

The Battle of Gettysburg: The Turning Point of the Civil War

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It was July 1st, 1863, when a great battle began on the outskirts of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. For three days, Union and Confederate soldiers fought against each other in ruthless combat. General Robert E. Lee of the Confederate army had every intention of coming out victorious and leading his men down towards the Union capital, Washington, D.C. – but the Northerners were going to stop them dead in their tracks.

Lee had planned on a surprise victory, and there was one – just not the one he'd been expecting. Under the command of General George G. Meade, the Union army demolished an entire third of his forces, as well as the dignity of his surviving soldiers. Any hope of his for foreign aid was lost after this embarrassing flop, marking the day of their defeat as the last of Lee's major invasions in the North. Even though Lee would return to the North one year later, he would be much weaker.

And despite the fact that the battle had been a bloodbath (with dead and wounded totaling up to 51,000), the spirits and confidence of the Union soldiers were uplifted. Before this day, they had always been on the defensive, needing to push back Lee's troops, and barely surviving in the process. But now that they'd won, *they* were the aggressors – they knew that they could charge against their enemy and prevail.

It was on that hot summer day of July 3rd, 1863, that their determination to win the war grew stronger, so that with every battle thereafter, they fought with the knowledge that they were risking their lives for a cause worth dying for.