BATTLEFIELD PILGRIMS AT GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK[1]

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Historic battlefields provoke a broad range of responses from visitors. This article reports on the reasons people give for visiting Gettysburg National Military Park and the perceptions and images they have of the park. The meanings that Gettysburg has for people are varied and in some cases highly affective. The research provides empirical support for the suggestion of other studies that sometimes battlefield visitors begin as tourists, but then are transformed into pilgrims. (Battlefield tourism, pilgrimage, historic sites)

Despite world history being riddled with events of war, few battlefields have been marked for remembrance, perhaps because the sites recall destruction, death, and sometimes feelings of disgrace, anger, or despair. Many battlefields, if stripped of casualties and the detritus of war, are physically unremarkable and need to be transformed from neutral terrains into culturally meaningful landscapes (Gold and Gold 2003; Kapralski 2001). The transformation is done by the placement of physical artifacts such as monuments, statues, and gelded war machines, as well as the use of verbal text: brochures, guidebooks, signs, plaques, and tour guides. All these shape and define the visitors' experience on ground that otherwise may seem unprepossessing.

The growing literature on battlefield tourism documents some of the history of restoration efforts in Europe, North America, and Australia (e.g., Diller and Scofidio 1994; Gold and Gold 2003; Linenthal 1991; Lloyd 1998; Ramsay 2001; Weeks 2003). There is general agreement that battlefield restoration, a subset of commemoration activities, began in the nineteenth century in association with the creation of national histories and patriotic fervor in young states such as America or the renewed states of Europe (Gillis 1994). Anderson's (1991) work has helped to show how the veneration of military death is linked to modern nationalistic impulses.

In the nineteenth century, battlefields and military cemeteries came to be seen as holy places, sanctified by the death of soldiers. These deaths were framed as sacrifices for the highly abstract notion of a nation or what Anderson (1991) describes as an "imagined community." In the United States, where there was a dearth of religious shrines, battlefields, military cemeteries, and monuments came to be regarded as sacred places. Linenthal (1991:4) argues that in the nineteenth century, a common religious-style rhetoric he calls the "patriotic canon" permeated the text of remembrance at American military sites with the oft-repeated themes of

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"war as holy crusade, bringing new life to the nation and warrior as culture hero and savior."

To the extent that battlefields are regarded as holy sites, visitors might think of themselves as pilgrims. This notion is apparent in Walter's (1993:72) study of a World War II battlefield in which he describes what he and others experienced, where "for a few moments [visitors] cease to be tourists and have connected with something very deep." The battlefield as shrine is also the central focus of a recent historical study of Gettysburg National Military Park, which has become "a great cultural icon" (Weeks 2003:6).

The representation of Gettysburg in brochures, books, tours, and the park Web site uses highly charged language such as "hallowed ground," "national shrine," and "place of pilgrimage." Such language encourages the visitors to see the battlefield as a sacred shrine commemorating the country's most difficult period of conflict. But how do people actually regard the site? Are reactions generally congruent with the evocative language of the public portrayal, or is there a wide range of responses to Gettysburg?

This basic problem, the focus of the article, is part of ongoing research on the appeal of history to Americans, the responses of visitors to heritage sites, and their preferences for different kinds of historical sites (e.g., Cameron and Gatewood 1994, 2000, 2003). A most interesting discovery is that a certain portion of visitors want to consume history in a deeper, affective, and personal way. They speak of attempts to go back in time and imagine what actors were feeling. We have labeled this impulse numen-seeking. Thus, extrapolating from previous research, we expected to find that Gettysburg would be a magnet for numen-seekers and that such people would be very satisfied with what the site could offer them. At the same time, given the very skillful way Gettysburg is presented, one might also expect that some visitors, whose initial reasons for visiting the site were more educational or recreational, might well be "converted" by the evocative power of the site.

This article describes the results of multimethod research conducted at Gettysburg National Military Park in the summer of 1999 (with a follow-up in 2002). The goal was to learn about people's perception of the site and their reasons for visiting. We expected many people to see Gettysburg as an educational experience for themselves and/or their children, but we also wondered if there were other perceptions and reactions that were affective, perhaps even sacred.

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF GETTYSBURG PARK

Gettysburg National Military Park is a 3,500-acre historic site administered by the National Park Service. Efforts to preserve the battlefield and create the national cemetery (Soldiers National Cemetery) began shortly after the decisive three-day battle in July 1863.[2] The cemetery was dedicated in November 1863 by President Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address. Battlefield preservation was undertaken by the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association (GBMA) beginning in 1864. The charter

of the association was to preserve the appearance of the battlefield as closely to 1863 as possible and to commemorate the heroic deeds, struggles, and triumphs of the soldiers (presumably Union) who fought there. The GBMA surveyed and mapped the area and purchased the land on which the battles took place. In 1895, it turned over its holdings, which included 522 acres and 320 state monuments, to the U.S. War Department. The War Department administered the battlefield until 1933, then transferred it to the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Today, the main portion of the site includes the preserved battlefield areas which are largely to the west and south of the town of Gettysburg. The other portion is the Eisenhower Farm, where President Eisenhower and his wife lived after retirement. The farm was later donated to the park. Throughout these areas are more than 1,300 state monuments and markers (Linenthal 1991:4) commemorating those who fought for the armies of the North and the South. There are also informational plaques and cannons at many locations. Roads built by the War Department in the early part of the twentieth century crisscross the battlefields. The fields and orchards are landscaped by the Park Service. Visitors can traverse the roads by car or tour bus, and can walk in the fields where the battles took place.

The orientation area for the park is the Visitor Center, which houses a bookstore, a museum of Civil War artifacts, and a room with a large floor map that interprets the Gettysburg campaign with a narrative and lights. Group and self-guided auto tours begin there. Adjacent to the Visitor Center and parking area is the Cyclorama Building, which contains a giant mural of the battle event called Pickett's Charge. This hub is woefully overtaxed by the large numbers of visitors (over a million and a half annually) who use it as a starting point. A new museum and visitor center at a cost of $95 million is being planned as a joint public-private venture of the Park Service and nonprofit Gettysburg National Battlefield Museum Foundation. There has been heated debate about the location of the new facility and the degree to which commercial interests will influence the final plan (Patterson 1996; Weeks 2003).

Close to the Visitor Center is Soldiers National Cemetery, the burial site of the Union soldiers of Gettysburg, as well as American soldiers from subsequent wars. The cemetery, which was a novel idea at the time, was designed by landscape architect William Saunders. Less than three months after the battle, the Union dead were removed from their shallow graves on the battlefield and reinterred in the cemetery over a period of about six months. About half of the visitors to the park make their way to the cemetery and the Gettysburg Address memorial.

The main program piece of Gettysburg is the battlefield tour. The self-guided auto tour may be aided by an audiotape describing the three-day battle. Visitors can also hire a licensed battlefield guide who will accompany them in their car with a narrative somewhat tailored to their personal interests. Many people take the two-hour bus tour (operated by a private business in the town) with a guide through the park. Re-enactment events are also staged on a regular basis. These recreate events of the battlefield, as well as harrowing scenes from the hospitals and nearby

town of Gettysburg. Park rangers conduct lengthy walking tours of portions of the battlefield, which are very popular with Civil War history buffs.

Visits to the battlefield began shortly after the end of the Civil War. Most of the visitors were veterans or relatives of deceased soldiers. Between 1870 and 1873, large numbers of Southern women came to Gettysburg to carry away the remains of three thousand Confederate soldiers (Patterson 1992). Huge numbers of veterans came for the 25th reunion in 1888 and 50th in 1913. Although many fewer were alive and able to come to the 75th and final reunion in 1938, it is estimated that 1,400 veterans and 500,000 visitors returned to the battlefield for a re-enactment and the dedication of the Eternal Light Peace Memorial (Linenthal 1991:96; Weeks 2003:134).

Linenthal (1991:94) characterizes the reunions as "rituals of reconciliation" in which Union veterans extended offers of friendship and forgiveness to the Southern veterans. In the 1938 re-enactment of Pickett's Charge, the men on each side embraced their opponents after the mock charge with roars of approval from the onlookers. While not everybody endorsed the fashionable sentiment of reconciliation, the mood of the country was to bridge the deep cleavage between the North and South and conveniently focus on the sacrifice and patriotism of the soldiers on both sides.

The commercial value of the battlefield was appreciated from the very beginning and has generated the long-standing tension between preservationists and entrepreneurs that continues to the present. After the war, battlefield guides, many with scanty knowledge of events, took the uninitiated on paid tours. According to Unrau (1991), the guides were eventually licensed in 1915 and required to take a knowledge test. Inns and eateries sprang up in the town to cater to the tourists. In the post-1950 period, commercial development of the town was seen as a threat to the historical integrity of the place. Patterson (1996) notes that in response to the threat of commercial sprawl, the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association was created to protect the battlefield and help with tourism.

Until a few years ago, the apotheosis of commercial interests was a 307-foot observation tower that opened in 1974 on private land. For the price of admission, visitors could gaze across the battle areas with patriotic music in the background, then descend to the gift shop below. The Battlefield Tower was a center of controversy for the next 25 years, a symbol of opportunistic commerce capitalizing on Gettysburg's historic interest. To the delight of historic preservationists, it was finally brought down on July 3, 2000, with explosives detonated by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

The park, nonetheless, remains a cash cow to the merchants of the town who operate restaurants, motels, for-profit museums, and gift shops. In an attempt to gauge the park's effect on the local economy, a comprehensive economic-impact study was commissioned by the local Chamber of Commerce in co-operation with the Park Service and Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, Inc. The data gathered on visitor spending, expenditures by the Park Service for salaries, goods, and

services, additional income sources (such as the bookstore, Battlefield Guides, Eisenhower Farm Tours, and crop income), and, finally, tax revenues (income, local, and state taxes) indicate that the total economic import of the park is $118.8 million per year (Becker 1995). Including a multiplier effect of 2.24 brings the total to $266.2 million.

Recent visitation to the park has never exceeded the peak year of 1963, in which over two million people came to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the battle. Currently, visitation ranges from 1.6 to 1.8 million people. Heaviest visitation is from April to October, July being generally the peak month (Monthly Travel Report 1998-2002). The Park Service keeps records of attendance based on a scanner in the doors of the Visitor Center, but adjusts these figures to reflect that a certain proportion of visitors travel through the park without stopping at the center (Brion Fitzgerald and Clyde Bell, pers. comm.).

Visitor studies (e.g., Economics Research Associates 1994; Patterson and Madison 1995) have ascertained that while a large portion of Gettysburg visitors comes from Pennsylvania and nearby states, a sizable percentage comes from California and even from Europe, Canada, and Australia. People typically come with family members in parties that range from two to four people. Gettysburg is also a favorite group destination for members of voluntary associations such as Boy Scout troops or Friends of National Parks at Gettysburg, Inc. The park is not for what the museum crowd call "streakers," those who fly through exhibits; the average stay is eight hours and only 18 per cent spend less than four hours. One study found that average visitor expenditures in the Gettysburg area were $263 per visitor group and $68 per person, with the largest proportion (38 per cent) being spent on lodging (Patterson and Madison 1995).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Ethnographic research at Gettysburg in the summer of 1999 included participant observation and a questionnaire survey. We returned in August 2002 for some additional work. Participant observation included trying to see the park as visitors do by taking ranger battlefield tours, doing the self-guided auto tour, and visiting the museum and tourist venues in the town. We also interviewed park rangers, administrators, licensed guides, and visitors. Much additional archival information was secured from the park's library and office of visitor records. The Park Service gave permission to distribute the questionnaires for the survey, but restricted us to the parking lot area between the Visitor Center and the Cyclorama Building. Over three days in July, we distributed 400 forms and asked people to mail the postage-paid surveys back later. We affixed a crisp one-dollar bill to the cover letter as a token compensation. The response (63 per cent, 253 returns) included a few who returned the dollar with the instruction to use the money for research expenses.[3]

The survey form was a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions concerning people's perceptions of Gettysburg and their general interests in and

reactions to historic sites and museums. Visitors' impressions of Gettysburg were probed in two ways: first, respondents were asked to describe in their own words what Gettysburg means to them, and then rate how well a list of adjectives describes the park. Although open-ended questions in surveys are time consuming to analyze, they yield rich information. Some people answered with detailed remarks that later were categorized and tabulated.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Perhaps as a function of the time of the year conducive to travel, the park's visitors were from across the United States, with a few from abroad. About a third were from Pennsylvania and nearby Ohio and Maryland, and about a quarter were from southern states such as Virginia, Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia. The sample's division by residence (Table 1) is quite similar to what other visitor studies of Gettysburg have found.

Fifty-six per cent were day-trippers, while the rest said they were at the park for two or more days. Forty-five per cent said this was their first visit to the park. The mean number of returns for the 55 per cent who had been to the park previously was almost five visits.

Similar to an earlier finding (Economic Research Associates 1994), the sample was well educated: 68 per cent held a baccalaureate or advanced college degree. They were also fairly affluent: 47 per cent reported household incomes of over $75,000 and 27 per cent reported household incomes of over $100,000. The sample was slightly skewed toward men (52 per cent). People in their forties and fifties made up more than half of the sample (55 per cent), people in their twenties and thirties were second most frequent (28 per cent), followed by people sixty and over (13 per cent), and just a few respondents under twenty (3 per cent).

REASONS FOR VISITING GETTYSBURG

Asked to say in their own words why they came to the park, respondents gave numerous reasons. Their responses were grouped into eight categories. The most common reason given was a casual interest in history (52.6 per cent). Fifteen per cent expressed a more serious interest in history, the Civil War, or battlefields. For some, the park is a convenient stopping place while driving through the region, although it appears from their remarks that a predisposition for historic sites is also necessary. For others, Gettysburg is a good destination for a family outing or group trip. With few exceptions, the responses to this question conveyed little in the way of affect or intensity (see Table 2).

Table 1: Home Residence of Respondents to the Gettysburg Visitor Survey

Northern States		Southern States		Western States		Foreign Countries	
Pennsylvania	48	Virginia	16	California	12	Australia	2
Ohio	20	North Carolina	14	Arizona	3	England	1
Maryland	19	Florida	13	Colorado	3	Netherlands	1
New York	14	Georgia	5	Oregon	2	Slovakia	1
New Jersey	11	South Carolina	4	Utah	2		
Michigan	10	Texas	4	Washington	2		
Massachusetts	7	Alabama	2	New Mexico	1		
Illinois	6	Tennessee	2				
Minnesota	5						
Connecticut	4						
Iowa	4						
Indiana	3						
West Virginia	3						
Wisconsin	3						
Kansas	2						
Rhode Island	2						
Delaware	1						
District of Columbia	1						

Table 2: Reasons for Visiting Gettysburg

Question: What prompted you to visit Gettysburg Park?
(253 verbatim responses, coded into eight broad categories)

Serious historical interest	38	15.0%
Casual historical interest	133	52.6%
Convenient stop/en route	34	13.4%
Planned group destination	25	9.9%
Return visit	9	3.6%
Family memories	5	2.0%
Entertaining outing	4	1.6%
Other	5	2.0%

IMAGES AND MEANINGS OF THE PARK

Quantitative Data

The survey asked people to indicate how well seventeen adjectives describe Gettysburg Park (see Figure 1). There are high mean scores for the following descriptors: historic, interesting, meaningful, emotional, enriching, and authentic. At the same time, respondents strongly disagree that Gettysburg is boring, run down, or high pressured. Indeed, the overall pattern of means indicates that the park is seen in very positive terms. One might anticipate high mean scores on the adjectives historic and interesting; however, it is noteworthy that there are also fairly high scores on the affective adjectives (meaningful, emotional, enriching). This suggests that people see Gettysburg as more than an informational site.

Also of interest is that the adjectives touristy, crowded, and commercialized (characteristics that might detract from the historic focus of the park) do not register strongly with the respondents. Apparently, visitors do not pay much attention to the summer crowds, the numerous tourist shops, and general commercial development of the site; at least, these are not salient characteristics as visitors contemplate the overall meaning of the park.

Consensus analysis (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986) of these ratings shows a high degree of interindividual agreement concerning these adjective ratings. In particular, the ratio of the first factor's eigenvalue to the second is 10.446, and the average competence score for individuals (.806) is also quite high.

While each adjective's rating is interpretable in itself, the seventeen ratings depicted above are not necessarily independent of one another. In general, the ratings for one adjective are correlated to some extent with the ratings for other adjectives. These interrelations among the set of adjectives can be analyzed to determine the number of independent evaluations visitors might be making, and the results would indicate the dimensionality of visitors' impressions. Toward this end, we analyzed the interrelations among the seventeen adjectives in two ways: nonmetric multidimensional scaling and principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation.

The MDS plot represents an acceptable two-dimensional solution (stress = .10). As Figure 2 shows, eleven "positive" adjectives form one cluster, and six "negative" adjectives form another cluster. Since adjectives with higher correlations are placed closer together in the diagram, the best overall interpretation would appear to be that visitors evaluate positive and negative characteristics of the site separately.

Principal-component factor analysis revealed a more interesting structure in visitor impressions. In the initial extraction of orthogonal factors, five factors had eigenvalues greater than one. A Scree plot of the eigenvalues, however, revealed a sharp "elbow" at three factors. For this reason, the subsequent analysis was limited to three factors, which were then brought into sharper relief via varimax rotation. The rotated factor loadings for all seventeen items are shown in Table 3.

Figure 1. Average Ratings for Seventeen Adjectives

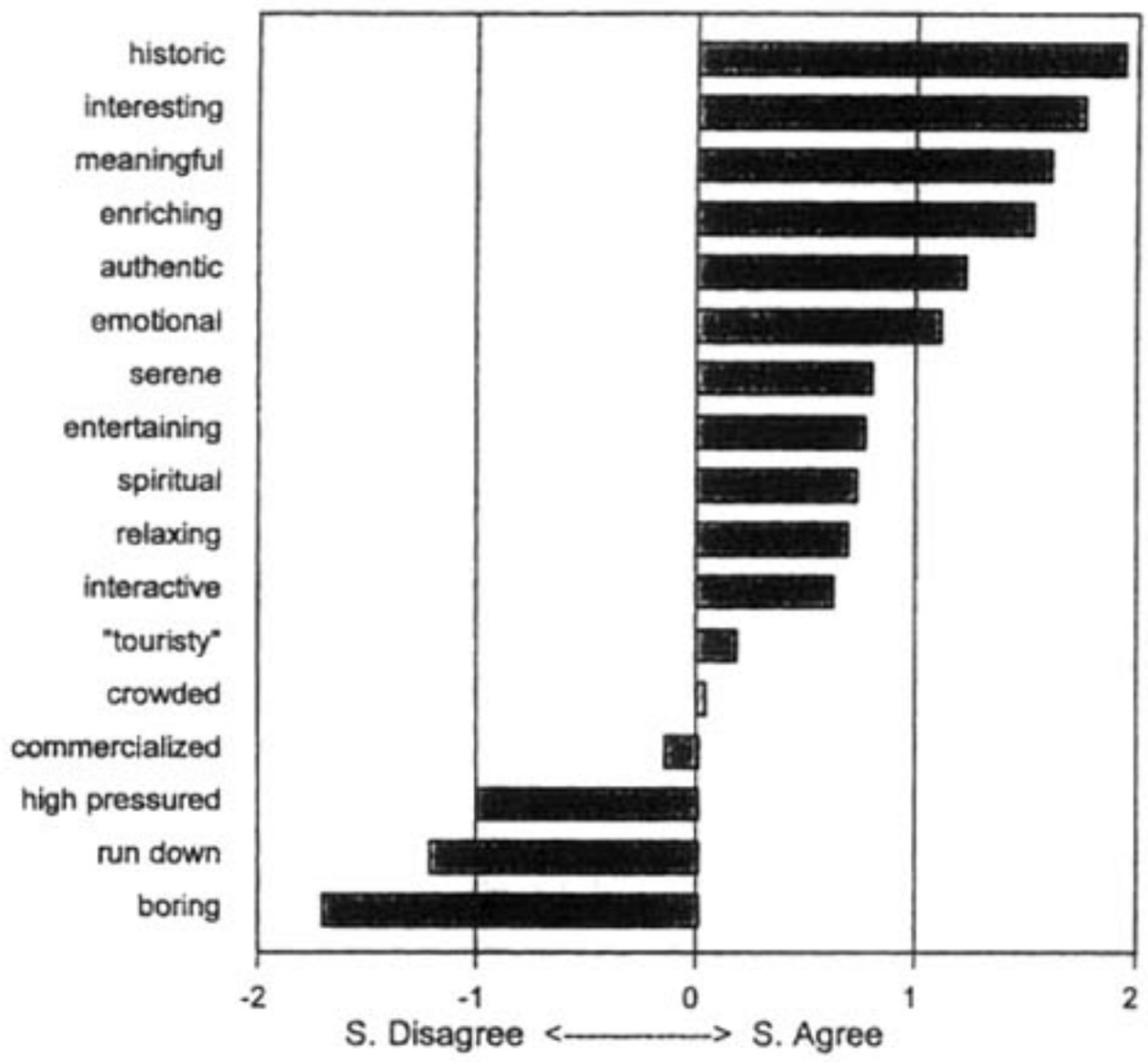

Figure 2. Multi-Dimensional Scaling of Correlations among Adjectives

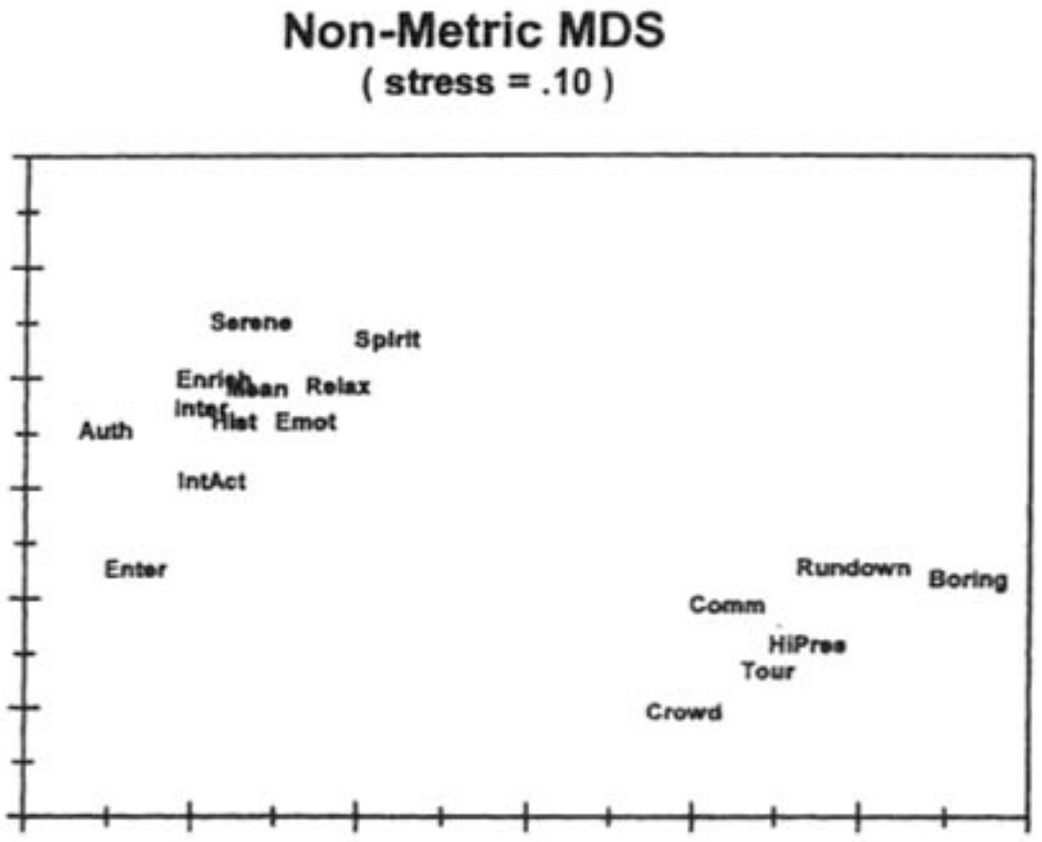

Table 3: Principal-Components Factor Loadings after Varimax Rotation

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Meaningfulness			
Meaningful	.757	-.013	.237
Spiritual	.698	-.022	-.151
Emotional	.694	-.002	.192
Enriching	.638	-.148	.351
Relaxing	.564	-.071	-.055
Interesting	.533	.000	.471
Serene	.511	-.433	-.012
Historic	.388	-.041	.203
Glitzy-Crassness			
Commercialized	.106	.734	-.139
Touristy	-.003	.714	-.176
Crowded	-.103	.636	.094
High pressured	-.168	.601	-.033
Fun			
Entertaining	-.048	-.033	.640
Boring	-.368	.081	-.633
Interactive	.243	.048	526
Run down	.062	.311	-.466
Authentic	.136	-.441	.454
Eigenvalue	4.207	2.087	1.345
Variance accounted for	24.7%	12.3%	7.9%

One interprets an underlying factor by examining the individual items whose factor loadings are highest (absolute value) for that factor. Based on the individual adjectives that load most strongly onto the three factors, it appears that visitor impressions of Gettysburg are structured by three dimensions: what might be called "meaningfulness," "glitzy-crassness," and "fun." And it should be stressed that visitors' ratings on one of these dimensions are independent of their evaluations on another.

Comparing return visitors' perceptions of the park with first-time visitors' perceptions provides an indication of the site's special attractiveness. This sort of comparison complements the direct, open-ended question about what prompted respondents to visit Gettysburg, but does not presume that people can clearly articulate their reasons. The ways in which the two groups of visitors differ indicates what kinds of people are more likely to return to the site. More generally, the specific ways in which return visitors regard the site differently from first-time visitors suggest the dimensions of meaning that prompt people to return.

To do this comparison, the principal-component factor analysis was used to generate factor scores for each survey respondent. This procedure uses each item's factor loadings as a weighting mechanism to reduce each person's seventeen adjective ratings to three composite scores. Then the two groups of respondents were compared in terms of their three factor scores via analysis of variance.

The results show no significant difference between return and first-time visitors with respect to the glitzy-crassness or fun dimensions. On average, however, return visitors find Gettysburg significantly more meaningful than do first-time visitors to the site ($p = .000$, $F = 12.614$, $df = 1/237$). Thus, return visitation is correlated with the extent to which individuals regard Gettysburg as a meaningful site (meaningful, emotional, spiritual, enriching, interesting, relaxing, serene, and historic). The more visitors perceive Gettysburg as a meaningful site, the more likely they are to return. By contrast, visitors' evaluations of Gettysburg in terms of glitzy-crassness and fun have no bearing on whether or not they return.

Qualitative Data

Besides the adjective descriptors, which make possible various numeric analyses, the survey also asked an open-ended question, "What is the most meaningful aspect of Gettysburg to *you?*" The replies to this question were rich, producing some of the most fruitful data for the question about how people respond to the park. The 246 responses were collapsed into four general categories.[4] These are: 1) historical significance, in which the answers range from a simple mention of "the history" to some attempt to elaborate what that significance is; 2) drama of the battle or the battlefield; 3) mention of specific physical or programmatic features of the site; and 4) personal connection, in which the answers range across a mention of kinship with a soldier, a strong sense of place, conjuring or imagining the event, and that Gettysburg is a sacred place (see Table 4).

Table 4: Most Meaningful Aspect of Gettysburg

Question: What is the most meaningful aspect of Gettysburg to you?
(246 verbatim responses, coded into four broad categories)

Historic significance	89	36.2%
Drama of battle/battlefield	68	27.6%
Specific features of site	41	16.7
Personal connection	48	19.5%

As was the case for why people come to the park, the battle's historical significance is cited as most meaningful for over a third of the sample. A few people made only a simple reference to history; many more elaborate on why the battle was significant either for the course of the war or the future of the country.

Slightly over a quarter of the sample focused on some aspect of the battle, either the stupidity or tragedy of the event or the great courage and sacrifice of those who fought. A few people clearly enjoy trying to visualize the battle or mentally reviewing the strategies. Some comments indicate that the battlefield provokes strong emotional reactions.

Almost 17 per cent of the respondents mentioned specific features at the park as most meaningful. Some of these were physical features such as the monuments, gravestones, electric map, or specific locales on the battlefield. Others recalled programmatic features, such as the narratives provided by guides. For a few people, the authentic presentation of the battlefield is important; they respond very positively to the faithful restoration done by the park.

Almost a fifth of the respondents responded in a very personal way to the site. In some cases, that translated as a kind of awe that one could be standing on the very spot where the two sides fought so fiercely. Being in the same place as the soldiers and seeing the landscape also brought old history lessons to life or allowed deep empathy and leaps of imagination. Others responded with great reverence for the places where men died and expressed honor for the great sacrifice. This group often used religious language to express their feelings.

GETTYSBURG AS CLASSROOM

As documented elsewhere (Alderson and Low 1996; Falk and Dierking 1992; Lowenthal 1985; Prentice 1993), knowledge of history among the American (and European) public is sketchy and inexact. Undaunted, however, Americans avow a great interest in history and manifest this in high rates of visitation to historic sites

and museums (Dickinson 1996; Jakle 1985; Kammen 1991; Mooney-Melville 1991). Civil War sites are especially popular. According to Eicher (1998:xiii), interest in Civil War history is even higher today than it was during the Centennial years of the 1960s. This rise in popular interest is due in part to Michael Shaara's popular book, *The Killer Angels*, published in 1974, two television miniseries (*North and South* in 1986; *The Civil War* in 1990), and several successful commercial films on the topic (*Glory* in 1989; *Gettysburg,* based on Shaara's book, in 1993; and *Gods and Generals* in 2003). Weeks (2003:175-76) provides a useful discussion of the influence of the books and films on the public's historical imagination.

The goal of learning something during an excursion is salient to many people who visit historic sites, and visitors to Gettysburg National Military Park are no exception. Based on their survey results, Patterson and Madison (1995) report that the most frequently given reason for visiting the park is the desire to learn about history and culture. Our survey also shows this with the finding that almost 68 per cent of the sample indicated that their interest in history, whether casual or serious, prompts them to visit.

It is not surprising that Gettysburg attracts people who are interested in history and want to learn more. For some, however, the park is a place they visit many times. Our survey shows that the 15 per cent who indicated a serious interest in history make significantly more return visits than those with a casual interest. They also spend more days at the site. Park personnel with whom we talked estimate those in the "serious" camp (park personnel's category) comprise between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of all visitors and are those who sign up for the ranger tours of the battlefield.

There are several ways that people get involved in deeper study or involvement with the site. They can join the Volunteers in the Park program run by the Park Service, although Gettysburg has fewer positions than the other national parks. Some people become licenced battlefield guides for the Park Service, a position that requires a period of intense study and rigorous examination. One man we interviewed said the money he earned as a guide helped support the "Gettysburg habit" that began in his youth.

A great number of people indulge their interest by joining the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, Inc., a nonprofit association created in 1989 that attracts both casual and serious students of Civil War history. Membership is currently about 21,000 and growing. The organization has been successful in actively involving new members in restoration projects and weekend getaways that feature fun and educational events such as talks and seminars. Members get a regular newsletter that announces upcoming events, seminars, and projects (Weeks 2003:179). The association has been particularly effective at tackling restoration projects and raising money; for example, burying overhead utility lines in the vicinity of Pickett's Charge field (Weeks 2003:179-89).

Gettysburg has many enthusiasts who enjoy the sport of re-enactment. Although some re-enactments portray battle events, which are popular during anniversaries,

there are more sedate portrayals such as scenes of the wounded being attended by doctors and nurses. Some buffs border on the fanatical. Horwitz (1998) provides a fascinating account of Civil War re-enactors who form two folk categories: the FARBS (a rough acronym for "far be it from authentic"), who take some license with history, and the "hard cores," who dedicate themselves to an absolutely authentic portrayal of soldier life on their weekend drills. Hard cores wear woolen uniforms (some handmade), eat a spare diet that might include hard tack, use tin implements (never plastic), sleep together in "spoon" pattern (ventral-dorsal position) wrapped only in thin blankets, and even diet to make their bodies look as rail thin as the Confederate soldiers at the end of the war. One of these re-enactors is famous for his ability to "bloat"; that is, make his body look like a decaying corpse on the battlefield.

This period of military history is thick in the sense that so many memorable events transpired during the three-day battle at Gettysburg, not to mention the course of the four-year Civil War. The documentation of these events runs to more than 50,000 books (Eicher 1996). Anderson (1991:201) refers to the output as a "vast pedagogical industry." Titles range across a myriad of topics and genres, from war journals, letters, and memoirs to biographies of luminaries and ordinaries. Thus, for visitors deciding to learn about Gettysburg's history, there is much to feast upon.

Some of the visitors interviewed said they returned to the park regularly. One woman said, "The more you learn, the more you want to learn." Although the repeat visitors describe themselves as historically knowledgeable, they say they always find something new to discover. They generally stay for several days, sometimes a week, and plan their activities for each day. One American citizen who lives abroad visits the park every time he comes to the United States. On a typical visit, he begins at the Visitor Center to find out what tours and re-enactments are scheduled.

While Gettysburg is a highly effective classroom, our research suggests that it provides much more than a neutral history lesson. Many people are profoundly aware of and disturbed by the great carnage of the July campaign, and they respond to the site with emotion. There is great empathy and sadness for the soldiers' suffering, gratitude for the sacrifice, and awareness that the outcome of the conflict at Gettysburg altered the course of the country's history. One Southerner standing at the North Carolina monument reflected that "the Good Lord or Providence had the wisdom to foresee that the nation would have to be united for the wars and conflicts to come."

A few people who participated in ethnographic interviews were asked to think about Gettysburg within a triangular grid where the points would represent something akin to a school, church, and amusement park. They all placed the park between church and school. The educational aspect of the park was expected. For some, however, Gettysburg is a spiritual place where one can be quiet and contemplative, a place to which they feel compelled to return. They talk of feeling "drawn back" and "pulled back." Visiting Gettysburg is "coming home," pulling them "like a magnet." One elderly woman, a self-described history buff, said that for her

Gettysburg is a place of pilgrimage, and the most moving of the many Civil War sites she has visited with her husband.

The not-so-hidden agenda of most commemoration sites, whether they are physical memorials such as those found in Washington, D.C., or battlefields such as Gettysburg, is to serve as components of a patriotic landscape. As such, they exist not simply to educate the citizenry, but to instill and sustain nationalistic impulses among the viewers. What is often missed by the "consumers" of such sites is that the message of the text is selective, biased, and often deliberately simplistic. This point is also made by Savage (1994), who, commenting on the political side of memorializing, describes how statues were financed and commissioned just after the Civil War days, as well as what subjects were avoided; for example, memorials to African-American soldiers. Similarly, reflecting on national memory-making in the United States, Gill (1994) notes that certain things are often forgotten in the creation of new histories, and historians are enlisted to rewrite the past in ways that abet the present.

In his history of memorializing the Gettysburg battle, Linenthal (1991:90) argues that those involved in commemoration activities, from the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association to the returning veterans, sought to "freeze the meaning of Gettysburg in a simple and enduring patriotic orthodoxy, developed in the 1880s as Americans sought to recover the epic excitement of the Civil War and forget its horror." The battle came to be recast not as a place of fratricidal struggle or conflict over the racist imperative of slavery, but as a battle over heartfelt principles by two determined sides, both of which showed great heroism and bravery.

There are very few remarks in our data to suggest Gettysburg is regarded as a problematic site, in the sense of provoking personal conflicts or dilemmas about the war or slavery. Only a few people mentioned slavery as a central issue of the war and no one commented on the continuing problem of race. While there is some hand-wringing about stupid tactics and senseless killing, there is scarcely any indication of lingering anger, bitterness, or outrage about the "Northern war of aggression," as it is sometimes called in the South, or, from a Northern point of view, the willingness of the Confederates to breach the Union. Nor does there seem to be any cold-eyed appreciation that perhaps, as Anderson (1991:201) suggests, the war was not between "brothers," but between two sovereign nation-states, as they briefly were. There are, however, examples of a gloss of the war, in the sense of seeing the outcome in a positive light, without value judgments about either side. This kind of glossing is evident in statements such as, "Both sides believed so strongly that their side was the only one that was right, when freedom was the ultimate goal of both," and "The bravery [was] on both sides." The references to the slavery issue make no negative attributions of the South: "[Gettysburg] symbolizes our country's commitment to equality and freedom, that we would start a Civil War over the freedom of others." If the sample is fairly representative of wider public opinion, people's comments about the meaning of the battle suggest that all the patriotic rhetoric about Gettysburg and the war has been rather successful in shaping visitors' responses to the site.

GETTYSBURG AS A NUMINOUS SITE

Elsewhere (Cameron and Gatewood 2000, 2003), we have explored the notion of numen and numen-seeking in the context of visits to historic sites and museums. The numen idea is best known in the field of religious studies, especially in the work of Eliade (1967) and Otto (1946 [1928]). Strictly speaking, numen, in its Latin etymology, means a nod or beckoning from the gods. Otto (1946) uses it to describe a religious emotion or experience akin to rapture awakened in the presence of something holy. Oubré (1997), an anthropologist, sees numen as a transcendental quality of the mind. We have suggested that nonreligious contexts or objects can also stir such a response in people and that some people seek numinous experiences in their visits to historical sites and museums. Some of those surveyed in the studies cited above said that when visiting a historic site, they enjoyed the experience of transcending the present and leaping back into the past, imagining the lives, feelings, and hardships of people in earlier times. People used terms such as "get a feel for," "connect with," and "imagine." Not all people turned out to be numen-seekers, but about 27 per cent of the sample qualified as true numen-seeker types (see Cameron and Gatewood 2000).

There is evidence from another source that numinous experiences can be achieved in unlikely circumstances. For example, Kurin (1997) documents the touring two-year exhibit, *America's Smithsonian,* in which 300 of the nation's "treasures" were presented to the public in cavernous convention halls in twelve cities across the country. There frequently were strong emotional reactions to items such as Lincoln's hat, Dorothy's ruby slippers from the film, *The Wizard of Oz*, and famous paintings of famous people such as George Washington. In some instances, people's comments (such as, "To see the things that Abe Lincoln wrote . . . it goes beyond words" [Kurin 1997:38]) indicate they were awestruck by the power of the exhibit; in others, their responses were signaled by unusual behaviors such as weeping in front of cases. Kurin (1997:38) argues that the exhibition demonstrates "the power of the experience that allows visitors to commune with objects."

We have refined the numen concept to include three dimensions: 1) deep engagement or transcendence, which can involve such concentration that the individual loses a sense of time passing or may have a flow experience of the kind suggested by Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988); 2) empathy, a strongly affective experience in which the individual tries to conjure the thoughts, feelings, and experiences, including hardships and suffering, of those who lived at an earlier time; and 3) awe or reverence, an experience of being in the presence of something holy or spiritual communion with something or someone. To measure these conceptual dimensions, we developed a battery of questions dealing with a person's interests in, reactions to, and enjoyment of historical sites.[5]

To date, the research has given more emphasis to the nature of the numen impulse than to that which stimulates or nurtures it. However, following this line of inquiry, several questions emerge: What stimulates the numinous experience? Are

there some contexts or even kinds of things that lead to people's engagement, empathy, or the sense of communion with something sacred? How is engagement enhanced or diminished by the physical environment?

In the case of historical sites, it is reasonable to assume that those depicting human endurance, suffering, and sacrifice are very likely to induce numinous affect. Examples of such places might include museums that interpret genocide and internment, such as the Jewish Holocaust, genocide in Cambodia, and Japanese-American internment camps during World War II (Fujitani 1997; Ledgerwood 1997); slavery in the New World (Handler and Gable 1997); and the Enola Gay and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Zolberg 1996). Sites associated with extraordinary historical figures can also stir strong reactions. For example, Bruner (1994), writing about the site at New Salem, Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln spent his formative years, describes in some detail the heartfelt responses of visitors to what many regard as a "national shrine."

Because they concern death, battlefields and war cemeteries are particularly good candidates for the label of numinous site. Such places have received increased attention in recent years in different world regions and for different wars. Lloyd (1998) and Walter (1993) outline the case for European battlefields and cemeteries which became popular tourist destinations beginning in the 1920s. Travel companies in Britain such as Thomas Cook's Tours saw a lucrative market in package tours to European battlefields both in the interwar period and after World War II (Brendon 1991). They identified their primary market as those with a direct personal tie to the wars (veterans and relatives of deceased soldiers), although they also recognized that some visitors might want go to battlefields out of historical interest. For this reason, the companies labeled the trips as both tours and pilgrimages. These visits apparently had great emotional effect, although they could have different motives (Walter 1993:71-81; Lloyd 1998: ch. 4). For veterans, visits to honor and remember those who died helped to assuage their feelings of guilt. Widows and children of deceased soldiers who had never been able to hold a funeral for their loved ones were able to find some measure of closure.

Walter (1993:70) asks whether the pilgrimage aspect of battlefield tours will cease when the last of the veterans and widows and children of the war dead themselves die. He suggests, though with some uncertainty, that battlefield pilgrimage may be a temporary phenomenon of the twentieth century that has arisen because of the now-unusual custom of burying soldiers who fought on foreign soil in the counties where they died. Quoting a Civil War historian, R. W. Sellars, he notes that, by comparison to the European battlefields, the emotional intensity of a Civil War site like Gettysburg has diminished over time. As the argument goes, today, there are more tourists and fewer pilgrims, and the trend is supposed to continue.

Our findings do not support either the idea that time, now almost 150 years, has blunted the emotional power of the battlefields or cemetery at Gettysburg, or that one need have a direct personal tie with those who died in the three days of battle to be affected. Weeks (2003:4) goes a step further, suggesting that, if anything, "the power

appears to grow instead of diminish as the battle recedes in time." It seems to us that Gettysburg continues to be a multivalent domain, complex and resonant to the many people who visit it. As support of this, consider the high mean ratings (Figure 1) for the adjectives, meaningful, enriching, authentic, and emotional, as well as for the expected ones, historic and interesting.

Gettysburg appears to be highly numinous to many visitors. There is evidence for this in some answers to the open-ended meaningful question, especially in the remarks coded as "personal connection." Walking the battlefield allows some people to transcend the present and imagine scenes from the battle period. There are many highly empathic comments about what the battlefield might have looked and felt like, as well as about the soldiers' suffering and death. There are also clear statements of reverence, awe, and respect for the place sacralized by the soldier-martyrs.

It is reasonable to see Gettysburg as a place of pilgrimage, if pilgrimage be a journey for the purpose of paying homage, personal renewal, connecting with spiritual ideas, contemplation, or prayer. Indeed, a few people in our interviews and in the surveys spontaneously use the language of pilgrimage: "honoring the soldiers"; "going on a pilgrimage"; "remember, honor, and walk in the footsteps"; "being drawn to the men who sacrificed their lives." One man unabashedly said, "The place is sacred to me."

One woman we met is a particularly good example of the Gettysburg pilgrim. A soon-to-retire schoolteacher, she lives about four hours' drive from the town of Gettysburg and plans to retire there. A member of the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg, Inc., she has made friendships in the association. She makes five or six trips a year from her home for events such as special seminars organized by the Friends and generally stays for several days. She especially likes the ranger-guided walking tours because of the detailed stories they tell. She avows that the park is "sacred ground" to her and that the ground resonates with the energy of the soldiers who died there. Her final pronouncement on the power of Gettysburg was her unforgettable statement, "I pray better at Gettysburg than I do anywhere else."

What is Gettysburg's power? What aspects of the place or the historical narrative resonate most strongly with visitors? What is it about the site that transforms some people into pilgrims?

Historical sites are unlike museums in that the narrative intimately involves a physical area upon which past events transpired. If the site is lacking in built structures, then something must be added to give it a meaningful contour. The addition of markers, monuments, statues, and other orienting devices such as maps or guides transforms "an otherwise undifferentiated terrain" into an "ideologically encoded landscape" (Diller and Scofidio 1994:47). Maps, audiotapes, and markers, in particular, help to mediate people's movements, "enjoining them to pause at *this* point, gaze in *that* direction, and reflect in particular ways" on events (Gold and Gold 2003:111). The things that differentiate the physical landscape into zones and points of interest are themselves the focus of visitors' attention. Kapralski (2001:35-36) refers to marked places as chronotypes. A chronotype is a "real, but symbol-

laden and often mythologized place in which events important for the construction of a group's identity either actually happened . . . or are symbolically represented by—for example—monuments. . . ."

One of the most obvious points is that the Battle of Gettysburg has been well preserved as a special place. Preservation efforts began immediately after the battle, continued in the ensuing decades, and occur with great regularity even today. For the most part, the battlefield areas are as they were during the conflict and today are freely accessible by car, bicycle, and foot. The expansive physical topography of fields, hills, woods, and rock-filled valleys is picturesque, part of the rolling hills of Pennsylvania scenery. Although it is pretty, the topography on its own would hardly draw visitors and probably would not even be marked as scenic on a standard road map. However, it has been heavily encoded with cultural meaning. Many places have evocative names such as Little Round Top, Cemetery Hill, Seminary Ridge, the Wheatfield, Devil's Den, and the Highwater Mark, some of which supposedly were coined by soldiers during the battles. The natural space is punctuated by hundreds of monuments and statues. The monuments vary greatly in size and style: the Pennsylvania monument is a massive presence in the landscape, while others are modest or humble. Dozens of cannons are situated throughout the battlefield, bearing silent testimony to the carnage they once wreaked.

The stopping points are clearly marked on the driving route through the park. It is at these monuments, statues, and markers that clusters of visitors converge, often the first thing they walk to upon at arriving at a site. Typically, they read the text at marked stops and then do any of a common routine of activities: take photographs, gaze at some length at the bigger vista, converse with companions and/or instruct children about the site, and, finally, clamber back into their cars or tour buses to move to the next annotated place.

Some respondents in the survey felt a strong resonance with the battlefield as a physical landscape. Actually seeing the landscape allows for a deeper appreciation of what people have read in books. Place also adds a strong dimension of realism that is illustrated in the comment, "This place is really real!" For many, however, being on the actual ground where soldiers assembled, where sharpshooters took aim, where men fell with wounds, is a profoundly moving experience. Standing or walking on the ground of the battlefield often provokes a transcendental reaction and a sense of awe that, on this very spot in the past, soldiers died for their beliefs and principles. One woman expressed the feeling this way: "Regardless of where you walk on the battlefield, I am very aware that I may be standing on the ground where men have spilled their blood or even died. The enormity of that thought can be overwhelming."

Place unexpectedly conjures history in a way visitors may not have experienced before. People at Little Round Top spoke of how being there helped them see and feel as the soldiers did. Some people react strongly to Soldiers National Cemetery, which not only contains thousands of graves, but also a simple memorial to Lincoln. People behave quietly and contemplatively there as they weave their way through the gardens of stone. One woman in the survey described her experience this way:

"Walking through the National Cemetery was a very surprisingly humbling and emotional time as we read the grave stones."

The second notable thing about Gettysburg is that there is a distinctive script. It exists as oral and written text in the park's written material, in the narratives provided by tour guides and rangers, in the recorded speeches, and in countless publications of the battle. The stories are of endurance and courage exhibited by the rank-and-file soldiers. These are the tales of the forced marches of 50 miles a day to the battlefield, the exhausted companies that lacked supplies but stayed to fight, the men who held field positions in the blazing July heat in woolen uniforms and without water. Many people with whom we talked said that what they like best in their study of Gettysburg history is the personal stories of the soldiers, some of which are actually told by the principals themselves in the form of published letters home and diaries in the field. One man said he is not compelled by "the glory" (the high-profile generals, tactics, or fire power), but by the personal side of war—the responses of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. He said that for him, the small stories provide a model for the conduct of his own life.

There is also the story of the "ultimate sacrifice" by young men in the prime of life, and the story of the generals who agonized over sending their troops to fight against overwhelming odds. In this vein, there is special empathy for the soldiers who participated in Pickett's Charge (actually a charge by three divisions under Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble), a perilous assault by 12,000 Confederates across open fields to break the well-fortified Union position on Cemetery Ridge. Twelve thousand advanced across those fields, and one hour later, 5,600 of them had become casualties. There are many references to sacrifice, bravery, and valor in the survey commentary with words such as "tremendous sacrifice," "unyielding valor," and "courage." Sometimes, people's comments are tinged with anger at the futility of the charge, as in one comment on "[t]he lack of imagination and stupidity in ordering a frontal assault against well positioned Union forces."

The Gettysburg script was potently condensed in the deceptively short and simple speech given by President Lincoln at the commemoration ceremony of Soldiers National Cemetery only four months after the conflict. The genius of the three-minute-long Gettysburg Address is that it does not laud one side and vilify the other, but rather honors the men who died in a principled fight which, in the final analysis, was a great test of the nation that "was conceived in liberty." The speech gives a noble form to the battle and frames the soldiers' suffering and death as selfless sacrifice. Most important, using the metaphor of rebirth, it affirms that the dead have given new life to the principles of a democratic nation. Lincoln's words cast the dead as heroes and martyrs, a message that rings true to many. One woman said, "We live in a country of artificial values and have no heroes. . . . Here is a place of true human effort and courage. . . ." An obviously moved international visitor said, "American people gave up so much blood in this war to uphold the cause of democracy. . . . Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg is . . . a masterpiece. As a Bangladeshi, it has much appeal to me as we also fought a cause."

One wonders if Lincoln himself appreciated that his short speech was "a masterpiece." From a dispassionate point of view, it can be seen as one of the earliest efforts of civic reconciliation and part of the movement to reframe the meaning of the Civil War. It may be one of the best pieces of the patriotic canon. Generations of Americans have been raised on its message of self-sacrifice for noble causes.

While it may be true that citizens of modern states are highly susceptible to sentimentalized and simplified renditions of history, this diagnosis misses an interesting point. As Reader (1993:17-19) observes, "The tombs and relics of martyrs, cultural heroes and saints, and the graves of and memorials to those killed in battles and wars, have always formed a natural magnet for pilgrims. . . ." The question is why people are drawn to evocative sites such as battlefields.

We suggest that people are attracted to sites where death abounds because such places encourage the contemplation of ultimate concerns; in particular, the meaning of life and death. A problem for us, in the secular West, is that our eschatology is not particularly comforting, nor is there, for civilians, a script of what a good death might be. Thus, the heroic sacrifices commemorated at battlefields offer the possibility that there is such a thing as a good death and, at the same time, provide a model of what it might be.

CONCLUSION

What Gettysburg means to people is clearly more than just a living history classroom. Based on the conversations with park personnel and visitors and analyses of the survey data, the meaning of Gettysburg seems to grow on people. That is, impressions of the site become more complex and more layered with repeated visits. The initial reason to visit the battlefield may have been because it was en route to some other destination, someone recommended it, or because of a vague sense of its historic importance. First-time visitors expect to learn about the site and the battle fought there, and in this they are seldom disappointed. But many visitors, particularly those who have come before, are emotionally touched as they quietly reflect on the site and consider its significance.

For this latter group, Gettysburg is a place of pilgrimage, although not in the usual sense of going to a religious center, suffering privation, or doing penance along the way. The pilgrims at Gettysburg are not seeking grace, communing with a deity, or making speial requests. They are, however, having transcendental experiences—numinous ones—as they contemplate the desperate battle fought in those same places in early July of 1863. Men and women stare across the mile and a half of fields separating Seminary and Cemetery Ridge, and many find themselves fighting back tears as they empathize with long-dead soldiers. The Battle of Gettysburg was fought over ideas that matter, and the enormity of that struggle and those ideas still touches the hearts and minds of the park's visitors today, evoking a gentle, grateful sadness.

NOTES

1. A version of this essay was presented as a poster at the 101st meeting of the American Anthropological Association in New Orleans, November 20-24, 2002. We are grateful to our informants at the park and respondents to the survey. We thank Chief Ranger Brion Fitzgerald and Supervisory Ranger Clyde Bell for providing reports on park visitation, and Ranger John Heiser, who provided valuable archival material in the Park Service library. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge support from the Research Fund of Lehigh University and the Faculty Development Fund of Cedar Crest College.

2. For accounts of the preservation efforts, see Linenthal (1991), Patterson (1992), Unrau (1991), and Weeks (2003).

3. While 63 per cent is a good response rate for return-mail surveys, there is always the possibility that those who returned their questionnaires differ in key ways from those who did not. To check for this, all important variables (demographics, number of times visited Gettysburg previously, adjective descriptors of the site, etc.) were examined against the order in which questionnaires were returned (see Babbie 1998:260). As there were no significant trends associated with how long it took respondents to mail back their questionnaires, we are more confident that the 253 people who did respond constitute a representative sample of Gettysburg's summer visitors.

4. These coding categories were developed by each of us carefully reading the comments and creating our own groupings. Then we compared categories, worked out a mutually agreeable set of codes, and applied them to the data.

5. Numen-seeking was operationalized, along with two other kinds of motives for visits to public events, namely fun-seeking and information-seeking, in a section of the Gettysburg survey. The section dealt with responses to historic sites in general, not just Gettysburg. The questionnaire included 34 items with a Likert-type response scale—"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"—covering many different aspects of what people might want or enjoy from a visit to a heritage site, including aspects of information-seeking, fun-seeking, and numen-seeking. In particular, numen-seeking can be measured by responses to ten items, which have acceptable item-by-index correlations (ranging from $r=.74$ to $r=.55$) and reasonable interitem correlations (mean item-by-item $r=.343$, Cronbach's alpha $=.839$). The ten items comprising this Numen-Index are as follows:

-I like to use my mind to go back in time while visiting historic sites and museums.
-I am sometimes able to connect deeply with the objects displayed in exhibits.
-While at historic sites, I try to feel the aura or spirit of earlier times.
-I enjoy reflecting on a site or museum after visiting it.
-I enjoy imagining the day-to-day life of people who lived in the past.
-Some sites and museums provoke an almost "spiritual" response in me.
-When I was a child, I used to imagine what it would have been like to live in the past.
-At some historic sites and museums, I lose my sense of time passing.
-I want to learn about the hardships of earlier times, not just the high points.
-I enjoy talking about my personal reactions to historic sites and museums.

The analysis in Gatewood and Cameron (2000) resulted in the creation of a quantitative index for measuring the numen-seeking motive, which will be tested again at other sites.

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