

The Battle of Chancellorsville

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MEMORANDUM FOR Faculty Advisor, Group Room M09, ATTN: SGM Adams, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918

SUBJECT: The Battle of Chancellorsville

1. Thesis Statement: Superior forces did not compensate for poor leadership. During the Battle of Chancellorsville General Lee dominated over General Hooker despite being tremendously outnumbered.
2. Discussion: The Battle of Chancellorsville was one of the greatest miscalculations of the Union Army during the American Civil War. The Union Army of the Potomac had superior forces and equipment to achieve victory during this battle. General Hooker's over confidence and poor execution of his battle plans facilitated his failure despite his numerical superiority.
3. Counterpoint. The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia did not defeat the Union Army because of the unconventional tactics it used in the battle. The weather, bad intelligence, communications and inexperience were all factors that ultimately led to the defeat of the Union Army at the Battle of Chancellorsville.
4. Conclusion. The unconventional tactics employed by the Confederate forces were incomparable, to their counterparts during this campaign. Nevertheless, poor leadership and indecisiveness from the Northern Commander and a list of extreme circumstances led the Union Army to its eventual defeat.
5. Haines Award. We (do / do not) request that the Haines Award Selection Board consider this paper for the General Haines Award for Excellence in research. *Writing Research Papers*, Tenth Edition by James D. Lester and James D. Lester, Jr., is the Guide used in the preparation of this research paper.

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Outline

Thesis Statement: Superior forces did not compensate for poor leadership. During the Battle of Chancellorsville General Lee dominated over General Hooker despite being tremendously outnumbered.

I. Introduction of Generals Lee and Hooker

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The Battle of Chancellorsville

General Robert E. Lee's medical history and General Joseph Hooker's moral deviations certainly influenced their performance during the Battle of Chancellorsville. This battle is described as General Lee's greatest victory and General Hooker's worst defeat. Both commanders were graduates from the prestigious West Point Military Academy.

Robert E. Lee graduated second in his class at West Point in 1829. During his four years he served as the adjutant of the Cadet Corps and received no demerits the entire time he was a cadet. No cadet in West Point history has ever accomplished this feat. Following graduation, Lieutenant Lee was commissioned to be an engineer. Lieutenant Lee helped with the construction of the Saint Louis waterfront, and he worked on the coastal forts in Brunswick and Savannah, Georgia.

Lee married Mary Custis, the granddaughter of George and Martha Washington. In 1845 the war between the United States and Mexico erupted. General Winfield Scott, who was the overall U.S. Army Commander, personally assigned Lee, now a captain, to his staff. General Scott was so impressed with Captain Lee for his heroism and brilliance that he wrote that Lee was "the very best soldier I ever saw in the field."

Following the end of the Mexican War, Lee returned to service as an engineer, headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1852 Lee assumed duties as the Superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point, a position he held until 1855. Frustrated with the slow promotion rate in the Engineer Corps, in 1856, Lee accepted a frocking to lieutenant-colonel and was assigned to frontier duty with the Second Cavalry in Texas.

In 1859, Lee led a marine unit in a joint effort with the militia to suppress John Brown's uprising at the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry. Upon arriving on the scene, Lee quickly

ordered the arsenal taken by storm and successfully subdued the uprising. Afterwards, he returned to serve in Texas until summoned to Washington by General Scott in 1861. Lee, a Virginian, rejected command of the Union's field forces that began assembling the day after Virginia succeeded to the Union. Later Lee would assist the Virginia State forces in transitioning into the Confederate Service.

Lee, who was now a Colonel, resigned his commission from the 1st Calvary effective 25 April 1861. He then accepted command of Virginia's Armed Forces as a brigadier general and was mainly involved in organizational matters.

In the first summer of the Civil War, Brigadier General Lee was given a field command in western Virginia. His Cheat Mountain Campaign failed because of the shortcomings of his superiors, and his entire time in command in the region was unpleasant. Bad weather and bickering among his subordinate officers plagued General Lee and he soon became known in the south as "Granny Lee." And although his time in command was disappointing, President Jefferson Davis appointed Lee to a command on the Southern Coast.

In 1862, Lee was recalled to Richmond and made an advisor to President Davis. This position gave General Lee influence over military operations, especially those of Stonewall Jackson along the Shenandoah Valley.

When Joseph Johnson launched an attack at Seven Pines, he was badly wounded in the confusion of the battle. General Lee was then ordered to take command of Johnson's Army of Northern Virginia. Less than a month later, Lee struck at McClellan's Army of the Potomac. He left a small contingent to cover Richmond and combined with Stonewall Jackson, who left Shenandoah Valley to join him. Lee won a series of battles at Beaver Dam Creek, Gaines' Mill, Savage Station, Glendale, White Oak Swamp, and Malvern Hill known as Seven Days Battles,

forcing McClellan's Army to withdraw from their positions that were threatening the Confederate capital. McClellan withdrew to Harrison's Landing and Lee became a hero to the southern people and among his soldiers.

General Lee next launched a bold offensive into Maryland. Orders detailing the Army's plans fell into Northern hands, and heavy casualties were sustained by both sides when Lee met McClellan's soldiers at Antietam. Neither side obtained a decisive victory, so Lee's reduced force went back across the Potomac into Virginia.

In May 1863, at age 56 and plagued with pericarditis, a debilitating heart disorder, Lee achieved his greatest military success at Chancellorsville. Even though Lee's forces were outnumbered two to one, he dispatched Jackson and most of his forces to make a long march along the Federal flank. Lee remained with only two divisions in the front of the Union Army.

Major General Joseph Hooker graduated West Point in 1837. He spent 16 years in the Army and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel during the Mexican War. During the war, Hooker established himself as a capable soldier, although he was notably disloyal and blatantly criticized his superiors. He resigned his commission after the end of the Mexican War but returned to Washington, DC to regain his commission in the Federal Army at the outbreak of the Civil War. His reputation preceded him, and General-in-Chief of the Army Winfield Scott refused to reestablish his commission.

Refusing to give up, Hooker appealed his commission to President Abraham Lincoln soon after the Union's defeat at Bull Run. Hooker stated that he was better than any general that Lincoln currently had serving in the Army, resulting in President Lincoln giving Hooker a commission as a Brigadier General of Volunteers. Hooker rose quickly through the General Officer ranks.

In January 1863, President Lincoln relieved General Ambrose Burnside of command and took a calculated risk in sending Hooker to command the Army of the Potomac. The President wrote Hooker a letter berating him on his personality, professional ethics, leadership philosophy, and character flaws. Most of Hooker's subordinates knew of his flaws and regarded him as a dangerous, self-serving drunkard.

Hooker assumed command and reorganized the Army of the Potomac. He failed, however, to keep his superior leaders informed, creating dissent among the upper echelons of command.

When Hooker declared his Army mission ready, he received orders to invade Virginia, capture the Confederate Capitol in Richmond, and defeat General Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. The Union Army's strategic concept, combined with readily available resources, set the conditions for a Union victory.

Hooker had earned a reputation as a heavy drinker, and alcohol often took precedence over his duties as a commander. He refrained from drinking during the Battle of Chancellorsville, causing his senior corps commander, Major General Darius Couch, to remark that they may not have lost the initiative had Hooker continued to drink. The absence of Hooker's "liquid courage" may have cost the Union Army this major battle.

After taking command, General Hooker immediately brought social reform to the Federal Army. He vowed to improve morale and living conditions of the Army. He did away with lazy and useless staff members and logisticians, who failed to feed, supply, and pay Soldiers despite the North's vast resources. He also instilled two military reforms: he created an intelligence system and implemented counterintelligence measures, and he pooled his mounted guards instead of leaving them with individual generals throughout the Army.

Due to the reforms, General Hooker's efforts succeeded admirably. His Soldiers became enthusiastic; they were well fed, well equipped, and eager to fight. He had a smooth running Army of 135,000 troops, which allowed him to plan maneuvers to gain an advantage over General Lee.

The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia led by General Robert E. Lee, spent the winter of 1862-1863 spread out over Virginia's central countryside. General Lee and his Headquarters remained centered on Fredericksburg while artillery camps were located south and west of Carmel Church and infantry outposts lining the Rappahannock River to and west of the Rapidan River. Camps were also located downstream throughout Caroline County.

While General Lee began preparing for spring and the Battle of Chancellorsville, he knew he was greatly outnumbered but believed he had three advantages over his adversary. First, he believed in his Soldiers. His leadership molded his men into a strong, well disciplined Army that would carry out his will. Second, he developed a remarkable bond with Major General Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson. Together, they shared the same tactical and operational views that no other could match. And third, his victories with his Army were so great, they just expected to win and the enemy expected to lose.

But war had depleted the state's agriculture and feeding Soldiers and animals posed a great challenge to General Lee. As a result, his men were underfed. He also faced challenges of resupply. General Lee sent Lieutenant General James Longstreet, along with a sizable force to Suffolk for supplies. With General Longstreet and his forces gone, the Confederate Army was reduced to 60,000 troops.

General Hooker believed he had the perfect plan. The moral was high among his men of 135,000 and they were competent due to his reforms. His plan was to take General Lee's strong

defensive position from the rear instead of a direct assault as his predecessor, General Burnside, had done.

On the morning of 27 April 1863, General Hooker set in motion his plan for the Battle of Chancellorsville. The campaign started with tens of thousand infantrymen departing several different Stafford area camps and moving northwest paralleling the Rappahannock River under the command of Generals Slocum, Howard, and Meade. They moved in long columns until they reached the Hartwood Church where they set up camp for the night.

The next morning, 28 April 1863, they joined forces and continued northwest until they arrived at Kelly's Ford. General Hooker's logistical determination paid off when his Soldiers crossed the Rappahannock River at Kelly's Ford into Culpeper County using a pontoon bridge that his forces had constructed. Meanwhile, Generals Sedgwick, Reynolds and Sickles took up camp just south of Fredericksburg on the east side of the Rappahannock River. They began making their presents known to distract any attention from the troops approaching from the northwest.

On the morning of 29 April 1863, General Meade (Fifth Corps) took his men southeast through Richardsville to Ely's Ford while Generals Slocum and Howard (Eleventh and Twelfth Corps) moved their men through Madden's Tavern down to Germanna Ford where they crossed the Rapidan River. General Slocum surprised some Confederate Soldiers, driving them back, eventually capturing most. General Sedgwick and his men crossed the Rappahannock River using pontoon bridges just below Fredericksburg. Throughout the night, General Sedgwick's Soldiers skirmished with Confederate Soldiers still tempting to distract other activities that were being put into place.

As the morning of 30 April 1863 approached, General Hooker's confidence was high. By mid afternoon, he had all his men in place. Generals Slocum and Howard were located in the northeast part of Orange County, about ten miles apart. They moved southeast to Wilderness Tavern then east toward Chancellorsville. General Meade moved south from Ely's Ford until the Army of the Potomac was arced around Chancellorsville. General Sedgwick was already set up south of Fredericksburg.

With the Chancellorsville Inn now serving as a forward headquarters, the North had the upper Rappahannock River in their hands. They believed that General Lee did not know that they were there. All Generals were posed and ready for battle.

While General Hooker's Army prepared for war, General Lee's Army also prepared. On 29 April 1863, a few Confederate Soldiers watched over Germanna and Ely's Fords hoping to defend off General Hooker's mighty Army. General Lee was informed that a large mass of enemy troops were on the south banks of the Rappahannock River. General "Stonewall" Jackson, who was staying in Belvoir, reported to General Lee on the front. Meanwhile, Artillerymen noticed General Sedgwick and his men just below Fredericksburg moving around in a non-offensive manner. At this point, the Artillery units broke camp and moved back to General Lee near Fredericksburg.

On 30 April 1863, a detachment of Confederate cavalry led by General Stuart, watched General Meade's men cross Ely's Ford. Recognizing the volume of troops crossing the river, they quietly moved out of the area without General Meade ever knowing they were there. Along with General Stuart's intelligence, the surviving party from the Germanna and Ely's Ford, and other mounting information, General Lee informed President Jefferson Davis that General Hooker intended to attack from the left and probably from the rear.

On the morning of 30 April 1863, General Lee remained unsure about whether to abandon his position near Fredericksburg or stay and fight for it. With a large number of Federal troops to his west and more just south of Fredericksburg, he felt he had three options. He could fight either to his west or east, but not both, or he could retreat to the south. Although heading south made the most sense, General Lee decided to advance west and take on General Hooker despite the massive odds against him. General Lee sent General Anderson, in advance, west to set up a tentative front northeast of Chancellorsville. The rest of the Army of Northern Virginia moved in columns to link up with General Anderson and prepare for battle.

During the Civil War the Battle of Chancellorsville was one of the key battles. Even with the forces of the North outnumbering the forces of the South, and were set in the defense waiting for the Southern forces they failed to win this battle. General Hooker's men were set for the fight, but General Lee's cavalry reported where Hooker's men were and what they were doing. With this in mind, Lee reacted differently than what Hooker expected.

The Army of Northern Virginia consisted of only two Corps averaging approximately 34,000 men. (Martin 31) With only two Corps Commanders, General Lee's orders and battle plans were communicated faster and clearer. These two Corps consisted of and were commanded by:
(Luvaas and Nelson³⁴¹)

First Corps was commanded by two division commanders;

Major General Lafayette Mc Laws and Major General Richard H. Anderson

Second Corps-Lieutenant General Thomas J. Jackson

Most of the soldiers for both sides were infantry, a small percentage were artillery, cavalry and signal.

Finding the Northern troops massing in the woods around Chancellorsville; Anderson commenced the construction of earthworks at Zoan Church. Confederate reinforcements under Stonewall Jackson marched to help block the Federal advance, but did not arrive until May 1, 1863. The Confederates had no intention of retreating as Hooker had predicted.

Hooker's troops rested at Chancellorsville after executing what is often considered to be the most daring march of the war. They had slipped across Lee's front undetected. To some the hardest part of the campaign seemed to be behind them; to others, the most difficult had yet to be encountered. The cavalry raid had faltered in its initial efforts and Hooker's main force was trapped in the tangles of the Wilderness without any cavalry to alert them of Lee's approach. As the Federal Army converged on Chancellorsville, General Hooker expected Lee to retreat from his forces, which totaled nearly 135,000. Although heavily outnumbered with just fewer than 60,000 troops - Lee had no intention of retreating. The Confederate commander divided his Army: one part remained to guard Fredericksburg, while the other raced west to meet Hooker's advance. When the van of Hooker's column clashed with the Confederates' on May 1, 1863 Hooker pulled his troops back to Chancellorsville, a lone tavern at a crossroads in a dense wood known locally as The Wilderness. Here Hooker took up a defensive line, hoping Lee's need to carry out an uncoordinated attack through the dense undergrowth would leave the Confederate forces disorganized and vulnerable.

To retain the initiative, Lee risked dividing his forces still further, 'retaining two divisions to focus Hooker's attention, while Stonewall Jackson marched the bulk of the Confederate Army west across the front of the Federal line to a position opposite its exposed right flank. Jackson executed this daring and dangerous maneuver throughout the morning and afternoon of May 2, 1863. Striking two hours before dusk, Jackson's men routed the astonished Federals in their

camps. In the gathering darkness, amid the brambles of the Wilderness, the Confederate line became confused and halted at 9 p.m. to regroup. Riding in front of the lines to reconnoiter, Stonewall Jackson was accidentally shot and seriously wounded by his own men. Later that night, his left arm was amputated just below the shoulder.

On May 3, 1863 Jackson's successor, General J.E.B. Stuart, initiated the bloodiest day of the battle when attempting to reunite his troops with Lee's. Despite an obstinate defense by the Federals, Hooker ordered them to withdraw north of the Chancellor House. The Confederates were converging on Chancellorsville to finish Hooker when a message came from Jubal Early that Federal troops had broken through at Fredericksburg. At Salem Church, Lee threw a cordon around these Federals, forcing them to retreat across the Rappahannock River. Disappointed, Lee returned to Chancellorsville, only to find that Hooker had also retreated across the river. Hooker's forces held practically every tactical advantage for this mission. The strategic concept, with the forces and resources available set the conditions for a Union victory, only the tactical blunders of Major General Hooker destined his plan for failure.

The North sustained a heavy and unnecessary defeat at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Many students of military history attribute the victory of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia to the unconventional tactics used as the key factor in the defeat of the Union Army of the Potomac. There is no denying that General Lee was a brilliant tactician and dynamic leader. His forces "defeated an invading army of nearly 135,000 with approximately 61,000" of his own troops (Lowe). General Lee's tactics were innovative; however they were not the crucial factor in this action. The defeat of the Union Army of the Potomac was attributed to poor leadership by the Commander of those forces, Major General Joseph Hooker as the crucial factor.

General Lee's nine basic principles of war during the time of the Civil War were; the objective, the offensive, mass, economy of force, movement, surprise, security, simplicity and cooperation. The personalities of the two opposing combatant commanders reflect how each applied these principles. An objective study reveals that Lee applied each of the nine principles with devastating results to his enemy.

Hooker on the other hand, unbelievably "violated or completely ignored seven of them, and negated the other two merely by his failure to follow through" (Stackpole 371). Hooker's lack of tactical prowess during the Chancellorsville Battle left his subordinates completely dumbfounded; "Hooker failed to resupply his cannoneers with ammunition or shift sufficient infantry reserves to critical areas" (Lowe). When his subordinate commanders attempted to take advantage of the tactical situation during the fight, he would stifle their ingenuity, disregard their suggestions and dismiss them outright. Hooker's display of poor leadership disrupted the battle rhythm of his force, confused and disappointed not only his subordinate commanders, but Soldiers as well. This disintegration of his offensive momentum created a fatal delay and caused his entire Army to lose the tactical advantage it held. When faced with a flanking maneuver by a smaller Confederate Cavalry unit, "Hooker quickly ordered his generals to fall back to the Wilderness and assume a defensive posture" (Lowe).

When Hooker transitioned to a defensive posture, his ineffective strategy allowed the enemy to execute its bold flanking maneuvers and counterattacks. In addition to his violation of the principles of war, he kept his battle plans from his subordinate commanders. This compartmentalization of battle plans was detrimental to his forces. At no time did his Army synchronize their efforts after their initial successes. He kept the bulk of his forces behind fortifications while other elements of his command sustained heavy attack. He had an agenda for

the fight that was contrary to his orders. He felt that he would allow the enemy to come into a well-prepared, deliberate defense, then destroy him piecemeal and in short order. "His grave defects as a commanding officer became apparent when Confederate General Robert E. Lee, with fewer than half the number of troops, outmaneuvered him and caused a Union retreat. This defeat resulted in the loss of 17,000 Union soldiers." (Britannica)

While Hooker's troops were retreating from the battle, they still maintained the forces and leaders necessary to complete their mission. The one man who could turn the tide of the battle around failed again to fulfill his obligation to his nation and his soldiers. Hooker's excuse for the retreat defies rational explanation. Through the entire campaign, his only order that required a combined action by two or more elements towards the same purpose or objective was the retreat. Major General Hooker was defeated in the Battle of Chancellorsville; his Army of the Potomac was not. Hooker's lack of intestinal fortitude caused the defeat of his plan; he retained sufficient forces to achieve a military victory. Hooker tried to justify his actions or more accurately inaction by stating that he engaged with less than half of his forces then disengaged to fight the enemy under more favorable circumstances. Hooker took no responsibility for his failures at the Battle of Chancellorsville; he blamed his subordinate commanders for failing to execute his plans properly.

Poor leadership was not the reason that the Union Army was defeated at the Battle of Chancellorsville in May of 1863. Confederate General Robert E. Lee was the victor; to say that he dominated the battle is to misquote history. President Abraham Lincoln was as much to blame as the Union leadership during the Battle of Chancellorsville. The Battle of Chancellorsville is touted as Lee's "Greatest Victory", but was the Union defeat because of Lee's genius or just plain bad luck on the Union's part.

Was poor leadership the reason that the Union Army was defeated at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863? The answer to this question is a surprising yes and no. During this battle, Union Army was a numerically superior force. However, during the timeframe of the fall of 1862 through the spring of 1863 the Union Army was in need of repair. The trust and the will that the citizens had towards the Union Army was skeptical at best.

President Abraham Lincoln had little confidence in his Generals for almost the entire period of the war. His repeatedly changing the commander of the Union Army during the war, made this point perfectly clear. When the war began in 1861, General Winfield Scott was the Commander of the Union Army. Unable to command due to health reasons General Scott retired. Command of the Union Forces was then offered to a man from Virginia by the name of Robert E. Lee. Lee was the commander for a brief period but resigned when Virginia seceded from the Union in April 1861.

After Lee's resignation, the Union Army went through several commanders before Ulysses Grant took command in 1864. General McDowell took the command after Lee resigned. McDowell was under constant pressure from Washington Politicians to attack the Confederacy and secure a quick victory. Reluctantly and against his better judgment McDowell led an inexperienced and poorly trained Union Army into Virginia. In July 1861, at the First Battle of Bull Run, the Union Army suffered a humiliating defeat and General McClellan replaced General McDowell.

This process of replacing the Commander of the Union Army was common from 1861 until Grant took command in 1864. Prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville, the succession of Union Commanders was as follows: George McClellan, John Pope, George McClellan, Ambrose

Burnside, and Joseph Hooker. It would have been impossible for the Union Army to have any continuity and cohesiveness with the constant changing of commanders.

When Joseph Hooker took command in January 1863, the Union Army was in trouble. President Lincoln against his better judgment appointed Joseph Hooker as the Commander of the Union Army. President Lincoln's lack of confidence, in Hooker is shown by his remarks in a letter that was given to the General, the remarks are as follows:

GENERAL: I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appears to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skillful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable, quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the Army and the Government needed a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The Government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it. And now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories (Lincoln).

Desertion and insubordination was rampant throughout the ranks and the strength of the Union Army was low. The Union Army was in need of reorganization and morale of the troops was low. Hooker made the Union Army more efficient and increased the strength of the Army to 135,000. Under Hooker's command, corps insignia badges were implemented which raised the morale of the troops and made them proud of their units. Hooker also reorganized the Federal cavalry into a single corps, a move used to counter the more effective Confederate cavalry.

Another question that arises in the Battle of Chancellorsville was Hooker outgeneraled by Lee or was there a series of circumstances that enabled the Confederates to be victorious though no fault of their own? Several factors contributed to the Union defeat at Chancellorsville, none of the factors were a result of Confederate actions. Weather, inexperience, communications and bad intelligence, were all factors beyond Hooker's control that ultimately led the Union Army to defeat at Chancellorsville.

Initially, weather delayed the execution of Hooker's battle plan. Hooker's battle plan had three parts. First, the union cavalry would cut the Confederate supply lines and then create confusion behind the Confederate lines. Then Hooker "intended to use these superior numbers to affect a plan whereby he would employ a pincer movement against Lee. One-half of the Army would cross the Rappahannock River below Fredericksburg and the other half would cross upstream to move against Lee's rear. Each Federal wing would be almost the size of Lee's entire command" (Civil War Overview).

The battle plan was to begin in mid April when Hooker ordered General Stoneman to cross the Rappahannock River. Hooker's intent for Stoneman was simple, "He had hoped that Stoneman would have been able to place his horsemen on the railroad between Fredericksburg and Richmond, by which Lee received his supplies, and make a wreck of the whole structure, compelling that general to evacuate his stronghold at Fredericksburg and vicinity and fall back toward Richmond" (Couch). Stoneman attempted to cross the Rappahannock River on 13 April 1863, but was unable to because the river had risen due to heavy rainfalls. This caused the battle plan to be setback until 27 April 1863. The weather delay also enabled Lee to observe the Union forces forming at Fredericksburg and to determine that the Union forces at Fredericksburg would

not be the main thrust of the attack. Lee left 10,000 Confederate soldiers at Fredericksburg and marched the rest to meet Hooker at Chancellorsville.

Inexperience played a large part in the Union Army's defeat at Chancellorsville. Many of the soldiers and key leaders were new either to the Army or to the force. According to Stephen Sears, "When Joe Hooker led the Army of the Potomac on campaign that spring; he would have under him in the infantry four new corps commanders, four new division commanders, and nineteen new brigade commanders. Of these nineteen brigades, thirteen were led by colonels, too new to the post to have even the proper brigadier's rank. Just six of the nineteen were professional soldiers. Indeed, in the Army of the Potomac as a whole, less than one third of the brigade commanders were professionals" (Sears p.64). Inexperience also caused the Union Army's XI Corps to meet a terrible fate. Newly appointed Major General Howard made a critical error during the battle and failed to post sentries for security. This error enabled Confederate General Stonewall Jackson to roll up the Union Army's right flank.

Communications during the Battle of Chancellorsville was a disaster for the Union Army. A malfunction in the telegraph wire between the Union Forces at Fredericksburg and Union Forces in Chancellorsville left the Union Army unable to communicate. This ultimately caused the pincer movement in Hooker's battle plan to fail. Communications problems also plagued the Union Army's XI Corps, "Making matters worse, the XI Corps was a poorly trained unit made up almost entirely of German immigrants, many of whom didn't even speak English" (Wikipedia).

Bad intelligence also played a large part in the Union Army defeat at Chancellorsville. The Union Forces at Fredericksburg wrongly believed that the Confederate force facing them had more men than they did and decided not to attack. Union Forces observed a Confederate forcing

moving and believed that they had cut the Confederate supply lines. What the Union observers were actually seeing was Lieutenant General Stonewall Jackson leading 28,000 men on a twelve mile march to attack the Union XI corps.

In conclusion, the Confederate Army won the Battle of Chancellorsville, but not because Lee “outgeneraled” Hooker. Political pressure from Washington bureaucrats, lack of confidence in chosen leaders, and an extreme set of circumstances caused the Union’s defeat. While the Confederate Army did win at Chancellorsville, two very important notes need mention. First, despite the victory Confederate forces did not gain an inch of ground. Secondly, the Confederates lost many men on this day, and being significantly smaller than the Union population wise, found themselves slipping further in what would be a “War of Attrition”.

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