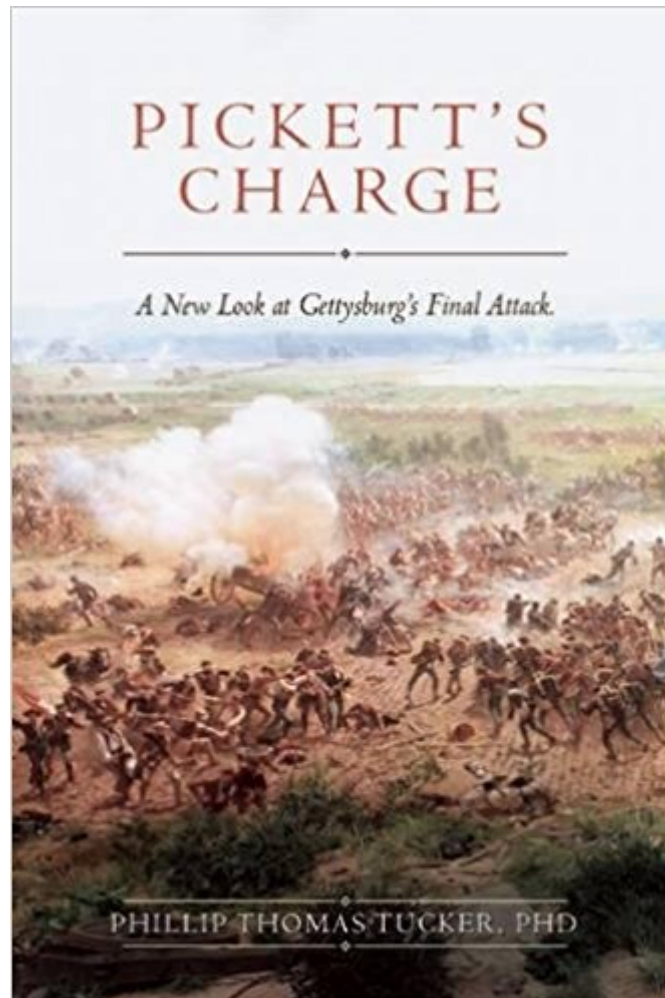




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Pickett's Charge: A New Look At Gettysburg's Final Attack



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 These fighters' moments of cowardice, failure, and triumph are explored using their own words from primary and unpublished sources.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

"A popular historian deconstructs 'the greatest assault of the greatest battle of America's greatest war', [Pickett's Charge] contains much to interest and provoke Civil War enthusiasts."

—Kirkus "In his almost minute-by-minute account of the most famous infantry charge in history, Phillip Thomas Tucker provides a thoughtful and challenging new look at the great assault at Gettysburg, from planning to aftermath. Not afraid to lay blame where he thinks it belongs, Tucker is fresh and bold in his analysis and use of sources. Even though any reader knows in advance the outcome, still Pickett's Charge maintains suspense to the sound of the last gun." -William C. Davis, author of *Crucible of Command: Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee--The War they Fought, the Peace they Forged* "No action in the Civil War is more iconic than the misnamed 'Pickett's Charge,' and yet few episodes of this most-studied of wars is in need of more enlightened and enlightening reexamination. Phillip Thomas Tucker's magisterial *Pickett's Charge: A New Look at Gettysburg's Final Attack* replaces 150-plus years of uninterrogated mythology with meticulously researched history to give us a new and long-overdue understanding of what tradition dismisses as Robert E. Lee's most tragic error in pursuit of a 'Lost Cause.' Tucker persuasively argues that Pickett's Charge, though failed in its execution, actually reveals Lee at his most masterful. This book is one of a handful essential to gaining a full strategic and tactical appreciation of both Gettysburg and the war in which it was the turning point."

—Alan Axelrod, author of *The Horrid Pit: The Battle of the Crater, the Civil War's Cruellest Mission* and *The 20 Most Significant Events of the Civil War* "Phillip Thomas Tucker cuts through the myths and misconceptions that surround Pickett's charge to offer a fresh defense of Robert E. Lee and a probing examination of what happened that fateful afternoon. The result is a thought-provoking and eye-opening study of this pivotal moment in American history."

—Louis P. Masur, PhD. Distinguished Professor of American studies and History, Rutgers University, and author of *The Civil War: A Concise History* "In nearly all recent surveys, Americans list the Battle of Gettysburg as the most recognizable and most important of all battles in our history. And, when asked what they know about Gettysburg, to top of that list is Pickett's Charge. When pressed a little harder, if they know anything about the charge, most will say it was a disaster, that General Lee didn't know what he was doing, that there was no way it could have

succeeded, and so forth. Relying heavily on the combatants' first-hand accounts, Phillip Thomas Tucker cuts away the myths and offers a fresh new interpretation that challenges long held views of the story. Rather than seeing Pickett's Charge as foolhardy, Tucker considers Lee's plan as a stroke of genius, and that, had a few things gone differently, could well have ended the war in favor of the Confederacy." —Robert K. Sutton, former Chief Historian, National Park Service

Phillip Thomas Tucker, PhD, is a writer and historian who has edited and authored more than two dozen books and written over sixty scholarly articles. After earning his PhD in 1990, he took a position as civilian historian with the Department of Defense and specialized in air force history. His previous books include *George Washington's Surprise Attack*, *Exodus from the Alamo*, and *Father of the Tuskegee Airmen*, John C. Robinson. He lives in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

In every major world conflict there is a deciding point, a keystone moment that changes everything. The battle of Gettysburg (with 51,000 combined casualties) was just that for the civil war; with Pickett's charge forming a cascading domino to determine would win America's bloodiest conflict. When I learned Pickett's Charge, Dr. Thomas Tucker would take a meticulous in-depth view of the battle from a Confederate perspective I was quite hesitant. Having no interest in listening to yet another southern apologist extoll the bravery of a lost cause. It was pleasantly surprising to learn he did not glorify the south and their goals while giving Lee far more credit than previously thought. Many historians have tried to paint the general as an anachronism, a throwback to a more gentlemanly form of war. A sort of Don-Quixote-ish character who trusted in the power of the then-obsolete bayonet charge and decimated his own army with 9-divisions receiving a 50% casualty rate in a mad bid for glory. Dispelling the myth of the hopelessly romantic-idiocy of the south in a final charge, the truth is there was nothing glorious. More importantly Tucker suspects Lee was far more insightful than previously thought, his choice to attack the right-center of the Union forces was actually tactically sound. While around eight out of ten frontal-assaults failed during the civil war, he assumed the lay of the land would provide cover while they converged on the center in what he thought would be a surprise. The general was following Napoleon sudden-attack model, thinking sheer initiative and artillery bombardment would compensate for the open ground. As Tucker explains it this wasn't a "Charge of the Light Brigade" moment, but rather that last in a long line of desperate gambles that finally came up short. Ultimately I appreciated the detailed accounts

that went into the writing: maps, battle plans and even first-hand recollections of the battle's progress. He even, and I love it when historians do this, gave clashing accounts and opinions of why the charge failed to spectacularly rather than tell you what to think.

The book certainly has an academic gait, but does well to address, at depth, numerous myths surrounding Pickett's Charge. Tucker posits that contrary to popular belief, Pickett's Charge was not a doomed battle from the beginning. The failure of the assault could be attributed to the cowardice of Confederate soldiers (among other tactical failures such as Stuart's missing cavalry), while its legacy could be thought of as both revisionist fantasy and southern nationalist storytelling. As other reviewer's have indicated, Tucker does seem to offer a good amount of praise towards Lee throughout the book for the apparent genius which went into the planning of the assault, and it is admittedly strange and a bit overzealous considering the author chastises Lost Cause romance and mythology fairly often, but I feel he still retains an analytical eye about the depth of thought and planning that went into the Charge. Ultimately, I didn't feel too captivated by Tucker's prose, but the story overall wasn't very difficult to follow along. Some of the editing was strange; there were parts that felt as though they were written directly by the editor, but no indication was given that another person was writing. On top of that, Tucker (or the editor) repeated themselves quite often in a jarring way. In the end, it probably wasn't the easiest casual read, but for someone interested in the subject matter, I'd give it a read.

A very good explanation and tactical overview of the battle. Unfortunately, the author has to remind the reader every few pages EXACTLY where each unit was every 100 paces. Give the reader a little credit. We get it. Nothing really new here.

I bought this book because I felt like I was still ignorant about some parts of the battle of Gettysburg, and was curious about the events surrounding Pickett's charge; the game changer. Although you brush over it in college, it's a different story whenever you decide to buy it for yourself. Needless to say, this book does great in providing a fresh new outlook I haven't seen before and transitions well from one event to the other. It's also easy to follow and very organized in defining its ideas. I appreciate the more in-depth explanations we get about tactical plans, and also added details such as misleading information and quotes from other related persons. It's clear to me that there were a lot of people involved in the making of Pickett's Charge, which fascinated me.

Additionally, comparisons and strategies adapted from other once successful leaders such as Napoleon were interesting to see. Safe to say, I read a lot I wasn't expecting to learn which proves to me that this was useful and not as repetitive compared to what I've read/learned before.

I was never one to read about historic battles in my free time until I discovered Dr. Phillip Thomas Tucker's writing. Through his writing, he truly engages in the reader in the events of the battle, as well as the social, political, and economic tensions building up to it. Dr. Tucker brings history to life, while highlighting key historical aspects of warfare that have either been overlooked or omitted by others. This book, Pickett's Charge: A New Look at Gettysburg's Final Attack, dissects General Robert E. Lee's assault on Gettysburg, while giving the reader context about how tactical decisions made in battle translated to the future of slavery and political factions in the U.S. Contrary to what many people believe about the recklessness of General Lee, his attack on Gettysburg was bold and calculated and not set up for ultimate failure. Dr. Tucker discusses and dismantles the myth of the "Lost Cause" step by step. If you want to read a well-documented account of Pickett's Charge that places the battle in historical context, pick up this book. You will not be disappointed.

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