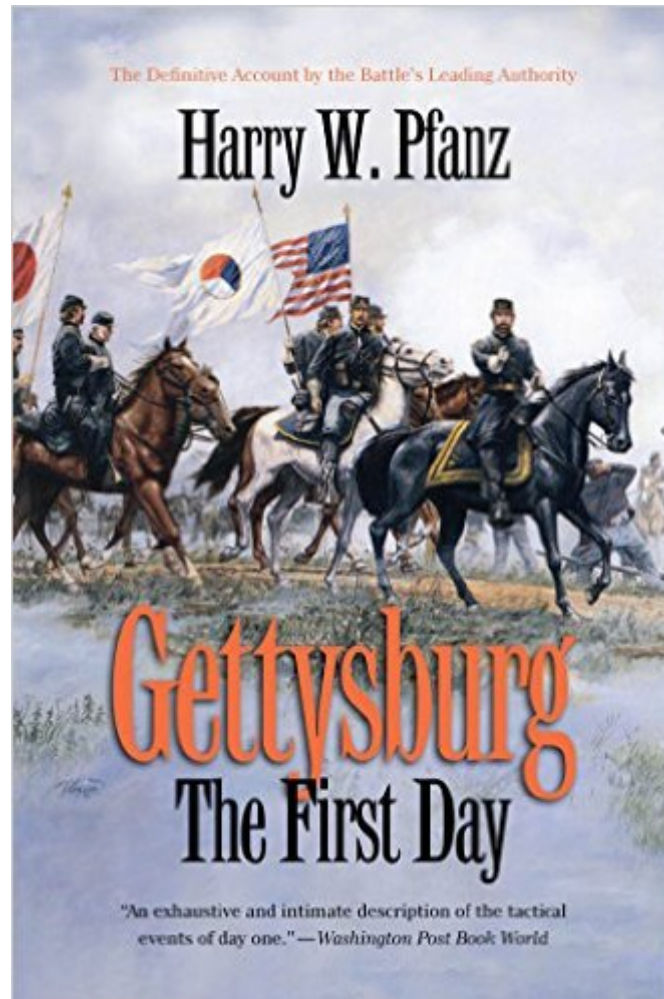


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Gettysburg--The First Day (Civil War America)



Synopsis

For good reason, the second and third days of the Battle of Gettysburg have received the lion's share of attention from historians. With this book, however, the critical first day's fighting finally receives its due. After sketching the background of the Gettysburg campaign and recounting the events immediately preceding the battle, Harry Pfanz offers a detailed tactical description of events of the first day. He describes the engagements in McPherson Woods, at the Railroad Cuts, on Oak Ridge, on Seminary Ridge, and at Blocher's Knoll, as well as the retreat of Union forces through Gettysburg and the Federal rally on Cemetery Hill. Throughout, he draws on deep research in published and archival sources to challenge many long-held assumptions about the battle.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Harry Pfanz, a former historian at Gettysburg National Military Park and retired Chief Historian of the National Park Service, is well known in American Civil War literary circles for his excellent work on Gettysburg - The Second Day and its companion volume, Gettysburg - Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. Both are definitive works featuring new interpretations and fresh looks on both known and more obscure facets of the famous battle. Now Pfanz has written Gettysburg - The First Day, which continues his excellent research and writing to cover the marches to Gettysburg leading to that fateful first day. Pfanz details the personalities behind the first day's fighting, down to the brigade level (and occasionally the regimental level). He handles the day's fighting in somewhat

chronological order (see below), and as major units arrive he details their command and personality individually and succinctly. Controversial and contradictory events or decisions -- such as who fired the first shot of the battle, the Union XI Corps' rout, the battles at the railroad cut, the work of the Union cavalry at the beginning of the day, and Ewell's lack of attack at the end of the day -- are covered (as well as many others) on a factual and well-thought basis. I couldn't find myself arguing with any of the points he brought up to any great extent, and there doesn't appear to be any kind of side bias. One of Pfan's great strengths is his ability to recreate the terrain of the battlefield in various ways and the deployments therein, giving the reader a visual capacity to understand the peculiarities, vulnerabilities, and practicalities of various positions over others -- the advantage of I Corps's position on the afternoon of July 1 over that of XI Corps, for instance.

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