In the spring of 1863, Gen. Robert E. Lee reorganized the Army of Northern Virginia into three infantry corps and began marching westward from Fredericksburg, Va., through the gaps of the Blue Ridge, then northward into Maryland and Pennsylvania. For a second time in less than a year, Lee was carrying the war to northern soil. His first invasion had been turned back at the Battle of Antietam.

President Lincoln, learning that Lee's army was moving again, ordered the Army of the Potomac to follow. Lee was prevented from knowing precisely the enemy's whereabouts because his cavalry had gone on a brush raid around the Union Army and was unable to rejoin the others. Advance columns of Confederate troops were already at Carlisle and York when Lee finally learned that Maj. Gen. George Q. Meade's entire force was still at hand. By chance the two armies touched at Gettysburg when a Confederate brigade sent there for supplies observed a forward column of Meade's cavalry.

The next day, July 1, the great battle opened with Confederate troops attacking Union troops on McPherson Ridge west of town. Outnumbered, the Union forces managed to hold until afternoon when they were overwhelmed and driven back through town. In the confusion, thousands of Union soldiers were captured, leading to the death of the Union line; only one in three retrieved to safety.

Lee's army that staggered back from the fight at Gettysburg was physically and spiritually exhausted. Lee would never again attempt an offensive operation of such proportions. Meade, though he was criticized for not immediately pursuing Lee's army, had carried the day in the battle that has become known as the High Water Mark of the Confederacy.

Gettysburg National Cemetery

Both armies marched away from Gettysburg on July 5, 1863. They left behind a record of more than 51,000 killed, wounded, and missing, a community in shambles—and a legend. Even before the dead could be interred in temporary graves, sightseers came to Gettysburg to view the carnage of the war's most devastating battle.

The hasty and inadequate burial of the dead particularly distressed Pennsylvania's governor, Andrew Curtin, and a local attorney, David Wills. Curtin authorized Wills to purchase battlefield land for a cemetery, and within 6 weeks more than 69 hectares (17 acres) that became Gettysburg National Cemetery were sold. The next day, July 6, 1863, the Gettysburg Address was delivered.

Because of the epic proportions of the battle, it was thought fitting to consecrate the grounds with appropriate ceremonies. The choice of Edward Everett as principal speaker signaled an event of great dignity, for Everett was the outstanding orator of his day. He was invited well in advance of the date, November 19, to allow him time to prepare his address. President Abraham Lincoln and a number of other national figures were invited, too. And when those in charge of the ceremonies learned that Lincoln indeed would attend, Wills sent him a personal invitation, requesting that he dedicate the cemetery "with a few appropriate remarks."

Thorns filled the town the day before the ceremony, and the next morning thousands more poured in. The procession to the cemetery commenced at noon to the playing of funeral music. A prayer was offered. Then Everett arose, surveyed the scene, and delivered a fine classical oration. President Lincoln next arose and spoke in fewer words than those roomy. Even those in charge of the ceremonies learned that Lincoln indeed would attend. Wills sent him a personal invitation, requesting that he dedicate the cemetery with "a few appropriate remarks."

The Battle In Brief

In the spring of 1863, Gen. Robert E. Lee reorganized the Army of Northern Virginia into three infantry corps and began marching westward from Fredericksburg, Va., through the gaps of the Blue Ridge, then northward into Maryland and Pennsylvania. For a second time in less than a year, Lee was carrying the war to northern soil. His first invasion had been turned back at the Battle of Antietam.

President Lincoln, learning that Lee's army was moving again, ordered the Army of the Potomac to follow. Lee was prevented from knowing precisely the enemy's whereabouts because his cavalry had gone on a brush raid around the Union Army and was unable to rejoin the others. Advance columns of Confederate troops were already at Carlisle and York when Lee finally learned that Maj. Gen. George Q. Meade's entire force was still at hand. By chance the two armies touched at Gettysburg when a Confederate brigade sent there for supplies observed a forward column of Meade's cavalry.

The next day, July 1, the great battle opened with Confederate troops attacking Union troops on McPherson Ridge west of town. Outnumbered, the Union forces managed to hold until afternoon when they were overwhelmed and driven back through town. In the confusion, thousands of Union soldiers were captured, leading to the death of the Union line; only one in three retrieved to safety.

Lee's army that staggered back from the fight at Gettysburg was physically and spiritually exhausted. Lee would never again attempt an offensive operation of such proportions. Meade, though he was criticized for not immediately pursuing Lee's army, had carried the day in the battle that has become known as the High Water Mark of the Confederacy.

Gettysburg National Cemetery

Both armies marched away from Gettysburg on July 5, 1863. They left behind a record of more than 51,000 killed, wounded, and missing, a community in shambles—and a legend. Even before the dead could be interred in temporary graves, sightseers came to Gettysburg to view the carnage of the war's most devastating battle.

The hasty and inadequate burial of the dead particularly distressed Pennsylvania's governor, Andrew Curtin, and a local attorney, David Wills. Curtin authorized Wills to purchase battlefield land for a cemetery, and within 6 weeks more than 69 hectares (17 acres) that became Gettysburg National Cemetery were sold. The next day, July 6, 1863, the Gettysburg Address was delivered.

Because of the epic proportions of the battle, it was thought fitting to consecrate the grounds with appropriate ceremonies. The choice of Edward Everett as principal speaker signaled an event of great dignity, for Everett was the outstanding orator of his day. He was invited well in advance of the date, November 19, to allow him time to prepare his address. President Abraham Lincoln and a number of other national figures were invited, too. And when those in charge of the ceremonies learned that Lincoln indeed would attend, Wills sent him a personal invitation, requesting that he dedicate the cemetery "with a few appropriate remarks."

Throns filled the town the day before the ceremony, and the next morning thousands more poured in. The procession to the cemetery commenced at noon to the playing of funeral music. A prayer was offered. Then Everett arose, surveyed the scene, and delivered a fine classical oration. President Lincoln next arose and spoke in fewer words than those roomy. Even those in charge of the ceremonies learned that Lincoln indeed would attend. Wills sent him a personal invitation, requesting that he dedicate the cemetery with "a few appropriate remarks."

The Battle In Brief

In the spring of 1863, Gen. Robert E. Lee reorganized the Army of Northern Virginia into three infantry corps and began marching westward from Fredericksburg, Va., through the gaps of the Blue Ridge, then northward into Maryland and Pennsylvania. For a second time in less than a year, Lee was carrying the war to northern soil. His first invasion had been turned back at the Battle of Antietam.

President Lincoln, learning that Lee's army was moving again, ordered the Army of the Potomac to follow. Lee was prevented from knowing precisely the enemy's whereabouts because his cavalry had gone on a brush raid around the Union Army and was unable to rejoin the others. Advance columns of Confederate troops were already at Carlisle and York when Lee finally learned that Maj. Gen. George Q. Meade's entire force was still at hand. By chance the two armies touched at Gettysburg when a Confederate brigade sent there for supplies observed a forward column of Meade's cavalry.

The next day, July 1, the great battle opened with Confederate troops attacking Union troops on McPherson Ridge west of town. Outnumbered, the Union forces managed to hold until afternoon when they were overwhelmed and driven back through town. In the confusion, thousands of Union soldiers were captured, leading to the death of the Union line; only one in three retrieved to safety.

Lee's army that staggered back from the fight at Gettysburg was physically and spiritually exhausted. Lee would never again attempt an offensive operation of such proportions. Meade, though he was criticized for not immediately pursuing Lee's army, had carried the day in the battle that has become known as the High Water Mark of the Confederacy.

Gettysburg National Cemetery

Both armies marched away from Gettysburg on July 5, 1863. They left behind a record of more than 51,000 killed, wounded, and missing, a community in shambles—and a legend. Even before the dead could be interred in temporary graves, sightseers came to Gettysburg to view the carnage of the war's most devastating battle.

The hasty and inadequate burial of the dead particularly distressed Pennsylvania's governor, Andrew Curtin, and a local attorney, David Wills. Curtin authorized Wills to purchase battlefield land for a cemetery, and within 6 weeks more than 69 hectares (17 acres) that became Gettysburg National Cemetery were sold. The next day, July 6, 1863, the Gettysburg Address was delivered.

Because of the epic proportions of the battle, it was thought fitting to consecrate the grounds with appropriate ceremonies. The choice of Edward Everett as principal speaker signaled an event of great dignity, for Everett was the outstanding orator of his day. He was invited well in advance of the date, November 19, to allow him time to prepare his address. President Abraham Lincoln and a number of other national figures were invited, too. And when those in charge of the ceremonies learned that Lincoln indeed would attend, Wills sent him a personal invitation, requesting that he dedicate the cemetery "with a few appropriate remarks."

Throns filled the town the day before the ceremony, and the next morning thousands more poured in. The procession to the cemetery commenced at noon to the playing of funeral music. A prayer was offered. Then Everett arose, surveyed the scene, and delivered a fine classical oration. President Lincoln next arose and spoke in fewer words than those roomy. Even those in charge of the ceremonies learned that Lincoln indeed would attend. Wills sent him a personal invitation, requesting that he dedicate the cemetery with "a few appropriate remarks."

Throns filled the town the day before the ceremony, and the next morning thousands more poured in. The procession to the cemetery commenced at noon to the playing of funeral music. A prayer was offered. Then Everett arose, surveyed the scene, and delivered a fine classical oration. President Lincoln next arose and spoke in fewer words than those roomy. Even those in charge of the ceremonies learned that Lincoln indeed would attend. Wills sent him a personal invitation, requesting that he dedicate the cemetery with "a few appropriate remarks."

The Aftermath: A "MELANCHOLY" PROCESSION"

The climax of the Battle of Gettysburg came on the third day when Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett and his division of 4,800 men spearheaded a masterful cavalry charge of some 12,000 men against the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge. Arthur T. Curtin, a Union army colonel who was among those grenadiers in military operations, moved forward to watch the Confederate assault. What he saw instead were soldiers—those who were still alive—in full retreat. In his diary, he wrote:

"I soon began to meet many wounded men returning from the front: many of them asked in piteous tones the way to a doctor or an ambulance. The further I got, the greater became the number of wounded. At last I came to a perfect stream of them flowing through the woods in numbers as great as the crowd in Oxford-street in the middle of the day. Some were walking alone on crutches com­posed of two rifles, others were carried stretchers by the ambulance corps; but in no case did I see a sound man helping the wounded to the rear, unless he carried the red badge of the ambulance corps. They were still under a heavy fire; the shells were continually bringing down great limbs of trees, and carrying further destruction amongst this melancholy procession. I saw all this in much less time than it takes to write it, and although astonished to meet such vast numbers of wounded, I had not seemed enough to give me any idea of the real extent of the mischief."

Park Programs—History For Today

Gettysburg battlefield looks today much as it did in 1863. Fences, rocks, hills, cannon, and even the monuments, which weren't here then, have been added to make it an empty stage for an aud­ience with the imagination to remember the battle, to ponder and try to understand what really happened here. What were the thoughts of men who fought at Gettysburg? What of the women who offered aid and comfort in the after­math of battle, and of the hardships on the civilian population?
The Visitor Center has orientation displays, Where To Begin Your Visit.

The Cyclorama Center has exhibits, a 10-minute film, "From These Honored Dead," and the Gettysburg Cyclorama, a spectacular painting of Pickett's charge displayed with a sound and light program inside a large circular auditorium. Both programs are shown regularly; admission is charged only for the Cyclorama.

The three days of fighting at Gettysburg in 1863 are history. Much has been written and said about this, the greatest battle of the Civil War, and many are the treasured artifacts collected in museums here and across the country. But the most tangible link to Gettysburg's past is the battleground itself.

Upon these peacefully tilled Pennsylvania fields, more men fell than in any other battle fought in North America before or since. Many of the soldiers are buried here in the National Cemetery and many are the treasured artifacts collected in museums here and across the country. But the most tangible link to Gettysburg's past is the battleground itself.

Come walk the sun-flooded fields and shaded groves of trees. Climb the knobby hills and the Round Tops and let Gettysburg Battlefield stir in you powerful visions of the past. The names and regimental numbers on hundreds of monuments in the park may be unfamiliar to us today. But these statues in stone and bronze still echo the sentiments of North and South, enabling the sacrifice of soldiers who gave what Lincoln called "the last full measure of devotion."

Where To Begin Your Visit
The Visitor Center has orientation displays, Civil War exhibits, current schedules of living history demonstrations, and the regular Electric Civil War exhibits, cur- rented battlefield guides begin here.

Information—Where To Write
Groups may wish to arrange for a Gettysburg battlefield guide. At most of the numbered stops, markers describe significant action during the three days of battle.

How To See The Battlefield
Likely you have come to Gettysburg in your car. You can drive easily around the battlefield in about two hours by following the Auto Tour, either by yourself, or with a licensed battlefield guide. A good way to sense the land and the slower pace of Gettysburg's past is to leave the car and walk the battlefield as thousands of soldiers did. Think of the men who came here on foot and horseback, and of the wounded who traveled the long way home in hospital wagons or on foot.

The High Water Mark Trail, about 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) long, begins at the Cyclorama Center. You will see regimental monuments, part of a cannon battery, the land defended by Union soldiers in the repulse of Pickett's charge, and General Meade's Union headquarters.

For a longer hike, inquire about the 15-kilometer (10-mile) Compass Hike used by the Boy Scouts of America as part of the requirement for a Gettysburg patch.

The Big Round Top Loop Trail reveals something of the plants, animals, and rocks of the Pennsylvania hardwood forest. Stone breastworks built by the armies are visible along the way. The trail, 1.6 kilometers (1 mile) long, takes about an hour to walk, and starts just beyond Auto Stop 3.

Bikers are welcome on all park roads, but the less-traveled roads are best for bicycle riding. The Bike Tours shown on the map are recommended. The park also has a 15-kilometer (9-mile) Bridle Trail for those with horses. It begins at McMillan Woods and passes through much of the second-day and third-day battle areas.

The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.