,

and he vividly shares his enthusiasm. I haven't visited the battlefield as often as I would like particularly in recent years but I continue to read about the battle and about the Civil War and to share my responses to what I read. I was glad to get to know Coleman and his book. The publisher, Savas Beatie, kindly sent me a review copy. Robin Friedman

This national treasure should be visited, enjoyed and studied by general readers, and serious students of the Civil War, the Eastern Theater and the battle of Gettysburg. W. Stephen Coleman travels the modern community of Gettysburg, analyzes the three day battle, and tramps and discusses the battle ground it was fought on. The book is a good introduction of the three days fight. It is a balanced account of both the Army of Northern Virginia and its commanding General; Robert E. Lee, and the Army of the Potomac and its commanding General; George Meade. The author has done justice to the remarkable men who fought in this turning point of the conflict and provides many interesting anecdotes. Perhaps the best parts of the book are: 1. the detail of a host of famous and off-the-beaten-path places on the battlefield; 2. important historic places in the town of Gettysburg as it is today; 3. worthwhile hotels and restaurants such as the James Getty Hotel and the Dobbins House; 4. conversations with National Park Rangers, Licensed Battlefield Guides, historians, authors, and several experts on the town such as Dean Shultz; Chuck Teague; D. Scott Hartwig; Scott L. Mingus, Sr.; Eric Wittenberg, and Matt Atkinson. Coleman takes buffs on a battlefield walk throughout the battlefield and the town. He is joined by his wife; Marilyn, along with friends Mimi and Enis Koral. W. Stephen chronicles his visits to "the most unique community in America" and has something important to tell Americans about its influential characters, and importance to the United States. The author addresses the meaning of the battle and America's struggle during the Civil War. A strength of this publication is the ability of the writer to allow us to feel like we are accompanying him on his sojourn around "the hallowed ground". The beginning student of Civil War military history will find the work an unmatched guide to how the battle was fought in the mid nineteenth century. Anyone already well versed in (Gettysburg) Civil War history will find immensely stimulating the authors' interpretations of Union and Confederate strategy, tactics that will have to be grappled with by all buffs of the subject. The writer presents chapters that deal with why the battle took place in Gettysburg and it's not because of shoes. He chronicles how the Confederates traveled from Cashtown to a little town that ten roads converged on and fought for three days in July 1863. Coleman is able to explain how an accidental engagement evolved into a victory for the men

in blue. He goes on to explain the aftermath of the battle, the creation of the National Cemetery and how Lincoln was invited to give his address as an afterthought. Presented near the end of the tome is the creation of the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center and the Eisenhower Historic Site. An invaluable contribution to understanding the Civil War world is the chapter on the phenomenon of reenactors and reenactments. The treatise closes with an enlightening interview with the new Superintendent of the Gettysburg National Military Park, Ed Clark. Savas-Beatie has published a 264 page work that includes 9 unique maps produced by Tim Harman, 100 wonderful photos and 180 unconventional caricatures of the people, places, and events reproduced and properly placed in the text. It is nice to see the faces of the people written about in this fabulous title which greatly enhance the reader's experience. Interested individuals will appreciate the distinctive and outstanding caricatures especially if you know a few of the living historians. It is nice to see the faces that Coleman points out throughout his treatment, and just as nice to know that the writer and publisher can balance text-length and cost in an enjoyable monograph. The result is a personalized trek of the battlefield, a riveting overview of the men who fought in the Battle of Gettysburg and the opinions of numerous leading experts on the clash and the town. "An Unconventional Introduction to the Greatest Little Town in America and the Monumental Battle that Made It famous" is an engrossing volume and hard to put down. This title belongs in the library of every student of Gettysburg and the battle. I highly recommend it.

What an enjoyable book! Enough new information to keep Gettysburg aficionados interested, and a well-devised journey through highways and byways to enlighten the reader less familiar with the subject. The clever interweaving of the portrait drawings give faces to the always succinct but charming biographical details. Here's hoping Messrs. Coleman and Hartman turn their skills to more discoursing on this subject.

This is a great in-depth trip through Gettysburg, the battlefield as well as the town. Coleman is an informed and informal guide, taking the reader on a personally guided tour. The tone is welcoming and conversational. This is not just for newbies---a friend I gave a copy to, someone who has toured the battlefield 10 times with professional historians, loved this book and was delighted to learn about special sites he did not know and about the people of the town. As he said, "and I thought I knew everything about Gettysburg but this man really dug deep in his research!"

I truly enjoyed the conversations with the park rangers, guides, authors, and experts that are peppered throughout the book. They combine with the account of the battle, the illustrated faces, and insight into the town of Gettysburg, both past and present, to make for an enjoyable and educational read. The book is a great picture of the people and places that make the town the way it is today. Also, there is a poster available of the historical portraits: Poster of historical portraits from the book 'Discovering Gettysburg'

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