Subject: "Gettysburg"
Posted by elektratig on Tue, 30 Nov 2004 14:32:58 GMT
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I watched this movie about three months ago -- and have been obsessed with the Civil War ever since.Objectively, it's probably not a great movie, but it recounts key portions the events leading to the battle, and of the battle itself, with great accuracy, and it gives the viewer a taste of some of the key and issues, and in particular the central issue/controversy that has raged ever since: why did Lee fight there, in the way that he did (particularly on the third day, when he sent massed infantry against the entrenched center of the Union line (Pickett's Charge)? Was he right in doing so, or should he have taken Longstreet's advice and moved around the Union army, toward Washington, forcing the Federals to attack him?The movie poses, rather than answers, this question (because, as I have learned, no definitive answer exists) and others. It also introduces and shows the impotance of characters I, at least, had never even heard of -- John Buford (whose Federal cavalry were the first Union troops to arrive, and who recognized the potential advantages of the site) and Joshua Chamberlain (a professor at Bowdoin College, later President of Bowdoin and Governor of Maine, whose inspired leadership of his Maine regiment held the very end of the Union line at Little Round Top). Could these people have possibly existed? Could the continued existence of the Union have balanced so delicately on the inspired performances of such men? Did 15,000 men really walk in ordered rows more than a mile over open ground while enduring a storm of artillery and musket fire (think WWI, minus only the machine guns)? I was amazed and wanted to know more.Since watching the movie, I've been reading every Civil War book I can lay my hands on -- not just about Gettysburg.As I say, as a movie, "Gettysburg" has many flaws. It's long (4+ hours); the pacing is often slow (because much of the movie focuses on the decisionmaking and battle preparations rather than the battle itself); the beards are terrible; some of the dialogue sounds stilted to modern ears (but much of it is taken from contemporary accounts and post-war memoirs); and some of the casting is bad (I just couldn't swallow Martin Sheen as Robert E. Lee). Don't expect "Saving Private Ryan"-type battle-scene gore -- blood appears on shirts and I think there are a few distant views of the surgery area, but you don't see heads blown off, limbs shattered, horses disembowled (Civil War injuries were truly horrific).On the other hand, some of the casting is quite good (Jeff Daniels as Chamberlain), and the movie uses thousands of authentically armed and clad reenactors in pre-battle and battle scenes.All in all, I highly recommend the movie (and the included "making of" documentary). If you don't like it, you've wasted a few bucks and an (admittedly long) evening. But maybe it'll grab you the way it did me, and then you'll be reading every Civil War book you can lay your hands on.

Subject: Re: "Gettysburg"
Posted by Wayne Parham on Tue, 30 Nov 2004 17:51:56 GMT
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Thanks for the recommendation; I'll have to check it out. Every time a special on the Civil War or on Lincoln comes on the History Channel, I always watch it. So "Gettysburg" should be an interesting movie for me. Thanks!

Subject: Abraham Lincoln
Posted by elektratig on Wed, 01 Dec 2004 00:39:08 GMT
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As I have been reading, my admiration of Abraham Lincoln has grown and grown. He was truly an extraordinary man.