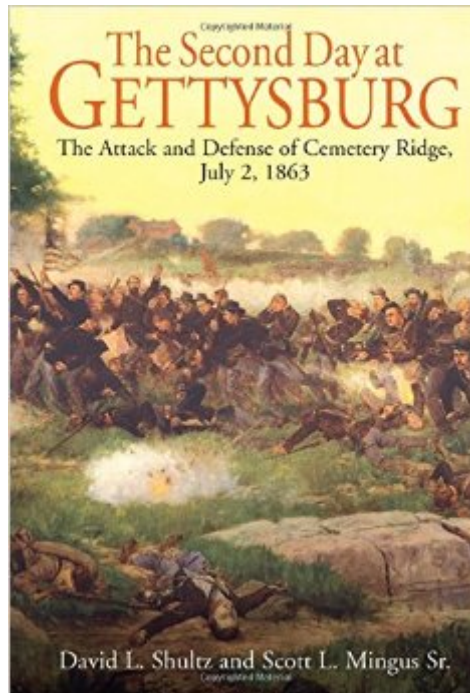


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The Second Day At Gettysburg: The Attack And Defense Of Cemetery Ridge, July 2, 1863



Synopsis

So much has been written about Gettysburg, goes the well-worn cliché, that there is nothing new left to write. *The Second Day at Gettysburg: The Attack and Defense of Cemetery Ridge, July 2, 1863*, by David L. Shultz and Scott L. Mingus Sr. aptly demonstrates that there is indeed still much to learn about the war's largest and bloodiest battle. Based upon a faulty early-morning reconnaissance, General Robert E. Lee decided to attack up the Emmitsburg Road in an effort to collapse the left flank of General George Meade's Army of the Potomac and decisively defeat it. The effort got underway when General James Longstreet's First Corps troops crushed General Sickles' Peach Orchard salient and turned north and east to drive deeply into the Union rear. A third Confederate division under Richard Anderson, part of A. P. Hill's Third Corps, joined in the attack, slamming one brigade after another into the overstretched Union line stitched northward along the Emmitsburg Road. The bloody fighting stair-stepped its way up Cemetery Ridge, tearing open a large gap in the center of the Federal line that threatened to split the Union army in two. The fate of the Battle of Gettysburg hung in the balance. Despite the importance of the position, surprisingly few Union troops were available to defend the yawning gap on the ridge. Major General Winfield S. Hancock's Second Corps had been reduced to less than one division when his other two were sucked southward to reinforce the collapsing Third Corps front. Reprising Horatio at the Bridge, the gallant commander cobbled together a wide variety of infantry and artillery commands and threw them into the action, refusing to yield even one acre of ground. The long and intense fighting included hand-to-hand combat and the personal heroics of which legends are made. Veteran Gettysburg authors Shultz and Mingus merge their subject matter expertise and keen understanding of the complex undulating terrain and physical features to produce the most detailed study of this action ever written. In addition to demonstrating how the fighting on the far Union left directly affected the combat to come in the center of General Meade's line, the authors also address some of the most commonly overlooked aspects of the fighting: what routes did some of the key units take to reach the front? What could the commanders actually see, and when could they see it? How did the fences, roads, farms, trees, ravines, creeks, and others obstacles directly affect tactical decisions, and ultimately the battle itself? Based upon extensive research and graced with dozens of photographs and detailed original maps, *The Second Day at Gettysburg* offers a balanced, compelling, and ultimately satisfying account of one of the most overlooked and yet important aspects of the defining battle of the American Civil War.

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Customer Reviews

With the extensive nature of the primary and secondary source material and the fascination and importance of the subject, there always is something to learn about the battle of Gettysburg.

Historians say that the battle is "overdetermined" by the wealth of source material which means simply that it can be studied from a variety of perspectives. This new study, "The Second Day at Gettysburg: The Attack and defense of Cemetery Ridge, July 2, 1863" (2015) focuses on the Union center during the pivotal day of the three-day battle. The authors, David Shultz and Scott Mingus are well-known students of Gettysburg who have written extensively on the battle. Shultz has an extensive knowledge of artillery which is put to excellent use in this new book. The Union center and its Copse of Trees is well-known to even casual students of the battle because it was the focus of Pickett's Charge on July 3. The center was also critical to the July 2 battle. Perhaps more so than Pickett's Charge, the July 2 attack on the Union center deserves to be known as the "high water mark" of the Confederacy. The fighting on July 2 receives a great deal of attention in books and in Gettysburg tours. Most accounts of the battle on that day concentrate on Little Round Top and on associated actions of Longstreet's Corps against the Union left, including Devil's Den and the Wheatfield. These actions on July 2 receive only passing mention in this study. Readers looking for a history of the attack and defense of Little Round Top, for example, will not find it here. Another smaller group of studies examines the fighting late in the day on the Union right at Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill. Again, this book devotes little attention to this part of the day. All these actions were all important, but the key fight late in the afternoon for the Union center often receives less attention

than it deserves. Schultz's and Mingus' book is one of a small number of studies that focus on it in detail. The book offers a detailed view of the fighting at the center of the Union line on July 2 and of the events leading up to it. The study examines a great many aspects of the battle that, with the welter of writing, are not always fully considered. In their introduction, the authors write: "Our analysis examines the overall cause and effect of the command decisions made that day, with special attention paid to the routes taken by the troops involved, and how the varying terrain and ubiquitous physical impediments like fences, farms, and roads affected the fighting. Battles are not always decided by superior firepower, positioning, or morale, although these can (and usually do) prove decisive. Other human elements, such as how orders are interpreted, inadequate or inaccurate reconnaissance reports, the poor coordination of troops movements, a lack of clarity regarding objectives, and spur-of-the moment tactical decisions made in the overall understanding of the general plan, influence, and sometimes dictate, the outcome." Each of the factors the authors identify in the above passage plays a significant role in the study and in the battle's outcome. The book includes substantial consideration of events prior to the July 2 fighting beginning with the Confederacy's decision to invade Pennsylvania. This material has been covered frequently but it is essential to understanding the authors' approach to July 2. The study offers fresh, focused insight in how the battle developed, the lack of information about the terrain and about opposing forces, and about the movement of the troops on both sides into the positions they occupied at the time of the July 2 battle. The ineptitude of the Confederacy's high artillery command (Parson Pendleton) as compared with the Union's (Henry Hunt) together with the advantageous fields of fire the topography offered to the Union long arm receive emphasis throughout. The early portion of the book moves slowly at times, but there is much to be learned from the detail. The book gains in momentum and drama as it proceeds. On the Union side, the study focuses on Sickles' near disastrous move of his Third Corps. On the Confederate side, the study emphasizes the lack of coordination and of unified action in the Confederate high command beginning with General Lee and working down through Corps and Divisions. The book describes Barksdale's charge as part of Longstreet's efforts up the Emmitsburg Road but the actions of Anderson's Division of A.P. Hill's Corps receive even more attention. Hill's Corps was to join Longstreet's in the attack on the Union center. Portions of Anderson's Division fought gallantly and perhaps might have turned the battle if they had been properly supported. This study shows what these troops did and helps to explain why coordination with other troops in the center of the line failed. The account of the battle gains in intensity, drama, and readability as it progresses. The many maps, prepared by cartographer Phil Laino, and historical photographs add to the text and help the reader understand the events

discussed. The hero in this study is Union General Winfield Scott Hancock. Hancock is ever-present in this book, patching holes in the Union center, moving and coordinating the troops, and encouraging the soldiers with his very presence. Hancock was truly an inspiring presence and the authors' admiration for him comes through on almost every page. Other doughty figures from the Union that achieve recognition include the famous First Minnesota, Stannard's Brigade of Vermonters, and Willard's Brigade, which sought to redeem itself from the charge of cowardice leveled against it at Harper's Ferry. The book concludes with the repulse of the Confederate efforts in the left and center and with a moving discussion of the human cost of the battle. This book is a study of military history and includes little about the political dimensions of the Civil War. There are those who object to exclusively military studies of the Civil War, but I find there is much to be learned from them about our country and its ideals. Shultz and Mingus have helped me think about the battle in an expanded way. I have always wanted to know more about the Union center and about the debated question of whether portions of Anderson's troops were able, however briefly and futilely, to reach the Union line on Cemetery Ridge. Because of the specific focus of this study on the Union center and the dense nature of much of the writing, this book will be of most interest to readers with a passion for Gettysburg and with a good working knowledge of the battle in its entirety. The book is published by Savas Beatie, and the publisher kindly sent me a review copy. Robin Friedman

Robert Lee and southern leaders hoped that success in a large and important battle by Confederate forces in the North would lead United States President Abraham Lincoln to the bargaining table and bring about an end of hostilities so the Confederate States of America could completely gain their independence from the United States of America. During the sojourn across the Mason-Dixon Line, Lee hoped that Federal forces would be transferred from Vicksburg and weaken their armies along the Mississippi River in the West. A third goal for the South was to collect needed food and supplies that would provide aid to his needy soldiers and the Army of Northern Virginia prior to returning to Southern soil during the summer months. This exciting new study examines why and how the attack and defense of the Union center on July 2, 1863, happened. This investigation provides an overview of the fighting on July 1 and the lead up to the battle. Dean L. Schultz and Scott Mingus Sr. provide details into how the participants ended up where they did on July 2nd as well as important analysis of how the success of Longstreet's attack on Sickles's Third Corp's salient directly affected the combat farther north on Cemetery Ridge. Furthermore, these wonderful writers show how the cause and effects of command decisions made on this essential day greatly

affected the outcome of the battle. Additionally, they provide an important examination on how the routes taken by soldiers involved and the terrain played a significant role in the ultimate Union hold and victory. Finally, this volume makes an important case and allows interested parties to realize that Union forces on July 2nd not only stopped Confederate momentum after an initial victory on July 1 but was a turning point in the Union victory at the Battle of Gettysburg. Savas-Beatie has published an outstanding 552 page book on the second day of the battle of Gettysburg. This publication will assist scholars, amateur historians, battlefield trappers and armchair readers gain a greater understanding of the "Attack and Defense of Cemetery Ridge" by the Confederate and Union armies respectively. The authors provide unusual insight on the role played by Confederate General Anderson's division, whose brigadiers turned in brave and imperfect performances as well as how Union General Winfield S. Hancock owned this battlefield during the three day fight. 37 outstanding detailed original maps produced by Phil Laino are located throughout the work and are most helpful to all readers. Schultz and Mingus utilize a plethora of primary and secondary sources in their detailed research. Contained in this title is an extensive bibliography, index, notes and 93 helpful photographs. The writers were provided with valuable insight by Edwin C. Bearss and Dean Schultz as well as historians Bill Spoehr, James Hessler, J. David Petrucci and Eric J. Wittenberg during the writing process. This narrative is easy to read, hard to put down and allows individuals to follow the movements of troop formations and keep track of the many farms, roads, lanes, wood lots and physical features mentioned throughout the text. Shultz and Mingus have provided a significant amount of information and a balanced account along with numerous human interest stories that will lead to many discussions and debates. For someone looking for something new, "The Second Day at Gettysburg" will not disappoint. This outstanding 2015 book is highly recommended and should be added to the libraries of students of this important battle.

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