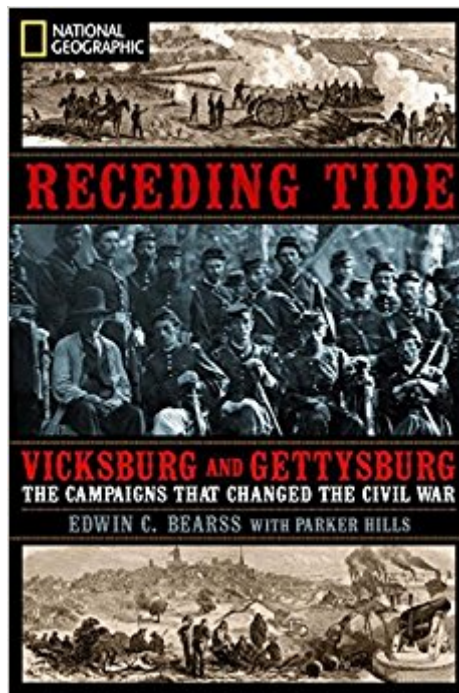




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Receding Tide: Vicksburg And Gettysburg- The Campaigns That Changed The Civil War



Synopsis

It's a poignant irony in American history that on Independence Day, 1863, not one but two pivotal Civil War battles ended in Union victory, marked the high tide of Confederate military fortune, and ultimately doomed the South's effort at secession. But on July 4, 1863, after six months of siege, Ulysses Grant's Union army finally took Vicksburg and the Confederate west. On the very same day, Robert E. Lee was in Pennsylvania, parrying the threat to Vicksburg with a daring push north to Gettysburg. For two days the battle had raged; on the next, July 4, 1863, Pickett's Charge was thrown back, a magnificently brave but fruitless assault, and the fate of the Confederacy was sealed, though nearly two more years of bitter fighting remained until the war came to an end. In *Receding Tide*, Edwin Cole Bearss draws from his popular Civil War battlefield tours to chronicle these two widely separated but simultaneous clashes and their dramatic conclusion. As the recognized expert on both Vicksburg and Gettysburg, Bearss tells the fascinating story of this single momentous day in our country's history, offering his readers narratives, maps, illustrations, characteristic wit, dramatic new insights and unerringly intimate knowledge of terrain, tactics, and the colorful personalities of America's citizen soldiers, Northern and Southern alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With his passion for his subject, knowledge, and flair for presentation, Ed Bearss (b. 1923) is America's premier Civil War tour guide. A former historian at Vicksburg and Chief Historian of the National Park Service, Bearss continues to give selflessly of his time to increase understanding of

one of the defining moments of American history. In 2007, the National Geographic Society published "Fields of Honor" Fields of Honor: Pivotal Battles of the Civil War a book of transcripts of Bearss' tour presentations for several major Civil War Battlefields. In this new book, "Receding Tide", readers receive the benefit of more Bearss tours but with a focus. The book concentrates on the conflict during late 1862 to mid- 1863. The focus is on Vicksburg and Gettysburg, "The Campaigns that Changed the Civil War", but the campaign in Tennessee during this time period also receives much attention. Other than books that give an overview of the Civil War, most books that explore the military conflict in depth focus on one campaign or the other. Thus, there are many books on the Gettysburg campaign and a smaller though still substantial number of books about Vicksburg. I have read many books about individual battles and about the Civil War, but Bearss' book taught me a good deal. He weaves together the stories of the three primary theaters of the war: the East in Virginia and Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Vicksburg and the Mississippi River and shows their interrelationship. The narrative shifts back and forth among the different theaters and various points and helped me understand how they held together.

Well known Civil War historian and National Park Service legend Edwin Bearss is the primary author of a detailed examination of the battles at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. The Union victories at both battlefields essentially marked, in the book title's terms, a receding of the Confederate tide. J. Parker Hills, a military officer with considerable knowledge of the Civil War adds his commentary (in italics). The addenda by Hills help to fill out details. . . . The receding tide was, according to Bearss, a function of the double defeat of the Confederate States of America--the defeat at Gettysburg and the surrender at Vicksburg. This book is characterized by great detail and deep knowledge by the author of these two campaigns. It was fun to follow the detailed discussions. While the details regarding the run up to the battle at Gettysburg do not add great insights into our understanding of that battle, his discussion of the events between July 1 and July 3 give great insight into the combat there. He gives a sense of the specific events taking place (his discussion of Longstreet's attack on Day # 2 is concise but also filled with enough detail to make sense of events); he also gives insight into the larger strategic decisions made by Lee and Meade. Thus, one gets an "on the ground" view--but also a view from "30,000 feet." All without being drowned by detail. Bearss' presentation of the stages of the Vicksburg campaign added a great deal to my understanding of events. He did a nice job of summarizing the "experiments" by Grant, although I'm not sure that I learned anything new. Then, a very lucid description of Grant's venture south, below the guns of Vicksburg. The coverage of the campaign after that is delightful.

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