

**The George  
Gordon Meade  
Collection  
1793-1896**



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## Introduction

George Gordon Meade (1815-1872), born in Spain to an American naval agent and exporter, was Pennsylvania's most famous Civil War hero and leader of the Union forces at Gettysburg. Meade graduated from West Point in 1835 and followed his father into a life of government service, both military and civilian. During his first enlistment, Meade served in Florida and at the Watertown Arsenal in Massachusetts. He retired in 1836 to become a civil engineer.

In 1842 Meade reenlisted as a lieutenant in the Army's Topographical Engineers, during which time he served under President Zachary Taylor in the Mexican War. He continued surveying after the war, engineering the construction of lighthouses and breakwaters along the Atlantic and Florida coasts. From 1857 to 1861, Meade was director of the Great Lakes Survey, a vast undertaking that included both coastal and geodetic surveys.

The Civil War brought Meade into the limelight. At the start of the war, he accepted a voluntary brigadier general's commission. He led his troops into battle at Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville and was wounded twice during the Peninsular Campaign. At Chancellorsville, Meade commanded the V corps, a group that later would return to fight at Gettysburg.

On June 28, 1863, Joseph Hooker resigned as commander of the Army of the Potomac, to the great relief of President Abraham Lincoln. Hooker had been accused of moving too slowly against the advancing Confederates. Meade was awakened at 3 A.M. and informed that he now commanded the Army of the Potomac. Although usually a bookish type, Meade had proven his abilities through his skillful performance at Fredericksburg. Now the task of

defending against General Robert E. Lee's advancing army rested upon his shoulders.

The sudden promotion left Meade with little time to act. He immediately dispatched his troops to defend Baltimore and Washington, while at the same time preventing the Confederates from crossing the Susquehanna. By nightfall, Meade's army had marched twenty-five miles and was stretched along a twenty-mile front. The next day Meade moved into Pennsylvania, meeting General Lee's troops at Gettysburg.

The Battle of Gettysburg lasted from July 1 to July 3, ending with Lee on the retreat. During this battle, Meade, known for his quick temper, appeared cheerful and hopeful. As General Lee retreated, Meade dispatched a note to President Lincoln, informing him that he would drive out the invading forces. Lincoln, however, wished for not just the recovery of the land but the destruction of Lee's army as well. After the battle, Meade hesitated in following the Confederates. This decision, along with fog and rain, allowed Lee to escape across the Potomac under the cover of night. Meade pursued as far as possible but was held to a defensive line along the Rapidan River until the end of the war.

After the Civil War, Meade served in the U.S. Army in various departments and divisions. He was in charge of coastal military affairs, quelling the American Fenian uprising against Canada. During Reconstruction, he headed the Third Military District in the south, where he ruled in moderation. Shortly before his death, Meade returned to Philadelphia, where he laid out most of Fairmount Park. He died in Philadelphia on November 6, 1872.

## Scope and Content

The bulk of this collection consists of Meade's personal and official correspondence, but it also includes reports of operations, statements of losses, plans of campaigns, field reports from Gettysburg, official Army of the Potomac correspondence, and manuscript versions of *The Life and Letters of General George Gordon Meade*.

Of interest are Meade's letters to his wife, which provide personal insight into the politics of the Mexican War and the Civil War. Prominent correspondents include General-in-Chief Henry Halleck, Union General John Pope, and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Other items include reports to Brigadier General Lorenzo Thomas; field reports on the battle of Gettysburg; lists of casualties; minutes of Council held at Gettysburg, July 2, 1863; official dispatches; official letters; Meade's military commissions; war maps of the Army of the Potomac and southern states; surveys, maps of Mexico; and letters of condolence on Meade's sickness and death.

This collection is arranged by type of document: letters (outgoing/incoming), other correspondence, reports, and other materials. It is further arranged chronologically.

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	0137	Vol II: Letters & Telegrams recorded by Gen. Meade (Nov 1863-May 1864)
	0262	Vol III: Letters & Telegrams recorded by Gen. Meade (May 1864)
	0390	Vol IV: Letters & Telegrams recorded by Gen. Meade (Jun 1864)
	0523	Vol V: Letters & Telegrams recorded by Gen. Meade (Jun-Jul 1864)
6	0002	Vol VI: Letters & Communications received by Gen. Meade (Jul-Aug 1864)
	0126	Vol VII: Letters & Communications received by Gen. Meade (Army of the Potomac, Incoming Orders)
	0334	Vol IX: Letters & Communications received by Gen. Meade (Jan-Mar 1865)
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6	0632	Incoming Correspondence (1865-1870)
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	0424	Vol IV: Letters, Telegrams, etc. sent by Gen. Meade (May 1864)
	0555	Vol V: Letters, Telegrams, etc. sent by Gen. Meade (May-Jun 1864)
8	0002	Vol VI: Letters, Telegrams, etc. sent by Gen. Meade (Jun-Aug 1864)
	0126	Vol VII: Letters, Telegrams, etc. sent by Gen. Meade (Aug-Sep 1864)
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	0154	Incoming Telegrams, 3d Military District (1868)
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	0379	Telegrams, 3d Military District (1869)
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	0495	Official Correspondence (1866)
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	0173	Death notices and letters (Nov 1872)
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	0512	Diary Excerpts (1864)
	0555	Diary Excerpts (1865)
	0570	Memo to Col. Lyman about "Life and Letters of Gen. Meade"
	0586	Incoming Correspondence (1863-1893)
	0637	Col. George Meade, newspaper clippings and letters at death (Feb 1897)
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	0033	George Meade letters (1845-1869)
	0974	Transcription of biography of George Meade
	1001	Transcription of George Meade letters
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	0021	Masonry Drawings (1835)
	0025	Carpentry Drawings (1835)
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	0034	Perspective Drawings for Topographical Framing
	0044	Florida, Printed Maps
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	0096	Texas
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	0157	Coast survey charts: Harbors (c.1853)
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