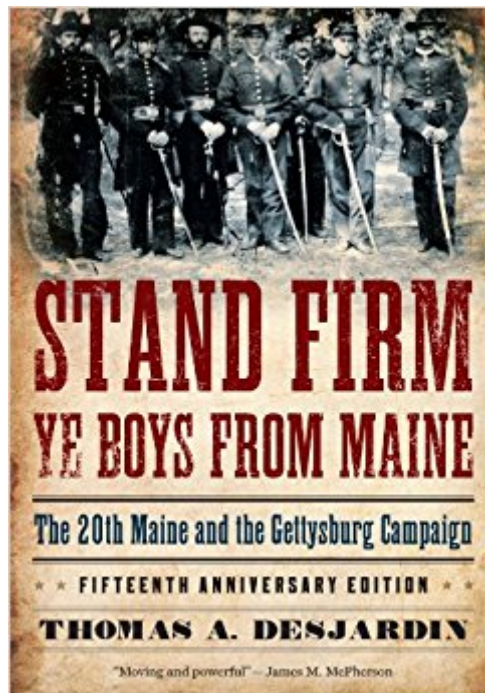




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Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine: The 20th Maine And The Gettysburg Campaign



Synopsis

Fought amid rocks and trees, in thick blinding smoke, and under exceedingly stressful conditions, the battle for the southern slope of Little Round Top on July 2, 1863 stands among the most famous and crucial military actions in American history, one of the key engagements that led to the North's victory at Gettysburg. In this powerfully narrated history, Maine historian Tom Desjardin tells the story of the 20th Maine Regiment, the soldiers who fought and won the battle of Little Round Top. This engaging work is the culmination of years of detailed research on the experiences of the soldiers in that regiment, telling the complete story of the unit in the Gettysburg Campaign, from June 21 through July 10, 1863. Desjardin uses more than seventy first-hand accounts to tell the story of this campaign in critical detail. He brings the personal experiences of the soldiers to life, relating the story from both sides and revealing the actions and feelings of the men from Alabama who tried, in vain, to seize Little Round Top. Indeed, ranging from the lowest ranking private to the highest officers, this book explores the terrible experiences of war and their tragic effect. Following the regiment through the campaign enables readers to understand fully the soldiers' feelings towards the enemy, towards citizens of both North and South, and towards the commanders of the two armies. In addition, this book traces the development of the legend of Gettysburg, as veterans of the fight struggle to remember, grasp, and memorialize their part in the largest battle ever fought on the continent. With a new preface and updated maps and illustrations, *Stand Firm Ye Boys of Maine* offers a compelling account of one of the most crucial small engagements of the Civil War.

Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; -15th Anniversary ed. edition (October 29, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195382315

ISBN-13: 978-0195382310

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 0.7 x 5.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 42 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,024,589 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #83 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Regimental Histories](#) #255 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War > Campaigns & Battlefields > Gettysburg](#) #2767 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Military](#)

Customer Reviews

"An excellent book--moving and powerful, with a strong narrative line and interesting analysis based on exhaustive research."--James McPherson
"A well-researched and compelling story of the Mainers' fight on Little Round Top...Even those who do not consider themselves Civil War buffs will find the story of the 20th Maine at Gettysburg to be a fascinating tale...Highly recommended."

--Journal of America's Military Past
"A well-researched and compelling story...highly recommended."

-- Journal of America's Military Past

Thomas A. Desjardin was born and raised in Maine and did his doctoral work in American History at the University of Maine. He has worked as an interpreter, giving programs on the Gettysburg battlefield for the National Park Service. The author of *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* and *Through A Howling Wilderness: Benedict Arnold's March to Quebec, 1775*, he is working on a TV documentary on Joshua Chamberlain.

I have read a lot about the 20th Maine at Gettysburg and the exploits of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, their Colonel. I enjoyed "Killer Angels" and the movie "Gettysburg" based on that novel. I have also read the after action report filed by Chamberlain. This book is very well researched and fairly easy to read. Only about the first third is about the Little Round Top action while another third is devoted to what happened to the leading characters after the battle. The last third is mostly statistics, while if correct, represent a great deal of work to organize. For a person interested in this particular action at Gettysburg this book can be rewarding. However, it is fairly dry for anyone looking for dramatization of the action.

Tough to write a book with differing accounts of what happened way back when. "Stand Firm" does a fine job separating what makes sense with legend and fiction. It dissects why certain versions of the 20th Maine's Little Round Top battle are taken as gospel even though there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. I was surprised to learn how much "Killer Angels"/the movie "Gettysburg" was fictionalized; and "Stand Firm" author Desjardin makes it clear that "Killer Angels" did not pass itself off as being all fact-based. Similar to the Hollywood versions of the Alamo. "Stand Firm" did not dampen my enthusiasm for the Little Round Top/Gettysburg battle story, Joshua Chamberlain's life or the campaigns of the 20th Maine; in fact, I have even a better appreciation for them. I toured the Gettysburg battlefield, including Little Round Top once and it whetted my appetite to go back again with this fresh perspective of how it really was.

Interesting book, good subject. Some people, with a degree of justification, bemoan the attention given to the 20th Maine, but I'm not one of them. What I would like to see is that same attention given to other deserving regiments as well. This book has the advantage of being well-documented and, as far as I can tell, accurate. It has the disadvantage of being somewhat superficial in that the regiment is never put into any larger context. There are anecdotes galore, and of course there is a thorough reconstruction of the 20th Maine at Little Round Top. But the substance of the battle around them is lacking; to be fair, this is not supposed to be a book about the battle as a whole. In short, this is a good supplementary book if you have already read a thorough account of the battle (I recommend Coddington, personally), and it's good for bits of information about the 20th Maine, so it fulfills its purpose. Subjectively, I found it a rather dry account; interesting, informative, clearly written, but somehow lacking flavor.

This is the first account of the Battle of Little Round Top and the subsequent actions that I felt was objective and well documented. The emotional ties of the event that have often clouded so many descriptions seem to have been left behind. It is a well researched history and the narrative is well crafted.

The book isn't one that would catch your eye in a bookstore. It's barely 200 pages long and at first looks like any number of books one will find related to Gettysburg and the Civil War. The difference is while there are a lot of good historians out there who are good researchers, few of them are as talented at writing as Tom Desjardin. The 20th Maine is perhaps the most famous regiment that fought at Gettysburg and it's commander Lawrence Chamberlain is perhaps the most famous Union officer after Grant thanks in part to the book 'Killer Angels' and the film 'Gettysburg'. Unfortunately however there are a lot of myths surrounding both Chamberlain and the 20th Maine. This book cuts through the myths that the book and film have helped perpetuate without trying to tear down Chamberlain like some in recent years have tried to do. In the end the truth is just as facinating as the myths, if not more so.

After a visit to Gettysburg and the 20th Maine scene, I was impressed by how small the area was. Imagining the battle between the right and left markers was awesome. The book was clear in its explanation. Maps could have been better but an all around gripping tale. I kept waiting for the Maine boys to be shifted to cemetery ridge like in the movie, but in fact they went up Big Round Top. Such

is Hollywood.

Well written and enlightening. One of my ancestors is mentioned as being wounded at Little Round Top.

Another great read for the Gettysburg enthusiast out there. I had never read much on the 20th Maine except from short articles or an occasional mention in lectures. This completes the picture and helps you to know what the boys went through and how brave they were

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