

"Lincoln's Gettysburg Remarks"

On July 1, 1863, the two finest armies on the planet stumbled into one another at a cross-roads town in south-central Pennsylvania. For three days Union and Confederate forces engaged each other in a universe of battle that was the bloodiest sustained combat in the history of the Civil War.

Why did Lee Come North again in 1863?

Lee's main purpose in invading the North in 1863 was as straightforward as it was unabashedly ambitious. His immediate military purpose was to engage the Union Army of the Potomac in one "Big Battle" and wreck upon it a humiliating and disasterous defeat. He was not looking for another battlefield victory like those in December 1862 at Fredericksburg and then again in May 1863 at Chancellorsville. He was intent on administering a disasterous whooping. He was convinced that if Lincoln's eastern army was soundly defeated again that the Army of the Potomac would disintegrate and the North's resolve to continue the war would wither away. There would be a wave of political panic in the North, a search for scapegoats, and a massive loss of confidence in Lincoln as war president and commander-in-chief. (This is what happened to some degree after the Union defeat at Fredericksburg).

Lee saw clearly that if he could that the only hope for the Confederacy was to parlay back-to-back Confederate battlefield triumphs into earth shattering political benefits. When the 1864 presidential elections came around in the North in 1864 disillusioned Northern voters would replace Lincoln with "a peace at any price" candidate in the White House.

Lee's reasoning was sound. The fact that his military-political strategy failed to accomplish its designed ends meant that Gettysburg would be the turning point in the war providing that the North was willing to persevere until final victory.

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Despite the carnage there was much celebration in the North over this stunning victory by Union men and arms. Meade was an instant hero in northern hearts. His stock rose sky high.

But a contemporary could take a critical; view of what happened at Gettysburg (and Lincoln did as we shall see). No taking anything away from the incredible dedication(I think of the 15,000 men involved in Pickett's Charge particularly)and the embattled courage demonstrated on both sides of the battlefield, nevertheless, the Three Days of Gettysburg were three days of muddle, missed chances, and unparalled death and mayhem.

For Lee it was his ultimate folly to assault the Union lines on Cemetary hill on the third Day. He offered to resign his command.

On the Union side, Meades' failure to counterattack after the repulse of Pickett's charge meant that the Union threw away an almost certain opportunity to destroy Lee's army before it recrossed the Potomac, march on Richmond and in conjunction with the news of the fall of Vicksburg on July 4th, bring Ole Dixie Down. Instead Meade hunkered down and refused to move against Lee before Lee ghosted his army across the flooded Potomac and escaped back into Virginia.

The war received a reprieve and would go on for another two ^{more} ~~savage~~ years of remorseless carnage.

History 225
Re: Notes w/ Gettysburg

End the Gettysburg battle as Second Turning Point of the War

First turning point was Antietam

Gettysburg, in retrospect only, because the war goes on for almost two more years, was the Second Turning point for the following reasons:

1. Lee would never again be able to invade the North *again*.

2. Gettysburg and Vicksberg campaigns end for good any possibility of foreign intervention in the war. (Not Antietam but these victories in the field shut down any residual interest by the British to offer mediation in this war. See Chpt. 22 of BCF for the material on this last effort. McPherson talks about Napoleon Bonaparte III's futile efforts to try and interest the Parmerston Government in ntervention. Coupled with the fact that the British stop Bulloch from releasing his "superweapon" Laird rams from leaving England. I believe only one got away.

3. Point out too that after Gettysburg and Vicksburg the Confederate Government began to develop a broad program of clandestine action to demonstrate to the Northern electorate that the Lincoln administration's war effort was ineffective. Part of this program was to increase sabatoge efforts in the Union rear (like burnig down large sections of New York City) and the kidnapping of the president; and appaantly, blowing up the White House as an alternative act of terror and disruption or decapitation of the Union leadership.

Point here is that after the defeat at Gettysburg and Vicksberg it was clear to Richmond that if there was any chance of winning Southen independence it could only be won be convincing the Northern people that to continue the war would be too costly in manpower casualties and in money. The Confederate war would now be a deperate war to attrit the morale and the fighting spirit of the North. To do whatever it took to wear down the North's perseverance.

Looking ahead especially to the election of 1864. Which would be the Third turning Point of the War.

*Retribution
for
Dahlgren
Raids*

II. The Occasion

The November 19 gathering at Gettysburg was to commemorate the Soldiers' National Cemetary.

The carnage after the battle. The battlefield was littered with at least 5,000 dead horses and mules. Some 8,000 human bodies were scattered over or barely under the ground in shallow graves. The clean up was a momentous task that was beyond the capabilities of a town population of 2,500. Farmers had to plow around shallow graves and women of the town attempting to attend to their gardens were finding bits and pieces of bodies and sometimes stumbling over a corpse of a dead soldier who had taken refuge in a barn or haystack and died there.

There was a ^{extra bodies here.} common complaint about relatives of missing Union and Confederate dead (most of the dead were Confederate) who were uncovering shallow graves looking for loved ones or other more sinister outsiders who took to rifling the graves.

^David Wills, a prosperous banker of the town, wrote to Pennsylvania Governor Curtin, "In many instances arms and legs protrude and my attention has been directed to several places where the hogs were actually rooting out the bodies and devouring them"

Something had to be done. The upshot of this severe environmental and health emergency was the establishment of a commission made up of representatives of the various Northern states whose citizens fought at Gettysburg to come up with funds to get the unclaimed bodies into permanent grave sites.

Wills found a "rural architect" to create the cemetary's layout (Wm. Saunders) and he canvased among the prominent wordsmiths of the time to prepare a dedication of appropriate words to "sweeten the poisoned air of Gettysburg." (Wills, p. 23). Longfellow, Whittier, and Bryant all passed on the invitation.

Wills turned to Edward Everett, the ^{the culture} heavyweight champion of declamatory occasions. Commemorating battlefields was an Ewverett specialty. He had added fame to Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill with oratory. And snapped up Wills' invitation to come to Gettysburg.

His distinguished career - Professor, Harvard, U.S. Senator, 1st Sec. of State. Also has done Webster was dead England,

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II. Occasion, p. 2

Everett, of course, was the featured speaker at the dedication of the Cemetary. The occasion was orinally scheduled for October but Everett insisted that he needed more time to prepare his oration. He expected to research the Three Days in considerable detail before he would be comfortable with his assignment to declaim on the national meaning of what took place at Gettysburg. The date was moved back to November. — *Good that it was moved back to Nov, during*

Everett address was expected to take about two hours. (Note that this was standard in thjis Age of Exposition. Cite the Lincoln/Douglas Debates). Everett's address was 9 to 10,000 words long. His personal touch was always to commit his words to memory. He would carefully lay his bulky text where the audience could gllimpse its

two, become presence still compared with Conf., read still and Devic. Dan.

And then he would ostentatiously never refer to it during the course of his address. Sort of like a high-wireperformer who waved off the fasety net. it was probably great theatre.

Since this was a state activity Federal responsibility was not assumed. However, to round out the program Cabinet members and the President, of course, and other celebrities were invited to attend. Lincoln was invited to deliver only "a few appropriate remarks" if he the press of duties would permit him to attend.

The program for the November 19th dedication:

- Music, by Birgfield's Band
- Prayer, by Rev. T. H. Stockton, D.D.
- Music, by the Marine Band
- Oration, by Hon. Edward Everett
- Music, Hymn composed by B. B. French, Esq.
- **** Dedicatory Remarks, by President of the U.S.
- Dirge, sung by Choir selected for the occasion
- Benediction, by Rev. H.L. Baugher, D.D.

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Lincoln's remarks were intended to make the occasion formal(something like ribbon-cuttings at modern "openings.")

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III. Lincoln's Business at Gettysburg

Lincoln took no offense at the invitation and his assigned role in the ceremonies. He meant to use the opportunity. The War President had important business at Gettysburg.

The November 19 dedication expected to attract thousands. (actually 20 to 25,000 people showed up). Most of the northern governors and their entourages were expected to be at the dedication. It was a prize opportunity for Lincoln to do some fence-mending with the divided Pennsylvania Republicans who were split between the Curtin and the Cameron factions. Lincoln hoped to lay a soothing balm on these troubled political waters in view of the presidential election a year away.

His secretaries Hay and Nicolay had a marvelous opportunity to do some political intelligence-gathering by circulating among the governors and other state politicians.

Lincoln left nothing to chance. He took over control of his own schedule and insisted that he leave for the 80-mile trip from Washington to Gettysburg a day earlier not trusting to the a train trip that involved transfers at Baltimore and at Hanover Junction. He told Sumner that he wanted to avoid "the slightest accident . . . and at best the whole to be a mere breathless running the gauntlet"

I think we can dismiss the silly myth that Gettysburg was sort of a casual outing and his remarks took no more preparation than inspired jottings on the back of an envelop in order to pass the time (6 hours) while he rode the train to Gettysburg. (Or as that fictional muddled student wrote "Lincoln wrote the Gettysburg Address while travelling to Gettysburg on the back of an envelop.")

It is certain that Lincoln had used his time in Washington to carefully prepare his remarks before going to Gettysburg. He may have polished them a little after he arrived at the town on November 18th but there was little time for any serious last minute composition or rewrite.

Lincoln's remarks were to be "short, short, short" as he explained to Secretary of State Seward who was part of the presidential entourage. As we know Lincoln spoke for only about 3 minutes. His speech was less than 300 words (272 to be exact). But he intended to use the occasion to Reinvent American history.

~~and he would leave nothing to chance~~

and therefore he was determined to leave nothing to chance

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Addendum: Add here why Lee came North in ¹⁸⁶² ~~1863~~.

Lee's main purpose in coming North in 1863 was as straightforward as it was ~~overwhelmingly~~ ^{was a rash} ambitious: His immediate military goal was to engage the Army of the Potomac in one "Big Battle" and wreck upon it a humiliating and disasterous defeat. He was not looking for another battlefield victory he was intent on administering an irreversible disaster.

Lee reasoning was that after the defeats suffered by the Army of Potomac at Fredericksburg (Dec. 1862) and Chancellorsville (May 1863) at his hands that if he could administer another whooping to Lincoln's eastern army that army would simply disintegrate and with it Northern resolve to continue the war would wither away. There would be a collapse of confidence in Lincoln as Commander-in-chief, a wave of political panic in the North, a search for scapgoats, and when the presidential election of 1864 rolled around Lincoln would be replaced with a "peace at any price" candidate in the White House.

Lee's reasoning was not unsound.

The fact that Lee's military-political strategy failed meant that Gettysburg was a turning point in the war providing that the North was willing to persevere until final victory.

This is exactly what happened on a smaller scale after the Union disaster at Fredericksburg in the end of 1862 - except, of course, on a smaller scale.

He saw clearly that an accumulation of major victories in the field in ¹⁸⁶² 1863 could have completely demoralized the Union in 1864. For Lee, this was the only hope for the Confederacy achieving her goal of independence.