

THE SENTINEL

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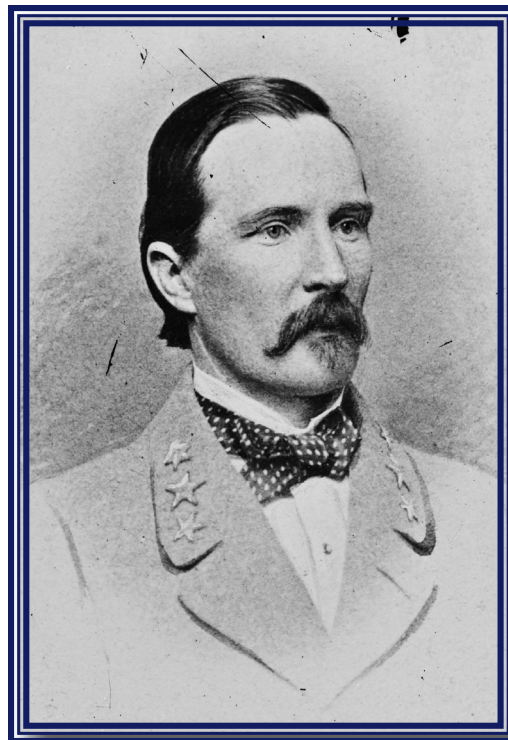
Gen. Harry Heth at Gettysburg: was it really for the shoes?

The facts: Harry Heth, a division commander in Hill's Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia, blundered badly on the way to Gettysburg on the morning July 1, 1863. His advance was contested initially by John Buford's cavalry, which slowed him to a crawl from 7:30 am until about 10 am, when he finally got his division atop Herr's Ridge west of the town. From there, he hurled two brigades forward without the support of the rest of the division, only to run into two brigades of the 1st Division, 1st Corps of the Army of the Potomac rushing up to relieve Buford. In the ensuing struggle, Archer's brigade and Davis's brigade were shattered, with regiments losing anywhere from 20 to 35% as prisoners. The magnitude of this early Confederate blundering is often overlooked since the first day at Gettysburg was, overall, a Confederate victory.

But just how and why did Heth come to make bad command decisions that morning? At the September meeting, presenter Mark Acres contended these decisions were due to three factors that at least help to explain why Heth made such seemingly horrid decisions, and against orders, on July 1, 1863: First, Heth's personality; second, the history of rewards and punishments for general officers in the Army of Northern Virginia; and last, orders from Hill and Lee that were subtly contradictory.

Harry Heth was a charmer and a bit of a rowdy from an established Virginia family. Like his first cousin, George Pickett, Harry was last in this class at West Point. He gained experience fighting native Americans in the west played a small role in the Mexican-American war. These experiences no doubt reinforced his tendency to attack whenever possible, trusting to an aggressive spirit over tactical finesse. With Virginia's secession, Heth resigned from the US Army and went to Richmond, where he became a high level quartermaster and met his mentor, Robert E. Lee. Lee at once took to Heth; Heth was reputedly the only general officer Lee addressed by his first name.

Getting field command in West Virginia in 1862, Heth marched to disaster at Lewisburg, where his command, conducting a "surprise" frontal attack, was routed by a smaller Yankee force. This didn't hurt Harry's career; he wound up with a brigadier's star and a brigade at Chancellorsville. There, only the timely intervention of a subordinate kept him from launching an ill-conceived dusk attack without reconnaissance. After Chancellorsville, Lee, reeling from the loss of Stonewall



*Henry "Harry" Heth, Major General, CSA.
West Point, 1847, 38th in a class of 38*

Jackson, was looking for officers with aggressive qualities — and Harry ended up getting his second star as the Army was reorganized.

Approaching Gettysburg, Heth was under orders to conduct a reconnaissance in force from AP Hill, but also under Lee's orders not to bring on a general engagement. Chafing at the delay imposed on his force by Buford's cavalry, he overrode Brigadier Archer's protests and threw Archer's and Davis's brigades at the Yankees — with disastrous results. Heth's unwise behavior seems perfectly typical for a man who made his way up the ranks with displays of aggression, no matter how unwise, and given orders that would normally lead him to fight as long as he didn't bring on a "general engagement."

Finally, the shoes. Did Heth and his forces cause what was to become, even to this day, the largest land battle on the North American continent simply because they were, as legend has it, looking for shoes they had been told were cached in the town? Of course the Confederates were foraging for anything they could find, as they were far, far from home in "enemy" territory, having invaded Pennsylvania and cutting themselves off from good supply sources. And it is a given they needed shoes, just as they needed food, clothing, munitions, etc. But there is no evidence today that shows that there was anything special about the shoe supply in Gettysburg. So goes the stuff of legend.

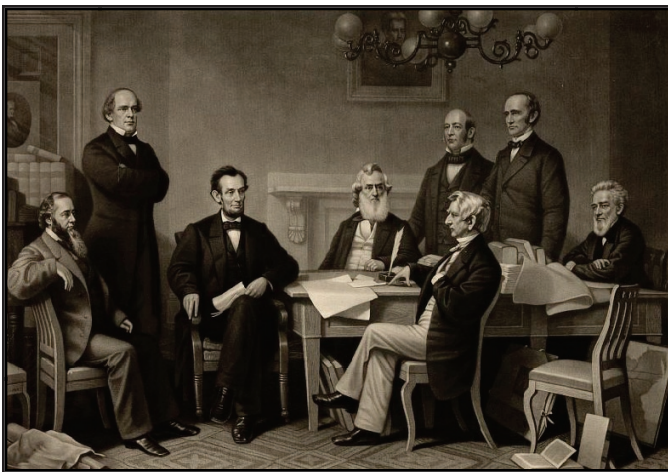
Gettysburg Seeks Opinion on Fees

The Gettysburg National Military Park and the Gettysburg Foundation are considering a single admission fee for all venues at the new visitor center. The new “all-in-one” price would include the new museum, the Cyclorama (opening Sept. 26), and the 22-minute film “A New Birth of Freedom.” The museum is currently free. Adult admission to the movie is \$8 until the reopening of the Cyclorama, when a combined Cyclorama-movie adult ticket will be sold for \$12.

The proposed new adult price is \$7.50 for all three with discounts for kids and groups. The battlefield itself and ranger programs would continue to be free, as would admission to the Visitor Center itself. Read the entire proposal at <http://www.nps.gov/gett/parkmgmt/publicinvolvement.htm> or e-mail your comments to the superintendent at GETT_Superintendent@nps.gov. The restored Gettysburg Cyclorama, complete with original three-dimensional effects and new audio system, opens in the new Gettysburg National Military Park and Museum Sept. 26.

Lincoln Walking Tour

In the pursuit of “all things Lincoln” in the upcoming bicentennial year, the Indiana Historical Society has produced a wonderful booklet with, literally, step by step directions on a downtown walking tour in Indianapolis that highlights nine Lincoln-related sites. These include the big things, of course, like the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument on Monument Circle and the Indiana War Memorial, with lesser-known stops such as a statue of Lincoln as a boy, the hotel he stayed in on his first inaugural trip from Springfield to Washington in 1861, and an unusual seated Lincoln statue in University Park. A copy of this brochure will be available for loan at the next Roundtable meeting on October 14th as well as at the Indiana History Center, the starting point of the tour in Indianapolis, at any time.



FIRST READING OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION BEFORE THE CABINET (detail), a mezzotint by Alexander Hay Ritchie (1872-1895). Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Upcoming I U Course

Indiana University is sponsoring a Lifelong Learning course entitled *Arguing about History: Battlefields, Museums, and Other Memorial Sites* this fall. The course is taught by IU professor Ed Linenthal, who is also the editor of the *Journal of American History*, and currently serves as an advisor on the planning of the Pennsylvania 9/11 memorial. Historic sites, like individuals, have revealing and interesting histories. This course will examine the contested histories of several battlefields, including Gettysburg, the Little Bighorn, and Pearl Harbor, along with the making of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the complexities of building a memorial after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Each presentation will be illustrated. The course will be taught on three Mondays, Nov. 3, 10 & 17 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at the Monroe County History Center, 202 E. 6th St. Course fee is \$50 until 10/27, \$55 thereafter.

Coming Soon at the History Center!

- OCT. 14: DICK WORSENA ON “THE NAVY DIVIDED”** — Dick gave us a great two-part presentation on Col. Oates of the 15th Alabama at Gettysburg most recently, and now takes us to a rarely examined aspect of the war—the navies of the Union and the Confederacy. “The Navy Divided: Bits and Pieces” will cover several topics, such as the Union blockade of the South, the Monitor-Virginia clash at Hampton Roads, Island #10 in the Western Theater, Farragut at Mobile Bay and the Kearsarge-Alabama battle that would make a hero of Captain Raphael Semmes. We do not hear that much about the Navy during the Civil War, so this is a unique chance to learn more about this lesser-known subject.
- NOV. 11: DAVE SUTHERLAND ON “THE VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE IN THE WAR”** — Dave visits us from the Indianapolis Roundtable and highlights the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia, where Stonewall Jackson taught before the war and whose cadets figured into the fighting in more ways than one. VMI is still the home of Jackson’s favorite “double-brace” of cannons, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, so-called because, when they spoke, people listened.

Help Us

If you can, please consider volunteering to help out with refreshments at an upcoming meeting. Our Hospitality Chair, Deborah Cronin, is a stalwart trooper, but a little relief would be nice for her. Make some cookies (Civil War recipe, maybe?), bake a cake, make your own hardtack (but please leave the “fellow travelers” at home!)... anything at all. If you can help us out even one time, just contact Deborah at the number below.

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On the web at <http://mypage.iu.edu/~rawatson/roundtable/>.