

### The Maps of Gettysburg: an Atlas of the Gettysburg Campaign, June 3-July 13, 1863.

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## Review

**Keller, Christian B.**

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**Gottfried, Bradley M.** *The Maps of Gettysburg: An Atlas of the Gettysburg Campaign, June 3-July 13, 1863.* Savas Beatie, \$39.95 ISBN 978-1-932714-82-1

### Mapping out the Gettysburg Campaign

Bradley M. Gottfried's *The Maps of Gettysburg* is one of the best books on the battle of Gettysburg I've had the pleasure of reading in the last decade. At first glance, it appears to be simply another recitation of the well-worn battle narrative of the campaign coupled with some interesting maps. Fancy maps normally fail to make a book better. But after the first few sections of, what the author calls, "Map Sets," the reader is giddily drawn in and the book becomes a sort of guilty pleasure. Turning the pages, I found myself liking the work more and more and understanding facets of the battle, and especially the numerous skirmishes and engagements of the campaign, in a more concrete and permanent manner. The combination of painstakingly detailed maps (down to the type of fences and fields) side-by-side with a well-written, succinct narrative is the secret to Gottfried's success. This is not a normal atlas in the true definition of the word.

Gottfried organizes his book logically, starting with the "March to Gettysburg" and a section entitled, "The Confederates Clear the Valley." Next comes the three days of the battle itself, subdivided by specific geographic location and sometimes specific unit action. Then a fascinating map set about Lee's retreat back to Virginia concludes the work. Every narrative sub-section is paired with a map specific to that narrative. The cognitive result is impressive.

The author must have spent a staggering amount of time researching the enormous primary and secondary literature on the campaign. Anyone wishing to tackle a subject as broad and well-plowed as Gettysburg has his work cut out for him. The careful footnoting, extensive bibliography, and comprehensive

coverage of nearly every significant action is proof that Gottfried not only consulted most of the relevant sources and used them, but found a few little-known ones as well. He admits he conducted little original research in archives for the book and relied on what he considered the best published primary and secondary sources. Fair enough, but he did drop the analytical ball in a few places and made a few choices that may strike some as odd.

The section dealing with the Eleventh Corps' fight north of town on July 1, for example, probably deserved more attention. Gottfried neglects almost entirely the bloody experience of Georg von Amsberg's brigade of Schimmelfennig's Division and erroneously delegates the catastrophic losses of regiments like the 74th Pennsylvania to action along a "skirmish line." More research of both published and unpublished accounts of this brigade's struggle on the Gettysburg Plains (which do exist) might have borne fruit and provided the reader with a much-needed map of this hard-to-understand episode. Perhaps the author chose to represent Amsberg's actions by devoting an entire map and narrative to the flanking maneuver of the 157th New York against Doles' Georgia Brigade. Yet neglecting the actions of the regiments of the rest of the brigade does them an historical disservice. That said, Gottfried comprehensively focuses in on regimental actions in nearly all his other sections, giving each brigade on both sides more than its due. He did very well recounting the plight of the regiments in von Gilsa's brigade of Barlow's Division on Blocher's Knoll, for instance, and allocates a lot of narrative and maps to the tactics of all of the First Corps' brigades versus those of Heth's, Rhodes', and Pender's Confederate Divisions. Indeed, the level of detail Gottfried delves into regarding the fights for McPherson's and Seminary Ridges is stunning, leading one to conclude that in his countless walks over the battlefield, the author may have preferred to linger in those sectors.

The sections on the Second and Third Days are very well-done, especially the potentially confusing combat in the Rose Woods/Wheatfield area. The graphic depiction in the maps of the ground traversed by Law's Confederate brigade makes it abundantly clear why the Alabamans that assaulted the 20th Maine were tired and half-spent before they even attacked the enemy. Historians of Sickles' fight at the Peach Orchard and Pickett's Charge will likewise benefit from the maps of those struggles, which are improvements on most of those previously available. Especially valuable are the maps illustrating the Confederate operational advance to and retreat from Gettysburg. Where else can one turn for a good depiction of the action at Stephenson's Depot, for instance?

Overall, Gottfried has provided the seasoned historian with a set of superb maps organized and complemented by a reasonable, chronological narrative. The combination of the two is a unique approach and will help even the most advanced students of the Gettysburg campaign better conceptualize its operations and tactics. This book would be extremely useful while walking the battlefield itself and supercedes in detail and accuracy nearly all previous graphical guides. For those searching for new analyses of why certain unit actions occurred, operational decision-making, or the greater significance of the campaign, this book will disappoint, because that is not its purpose. Instead, it is a fine work of graphical history and deserves to be consulted by every serious historian of the battle of Gettysburg.

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