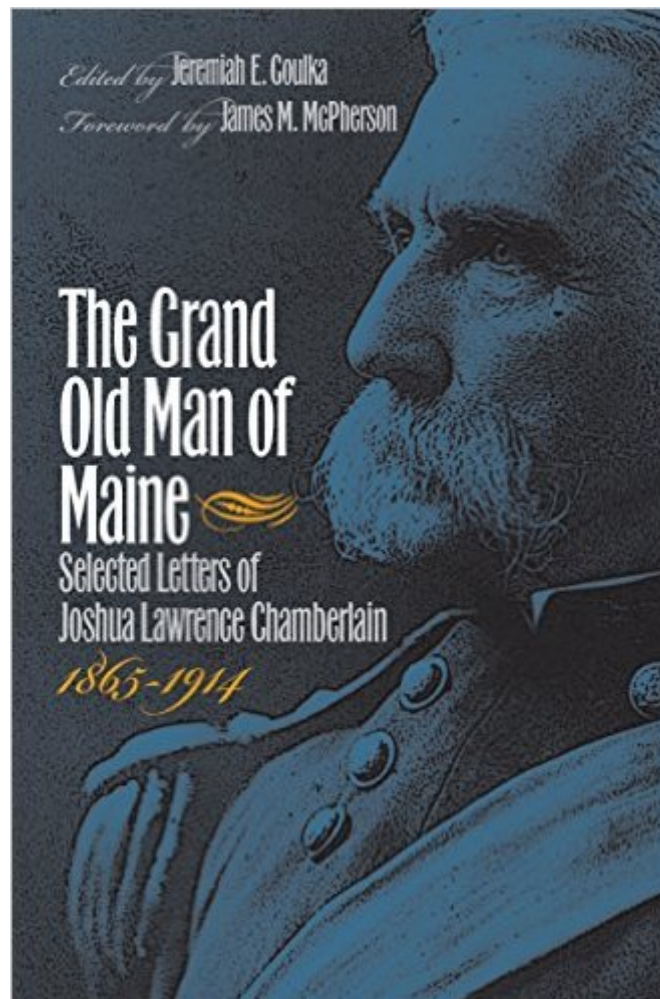


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The Grand Old Man Of Maine: Selected Letters Of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, 1865-1914 (Civil War America)



Synopsis

Best known as the hero of Little Round Top at Gettysburg and the commanding officer of the troops who accepted the Confederates' surrender at Appomattox, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (1828-1914) has become one of the most famous and most studied figures of Civil War history. After the war, he went on to serve as governor of Maine and president of Bowdoin College. The first collection of his postwar letters, this book offers important insights for understanding Chamberlain's later years and his place in chronicling the war. The letters included here reveal Chamberlain's perspective on military events at Gettysburg, Five Forks, and Appomattox, and on the planning of ceremonies to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Gettysburg. As Jeremiah Goulka points out in his introduction, the letters also shed light on Chamberlain's views on politics, race relations, and education, and they expose some of the personal difficulties he faced late in life. On a broader scale, Chamberlain's correspondence contributes to a better understanding of the influence of Civil War veterans on American life and the impact of the war on veterans themselves. It also says much about state and national politics (including the politics of pensions), family roles and relationships, and ideas of masculinity in Victorian America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

While some in the Civil War community complain of "Chamberlain fatigue," it is difficult to gripe about this marvelous new collection of postwar correspondence from one of the most articulate

officers on either side of the conflict. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain survived the Civil War - including a horrible wound at Petersburg - to become one of Maine's most prominent citizens. His postwar career included four terms as governor of Maine, a stint as president of Bowdoin College, numerous business enterprises, and perhaps most importantly, many years as a writer and lecturer on his Civil War experiences. The correspondence included by editor Jeremiah Goulka covers nearly every aspect of Chamberlain's personal and professional life. Chamberlain's heartfelt letters to his family, especially those to his wife Fannie, reveal him to be a loving, thoughtful husband and father. His relationship with Fannie, stormy and difficult though it was for many years, survived numerous crises until Fannie's death in 1905. Chamberlain's Civil War experiences transformed him, and his separation from the army often left him feeling restless. In 1870, Chamberlain wrote to the King of Prussia and offered his services in Prussia's war with France. In 1898, Chamberlain contacted the Secretary of War to volunteer for the Spanish-American War. Even with all his postwar positions and projects, Chamberlain never quite filled the space in his soul left empty by the end of the Civil War. Critics of Chamberlain, in his lifetime and in our own time, claim that he inflated his role at Little Round Top in an attempt to hoard the glory of that important engagement. At least one letter included in this volume refutes this criticism.

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