

Appointment at Gettysburg

It was 150 years ago this month that Abraham Lincoln came to Gettysburg, Pa., to make a few “dedicatory remarks” at Soldiers’ National Cemetery. The President was set to be second banana; the “real” Gettysburg Address was supposed to be given by famed orator Edward Everett, a former Massachusetts senator and governor. Everett, who spoke first, went on for two hours, spinning tales of ancient heroes and battles. Then came Lincoln’s elegant two-minute speech. The rest is history. The next day, a gracious Everett wrote to Lincoln, “I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes.” He didn’t. Lincoln’s entire speech is given here. We offer Everett’s 13,000-word Gettysburg Address online.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The text given above is the so-called “Bliss Copy” of the Gettysburg Address, one of several versions that Lincoln wrote. This is the only one the President signed, and it is believed to be the final and “official” version.

“Gettysburg Address”

President Abraham Lincoln
Dedicatory Remarks at
Soldiers’ National Cemetery
Gettysburg, Pa.
Nov. 19, 1863

Find the full text on
Air Force Magazine’s website
www.airforcemag.com
“Keeper File”



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