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Battle of Gettysburg Timeline

Gettysburg Battle Summary / Civil War Timeline

The Battle of Gettysburg timeline includes a condensed Gettysburg battle summary. The 3 day fight is but a brief moment in the Civil War timeline, yet this battle more than any other would decide the fate of the country. For a more detailed account, visit the [Battle of Gettysburg](#) section of this site.

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Battle of Gettysburg Timeline - Day 1



Gettysburg Day 1

5am - Confederate Major General Henry Heth's Division sets out for Gettysburg from Cashtown. To the west of town Union [Brig. General John Buford's](#) Cavalry Division sits just west of town with 2,700 troops. Advanced skirmishers have been deployed to meet the Confederate advance.

7:30am - Lieutenant Marcellus Jones of the 8th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry fires the first shot at the Battle of Gettysburg at advancing Confederates. Skirmishing ensued as the Union lines held out stubbornly though seriously outnumbered.

9:30am - Heth finally gets his men into position to attack as his men form battle lines to advance on Buford's dismounted cavalry.

10:15am - [Union General John Reynolds'](#) I Corps arrived on the scene to reinforce Buford's Division against increasing pressure from the roughly 13,500 advancing Confederates.

10:30am - While deploying the [Iron Brigade](#) near McPherson's Ridge, General Reynolds is struck by a bullet to the head and is killed instantly. Some believe it was a sharpshooter's bullet, but since none were operating in the area, it is

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more likely to have come from the 7th or 14th Tennessee infantry.

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1:30pm - Confederate Major General Robert Rodes deploys his Second Corps divisions just north of town as they begin attacks from Oak Hill.

2:45pm - The Confederates renew their attacks on McPherson's Ridge west of town as the Iron Brigade is sent forward to repulse their attack.

3:30pm - Union forces begin to retreat from the area as the Confederates troops massed there begin to push them back.

4:00pm - Union troops reform a defensive line at Seminary Ridge and await the Confederate advance. To the north of town on Oak Ridge the Union troops are pushed back.

...more Battle of Gettysburg Timeline

4:15pm - Outnumbered, disorganized and tired, the Union forces crumble and retreat back through Gettysburg.

4:20pm - Colonel Charles Coster's First Brigade is ordered down Cemetery Hill and into town to slow down the Confederate advance, and protect the Union retreat.

4:35pm - Outnumbered almost 3 to 1, they held their ground. The 134th New York anchoring the Union was overlapped and was forced to withdraw but the other 3 regiments stood tall.

4:40pm - Coster's brigade is overwhelmed and of the 922 men deployed, only 359 made it back safely to Cemetery Hill.

As Union reinforcements arrive they are positioned along Cemetery Hill into defensive positions. The retreating Union troops are reformed as well. The days fighting ends as Confederate Lt. General Richard Ewell makes the decision not to attack the Union positions on Cemetery Hill.

Battle of Gettysburg Timeline - Day 2



Gettysburg Day 2

[Little Round Top](#)

12:15am - Commanding Union [General George Meade](#) arrives on the battlefield and meets with his generals to survey the situation. He is assured that the Union army holds strong positions on the high ground south of Gettysburg, and makes the decision to stay and fight.

Dawn-4:30pm - [General James Longstreet](#) moves his army into position to begin attacks against the Union left to be coordinated en echelon to break the Union lines. Longstreet's attacks would not begin until late in the afternoon on July 2.

4:30pm - Confederate regiments from Texas and Alabama overrun Union skirmishers on Big Round Top and make their way toward Little Round Top. Union Brigadier General Gouverneur K. Warren notices that Little Round Top is undefended and after sending aides for help, Colonel Strong Vincent reinforces the hill just as the Confederate assault begins.

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4:45pm - Regiments under Vincent form defensive positions with the famous [20th Maine](#) led by [Colonel Joshua Chamberlain](#) covering the Union left flank.



Additional information on the Battle of Gettysburg and the American Civil War can be found in books and videos. Please find many suggestions for good reading & viewing resources throughout this site.



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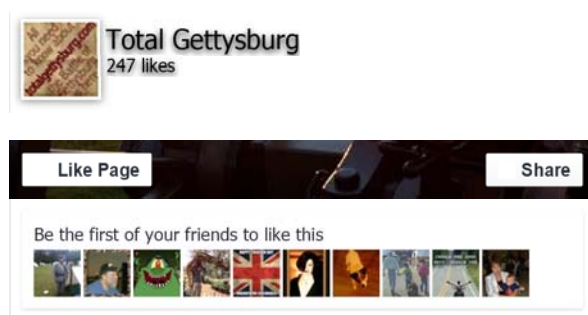


5:00-5:15pm - Confederate attacks are repulsed as Colonel Strong Vincent is mortally wounded.

5:30pm - Nearly out of ammunition, and his men exhausted, Chamberlain orders a bayonet charge of the 20th Maine down the hill and effectively ending the Confederate assault on Little Round Top.

[Devils Den](#) and the Slaughter Pen

4:15-5:30pm - After Union [General Daniel Sickles](#) advanced his entire corps to higher ground ½ mile out of line with the rest of the Union army, a dangerous salient was created. It did however put his men in a position that the Confederates did not expect so heavy fighting ensued immediately upon the initial assault. Confederate General John Bell Hood led the assault and his men from Alabama, Texas and Georgia fought valiantly, but were unable to unseat the Union forces.



[The Wheatfield](#) and Stony Hill

4:15pm-7:30pm - Often referred to as the "Bloody Wheatfield" due to the catastrophic losses by both sides in just a few hours of fighting on this 20-acre sight. Time-after-time the Wheatfield exchanged hands and was the scene of frantic hand-to-hand fighting that was a rarity in Civil War battles. In the end the Confederates failed to capitalize on their successes and the Union forces commanded the field.

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[Peach Orchard](#)

5:45-7:00pm - Initially, Brigadier General Joseph B. Kershaw's South Carolina brigades attacked the Union lines at Stony Hill. General Sickles who had been leading his troops from the Trostle house began to withdraw due to the pressure of the advancing Confederates. A cannonball caught Sickles in the right leg and he was quickly put on a stretcher and taken to the rear.

The Confederates had taken advantage of the salient created by Sickles' tactical error and driven the Union troops out of the Peach Orchard but fortunately for the Union, they held adjacent areas and the Confederates failed to capture the high ground.

[Culp's Hill](#)

8:00-midnight - Culp's Hill was a substantial hill with wooded slopes on the extreme right flank of the Union army. It made up the point on the "fishhook" as part of the Union defenses and saw considerable action on July 2.

The Union XII Corps under Brigadier General George S. Greene arrived on the morning of July 2, 1863 and helped fortify the hill. When Longstreet finally attacked the Union left at 4pm, Ewell began his demonstration with an artillery barrage from a nearby hill. It was Major General Edward Johnson's division that was given the order by Ewell to attack later that day. It was close to 7pm by the time Johnson moved his division of 4,700 men into position.

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Union Major General George Meade had shifted many troops to the Union left to reinforce including much of XII Corps. This left Greene to defend the hill with only 1,400 men and he quickly deployed them in a long line behind the breastworks without the benefit of reserves.

Badly outnumbered, Greene skillfully shifted his men along the breastworks to thwart each Confederate attack. Finally, the fight subsided close to midnight and the Confederates retreated to lower Culp's Hill.

Battle of Gettysburg Timeline - Day 3



Gettysburg Day 3

5:30-10:30am - Confederate Major General Edward Johnson planned to renew the attack at first light once more reinforcements were available, and still believed he faced larger numbers.

Early in the morning on July 3, the Union artillery perched on Baltimore Pike opened up on the Confederates. This was followed by a Union infantry assault in which they swept downhill off Culp's Hill and attacked through the woods. The fighting was fierce, and for several hours the two armies battled back and forth. The Union commanders did a superb job of rotating troops so that a constant rate of fire could continue. Johnson attempted multiple charges up the hill but each time the attacks were repelled.

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1:00-3:50pm - [General Robert E. Lee's](#) plan of attack was to assault the Union center with 12,000 troops with General James Longstreet coordinating the attack. After a devastating artillery attack that was intended to loosen up the Union defenses, the Confederates attacked across a mile of open ground.

On the other side of the battlefield stood Union [General Winfield S. Hancock](#) and the II Corps. The "copse of trees" in the center of Hancock's lines were the focus of the Confederate assault. The Confederate ranks were close to a mile wide and through a series of obliques, would concentrate their forces in the middle by the copse of trees marking the Union lines.

The Confederates were under constant long-range artillery fire and this created ghastly holes in their ranks. The Confederate ranks were steadily decimated and their lines were now close to 1/2 mile long as Pettigrew moved to the right and Pickett toward the left, converging toward the Union lines.

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On the Union side, General Hancock was wounded in the thigh and he issued and order that he not be removed from the battlefield until the engagement was decided.

Finally the Confederates reached the stone wall with roughly 200 men and led by General Armistead who had put his hat on his sword, they stormed the wall and fought hand-to-hand with the Union soldiers. Shortly thereafter, General Armistead was mortally wounded and as Union reinforcements arrived, [Pickett's Charge](#) stalled. Without leaders, the remainder of the Confederates either retreated, were killed or were captured.

The Confederates had over 50% [casualties](#) while the Union had only 1,500 casualties total. General Lee rode up to meet his troops as they retreated and exclaimed that the failure "was all my fault".

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