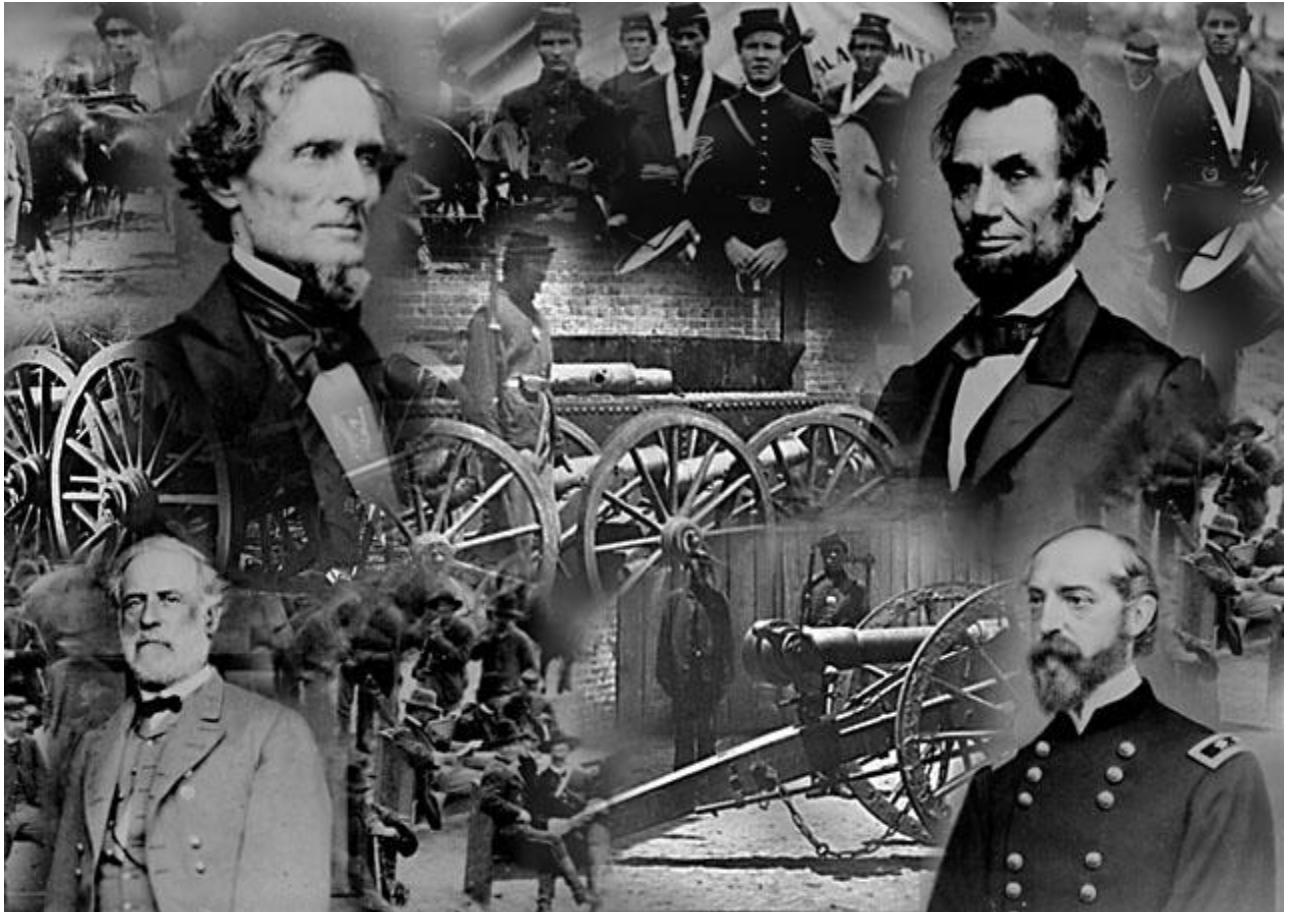


GETTYSBURG

A Study in Command



U.S. Army War College
Strategic Leader Staff Ride
AY13



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U.S. Army War College
Strategic Leader Staff Ride

An Overview of the Gettysburg Campaign

With Selected Correspondence

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25 June 2012

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Gettysburg Campaign Senior Leader Staff Ride

“Not to promote war, but to preserve peace.”

Purpose of the Army War College

Secretary of War Elihu Root, during his speech at the dedication of the first Army War College, charged the institution with its enduring mission. War College graduates, he said, should be educated in the skills that would enable them “to preserve peace by intelligent and adequate preparation” and, if called upon, be fully capable of applying their education “to repel aggression.” Attainment of these ends would be achieved “through studying and conferring on the great problems of national defense, military science and responsible command.”¹

Thoughtful study on war, the ultimate application of military force to achieve political ends, is normally undertaken in an academic setting, such as in the seminar room. One may also consider war in all its complexity on the great battlefields of history, where in a few hours or days and in the confines of several square miles, issues of policy and strategy, operations and tactics were contested by armies, ably or poorly led.

Thoughtful and informed discussions about the battle of Gettysburg, a discrete tactical event embedded within a campaign, can lead to insights on the complexities associated with the employment of military power to achieve strategic ends. General Robert E. Lee, in this instance, sought to secure independence for the Confederacy by winning a military victory in Pennsylvania, which would in turn, lead to a favorable political settlement of the war. His opponent, General George G. Meade, sought to prevent this, and in so doing to preserve the Union. As tactical and operational decisions were made throughout the battle and campaign, the political ends for which the Civil War was being fought shaped and determined decisions at all levels of war. We can benefit from studying the Gettysburg Campaign by carefully and thoughtfully examining decisions made by the respective political leaders directing the war, and those of field commanders directing actions on the battlefield. Armed with even a limited knowledge of the personalities involved and the conditions extant on the field, we can arrive at informed judgments on the thinking that was done and the decisions that were made affecting the outcome of the battle. Critical thinking, in other words, is the order of the day.

Carl von Clausewitz, the 19th century Prussian military theorist, reminds us that when engaged in critical thinking one must not only find fault with what was done, but one must also propose alternatives not taken, and these too must be rigorously examined. What better course of action could have been taken? If the best course of action was the one executed, why did it succeed, or fail?

One student of the profession of arms put it this way,

To criticize the work of the great masters of military art... with the best maps on the table in the quiet of a library and with information available which in many instances was wanting to the commanders in the field, is not to assert that one could have done better oneself. Every commander, however

¹ In 1901, at the time of the dedication of the first Army War College located at Washington Barracks (now Fort McNair), then Secretary of War Elihu Root created the Army’s first senior service school in response to the Army’s lackluster handling of the deployment and employment of forces during the Spanish American War, 1898-1901. Quotation is adapted from the U.S. Army War College Curriculum Pamphlet, 2003-2004, p. 2.

brilliant, made mistakes either from lack of correct information, from want of knowledge which subsequent experiments on the battlefield have placed within the reach of every subaltern, and very often from bodily pain and exhaustion which the prolonged strain of commanding an army in war not seldom inflicts. No sort of education in troop-leading is more valuable than a close consideration of the mistakes and failures of great generals, together with an attempt to form the mental picture which presented itself to them and on which they acted at the time.²

As we walk the fields of Gettysburg our task is to think hard about the complexities of the profession of arms and the use of force to achieve political ends. Insights on generalship, command, and leadership are equally important objectives.

Examples of leadership challenges at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war may be examined during the Gettysburg staff ride. Countless examples of direct leadership successes and failures abound as one looks at the three days of Gettysburg. Moreover, when considering the challenges faced by Meade and Lee, army commanders with both tactical and operational level responsibilities, we can see similarities and differences between direct and indirect, or organizational, leadership skills come sharply into focus. The same may be said for comparisons between strategic leadership and direct and indirect leadership challenges.

Finally, as we walk Lincoln's "hallowed ground," we would be remiss if we did not take time to think about the stern demands of the profession of arms and the nature of what is generally referred to as the warrior ethos. Ultimately, the destiny of national policy and strategy, and the fate of the most elaborate military plans and operations, come to rest on the shoulders of those who stand resolutely on distant battlefields. Those who have volunteered to serve and the nations that send them to war and battle, rightly expect that decisions about when and where they are sent, and to what purpose, how they are led and to what ends -- that these and countless other decisions on which their lives depend -- are securely and firmly in the hands of competent professionals.

² Cecil Battine, *The Crisis of the Confederacy*, p vii-ix

The Battle of Gettysburg **1-3 July 1863**

The battle of Gettysburg is generally recognized as one of the most important battles of the American Civil War (1861-1865). With victory, the North seized the strategic initiative, but tragically, two more difficult years of war would be necessary to defeat the South. Nonetheless, by the power of his address in November, 1863, Abraham Lincoln forever attached to the Gettysburg a symbolism that secured its revered place in the history of the war and of the nation.

For the first two years of the Civil War the Southern States, also known as the Confederate States of America (CSA), adopted a defensive military strategy seeking to win the war by convincing the North that it could not defeat the South by force of arms. From the outset, the North had adopted an offensive military strategy and sought to defeat Southern armies, occupy terrain, and, ultimately, capture the Confederate capital in Richmond, Virginia. Although the North was far stronger than the South in population, wealth, and natural resources, skillful Southern generals blunted these advantages by outmaneuvering and outfighting the Union armies in battle after battle between 1861 and 1863. Nonetheless, by the summer of 1863 it was clear to Confederate General Robert E. Lee that a defensive strategy would not lead to victory for the South. In his judgment, with a prolonged war, victory would go to the side with the greatest resources. Consequently, in the aftermath of his brilliant victory over a Union force nearly twice the size of his own at Chancellorsville, Virginia, in May 1863, Lee determined to undertake a decisive campaign to end the war on terms favorable to the South.

By 1863, an antiwar sentiment was growing in the North, and although Union armies had recently won some successes in the western theater of war, many called for an end to the war. To get the men necessary to fill Union armies, conscription had been adopted, further adding to the discontent. In June of 1863, Lee went to Confederate President Jefferson Davis with a plan designed to further demoralize the North and perhaps create conditions that would cause Northerners to demand that their government end the war. In short, Lee suggested an invasion of the North arguing that from a position in Southern Pennsylvania his army could threaten the key Northern cities of Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. His presence in Pennsylvania would compel the Northern army to attack him on ground of his choosing, thereby permitting his smaller army to fight from a position of advantage. Victory in such a battle might result in negotiations leading to Southern independence.

In late June, 1863, Lee led a Confederate army of 75,000 men into Pennsylvania. A Union army, commanded by Major General George Gordon Meade, moved north from vicinity Washington, D.C., to confront Lee's force. On the 1 July, leading elements of the two armies met at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, as much by accident as design. Lee had detached his cavalry division, Major General J.E.B. Stuart commanding, to screen his flanks, but had lost contact with it and was thus ignorant of the dispositions of Union forces. Meade, newly appointed to command the Union army on 28 June, moved cautiously to engage the Confederate army, sending two Union corps (I and XI) under the command of Major General John Reynolds ahead of his army. Elements of two additional corps (III and XII) arrived later in the day, adding their weight to the gathering Union force. Confederate forces were scattered over a wide area of

Pennsylvania on 1 July, and only about half of the Confederate army (30,000) managed to get into the fight on the first day. About an equal number of Union forces (28,000) contained the Confederate attack. Neither army commander exercised direct command on the first day. Subordinates led attacks and counterattacks on the north and west side of Gettysburg throughout the day until the weight of Confederate attacks caused Northern forces to retreat to defensive positions that had been hastily prepared on the hills to the south of the town. Both armies sustained heavy casualties during the day's fighting with each side counting nearly 7000 killed, wounded, or captured.

Although Lee had intended to fight a defensive battle, the chance meeting engagement of the armies caused him to alter his plans, and the success gained the first day convinced him to continue the attack the following day. Calling up Lieutenant General James Longstreet's corps from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, he ordered all three corps of the Army of Northern Virginia to concentrate near Gettysburg. Meanwhile, Meade determined to commit the entire Army of the Potomac to the battle, and likewise ordered a concentration of forces in defensive positions on the ground south of the town of Gettysburg.

On 2 July, Lee attempted to seize the high ground on the Union army's southern flank with a force of 28,000 men under Longstreet. Simultaneously, supporting attacks led by CSA Lieutenant Generals Richard Ewell and A.P. Hill were to be conducted on the Union right and center. Unfortunately for Lee, control of the two wings of his army, separated by over five miles, proved too difficult, and the flank attacks were not synchronized. Meade was able to shift forces within his lines to meet and repulse both attacks, although with heavy casualties. At the end of the day on 2 July, Union forces had suffered nearly 9,000 casualties, but had restored their lines and absorbed the Confederate attacks. Lee had suffered nearly the same number of casualties.

During the night of 2-3 July both armies closed on the field. Meade briefly considered withdrawing his army to better defensive lines closer to Washington, but ultimately decided to remain in his strong defensive position at Gettysburg. Lee reasoned that he had nearly achieved success on the first two days of the battle and thus resolved to continue the attack on 3 July. Although he had intended to fight a defensive battle in the north, events had dictated otherwise. He was resolved to retain a firm grip on the strategic and operational initiative. Lee had intended to provision his army by foraging and thus had few supplies on hand. Engaged as he was Lee could not wait on the enemy to attack him and thus success lay only in sustaining offensive operations. To withdraw after two days of fighting would give the Union a *de facto* victory and dash all hopes of securing the strategic ends that had brought him to Pennsylvania.

Late on the afternoon of 2 July Lee's cavalry force had at last joined the army. Taking no counsel from subordinates who advocated withdrawing to defensive positions to the west, he determined to continue pressing his attacks against the center of the Union line. If the northern and southern flanks of the Union position were strong, Lee reasoned, its center must be weak, and thus it was there he would mass his attack on 3 July. He reasoned that the Union army, once sharply struck and penetrated, would collapse and flee as it had in so many preceding battles. Lee had enormous confidence in the fighting qualities of his army; he thought them capable of anything. It was only the failure to coordinate the wings of his army that had caused success to elude them during the first two days of fighting, or so Lee believed. But Lee was wrong. The

Union Army of the Potomac had been steadily gaining in proficiency, and in the aftermath of each defeat, changes and improvements had been made. The soldiers had become toughened by battle and incompetent and inexperienced leaders slowly but surely weeded out. The Union defeat two months earlier at Chancellorsville was not so much a defeat of the Union army as a defeat of its commander at the time, Joseph Hooker. He was now gone, Meade was in command, and Meade was a fighter. Lee's army, magnificent though it was, had been inexorably weakened by losses of veterans and key leaders. The two armies that would meet on the third of July were evenly matched-- more so than either commander realized.

Shortly after noon on 3 July, nearly 120 cannons along the Confederate line opened a two-hour barrage on the center of the Union line. Lee's plan called for nearly 15,000 men under Major General George Pickett to assault the center of the Union line, while secondary attacks, one on the right of the Union line with infantry and a second in the rear of the Union line with the Confederate cavalry, lent support. Neither supporting attack developed as planned. Union forces launched an early morning attack on 3 July to recover positions on Culp's Hill lost the previous day. This fighting began before dawn and ended by midday. Later in the afternoon, the Confederate cavalry force was caught circling around to the east and was repulsed by Union cavalry a few hours later. Despite these setbacks, Lee remained confident his frontal attack would succeed.

Around 3:00 p.m., Pickett led forward three Confederate divisions, about 15,000 men, to attack the center of the Union line, held by an equal number of defenders. Advancing across nearly a mile of open ground, the Confederates presented a magnificent spectacle, flags waving in the bright sun and soldiers on line as if on parade. Pressing on through a hail of fire and with the Rebel yell ringing above the din of battle the Confederate army struck the Union line. Yankee defenders met the attack, and in fierce hand-to-hand fighting, halted the attack and repelled the Confederate forces. It had been a bloody fight. Fifty-five percent of the attacking forces were killed or wounded, as were forty-five percent of the defenders. Meade attempted to organize a counterattack to follow-up his success, but as it was late in the day, he was unable to do so. Neither force made any effort to continue the attack on the following day, and during the evening of 4-5 July, the Confederate commander withdrew his forces. The Union commander cautiously pursued the Confederate force but made no effort to hinder their withdrawal to positions in northern Virginia.

The battle was costly for both sides. Confederate losses numbered about 28,063 (3,903 killed) out of the 75,000 men in the army. Northern losses totaled 23,049 (3,155 killed) among the 90,000 men in the army. Lee had failed to achieve his objectives while incurring heavy losses. Meade claimed victory but failed to pursue Lee aggressively. Abraham Lincoln, at first elated over the victory at Gettysburg, despaired on hearing that a golden opportunity to destroy the Confederate army had been lost when Meade failed to destroy Lee's army north of the Potomac River. In a short time, the Army of Northern Virginia had replenished its ranks and was fit for battle. Though never again strong enough to mount an invasion of the north, the Confederate army was able to conduct defensive operations with bloody tenacity. The war continued almost two more years, and indeed the darkest days were yet to come.

In time, the battle of Gettysburg came to be seen as the turning point in the war-- the point where the strategic initiative clearly shifted in favor of the Union. In November 1863, President Abraham Lincoln came to Gettysburg to dedicate the cemetery where those who had died in the battle were buried. His memorable speech secured for Gettysburg its place in American history. Lincoln used the battle to explain in simple terms the issues underlying the war and the reasons why the North must succeed and the Union be preserved. Eloquent in its simplicity and poignancy, the power and impact of the speech endures. Gettysburg today remains as it was then, a monument not only to those who died there fighting for the cause of freedom, but also a symbol of what Americans are willing to pay for the preservation of that freedom.

**The Gettysburg Campaign
Union and Confederate Forces
Order of Battle³**

Union Army of the Potomac (95,000)

Commander: MG George Gordon Meade⁴

Infantry (approximately 68,000)

- 7 Infantry Corps (strengths varied between 8,000 and 16,000 per corps)

I Corps: MG John Reynolds, 3 Infantry Divisions (Wadsworth, Robinson, and Doubleday)

II Corps: MG Winfield Scott Hancock, 3 Divisions (Caldwell, Gibbons, and Hays)

III Corps: MG Daniel Sickles, 2 Divisions (Birney and Humphreys)

V Corps: MG George Sykes, 3 Divisions (Barnes, Ayres, and Crawford)

VI Corps: MG John Sedgwick, 3 Divisions (Wright, Howe, Newton)

XI Corps: MG Oliver Howard, 3 Divisions (Barlow, von Steinwehr, and Schurz)

XII Corps: MG William Slocum, 2 Divisions (Williams and Geary)

- Cavalry Corps: MG Alfred Pleasonton, 3 Divisions (Buford, Gregg, and Kilpatrick)

- Artillery with the army: 372 pieces in 65 batteries (6 gun batteries)

Confederate Army of Northern Virginia (75,000)

Commander: General Robert E. Lee

Infantry (approximately 62,000)

- 3 Infantry Corps (strengths varied between 19,000 and 24,000)

I Corps: LTG James Longstreet, 3 Divisions (McLaws, Pickett, and Hood)

II Corps: LTG Richard Ewell, 3 Divisions (Early, Johnson, and Rodes)

III Corps: LTG Ambrose P. Hill, 3 Divisions (Anderson, Heth, and Pender)

- Cavalry Division: MG J.E.B. Stuart, 7 Brigades (Hampton, Robertson, Fitz. Lee, Jenkins, Jones, W.H.F. Lee, and Imboden)

- Artillery with the army: 265 pieces in 60 batteries (4 gun batteries)

³ Order of battle is a term of art. It refers to the strength, command structure, and organization of military units.

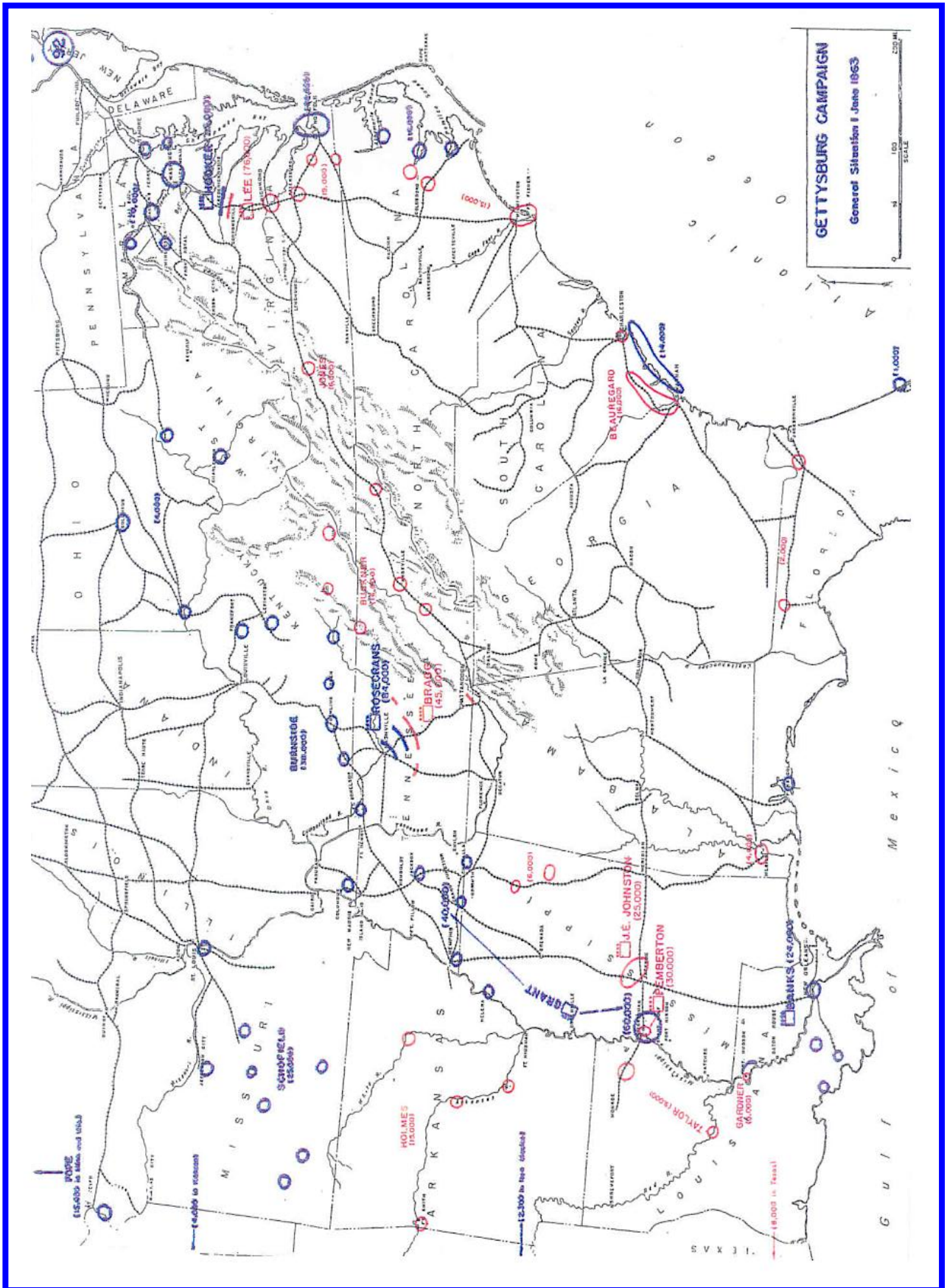
⁴ The Union Army had only two grades of general officer in 1863. Brigadier Generals normally commanded brigades, but could be found in command of divisions as well. Major Generals commanded divisions, corps, armies and departments, the latter being geographic areas of responsibility. By 1863 the Confederacy had four grades of general officer: Brigadiers commanded brigades, Major Generals commanded divisions, Lieutenant Generals commanded corps, and Generals commanded armies and departments.

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Gettysburg Campaign
Chronology of Strategic and Operational Events
February-July 1863

- 23 Feb Lee directs J. Hotchkiss to “Make a map of the Shenandoah Valley from Staunton, VA, to Harrisburg, PA,” and keep his work a closely guarded secret
- 15 Mar Lee orders his pontoon trains to Culpeper, VA
- 29 Apr Chancellorsville Campaign interrupts planning
- 30 Apr Grant runs batteries at Vicksburg and crosses over to east bank
- 16 May Lee briefs CSA NCA on tentative invasion plans; Battle of Champion Hill, MS
- 19 May 1st assault on Vicksburg
- 22 May 2nd assault on Vicksburg; siege begins
- 26 May Lee’s second meeting with NCA; gains final approval
- 3 June Movement commences, I & II Corps, III Corps at Fredericksburg
- 4 June Hooker detects movement and sends cavalry to investigate
- 9 June Battle of Brandy Station
- 10 June Hooker proposes to march on Richmond; Lincoln disapproves, “Lee’s army is your main objective point”
- 15 June Ewell captures Winchester, VA
- 16 June Ewell crosses the Potomac; Harrisburg, PA, citizens panic and begin fleeing the city
- 22 June Lee’s orders to Ewell, “If Harrisburg comes within your means, capture it.”
- 23 June Stuart ordered to screen Ewell’s right and report movements of Federal Army (last contact w/Lee until 2 July)
- 24 June Longstreet and Hill cross the Potomac; Ewell marches on Carlisle, PA
- 25 June Stuart begins his ride around the Federal Army
- 26 June Early passes through Gettysburg enroute to York, PA
Hooker reports movement toward Frederick, MD
- 27 June Hooker demands control to be relieved if not given control over all forces in the theater; Ewell takes Carlisle, PA
- 28 June Meade replaces Hooker as commander, Army of the Potomac; Lee learns of rapid Federal advance, orders Longstreet, Hill and Ewell to concentrate at Cashtown
- 29 June Meade continues northward; Buford’s cavalry advances on Gettysburg
- 30 June Confederates advance east from Chambersburg; Ewell south from Carlisle; Buford skirmishes with Confederates at Gettysburg
- 1 July Hill moves on Gettysburg, Reynolds brings up I and XI Corps, the battle begins
- 2 July Longstreet’s assault in the South, Ewell’s attack in the north uncoordinated; Federal corps close up; Stuart arrives at Gettysburg; Meade’s council of war decides to stay and fight
- 3 July Longstreet’s assault (Pickett’s Charge); Federal victory; Meade chooses not to counterattack due to the lateness of the hour
- 4 July Vicksburg surrenders; heavy rain at Gettysburg; no fighting
- 5 July Lee withdraws through Chambersburg and Fairfield; Federal cavalry burns Lee’s pontoon bridge at Falling Waters
- 6 July Federal troops begin pursuit of Lee’s army

- 10 July Lee arrives at the Potomac River crossing and finds the river in flood and that his pontoon bridge has been destroyed by Union cavalry
- 11 July Federal troops confront Lee's army at Falling Waters
- 12 July Meade holds council of war, decides to delay attacking Lee
- 13 July Draft riots break out in NYC; Lee makes good his escape across the Potomac
- 14 July Meade begins crossing the Potomac; Lee withdraws further south; stung by what he perceives to be unfair criticism of his generalship, Meade requests relief from command of the Army of the Potomac; Lincoln retains Meade in command
- 19 July Meade completes crossing, presses after Lee; minor skirmishing during the next ten days
- 30 July Lincoln cautions Meade against unwise attacks on Lee, Gettysburg Campaign officially ends
- 8 August Lee requests to be relieved of command of the Army Northern Virginia; Davis retains Lee in command



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Strategic Situation May-June, 1863

Union “Spring Offensive” stopped at Chancellorsville, May 1-3; Union Major General Joseph Hooker intends to resume the offensive “as soon as practicable.”

Union Major General Wm. Rosecrans in Tennessee preparing for summer offensive; Major General Ulysses S. Grant crosses Mississippi River (30 April) and advances on Vicksburg.

Union Major General Nathaniel Banks launches an offensive into western Louisiana and Texas.

Union Naval blockade slowly becoming more effective.

Although the threat of foreign intervention has diminished, France has reinforced its forces in Mexico (which have been there since 1861 & will take Mexico City in June 1863).

War weariness grips the North:

- Conscription is set to be implemented in July 1863 despite protests.
- Antiwar movement becoming more active in Ohio, Indiana, and New York.

Union Course of Action:

- Resume offensive in Virginia in pursuit of “On to Richmond!” strategy.
- Combine forces of Grant and Banks and gain control of Mississippi River.
- Or send Banks into Texas or Alabama and leave Grant to work the River.
- Or concentrate forces and seek to capture southern ports in support of the Union naval blockade.

Confederate Courses of Action:

- Defend in the east and shift forces to Bragg in Tennessee to oppose Rosecrans.
- Defend in the east and shift forces to relieve Vicksburg.
- Defend in the west and attack into Pennsylvania drawing Union forces from the west.

Lee’s arguments:

- Virginia, ravaged by two years of war, could use some relief.
- An invasion Pennsylvania would:
 - permit subsistence of Lee’s army in the north,
 - demonstrate to Northerners that their armies could not protect them,
 - seize the operational initiative and preclude Federal operations in northern Virginia for the summer. Moreover,
 - a successful operation in Pennsylvania may encourage foreign recognition,
 - and would achieve decisive results, unlike western theater strategic options.

In sum, Confederate forces grow weaker as the war grinds them down. Lee wants to strike while he still has the combat power to do so. He wants to abandon an exhaustion strategy and win the war quickly with offensive military operations.

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Operational Movements Leading to Gettysburg May-June 1863

Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, approves Lee's plans to invade Gettysburg in late May.

Lee's Plan:

- A.P.Hill's corps to remain on banks of the Rappahannock to cover the northern movement of the army.
- Stuart's Cavalry Division (-)⁵ to screen east of the mountains while army moves north down (the river flows north) the Shenandoah Valley.
- Ewell's corps, followed by Longstreet's corps, moves up the valley to Winchester (12-15 June) and on to Chambersburg.
- Hill moves north to join Lee once assured the Federal army has moved north in pursuit of Lee.

Commander's intent: Fight a decisive battle on favorable terms. Ideally, the Union army will move north with corps in column enabling Lee to concentrate and defeat them piecemeal.

Operational focus: Harrisburg and Wrightsville with their railroad bridges.

Strategic objectives: Threaten Baltimore and Washington and strike a blow against Northern will to support the war.

Union Major General Joseph Hooker's reactions:

- Detects Lee's movements and asks Lincoln for permission to strike out for Richmond. Lincoln disapproves Hooker's request, "I think Lee's army, and not Richmond, is your sure objective point....Fight him...when opportunity offers."⁶
- Orders a cavalry recon on 9 June that confirms Lee is on the move and results in the Battle of Brandy Station.
- Moves the army north (24 June) in pursuit of Lee, but is relieved of command (28 June) by Lincoln in a dispute involving C2 (Troops at Harpers Ferry).
- Upon assuming command, Meade oriented his army toward Gettysburg, leading with cavalry (Buford). Rest of army to follow in two wings (3 & 4 corps respectively).

Commander's intent: Find Lee and fight him, defensively if possible, offensively if he must. As a precaution, Meade orders construction of defensive positions along on Pipe Creek.

Operational objectives: Protect Baltimore and Washington while creating conditions that will lead to battle with Lee under favorable conditions.

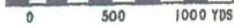
⁵ J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry Division of three brigades was reinforced by four additional brigades for this campaign. Stuart with the brigades of Wade Hampton, W.H.F. Lee, and Fitzhugh Lee, screened the army's movement north. The other four brigades (Wm. Jones, Imboden, Robertson, and Jenkins) guarded mountain passes, protected Lee's trains or, in the case of Jenkins, accompanied the army on the march.

⁶ *Official Records, War of the Rebellion*, Vol. XVII/1, p. 35.

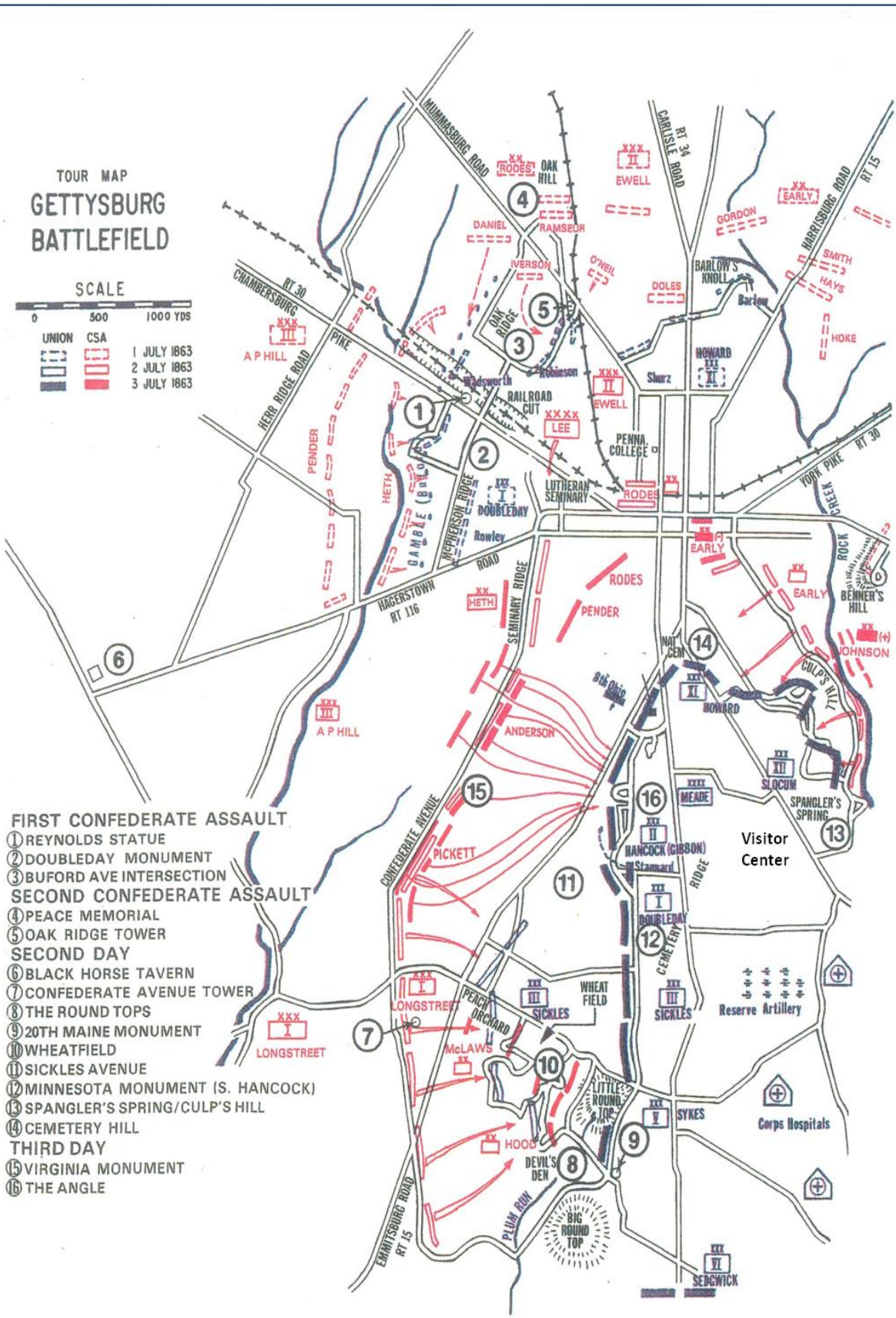
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TOUR MAP
GETTYSBURG
BATTLEFIELD

SCALE



UNION	CSA	
		1 JULY 1863
		2 JULY 1863
		3 JULY 1863



- FIRST CONFEDERATE ASSAULT**
- ① REYNOLDS STATUE
 - ② DOUBLEDAY MONUMENT
 - ③ BUFORD AVE INTERSECTION
- SECOND CONFEDERATE ASSAULT**
- ④ PEACE MEMORIAL
 - ⑤ OAK RIDGE TOWER
- SECOND DAY**
- ⑥ BLACK HORSE TAVERN
 - ⑦ CONFEDERATE AVENUE TOWER
 - ⑧ THE ROUND TOPS
 - ⑨ 20TH MAINE MONUMENT
 - ⑩ WHEATFIELD
 - ⑪ SICKLES AVENUE
 - ⑫ MINNESOTA MONUMENT (S. HANCOCK)
 - ⑬ SPANGLER'S SPRING/CULP'S HILL
 - ⑭ CEMETERY HILL
- THIRD DAY**
- ⑮ VIRGINIA MONUMENT
 - ⑯ THE ANGLE

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Summary of Significant Events The Battle of Gettysburg

Day 1 – 1 July 1863, Wednesday, very cloudy, 76 degrees

0830 CSA III Corps (Hill) approaches Gettysburg precipitating a meeting engagement with Buford's Federal Cavalry Division⁷

0900-1000 Confederate division under Heth attacks and is repulsed.

0830 MG Reynolds arrives with lead division of USA I Corps

1030 Reynolds is killed but not before he has sent word to Meade to bring along the rest of the Army of the Potomac

1300 Union Major General Howard's XI Corps arrives on the field

1330 CSA II Corps (Ewell) arrives from Carlisle and attacks the northern flank of the Union line with Rodes' division and then Early's division collapsing XI Corps' position.

1530 Nearly simultaneously CSA attacks with 2 divisions (Heth and Pender) breaking through the Union line at the Seminary.

1600 Union I and XI Corps fall back to positions on Cemetery Hill.

1630 Lee orders a discretionary attack on Cemetery Hill. Ewell hesitates and succeeds in a launching only a feeble attack on the hill late in the day.

2100 Lee concludes that on the merits of success thus far to continue the attack on 2 July.

Day 2 – 2 July 1863, Thursday, fair skies, 81 degrees

0100 Union army commander Major General Meade arrives on the field after midnight and decides to defend his position on Cemetery Ridge.

0600 Meade orders XII Corps commander William Slocum to plan an attack northward from Cemetery Hill. After a brief reconnaissance Slocum recommends against the attack.

1100 Lee orders his I Corps commander, James Longstreet, to attack Union left with two divisions. Hill (III Corps) to cooperate with one division. Ewell (II Corps) to conduct limited attacks to fix Union forces. Longstreet reluctantly accepts the order.

⁷ All times are, at best, estimates. Wristwatches were yet to be invented and no effort was made to synchronize pocket watches. Most witnesses estimated time by the position of the sun, leading to a general approximation at best. One student of the battle who sought to establish exact times for events gave up in disgust, observing "Now I know why Joshua commanded the sun to stand still. That was the only way one could be sure of the time." The quote is attributed to John Batchelder, first historian for the Gettysburg Battlefield Monument Association.

By noon all but the Union VI Corps (John Sedgwick commanding) had arrived on the field.

1330 Longstreet Corps (divisions of Hood and McLaws) seeking to avoid detection by Union observation posts is forced to countermarch to his attack position against the Union left.

1530 III US Corps (Daniel Sickles commanding), seeking better ground, moves to the Peach Orchard causing a dangerous salient, or bulge, in the Federal line.

1730 Longstreet's divisions attack the southern end of the Union line. Meade rushes reinforcements to the fight: Caldwell's division (II Corps), Williams' division (XII Corps), two divisions from V Corps, and at the end of the fight, VI Corps arrives on the field.

1915 As Longstreet's attack was stalling, Ewell finally assaulted Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill. He is repulsed but only after reaching the gates of the cemetery, and in so doing nearly breaching the Federal lines.

2100 Confederate Major General J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry arrives after the fighting has quieted.

2130 Lee determines to continue the attack on day 3.

2300 Meade determines to continue his defensive.

Day 3, 3 July 1863, Friday, sunny, 87 degrees.

0800 Lee orders Longstreet to attack the center of the Federal line with George Pickett's fresh division and two divisions from Hill's Corps (Pettigrew commanding for Heth, and Lane commanding for Pender).

Ewell is to cooperate by attacking Cemetery Hill and Stuart is to gain a position in the rear of the Union line from which he can support Pickett's breakthrough.

Meade continues to defend with MG Hancock assuming control of the center of his line.

1300-1500 Artillery preparation precedes the attack on the center of the Federal line.

1515 Pickett leads the three-division assault and is repulsed.

1600 Meade declines to counterattack.

Day 4, 4 July 1863, Saturday, Showers, 72 degrees

Meade declines to attack/ Lee orders a withdrawal to begin after dark.

Longstreet's Assault, 3 July 1863
(Commonly referred to as Pickett's Charge)

Lee's Objective: Decisive tactical victory in pursuit of strategic ends.

Tactical Plan: Frontal assault against a vulnerable section of Federal lines.

- Ewell to conduct supporting attacks on Culp's and Cemetery hills. (Precluded by Union counterattack 3 A.M. on 3 July)
- Stuart's cavalry positioned in rear of Union lines to exploit a break-through (Repulsed by Custer at 1515 hours)
- 3 divisions under Longstreet attack the Union center
- attack preceded by artillery preparation (120 guns)

Confederate Forces making the attack:

- From Hill's corps, 2 divisions
 - Heth's Division (~4000) commanded by James Pettigrew (AL, TN, MS, NC, VA)⁸ with brigades commanded by:
 - Archer (Fry, AL & TN), Pettigrew (Marshall, NC), Davis (MS & NC), Brockenbrough (VA)
 - Pender's Division (~3000) commanded by Isaac Trimble
 - Scales (Lowrance, NC), Lane (NC)

From Longstreet's corps, 1 division (VA)

- George Pickett (7500 men) with brigades commanded by:
 - Kemper
 - Garnett
 - Armistead

Total forces: ~12,500 to 15,000⁹

Assault formation: 9 Brigades (2 additional brigades, Wilcox and Perry, from Anderson's Division, Hill's corps, were to support on the right. Although these latter forces did advance they did not participate in the main attack and therefore are discounted in the final numbers. Their efforts did not materially support Pickett and were easily repulsed by Federal troops well south of the Angle.)

Pickett advanced on the right with 2 brigades forward (Garnett north, Kemper south, Armistead to the rear).

⁸ States contributing regiments included Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, North Carolina and Virginia. While a preponderance of the attacking Confederates were Virginians, it should be noted that one in four were North Carolinians.

⁹ Estimates on the number of men who made the assault on the third day vary greatly from a low of 10,500 to 15,000. Confederate strength returns for 3 July were not generated at the time and precise losses in Heth's and Pender's divisions on the first day of fighting are difficult to establish making an exact strength for these two divisions problematic. An assault force numbering approximately 12,500 is a reasonable estimate for Longstreet's assault.

Pettigrew advanced on the left with brigades in line (south to north, Archer, Pettigrew, Davis, Brockenbough) followed by Trimble with brigades on line (south to north, Scales and Lane)

Pickett had field command.¹⁰

During the assault Union forces, the 8th Ohio regiment (posted near the Brian [or Bryan] farm), and Stannard's Vermont Brigade (3rd Div, I Corps) positioned south of the Angle, enveloped the flanks of the Confederate attack with fires.

Alexander Webb's Pennsylvanians (2nd Division, II Corps) defended the Angle (69th, 71st, 72nd, and 106th Pennsylvania Regiments). John Gibbon, acting-commander II Corps, commanded the center of the line. Winfield Scott Hancock was in overall command of the center (II and III Corps)

Approximate number of Federal troops in the area to be struck by the assaulting Confederate force, 12,500-15,000; resulting in a correlation of forces of approximately 1:1 at the point of attack.¹¹

¹⁰ There is some question as to whether Pickett actually commanded the divisions of Pettigrew and Trimble. Some sources indicate he was merely to cooperate with them, leaving Longstreet to direct the larger effort. Others hold that Pickett had nominal if not actual authority to direct the movements of all three divisions in the attacking force. Giving credence to this latter opinion is the fact that Pickett did send instructions to brigade commanders in the other two divisions at various times within the assault.

¹¹ Precise figures on casualties in the attack are impossible to state with certainty. George R. Stewart, *Pickett's Charge*, and others estimate that 55% of the attacking force and 45% of the defending forces were killed, wounded or captured. See pages 260-266 for a computation of Confederate and Federal casualties.

Gettysburg Casualty Figures

About the only thing historians can agree on is to disagree about casualty figures for Civil War battles. Although casualty figures for the Federal army are more reliable than those for the Confederacy, where in many instances records were lost or destroyed, considerable care must be taken when looking at the numbers. Simply put, there was no standard method for accounting for casualties in battles and campaigns. Were, for example, men who became casualties in minor skirmishes preceding or following the main battles to be counted? What of the men who later died of wounds? How were they to be counted? Many men listed as missing in first reports later straggled back into camp.

In short, all casualty figures are subject to qualification. That said, the following casualty figures for the Gettysburg campaign are generally accepted by historians with the noted qualifications.

Army of the Potomac fighting strength: 90,000

Federal Casualties: (23,049)

Killed	Wounded	Missing/Captured
3,155	14,529	5,365

Army of Northern Virginia fighting strength: 75,000

Confederate Casualties: (28,063)

Killed	Wounded	Missing/Captured
3,903	18,735	5,425

These figures are taken from the *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*. Mark Boatner's *Civil War Dictionary* uses the same numbers. Luvaas and Nelson, *The Army War College Guide to the Battle of Gettysburg* list the Confederate casualties as 20,451 (2,592 KIA, 12,709 WIA, 5,150 MIA).

Intentionally Blank

Confederate Strategy Lee's Plan to Invade Pennsylvania

For sound tactical reasons Lee did not issue a written order to the army for the Gettysburg Campaign. The disastrous consequences of a lost order during the Antietam Campaign were still fresh in everyone's mind. Instead, Lee issued verbal orders to subordinates or provided separate instructions to commanders in personal correspondence. How Confederate leaders, President Jefferson Davis and his military advisors, including Lee, arrived at the momentous decision to invade Pennsylvania is the focus of our interest at the strategic level. The best account of the events surrounding this decision may be found in Edwin B. Coddington's, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*.

If a fraction of the Army of Northern Virginia could accomplish so much [defeat the Army of the Potomac at Chancellorsville], what could it not do once it had been refurbished and reinforced? The answer depended on Davis and Seddon [Confederate Secretary of War]. Lee had to get their approval and cooperation before he could proceed with his preparations.

While working out his plans Lee kept in constant touch with these men, usually by letter or dispatch but occasionally by personal conference.... Lee had to go to Richmond twice in May for meetings with Davis and Seddon before his summer offensive received final approval. The first conference resulted from Lee's desire to consult with Davis shortly after Chancellorsville.... He was there several days, from May 14 to 17, and during that time he discussed his plans with the two officials. No minutes were kept—at least none have been found—so there is no way of knowing exactly what Lee said in favor of his proposal or what questions were asked of him. The three men agreed upon an invasion of the North by Lee's army as a means of drawing Grant away from the lower Mississippi Valley before he could do any real harm. A few days later they learned the worst: Grant had finally cornered General Pemberton's army in Vicksburg...The news resulted in another conference on May 26. This time Davis, Seddon, and Lee met with the Cabinet to review Confederate grand strategy and decide what measures should be taken to force Grant to lift the siege. Davis now expressed doubts about the wisdom of invading Pennsylvania instead of detaching troops from Lee's army for the relief of Pemberton. Postmaster General John H. Reagan supported his position, but in the end both men yielded to the majority opinion and it was decided that the invasion should take place.... Lee seemed to assume that he and Davis...had come to an understanding...[but] he was soon disillusioned for on May 31...Davis made the amazing statement that he had "never fairly comprehended" Lee's "views and purposes" until he received a letter from him that day....Lee's statements seem to have surprised and upset Davis, and he expressed regret that he

had “misunderstood” the general; he would have been glad to “second” his wishes if he had known about them sooner. This exchange is hard to understand and makes one wonder what in fact the two men did discuss during Lee’s several visits to Richmond.¹²

Coddington’s interpretation of events at the planning session suggests that Davis was lukewarm at best in his support for an invasion of the north. Lee sees it as the best of available alternatives. That Davis later claimed to have “never fairly comprehended” Lee’s plans is confirmed by his unwillingness to provide Lee with all the troops the army commander wanted.¹³

As events unfolded Lee’s plan for invading the north appears in retrospect to have been a phased operation designed to allay the fears of Davis and others who were concerned about the safety of Richmond. As the Army of Northern Virginia began the invasion of the north, a third of the army was held along the Rappahannock River line below Fredericksburg until Lee was certain the Federals would not take advantage of his absence and launch a drive on Richmond. As his leading elements moved up the Shenandoah Valley Lee kept a close eye on the Federal Army of the Potomac. Once convinced that Richmond was safe, he pressed on, ordering the stay behind units to join him on the march. As the Confederate army moved northward it captured in succession the major towns that lay along the route north to Pennsylvania. In quick succession Winchester, Virginia, Martinsburg, West Virginia, and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania fell to advancing Confederate forces, setting the stage for the final drive on Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the state capital.

Lee’s general plan to build on successive victories made sense. If his forces were prevented from capturing the next city in the chain he could simply abandon the effort and withdraw safely back to Virginia. On the other hand, with each victory his campaign gathered momentum as it secured his line of operations. Thus it was with confidence that Lee, after capturing Chambersburg, ordered his subordinate Major General Richard Ewell to advance on Harrisburg. Essential to success of his plans was complete and detailed information on the actions of the Federal force. Lee sought to ensure this end by ordering his cavalry commander to keep tabs on the movements and intentions of the Federal force. This it failed to do, leading to disastrous consequences.

¹² Edwin Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, pp. 6-7. See also, Douglas S. Freeman’s *R.E. Lee III*, p. 19, for a slightly different account.

¹³ Lee asked to have the division of D.H. Hill, on duty in North Carolina, returned to the army. Davis disapproved this request because of his fears about a Federal attack along the North Carolina coast. This suggests that Davis at best considered Lee’s impending campaign a major effort, but hardly a campaign designed to win the war. Had the latter have been the case one would have thought Davis would have given Lee the troops he requested. Instead Davis substituted for Hill’s experienced troops units with less experience.

Meade Takes Command

The following correspondence includes the letter from Major General Henry Halleck, General-In-Chief of the Union Army, to Major General George G. Meade, alerting him of the President's decision to place him in command of the Army of the Potomac. In the letter Halleck goes to some length to assure Meade that he will have a free hand to direct the army as he sees fit as well all the men and material the government could provide. One would expect this latitude and support would be given a field commander so why bother to mention it? Meade's predecessor, Major General Joseph Hooker, had tendered his resignation only the day prior because he felt that he was being micromanaged by his superiors in Washington and, worse, denied the resources in men and material he believed necessary for successful prosecution of the war effort. In the first letter Halleck seeks to allay Meade's concerns and provide encouragement and reassurance.

Note in the second letter the lack of enthusiasm with which Meade accepts the appointment. Generals in command of the Army of the Potomac had not enjoyed much success for a variety of reasons. Indeed, so little desired was the command that several corps commanders in the army had refused the offer to replace Major General Joseph Hooker. Meade reluctance then to assume what he knew to be a heavy burden is understandable.

The third letter, dated 29 June, from Meade to Halleck, is important for it contains a statement of Meade's intent. The commander's intent is powerful leadership tool when used properly. It empowers subordinates to act in the absence of instructions when they find the conditions at hand different from those they had anticipated would obtain at the time they received the original order. Because the commander's intent is clearly expressed as a statement of desired conditions at end state, subordinate commanders are able to adapt to rapidly changing situations and yet take actions consistent with directions their commander would have given. Meade's intent is to find Lee's army and fight it, defensively if he can, but offensively if he must. Thus on 1 July when contact is made with the advance columns of Lee's army, Meade's army without orders moves to engage, thereby setting in motion events that would lead to the battle of Gettysburg.

The fourth piece of correspondence is a circular Meade issues to the army on 30 June. Circulars were so named because the correspondence was sent "around" the army, commander to commander, as a way of rapidly disseminating information. A courier would be dispatched with the circular and would literally ride around the army with the message. In his 30 June circular to the army Meade tells the individual soldiers why they are fighting. It concludes with an interesting motivational appeal.

The source of these letters is *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, commonly referred to as *The Official Records*. As early as 1863 Henry Halleck sought to preserve for history the official correspondence, orders, telegrams, and reports that collectively told the story of the war. Union records from the war were fairly complete; however captured Confederate records were not. Often crucial Confederate correspondence is missing from the records. In some instances, as with the exchange of letters between Lee and Davis that follows this section, private correspondence later surfaced, adding to our understanding of events.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, D.C., June 27, 1863.

Maj. Gen. GEORGE G. MEADE,
Army of the Potomac :

GENERAL: You will receive with this the order of the President placing you in command of the Army of the Potomac. Considering the circumstances, no one ever received a more important command; and I cannot doubt that you will fully justify the confidence which the Government has reposed in you.

You will not be hampered by any minute instructions from these headquarters. Your army is free to act as you may deem proper under the circumstances as they arise. You will, however, keep in view the important fact that the Army of the Potomac is the covering army of Washington as well as the army of operation against the invading forces of the rebels. You will, therefore, maneuver and fight in such a manner as to cover the capital and also Baltimore, as far as circumstances will admit. Should General Lee move upon either of these places, it is expected that you will either anticipate him or arrive with him so as to give him battle.

All forces within the sphere of your operations will be held subject to your orders.

Harper's Ferry and its garrison are under your direct orders.

You are authorized to remove from command, and to send from your army, any officer or other person you may deem proper, and to appoint to command as you may deem expedient.

In fine, general, you are entrusted with all the power and authority which the President, the Secretary of War, or the General-in-Chief can confer on you, and you may rely upon our full support.

You will keep me fully informed of all your movements, and the positions of your own troops and those of the enemy, so far as known.

I shall always be ready to advise and assist you to the utmost of my ability.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,¹⁴

H. W. HALLECK,

General-in-Chief.

FREDERICK, MD., *June 28, 1863--7 a.m.*
(Received 10 a.m.)

General H. W. HALLECK,
General-in-Chief:

The order placing me in command of this army is received. As a soldier, I obey it, and to the utmost of my ability will execute it. Totally unexpected as it has been, and in ignorance of the exact condition of the troops and position of the enemy, I can only now say that it appears to me I must move toward the Susquehanna, keeping Washington and Baltimore well covered, and if the enemy is checked in his attempt to cross the

¹⁴ Official Records, Vol. XXVII/1, p. 61.

Susquehanna, or if he turns toward Baltimore, to give him battle. I would say that I trust every available man that can be spared will be sent to me, as from all accounts the enemy is in strong force.. So soon as I can post myself up, I will communicate more in detail.¹⁵

GEO. G. MEADE,

Major-General.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

June 29, 1863--11 a.m.

Maj. Gen. H. W. HALLECK,

General-in-Chief:

Upon assuming command of the army, and after carefully considering the position of affairs and the movements of the enemy, I have concluded as follows: To move today toward Westminster and Emmitsburg, and the army is now in motion for that line, placing two corps, First and Eleventh, at Emmitsburg; two corps, Third and Twelfth, at Taneytown; one corps, Second, at Frizellburg, and one corps, Fifth, at Union; Sixth Corps at New Windsor; my cavalry guarding my flanks and rear. If Lee is moving for Baltimore, I expect to get between his main army and that place. If he is crossing the Susquehanna, I shall rely upon General Couch, with his force, holding him until I can fall upon his rear and give him battle, which I shall endeavor to do. I have ordered the abandonment of Harper's Ferry, a detachment of not more than 3,000 to proceed with the property, by canal, to Washington, and strengthen your forces there against any cavalry raid; the remainder to move up and join me. The line from Frederick to Baltimore by rail will necessarily be abandoned. While I move forward, I shall incline to the right, toward the Baltimore and Harrisburg road, to cover that, and draw supplies from there, if circumstances permit it, my main objective point being, of course, Lee's army, which I am satisfied has all passed on through Hagerstown toward Chambersburg. My endeavor will be in my movements to hold my force well together, with the hope of falling upon some portion of Lee's army in detail. The cavalry force between me and Washington, as soon as I can learn sufficiently of their movement to pursue and fight without wasting the necessary force by useless movements, will be engaged by my cavalry. Stuart's cavalry, from my best information, have divided into two columns, one on my right, between me and Baltimore, one on my left, through Hagerstown, to join their army. My main point being to find and fight the enemy,¹⁶ I shall have to submit to the cavalry raid around me in some measure. The sections of artillery and small force of cavalry sent from here to Baltimore have been ordered to fall back from Poplar Springs and join General Pleasonton's force, on my right, their route having been intercepted by the enemy's cavalry. I have hastily made up this dispatch to give you the information. Telegraphic communications have been cut off. I have no opportunity to receive a reply to mine asking your advice as to these movements, and upon my best judgment proceed to execute them. I can at present give no orders as to General Schenck's department in

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

¹⁶ Emphasis added.

Baltimore, or the Potomac in my rear; neither can I, in the absence of telegraphic communication, and on account of the great distance of Couch, exercise any influence, by advice or otherwise, concerning the co-operation of that force. These circumstances are beyond my control. I send this by courier, with the hope and expectation that it will reach you safely. Headquarters to-night are at Middleburg, 3 miles from Uniontown and 13 from Westminster. There is rail communication from Baltimore to Westminster.¹⁷

GEO. G. MEADE,

Major-General

[CIRCULAR.]

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

June 30, 1863.

The commanding general requests that previous to the engagement soon expected with the enemy, corps and all other commanding officers address their troops, explaining to them briefly the immense issues involved in the struggle. The enemy are (sic) on our soil. The whole country now looks anxiously to this army to deliver it from the presence of the foe. Our failure to do so will leave us no such welcome as the swelling of millions of hearts with pride and joy at our success would give to every soldier of this army. Homes, firesides, and domestic altars are involved. The army has fought well heretofore; it is believed that it will fight more desperately and bravely than ever if it is addressed in fitting terms.

Corps and other commanders are authorized to order the instant death of any soldier who fails in his duty at this hour.¹⁸

By command of Major-General Meade:

S. WILLIAMS,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

¹⁸ Emphasis added. Circular is found in Official Records, Vol. XXVII/3, p. 415.

Lee's Reflection on the Battle of Gettysburg

Less than a month after the battle of Gettysburg Lee penned the following letter to Jefferson Davis explaining why he fought the battle as he did. The note he refers to included a newspaper clipping that was highly critical of Lee, several named officers, and the army. Well before the true significance of the battle of Gettysburg was understood and thus before men such as Lee looked to protect their reputations, Lee weighs his own performance dispassionately.

To Jefferson Davis
Richmond, Virginia

Camp Culpeper [Virginia]
July 31, 1863

Mr. President:

Your note of the 27 enclosing a slip from the *Charleston Mercury* relative to the battle of Gettysburg is received. I much regret its general censure upon the operations of the army, as it is calculated to do us no good either at home or abroad. But I am prepared for similar criticism and as far as I am concerned the remarks fall harmless.

I am particularly sorry...that injustice should be done to any officer....No blame can be attached to the army for its failure to accomplish what was projected by me, nor should it be censured for the unreasonable expectations of the public. I am alone to blame, in perhaps expecting too much of its prowess and valor. It however in my opinion achieved under the guidance of the Most High a general success, though it did not win a victory.

I thought at the time that the latter was practicable. I still think if all things could have worked together it would have been accomplished. But with the knowledge I then had, and in the circumstances I was then placed, I do not know what better course I could have pursued. With my present knowledge, and could I have foreseen that the attack on the last day would have failed to drive the enemy from his position, I should certainly have tried some other course. What the ultimate result would have been is not so clear to me. Our loss has been very heavy, that of the enemy's is proportionally so. His crippled condition enabled us to retire from the country comparatively unmolested. The unexpected state of the Potomac was our only embarrassment....

I remain truly and sincerely yours,

R.E. Lee¹⁹

¹⁹ *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee*, Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, editors, pp. 564-65.

Lee's Request for Relief from Command

Robert E. Lee accepted full responsibility for the outcome at Gettysburg. Stung by the rising criticism for his handling of the battle and campaign he tendered his resignation to President Davis. The president's reply follows Lee's letter.

CAMP ORANGE, *August 8, 1863.*

His Excellency JEFFERSON DAVIS,
President of the Confederate States:

Mr. PRESIDENT: Your letters of July 28 and August 2 have been received, and I have waited for a leisure hour to reply, but I fear that will never come. I am extremely obliged to you for the attention given to the wants of this army, and the efforts made to supply them. Our absentees are returning, and I hope the earnest and beautiful appeal made to the country in your proclamation may stir up the virtue of the whole people, and that they may see their duty and perform it. Nothing is wanted but that their fortitude should equal their bravery to insure the success of our cause. We must expect reverses, even defeats. They are sent to teach us wisdom and prudence, to call forth greater energies, and to prevent our falling into greater disasters. Our people have only to be true and united, to bear manfully the misfortunes incident to war, and all will come right in the end.

I know how prone we are to censure and how ready to blame others for the non-fulfillment of our expectations. This is unbecoming in a generous people, and I grieve to see its expression. The general remedy for the want of success in a military commander is his removal. This is natural, and, in many instances, proper. For, no matter what may be the ability of the officer, if he loses the confidence of his troops disaster must sooner or later ensue.

I have been prompted by these reflections more than once since my return from Pennsylvania to propose to Your Excellency the propriety of selecting another commander for this army. I have seen and heard of expression of discontent in the public journals at the result of the expedition. I do not know how far this feeling extends in the army. My brother officers have been too kind to report it, and so far the troops have been too generous to exhibit it. It is fair, however, to suppose that it does exist, and success is so necessary to us that nothing should be risked to secure it. I therefore, in all sincerity, request Your Excellency to take measures to supply my place. I do this with the more earnestness because no one is more aware than myself of my inability for the duties of my position. I cannot even accomplish what I myself desire. How can I fulfill the expectations of others? In addition I sensibly feel the growing failure of my bodily strength. I have not yet recovered from the attack I experienced the past spring. I am becoming more and more incapable of exertion, and am thus prevented from making the personal examinations and giving the personal supervision to the operations in the field which I feel to be necessary. I am so dull that in making use of the eyes of others I am frequently misled. Everything, therefore, points to the advantages to be derived from a new commander, and I the more anxiously urge the matter upon Your Excellency from my belief that a younger and abler man than myself can readily be attained. I know that he will have as gallant and brave an army as ever existed to second his efforts, and it would be the happiest day of my life to see at its head a worthy leader--one that would

accomplish more than I could perform and all that I have wished. I hope Your Excellency will attribute my request to the true reason, the desire to serve my country, and to do all in my power to insure the success of her righteous cause.

I have no complaints to make of any one but myself. I have received nothing but kindness from those above me, and the most considerate attention from my comrades and companions in arms. To Your Excellency I am especially indebted for uniform kindness and consideration. You have done everything in your power to aid me in the work committed to my charge, without omitting anything to promote the general welfare. I pray that your efforts may at length be crowned with success, and that you may long live to enjoy the thanks of a grateful people.

With sentiments of great esteem, I am, very respectfully and truly, yours,²⁰

R. E. LEE,
General.

RICHMOND, VA.,
August 11, 1863.

General R. E. LEE,
Commanding Army of Northern Virginia:

Yours of 8th instant has been received. I am glad that you concur so entirely with me as to the want of our country in this trying hour, and am happy to add that after the first depression consequent upon our disaster in the west, indications have appeared that our people will exhibit that fortitude which we agree in believing is alone needful to secure ultimate success.

It well became Sidney Johnston, when overwhelmed by a senseless clamor, to admit the rule that success is the test of merit; and yet there has been nothing which I have found to require a greater effort of patience than to bear the criticisms of the ignorant, who pronounce everything a failure which does not equal their expectations or desires, and can see no good result which is not in the line of their own imaginings. I admit the propriety of your conclusions, that an officer who loses the confidence of his troops should have his position changed, whatever may be his ability, but when I read the sentence I was not at all prepared for the application you were about to make. Expressions of discontent in the public journals furnish but little evidence of the sentiment of an army. I wish it were otherwise, even though all the abuse of myself should be accepted as the results of honest observation. I say I wish I could feel that the public journals were not generally partisan nor venal.

Were you capable of stooping to it, you could easily surround yourself with those who would fill the press with your laudations, and seek to exalt you for what you had not done, rather than detract from the achievements which will make you and your army the subject of history and object of the world's admiration for generations to come.

²⁰ *The Wartime Papers of R.E. Lee*, pp. 589-90.

I am truly sorry to know that you still feel the effects of the illness you suffered last spring, and can readily understand the embarrassments you experience in using the eyes of others, having been so much accustomed to make your own reconnaissances. Practice will, however, do much to relieve that embarrassment, and the minute knowledge of the country which you have acquired will render you less dependent for topographical information.

But suppose, my dear friend, that I were to admit, with all their implications, the points which you present, where am I to find that new commander who is to possess the greater ability which you believe to be required? I do not doubt the readiness with which you would give way to one who could accomplish all that you have wished, and you will do me the justice to believe that if Providence should kindly offer such a person for our use, I would not hesitate to avail of his services.

My sight is not sufficiently penetrating to discover such hidden merit, if it exists, and I have but used to you the language of sober earnestness when I have impressed upon you the propriety of avoiding all unnecessary exposure to danger, because I felt our country could not bear to lose you. To ask me to substitute you by some one in my judgment more fit to command, or who would possess more of the confidence of the army, or of the reflecting men of the country, is to demand an impossibility.

It only remains for me to hope that you will take all possible care of yourself, that your health and strength may be entirely restored, and that the Lord will preserve you for the important duties devolved upon you in the struggle of our suffering country for the independence which we have engaged in war to maintain.

As ever, very respectfully and truly, yours,²¹

JEFFERSON DAVIS

²¹ Official Records, Vol. XXIX/2., pp. 639-40.

Meade's Request for Relief from Command

As the battle of Gettysburg ended on 3 July no one knew what tomorrow held. Would the attack be resumed? On the fourth of July both armies awaited an attack. None came. The battering both armies had sustained over the past three days as well as heavy rains discouraged it. With nightfall Lee ordered the army to withdraw. Over the next few days Lee's army made its way back to the Potomac River only to find that its pontoon bridge had been destroyed by Federal cavalry. With the Potomac River was swollen past fording depth by the heavy spring rains, Lee's army dug in along a line three miles east of the river and awaited a Union attack.

Meade approached cautiously not wanting to throw away in a moment of carelessness the hard-won victory at Gettysburg. Despite repeated urgings from his superiors in Washington to finish off Lee's army, Meade hesitated to attack.

Taking advantage of this delay, Lee ordered a makeshift bridge be constructed from whatever materials could be found and on the night of July 13th withdrew the army across the Potomac River to Virginia. By the time Meade got around to ordering an attack on the morning of the 14th, Lee was safely south of the river. The following exchange of letters reflects Washington's reaction to events and culminates with a letter from Lincoln on the matter.

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 14, 1863--1 p.m.

Major-General MEADE,
Army of the Potomac:

The enemy should be pursued and cut up, wherever he may have gone. This pursuit may or may not be upon the rear or flank, as circumstances may require. The inner flank toward Washington presents the greatest advantages. Supply yourself from the country as far as possible. I cannot advise details, as I do not know where Lee's army is, nor where your pontoon bridges are. I need hardly say to you that the escape of Lee's army without another battle has created great dissatisfaction in the mind of the President, and it will require an active and energetic pursuit on your part to remove the impression that it has not been sufficiently active heretofore.²²

H. W. HALLECK,

General-in-Chief.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
July 14, 1863---2.30 p.m. (Received 3.10 p.m.)

Maj. Gen. H. W. HALLECK,
General-in-Chief:

Having performed my duty conscientiously and to the best of my ability, the censure of the President conveyed in your dispatch of 1 p.m. this day, is, in my judgment, so undeserved that I feel compelled most respectfully to ask to be immediately relieved from the command of this army.²³

GEO. G. MEADE,

Major-General, Commanding.

²² Official Records, Vol. XXVII/1, p. 92.

²³ Ibid., p. 93.

Lincoln to Meade

Executive Mansion, Washington, July 14, 1863

Major General Meade,

I have just seen your dispatch to Gen. Halleck, asking to be relieved of your command, because of a supposed censure of mine. I am very--very--grateful to you for the magnificent success you gave the cause at the country at Gettysburg; and I am sorry now to be the author of the slightest pain to you. But I was in such deep distress myself that I could not restrain some expression of it. I had been oppressed nearly ever since the battles at Gettysburg, by what appeared to be evidences that you... were not seeking a collision with the enemy, but were trying to get him across the river without another battle. What these evidences were, if you please, I hope to tell you at some other time, when we shall both feel better. The case summarily stated is this. You fought and beat the enemy at Gettysburg; and, of course, to say the least his loss was as great as yours. He retreated; and you did not, as it seemed to me, pressing pursue him; but a flood in the river detained him, till by slow degrees, you were again upon him. You...let the flood run down, bridges be built, and the enemy move away at his leisure, without attacking him....

[M]y dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war. As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely....Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasurably because of it.

I beg you will not consider this a prosecution, or persecution of yourself. As you had learned that I was dissatisfied, I have thought it best to kindly tell you why.²⁴

(The envelope containing this letter bears Lincoln's endorsement "To Gen. Meade, never sent, or signed.")

²⁴ Roy P. Basler, editor, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 327-328.

Naval Considerations and the Gettysburg Campaign

Naval considerations greatly influenced the thinking of both Northern and Southern strategists throughout the war. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to state that naval considerations were a major factor in the planning and execution of Lee's Gettysburg campaign, and the North's reaction to it.

Four lines of operation connected north and south in the Eastern Theater of War, three by land and one by sea. The sea line was the most dangerous for the Confederacy for it had no navy to speak of (after the battle of Hampton Roads, March, 1862) and thus had to have army troops on guard constantly against amphibious assaults on this vulnerable strategic flank. The Federal government could land forces ashore practically at will on any number of places along the eastern seaboard. McClellan's 1862 Peninsula Campaign dramatically illustrated this point. Southern ports, such as Wilmington, NC, Charleston and Savannah, SC, and so forth, had to be defended thus tying down substantial numbers of scarce Confederate forces. The Confederacy's limited resources were frequently taxed as it sought to use land power to confront the threats posed by Federal joint (army/navy) operations up the James, York, and Cape Fear Rivers.

Concerns about Federal operations from the sea dominated Lee's early planning considerations for the Gettysburg Campaign. Davis's first concern upon learning of Lee's proposal to invade Pennsylvania was for the eastern seaboard. Would there be adequate forces, he asked of Lee, to secure both the eastern seacoast and Richmond during the time the Army of Northern Virginia was operating north of the Potomac River? Seagoing Union ironclads could threaten the Confederate capital from the James River. To guard against this Drewry's Bluff fortifications had been constructed but these were normally lightly manned due to other pressing demands for ground forces. Davis feared that unless adequate defenders were kept close at hand the Federals (army and navy) could succeed in forcing a passage of Drewry's Bluff. As recently as May 15, 1862 (coincidentally one year from the very day Lee was in Richmond briefing his concept of operations for the Gettysburg Campaign), the Federals had attempted just such an operation. Although repulsed, the operation demonstrated the extent of the danger. Moreover, with Fort Monroe in Federal hands Davis had to worry constantly that reinforcements could be landed at this place and an overland assault on Richmond, reminiscent of McClellan's May '62 effort, repeated. With Lee off far to the North the possibility of an assault on Richmond by the Federals could not be ignored.

Lee first sought to assuage Davis's concerns by assuring him that with the coming of the "fever season" (malaria) in June it would be unlikely that the Federals would attempt landings along the eastern seaboard. Moreover, he asserted that the strong fortifications around the coastal cities of Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah could be held long enough for him to withdraw and come to their aid should it come to that. Practically speaking, Lee could not have believed he could have done any good in the event of a Federal attack against the port cities and one can only conclude he was so convinced that his actions in the north would paralyze Federal forces that he believed the risks were prudent. He was proved wrong on nearly all accounts, although not until long after Davis had accepted the strategic risk and permitted Lee to proceed into Pennsylvania.

Upon discovery of Lee's movement north of the Potomac River, Major General Henry Halleck made what were perhaps his best strategic decisions as general-in-chief. On June 14, he ordered MG John Dix, commander of the garrison at Fort Monroe, to initiate operations by land and sea against Richmond. The stated objectives of these operations were "to compel the withdrawal of Lee's army from the north or, as a minimum, to prevent additional forces from being sent north to reinforce the Army of Northern Virginia." Operations overland up the peninsula and on both the James and York Rivers commenced on 16 June and served to worry Jefferson Davis greatly. Although none of these operations held true promise of success they did succeed in fixing the South's attention on the defense of Richmond at a time when Lee could have used some help in Pennsylvania. In the end, Lee, with his back to the Potomac River and facing Meade's advancing army, was denied reinforcements from Northern Virginia on the grounds that these forces were more urgently needed for the defense of Richmond. The Federal Navy made all of this possible

A robust Federal Navy gave the Union a menu of strategic options unavailable to the Confederacy. This was especially true during the Gettysburg Campaign where the U.S. Navy's contribution is too often overlooked.

War and Policy

Clausewitz tells us that war should be an instrument of policy. In few other examples from history is the relationship between war and policy so clearly expressed as it is here in Abraham Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg. Within the space of his few brief remarks Lincoln plainly stated the political purposes for which the war was being fought, and in so doing firmly connected the use of military arms with a set of political objectives. Lincoln's address transformed a military act into a clear statement of policy, and in so doing elevated the battle of Gettysburg to its exalted status as the most important battle of the American Civil War.

Gettysburg Address

Abraham Lincoln

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.

19 November 1863

Concluding Remarks to Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's Dedication of the 20th Maine Monument, October 3, 1889

For many years after the battle of Gettysburg, Joshua Chamberlain returned to the battlefield to sit among the rocks and trees where his regiment had made its heroic stand on Little Round Top. On one of those occasions, twenty-six years after the battle, he came to that special place to dedicate a monument to the memory of the exploits of the 20th Maine.

Looking at the now lined and aging faces of his men, in the company of their families and friends, he began his address with a few special words to his old comrades, "We were young then. We are not yet old. I believe even now we could do again what we did then, even as I wonder now, how we did it then." His dedication speech, appropriately eloquent, as was to be expected from someone who taught rhetoric in college, summarized the actions of the 20th Maine at Gettysburg, and then ended with these words,

"In great deeds something abides.
On great fields something stays.
Forms change and pass; bodies
disappear; but spirits linger,
to consecrate the ground for the
vision-place of souls. And
reverent men and women from afar,
and generations that know us not of,
heart drawn to see where and by
whom great things were suffered
and done for them, shall come to
this deathless field, to ponder and
dream; and lo! the shadow of a
mighty presence shall wrap them
in its bosom, and the power of
the vision pass into their souls."²⁵

²⁵ J.L. Chamberlain, *Maine at Gettysburg*, pp. 558-59.

Key Leaders

The following is a synopsis of the key leaders, their experience, roles in this battle, and traits that made them effective or ineffective.

Confederate Army of Northern Virginia²⁶

Jefferson Davis (55) – Politician, President, Commander-in-Chief (and general-in-chief). Confederate system has no senior military commander as does the Union. Davis, a war hero from the Mexican War and Secretary of War in the Pierce Administration, holds the military reins tightly in his own hands. In spite of extensive political experience (House and Senate), Mr. Davis is not a skilled politician. Prickly, sensitive to the slightest criticism, his leadership of the South has been stormy. He has as an excellent relationship with R.E. Lee but is lukewarm in his support for the Gettysburg Campaign. The demands of a “States Rights” platform compel him to balance Lee’s request for forces with the needs of Southern governors, especially those of the coastal states of North and South Carolina, and the states along the Mississippi River.

Robert E. Lee (56) – General, Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV). “The Marble Man” as he is known behind is back has become the symbol of the Confederacy. Loved by his men, revered by Southerners, respected and feared by his foes, Lee is at the peak of his game. His recent victory at Chancellorsville (1-3 May, 1863), where he defeated a Union army that outnumbered him two to one rivals for sheer brilliance Napoleon’s great victory at Austerlitz. Whereas Davis believes in a strategy of exhaustion, Lee understands the correlation of forces and resources to mean that the South must win quickly or lose eventually. A battlefield victory in Pennsylvania could lead to a political settlement and independence for the Confederacy. As was said of Napoleon could be said of Lee, “Boldness was his name.”

James Longstreet (42) – Lieutenant General, Commander of I Corps²⁷ (ANV) since the beginning of the war. Affectionately known to Lee as “My Old War Horse,” and “Pete” to his friends, Longstreet is the best corps commander in either army. His role approximates that of a second in command. He prefers defensive battles to frontal attacks. Although he fancies himself a strategist, his real strength is tactics. His loyalty to Lee is beyond question. He can be stubborn when decisions do not go his way. Longstreet supports the invasion of the North but has argued for a defensive battle. For us he poses an interesting question: How does one handle the loyal subordinate who strenuously disagrees with the corporate decision, especially when that someone is the best at what he does?

Richard Ewell (46) – Lieutenant General, Commander of II Corps (ANV) since May 1863. He has only recently returned from a long convalescence after losing a leg at 2nd Manassas the previous summer. Known as “Baldy,” Ewell was an aggressive and competent division commander. Early indications are he will do well at the next level but as a corps commander Gettysburg will be his first test. Indications are that he is unsure of himself in his new role and he tends to lean heavily for advice on Jubal Early, one of his division commanders. For Lee he

²⁶ Confederate armies were named after the regions where the armies operated while Union armies were named after the major rivers in the regions where they served.

²⁷ A Confederate corps numbered approximately 21,000 men. Lee’s army was comprised of three infantry corps.

poses a dilemma. Accustomed to giving wide discretion to subordinates, Lee is given to wonder how much to give to a commander in whose judgment he is yet uncertain.

Ambrose P. Hill (38) – Lieutenant General, Commander of III Corps (ANV) since May 1863. Along with Ewell, Hill stepped up to corps-level command after the death of Stonewall Jackson. A skilled and brave tactician, Hill was a brilliant division commander with few equals among his contemporaries at that level. How he will fare at corps command is a question. Illness plagues him. With increasing frequency he is unable to command from the front, leaving his duties to less capable subordinates. Lee tolerates Hill's condition in the belief that he has no one who can do better. In this view he is likely blinded by loyalty to a subordinate who has done great service in the past. Hill's performance at Gettysburg raises the question: How does one let go a great man who is no longer capable of handling his duties?

Henry Heth (37) - A Virginian and last in his class at West Point (1847), "Harry" Heth had been a professional soldier before the war. On 1 July, in obedience to orders from his corps commander, Heth sends his brigades up the Chambersburg Pike to brush aside Buford's Union cavalry. As with so many things in war, the task proves more difficult than envisioned. Before long he, and the Confederate Third Corps, is decisively engaged, a condition Lee had specifically warned against. Although well liked and considered by all to be a good commander, Heth is known throughout the army to be unlucky. His bad luck holds at Gettysburg.

Robert Emmett Rodes (34) - A Virginian and graduate of the Virginian Military Institute, Rodes early on distinguished himself as a brave and resourceful commander. At Chancellorsville his division led Jackson's flank march and had a key role in smashing the Federal army. At Gettysburg luck brings him onto the field under similar circumstances. In the vanguard of Ewell's corps, Rodes' division crests Oak Hill to find itself on the right flank of the Union's First Corps. Following Jackson's admonition to "Always march to the sound of the guns," Rodes attacks. Although his actions on 1 July are inspired, his performance on the second and third days of the battle is lackluster at best. How to explain this? Could it be that a good man under a weak leader, such as Ewell, loses his edge?

James Ewell Brown Stuart (30) – Major General, Commander of the ANV cavalry division since the beginning of the war.²⁸ J.E.B. Stuart is the "Gallant Knight of the Confederacy," a daring cavalier who has led Lee's cavalry since the opening days of the war. Brave but rash, Stuart loses contact with Lee's army in the opening days of the campaign, a cardinal sin for one who commands the "eyes" of the army. For seven critical days during the campaign Stuart will be off on a ride around the Federal army that takes him to the very gates of Washington, all the while being out of touch with Lee. Stuart was considered by Lee to be an indispensable subordinate, raising the question: What does one do when the indispensable subordinate is not there?

George E. Pickett (38) - Major General, division commander under Longstreet at Gettysburg. Pickett's ranking at the bottom of his 1846 West Point class belied his talents as a soldier. He proved himself to be a brave and inspirational leader while serving in Mexico.²⁹ Service in this

²⁸ Stewart's Cavalry Division numbered approximately 7,500 men and was divided into 7 brigades of near equal size.

²⁹ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray*, p. 239.

war to date has earned him distinction for his bravery and leadership as commander of a brigade. As a division commander since October, 1862, he has earned a reputation for competency and dash. Circumstances have kept him out of the thick of fighting over the last six months and he is eager to get his division back into the middle of things. At Gettysburg fate, and Robert E. Lee, will afford him that opportunity.

Edward Porter Alexander (28) – Lieutenant Colonel, commander of Longstreet’s artillery. An example of one of the finest officers to serve in the Confederate army. Smart, loyal, brave, Alexander is placed in charge of the artillery in support of the Lee’s attack on the 3 July. Longstreet will seek to shift responsibility for the attack onto Alexander’s shoulders. He bears up well under the test. His memoirs are among the finest written by any participant in the war for their analysis and fairness.

Union Army of the Potomac

Abraham Lincoln (54) – Politician, President and Commander-in-Chief. No significant military experience, captain of a volunteer infantry company in the Black Hawk War from 7 April 1832 to 16 June 1832. He served one term as a congressman from Illinois during which he opposed Mr. Polk’s war with Mexico. Lincoln has no background in strategy but is blessed with a keen intellect. Learning by doing, he has been making steady progress as a strategist. Now confident in his judgment, he is quick to remove generals who do not measure up even while retaining incompetent ones with political connections he can use to his advantage. While all around him are fretting, Lincoln alone sees the Confederate invasion of the north as less a disaster than an opportunity to destroy Lee’s army, and urges his army commander to seize the moment.

George Gordon Meade (48) – Major General, Commander of the Army of the Potomac (AOP). He is competent as a general but was Lincoln’s third choice to replace MG Hooker, whom he relieved on 28 June. Meade is technically able and in Lee’s view, “unlikely to make a mistake.” He is also cautious, and laboring under orders that pull him in two directions. He is to find and defeat Lee’s army, but to protect Baltimore and Washington at all times, a balance between offense and defense that proves difficult. Personally cold and distant, his gruff temperament has earned him the nickname, “The Old Goggle-eyed Snapping Turtle.” Meade conduct in this battle lets us observe a senior leader new to his role groping for the levers of command while contending with nearly overwhelming challenges.

John Reynolds (42) – Major General, Commander of AOP’s I Corps.³⁰ Many thought of him as the best corps commander in the AOP, or the Union army for that matter. He declined Lincoln’s offer to command the AOP saying the job came with “too much political influence from the politicians in Washington.” Brave and skilled as a soldier, Reynolds is loyal to Meade and trusted by him. He firmly understands Meade’s intent to fight Lee and thus is disposed to think creatively. He chooses the good ground at Gettysburg and sets favorable conditions for battle. In so doing, he shows us the value of the right man in the right place at the right time.

³⁰ Union corps number between 8,000 and 15,000 men. The Union Army of the Potomac had seven corps of infantry.

Winfield Scott Hancock (39) – Major General, Commander of AOP’s II Corps. Known in the army as “Hancock the Superb,” men were said to feel safe in his presence. Hancock is an inspirational leader and probably the best corps commander in Meade’s army. Although of differing political views from Meade, he is loyal to his commander and enjoys his complete trust. The hardest tasks and the greatest responsibilities are generally given to him. He serves as Meade’s sounding board and fireman. He does not abuse the trust invested in him. In short, he is the perfect subordinate.

Daniel Sickles (43) – Major General, Commander of AOP’s III Corps. A Tammany Hall politician of the worst sort but as a “War Democrat,” Lincoln keeps his kind around to show broad support for the war. Sickles is ambitious, egotistical and possesses a far greater estimate of his martial abilities than performance to date would suggest. He burns with desire to erase the stain of embarrassment for a decision to give up critical ground at Chancellorsville two months earlier. He routinely places his judgment above that of the army commander and is frequently heard to slander the cabal of “West Point men” who he thinks are ruining the army. Loosely supervised, a man like Sickles can get into mischief. As commander of a corps, he manages to make trouble for the entire army.

George Sykes (41) – Major General, Commander of AOP’s V Corps. Dour and colorless, Sykes is a quiet professional. Indeed, he is given to sitting his horse unperturbed in even the most harrowing situations. He commands the bulk of the regular army units in what is largely a volunteer army. Dependable but slow, hence his nickname, “Tardy George,” men like Sykes are a paradox. They are kept around because of their reliability but given their lack of imagination they are of limited utility. Well supervised he is well used, but Sykes is not one to be given wide discretion or mission type orders.

John Sedgwick (50) – Major General, Commander of AOP’s VI Corps. “Uncle John” as he is known to the troops, is regarded with affection by them. He has earned a record as dependable leader but not given to initiative or creativity. He follows orders well, to the letter. In this campaign he commands the largest corps in the AOP (15,000). Atypically, he shows initiative in this campaign and thus plays a role greater than one would have expected of him.

Oliver Otis Howard (33) – Major General, Commander of AOP’s XI Corps. Quiet, young, reverent, prickly and prudish, Howard is a mystery to most who serve with him. He commands a corps made up of German immigrants, who prefer to speak their native dialects, a predilection that on occasion contributes to confusion in battle. At Chancellorsville his corps was struck in the flank and disintegrated, nearly leading to a rout of the Union army and earning for the corps a despised moniker, “Howard’s Cowards.” He seeks to regain honor for himself and his corps at Gettysburg. His seniority among major generals places him near the top, but Meade is disinclined to invest trust in him. Steady under pressure, Howard eventually regains his reputation, but long after his actions at Gettysburg.

William Slocum (36) – Major General, Commander of AOP’s XII Corps. A senior officer with solid credentials on paper, Slocum consistently fails to live up to his billing. A play on his name says it all. Known in the army as “Slow Come,” the general is not one to be looked to in an emergency. Again, he is a senior officer who Lincoln keeps around because of his Democrat

politics. In this battle he serves well as an example of one who has a seat at the table but who brings little to the affair, as the contribution of his corps during the battle reflects. Given Slocum's seniority in the Army, Meade must be careful of how he ignores him.

Alfred Pleasanton (39) – Major General, Commander of the AOP Cavalry Corps. A man of modest talent, Pleasanton is fortunate to have several brilliant, young cavalry division and brigade commanders, including John Buford, Wesley Merritt, Elon Farnsworth, and George Armstrong Custer.³¹ Less talented are other of his division commanders, most notably Judson Kilpatrick, who is derisively and justly referred to behind his back as “Kill Cavalry.” Union cavalry does well in this battle but could have contributed more had it been better led across the board, a remedy that does not come along until the following year. Consider it an “under performing” organization in this campaign; no more so than on 2 July when a lapse in command by Pleasanton exposes Meade's left flank.

Gouverneur K. Warren (33) - Major General, Chief Engineer, Army of the Potomac. A graduate of West Point and an engineer by training, Warren, like many of his peers rose to prominence in the Civil War by serving with the infantry. Success as a brigade commander has earned him his stars. While awaiting appointment to command a division, his keen eye for ground has earned him appointment as Meade's chief of engineers. As such he has no line authority, but his competence and availability have caused Meade to employ him as a nominal deputy commander. Warren embraces his ambiguous role and moves to the sound of the guns where he acts decisively. His actions during several critical hours on 2 July prove pivotal to the outcome of the battle. Indeed, they prove to be his finest hours of the war.

John Buford (38) - Brigadier General, Commander of a cavalry division with the Army of the Potomac. Buford, a professional soldier with long years of service on the frontier fighting Indians, is talented, respected, and known throughout the army for his skills as a trainer. He has been in forefront of those developing new tactics for the cavalry in this war. Reports of Confederate infantry have drawn him to Gettysburg. Early on 1 July his division comes under fire on the ridge west of town. Understanding of Meade's mission and intent, Buford commits to holding the key ground until the Union infantry can be brought up. His fateful decision sets in motion a train of events which will lead to the battle of Gettysburg.

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (35) – Lieutenant Colonel, Commander, 20th Maine, V Corps. Chamberlain is the quintessential example of the volunteer officer populating the ranks of an amateur army. A college professor with no formal military training, he has mastered the skills of a soldier over the past nine months. Although this will be his first major battle, he is confident in his abilities. He is an inspirational leader and a natural combat commander. He talks to his men, not at them. He measures his orders against their capabilities and in so doing gets the most from them. Fate will place him in a critical situation on 2 July. He will prove equal to the challenge.

³¹ Buford, 38, a Kentuckian and old army Indian fighter is the best at his grade in his job as commander of a cavalry division. Fortune places him in a key position on the field on 1 July. Merritt, Farnsworth and Custer are promoted from Captain to Brigadier General on the eve of the battle. All do well, but Farnsworth is killed on 3 July.

