



# Dragoon or Cavalryman, Major General John Buford in the American Civil War

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Major General John Buford. Buford, a 1848 graduate of the United States Military Academy, began his Army career on America's frontier with the First United States Dragoons. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Buford was selected to command a cavalry brigade in John Pope's Army of Virginia, and participated in the Second Manassas Campaign. Buford went on to make significant contributions to the Union efforts in the Eastern Theater; however, history has generally portrayed Buford as a one-dimensional character based on his stand along McPherson and Seminary Ridges on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. Several historians have presumed that the dismounted cavalry (or Dragoon) tactics used by Buford at Gettysburg were the culmination of a method of fighting which he helped develop and propagate within the Union cavalry. However, this thesis shows that contrary to this Dragoon image, Buford was in fact a remarkable cavalry officer. His battlefield tactics were fairly traditional, but it was not in pitched battles that Buford excelled. His significant contributions were in the established roles of cavalry; performing reconnaissance and providing security for the army he was supporting.

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