

Tell Them All About It, Won't You? Images of the Present, Voices of the Past

Photographs by Helen S. Schwartz, Text by Katharine A. Sloan

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The Battle of Gettysburg was both the turning point of the American Civil War and the bloodiest battle ever fought on America soil. At the end of the three-day battle, 51,000 soldiers had been killed, wounded, captured, or were missing. The very ground was saturated with blood.

Today, Gettysburg National Military Park is a gorgeous landscape of 6,000 acres and more than 1,400 markers and monuments. With bucolic streams and quiet pastures, country roads and lovely vistas, present-day Gettysburg seems both far removed from the horrors of that battle and suffused by the echoes of it.

Photographer Helen Schwartz and writer Katharine Sloan bring to life both views of Gettysburg in their book *Tell Them All About It, Won't You? Images of the Present, Voices of the Past*. By juxtaposing Schwartz's beautifully composed landscape photographs with quotes from soldiers at the battle, the book evokes the complexity of Gettysburg's place in America's history, as well as the sacrifice of the men who suffered there.

The paperback book is just six inches tall and nine inches wide, with a full-page color photo on the right side of each page spread. Facing each photo is a quote from a Gettysburg soldier and additional information about the site pictured. In one photo, the soldier on the 11th Mississippi Volunteer Infantry Monument is backlit by the setting sun as he gestures his fellows onward. The facing page offers these words from Lt. Joseph R. Peel of that same regiment: "Implements of war were scattered in every direction, while here & there lay horses & men in every conceivable degree of mutilation. There are perhaps few stages of suffering of which the imagination may conceive, that were not here represented."

Schwartz's photos are universally gorgeous, capturing the serenity and grandeur of Gettysburg. While monuments and statues are represented here, so are the serene waters of Willoughby Run, the Triangular Field framed by a wooden gate that hangs ajar, and the pristine winter landscape of Codori Farm. The quotes that accompany each of these photos offers an echo of the past, and writer Sloan's commentary provides deeper understanding.

By design, the photos are not presented in chronological order; in so doing, the book's creators hope to inspire the reader to explore more about Gettysburg's history. However, readers will benefit from some familiarity with the battle and its personages; occasionally it is difficult to determine if the soldier quoted fought for the Union or Confederacy.

Helen S. Schwartz is a professional photographer and studio-owner specializing in historical landscape photography. She has exhibited at several local and regional shows.

Writer Katharine A. Sloan has been an avid diarist and poet since her teens. She is a frequent visitor to American historic parks and battlefields.

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