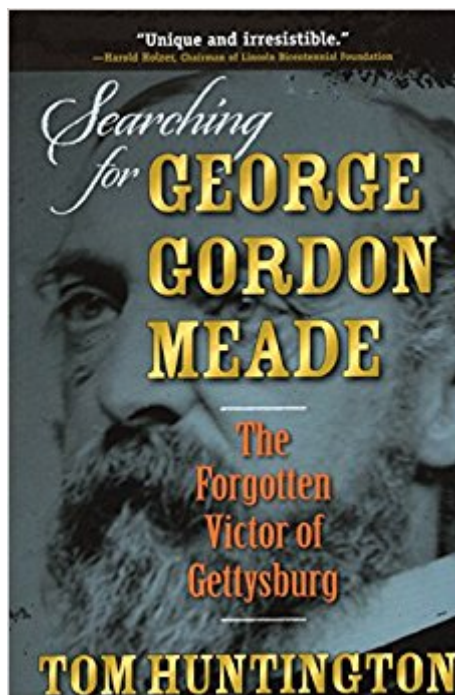




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Searching For George Gordon Meade: The Forgotten Victor Of Gettysburg



Synopsis

A historian's investigation of the life and times of Gen. George Gordon Meade to discover why the hero of Gettysburg has failed to achieve the status accorded to other generals of the conflict. Covers Meade's career from his part in the Mexican-American War through his participation in the great Civil War engagements, including Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Petersburg. Explores Meade's legacy today at reenactments, battlefields, museums, and institutions that preserve history.

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Customer Reviews

"[I]t's the rare reader who will not enjoy accompanying Huntington on his search for Meade."

(America's Civil War, July 2013)"[A] compulsively readable book of history, biography, travel and journalism." (Civil War Roundtable of Gettysburg)"[A] refreshingly readable and well-researched

book . . . Searching for George Gordon Meade should be required reading for all those interested in Civil War history."--Civil War News"Huntington writes accessibly about Meade's progress in the Civil War, offering quotes from contemporaries and vivid primary details that will draw readers in through the great descriptions and rich character studies." (Library Journal 2012-11-15) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Who was George Gordon Meade? He should be remembered as one of the Civil War's most important generals. Instead, history has pushed him aside. The hot-tempered Meade received

command of the Union's dysfunctional Army of the Potomac only three days before he defeated Robert E. Lee's Confederates at Gettysburg. After that Meade watched his reputation decline, thanks in part to the escape of Lee's army, hostility from politicians and the press, the machinations of Gen. Daniel Sickles, and the rise of Ulysses S. Grant. "I suppose after awhile it will be discovered I was not at Gettysburg at all," Meade once grumbled. Meade, it seems, is the Rodney Dangerfield of Civil War generals. He gets no respect. Tom Huntington wanted to find out why. In *Searching for George Gordon Meade*, he tells the story of the general's life and his participation in the Civil War's great engagements, including Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Petersburg. Huntington also provides accounts of his own investigations of Meade's legacy. Along the way he hikes across battlefields, recites the names of fallen soldiers at a candlelit ceremony at Gettysburg, drinks a champagne toast at Meade's grave on New Year's Eve, and visits a severed leg, a buried arm, and a horse's head. The result is a quirky and compelling mash-up of history, biography, travel, and journalism that casts new light on an overlooked figure from the past. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I found this biography / historical book for free as a Kindle book several months ago when I was searching the Free Bestsellers lists. While not anywhere near a Civil War expert, I do have a strong interest. One low rating review of this work said it was too much of a travelogue. It does relate much of the area features as well as being a seemingly thoroughly researched biography of General Meade. I don't see this as a negative. It actually made the reading more enjoyable; giving rhyme and reason to the lives and situations of Meade, his superiors, his troops and his foes on the battle fields. The importance of terrain, weather, etc is more than relevant when the subject is an important figure in a war time situation. I enjoyed the book and its subject and how the author brought to life people and places from 150 years ago in what may be the most important event in the history of this country.

I find this new biography of General Meade to be a welcome change from the literary neglect and criticism he has received in the past. In recent years the victor of Gettysburg has obtained more credit for his contributions to the Union cause, and Tom Huntington's book should add considerably to the much-deserved refurbishing of the general's reputation. The unusual format works well- he delves into Meade's story by actually visiting places associated with his life and death. The travelogue technique brings the reader to such places as West Point, Mexican War sites, a lighthouse in New Jersey, his native Philadelphia, and, naturally, many Civil War battlegrounds. The

past and present are thereby merged into an enjoyable and educational study of this controversial figure. The best section deals with the pursuit of Lee's army after Gettysburg. A greater appreciation emerges for how Meade pressed his fatigued army under very adverse conditions. It also becomes clear that he was not helped by contradictory orders from Washington- "fight Lee", "postpone a battle" etc. In line with other books like Kent Masterson Brown's RETREAT FROM GETTYSBURG, a powerful case is made that Meade has been overly criticized for his actions between July 4 and July 14 in 1863. My only minor complaint comes from the author's occasional tendency to sarcastically dismiss generals like Jackson, Hooker, and McClellan. Whether a general happens to be a good Christian is better left for theologians to discuss. Denigrating the performances of others does nothing to bolster the case for Meade. Rather, a consistently objective approach to the general's record will work best. I highly recommend this book. Hopefully works such as this will historical justice and literary recognition to a great American, albeit belatedly.

I absolutely loved this book. When discussing battles in which General Meade participated, the author will stop; and digress to a modern discussion of how the area looks now, what has been saved by the Civil War Trust, and what guides work at that battlefield. It is an ingenious effort to combine history and modern circumstances. For instance, while discussing Sickles, Huntington digresses into a story about the modern author of a book on Sickles and his work as a Gettysburg Guide. When discussing Mine Run, he digresses into a discussion of what the turf and battlefield presents today. I found this digression rather enjoyable...knowing it would probably irk purists. There is a paucity of real good information from Meade and his true feelings on his rough treatment from many, including Burnside, Hooker, Sickles, Doubleday, Grant, Sherman and Sheridan. We really only have his letters to his Wife, Margaret. Too bad. To find other sources would be a joyous find. Isn't it interesting that Meade hated Doubleday and replaced him with Newton and ended up hating Newton and discarding him out of the Army. So much intrigue, but so little good information because Meade burned most of his papers and reports. His burning caused future biographers to have little defense for him. I would also have liked to know much more about the Grant-Meade relationship from the Crater to Appomattox. This book, however, is a must read.

Huntington has done a commendable job of championing George Meade, the long-neglected Civil War general who, alongside George Thomas and later military leaders such as Terry Allen, Jake Devers and O. P. Smith, have never gotten their due. Huntington's approach is casual, yet informed. He expertly describes the political machinations and personal ambitions that are sure to

thwart a man of principle like Meade. Despite this, he gives credit where credit is due. For example, he does not demonize Phil Sheridan, an indisputably superb cavalry leader who still found it necessary to undermine fellow officers through lies and half-truths. Huntington punctuates the text with frequent interludes in which he visits battlefield sites from Gettysburg to Appomatox. The result is a left-handed tribute to Civil War buffs and park rangers whose dedication and love of history keep the flame burning. Without them, our heritage would be buried beneath shopping centers. I highly recommend this book.

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