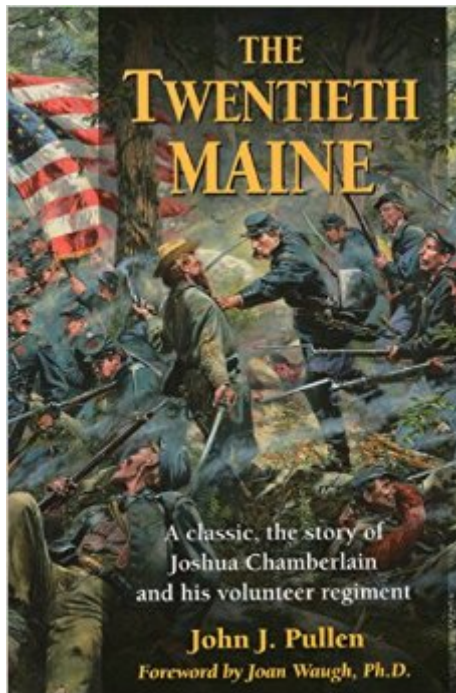


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The Twentieth Maine: A Classic Story Of Joshua Chamberlain And His Volunteer Regiment



Synopsis

We went into the fight with 386, all told--358 guns. Every pioneer and musician who would carry a musket went into the ranks. Even the sick and footsore, who could not keep up in the march, came up as soon as they could find their regiments, and took their places in line of battle, while it was battle, indeed. --Col. Joshua Chamberlain

The fascinating story of Joshua Chamberlain and his volunteer regiment, the Twentieth Maine, is reprinted with a new foreword by Civil War historian and UCLA professor Joan Waugh. Pullen's classic and highly acclaimed book tells how Chamberlain and his men fought at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville on their way to the pivotal battle of Gettysburg. There, on July 2, 1863, at Little Round Top, they heroically saved the left flank of the Union battle line. The Twentieth Maine's remarkable story ends with the surrender of Lee's troops at Appomattox. Considered by Civil War historians to be one of the best regimental histories ever written, this beloved standard of American history is now available in a new Stackpole edition. Includes maps, photographs, and drawings from the original edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Pullen did a masterful job of researching the history of the 20th Maine. He backed his research with clear, concise, powerful writing. He follows the unit from its inception in Downeast Maine, all the way through its "mustering out", touching on all the high and low points in between. His ability to clearly describe event through the eyes of often illiterate country boys is hard to match. He gives details most other histories assume the reader knows, such as what an average day in the field might be like, or how the men learned the mundane but necessary skills of formation movement. He never

skimps on the thrill or the horror of battle. This book is a must read for anyone interested in the Civil War on a human scale. I have read this book many times, and will reread it many more, always finding fresh detail.

John J. Pullen is to be commended for writing a masterful and interesting account of the famed 20th Maine led by Colonel (later Maj. General) Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. From the founding of the regiment made up of fishermen, lumberjack and regular men of various towns in Maine, Pullen describes the unorganization and various other problems the regiment encountered when it was first formed. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was made Lt. Colonel when he first arrived to join the regiment and soon afterwards the regiment was becoming disciplined and effective, also under the command of Col (later Gen) Adelbert Ames. From the first battles the unit fought in to the carnage of Fredericksburg and thus to Chancellorsville and finally to the 2nd of July 1863, Pullen describes vividly the heroic stance the 20th Maine made against the brave attack of the 15 Alabama and 4th and 5th Texas under Col. William Oates. The surprising bayonet charge by the 20th Maine, when all seemed lost was a daring and bold move that quite possibly saved the Union line and thus ultimately won the Battle of Gettysburg. The heroic regiment also fought bravely for the rest of the war especially at Petersburg where Gen. Chamberlain was seriously wounded. Pullen does an outstanding job describing the everyday life of the regiment and describing various soldiers and the routine that made life away from home very tough to bear, however this regiment is to be commended for their commitment to the Union, to the state of Maine and to their families most of all. This book is HIGHLY recommended to all Civil War Readers and once you start reading it, it will be hard to put down.

This is one of the best regimental histories written about a Civil War outfit on either side. It is also a story of high valor and drama, of lost youth and heavy, heartbreaking losses. It is also the story of the maturing of a good man, Joshua Chamberlain, into a good soldier who does more than his assigned duty and ends the war with a general's stars, and more than one wound. The regiment doesn't start with promise, however, and its first commander, Colonel Adelbert Ames, a hardened regular, is somewhat dismayed at his new command. However, hard work and professionalism pay off, and the 20th Maine does evolve into 'a hell of a regiment.' The payoff is at Gettysburg on the second day on the far left flank of the Army of the Potomac on a wooded hill known locally as Little Round Top. Now commanded by the Lieutenant Colonel, Joshua Chamberlain (Ames being deservedly promoted to Brigadier General and brigade command), the regiment becomes the focus

of the southern effort to capture Little Round Top and flank the Union Army. If one man could lose the war in the afternoon, it was Chamberlain and his homespun regiment from Maine. They rise to the challenge, at heavy loss to themselves, execute a bayonet charge down the hill after running out of ammunition, sweeping up 400 prisoners and saving the Union left flank. It is the stuff legends are made of. This is only one episode in this superb volume, and this book belongs in every Civil War collection. It is written with wit, verve, and accuracy, and it stirs the soul that our country was fought for and saved by men such as these.

What would it have been like to have been there, on campaign with Lincoln's Army? Anyone with even a casual interest in the ACW has asked that question - for the most part any available answer is most unsatisfying. We can walk the battlefields, read the histories, even re-enact with reconstructed materials, but we can never really feel what those soldiers felt. The closest we may ever come is Pullen's *The Twentieth Maine*. Pullen writes as a Mainer about Mainers, but he maintains his objectivity, despite the closeness of the subject matter. Drawing extensively from primary sources, as well as his own experiences with infantry in Europe during WWII, Pullen draws us into the regiment made famous by its "end-of-the-line" stand on Little Round Top while serving under COL Chamberlain on the second day at Gettysburg. Pullen's strength is his ability to relate the men of the Twentieth Maine as individuals throughout their ordeal, each with their own hopes and fears to be realized. Little Round Top was their first face-to-face, knock-down engagement and the results were beyond any realistic expectations. Chamberlain was a man constantly in the right place at the right time and so was the Twentieth Maine, several times saved from being fed into suicidal attacks and in the end honored with participation in the final surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Courthouse. This is without question one of the finest three or four unit histories of the ACW. A thoroughly enriching, rewarding experience for anyone with an interest in the ACW or the conduct of everyday men under far from everyday circumstances. Pullen reminds us that the true depth and breadth of the human spirit can only be guessed at, never really known.

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