A Tour of Gettysburg's Visual Battle Damage

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Abstract

A little-known aspect of the Battle of Gettysburg is the story behind the Civil War battle damage still present in some of the town's buildings. During the first three days of July 1863, cannons fired over and into Gettysburg, and as a result some of the homes were inadvertently struck by the shells. As a battlefield guide, the author has driven by these structures everyday for the past few years, and a highlight of any tour is a stop in front of the Sheads house on Buford Avenue, where one can point up to an artillery shell embedded just to the left of its attic window. The loud Oehs and Aahs that emanate from visitors are more than ample evidence of the fascination experienced when coming face to face with battle damage caused more than 130 years earlier. It conjures up the frightening image of a family huddled in the corner of their cellar, while the cannon from both armies fire missiles of death back and forth across the town. For the Gettysburg civilians, this was the true horror of war, the constant fear that one of these shells might crash through their wall, explode in their home, and kill members of their family. It does not take a great knowledge of Civil War tactics to understand and appreciate that fear. [excerpt]

Recommended Citation


In Ultimate General: Gettysburg, you'll re-live the Battle of Gettysburg in a non-linear campaign that lasts for up to four days. You will command historically accurate forces from small skirmishing to the full strength of each army, as reinforcements arrive on the field to help you win the battle. The combat strength of your army depends greatly on your decision-making, because unit numbers, morale, fatigue and territory captured are carried from one battle phase to the next.