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*On a Great Battlefield: The Making, Management, and Memory
of Gettysburg National Military Park, 1933–2013* by
Jennifer M. Murray (review)

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Jennifer M. Murray, *On a Great Battlefield: The Making, Management, and Memory of Gettysburg National Military Park, 1933–2013* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2014). 312 pp. ISBN 978-1-6219-0053-5.

Historian Jennifer Murray's *On a Great Battlefield* provides a thorough analysis and narrative of the shifting history of Gettysburg National Military Park from the early preservation efforts of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association in the nineteenth century to the National Park Service's management decisions and accomplishments in the twenty-first century. Utilizing and expanding on the growing number of works that have addressed public memory's relationship with the American Civil War, this sweeping study seeks to fill a void in the historiography. As Murray explains, "Scholars have paid only minimal attention to the battlefield itself and the process of preserving, interpreting, and remembering the bloodiest battle of the Civil War" (3). In remedying this issue, *On a Great Battlefield* offers a series of parallel and overlapping storylines. These storylines examine how Gettysburg has factored into American memory and identity, while simultaneously illuminating how the management decisions of Park Service superintendents and others have molded the battlefield's landscape, determined how the battlefield is used and interpreted for the public, and perpetuated a dominant memory of the battle itself.

On the whole, Murray's study has a number of strengths. Perhaps the greatest of these is her attention to context and its influence on what was occurring at Gettysburg. As she asserted, "A multitude of external factors influence the operations of the battlefield, and more importantly, mold Americans' understanding of the battle and their history" (5). Thusly, influential "external" circumstances, including the Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movements, and the rise of the environmental movement, all are woven into her analysis of how the battlefield was used, changed, preserved, and perceived by Americans through time. Providing even more context, Murray also shows how trends in the National Park Service influenced the management philosophies that governed the military park, and she frequently provides

a much needed comparative perspective by addressing the situations occurring at other Civil War sites, such as Shiloh, Antietam, and Vicksburg.

To a large degree, *On a Great Battlefield* focuses on the Park Service's management of the park, which began in 1933. While deftly showing the wide range of interests that have shaped decisions regarding the battlefield's landscape, Murray emphasizes the constant changes that have occurred as Park Service superintendents have independently managed the park. Equally important are the continuities in her work, as she reveals the lasting influence of Civil War veterans on the battle's memory. Indeed, her work illustrates the process by which the memory of Gettysburg was dominated by the idea that it was the high-water mark of the Confederacy and a place of reconciliation. Furthering her comprehensive analysis into the 1990s and 2000s, she demonstrates how this dominant memory was disputed as a new interpretative emphasis came to the fore at the visitor center and museum.

Overall, Murray has presented a balanced analysis that even includes the voices of average citizens who made known their opinions to park officials. However, examining contemporary management of the park, even up to 2013, is necessarily fraught with danger. Murray, who has worked at the park, reveals bias in her laudatory analysis of the controversial tenure of John Latschar, who served as park superintendent from 1994 to 2009. At the same time, the book suffers from some grammatical errors that detract from its readability. Yet *On a Great Battlefield* has gone a long way to introducing a clear understanding of how the battlefield, and even the Gettysburg Address, served different purposes as succeeding generations have come and passed. Going forward, it will be of great value to the historiography and to anyone interested in how a place of national importance is preserved and interpreted.

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