THE LEE OF GETTYSBURG: STEPHEN W. SEARS

NORTH & SOUTH

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CIVIL WAR SOCIETY

VOLUME 6 • NUMBER 5

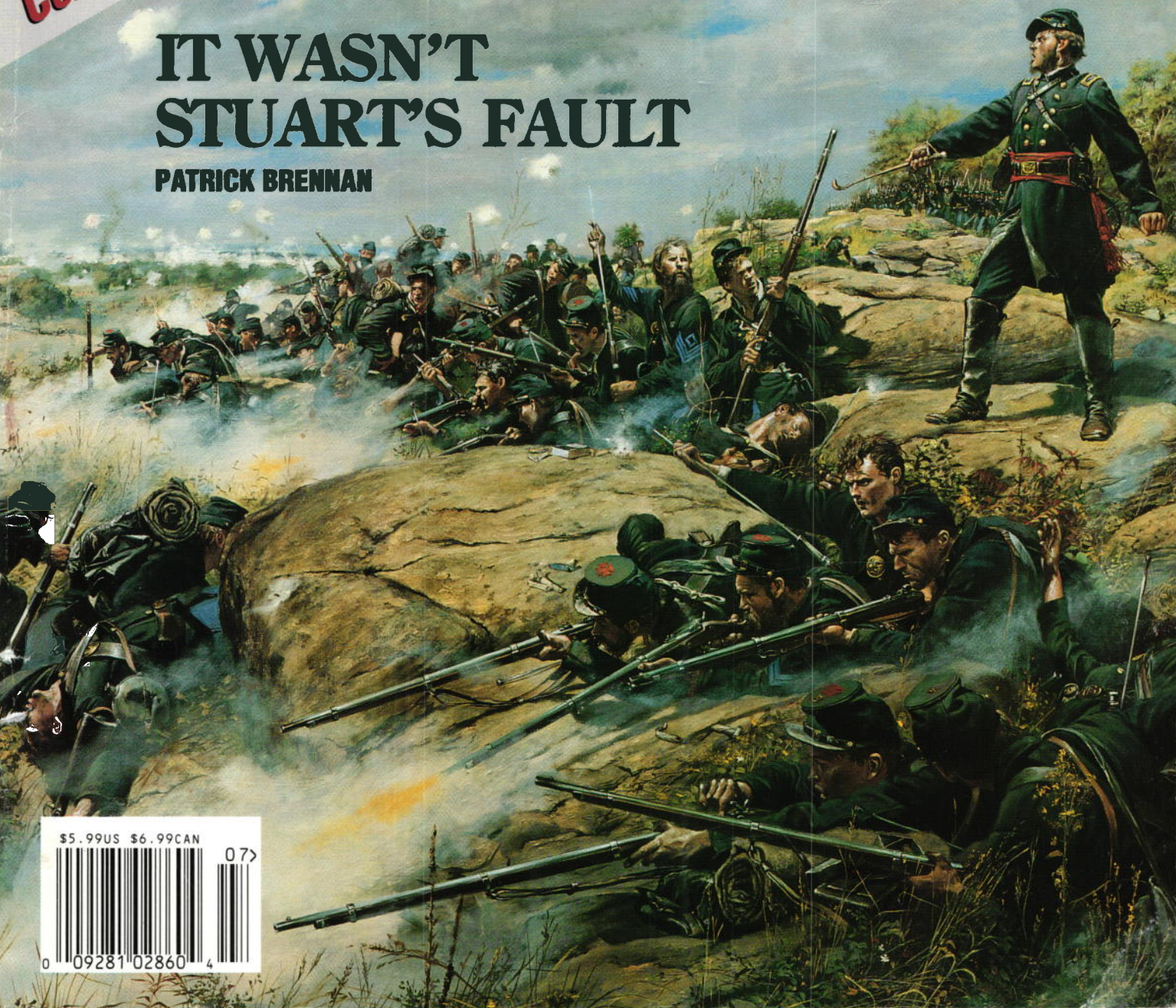
140th Gettysburg Commemorative Issue

MAKING SENSE OF PICKETT'S CHARGE

EARL J. HESS

IT WASN'T STUART'S FAULT

PATRICK BRENNAN



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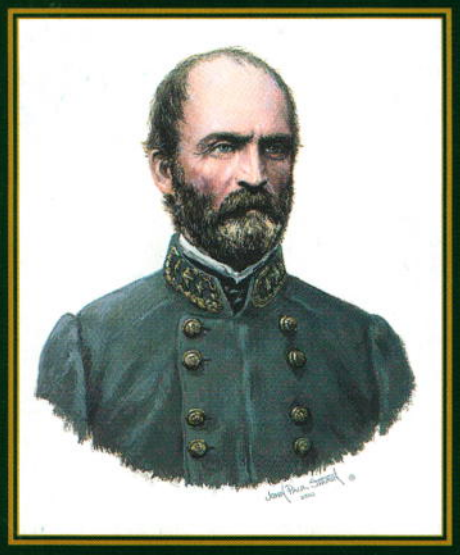

"Taking Battery A"

General Lewis A. Armistead

Pickett's Charge - July 3, 1863

by

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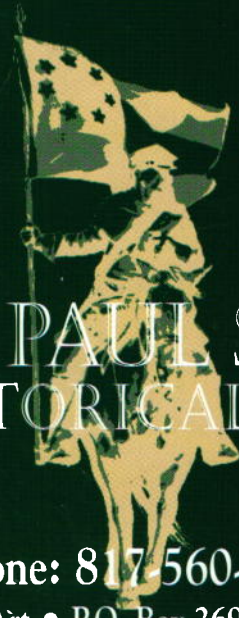

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It was to be a great glorious assault into the center of Cemetery Ridge to shatter the heart of General George Meade's Federal Army. General Robert E. Lee assembled a force of three divisions, Pickett's, Pettigrew's and Trimble's to smash through the Federal line. He gave the left flank assignment to one of his new army division commanders, daring, dashing and perfumed General George E. Pickett.

As the southern brigades formed with fifteen thousand barrels and bayonets, General Lewis A. Armistead exclaimed, "Look at my line; it never looked better on dress parade!" General Armistead commanded one of Pickett's brigades stationed on the left flank of the division. His brigade consisting of the 9th, 14th, 38th, 53d and 57th Virginia, would advance almost a mile across open ground, passing through devastating short and long range fire.

General Pickett gave the order to advance his huge force of flashing steel, "Up, men and to your posts! Don't forget today that you are from Old Virginia." General Armistead placed himself in front of his men and while advancing cried to a sergeant in the 53d, "Are you going to put those colors on the enemy's works today?" The sergeant yelled back, "I will try, sir, and if mortal man can do it, it shall be done!"

When the Federal army opened their fire, a huge moan could be heard coming up from the advancing Confederate force. One Federal brigade waited until the Southern line was within a couple of hundred yards and fired in volley. Seventeen hundred muskets went off at once. Whole regiments disappeared. A Federal artillerist later stated, "We could not help hitting them at every shot." A single bursting artillery round would kill or wound 10 to 15 men. But despite this devastation the lines moved forward.

The Federal position located behind a stone fence was breeched in only one place, a nook in the fence later called the "angle". As General Armistead and the remnant of his command crossed over the stone fence they took the 3-inch Ordnance Rifle of Lt. Alonzo Cushing's Battery A, 4th U.S. artillery. Immediately a volley from Federal infantry tore into the left flank of the General and his men. Armistead was hit twice, once below the right knee and in the upper left arm. Neither wound broke any bone and should not have been fatal, but poor medical care and loss of blood would cause Armistead death on July the 5th. The words from the sergeant of the 53d to Armistead, "If mortal man can do it, it shall be done," were prophetic, but their actions would also be immortalized.

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Map Detail
("It Wasn't Stuart's Fault," page 22)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In this illustration Pickett receives Longstreet's order to charge.
("Making Sense of Pickett's Charge," page 38)

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Postwar image of General Robert E. Lee.
("Leadership Impaired?" page 68)

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NORTH & SOUTH

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

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NORTH & SOUTH

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Editorial

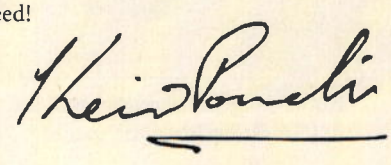
TEXAS BOB

I IMAGINE MOST OF OUR READERS are familiar with "Baghdad Bob," the erstwhile Iraqi Minister of Information whose daily pronouncements during the recent war demonstrated that reality is no match for a closed mind. I fear we have one or two readers who suffer from a similar condition. Take for instance the letter from Bob Axley of Dallas in this issue's "Crossfire" column. "Texas Bob," if we may call him such, congratulates us on giving "Gods and Generals" director Ron Maxwell space to reply to his critics, but says he will in future leave the magazine to the "South bashers, revisionists, and nitpickers," apparently because the critics too had their say. Bob presumably wants a publication that will publish—and thereby reinforce—only those views with which he agrees. Well, Bob, if that is what you want, there are a number of publications out there that are right up your alley. But *North & South* isn't one of them.

Bob's letter, and one or two others that appear in this issue, remind me of the time, six years ago, before *North & South* was launched, when I was thinking about the potential audience for the magazine. It could be divided, for instance, into those with a serious interest in the war and those whose interest was merely superficial. *North & South* was created for the former—those who want fresh, accurate history. Another way of classifying the potential audience is according to perspective, or allegiance. Here, of course, the great divide is between those whose emotional commitment (identification/allegiance—use whatever word seems most appropriate) is to the Union, and those whose commitment is to the Confederacy. In between there are no doubt individuals with an intense interest in the war, but who identify with neither side—however I suspect they are a tiny minority.

I was, and am, convinced that the vast majority of those in both the Union and the Confederate camps are intelligent, serious students of history. But on each side there is a minority whose minds are closed to alternative views. On the one hand there are those who persist in believing that the war was a holy crusade fought from the very beginning, under the leadership of "Saint" Abraham, to free the slaves. At the other extreme there are those who claim that the conflict had little or nothing to do with slavery, and was simply about the proper relationship between state and federal governments. My working assumption was that no more than ten percent of each camp fell into the "close minded" category, and that the vast majority were eager for well-argued historical analysis *resting upon verifiable historical evidence.*

The quality of *North & South* is a measure of my respect for its readers. In its pages we explore the *facts*—where factual evidence exits. Sometimes this causes us (me included) to modify what we thought we knew. In other cases the factual evidence is inconclusive, and we must fall back upon interpretation. Here we offer a *variety* of interpretations, leaving the reader to choose between them. A case in point is the pair of articles we ran in which the authors argued that (a) there was, and (b) there was not, a constitutional right of secession. Another is the upcoming discussion between Lincoln critic Thomas DiLorenzo and another (as yet undetermined) scholar. I neither want nor expect to change anyone's "allegiance." But what I do hope the magazine will increasingly do is eliminate differences based upon misconception, produce a broad consensus where *facts* are concerned, and where factual evidence is lacking at least clarify the issues. Ambitious goals indeed!



Crossfire

"GODS AND GENERALS"

I enjoyed "Historians Respond to 'Gods and Generals'" immensely [vol. 6, #3]. It reaffirmed that your publication is the best Civil War magazine available. Mr. Maxwell's response was fascinating but somewhat perplexing as well.

It seems "Gods" is a movie suffering from a cinematic identity crisis. Is it a documentary or is it drama? It tries to be both, but fails to succeed at either. Those expecting to see a smooth dramatic portrayal of the Civil War may be disappointed by its lack of good character development and substantive dialogue. Civil War historians and "buffs" may be a bit put off by the lack of a complete picture, both in issues and events.

Maxwell's response to the reviews seems to highlight this identity crisis. He defends the portrayal of two loyal slaves by arguing that they are not to be taken as representative of the entire slave population. He complains that historians have an "annoying habit of seeing individuals less as people than as representatives of people." Yet, in the movie, Maxwell does this exact thing with his focus on a handful of basically unnamed Virginia troops who are shown complaining about marching, talking about Stonewall, exchanging goods with a Union soldier, and finally facing death in battle. Certainly it was not the director's goal to develop Virginia Johnny Reb as an individual, unattached from any representation of Southern soldiers.

Maxwell seems irritated at what he believes is suppression of little known facts about the Confederacy. The reviewers did not criticize the portrayal of Jim Lewis, but rather the overall message Maxwell seemed to be sending by the sole use of such loyal slave characters, coupled with a glorification of the Southern cause as demonstrated by the extended "Bonnie Blue Flag" scene. That message is undeniably in line with Lost Cause ideology, a recognized attempt at historical revisionism. Maxwell may not consciously be trying to promote such an idea, but in light of the historiography of the Civil War it is not surprising that historians are sensitive as to how the topic is treated.

While I agreed with many of the reviewers' comments, I do appreciate Maxwell's work and look forward to the completion of the trilogy.

—Ian Spurgeon, Washington, D.C.

* * *

Your review of "Gods and Generals" [vol. 6, #3] was right on the money. I have seen this film twice in order to be sure it was not as bad as I thought the first time, and I can assure you, three times will not be a charm in my case. The film is not without its merits, but it comes across as obscenely pro-Confederate, and the script in general was wretched.

By the way, Steven Woodworth is quite incorrect to assert in his review that the North was as Christian as the South, "if not more so." As Bell I. Wiley pointed out in his great *Billy Yank* and *Johnny Reb*, the Yanks were not nearly as devout as their Southern counterparts. The contribution of freethinkers to the Union cause (e.g., German Freidenker, Unitarians, Universalists, and Transcendentalists) is one of the dirty little secrets of the Civil War. I hope that *N&S* will deal with this topic sometime soon. The recent desecration in the town of Comfort, Texas, of the monument to the German Freidenker martyred in the Union cause in a Confederate massacre brings to mind the fact that not all Yankees were Christian.

—Dennis Middlebrooks
Brooklyn, New York

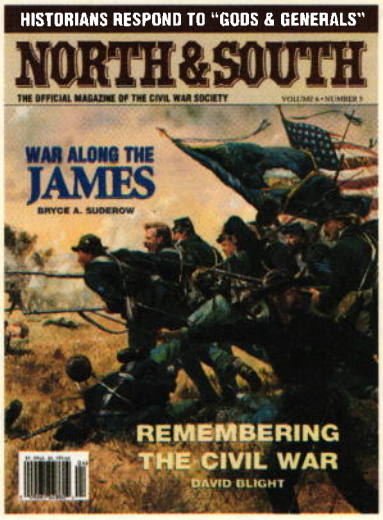
STEVEN WOODWORTH RESPONDS:

Dennis Middlebrooks is quite incorrect to deny the generally equal prevalence of Christianity in both North and South during the Civil War. No one I know of has ever asserted, as he implies, that "all Yankees were Christian." Large segments of the Union and Confederate armies would not have described themselves as Christians. But roughly comparable proportions on both sides did adhere to Christianity. Mr. Middlebrooks might have avoided this mistake had he relied less on Bell Wiley's ground-breaking but now highly dated 1943 and 1952 books and instead consulted more up-to-date research—such as my own 2001 book *While God Is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers*. Revivals and religious observance in camps took place with equal frequency and fervor on both sides of the lines.

* * *

I am usually very pleased and impressed with the editorial quality of *North & South*. This is why I am disappointed and surprised by the gratuitous smear directed at two of America's finest filmmakers in the April 2003 issue. I'm referring to Robert Brent Toplin's review of "Gods and Generals." Not satisfied with the obligatory insult of D.W. Griffith, Toplin adds, apropos of nothing, "This story would also probably appeal to Michael Curtiz, director of Hollywood's outrageous 1942 interpretation of Civil War issues 'Santa Fe Trail.'" Bizarrely, in the next paragraph, Toplin laments the loss of influence by "the moguls in California."

It is time for a history lesson, professor. Between 1930 and 1960 Curtiz made over one hundred films for Warner Bros., overseen by the mogul's mogul, Jack Warner. "Given the studio's rigid organization and tight production schedule, neither Dieterle, Curtiz, nor LeRoy was able to pursue a personal vision in their Warners films, but all three proved themselves to be remarkably versatile professional filmmakers who could function as master craftsmen within a system which militated strongly against creative freedom" (David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, p. 308, 2nd edition).



Toplin's apparent belief that Curtiz was in ideological agreement with any particular movie he directed is absurd and grotesque. Curtiz directed, in 1943, the notorious Stalin apologia "Mission to Moscow," based on Joseph Davis' mendacious book of the same title. Who, except for Toplin, would thus infer that Curtiz was a Communist!? Not the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Jack Warner, called as a "friendly witness" to the HUAC hearings in 1947, defended this stinker as a wartime necessity. To my knowledge Curtiz was never called to testify.

Out of one hundred films there are bound to be some bombs. A partial list of the classic films that Curtiz helped to create (is Toplin a member of the 'Auteur' cult?) include: "Angels with Dirty Faces" (1938); "The Adventures of Robin Hood" (1938); "The Seahawk" (1940); "Yankee Doodle Dandy" (1942); "Mildred Pierce" (1945); "Life with Father" (1947); "Young Man with a Horn" (1950); and "White Christmas" (1954). One last point: "Santa Fe Trail" was made in 1940—in 1942 Curtiz was busy directing "Casablanca."

—Grant Jones, Pahoa, Hawaii

* * *

I received the latest issue of *North & South*, Volume 6, # 2, and it contains, as usual, some outstanding articles on the American Civil War. I would like to point out one small error. In "Historians Respond to 'Gods and Generals'" you have labeled a photograph of blueclad troops in formation behind a green Irish unit color as the famed Union Irish Brigade. Those boys are Irish, but they are members of Company B, 27th Virginia Regiment—the Emerald Guards. I believe the photograph depicts the Emerald Guards in formation just prior to their participation in a bold counterattack, led by their commander Brigadier General Thomas Jackson, which turned the tide of battle at Henry House Hill during First Manassas.

Excellent magazine—any future articles on Mexican War San Patricio Battalion and its legacy for Irish who fought in the American Civil War, Irish Union/Confederate units, and the Fenian Invasion of Canada in 1866 (last battle of Civil War?), would be appreciated.

Faugh a Ballagh!!

—Donal Harrington, COL INF U.S. Army
Millersville, Maryland

* * *

In Keith Poulter's critique of "Gods and Generals" he states that "Lee was merely sounded out regarding a subordinate command" in the Union army. Both Freeman and Emory Thomas comment that "Lee was offered command of the army formed in response to Lincoln's call-to-arms." Lee himself said in a letter after the war that "I declined the offer he [Blair] made to me to take command of the army that was to be brought in to the field...." This does not suggest any subordinate role. Lee further stated that he understood the offer was made at the instance of President Lincoln.

Mr. Poulter also comments about the flag raised in April 1861 "by the Secessionists at VMI." The flag, even if it was the wrong flag, was raised at Washington College and not VMI, which a careful eye would have noted.

—Daniel T. Balfour
Richmond, Virginia

ED: Daniel actually *confirms* what I said about a subordinate command. Lee was sounded out by Blair regarding possible command of the army that was to advance on Richmond, the commanded by McDowell at Bluff Run. His being given command of the entire U.S. Army was not on the agenda. We have no evidence that Lincoln was behind Blair's approach; the White House was deeply suspicious of Lee's loyalty.

As for the flag—thanks for the correction.

* * *

Kudos to Ron Maxwell for his defense of his fine movie "Gods and Generals" against the historic revisionists, south bashers, and nitpickers. According to them, all Unionists were saints with halos and wings. Never mind how Sherman and one of his generals, Jefferson C. Davis, treated African Americans during his brave march to the sea or how Sherman, Sheridan, Custer, and Grant treated Native Americans a decade later. I believe it was Sheridan who coined the phrase, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," and ordered the indiscriminate slaughter of buffalo to deny Native Americans a food source. Sounds kind of similar to what was done in the South. Contrarily, according to the revisionists and south bashers, all Confederates were devils with horns and pitchforks. As for the nitpickers worrying whether Lee had gray hair and a beard at the start of the war, the historical accuracy of the war in other aspects should help young viewers, many of whom don't even know what century the Civil War occurred.

Both New-York Historical Society

As for the article on Civil War POW experiences [James Gillispie's "Postwar Mythmaking"], I wonder if anyone would question John McCain on his POW experiences now that it has been thirty years after the fact. I guess the author of the article has personal POW experiences of his own to know people exaggerate the treatment they receive. I believe I will leave your magazine to the revisionists, south bashers, and nitpickers. *—Bob Axley*

Dallas, Texas

ED: See editorial, page 4.

* * *

Congratulations. The exchange between director Ron Maxwell and the panel of historians must be unique in the annals of both Hollywood and the scholarly world. Too bad one could not arrange a similar encounter with James Cameron over "Titanic"!

—Warren C. Robinson
Washington, DC

* * *

The bottom line (excuse the cliché) on "Gods and Generals" is that it, unlike "Gettysburg," was widely advertised. Civil War buffs were going to see the movie anyway, so it may be assumed this was done to attract the general public. They gave their verdict. They pay the ever-rising admission price expecting to be entertained, and this movie simply was not entertaining.

What constitutes entertainment? Look at the scene in which the Yank and Reb meet in midstream. It is a moment that should exude passionate, dramatic pathos, but watch it. Then compare it to the scene in "Glory" in which Denzel Washington is whipped for running off to find a pair of shoes. I so wanted this movie to be otherwise, but dramatic depth is missing in "Gods and Generals."

Historical accuracy is always desirable in such movies, but the elements of entertainment are mandatory if you wish to sell a movie to the public. This may tweak the facts, but it sells the tickets. *—Gerald R. Hibbs*

Edmond, Oklahoma

* * *

My letter regarding "Gods and Generals" was printed in last issue's "Crossfire." It read in part, "The only thing I would change would be to trim down Jeff Daniels' role as Chamberlain." It should have read, "The only thing I would change would be to trim down Jeff Daniels in his role as Chamberlain" (i.e., Mr. Daniels needed to lose weight for his role!).

Thanks for the honor of being included in your exceptional magazine.

—Professor Louis R.F. Preysz III
St. Augustine, Florida

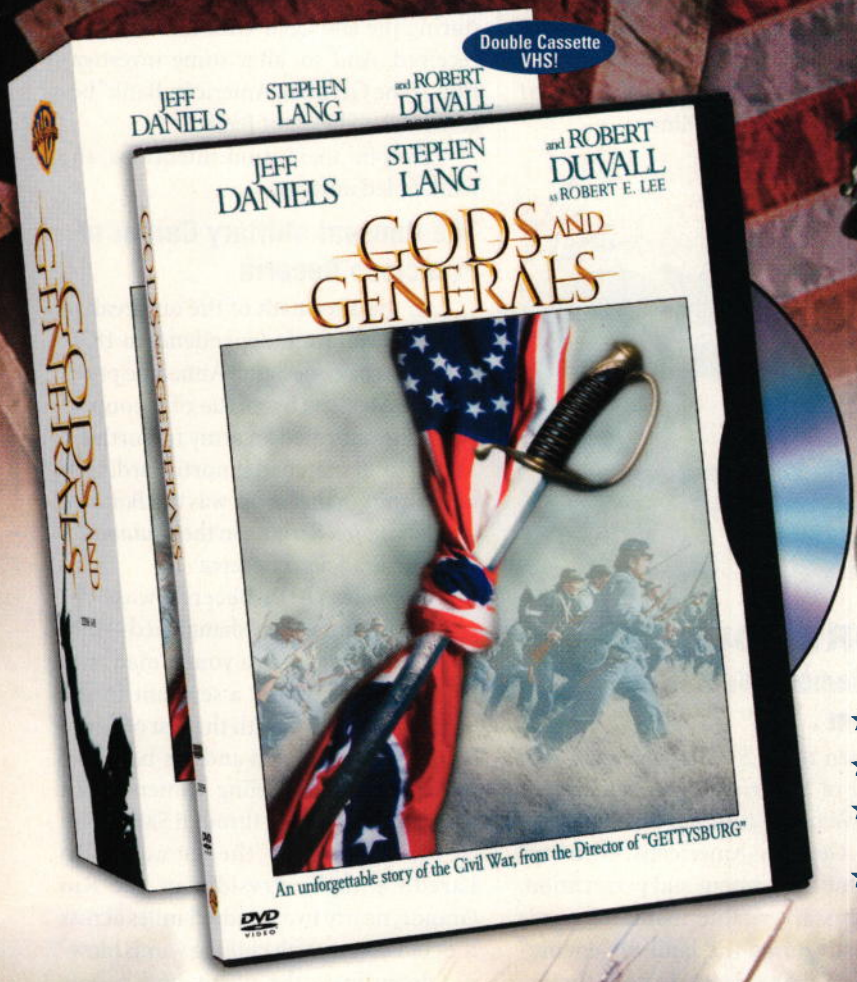
* * *

Just a quick note. Your editorial against "Gods and Generals" was disgusting. I will now buy other Civil War magazines. Shame on you for insulting the movie. You said it was propaganda. Sir, you are propaganda. Goodbye.

—Charles Pearson, Irving, Texas

ED: Let's get the record straight. I said some good things and some bad things about the movie. I described it as propaganda for two reasons: (1) the depiction of only one slice of reality creates a distorted historical picture, and (2) the techniques used in the climactic scene in which the Confederate horsemen gallop up to the camera, the music swells, and the battle flag waves triumphant, are—as I said—"frighteningly reminiscent of classic propaganda movies." Actually, I was trying to be tactful. The techniques used were virtually identical to those used by Leni Riesenthal's classic Nazi propaganda movie "Triumph of the Will." More than two dozen *(continued on page 93)*

HISTORY COMES THUNDEROUSLY ALIVE IN THIS HEROIC WAR EPIC



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Knapsack A CIVIL WAR DIGEST

FROM THE GRAPEVINE

- In 1834 young Ben Butler enrolled as a divinity student at Colby College, Maine, though his seriousness in pursuit of his stated major was shortly brought into question, when he petitioned the administration to be excused from attending church services.
- One of the more creative slang terms coined by the troops during the war was "Body Guards," for lice.
- Gaetano Donizetti's 1840 two-act comic opera, *La Fille du Regiment*, about an infant adopted by a French infantry regiment, was so popular in the U.S. that it helped inspire many a regiment—both North and South—to go to war with a *vivandière* in its ranks.
- Instituted in 1851, a program permitting garrisons to have farms and raise cattle to supplement their rations proved immensely successful, but was canceled in 1854 by incoming Secretary of War Jefferson Davis because it had been instituted by his predecessor in that post, Charles Conrad, whom he cordially disliked.
- Confederate Brigadier General George B. Anderson, who died of wounds shortly after Antietam, was the father of Edwin A. Anderson, who had a distinguished record in the U.S. Navy, rising to admiral and commander, Asiatic Fleet, after being awarded a Medal of Honor for leading the 2nd Regiment of Marines and Bluejackets at Vera Cruz in 1914.
- George Pickett's appointment to West Point in 1842 was arranged by Representative John T. Stuart, who had for a time been Abraham Lincoln's law partner.
- So vain was Lieutenant General Winfield Scott that whenever anyone mentioned that he was 6'4" tall, the old war hero was quick to point out that he was in fact 6'4 1/2".
- So fond was U.S. Grant of Cincinnati (pictured below), "the finest horse that I have ever seen," that he once supposedly refused an offer of $10,000 in gold for him.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF THE CIVIL WAR

We make every effort to check the accuracy of anecdotes published in "Knapsack," but many were written down years after the event and in some cases are undoubtedly folk tales rather than genuine reminiscences.

SHORT ROUNDS

"Gentlemen, We Have a Problem . . . ."

When the U.S. entered World War I, a wave of hysterical anti-German sentiment swept the country, causing much pain to German-Americans, who suffered some harassment and persecution. There was a veritable mania of name changes to purge the land of "enemy" names, so that streets named, for example, Hamburg, suddenly sported the name of the president or some other contemporary notable. Anything remotely German came in for criticism. Sauerkraut suddenly became "liberty cabbage" and dachshunds were dubbed "liberty pups."

Now it seems that there was a small German-American community in a certain town in northeastern Virginia. Hard working folks, they had accumulated over the years enough money to charter a bank, which they proudly named "The German-American Bank." Of course with the coming of war and the rising anti-German sentiment, the name had to go.

The three principal officials of the bank couldn't decide upon a new name, one that would be sufficiently "American" to appeal to their non-German neighbors. Then one of them proposed selecting a name from among the many people who had risen to prominence during the late Civil War. This was well received. And so, after some investigation, "The German-American Bank" became "The Sherman Bank."

Despite their good intentions, the bank failed anyway.

The Unusual Military Career of Francisco Becerra

In the aftermath of the outbreak of the Texas War for Independence in 1835, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, the president of Mexico (by virtue of a coup or two), concentrated an army in northern Mexico and marched it northward. One of the units in that army was the *Battalon de Matamoros.* Serving in the *Matamoros* was one Francisco Becerra

Born in 1810, Becerra was "recruited"—more likely shanghaied—into the Mexican army as a young man, and by 1835 had become a sergeant in the *Matamoros.* Along with the rest of Santa Anna's army, Becerra and his battalion made the long, grueling winter march from San Luis Potosi through Saltillo, on to Monclova, and thence across to Laredo and the Presidio of the Rio Grande, nearly five hundred miles across the cold desert, with chilling winds blowing down from the north, and people and animals suffering great hardships while maintaining a steady rate of march of fifteen to twenty miles a day.

And, of course, Becerra was present at the storming of the Alamo and at San Jacinto, where he had the good fortune to be captured rather than cut down in the slaughter that followed the Mexican defeat. Surprisingly, rather than return to Mexico, Becerra settled in Texas.

Because of his unique perspective on the events of the Texas War, Becerra was for a time employed by Reuben Marmaduke Potter, the first serious historian of the Alamo. But he seems to have had a talent for soldiering. Time and again he reentered military service, joining the Texas army to fight Indians, later serving as a volunteer in a Texas regiment during the Mexican War, and when the

"A bullet, gentlemen, has a path called a 'line of trajectory.' All you have to do to insure safety is to stand to the left or right of this line."

—Petty Officer James F. Taylor, blockade runner *Advance*, to some shipmates while under hostile fire.

Civil War broke out enlisting in the 2nd Texas Cavalry. Becerra had a busy war, though one not characterized by participation in the struggle's famous battles. Rather, he served on the frontier, patrolling the Rio Grande against Indian raids and incursions by outlaws. But he rose to lieutenant and was in at the end, fighting at Palmito—or Palmetto—Ranch (May 12-13, 1865), traditionally regarded as "the last battle of the war," in which, although only one man was killed on either side, over one hundred Union soldiers were captured.

After the war, Becerra became a law enforcement officer in Brownsville. In 1875 Colonel John S. Ford, formerly of his old regiment, published Becerra's reminiscences, *A Mexican Sergeant's Recollection of the Alamo & San Jacinto As Told by Francisco Becerra*, an important source of information on the Texas War, which has been reprinted several times over the years.

In 1876 Becerra attempted to arrest a drunken soldier, who stabbed him with a bayonet. Becerra died shortly after.

Some Union OERs*

Although we tend to think of Americans from the mid-nineteenth century as the products of a rather polite and reserved society, they were often quite outspoken. This was especially the case in the armies during the Civil War, in which extreme opinions—whether positive or negative—on the prowess of senior officers were often expressed quite openly by their comrades, their opponents, or even their soldiers.

Forthwith, a batch of comments on the military ability or character of some notable Union officers—and one secretary of war—by some of their colleagues and their foes, plus a sprinkling of foreigners and historians.

- Lieutenant General U.S. Grant on Brigadier General Napoleon Bonaparte Buford: "He could scarcely make a respectable Hospital nurse if put in petticoats, and certainly is unfit for any other Military position. He has always been a deadweight to carry, becoming more burthensome with his increased rank."
- Major General Henry Halleck on Major General Benjamin Butler: "Hopeless as a child on the field of battle, and as visionary an opium eater in council," a good match for Major General Erasmus Keyes, who "possessed phenomenal activity and persistence of brain power, and. . . considered himself fit to be the leader of all pursuits, callings, professions, and occupations of men, whether he had studied them or not."
- Lieutenant General Winfield Scott on Secretary of War Simon Cameron: "There goes a bad man."
- Winfield Scott on U.S. Grant: "the ablest general in the world" (written by Scott in the copy of his memoirs that he presented to Grant).
- Major General Stephen Watts Kearny on Major General William S. Harney, in 1848: "no more brains than a greyhound," to which Scott would add: "not fit for a separate command."
- Winfield Scott on Major General Philip Kearny: "The bravest man I ever knew, and a perfect soldier," a close match to Confederate Lieutenant General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's remark: "The bravest man in the Union Army."
- U.S. Grant on Major General John McClernand: "He is entirely unfit for the position of Corps Commander both on the march and on the battle field."
- The Duke of Wellington on Winfield Scott, in 1848: "the greatest living general," to which Robert E. Lee would add: a "bold, sagacious, truthful man.... "
- Major General George B. McClellan on Henry Halleck: "very dull and very incompetent."
- Major General William T. Sherman on Major General John Logan: "a brave, fierce fighter, full of the passion of war . . . perfect in battle."

* For those not familiar with contemporary military parlance, "OER" refers to DA Form 67-8, Officer Evaluation Report.

The Dangers of Teaching School

In the spring of 1864 the Union military authorities in Columbia, Tennessee, having responsibility for a large number of "contrabands"—African-Americans who had fled slavery—ordered the establishment of "Negro Schools" to educate the freedmen. Most of the teachers in these schools were dedicated young abolitionists from the North. But in one instance, a literate black man, himself a fugitive from slavery, was hired.

In May 1864, when the man had hardly been on the job more than a few days, he was abducted by four men. The kidnappers carried him off to an isolated spot in the woods and gave him what were officially described as twenty-five "brutal" lashes with a whip. Surviving this ordeal, the man was able to reach the Federal authorities, and actually identified his abductors. They were four of the most distinguished citizens of Columbia, including the mayor, two of the city magistrates, and the city constable. The provost marshal promptly arrested the four on charges of assault and battery.

At their trial the victim testified: "It is a glorious cause for which I have suffered. God has given us the Bible for all to read." In defense of the four pillars of Southern society, their attorney argued that a Tennessee law passed in 1849 prohibited teaching black people to read. The court proved unsympathetic, and the four were convicted. The mayor was fined $200, a substantial sum (perhaps $12,000-$15,000 today), and a month in prison. One of the city magistrates, who seems to have been the ringleader, was fined $150 and given four months in jail. The constable was given a $100 fine and a month in jail, while the other magistrate, on the testimony of the victim only peripherally involved, was fined $5 and released.

—Contributed by Thomas R. Lowry

- U.S. Grant on Brigadier General Ranald MacKenzie: "The most promising young officer in the Army."
- Major General Montgomery Meigs on George B. McClellan: "McClellan would prefer to send forward any other troops than those under his present command."
- U.S. Grant on Major General James B. McPherson: "the most promising officer of his age in the army."
- Major General John Pope on Major General Franz Sigel: "the God damndest coward I ever knew."
- Major General Lew Wallace on Major General Charles F. Smith: "the best all-around officer in the regular army."
- Major General John Gibbon on Major General George Sykes: "a very fine soldier."
- Brigadier General Luigi di Cesnola on Colonel James H. Van Alen of the 3rd New York Cavalry: "radically incapable of commanding his regiment, much less leading it into battle."
- U.S. Grant on Brigadier General W.H.L. Wallace: "Every inch a soldier. . .the equal of the best, if not the very best, of the Volunteer generals."

Some of these comments are pretty telling. But their accuracy perhaps depends more upon the person making the comment than on the one commented upon. Certainly the opinion of U.S. Grant or Winfield Scott or Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson deserves to be given considerable respect, while the views expressed by a Henry Halleck or a George B. McClellan may perhaps be viewed with jaundiced eye.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: Strength Report, the "Fighting 69th," after Fredericksburg

Contributed by Tom Ryan, 69th N.Y. Historical Society

A UNIT OF THE FAMED IRISH BRIGADE, the 69th New York Volunteers had a hard war. Many of the men were veterans of the 69th New York Militia and had served at Bull Run before enlisting in the new 69th New York Volunteers. The 69th, which ended the war as one of Fox's "300 Fightingest Regiments," served in the Peninsular Campaign (Yorktown, Seven Pines, the Seven Days), the Second Bull Run Campaign, Antietam, and in other operations, always with distinction. But it was at Fredericksburg that the regiment had its most trying day, in an action of such intensity that it was virtually wiped out, as can be seen by this official return, dated a few days later.

CIRCULAR: CAMP NEAR FALMOUTH, DECEMBER 22, 1862

In compliance with general orders received December 21, I hereby certify that the Sixty-ninth Regiment New York Volunteers entered the battle of Fredericksburg, on December 13, 1862, commanded by Col. Robert Nugent, and 18 commissioned officers and 210 rank and file, in which the above numbered regiment lost 16 commissioned officers and 160 rank and file leaving Capt. James Saunders, Lieutenant Milliken, and Lieut. L. Brennan to bring the remnant of the regiment off the battle-field.

JAMES SAUNDERS
Captain, Comdg. Sixth-ninth
Regiment New York Volunteers.

Recruiting poster for the 69th New York Infantry Regiment. *Library of Congress*

PROFILE
The Fighting Irishman

A fellow officer once wrote of Colonel Michael W. Burns: "He embraced danger as a friend. The excitement of battle was like breath to his nostrils." Unfortunately, Burns fought his fellow Unionists as often as he did the enemy.

Before the war the Ireland native worked as a fire inspector in New York City while serving as a volunteer in Hudson River Engine Company 53. After the Civil War broke out, Burns and a fellow firefighter recruited men for a company that would be officially designated as Company A, 73rd New York Infantry (2nd Fire Zouaves); Burns was mustered in as its captain on August 14, 1861. By early 1863 Burns, who survived a severe wound during the Second Manassas Campaign, had ascended to the command of the regiment. Major Henry E. Tremain of the 73rd declared that "no man ever lived who could have led this regiment more gallantly and efficiently in all its subsequent battles and arduous experiences."

But a more sinister side to Burns had emerged by the time of his promotion to the head of the 73rd: he had a fondness for drink and a propensity for violence. On February 10, 1863, Father Joseph B. O'Hagan, the brigade chaplain, concluded his daily diary entry with the following observation: "Drunkenness gave us another fine exhibition in camp today. Our new Lt. Col. [Burns] returned his new shoulder straps—came into camp bossy—calls somebody a son of a bitch—The compliment is returned—then the gallant Col. uses his sword—then the soldier his fists. Grand Army of the Potomac!!!"

Nevertheless, the Fire Zouaves fought well under Burns' leadership. On the evening of May 2, 1863, at Chancellorsville, the New Yorkers repulsed three enemy assaults, and two months later they fought valiantly in the Peach Orchard at Gettysburg. It was after the latter battle that Burns perpetrated the most heinous act of his army career. Burns entered the Breckenridge Street home of Mrs. Mary Wade (the mother of Mary Virginia "Jennie" Wade, the only civilian killed during the battle) while "grossly intoxicated," and—for reasons unkown—violently assaulted the Reverend

Walter S. Alexander, a delegate of the United States Christian Commission. An enraged Burns pressed a pistol to the reverend's head and threatened to blow his brains out. He then drew his sword and slashed Alexander in the head and thigh, inflicting serious injury.

The gritty Irishman maintained his command of the Fire Zouaves and led them through the bloody spring campaign of 1864. During the Battle of the Wilderness, a small group of Confederate prisoners approached the regiment. As they passed by, Burns overheard one of the officers urging the men to overpower the guard detail. Grasping a musket, Burns rushed over to the ringleader and drove a bayonet through his body.

A couple of weeks later, following the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, Major S. Octavius Bull, provost marshal of the II Corps, ordered his assistant, Captain Alexander McCune, to round up stragglers. Near Milford Station, McCune discovered Burns sitting on a stoop and talking with the occupant of the house. Citing his orders from Major Bull, the captain instructed the absent officer to rejoin his regiment. "Tell Major Bull that I am in command of the rear guard and that he is a damned fool," snapped Burns.

Prior to this confrontation, a dispute had erupted between Burns and Captain Charles Young, a brigade staff officer. When Burns threatened to give him a thrashing, the captain drew his sword and held his adversary at bay. Later in the day, the simmering colonel tracked him down and demanded to know "if he was a better man than he was this morning." Burns chastised Young for never being in a fight, called him "a damned cowardly son of a bitch," and then struck him across the chest. After a brief scuffle, the provost guard subdued both of the combatants.

The next morning a general court martial found Burns guilty of neglect of duty and of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and sentenced him to be cashiered from the service. However, in a letter to President Abraham Lincoln dated July 2, 1864, Major General David Birney pointed out that the accused had always "conducted himself with great bravery and efficiency" and recommended a remission of the sentence. Major General George G. Meade and President Lincoln approved this request.

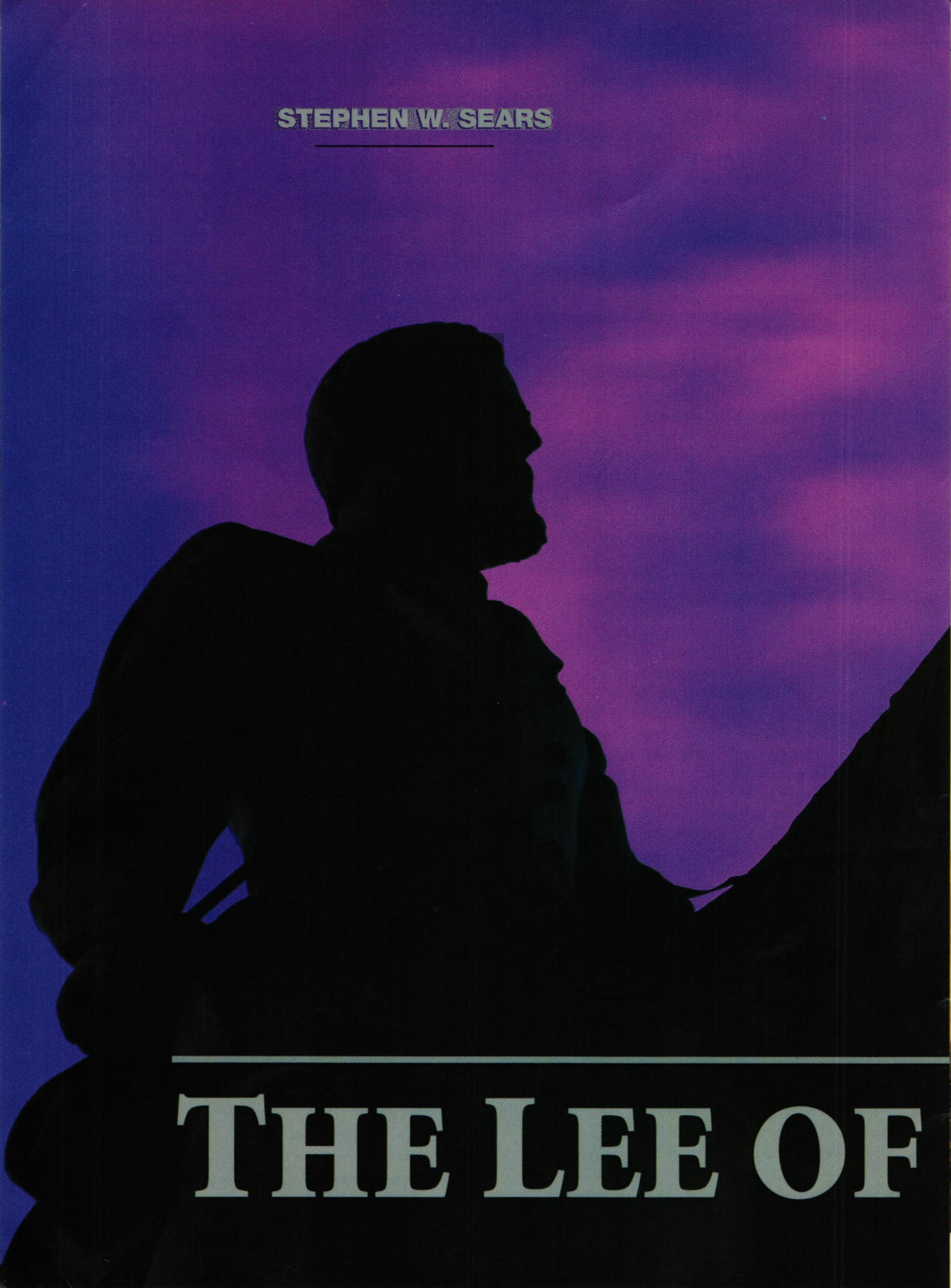
Remarkably, just two weeks earlier during the initial assaults upon Petersburg, an intoxicated Burns had been involved in a heated confrontation with a group of soldiers from the 70th New York. He challenged any comers to a fight and when no one accepted, the drunken officer punched and kicked Captain John N. Coyne. Although charges and specifications were filed, there is no record of a subsequent trial.

To his credit, Burns served throughout the duration of the war without further incident. In fact, two months after being mustered out on June 29, 1865, he received a commission to brevet colonel for gallant service during the siege of Petersburg and at the Battle of Sayler's Creek.

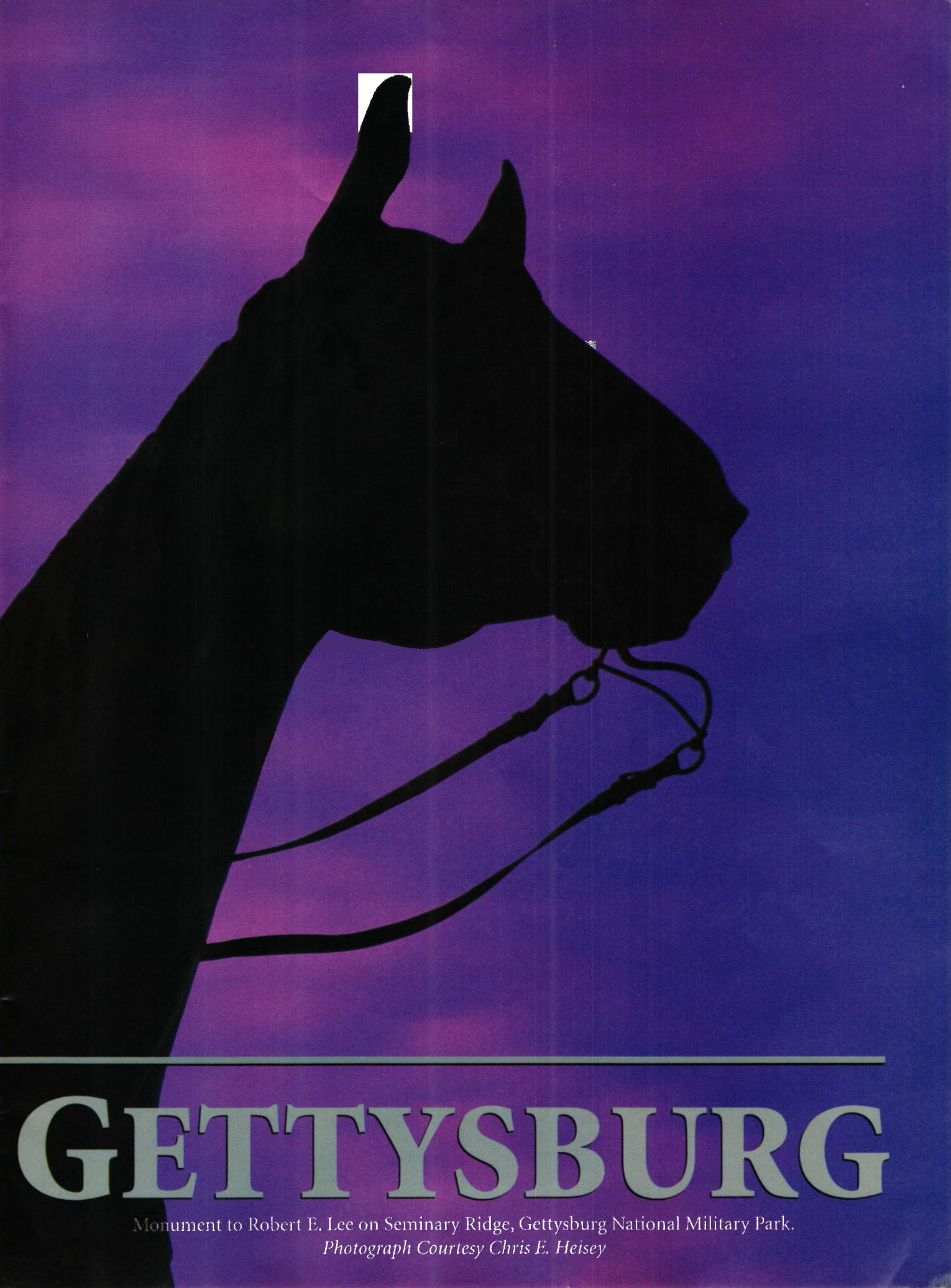
After the war, Burns secured a position as a port warden and later as a harbormaster in New York City, where he died of kidney disease on December 7, 1883, at the age of forty-eight. He was eulogized as "a lion-hearted soldier, a fervent patriot, a fond husband, and a trusty friend."

—Contributed by Michael Dreese
Kreamer, Pennsylvania

STEPHEN W. SEARS



THE LEE OF



GETTYSBURG

Monument to Robert E. Lee on Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg National Military Park.
Photograph Courtesy Chris E. Heisey

The poet Stephen Vincent Benét famously described Robert E. Lee as a marble man—"A figure lost to flesh and blood and bones / Frozen into a legend out of life, / A blank-verse statue." General Lee, Benét concluded, "kept his heart a secret to the end / From all the picklocks of biographers." And, it may be said, secret from the picklocks of historians.[1]

Nothing, for example, is more elusive than the Lee of Gettysburg.

To test that theorem, let us turn first to what Lee wrote and was quoted as saying concerning his management of this greatest of Civil War battles. He prepared two official reports on Gettysburg—a comparatively brief "outline of the recent operations of this army," dated July 31, 1863, then a more extensive final report, dated January 1864. In neither paper do we learn very much of the reasoning behind Lee's battlefield decisions. He did what he did, he tells us, and leaves it at that. At the close of the fighting on July 2, for instance, Lee decreed that "the result of this day's operations induced the belief that, with proper concert of action...we should ultimately succeed, and it was accordingly determined to continue the attack. The general plan was unchanged." That's all he had to say about the origin of Pickett's Charge.[2]

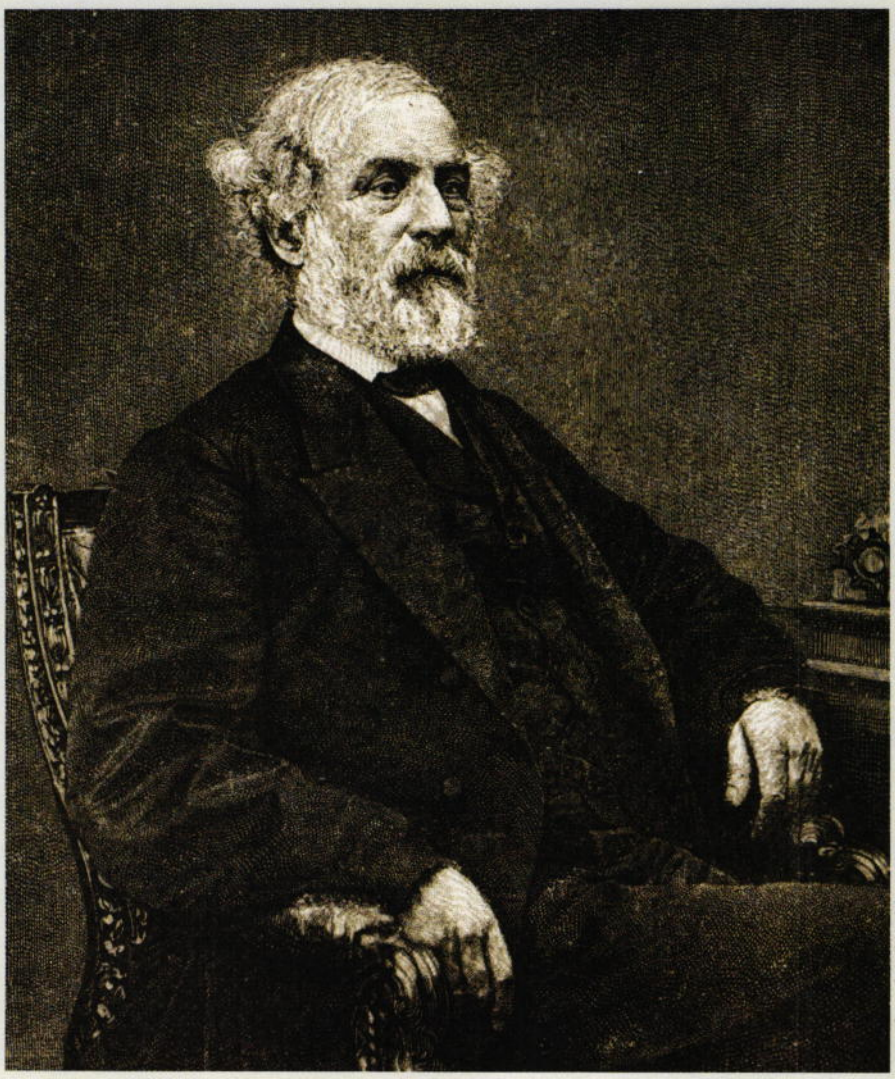
In a series of letters he wrote to Jefferson Davis in the immediate aftermath of the battle, Lee was circumspect to a fault. "The works on the enemy's extreme right and left were taken," he explained in reference to July 3's climactic fighting, "but his numbers were so great and his position so commanding, that our troops were compelled to relinquish their advantage and retire." In his letter to Davis of July 31 from Culpeper, back in Virginia, Lee admitted to no second thoughts concerning his conduct: The late campaign in Pennsylvania "in my opinion achieved under the guidance of the Most High a general success, though it did not win a victory.... I still think if all things could have worked together it would have been accomplished. But with the knowledge I then had, & in the circumstances I was then placed, I do not know what better course I could have pursued."[3]

It is reported that an emissary from Richmond, Major John Seddon, sent to learn the state of affairs soon after the Army of Northern Virginia recrossed the Potomac, found General Lee in that same unapologetic frame of mind. While his losses in Pennsylvania were heavy, said Lee, they were no more than he would have suffered in the battles he would otherwise have had to fight had he remained in Virginia. "General Lee then rose from his seat," Major Seddon reported, "and with an emphatic gesture said, 'and sir, we did whip them at Gettysburg, and it will be seen for the next six months that *that army* will be as quiet as a sucking dove.' "[4]

Lee's two official reports and his letters to the president comprise the sum of his wartime written commentary on Gettysburg, both the campaign and the battle. He did not live long enough to compose a memoir or to write the history of his campaigns that he had once contemplated, and therefore we are left to parse every passing comment he was heard to make on the subject of Gettysburg during the five years left to him after Appomattox.

The most substantive of such comments are found in a conversation Lee had with William Allan on April 15, 1868, during Lee's tenure as president of Washington College. Allan, a member of the college faculty and a budding historian of the Army of Northern Virginia, found the general in a rare mood to speak of the war after answering queries about it that day from a textbook author. The burden of Lee's remarks, as Allan recorded them, echoed his wartime opinion that "victory wd. have been won if he could have gotten one decided simultaneous attack on the whole line. This he tried his utmost to effect for three days, and failed."

Lee confessed no operational failings of his own. Instead, he found his corps commanders—James Longstreet, Dick Ewell, A.P. Hill, and the cavalry's Jeb



Battles and Leaders of the Civil War

General Robert E. Lee (right) confessed no operational failings of his own.

Stuart—to be primarily culpable for the Gettysburg defeat: "Ewell he could not get to act with decision. . . . Then Longstreet & Hill &c. could not be gotten to act in concert." Stuart, absent for most of the campaign and battle thanks to his excursion around the Federal army, was also singled out for blame: "He did not know the Federal army was at Gettysburg, *could not believe it*, as Stuart had been specially ordered to cover his (Lee's) movement & keep him informed of the position of the enemy, & he (Stuart) had sent no word." In sum, said Lee, speaking so emphatically that Allan's notes reflect the intensity, "Stuart's failure to carry out his instructions *forced the battle of Gettysburg, & the imperfect, halting way in which his corps commanders* (especially Ewell) *fought the battle gave victory* (which as he says trembled for 3 days in the balance) *finally to the foe.*"[5]

In view of the later demonization of Longstreet for allegedly thwarting Lee's best laid plans at Gettysburg, it is of interest to note that only in this conversation with William Allan did General Lee ever comment on any failings by "Old Pete" on this battlefield—saying rather mildly, in reference to the second day's fighting, that Longstreet and A.P. Hill failed to "act in concert." (In point of fact, in that particular July 2 transaction, it was Hill rather than Longstreet who was delinquent.)

Indeed, there is evidence that Lee admitted—privately, to be sure—that Longstreet's ideas for fighting the battle had been better than his own. During the winter of 1863-64, when Longstreet's corps was on detached service in East Tennessee, Old Pete sent Thomas Goree of his staff to Virginia with dispatches for General Lee. As Captain Goree remembered the scene, Lee was alone in his tent when Goree delivered the dispatches. Lee said he had been reading the Federal reports on Gettysburg as printed in Northern newspapers, and (so Goree wrote to Longstreet) "had become satisfied from reading those reports that if he had permitted you to carry out your plans on the 3d day, instead of making the attack on Cemetery Hill, we would have been successful."

That remark of course can be construed as reflecting the unerring wisdom of hindsight, but then Lee went on to acknowledge that *at the time* Longstreet's grasp of the situation had been superior to his own thinking. On July 3, Lee observed, the Yankees seemed to have anticipated an attack on their center, and had weakened their left to meet it. Goree quoted Lee as saying "that if you had made your flank movement early on the morning of the 3d day as you desired that you would have met with but little opposition." Consequently, at least in General Lee's eyes, James Longstreet did not have much to answer for at Gettysburg.[6]

As to what Lee himself had to answer for, it is clear that there is more to be gained by deciphering and analyzing what he actually did at Gettysburg—the actions and command decisions he took—than by trying to assay his writings and sayings. As it happened, on those three hot July days General Lee acted in ways quite uncharacteristic of him, thereby disclosing, in a series of scenes, answers to much that is puzzling about his direction of the Gettysburg drama.

All Battles and Leaders of the Civil War

Major General Henry Heth (left), Major General William Dorsey Pender (center), and Lieutenant General Richard W. Anderson.

Scene 1: Midday on July 1, at Cashtown on the Chambersburg Pike, eight miles west of Gettysburg. The sound of cannon fire could be heard quite distinctly from the direction of Gettysburg, but General Lee had no idea what it signified, nor could he find anyone to provide him with answers. A.P. Hill, commanding the Third Corps, could tell him only that he had sent Harry Heth eastward that morning to reconnoiter and Heth reported back that he had encountered Yankee cavalry at Gettysburg. By the sound of it, however, there was certainly more than enemy cavalry involved. Hill had ridden ahead to see about it, leaving Lee in a state of growing impatience.

Lee spoke with Dick Anderson, the third of Hill's division commanders; the other two, Heth and Dorsey Pender, were in the advance. Lee had not anticipated any of this happening when he began the day, and his mood was growing dark and angry. Anderson would remember the commanding general being "very much disturbed and depressed." What seemed to disturb Lee the most was not having Jeb Stuart on the scene. "In the absence of reports from him," Lee said, "I am in ignorance as to what we have in front of us here." It might be the whole Federal army; it might be only a detachment. "If it is the whole Federal force," he said, "we must fight a battle here."

Soon thereafter Major Campbell Brown, of Dick Ewell's staff, rode up to report. Brown explained that Ewell, told of Harry Heth's scheduled reconnoiter toward Gettysburg that morning, was bringing two of his Second Corps divisions down from the north to join up. Ewell, the spearhead of the invading army, had reached all the way to Harrisburg before Lee sent him recall orders. Like Dick Anderson, Major Brown found Lee to be not his usual self.

The general, Brown recalled, "asked me with a peculiar searching, almost querulous, impatience which I never saw in him before . . . whether Genl. Ewell had heard anything from Genl. Stuart. . . ." When Brown replied in the negative, Lee was uncharacteristically blunt, saying he "had heard nothing from or of him for three days, and that Genl. Stuart had not complied with his instructions." Instead of keeping in constant communication, "he has gone off clear around Genl. Meade's army and I see by a Northern paper that he is near Washington. A scout reports Meade's whole army marching this way, but that is all I know about his position." Major Brown was greatly surprised by this outburst, this departure

from Lee's "habitual reserve." Looking back on the episode, he wrote, "I now appreciate that he was really uneasy & irritated by Stuart's conduct. . . ."[7]

In this opening scene of what would become the Battle of Gettysburg, then, Lee discovered that three of his ranking generals had disobeyed or ignored his orders. Jeb Stuart with the cavalry had simply disappeared, utterly failing in his primary duty of reporting on the opposing army. Harry Heth, at the head of an unwieldy reconnoitering force—two infantry divisions and two artillery battalions—had (it seemed) violated Lee's standing order to avoid a general engagement until the army was reunited. A.P. Hill (it seemed) had failed to supervise Heth and to maintain control of events. Hoping to limit the damage, Lee sent Major Brown back to Dick Ewell with specific orders. "General Lee," Brown wrote, "then impressed on me *very strongly* that a general engagement was to be avoided until the arrival of the rest of the army."[8]

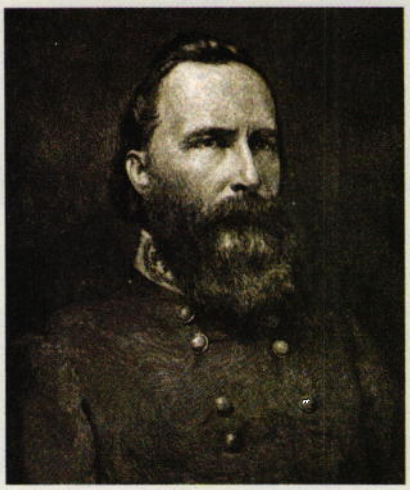
Scene 2: A vantage point on Seminary Ridge, three-quarters of a mile west of Gettysburg, late afternoon of the same day. Lee and Longstreet are surveying a victorious field. Dick Ewell, by happenstance positioned to outflank the Yankee defenders north of the town and with his artillery already engaged, had overridden Lee's order to avoid a general engagement and attacked and routed the Federal XI Corps. West of Gettysburg, Heth's and Pender's divisions of Hill's corps, after a very bloody contest, had finally broken the lines of the Federal I Corps. The beaten Yankees had retreated through the town, losing many prisoners, to the high ground of Cemetery Hill just to the south. Lee and Longstreet were sharply divided about what to do next.

"We could not call the enemy to position better suited to our plans," Old Pete had observed when he saw the Yankees take refuge on Cemetery Hill. "All that we have to do is to file around his left and secure good ground between him and his capital." His remark was an unspoken reference to the "understanding" he believed the two of them had reached at the start of the campaign—that in Pennsylvania they would combine offensive strategy with defensive tactics—and he assumed Lee would surely agree. But Lee did not agree. He said, with a show of impatience, "If the enemy is there tomorrow, we must attack him." Longstreet's reply was prompt and more pointed than he perhaps intended: "If he is there, it will be because he is anxious that we should attack him—a good reason, in my judgment, for not doing so." Longstreet went on to elaborate his plan to shift the army south and east and thereby force the Federals to do the attacking. Lee remained noncommital.[9]

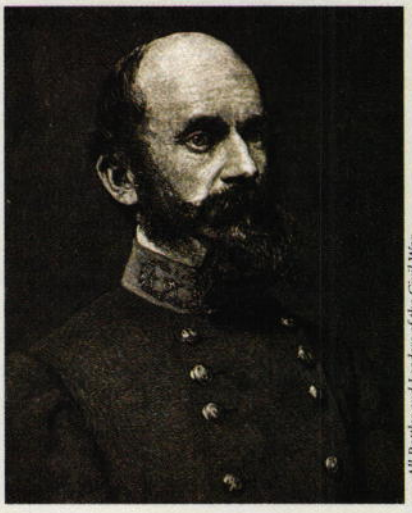
Scene 3: Ewell's headquarters on the Carlisle Road on the outskirts of Gettysburg, early evening, July 1. General Lee is meeting with Ewell and two of his divisional commanders, Jubal Early and Robert Rodes. Earlier, Lee had instructed Ewell to attack the Yankee position on Cemetery Hill "if he found it practicable, but to avoid a general engagement until the arrival of the other divisions of the army. . . ." He was urged to start a fight but not to start a battle. Ewell had not found such an attack practicable, especially after Lee refused him the needed support troops from A.P. Hill's corps. Now Lee asked Ewell, "Can't you, with your corps, attack on this flank at daylight tomorrow?"

Ewell, Early, and Rodes were unanimous in opposing this idea. The terrain was against it, the enemy was in force there, the result "might be doubtful." Lee tried another tack. "Then perhaps I had better draw you around towards my right," he said, so as to support an attack on the opposite flank. There came a chorus of objections to that idea as well. After winning such a dramatic victory that day, they said, the troops would be demoralized by having to pull back from their conquests. There were the wounded to consider, and the booty collected from the Yankees. Here were three more of his generals voicing opposition to his plans. It was an entirely new experience for Robert E. Lee. He equivocated, leaving the Second Corps where it was but without a clear mission.[10]

Scene 4: Lee's headquarters at the Thompson house, on the Chambersburg Pike at Seminary Ridge, later that evening. Lee is visited by General Ewell. Following his return from Ewell's headquarters, Lee had continued groping toward a course of action for July 2. For a



Lieutenant General James Longstreet was being stubbornly and outspokenly contrary to the whole plan of battle.

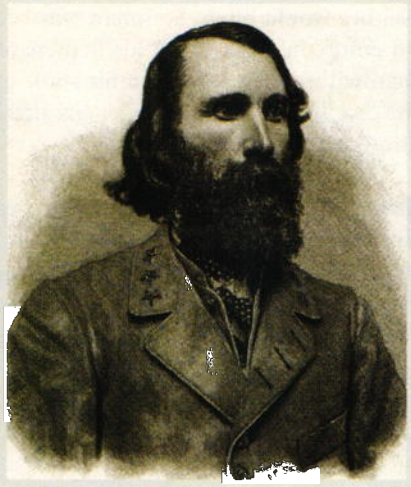


All Battles and Leaders of the Civil War

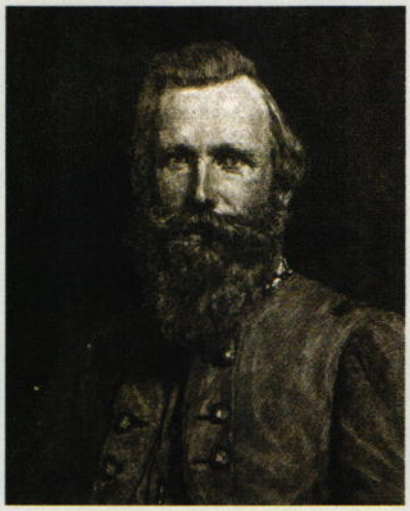
Lee refused Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell the needed support troops from A.P. Hill's corps.

time at least, he gave Longstreet's plan serious consideration. Campbell Brown recorded Lee's caution to Dick Ewell that he should not become too entangled with the enemy on his front: "I have not decided to fight here—and may probably draw off by my right flank . . . so as to get between the enemy & Washington & Baltimore—& force them to attack us in position." That led Lee to second thoughts concerning the Second Corps, and he had sent his aide Colonel Charles Marshall to Ewell with orders to evacuate Gettysburg and bring his corps around to the army's right.

This abrupt change of course stunned Ewell and sent him rushing to Lee's headquarters to argue once more against giving up his hard-won position on the battlefield's northern front. No



Lieutenant Geneneral Ambrose P. Hill had failed to supervise Heth and to maintain control of events.



Lee had made no effort to conceal his anger at Major General J.E.B. Stuart for failing to obey instructions.

record seems to have been made of their hour-long discussion, but Ewell must have been persuasive. He probably offered assurances that he could seize Culp's Hill on his front, thereby dominating the Yankees' position on nearby Cemetery Hill. However that may be, in the end Lee shifted his ground yet again and left the Second Corps where it was.[11]

Observers agreed that the commanding general was not his usual self on this first day of Gettysburg. "He seemed under a subdued excitement," Longstreet recalled, "which occasionally took possession of him when 'the hunt was up,' and threatened his superb equipoise. The sharp battle fought by Hill and Ewell on that day had given him a taste of victory." Other observers traveling with the army had thoughts about what was different about Lee after he reached Gettysburg. "Lee was not at his ease, but was riding to and fro, . . . making anxious enquiries here and there, and looking care-worn," wrote the Prussian military observer Justus Sheibert. The London *Times* correspondent Francis Lawley found General Lee "more anxious and ruffled than I had ever seen him before, though it required close observation to detect it."

The fact of the matter seems to be that Robert E. Lee was deeply angered. Talking to Dick Anderson and to Campbell Brown, he had made no effort to conceal his anger at Jeb Stuart for failing to obey instructions. He was displeased with Harry Heth for disobeying *his* instructions not to bring on a general engagement, and with corps commander Hill for letting it happen. Under questioning, Dick Ewell and his lieutenants had displayed, first, strong reluctance to move against the enemy's right, then strong reluctance to shift forces to the enemy's left as Lee proposed. Longstreet was being stubbornly and outspokenly contrary to the whole plan of battle.

This was Lee's first experience with recalcitrant subordinates questioning and challenging him at every turn. He was troubled by this unexpected development, and initially uncertain how to respond to it. He was entangled in a battle he had not wanted in a place he knew little about against a foe he could not describe. It was not any wonder that he seemed "anxious and ruffled."[12]

Scene 5: The vantage point on Seminary Ridge, taken as Lee's field headquarters, shortly after 8 o'clock on the morning of July 2. Lee is meeting with Longstreet and one of Longstreet's division commanders, Lafayette McLaws. Earlier that morning it became evident to his lieutenants that General Lee had decided to reject any notion of fighting defensively, either by Longstreet's plan of shifting the battlefield, or by standing on Seminary Ridge and inviting the Federals to do the attacking. Instead Lee had determined to keep the initiative by continuing offensive action, in part because he believed he had an edge in numbers. As Longstreet would write a month later, what happened that day "was due I think to our being under the impression that the enemy had not been able to get all of his forces up. Being under this impression Gen. Lee thought it best to attack at once. . . ."[13]

During those early morning hours Longstreet persisted in his argument for a turning movement around the Federals' southern flank, and finally Lee had enough of it. "He seemed resolved, however," Longstreet later wrote, "and we discussed the probable results." That mild summation papers over what was a seething disagreement between the general commanding and his senior lieutenant. Moxley Sorrel, Old Pete's chief of staff, perceptively captured the moment. Longstreet, Sorrel wrote, "did not want to fight on the ground or on the plan adopted by the General-in-Chief. As Longstreet was not to be made willing and Lee refused to change or could not change, the former failed to conceal some anger." For his part, Lee, having dug in his heels and asserted his authority, would not—indeed, after taking his stand, could not—alter his plan.

Their dispute became evident when McLaws arrived on Seminary Ridge to report his division had reached the field. It had been General Lee's habit, since taking command of the Army of Northern Virginia, to follow a strict battlefield protocol: He would deliver an overall tactical plan to his lieutenants, then leave it to them to carry out its specific workings. As he explained it to the Prussian observer Justus Scheibert, he made his plans as perfect as possible and brought his troops to the battlefield; "the rest must be done by my generals and their troops, trusting to Providence for the victory." But now Lee took a startling and quite uncharacteristic action.

While Longstreet paced back and forth within earshot, Lee called McLaws to him and proceeded to lay out exactly where he was to go and exactly what he was to do in the forthcoming offensive. This intrusion into Longstreet's prerogatives was Lee's deliberate signal to his reluctant lieutenant that he was in no temper to brook further disputation and was thereby taking full direction of the offensive.

On a map Lee marked the position McLaws was to take in the forthcoming attack on the Federal left. McLaws asked Lee if he could conduct a reconnoiter. At this, Longstreet stepped in and said, "No, sir, I do not wish you to leave your division." Pointing to the map, Longstreet

indicated the position *he* wanted McLaws' division to take. "No, General," said Lee firmly. "I wish it placed just perpendicular to that." On that note the meeting ended. "General Longstreet appeared as if he was irritated and annoyed," McLaws wrote, "but the cause I did not ask."[14]

Scene 6: Ewell's headquarters on the outskirts of Gettysburg, midmorning on July 2. Lee meets with Ewell to plan the Second Corps' role in the day's action. During the night Ewell had failed to seize Culp's Hill, and now it bristled with Yankee defenders. This left the Second Corps in a very poor position tactically, greatly extending the army's lines and confronting the most defensible part of the Federal position. Once again Lee broached the idea of shifting the Second around to the right to shorten the Confederate lines and to add weight to the offensive there. But again he equivocated, phrasing it as a suggestion rather than an order, and apparently Ewell had no trouble persuading him to leave his corps were it was. On this 2nd of July, in his unaccustomed misalliance with his subordinates, General Lee yielded to Ewell's views . . . and overrode Longstreet's.[15]

Scene 7: Lee's field headquarters on Seminary Ridge, the evening of July 2. The day's fighting, of unrelieved savagery, had not gained Lee the advantage he had expected. Longstreet's assault on the right, against Little Round Top and Cemetery Ridge, failed (narrowly) to roll up the Federals' line. Ewell's attacks on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill on the left were repelled. Lee had now to determine a course of action of July 3. In significant contrast to the earlier scenes, this evening he took his decisions alone, without conferring with his generals.

Over the last year it had been James Longstreet's habit, after a hard day's fighting, to present himself at Lee's headquarters to report on the condition of his command and to discuss what ought to be done next. It was a hallmark of their relationship. After that bloody, terrible day at Sharpsburg, for example, Old Pete had ridden to Lee's headquarters and been greeted warmly—"Ha! here is Longstreet; here's my old war-horse! Let us hear what he has to say." After this bloody, terrible day at Gettysburg, however, Old Pete simply sent a messenger with a brief report of his doings to army headquarters, and remained stolidly at his own headquarters.

Apparently that suited General Lee. He cannot have cared to listen to Longstreet's predicable opinions and objections, for he neither summoned him to headquarters nor rode over to see him. He took his decisions that evening before the guns had hardly cooled and did so without inspecting the battlefield and without consulting a single one of his lieutenants. He summed up his orders in two sentences in his report: "The result of this day's operations induced the belief that, with proper concert of action, and with the increased support that the positions gained on the right would enable the artillery to render the assaulting columns, we should ultimately succeed, and it was accordingly determined to continue the attack. The general plan was unchanged."

The most noteworthy aspect of Lee's battle plan for July 3, as he conceived it that evening, is how barren and uninformed it was. It is astonishing how little he knew of the state of his own army, of the enemy's army, and of the battlefield when he announced that his general plan was unchanged and that the attack would continue. That neither he nor Longstreet made any effort to discuss the course of the fighting that day and the course to follow the next day reveals two strong-minded men engaged in a contest of wills. Neither would blink. So intent was Lee on enforcing his will on his lieutenant that, without a serious examination of the case, he refused to consider any alteration of his original battle plan.[16]

Scene 8: First Corps headquarters behind the lines on the Confederate right, daybreak on July 3. General Lee arrives to observe the start of the offensive he had ordered the evening before. The attacking force has not been readied, however. Instead he was greeted by General Longstreet, who proceeded to expound on a quite different plan.

As Longstreet later explained it, he feared that Lee "was still in his disposition to attack," and so he chose a preemptive course. "General," he said, "I have had my scouts out all night, and I find that you still have an excellent opportunity to move around to the right of Meade's army, and maneuver him into attacking us." (On July 3 Meade had but two brigades posted to guard his extreme left flank.) Longstreet said he was prepared to swing his corps around Round Top and take a position on the enemy's flank. Lee was surely surprised by this, and surely angry as well, but Longstreet only has him reacting "with some impatience" and pointing his fist at Cemetery Hill and saying that the enemy is there and he will strike him.

Because it was the 15,000 men of his First Corps who were at risk, Longstreet said he felt it his duty "to express my con-

Battles and Leaders of the Civil War

On the far flank Ewell was already renewing his assault on Culp's Hill.

victions." He then did exactly that: "General, I have been a soldier all my life. I have been with soldiers engaged in fights by couples, by squads, companies, regiments, divisions, and armies, and should know, as well as any one, what soldiers can do. It is my opinion that no fifteen thousand men ever arrayed for battle can take that position." And then *he* pointed to Cemetery Hill.

In writing this some years later, Old Pete perhaps embellished his recollection somewhat, yet certainly these were his sincere convictions. But he had waited too long to express them. Perhaps the evening before, had he overridden his bruised sensibilities and gone to Lee with his first-hand evaluation of the day's fighting—something Lee would certainly have been bound to respect—he might have earned at least a look at his flanking plan. But now Lee was not to be swayed. He could hardly back down from his issued orders at this late hour. On the far flank Ewell was already renewing his assault on Culp's Hill. Lee could hardly—in public as it were—admit as commanding general that his battle plan was basically flawed. Longstreet saw that he was wasting his breath: "General Lee, in reply to this, ordered me to prepare Pickett's Division for the attack.... I said no more, however, but turned away." The contest of wills was over.[17]

And so, early that afternoon, the attack that history knows as Pickett's Charge was made, only to fail disastrously. And, some months later, General Lee would admit to Captain Goree that Longstreet's alternative plan for a swing around the Federals' left flank that day was based on a better analysis of the battlefield situation than he had made.

In seeking out the Lee of Gettysburg, we find a common thread running through these eight command scenarios spanning the three days of Gettysburg—Robert E. Lee's inability to manage his generals. At first, on July 1, he was frustrated and exasperated by generals who disobeyed his orders—Jeb Stuart, A.P. Hill, Harry Heth. His dealings with Dick Ewell and his lieutenants that day and the next only deepened his frustration. On the eve of the Pennsylvania campaign, Lee recalled, he had spoken "long and earnestly" to Ewell about his "want of decision." Yet on July 1 Lee issued vague and contradictory orders to Ewell, who of all his generals most needed positive directions. That pattern of indecision continued on that day and the next. Three times Lee proposed moving Ewell's corps to a more advantageous position on the battlefield, and three times he let Ewell talk him out of it.

At the same time—perhaps in part because of his unsatisfactory dealings with Ewell—Lee *did* impose his will on Longstreet. Since there is only Longstreet's record of what occurred between the two of them on these days, it is not clear what arguments Lee may have countered with. What is clear is that theirs was a serious, extended dispute over a fundamental question of how to fight the battle. Never before had Lee's judgments been questioned or challenged, and by the morning of July 2 he would take no more of it. Thus it may be said that Pickett's Charge was more a product of Lee's will than of his head. He seems to have felt obliged to demonstrate to his lieutenants that his way was the right way, and the only way.

Porter Alexander is easily the most astute of Confederate soldier-historians, and in his published appraisals of Gettysburg he wrote critically but with proper deference concerning General Lee's conduct of the battle. In a private letter, however, Alexander was rather more blunt. "Never, never, never," he wrote, "did Gen. Lee himself bollox a fight as he did this."[18] □

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15. Ewell report, *OR* 27:2, p. 446; Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill, 1989), pp. 234-35.
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17. Longstreet, "Lee in Pennsylvania," *Annals of the War*, 429; Longstreet report, *OR* 27:2, p. 359.
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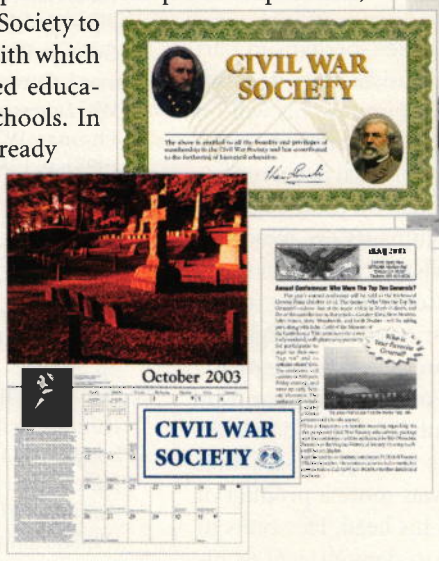
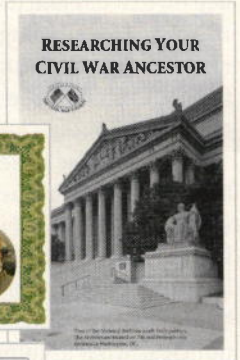
SOCIETY UPDATE

May saw a significant step taken, as the Civil War Society was established as a separate not-for-profit corporation, paving the way for the Society to receive grant money with which to develop the planned educational materials for schools. In fact the Society has already received its first grant, in the form of a $2,500 check from the Greater New Orleans Foundation, a donation generously recommended by Society members Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Hearin, and made from the Hearin Fund.

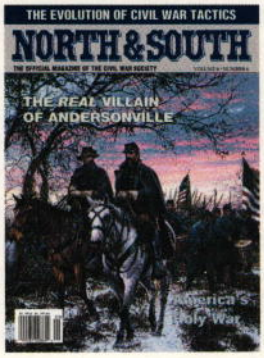




Membership: Members will be glad to know that the membership packets have been mailed. Associate members receive the Society newsletter, a membership certificate, and a bumper sticker. Executive members, who were sent the Chris Heisey calendar earlier in the year, also receive our updated booklet "Researching Your Civil War Ancestor," which incorporates the (extensively revised) "Organization of the Armies" item previously issued as a separate card. Associate members can obtain the research booklet for just one dollar.

The newsletter contains details of this year's Annual Conference, which will be held in Richmond on October 10-12. The theme, for what is expected to be a very lively weekend, will be "Who Were the Top Ten Generals?" Speakers: Steve Newton, Gordon Rhea, John Simon, Steve Woodworth, and Keith Poulter.

Michael Miller will lead a one-day tour of the Gettysburg battlefield on Saturday, September 20: The theme will be "DAY TWO—Robert E. Lee, Plans and Performance." Those who recall Michael's "DAY ONE" tour will know he is an exceptional guide. Cost: $75.00. For more information, booking details and tour itinerary, call or write: (559) 855-8636; Civil War Society, 33756 Black Mountain Rd., Tollhouse CA 93667.



IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

(Volume 6, #6: Mails to subscribers on 8/13; on sale in stores 9/3.)

The Changing Battlefield: Theory —*Brent Nosworthy*
The *Real* Villain of Andersonville —*David Crook*
The Battle of Jonesborough —*James R. Furqueron*
America's Holy War —*John Daly*
Union Troops' Treatment of Black Civilians —*Mark Grimsley*
Giant In Gray: Wade Hampton At Fayetteville —*Eric Wittenberg;*

UPCOMING ARTICLES: "The Changing Battlefield: Practice"—*Brent Nosworthy;* "The Battle of Crane's Nest"—*Jeffrey Weaver;* "The Road to Disunion (1760-1850)"—*William W. Freehling;* "The Meridian Campaign"—*Buck Foster;* and "Confederate Cavalry Tactics"—*Lawrence Schiller.*

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IT WASN'T

Patrick Brennan

IT WAS THE FAMILIAR POUNDING OF AN OLD-FASHIONED SUMMER STORM, Virginia style, and the fields around Rector's Crossroads had turned into a sodden quagmire. Across the morass, the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia camped in various states of misery, the troopers trying as best they could to get some sleep in the pouring rain. Even their commander, Jeb Stuart, had foregone the shelter of a nearby house and curled up under a tree, protected by his blanket and oil cloth, opting to share his men's discomfort. But nodding on the porch of the house was Major Henry McClellan, Stuart's adjutant, encamped under the roof by the chieftain's direct orders "to readily light [a] candle and read any dispatches which might come during the night." As luck would have it, sometime near midnight a rider appeared out of the gloaming and handed McClellan a letter from army headquarters marked "confidential." The young adjutant felt some compunction about awaking the exhausted Stuart, but the gravity of the missive's markings prompted McClellan to break the seal and read the contents. Upon a hurried perusal and fully aware of the import of the dispatch, McClellan strode to the back of the house and awoke his commander.[1]

The torrential rain of June 23, 1863, was hardly the only happenstance that had made it a trying month for Stuart and his horsemen. On June 9 Federal cavalry under General Alfred Pleasonton had attacked their Confederate counterparts on the plains near Brandy Station. Though Stuart rallied to fend off the thrust, inflicting twice the casualties in the process, both the Southern press and a number of his colleagues castigated Jeb for being caught unawares. Soon thereafter, General Robert E. Lee ordered his infantry—then encamped around Culpeper—to cross the Blue Ridge Mountains into the Shenandoah Valley and march north, commencing his second incursion across the Mason-Dixon line. Concurrently, the Confederate troopers spread out across Loudoun County to shield the infantry from the prying eyes of the Federal cavalry. They didn't have long to wait. On June 16, one day after General Albert Jenkins led his brigade into Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, while the van of General Richard Ewell's command crossed the Potomac River into Maryland, sharp fighting erupted across the contours of Loudoun as Pleasonton sought to discover Lee's intentions. Finally, on June 22, after nearly a week of bloodying Loudoun's soil, yet still unsure of the Rebel plans, Pleasonton and his spirited Federal horsemen broke off the running battle, leaving the Valley to Stuart and his battered boys. With the Federal pressure waning on Stuart's front, Lee ordered Ewell to the Susquehanna River—threatening the Pennsylvania capital at Harrisburg if possible—and pressed the rest of his troops toward the crossings of the Potomac. One problem, however, demanded attention. Lee wanted Stuart at the front and flank of the invasion, and how to relocate the cavalry from Loudoun to Pennsylvania presented a difficult challenge. Stuart thought he had the answer.[2]

The letter Henry McClellan read on the rainy night of June 23 represented the results of a series of striking exchanges between Lee, General James Longstreet, and Stuart himself as to the most efficient method by which Jeb's command could cover Ewell's advance. The day before, Lee had told Stuart through Longstreet that if he found the Federals moving northward, Jeb was to leave two brigades to cover Longstreet's infantry and take his remaining three brigades into Maryland to join Ewell. Stuart's route however remained up in the air. Both Lee and Longstreet were concerned that Stuart's move into Maryland would, as Longstreet phrased it, "indicate what our plans are"

Right: an 1863 painting entitled "General Stuart and His Staff" by John Adams Elder (1833-1895). *Courtesy of the R.W. Norton Art Gallery, Shreveport, Louisiana*

STUART'S FAULT

if Stuart simply passed by Longstreet's rear on his way north. By the afternoon of the 22nd, all three principals were discussing the possibility of Stuart's "passing by the rear of the enemy" to reach Ewell, a plan Jeb later claimed to have initiated. Longstreet went so far as to warn Stuart, "I think that your passage of the Potomac by our rear at the present moment will, in a measure, disclose our plans. You had better not leave us, therefore, unless you can take the proposed route in rear of the enemy."[3]

Lee's final published orders to Stuart were issued at 5:00 p.m. on June 23. Penned by Lee staffer Charles Marshall, they are vague at best and contradictory at worst. They read in part:

> If General Hooker's army remains inactive, you can leave two brigades to watch him, and withdraw with the three others, but should he not appear to be moving northward, I think you had better withdraw this side of the mountain tomorrow night, cross at Shepardstown next day and move over to Fredericktown.
>
> You will however, be able to judge whether you can pass around their army without hindrance, doing them all the damage you can, and cross the river east of the mountains. In either case, after crossing the river, you must move on and feel the right of Ewell's troops, collecting information, provisions, &c.
>
> Give instructions to the commander of the brigades left behind, to watch the flank and rear of the army, and (in the event of the enemy leaving their front) retire from the mountains west of the Shenandoah, leaving sufficient pickets to guard the passes, and bringing everything clean along the Valley, closing upon the rear of the army.

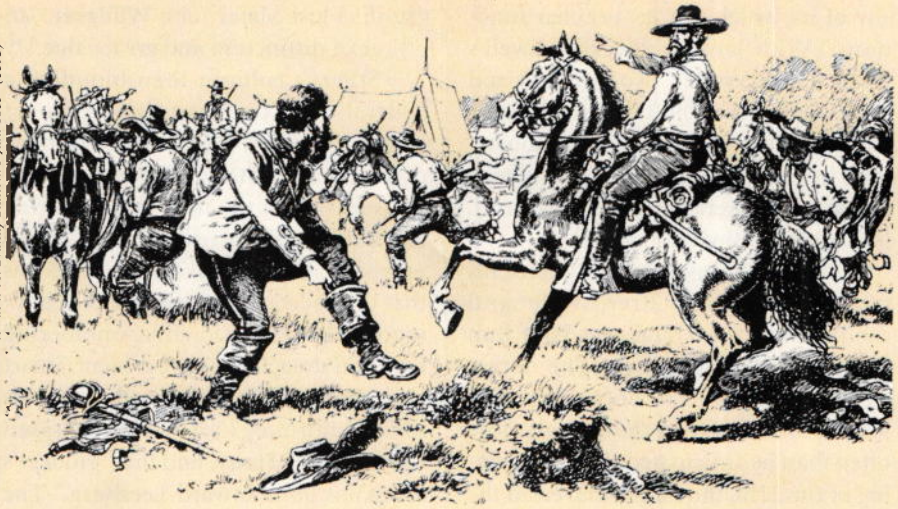
Marshall later claimed that these final orders were simply a repeat of Lee's previous directives. They certainly were not. Earlier, Lee was quite specific that if the Federals remained quiescent, Stuart was to link up with Ewell, and both Lee and Longstreet seemed to favor Stuart accomplishing the mission by moving through the Federal rear with an emphasis on collecting supplies and disrupting enemy communications. Now, Marshall wrote that if the Federals did "not appear to be moving northward," Stuart should traverse the Blue Ridge and cross the Potomac at Shepardstown. Marshall stoked the confusion by writing, "If General Hooker's army remains inactive, you can leave two brigades to watch him, and withdraw with the three others." Perhaps he intended for Stuart to "withdraw" from his present position and circumnavigate the Federals on his way to Ewell. However one chooses to interpret these directives, they remain fatally contradictory.[4]

Library of Congress

On June 9 Federal cavalry under General Alfred Pleasonton (above) attacked Stuart and his horsemen on the plains near Brandy Station.

Luckily for Stuart, the "confidential" envelope that arrived in the rain late on the 23rd clarified his orders. Lee expressed concern that the Maryland roadways north of Shepardstown and Williamsport were already "encumbered" by the men and trains of the Army of Northern Virginia snaking their way north toward Chambersburg, thus making the passage to Pennsylvania through the Federal rear that much more appealing. Lee wanted Stuart to move quickly, but he now directed his cavalry to connect with General Jubal Early's forces at York, "the possible (if not the probable) point of concentration of the army." Most importantly, if Stuart did decide to circle the Federals on his way to York, Lee would inform "General Early...to look out for him [Stuart] and endeavor to communicate with him."[5]

Enter John Mosby, the scout nonpareil. Early on June 24, Mosby arrived at Rector's after spending the night roaming the Federal-controlled areas east of the Bull Run Mountains. Based on Mosby's intelligence, Stuart determined to cross the Bull Run range somewhere south of Thoroughfare Gap with the brigades of General Fitzhugh Lee, General W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee (commanded by Colonel John Chambliss in Lee's absence), General Wade Hampton, and six guns from the Stuart Horse Artillery. From there the column would move toward the Potomac west of Centreville, cross the river at a convenient ford (probably Seneca Ford), and move through Maryland to York, Pennsylvania, a distance of one hundred twenty five miles. Remaining in the shadow of the Blue Ridge would be the brigades of General Beverly Robertson and General William J. "Grumble" Jones. Stuart left detailed instructions for division commander Robertson to cover Ashby's and Snicker's Gaps. Stuart then listed his directives:



From "Die Grosse Reiterschlacht bei Brandy Station: 9 Juni 1863" (1893)

Jeb Stuart hurriedly pulls on his boots when
Heros von Borcke warns him of the attack on Brandy Station.

US Army Military History Institute

General W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee

Museum of the Confederacy

General Jubal Early

Library of Congress

General William J. "Grumble" Jones

> Your object will be to watch the enemy; deceive him as to our designs, and harass his rear if you find he is retiring.... After the enemy has moved beyond your reach, leave sufficient pickets in the mountains, withdraw to the west side of the Shenandoah, place a strong and reliable picket to watch the enemy at Harper's Ferry, cross the Potomac, and follow the army, keeping on its right and rear.[6]

It is important here to note the mindset of the two principals. Stuart believed Robertson's wing numbered some 3,000 troopers, a sufficient force to guard the Blue Ridge passes, observe the Yankees still ensconced at Harper's Ferry, and patrol Lee's right flank and rear. In truth, Stuart had a low opinion of Robertson, "the most troublesome man I have to deal with" by Stuart's reckoning. But he regarded Jones highly as an outpost officer—"Grumble" had proven himself in independent command the previous April during a daring raid through West Virginia—and one need look no farther than Brandy Station to know that Jones and his men could fight. Stuart also knew that General John Imboden's 2,000 troopers covered Lee's left while General Albert Jenkins supposedly commanded 3,800 men accompanying Ewell's columns. In fact, detachments had reduced Jenkins' command by half, but Stuart still believed Lee had close to 9,000 saddles at his disposal, all within two days of Marse Robert's voice, certainly a sufficient number for any exigency.[7]

Although it is somewhat difficult to divine Robert E. Lee's intentions from surviving documents, it seems likely that Marshall's interpretations of Lee's orders did not accurately reflect the general's desires. One glaring imprecision is the use of the term "right" when describing Stuart's target. Ewell's "right" in Pennsylvania would be the vicinity of Hanover, while Early's "right" would be even farther east. However, Lee's "right" at Chambersburg would be the area east of South Mountain, which is probably why Lee mentioned "Fredericktown" as a target in the June 23/5:00 p.m. orders. Obviously, it would be impossible for Stuart to cover both Frederick, Maryland, and York, Pennsylvania, at the same time.[8]

Again, existing documents betray little of Lee's intentions in these regards, but it seems obvious that with the general advancing on Chambersburg, he would want his trusted Stuart patrolling the area east of South Mountain. Additionally, Lee understood as early as the 19th that the Federal army appeared to be sidling north toward the Potomac, and on the 23rd, Lee felt confident enough in this intelligence to warn Confederate President Jefferson Davis that the enemy "is preparing to cross the Potomac," all the more reason to have Stuart close at hand. But Henry McClellan's memory provides the clue that no doubt settled Stuart's mind. In those final orders that directed Jeb to link with Early near York, it is worth repeating that McClellan designated the Pennsylvania town as "the possible (if not the probable) point of concentration of the army." As Stuart gathered his forces near Salem, Virginia, to begin his raid, he assumed he could just as well be meeting Robert E. Lee as Jubal Early when he arrived at York. His assumption would prove ill-founded.[9]

* * *

AFTER DARK ON THE 24TH, Stuart's three-brigade force congregated at Salem on the Manassas Gap Railroad. Federals held nearby Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run Mountains, so preparations had to advance with as much secrecy as possible. As a result, sometime after midnight the Confederates employed the cover of darkness to depart for Glasscock's Gap just to Thoroughfare's south. Debouching from the mountains in the morning light, the raiders reached the Warrenton Turnpike and trotted northeast through Buckland toward Haymarket. Jeb had sent Mosby off again to examine the Potomac crossings near Dranesville and hoped to connect with his scout at Gum Springs some fourteen miles away. Instead, as the troopers reined into sight of Haymarket, Stuart found the trains of General Winfield Hancock's II Corps filling the roads. Noting that Yankee infantry was "well-distributed" throughout the column, Jeb nevertheless ordered his artillery to open fire on the wagons. One of their first shots delighted the general by scoring a direct hit on a caisson, causing considerable damage and attendant

confusion, but the blueclad infantry quickly cordoned their threatened flank and doused Stuart's amusement.[10]

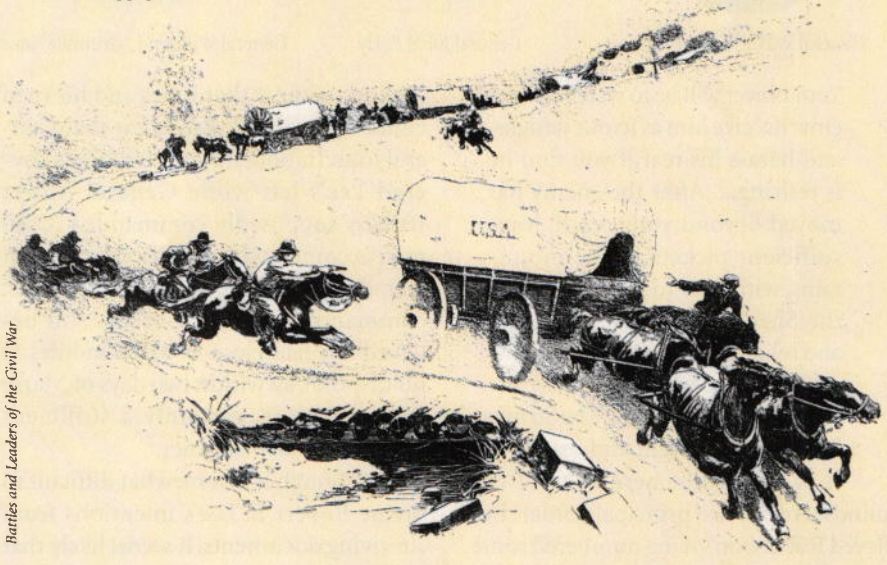
His original plans frustrated by the enemy's presence at Haymarket, Jeb ordered Fitz Lee's command to reconnoiter the Gainesville area while he withdrew the rest of his boys to Buckland and set the horses to graze. Dispatching a messenger to warn Robert E. Lee of Hancock's movement, Stuart then paused to consider his options. The first possibility was simple: call the mission off and recross the Bull Run Mountains. The drawbacks of this avenue were obvious. After three days of give and take with his chief lieutenants, Robert E. Lee had made it very clear that he favored Stuart crossing the Potomac east of the Blue Ridge, preferably on a route through the enemy rear to Pennsylvania. Lee was a proponent of the mounted raid and factored the inevitable disruptions caused by Stuart's proposed mission into his own strategic thinking. Lee had also banked upon Stuart's move as a ruse de guerre, confusing enemy observers as to Lee's real intentions, a position strongly shared by James Longstreet. Finally, Lee evidenced real concern that Stuart would have great difficulties negotiating the wake of the Army of Northern Virginia, and such delays could make reaching Early at York nigh on impossible. With the raid canceled, Lee would enjoy none of those benefits, and Stuart would have to weigh the results of this denial seriously and carefully.

The second option appeared far more promising: swing to the south around Hancock's column and continue the mission. Stuart had to know that he was now ninety miles from Chambersburg, a hard four days on clear roads, a dangerously unknown time span on roads choked by a marching army. And, assuming that Lee was angling toward Harrisburg and York, Stuart could face insurmountable problems reaching Early, who at York was another seventy-one miles east of Chambersburg. Jeb also shared Lee's views on the strategic efficacy of the mounted raid and felt the benefits derived from the mission would offset any delays he might encounter by employing a longer route. In fact, the cavalry chieftain downplayed the possible effects of any delay on his part. If the raid were to bog down for any reason, Stuart was certain Lee had plenty of cavalry for any of its, as Jeb put it, "peculiar functions." With Jenkins covering Ewell's point, Elijah White's two hundred and sixty saddles from the 35th Virginia Battalion accompanying Early, and Robertson's two brigades on Lee's right and rear, the decision was really no decision at all. Jeb would continue the raid.[11]

After a rainy night, Stuart guided his troopers through Brentsville and camped for the evening near Wolf Run Shoals on the Occoquon. The horses were showing signs of breakdown, and Jeb was forced to graze the animals more often than he anticipated. On the morning of the 27th, the raiders traversed the Occoquon where Fitz Lee split to the right to occupy Burke's Station while Stuart, with Hampton's and Chambliss' brigades, trotted toward Fairfax Station. The entire force was to reconvene at Fairfax Court House, but at the Station Hampton ran into a Federal detachment that put up a brief but spirited resistance. The South Carolinian eventually brushed the Unionists aside, but in the flash of sabers and report of pistols, the 1st North Carolina lost Major John Whitaker, "an officer of distinction and great value."[12]

Stuart's column then bloodied a Federal detachment at Fairfax Court House, "rout[ing] them, capturing many prisoners and stores, and secure[ing] rations for which the men were suffering much." Here Jeb learned that Fitz Lee had moved from Burke's to Annandale. Signs that the Federals had commenced moving north—impedimenta, smoldering fires, and stragglers—were evident. Stuart took a moment to write another missive to Lee, informing him that he had taken Fairfax Court House and that "Hooker's army has gone toward Leesburg." The commander still had not heard from Mosby, but with the Federals gravitating toward Leesburg, Jeb felt confident at last that he could successfully complete his circumnavigation of the enemy. He pushed the column through the afternoon to Dranesville where Chambliss paused to await Fitz Lee's arrival. Meanwhile Hampton trotted on to Rowser's Ford on the Potomac. Stuart never admitted as much, but by arriving in

Wartime sketch of Stuart's cavalry raiding a Union baggage train.



Battles and Leaders of the Civil War

William A. Turner Collection

General Richard Ewell

Museum of the Confederacy

General James Longstreet

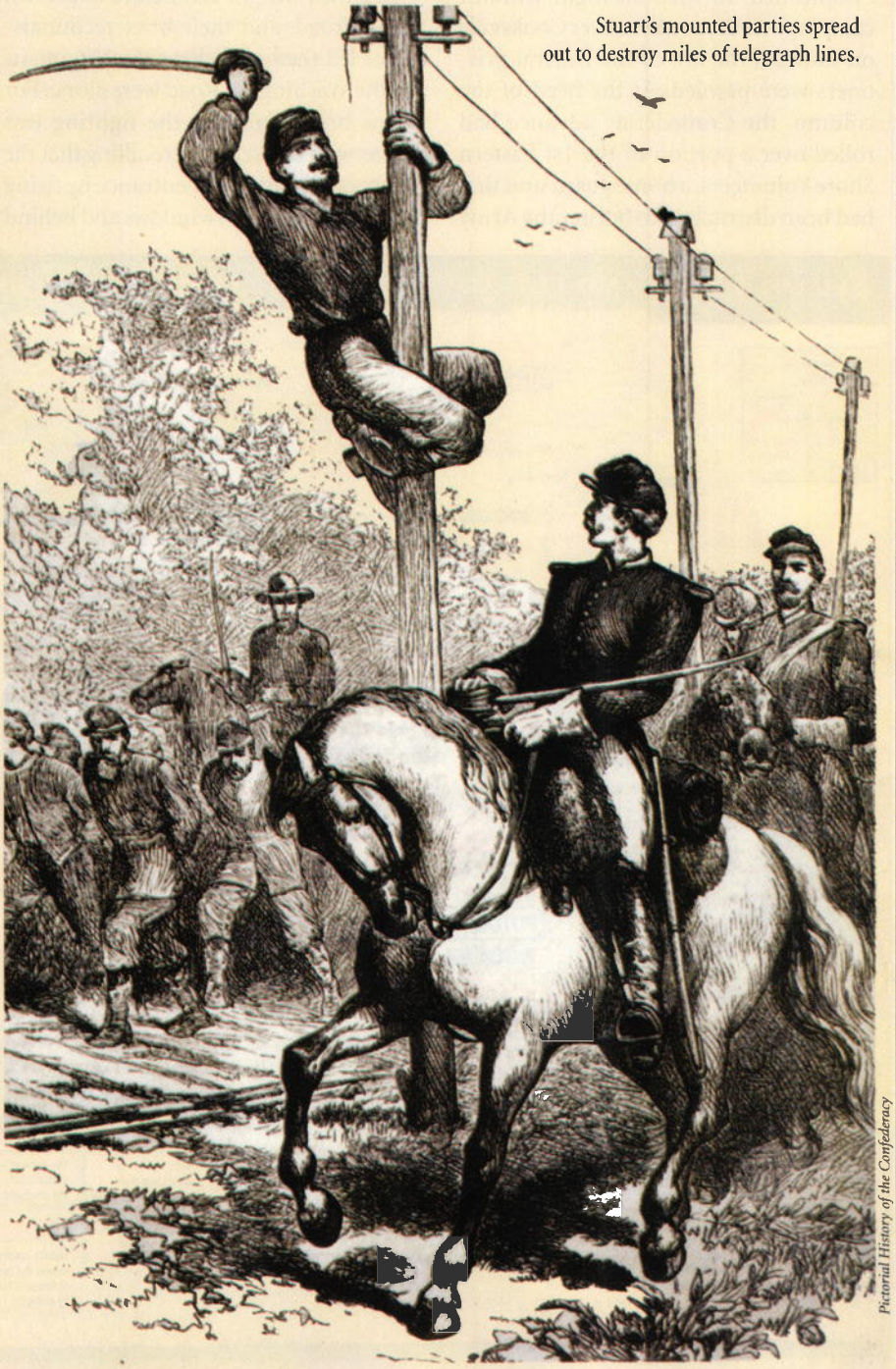
Valentine Museum Collection

Colonel John Mosby

Dranesville the afternoon of the 27th instead of the evening of the 25th, his mission had lost nearly forty-eight hours.[13]

Hampton found a local guide who revealed that Rowser's was passable despite its recent rise of two feet in depth. Emboldened, the South Carolinian spent the early evening getting his command across the surging river. Of the panorama, one eyewitness warmly noted, "The spectacle was picturesque. The broad river glittered in the moon, and on the bright surface was seen the long, wavering line of dark figures, moving in 'single file;' the water washing to and fro across the backs of the horses, which kept their feet with some difficulty." The troubles prompted Hampton to warn Stuart that the artillery and the wagons would find the swollen ford close to impossible to negotiate. But after examining and rejecting a nearby ford, Stuart decided to force Rowser's. As he recalled, "I, however, determined not to give it up without trial, and before 12 o'clock that night, in spite of the difficulties...every piece was brought safely over, and the entire command in bivouac on Maryland soil."[14]

Although Stuart did not mention it, crossing the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal presented another challenge to the Confederates. The narrow lock created a log-jam as only a few troopers could cross the span at one time, so roving parties collected some forty canal boats—many being intercepted on their way to Hooker's army—and fashioned a rude causeway. Once across, most of the command took a few hours of rest while Colonel Williams Wickham oversaw the destruction of the lock-gate. The officer and his 4th Virginia Cavalry also continued to intercept vessels plying the canal's waters, capturing, as Stuart wrote, "troops, negroes, and stores." From the prisoners the general confirmed what he already had surmised: "Hooker was on the day previous at Poolesville, and his army was in motion for Frederick. I realized the importance of joining our army in Pennsylvania, and resumed the march northward early on the 28th." The intelligence convinced the general that time was indeed of the essence.[15]



Stuart's mounted parties spread out to destroy miles of telegraph lines.

Pictorial History of the Confederacy

Henry McClellan would recall that "the sun was several hours high" before Hampton started for DarnBestown and Fitz Lee swung east toward Offutt's Crossroads. Stuart had ordered both commands to converge upon Rockville, and after some minor skirmishes with roving Federal patrols, including elements of the 2nd New York Cavalry, the two wings reunited in the strategic and decidedly pro-Confederate community around noon. Mounted parties spread out to destroy miles of telegraph, thus temporarily cutting communications between Washington and the Army of the Potomac. As much of the citizenry rejoiced in the arrival of the Southern cavaliers, a massive Federal wagon train rumbled into view, bound from Washington for the front. Elements from all three brigades thundered down the Georgetown road and a parallel track in pursuit. "We charged down the pike for six miles or more," wrote one Southerner, "and the chase and fight were the most interesting, exciting and filled more with ludicrous scenes than any I ever before witnessed." When the dust had cleared, Stuart was in possession of over one hundred twenty-five of the "best United States model wagons." Brimming with supplies and forage, McClellan called the haul "a godsend to our poor horses." It would soon turn into a bone of contention.[16]

Stuart stood at yet another crossroads. The Washington suburb of Georgetown loomed two miles beyond

his leading brigade, but, given the dispersed nature of his force, the general realized he could attack the city no earlier than sundown. A night attack he reckoned would be "extremely hazardous," and with the enemy on the move he knew he had to connect with Lee quickly. Burdened now by the captured wagon train and hundreds more prisoners—"among them a number of contrabands, who were recognized and claimed"—Stuart realized his proper course was north. Reluctantly, he recalled his scattered commands and started them to Brookeville, where the column arrived as the sun set. There, the commander determined to parole the nearly four hundred prisoners he was shepherding, and as June 28 receded into darkness, the first of the paroled Yankees departed for Washington. Sometime after midnight, as the business of the paroles continued, an exhausted Jeb Stuart saddled up and trotted north toward Cooksville. While his mount negotiated the crowded roadway, Stuart fell fast asleep.[17]

* * *

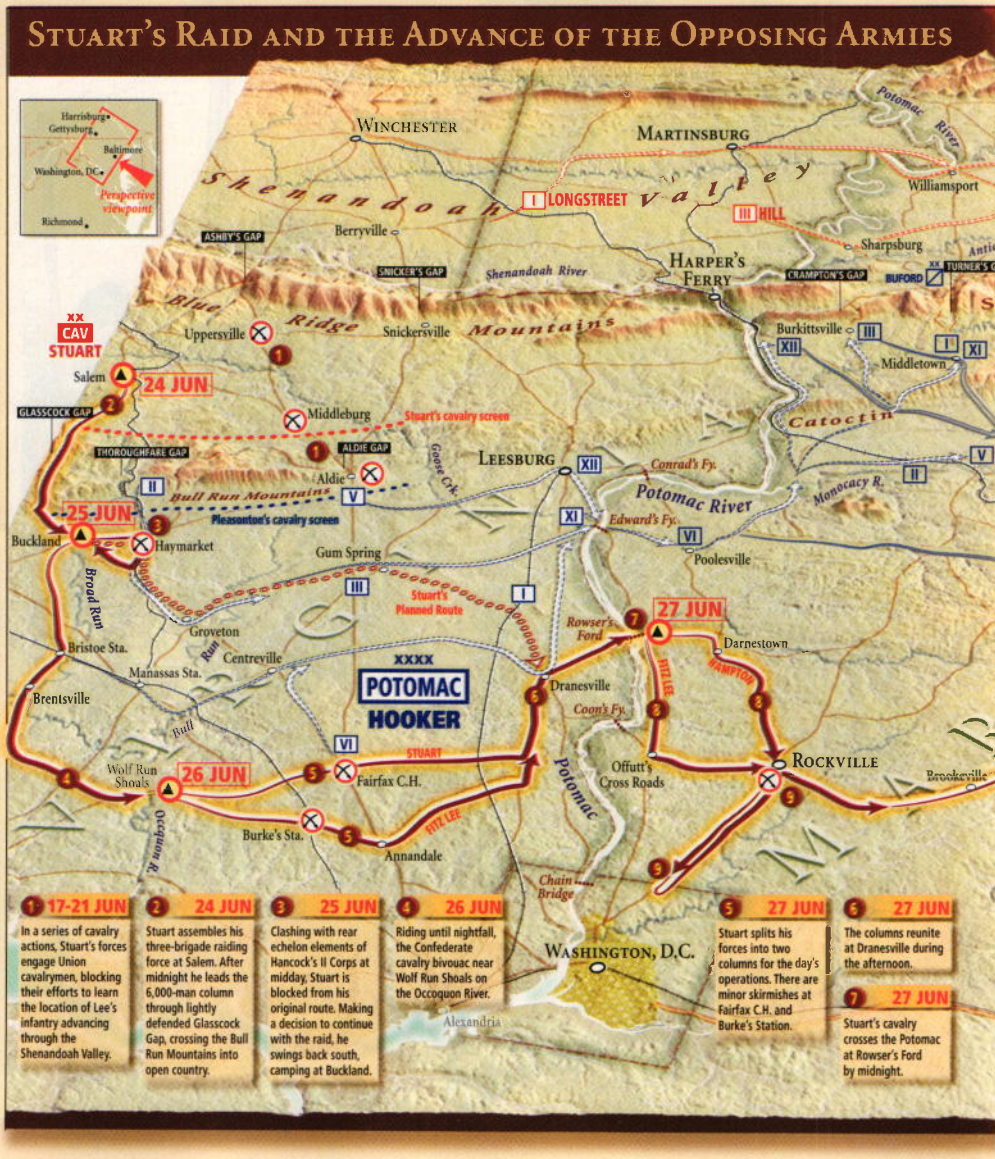
THAT SAME DAY, JUNE 28, as Stuart and his cavalry swept north, the Federal army had completed its transfer north of the Potomac and continued to concentrate in Maryland. Three corps—I, III, and XI—camped around Middletown in preparation for their move east to Frederick, just twenty miles from Stuart's troopers on the National Road. The XII Corps was also marching toward Frederick from Knoxville, while the VI and II Corps moved north from the Potomac toward Hyattstown. General John Buford was readying his two-brigade division to move north toward Emmitsburg and beyond, while General David Gregg and newly designated divisional commander General Judson Kilpatrick prepared to move east to locate Stuart's horsemen and the leading edge of Lee's army.

In a jarring move, "Fighting" Joe Hooker's proffered resignation had been accepted in Washington, and early that morning V Corps commander General George Gordon Meade took command of the Army of the Potomac.

Forty-five miles north of Stuart, Jubal Early headquartered in York with his advance in sight of the Susquehanna River at Wrightsville. To the northwest, Richard Ewell occupied Carlisle as his cavalry threatened the Pennsylvania capital at Harrisburg. Twenty-seven miles southwest of Ewell, Robert E. Lee and most of the Army of Northern Virginia had completed their concentration around Chambersburg. In a bitter irony, Lee was reportedly beginning to wonder where his cavalry chieftain was. At the same time, Jubal Early had no idea Stuart was close and closing.[18]

* * *

THE CONFEDERATES HAD ENJOYED LITTLE REST over the previous three days, and the night of the 28th was no exception. One officer scribbled in his diary, "Continued on road all night without camping." As the sun rose over Cooksville on June 29, the last of the Federal prisoners were paroled. At the head of the column, the Confederate advance had rolled over a portion of the 1st Eastern Shore Volunteers, a home guard unit that had been dispatched to bolster the Army of the Potomac but only managed to be embarrassingly dispersed by the butternut veterans. Fitz Lee's people meanwhile tore up a considerable length of the Baltimore & Ohio at Hood's Mill until Stuart recalled his troopers and pressed them northward toward Pennsylvania. The column made good time, and by 3:30 p.m. gray horsemen approached the Maryland community of Westminster. Scouts from the 4th Virginia trotted up the Washington Road to within sight of the Baltimore Pike. Suddenly, some sixty troopers from the 1st Delaware Cavalry stormed down the Pike and angled into the Virginians. Ninety-five of these Unionists had garrisoned the town the day before to protect the railroad, and their brief reconnaissance led them to believe the Virginians on the Washington Road were alone. For a few brutal minutes the fighting was fierce, with one sergeant recalling that the Yankees "disputed our entrance by firing into our ranks from windows and behind



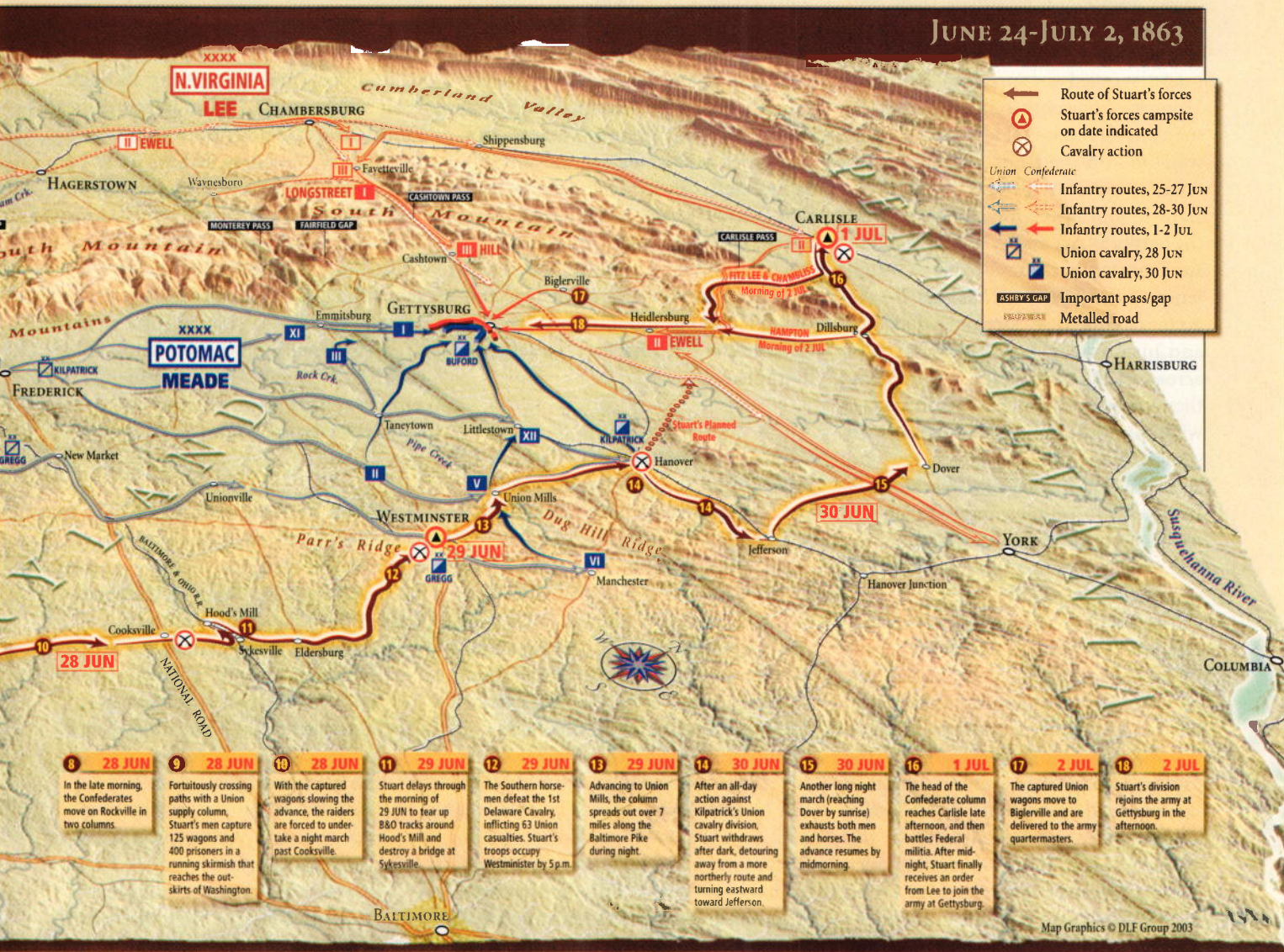
houses." But as more graybacks swept over the hills south of town and swung into the fray, the Federals found themselves badly overmatched. The battle blood was up, as one trooper from the 2nd Virginia recalled, "Gen'l Fitz Lee came galloping to the head of our regiment and led us in a charge." After a spirited running battle eastward on the Baltimore Pike, Stuart's boys could claim killing two and wounding ten while capturing fifty-five cavalrymen and a sixteen-member provost guard from the 150th New York, all at the cost of two killed and approximately five wounded. Only thirty-two Northerners escaped.[19]

With the threat extinguished, the raiders returned to Westminster to find an abundance of badly needed stockpiles. Jeb recalled, "For the first time since leaving Rector's Cross Roads we obtained a full supply of forage." But the post-battle effort to provision the column came at a cost, as the general added, "The delay and difficulty of procuring it kept many of the men up all night." As the sun banked toward the western horizon, Chambliss led his men north, arriving in Union Mills sometime before midnight. About the same time, the last of the Confederates departed Westminster, making the cavalry column some seven miles long. The road north of Westminster soon became a haphazard bivouac for the exhausted Southerners.[20]

While most of the Confederates fell out, Chambliss dispatched scouts to investigate the roads into Pennsylvania. Soon the riders returned to report enemy cavalry at Littlestown on the road to Gettysburg, forcing Stuart to eye the track to Hanover. Came morning, and Jeb placed Chambliss' boys in the van, with the captured wagons between them and Wade Hampton's brigade in the rear. To counter the Yankees at Littlestown, Stuart ordered Fitz Lee to cover the left flank of the column. On June 30, as the sun rose over Dug Hill Ridge, the Southrons crossed the Pennsylvania border and headed toward Hanover.

* * *

JUNE 29 HAD BEEN A MONUMENTAL DAY for Judson Kilpatrick. That morning in Littlestown he took over command of Julius Stahel's cavalry force, the freshly designated Third Division. Two newly minted generals, George Custer and Elon Farnsworth, commanded his brigades, with Custer's command joining Farnsworth's at 10:00 p.m. General George Meade was extending the cavalry screen around the Army of the Potomac, and he desired Kilpatrick to investigate the enemy's reported occupation of York. To this end, Kilpatrick departed Littlestown early on the 30th and led his people to Hanover, clearing the town center around 8:00 a.m. As the column snaked toward York, squads from the 18th Pennsylvania took up their rearguard duties



by fanning out across the roads south of Hanover.[21]

Suddenly, Confederates appeared to be everywhere. In Stuart's van, Chambliss' outriders exchanged fire with a small group of Federal scouts, inflicting and taking some casualties. Soon thereafter, the 13th Virginia surrounded twenty-five Yankees and forced their capitulation. Then, as the head of Chambliss' column rolled toward Hanover, the 2nd North Carolina ploughed into the main body of the 18th Pennsylvania near the hamlet of Pennville and swept the fractured unit north through Hanover's town square. The victorious Tarheels had little time to celebrate. Responding to the Pennsylvanian's call for support, the 5th New York came charging into Hanover and slammed into the Carolinian flank, rolling the Confederates down the Littlestown-Frederick Road and onto the nearby Forney farm southwest of town. "They swarmed everywhere, right, left, and front; rapidly formed line of battle, and delivering a sharp volley at short range," recalled one surprised Southron. Troopers from both sides gravitated to the sharp fighting exploding in the roadways and on the fields, prompting Jeb Stuart and part of his staff to gallop forward to join in the fray. In the sway of the battle, Stuart and William Blackford suddenly found themselves alone within ten paces of a wave of Yankees. To the accompaniment of surrender demands and pistol shots, both riders sped off across a field of high grass. In a moment, they came upon a ditch some fifteen feet wide, but without a pause, the horsemen spurred their mounts into the air and across the chasm. Recalled Blackford, "I shall never forget the glimpse I then saw of this beautiful animal away up in mid-air...and Stuart's fine figure sitting erect and firm in the saddle."[22]

Seemingly unshaken by the close call, Stuart nevertheless realized he was in a ticklish situation. Fitz Lee was not yet up and Hampton was still a few hours behind. And between Chambliss' battle line and Hampton's column rumbled the captured wagon train, "now a subject of serious embarrassment" in Jeb's own words. As the Confederate artillery deployed in an arc on a commanding ridge south of Hanover, Stuart knew he would have to play a waiting game until his entire command was up, and his men were questioning the wisdom of the move. Wrote one, "Both men and horses being worn out, all of us regarded the prospect of a fight with no little regret and anxiety." Meanwhile, Kilpatrick began to deploy his troopers across Hanover's town center, eventually forming a two-brigade front with his artillery barking from a rise north of town. As Fitz Lee's brigade returned from its screening operation and formed near the Littlestown Road, Major James Breathed's cannoneers replied to the Yankee heavy metal in kind. For the next two hours, "vomiting fire and smoke," the artillery dominated the battle.[23]

Around 2:00 p.m. Hampton reined up and immediately extended the Confederate right to the York road. Meanwhile, to the southwest, Stuart had ordered the wagon train formed in a square with preparations apace to burn the whole of it should events turn against the Confederates. At first, just such a possibility seemed imminent. Michiganders from Custer's brigade launched a series of attacks down the Littlestown Road and eventually secured the area, thus protecting their link to the hard marching Army of the Potomac. Stuart however was unconcerned with these aggressive enemy movements, for he remained convinced that Lee must be near the Susquehanna River. Therefore, after an afternoon of limited thrusts and counters, he ceded his left flank to the Federals, rotated his command—wagons and all—to the northeast, and set out after dark for Jefferson and York.

* * *

SOMETIME DURING THE MORNING OF JUNE 30, Jubal Early watched his infantrymen break their camps around York and swing west onto the Heidlersburg Road. He had been ordered to rejoin Ewell's corps "on the western side of the South Mountain" some fifty miles away, and it would be a long day of marching. While outriders from the 35th Virginia Battalion trotted along the York Pike just a few miles to the south, the main column passed East Berlin. Reports of enemy forces moving south from the York Pike toward Hanover drifted in about the same time that Ewell's orders arrived for Early to move to Heidlersburg. Suddenly, from the south, both officers and privates alike recognized the distant thunder of battle echoing across the landscape. Word

Cook Collection, Valentine Museum Collection

The flamboyant "J.E.B." Stuart.

of the engagement filtered up through Early's staff, but if Old Jube heard the report, he made no effort to investigate the matter. Of course, if Early is to be believed, there was no reason for him to make such a move. He had not been informed by Robert E. Lee's staff that three brigades of Confederate cavalry were marching through the Federal rear in an attempt to link with him at York. As Jeb Stuart sparred with Judson Kilpatrick, Jubal Early marched his command to within ten miles of Hanover's town square, then marched on.[24]

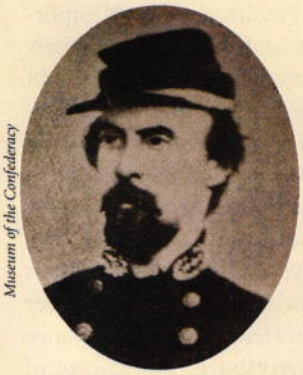
* * *

IT WOULD BE A BRUTAL EXERCISE, a soul-sapping effort, to fend off fatigue while shepherding the captured wagon train north to York. Henry McClellan described the night's march bluntly:

> The mules were starving for food and water, and often became unmanageable. Not infrequently a large part of the train would halt in the road because a driver toward the front had fallen asleep and allowed his team to stop. The train guard became careless through excessive fatigue, and it required the utmost exertions of every officer on Stuart's staff to keep the train in motion.

American Heritage Picture Collection

Walton Taber's drawing depicts Jeb Stuart's horsemen riding around the Army of the Potomac in June 1862.

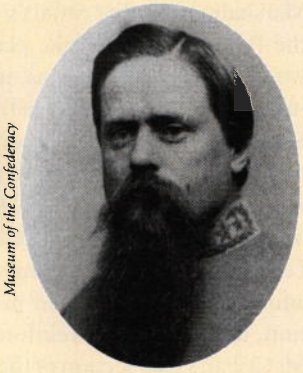


Museum of the Confederacy

Colonel John Chambliss

Cook Collection, Valentine Museum

General Wade Hampton



Museum of the Confederacy

General Fitzhugh Lee

Jeb described the "peculiar hardships" of the march wherein "whole regiments slept in the saddle.... In some instances they fell from their horses, overcome with physical fatigue and sleepiness." Through the night the jaded column trudged, marking its route with the carcasses of dead horses. Around Jefferson, Stuart read a newspaper report describing Rebel activity around York. However, as the sun rose on July 1, the weary Confederates passed Salem and reached Dover. Here, Fitz Lee discovered that Early's force had marched west sometime on the 30th, its destination unknown. Rumors had the army at Shippensburg, but Jeb determined to continue north to Carlisle "where we hoped to find a portion of the army." Still, he sent staffer Major A. R. Venable west on the York Pike to search out Early, even as Fitz Lee dispatched Captain Henry Lee on a similar mission. As the two officers trotted toward Gettysburg, the exhausted troopers resumed their march north.[25]

Toward the tail of the column, Wade Hampton trotted into the now-empty streets of Salem to find John Esten Cooke groggily awaiting his arrival. The Stuart staffer joined the South Carolinian as they angled toward Dover, but as the day broke, Hampton halted his command. The general announced to the assembled, "I am perishing for sleep" and promptly collapsed near a haystack. His men, including Cooke, did the same. After a short rest, Hampton's boys remounted their spent horses and continued the march.[26]

Through Dillsburg the troopers struggled, the column now strung out across the sun-baked Pennsylvania countryside. Exhausted, starving, and almost without ammunition, Stuart and Fitz Lee's brigade finally reached Carlisle late that afternoon, only to find the town occupied by 3,000 Federal militia and an assortment of state guards. Stuart deployed his artillery then demanded the Yankees' immediate surrender, but Northern commander Major General William F. Smith refused the offer. As the Federals hunkered down, Jeb's guns began a slow bombardment of the town. The shelling fired a number of buildings, including the Carlisle Barracks, and panicked some civilians, prompting one officer to recall, "We could easily hear the screaming of the people and witness the burning of the houses." Despite causing some minor damage and inflicting a few casualties, Jeb fretted as the intransigent enemy remained in place. The artillery reports droned on, prompting many of the spent cavalrymen to fall asleep in their saddles. Wrote one officer, "The men were overcome and so tired and stupid as almost to be ignorant of what was taking place around them." A trooper from the 9th Virginia was even more succinct as he wrote, "weak and helpless... anxiety and uneasiness.... depression of spirits." Then, sometime after midnight, Venable returned bearing a single order from Robert E. Lee: Stuart was to bring his command to Gettysburg as soon as possible. After seven days, Jeb was back in touch with his commander.[27]

By 3:00 a.m. the Horse Artillery limbered up and rolled south. Stuart ordered Hampton to proceed from Dillsburg to Heidlersburg, and he commanded Fitz Lee to unite with Chambliss at Boiling Springs, where both commands would move south to Hampton. Thus reunited, the column would use the Harrisburg Road on its way to Gettysburg, although part of Hampton's command would eventually employ a parallel route by way of Hunterstown. Through the torrid morning of July 2, the Confederates guided their weary mounts south. "More jaded and wearied than I had ever seen our men before" was one officer's description of the Confederates. Another officer found that many of the wagon drivers "suffering in agony for sleep, lay on the road with bridles in hand... slumbering soundly." It is said that the captured train was released to the army's quartermasters near Biglerville, but whatever the disposition of those "best United States model wagons," the weary horsemen dragged themselves the few final miles and collapsed into camp just north of Gettysburg.[28]

Jeb Stuart did not accompany his men on their march from Carlisle. After orders were dictated and final details worked out, Stuart and a number of his staff rode ahead to report to Robert E. Lee as quickly as possible. Most of the spent officers simply fell asleep in their saddles, so at dawn, perhaps in deference to his escort, Jeb called a two-hour halt. The party collapsed on the side of the roadway and sank into exhausted slum-

ber, but in exactly two hours Stuart rose and continued on, leaving most of his sleeping staffers in his wake.[29]

Stuart and Lee met outside Gettysburg sometime during the afternoon of July 2. Stuart biographer John Thomason claimed that Lee austerely said, "Well, General Stuart, you are here at last." Years later, Thomas Munford from the 5th Virginia Cavalry quoted Henry McClellan as to the "painful" nature of the meeting and added Lee's heated exclamation, "General Stuart, where have you been?" to the mix. These stories were repeated to such a degree that they became a part of the Gettysburg canon. Thomason was an engaging writer and privy to Stuart lore, but his book is not sourced, and remains enjoyable but unreliable. Henry McClellan also produced an engaging history of his service which stands on a firmer foundation. In it, he says nothing bearing the slightest resemblance to Munford's fanciful account. However, one fact is evident: there were no eyewitnesses to the Lee-Stuart meeting other than the two generals, and neither one of them ever revealed the nature of the conversation they shared that day.[30]

* * *

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BATTLE, critics began naming Jeb Stuart in the cartel that cost Robert E. Lee victory at Gettysburg. The case against Stuart was rather simple: had Jeb and his cavalry been patrolling the area east of South Mountain on June 28, Lee would have known of the enemy's dispositions in Maryland and been able to defeat them in detail as they marched north. At the very least, Stuart could have controlled the opening engagement on July 1 by taking over the initial advance, thus preventing the infantry collision that forced Lee's hand. The thought, however, that Stuart's mission was simply waylaid by the exigencies of war did not sit well with his critics, who seemed to have bigger game in sight. As a result, a Stuart paradigm of bruised emotions, overbearing ego, and, in the end, willful disobedience emerged in post-battle analysis, as pervasive in its recounting as in its inaccuracy.

Charles Marshall was perhaps the first actor in the drama to paint Stuart the scapegoat. As the author of Lee's orders and reports, Marshall was certainly in a unique position to control the debate; not surprisingly, he took little time

Library of Congress

Colonel Thomas T. Munford

Library of Congress

Brigadier General Beverly Robertson

Williams College Collection

Major Henry B. McClellan

in firing the first salvo. Purposely or not, in his first draft of Lee's official report on the Gettysburg Campaign, issued on July 31, Marshall made no mention that Lee authorized Stuart's route through the Federal rear to Early at York. Instead, Marshall wrote that Stuart's crossing of the Potomac was to take place "east or west of the Blue Ridge, as, in [Stuart's] judgment, should be best," and that Stuart would then "take position on the right of our column as it advanced." However, just a few months later in a second report, Marshall not only admitted Lee's authorization of the mission, he also added the need for speed in the operation, unintentionally reinforcing Henry McClellan's recollection of the "confidential" orders of June 23. Already it was obvious that Marshall was massaging the facts.[31]

Marshall's first report contained further tainted interpretations of the events, which combined to become the lynchpin for future critics of the cavalry commander. He first claimed that Stuart moved to Fairfax Courthouse "in his efforts to impede [the Army of the Potomac's] progress." Marshall then attempted to deal the death blow. He wrote, "By the route he pursued [through Westminster to Carlisle], the Federal army was interposed between his command and our main body, preventing any communication with him until his arrival at Carlisle." The result? Lee's "march toward Gettysburg was conducted more slowly than it would have had the movements of the Federal Army been known."[32]

Obviously, much is wrong in these declarations. Stuart moved east to Fairfax not to impede the Federals but to maintain his route to York, a route authorized by Robert E. Lee. Then, after crossing the Potomac, Stuart continued on his way to York, a move that necessarily put the enemy between the Army of Northern Virginia and himself. If Stuart was out of communication with Lee at this point in the operation, it was a result of Lee's orders and Stuart's attempt to fulfill those orders, not some dereliction of duty on Stuart's part. Finally, and most importantly, had Lee's staff apprised Jubal Early of Stuart's mission, Early would no doubt have dispatched scouts to find the cavalry column. Linkage with Stuart could have occurred as early as the 29th, most certainly by the 30th. Armed with updated information on Lee's intentions, Jeb could have avoided Kilpatrick at Hanover, allowing him either to cover Early's move to Heidlersburg or advance directly on Gettysburg. The failure of Lee's staff to provide this staggeringly vital information to Jubal Early not only doomed Stuart's primary mission, it forced Jeb's exhausted men to move blindly about in enemy territory an additional forty-eight mind-numbing hours.

After the war, Charles Marshall spent an inordinate amount of time retelling his version of Stuart's service in the Gettysburg Campaign, claiming a number of times without a trace of irony that he had recommended Stuart's court-martial to Robert E. Lee. Like many of Jeb's critics, Marshall found a warm welcome in the pages of the Southern Historical Society Papers, a publication initially founded to advance Confederate memorials but soon regarded as a bastion of Lost Cause theorizing. An 1896 Marshall speech amplified his earlier arguments against Stuart, and his discourse eventually made its way into the Society's publication. It is a remarkable performance, for at its core is the accusation that Stuart lied about the orders he received from Lee. Marshall claimed that the June 23 "confidential" communication did not exist, that Lee uncondition-

Library of Congress

An 1862 sketch of the Army of the Potomac scouting in Loudoun Valley.

ally ordered Stuart to attach himself to Ewell's right and "not to cross the Potomac east of the Federal army." Caught in the crossfire was James Longstreet, another enticing target for the Society's members. According to Marshall, Longstreet's recommendation for Stuart to march as he did stood at perfect odds with Lee's "positive instruction" for Stuart not to. As a result, Marshall could accuse both Longstreet and Stuart of ignoring Lee's directives and acting on their own devices. In fact, the same distortions and inconsistencies that plagued Marshall's earlier work arise here as well, but his attack on Henry McClellan's veracity betrays a mind suspiciously aware of the fatal weakness of his position.[33]

Quite a number of Confederates—some fellow members of Lee's staff among them—adopted Marshall's arguments, thus perpetuating the fantasy of Stuart's dereliction of duty. However, many former Southrons rose to Stuart's defense, among them Jubal Early, Henry McClellan, and John Mosby. Early denied receiving word that Stuart was approaching York, thus highlighting the failure of Lee's staff at this critical time. But Early's soft-pedaling of Stuart's mission seemed more of an effort to keep the heat on James Longstreet's supposed failings rather than an honest attempt to defend Stuart. McClellan and Mosby however mounted sturdy briefs, with McClellan's having the added cachet of providing an eyewitness account of the now-infamous "confidential" letter. But of the two, Mosby took on Stuart's defense with a vengeance. Seemingly still on horseback scanning the contours of Loudoun County for his blue-uniformed enemy, Mosby made it his job to skewer attempts like Marshall's to lay blame for the defeat at Gettysburg on Stuart's head. In his varied writings on the subject, Mosby was lawyerly in his approach and fiery in his dedication, unafraid to take Confederate icons to task for a variety of failings, perceived and otherwise. And, in one telling 1887 exchange, Mosby laid Marshall bare when he confronted the former staffer about his claim that Lee's second set of orders was actually revoked the night of June 23. Marshall had declared that Lee's revocation "ordered Stuart to ride on the right of his column" and not through the enemy's rear. The implication of Stuart's dereliction was clear, but when Mosby confronted Marshall with the uncomfortable fact that Lee had admitted authorizing Stuart's route in his official report—a report Marshall authored—"Colonel Charlie," as Mosby called him, "had nothing to say." Nine years later, this revocation of Stuart's orders would have made a powerful keystone in Marshall's speech, proving once and for all that Stuart indeed had disobeyed Lee's orders. Instead Marshall weakly argued that the "confidential" set of orders never existed. Of the supposed revocation he said nothing, admitting with his silence that he shouldn't have spoken in the first place.[34]

Despite Mosby's and McClellan's efforts, Marshall's flawed position remained a key component of Gettysburg studies for years, peaking in 1944's *Lee's Lieutenants*, in which author Douglas Southall Freeman called his chapter on Stuart's mission "The Price of 125 Wagons." Claiming that the cavalry commander entered the campaign "with fame impaired" while seeking somehow to "vindicate his name as a leader," Freeman inexplicably quoted Lee's June 23/5:00 p.m. orders as the later "confidential" letter, thus ignoring both Lee's desire for Stuart to connect with Early at York and Lee's expressed fears over the congested state of the roads west of the Blue Ridge. Not surprisingly, there is no mention of the staff breakdown that left Early unaware of Stuart's approach, but by building his indictment of Stuart on a badly flawed explication of Lee's orders, Freeman doomed his own credibility from the start. Twenty-four years later, in *The Gettysburg Campaign*, author Edwin Coddington treated Stuart on a more even keel. Critical of Jeb in a number of areas, Coddington broke ranks when he firmly declared, "If Robertson had followed Stuart's orders, Lee would not have felt the want of adequate cavalry support." In one terse statement, the author swept away the shaky historical underpinnings from a legion of Stuart's critics. At the same time, Coddington focused attention on a critical yet overlooked area.[35]

Before he departed on his mission, Jeb Stuart had ordered Beverly Robertson to guard the Blue Ridge passes until the Federals left his front. At that point Robertson was to follow Lee up the Shenandoah Valley and cross the Potomac, keeping on the army's "right and rear." These orders mirrored Lee's directives that enjoined Stuart to make sure the brigades that remained behind would "watch the flank and rear of the army." Coincidentally, on June 25, the same day Stuart led his column over the Bull Run Mountains, General Joseph Hooker finally responded to the report that Confederates had crossed the Potomac at Shepardstown by ordering his army north. Hooker handed General John Reynolds the assignment of directing three corps to the vicinity of Middletown, Maryland, in order to establish a strong flanking position as the rest of the army advanced. Reynolds plunged into the operation with his usual energy and efficiency, and late that night he proudly reported holding Crampton's Gap with elements of his cavalry and a brigade from the XI Corps. On through the 26th and

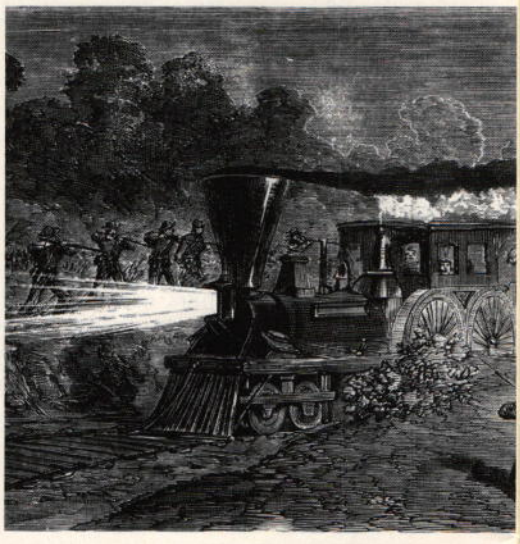
into the 27th Hooker drove his boys relentlessly, concentrating his forces between Middletown and Frederick. It was a remarkable piece of maneuvering, because late on June 27 Hooker could count five infantry corps and three cavalry divisions completely in hand. Yet that night, even as Stuart approached the Potomac at Rowser's Ford, even as the entire Federal army completed its march north across the Potomac, Beverly Robertson remained inexplicably stationary at the base of the Blue Ridge.[36]

It is a simple question: why did Beverly Robertson ignore Stuart's expressed orders to follow Lee once the Federals abandoned Aldie on June 26? As it happened, Robertson remained inert until Lee himself ordered him north on June 29. Even odder is the evidence that Lee was in constant contact with Robertson's command for the entire time, thus making Lee fully aware that the Federals had abandoned Robertson's front. It does appear from the official reports that Stuart's two messages ever got to Lee, and the army commander claimed he learned that the enemy was north of the Potomac only on the night of the 28th when the spy Harrison reported as much. Yet he had to know from Robertson's reports that the Yankees had disappeared from the cavalryman's front, signaling if only in general terms some kind of major move. We can also assume that Lee was fully aware that Robertson was not following Stuart's directives. Given this development, it is not surprising that Beverly Robertson defended his actions after the war by pointing out that neither Stuart nor Lee preferred charges against him. Although there is no firm evidence of it, it seems likely that Lee ordered Robertson to remain where he was. Why Lee would do this is difficult to guess. Lee had to know that, regardless of his own opinion on the matter, Stuart had ordered Robertson to protect Lee's right flank on the march north. Also, as Edwin Coddington pointed out, protecting the Blue Ridge passes in Virginia made little sense if Lee left the South Mountain passes in Maryland unguarded. Others have argued that Lee expected Stuart to be back in touch by the 28th or 29th, allowing Robertson to remain in place. By Lee's reckoning, Stuart's route should somehow have allowed him to pass around the Federal rear yet arrive in Maryland in such a manner as to cover the area east of South Mountain, thus protecting the passes. Unfortunately for Lee, no matter how quickly Stuart might have crossed the Potomac, the XI Corps would have beaten him to Middletown and prevented his access to South Mountain.[37]

Robertson's actions point to a serious flaw in Robert E. Lee's dispositions. By the night of June 25 Federal infantry and cavalry had occupied Crampton's Gap, squarely athwart Lee's invasion route. Yet Lee had no cavalry in hand to inspect the South Mountain passes, much less contest the enemy's occupation of them. Had Robertson moved at the behest of Stuart's orders on the 26th, he was still a hard day's march from Crampton's Gap. At best, Lee would not have learned of the presence of the Army of the Potomac near Middletown until the 28th, the same day the spy Harrison arrived in Chambersburg to alert Lee to Hooker's moves. Even following Stuart's orders, Beverly Robertson would have had a difficult time warning Robert E. Lee of the Federal countermoves any faster than Harrison actually did. And Lee still would not have had any cavalry patrolling the area east of the mountains.

A second flaw is more problematic. Some modern observers have offered a corollary of Marshall's argument: even if Stuart was not specifically ordered to cover Lee's right at South Mountain, the cavalryman should have recognized that his rightful place was there and modified his march accordingly. However, how Lee envisioned this happening is difficult to comprehend. Back on June 25, if everything had fallen perfectly for the Confederates, Stuart might somehow have managed to avoid the Army of the Potomac and reached Rowser's Ford that night. At that point, John Reynolds had infantry and cavalry clogging Crampton's Gap. Stuart would have had his force in Maryland on the morning of the 26th. Already Reynolds would have had three infantry corps converging on Middletown, while Hooker would have been pushing his remaining four corps and entire cavalry force across the Potomac. Assuming that Stuart understood he was to seek Lee's flank at South Mountain, had he hugged the Potomac in pursuit of his mission he would have been stymied by the massive Federal crossing at Edward's Ferry. Even worse, had he come in contact with the Federals at this point and revealed his precarious position, there is no telling the amount of damage a pursuing enemy column might have done him. At best, the route retracing and attendant delays would have been serious.[38]

Stuart's other option at Rowser's would have been the route he actually did take: north to Rockville and Cooksville. Destroying the Federal telegraph line at Rockville might have raised eyebrows in Washington D.C. and at Hooker's headquarters, at least until the damage was investigated and Stuart's presence confirmed. But tearing up the tracks of the Baltimore & Ohio north of Cooksville most certainly would have raised immediate red flags at the Federal command nexus—just as it actually did a few days later—and prompted a firm response. Since the Federal presence at Frederick would have ruled out Stuart's use of the National Road, Jeb would have had to find another route west, either through Libertytown (a scant ten miles from the Union concentration at Frederick) or north through Westminster to Taneytown. Perhaps Stuart could have slipped through the growing Federal cordon, but with Federal cavalry roaming the area trying to intercept the interlopers, nei-



In the illustration above, Confederate cavalry fires on a Federal supply train at Tunstall's Staion during Stuart's June 1862 ride around the Army of the Potomac.

NOTES:

1. H.B. McClellan, *I Rode With Jeb Stuart* (Indiana: 1958), p. 316.
2. Edwin Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign* (Dayton, Ohio: 1979), p. 106-07. For a description of the battle at Brandy Station, see Patrick Brennan,

ther route could offer any assurance that Jeb's cavalry would have found Lee in due course. At this point, sometime on the 27th or 28th, Stuart still would have been almost fifty miles from Lee's headquarters, and his only safe route to the army would have been north to Ewell, the route he ended up taking.

Stuart had one more option open to him. At Buckland on the evening of the 25th he could have called the entire mission off. Returning to Salem the next day, he would have sent another message to Lee that Federal infantry were pressing Gainesville and that the enemy was abandoning Aldie. There would have been the inevitable delays crossing the Potomac at Shepardstown in the wake of Lee's army. Arriving in Boonsboro—possibly on the 28th—Stuart's primary mission would have involved locating the enemy. With this in mind, Stuart's first instinct would have been to force Turner's Gap, which may have provided him a view of the Union columns crossing the Catoctins to the east. A courier would have galloped north to Chambersburg to alert Lee to the enemy's concentration north of the Potomac, but Stuart would have encountered tough odds trying to get beyond Braddock Heights to observe the area around Frederick. The only information he could have offered his commander at this point would have been sketchy at best, certainly no better than the intelligence delivered by Harrison that same day, and if his aggressive scouting prompted a Federal response, Stuart might have found himself pinned down in Pleasant Valley.

Sidling to the north, Jeb's next chance to move east of South Mountain was the pass at Thurmont, just fifteen miles north of Frederick. There he would have drawn the attention of General Alfred Pleasonton and at least one, possibly two, divisions of Union horse. With no Confederates operating in the Federal rear, Judson Kilpatrick's division would also have been free to join the ball. As Gettysburg expert Wayne Wachsmuth perceptively points out, given the experiences at Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville less than two weeks before, it was no sure thing that Stuart would have gathered any intelligence of substance, facing as he would have a well-rested, well-mounted enemy. In fact, using the actions in Loudoun as a template, Stuart and his lieutenants would more likely have been fighting for their lives rather than penetrating the Federal cordon. There would have been more riding, more fighting, then more riding, more fighting....[39]

* * *

IF CONJECTURE IS A TYPE OF ENTERTAINMENT, then Jeb Stuart's actions in the week before Gettysburg provided grist that rivaled the grandest of Las Vegas showrooms. For the first few decades after the war, his critics manipulated the facts in an effort to blame the Confederate failure at Gettysburg on his supposed willful disobedience of orders, controlling the debate as others rose to defend him. But even as the facts of the matter emerged, the disproved theories died hard, finding their way into modern studies of the battle in the face of strong, contradictory evidence. Yet that evidence could not be denied, and finally, it seems the old saw that Stuart went off on an inexplicable joyride has gone the way of most Civil War fantasies, consigned gratefully to history's dustbin.

The facts are obvious. Jeb Stuart believed that he was ordered to proceed from Salem, Virginia, through the Fed-

Frank and Marie-T. Wood Print Collection

"Thunder On the Plains of Brandy," *North & South*, volume 5, #3 and #4.

3. *The War of the Rebellion, A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Volumes (Washington, D.C.: 1880-1901), vol. XXVII, part III, p. 915 (hereafter *OR*).
4. *Ibid.*, 923. For a detailed examination of these orders, see Mark Nesbitt, *Saber and Scapegoat* (Pennsylvania: 1994), pp. 57-65.
5. McClellan, 317.
6. See John Mosby, *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby* (Indiana: 1959), pp. 216-17 for the scout's arrival. *OR*, p. 927.
7. Adele H. Mitchell (ed.), *The Letters of General J.E.B. Stuart* (Virginia: 1990), p. 221.
8. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part III, p. 923.
9. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, p. 296-97.
10. *Ibid.*, 692. See John Esten Cooke, *Wearing of the Gray* (Indiana: 1959), pp. 230-31 for an interesting description of this encounter.
11. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, p. 708.
12. *Ibid.*, 693.
13. G.W. Beale, *A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee's Army* (Maryland: 1994), p. 112. John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary* (Pennsylvania: 1866), vol. I, p. 366. Although this communication—like Stuart's first report from Buckland on June 25—did not get through to Lee, it appeared in a Richmond newspaper soon thereafter. Jones wrote of it on July 1. It is quite a coincidence that neither report made it to Lee, especially since both undercut later characterizations of Stuart as an irresponsible joyrider.
14. Cooke, 235; *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, p. 693.
15. *Ibid.*, 694.
16. *Ibid.*, 694; Beale, 112.
17. Cooke, 239; Beale, 113.
18. Coddington, 180-81.
19. Walbrook D. Swank (ed.), *Sabers, Saddles, and Spurs* (Pennsylvania: 1998), p. 72; B.J. Haden, *Reminiscences of J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry* (Virginia: 1912) as quoted in Robert J. Driver Jr., *1st Virginia Cavalry* (Virginia: 1991), p. 63; Robert J. Driver Jr., *2nd Virginia Cavalry* (Virginia: 1995), p. 90.

eral rear to the vicinity of York, Pennsylvania, where he would link with Jubal Early. Additionally, he believed he was to disrupt Federal communications and gather supplies. Everything he did, from June 25 to July 2, supports his efforts to fulfill those orders. He also believed that he had left sufficient cavalry and proper orders with Beverly Robertson to provide Lee all the horsemen the army commander would need. However, neither Lee nor Robertson recognized the need for Robertson to remain close to Lee's hand, thus putting two of Stuart's better brigades out of the action. At the same time, Robert E. Lee's staff failed to inform Early that three brigades of Confederate cavalry were on their way to him. As a result, Early made no attempt to establish communications with the cavalry column. Instead of staggering across the Pennsylvania countryside an additional two days, Stuart could have been covering Early's march to Heidlersburg and Gettysburg, possibly initiating contact with Buford as early as June 30.

Now, the frame of the debate has changed. When Jeb Stuart paused at Buckland on June 25, should he have called off the mission and followed in Lee's wake? It is impossible to rule out some benefit to this route, and one can fault Stuart for not seeing the big picture. But those same exigencies of war that delayed his mission as actually performed, loomed large around Middletown and Frederick; the same Federal cavalry that had handled him so roughly in Loudoun prowled dangerously in the shadow of South Mountain. Additionally, had he spent a second day near Buckland scouting for a route to the Potomac, Jeb could have ridden directly for Chambersburg and still not have reached Lee before the 30th, practically assuring the army commander of no cavalry east of South Mountain those last days of June. Which begs one last question: was this operation doomed from the start? As has been shown, Stuart's possible crossing at Rowser's late on June 25 hardly would have ensured the success of his mission. With the Federals pouring over the Potomac and accomplishing marches of uncharacteristic duration and distance, Stuart would have found himself much in the same position on the 26th that he experienced in fact on the 28th—cut off from the army, unsure of its location, and in the immediate vicinity of an alert enemy.

If Lee had wanted cavalry on his right covering Chambersburg, his choice was simple. He should have ordered elements of Stuart's cavalry—perhaps even Stuart himself— to accompany the invasion column. Delaying Longstreet's advance by a day and pulling Jeb and a brigade from Loudoun on the morning of June 24 would have given Lee a strong presence east of South Mountain on the 27th. Leaving either Fitz Lee or Wade Hampton in charge in Loudoun would have put an aggressive Confederate presence on the Federal tail as the Northerners attempted to disengage on the 26th, perhaps helping to delay the Federal push north. Instead, ordering Stuart on his mission was certainly a risky, if not impossible, way for Lee to accomplish his goals. As it played out, Marse Robert paid for that risk.

* * *

SOON AFTER THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG and long before the recriminations began, Jeb Stuart wrote his wife, "I had a grand time in Pennsylvania and we return without defeat." He trumpeted, "We must invade again—it is the only path to peace," and called Lee's invasion "the grandest piece of strategy ever heard of." For an officer who had supposedly failed his commander and received a heated

20. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, p. 695.
21. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part I, p. 991.
22. Cooke, 240.
23. Beale, 113; Cooke, 242.
24. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, p. 467; W.H. Swallow, *Southern Bivouac*, November 1885, in Jacob Hoke, *The Great Invasion* (Ohio: 1887), pp. 253-54. The author claims that Early himself heard Stuart's artillery.
25. McClellan, 330; *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, p. 696.
26. Cooke, 244.
27. Thaddeus Fitzhugh, "Memoirs of the 5th Virginia Cavalry," Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, Museum of the Confederacy, as quoted in Robert J. Driver Jr., *5th Virginia Cavalry* (Virginia: 1997), p. 57; Beale, 114; Robert K. Krick, *9th Virginia Cavalry* (Virginia: 1982), p. 23.
28. Beale, 115; RLT Beale, *History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry* (Richmond, 1899), p. 84
29. Cooke, 246.
30. John W. Thomason, *Jeb Stuart* (New York: 1953), p. 440; Glenn Tucker, *High Tide at Gettysburg* (New York: 1958), pp. 316-17, gives Munford's account of McClellan's supposed observations. There are enough errors to practically discount it outright. It is from a letter Munford wrote over fifty years after the battle when McClellan was no longer alive to dispute its content. Munford claimed that Stuart arrived with McClellan and Fitz Lee at 10:00 p.m. on July 2; in fact, Stuart arrived alone earlier that afternoon. Munford had Lee speaking extremely out of character, loudly repeating, "Where have you been?" a number of times. Munford also described Stuart wilting before the onslaught, a reaction difficult to believe given Jeb's subsequent strong defense of his actions in his official report. Needless to say, McClellan's published recollection (admittedly based on second-hand information) contradicted Munford at almost every step.
31. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, pp. 306, 316.
32. *Ibid.*, 307.
33. *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Volume 23, p. 223.
34. Colonel Walter Taylor, who had served as Robert E. Lee's adjutant, is a good case in point. On July 17 he wrote a long letter to his brother describing the Gettysburg campaign in some detail. In the letter, no mention is made of Stuart's supposed dereliction of duty, only a recitation of the Confederate victories on July 1 and 2. R. Lockwood Tower (ed.), *Lee's Adjutant* (South Carolina: 1995), pp. 59-63. However, after the war he would write that Stuart's discretion in choosing the crossing place of the Potomac was secondary to his direct orders "to maintain communication with the main column" and "to keep the commanding general informed of the movements of the Federal army." With Stuart off on a joyride, Lee's ability to "intelligently administer a single effective blow" was hamstrung. The effect here of Marshall's campaign is obvious. James I. Robertson (ed.), *Four Years With General Lee* (Indiana: 1962), pp. 92-93; Adele Mitchell (ed.), *The Letters of John S. Mosby* (Virginia: 1986), pp. 85-87, for the entire letter.
35. Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants* (New York: 1944), vol. III, pp. 51, 56-57; Coddington, 184.
36. *OR*, vol. XXVII, part III, pp. 927-28, for Stuart's orders to Robertson; *Ibid.*, 923,

censure for his actions, Stuart was decidedly upbeat. Later, after the finger-pointing began, the general refused to back down. Lee's second report on the Gettysburg Campaign included the observation, "The movements of the army preceding the battle of Gettysburg had been much embarrassed by the absence of cavalry." Ironically enough, what followed was an explication of Beverly Robertson's inability to inform Lee that the Federals had crossed the Potomac after abandoning Aldie on June 26, perhaps the worst of the many cavalry breakdowns in the campaign. Stuart fired back that Lee had Jenkin's command nearby which "properly handled...should have done everything requisite." Even more telling, he questioned Early's failure to "acquaint me with his destination" once he abandoned York, evidentally unaware of the breakdown in Lee's staff. But the posts and counters were already well past the fact. Ill-defined objectives, contradictory orders, over-confidence, and poor use of resources all conspired to embarrass Lee's operation, much of it traceable to the army commander himself and his staff. And yet, it is left to Henry McClellan to find the nub of the truth. Years later, he would conclude his own examination of the Gettysburg Campaign and Stuart's role therein with the simple observation:

> "It was not the want of cavalry that General Lee bewailed, for he had enough of it had it been properly used. It was the absence of Stuart himself that he felt so keenly; for on him he had learned to rely to such an extent that it seemed as if his cavalry were concentrated in his person, and from him alone could information be expected."[40] □

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for Lee's directives concerning the brigades left behind. Coddington, 123-27, gives a fine description of the Federal movements.

37. For Lee's evident communication with Robertson, see Henry McClellan to Jubal Early (Early papers, Library of Congress) as quoted in Coddington, 652, note 20. Mosby argues the same in his *Stuart's Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign* (New York: 1908), p. 198. Beverly Robertson defended his actions in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Buel (eds.), *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (New York, NY: 1883), vol. III, p. 253. In David Powell, "Stuart's Ride: Lee, Stuart, and the Confederate Cavalry in the Gettysburg Campaign" (*Gettysburg Magazine*, Issue 20), Powell agrees with Mark Nesbitt that Lee expected to hear from Stuart on either the 28th or 29th.
38. Powell, 37.
39. Wayne Wachsmuth, "Stuart was late" email to the Gettysburg Discussion Group, January 30, 2003. Wachsmuth is a licensed battlefield guide at the Gettysburg National Battlefield.
40. Mitchell, *Stuart letters*, 327-28; *OR*, vol. XXVII, part II, pp. 321, 708-09; McClellan, 336-37.

Library of Congress

Just as one trooper saw Stuart as a "fine figure sitting erect and firm in the saddle," this drawing depicts him boldly leading his cavalry around the Army of the Potomac in June 1862.

DO YOU KNOW?

1. This Union general was named to head the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865.
2. New Orleans was the South's largest city. What was its second-largest city?
3. This newspaper had the largest circulation in the North.
4. This Southern state had the most slaves in 1860.
5. This was the first battle of the Seven Days.
6. Name the three Union corps commanders killed during the war.
7. This man received the first Medal of Honor awarded to a black soldier.
8. Union General Alfred Pleasonton described this Confederate general as "the best cavalry general of the South."

Library of Congress

TEASER QUESTION

This Confederate division commander was captured twice in 1864.

THE ANSWERS to questions 1-8 are below. If you know the answer to the teaser question, send it to: *North & South*, 33756 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, CA 93667. The author of the correct answer drawn from the *N&S* hat will win a free book prize.

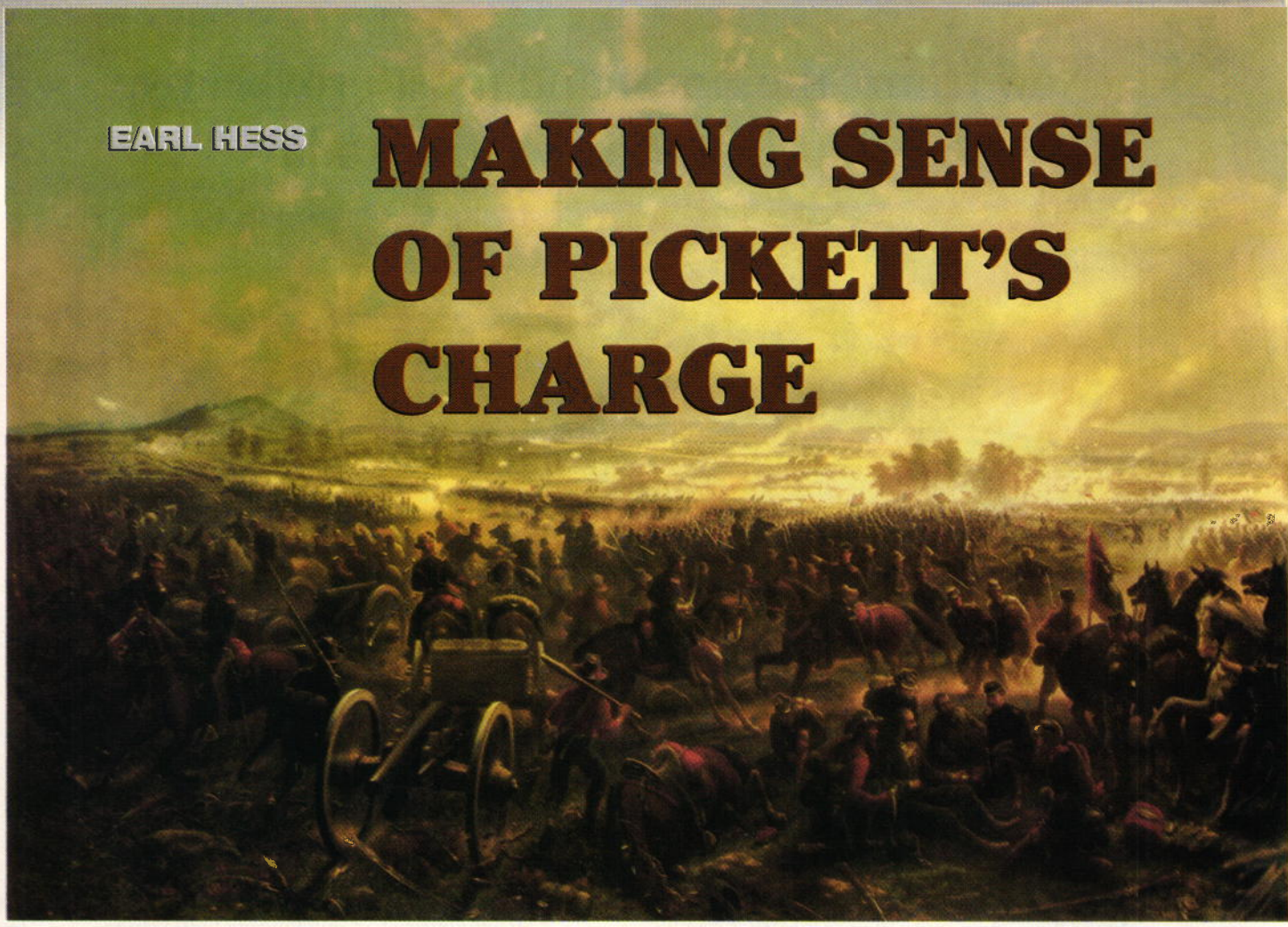
WE HAVE A WINNER

The Teaser question in volume 6, #3 was: "Name the first Union general officer killed during the war." The answer, of course, was Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon, killed August 10, 1861, while attempting to rally his troops at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri. The name drawn from the hat was that of Jean Andra of Logan, Utah, who receives as her prize a copy of Larry Sklenar's *To Hell With Honor: Custer and the Little Big Horn.*

DYK ANSWERS: (1) O.O. Howard; (2) Charleston, South Carolina, with 40,578 people as of 1860; (3) *New York Herald*. A group of the paper's correspondents are pictured above with thier wagon in camp at Bealeton, Virginia. (4) Virginia, with 490,865; (5) Oak Grove, June 25, 1862—*not* Mechanicsville; (6) John F. Reynolds, John Sedgwick, Joseph K.F. Mansfield; (7) Sergeant William Carney, 54th Massachusetts, for gallantry at Fort Wagner; (8) Joseph O. Shelby.

EARL HESS

MAKING SENSE OF PICKETT'S CHARGE



PICKETT'S CHARGE, THE LAST ATTACK AT GETTYSBURG BY LEE'S ARMY, is probably the best-known military action of the Civil War. It is arguably one of the best-known military actions of all American history, ranking with the Battle of New Orleans, Custer's Last Stand, and the Battle of the Bulge in the pantheon of famous conflicts.

The creation of its legendary status began immediately after the attack failed. On July 4 Brigadier General James Johnston Pettigrew, who led the other full division in the assault, confided to a trusted subordinate that, "had we succeeded the evening before, no doubt our army would have been on the road to Washington and perhaps negotiations for peace would then be on foot."

James Walker based his "Repulse of Longstreet's Assault" (above) on interviews with survivors of the battle.
Jay P. Altmayer Collection

Soon after the war, the legend picked up strength and vibrancy. Colonel Walter Harrison, a former member of Pickett's staff, visited Gettysburg and had a long discussion with John B. Bachelder, the self-appointed historian of the battle. Harrison pointed out that the now famous copse of trees on Cemetery Ridge, where the equally famous stone fence made a jog westward to form a distinctive angle in the Union line, had been the demarcation between Pickett's Virginia division and Pettigrew's division. Bachelder was so moved by this insight that he blurted, "Why, Colonel, as the battle of Gettysburg was the crowning event of this campaign, this copse of trees must have been the high water mark of the rebellion."[1]

Bachelder, a tireless promoter of his view that Gettysburg was the decisive battle of the Civil War, convinced many people that the attack of July 3 had more than just an immediate, tactical impact. Soon the legend grew that its failure prevented the Confederacy from winning the war and its independence. Even Lieutenant General James Longstreet, who had been charged by General Robert E. Lee with the responsibility of organizing the attack, only to become the chief scapegoat for its failure, began to accept this view of the matter. Long after the war, Longstreet wrote, "Pickett's charge was the crowning point of Gettysburg and Gettysburg of the war."

But Captain Benjamin Lyons Farinholt of the 53rd Virginia penned the ultimate faith in the idea that the attack was a turning point of the war. "And when the sun went down on the shattered and broken columns of Pickett's Division in the final charge on Cemetery Hill at Gettysburg on the 3rd of July '63, the Southern Cross and all we fought for was as decisively lost as was the Crown of Napoleon when the Imperial Guards bearing the Eagles of France went down in the magnificent charge of Ney at Waterloo."[2]

This idea was started by contemporaries of the war and soon became a legend among their descendants. The idea

Was Pickett's Charge "heroic but foolish," as some contemporaries described it? The conclusion will always depend on the view of those who dare to answer.

that Pickett's Charge was not only the High Water Mark of the Confederacy but the turning point of the Civil War grew with each passing generation. But is this hyperbole justified? Was Pickett's Charge the pivot point beyond which the United States would either remain united, with slavery eliminated from its borders, or would dissolve into separate, antagonistic nations? Many generations of Americans, especially those living south of the Mason-Dixon Line, have loved to ponder what might have happened if the assaulting column had broken through the Federal line and swarmed across the stone fence. In their view, the capture of Washington, D.C., and a negotiated end to the war with an independent Confederacy, was likely.

To answer questions like these one must strip away the accumulated layers of legend and myth that have encrusted Pickett's Charge for one hundred forty years, and view it as a military operation rather than a cultural artifact. The charge was a complex event, and there are several layers to its tactical and strategic significance. On different levels, it had the possibility of succeeding and was doomed to failure at one and the same time.

Preparation

The attack was conceived amid controversy and disagreement between Lee and Longstreet, its chief authors. If Longstreet had had his way, it never would have taken place. He had seen two of his divisions, under Brigadier General Evander M. Law and Major General Lafayette McLaws, make one of the most spectacular assaults of the war on the evening of July 2 against the left wing of the Army of the Potomac. Each division lost about one-third of its number and, while they came close to winning something big, their accomplishments fell far short of being decisive. At the same time, Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell's Second Corps had attacked the Union right wing and won even less important gains. Both ends of Major General George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac held firm that evening.

Longstreet felt that the results of July 2 demonstrated the futility of attacking the Federals frontally in their strong position outside Gettysburg. He did not bother to visit Lee's headquarters that night, but merely submitted a report. In turn, Lee sent a brief message that he wanted the offensive continued the next morning. Before dawn on Friday, July 3, Longstreet began to prepare for a resumption of the offensive, but on a different tack. Instead of a frontal assault, he wanted to find a way to turn Meade's left entirely, and roll up his battle line. Used to Lee's leadership style, he assumed he had enough latitude to conduct the offensive in the best way he thought possible.

But about 4:30 a.m., just as dawn was breaking, Lee rode up to Longstreet and discovered his project. The army commander immediately ordered him to cancel it. Lee wanted another frontal attack. This time Law and McLaws were to be shifted to strike Meade's center, which had been only partially tested on July 2. Longstreet's only fresh division, com-

manded by Major General George E. Pickett, was to act as support. At the same time, Ewell was to renew his attack on the Federal right. Lee apparently had intended this scenario all along, and had expected it to start about dawn.

Now ensued a classic conflict of wills. Longstreet was quite vocal in his opposition to the proposed operation. He pointed out to Lee that to shift Law and McLaws to the center would uncover the Federal left, and allow the Yankees to go on the offensive there. Moreover, he would need 30,000 men to have a chance of bursting through the Union center, but his three divisions now numbered no more than 13,000.

Longstreet instead suggested that the whole army disengage and swing around Meade's left wing, move five or six miles in the direction of Washington, D.C., find a good defensive position, and wait. Meade would then have to attack, and the Confederates would have the advantage of ground and punish them severely.

University of Georgia Press

James Longstreet: "Pickett's charge was the crowning point of Gettysburg, and Gettysburg of the war."

This plan became one of the great might-have-beens of Gettysburg, for Lee adamantly refused to adopt it. He knew how complex it would be to disengage his large army and maneuver it within striking distance of the enemy. Moreover, it would take time to find the right location, and Meade would not be idle in the meanwhile. Lee also felt that, emotionally, his men would not understand why they were leaving the field before a battle was decided. He also knew that his logistical support, so far from friendly territory, was tenuous, and that his army had limited ammunition available after two days of heavy fighting. For all the right reasons, Longstreet's plan was unworkable. If anything more was to be done at Gettysburg, another attack was the only option.

Whether Lee carefully considered all these objective views is uncertain. At the very least, the army commander genuinely viewed the results of July 2 differently than Longstreet. Its limited gains were not a sign of failure, in his view, but one step in the right direction. Lee wanted to take the next step, but with different preparations. He believed the attacks of July 2 were uncoordinated, and now wanted more minute plans and better artillery support. He was encouraged by the capture of the Sherfy Peach Orchard on July 2, and believed it offered slightly higher ground for the Confederate artillery. Lee hoped that a massed artillery bombardment would provide the key to a successful infantry attack.

But circumstance forced Lee to alter his plan. As he and Longstreet talked, guns could be heard to the north. The Federals opened an artillery barrage on Ewell's men at about dawn. Pickett was on the field by now but not yet in position to attack, and neither Law nor McLaws were ready to go in. Ewell therefore would have to fight alone. The Federals advanced and in three hours of battle managed to regain much of what little ground Ewell had taken the previous evening.

Longstreet's attack would have to go in much later that day, and without cooperative effort on the left. But it still would aim at the center of the Union line. The biggest difference was that now Pickett's fresh division would constitute the core of the attacking force, and Longstreet was authorized to draw additional troops from Lieutenant General A. P. Hill's Third Corps, already positioned in the center. Lee guessed that the total number of men would reach 15,000, which led Longstreet to reiterate his earlier view. "General, I have been a soldier all my life," he bluntly told his superior. "I have been with soldiers engaged in fights by couples, by squads, companies, regiments, divisions and armies, and should know as well as any one what soldiers can do. It is my opinion that no 15,000 men ever arrayed for battle can take that position." Lee lost all patience; he was tired "of listening, and tired of talking, and nothing was left but to proceed."[3]

Even though Lee never left a record of this conversation, there is no reason to doubt the essential truth of Longstreet's version of it. Longstreet was convinced the planned attack would be a useless sacrifice of manpower, he tried his best to dissuade Lee, and he failed.

Longstreet now had to organize an operation that he had no faith in, and he did so with a heavy heart. True to his command style, Lee left the details up to his subordinate. Longstreet later complained of this. Knowing his lack of confidence in the plan, knowing that half the troops would come from a different corps, he felt Lee should have appointed someone else to take charge of the operation, or at least offered Longstreet the advantage of his presence on the scene. Longstreet felt alone and vulnerable.

Lee did not completely abandon Longstreet, for he helped select Third Corps troops. Unfortunately, this was done in a perfunctory manner. Major General Henry Heth's division, temporarily commanded by Pettigrew, was chosen because it was already in a good spot. A new division, less than two months old, it had been worsted in a bitter but successful fight on July 1, suffering heavy losses. Lee also chose two brigades of Major General William D. Pender's division with as little care. Brigadier General James H. Lane's North Carolina brigade had suffered light casualties, but Colonel Alfred M. Scales's North Carolina brigade had lost very heavily on July 1. It was temporarily led by Colonel William L.J. Lowrance, as Scales had been wounded. Lee also put Major General Isaac R. Trimble in charge of the division, as Pender had been mortally wounded on July 2.


GETTYSBURG
2:45 PM–3:00 PM
The Confederates approach the wall under artillery fire
Emmitsburg Road
Ziegler's Grove
Taneytown Road
8th OH
126th NY
108th NY
Woodruff
111th NY
Egan
136th NY (5 cos)
12th NJ
Brian's Orchard
1st DE
125th NY
14th CT
71st PA
Lane
Davis
Lowrance
Lane
Marshall
Fry
The Angle
Armistead
Stockton
Meade's HQ
The Copse of Trees
Fuger
69th PA
Garnett
18th VA
8th VA
Cowan
59th NY
72nd PA
Codori Farm
7th MI
42nd NY
20th MA
19th MA
Kemper
19th ME
15th MA
1st MN
82nd NY
80th NY
151st PA
Emmitsburg Road
13th VT
16th VT (5 cos)
Fitzhugh
Kemper's Skirmishers
14th VT
Daniels
Rodgers House
Thompson
Brown
North
Latham
16th VT (5 cos)
0
300
600 feet
Phillips
Garden
Map Graphics: DLF Group 1998 / Base map courtesy of McElfresh Map Co.

There were other, less used, brigades belonging to Major General Richard H. Anderson's division of the Third Corps, but no one seems to have told Lee about the relative condition of the troops. Hill, newly booted to corps command after a brilliant record as division leader, was strangely silent in offering advice. As a result, 11,830 Confederates would make the charge, half of them from Pickett's fresh division. The rest were willing but exhausted.

Preparations for the attack were more thorough in other areas than in the selection of Third Corps troops. Longstreet personally showed Pickett the lay of the land and gave him detailed instructions. He minutely organized the artillery support, assembling 135 guns as close as possible to open fire on command.

But Longstreet did not pay as much attention to instructing and guiding the troops from Hill's corps. Pettigrew received only minimal information and no one showed him the lay of the land. Longstreet also failed adequately to arrange for support troops to either side of the attacking force. Believing the charge was doomed, he probably wanted to lessen the number of men exposed to danger. Lee's staff members later claimed that the army commander wanted Longstreet to use Law and McLaws, to Pickett's right. Longstreet argued that Lee had allowed him to keep those two divisions in place to secure the army's right flank. Lee essentially admitted the truth of Longstreet's claim in his post-battle report.

As a result, Longstreet only arranged for two small brigades of Anderson's division to be ready to support Pickett's right, Colonel David Lang's Florida brigade and Brigadier General Cadmus M. Wilcox's Alabama brigade. Both had suffered heavily in the attack of July 2. Longstreet did not see them as an aid to penetrate the Federal line, but as a flank guard.

To Pettigrew's left, Anderson had readily available Brigadier General Carnot Posey's Mississippi brigade and Brigadier General William Mahone's Virginia brigade, and Pender still had Brigadier General Edward L. Thomas' Georgia brigade. The first two were barely used, and the Georgia brigade not all, so far in the battle. Longstreet regarded all of them as available if a need arose, but he failed to identify any of them as a ready reserve, or to ask Hill for assistance in coordinating their movements.

It is probably true, as Longstreet reported to Lee, that he was "more particular in giving orders than ever before" while preparing Pickett's Charge. In most ways, Lee's old war-horse tried his best to do it right. Nevertheless there were faults in the preparations. Some were due to Longstreet's lack of attention to matters that did not directly concern the troops from his own corps, and others were due to circumstances beyond his control. For example, when Pickett's division deployed on line that morning, it was placed four hundred yards away from Pettigrew's division. This gap would have to be closed after the attack began, forcing Pickett to conduct a sharp left oblique while advancing under fire.

Preparations went on all morning. Organizing the artillery support took a lot of attention. Longstreet assigned Colonel Edward P. Alexander, his acting artillery chief, to take the lead. His guns were to fire the opening shots of the bombardment. Longstreet even gave Alexander the job of determining if the effect of the fire was encouraging enough to justify sending in the infantry.[4]

On the Union side, no one but Meade suspected such an attack was in the offing. He warned Brigadier General John Gibbon, whose II Corps division held the center, about what was to come. On the night of July 2, during a conference of his commanders, Meade told him, "Gibbon, if Lee attacks me to-morrow it will be on *your front*." Meade came to this conclusion after studying the attacks on July 2, which hit both of his flanks. "Well, general, I hope he does," Gibbon replied, "and if he does, we shall whip him."

Meade was confident of success if the Confederates attacked his center, but worried if they tried to turn his left, so he spent quite some time preparing for that contingency. Subordinates gathered information on the roads to his left and rear. Also, Meade had earlier selected a strong defensive position along Pipe Creek in Maryland, sixteen miles south of Gettysburg, as a fall back position. It was good defensive ground and would block any Confederate advance from Gettysburg toward Washington. Although only 5,750 men held the line targeted by Lee, the Federals were ready.[5]

The Artillery

At 1 p.m. most Unionists were taken by surprise as the Confederate guns thundered forth. For the first few minutes the air remained relatively clear, and some Federals could catch glimpses of projectiles. "We could see a dark line flit across overhead," recalled a member of the 12th New Jersey, "and others cross this towards every point of the compass."

But then 126 Union guns began to reply, and before long the valley that separated Cemetery Ridge from the Confederates became filled with smoke. It

Tulane University Library

Edward P. Alexander: "So I stood by, & looked on in silence almost embarrassing."

National Archives

James J. Pettigrew: "had we succeeded the evening before, no doubt our army would have been on the road to... negotiations for peace."

was the largest artillery concentration thus far in the war, and it shook the ground, blotted out the sun, and created a tremendous noise that jarred the waiting infantry.

Some Federals tried to estimate how many projectiles were flying across the valley, and their guesses ranged anywhere from two hundred to six hundred rounds per minute. One staff officer counted six shell explosions in sixty seconds. But Major Thomas Ward Osborn, artillery chief of the XI Corps, believed it was possible that each gun engaged in this duel could have fired from two to four rounds per minute. If so, the 261 pieces involved shot between 522 and 1,044 rounds per minute.[6]

The Federal infantry suffered far less than one would expect. The stone fence and a few meager breastworks offered most infantrymen just enough protection to survive the storm. Also, the Confederates tended to overshoot the thin line of infantrymen. Ironically, the rear areas were more heavily hit. Meade had his headquarters at the Widow Leister House, located on the eastern slope of Cemetery Ridge. It was so heavily pummeled that the army commander temporarily moved his staff officers farther to the rear.

Some Federal batteries also received a lot of rounds. Longstreet's guns were quite effective in damaging the Union artillery near the angle in the stone fence and the copse of trees. Here, four Federal batteries were at the center of a firestorm, exposed on the open western slope of the ridge. Farther north, another battery also was exposed and severely damaged.

One of the four units near the angle, Captain James McKay Rorty's Battery B, 1st New York Artillery, lost two of its four guns and all but three of its sixty-five gunners. Volunteers were culled from nearby infantry units to keep the remaining pieces firing now and then. Lieutenant Alonzo H. Cushing's Battery A, 4th U.S. Artillery, positioned at the angle itself, was decimated as badly as Rorty's. Virtually all of the crew were hit and Cushing was wounded. But he coolly directed the remaining two operational guns to be manhandled down the slope by infantry volunteers to the stone fence itself. He realized the enemy would likely charge soon and wanted to meet them as far forward as possible.

The hour-long bombardment almost eliminated Union artillery support near the angle. This was significant, for it aided Pickett's men in their ability to crowd up to the stone fence at the height of the charge.

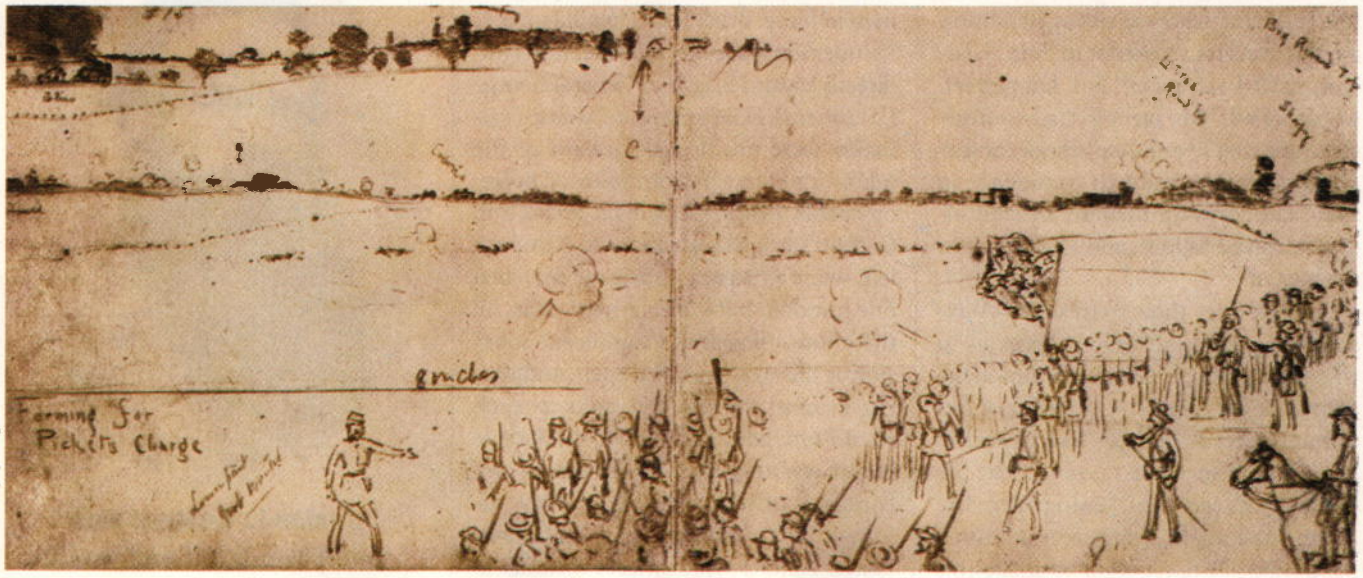
But the Rebel artillery barrage was far less effective on other parts of the Union line. There were three more concentrations of Federal guns, besides those batteries near the angle, and two of them were completely unaffected by the hail of Confederate fire.

Lieutenant Colonel Freeman McGilvery commanded a concentration of eight batteries, thirty-nine guns, a few hundred yards south of the angle. They were aligned behind a short parapet and mostly hidden by the lay of the land from the Confederates, yet McGilvery's artillerists had a superb lateral view of the ground over which Pickett would charge.

Lieutenant Benjamin Rittenhouse's Battery D, 5th U.S. Artillery, was safely ensconced atop Little Round Top. His 10-pounder Parrotts were effectively out of range of most Confederate guns, yet they were able to lob long range shells at the Rebel infantry, and even reach the angle itself.

The third concentration of Union guns was exposed to Confederate fire, but held its own. Thomas Ward Osborn had a number of pieces positioned atop Cemetery Hill which could reach the area of Pettigrew's advance. Osborn received fire from Rebel guns positioned west of his location, but the rounds were overshot and did no damage. Then a Confederate battery to the north opened and found his range and elevation perfectly. Osborn's command would have been devastated if his gunners had not quickly responded, found the enemy's range and elevation, and silenced his battery. Not long after, Osborn came up with the idea of deliberately stopping the Union artillery fire all along the line, to trick the Confederates into starting their infantry attack while the Federals still had plenty of ammunition left to damage it. This was done, and it appears to have worked as planned.[7]

Overall, the Union guns failed to damage the Confederate artillery too much. They did fire long enough, however, to force the Rebel gunners to expend most of their remaining long-range ammunition even before the infantry started the famous charge. Near the end of the barrage, Alexander was distressed to learn that only a few of his batteries had



Library of Congress

Pickett's Confederates form for the charge. Sketch by Massachusetts artillerist Charles Reed.

enough shells left to offer any fire support for the infantry advance.

The Union guns, however, had a dramatic effect on the waiting Rebel soldiers, many of whom were killed and wounded. Few Confederate infantrymen had any protection except that offered by lying flat on the ground under a broiling sun. Every time a Federal projectile hit the ranks, it tore men apart or flung them into the air, often in spectacularly horrifying fashion.

One shell that landed among the 7th Virginia killed three men and wounded five others. An officer in the 18th Virginia recalled how the "shrill shot overhead or bounding madly across the field would alike dip through a line of prostrate men and rush on with a wail to the rear leaving a wide track of blood behind." One of Pickett's brigade commanders, Brigadier General Lewis A. Armistead, calmed his men by saying, "Lie still boys, there is no safe place here." At least three hundred fifty Confederates were put out of action by the Union guns, and probably about the same number of Federals were victims of Confederate artillery fire.[8]

Alexander had a difficult time gauging whether his guns were inflicting enough damage. The smoke and noise obscured the valley, but he had to keep up the barrage as long as possible to give the infantry maximum assistance, without completely depleting his supply of ammunition.

He decided to send a note to Pickett at 1:25 p.m., telling him that the return Yankee fire had not yet slackened, but that he could not keep the bombardment up too much longer. Pickett took the note to Longstreet, who was sitting nearby on a rail fence, and showed it to him. "General, shall I advance?" For Longstreet, words failed. "My feelings had so overcome me that I would not speak for fear of betraying my want to confidence to him." The corps commander either nodded or waved to him, and Pickett left to get started.

Longstreet then went up to Alexander to sound out the artillerist as to whether there were grounds to cancel the attack. He got there at 1:45 p.m., just five minutes after Alexander had penned a second note to Pickett, saying that the Union guns were slackening their fire around the angle. Longstreet admitted his doubts. "I don't want to make this attack," he frankly told Alexander, but the young artillerist refused to respond, not wanting to take on the responsibility of helping Longstreet abort the attack. "So I stood by, & looked on," Alexander later recalled, "in silence almost embarrassing." Then, between 1:50 and 2:00 p.m., Pickett's men marched past the artillery. The attack was on, and no one could stop it.[9]

To the Emmitsburg Road

When Pickett had first given the signal for his men to ready for the advance, before the end of the artillery bombardment, some of them could not stand up. They were overcome by heat prostration. The temperature was 87 degrees by 2 p.m., and steadily rising. An hour spent hugging the ground in this sweltering heat, under the intense bombardment, had incapacitated some Virginians. Others merely feigned heat exhaustion, at least so thought many of their comrades.

But the vast majority of Pickett's men quickly formed ranks. After a few exhortations by their commanders, the three brigades moved out, making their way up the eastern slope of Seminary Ridge. As they neared the open top of the rise, the panorama of the battlefield came into view, and their ranks became visible to the waiting Federal gunners. The dangers to be encountered and the crashing of artillery rounds in their midst unnerved some Virginians, a handful of whom bolted from the ranks and ran to the rear. Yet the majority continued forward under an increasingly deadly hail of artillery fire.

The example set by all three brigade leaders was instrumental in keeping the men in place. Brigadier General James L. Kemper's brigade advanced on the right, directly toward Brigadier General George J. Stannard's I Corps brigade, whose regiments were positioned forward of the main Union line in a pronounced bulge, or salient. Brigadier General Richard B. Garnett's brigade advanced to Kemper's left, while Armistead's brigade marched one hundred paces to Garnett's rear. All three units displayed magnificent cohesion as they traversed the open, undulating ground, redressing ranks as each round tore holes in them. Considerable credit was due to the regimental and company officers as well, for they adjusted the pace of their men and maintained contact with officers of units to their flanks.

Kemper and Garnett had earlier deployed skirmishers, and these now advanced as far as possible, until Stannard's skirmishers forced them to halt. Some of the small arms rounds from the Yankees found marks in Pickett's line, as his men received their first infantry fire in the charge.

Now the problem of alignment with Pettigrew became obvious. The ominous four hundred yard gap that had separated the two divisions before the start of the advance had to be closed. While Pettigrew had only to advance straight ahead, Pickett had to move to his left by the time the two divisions neared the Federal position. At first, orders filtered down the

Library of Congress

George E. Pickett lost more than forty-two percent of his men.

L.C. Handy Studio

James L. Kemper was badly wounded and would barely survive.

ranks merely to guide left as much as possible, to effect a slide in that direction while maintaining the forward momentum. But the advance was too fast and the distance too short to allow this easy solution to take effect. By the time the Virginians neared Emmitsburg Road, it became apparent that a sharp left oblique was necessary—that is, the men had to turn left, still maintaining their place in line, so that entire brigades could veer off to the left. It was a change in direction of advance, not easy to do under battlefield conditions.

When Pickett's men started their left oblique, it was so suddenly and sharply done that many Federal officers were convinced it was taken to avoid Stannard's waiting brigade. Stannard had positioned his 14th Vermont well forward as skirmishers, with the 13th and 16th Vermont waiting farther to the rear. Stannard's men were nine-month volunteers whose term of service was nearly over, yet they were engaged in their first and only battle. It was wrong to think that Pickett was trying to avoid Stannard, but as his brigades conducted their left oblique, they exposed their right flanks to Stannard's fire. Moreover, most other units on the Federal line, those of Gibbon's division, also opened fire on Pickett's men even though they were farther away than normal for effective infantry fire.[10]

Pettigrew had his own problems on the Confederate left. Brand new to division command, and with brigades that had not yet recovered from the pounding they had received on July 1, he lost control of his left wing. Colonel Birkett D. Fry's Tennessee brigade, on the far right, and Colonel James K. Marshall's North Carolina brigade, next to Fry, started out well in hand and advanced steadily across the open valley. But Brigadier General Joseph R. Davis' Mississippi brigade was late in starting. Led by President Jefferson Davis' nephew, this was a good brigade, but Davis had mistaken the signal for starting the advance. When he realized his mistake, he pushed his men onto the field so hastily that they raced ahead of Marshall's command. Davis never fully got his eager unit under control, and reached the Emmitsburg Road essentially on his own, ahead of Marshall.

Colonel John M. Brockenbrough's Virginia brigade, on Pettigrew's far left, had worse troubles. The incompetent Brockenbrough decided to divide his five hundred man brigade into two wings. He led the 40th Virginia and 22nd Virginia Battalion on the right, while Colonel Robert M. Mayo led the 47th Virginia and the 55th Virginia on the left. When the division started to advance, even after Davis' command appeared, there was still no sign of the Virginians. Brockenbrough took his wing out a few minutes later, but Mayo was nowhere to be found. After waiting a few more minutes, the left wing started without him. As a result, Pettigrew's left-most brigade advanced in two small contingents with no coordination between them.

Kennedy Galleries, Inc. New York

Thomas Nast's painting depicts the men of Alexander Webb's brigade desperately fighting to hold their ground as the Confederate high tide reaches their position.

The Confederates received murderous artillery fire from Osborn's concentration of guns on Cemetery Hill. Brockenbrough took his wing about halfway across the valley before it broke apart and ran back to the crest of Seminary Ridge. Mayo's wing advanced nearly to the forward position of the 8th Ohio, about three quarters of the way across the valley, before it too stopped. The Ohio unit, performing continuous skirmish duty in this advanced position since the previous day, now concentrated its strength and delivered a devastating volley directly into the face of Mayo's troops. The Virginians broke and retreated.

Thus began the disintegration of the Rebel left wing. Davis' brigade remained intact but the Federals put together a flanking column to fire directly into its exposed left flank as it neared the Emmitsburg Road. First, the 8th Ohio repositioned itself to face south. It was soon joined by a detachment of the 125th New York, so that a continuous Federal line of 260 men stretched west from the Emmitsburg Road. Other units later joined these men and extended the line east of the road, all the way up to the stone fence atop Cemetery Ridge. A total of 580 Federals eventually made up this flanking line that devastated Pettigrew's left flank. Davis' Mississippians could not stand the fire. Most of them stopped at the roadbed, only fragments and isolated individuals managed to make it some distance beyond that line of demarcation, some of them quite close to the stone fence. But soon most of Davis' command retreated, stripping away the protection for Marshall's exposed left flank.

High Tide

Fry and Marshall maintained tight cohesion all the way across the valley, as did Lowrance and Lane, under Trimble's personal supervision, only a few yards to their rear. Pickett's men completed their sharp left oblique in time to close on Fry's right just as the two wings of the Confederate attacking force neared the Emmitsburg Road. The only question now was how far they could go beyond the fateful roadbed.

The pike offered almost insurmountable obstacles. Two stout fences—post and rail, the strongest fence used in the era—bordered the road. Fry's and Marshall's men had to break their momentum to climb the first one, just as the

Federals unleashed their volleys. At a distance of one hundred seventy-five yards, the range was close enough to make musketry very effective, and the Yankees had managed to stockpile a number of loaded muskets for their use. By picking up arms abandoned during the fighting of the previous day, each Federal soldier had up to ten loaded and ready muskets by his side. The men of Colonel Thomas A. Smyth's brigade and Colonel Eliakim Sherrill's brigade, both of Brigadier General Alexander Hays' Third Division of the II Corps, were veterans, and they made full use of their small arsenals.

As a result, the Confederates were devastated by small arms fire as they climbed the fence, and a lot of their determination evaporated. Hundreds of men in both Rebel brigades took shelter in the roadbed, which was about two feet deep and offered some degree of shelter from the incessant hail of lead. This was not cowardice; these men knew the folly of exposing themselves in the open at close range and their cohesion had been broken by the fence. They had reached their high tide.

Some members of both brigades managed to steel their nerves and push forward. This was done by regimental and company leaders, for both brigade commanders were already down. Fry had been wounded before his men got to the road, and Marshall was killed just as his Tar Heels began to cross the first fence. But there was no general or coordinated advance beyond the road, only fragments or individuals pushed ahead. By best accounts, perhaps two hundred fifty of Fry's brigade and perhaps seven hundred of Marshall's command did so.

A few soldiers of the 1st Tennessee managed to make it to the angle in the stone fence, and mingled with Garnett's brigade. The color bearer of the 14th Tennessee advanced to a rail fence that stretched northward from the angle. Here he planted his flag and stood defiantly, encouraging his comrades to come up. Soon he was shot down by men of Smyth's brigade.[11]

In Marshall's command, the 26th North Carolina was, according to Captain Thomas J. Cureton, "reduced to a skirmish line by the constant falling of the men at every step," and only handfuls of them ventured into the maelstrom east of the Emmitsburg Road. All were hit or halted short of the stone fence, some fell forty yards or even less from their antagonists. One group of the 26th North Carolina surged within twenty yards of the Federal line before they were blasted at short range by canister from a gun of Captain William A. Arnold's Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Artillery.[12]

Trimble's two brigades, following close behind Fry and Marshall, did all they could to help. As he neared the Emmitsburg Road, Lane noticed that Pettigrew's left wing was disintegrating, so he ordered his North Carolina brigade to veer left to shore up the line. Most of his regiments heard and understood his meaning, but the 7th North Carolina and the right wing of the 37th North Carolina, on his extreme right, did not, and they continued advancing directly ahead. Lane gallantly brought the rest of his brigade up to the road and replaced Davis' recently departed command, but he could not move beyond that line of demarcation. His Tar Heels held here for several minutes until the pressure from the Federal flanking line became too great.

Lowrance, along with the regiment and a half from Lane, continued straight ahead and duplicated Fry's and Marshall's limited successes. Some men advanced all the way up to the angle, but many simply took shelter with the mass already lying in the roadbed. There was no way to get these men up and moving again. Pettigrew had already been slightly wounded in the hand by a shell burst, before his division reached the road, and Trimble was badly wounded by a bullet in the leg just as he reached the pike. The leg was later amputated.

Thus the high tide for the Confederate left wing was actually many spots on this deadly battlefield. For some, as with Brockenbrough's brigade, it lay only part-way across the valley. For most, it lay in the slim protection of the Emmitsburg Road. For a few brave souls, it was within throwing distance of the stone fence. Perhaps one thousand men of Pettigrew's 4,500-man division managed to make it across the road and endeavor to close with the enemy, while probably four hundred of Trimble's two brigades did the same. None of them reached the stone fence except as prisoners of war.[13]

On the Confederate right, Pickett's three brigades maintained their relative positions and their tight cohesion throughout the left oblique, hitting the Emmitsburg Road at a sharp angle. The fences were far less of an obstacle here than over on the left, for many holes had been knocked down by the troops engaged in the fighting that swirled over this part of the field on the evening of July 2. In fact, very many survivors of Pickett's attack did not even mention the fences as any hindrance at all. Also, very few if any of Pickett's men dropped down into the roadbed for shelter, the vast majority of them seem to have remained in line, their momentum hardly slowed.

Just as the division crossed the road, it redirected its line of advance due eastward. Garnett's left flank neared Fry's right, and the Virginians moved as a mass

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John Gibbon was wounded in the shoulder and had to relinquish command of his division.

Library of Congress

Alexander S. Webb: "That halt at the wall was the ruin of the enemy."

up the gentle, open slope toward the stone fence. They found the angle virtually empty, for the 71st Pennsylvania, of Brigadier General Alexander S. Webb's brigade of Gibbon's division, had decided to abandon it. This was not necessarily a mistake, for the approach of Pettigrew's division seemed to give the Confederates an opportunity to outflank the regiment to the north. The retreat was hasty, however, and it left the two guns of Cushing's battery exposed. It also uncovered the right flank of the 69th Pennsylvania, also of Webb's brigade, immediately to the left of the two guns.

The evacuation of the angle allowed Garnett and Armistead to close up to the stone fence. They received a hail of small arms fire from the 69th Pennsylvania and the two artillery pieces fired one last salvo of canister as they approached. Cushing was shot down just before this, but his remaining gunners waited until the Confederates were only twenty yards away before they jerked the lanyards, cutting open two fifty-foot wide swathes in the ranks. The Federals then abandoned the guns. Garnett's men were staggered, but then they closed up and pushed on.

The Rebels naturally stopped just outside the stone fence, for it was a ready line of demarcation between the opposing forces. Although only one or two feet tall, the fence was the only shelter on the battlefield, and a turning point was reached when they stopped here. "That halt at the wall was the ruin of the enemy," Webb later told Colonel Charles Wainwright, artillery chief of the I Corps, "as such halts almost always are; yet so natural is it for men to seek cover that it is almost impossible to get them to pass it under such circumstances."[14]

The rest of the division also closed up on the Union position. Armistead simply melded his own brigade with Garnett's, but Kemper had a more complex problem in closing with the Federal line. Stannard's Vermont brigade was in an admirable spot to do mischief to the Confederate right flank. He quickly repositioned the 13th Vermont and then the 16th Vermont to face northward and fire at short range, less than one hundred yards, into the Virginia division. The 13th Vermont fired up to fifteen rounds, and the 16th Vermont fewer, but both regiments were large and thus a considerable amount of lead was delivered into Pickett's vulnerable flank.

This forced Kemper to refuse his line. About half of his brigade wound up facing south, firing at Stannard's annoying Vermonters rather than advancing toward the main Union position. The rest moved as far as they could eastward, connecting to Garnett's right flank, but they could not close up so tightly to the Union position as had Garnett and Armistead. Facing them were the veteran brigades of Colonel Norman J. Hall and Brigadier General William Harrow, both of Gibbon's division. These Federals had been firing ever since the Virginians had come within range, and they held firmly behind a small earthwork, only one or two feet high, which extended southward from the stone fence. Kemper's men, and those on Garnett's right flank, halted several yards short of the Union position, taking whatever shelter they could in the undulations of the land and behind a few clumps of rocks.

This is how Pickett's division came to its high tide. How many Confederates were massed just before the Yankee position is difficult to determine, but most likely the majority of the division had made it across Emmitsburg Road. Subtracting the men felled in the artillery bombardment and during the advance, it is quite possible that as many as 4,530 out of Pickett's 5,830 men were there. Even though opposed only by about 3,000 Federals in Gibbon's division and the brigade and a half of troops from the I Corps that were available nearby, the Confederate right wing had stalled. Gibbon was wounded in the shoulder about this time, and his superior, Major General Winfield S. Hancock, commander of the II Corps, was severely wounded in the

Battles and Leaders of the Civil War

A wartime sketch from the Union position of the charge of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble.

groin. But the Federal brigade commanders were capable and active.[15]

The stall lasted but a few moments. Soon, Armistead stepped forward to lead a valiant attempt to cross the stone fence. He exposed himself, his hat on his upraised sword, and yelled, "Come forward, Virginians! Come on, Boys, we must give them the cold steel; who will follow me?" It had an electric effect. About one hundred men joined him in leaping across the fence into the Union position. They swarmed around Cushing's two abandoned guns and filled the angle. If followed by more of Garnett's and Armistead's brigade, this could easily have resulted in the turning point of the attack.

But Pickett's high tide was halted by two factors. First, Webb had already given orders to move forward the 72nd Pennsylvania from its reserve position, just after the 71st Pennsylvania had abandoned the angle. The 72nd advanced to the northeast angle of the stone fence and then, seeing the Rebels only eighty yards down the gentle ridge slope, stopped and began to deliver fire. Webb had wanted the regiment to advance all the way down to the angle, but he could not convince the men to do so.

Nevertheless, the 72nd had effectively closed the hole created by the retreat of the 71st. Its fire devastated Armistead's little band. Forty-two of the one hundred men were hit, and Armistead himself was struck in the abdomen, the arm, and the leg. He fell ten feet inside the angle, near one of the Federal guns, and only a few feet from the spot where Cushing had fallen.

The second factor was the heroic stand of the 69th Pennsylvania. It nearly collapsed when Armistead's group billowed across the stone fence. Orders went out for Companies I, A, and F, on the far right of the regiment, to refuse the line, to bend backward before the Confederate group broke the formation. Companies I and A successfully did so, despite the presence of Rebel troops only a few feet away, but Company F hesitated. It was swamped by Armistead's followers, and most of the company members were taken prisoner. A dangerous break thus developed in the regimental line, but it was contained. Companies I and A held firm, in their refused position to the right of the break, and Company D stood in place to the left.

The rest of the 69th Pennsylvania also held firmly behind the stone fence, even though Confederates were so close that some men actually slapped them with the end of their musket barrels. Every time a group of Rebels tried to jump across the fence, the Pennsylvanians were able to repulse or capture them. To a degree, the regiment held so firmly because they were backed up against an obstacle. The copse of trees was much larger in 1863 than it is today. The outer fringes extended nearly down to the stone fence, and regimental members had to cut a lot of the small trees away to make room for the 69th to deploy along the fence. Now there was a pile of limbs and trunks just behind the regiment, and no one wanted to trip over it with the enemy only feet away. As Corporal Robert Whittick later put it, "there was more danger tramping over the trees in the position we had there than if we stood still." So the Pennsylvanians stayed and fought like tigers.[16]

These two Federal regiments contained Armistead's limited penetration of the Union position. By the time the survivors of Armistead's band filtered back across the stone fence, all of the brigade leaders in Pickett's division were down. Garnett was shot off his horse just behind the massed Confederates and died instantly. Kemper was badly wounded off on the Rebel right and would barely survive. Pickett himself, unlike Pettigrew and Trimble, decided to remain well behind his command. This caused some controversy after the war, for the Virginian made it through the attack unscathed, but he remained in close touch with his command and rode most of the way across the valley before stopping to gaze upon the destruction of his division.

As soon as it became apparent that a breech was opening in the line at the angle, officers in Hall's and Harrow's brigades acted to bring their commands forward and help seal it. The movement of the 72nd Pennsylvania alerted everyone to the danger. Hall and his regimental leaders reacted first. Each unit was brought out of position and rushed pell mell toward the angle. There was no time to do this nicely, and the resulting line was as mixed up as was Pickett's division outside the stone fence. This crude but firm line stretched to connect with the position of the 72nd Pennsylvania on the right, then curved around the eastern and southern edges of the copse. Its left rested at the stone fence, beyond the left flank of the 69th Pennsylvania. That regiment's position was obscured by the trees, and hardly anyone in Hall's brigade mentioned it in their accounts of the battle. The 69th suffered some casualties when Hall's men opened fire. The volume of fire increased when Harrow's regiments duplicated Hall's movement, crushing up behind Hall's men to strengthen the ring containing Armistead's breech.

Fortunately for the Federals, more reserve units were ready to move up and replace Hall's and Harrow's regiments after they had evacuated a considerable stretch of the Union position. Kemper's brigade and the right wing of Garnett's failed to take advantage of this momentary opportunity to move forward into the Union position. Colonel Theodore B. Gates led two regiments of the I Corps, the 80th New York and the 151st Pennsylvania, from their position in the rear to confront the Confederates, extending the Union line from the left of the new position taken by Hall and Harrow. Gates' left extended at least as far as the southern end of the stone fence. Kemper's men were too busy with Stannard's brigade to find their way around Gates' exposed flank.

For ten to fifteen minutes, the Federals remained in their new positions and fired at the Rebels, some of whom were only a few yards away. But then it became apparent that something had to be done to drive the enemy away. Webb finally got the 72nd Pennsylvania to move forward, slowly advancing down the ridge slope, firing as it went.

Museum of the Confederacy

Cadmus M. Wilcox's Alabama brigade suffered heavily.

To the left, Hall walked up to Colonel Arthur F. Devereux, commander of the 19th Massachusetts, and said, "We are steady now." Devereux replied, "Sure, but we must move." Hall agreed and passed around the word as the rest of his brigade began to advance. Harrow's brigade did the same. Much encouragement came from regimental and company officers, and even some privates. George H. Cunningham urged the 15th Massachusetts forward by yelling in a loud voice, "*For God's sake let us charge, they'll kill us all if we stand here.*"[17]

This was too much for the Virginians. Some of them stood their ground and fired at the advancing Yankees, and some hand-to-hand combat took place across the fence. But most Confederates moved away to put more distance between themselves and the enemy. They now had to decide whether to retreat across the wide open valley in the face of an advancing foe, a prospect in some ways more dangerous than advancing across it toward the enemy. "To remain was life in prison," recalled Lieutenant William Nathaniel Wood of the 19th Virginia, in Garnett's brigade. "To retreat was probably death in crossing the field, but possible safety within our lines." Wood ran and made it safely, but hundreds of his comrades were shot down as they tried.[18]

Cook Collection, Valentine Museum

Lewis A. Armistead: "Come forward, Virginians! Come on, Boys,... who will follow me?"

Library of Congress

Isaac R. Trimble was badly wounded by a bullet in the leg.

No wonder that so many other Confederates decided to stay put and let the Federals take them prisoner. On Pettigrew's front, advancing Yankees saw a forest of handkerchiefs raised high in the air by unwounded Rebels who were lying in Emmitsburg Road. They were offering a token of their willingness to surrender. The Federal flanking column on the right advanced along the road and scooped up these men, and other Federals advanced a short distance beyond the road until Confederate artillery fire forced them back. A good many of the captured Confederates had no decision to make—they were wounded and unable to retreat.

Pickett's men, at least, were helped a little by the advance of Wilcox's and Lang's brigades to their right, the only supporting troops to move forward. Longstreet had authorized the two brigades to move up shortly after the start of Pickett's advance. Both units were undersized, only one thousand Alabamans and four hundred Floridians taking part in the charge. Both had seen heavy fighting on July 2, and no one was eager for this attack as they set out with imperfect instructions as to what they were supposed to do.

As it turned out, they accomplished very little. Their line of advance was directly across the open watershed of Plum Run, a shallow rivulet with a thin screen of timber along its banks, half way across the valley. Wilcox and Lang were severely punished by artillery fire from Rittenhouse and McGilvery along the way. In fact, the two brigades headed, unknowingly, straight into McGilvery's line of fire. A total of fifty-nine Federal guns pounded them.

To make matters worse, Stannard redeployed troops to fire into their left flank. He quickly moved the 16th Vermont and four companies of the 14th Vermont to face south and deal out the same punishment to them that they had recently inflicted on Pickett's division. It was all too much for the Rebels. Lang made it to the skirt of trees, where his men took shelter. They held there a few minutes before Stannard advanced his Vermonters, causing the Floridians to evacuate their position and retreat. Wilcox also fell back after making it partway across the open valley. The most that either brigade accomplished was to divert some Federal attention for a while and give the Virginians a greater opportunity to retire. Wilcox and Lang lost 315 men out of their combined strength of 1,400.[19]

The loss ratio of the other Confederate units involved in the charge was even greater. Pickett lost more than forty-two percent of his men, and Pettigrew lost a staggering sixty-two percent. All told, with Trimble's losses added to the total, 6,555 out of the 11,830 Confederates were killed, wounded, or missing. The 26th North Carolina in Marshall's brigade had started the battle on July 1 with eight hundred men. It ended Pickett's Charge forty-eight hours later with barely seventy men still standing. Company F of that hard-hit regiment lost all but one man in the fighting on July 1. Five more were scraped up for the charge on July 3, and literally all of them were shot down. In addition to the tremendous human loss, the Confederates lost thirty-eight regimental flags in the attack, the highest such loss suffered by the Army of Northern Virginia on any battlefield. In contrast, the Federals suffered 1,500 casualties from among the 5,750 men involved in repelling the attack. The Yankees had less than half as many men involved, and about the same number of guns, yet suffered less than half the casualty rate.[20]

Might-Have-Beens

Perhaps no other battle of the war has been invested with so many possibilities for Confederate success as Gettysburg. The might-have-beens began to accumulate right after the fight ended and have become part of the mythic legend associated with the engagement.

But there are many ways to question these assumptions about what was lost when Pickett's Charge failed. First, could the attack have succeeded? If so, could that tactical success have been translated into strategic success? In other words, if Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble had broken through the II Corps line on Cem-

etery Ridge, would that have won the Battle of Gettysburg for Lee? And, if so, was winning the battle necessarily a prelude to the Confederacy winning the war and its independence?

First, let us consider the tactical level. The Confederate failure to break through Hancock's position was not inevitable. The Rebels did have a chance, albeit a marginal one. Pickett had a better opportunity to do so at the angle because Alexander's artillery had decimated the Union guns there. But even here, Garnett and Armistead failed to break Webb's line. Pettigrew and Trimble appear to have had virtually no chance of success on the left.

The Confederate effort was not a forlorn hope. If more Union guns—those of McGilvery and Osborn—could have been knocked out, if the stone fence and the meager earthwork had not shielded the Yankees and offered a tempting shelter for Pickett's men, maybe a breakthrough would have been more probable. But, as it was, the chances for a tactical victory were slim indeed.

US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle

Lieutenant Colonel Freeman McGilvery's artillerists had a superb lateral view of the ground over which Pickett would charge.

For the sake of argument, let us suppose the ultimate Confederate tactical success, a smashing breakthrough that chewed up and rendered ineffective Hancock's two divisions holding the Union center. What then might have happened? Meade had ample tactical reserves, the VI Corps, idle to the rear, and various brigades from other corps were also ready to act. In fact, several units were rushed to the scene of battle and could have been thrown into Pickett's path. It seems that Meade had several good options to contain the Confederates, even to drive them back, and Lee had no fresh reserves to counteract these moves.

Even so, let us consider what might have happened if a Confederate breakthrough had, by some miracle, forced the Army of the Potomac entirely off the high ground at Gettysburg. What might have happened if Meade had conceded defeat and fled from the battlefield? This takes us even more into the realm of counterfactual history, but one can develop a plausible scenario.

Recall that Meade had a very good defensive position already selected at Pipe Creek, and was ready to fall back to it even before July 3. It was well sited to block a Confederate advance from Gettysburg into Maryland. The retiring army usually had an advantage over the victorious army during the Civil War, for it had a head start in the following set of movements. In effect, the retreating army was setting the pace and the direction for those movements, and the victorious commander had to spend time finding out what the enemy was doing and where he was going. There is every likelihood that Meade would have safely emplaced his army in a position as strong as that at Gettysburg and would have been patiently waiting for Lee's exhausted men, who would have been desperately short of artillery ammunition and encumbered with thousands of wounded. The chances for a decisive end to the war seem remote indeed. Rather, another major battle would have been in the offing, and Lee's army would have been far less ready for it than it had been for Gettysburg.

Many commentators have argued that a spectacular Confederate victory on Northern soil would have taken the steam out of the Union war effort and led to some sort of negotiated peace, or at least to foreign intervention on the Southern side. But that view undervalues the tenacity and commitment of the Union soldier and the Northern people to the war. If Southerners felt they were fighting for a good cause, Northerners felt equally committed to their own war effort. Repeated Union disasters on Southern soil, such as in the Seven Days, at Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, had depressed Northern spirits but failed to win the war for the Confederacy. The North always bounced back, often with renewed energy and intensity, as it did after the Seven Days, with more radical war policies with which to fight the conflict.

Also, there was little possibility of Lee destroying Meade's army and paving the way for an immediate march on Washington to dictate terms. Time and time again, the Civil War demonstrated how difficult it was to capture, neutralize, or decimate entire field armies; they always had a chance to escape the battlefield before complete destruction occurred. If beaten, Meade could always move away, even to a better position, and the North always had more men with which to reinforce him. If Lee's army could survive Antietam without the collapse of Southern will to go on with the war, why could not the North have survived a defeat at Gettysburg?[21]

Conclusion

Was Pickett's Charge then "heroic but foolish," as some contemporaries described it? The conclusion will always depend on the view of those who dare to answer. It can be argued that Lee had no good alternative to striking at Meade's center on July 3, despite the limited chances of success. If so, it was indeed a tragic effort to save something from a battle that was all but lost anyway. The best chances of Southern success at Gettysburg had been offered on July 1, and Lee's army had failed to capitalize on them. Longstreet and Ewell had also failed to deliver on the reduced but real chances of success on July 2. The last attack at Gettysburg, on July 3, was controversial precisely because it had so few chances to succeed, yet was so magnificently launched and repelled. The only thing left to do after the guns fell silent on that hot afternoon was to prepare for the long retreat back to Virginia, and immortalize the charge in myth and legend.[22] □

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ERIC J. WITTENBERG

EAST CAVALRY FIELD

BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, JULY 3, 1863

AFTER TEN LONG, HARD DAYS IN THE SADDLE Jeb Stuart's exhausted Confederate cavalrymen made their way to Gettysburg. Moving with one hundred fifty captured Yankee wagons in tow, Stuart's men had fought a pitched battle with Brigadier General Judson Kilpatrick's Third Cavalry Division at Hanover on June 30. Stuart had broken off that engagement and set out to find Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell's Second Corps, which he believed was near Dover, not far from York. However, Ewell's foot soldiers were already moving in on Gettysburg. The weary grayclad troopers then pressed on to Carlisle, where Brigadier General Fitzhugh Lee's people burned the barracks.

Finally, on July 1, Stuart learned that the Army of Northern Virginia had concentrated at Gettysburg, and that a heavy engagement had occurred that day. Stuart turned toward Gettysburg. On July 2, at Hunterstown, five miles from Gettysburg, Kilpatrick's column caught up to Stuart's rearguard, and a brief but sharp fight took place there. After shaking off Kilpatrick's dogged horse soldiers, Stuart arrived at Gettysburg in time to witness the opening of the fighting for Brinkerhoff's Ridge on July 2, in which Brigadier General David M. Gregg's dismounted cavalrymen defeated a force of Confederate infantry. From that vantage point, Stuart had noticed the good ground for cavalry operations to the east of Cress Ridge: "A commanding ridge completely controlled a wide plain of cultivated fields stretching toward Hanover, on the left, and reaching to the base of the mountain spurs, among which the enemy held position," he later recalled.[1]

Both Library of Congress

Brigadier General David M. Gregg, Second Cavalry Division commander (left), and Major General Alfred Pleasonton, commander of the Army of the Potomac's Cavalry Corps.

Opposite: detail from "Hampton's Duel."
Painting by Don Troiani, www.historicalartprints.com.

His men were hungry and exhausted. Richard L.T. Beale, colonel of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, recalled reporting to Stuart on the night of July 2, "The utmost verge of endurance by men and horses had been reached, and that whatever the morrow might bring, we feared that neither horses nor men could be used either to march or fight."[2] Even though the men were worn out from their exertions, they faced a trying day.

At age thirty, Major General James Ewell Brown Stuart was at the height of his power and fame. A member of the West Point Class of 1854, he had married the daughter of Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, the ranking officer in the prewar cavalry, cementing his position as an up-and-comer. Stuart had also served as Colonel Robert E. Lee's aide during the mission to free Harper's Ferry from John Brown's raiders. He had made his mark at First Bull Run, when his 1st Virginia Cavalry charged into Federal infantry on Henry House Hill, crumbling the Union line. By August 1862 he commanded all of the Army of Northern Virginia's cavalry and had, by the spring of 1863, assumed almost legendary status. However, things had begun to change that spring, and in the days prior to the great conflagration at Gettysburg Stuart's vaunted horse soldiers had suffered their first defeats at the hands of their Northern adversaries. Stuart had missed the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg, and part of the second day, and had received a humiliating dressing down by Robert E. Lee. The Southern cavalier was determined to redeem himself on July 3.

Under Stuart's command were the cavalry brigades of Fitzhugh Lee, Wade Hampton, and John Chambliss, and elements of Albert G. Jenkins' brigade, along with two batteries of horse artillery. He hoped to move east on the York Road to a position where his horsemen could pro-

tect Ewell's Second Corps.[3] Two of his batteries, those of Breathed and McGregor, had been left behind in order to replenish their ammunition, with orders to join the rest of the Southern cavalry as soon as possible. Stuart intended to pass around the Federal right flank and try to strike the Army of the Potomac's rear while the Northerners were distracted by a Confederate assault on the Union center that afternoon.

Some have speculated that this move was actually to be coordinated with the Pickett-Pettigrew-Trimble charge, but Stuart's report does not support that conclusion. "During this day's operations, I held such a position as not only to render Ewell's left entirely secure, where the firing of my command was mistaken for the enemy, caused some apprehension, but commanded a view of the routes leading to the enemy's rear," he wrote. "Had the enemy's main body been dislodged, as was confidently hoped and expected, I was in precisely the right position to discover it and improve the opportunity."[4]

Stuart also wanted to set an ambush for David M. Gregg and his Second Cavalry Division. He would approach from the north, contain Gregg's command with dismounted sharpshooters, and launch a mounted attack from the west to take advantage of the protection of the ridges. His brigades would be hidden in the dense woods on Cress Ridge until the last moment.[5] He had observed the lay of the land, and probably believed that, in the course of protecting Ewell's left, he had a prime opportunity to ambush and perhaps destroy Gregg's veteran division. Stuart made his plans and dispositions accordingly.

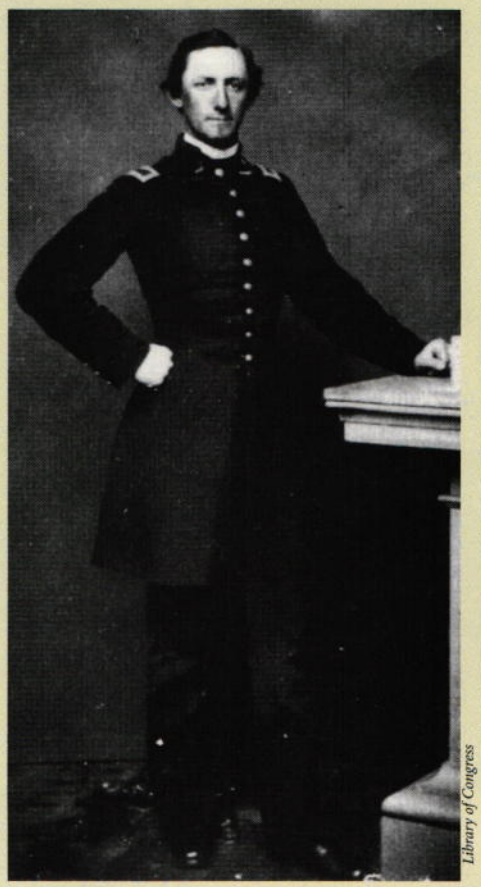
At 6:00 a.m. on July 3, David Gregg, who had also carefully studied the lay of the land during the fight for Brinkerhoff's Ridge, and who had recognized the strategic significance of the intersection of the Low Dutch and Hanover roads, received orders to move his two brigades out. Major General Alfred Pleasonton, commander of the Army of the Potomac's Cavalry Corps, instructed Gregg to move his division to a position between White Run and Cemetery Hill in the event of a change in the main Union line. If no such change occurred, Gregg was to remain at White Run. "This point is so important that it must be held at all hazards," concluded Pleasonton.[6] However, the astute Gregg recognized that his obedience to this order would leave the army's right flank unguarded.

Gregg immediately objected. "I then requested the aide-de-camp to return to General Pleasonton and to state to him that I regarded the situation on the right of our army as exceedingly perilous," he later reported, "that I was familiar with the character of the country east of Brinkerhoff's Ridge, that it was open, and that there were two roads leading toward the Hanover Road to the Baltimore Turnpike; that if these were not covered by a sufficient force of cavalry it would be to invite an attack upon our rear with possibly disastrous results."[7] Pleasonton reaffirmed the prior order, but gave Gregg discretion to detach one of Kilpatrick's brigades and send it to the Hanover Road position if he was still concerned about covering the army's right flank.

Gregg dispatched one of his staff officers to Two Taverns, where Judson Kilpatrick's Third Division had camped for the night. When the aide arrived he learned that Kilpatrick had moved out at 8:00 a.m., intending to lead his two brigades to the Union left flank, near Little Round Top, where they expected to operate against the Confederate right. Brigadier General Elon J. Farnsworth's brigade had already left, but the brigade of twenty-three-year-old Brigadier General George A. Custer, consisting of the 1st, 5th, 6th, and 7th Michigan Cavalry, along with Lieutenant Alexander C.M. Pennington's Battery M, 2nd U.S. Artillery, was still there. After receiving Gregg's order, Custer turned his column and marched across country to the intersection of the Hanover and Low Dutch roads.

Custer had been promoted from captain to brigadier general on June 28 and had assumed command of the Michigan Cavalry Brigade at Hanover on June 30. He was still new to command, and his men were not yet used to him. Custer deployed his regiments in a line covering the intersection and facing northwest toward Cress Ridge and away from the main lines of battle at Gettysburg. Scouts he sent out to reconnoiter the area reported that all was quiet and there were no Confederates in the area.

By 10:00 a.m. Gregg had grown even more concerned about the army's right flank. Acting upon his own initiative Gregg broke his camp and led two brigades north toward the Hanover Road. Colonel John B. McIntosh's brigade moved to the right, toward the low area



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between Cress Ridge and the Low Dutch Road, connecting with Custer at the road intersection.

McIntosh halted his column, and his men dismounted and sprawled about the fields south of Custer's line along the Hanover Road. They rested there until shortly after noon, when Gregg received a critical message from Pleasonton that confirmed his worst fears. Major General Oliver O. Howard, commander of the Federal XI Corps, had reported he could see a large body of Confederate cavalry moving east out the York Road toward the Union right flank. Jeb Stuart was headed that way with more than 4,800 Confederate horse soldiers. Somehow, Pleasonton failed to grasp the grave threat posed by the Confederate cavalry, and enclosed an order to Gregg to relieve Custer's brigade and send it to rejoin Kilpatrick on the left flank.[8]

About 1:00 p.m. McIntosh rode out to consult with Custer at his headquarters south of the Lott house. Custer reported the positions of his pickets and indicated that there were Confederates in the woods beyond the Rummel farm buildings. Armed with this information, McIntosh returned to choose his new position while Custer's Wolverines prepared to mount up and ride off. After relieving

Opposite: Lieutenant Alexander C.M. Pennington, Battery M, 2nd U.S. Artillery (left), and Brigadier General George A. Custer, commander of the Michigan Brigade.

Below: Colonel John B. McIntosh, commander of the First Brigade, Second Cavalry Division.

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the Wolverines, McIntosh's men dismounted and permitted their horses to pick at the field of clover on either side of the road junction. As the Michigan men slowly marched off, the Federals abruptly learned that they were not alone.

Stuart had marched approximately two and a half miles along the York Road and then turned south on a crossroad that would lead him directly to the Low Dutch Road, where he could cover Ewell's left and operate against the Federal cavalry he had seen attacking Brinkerhoff's Ridge the previous afternoon. Heavy woods bordered this road and screened it from sight atop Cress Ridge, so that the Confederates could not see the Federal brigade posted at the crossroads below. With Jenkins' brigade in the lead, followed by Chambliss', Stuart "moved... secretly through the woods to a position, and hoped to effect a surprise upon the enemy's rear."[9]

Jenkins' and Chambliss' men filtered down the ridge toward John Rummel's farm buildings, while Hampton's horsemen followed the farm lane into the thick woods at the northern end of Rummel's property. Fitz Lee's brigade was the last to arrive on the field, and it took position behind a fence a half mile from Rummel's large stone and wooden barn. Stuart hoped to use Jenkins' sharpshooters to pin the enemy down while he shifted Lee's brigade around the Federal flank. He kept two of his brigades hidden in order to spring a trap on Gregg's unsuspecting horse soldiers. Uncertain about what lay in front of him, Stuart ordered Captain Thomas E. Jackson to deploy a single gun of his battery and fire a shot in each of the four directions of the compass.[10]

Given Stuart's concerns about maintaining the secrecy of his position, the reason for firing these shots remains a mystery. Major Henry B. McClellan, one of Stuart's staff officers, later suggested that Stuart ordered the firing in an effort to discover whether there were any Union troopers in the area. More likely, Stuart hoped the shots would cause David Gregg to launch an attack that would fall into Stuart's ambush.

Major Peter Weber, who, with a detachment of fifty men of the 6th Michigan Cavalry, was stationed in the woods near the Lott barn, could clearly see the deployment of Jenkins' and Chambliss' men on the Rummel farm property. He promptly withdrew and reported this fact to Custer, whereupon Custer ordered Lieutenant Pennington to deploy his guns and return fire. Pennington unlimbered four guns between the Hanover Road and the Lott house and two on the south side of the Hanover Road, and opened fire. Jackson's battery returned fire, but the precisely aimed Federal guns soon silenced the rebel guns: in just a few minutes, the Northern gunners had killed half of the battery's horses and had wounded four men. "The little artillery we used seemed of little service," observed a Virginia officer, "& I think most of it was soon silenced by the Federals."[11]

The Wolverines deployed in line of battle, facing north this time, instead of west. "My line, as it then existed, was shaped like the letter L, the shorter branch formed of the section of Battery [M], Second Artillery, supported by a portion of the Sixth Michigan cavalry on the right, while the Seventh Michigan cavalry, still further to the right and in advance, was held in readiness to repel any attack the enemy might make, coming on the Oxford road," reported Custer. "The Fifth Michigan cavalry was dismounted, and ordered to take position in front of my centre and left. The First Michigan cavalry was held in column of squadrons to observe the movements of the enemy."[12]

While the artillery duel raged, McIntosh put the men of the 1st New Jersey into line alongside the Wolverines, taking up positions on either side of the Low Dutch Road in the vicinity of the Lott house. The rest of McIntosh's brigade deployed to the north of the Hanover Road. The head of Custer's column had actually started down the Low Dutch Road to join Kilpatrick, but Gregg recalled them when Jackson's guns began barking. Two regiments of Custer's brigade—the 1st and 7th Michigan—stayed at the road junction as they came back up the Low Dutch Road.

While McIntosh's men deployed, General Gregg arrived on the scene and took personal command of the field. "The importance of successfully resisting an attack at this point, which, if succeeded in by the enemy, would have been productive of the most serious consequences, determined me to retain the brigade of the Third Division until the enemy were driven back."[13] Gregg found Custer, who offered the opinion that

Gregg would soon have quite a fight on his hands, stating, "I think you will find the woods out there full of [Confederates]."

"Say you never got the message. I need you here," replied Gregg. "I will only be too glad to stay," proclaimed Custer, "if you will give the order." Gregg gave the order, and Custer "was well pleased to remain with his brigade." The two generals fully understood that "the Battle of Gettysburg might be lost right here if Stuart got through to Meade's rear."[14]

Stuart ordered Jenkins' men to advance and occupy the Rummel farm buildings. Lieutenant Colonel Vincent Witcher, the commander of the 34th Battalion of Virginia Cavalry, was the brigade's senior officer on the field. Witcher had only the 332 men of his own 34th Battalion and eight companies of the 14th and 16th Virginia Cavalry to commit to battle that afternoon, for a total of about six hundred men, who occupied a front of three to four hundred yards. Stuart also deployed Captain William M. McGregor's battery on Cress Ridge to engage Pennington's artillerists in counterbattery fire.

Witcher's men occupied the large wood and stone barn adjacent to the Rummel farmhouse. They cut rifle holes into the barn's planks, allowing them to fire from complete shelter. For some unexplained reason, the men of Jenkins' brigade went into battle that day with only ten rounds of ammunition each for their Enfield rifles.[15] In spite of their tiny supply of ammunition, Witcher's dogged little band of Virginians stubbornly held the Rummel farm buildings for most of the afternoon, despite unrelenting pressure from the Union cavalry.

McIntosh watched the Confederates advance toward the Rummel barn, but could not see Stuart's main line of battle along Cress Ridge. Wanting to ascertain the strength of the enemy force facing him, he dismounted the 1st New Jersey and sent it forward to occupy a fence line along Little's Run. The Jerseymen held their position until they ran out of carbine ammunition and had to face down the Southern horse soldiers with their revolvers. McIntosh then brought up the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry, which deployed behind the main skirmish line of the Jerseymen. As the 1st New Jersey attempted to withdraw, the Confederates advanced on both flanks. Instead of falling back, the Jerseymen borrowed ammunition from the Pennsylvanians and remained on the firing line.[16]

Witcher's men advanced to a parallel fence line west of the Rummel barn. They opened fire, trading shots with the Wolverines across the open farm fields. With a heavy fight now raging, McIntosh deployed more troops, sending two dismounted squadrons of the 3rd Pennsylvania into line along Little's Run next to the 1st New Jersey, two other squadrons north of the Lott house along the Low Dutch Road, and the final squadron, commanded by Captain William E. Miller, to the edge of the Lott wood lot, extending their line north to the crossroads. Thus, the 3rd Pennsylvania held both ends of the 1st New Jersey's line. The single company of the Purnell Legion also advanced to Little's Run to the left of the Pennsylvanians. McIntosh's line extended from a strip of woods north of the Lott house to a fence near the Rummel spring house then toward the Hanover Road, following along the meandering route of Little's Run. McIntosh held his remaining regiment, the 1st Maryland Cavalry, in reserve behind the Lott house.[17]

Road southwest of the Lott farm buildings.[18] Lieutenant James Chester deployed his section of guns on the highest spot in the area and immediately opened fire on the Rummel barn at a range of approximately 2,100 yards. Pennington and Randol directed their gunners to concentrate their fire on the stone barn held by Witcher's men. The Federal artillerists rained a severe and highly effective fire on the Confederates in the barn, which soon became untenable.

Stuart responded by deploying additional men of Jenkins' and Chambliss' brigades, who extended the Confederate line of battle south toward the Hanover Road, outflanking the Union position along Little's Run. Spotting the threat to McIntosh's troopers, Custer dismounted a portion of the 6th Michigan Cavalry and sent it to extend the Union left. When the 1st New Jersey and 3rd Pennsylvania reported that they were running low on ammunition, Custer also committed the 5th Michigan to the fight. The men of the 5th Michigan carried seven-shot Spencer repeating rifles, and they could lay down a tremendous amount of firepower. The 5th Michigan attempted to

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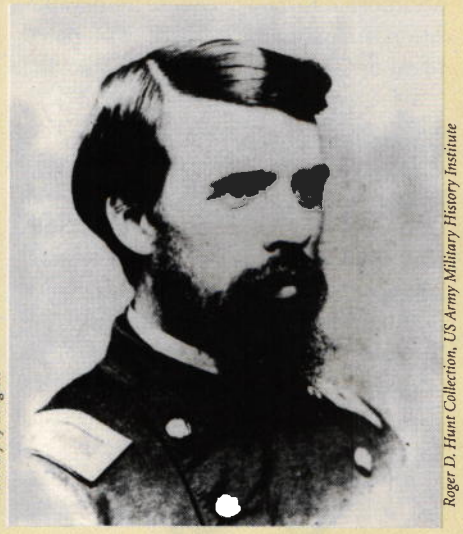

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Captain Alanson M. Randol, Battery K, 1st U.S. Artillery (left), and Colonel Russell A. Alger, 5th Michigan Cavalry.

McIntosh rode off and reported to General Gregg that he was engaged with a superior force of the enemy, and asked for reinforcements from Colonel J. Irvin Gregg's brigade. General Gregg had held his cousin's brigade in reserve in order to protect the flank, and did not want to pull them out of line. He refused McIntosh's request and instead directed Captain Alanson M. Randol's Battery E, 1st U.S. Artillery, to unlimber along the Hanover advance northward from the Hanover Road behind the left of the Federal line, but the heavy fire of Witcher's and Chambliss' people soon pinned them down.

Some of Chambliss' men had noticed that the fire of the 1st New Jersey and the 3rd Pennsylvania had slackened, and that they were trying to withdraw from the firing line, creating an opportunity. A portion of Chambliss' brigade

attacked the Federal line. "Now for them before they can reload," cried the Confederate officers. Chambliss' Virginians quickly pinned the men of the two Union regiments down, preventing them from withdrawing and forcing the Northerners to turn about and return fire, staggering but not stopping the Confederate attack.[19]

Fortunately for the defenders, the 5th Michigan arrived in time to help repulse Chambliss' attack. The contest was hand-to-hand for a moment. Then, "Alger's men, with their [seven]-shotted carbines, forced their adversaries slowly but surely back, the gray line fighting well, and superior in numbers, but unable to withstand the storm of bullets," recalled a Wolverine. The Confederates "made a final stand behind the strong line of fences in front of Rummel's and a few hundred yards out from the foot of the slope whereon Stuart's reserves were posted." Although the Wolverines had checked Witcher's men, Stuart observed that "the 34th had made the worst massacre of Alger's command and had piled more dead and wounded men and horses on as little space as he had ever seen on any field."[20]

Jeb Stuart had not intended to have such a protracted and violent dismounted fight. He had hoped to send a mounted column around the Federal flank, but Witcher's withdrawal had forced Stuart to change his plan. "Notwithstanding the favorable results obtained, I would have preferred a different method of attack, as already indicated," noted Stuart in his report of the battle, "but I soon saw that the entanglement by the force of circumstances narrated was unavoidable, and determined to make the best fight possible."[21]

Lieutenant Colonel Witcher rode off to find a fresh supply of ammunition for his Virginians. After a "fearful ride with death all around me, front and rear, and bullets as numerous in the air as hailstones in a storm," Witcher distributed the fresh ammunition to the men of Jenkins' brigade, and ordered the 34th Battalion to retake the position they had abandoned earlier. "With a wild yell the whole line dashed forward, retook the fence and swept the Federal dismounted men back," claimed Witcher. "Seeing the whole line of dismounted men give way, I moved forward with a view of taking a battery in our front and right." He would not get the chance to capture the Federal guns.[22]

Major Ferry, whose brother Thomas was an influential U.S. Senator, was walking his lines, cheering on his men. A soldier, shot down near Ferry, cried out, "Major, I feel faint; I am going to die." Ferry turned to the man and said, "Oh, I guess not; you are all right—only wounded in your arm." The major picked up the man's Spencer rifle, fired a few shots, and then turned to his men, yelling, "Rally, boys! Rally for the fence!" A Confederate ball then crashed into his skull, killing him instantly.[23] Their ammunition exhausted, Ferry's demoralized and leaderless battalion fell back, leaving the lamented major's body behind.

Ferry and his troopers had made quite a stand. At a range of just ninety feet, his men had fended off Witcher's withering frontal fire and Chambliss' heavy flanking fire, and had inflicted heavy casualties on the Confederates.

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

SECOND CAVALRY DIVISION
Brigadier General David M. Gregg

First Brigade*
Colonel John B. McIntosh
3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel Edward S. Jones); 1st New Jersey Cavalry (Major Myron H. Beaumont); 1st Maryland Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel James M. Deems)

Third Brigade
Colonel John Irvin Gregg
16th Pennsylvania Cavalry (Colonel John K. Robison); 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry (Colonel William E. Doster); 1st Maine Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel Charles H. Smith); 10th New York Cavalry (Major Matthew H. Avery); Company A, Purnell Legion Cavalry (Captain Robert E. Duvall)

THIRD CAVALRY DIVISION
Brigadier General Judson Kilpatrick

Second Brigade
Brigadier General George A. Custer
1st Michigan Cavalry (Colonel Charles H. Town); 5th Michigan Cavalry (Colonel Russell A. Alger); 6th Michigan Cavalry (Colonel George Gray); 7th Michigan Cavalry (Colonel William D. Mann)

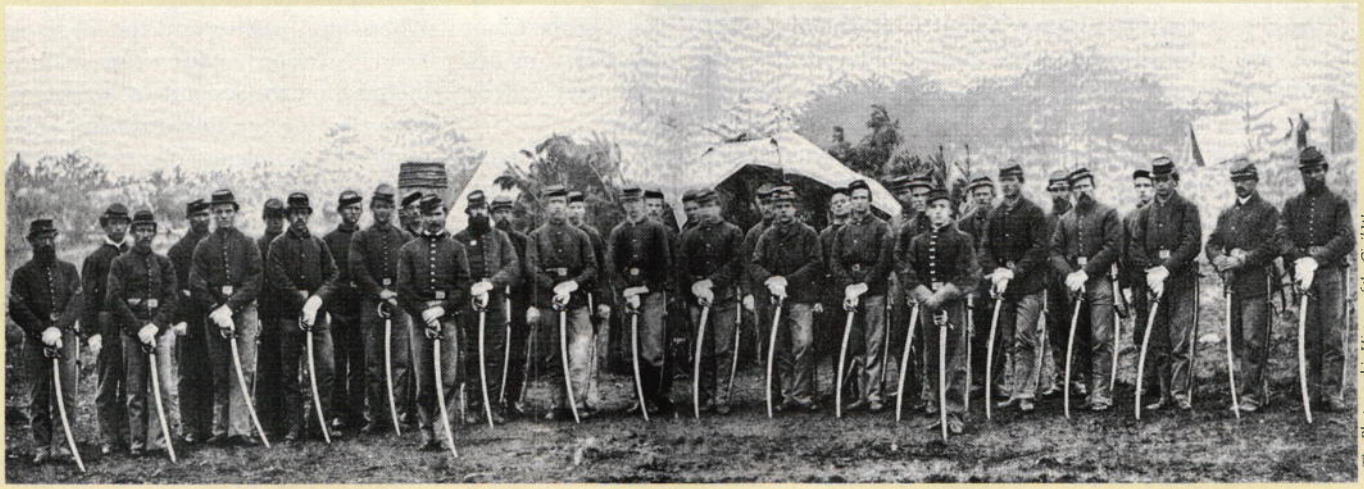
HORSE ARTILLERY
Captain John C. Tidball
Captain James Robertson
Battery E, 1st U.S. Artillery (Lieutenant Alanson M. Randol); Battery M, 2nd U.S. Artillery (Lieutenant Alexander C.M. Pennington)

TOTAL STRENGTH: 3,399 officers and men

TOTAL LOSSES: 293, representing nine percent of the number engaged.

* The 1st Massachusetts Cavalry was normally part of McIntosh's brigade. However, as a result of severe losses taken at the Battle of Aldie on June 17, 1863, it was detached and was serving as headquarters escort for the VI Corps. The 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry likewise had been detached and was serving with the II Corps.

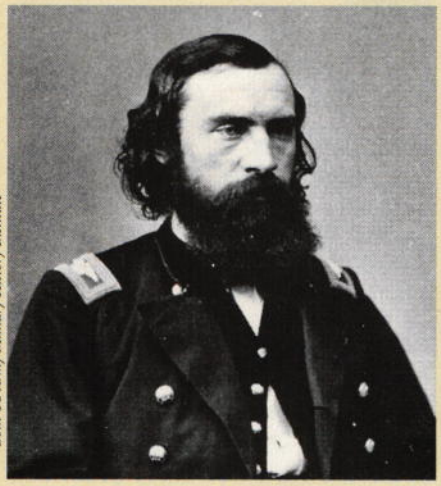
Some members of Lieutenant Colonel Edward S. Jones' 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry posed for the camera about seven months after the battle.



The Photographic History of the Civil War

Ferry's valor impressed all who saw him. Vincent Witcher, for one, never forgot Ferry's courage and cool demeanor, and the sight of Ferry's death at the hands of one of his Virginians lingered with him for the rest of his life.

Chambliss' men pulled back as Randol's and Pennington's gunners rained shells on them. Witcher's troopers had exhausted their meager supply of ammunition, forcing them to abandon the fence line and to fall all the way back to the woods along Cress Ridge. Seeing the Confederates retreating, the Federals immediately advanced and cleared the Rummel farm buildings of any remaining enemy soldiers, exposing the Confederates holding Cress Ridge to the possibility of being captured. They also threatened to split Stuart's line of battle in two. A lull fell across the battlefield as the two sides consolidated their lines and waited for the next move in their intricate chess game.



Both US Army Military History Institute

Colonel Stephen D. Mann, 7th Michigan Cavalry (left), and Colonel Charles Town, 1st Michigan Cavalry.

When the dismounted phase of the fighting bogged down, Stuart thought he saw an opportunity for a mounted attack. If Chambliss' men charged, they would distract the Federals along Little's Run, permitting Hampton and Fitz Lee to pitch into their exposed and vulnerable flank. They would drive a wedge between McIntosh's line along the Low Dutch Road, and they would also encircle McIntosh's troopers and Alger's Wolverines near the Rummel farm buildings. If the plan succeeded, it would open the way to the Low Dutch Road and the rear of the Army of the Potomac's line. This was an excellent plan, but for one thing—it did not account for the presence of the 1st and 7th Michigan Cavalry at the junction of the Hanover and Low Dutch roads.

Stuart ordered Fitz Lee's 1st Virginia Cavalry to make a mounted charge between the two Federal lines. McIntosh instantly recognized the threat and galloped over to the Lott farm buildings, looking for his reserve, the 1st Maryland Cavalry. To his chagrin, McIntosh learned that General Gregg had moved the regiment to the right to cover the intersection of the Hanover and Low Dutch roads. Major Weber of the 6th Michigan also formed his men, crying, "Men, be ready. We shall have to charge that line!" However, Custer's 7th Michigan, which had been ordered to replace the 1st Maryland, was forming up to come onto the field.

Gregg rode over to Colonel William D. Mann, the commander of the 7th Michigan, and ordered the charge. Custer fell in at the head of the 7th Michigan and, with his saber drawn and pointing toward the enemy, the Wolverines dashed across the fields, aiming to meet the Virginians head on. As the 7th Michigan neared the head of the Confederate line, Custer wheeled in his saddle, took off his hat, and yelled, "Come on, you Wolverines!"

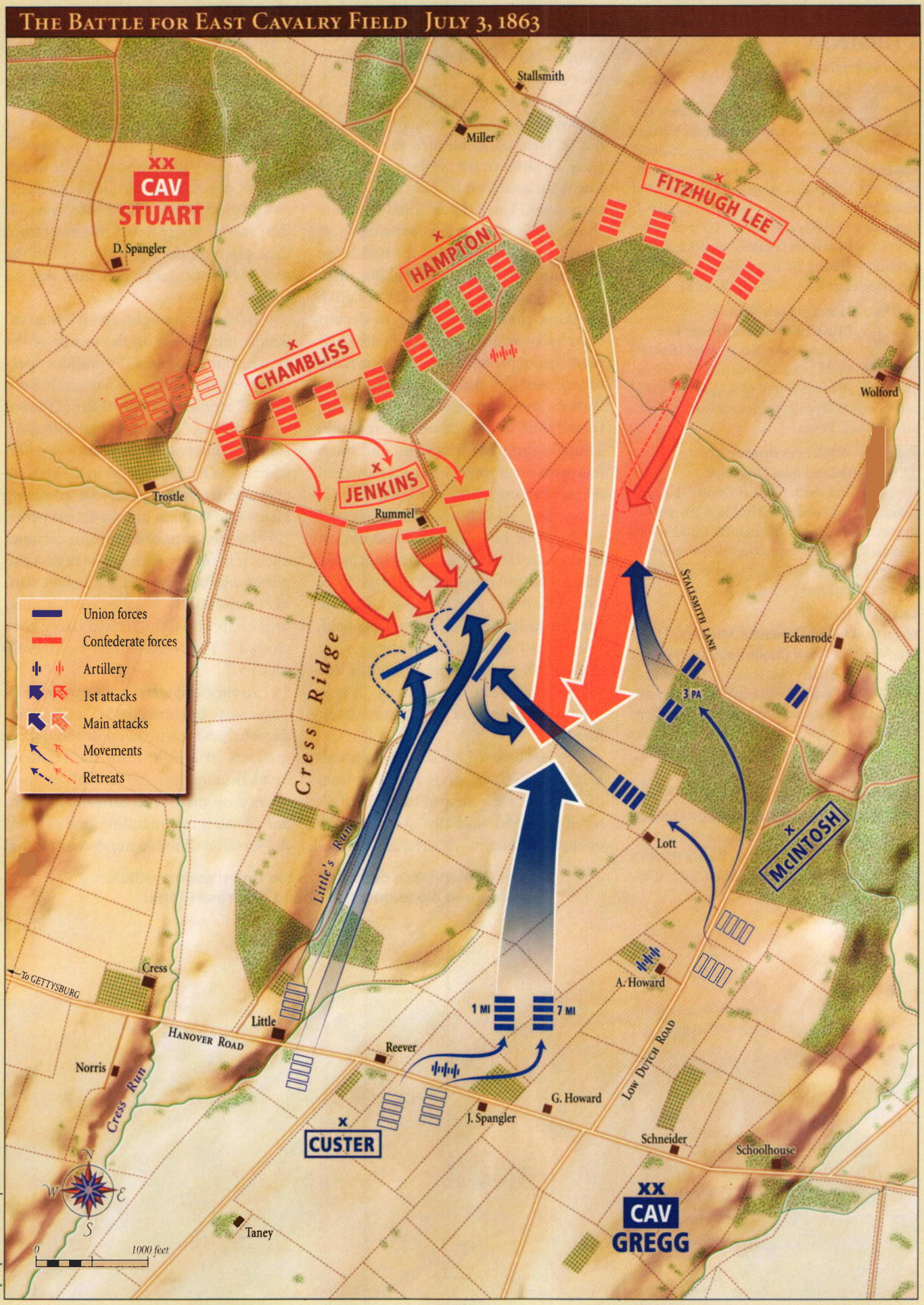
"There was no check to the charge," observed Captain James H. Kidd of the 6th Michigan. "The squadrons kept in good form. Every man yelled at the top of his voice until the regiment had gone, perhaps, five or six hundred yards straight toward the Confederate batteries." Without Witcher's men there to pin them down, the dismounted men of the 5th Michigan wheeled and opened on the flank of the charging Virginians.[24]

As the 1st Virginia trotted across the farm fields, the two squadrons of the 3rd Pennsylvania stationed near the Lott farmhouse also raked them with volleys, forcing the Virginians to veer toward a sturdy fence running eastward from Little's Run. The Wolverines and the 1st Virginia crashed into each other at the fence. "The ground over which we had to pass was very unfavorable for the maneuvering of cavalry, but despite all obstacles this regiment advanced boldly to the assault," praised Custer in his report, "which was executed in splendid style, the enemy being driven from field to field, until our advance reached a high and unbroken fence, behind which the enemy was strongly posted. Nothing daunted, Colonel Mann, followed by the main body of his regiment, bravely rode up to the fence and discharged their revolvers in the very face of the foe." Major Trowbridge watched in "astonishment and distress" as the 7th Michigan, "apparently without any attempt to change direction, dash[ed] itself upon a high staked and railed fence, squadron after squadron breaking upon the struggling mass in front, like the waves of the sea upon a rocky shore, until all were mixed in one confused and tangled mess."[25]

The following squadrons crashed into the mass struggling to get over the fence, throwing the Wolverines "into a state of indescribable confusion, though the rear troops, without order or orders, formed left and right into line along the fence, and pluckily began firing across it into the faces of the Confederates." The 7th Michigan lost its regimental colors in the melee.[26]

Hampton sent reinforcements forward, driving the 7th Michigan away from the fence. The grayclad troopers crossed the wall and began shoving the Wolverines back toward the Hanover Road. "No troops could have maintained this position; the Seventh was, therefore, compelled to retire, followed by twice the number of the enemy," observed Custer. "We huddled together and the [enemy] was pouring a destructive fire among us. No wonder that we ran," observed a Wolverine.[27]

With Witcher's men raining severe flank fire on their exposed position along the fence, the men of the 7th Michigan broke and ran back toward their original position at the road junction. Colonel McIntosh tried to rally the fleeing Michi-


THE BATTLE FOR EAST CAVALRY FIELD JULY 3, 1863
Stallsmith
Miller
XX CAV STUART
D. Spangler
HAMPTON
FITZHUGH LEE
CHAMBLISS
JENKINS
Trostle
Rummel
Wolford
Union forces
Confederate forces
Artillery
1st attacks
Main attacks
Movements
Retreats
Cress Ridge
Little's Run
Stallsmith Lane
Eckenrode
3 PA
Lott
McINTOSH
To GETTYSBURG
Cress
Little
Hanover Road
Reever
Norris
Cress Run
1 MI
7 MI
A. Howard
Low Dutch Road
G. Howard
J. Spangler
CUSTER
Schneider
Schoolhouse
XX CAV GREGG
Taney
N
W
E
S
0
1000 feet
Map Graphics © D.L.F Group 2003

ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Major General J. E. B. Stuart

Hampton's Brigade
Brigadier General Wade Hampton (wounded), **Colonel Laurence S. Baker**
1st North Carolina Cavalry (Colonel Laurence S. Baker); 1st South Carolina Cavalry (detachment) (Lieutenant Colonel John D. Twiggs); 2nd South Carolina Cavalry (Major Thomas J. Lipscomb); Cobb's Legion Cavalry (Colonel Pierce M. B. Young); Jeff Davis Legion Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel J. Frederick Waring); Phillips' Legion Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel William W. Rich)

Fitzhugh Lee's Brigade
Brigadier General Fitzhugh Lee
1st Virginia Cavalry (Colonel James H. Drake); 2nd Virginia Cavalry (Colonel Thomas T. Munford); 3rd Virginia Cavalry (Colonel Thomas H. Owen); 5th Virginia Cavalry (Colonel Thomas L. Rosser)

W.H.F. Lee's Brigade
Colonel John Chambliss
2nd North Carolina Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel William H. F. Payne); 9th Virginia Cavalry (Colonel Richard L. T. Beale); 10th Virginia Cavalry (10 companies) (Major Robert A. Caskie); 13th Virginia Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel Jefferson C. Phillips)

Jenkins' Brigade
Lieutenant Colonel Vincent A. Witcher
14th Virginia Cavalry (Major Benjamin F. Eakle); 16th Virginia Cavalry (Major James H. Nounnan); 17th Virginia Cavalry (Colonel William H. French); 34th Battalion Virginia Cavalry (Lieutenant Colonel Vincent A. Witcher); 36th Battalion Virginia Cavalry (Major James W. Sweeney)

Horse Artillery Battalion
Major Robert Beckham
1st Stuart Horse Artillery (Captain James Breathed); 2nd Stuart Horse Artillery (Captain William M. McGregor); 2nd Baltimore Light Battery (Captain William H. Griffin); Lynchburg Beauregards (Captain Marcellus N. Moorman)

ganders. He rode in their midst, crying out, "For God's sake, men, if you are ever going to stand, stand now, for you are on your own free soil!"[28]

The raking flank fire of the 5th and 6th Michigan, the 3rd Pennsylvania, and the 1st New Jersey blunted the Confederate counterattack and gave the 7th Michigan a chance to rally and reform their lines. Their determined countercharge pushed the Confederate troopers back past the Rummel farm buildings, right into the muzzles of Jenkins' men. One of Stuart's staff officers recalled: "Jenkins' men had nothing to do but blaze away as the Blue Cloud passed by them, being protected by the stone fence or wall, and they did great execution; the Yankees seemed to much occupied with their front to care about their flank. Though hundreds passed us, and but a few yards off at times, I did not see a man fire at us or even look our way."[29]

Stuart saw that a limited attack by a fragment of his command had almost reached the Hanover Road. He concluded that an all-out assault by a larger force would shatter Gregg's thin line and drive the Yankee horse soldiers from the field. "Severe as has been the fighting, as yet no advantage has been gained by the Rebels," observed General Gregg, "& now the time has arrived for a supreme effort."[30]

Stuart ordered Lee's and Hampton's brigades to charge. Soon, the long lines of Confederates emerged from the shelter of the woods and moved out into the open, their lines neatly dressed, their sabers glinting in the afternoon sun. "In these charges, the impetuosity of those gallant fellows, after two weeks of hard marching and hard fighting on short rations, was not only extraordinary, but irresistible," claimed a proud Jeb Stuart. "It was the moment for which cavalry wait all their lives—the opportunity which seldom comes—that vanishes like shadows on glass," observed a Confederate. "If the Federal cavalry were to be swept from their place on the right, the road to the rear of their center gained, now was the time."[31]

It was quite a sight, and it left an indelible impression on the minds of the Yankee horse soldiers. "A grander spectacle than their advance has rarely been beheld," recalled Captain Miller of the 3rd Pennsylvania. "They marched with well-aligned fronts and steady reins. Their polished saber blades dazzled in the sun. All eyes turned upon them." An admiring Lieutenant William Brooke-Rawle wrote, "In close columns of squadrons, advancing as if in review, with sabers drawn and glistening like silver in the bright sunlight—the spectacle called forth a murmur of appreciation." David Gregg concluded, "This onset must be bravely met."[32]

As the Confederate column made its way across the farm fields, "yelling like demons," and reached a point about three quarters of a mile from the Hanover Road, Pennington's and Randol's gunners opened on them with canister. Lieutenant Chester, commanding one of Randol's sections, fired so much canister that

H.C. Bispham's depiction of the Union counterattack and close-quarter fighting on Cress Ridge.

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall

it had to be brought up "by the armful." Their accurate fire gouged gaps in the ranks of the Southern horse soldiers, but on they came, their rear ranks moving up and filling the gaps in the line. "Their line was almost perfect until they reached the fence that our boys had held so long," recalled a Wolverine who marveled at the precision of the Confederate advance.[33]

David Gregg realized that the moment of crisis had arrived. He had only one regiment in reserve, the 1st Michigan Cavalry, but he realized that he would have to commit them to the fight or risk losing the critical crossroads. He ordered the 1st Michigan, commanded by Colonel Charles H. Town, to draw sabers and charge. Town was suffering terribly from advanced tuberculosis, but even though dying, he had refused to leave the army. Town girded himself to make the charge.

With his voice little more than a raspy whisper, Town cried, "Draw—saber! Remember men; be steady, be calm, be firm! Think of Michigan! Forward—March!" The 1st Michigan moved out at a trot, their sabers drawn and their regimental guidon snapping in the breeze. George Custer dashed to the head of the column and declared, "Colonel Town, the Seventh Cavalry has broke; I shall have to ask you to charge the Rebels." "Riding at the head of the 1st Michigan was Gen. Geo. A. Custer, with drawn saber, as beautiful as the eye ever gazed upon," recalled one of Gregg's admiring horsemen.[34]

The opposing columns gained momentum as they thundered across the open fields. "The gait increased; the charge sounded; every muscle and nerve strung to its utmost tension, every man yelling like a fiend, as the forces drew near each other." The Federals could hear Southern officers encouraging their men, yelling, "Keep to your sabers, men, keep to your sabers!"[35]

Dismounted Federal cavalrymen opened up on the flanks of the Southern horsemen dashing across the fields, their compact mass offering an inviting target. The accurate fire of the Federal batteries staggered the Confederate charge, causing some to turn and others to fan out to the right and left to escape the canister fire. The Northern gunners maintained a galling fire as the two opposing lines of horse soldiers galloped across the farm fields. Stuart and his adjutant, Major Henry B. McClellan, rode out to get a better view, and incoming artillery shells whistled over their heads on their way toward the Confederate guns along Cress Ridge. The Southern gunners attempted to respond, but defective ammunition caused many shells to detonate prematurely. When one friendly shell exploded near Stuart, an alarmed McClellan implored the Southern cavalry commander to fall back to a safer position. "Major McClellan," snapped Stuart, "you know your duty. If I fall, report to the next officer in command." Stuart remained in place, intently watching his grayclad ranks speed across the fields.[36]

US Army Military History Institute

History of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry in the American Civil War

Captain William E. Miller (left), 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry, recipient of the Medal of Honor for his valor, and Lieutenant William Brooke-Rawle, 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry.

Just then, one of Pennington's section commanders decided that things were getting a bit too hot for his comfort and decided to withdraw. He ordered his men to limber up. Pennington countermanded the order, instructing the gunners to give the Southerners a blast of double canister. "This iron hail storm was more than they could stand," recounted Lieutenant Samuel Harris of the 5th Michigan Cavalry. The Confederates veered off to the right, directly into the path of the charging men of the 1st Michigan. A captured Rebel officer later told Pennington's gunners that "he never saw better artillery practice and that we knocked their battery all to pieces."[37]

The grayclad horsemen came within seventy-five yards of Chester's advanced guns. As the Yankee troopers fell back, the gunners "shouted at the top of our voice for them to divide and fall back on the flanks of our battery, but they did not heed us until they got nearly up to the muzzle of our guns, when it was almost too late for us to do anything as the enemy were upon us." While the Confederates were still nearly one thousand yards away, Gregg sent a staff officer over to Chester, who said, "The General says withdraw your guns." But by then it was too late for Chester to withdraw, as doing so would have led to the capture or destruction of his guns. Chester was "not in a cheerful humor," and proclaimed, "Tell the General to go to hell!" Chester was never censured for his refusal to obey General Gregg's orders. His heroic stand demonstrated he had made the right decision.[38]

Seeing the Confederates hesitate, and with the Wolverines only a few hundred feet away from the charging Rebels, Custer raised his saber above his head, turned in the saddle, and cried out again, "Come on, you Wolverines!" The Boy General cut an impressive figure as he dashed across the open fields at the head of his troopers. "His long, straight saber is gleaming in the sunshine," observed a Michigan horse soldier. "He is bareheaded and glorious. His yellow locks of hair are flying like a battle flag." The opposing forces crashed together thunderously. "The First Michigan struck the Rebels on their left flank," noted Lieutenant Sam Harris of the 5th Michigan, "about in the middle and actually went clear through them, cutting them in two parts. The saber was all they used." The charge of the Wolverines shoved the grayclad horse soldiers aside, bunching them up so that they could do little but try to defend themselves from the savage attack.[39]

"Like the falling of timber, so sudden and violent that many of the horses were turned end over end and crushed their riders beneath them," observed Captain Miller from his vantage point in the Lott woods. "The clashing of sabers, the firing of pistols, the demands for surrender and cries of the combatants now filled the air." Men on both sides remembered it as "without doubt ...the most gallant cavalry charge made during the war." The remaining Federal forces watched the savage mounted melee unfold before them. "For many minutes the fight with sabre and pistol raged most furiously. Neither side seemed willing to give way," recalled Stuart's staff officer, Major McClellan. "The two hostile columns tilt together, with furious clashing of sabers, intermingled with the popping of pistols," recalled a South Carolinian, "horses and riders lock together in the dread melee, friend and foe fall and are crushed beneath the angry tread. The lines of each party are swinging to and fro, backwards and forwards."[40]

"We advanced at the charge with drawn sabers as the enemy did the same toward us," recalled a Virginian. "We met near the center of that field where sabre met sabre and pistol shots followed in quick succession. Because we tried to ride the enemy down, the individual encounters were often decided by the weight and strength of the animals. The battle grew hotter and hotter, horses and men were overthrown or shot and many were killed and wounded." Another Virginian recollected that "the field is soon alive with moving squadrons—here a group retiring in disorder—there a mass mixed up in hand to hand conflict; horses rearing, swords uplifted, smoke and dust."[41]

As the melee raged, the Federals saw an opportunity unfold. The Federal line along Little's Run wheeled and raked the Confederate right flank with volley after volley. Colonel McIntosh gathered his staff officers, headquarters escort, and whatever other miscellaneous men could be found, "consulted my officers as to the propriety of a charge, and they agreed that an effort was demanded of us." McIntosh and his gallant little band charged into the right front of the Confederate line.[42]

As the action unfolded in front of him, Captain Miller itched to pitch into the fray. The left flank of Hampton and Fitz Lee was passing directly in front of his position, and the Confederates did not know that his little force was even there. "Lieutenant Brooke of my squadron stood on a knoll in front of my command where we had an elegant view of all that was going on," wrote the captain. "We soon discovered that Stuart was too heavy for Custer, and unless some diversion was made all would be lost." Miller turned to his next ranking officer, Lieutenant Brooke-Rawle, and said, "I have been ordered to hold this position, but if you will back me up in case I am court-martialed for disobedience, I will order a charge."[43]

Brooke-Rawle readily agreed. Miller ordered his command to fire a volley and then, shouting to his men to draw their sabers, led them in a pell-mell mounted charge that pierced the Confederate column, cutting off nearly a third of it, and driving it back toward Cress Ridge. "Miller swept like a thunderbolt from the right and struck the column about the middle and cut his way clear through, cutting off a portion and driving it back as far as Rummel's barn, although himself wounded."[44]

Miller's impetuous charge passed all the way through the Confederates, almost to the Little's Run line, which blazed with carbine fire. "Breathed's battery, unsupported, was only one hundred yards away, but my men were so disabled and scattered that they were unable to take it back," he wrote. A Confederate trooper slashed at him at the entrance to the Rummel wagon shed, snapping the captain's saber in two. Miller threw away the hilt, drew his pistol, and captured the man. Miller reformed his line, and then his squadron cut its way back through the Confederates again, cutting off a portion of Fitz Lee's brigade before reaching the safety of the Lott woods once more. Instead of a court-martial, Miller received a Medal of Honor.[45]

Captain Hampton S. Thomas, one of McIntosh's staff officers, realized that the Pennsylvanians needed help. Thomas found Captain James H. Hart's squadron of the 1st New Jersey, restlessly waiting for orders along the Low Dutch Road. The Jerseymen drove off the Confederates near the Lott house, and then pitched into the fighting in front of them. "In the melee, near the colors, was an officer of high rank, and the two headed the squadron for that part of the fight." They drew sabers and charged into the Confederate left flank, just south of Miller's charge.

John Esten Cooke, *"The Wearing of Gray"*

Surrounded by the enemy, it seemed inevitable that Wade Hampton would be captured or killed.

Several of the New Jersey troopers closed in on Wade Hampton and engaged him in a saber duel.[46] Mounted on his favorite charger, Butler, the big South Carolinian had led his brigade forward at the gallop, crying, "Charge them, my brave boys, charge them!" Hampton had ridden over to try to extricate the 1st North Carolina and the Jeff Davis Legion when he drew the attention of several Federals. Hemmed in against a fence, he cut one down with his saber, and dispatched another with his pistol. Two Mississippians of the Jeff Davis Legion, Privates Jordan Moore and John Dunlap, tried to rescue the brigade commander, but were cut from the saddle by Yankee sabers. A third attacker fell to Hampton's

pistol as the general fought on alone. Hampton had suffered a gash to his scalp in the melee at Hunterstown the afternoon before, and the cut opened again as he took a sabre blow from a Yankee during the struggle near the fence.

Another Yankee trooper rode up behind Hampton and shot him in the side. "While he parried manfully the blows being rained on his devoted head," recorded a Georgian of Cobb's Legion, "he turned his head with those snapping eyes flashing upon the man who shot him and said, 'You dastardly coward—shoot a man from the rear!'"[47] Blood-soaked, and with his vision blurred, Hampton rode to the aid of another Southern trooper. The general fenced with a Yankee, who scored with another stroke to Hampton's head. Hampton crashed his heavy sword down on his adversary with all his considerable strength, cleaving his skull all the way down to the chin.

Northern troopers surged toward the injured South Carolinian, trapping him against the fence. His capture or death seemed inevitable, but Hampton fought on. Fortunately for him, some of his men spotted his predicament and came to his aid. Sergeant Nat Price of the 1st North Carolina killed a man who had aimed a blow at the general's head. Aided by a Georgian of the Cobb Legion, Price hacked open a narrow corridor for Hampton's escape. "General, general, they are too many for us," cried the frantic Price. "For God's sake, leap your horse over the fence; I'll die before they have you." As the Federals formed to charge him again, Hampton spurred Butler and soared over the fence to safety as Sergeant Price shot the nearest of the enemy and leaped to safety just behind the injured general. Covered with blood and badly wounded, Hampton left the field.[48] He would not return to duty until September.

With Yankees in their front and Yankee forces of unknown strength crashing into their flanks, the Confederate charge lost its momentum. The Southerners never even reached the Union batteries before they were forced to retreat all the way to Cress Ridge and the woods beyond the barn. Jeb Stuart himself rallied elements of the 1st Virginia Cavalry as it retreated, and the regiment made a countercharge that halted the Federal pursuit. But the Virginians could not hold their new position long. "For a moment, but only a moment, that long, heavy column stood its ground; then, unable to withstand the impetuosity of our attack, it gave way in a disorderly rout, leaving cast numbers of dead and wounded in our possession" boasted Custer, "while the First, being masters of the field, had the proud satisfaction of seeing the much-vaunted chivalry, led by their favorite commander, seek safety in headlong flight."[49]

The Confederates pulled back to the north of the Rummel barn and formed a thin skirmish line, leaving the rest of the field in the hands of the victorious Yankee troopers. The two sides maintained skirmish and small arms fire until darkness fell, when Stuart withdrew to the main Confederate line to the west of Gettysburg. Custer rejoined Kilpatrick on the Federal left flank, leaving Gregg's two brigades to maintain their lonely vigil at the critical crossroads of the Hanover and Low Dutch roads.

After three long hours the fight for East Cavalry Field had ended with David Gregg's men still stubbornly in place. Most of the fighting was done dismounted, with the mounted phase ending quickly and violently. The 1st Michigan had taken heavy casualties in making its gallant charge. "Charging in close column, the troopers using the saber only, the host of rebel myrimonds [myrmidons] were immediately swept from the field," exulted Colonel Town in his after-action report. "Never before in the history of this war has one regiment of National cavalry met an entire brigade of Confederate cavalry...in open field—in a charge and defeated them. By the blessing of God, they were not only defeated, but they were driven from the field in great confusion, and this regiment held the ground until ordered to a new position."[50]

The veterans of the 1st Michigan were rightly proud of their performance that day. They had sealed their place in history. "I cannot find language to express my high appreciation of the gallantry and daring displayed by the officers and men of the First Michigan cavalry," wrote Custer. "They advanced to the charge of a vastly superior force with as much order and precision as if going upon parade; and I challenge the annals of warfare to produce a more brilliant or successful charge of cavalry than the one just recounted."[51]

LONG HISTORY OF PRESERVATION AT EAST CAVALRY FIELD

By Jim Campi

During the early years of preservation at Gettysburg, East Cavalry Field was a neglected stepchild, rarely getting the attention received by the locations of infantry combat. Not until the 1880s was any serious attempt made to protect the scene of cavalry fighting on July 3. By 1933, only forty acres of the battlefield were preserved.

Fortunately, East Cavalry Field has generated far more interest in recent decades. Both the Friends of National Parks at Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association have purchased historic property at the site. In addition, The Conservation Fund has donated more than 312 acres of East Cavalry Field to the National Park Service (NPS). Today, 518 acres of hallowed ground at East Cavalry Field are protected by NPS.

However, as with most Civil War battlefields throughout the country, much more needs to be done. The Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) has begun a fundraising campaign to rescue a further forty-five acres of historic land on East Cavalry Battlefield. According to Eric Wittenberg the site served as a staging area for the 1st and 7th Michigan Cavalry during the July 3 clash.

CWPT's goal is to raise $112,000 to purchase the property, known locally as the Shea Tract. During the war, the site was part of the Solomon Tipton Farm. Famous early Gettysburg photographer William H. Tipton was Solomon's son and lived on the property.

To save the property, CWPT is working closely with the Land Conservancy of Adams County, The Conservation Fund, and other interested parties. These groups intend to seek federal matching money available through the Farmland Protection Program (FPP) and the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program. Last year, CWPT and the Land Conservancy of Adams County used FPP funding to protect 114 acres at Fairfield Battlefield, located west of Gettysburg. □

Gregg's superbly trained veterans had demonstrated great initiative during the mounted melee. The many spontaneous small unit actions, such as Captain Miller's charge, showed that the Federal horsemen had learned to act with initiative. These flanking attacks and the accurate flanking fire of the Northern gunners took much of the steam out of the Confederate juggernaut and inflicted a substantial toll on the charging Southerners. When Miller's charge crashed into their flank, Fitz Lee's surprised Virginians believed that a much larger force had hit them, and they broke and ran. The experience and training of these Northern horse soldiers paid dividends that long afternoon, and Gregg had every right to be proud of their performance.

Both sides took heavy casualties during the action. Between McIntosh's brigade and Custer's Wolverines, the Yankee horse soldiers reported 254 casualties, 219 of them in Custer's Michigan Brigade and the bulk of these in the 1st and 7th Michigan. Stuart reported sixteen killed, ninety-three wounded, and fifty-five missing for losses of 164. However, this figure does not include Witcher's men. The next morning, Witcher could only muster ninety-six of out of 332 men, for losses of 236 in the 34th Battalion alone. An officer of the 14th Virginia estimated that the contingents of the 14th and 16th Virginia suffered twenty-five percent losses, meaning that Witcher's command took more than three hundred casualties in their ferocious firefight with Alger's 5th Michigan. In short, Gregg inflicted more than four hundred fifty casualties on Stuart's vaunted cavalry.

The battlefield was a dreadful place, with dead and wounded men and horses mingled promiscuously. When he returned to his land that night, John Rummel found the bodies of a private of the 3rd Pennsylvania and a Confederate, who had fought on horseback, and who had cut each other down with their sabers and lay with their feet together, their heads in opposite directions, their blood-stained sabers still clutched tightly in death. At another point, Rummel found a Virginian and another trooper of the 3rd Pennsylvania, who had fought mounted with their sabers until they finally clinched and their horses ran out from under them. Their heads and shoulders were severely slashed, and when found, their fingers, "though stiff in death, were so firmly embedded in each other's flesh that they could not be removed without the aid of force." Rummel found thirty dead horses on his property alone.[52]

Gregg's determined defense of East Cavalry Field screened the Army of the Potomac's right flank and also protected the Federal rear from attack. Gregg's superb tactics and masterful use of the terrain prevented Jeb Stuart and his horsemen from ambushing and destroying the Northern mounted forces operating on the right flank. Had Stuart's ambush succeeded, the Confederate horse could have sortied into the rear of the Army of the Potomac, where they might have wreaked havoc.

The Rummel Farm buildings from the perspective of the 5th Michigan Cavalry. *Courtesy J. David Petruzzi*

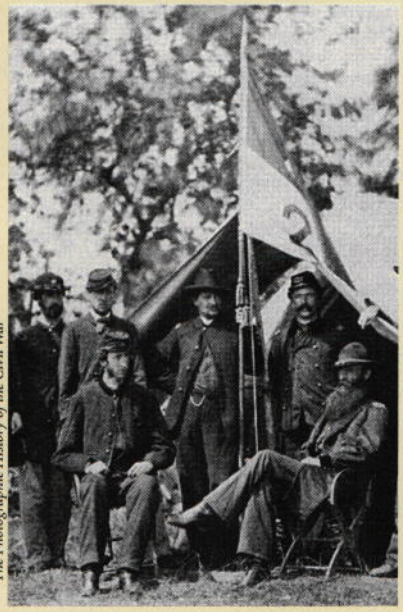
ERIC J. WITTENBERG is a cavalry historian who lives in Columbus, Ohio. His first book, *Gettysburg's Forgotten Cavalry Actions*, was named the winner of the 1998 Bachelder-Coddington Literary Award as that year's best new work interpreting the Battle of Gettysburg. This article is based on a chapter in his *Protecting the Flank: The Battles for Brinkerhoff's Ridge and East Cavalry Field, Battle of Gettysburg, July 2-3, 1863* (Ironclad Publishing, 2002)

NOTES:

1. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 volumes in 3 series (Washington, D.C., 1889), Series 1, Vol. 27, Part 2, pp. 696-97 (hereinafter, "*O.R.*" All further references are to Series 1).
2. Richard L.T. Beale, *History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry in the War Between the States* (Richmond, 1899), p. 86.
3. Colonel Milton Ferguson, the brigade's senior colonel, was nominally in command of the brigade. However, Ferguson was not with Stuart that day. Along with a contingent of his brigade, Ferguson spent July 3 guarding Federal prisoners of war captured during the first day's fighting at Gettysburg. He would play no role in the fighting on the East Cavalry Field.
4. *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 2, p. 699.
5. Jerry F. Meyers, "East Cavalry Field at Gettysburg," unpublished manuscript, 3.
6. *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 3, p. 502.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, Part 1, p. 956.
9. *O.R.* Vol 27, Part 2, p. 697.
10. Vincent Witcher to Henry B. McClellan, March 16, 1886, included in David L. and Audrey J. Ladd, eds., *The Bachelder Papers*, 3 vols. (Dayton, Ohio, 1994), 2:1229; Fitzhugh Lee to Henry B. McClellan, May 7, 1886, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1376. This stone wall ran along the course of the modern park road cut through East Cavalry Field. *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 2, p. 698; Henry B. McClellan, *The Life and Campaigns of Major-General J.E.B. Stuart* (Boston, 1883), pp. 338-39.
11. James H. Kidd, *Personal Recollections of a Cavalryman in Custer's Michigan Brigade* (Ionia, Mi., 1908), p. 141; Jeffry D. Wert, *Gettysburg: Day Three* (New York, 2001), p. 264.
12. Eric J. Wittenberg, ed., *At Custer's Side: The Civil War Writings of James Harvey Kidd* (Kent, Ohio, 2001), p. 130.
13. *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 1, p. 956.
14. *Philadelphia North American*, June 29, 1913; *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 1, p. 956; Jay Monaghan, *Custer: The Life of General George Armstrong Custer* (Boston, 1959), p. 144.
15. *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 2, p. 697. Witcher claimed that his men had not drawn ammunition for days, which may explain

why his men had only ten rounds that day. Witcher to McClellan, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1229.

16. Henry R. Pyne, *The History of the First New Jersey Cavalry* (Trenton, 1871), pp. 132-33.
17. Hampton S. Thomas to John B. Bachelder, July 1, 1886, *The Bachelder Papers*, 3:1431; William Brooke-Rawle, *History of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry, Sixtieth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, in the American Civil War 1861-1865* (Philadelphia, 1905), p. 258.
18. David M. Gregg, "The Second Cavalry Division of the Army of the Potomac in the Gettysburg Campaign," unpublished manuscript, David M. Gregg Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 15; Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 274;



The Photographic History of the Civil War

Brigadier General David McM. Gregg photographed at Gettysburg with officers and staff.

William E. Miller, "The Cavalry Battle Near Gettysburg," included in Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, eds., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (New York, 1888), 3:402.

19. Samuel Harris, *The Michigan Brigade of Cavalry at the Battle of Gettysburg* (Cass City, Mich., 1894), p. 10; Miller, "The Cavalry Battle Near Gettysburg," 3:403.
20. Kidd, *Personal Recollections*, 146; Scott C. Cole, *34th Battalion Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg, Va., 1993), p. 52.
21. *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 2, p. 698.
22. Vincent A. Witcher to John B. Bachelder, March 19, 1886, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2: pp. 1237-38.
23. Rev. David M. Cooper, *Obituary Discourse on Occasion of the Death of Noah Henry Ferry, Major of the Fifth Michigan Cavalry, Killed at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863* (New York, 1863), p. 23.
24. Kidd, *Personal Recollections*, 149; John B. McIntosh to John B. Bachelder, August 27, 1885, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1123.
25. Wittenberg, *At Custer's Side*, 132; Trowbridge to Bachelder, February 19, 1886, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1207.
26. Kidd, *Personal Recollections*, 149; "To Recover the Flag," *The National Tribune*, March 4, 1897.
27. George G. Briggs to John B. Bachelder, March 26, 1886, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1257; Longacre, *Custer and His Wolverines*, 150.
28. Briggs to Bachelder, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1257-58.
29. Robert J. Trout, ed., *In the Saddle With Stuart: The Story of Frank Smith Robertson of J.E.B. Stuart's Staff* (Gettysburg, Pa., 1998), p. 82.
30. McClellan, *The Life and Campaigns*, 340; Gregg, "Second Cavalry Division," 16.
31. *O.R.*, Vol. 27, Part 2, p. 698; Harbord, "The History of the Cavalry," quoted in Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 319.
32. Miller, "The Cavalry Battle Near Gettysburg," 404; Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 277; Gregg, "Second Cavalry Division," 16.
33. James H. Kidd to his father, July 9, 1863, included in Eric J. Wittenberg, ed., *One of Custer's Wolverines: The Civil War Letters of Brevet Brigadier General James H. Kidd*, 6th Michigan Cavalry (Kent, Ohio, 2000), p. 49; James Chester to William Brooke-Rawle, September 27, 1879, *The Bachelder Papers*, 1:655; Harris, *The Michigan Brigade of Cavalry*, 12-13.
34. John A. Bigelow, "Draw Saber, Charge!", *The National Tribune*, May 27, 1886; Harris, *The Michigan Brigade of Cavalry*, 12-13; Dewitt C. Hagadorn, "The 10th N.Y. Cav.—Porter Guard: The Great Cavalry Battle on the Right at Gettysburg," *The National Tribune*, January 25, 1906.
35. David M. Gilmore, "Cavalry: Its Use and Value as Illustrated by Reference to the Engagements of Kelly's Ford and Gettysburg," Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Minnesota Commandery, *Glimpses of the Nation's Series*, 2nd series, 47; Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 278.
36. Cole, *34th Battalion*, 52.
37. Harris, *The Michigan Brigade of Cavalry*, 15; Frank B. Hamilton to Carle Woodruff, November 14, 1884, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1078.
38. Daniel Townsend diary, Christopher Densmore collection, Getzville, New York, 47; James Chester to Carle A. Woodruff, December 29, 1884, *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1090
39. Harris, *The Michigan Brigade of Cavalry*, 12-13; Gregg, "The Second Cavalry Division," 12; Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 279; Michael Phipps, *"Come On You Wolverines!": Custer at Gettysburg* (Gettysburg, Pa, 1995), p. 47.
40. Miller, "The Cavalry Battle Near Gettysburg," 404; Harris, *The Michigan Brigade of Cavalry*, 14; McClellan, *The Life and Campaigns*, 340; Ulysses R. Brooks, *Stories of the Confederacy* (Columbia, S.C., 1912), p. 176.
41. Garland C. Hudgins and Richard B. Kleese, eds., *Recollections of an Old Dominion Dragoon: The Civil War Experiences of Sgt. Robert S. Hudgins II, Co. B, 3rd Virginia Cavalry* (Orange, Va., 1993), pp. 82-84; Stephens Calhoun Smith, "Personal Reminiscences of Gettysburg," copy in files, Gettysburg National Military Park, 2.
42. McIntosh to Bachelder, 1:653.
43. William E. Miller to his brother, July 7, 1863, William Brooke-Rawle Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Miller, "The Cavalry Battle Near Gettysburg," 404-05.
44. Statement of Captain David M. Gilmore, included in William E. Miller Medal of Honor file, RG 94, Entry No. 496, Box 1391, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
45. Miller, "The Cavalry Battle Near Gettysburg," 404-05; Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 279. Years later, when he visited the battlefield, Mr. Rummel returned the shaft of his saber to Miller. Captain Miller's Medal of Honor citation reads: "At Gettysburg, Pa., July 3, 1863, this officer, then Captain 3d Pennsylvania Cavalry, and commanding a squadron of four troops of his regiment, seeing an opportunity to strike in flank an attacking column of the enemy's cavalry, that was then being charged in front, exceeded his instructions and without orders led a charge of his squadron upon the flank of the enemy, checked his attack, cut off and dispersed the rear of his column."

    Russell A. Alger, who had commanded the 5th Michigan Cavalry during the fight for East Cavalry Field, served as secretary of war during the McKinley Administration. When Miller's Medal of Honor citation was issued in 1897, Alger signed it. Miller Medal of Honor file.
46. Hampton S. Thomas to John B. Bachelder, July 1, 1886, *The Bachelder Papers*, 3:1432; Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 280.
47. Wiley C. Howard, *Sketches of Cobb Legion Cavalry and Some Incidents and Scenes Remembered* (privately published, 1901), pp. 8-9.
48. Brooks, *Stories of the Confederacy*, 175-77.
49. "Statement of Sgt. Elliott G. Fishburne," *The Bachelder Papers*, 2:1286; Wittenberg, *At Custer's Side*, 132.
50. Wittenberg, *At Custer's Side*, 116.
51. *Ibid.*, 132.
52. Brooke-Rawle, *Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 313-14.

LEADERSHIP IMPAIRED?

The Health of Robert E. Lee During the Gettysburg Campaign

CHUCK TEAGUE

It was a moment that Captain James Power Smith would never forget. The day was July 1, 1863, and the young officer was serving on the staff on Major General Richard Ewell, commander of the Second Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. Smith had been ordered to report to the army commander's headquarters and there observed General Robert E. Lee from a distance of a couple dozen feet. Lee sat on his famed iron gray horse and gazed through his glasses toward the Lutheran Seminary just west of the small Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg.

There was an aura about the general that Ewell's aide sensed immediately. Years later Smith would recall the moment, the army commander superb in physique and perfect in health. Such was the man's mystique that for Smith the image was stunning, truly regal. It was an image of manly perfection that became ever more defined in his mind as the decades passed. Indeed, speaking to veterans forty years later, he boldly speculated that such an ideal man as Lee would never have been ill as would a mere mortal![1]

It was, of course, untrue that Lee was beyond the limitations and struggles of lesser men. Yet any weakness on his part was hidden. Lee himself was a proud and private individual, and it was important to the Confederate cause not only that his army be seen as invincible, but that he be regarded as invulnerable. But Lee was human and had his bouts of illness, with which he struggled like anyone else.

In 1849 Lee apparently contracted malaria, a disease that dogged him in later life.[2] Several years later while commandant at West Point, Lee, facing an unspecified but apparently serious illness, somewhat melodramatically confessed to a friend, "my health is failing fast, & if I could get hold of a Dr sensible enough to see it...." Was Lee feeling more than he was revealing? To that same confidant he revealed in 1855 that "I fear my eyes will not hold out much longer."[3] In 1860, while on cavalry service in Texas, Lee struggled with an ailment that hindered the use of his right arm. He identified it as rheumatism, though one biographer has conjectured that the pain may have had cardiovascular origins. In a comment to his wife, Mary, that reveals both a sense of humor and the struggle he faced, he expressed amazement that in that hot climate "a man has energy to be sick."[4]

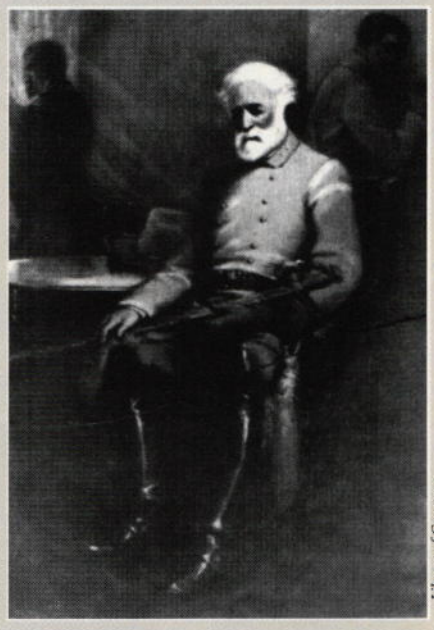
PRELUDE TO GETTYSBURG

Facing the typical struggles of illness and aging were a frustration for one who had been so vigorous when younger. Yet Lee was philosophical, admitting to a daughter-in-law in June 1862 that his heart was not as it once was and "age with its snow has whitened my head, and its frost have stiffened my limbs."[5]

In March 1863 Lee admitted to being shaky. It was a time when he acknowledged to his wife that he had "a very rickety position on his pins." Several days later he described himself "suffering from a heavy cold," but there were hints of something far more serious. "My poor prayers... too feeble I fear to be heard or answered."[6] In the next two weeks he faced the most serious illness in his life thus far. When stabbing pains were felt by Lee in his chest, back, and arms, Dr. Lafayette Guild, medical director of the Army of Northern Virginia, was concerned enough to call in another army surgeon, Dr. S.M. Bemiss, a distinguished physician from New Orleans.

After ten days of acute medical support, Lee found himself recovering, though still suffering. He described the ordeal in an April 8 letter to a relative.

> I... was threatened with some malady which must be dreadful if it resembles its name, but which I have forgotten.... I have not been so very sick, though have suffered a good deal of pain in my chest, back and arms. It came on in paroxysms, was quite sharp and seemed to me to be a mixture of yours [arthritis] and Agnes' [neuralgia] diseases from which I infer they are catching and that I fell I victim while in Richmond. But they have passed off I hope, some fever remains.... The doctors are very attentive and kind and have examined my lungs, my heart, circulation, and I believe



Library of Congress

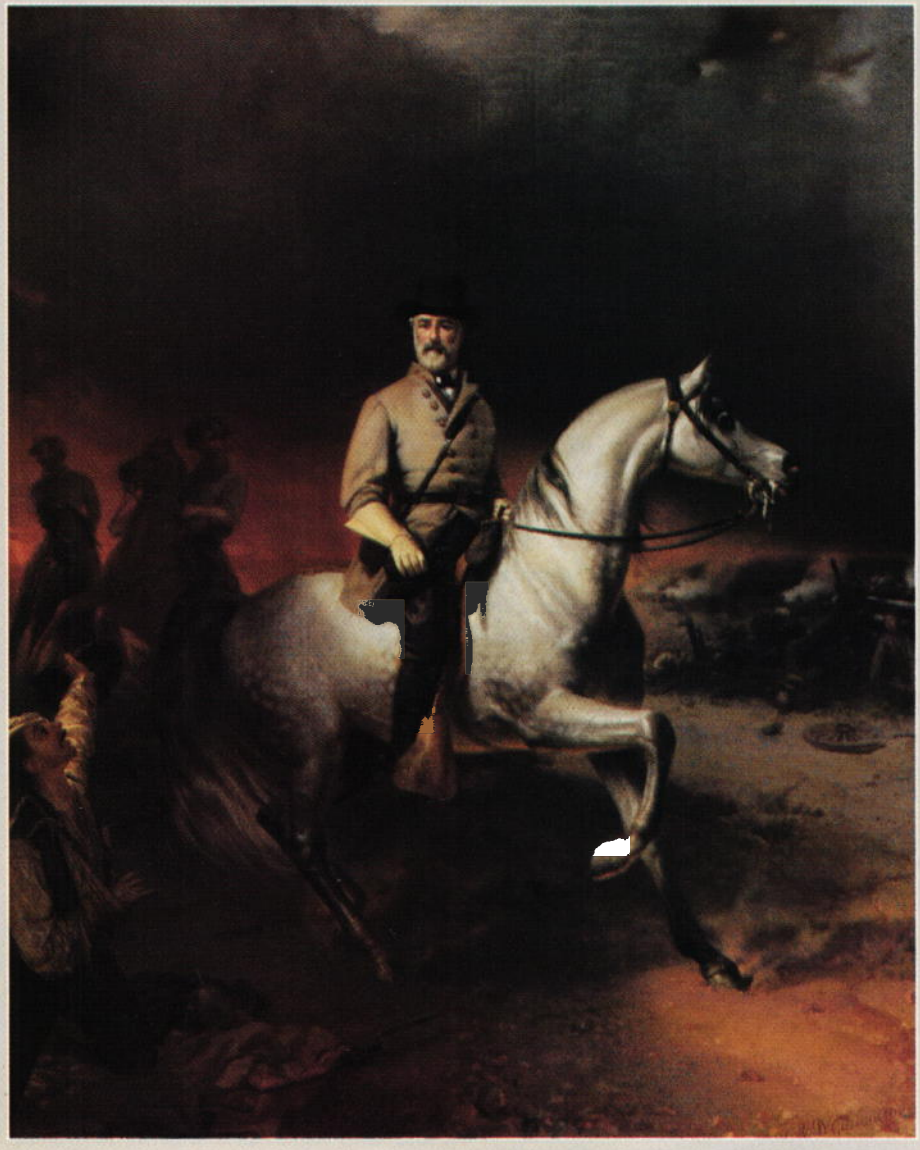
Opposite: Benjamin Franklin Reinhardt's painting of a vigorous and younger Lee. Lee's face was allegedly painted from life in 1861, but the work was not completed until 1862. *Courtesy the R.W. Norton Art Gallery, Shreveport, Louisiana.*

Above: the war had taken its toll—"I am old, and have but a short time to live," declared Lee in the wake of Appomattox. In this unfinished Thomas Nast painting, Lee awaits Grant in anguish in the McLean parlor on April 9, 1865.

> they pronounce me tolerable sound. They have been tapping me all over like an old steam boiler before condemning it.... Mrs. Neal sends me some good soup or something else which is more to my taste than the doctor's pills.... But I think I shall be well soon and in the meantime must suffer....[7]

Physicians who have recently reviewed Lee's reported symptoms have concluded that he was suffering serious cardiovascular problems, surely angina pectoris, and probably a myocardial infarction (heart attack). Such a condition is not only painful, but life-threatening. Yet with rest and medical attention Lee gradually regained his strength. On April 11 he admitted he was still "too weak to stand the knocks & bruises" and again described his uneasiness, saying "my pins are remarkably unstable."[8] The next day he was mostly free of pain and looking forward to rejoining his troops. He was hopeful of fully regaining strength, yet also admitted in an apparent afterthought, "though I fear [it] will not be a very elevated standard."[9] A week later he confessed that, though having returned to camp, he still felt "feeble & worthless and can do but little." Without identifying it by name, he wrote of "my disease" as if he felt it would be his to keep.[10]

Lee's strength returned, and on April 24 he informed his son Custis that "my own health is improving."[11] This was indeed fortuitous, for the Army of the Potomac crossed the Rappahannock just five days later, threatening the rear of the rebel army. The ensuing Battle of Chancellorsville is deemed by many to have been Lee's finest hour.



The portrait above entitled "Gen. Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Chancellorsville, Va." was painted by French-born artist Louis Mathieu Didier Guillaume, and was commissioned by M. Knoedler Co. in New York between 1863-1865. *Courtesy R.W. Norton Gallery, Shreveport, Louisiana.*

ODD CLUES: A HOUSE AND A HORSE

Lee accepted that the life of a soldier involved hardship, and was unwilling to grasp the customary privileges of rank. Said one of his astounded and respectful men, "He was himself a soldier and lived as a soldier in a tent and on the plainest fare...."[12] This was a key way in which Lee endeared himself to his men. In the autumn of 1863 another amazed observer commented, "A large farm-house stands close by, which, in any other army, would have been the general's residence, pro tem.; but as no liberties are allowed to be taken with personal property in Lee's army, he is particular in setting a good example himself...."[13]

Lieutenant Colonel Walter H. Taylor, one of Lee's close aides-de-camp, wrote of "the many arguments always advanced by [Lee] why he should not occupy a house."[14] Mary Lee apparently protested her husband's continuing refusal to accept rooms in the houses of citizens, but he insisted on living in the field in a tent.[15] The rare occasions when Lee took refuge in a house are noteworthy. One was near Fredericksburg in April 1863, when he was stricken with cardiovascular problems, another was at Gettysburg, though the significance of this is usually overlooked.

As Lee rested on the night of July 1, he was not in his cot but lying indoors in bed. Eyewitness accounts include the sergeant responsible for placing guards at the Widow Thompson's home, an aide-de-camp to Lee, and two professors who spoke with the lady immediately after the battle. The house is also identified as Lee's headquarters in an issue of *Harper's Weekly* the following month and in a Philadelphia paper, *Lutheran and Missionary*, in September. It was not until nearly twenty-five years after the battle that a popular discounting of Lee's use of the house began to prevail.

That Lee at Gettysburg dwelt in a house is markedly outside of his observed and expressed pattern of behavior while in the field. In light of what had happened three months earlier, it at the least raises

a suspicion that he was not feeling well in the face of battle.

Another clue may be found in observations of Lee riding his faithful mount, Traveler. Though striking in appearance, he was not an easy ride. One of Lee's sons recounted his own difficulty riding Traveler, describing the horse as having an uneasy gait, a "short, high trot, a buck-trot."[16] When Lee heard the distant thunder of guns during his approach to Gettysburg, he was understandably disturbed. He conferred briefly with General A.P. Hill who, though himself not well, rode from Cashtown to investigate. Lee did not advance immediately with him, but followed at a slower gait.[17] Another eyewitness account at Gettysburg also noted how slowly Lee rode.[18] Was it indicative of anything that Lee kept Traveler to a slow gait at Gettysburg?

A curious but revealing reference is found in a report of the physicians who attended Lee in Lexington in the final chapter of his life. They do not explain how they came about their information, but it was probably from Lee himself. They wrote in a medical journal in October 1870:

> *During the trying campaign of 1863*, General R.E. Lee contracted a severe laryngitis which culminated in a cardial inflammation of a rheumatic character. *After his recovery, he could never exercise on foot, nor ride rapidly, without some pain* in the praecordial region, gradually extending over both sides of the chest, and attended with difficulty of respiration. This trouble, however, had gradually diminished.... During his convalescence, some weeks subsequently [to October 1869], we discovered that *he had pain in the praecordial region during active exercise, and ascertained, for the first time, that such had been the case since 1863 to some extent.*"[19] (Italics added)

Granted, the house and the horse alone offer slim threads, mere circumstantial evidence to indicate any malaise on the part of Lee. But each supports the other in raising the question of possible illness, and the observations of others magnify their import.

Author's Collection

Illustration from *Harper's Weekly*, August 22, 1863, identifying the house of Mary Thompson as "General Lee's Head-Quarters" during the battle.

THE PASSIVE COMMANDING GENERAL

Residing in a house and riding slowly suggest a passivity on the part of one renowned as active, virile, and audaciously aggressive. Historians such as Clifford Dowdey, Jeffrey Wert, and Al Gambone have commented on this passivity at Gettysburg, though others do not share this view.

A recent article in *Gettysburg* magazine by battlefield guide David Callahan catalogues Lee's surprising inactivity. Callahan describes Lee during the battle as tentative, uncertain, and indecisive, noting that at crucial times he remained at his headquarters when on-the-spot command was desperately needed. Callahan's article does not address the question of Lee's health, but his analysis of Lee's passivity surely raises the issue.[20]

Many have attributed Lee's passivity to a professed management style of staying to the rear and allowing his lieutenants to fight the battle. Though Lee did once suggest to a foreign observer that this was his habit, in fact he often intervened actively, even aggressively, in his battles. At Chancellorsville after boldly dividing his own forces he effectively acted as one of his own corps commanders. In at least two battles his soldiers balked at his front-line involvement, crying, "Lee to the rear!" Not so at Gettysburg, even when it appeared that his corps commanders were not carrying out his orders.

LEE OBSERVED

To demonstrate or refute an impairment of Lee's physical health and strength as being a contributing factor to the dynamics of his leadership at Gettysburg, the only options we have are (a) the observations of others, and (b) Lee's own comments about his health. First, what did others observe?

It is unfortunate that we have but one physician's recorded observation describing Lee during the Gettysburg Campaign itself, and this from a doctor who did not examine Marse Robert per se, though he did watch him closely. The physician was Dr. J.L. Suesserott, a leading medical figure in Chambersburg, who had obtained permission to approach the commanding general on behalf of a friend who felt himself aggrieved by the rebel soldiers. The doctor was startled by what he saw in Lee's demeanor.

> "I employed my time in watching the features and movements of the great commander. Never have I seen so much emotion displayed upon a human countenance. With his hand at times clutching his hair, and with contracted brow, he would walk with rapid strides for a few rods and then, as if he

bethought himself of his actions, he would with a sudden jerk produce an entire change in his features and demeanor and cast an inquiring gaze on me, only to be followed in a moment by the same contortions of face and agitation of purpose."[21]

There is no way to know whether the contorted countenance and agitation shown by Lee had a medical cause, but the possibility cannot easily be dismissed.

Major G. Campbell Brown, aide and stepson to Major General Richard Ewell, approached Lee at Cashtown as the battle was unfolding, to inform him of Rodes' and Early's approach to Gettysburg. Lee asked him "with a peculiar searching, almost querulous impatience, which I never saw in him before and but twice afterward, whether Gen. Ewell had heard anything from Gen Stuart."[22] Brown implied that Lee's obvious anxiety stemmed from operational concerns, although that is only a surmise. But such anxiety is also consistent with physical distress. What is rarely pointed out by those who quote Brown is that on one of the two subsequent occasions when Brown observed Lee with that same distressed demeanor, Marse Robert was "sick & riding in an ambulance."

Longstreet after the war mentioned an observation about Lee made to him by Major General Richard H. Anderson, who also conferred with the commanding general about the same time as Brown. Anderson commented that Lee was "very much disturbed and depressed."[23] Another Confederate officer expressed surprise at Lee's appearance immediately prior to the battle, commenting that he looked "much older and somewhat careworn."[24]

In fact, Lee's tension did not ease with Stuart's tardy arrival. One of the most telling descriptions of the commander being ill at ease comes from Major I. Scheibert, of the Prussian Royal Engineers.

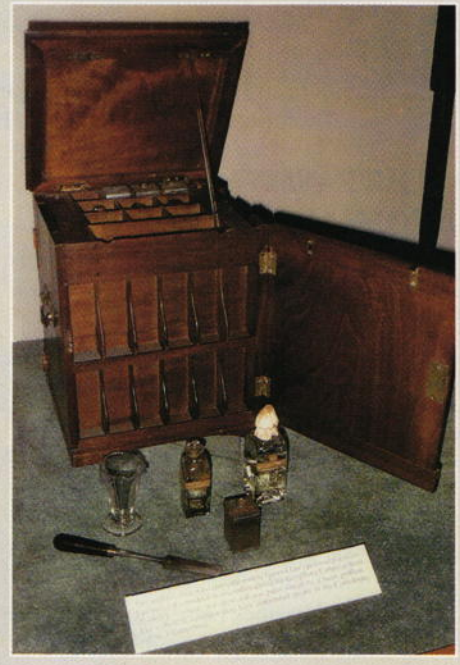
> All who saw him on these two occasions, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, will remember that Lee at Chancellorsville (where I had the honor of being at his side in the brunt of the struggle), was full of calm, quiet, self-possession, feeling that he had done his duty to the utmost, and had brought the army into the most favorable position to defeat the hostile host. *In the days at Gettysburg this quiet self-possessed calmness was wanting. Lee was not at his ease, but was riding to and fro, frequently changing his position, making anxious enquiries here and there, and looking care-worn.* After the shock of battle was over he resumed his accustomed calmness....[25] (Italics added)

Schiebert's description of Lee closely parallels what Dr. Susserott had observed only a few days earlier. The Prussian officer did not know why Lee manifested such stress, but speculated that it was caused by the absence of "Stonewall" Jackson.

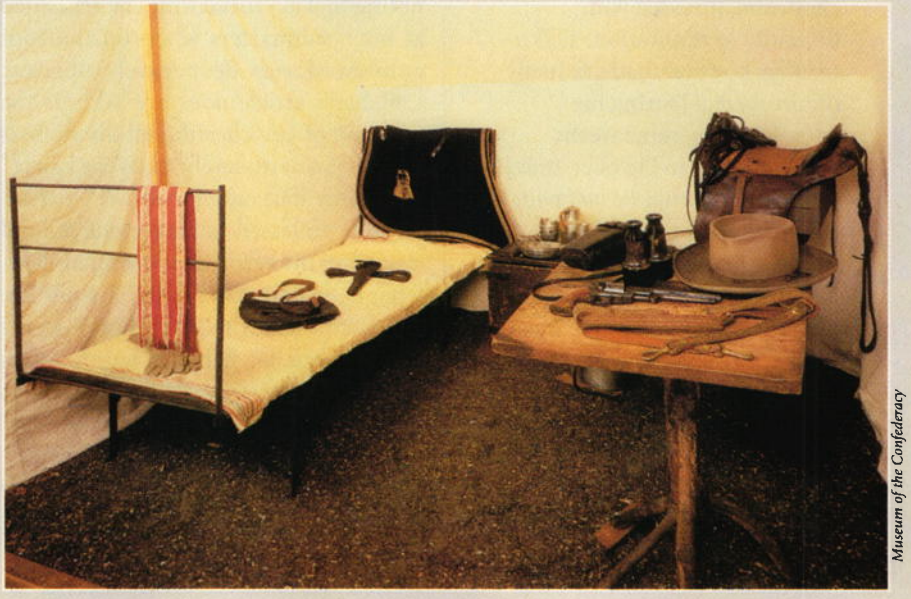
Another foreign observer, Colonel Arthur J.K. Freemantle, was also surprised at Lee's manner during the battle, though he noted passivity, not heightened anxiety. Freemantle's oft-quoted description of Lee comes from the afternoon of July 2.

> So soon as the firing began, General Lee joined Hill just below our tree, and he remained there nearly all the time, looking through his field-glass—sometimes talking to Hill and sometimes to Colonel Long of his Staff. But *generally he sat quite alone on the stump of a tree. What I remarked especially was that during the whole time the firing continued, he only sent one message, and only received one report.*[26] (Italics added)

One way to reconcile the contrasting accounts of the Prussian and English observers is to envision Lee at times af-



Left: medical chest reportedly used by General Lee's personal physician, now on display at the Visitor Center of Gettysburg National Military Park. *Author's collection.*



Below: at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, a collection of Lee's belongings are placed in a recreated camp tent. The table was carved for Lee by his mess boy and the reversible top features a checkerboard. Other items displayed are his boots, saddle, saddle cover, hat, sword belt, Colt Navy revolver and holster, field glasses, haversack, gauntlets, sash and tableware.

Museum of the Confederacy

flicted by physical distress, at others exhausted by it.

Freemantle and Schiebert did not know Lee well, but two who did also commented on his striking demeanor during the battle. One of those who put his observations into writing, First Corps commander Lieutenant General James Longstreet, was later pilloried for his candor. Other than his immediate staff, probably no one at Gettysburg was closer to the Gray Fox than Longstreet. Repeatedly after the war he commented that there was something wrong with Lee during the battle. In his memoirs he declared, "That [Lee] was excited and off his balance was evident on the afternoon of the first."[27] And again, "There is no doubt that General Lee, during the crisis of that campaign, lost the matchless equipoise that usually characterized him...."[28]

Longstreet attributed this to the stress of "unparalleled conditions." But he acknowledged on another occasion that he had observed Lee suffering during the campaign from what he assumed to be "his old trouble, sciatica."[29] That would indeed be debilitating, though Old Pete was not clear whether such a diagnosis was speculation, or something vouchsafed by Lee.

These perceptive observations by one who knew Lee well were disparaged by proponents of the Lost Cause, who sought to portray Lee as the flawless idol imagined by Captain Smith. But they provide provocative clues that Lee was somehow ailing at Gettysburg.

Two of Lee's staff offer some further insight into Lee's condition. Colonel A.L. Long, Lee's military secretary, commented on his commander's uncharacteristic "degree of anxiety and impatience" during the battle, speculating it was due to delays by Stuart and Longstreet. Long saw Lee at Gettysburg as missing "his ordinary calmness of demeanor," though it returned in the days that followed.[30] Perhaps more revealing is the comment of Brigadier General William Nelson Pendleton, that at Gettysburg Lee's "usual promptness in the presence of the enemy" was lacking.[31]

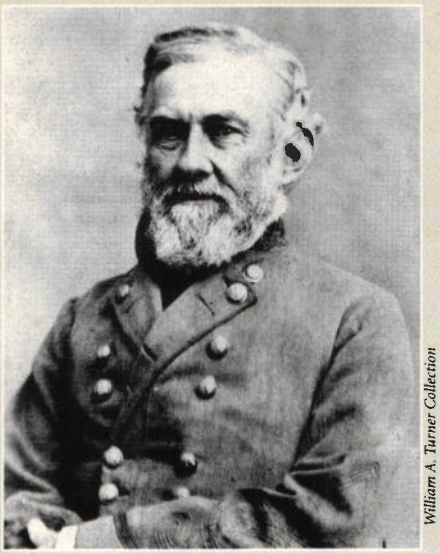
In addition to Longstreet's comment about sciatica, there are two other eyewitnesses who specifically identify physical affliction experienced by Lee at Gettysburg. Major W.W. Blackford of J.E.B. Stuart's staff visited army headquarters and observed the commanding general in distress so apparent that he conjectured that Lee's sickness was a contributing cause of the Confederate defeat:

> In the supreme hour of battle, the Commander in Chief is the soul of an army.... [A]nything which affects his physical condition at that time must have a powerful influence upon events. We all know the desperately weakening power of severe diarrhea, and this General Lee had, as I know.... [On the evening of July 2] I was a little surprised... to see [Lee] come out of his tent hurriedly and go to the rear several times while I was there, and *he walked so much as if he was weak and in pain* that I asked one of the gentlemen present what was the matter with him, and he told me *General Lee was suffering a good deal from an attack of diarrhea.*[32] (Italics added)

Curiously, this revealing first-person account receives only a brief endnote in Edwin Coddington's 1968 *Gettysburg: A Study in Command.*[33] Yet diarrhea could indeed be debilitating, as well as simply uncomfortable. Though it was not an uncommon experience for a soldier in the field, there is no report of anyone else at headquarters suffering in this same way at the time, as would be likely if the cause were poor food or water.

Another highly revealing account of Lee's physical condition comes from Brigadier General John Imboden. Called to army headquarters immediately after the battle, he observed:

> [Lee] did not make his appearance until about 1:00 [a.m.], when he came riding alone, at a slow walk.... [H]e spoke, reigned in his jaded horse, and essayed to dismount. The effort to do so betrayed so much physical exhaustion that I hurriedly arose and stepped forward to assist him, but before I reached his side he had succeeded in alighting, and threw his arm across the saddle and almost motionless upon his equally weary horse, the two forming a striking and never-to-be forgotten group. The moon shone full upon his massive features and revealed an expression of sadness that I had never before seen upon his face. Awed by his appearance I waited for him to speak until the silence became embarrassing, when, to break it and change the silent current of his thoughts, I ventured to remark, in a sympathetic tone, and in allusion to his great fatigue: "General, this has been a hard day on you?" He looked up, and replied mournfully: "Yes, it has been a sad, sad day to us," and immediately relapsed into his thoughtful mood and attitude.... I shall never forget his language, his manner, and his appearance of mental suffering.[34]



William A. Turner Collection

US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle

Brigadier General William Nelson Pendleton (left) and Brigadier General John Imboden both commented on Lee's changed demeanor at Gettysburg.

Such utter physical exhaustion does not in itself point to disease, for those seventy-two hours had been pressure-packed indeed, especially for an older man. Lee was one of the oldest men on the field, there being but two generals on each side who exceeded him in age. After the war none other than Grant made an allusion that Lee was probably too old to command an army effectively in the field. A final pertinent observation came in the aftermath of the battle. On July 13 Longstreet commented on how much Lee was "worn by the strain of the past two weeks."[35]

LEE'S OWN ADMISSIONS OF INFIRMITY

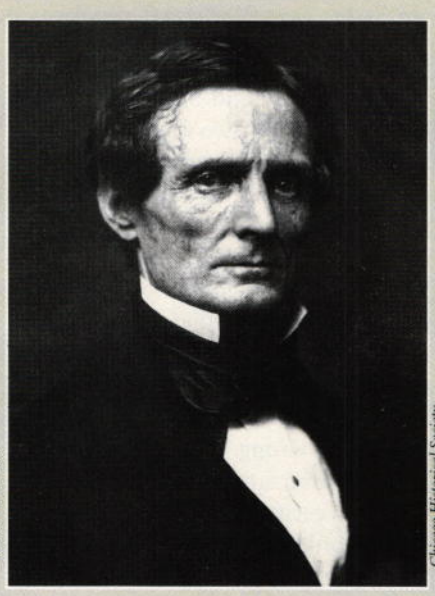
Lee did not immediately disclose to others the toll the battle had inflicted upon his men or upon himself. Four days after the battle he rather disingenuously told Mary, "our noble men are cheerful & confident." A week later he added, "We are all well."[36] We now know this was not the case.

Marse Robert was a bit more candid when he wrote to Mary on July 26, acknowledging, "I am accustomed to bear my sorrows in silence."[37] Indeed, one of the striking things about Robert E. Lee was the steadfast way in which he internalized his distress. The two family doctors who attended him at Lexington reflected on the man they had come to know well and appreciate. Shortly after his death they commented on this dimension of his personality, referring to the "terrible strain" that began in the momentous campaign of 1863: "with all this mighty sorrow weighing him down, he ever preserved a calm, serene, and even cheerful exterior. Few, even of his most intimate friends, knew the depth of his anguish, rendered all the keener, all the more poignant by the very effort to repress it. He felt it his duty to conceal it...."[38]

One of Lee's lieutenants from Gettysburg, Brigadier General John Gordon, maintained contact with the respected leader after the war. He noted that Lee's "nearest approach to fault-finding" about the battle had to do with his own bodily limitations and need to rely on the unreliable support of others.

To confirm that Lee may have been physically distressed at Gettysburg, his own comments must be carefully considered. Since he was not one freely or easily to disclose such things, what little he said must be given careful attention and credence. On July 26 he made a startling admission to his wife, that he was "receiving in this world the punishment due my sins & follies."[39] What could such a thing mean? Perhaps he deemed the unaccustomed weight of defeat a punishment. Or might it be that he was feeling a punishment in his own body?


National Archives


Chicago Historical Society

Brigadier General John Gordon (left) and President Jefferson Davis.

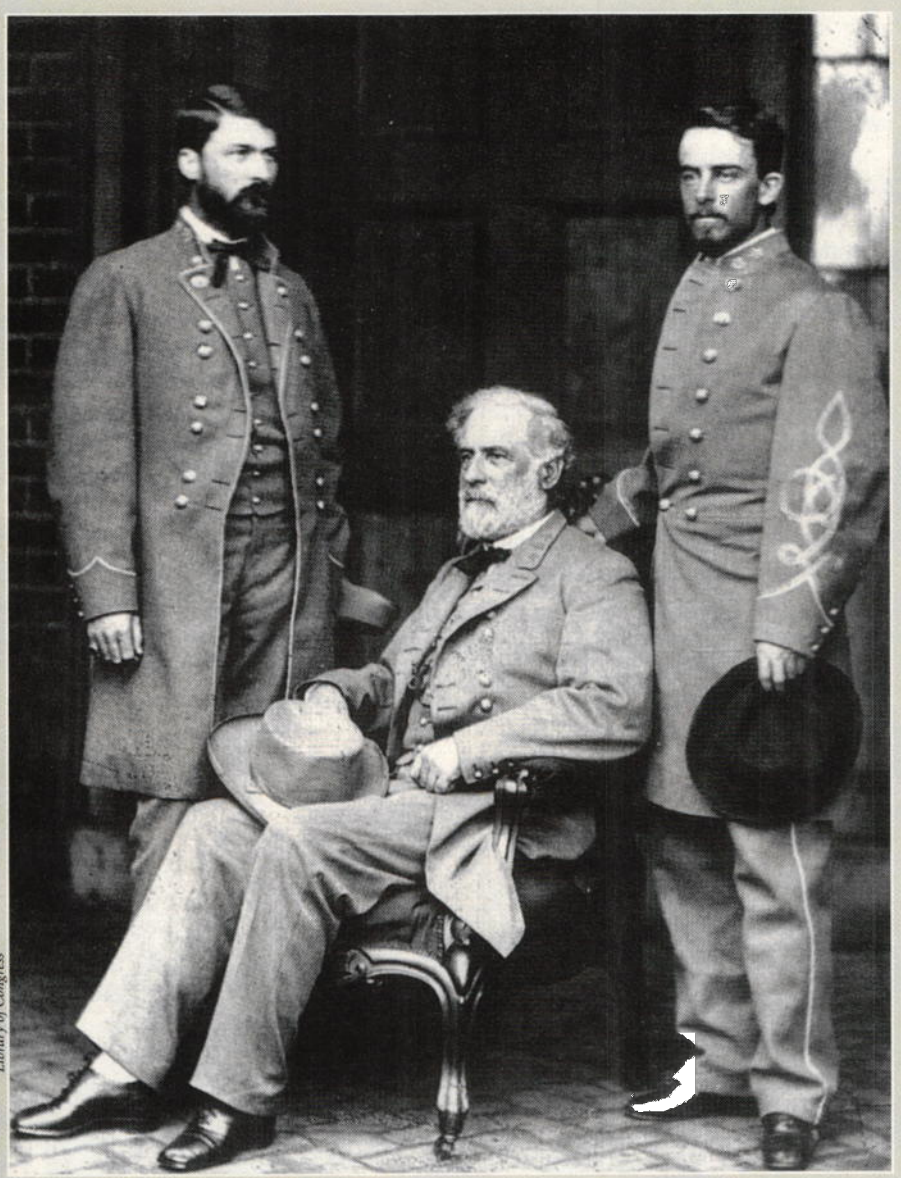
In appreciating Lee's manner of dealing with illness, it is crucial to recognize his stoic approach to his plight. In the retreat from Gettysburg he wrote to his wife about the imperative of bearing "affliction with fortitude & resignation" and "labours & hardships manfully."[40] Upon returning to Virginia, he spoke of his "trust is in Him who favors the weak and relieves the oppressed...."[41] The implication is that Lee in July 1863 saw himself as weak and oppressed.

Once Lee came to grips with his experience at Gettysburg, he drafted a letter to President Davis that touched upon the defeat and his physical troubles. He spoke openly of "the general remedy for the want of success in a military commander [being] his removal," thereby admitting responsibility for the defeat. But he also went further and frankly spoke of his failing health and strength. It is uncharacteristically revealing:

> 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 the belief that a younger and abler man than myself can readily be attained...."[42] (Italics added)

If accepted at face value, this must be seen as proof of Lee's physical impairment during the Battle of Gettysburg. Some, however, consider Lee to be using metaphorical language, or simply providing Davis with a convenient excuse to remove him from command.

In his response to Lee, Davis made it clear that he truly believed what Lee was saying, that his best and most trusted general had become physically afflicted. He regreted that Lee was still feeling "the effects of the illness you suffered last spring." He also recog-



Library of Congress

In April 1865 George Washington Custis Lee (left) posed with his father and Lieutenant Colonel Walter H. Taylor, one of Lee's close aides-de-camp.

nized the genuine frustration felt by Lee, "the embarrassments you experience in using the eyes of others, having been so much accustomed to make your own reconnaissances." But the bare truth is that Davis had no one who could replace Lee, even as physically hindered as he had become. "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...." [43] There is no suggestion here that Lee and Davis were playing with semantics, or that their concerns were anything other than the obvious: Lee was ailing, but Davis could not spare him.

As Lee continued to experience sporadic periods of debilitation, he gradually became more candid with his family about his condition. A few months after Gettysburg he twice had episodes in which he simply could not bear to sit a horse and had to ride in a wagon, admitting, "still I suffer." "I still suffer," wrote Lee to his wife on October 28, 1863. "I have felt differently since my attack last Spring from which I have never recovered." [44]

Blaming rheumatism, he again told Mary on November 1, 1863, of continuing pain. And several months later he admitted to his son, Custis, "I feel a marked change in my strength since my attack last Spring at Fredericksburg and am less competent for duty than ever." [45] Biographers Clifford Dowdey and Emory Thomas both attribute such acknowledgments to angina pectoris. [46]

THE CURIOUS QUESTION OF QUININE

Quinine was regarded in the mid-nineteenth century as a miracle drug. Primarily used for treating malaria, it was also used to ease pain from such ailments as neuralgia, arthritis, and thoracic and abdominal distress. So valued was it that the Confederate army specifically sought it in Pennsylvania towns that it occupied. The following excerpt from a report of the U.S. Sanitary Commission issued in the middle of the war summarizes in glowing terms the perceived properties of this medication.

> Its curative properties are recognized and highly esteemed in all parts of the civilized world, and by physicians of every school. Happily they are not confined to the cure of miasmatic diseases alone; in virtue of its tonic or strengthening power, Quinine is valuable in debility arising from many other causes, promoting the appetite and power of digestion, and increasing the vital forces. Unlike many excellent medicines, it is destitute of noxious and poisonous qualities, and, unless rashly and injudiciously employed, never does serious harm; nor does it act only as a temporary stimulant, leaving a condition of greater weakness after its immediate effects have passed away, but rather, like nutritious food, confers permanently increased strength and power of resisting disease.... These facts... are known and used by all educated physicians.... [47]

Lee had been given quinine when he first contracted malaria in 1849, and received the drug subsequently when he suffered recurring bouts of the disease. While being treated for discomfort near Fredericksburg prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville, Lee had received large doses of quinine from his attending physicians, who again prescribed it to treat paroxysms that Lee experienced two months before the Battle of Gettysburg. Not only was quinine viewed as a miracle drug, it was also seen as quite safe. Lee admitted to delighting in the treatment: "I am enjoying the sensation of a complete saturation of my system with quinine."

Though quinine helps to overcome aberrant cardiac rhythms and paroxysms like those Lee suffered in the months prior to the fight at Gettysburg, the drug comes with potential risks. Lethal heart rhythm irregularities, such as ventricular tachycardia, ventricular fibrillation, and torsades de pointes can occur. Other effects include premature contractions of the heart, low blood pressure, and a severe condition known as cinchonism, a common symptom of which is gastrointestinal upset, including diarrhea. Recall that Lee was the only one at headquarters reported to be so suffering at Gettysburg. Another side-effect is impaired eyesight, including blurred and double vision, gaps and/or reduction in the visual field, and photophobia.[48] Lee himself commented on how "dull" his vision was at Gettysburg. Additional adverse reactions to high concentrations of quinine include headache, dizziness, restlessness, apprehension, and confusion.[49] The eye-witness reports of Lee's demeanor and appearance during the battle seem to support the conclusion that the general may well have been suffering in these ways as well.

Today quinine is supposed to be used only under the care of an experienced physician.[50] A self-medicating layman in the mid-nineteenth century would not have been able to distinguish between the symptoms and conditions that quinine was alleviating and those it was causing. If Lee continued during the Gettysburg Campaign to use quinine for the benefit it had offered him just weeks earlier, there might well have been unforeseen consequences.

THE GENERAL'S STATE OF MIND

Throughout the remainder of the war, Lee experienced periodic illness, somewhat typical of those with cardiovascular problems. He was fortunate when battle was waged when he was fit, though the stress of battle might itself exacerbate his symptoms. With Grant's relentless push during the Overland Campaign, the time would come when the armies would be engaged and Lee again impaired. It happened at North Anna. The purpose of this article is not to explore the continuing saga of Lee's ill health throughout the remainder of the war. Yet an incident at North Anna may help to explain the commanding general's thinking at Gettysburg. He refused in the face of battle, despite debilitating illness, to relinquish his command.

At North Anna Lee's trusted aide Colonel Charles Venable had spoken earnestly with a sickly Lee at his cot. We do not know the substance of the conversation. However, Venable left in a fury, declaring to a fellow officer, "I have just told the old man that he is not fit for command, and that he better send for Beauregard."[51] We know that Lee did not. As long as his army was in the field, Lee was not about to release command or to admit his incapacity to lead. He was not one to give up in the midst of duty. As Major General Jubal A. Early commented, "Nothing but his own determined will enabled him to keep the field at all."[52] If it was so at North Anna, it was likely true at Gettysburg as well.

Several weeks after Gettysburg he acknowledged to Mary that God might indeed take him away. In a poignant message, as serious as any Robert E. Lee ever crafted, he declared, "I pray that God in his mercy may pardon my many & long standing sins & once more gather around me, you & my dear children & *grant me a little time with you all before I go hence & be seen no more.*"[54] (Italics added) Lest this be viewed as a possible premonition of death in battle, it should be noted that two years later, in the wake of Appomattox, Lee repeated this anticipation of death, declaring, "I am old, and have but a short time to live anyway."[55] Though others often perceived Lee during the war to be robust and stalwart, these remarkable acknowledgements of frailty must not be overlooked.

In August 1869 Lee posed for a group photograph at White Sulpher Springs, West Virginia. Standing, left to right: James Conner, Martin W. Gary, John B. Magruder, Robert D Lilley, P.G.T. Beauregard, Alexander R. Lawton, Henry A. Wise, and Joseph L. Brent. Seated, left to right: Blacque Bey, Robert E. Lee, George Peabody, W.W. Corcoran, and James Lyons. ***Library of Virginia***

It was Lee who planned, championed, and executed the grand raid onto Northern soil, and Lee who held command during the battle, whatever his level of illness or exhaustion. As long as he felt God and President Davis wanted him in the field fighting for the honor of his homeland, he was determined to rise to that responsibility. He had an abiding sense of mission that arose from a strong sense of Divine Providence.[53] And that was so, no matter what physical suffering he had to endure.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM LEE'S STATE OF HEALTH

General Robert E. Lee was determined to fulfill his duty, something that was evident at Gettysburg. But did it impair the effective leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia? Recall the comments of eyewitness W.W. Blackford, who saw Lee "weak and in pain" on July 2. His frank conclusion: "Now who in such a

condition would not be affected in vigor of both mind and body, and will this not account for several things which were behind time, or not pushed forward as they should have been the 3rd of July?"[56]

Some historians have reached a similar conclusion. Clifford Dowdey, who studied Lee thoroughly, frankly concludes:

> The only possible explanation for Lee's not assuming personal direction was the effect of physical weakness.... With his heart condition that had begun with the spring attack, the prolonged physical and mental stress and the growing burden of responsibility brought a steady decline. Outwardly his magnificent carriage was unaffected, his massive torso was still erect and his head high on his strong neck, but he felt the weakening he tried to conceal. It can only be assumed that the effect of illness on July 3, combined with the worry over the breakdown in coordination between the parts of his army, deprived him of the full possession of the combination of those faculties that had produced his successes.[57]

Despite the fact that recent books on the battle, purporting to be comprehensive, do not address the issue of Lee's health, various historians are now raising the issue:

> Lee faced his increased burdens at Gettysburg in his worst physical condition of the war.... [He] suffered from a debilitating attack of intestinal upset that certainly impaired his strength.... (Robert Krick)[58]
>
> It took all the stoicism he could summon to remain alert in the field and in command of himself and of others. His efforts were tinctured by ill health—his congenital heart disease weakened him with pain and discomfort.... (Michael Fellman)[59]
>
> [T]here are strong indications that he was not physically well during the Pennsylvania conflict.... It appears that Lee was probably suffering from diarrhea, malaria, angina, or perhaps two of these conditions.... (Al Gambone)[60]

There is no uniformity of agreement concerning what ailment affected Lee at Gettysburg, though cardio-vascular problems are most commonly conjectured. With appreciation of the effects of quinine, the diarrhea and eye problems are wrapped into a single diagnosis.

Lee eventually died from vascular problems, specifically a stroke. The nature of his final bout with the disease is itself a fascinating story, reexamined recently by physicians. It was not arterial blockage to the heart that ultimately brought him down, but occlusion of arteries supplying blood to the frontal cortex of the brain.[61] The illness is the same as Lee experienced in 1863, though a different vital organ was affected.

At Gettysburg, this apparent atherosclerosis was already beginning to take its toll. Efforts to treat the discomfort with quinine appear to have complicated his condition. In such a state Lee understandably would have been wary and anxious, even agitated. His stamina would have been diminished; he would have been prone to exhaustion. His eyesight would have suffered, and diarrhea would

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have caused dehydration and further weakness.

Appreciating that General Lee was indeed physically afflicted to some extent during the Battle of Gettysburg suggests that his leadership would have been in some way impaired. Could he have the energy to command effectively? Could he find the strength to push his lieutenants when they were wary or reluctant? Could he quickly move where he needed to be? Could he see the enemy positions well enough to plan the deployment of troops and their advance into battle? Could he keep his mind focused in planning the necessary strategies? Could he think clearly in the crisis of the moment? These and other concerns immediately come to mind when contemplating a weakened, suffering, agitated, and/or exhausted commanding general.

But the implications of Lee's illness are even broader and perhaps more troubling. Did awareness of his impending mortality factor into his decision to invade? Were there thoughts of martyrdom, even a Messiah complex, whereby Lee was subconsciously willing to give himself to the uttermost to save his people? Should the campaign thus be viewed as foolhardy and reckless? Did he press the offensive because he feared there might be no other occasion to lead his beloved army to victory? Why did he not communicate clearly to his staff and lieutenants the risk he was undertaking? Was his uncertainty about the capabilities of his two new corps commanders a factor in his trying to persevere? In the study of the Battle of Gettysburg, the answer to one question can raise a plethora of others.

Lee did cope with his physical problems as best he could, largely through the power of an amazing determination. But from 1863 on he must have been only too aware of his human frailty, hardly the perfect specimen that Captain Smith envisioned when he saw Marse Robert at the commencement of the Battle of Gettysburg. By Smith's own admission, that stirring image grew more vivid through the years, but it was increasingly divorced from Lee's actual experience.

Professor William Preston Johnston, a veteran of the war and postwar friend of Lee, stood by Marse Robert at his deathbed. In a personal reminiscence published in 1874, Johnston commented, "The death of General Lee was not due to any sudden cause, but was the result of agencies dating back as far as 1863."[62] Those "agencies" were at work at Gettysburg. □

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GENERALSHIP AT

ED: This being the Gettysburg 140th anniversary special issue, we decided to invite a panel of historians to comment on the quality of generalship displayed during the battle. Those invited to do so were Craig L. Symonds, professor of history at the United States Naval Academy and author of nine books, most recently *American Heritage History of the Battle of Gettysburg*; Peter S. Carmichael, assistant professor of history at University of North Carolina at Greensboro and editor of the University of Tennessee Press' "Voices of the Civil War" series; D. Scott Hartwig, supervisory park historian at Gettysburg National Military Park and author of numerous publications on the Civil War; Jeffrey C. Hall, professor at Brandeis University, where he teaches biology and history, and author of *The Stand of the U.S. Army at Gettysburg* (July 2003); and Stephen W. Sears, whose latest book, entitled simply *Gettysburg*, was released in June.

CRAIG L. SYMONDS: No battle in American history has been subject to anything like the kind of intensive examination that scholars have applied to the three-day Battle of Gettysburg. It has been memorialized by the participants, analyzed by arm-chair strategists, and scrutinized in almost microscopic detail by historians. Curiously, the very intensity of this study has tended to denigrate the generally excellent performances of some, if not most, of the decision makers. Rather like a magnifying mirror that enlarges skin pores to frightening size, the kind of intense study that scholars have focused on Gettysburg has exposed every freckle and blemish of command leadership. No teenager preparing for prom night has examined facial imperfections with more intensity or emotional investment than students of Gettysburg have applied in reconsidering virtually every command decision of the battle. But even though the magnifying mirror of history leads us to focus on the blemishes—the mistakes—at Gettysburg,

Kean Archives, Philadelphia

III Corps commander Daniel Sickles.
Did his unauthorized move help or hinder the Union defense?

GETTYSBURG

Both Library of Congress

At Gettysburg Winfield Scott Hancock (left) really did earn the encomium "Hancock the Superb." And George Meade demonstrated a capacity to work with his senior generals.

command leadership there was actually quite good, from the army commanders on down to the regimental level.

Part of the reason for much of the criticism that scholars and others have heaped on the commanders at Gettysburg grows out of the perception (true or not) that Gettysburg was the turning point of the Civil War. This has led to endless speculation that if somehow one or two key command decisions had been reversed, the battle might have come out differently, and that a different outcome at Gettysburg would have changed history. In consequence, many students of the battle have sought to identify those one or two key command decisions. Often they begin with the words: "If only...," and mostly they focus on southern decision makers: If only Stuart had been on hand to keep Lee apprised of the location and strength of the Union army; if only Ewell had attacked on the night of July 1 (as Jackson surely would have done—or so it is maintained); if only Longstreet had acted with more speed and less deliberation on July 2 (or, alternatively, if only Lee had listened to Longstreet's advice).

Even though the Union army won the battle at Gettysburg, this has not prevented analysts from criticizing Union command decisions. The post-battle Meade-Sickles feud is perhaps the best known aspect of this. Sickles is a clear exception to the generalization that battlefield commanders performed well at Gettysburg; his decision to disobey orders and take up a new, more advanced, position is indefensible. Yet Sickles sought to point an accusing finger at Meade. For more than half a century he conducted a public campaign to undermine Meade and elevate himself. Most of Sickles' charges are palpably false. But Meade did make errors at Gettysburg. He went into a near panic on the afternoon of July 2 when his left flank was all but crushed by Longstreet's attack (thanks partly, at least, to the cupidity of Daniel Sickles). In that panicked state of mind Meade practically denuded Culp's Hill of its entire force just prior to a Confederate assault on that flank. Even after Meade had secured a Union victory, he did not pursue Lee's retreating army with the kind of ferocity and commitment that Lincoln then, and others since, thought appropriate. But given Meade's short tenure in command, the history of the Army of the Potomac up to that time, and the possibility of losing what had been gained, Meade's actions become understandable, if not necessarily admirable.

Practically the only individuals who come off unscathed in most assessments of command leadership at Gettysburg are a handful of junior officers, most notably perhaps Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain of the 20th Maine, who has become a kind of American icon. In the senior ranks, John Buford and Winfield Scott Hancock also emerge with their reputations largely intact.

While these men, and others, have rightly earned the praise of historians, much more ink has been used to second-guess the others. Using the benefit of hindsight, scholars have pointed out the consequences of this or that unfortunate decision. But of course scholars today have far more information available, and far more time to assess the alternatives, than battlefield leaders did in 1863. On the whole, considering that Meade was new to command, that Lee's command team was newly organized, that the armies were as near to being equal in strength as at anytime in the war, and that Gettysburg was a meeting engagement fought on ground unfamiliar to both sides, it is impressive that the commanders performed as well as they did.

PETER S. CARMICHAEL: In much of the secondary literature on Robert E. Lee, the general appears as the great military maestro of the Civil War. His subordinates often receive the blame when the general's brilliant compositions turned out badly. If they had only followed Lee's magical conducting, continues this line of reasoning, things would have somehow been different. It is striking that Lee's battlefield symphony at Gettysburg lacked the harmony and imagination that had distinguished his earlier work with the Army of Northern Virginia. Most historians have turned the spotlight on Lee's "orchestral pit" when trying to explain his disaster. His first chairs often stand out as the army's primary culprits. Without question Generals Richard S. Ewell, James Ewell Brown Stuart, Ambrose Powell Hill, William Nelson Pendleton, and James Longstreet performed badly during the Pennsylvania Campaign.

Their mistakes, however, must be placed within the context of what mod-

ern pundits call a problem of command and control. From this perspective, proper attention can be devoted to the big question of Gettysburg: why didn't Lee make his presence felt on the battlefield? He had the responsibility of making his tactical vision into a reality. I am not suggesting that Lee should suddenly have taken on the responsibilities of a divisional or brigade commander. Rather he should have ensured that his subordinates cooperated properly. Only Lee could have connected the complicated lines of communication in his army, and this would have given his force the cohesiveness that is essential to any successful tactical operation. This problem comes into relief when looking at the actions of General Jubal A. Early during the afternoon of July 1.

In an army filled with superb combat officers, Early managed to stand out among his peers. As a divisional commander in Ewell's Second Corps, he was a gritty, cantankerous man who drove his men with the aggressive spirit that Lee demanded from his subordinates. On July 1 Early pitched into the Union XI Corps north of Gettysburg. It was a well-delivered assault that unhinged the enemy's line, but Early was not content to let the Federals retire safely to Cemetery Hill. One of his staff officers, John W. Daniel, observed that Early quickly reformed his division in the streets of Gettysburg and then searched for additional support to continue the advance. Ewell usually receives the blame for squandering this singular opportunity to win the battle, but he was not the only corps commander to ignore Early's protests. A.P. Hill also received urgent requests from the crusty Virginian to send reinforcements. Early believed that Cemetery Hill was up for grabs, and in his official report, he singles out Hill for failing to launch a concerted attack. At one of the crucial moments of Gettysburg, it would seem that two of Lee's chief subordinates failed him.

What is often overlooked, however, is the fact that Robert E. Lee was on the field as the Federal line collapsed. As Alan Nolan and Gary Gallagher have pointed out, Lee spent the late afternoon of July 1 at the side of A. P. Hill. He witnessed the enemy's disorganized retreat, he saw the fugitives gather on Cemetery Hill, and he knew that A. P. Hill had a fresh division at hand. We will never know all of the reasons why Ewell and Hill did not push their reserves forward in one last decisive attack. Exhaustion and confusion among their own troops certainly factored into their thinking. Such concerns, however, should not have stalled the advance if Lee had exercised authority on the field. While Lee did not like to meddle in the affairs of his subordinates, the idea that he always took a hands-off approach on the battlefield is nonsense. Before and after Gettysburg, Lee inserted himself when he thought it necessary. Why he did not respond to the protests of Jubal Early will probably remain a mystery. Only Lee could have satisfied Early's demands by insisting that Hill's Third Corps cooperate with Ewell's men. Only Lee could have pressed his inexperienced corps commanders to maintain the initiative, even when they thought their troops were incapable of such a feat. Only Lee could have delivered Confederate victory on July 1. At one of the most critical moments of the war, when Lee's subordinates badly needed overall direction, the podium was vacant.

D. SCOTT HARTWIG: Gettysburg was George G. Meade's finest hour as an army commander in the war, and, apart from III Corps commander Daniel Sickles, it can be argued that it was also the finest hour for corps command in the Army of the Potomac. In contrast, the Army of Northern Virginia's leadership largely failed it at Gettysburg.

I do not believe that Meade was Robert E. Lee's equal as a general. Other campaigns and battles these two engaged in bear this out. But for the three days at Gettysburg, and in the days immediately preceding the battle, Meade outgeneraled Lee. When we also consider that Meade was placed in command at such a critical moment in the campaign, his performance shines even brighter. He used his cavalry effectively, which helped him gather accurate information about the enemy, as well as keep them in ignorance of the movements of his army. He also delegated authority wisely. His decision to create a "Left Wing," and place it under I Corps commander Major General John Reynolds on June 30, is an example. Meade knew he could not be everywhere at once, and that the left of his army was the most likely to make contact with the enemy. He wanted someone in place there whom he trusted to make critical decisions and who understood his intent as commander. It turned out to be an important step, for Reynolds had to make crucial decisions on July 1 that committed the army to battle at Gettysburg.

Meade managed the battle on July 2 and 3 with sound tactical skill and nerve. His dispositions were good, he took every advantage the terrain offered, and he reacted promptly and decisively to the crisis created by Sickles' blunder on July 2. He communicated effectively with his generals, apart that is from Sickles, whom he should have watched more closely. The meeting on the night of July 2, which later caused Meade to be criticized for indecision, was in fact a sound idea. It allowed him to take stock of the army's condition, as well as personally communicate his plans for July 3 to all his senior generals. The Army of Northern Virginia could

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have benefited from such a meeting the same night.

Meade did not do everything right. His Pipe Creek circular on July 1 reflects hesitation and a willingness to surrender the initiative to Lee. But Reynolds forced the issue at Gettysburg, and to Meade's credit he did not shrink from the challenge this offered.

Lee's command style and lack of an adequate, trained headquarters staff hurt him at Gettysburg. In the days before the battle he did not make effective use of the cavalry he had with the army. Poor as it was, it still could have served to prevent his army from stumbling into battle at Gettysburg. His decision to continue the battle on July 2 was probably the best option open to him, but I think he erred in leaving Ewell's two divisions east of Gettysburg. The better move would have been to concentrate the entire army along Seminary Ridge. He still could have guarded his communications and line of retreat and shortened his lines. Lee's greatest error of the battle—no surprise—was in ordering the assault on the Union center on July 3 after his initial battle plan for that day came apart. The risks and the costs were simply not worth the gamble. A better play would have been to hold his position on Seminary Ridge on the 3rd, then maneuver south into Maryland on the 4th. This would have shortened his communications, kept the initiative with the Confederates, and spared them the massive losses they suffered on July 3.

Confederate corps leadership performed unevenly. Ewell did far better on July 1 than he is given credit for. His corps smashed the Federal XI Corps and captured nearly all the 3,500 Union prisoners taken that day, at a cost of about 650 casualties in Early's division. Although he has been condemned for not driving on and attacking Cemetery Hill, I think he made the right call under the circumstances. Longstreet fought well on July 2, but his performance throughout the entire battle lacked fire and enthusiasm. Hill performed poorly. His tactics on July 1 were unimaginative and caused unnecessary casualties. On July 2 and 3 he was a cipher.

On the Union side, Hancock and Reynolds stand out. They fought as if the fate of their nation rode on the outcome of the battle. Sickles proved he was brave, but his advance to the Peach Orchard and Emmitsburg Road was a blunder that placed the entire army at risk and exposed his corps to devastating casualties. Had he remained in the position Meade assigned him, I believe Longstreet's attack would have been repulsed, and at a cost of far fewer Union casualties.

By giving him three corps and command of the advance, Meade accorded Major General John Reynolds (left) second-in-command status; his death was a great blow.

Below: men of the 14th and 15th Louisiana push up Culp's Hill after twilight on the 2nd.

MASS MOLLUS, US Army Military History Institute

JEFFREY C. HALL: My comments on the day-to-day performance of the senior generals at Gettysburg are as follows:

July 1—Major General Oliver Otis Howard really did have a golden moment, mid-Wednesday. By placing one of his divisions on Cemetery Hill, Howard accomplished more than simply manning it with defenders. Just as important was that Brigadier General Adolph von Steinwehr's organized defensive positions gave the retreating Union units in the afternoon a force to head for and coalesce around. Absent the presence of this division, the retreating I and XI Corps troops would have been groping for a merely geographical fallback position, instead of retreating toward their well positioned comrades—a far more meaningful and *psychologically beneficial* fallback objective.

Major General Winfield S. Hancock steadied the troops on Cemetery Hill and helped arrange the defensive positions there, but even more significantly he directed the Iron Brigade (what was left of it) to Culp's Hill, which was even more vulnerable to a continuing Confederate attack.

Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell made an arguably good decision not to continue attacking south of Gettysburg in the early evening of Wednesday. The usual considerations as to why Ewell declined to press the attack are from Confederate perspectives alone: the Second Corps troops were nearly spent and had lost unit cohesion, Johnson's division was unavailable, General Hill declined to provide reinforcements, and a Union unit was reported to be approaching Ewell's left flank. Thus, this Confederate corps commander *decided* not to so continue the attack. An additional component to any such examination is that Cemetery Hill was *well defended.* In no way was it sitting there for the taking.

July 2—The opening of Longstreet's attack in the afternoon was late: I am not referring to the "attack at dawn" canard, but to the unnecessary wait for his last brigade to arrive; to distressing features of the countermarch south of the Fairfield Road; and to this key consequence—the First Corps commander *ran his army out of July 2*—especially with respect to the *necessary and proper timing* of Ewell's attack on the Union right. Was there any reason for Longstreet to wait for Evander Law to complete the forced march of his brigade

from New Guilford? And if Longstreet was thus to squander the morning hours, could he not have used that time to order subordinates thoroughly to scout an into-position march route from the Herr Ridge vicinity? If that had been done, might the rise of ground on Bream's Hill have been detected, and a possible *alternative route* located? There was such, just a short distance to the west, one actually employed by artillery units of Alexander and Eshelman that proceeded into position southwest of Gettysburg in secret and with dispatch. Instead, the already-late First Corps countermarched from the Bream's Hill rise and the assault did not take off until about 4 p.m. This delay gave the Union VI Corps time to march from northern Maryland to Gettysburg and keep its appointment on the battlefield in mid-afternoon, which meant that Meade could deploy his erstwhile reserve, V Corps, with impunity, knowing that the VI now constituted a new reserve.

A second, specific consequence of Longstreet's delays was that he permitted the Army of the Potomac, as Thursday afternoon proceeded, to optimize its defensive arrangements. Generals Meade and Hunt indeed rode the battlefield several times to arrange the defensive lines and establish superb artillery platforms—such that the Federal defense at Gettysburg became "rock-solid and as close to impregnable as any line constructed by the Army of the Potomac during the war" (David Shultz and Richard Rollins, "A Combined and Concentrated Fire," *N&S* vol. 2, #3).

Sickles' redeployment west of the "fishhook shank" messed up particulars of the rebel assault plan, at least with regard to the right wing of Longstreet's force; the resulting improvised features of the attack led to spreading out and splitting up of certain Confederate units, diminishing command and control and dissipating the attacking power of these brigades; and Sickles' defense out front forced the right wing of Longstreet's legions to *fight through* those III Corps positions, such that elements of the rebel right wing were not well organized and were to a degree fought out as they approached Cemetery Ridge. Indeed, the Union III Corps did not simply cave in as it was hit by elements of Hood's division; it fought furiously and significantly delayed the rebel advances through Houck's Ridge, the Stony Hill, and the Wheatfield. Only at the Peach Orchard was one of Sickles' outwardly deployed units quickly overrun. Moreover, the later Confederate advances at the bottom of the battlefield did not merely peter out; they were repelled by a large-scale counterattack, the efficacy of which was accentuated by the enervated and disjointed condition of the Southern soldiers in this sector, a condition arising from their earlier struggle with the III Corps.

But *there is more to it* than the tactical significance of Sickles' move. Its apparent rashness and the vulnerability of the III Corps' new position forced a long series of emergency responses on the part of the Union high command. These Union officers had no time nervously to "think themselves out of" the possibility that they'd be able to defend in a static, standard manner and hopefully hold. The key Union generals believed that they had to fairly leap into action to buttress Sickles' positions. Thus they acted and reacted vigorously through the remainder of that Thursday afternoon and into the evening. That the Army of the Potomac not only had held by the end of the fighting on July 2, but had also vigorously repelled elements of the rebel attacks, large and small, seemed to *cause the confidence of these Union generals to soar.* Union General John Newton said it best at the end of this Thursday: "They have hammered us into a position they cannot whip us out of."

If high-ranking Confederates were going to modify components of the assault tactics—because a Federal corps was sticking its nose in the face of the rebel right as of mid-afternoon Thursday—then why not change the instructions under which the Confederate Third Corps units were putatively operating?

Cook Collection, Valentine Museum

Museum of the Confederacy

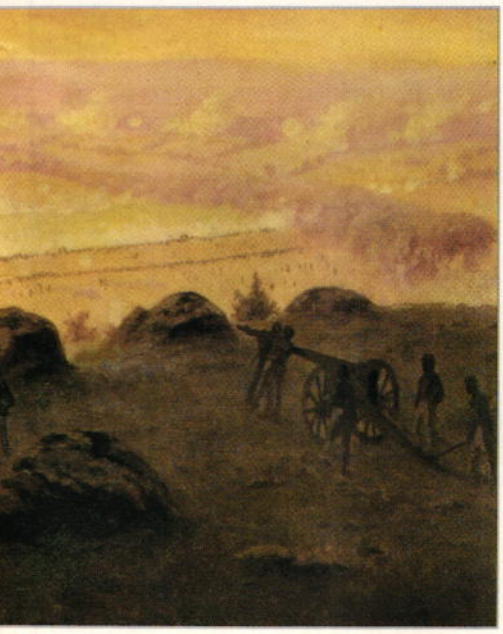
Library of Congress

That is, don't wait for McLaws to go in. Instead take *immediate* advantage of the large gap formed by the right wing of Sickles' redeployment: General Humphrey's right flank was in the air, and the left flank of the Federal II Corps on Cemetery Ridge was unprotected. But Humphrey's right was never threatened, and the gap sat unexploited (except perhaps by the eventual advance of General Ambrose Wright's rebel brigade, which was too little and too late). Perhaps the gonorrhea-ridden Hill was too indisposed to exercise the requisite leadership—whereby he could have improvised a "pincer within the pincer" (referring to attacks by Longstreet and Ewell on the Federal flanks). Absent new orders from Hill, where was General Anderson's leadership of his Third Corps division in this sector? Nowhere to be found.

The key mistake made by a general officer in the Army of the Potomac was the decision by Meade to redeploy most of the XII Corps from Culp's Hill to bolster the embattled left wing of the Union line. The Union army might have come within an ace of losing the battle at Culp's Hill late on July 2, but for the Federals' ace in the hole, General George Greene and his breastwork-bolstered brigade on the east-facing part of the hill.

Opposite: General Anderson (left) used poor tactics when attacking on the second day of the battle. Right: Ambrose Wright's brigade was too little and too late.

Below: Parrott guns of Battery D, 5th U.S. Artillery, blaze away at attacking Confederates from the summit of Little Round Top.



Some say that Ewell's July 1 dithering continued into the afternoon and evening of July 2, when his attacks against the Union right came too late. But he was instructed only to "demonstrate" against the Union right wing in conjunction with the onset of Longstreet's assault, which he did do. The Second Corps commander was also directed to escalate his demonstration to a concerted attack with Longstreet if the opportunity presented itself, *which it did.* But, thanks to Longstreet, by the time that opportunity arose, the day was fast waning.

July 3—Pickett's Charge was a good idea in general, and it was superbly planned in particular. In this respect, an army on the tactical offensive in a Civil War battle—and in others of the mid-nineteenth century—could succeed. Such an attack sometimes *did* rout a defending army, as at Missionary Ridge and Nashville. Who knows what dire consequences to Northern fortunes might have ensued had a massive military reverse occurred on its own Eastern soil in the summer of 1863? Gettysburg was essentially a drawn battle to this point. Robert E. Lee sensed it was winnable on this Friday. And a battle in any war can be more dramatically won by an army on the offensive.

Over the years the attack over the ground between the two ridges south of Gettysburg has frequently been termed "suicidal." But the ground over which the Confederates attacked was not in fact "open." In this regard, the Confederate high command made superb use of the intermediate ridges between Seminary and Cemetery, forming up the right wing of the assault force in protected positions from which this powerful line would emerge with considerable shock value from the perspective of the Union troops across the field. This is but *one* feature of how well planned was Pickett's Charge—an attack that could have succeeded had not the confident Union defense counterattacked so well. One negative note: if the charge were indeed the "great gamble," Lee and Longstreet should have committed even more troops to the assault.

STEPHEN W. SEARS: In light of all the ink expended on Lee and his lieutenants at Gettysburg, I should like to focus here on the Union generals and their response to crises.

Meade's determination to stand on the defensive—behind Pipe Creek by preference, on Cemetery Hill and Cemetery Ridge in the event—was a mark of his shrewdness. It can be said that John Reynolds took the decision for him, but in any event Meade would have found some way to defend. In his three days of command since June 28 Meade said he had had no time to sample the troops' morale, and no doubt he wondered about some of his corps commanders too. And surely Meade preferred testing himself initially in his new post while on defense. He demonstrated good command of the field on July 2, especially in getting reinforcements to where they were needed. And on July 3 he had 13,000 men ready to meet any breakthrough in his center.

Reynolds' death on July 1 deeply shocked Meade. By giving him three corps and command of the advance, Meade had awarded Reynolds second-in-command status. So he promptly sent his next-best general, Hancock, to take over the field, using Stanton's authority to override the seniority of weak reed Howard.

And Otis Howard *was* a weak reed. On July 1 he made matters considerably worse than they should have been after replacing Reynolds in field command, then tried to cover the inept performance of his XI Corps by saying the I Corps broke first that afternoon. Untrue. In fact Abner Doubleday had his best day of the war commanding the I Corps in Reynolds' place. But Howard's tattling persuaded Meade to supplant Doubleday with John Newton.

At Gettysburg Winfield Scott Hancock of the II Corps truly earned the encomium "Hancock the Superb," awarded him for Williamsburg. (Darius Couch did the Army of the Potomac his best service when he quit the II Corps on May 22.) Hancock was all over the field on July 2 and July 3, leading by example, plugging gaps, sending off reinforcements unbidden to where they were most needed.

Dan Sickles of the III Corps requires little comment—he was a nasty piece of work both as a man and a general. Meade did the Potomac army a good turn by maneuvering Sickles out of any further command role after Gettysburg. George Sykes, V Corps, belied his nickname "Tardy George" on July 2 by ordering

troops to Little Round Top without hesitation, then fought his corps competently the rest of the day. John Sedgwick's only role at Gettysburg was to force-march the VI Corps to be there when needed.

Henry Slocum, XII Corps, was hardly the model of a major general at Gettysburg. On July 1 Slocum sat his corps down five miles from the battlefield, within easy hearing of the guns, and waited for orders. On July 2 he vacated Culp's Hill but for one brigade in the face of Ewell's entire corps. At least, while Slocum acted imperiously, Alpheus Williams ran the corps competently.

Other Union generals worthy of special notation: George Sears Greene dug in that lone brigade on Culp's Hill so that nothing could dislodge it. In repelling Pickett's Charge, Alexander Hays, Alexander Webb, and George Stannard showed their mettle. The same was true of the officers of the I Corps in their gallant, doomed defense on the first day, in particular John C. Robinson, Solomon Meredith, Henry Baxter, and Roy Stone.

The cavalry's Alfred Pleasonton was largely out of the picture at Gettysburg, but his subordinates took up the slack and more. John Buford fought against long odds on July 1, and David Gregg and George Armstrong Custer and their troopers checked Jeb Stuart on July 3.

But the greatest single improvement in battlefield management was registered by the Union artillery. After being grossly mismanaged at Chancellorsville, the artillery arm was put in Henry J. Hunt's charge. At Gettysburg, perhaps for the first time in the war, Yankee gunnery lived up to its potential. Freeman McGilvery's handling of the reserve artillery helped save the day on July 2, and on July 3 Hunt's direction of the guns played a major role in repelling Pickett's Charge.

All in all, I have to give the Yankee generals the higher marks for initiative.

CRAIG L. SYMONDS: How to explain the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg? Peter Carmichael argues that Lee lost it by failing to exercise his authority on the battlefield; Scott Hartwig argues that Meade won it by reacting promptly to changing circumstances. I think they're both right.

Carmichael is correct to remind us that whatever the presumed sins of his subordinates, it is the commanding general who is supposed to orchestrate the whole, and that on July 1, Lee did not do so. I wonder, though, at Carmichael's praise for the "gritty and cantankerous" Jubal Early. Early's post-war claims that he alone saw clearly the importance of seizing Cemetery Hill on July 1 is somewhat specious, for his vision seemed to grow more acute with hindsight.

For his part, Scott Harwig states boldly that "Meade outgeneraled Lee." That, surely, will provoke a number of readers' responses. After all, Meade's job was to hold the ground that Hancock had selected for him and avoid big mistakes. He did make one mistake (though not a fatal one) on July 2. In trying to shore up his collapsing left, Meade ordered Slocum to abandon Culp's Hill and send his whole corps to the left. Stephen Sears blames Slocum for leaving Culp's Hill all but unprotected, but Slocum had to convince Meade to let him leave one brigade behind.

Sears is correct, however, to bring attention to a number of Union officers, too often overlooked, who played crucial roles in the battle. One was George Greene, whose lone brigade held Culp's Hill against an entire division on July 2; another was George Stannard, whose Vermont Brigade charged out from Cemetery Hill to take Pickett's men under fire from the flank on July 3; and the third is Henry Hunt, commander of the Union artillery.

And what of James Longstreet and Daniel Sickles? Of these two, the conversation will no doubt continue as long as people argue about the battle.

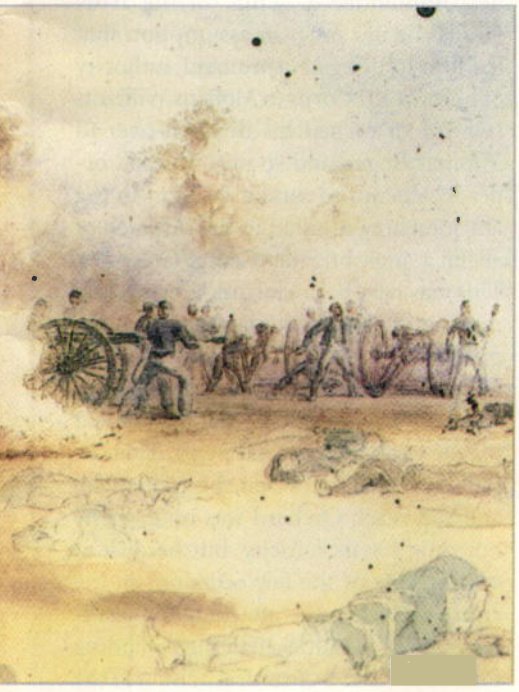
Both Library of Congress

Historic New Orleans Collection

PETER S. CARMICHAEL: Craig Symonds' observations about Gettysburg underscore a serious problem that plagues much of Civil War military history—too much armchair generalship at the expense of understanding the difficult circumstances in which generals operated and the success they managed to achieve. We would approach Civil War history with more sensitivity and sophistication if we followed Symonds' advice, and I fear I may not have in my piece on Lee. I still have a difficult time finding something positive about the general's performance on July 1, and even a more difficult time trying to explain it. He allowed the battle to slip out of control, and this prevented him from achieving the complete tactical victory that he so badly sought for much of the war. Those who absolve Lee for Gettysburg do so by applying a double standard. While Lee is rarely held accountable for the tactical miscues of his army, his Union counterparts, particularly Ulysses S. Grant, are almost always connected to battlefield blunders.

Opposite: Under Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt (left) Union artillery, perhaps for the first time in the war, lived up to its potential. General Slocum (right) mistakenly stripped Culp's Hill of all but one brigade, then lied about the order he had received.

Below: nineteen-year-old Lieutenant Bayard Wilkeson directs the fire of the guns of Battery G, 4th U.S. Artillery; the young officer was later mortally wounded.



It is also curious that Union generalship is rarely given credit for tactical success. This is surely attributable to the Lost Cause, which posits that Confederate leaders were far superior to Federal generals. Any credit given to Federal officers is somehow construed as a slight to Southern military prowess. Thankfully Scott Hartwig and Stephen Sears take on this ridiculous notion. They confirm George Pickett's simple but profound explanation for the failed Pennsylvania Campaign—"I think the Union army had something to do with it." I like what both of these authors have to say about the Union high command.

Anyone who wants to know more about the command decisions of the Army of the Potomac must turn to Sears' new book on Gettysburg. While his analysis of the Army of Northern Virginia is stunning in places, Sears brings the Army of the Potomac to the forefront of the Gettysburg story. He elaborates on the many positive contributions made by the Union high and junior command, and I think Symonds would be very pleased by Sears' willingness to give credit to those officers who were instrumental in the magnificent Union defense. I didn't believe we needed another tactical study of Gettysburg, that there was a gap big enough in the literature for a full-length treatment of the campaign, but Sears' new book proves me wrong. He brings together recent scholarship on the battle but not at the expense of new insights, which abound in every chapter. This book is the most readable, analytical, and forcefully argued study of the campaign. When you consider the body of Sears' work on the Eastern theater, I think this might be his finest piece of scholarship, which is saying a great deal.

D. SCOTT HARTWIG: In the various points made about Ewell on July 1, no one mentioned that Lee and his corps commanders had very little reliable intelligence about the whereabouts of five of the Army of the Potomac's seven army corps. About the same time that Ewell received his orders from Lee to take Cemetery Hill if practicable, he also received a report about Union troops east of his position, out on the York Road. This was Williams' division of the XII Corps, which did not quite reach the York Road but was on the Hanover Road near Benner's Hill. Ewell neither positively identified nor located Williams, since that division retraced its march back to the Baltimore Pike, but the combination of poor intelligence and reports of Federal troops lurking beyond his left flank had to make Ewell nervous about launching an all-out attack on Cemetery Hill.

I'll reiterate my earlier point that Sickles' move to the Emmitsburg Road ridge was a blunder. Instead of invigorating the Union army to fight harder, his advanced position caused confusion, the collapse of his line, heavy casualties, and near defeat for the Army of the Potomac. Disaster was avoided mainly because of the quick judgement and bravery of regimental, brigade, and division commanders, and Meade's rapid reaction to the crisis by shifting sufficient reserves to the threatened sector.

Howard's decision to leave von Steinwehr's division on Cemetery Hill on July 1 was a prudent one, but otherwise his generalship that day was non-existent. In particular, his failure to release Coster's brigade to support Carl Schurz's two hard-pressed XI Corps divisions in a timely fashion contributed greatly to the extent of their defeat and heavy loss in prisoners.

JEFFREY C. HALL: I agree especially with the overall evaluations presented by Symonds, Hartwig, and Sears, elements of whose analyses properly run counter to the oft-stated negativity about Gettysburg leadership. However, two of these analysts focus most of their attention on high-quality performances of Union commanders, and Hartwig notes that the "Army of Northern Virginia's leadership largely failed." I deem the Confederate commanders to have done better than that—the rebel forces were outfought at Gettysburg, thanks to the feats of their opposite numbers.

The Union generals Hartwig alludes to were crucially unleashed by Meade—who constructively regarded himself as a peer of his corps commanders. In this respect, one cannot stress enough the extent to which Generals Meade and Hunt operated as co-workers.

Symonds conspicuously dings Sickles for what he did on July 2. This is arguably correct in terms of that general's putatively insane redeploying of his corps on

COVER STORY

"DON'T GIVE AN INCH!"

This issue's cover painting by Don Troiani depicts Colonel Strong Vincent on July 2, 1863, on the flank of Little Round Top. As the men of the 16th Michigan began to abandon their position, Vincent rushed forward flourishing his riding crop and cried, "don't give an inch!" Moments later he was struck by a bullet in the groin, a wound that proved fatal. The following day he was promoted brigadier general, but word of this probably did not reach him before his death on the 7th. Thus passed another gallant officer who had contributed significantly to the Union victory at Gettysburg.

July 2. However, I consider Sickles' move positive because of the outcome.

As to a specific piece of Union leadership on the 2nd, I sense that Sears underestimates the accomplishments of General Sedgwick. His forced march of the VI Corps was most important—permitting Meade to unleash his V Corps reserve. Moreover, Sedgwick participated in organizing the final Federal counterattack at the southern end of the field.

With respect to July 3 I disagree with Hartwig, sensing that the Army of Northern Virginia could have proceeded from a well-planned assault to a dramatic victory "on Union soil." In this regard, Carmichael asks "why didn't Lee make his presence felt on the battlefield?" Well, on the 3rd, he did—by vigorously participating in the reconnoitering of the field and planning for the charge.

That assault did not fail: it was destroyed by a confident and active Union defense, a nod to which is given by Sears. This destructive outcome meant that the Army of the Potomac was victorious at Gettysburg. Afterward, Symonds notes that Meade "did not pursue Lee's retreating army" well enough. But Meade did pursue with celerity, through approximately July 9. Later, as the Northern army crept toward the river-crossing points, they approached formidable Confederate defensive positions. The Army of the Potomac never attacked them—and avoided snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Meade of Gettysburg therefore presaged Spruance of Midway: both commanders sealed their victories, which were crucial ones at those stages of the respective wars, especially in regard to the morale of U.S. forces and the citizenry of those times.

STEPHEN W. SEARS: There's a misunderstanding regarding Meade's handling of reinforcements on July 2. He asked Slocum on Culp's Hill for one division; Slocum sent everybody except Greene's brigade, and afterward lied about the order. Slocum showed no initiative on July 1 and too much on July 2.

I find Jubal Early more aggressive with pen than with sword. After routing the XI Corps on July 1, Ewell readied Early and Rodes to attack Cemetery Hill and sent to Lee for support from Hill's corps. Lee turned him down. Giving up that idea, Ewell directed Early to occupy Culp's Hill. The suddenly unaggressive Early begged off. Ewell humored him (first mistake), then failed to prod Johnson into seizing Culp's Hill (second mistake).

I concur with Scott Hartwig on the importance of Meade's conference of generals on July 2. Contrast that with Lee making plans that night entirely alone. As a consequence, (1) Meade's lieutenants were far better informed than Lee's about their roles on July 3; and (2) Pickett's Charge had to be recast on the fly the next morning, with poor results, especially the left wing of the assault. A.P. Hill indeed played the cipher in that, just as he had on July 2.

Finally, allow me to defend Longstreet. He had to spearhead the July 2 offensive with but two of his three divisions, and he rightfully insisted on waiting for Law to give him full strength in those two. The failure that day was Anderson's, who used only three of his five brigades and employed poor tactics in the bargain—and A.P. Hill let him get away with it. So Sickles' bungling only cost him his corps and his leg, not the battle. In my view, at Gettysburg James Longstreet led the Army of Northern Virginia in both batting average and slugging percentage.

CRAIG L. SYMONDS: I yield to Stephen Sears' expertise concerning Meade's order to Slocum on July 2. The confusion surrounding that order derives not only from Slocum's post-battle prevarication, but also from Slocum's mistaken notion that he commanded a "wing" of the army (which he did not), an assumption that led him to delegate command authority of his own XII Corps to Alpheus Williams (who then turned his division over to Thomas Ruger, and so on). Meade's order to Slocum to send a division to the left somehow resulted in the dispatch of all but a single brigade (George Greene's). This may have been Slocum showing "too much initiative," or it may have been the product of simple confusion.

I cannot resist commenting on Longstreet's attack on July 2 (the one that led Meade to ask Slocum for help). That assault through Devil's Den, the Wheatfield, and the Peach Orchard was noteworthy not only for its ferocity, but because it marked one of the few occasions in the entire war when the attacking force suffered fewer casualties than the defending force. That says a great deal about (1) the

ill-wisdom of Sickles' movement out to the Emmitsburg Road; and (2) Longstreet's capacity as a fighter. (Stephen Sears rightly notes Longstreet's "slugging percentage.") Sears blames the eventual failure of this assault on R.H. Anderson, who did not support Longstreet fully. But surely another reason the attack fell short of complete success was that the Confederates ran out of daylight. This affected not only the fighting along lower Cemetery Ridge, but also on Cemetery Hill, where the final attacks (that were supposed to have been coordinated with Longstreet's) took place in near total darkness.

PETER S. CARMICHAEL: Symonds is right to point out the dangers of using Lost Cause writings on Gettysburg uncritically. In the case of Early, I am relying on his *Official Record* reports, in which he mentions his attempts to secure Hill's cooperation for a joint attack on July 1, and John Warwick Daniel's wartime account of the battle. This is not the evidence of Lost Cause self-promoters. It strongly suggests that Ewell was not only amenable to the idea of taking Cemetery Hill, but that decisive action from Lee and Hill could have ensured cooperation between the Second and Third Corps for a final push.

The unity of purpose and spirit of cooperation that guided the actions of the Army of the Potomac is remarkable, but even a great victory like Gettysburg could not heal the deep political wounds or smooth over the old rivalries that had existed since the days of George B. McClellan. We need to spend less time on the "controversies" of Gettysburg and focus on the impact of the battle on the psyche of the Army of the Potomac. Why it had such trouble in maintaining its cohesiveness needs to be explored.

Hall overlooks the essential point of my piece. I was writing about July 1 and not 3. I agree that Lee did make his presence felt on the final day of the battle, and his army came very close to pulling off an incredible victory. I think that Hall has a deep understanding of the tactical mechanics of the battle, but I sometimes wonder if he doesn't cross into the realm of armchair generalship, that fine line between taking officers on their terms and an approach that is more speculative and less grounded in the historical reality presented to the men and officers who fought at Gettysburg.

D. SCOTT HARTWIG: Jeff Hall comments that the ANV was outfought at Gettysburg. The letters and diaries of the men who took part in the battle certainly suggest that the Confederate rank and file fought as well there as on any other battlefield. The outcome was the result of superior Union leadership and generalship.

JEFFREY C. HALL: I respectfully, but almost completely, disagree with Scott Hartwig's assessment of the effect of Sickles' unauthorized move. Wrongheaded it may have been, but it caused more confusion among the attacking Confederates than it did among the Union defenders. More important, it propelled the Union commanders into an active defense, whose efficacy had a most salutary influence on their confidence. In this regard the Army of the Potomac's generals realized that, at last, they were being led by a commander who would unleash them to take necessary tactical risks and actually fight.

With respect to Howard, Hartwig claims that for most of July 1 his generalship was non-existent. This is so, but I still claim that his golden moment had significant consequences for the outcome of the battle. Furthermore, it is somewhat of an overstatement to refer to his failure to release Coster's brigade to support Schurz. This brigade was deployed northward (though not as far as Schurz's position) and modestly slowed elements of the Confederate advance. It was more important to man Cemetery Hill and in so doing create a conspicuous force of well-placed defenders, toward which retreating Union troops could rally—as opposed to struggling merely to find a geographical fallback position. As for Coster's deployment contributing to the "heavy loss" suffered by the XI Corps, it is worth noting that that unit's loss in prisoners was less than that of the I Corps.

I must also take issue with some of Stephen Sears' remarks. Rather than conjuring up Pickett's Charge "on the fly," the rebel high command carried out hours of detailed, judicious, and insightful planning for the assault, throughout the morning of July 3. The Confederates achieved mass at the point of attack on both wings, and the poor results stemmed

not so much from improvised planning as from a stalwart, active Union defense.

As for Longstreet on day 2, I can see no good reason for his waiting for Law's brigade to march more than twenty miles to Gettysburg in order to form the caboose of the train that re-deployed southwest of the town into the First Corps' assault positions.

STEPHEN W. SEARS: As to Slocum and the defenders of Culp's Hill on July 2: Slocum *claimed* (after the war and after Meade was dead) that he argued Meade out of ordering the entire XII Corps over to the left to meet the crisis there, thus managing to keep back Greene's brigade for the Culp's Hill defenses. I don't believe him. Nothing on the record supports Slocum, and he is contradicted by Alpheus Williams' testimony. Meade's discretionary order called for a division; Slocum unthinkingly sent one and two-thirds divisions.

As to Sedgwick's role: on the afternoon of July 2 Meade committed his reserve, the V Corps, to the left the moment he learned of Sickles' blundering, a critical decision taken almost two hours before the first VI Corps troops reached the field. All credit is due John Sedgwick for getting the VI Corps to Gettysburg as soon as he did. His men were then scattered far and wide, serving as a final backstop for the entire line. Uncle John grumbled that since he had no one left to command, he might as well go home.

Finally, it is certainly true that the rebel high command put in hours of planning for the grand charge on the morning of July 3. But that is because it had to be completely recast that morning. Instead of Longstreet's three divisions, only one, Pickett's, participated. Pickett therefore formed the right of the attacking column rather than the left, and the assault became frontal rather than oblique as intended. To fill out the ranks, Hill's brigades were run in based on their locations, not their condition. Four Third Corps brigades had been virtually untouched by the fighting, yet only one of them, Lane's, was used in the charge. Not only had Pettigrew's four brigades, and Scales', been decimated on July 1, but for the charge they were misaligned. I don't regard all this as a case of meticulous planning.

ED: One final point before we close. I was fascinated to note that several of the articles in this issue, *when considered together*, perhaps offer a fuller explanation of Lee's performance in the Gettysburg Campaign than any I have seen before. If Lee's incapacity was as apparent as Chuck Teague suggests in his article, that could explain the propensity for Lee's senior subordinates to question his decisions (Sears: "The Lee of Gettysburg"), and that same incapacity could explain the extraordinary lapse of staff work at headquarters (Brennan: "It Wasn't Stuart's Fault"). Anyone care to comment?

CRAIG L. SYMONDS: I think it is not inappropriate to return to my initial point which was that Lee's performance at Gettysburg appears to come up short at least in part because of intensive second-guessing in the 140 years since, and also by comparison to his previous spectacu-

lar successes which raised the bar of expectations (including, I suspect, his own). Sears is correct that Lee failed to coordinate the various elements of his converging forces on July 1, but then Lee didn't get to the battlefield until mid-afternoon, and he was dealing with two corps commanders (Hill and Ewell) who were both in their first campaign at that grade. Pat Brennan is also correct that the failure of coordination cannot be pinned on Stuart; after all, Ewell's arrival north of town could not have been more timely if both he and Lee had been kept fully informed by Stuart. (Sometimes it really is better to be lucky than good.)

Finally, Chuck Teague points out how precarious Lee's health was in the summer of 1863, but we hardly need the explanation of poor health to explain why Lee could not successfully orchestrate a converging attack by 50,000 men operating along three different lines of approach to an unscouted battlefield. As for Confederate staffwork, I'm not sure that was ever the great strength of the Army of Northern Virginia, but if it was disappointing at Gettysburg, I doubt that it was because the army was losing confidence in its commander. Indeed, faith in Lee and his command decision making was, and remained right to the end, a hallmark of the ANV.

PETER S. CARMICHAEL: Lee had an uneven performance at Gettysburg, but we need to recognize that he possessed the tactical initiative from the onset of the fighting and wisely tried to use that to his advantage. He came remarkably close to victory on each day of the battle by launching powerful offensive movements that weren't perfect, but still had amazing punch. Moreover his decisions were consistent with his philosophy of war, which is so brilliantly explored by Joseph Harsh in his three volumes on Antietam. In short, Lee was certainly himself in Pennsylvania, and if that had not been the case, his army would not have come so close to achieving an amazing victory.

D. SCOTT HARTWIG: While Chuck Teague makes a strong case that Lee's health may have impaired his generalship at Gettysburg, staff work was never a strength of the headquarters of the Army of Northern Virginia, whether Lee was healthy or not. A battle as large as Gettysburg, with a new command structure and new corps commanders in place, tested the staff as no battle before had done and revealed that it was neither large enough nor empowered with the necessary authority to manage the entire army on such a broad front.

The questioning of Lee's plans and decisions by his subordinates in the battle had less to do with his health than it did with personalities. Longstreet had questioned Lee before on other fields, most notably at Second Manassas. His disagreements with Lee over tactics and operational strategy were not out of character. Ewell had no experience serving with Lee as a corps commander, yet as a professional he understood that it was his duty to question orders with which he disagreed. Had Lee been as emphatic with Ewell as he was with Longstreet on July 2 and July 3, Ewell's corps would have spent those two days on Seminary Ridge instead of opposite Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. He was not, which I think reveals not weakness on Lee's part but agreement with Ewell's reasoning.

JEFFREY C. HALL: Chuck Teague does present an intriguing hypothesis, although, as he admits, several pieces of his evidence are "thin." Even if we buy his reasoning about Lee's physical condition, it is not compelling that this had a momentous impact the outcome of the battle: the Army of Northern Virginia was simply outfought by a foe whose leaders were finally worthy of the men in the ranks. As for Pat Brennan's well-researched piece on Stuart, I do not believe anything he says really comes under Keith Poulter's heading "extraordinary lapse of staff work," except perhaps insofar as communications with the hapless Beverly Robertson were concerned.

STEPHEN W. SEARS: Chuck Teague's thoughtful analysis certainly goes far toward explaining the various observations regarding Lee's appearance and actions at Gettysburg, and I might add one more to his catalog: *London Times* correspondent Francis Lawley, traveling with the army, found Lee "more anxious and ruffled than I had ever seen him before, though it required close observation to detect it."

By Longstreet's account, Lee was in good spirits when they set out together for Cashtown on the morning of July 1. But his gorge rose the moment he found his lieutenants ignoring his orders and questioning his judgments and challenging his planning. They make quite a list: Jeb Stuart, Harry Heth, A.P. Hill, Longstreet (repeatedly), Dick Ewell, Jubal Early, Robert Rodes, tardy Pickett. Overuse of quinine, say, might very well have triggered Lee's temper and frazzled his nerves. Yet beyond that I would submit that his lieutenants furnished good cause for Lee to be "anxious and ruffled." In no previous battle had there been anything like this disputation.

Lee was fairly active during the three days of Gettysburg, whatever his ailments. On July 1 he rode on ahead of Longstreet when he heard firing, grew impatient with the lack of reporting from the front, then rode to the battlefield and took over direct command from Hill, committing the army to fighting at Gettysburg. That night he rode to Ewell's headquarters, then repeated the journey on the morning of July 2. When Longstreet's march stalled that afternoon, he rode out to the front to recast the assault of Hood's and McLaws' men. On the morning of July 3, when the entire grand charge had to be replanned at more or less the last minute, Lee was fully involved in the arrangements.

Confederate staff problems at Gettysburg—and they were manifest—were I believe endemic to the Army of Northern Virginia. Misdirected orders and faulty communications had already led (for example) to such disasters as Malvern Hill. Now, with the army scattered all across Maryland and Pennsylvania, the system, such as it was, failed again. Lee worked best when his lieutenants were gathered about his feet. When they were at a distance, his edge was dulled.

No one of these elements fully explains Lee's failings at Gettysburg; combined, they proved fatal.

ED: Which is probably as good a note as any on which to close the discussion. I must say I am amazed that after so much study of the battle there remains such fundamental disagreement. Some of the issues raised here certainly lend themselves to further discussion. One such is Peter Carmichael's point about the lack of cohesiveness in the high command of the Army of the Potomac, and we have already asked historian John Hennessy to explore this in a future article. □

Crossfire

(continued from page 6) correspondents have confirmed that was also their perception. Not wishing to suggest any affinity between Nazi Germany and the Confederacy, I referred merely to "classic propaganda." I do find anything that suggests an affinity between the two to be frightening. Perhaps Charles doesn't.

Incidentally, I understand—and sympathize with—the pleasure with which some have viewed the movie. In a world in which "Dixie" is so often portrayed in a wholly negative manner, what an emotional shot in the arm "Gods" must be. So much so that many are prepared to forgive its historical and dramatic shortcomings, or not even notice them. But it is absurd to label all the criticism "PC" (an increasingly meaningless term that signifies little more than "I don't like it"). I have talked, for example, with an SCV member who fell asleep during the movie, and a Virginian grandson of Confederate soldiers who walked out halfway through because, as he commented, "it insulted my intelligence." These are not "PC" reactions! We should accept that people have legitimate, honestly held differences of opinion regarding the movie, differences that have been reflected both in *North & South's* original coverage and in the letters in this column.

* * *

After reading the most recent edition of *North & South* I was appalled. How could so many so-called learned men be so biased and wrong? I readied myself to write a venomous counter-letter, but after calming down I thought twice. It was a good thing I did because while my head was cooling I came across a very good letter in your Crossfire section from last summer [vol. 5, #5] entitled "Dumbing Down of America." It seems a Mr. Jack Maples, author of *Reconstructed Yankee*, had beaten me to the punch. And I reasoned what more could I add. I decided to add anyway.

Last winter I took my boys to view the opening of "Gods and Generals," having waited with earnest all year for it to premier. We were all very moved with the story and came away feeling all parties including Mr. Ron Maxell had done their jobs well. Then came the historians' response, and I was disgusted to realize that, with all of the information we have at hand in this country, Americans have come away with the same brainwashed attitude they have always had. The North was the crusading white knight and the South was the ever vilified black knight forever to be cursed with the evil of slavery.

I used to be weary of revisionist history and now I know history was revisionist from the very start. No one should know this more than Mr. David W. Blight of Yale University. For it was the Yankee slavers who brought the Africans to our shores in bondage to begin with. So much so that the New England and later the northern industrial economy was built on the profits from this business. Remember, Mr. Blight, mercantilism, or trilateral trade, and slavery did at one time exist in the North. It was only when it became economically unfeasible that the North in its self-righteous holiness began to point the finger at the South.

When the run-on dialogue and overacting was done by the Yankees in "Gettysburg" it was critically acclaimed. But when the so-called overacting and bad acting was done in a movie where the South won all the battles, this could not be tolerated. So the intelligentsia distracted us with the evil South and slavery. It won't be the last time, and I fear for future generations. —*Jeffrey Gow*

An Unreconstructed Yankee

ED: As a matter of fact Jeff Daniels' speech in "Gettysburg" about "setting men free," perhaps the emotional climax of the movie, left me feeling distinctly uneasy, for abolitionists were in a relatively small minority in the Union army. No double standard here!

* * *

Like many movie critics and historians I was disappointed with "Gods and Generals."

As an historic site employee and frequent battlefield visitor it is painfully clear to me that Americans do not know their history. And a great opportunity was lost with "Gods and Generals." But perhaps there is still time to fix the VHS tapes and DVD prior to release.

The film should have kept the same format as "Gettysburg," and even the same music. The new score did absolutely nothing for "Gods." After the opening with the banners, a history lesson is needed to set the stage: using an 1860 U.S. map and period photographs, the few minutes required would be well spent. A narrative could explain how the country developed two cultures. With our mobile society, people today can't imagine the significance of place, i.e., fighting for state *vs.* country.

The depiction of slavery in the film was appalling, even to me. Slavery is a very complicated issue, and most people can't imagine *any* blacks fighting for the Confederacy or being loyal to their owners or state. But to ignore the harsh reality of the vast majority toiling in the fields was misleading.

The film's biggest problem was poor editing, and extending the movie to six hours will not fix it. By omitting Antietam, Manassas II, and the Valley Campaign, the movie failed to develop the growth of the Jackson legend. This could have been achieved by the use of soldiers' letters narrated over brief battle scenes, taking a minimum of screen time.

Overaged reenactors manning the wrong cannon are insignificant when balanced against the larger failure of a film that could have helped educate a nation. We can only hope they get the third part right.

—Gregory Schmidl, West Caldwell, NJ

* * *

Can you bear with one more writer regarding the "Gods And Generals" brouhaha? It seems to me that all of the historians asked to critique the movie missed the point; this is not a documentary, but rather a visualization of a novel. The question to ask is how faithful to the author's work is the director's recreation of certain events in the book. All of the historians queried took umbrage with the historical accuracy of the film, but did they read the novel, or are they mired in academia?

I have read the Shaara novels, and found Ron Maxwell's interpretations on film to be excellent. Of course one cannot include every detail from every chapter in such books; the result would be a film to rival Ken Burns' documentary "The Civil War" in length and scope. The filmmaker and screenwriter must strive to sift the most salient points from the novel without destroying its color and depth, while at the same time keeping its running time from becoming overwhelming.

Mr. Maxwell has succeeded admirably with both "Gettysburg" and "Gods and Generals" in capturing the mood and intensity of their namesake novels. This is cinematography the way it should be—the characters are not shadow people or caricatures; they are fully realized people with ideals and pasts and emotions. The visual effects are stunning, the battles gripping and horrendous. This viewer left the theatre shaken, moved almost to tears, and wishing the last book in the trilogy, *The Last Full Measure*, was already "in the can" so that I could see it.

In conclusion, I would say to the historians and nit-pickers in the audience, if you want to see a documentary, watch "The Civil War" by Ken Burns. Otherwise, leave your learned precepts at the door and enjoy these films for what they are. Who knows, perhaps these movies will entertain some folks (both young and old) enough that they may want to read and learn more about that sad yet glorious time in our history.

—Margaret Perry, Winslow, Maine

ED: Many thanks to our readers for the dozens of letters received about "Gods and Generals," of which we have published a cross section. Please do not send more; we must move on to other subjects.

SOUTHERN SOLDIERS' WOMENFOLK

On page 67, Volume 6, #2, in the poem "The Girl I left Behind Me" there is a line missing—in the first verse, the third line should read "Her sighs and tears my steps delayed."

I really love *North & South* magazine, and look forward very much to every issue. Keep up the excellent work!

—Steve Dovel, Fairfield, Iowa

The hours sad I left a maid
A lingering farewell taking
Her sighs and tears my steps delayed
I thought her heart was breaking
In hurried words her name I blest
I breathed the vows that bind me
And to my heart in anguish pressed
The girl I left behind me

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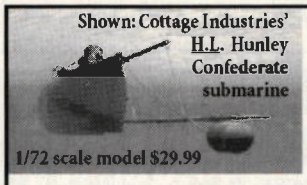

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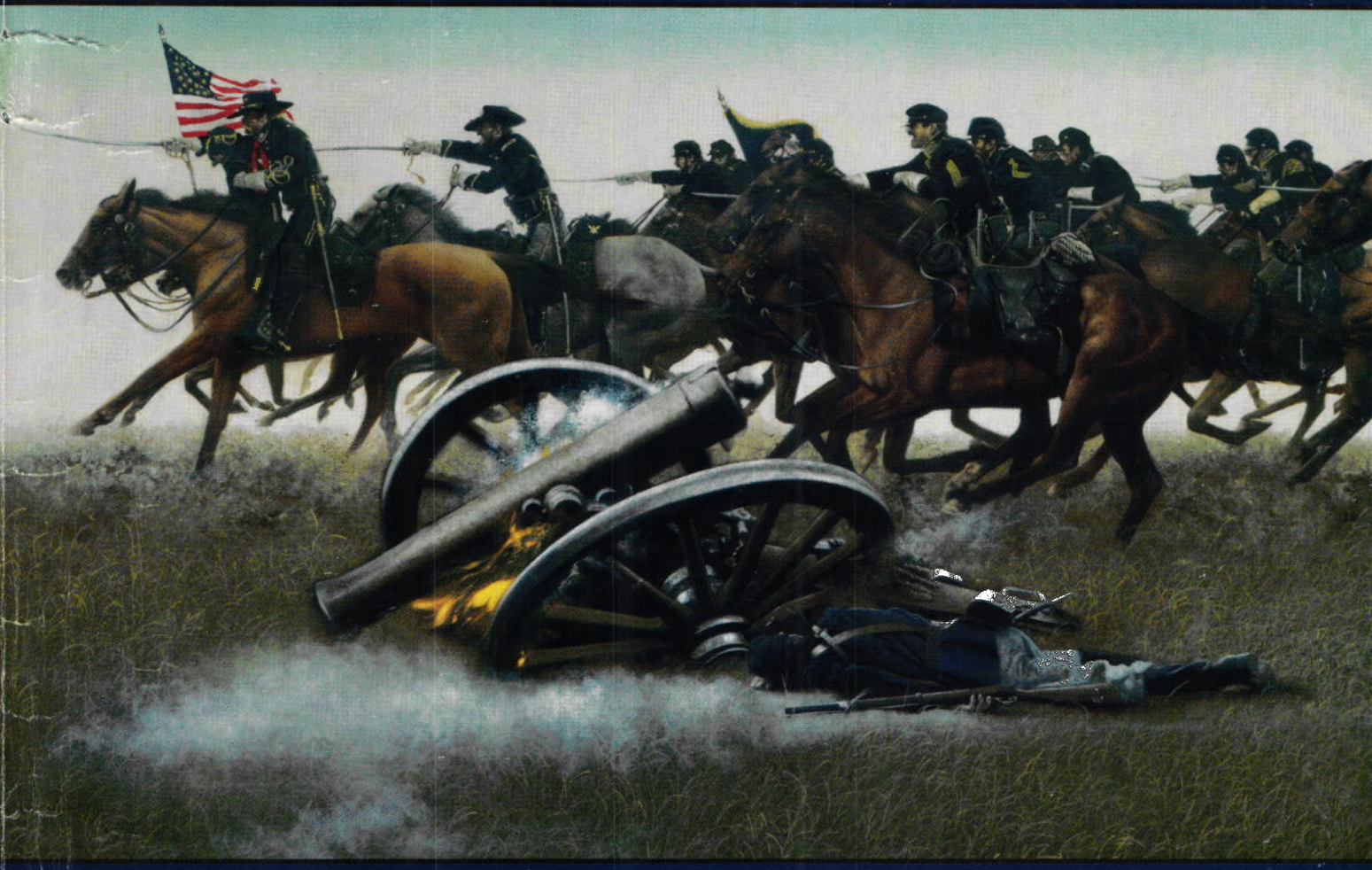

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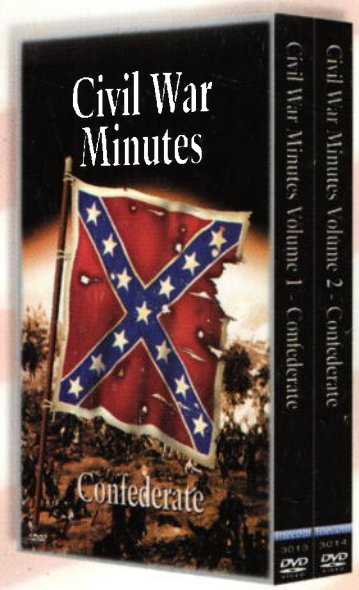

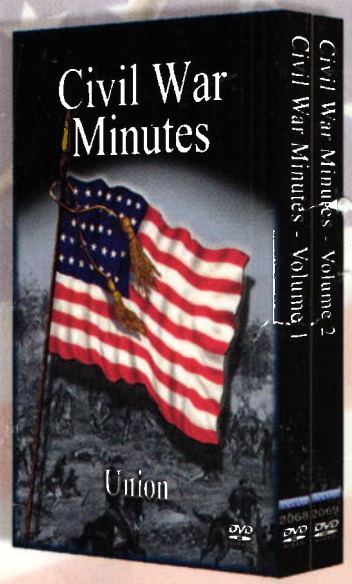

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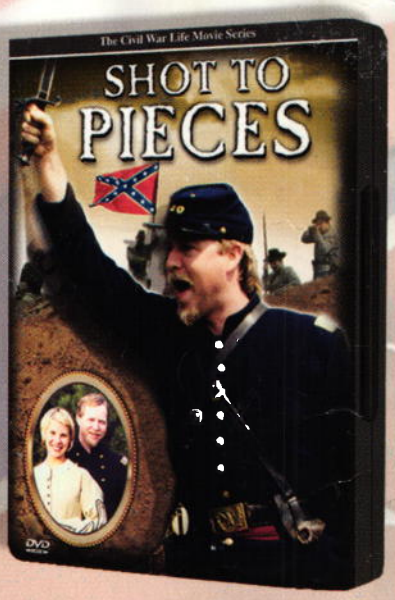

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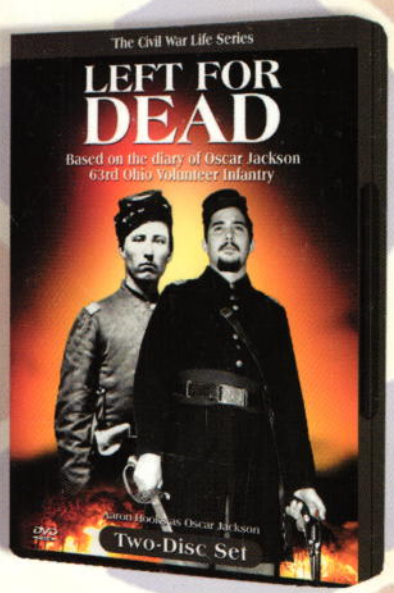

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