

Gettysburg was the turning point of the most tragic war in American history. This is an introductory study focusing on the command decisions, troop movements, and consequences on the participants' lives in this pivotal battle.

Gettysburg: What Duty Demanded

By Daniel P. Bricker

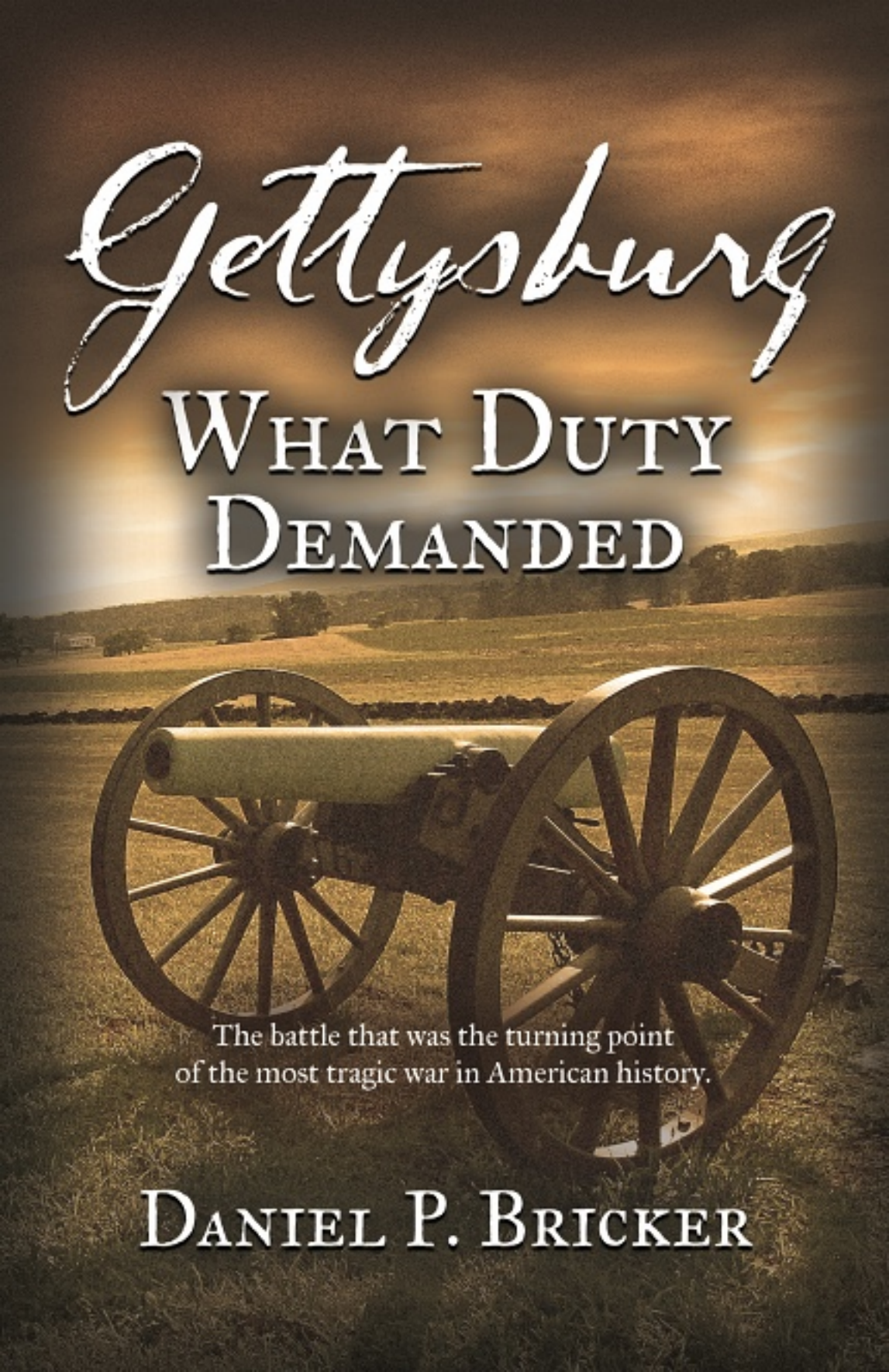
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Gettysburg

WHAT DUTY DEMANDED

A vintage cannon on a wooden carriage is positioned in a grassy field. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a setting or rising sun, with the sun visible in the background behind a line of trees. The overall mood is historical and somber.

The battle that was the turning point
of the most tragic war in American history.

DANIEL P. BRICKER

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Print ISBN: 978-1-959621-46-1

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-867-9

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2024

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Bricker, Daniel P.

Gettysburg: What Duty Demanded by Daniel P. Bricker

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024921754

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Preface

This study is one born of life-long interest. I can remember, as early as my third-grade year, reading every book my elementary school library had on the Civil War. That interest persisted throughout my junior high and high school years. In college, my primary interest turned in another direction, and my career did as well, although the Civil War was still there in my consciousness. As I got older, I discovered that I had ancestors who fought in the Civil War, and like many other modern Americans, they were on both sides.

On my father's side (the Union side), we know almost nothing about who they were. My great, great grandmother was an orphan—her father was killed fighting for the Union, probably in an Ohio unit, since she was from that state. She was a very small child when her mother died of illness during the war. She grew up in an orphanage and knew next to nothing about her family background. For all we know, there were several of her relatives who fought for the Union, but we have no idea how many there might have been or what units they served in.

On the Southern side, thanks to an old family Bible and the memory of my grandmother, we know much more. My great, great-grandfather was in the 9th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. He died in 1938, and my mother, who recently passed away at 91, remembered seeing him around when she was a little girl. He went into the Army when he was 16 and served in the cavalry for two years (1864-1865). After the war, he refused to ride a horse for the rest of his life. Mom said he walked everywhere he went. Looking back, we could probably surmise that he suffered from what we now call PTSD from his service in the cavalry. I also had some distant relatives in the 3rd Arkansas

Infantry Regiment, which was part of the famous Texas Brigade. My grandmother once said that one of her elderly relatives who had known them described them as “rough-as-a-cobb country boys.” From the reading I have done about the Texas Brigade, that description likely fits just about every member of that unit.

Now that I am retired, I find I have the time to pursue this interest. I am thankful for a long-suffering wife who is willing to allow me to tour battlefields on our vacations. To date, I have visited the battlefield sites of Pea Ridge (Arkansas), Franklin (Tennessee), Manassas (Virginia), Antietam (Maryland), and Gettysburg (Pennsylvania), as well as the area around Harper’s Ferry (now West Virginia). It is my hope that I will be able to add to that list.

In my preparation for visiting the battlefields, I try to read up on the events and the historical setting of the battles, although I must confess, I didn’t get to do as much reading on the Battles of Pea Ridge and Franklin as I did for the others. When we visited Manassas, I was absolutely enthralled as the guide described the troop movements on and near Henry House Hill at the Battle of First Manassas, and the reading I had done helped me understand it better.

I stood looking at the ridge and the tree line where Brigadier General Thomas J. Jackson had his men lay down to conceal themselves in the high grass from the Federal troops near Henry House. I stood just a few feet from where Brigadier General Bernard Bee was mortally wounded not long after telling his retreating men, “Rally to the Virginians; there stands Jackson like a stone wall.” I walked on the field where the Virginians let loose with the soon-to-be-famous Rebel Yell and charged the Federal battery, trying to unlimber and open fire, and I said to myself, “I know what happened here in this very place I am standing.” I had read many accounts of the Battle of First Manassas, but standing in the field near Henry

House Hill, looking at Matthews Hill from where Union troops advanced on Henry House Hill and over toward Blackburn's Ford across Bull Run, where brigades commanded by relatively unknown officers named Longstreet and Early held off a Federal division, I was able to see the battle for the first time.

I had very similar reactions when we visited Gettysburg in early October 2023. It was stunning and, at times, overwhelming for me, especially when I stood on Cemetery Ridge and tried to imagine what over 13,000 approaching Confederates would have looked like at Pickett's Charge. The Visitors Center is by far the best I have ever seen in a state or national park or battlefield. The cyclorama of Pickett's Charge even impressed my wife. The next day, we took an auto audio tour, which was very informative. When we got out of the car to look more closely at the various sites, I had to refrain from describing in excruciating detail what happened there, knowing my wife was far more interested in looking at the fall colors than hearing about the battle, so I simply recited the narrative in my mind.

Though I have read about the battle extensively there is no substitute for visiting the site itself. I now have a better concept of the distances and the terrain. For example, as I told a friend, I had always assumed that the part of the battlefield known as the Wheatfield was basically flat ground, but when I saw it, I realized that was not so. The curve of the land would have affected the aim and fire of the soldiers there.

One of my big disappointments was that the access road to Little Round Top was closed for repaving, so we were not able to go up there. However, I did see it a few hundred yards away from the height of Devil's Den and wondered how any commanding officer could have expected soldiers with nothing but muzzle-loading rifles and bayonets to take what looked like an unassailable position.

Just to set the record straight, Civil War history is not my academic field of specialty. I am what could probably be best described as an enthusiast. Publishing has always been an interest of mine, although I have not done a lot of it compared to some in the world of academia. Decades ago, while working on my Ph.D. I was talking to a professor about my dissertation, and he told me that there came a point where I had to submit it and not worry about perfection. Then, a few years later, I was conversing with a friend about scholarly research and publishing, and I described how I had several academic journal articles in process and couldn't finish one due to jumping back and forth between them. He just laughed and jokingly told me I was too scatterbrained to publish. I must admit I did the same thing with this book, jumping from one chapter to another and having difficulty finishing any of them. So, I am not sure how someone so scatterbrained and a perfectionist (is that an oxymoron?) managed to get this book completed. Although it is very far from perfect, I am pleased that I was able to collect and hold my thoughts together long enough to finish a study of a life-long interest.

It can also be noted that this study is introductory in nature. It is nowhere near the scope and depth of say, Stephen W. Sears' *Gettysburg* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), or Allen C. Guelzo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), both of which are oft-cited in this study. For readers who want to dig deeper these two are recommended but not the only ones that are well-written and based on excellent scholarship. See the bibliography for others.

Regarding the layout of the book, it consists of nine chapters and four excursions. The term *excursus* refers to a detailed discussion of a point, usually in an appendix. The reason for them is that there were points to be made that would make the chapters overly long or would

disrupt the flow of a chapter. I didn't want to push all the discussions to the end of the book and call them appendices, knowing they would likely be ignored. The information they contain is intended to add to the background and context of the chapters.

Hopefully for those who have little or only limited knowledge of the battle this book provides some basic information and encourages further reading on the topic. It was a project I thoroughly enjoyed researching and writing about.

Daniel P. Bricker, Ph.D.
October 2024

Prologue: Duty and Commitment

“...that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion...”

*--Abraham Lincoln
Gettysburg Address*

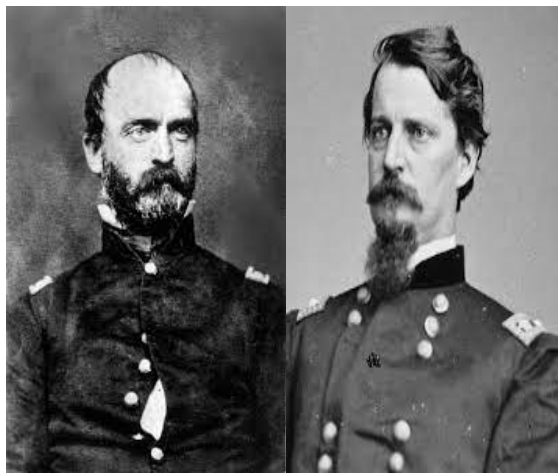
“I did only what my duty demanded; I could have taken no other course without dishonor & if all was to be done over again, I should act precisely in the same manner.”

--Robert E. Lee after the Civil War

At the height of summer in the early days of July 1863, two armies met almost by accident near the small crossroads town of Gettysburg in southern Pennsylvania. Although all wars are sad and tragic, the saddest and most tragic aspect of the largest and most important battle of this appalling conflict was that the two opposing armies were composed of *Americans*. The battle raged for three days, and both sides suffered close to 50,000 casualties, the bloodiest and costliest battle ever fought on the North American continent.

The American Civil War has often been described as “brother against brother,” and by now, that description of “brother against brother,” “friend against friend,” and “neighbor against neighbor” almost sounds trite. Still, in this war, it was in many instances, literally true. Families were divided against each other and, in some cases, met on the same battlefields. One example that has always stood out

was that Confederate cavalry general J.E.B. Stuart was married to the daughter of Union general Philip St. George Cooke, who was known as the “Father of the U.S. Cavalry.” Let that sink in. The army officer who pioneered and organized the



*Lewis Armistead (left) and Winfield Scott Hancock (right)
(Library of Congress)*

United States Cavalry had a son-in-law who became one of the best cavalry generals of the war, and they fought on opposite sides.

Another example of family and friends divided is that Ulysses S. Grant was married to Julia Dent, a cousin of James Longstreet, a close friend of Grant’s when they were students at West Point. The three groomsmen at Grant’s wedding, including Longstreet, who later commanded First Corps in the Army of Northern Virginia, were all close friends at West Point and surrendered to Grant at Appomattox.¹

Also sad was the situation at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863, at the height of what is often known as Pickett’s Charge, when two old friends found themselves on opposite sides just a short distance from each other. Major General Winfield Scott Hancock was commanding Union troops holding the stone wall atop Cemetery Ridge. He was

¹ Joan Waugh, *U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 33.

severely wounded when a bullet went through his saddle pommel and into his right thigh. A tourniquet was needed to tie off the bleeding and he was taken to the rear. Confederates led by his dear friend Brigadier General Lewis Armistead got over the wall. Armistead was hit three times by rifle fire, although none of the wounds were seen as serious at the time. He was carried to a Union hospital. News of his wounding was later related to Hancock, who could not visit his friend due to the ferocity of the battle.² Hancock was unable to visit Armistead due to his injury and the battle still in progress. Armistead asked to see Hancock, but Hancock's wound was too serious for him to move. Although Armistead's wounds were not seen as severe, he died two days later, probably of infection.³ Thus, two close friends fighting on the same battlefield were both wounded a short distance apart, and neither ever saw the other again.

Neighbors also fought each other. On July 2, at Culp's Hill on the far right of the Union line, the 1st Maryland Infantry Regiment was positioned near Spangler's Spring. Attacking them was the 1st Maryland Infantry Battalion of the Army of Northern Virginia, with the color bearers for the opposing units being cousins. These two units were recruited from the same region; many were neighbors and friends. After the battle, according to Union Colonel James Wallace, "our old friends and acquaintances" in the Confederate unit were "sorrowfully gathered up... and tenderly cared for" by the Union Marylanders.⁴

² Michael A. Halleran, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Freemasonry in the American Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 26-30.

³ Derek Smith, *The Gallant Dead: Union & Confederate Generals Killed in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005), 174-175.

⁴ Ryan Donnelly, "Culp's Hill: Key to Union Success at Gettysburg," *The Gettysburg College Journal of the Civil War Era* 3 (2013): 88-89.

There are many other examples of family, friends, and neighbors who fought against each other, so the descriptions of “brother against brother,” “friend against friend,” and “neighbor against neighbor” are not just literary phrases but reflect the often-painful reality of those who lived in America from 1861-1865.

Reading personal accounts of those who fought, we often find that many considered it their *duty* to fight. Duty might be understood as a personal, legal, and/or moral obligation or responsibility. The Roman philosopher Cicero noted that duties may arise from four different sources:⁵

1. As a result of being a human
2. As a result of one’s particular place in life (family, country, job, etc.)
3. As a result of one’s character
4. As a result of one’s own moral expectations of oneself

Individuals had to define for themselves what their personal duty demanded, and it seems likely that the people (soldiers and civilians alike) involved in the war acted and reacted the way they did for reasons arising from all four of Cicero’s categories. For some, it meant saving the Union; for others, it meant protecting their homes and families from invaders—for each one, it may have been based on different beliefs, obligations, or commitments. Regardless of how duty was interpreted individually, one of the conclusions we often reach some 160 years later is the level of commitment those on each side had to their perceived duty. It is difficult to cite a limited number

⁵ Marcus Tullias Cicero, *De Officiis*, 44 B.C. The Latin title can be translated “On Duties.”

of examples when just about every man who shouldered a weapon and answered roll call on July 1-3, 1863, could be honored with their stories of courage and commitment.

Consider the 1st Minnesota Infantry Regiment, which numbered only 262 officers and men on July 2, 1863. Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, riding with an aide along Cemetery Ridge, saw that a brigade of Confederates under Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox had broken through the III Corps position in the Wheatfield, and many III Corps troops were retreating toward him, leaving a large gap that threatened an artillery battery and the Union line atop Cemetery Ridge. Looking around for a unit to plug the gap he found only one undersized regiment. Hancock exclaimed, "My God, are these all the men we have here? What unit is this?" Col. William Colvill, commanding the unit, answered, "First Minnesota, sir." Hancock then gave the order to attack the advancing Confederate brigade (roughly 1200 men) to stop the breakthrough. As Col. Colvill later related, "I immediately gave the order 'Forward double-quick' and under a galling fire from the enemy, we advanced."⁶ As Civil War historian Stephen W. Sears stated:

The veterans of the 1st Minnesota, that state's one regiment in the Army of the Potomac, had fought at First Bull Run and in every campaign since and they knew a forlorn hope when they became one, yet fixed bayonets and charged anyway.⁷

⁶ Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 320.

⁷ *Ibid.*

The Alabamans' attack lost momentum as they came under heavy rifle and artillery fire from three directions. With no infantry support on either side, they began to retreat. The 1st Minnesota also pulled back to the relative safety of Cemetery Ridge. Of the 262 men who charged the Alabama brigade, only 47 answered roll call that evening. Not a single field grade



Gettysburg monument to the 1st Minnesota Infantry. It stands near the spot where General Hancock issued the order to attack. (Courtesy of the National Park Service)

officer was left standing. The sacrifice and commitment to duty of the 1st Minnesota Infantry bought Hancock time to reinforce the Union line. Hancock's order that cost the 1st Minnesota so dearly saved the Union line on Cemetery Ridge from potential disaster. Later General Hancock would write, "I cannot speak too highly of this regiment and its commanders in its attack."⁸

Looking back on the actions taken by the officers and men of the 1st Minnesota Infantry, they were experienced enough to know what lay ahead of them when Col. Colvill gave them the order to advance.

⁸ Richard Moe, *The Last Full Measure: The Life and Death of the First Minnesota Volunteers* (New York: Holt, 1993), 268-274.

They knew *why* the order was given and *what* was at stake. They also knew they were seriously outnumbered (roughly 5:1) and stood little chance of survival, but they grimly fixed bayonets and *advanced anyway*. Their commitment to duty was placed above their personal safety and well-being.

The courageous sacrifice of thousands of soldiers, not the least of which included the 1st Minnesota Infantry, as Abraham Lincoln so eloquently stated in the Gettysburg Address, was given to their “last full measure of devotion.”

One of the most interesting characters in the Battle of Gettysburg was not an American fighting on either side. Lt. Col. Arthur J.L. Fremantle was a British Army officer who was so interested in the American Civil War that he took a leave of absence from his elite unit, Her Majesty’s Coldstream Guards, and spent several months accompanying Confederate armies throughout the South. He found the Army of Northern Virginia just before they started their advance into Pennsylvania, and introduced himself to Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, commanding general of First Corps. Fremantle spent a great deal of time with Longstreet and his staff during the Gettysburg Campaign and later published his journal which recorded his impressions.⁹ As Longstreet’s Corps moved toward the front on July 2, firing was heard in the distance. Fremantle recalls:

At 3 P.M., we began to meet wounded men coming to the rear, and the number of these soon increased most rapidly, some hobbling alone, others on stretchers carried by the ambulance corps, and others in the ambulance wagons. Many of the latter were stripped nearly naked and displayed very

⁹ Arthur J.L. Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States: April, June, 1863* (Mobile: S. H. Goetzel, 1864).

bad wounds. This spectacle, so revolting to a person unaccustomed to such sights, produced no impression whatever upon the advancing troops, who certainly go under fire with the most perfect nonchalance (*sic*). They show no enthusiasm or excitement but the most complete indifference. This is the effect of two years' almost uninterrupted fighting.¹⁰

Fremantle's description of the reaction of Longstreet's men to the wounded and their attitude as they advanced into combat is telling. Many of us would feel horror at the sights these men saw. Fremantle relates what he calls the "complete indifference" that these battle-hardened soldiers showed and the "most perfect nonchalance (*sic*)" as they moved forward. Longstreet's men were combat veterans—in the day's idiom, they had "seen the elephant."¹¹ They were experienced soldiers and *knew* what was in front of them. Fremantle's words communicated a definite truth about Longstreet's First Corps but could be applied equally to the Army of Northern Virginia as a whole. Lee's troops were determined and persistent; their intention to succeed was obvious as Fremantle watched them advance. Fremantle's observations made during his time with Lee's Army of Northern Virginia overwhelmingly indicate a willingness to make trying sacrifices for their cause. Their dedication to duty characterized the very essence of Lee's army. They showed it on Days 2 and 3 at Gettysburg as they attacked uphill against a foe holding

¹⁰ Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 127-128.

¹¹ "Seeing the elephant" was an expression that arose from those who had visited a circus and seen an animal that was not native to North America and most Americans simply had no frame of reference for, since it was so unlike anything in their everyday experience. It was not always seen as a negative experience since it often indicated gaining worldly experience but at a high cost, since one had to pay to see the elephant. In military circles it came to refer to seeing combat.

strong defensive positions at Culp's Hill, Devil's Den, Little Round Top, and Cemetery Ridge. Their courage and resolution cannot be doubted. We can look back and agree or disagree with their *cause*, but it is hard to question their *courage* and *commitment*.

The Battle of Gettysburg continues to hold a unique place in American history. For those with even a slight familiarity with the battle, the places where fighting raged over those three hot days in early July of 1863 have become well known. For example, there were thousands of fields in the United States where farmers grew wheat, but over 6000 casualties in the fighting in the one farmed by John Rose on July 2 made it *the* Wheatfield. A similar status holds for a grove of peach trees that the Sherfy family owned. Due to the heavy fighting there, where the Union III Corps was routed, it came to be known as *the* Peach Orchard. Other place names from the battle also echo down through U.S. military history—Culp's Hill, Devil's Den, Cemetery Ridge, and Little Round Top.

A story of courage and commitment could be told for each one who shouldered a musket and advanced in the face of artillery and small arms fire. Today, when touring the battlefield, one cannot help but notice the many battlefield monuments to individuals and the units who were engaged at Gettysburg and call on us to remember their gallantry and sacrifices. They pay silent tribute to the determination and courage that duty demanded.

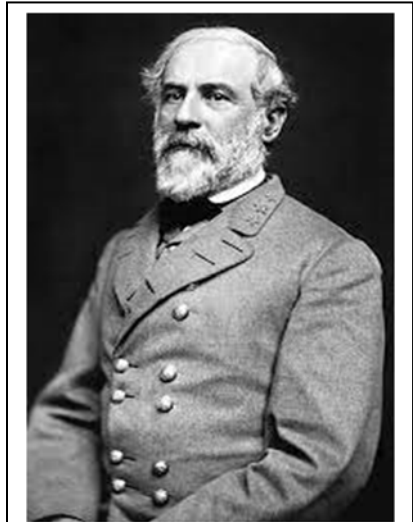
Chapter 1: An Overview of the Battle

This battle has been analyzed and discussed in many excellent books and articles, and the need to repeat it here is for context in this study. In the following chapters, specific events and troop movements will be the point of the discussion, so this context is necessary. The approach will be to describe the main events and actions by the day of their occurrence, noting, of course, that in many cases, the events of one day had a direct effect on the following day(s).

Background

The Battle of Gettysburg, fought on July 1-3, 1863, is one of the most studied battles in American military history. This pivotal clash followed General Robert E. Lee's stunning defeat of Union forces at Chancellorsville two months earlier. After such a significant victory, Lee aimed to push the war into Union territory for several reasons.

First, the harsh reality was that Northern Virginia had been nearly stripped bare of resources. Two years of relentless campaigning



*Robert E. Lee (1807-1870),
commanding general, Army of
Northern Virginia
(Library of Congress)*

had left the area in desperate need of supplies, making a move into Union-held regions essential.

Second, Lee's campaign was also about making a strong statement on the international stage. A major victory on Union soil was intended to persuade European powers like England and France to recognize the Confederacy. Such recognition could lead to valuable trade agreements and perhaps even military support, which the South desperately needed.

Most crucially, Lee wanted to pressure the Union by threatening Washington, D.C. The hope was that by creating a dire situation near the capitol, Lincoln might be forced into peace negotiations, potentially ending the war on terms favorable to the Confederacy.

In essence, Lee's invasion of the North was driven by practical needs and strategic ambitions: to relieve resource shortages, seek international support, and pressure the Federal government into negotiating peace.

However, Lee failed to defeat the Army of the Potomac, commanded by Maj. Gen. George G. Meade and this failure is recognized by most as the "high water mark of the Confederacy." Though the war dragged on for nearly two more years, for the most part, the Southern armies were forced to fight defensive battles on their home soil rather than offensive strikes into Northern territory until Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

On June 1, 1862, Robert E. Lee was appointed as the commanding general of the Army of Northern Virginia, a name given after the Army of Virginia was reorganized following the wounding of General Joseph E. Johnston at the Battle of Seven Pines. Just a few weeks after taking command on June 25, Lee launched the Seven Days Battles, a series of aggressive attacks that drove the Union's Army of the Potomac

away from Richmond and ended Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Peninsula Campaign.

Lee's successes didn't stop there. In late August, he faced off against Maj. Gen. John Pope and his Army of Virginia at the Battle of Second Manassas (Bull Run), where he secured another significant victory. In less than three months as the leader of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee achieved a series of impressive feats: he forced the larger Army of the Potomac, led by George B. McClellan, to retreat from the Virginia Peninsula, defeated another sizable Union force under John Pope, and shifted the front lines from about 80 miles south of Washington to roughly 20 miles from the Federal capitol. But Lee's success, impressive as it was up to this point, would not stop there.

As some scholars have suggested, Lee came to believe the ANV was virtually invincible regardless of the numerical odds against them or the terrain they fought on. What led him to hold this view? The two major battles that preceded Gettysburg may have given Lee a false idea of how much his smaller army could accomplish. The discussion below of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville are thumbnail sketches. More detailed studies are available.¹

The Battle of Fredericksburg

As the war dragged on in its second year, Lincoln's patience and frustration with the leadership of the Army of the Potomac grew

¹ For Fredericksburg, see George C. Rable, *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Francis A. O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006). For Chancellorsville, see Stephen W. Sears, *Chancellorsville* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Ernest B. Ferguson, *Chancellorsville 1863: The Souls of the Brave* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

more pronounced. It seemed that the southern generals were badly outgeneraling the northern generals.

Abraham Lincoln once asked General (Winfield) Scott this question: "Why is it that you were once able to take Mexico City in three months with five thousand men, and we have been unable to take Richmond with one hundred thousand men?" "I will tell you," said General Scott. "The men who took us into Mexico City are the same men who are keeping us out of Richmond."²

Not only were the Confederate generals keeping the Union Army away from Richmond but the poor performance by the leadership of the Army of the Potomac contributed greatly to its lack of success.

Abraham Lincoln's patience was wearing thin due to Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's inactivity and frequent excuses. McClellan failed to pursue Lee after the inconclusive Battle of Antietam in September 1862. Frustrated by McClellan's overly cautious approach and lack of communication,³ Lincoln decided a change of leadership was needed. On November 5, 1862, he relieved McClellan of command and appointed Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside as his replacement.

Ambrose Burnside, a West Point graduate (class of 1847), had resigned his commission in 1853 to pursue business ventures. However, as the Civil War erupted, he returned to military service. He

² *Confederate Veteran Magazine* 21 (1913), 471. I have not been able to document this quote from the records of Lincoln or Scott. The magazine does not provide a source. The exchange likely never took place although it does reflect a certain amount of truth.

³ Glenn W. LaFantasie, "How Lincoln Won and Lost at Gettysburg," *Leadership and the Battle of Gettysburg Conference* (Gettysburg National Military Park, 2002), 199-200.

raised a regiment of Rhode Island troops and was appointed as its colonel. His military career quickly progressed as he took on greater responsibilities, eventually commanding a brigade, then a division, and finally leading IX Corps.

Burnside, one in a series of ineffective commanders Lincoln appointed and then had to replace, accepted the promotion reluctantly⁴ but proposed attacking Lee at Fredericksburg in mid-December 1862.

Burnside's strategy for the Battle of Fredericksburg involved attacking on two fronts: crossing the Rappahannock River as well as advancing on the town itself. However, the plan encountered significant obstacles. The pontoon bridges, crucial for crossing the river, were delayed, giving Gen. Robert E. Lee time to fortify his defenses. Lee positioned sharpshooters in



*Ambrose Burnside (1824-1881),
commanding general, Army of
the Potomac
(Library of Congress)*

Fredericksburg to harass the Union Army engineers working to set up the pontoons. Additionally, Lee was able to move Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's First Corps to a strong defensive position behind a stone wall on Marye's Heights, just above the town.

⁴ Burnside was very hesitant to accept the position of Commanding General of the Army of the Potomac due to his lack of military experience, and after the debacle at Fredericksburg he offered his resignation from the Army, but Lincoln refused to accept it.

When Burnside's engineers finally got the pontoons in place Union infantry units were able to cross the river and began their assault. Burnside ordered fourteen frontal attacks, requiring his troops to advance uphill under devastating rifle fire and artillery barrages. Most of these attacks were unsuccessful, with notable success only on the Confederate far right. Burnside, however, failed to capitalize on the partial breakthrough. The Union Army suffered over 13,000 casualties. Observing the carnage, Lee reportedly remarked to Longstreet, "It is well that war is so terrible—otherwise, we should grow too fond of it." Following the battle, the Union Army retreated across the Rappahannock River, plagued by low morale and rising desertion. In January 1863, Lincoln removed Burnside from command and replaced him with Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker.

The Battle of Chancellorsville

After the setback at Fredericksburg, the Battle of Chancellorsville, fought in early May 1863, has sometimes been hailed by historians as Lee's "perfect battle."⁵

The Army of the Potomac was in dire need of reorganization, and Hooker, a competent administrator, was up to the task. He restructured the Army into the familiar system of regiments, brigades, divisions, and corps.⁶ His reforms also addressed critical aspects of daily life: improving the troops' diet, camp sanitation, and

⁵ Ron Field, *Robert E. Lee* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 28; William L. Barney, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66.

⁶ Each division and corps was given a distinctive insignia or symbol, which had the effect of promoting unit pride as individuals could instantly identify their unit. They carried flags into battle with these symbols. A similar practice is followed in the modern U.S. Army where divisions have now-famous identifying shoulder patches such as the legendary and unmistakable patches of the 1st Cavalry Division, 101st Airborne Division, etc.

the efficiency of the quartermaster system. He even introduced the addition of company cooks as well as organizing medical personnel to handle the sick and the wounded.⁷ These changes significantly boosted the morale of an Army that had sunk to its lowest point under Burnside.

Despite these badly-needed improvements, Hooker's arrogance was a liability. His boastful statement, "My plans are perfect, and when I start to carry them out, may God have mercy on Bobby Lee, for I will have none," did not endear him to his colleagues. While no records reveal Lee's reaction to this boast, Hooker's staff and corps commanders were well aware of the overconfidence and the irony of it, given the outcome of the battle.

Hooker began moving his corps across the Rappahannock River toward Chancellorsville.

Unlike Burnside's direct assault, Hooker's strategy aimed to outflank and envelop Lee's Army. Hooker sent three corps—II, XI, and XII—across the Rappahannock and then south across the Rapidan to attack Lee from the west. Meanwhile, V Corps and two divisions of II



*Joseph Hooker (1814-1879),
Commanding General, Army of
the Potomac
(Library of Congress)*

⁷ Bruce Catton, *Glory Road* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1952), 141-147.

Corps crossed the Rappahannock west of Fredericksburg to push the Confederates away from the river. To complete the envelopment, I Corps and VI Corps forded the Rappahannock below Fredericksburg, threatening Lee's right flank, held by Jackson's Second Corps. The rest of the Army of the Potomac remained in a position to mask these movements from the Confederate high command.

Unit Designations

From an organizational standpoint a corps in the ANV was larger than a corps in the Army of the Potomac. Union corps were designated by a Roman numeral; Confederate corps were given Arabic numerals or identified by their commanding general. Union divisions were numbered (for example 1st Division, IV Corps) while Confederate divisions were referenced by their current (sometimes former) commanding officer (for example Pickett's Division, Longstreet's Corps or First Corps). ANV brigades took either a state designation or a current or former commander. For example, the ANV brigade composed of the 1st, 4th, 5th Texas Infantry Regiments along with the 3rd Arkansas Infantry Regiment was called the Texas Brigade or Robertson's Brigade. Union brigades were numbered, or sometimes went by a nickname, such as the Iron Brigade, which was comprised of the 2nd, 6th, 7th Wisconsin Infantry, the 19th Indiana Infantry, and later the 24th Michigan. Regiments took a number and the state they originated from, along with the designation of infantry or cavalry.

The movements were not well coordinated or concealed, and Lee had an idea of what Hooker was attempting, thanks to the intelligence supplied by Stuart's cavalry scouts. Lee left Barksdale's Brigade at Marye's Heights above Fredericksburg and Early's Division at Prospect Heights, directly confronting Sedgwick's VI Corps, to conceal his audacious plan. In a bold move, Lee divided his

numerically inferior army into two parts and launched an attack on Union forces near Chancellorsville. He retained 13,000 men in front of Hooker to hold him in place and mask the movement around the Union right flank. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Thomas J. (“Stonewall”) Jackson led his Second Corps westward around the Union right flank. The surprise was so complete that Federal troops were caught off guard, relaxing in camp with unloaded rifles, while many engaged in cooking supper. Jackson’s 28,000 men surged from the trees with their famous rebel yell, driving the Union XI Corps nearly 1.5 miles almost back to Chancellorsville.

That evening, Jackson and his staff rode forward to explore the lines to assess the possibility of a night attack. Nervous pickets from the 18th North Carolina mistook Jackson’s staff for Federal cavalry and opened fire. Jackson was wounded in three places and died eight days later on May 10, 1863.⁸ Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, a cavalry officer with limited experience in commanding infantry, assumed temporary command of Second Corps.

Despite regrouping with a significant numerical advantage of over 2:1, the Union Army could not withstand the Confederate assault. Fierce infantry attacks and a relentless artillery barrage forced them to abandon their position. The Confederate forces reunited near Chancellorsville, where Lee’s arrival was met with a loud celebration. Riding in on Traveller, Lee’s presence sparked a wave of jubilation. As Lee’s aide-de-camp, Col. Charles Marshall recalled after the war:

⁸ For a detailed study of the friendly fire incident that led to Jackson’s death, see Robert K. Krick, “The Smoothbore Volley That Doomed the Confederacy,” in *Chancellorsville: The Battle and Its Aftermath*, Gary W. Gallagher, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 107–142.

Lee's presence signaled one of those uncontrollable bursts of enthusiasm that only those who have witnessed them can truly appreciate. The fierce soldiers, their faces blackened by the smoke of battle, and the wounded, crawling with feeble limbs from the flames of conflict, all seemed possessed by a common impulse. A long, unbroken cheer erupted, blending the feeble cries of the helpless with the strong voices of those who still fought. This roar of triumph rose above the sounds of battle, hailing the presence of a victorious leader. Lee sat in the full realization of what soldiers dream of—triumph. As I looked upon him, in the complete fruition of the success won through his genius, courage, and confidence in his army, I thought such a scene must have inspired men in ancient days to rise to the dignity of gods.⁹

The celebration was short-lived, as word reached Lee that the Federals had broken through the thin line left at Fredericksburg, and Lee sent two divisions to stop the advance. These units pushed Sedgwick's VI Corps back across the Rappahannock River. Hooker then held a council of war with his corps commanders and inexplicably decided not to pursue further action against the badly outnumbered Confederates.

In Hooker's defense, at the height of the battle, a cannon ball struck a wooden column he was leaning against at his headquarters, rendering him unconscious for over an hour, likely giving him a concussion. He remained incapacitated but refused to turn over the responsibilities for conducting the battle to a subordinate, leading many of his senior officers to question his fitness for command. It is

⁹ Charles Marshall, *An Aide-de-Camp of Lee; Being the Papers of Colonel Charles Marshall, Sometime Aide-de-Camp, Military Secretary, and Assistant Adjutant General on the Staff of Robert E. Lee, 1862–1865*, ed. Sir Frederick Maurice (Boston: Little, Brown, 1927), 173.

doubtful that his lieutenants would have reacted so negatively to him if he had agreed to step aside until his mind had cleared and he could conduct the battle properly. Hooker's "brain fog" likely contributed to his poor performance throughout the rest of the battle.¹⁰ This event led his second-in-command, Maj. Gen. Darius Couch and XII Corps commander Maj. Gen. Henry Slocum to say they would no longer serve under Hooker, which was a factor in his later dismissal as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

The bold plan carried out by Lee and Jackson gave Lee great confidence in the ANV.¹¹ Although it has been termed Lee's "perfect battle," Lee felt it fell short of any significant progress, as he stated later: "At Chancellorsville, we gained another victory; our people were wild with delight—I, on the contrary, was more depressed than after Fredericksburg; our loss was severe, and again we gained not an inch of ground and the enemy could not be pursued."¹²

The results of the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville were at least two-fold: (1) Lee's confidence that the ANV was up to the task regardless of the obstacles it faced, and (2) the loss of Jackson was not yet fully felt. In the first result, Lee had faced a series of, at best, hesitant and, at worst, incompetent Union generals, one of which, Ambrose Burnside, had had little military experience yet advanced all the way to command of the Army of the Potomac.

¹⁰ David J. Eicher, *The Longest Night: A Military History of the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 485-486.

¹¹ Eicher, *The Longest Night*, 489; Joseph P. Cullen, "Battle of Chancellorsville," in James M. McPherson, ed., *Battle Chronicles of the Civil War: 1863* (Lakeville: Grey Castle, 1989), 49-50, 69.

¹² A. L. Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee: His Military and Personal History* (New York: J. M. Stoddart and Co., 1887). Lee had begun his memoir but passed away in 1870 before it could be completed. General A. L. Long finished the work based on Lee's notes and gathered materials.

Unsurprisingly, the professionally trained generals of the ANV were confident when facing the Union Army and some of their inadequate generalship. Arthur Freemantle, the British officer traveling with Longstreet's staff, observed just before Gettysburg:

The Staff officers spoke of the battle as a certainty, and the universal feeling in the army was profound contempt for an enemy they have beaten so constantly, and under so many disadvantages.¹³

The second result soon had serious consequences, especially on the first day at Gettysburg. Lee's statement upon hearing of Jackson's wounding and the amputation of his left arm accentuated the loss far beyond what Lee could have imagined at that point: "He has lost his left arm but I my right." Jackson and Lee were rather "kindred spirits" when conducting combat operations. Both were very aggressive, and Jackson was Lee's most brilliant corps commander and adviser. Now that Jackson was gone, Lee turned to Longstreet, whom he thought highly of, who sometimes favored defensive tactics over boldly aggressive moves.

After the battle, Lee reorganized the ANV from the unwieldy two corps into three smaller, more maneuverable corps. Longstreet retained command of First Corps, Richard S. Ewell was promoted to replace Stuart as interim commander of Second Corps, and A. P. Hill's Light Division was separated from Second Corps and renamed Third Corps. Hill had recovered from his wounds received at

¹³ Arthur J.L. Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States: April, June, 1863* (Mobile: S. H. Goetzl, 1864), 129. Lt. Col. Fremantle was a British Army officer who was so interested in the American Civil War he took a leave of absence and spent time with the Southern armies. He has been referred to by some as a "war tourist" and was present with the Confederate staff at Gettysburg.

Chancellorsville and was promoted to reflect his new responsibilities as a corps commander. The ANV was now reorganized and freshly provisioned due to the captured supplies from the Army of the Potomac, and Lee started making serious preparations for the invasion of Pennsylvania.

Some have claimed that Longstreet was strongly against Lee's aggressive plans regarding the invasion of the North, but as the two generals conferred, Longstreet became a "convert" (in Sears' term) to the move. As Longstreet wrote to Senator Louis Wigfall of Texas, "If we could cross the Potomac with one hundred and fifty thousand men," he believed it might bring Lincoln to the bargaining table.¹⁴ The problem was that the ANV never in its entire history fielded 150,000 men in a battle. Lee would move north with about half that number.

The March to Gettysburg

The ANV moved westward from Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville to Brandy Station, northward through the Shenandoah Valley, and into Pennsylvania's Cumberland Valley. They were shadowed almost every step of the way by Union cavalry. Hooker's primary mission was to protect Washington and secondarily to intercept Lee and defeat him.

Lee's march north was not without its problems. Hooker knew where Lee was, and he shadowed the ANV as they moved up the Shenandoah Valley, with the Blue Ridge Mountain range separating them, and then through the Cumberland Valley with South Mountain between them once they were in Pennsylvania. Cavalry scouts kept Hooker informed of the location and activities of ANV units. By the same token, Lee also had ideas regarding where Hooker was, often

¹⁴ Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 7; Longstreet to Wigfall, May 13, Wigfall Papers, Library of Congress.



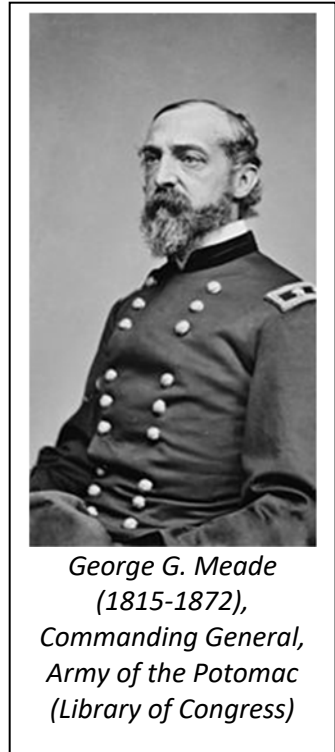
aided by local newspapers who supplied that information, much to Hooker's dismay.

Nor was the march north unopposed. Several battles were fought between Stuart's cavalry and Union cavalry under Pleasonton at Brandy Station, Winchester, Aldie, Middleburg, and Upperville as the two armies moved parallel to each other with the mountains in between.

Hooker sacked; Meade takes over. Although Hooker seemed to be keeping tabs on Lee, his position as commanding general of the Army of the Potomac was rather shaky. Following the defeat at Chancellorsville Lincoln, General-in-Chief Henry Halleck, and

Hooker's senior officers expressed their decreasing confidence in his ability. When Hooker got into a petty dispute with Army Headquarters over defensive forces at Harper's Ferry, Hooker impulsively offered his resignation in protest, prompting Lincoln and Halleck to quickly accept it.¹⁵

On June 28, 1863, only a few days before the battle of Gettysburg began, Maj. Gen. George Meade was appointed commanding general of the Army of the Potomac. Though it had been Hooker who had kept the Union Army between Lee and Washington, the credit for the victory at Gettysburg went mainly to Meade. Of course, Meade and Hooker were both well-known to most of the officers in the Confederate high command. Arthur Fremantle records in his journal on June 30, 1863:



In the evening General Longstreet told me that he had just received intelligence that Hooker had been disgraced, and that Meade was appointed in his place. Of course he knew both of them in the old army, and he says that Meade is an honorable and respectable man, though not, perhaps, so bold as Hooker.¹⁶

¹⁵ LaFantasie, "How Lincoln Won and Lost at Gettysburg," 204.

¹⁶ Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 126.

Meade was an unlikely choice because he was not the ranking officer next in line for the position, nor had he sought the position. Three corps commanders recommended him to Lincoln and agreed to serve under him.¹⁷

The Battle of Gettysburg

Our approach will be to break the battle down into the three days it took place. Certainly, in some respects, the impact of events overlaps; for example, the impact of the first day's fighting on the lack of information due to the late arrival of Stuart at Lee's headquarters on the afternoon of the second day, but the attempt will be to keep the discussion broken down into these segments of days.

The First Day: July 1, 1863

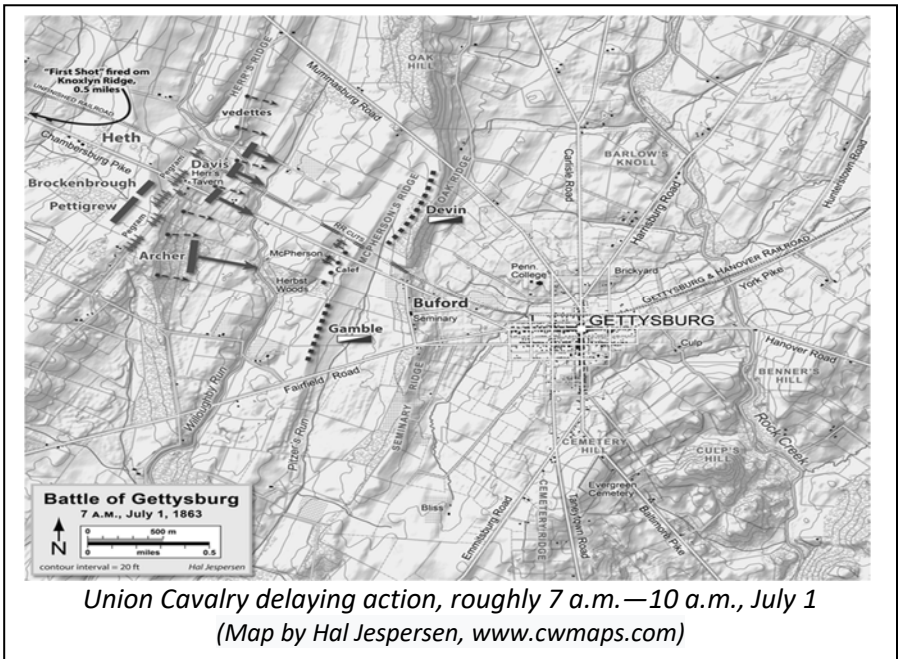
The battle began when advance elements of the two armies met around 7:30 a.m. on July 1. Two brigades of Maj. Gen. Henry (Harry) Heth's Division of Hill's Third Corps moved toward Gettysburg from the northwest, where they met Brig. Gen. John Buford's 2700 dismounted cavalymen of the 1st Division, Cavalry Corps just above McPherson's Ridge, who had arrived the day before on a scouting mission. Buford understood the importance of holding the high ground. His outnumbered cavalry¹⁸ held on as long as they could,

¹⁷ Larry Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg: The Leaders of America's Greatest Battle* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 1998), 2-3. The three corps commanders were Major Generals John Sedgwick, Henry Slocum, and Darius N. Couch.

¹⁸ Buford's cavalymen faced 7600 Confederates but were armed with breech-loading carbines allowing a greater volume of fire than the longer ranged muzzle loaders carried by the Confederates. The breech-loaders could fire two or three times faster and did not require a soldier to be in a standing position to reload, as the much longer muzzle loaders did, thus they could fire and reload from a

fighting a masterful delaying action, moving from Herr Ridge to McPherson's Ridge and Seminary Ridge until reinforcements arrived in Maj. Gen. John Reynolds' I Corps, followed closely by Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's XI Corps.

By the time I Corps arrived around 10:30 a.m. Buford had pulled back from Herr Ridge, and I Corps' leading units were starting to form a defensive line on McPherson's Ridge. Around 10:45, while directing troop placement, Reynolds was hit in the back of the neck with a rifle round and died instantly. Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday took command of I Corps.¹⁹



concealed or crouching position. The disadvantage of the carbines was their shorter range.

¹⁹ Harry Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The First Day* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 77-78.

Lee Arrives, the Controversial Order

General Lee arrived on the scene around 2:30 in the afternoon, as Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill's Third Corps renewed its attack on the Union left flank, now held only by I Corps atop Seminary Ridge. Pettigrew's Brigade of North Carolinians and Brockenbrough's Brigade of Virginians drove the Iron Brigade back in fierce fighting. Lee saw the need for the high ground, especially Cemetery Hill. If the Confederates could secure Cemetery Hill and move artillery to that location, they could control Culp's Hill to the north and Cemetery Ridge, which run in a general north-south direction to the west of town, all of which the Union Army eventually secured.

Upon surveying the battle in progress, Lee issued an order to Lt. Gen. Richard Ewell, Second Corps commander, and it may be significant that this was Ewell's first large battle in this role. Lee's order encouraged him to "carry the hill if practicable" but to avoid a general engagement until other divisions arrived. It is possible that this level of responsibility weighed on him more heavily than we now realize—not being sure of what course to pursue, he chose to do nothing. The order seemed to leave further action up to Ewell's discretion ("if practicable") and was possibly even contradictory ("carry the hill" vs. "avoid a general engagement"). After several more infantry assaults, the Federals retreated in an easterly direction from Seminary Ridge to Cemetery Ridge, but Ewell chose not to pursue further action.

To the north of town, Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's XI Corps established a defensive line anchored to no natural defensive elements such as hills, ridges, or streams. He had only four undersized brigades to cover this wide expanse of land. In one of the few truly coordinated and well-executed attacks in the Battle of Gettysburg, Maj. Gen. Jubal Early of Ewell's Second Corps was tasked with

attacking XI Corps. Early began with a devastating artillery bombardment, after which the infantry advanced and forced XI Corps into a disorderly retreat through the town and beyond. It took less than an hour and was over by 4 p.m.²⁰

Had the Confederates pushed their advantage and deployed their reserves, the outcome may have been different. Some have seen this as a missed opportunity.²¹ Buford's skillful deployment of troops and leadership in the early part of the battle on the first day allowed the Army of the Potomac to occupy the high ground around Gettysburg, resulting in the ANV being forced to attack uphill against prepared positions on the second and third days of the battle. Buford's foresight regarding the importance of the terrain around Gettysburg is now recognized as one of the main reasons for the Union victory.²²

Why did Ewell not find it "practicable" to assault Cemetery Hill and gain the high ground? The answer may never be known but will be explored further in Chapter 3. Ewell's decision put the ANV in a difficult position they never overcame.

The Union lines began taking shape in the evening and into the night on the first day, forming a fishhook shape, starting on Culp's Hill to Cemetery Hill and extending southward down Cemetery Ridge—a strong defensive position. The ANV occupied an almost parallel line down Seminary Ridge. All of Second and Third Corps were present by the morning of July 2, and Longstreet's First Corps was beginning to arrive. All of Longstreet's Corps would participate in the fighting on

²⁰ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 216-217; Douglas R. Kleinsmith, "Gettysburg Day One: Taking Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill," *The Saber and Scroll Journal* 8/1 (2019): 115.

²¹ Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The First Day*, 320; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 223.

²² For discussion of Buford's critically important actions, see Eric Wittenberg, *"The Devil's to Pay:" John Buford at Gettysburg* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beattie, 2014).

the second day, except Pickett's Division, which would be involved in the famous assault on the third day.

Summary of the First Day

Stuart's absence caused Lee to go into the first day of the battle virtually blind to the disposition of Union units, which led directly to the unintentional (from Lee's point of view) start of the battle that morning before Lee was ready to begin. Hostilities erupted while a good deal of the ANV was still enroute and Lee was not in control of the battlefield. After the war many of the officers of the ANV placed responsibility for this situation directly on Stuart.

Ewell's failure to take Cemetery Hill and control the high ground had serious consequences for the next two days of fighting. Lee made the mistake of treating Ewell as if he were Jackson or Longstreet, and the result was a failure to take any of the hills or ridges that the Army of the Potomac would later occupy. In the words of Edwin B. Coddington:

Responsibility for the failure of the Confederates to make an all-out assault on Cemetery Hill on July 1 must rest with Lee. If Ewell had been a Jackson, he might have been able to regroup his forces quickly enough to attack within an hour after the Yankees had started to retreat through the town. The likelihood of success decreased rapidly after that time unless Lee [was] willing to risk everything.²³

The Second Day: July 2, 1863

Though one of the most famous days of combat in American military history is July 3, 1863, with the assault known widely as Pickett's Charge, in the actual outworking of the battle, the outcome

²³Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 320-321.

was decided on the second day. In most scholars' informed opinion, the attack on the third day had no realistic chance of success.

Preparing to Attack

Around 5 p.m. on the first day of the battle, July 1, Lee rested in his tent due to alleged physical and mental fatigue. The failures by

Robert E. Lee's Coronary Health

Lee first reported cardiac symptoms at the age of 56 years in a letter to his wife, March 27, 1863, "The troops are not encamped near me & I have felt so unwell since my return [Lee arrived from Petersburg March 19, 1863] as not to be able to go anywhere." "He had not been sleeping well and he contracted a serious throat infection which settled into what seemed to be a pericarditis. His arm, chest, and back were attacked with sharp paroxysms of pain that suggest even the possibility of angina." Symptoms continued and in a letter to his wife on April 19, 1863, Lee notes, "I am feeble & worthless & can do but little." After Gettysburg, Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis asking to be relieved of command on August 8, 1863, "I sensibly feel the growing failure of my bodily strength. I have not yet recovered from the attack I experienced last spring. I am becoming more and more incapable of exertion. Everything, therefore points to the advantages to be derived from a new commander..." (Reinhart, "Robert E. Lee's Right Ear," 327.)

Ewell on the first day of the battle no doubt added to his stress, along with desperately needing to hear from Stuart. His health had been in question for a while, with some modern observers looking back on his symptoms and suggesting that he was afflicted with ischemic heart disease.²⁴ There is evidence that he may have had a mild heart

²⁴ The American Heart Association defines ischemia as a condition in which the blood flow (and thus oxygen) is restricted or reduced in a part of the body. Cardiac ischemia describes decreased blood flow and oxygen to the heart muscle (myocardium). There is no definitive diagnosis since the study of heart disease was in its very infancy at this time. There is a study and diagnosis of his self-reported symptoms in Richard A. Reinhart, MD, "Robert E. Lee's Right Ear and the Relation

attack a few months before the battle; thus, his lingering poor health may have played an important role in his decision-making. Without a doubt, he was mentally fatigued from worries brought on by decisions that had turned into serious problems. His impatience with Longstreet in discussing tactics and some of his decisions made early the next morning may have been because he didn't feel well enough to do so.

The plan for July 2 was to press the Union lines from two directions: elements of Ewell's Second Corps would once again attack Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill; Longstreet's First Corps would find the Union left, get around and behind it, and roll northward to Cemetery Hill.

Early Morning Reconnaissance and Meeting

After Ewell failed to take the high ground on July 1, Longstreet was not confident that offensive tactics were still called for and believed the plan needed adjustments. Around 5 a.m. a meeting took place on Seminary Ridge between Lee and other commanders. Lt. Col. Arthur Fremantle, a British Army officer observing from a nearby tree for a better view, stated, "Just below us were seated Generals Lee, Hill, Longstreet, and Hood, in consultation—the two latter assisting their deliberations by the truly American custom of *whittling* sticks."²⁵ Longstreet again took up his argument to go farther east of Little Round Top, hoping to circumvent it and place his First Corps between Meade and Washington, D.C.

Earlier that morning, Lee had sent one of his most trusted scouts, Capt. Samuel Johnston of his staff, to reconnoiter the Union left. He

of Ear Lobe Crease to Coronary Artery Disease," *The American Journal of Cardiology* 120/2 (July 2017): 327-330.

²⁵ Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 129.

took an engineer from Longstreet's staff and three or four escorts. When he returned to Lee's headquarters around 7 a.m., he reported no significant enemy activity on Little Round Top. In truth, there was a Union observation post on Little Round Top with thousands of Federal troops encamped nearby. Karlton Smith has suggested that Johnston never actually scouted Little Round Top but was on Round Top instead.²⁶ This would explain why Lee was unaware of the large contingent of Union troops on and near Little Round Top. There were elements of two Union Corps in the vicinity, along with two brigades of cavalry.

Upon hearing Johnston's report, Lee felt Longstreet's proposed long march around the two Round Tops would be too time-consuming and unnecessary. When the report was finished, Lee turned to Longstreet and said, "I think you had better move on."²⁷ It seems Lee envisioned a move similar to Jackson's surprise attack at Chancellorsville, where an unwitting and unprepared Union flank was routed. Lee wanted Longstreet to advance up the Emmitsburg Road and locate the Union left flank that morning, but Longstreet's divisions were still arriving.

As stated before, the events of the first day of the battle had serious consequences for the second. The Army of the Potomac was now occupying the heights just south of Gettysburg, and Lee wanted to remove them from those advantageous positions. The ANV had successfully pushed the Army of the Potomac back from their

²⁶ Karlton D. Smith, "'To Consider Every Contingency,' Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, Captain Samuel R. Johnston and the factors that affected the reconnaissance and countermarch, July 2, 1863." *Papers of the Gettysburg National Military Park Seminar* (National Park Service, 2006), 104-105.

²⁷ Roger G. Greezicki, "Humberging the Historian: A Reappraisal of Longstreet at Gettysburg," *Gettysburg Magazine* 6 (1992): 63-65; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 255.

objective being to collapse the Union flank, roll up the Union line and seize Cemetery Hill.²⁸

However, the lack of information due to Stuart's delay in arriving at Lee's headquarters and Capt. Johnston's failure to scout Little Round Top effectively earlier that morning, Lee knew nothing about the disposition of the Union forces. Lee believed the left flank was vulnerable--"hanging in the air," i.e., not secured or anchored by a natural defensive position, but that was not the case.²⁹ By the morning of July 2, the lines extended the length of Cemetery Ridge and anchored on Houck's Ridge and Devil's Den. But from Lee's vantage point on Seminary Ridge, he could not see the farthest reaches of the Federal line and trusted the inaccurate report of Capt. Johnston, which had been delivered a few hours previous. Lee ordered Longstreet to advance and brooked no further discussion or disagreement. If speculation about Lee's poor health is accurate, one may wonder if it kept him from engaging in a more reasoned discussion with Longstreet. Longstreet had exhausted his argument with Lee, who refused to budge. As a loyal subordinate, Longstreet set off to carry out Lee's orders.

Later that afternoon, as Lee sat alone at his headquarters after Longstreet had left to direct his two divisions, Stuart would arrive with information on Union troop placement, as discussed in Chapter 3. By then it was too late to adjust Longstreet's orders.

Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill

At about the same time McLaws' and Hood's divisions began advancing up the Emmitsburg Road, Lee ordered Ewell to initiate a

²⁸ Troy D. Harman, *Lee's Real Plan at Gettysburg* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2003), 27.

²⁹ Pfanz, *Second Day*, 106-107.

diversionary attack on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. The purpose was to distract Meade from the primary assault of Longstreet's two divisions on the Union left. Lee hoped to tie down the units defending the Union right so they could not be redeployed to counter Longstreet's attack. Ewell was ordered to follow up any breakthroughs with a full-scale attack at his discretion.³⁰

Culp's Hill



*Union breastworks atop Culp's Hill
(Library of Congress)*

Culp's Hill was located less than a mile south of the center of Gettysburg. It was the "barbed" part of the Union line that has often been described as shaped like a fishhook. Due to it being heavily

³⁰ Pfanz, *Second Day*, 113.

wooded, it was not useable as an artillery platform but losing it to the Confederates would have given them control of Cemetery Hill (which was a good place for artillery) and the Baltimore Pike, a critical road for Union supply wagons to travel as well as any advance to Washington, D.C., or Baltimore.³¹

The XII Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Henry Slocum arrived on the field early on July 2. Five of the six brigades of XII Corps were later summoned to repulse Longstreet's attacks, and this was fortunate for Ewell since his assault force faced only the 1400-man brigade of Brig. Gen. George "Pop" Greene, at 62, the oldest field commander at Gettysburg.³²

Greene was a West Point graduate and had trained as an engineer and taught at the U.S. Military Academy for a few years, but then left to pursue civilian work. Returning to the army when the war began, he was given a field command in the 60th New York Infantry. He was promoted to brigadier general in April of 1862 and eventually given charge of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, XII Corps. His division commander scoffed at the idea of constructing defensive positions. But Greene, being an engineer, believed it to be the best course of action and began putting up defensive works consisting of felled trees, rocks, and earth.

Around 7 p.m. as Ewell saw that the advance by the Confederate right was slowing, he halted the artillery barrage and began the infantry attack. Ewell sent three brigades (4700 men) from Maj. Gen. Edward "Allegheny" Johnson's Division which advanced with difficulty up the steep slopes, running into a hail of fire from the

³¹ Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 25.

³² Sears, *Gettysburg*, 325.

Union troops in well-protected positions. As it grew darker, it was harder for each side to locate the other except by muzzle flashes. Throughout the engagement, there were several friendly fire incidents due to the darkness.³³

The defenders on Culp's Hill repulsed Confederate attacks on the right and center with heavy casualties due to the well-constructed breastworks. On the left, some Confederate units occupied abandoned positions on the lower slope and attempted to advance further along the line but were driven back.

The 137th New York held the far right of the Union line. The 23rd and 10th Virginia Regiments outflanked them but fell back to another defensive position and held there. Due to darkness, the Confederates did not know they had clear access to the Baltimore Pike some 600 yards ahead. The beleaguered 137th New York prevented a catastrophic situation by holding the line.³⁴ Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock on Cemetery Ridge heard the firing in that sector and sent the 71st Pennsylvania to support the 137th New York and secure the flank.

For all the casualties taken on the second day at Culp's Hill, the Confederates only gained a foothold in the abandoned position at the extreme right flank of the Union line. Thanks to the foresight of Brig. Gen. George Greene, Culp's Hill was secure due to their construction of strong defensive positions, although the fighting there would start anew the next day.

³³ For two examples see Randolph H. McKim, *A Soldier's Recollections: Leaves from the Diary of a Young Confederate* (New York: Longmans, Greene, 1910), 195; Ireland Report, U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (70 vols. in 128 parts; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), vol. XXVII, part 1, 866. Hereafter cited as *OR*.

³⁴ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 329; Pfanz, *Culp's Hill*, 220-222.

Cemetery Hill

Cemetery Hill is somewhat unusual on the Gettysburg battlefield in that it was fought over on each day of the battle. Lee saw it as the main goal of his offensive plans on each of the three days of the battle. It was valuable because, unlike nearby Culp's Hill, it was clear of forestation and made an excellent location for artillery emplacements.

Ewell began the attack on the eastern side of Cemetery Hill around the same time, around 7 p.m., as the attack on Culp's Hill. A three-hour artillery barrage accomplished next to nothing. The responding Union artillery effectively silenced the Confederate batteries.

Almost simultaneous with the attacks on Culp's Hill Ewell signaled for two brigades from Jubal Early's Division to advance on Cemetery Hill. These were the Louisiana Tigers commanded by Brig. Gen. Harry Hays and Brig. Gen. Isaac Avery's North Carolina Brigade. On the east side of Cemetery Hill, two brigades of Barlow's 1st Division of XI Corps were dug in. These two brigades had taken heavy casualties on the first day of fighting, and combined, they numbered less than 1200 men. Although there were gun emplacements on top of Cemetery Hill, the steep slope made it almost impossible to depress the gun tubes low enough to fire on the advancing Confederates; however, they loaded canister and fired, hoping some of it would take effect.

Just before the start of the attack one of the Union regiments had been diverted to the center of the line to bolster the defense there. When the Louisiana Tigers let loose with their rebel yell and attacked, they crashed over the stone wall and through the gap left in the line. Hays sent a message to Brig. Gen. John Gordon to advance his brigade in support, but Gordon replied that he had no orders to move in support. Early had already determined that it was useless to throw

Gordon's unit into the fight, being "a useless sacrifice," and Rodes agreed. Ewell later blamed Pender's Division of Hill's Third Corps for failing to support Rodes and Gordon,³⁵ which seems odd since Rodes and Gordon moved little or not at all.

The 9th Louisiana and the 6th North Carolina made progress up the slope, some even gaining the crest of the hill, threatening the artillery units positioned there.³⁶ They were chased back when Maj. Gen. Howard of XI Corps sent two regiments to secure the guns. Hancock also sent one II Corps brigade from Cemetery Ridge to strengthen the defense around the batteries on the summit and the Southern troops were forced to retreat.

The Confederate attacks had not been well coordinated, nor had the reserve division arrived in place in time to support the breakthroughs. Maj. Gen. Robert Rodes' Division was assigned to move in support of Hays and Avery, but Rodes' men were not in position until the attack had petered out and they stopped after advancing a short distance and stood in line in the dark. Later Ewell blamed Rodes' "failure to co-operate. For this, Ewell always thought Rodes fairly censurable...Ewell & Early thought Rodes had been too slow."³⁷

Both sides suffered high casualties, but the Union line held. Had Rodes' Division and Gordon's Brigade properly supported the brigades of Hays and Avery as they approached the crest of Cemetery Hill and reinforced them, the next day's battle may have turned out quite differently with the Confederates holding Cemetery Hill.

³⁵ Hays, Rodes, Ewell reports, *OR XXVII* part 2, 481, 556, 447. See discussion in Sears, *Gettysburg*, 340-341.

³⁶ Tate report, *OR XXVII* part 2, 486.

³⁷ Rodes, Ramseur, Ewell reports, *OR XXVII* part 2, 556, 588, 447.

The Peach Orchard, the Wheatfield, Devil's Den, Little Round Top

The two-pronged attack on the Union lines on the second day consisted of Ewell's assaults on Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill, as explained above. On the Confederate right, Longstreet's advance was delayed until Brig. Gen. Evander Law's Brigade arrived. The attacks at either end of the Confederate lines were supposed to take place at the same time. Once Law's Brigade arrived, McLaws and Hood moved up the Emmitsburg Road, and Ewell heard their gunfire and launched his attacks on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill.

The Wheatfield and the Peach Orchard

When McLaws and Hood advanced up the Emmitsburg Road, they were surprised to find Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles' III Corps was directly in their path. Sickles had moved III Corps from its position on Cemetery Ridge across the Emmitsburg Road to an area known as the Peach Orchard. He did this due to a rise in the topography a little less than a mile from their original position due to the advantage of higher ground.³⁸ The Confederate advance had the brigades of Barksdale and Kershaw in front, followed by those of Wofford and Semmes behind.

--*The Wheatfield*, as it has come to be known, was a 20-acre plot owned by the John Rose family. To its west was Rose Woods, to the southeast was Houck's Ridge, and to the south was Devil's Den. Fighting raged back and forth as Confederate and Union units surged forward and were pushed back numerous times until the Federals

³⁸ Sickles' move was not authorized by Meade, and Meade was furious that he had done so. It led to an attack on III Corps which forced Meade to divert more units into the area. Sickles' poor decision led to horrendous casualties and left III Corps virtually incapable of carrying out combat operations for the rest of the battle. For discussion, see Sears, *Gettysburg*, 263, 301; Eicher, *The Longest Night*, 523-524; Pfanz, *Second Day*, 21-25, 333-335.

finally gained control but, seeing how exposed they were, moved back to the relative safety of Cemetery Ridge.

Six Confederate brigades faced thirteen Union brigades over the span of a few hours. There were just over 20,000 men from both armies engaged and about 30% of them were casualties, testifying to the intensity of the fighting that took place there.

--*The Peach Orchard*, owned by the Joseph Sherfy family, also gained notoriety because of its importance in the second day's action at Gettysburg. It was northwest of the Wheatfield and just east of the Emmitsburg Road. The attack by the brigades led by Kershaw, Barksdale, and Wofford (McLaws' Division) punched through the Peach Orchard, driving the Union troops of III Corps back. A little farther north Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson's Division of Hill's Third Corps attacked the Union position with five brigades in line rather than four brigades in two lines with two brigades following, which had been the practice of McLaws' Division. Hancock had been given overall control of the Union corps along Cemetery Ridge and rode along the line, directing brigades to fill gaps as needed. He successfully staved off the Confederate advance and each side pulled back; the Union to Cemetery Ridge, the Confederates to the west side of the Emmitsburg Road. Their attack managed to gain the Peach Orchard, which Lee considered valuable for placing artillery. More details of the fighting in the Wheatfield and the Peach Orchard will be covered in Chapter 6.

Devil's Den and Little Round Top

The discussion that follows regarding Devil's Den and Little Round Top is a thumbnail sketch. The fighting that took place there will be covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

--*Devil's Den*, a roughly ten-acre site comprised of large boulders at the end of Houck's Ridge, made up the southern end of the III Corps line on the Union left flank. It was defended by one of the largest Union brigades on the field that day, Brig. Gen. Hobart Ward's 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, III Corps, consisting of 2200 men. There were six regiments in all, along with two companies of sharpshooters.

Two regiments of the Texas Brigade (1st Texas, 3rd Arkansas) hit Ward's front from Rose Woods as two regiments from Benning's Georgia Brigade (2nd, 17th Georgia) advanced up Plum Run Valley on Ward's flank from the east. The hot exchange of fire was devastating for both sides. The Georgians threatened to turn Ward's flank, so he moved the 99th Pennsylvania from his right to his left flank. They were able to retake the crest, but the Confederate counter attacks by additional Georgia regiments were able to dislodge Ward's brigade, which had taken heavy casualties, from their position and Benning's Georgians secured Devil's Den. The Georgians later fired on Union troops on Little Round Top, causing many casualties.

--*Little Round Top* was a rocky prominence to the east of Devil's Den at the end of Cemetery Ridge. Despite its height it was of little use to the Confederates as an artillery emplacement. The crest was narrow and ran in the wrong direction. Union batteries found it more advantageous because they could fire at Confederate units to the west. The narrow crest made firing to the north, the desired direction for the Confederates, of less value because there was room for only one or two guns to fire that direction. The fighting at Little Round Top was something of an accident. Lee never had any interest in Devil's Den or the Round Tops. The main reason the fighting took place there is because Lee had ordered Hood's Division to locate the end of the Union line on the Confederate right, and as the brigades of Robertson and Law advanced up the Emmittsburg Road they kept receiving fire

from the east (their right) and drifted that direction to ascertain the end of the Union flank.

The Union stand at Little Round Top and the Confederate assault on the third day of fighting known as Pickett's Charge are probably the most famous engagements of the battle, and two of the most storied in U.S. military history.

Five Confederate regiments engaged in a difficult uphill assault against four Union regiments in a strong defensive position. Both Union flanks were almost turned. The right flank, occupied by the 16th Michigan, was almost overrun by the 4th Texas and 48th Alabama, but a regiment (followed by the rest of that regiment's brigade) arrived just in time to secure the flank. On the other flank the stubborn defense by the 20th Maine held off multiple attacks from the 15th and 47th Alabama. Once the 20th Maine had almost reached the end of their ammunition supply Col. Joshua Chamberlain gave the order to fix bayonets and charge. The exhausted Confederates retreated down the hill. The attacks on Little Round Top were finished.

Longstreet had good reason to be proud of his corps' performance even though they failed to move the Union troops from Little Round Top, which is described in more detail in Chapter 5. With only two of its three divisions First Corps inflicted severe damage on the Army of the Potomac. Sickles' III Corps was no longer effective as a combat unit with a casualty rate of nearly 40% and had many stragglers scattered all over the Union rear. Also heavily damaged was Sykes' V Corps with two of its divisions losing about 25% of their combatants at Devil's Den and Rose Woods. Due to the ferocity of Longstreet's First Corps attacks Meade had been forced to move several units of II, VI, and XII Corps to meet the Confederates, along

with most of the reserve artillery.³⁹ Longstreet accomplished this without Pickett's Division, which was still in the rear guarding the supply train due to the absence of Stuart's cavalry.

Summary of the Second Day

The day had begun with an early morning meeting with Longstreet stating his doubts about the wisdom of attacking a numerically superior enemy who held the high ground. He advised Lee that they should dig in along Seminary Ridge and force Meade to attack them. It had been a successful strategy at Frederickburg in December 1862. Longstreet had been in agreement with Lee about the aggressive posture to be taken on the Pennsylvania Campaign⁴⁰ but the failure on July 1 to take the high ground led him to believe a defensive stance was best. Lee disagreed and this left Longstreet with no other choice but to carry out his orders, which he did.

The failure of the reconaissance by Capt. Samuel Johnston proved to be a determining factor as Hood's Division, oblivious to the fact that the Union held a strong defensive position on Little Round Top, was unable to move Union troops off that stronghold. However they were able to take the southern end of Houck's Ridge and Devil's Den. Further to the north McLaws' Division successfully drove III Corps out of the Wheatfield and took the Peach Orchard, which Lee would use as an artillery platform the next day in support of the attack on Cemetery Ridge.

The assaults by Ewell's Second Corps on Culp's Hill, and more importantly, Cemetery Hill, once again failed to dislodge the Federals dug in there.

³⁹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 350-351.

⁴⁰ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 7; Thomas Lawrence Connelly and Archer Jones, *The Politics of Command: Factions and Ideas in Confederate Strategy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 118-123.

Meade's Council of War

Once the battlefield fell quiet on the night of July 2 Maj. Gen. George Meade called his senior officers together for a council and they voted unanimously to stay and fight it out. As the generals were leaving for their individual headquarters Meade approached Gibbon, saying, "If Lee attacks tomorrow it will be in your front...he has made attacks on both our flanks and failed and if he concludes to try it again, it will be on our centre."⁴¹ It proved to be prophetic.

Meade now had a good sense of what his generals were thinking and that the high command were in agreement on their approach for the next day's fight when it came. This was a clear-thinking decision by Meade, who had now been in command of the Army of the Potomac for only five days over some of the generals who were technically senior to him.

Lee's Decision

In contrast to Meade's taking counsel and listening to his corps commanders Lee met with no one. After the fighting on the second day of the battle Lee seemed to be "not in a good humor over the miscarriage of his plans and his orders."⁴² A few months later he put a better face on it with an optimistic viewpoint. In his official report in January 1864 Lee stated:

The result of this day's operations induce 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,

⁴¹ Eicher, *The Longest Night*, 539-540; Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 449-453.

⁴² Sears, *Gettysburg*, 345-346.

and it was accordingly determined to continue the attack. ...
The general plan was unchanged.⁴³

As noted, Lee made the decision to continue the original plan to take Cemetery Hill without consulting any of his subordinates, which was hardly like him and hardly like his corps commanders. This was especially true of Longstreet, who typically went to Lee's headquarters after a day in which his divisions were engaged to report on casualties and discuss the next steps. This seems to indicate that Longstreet was unhappy with the outcome of the offensive they had attempted to carry out that day and saw Lee's orders as being flawed, since he had expressed his concerns with Lee, had been overridden, and his opinion of the operation had not changed. Lee felt confident that the approach he had laid out earlier would be successful.

The Third Day: July 3, 1863

Lee continued to aim at capturing Cemetery Hill, just south of Gettysburg since the hill would provide artillery control of the town, the nearby heights such as Culp's Hill and Cemetery Ridge, as well as the roads leading into Gettysburg, not the least of which was the road that led to Washington, D.C. His commitment to the original plan shows that his confidence in the ANV was unshaken and he believed that they would ultimately prevail.

Longstreet sought once more to convince Lee not to pursue a frontal assault on the Union center. However, Lee was committed to his position and refused to budge. Longstreet left Lee's presence and began his preparations to position his attacking force.

⁴³ *OR* vol. XXVII, part 2, 27.

Culp's Hill

Lee's timetable for Pickett's Division (along with the rest of Longstreet's Corps), which had arrived near the battlefield in the late afternoon on July 2, was to go into action at daylight on July 3, yet that was never communicated to Pickett. As stated above, Johnson's Division was to renew the attack on Culp's Hill on the right flank in concert with Longstreet's attack. It is possible that Longstreet assumed that Lee would relate this order directly to Pickett as he had with McLaws regarding his assault on Cemetery Ridge on July 2, since essentially Lee had cut Longstreet out of the line of communication. Typically, Lee drew up his master plan, issued orders for it, then allowed his corps commanders to achieve the plan as they saw fit. Lee's direct intervention with McLaws, one of Longstreet's division commanders, went against the previous chain of command delivery of orders in the past.

The breakdown of communication between Lee to his commanders was evident on the morning of July 3. Johnson's Division of Ewell's Second Corps commenced their attack on Culp's Hill, but parts of Pickett's Division were still in transit. Lee sent a courier to Ewell to try to stop the attack, but it was too late. The result was that the coordinated attacks planned for July 3 did not happen, which allowed Meade to fight the separate attacks one at a time.

Cavalry Engagements

East of Gettysburg Stuart's cavalry was moving around the Union right flank trying to get in the rear. Stuart hoped to take advantage of a breakthrough by Ewell's attack on Culp's Hill and/or Longstreet's assault on the Union center.⁴⁴ The route taken by Stuart was blocked

⁴⁴ Jeffrey Wert, *Gettysburg: Day Three* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 255-256.

by the Union cavalry brigades commanded by Brig. Gen. John B. McIntosh and Brig. Gen. George A. Custer. In Custer's Michigan brigade the troopers of the 5th Michigan Cavalry were armed with Spencer repeating rifles, which multiplied their rate of fire considerably over muzzle-loaders.

Stuart's troopers charged and the Union men pulled back, but then Custer led a counterattack with his 7th Michigan Cavalry. Hundreds of cavalrymen were fighting at point blank range with sabers, pistols, and carbines across a fence on the Rummel farm, and the Union cavalry forced Stuart's men to retreat. Stuart then ordered several more units into the fight and they fought off Custer's troopers, who retreated in a disorderly fashion.⁴⁵

Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton's Brigade was then sent into the battle, but they were met by Union troopers on three sides and forced to withdraw. The Union troopers were in no condition to pursue them, so they held the ground at the Rummel farm.⁴⁶ In around 40 minutes of combat the Union lost 254 men, most of them in Custer's Michigan brigade, while Confederate losses numbered 181. However, the Union troopers kept Stuart's cavalry from causing chaos in their rear areas, which was a tactical victory.⁴⁷

On the Union left an ill-advised cavalry attack was carried out by Brig. Gen. Elon Farnsworth on Law's Alabama Brigade. This veteran brigade had taken up positions that stretched from the base of Round Top to Devil's Den, extending to the Emmittsburg Road. In places the Confederates had cover from a stone wall which they had heightened

⁴⁵ Wert, *Gettysburg: Day Three*, 266-267.

⁴⁶ Wert, *Gettysburg: Day Three*, 269.

⁴⁷ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 462.

using fence rails so the horses could not jump over. Every attack was repulsed with great loss.⁴⁸

The Pettigrew-Trimble-Pickett Charge

What has come to be known as Pickett's Charge should more accurately be known as the Pettigrew-Trimble-Pickett Charge, since there were elements of three divisions (nine brigades) involved in the assault and not just Maj. Gen. George Pickett's Division alone. Though not all nine brigades were from Longstreet's Corps Lee assigned operational control of all of them to a very reluctant Longstreet for this attack. As the officer in charge of the attack Longstreet should have been the one to give the order to advance, but Longstreet could not bring himself to order his troops on a suicide mission. Maj. Gen. Pickett asked, "General, shall I advance?" and Longstreet did not respond. After a few moments that had to have been awkward for Pickett, he said, "I am going to move forward, sir," and rode off to prepare his division for the assault.⁴⁹ Further discussion is taken up in Chapter 7.

There were roughly 13,500 Confederates who advanced on Cemetery Ridge and about 6500 of them were killed, wounded, missing, or captured for a casualty rate of around 50%. Only 100-200 Confederates made it over the low stone wall on Cemetery Ridge. History showed that Longstreet was correct in his assessment that this assault was an unnecessary sacrifice of men. As Longstreet later wrote, "Never was I so depressed as on that day. I felt that my men were to be sacrificed, and that I should have to order them to make a hopeless charge."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Edward G. Longacre, *The Cavalry at Gettysburg* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 235-236.

⁴⁹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 407.

⁵⁰ James Longstreet, *Annals of the War*, 430.

Summary of the 3rd Day

Communication problems plagued the Southern high command on July 3, which resulted in the uncoordinated attacks that allowed Meade to successfully defend first the Union forces holding the high ground on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill without shifting additional units from other areas. Once that attack ended the assault on the Union center by the nine brigades under Longstreet was repulsed.

On July 4 Fremantle added this note in his journal after a conversation with Longstreet:

At 2 P. M. we walked to General Longstreet's camp, which had been removed to a place three miles distant, on the Fairfield road. General Longstreet talked to me for a long time about the battle. He said the mistake they had made was in not concentrating the army more, and making the attack yesterday with 30,000 men instead of 15,000. The advance had been in three lines, and the troops of Hill's corps who gave way were young soldiers, who had never been under fire before.⁵¹

Meade was criticized for not attacking Lee after the failure of the Pettigrew-Trimble-Pickett Charge. However, the Union Army was in no position to do that and the ANV was dug in on Seminary Ridge. In addition, he had lost his two best corps commanders (Reynolds killed, Hancock severely wounded). The corps most likely to carry out an offensive operation were V Corps and VI Corps, but V Corps had taken heavy casualties (about 25%) and was commanded by the slow-moving Sykes; while VI Corps, commanded by the cautious Sedgwick, was scattered all over the Union position since it had been acting as

⁵¹ Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 138.

a reserve to plug gaps and reinforce lines. Had Meade proceeded with an attack the situation would have been reversed from the second and third days at Gettysburg with the Union troops attacking uphill against a well defended enemy position. Meade chose to remain in place until he was certain that Lee was retreating so as not to leave the road to Baltimore and Washington, D.C. wide open.

Leaving Pennsylvania

On the morning of July 4 under a flag of truce Lee sent a message to Meade proposing a prisoner exchange but Meade declined. His thinking was to deprive the ANV of soldiers. At this point he believed it was better to burden Lee with Union prisoners to feed and guard rather than give him able-bodied soldiers to continue the fight. Later, another flag of truce came from the Union side and approached General Longstreet. The messenger announced that Longstreet had been wounded and captured, and that he would be well cared for. This gave Longstreet quite a chuckle. Likely they had confused the wounded Lewis Armistead with Longstreet, who informed the messenger he could take care of himself, thank you.⁵²

Heavy rain fell on July 4 making a mess of the roads. When the ANV left they made their way back as they had come. There were several cavalry battles which resulted in captured wagons and soldiers, and Meade followed a few days later with the infantry. He considered an infantry attack, but the Confederates had built strong defensive positions near the river crossings, and he decided against it. The rain-swollen rivers were too difficult to cross but a few hours later the river surge subsided and the ANV was able to move back into Virginia.

⁵² Sears, *Gettysburg*, 474. Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 137.

Casualties

There have been several studies on casualties at Gettysburg. Despite the records the numbers can vary considerably, especially estimates for the Confederate losses. Some have estimated ANV losses as high as 28,000. The seemingly most accurate figures are as follows:⁵³

Union Corps	Casualties (k/w/m)
I Corps	6059 (666/3231/2162)
II Corps	4369 (797/3194/378)
III Corps	4211 (593/3029/589)
V Corps	2187 (365/1611/211)
VI Corps	242 (27/185/30)
XI Corps	3801 (369/1922/1510)
XII Corps	1082 (204/812/66)
Cavalry Corps	852 (91/354/407)
Artillery Reserve	242 (43/187/12)

Confederate Corps	Casualties (k/w/m)
First Corps	7665 (1617/4205/1843)
Second Corps	6686 (1301/3629/1756)
Third Corps	8495 (1724/4683/2088)
Cavalry Corps	380 (66/174/140)

⁵³ John W. Busey and David G. Martin. *Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg* (4th ed. Hightstown, NJ: Longstreet House, 2005), 125-147, 260-315.

The Army of the Potomac came into the battle with around 112,700 men;⁵⁴ their casualties totaled 23,055 (3155 killed, 14,531 wounded, 5369 missing or captured)—about 20%. Confederate casualties are harder to determine due to incomplete or inaccurate records. Busey and Martin put the totals at 23,231 (4708 killed, 12,639 wounded, 5830 missing or captured). The ANV brought between 75,000-80,000 men into Pennsylvania, so their losses were nearly a third. While the casualty numbers were almost even, the Union could replace their losses whereas the Confederates could not. Add to that the Confederates were forced to leave many of their wounded behind, some of whom may have recuperated enough to continue fighting later. The losses were a serious blow to the Army of Northern Virginia.

Even worse for Lee were the losses in irreplaceable general officers. Nearly a third of them were killed, wounded, or missing. As warfare in that era dictated, the commanders of these units often led from the front. Of the ANV's 46 division or brigade commanders 19 were killed, wounded, or captured.⁵⁵

Lee's Reaction

The battle and the resulting criticism in the Southern press was hard on Lee. On August 8, 1863, he offered his resignation to Jefferson Davis. He cited among other reasons, his health, believing that a younger and abler man might be needed. Davis refused the resignation and Lee continued in his role.

The ever-observant Fremantle had seen the confidence of the ANV as they approached the battle and had this to say following the

⁵⁴ Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses*, 6, 16. Sears, *Gettysburg*, 149.

⁵⁵ See Sears, *Gettysburg*, 498-499 for a complete listing of these officers.

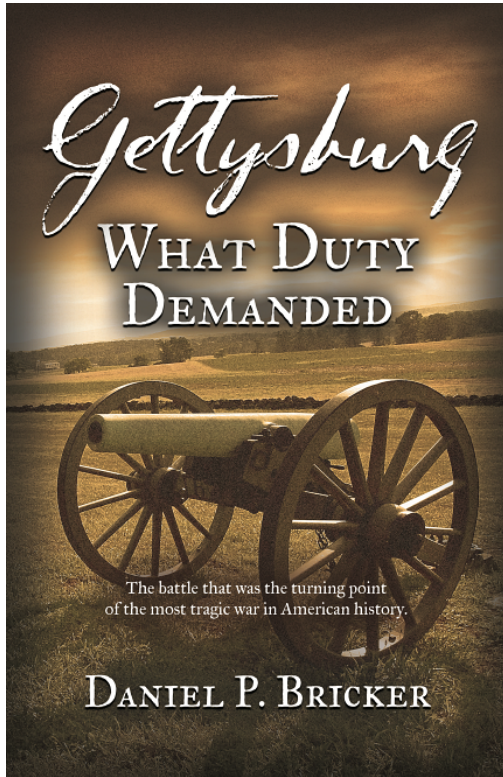
Pettigrew-Trimble-Pickett Charge in part of his journal entry on July 4: “It is impossible to avoid seeing that the cause of this check to the Confederates lies in the utter contempt felt for the enemy by all ranks.”⁵⁶ The ANV had little respect for the Army of the Potomac since they had rarely been well led or fought effectively. That attitude started at the top and extended to the lower ranks.

For the Army of the Potomac Meade, himself a native Pennsylvanian, was a difference maker. He was seen on the battlefield directing units from one place to another to plug gaps and reinforce lines. He took the views of his lieutenants seriously and sought their advice. He worked well with his corps commanders, and they respected him. Unlike his predecessors there seemed to be little or no political wrangling.

It also made a difference that the Union troops were fighting on their own soil. In this battle they had something to *defend*. In the Army of the Potomac 69 infantry regiments, 9 cavalry regiments, and 7 artillery batteries were Pennsylvanians.⁵⁷ Like the rest of the Union Army, they had a reason to fight. And fight they did.

⁵⁶ Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States*, 138; compare the statements of confidence by Southern troops and leaders on 117 (June 23), 118 (June 25), 126 (June 30), 129 (July 1).

⁵⁷ This is the number of Pennsylvania units in the Army of the Potomac according to their state monument at Gettysburg. Sears, *Gettysburg*, 167, says there were 67 infantry regiments, not 69.



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