

Forward

Since 1992, Gettysburg National Military Park and the National Park Service have hosted semi-annual seminars that cover a broad spectrum of subjects tied to the Campaign and Battle of Gettysburg. In May, 2017, the Sixteenth annual park seminar was held at Gettysburg, with classroom lectures held on the Gettysburg campus of Harrisburg Area Community College, followed by afternoon field programs in the park. This year's theme, "A Contrast in Commanders: Meade, Lee and Their Commands at Gettysburg" was meant to discuss and contrast the two generals and the methods each used to command and control two of the most notable armies of the war. The lectures covered many subjects including Meade's controversial pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia after Gettysburg, how Lee was influenced in his generalship by the larger than life French general and emperor Napoleon, the strengths and failures of corps commanders under both commanders, and the struggle of serving in an army where politics often decided one's rise to high office. The afternoon field sessions covered the story of the Mary Thompson House-Lee's Headquarters, the Union Council of War on July 2, and a tour of Lee's personal movements about the battlefield during those fateful days in July 1863. With a dash of luck, the weather was nearly perfect for the weekend and the 200 guests provided the park with excellent feedback on the seminar's strengths and where we can also improve. This booklet is a compilation of the papers generated from that seminar.

The study of Gettysburg has inherited its own contrast in interpretations, especially in the conflicts that arose among commanders on the field, the lost opportunities, the post-war accusations of one general's shortcomings over another's, and difference of opinion by defenders of the part they personally took in the greatest of military campaigns. As we look again at the two generals who fought this great battle and try to further investigate the complicated legacy of both armies, it is only right that we contrast the legacy of Gettysburg with consistent re-examination of the men who wore the uniforms of the blue and the gray in the struggle that decided the fate of the nation as we know it today.

John Heiser
Historian, Gettysburg National Military Park
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