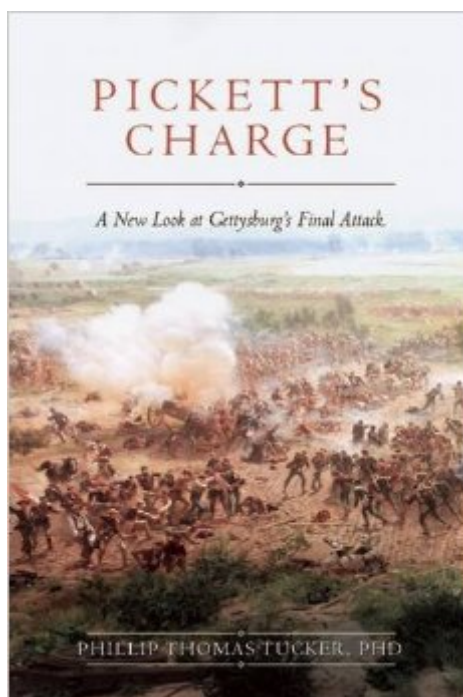


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Pickett's Charge: A New Look At Gettysburg's Final Attack



Synopsis

Main Selection of the History Book Club The Battle of Gettysburg, the Civil War's turning point, produced over 57,000 casualties, the largest number from the entire war that was itself America's bloodiest conflict. On the third day of fierce fighting, Robert E. Lee's attempt to invade the North came to a head in Pickett's Charge. The infantry assault, consisting of nine brigades of soldiers in a line that stretched for over a mile, resulted in casualties of over 50 percent for the Confederates and a huge psychological blow to Southern morale. Pickett's Charge is a detailed analysis of one of the most iconic and defining events in American history. This book presents a much-needed fresh look, including the unvarnished truths and ugly realities, about the unforgettable story. With the luxury of hindsight, historians have long denounced the folly of Lee's attack, but this work reveals the tactical brilliance of a master plan that went awry. Special emphasis is placed on the common soldiers on both sides, especially the non-Virginia attackers outside of Pickett's Virginia Division. These fighters' moments of cowardice, failure, and triumph are explored using their own words from primary and unpublished sources. Without romance and glorification, the complexities and contradictions of the dramatic story of Pickett's Charge have been revealed in full to reveal this most pivotal moment in the nation's life. Skyhorse Publishing, as well as our Arcade imprint, are proud to publish a broad range of books for readers interested in history--books about World War II, the Third Reich, Hitler and his henchmen, the JFK assassination, conspiracies, the American Civil War, the American Revolution, gladiators, Vikings, ancient Rome, medieval times, the old West, and much more. While not every title we publish becomes a New York Times bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

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Customer Reviews

UPDATED REVIEW: Due to a number of circumstances, including sheer determination, I decided to continue on with the remainder of Dr. Tucker's book. After my initial review, I took a look at the reviews of his other work as well. It seems that many of the same critiques run throughout Dr. Tucker's efforts. I may have only alluded to it in my earlier comments about "Pickett's Charge", but it is, without a shadow of a doubt, the single most repetitive thing I have ever come across. What Dr. Tucker posts as his thesis was presented in the first few paragraphs of the book and just repeated, ad nauseam, for over 370 pages. I purchased this book, without sufficient research on the author, because it is marketed as a "new look at Gettysburg's final attack". I am a student of the battle who still firmly believes that the real story of Pickett's Charge has yet to be told. Dr. Tucker's thesis is that Lee's plan for Pickett's Charge, overlooked and misunderstood by historians for generations, was a masterful stroke of genius, only disrupted by his subordinate generals. According to Tucker's "new perspective", Lee intended a 3-prong assault, including the artillery, infantry, and JEB Stuart's cavalry to crush the Union left-center. How is this point of view new in any way? Dr. Tucker provides no evidence for whatsoever for his assertions, other than anecdotal comments from the same 3 or 4 sources the entire book. Furthermore, he never actually tries to explain why particular individuals failed to support Lee's plan, he just makes accusations. While Stuart's cavalry is centered as a HUGE role in Lee's planning, Dr. Tucker never, not once, explains what occurred with Stuart in East Cavalry Field.

This book has real virtues. Among these--the extraordinarily rich depiction of the views and feelings of soldiers on both sides. This adds a great deal of context to this sanguinary struggle on the third day at Gettysburg. The author argues that General Robert E. Lee put together a brilliant attack plan on Day Three of Gettysburg--and that it was thwarted by his subordinates, such as George Pickett, James Longstreet, and A. P. Hill. Fair enough. There was surely blame to go around (including General Ewell who is not mentioned much here--but is noted in other analyses of the problems on Day Three). The three aspects of his plan: a massive assault on Meade's center on Cemetery Ridge, an attack by JEB Stuart on the Union rear, and a great bombardment from Confederate cannon. One note here: Some other scholars have also noted a demonstration by Ewell. The basic

model that the author uses is Napoleon at Austerlitz. Frankly, I think that Napoleon's strategy at Austerlitz was nuts. He assumed that Marshall Davout would make a long march and fall upon the Austrian/Russian forces at the key moment. In the friction of war, such an assumption is dangerous. He assumed that by giving up the Pratzen Heights, the allies against him would denude it of troops at a key moment. Note: As I understand it, Russian General Katuzov wanted to maintain strength on that position. If he had been supported, this could have been a disaster. Giving up the heights strikes me as "dopey." Let that go, but the author valorizes Napoleon's perspective--which, to me, is a dangerous set of assumptions on Napoleon's part. What do we know? Confederate cannon had defective ammunition. The odds of a successful bombardment were open to question. Stuart was lethargic that day.

On the major premise - The book's major premise is that Lee's plan would have been successful at ending the War had it been executed as planned. I find this ludicrous for many reasons not addressed by the author. Vicksburg had just fallen and the Union's most capable General - Grant - had his army intact, the Confederacy was split in two, the Anaconda Plan was still in effect strangling the rebels. If Meade's Army had been split in two, the remnants ultimately would have regrouped and fought Lee again, under Grant. If Meade had been split in two, Lee's out of cannon ammo and low on supplies army could not have taken Washington DC. Lee's artillery ammo reserves were 150 miles away in the Shenandoah Valley, a far way from an assault onto DC. McClellan had fortified DC and began by laying out lines for a complete ring of entrenchments and fortifications that would cover 33 miles of land. He built enclosed forts on high hills around the city, and placed well protected batteries of field artillery in the gaps between these forts, augmenting the 88 guns already placed on the defensive line facing Virginia and south. In between these batteries interconnected rifle pits were dug, allowing highly effective co-operative fire. This layout, once complete, would make the city one of the most heavily-defended locations in the world, and almost unassailable by nearly any number of men, especially a tired, under supplied, under staffed, depleted Rebel army fresh from the exhaustive Battle of Gettysburg. With respect to the charge itself, the author cites Napoleon's use of coordinated infantry, artillery and cavalry and says Lee planned his charge that way. The author admits he has no documentation of Lee ordering Stuart to participate in the charge by attacking in the rear at the copse of trees.

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