

★ THE U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS OF THE CIVIL WAR ★

# THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN



JUNE – JULY 1863



Cover: *Scene from the Gettysburg Cyclorama painting, The Battle of Gettysburg, by Paul Phillippoteaux, depicting Pickett's Charge and fighting at the Angle.*  
Photograph ©Bill Dowling, Dowling Photography.

---

# THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN



JUNE – JULY 1863

by  
Carol Reardon  
and  
Tom Vossler

Center of Military History  
United States Army  
Washington, D.C., 2013





## INTRODUCTION

Although over one hundred fifty years have passed since the start of the American Civil War, that titanic conflict continues to matter. The forces unleashed by that war were immensely destructive because of the significant issues involved: the existence of the Union, the end of slavery, and the very future of the nation. The war remains our most contentious, and our bloodiest, with over six hundred thousand killed in the course of the four-year struggle.

Most civil wars do not spring up overnight, and the American Civil War was no exception. The seeds of the conflict were sown in the earliest days of the republic's founding, primarily over the existence of slavery and the slave trade. Although no conflict can begin without the conscious decisions of those engaged in the debates at that moment, in the end, there was simply no way to paper over the division of the country into two camps: one that was dominated by slavery and the other that sought first to limit its spread and then to abolish it. Our nation was indeed "half slave and half free," and that could not stand.

Regardless of the factors tearing the nation asunder, the soldiers on each side of the struggle went to war for personal reasons: looking for adventure, being caught up in the passions and emotions of their peers, believing in the Union, favoring states' rights, or even justifying the simple schoolyard dynamic of being convinced that they were "worth" three of the soldiers on the other side. Nor can we overlook the factor that some went to war to prove their manhood. This has been, and continues to be, a key dynamic in understanding combat and the profession of arms. Soldiers join for many reasons but often stay in the fight because of their comrades and because they do not want to seem like cowards. Sometimes issues of national impact shrink to nothing in the intensely personal world of cannon shell and minié ball.

Whatever the reasons, the struggle was long and costly and only culminated with the conquest of the rebellious Confederacy, the preservation of the Union, and the end of slavery. These campaign pamphlets on the American Civil War, prepared in commemoration of our national sacrifices, seek to remember that war and honor those in the United States Army who died to preserve the Union and free the slaves as well as to tell the story of those American soldiers who fought for the Confederacy despite the inherently flawed nature of their cause. The Civil War was our greatest struggle and continues to deserve our deep study and contemplation.

RICHARD W. STEWART  
Chief Historian



# THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN JUNE–JULY 1863

## *Strategic Setting*

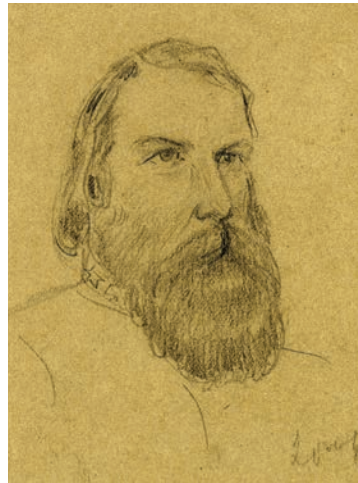
After the Confederates' victory at Chancellorsville in May 1863, General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac, commanded by Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, once again confronted each other across the Rappahannock River near Fredericksburg, Virginia. The battle, which cost Hooker nearly 16,000 casualties and Lee some 12,300 losses, had proved indecisive. The two armies maintained an uneasy stalemate, occupying virtually the same ground they had held since December 1862. Washington, D.C., the U.S. capital, stood fifty-three miles to the north, while Richmond, Virginia, the Confederate capital, lay fifty-seven miles to the south. The rival presidents, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, pondered their next moves.

Despite the defeat at Chancellorsville and mounting discontent on the Northern home front, Lincoln could take heart from recent developments in the west. In April 1863, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant shifted 20,000 Union troops from the west bank of the Mississippi River to the east bank, about thirty-five miles below the Confederate garrison at Vicksburg, Mississippi. From 1 to 17 May, Grant's command defeated Confederate forces at Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson, Champion Hill, and the Big Black River Bridge. By the end of the month, Grant had trapped Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton's 30,000 Confederates inside their fortifications around Vicksburg. After two unsuccessful frontal

assaults, Grant's army settled into a siege; meanwhile, a Confederate relief force under General Joseph E. Johnson failed to rescue Pemberton.

Davis confronted a more daunting set of problems than his Northern counterpart. Amid bad news from Vicksburg and other parts of the Confederacy, he summoned Lee to Richmond twice in mid-May to discuss their strategic options. Despite Lee's victory at Chancellorsville, the military situation in Virginia appeared to be deteriorating. In the Tidewater region, a Federal garrison of some 20,000 men held Suffolk, and their presence threatened both Norfolk and Hampton Roads. Given the size and location of the Federal force, Davis and Lee also feared for the safety of Richmond.

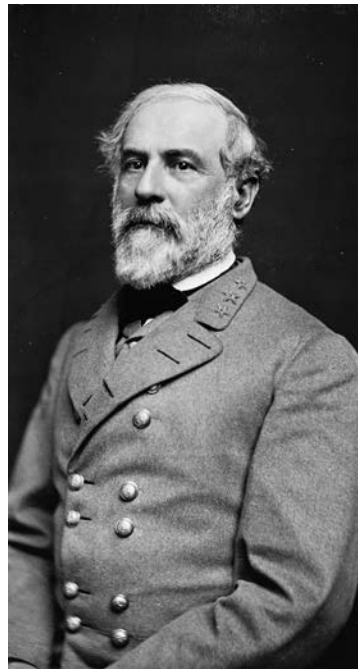
On 16 February 1863, Lee had ordered the infantry divisions of Maj. Gens. John Bell Hood and Lafayette McLaws to march from the army's winter camp at Fredericksburg to Richmond and Hanover Junction. Two days later, Lee ordered Lt. Gen. James Longstreet to take command of "the Suffolk Expedition," as he called it. On 21 March, Lee advised Longstreet to remain alert for "an opportunity of dealing a damaging blow, or of driving [the enemy] from any



*General Longstreet by Alfred R. Waud (Library of Congress)*

---

*General Lee (Library of Congress)*





important positions.” Should Longstreet find such an opening, Lee urged him not to “be idle, but act promptly.”

Bad news on nearly all military fronts—above all, the report that Grant had trapped Pemberton’s army inside Vicksburg’s defenses—forced the Davis administration to consider a wide range of options. No single course of action could resolve all the challenges facing the president. In addition to Vicksburg and Suffolk, Davis also had to consider impending Union offensives in middle Tennessee and at Charleston, South Carolina.

Lee had, in fact, already crafted a plan for his own army. In early April, he advised Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon: “Should General Hooker’s army assume the defensive, the readiest method of relieving pressure on [Vicksburg and Charleston] would be for this army to cross into Maryland.” One week later, Lee suggested to Davis:

I think it all important that we should assume the aggressive by the first of May when we may expect General Hooker’s army to be weakened by the expiration of the term of service of many of his regiments. . . . I believe greater relief would in this way be afforded to the armies in middle Tennessee and on the [South] Carolina coast than by any other method.

During his mid-May deliberations with Davis and Seddon, Lee continued to advocate an offensive operation against Hooker’s army. He hoped to take the Army of Northern Virginia north of the Potomac once again. Lee’s reverse at Antietam in September 1862 did not deter him from making a second northern expedition. While in winter camp in February 1863, Lee had directed Jedediah Hotchkiss (then Lt. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s chief engineer) to draw up a map of the valley of Virginia “extending to Harrisburg, PA and then on to Philadelphia—wishing the preparation to be kept a profound secret.”

Not everyone who participated in the strategic conference in Richmond agreed with Lee’s plan. A number of senior Confederate officials—including Postmaster General John H. Reagan and, for a time, even Davis himself—advocated sending all or part of Lee’s army to Mississippi. In the end, however, Lee’s views won out. Davis gave his approval for the Army of Northern Virginia’s invasion of the North. Only one question remained: When should the campaign begin?

## *Operations*

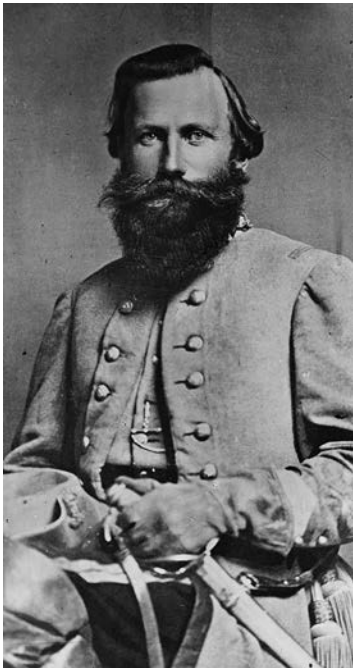
### THE ADVANCE INTO PENNSYLVANIA

Lee issued his initial orders for the northern offensive on 3 June, stealthily breaking contact with Hooker's Army of the Potomac near Fredericksburg to concentrate around Culpeper. Despite Lee's best efforts, Hooker discovered that the Confederates were marching northward on 5 June. Hooker sent a force of 7,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry and artillery under his new cavalry commander, Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton, in pursuit of the Confederates. Early on the morning of 9 June, Pleasonton surprised Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart's Confederate horsemen at Brandy Station. In a chaotic fight that proved to be one of the largest mounted clashes of the war, the Union troopers initially scattered Stuart's men and nearly captured the vaunted cavalry commander himself. In the end, Stuart held his ground, but it had been a near thing. Richmond newspapers sharply criticized him and demanded that

he redeem himself through heroic action.

---

*General Stuart* (Library of Congress)



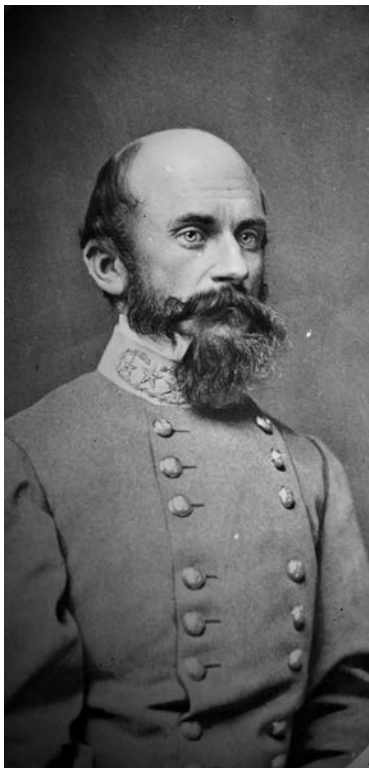
The scare at Brandy Station did not deter Lee in the least. He forged ahead with ambitious plans that would test his army's new organizational structure in active field operations. After the death of General Jackson on 10 May, Lee had reconfigured his army of two corps under Jackson and Longstreet into three corps. Longstreet retained command of the First Corps, while two newly promoted lieutenant generals, Richard S. Ewell and Ambrose Powell Hill, led the Second and Third Corps respectively. The inclusion of Stuart's cavalry raised Lee's total strength to roughly 75,000 officers and enlisted men. An unbroken string of

victories during Lee's thirteen months in command—assuming that Antietam was a tactical draw—inspired high morale among the rank and file and great confidence in the commander. As one Georgian said while passing the general during the march north, “Boys, there are ten thousand men sitting on that one horse.”

Lee planned his northward route with care. (*See Map 1.*) After concentrating at Culpeper, he intended to clear the Shenandoah Valley of Union troops and then continue north into Pennsylvania's rich Cumberland Valley. If he stayed west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the range would shield both his army's supply trains and, in time, southbound wagons filled with goods taken north of the Potomac. On 10 June, Lee ordered Ewell to proceed into the Shenandoah Valley. Lee chose Ewell's Second Corps to lead the

---

*General Ewell* (Library of Congress)



*General Hill* (Library of Congress)



advance into Pennsylvania because that command contained most of the veterans of Jackson's 1862 Valley Campaign—men who knew the region they were marching into.

The fight at Brandy Station, meanwhile, convinced Hooker to reconsider his options. When it became apparent that Lee's entire army was heading north, Hooker recommended marching south and attacking Richmond instead. President Lincoln, however, reminded him that "Lee's army and not Richmond, is your sure objective point." On 13 June, Hooker ordered the Army of the Potomac to begin its pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia.

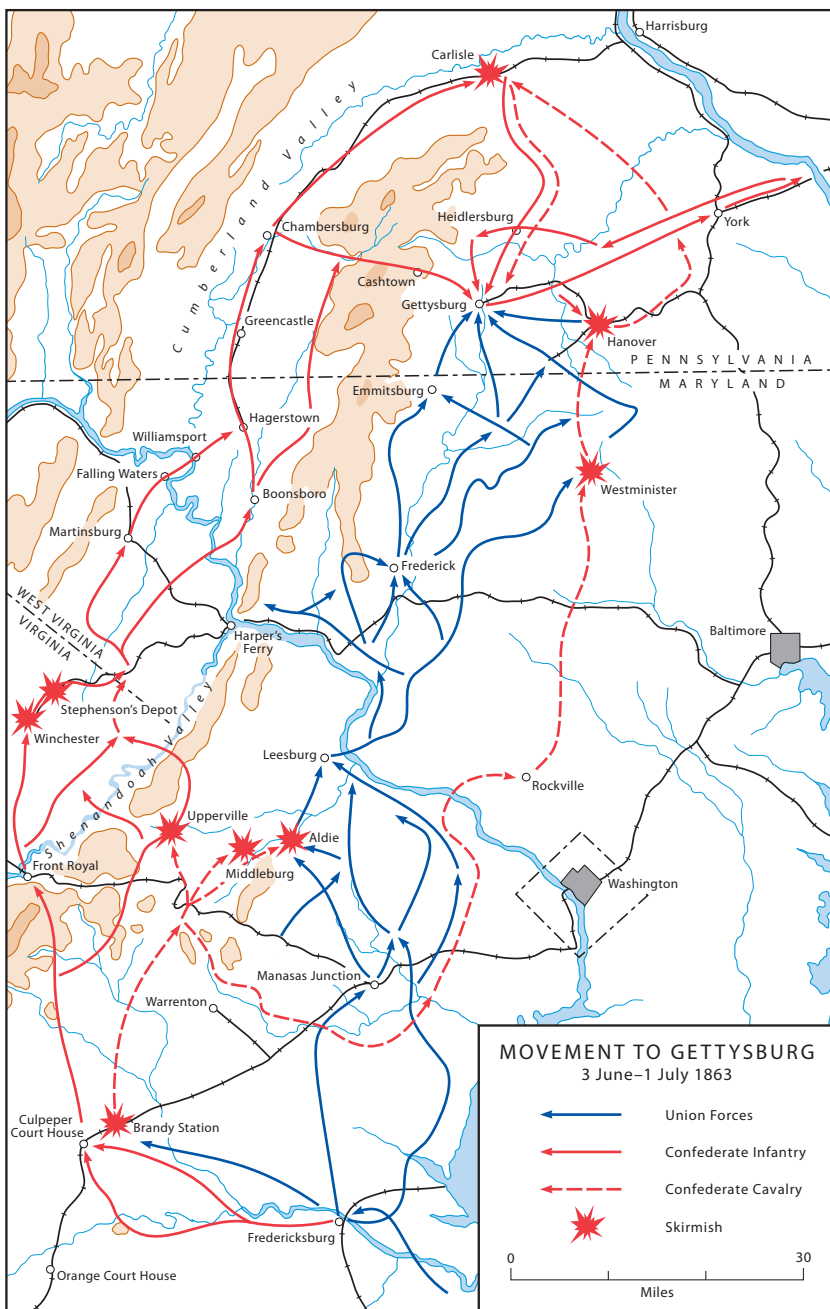
Consisting of seven infantry corps and one cavalry corps, the Army of the Potomac numbered about 94,000 effectives. While Hooker saw no need for the kind of massive reorganization that Lee had recently undertaken, he knew that several of his corps contained only two divisions rather than the usual three and that he had just lost thousands of veteran soldiers who mustered out when their two-year enlistments expired. For those reasons and more, Hooker believed that Lee outnumbered him, and he often badgered the general in chief of the U.S. Army, Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, either for reinforcements or for authority over garrisons not currently under his control.

On 14 June, Ewell passed his first test as corps commander at Winchester soundly defeating Union Brig. Gen. Robert H. Milroy's garrison. "So impetuous was the charge of our men that in a few minutes they were over the breastworks, driving the enemy

---

*General Hooker (Library of Congress)*





**MAP 1**

out in great haste and confusion,” described a Louisiana captain. Ewell captured 23 cannon, 300 wagons, and 4,000 prisoners. He then sent Brig. Gen. Albert G. Jenkins’ cavalry brigade scouting ahead of the main column. Jenkins’ horsemen rode into Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, on 20 June, and two days later, Ewell’s infantry entered the Keystone State near Greencastle.

For the next week, Ewell’s troops scoured south-central Pennsylvania for supplies, advancing as far north as the outskirts of Harrisburg, the state capital. On 21 June, Lee issued General Orders 72, setting forth proper foraging procedures: quartermaster, commissary, ordnance, and medical officers were to obtain needed goods at fair market value, and all soldiers must respect private property. Jenkins’ cavalry apparently interpreted the order quite loosely. “Some people, with . . . antiquated ideas of business, might call it stealing to take goods and pay for them in bogus money,” wrote a Chambersburg journalist, “but Jenkins calls it business, and for the time being what Jenkins called business, was business.” When Ewell’s infantry arrived, they also enjoyed the bounty of the region. Pvt. Gordon Bradwell of the 31st Georgia recalled an issue of “two hindquarters of very fine beef, a barrel or two of flour, some buckets of wine, sugar, clothing, shoes, etc. All this for about twenty men.”

Reports of such excesses troubled Lee. On 27 June, he issued General Orders 73 chastising his soldiers for their “instances of forgetfulness” and reminding them of the “duties expected of us by civility and Christianity.” Still, even before Lee’s entire army had crossed into Pennsylvania, wagon trains loaded with food-stuffs and other goods began heading south. In addition, reported the Chambersburg editor, “Quite a number of negroes, free and slave—men, women and children—were captured by Jenkins and started south to be sold into bondage.”

Pennsylvanians responded to the arrival of Lee’s army in various ways. Many civilians in Lee’s path simply fled with all they could carry. Some Pennsylvania Democrats believed—wrongly, as it turned out—that their political affiliation would protect them from depredation. A Harrisburg editor opined that Lee’s men enjoyed great success as foragers because “the people of the State were not prepared to meet any foe, and least of all, such a foe as marches beneath the black flag of treason.” He cited the legislature’s recent failure to improve the state’s militia system for leaving south-central Pennsylvania open to invasion. On 9

June, the Lincoln administration had established the Department of the Susquehanna to organize local defense, and Governor Andrew G. Curtin had called out the state's emergency forces, but all such efforts proved futile. On 26 June, the 26th Pennsylvania Emergency Regiment deployed against some of Ewell's men just west of Gettysburg; those who did not become prisoners scattered in panic after exchanging a few shots with the Confederates.

Even as Ewell neared Harrisburg, he faced only minimal resistance; however, the rest of Lee's army faced far stiffer opposition during its northward advance. Now alerted to Lee's movements, Hooker sent his cavalry and some infantry to probe the Blue Ridge gaps, seeking opportunities to intercept the Confederate columns. Lee had kept Longstreet's First Corps and Stuart's cavalry east of the Blue Ridge to block Hooker's advance, resulting in sharp clashes between rival horsemen at Aldie on 17 June, at Middleburg on 19 June, and at Upperville on 21 June. On 23 June, Lee ordered Stuart to "harass and impede as much as possible" the progress of Hooker's army if it attempted to cross the Potomac, and, should that occur, to "take position on the right of our column as it advanced." Stuart certainly bothered the Union army and caused great consternation in Washington, but he chose a north-bound course that placed Hooker's hard-marching army squarely between him and Lee for one crucial week in late June. Lee thus had to conduct operations without benefit of the excellent intelligence that Stuart usually provided him.

Even so, Lee continued to display an aggressiveness that confounded Hooker. Still convinced that he faced "an enemy in my front of more than my number," Hooker delivered an ultimatum to Halleck on 27 June—either send reinforcements or relieve him of command. Hooker's superiors decided to replace him. In a letter to his wife, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade noted that he was awakened before dawn on 28 June "by an officer from Washington." The officer, Meade wrote, said that "he had come to give me trouble. At first I thought that it was either to relieve or arrest me, and promptly replied to him, that my conscience was clear. . . . He then handed me a communication to read; which I found was an order relieving Hooker from the command and assigning me to it."

Hooker was in such a hurry to leave that he failed to provide Meade with a detailed assessment of the military situation. The new commander therefore knew little about his own army's status and even less about Lee's. With a hostile army on the march ahead



of him, his own army in hot pursuit, and a myriad of administrative and operational challenges confronting him, Meade had to assume the responsibilities of high command in short order. He began by making a few essential administrative and organizational changes and then communicated with General Halleck and President Lincoln in Washington. Meade also fielded numerous requests for information or supplies from political and military officials, and began to develop a plan of action for his new command based on Halleck's instructions: "You will . . . maneuver and fight in such a manner as to cover the capital and also Baltimore. . . . Should General Lee move upon either of these places, it is expected that you will either anticipate him or arrive with him so as to give him battle."

---

*General Meade (Library of Congress)*



Despite the defensive tone of Halleck's instructions, Meade understood that he had "to find and fight the enemy," and he ordered the Army of the Potomac to resume its northward advance the next day, 29 June. On 30 June, Meade was still uncertain as to Lee's location and intentions, so he drafted a contingency plan to concentrate his army along Pipe Creek in Maryland, just south of the Pennsylvania state line. Meade's critics later cited the Pipe Creek circular as proof of his unwillingness to fight, but his concluding sentence suggested otherwise: "Developments may cause the Commanding General to assume the offensive from his present positions."

While encamped near Chambersburg, Lee learned of Meade's accession to command the day after his appointment. Although he assumed that a



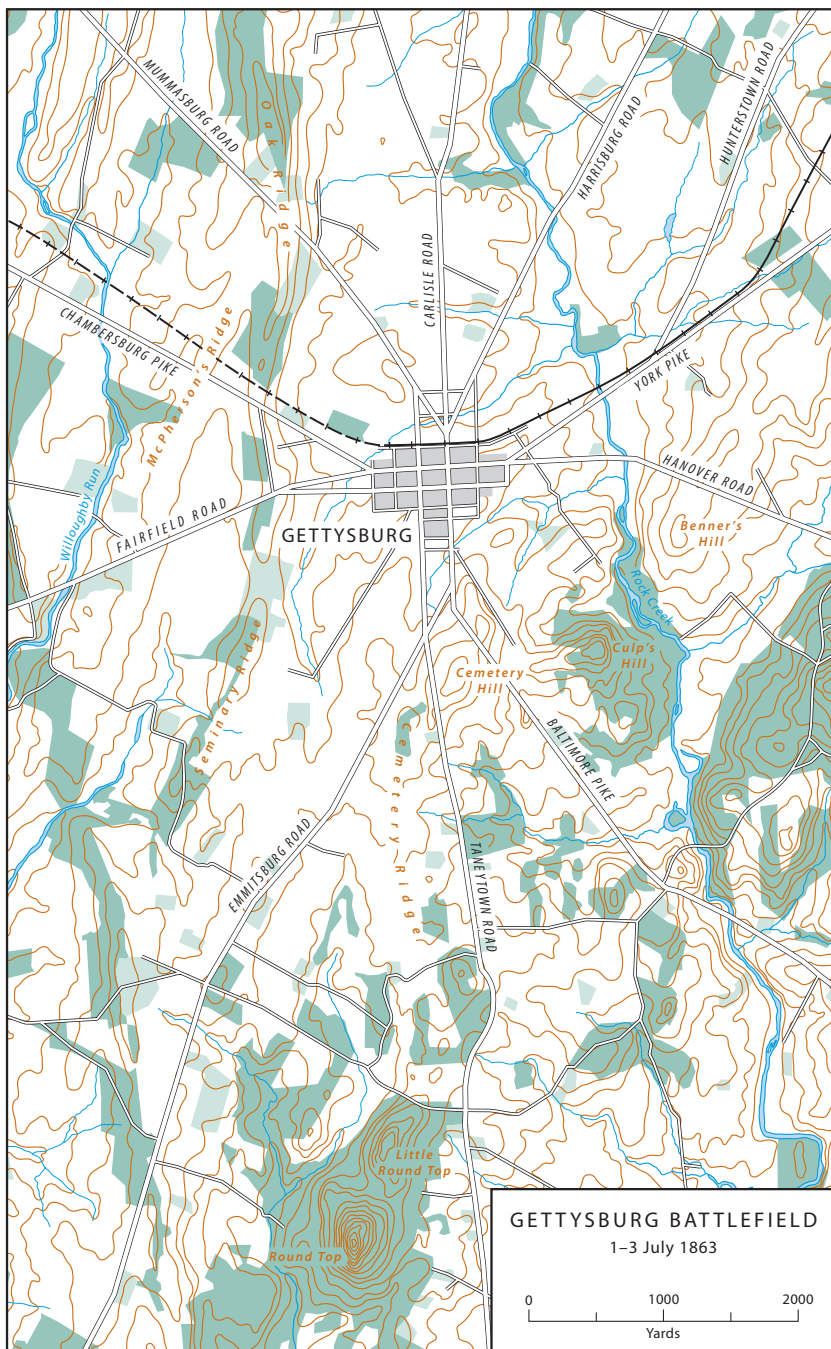
new commander would enter his duties cautiously, Lee issued orders on 29 June for the Army of Northern Virginia to concentrate at Cashtown, east of the Blue Ridge and seven miles northwest of Gettysburg. He warned his corps commanders not to give battle with Meade's approaching forces until the whole of the army was concentrated to provide ready support. By 30 June, most of Hill's Third Corps had already reached Cashtown. Longstreet remained west of the Blue Ridge, but was less than a day's march away. Ewell made plans to leave his camps around Carlisle early on 1 July and head for Cashtown.

On 30 June, Hill sent forward a brigade from Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's division to reconnoiter toward Gettysburg. The brigade commander, Brig. Gen. James J. Pettigrew, reported that Union cavalry had entered the town from the south. Pettigrew had encountered the lead element of the Army of the Potomac—Brig. Gen. John Buford's cavalry division, which then consisted of two small brigades and one six-gun battery. An outstanding cavalry officer, Buford had deployed his command to cover Gettysburg's road network from the Hanover Road to the east through the York Pike and the Harrisburg Road to the northeast, the Carlisle Road to the north, the Mummasburg Road and Chambersburg Pike to the northwest, and the Fairfield Road to the southwest (*Map 2*). Buford remained uncertain of Lee's location and intentions, yet he sensed that the Confederates who had appeared west of town earlier that day would return the next morning in far greater numbers. He was right.

---

*General Buford (Library of Congress)*





**MAP 2**

## THE FIRST DAY OF BATTLE, 1 JULY

As Buford had expected, Hill ordered Heth's entire division to advance on Gettysburg at first light. About 0700, troopers from the 8th Illinois Cavalry, posted three miles west of Gettysburg on the Chambersburg Pike, spotted shadowy figures nearing the Marsh Creek Bridge to their front. According to tradition, Lt. Marcellus Jones borrowed a sergeant's carbine and fired the first shot of the Battle of Gettysburg. He then fired several more rounds at skirmishers from Brig. Gen. James J. Archer's brigade, the lead element of Heth's division. Jones immediately reported the contact; in short order, Buford learned not only of the mounting threat along the Chambersburg Pike but also of enemy activity along roads to the west and north of Gettysburg. He immediately sent brief but informative assessments of the rapidly changing situation to Meade at Army headquarters and to Maj. Gen. John F. Reynolds, whose I Corps had encamped the previous night just a few miles south of Gettysburg. In order to keep the Gettysburg crossroads under Union control, Buford would need Reynolds' help. With Heth's division in the lead and Maj. Gen. William Dorsey Pender's division close behind, a force of nearly 14,000 Confederates from General Hill's Third Corps advanced down the Chambersburg Pike toward Buford's 2,800 cavalymen.

Fortune favored Buford that muggy July morning. Without cavalry to scout ahead, Heth admitted, "I was ignorant what force was at or near Gettysburg." This meant that even the slightest resistance from Buford's pickets compelled Archer's brigade to halt, deploy skirmishers, and proceed cautiously as if the command faced a comparable force of infantry. As Capt. Amasa Dana of the 8th Illinois Cavalry recalled, "the firing was rapid from our carbines, and . . . induced the belief of four times our number of men actually present." For nearly a mile-and-a-half, each time Archer's skirmishers came too close "we retired and continued to take new position, and usually held out as long as we could without imminent risk of capture." Buford's cavalymen thus traded space for the time required for Reynolds to arrive with his I Corps. About 1000, Archer's brigade halted on Herr's Ridge, two miles west of Gettysburg, to await the rest of Heth's division while Buford's troopers took up their final defensive line on the next rise to the east—McPherson's Ridge—one mile closer to town.

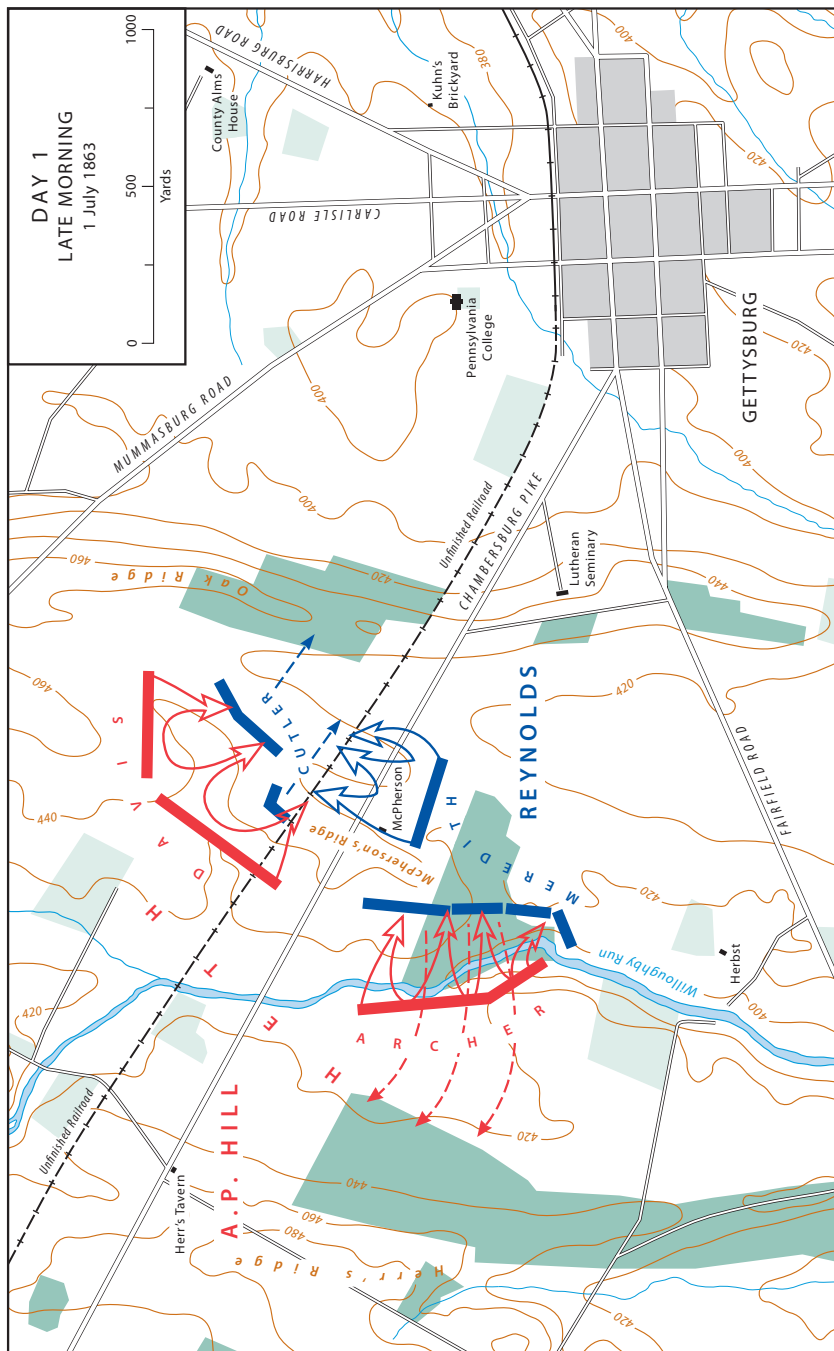
Reynolds had not yet arrived when Heth launched his strongest attack yet. Deploying Brig. Gen. Joseph R. Davis' brigade

north of the Chambersburg Pike and Archer's brigade south of it, Heth sent his troops across Willoughby Run and up the slopes of McPherson's Ridge against Buford's line. Thanks to the ease of reloading their single-shot, breech-loading carbines, the cavalymen produced a volume of fire entirely disproportionate to their numbers, but both sides knew the outnumbered troopers could not withstand the Confederate infantry much longer. At roughly 1015, however, the rattle of drums signaled the arrival of General Reynolds and the lead division of the I Corps.

The fighting on 1 July west of Gettysburg breaks down into four phases. The advance of Archer's Confederate infantry against Buford's Union cavalry that began at 0700 and culminated with the assault on McPherson's Ridge around 1015 constituted the first phase. No officer in either army more senior than a division commander played a major role in this action and casualties remained comparatively light. The three remaining phases of the 1 July fight featured far more lethal action between large infantry units, well supported by artillery, with corps commanders and, in time, Lee himself present on the battlefield to make key decisions.

Phase two of the 1 July fight, lasting from about 1030 until 1200, included two largely independent brigade-level infantry actions on McPherson's Ridge, one on each side of the Chambersburg Pike (*Map 3*). North of the road, Heth sent Davis back into the fight, this time against Brig. Gen. Lysander Cutler's infantry brigade rather than Buford's cavalry. Davis turned Cutler's right flank, but the 380-man 147th New York failed to receive the order to withdraw and remained in position to protect an artillery battery. The New Yorkers were hard-pressed by enemy troops in their front, and their right flank was exposed or "in the air." To confront both threats, the 147th New York refused—or bent back—its rightmost companies, giving the battery time to withdraw. As the New Yorkers' ranks melted away in the crossfire that engulfed them, Maj. George Harney issued a unique command: "In retreat, double time, run." During the short but sharp fight, the 147th New York lost almost 80 percent of its troop strength.

At roughly the same time south of the Chambersburg Pike, Brig. Gen. Solomon Meredith's famed Iron Brigade—consisting of the 2d, 6th, and 7th Wisconsin, the 19th Indiana, and the 24th Michigan—arrived on the field. Reynolds himself pointed out the Midwesterners' first objective: the repulse of Archer's brigade, then cresting McPherson's Ridge through the Herbst family woodlot.



MAP 3

Seconds later, Reynolds fell from his saddle, killed instantly by a bullet to the back of the head. Unaware of Reynolds' death, the Iron Brigade drove Archer's men out of the woodlot and back across Willoughby Run. Pvt. Patrick Maloney of the 2d Wisconsin captured Archer himself, making him the first general officer in the Army of Northern Virginia to be captured since Lee had assumed command thirteen months earlier. The Iron Brigade learned of Reynolds' fall only after they withdrew to the high ground in Herbst's woods to reorganize.

The Midwesterners' position south of the Chambersburg Pike was not as secure as it seemed. Reynolds' death made Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday the senior Union officer on the field, and he found his attention quickly drawn north of the turnpike. That was because Davis' troops, emboldened by their success against Cutler, continued to push eastward; if left unchecked, the onrushing Confederates could sweep in behind the Union troops fighting south of the road. To stop Davis' advance, the Iron Brigade's 6th Wisconsin and two New York regiments charged from south of the pike to the lip of an unfinished railroad cut that many of Davis' troops were using for cover. The Federals' sudden appearance made prisoners of hundreds of Confederates who found themselves trapped within the railroad cut's steep earthen walls. Lt. Col. Rufus Dawes of the 6th Wisconsin ordered a Mississippi officer,

---

Death of Reynolds by Alfred R. Waud (Library of Congress)





“Surrender, or I will fire!” According to Dawes, the man “replied not a word but promptly handed me his sword.” Then, “six other officers came up and handed me their swords,” Dawes recalled. The successful charge consequently averted a Union disaster, inspiring Doubleday to hold McPherson’s Ridge in the belief that it had been Reynolds’ “intention to defend the place.”

The fight at the railroad cut ended about 1200, and an eerie calm settled over the battlefield. When the third phase began around 1400, the battle changed in three important ways. First, both sides received substantial reinforcements. Second, the morning’s fight west of Gettysburg now extended to the north of town. Third, General Lee arrived on the battlefield and took a significant measure of tactical control over his army’s actions.

Phase three began when General Heth renewed the contest south of the Chambersburg Pike by advancing his two remaining fresh brigades against the Iron Brigade. The Midwesterners’ line had been bolstered by two newly arrived I Corps brigades. Fighting grew in intensity all along McPherson’s Ridge, but nowhere did the carnage exceed that in the Herbst woodlot, where the left flank of General Pettigrew’s North Carolina brigade assaulted the Iron Brigade’s line. Fate had thrown two of the largest regiments on the field—the 496-man 24th Michigan and the 800-man 26th North Carolina—against each other. Col. Henry Morrow of the 24th Michigan considered his position to be “untenable,” but he received orders that the line “must be held at all hazards.” The 26th North Carolina advanced “with rapid strides, yelling like demons,” Morrow reported. Before the fighting ended, at least eleven North Carolina color bearers—and their 21-year-old colonel, Henry K. Burgwyn Jr.—fell to Iron Brigade bullets. Company F, 26th North Carolina, contained three sets of twins in its ranks, and five of those six men were either killed or mortally wounded. The 24th Michigan paid dearly as well, reporting 316 men killed and wounded, along with another 80 listed as missing in action.

In the meantime, a new threat emerged against the right of the I Corps’ line, this time from the north and northwest. Earlier that day, General Ewell was heading southwest toward Cashtown with the Second Corps divisions commanded by Maj. Gens. Robert E. Rodes and Jubal A. Early. Then word arrived of the fighting at Gettysburg. Ewell immediately changed direction and began marching south toward Gettysburg, bearing in mind that Lee “did not want a general engagement brought on till the

rest of the army came up.” The deployment of Rodes’ division on Oak Hill, an eminence just north of the Mummasburg Road that overlooked the morning’s battlefield, placed Ewell’s men in good position to strike the right flank of the I Corps’ line astride the Chambersburg Pike. As Rodes wheeled his batteries onto the high ground, Doubleday saw the potential for disaster and sent Brig. Gen. Henry Baxter’s fresh brigade to extend the I Corps’ line to the Mummasburg Road and anchor its flank there. Utilizing the cover offered by Sheads’ Woods and the reverse slope of a northward extension of Seminary Ridge known as Oak Ridge, Baxter’s men moved into their assigned position unseen by Rodes.

Wrongly believing that the Union flank rested squarely in Sheads’ Woods, Rodes planned to hit the woodlot hard with a coordinated assault launched by three of his five brigades. Because of poor execution resulting from incompetence and negligence on the part of two brigade commanders, Col. Edward A. O’Neal and Brig. Gen. Alfred Iverson Jr., Rodes’ assault soon fell apart. O’Neal’s Alabamians attacked alone, and Baxter’s right flank regiments along the Mummasburg Road repulsed them easily. Iverson’s North Carolinians attacked shortly thereafter, blundering forward without skirmishers to warn them of the enemy’s presence. To deal with Iverson’s assault, Baxter’s men simply faced left and redeployed behind a stone wall on top of Oak Ridge, firing volleys into the Tar Heels’ ranks that literally mowed them down. Virginia artilleryman Henry Robinson Berkeley passed the field a few days later and noted in his diary: “There were, in a few feet of us, by actual count, seventy-nine (79) North Carolinians laying dead in a straight line . . . all evidently killed by one volley.”

Rodes had intended for Brig. Gen. Junius Daniel’s North Carolina brigade to support Iverson’s assault, but a growing threat on the Tar Heels’ right flank caused the unit to split in two. Two of Daniel’s regiments ultimately supported Iverson, but the rest turned south toward the railroad cut and the McPherson farm, where they clashed with Col. Roy Stone’s small Pennsylvania brigade. The Tar Heels and the Pennsylvanians surged back and forth in some of the costliest fighting of the day across the narrow swath of ground separating the pike and the railroad cut, with neither side gaining an advantage.

While Ewell’s men approached Gettysburg from the north, Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard brought up the Union XI Corps from the south. The unit contained a high percentage of German-born

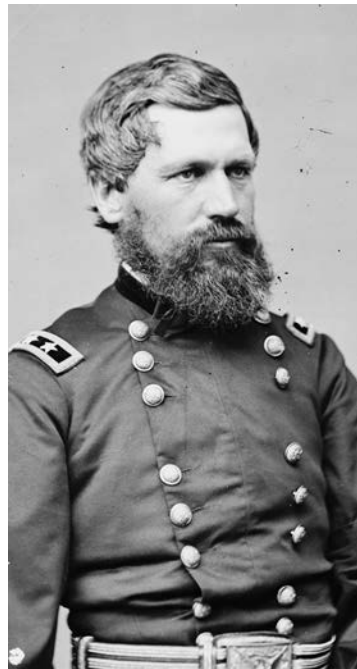


soldiers. It had been plagued by misfortune, having borne the brunt of “Stonewall” Jackson’s flank attack at Chancellorsville, after which the XI Corps became known throughout the Army as “Howard’s Cowards” or the “Flying Dutchmen.” By virtue of seniority, Howard superseded Doubleday as the Union commander at Gettysburg. He ordered Doubleday to continue to hold McPherson’s Ridge with the I Corps. Recognizing the importance of Cemetery Hill, a key terrain feature just south of town, Howard sent Brig. Gen. Adolph von Steinwehr’s division there as a reserve in case the situation north of Gettysburg deteriorated. He sent his other two XI Corps divisions—those of Maj. Gen. Carl Schurz and Brig. Gen. Francis C. Barlow—north through the town. As Howard’s senior division commander, Schurz became commander of the XI Corps when Howard assumed overall command.

Schurz intended to deploy on the right flank of the I Corps’ line, but Rodes’ presence on Oak Hill made that impossible. Worse yet, the acting XI Corps commander began to receive reports of the advance of Early’s division down the Harrisburg Road from the northeast. Schurz conferred with Barlow and quickly decided to establish a defensive line perpendicular to the I Corps’ line to counter the threat posed by both Rodes and Early. Since the Carlisle Road bisected his new front, Schurz deployed west of it, and he sent Barlow east of it. Barlow disliked the position that Schurz had assigned him. Concerned that Early might transform a knob of high ground in his immediate front into a commanding artillery position, Barlow advanced his entire division, posting one of his two brigades as a heavy skirmish line astride the Harrisburg Road at Rock

---

*General Howard* (Library of Congress)



Creek and extending the other westward to the knoll. During the advance, Barlow broke contact with Schurz's right flank near the Carlisle Road leaving a large gap in that part of the XI Corps' line. To make matters worse, Barlow's right flank was also in the air. Both points were vulnerable to a Confederate attack.

Schurz faced problems of his own. The general realized that he lacked sufficient numbers to do the three things he deemed essential to maintaining his position: establish a line of battle to stop the Confederates advancing down the Carlisle Road, forge a link with the I Corps on Oak Ridge, and retain a reserve force. All he could do was deploy one of his two brigades as a strong skirmish line between the Carlisle Road and the Mummasburg Road, weighted a bit to the left to provide support to the I Corps if needed, and keep Col. Wladimir Krzyzanowski's brigade available to respond to crises anywhere along the XI Corps' front.

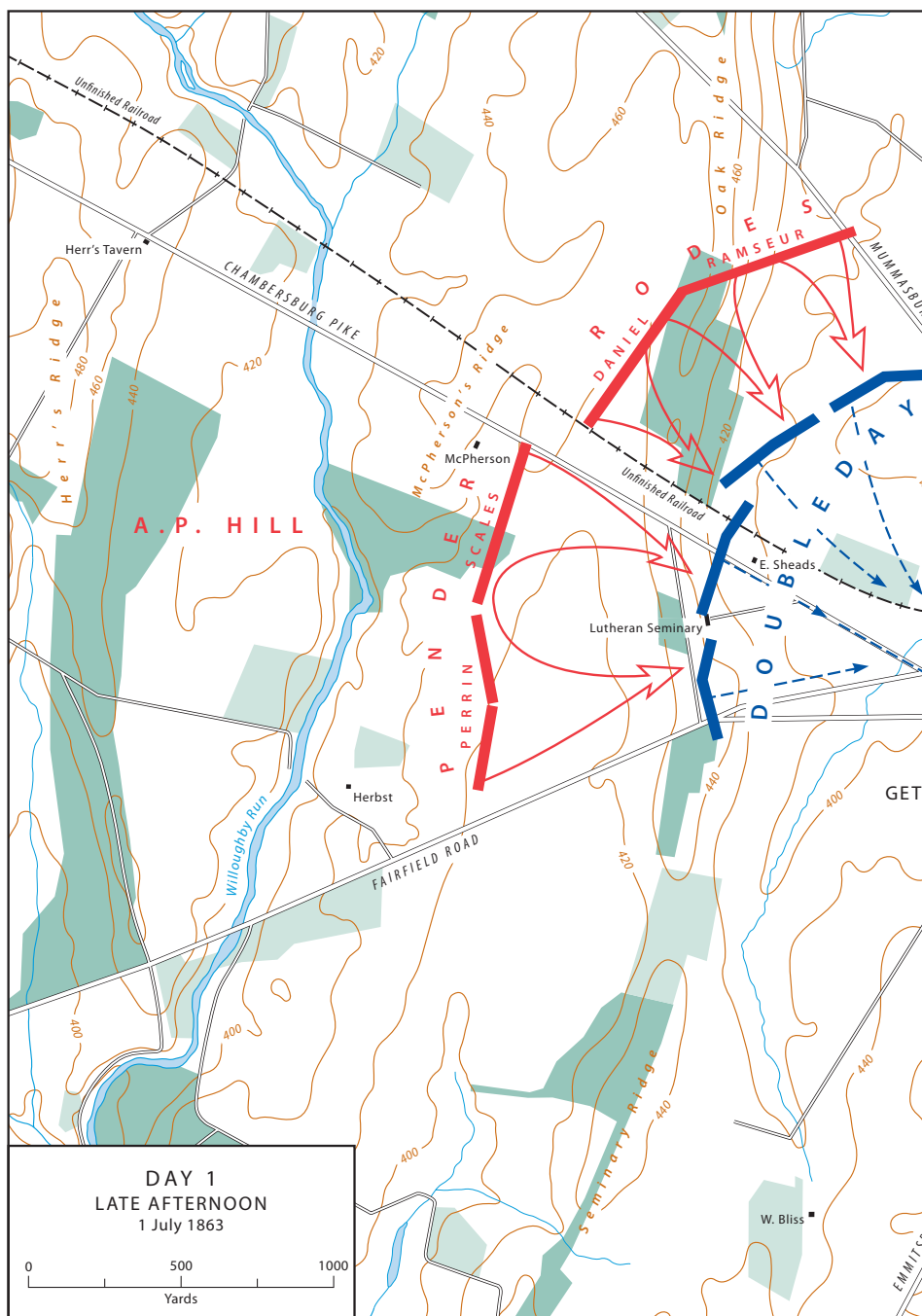
When Early finally struck, Barlow bore the brunt of the assault. Brig. Gen. John B. Gordon's Georgia brigade advanced directly on Barlow's line at the knoll, while Brig. Gen. Harry T. Hays' Louisiana brigade marched on the east side of the Harrisburg Road in order to turn Barlow's right flank. (*See Map 4.*) While Barlow focused his attention on Hays and Gordon, Brig. Gen. George P. Doles' Georgia brigade from Rodes' division advanced in force down the Carlisle Road toward Barlow's unprotected left flank. A gallant stand along the road by the 157th New York slowed their progress, but the Georgians continued to angle toward Barlow's open flank. Schurz ordered Krzyzanowski's brigade forward to Barlow's support. Pvt. Edwin Southard of the 119th New York recalled the vicious firefight that followed: "We moved straight on to the death that hurtled from the enemy's hidden lines. We returned volley for volley, and the sulphurous air seemed filled with hissing bullets and bursting shells." Krzyzanowski's men briefly held but "suffered cruelly" in doing so.

General Lee, meanwhile, arrived on the battlefield about 1400. Informed of Early's initial success, Lee ordered a general assault around 1600. Thus began phase four of the 1 July fight. Overwhelmed by the weight of superior numbers, the entire Union line unraveled, starting with the right flank of the XI Corps on the Harrisburg Road. During the rout, Barlow fell seriously wounded, and his division fled through the streets of Gettysburg toward Cemetery Hill. Schurz soon withdrew his skirmish line west of the Carlisle Road, his survivors also heading for the high

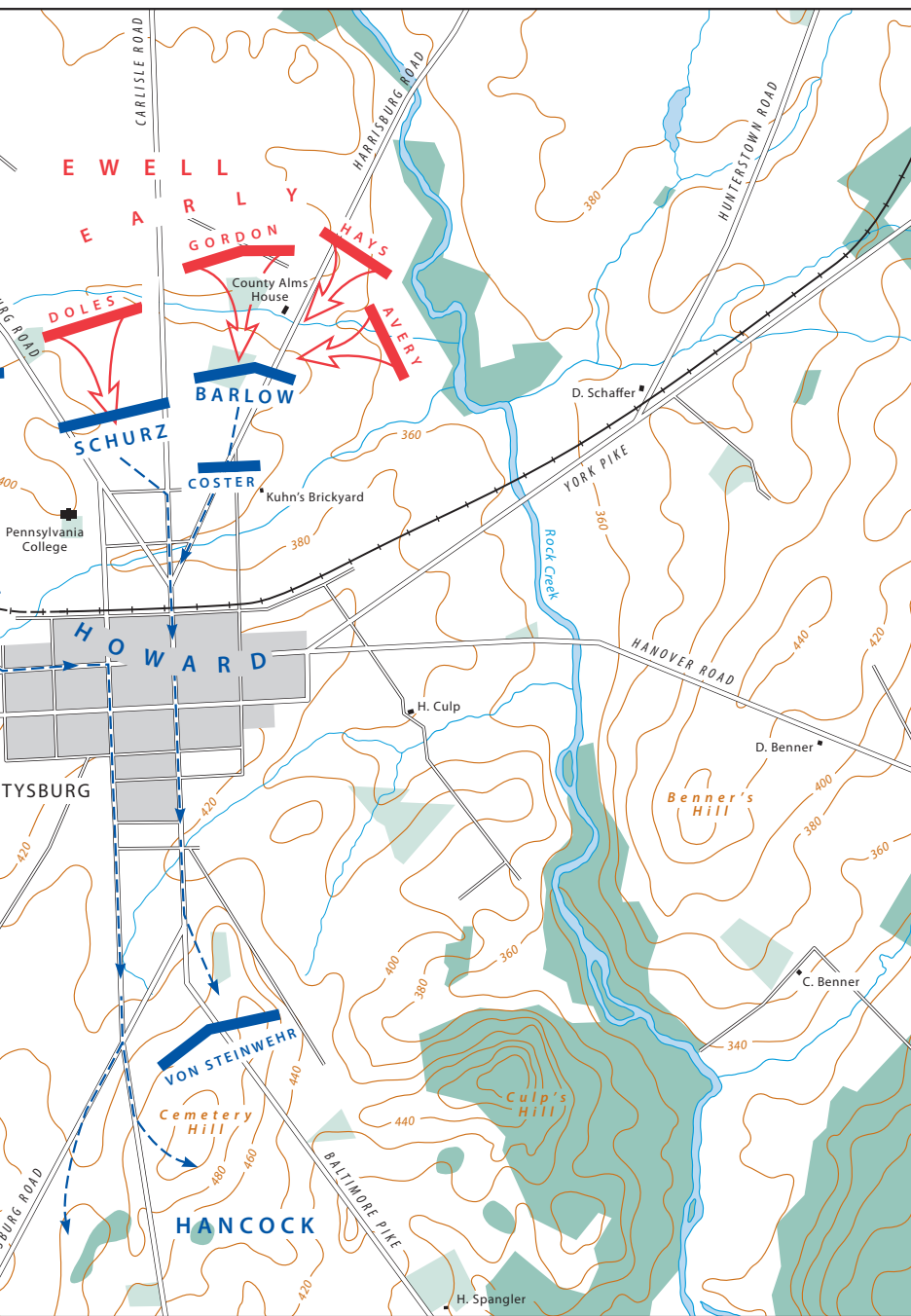
ground south of town. From Cemetery Hill, Steinwehr sent Col. Charles R. Coster's brigade forward to cover the XI Corps' withdrawal. Coster's men became embroiled in a nasty firefight with Hays' Louisianans and Col. Isaac Avery's North Carolina brigade. Making a desperate stand at Kuhn's brickyard on the northern edge of town, Coster's men soon found themselves all but surrounded. Those who managed to cut their way out joined their fleeing comrades in the race to Cemetery Hill. Critics point to the large number of Union prisoners as evidence of the XI Corps' cowardice, but the long list of killed and wounded says otherwise.

As the XI Corps' line disintegrated, the I Corps' line began to give way—but only after six hours of hard fighting. The rout began on the right of Doubleday's line. Brig. Gen. Stephen D. Ramseur's fresh North Carolina brigade reinvigorated the remnants of Rodes' brigades that had fought near Oak Hill, and the Confederates finally swept the Union forces off Oak Ridge. During the fight, a Confederate bullet struck one of Doubleday's brigade commanders, Brig. Gen. Gabriel R. Paul, in the head and blinded him for life—many Northern newspapers reported Paul as killed. Col. Charles W. Tilden of the 16th Maine assumed command of Paul's brigade and received orders unwelcome to any commander: stand to the last and hold "as long as there was a man left." Tilden tore the regimental battle flag from its pole and gave a shred to each soldier in his command. By the end of the day, Tilden and 161 of his men were prisoners—many captured while occupying the same railroad cut that had betrayed so many hapless Confederates earlier that day. Oddly enough, the Confederates made their greatest haul of Union prisoners at the cut.

On the I Corps' line south of the Chambersburg Pike, the remnants of three Union brigades—including the Iron Brigade—finally abandoned McPherson's Ridge and re-formed behind a fence-rail barricade in front of Schmucker Hall, the main building of the Lutheran Theological Seminary on Seminary Ridge. Col. Charles S. Wainwright of the I Corps artillery concentrated his batteries along the ridge to the right of the infantry and astride the Chambersburg Pike. When General Pender's fresh division launched its assault on the high ground, Wainwright's guns took a heavy toll on Brig. Gen. Alfred M. Scales' North Carolina brigade, wounding Scales and putting every one of his regimental commanders out of action. The remaining I Corps troops made Col. Abner M. Perrin's South Carolinians pay in blood for the ridge before they and Wainwright's



MAP 4



guns finally gave way and fell back to the Union rallying point on Cemetery Hill. About 1700, soldiers from Perrin's 1st South Carolina Infantry raised their regimental flag over the Gettysburg town square.

In the meantime, chaos reigned on Cemetery Hill. While Doubleday and Howard squabbled over possible courses of action, thousands of lost soldiers searched for their units as small groups of exhausted men gathered around tattered remnants of regimental colors. To restore order, Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, the commander of the Army of the Potomac's II Corps, arrived on the scene as General Meade's personal representative, carrying written authorization to make decisions in Meade's name and an order to evaluate Gettysburg as a potential battlefield. "If you think the ground and position there a better one to fight a battle" than the Pipe Creek line, Meade instructed, then the commanding general would "order all the troops up." Upon his arrival, Hancock

quickly ended all dissension by assuming command in Meade's name. Then he ordered Howard to keep his XI Corps on Cemetery Hill, and overruled Doubleday's objection to sending the I Corps to defend neighboring Culp's Hill. In a dispatch to Meade, Hancock assessed the situation at Gettysburg: "I think we can retire; if not, we can fight here, as the ground appears not unfavorable with good troops."

It was well that Hancock carried out his orders so efficiently. Buoyed by his tactical success, at 1645, Lee sent Ewell one more order: attack the high ground south of town—Cemetery Hill—"if practicable." Ewell was unaccustomed to such discretionary orders. He performed a perfunctory reconnaissance of the ground, saw the

---

*General Hancock* (Library of Congress)



beginnings of a stout defense, and received reports about possible Union activity behind his left flank. Then, realizing that he “could not bring artillery to bear” on the hill “and all the troops . . . were jaded by twelve hours’ marching and fighting,” he decided—against the recommendations of his senior subordinates—not to order an assault. Ewell’s controversial decision, still debated today, ended the day’s major combat.

About 2100, General Longstreet arrived at Lee’s headquarters on the Chambersburg Pike near the seminary. After offering his congratulations on the day’s success, Longstreet was stunned to learn that Lee already had decided to renew the fight on 2 July. As he later wrote, “I suggested that this course seemed to be at variance with the plan of the campaign that had been agreed upon before leaving Fredericksburg.” At the time, the two generals had discussed a strategic offensive into Pennsylvania, in which Lee would shift to the tactical defensive on ground of his choosing if compelled to fight. But now Lee said, “If the enemy is there to-morrow, we must attack him.” Longstreet replied, “If he is there, it will be because he is anxious that we should attack him—a good reason, in my judgment for not doing so.” But Lee had made his decision. As he explained in his report, “It had not been intended to fight a general battle at such a distance from our base, unless attacked by the enemy, but finding ourselves unexpectedly confronted by the Federal Army, it became a matter of difficulty to withdraw through the mountains with our large trains. . . . A battle thus became in a measure unavoidable.”

## THE SECOND DAY OF BATTLE, 2 JULY

Acting on Hancock’s advice, Meade ordered the Army of the Potomac to concentrate at Gettysburg and thus made the prospect of battle there almost a foregone conclusion. Just after 2400 on 2 July, Meade established his headquarters at the small farmhouse of Lydia Leister on the southwestern slope of Cemetery Hill. He consulted with Buford, Hancock, and other senior subordinates, and after a quick reconnaissance, laid out a strong defensive position. Meade kept the XI Corps on Cemetery Hill, sent the XII Corps to Culp’s Hill, and placed the decimated I Corps in the saddle between the two heights. He also deployed Hancock’s II Corps on a rise that ran south from Cemetery Hill—known as Cemetery Ridge—and planned to extend his line along that elevation as additional corps arrived. Meade intended to anchor his defensive position on two hills—known as the Round Tops—at the



southern end of Cemetery Ridge. When placed on a map, Meade's line resembled a giant fishhook.

As Meade deployed his army, Lee considered how best to attack it. As his conversation with Longstreet indicated, Lee evinced little interest in the other options still open to him. At first light, he sent out Capt. Samuel R. Johnston, an engineer on his staff, to reconnoiter the Union left flank. Johnston described the Union line as extending south from Cemetery Hill along the Emmitsburg Road until it ended just south of the distinctive red Codori farm buildings. When asked if he had found Union troops on Little Round Top—the less forested of the two hills—Johnston reported that he had ridden to its peak and found it unoccupied.

Present-day students of the battle find Captain Johnston's report befuddling because the Union left flank bore no resemblance to Johnston's description. In fact, when the captain made his reconnaissance, the II Corps' line—then the army's left flank—extended along Cemetery Ridge well south of the Codori farm. The line also rested at least 250 yards east of the Emmitsburg Road—in reality, Meade had posted no Union troops on the road itself. Moreover, troops from Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum's XII Corps and later Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Sickles' III Corps encamped in the area of Little Round Top in such numbers that Johnston should have detected their presence. Flawed as Captain Johnston's report was, it determined Lee's plan of attack for 2 July.

About 0900, Lee explained his plan to Longstreet. As Lee later reported, "It was determined to make the principal attack upon the enemy's left, and endeavor to gain a position from which it was thought that our artillery could be brought to bear with effect." He gave Longstreet command of the assault on the Union left, "which he was to drive in." Lee also ordered Ewell to "make a simultaneous demonstration upon the enemy's right, to be converted into a real attack should opportunity offer." He directed Hill's Third Corps to "threaten the enemy's center," in order to prevent the shifting of reinforcements against Longstreet or Ewell. Longstreet once more raised objections to Lee's plan. When it became clear that Lee would not reverse his decision, Longstreet sought to delay its execution. Only two of his divisions—those commanded by Generals McLaws and Hood—had arrived. He wanted to wait for Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett's division, still half a day's march away. Lee determined to press on



without it, but he did permit Longstreet to await the impending arrival of Hood's final brigade and even arranged for Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson's division of Hill's Third Corps to cooperate with Longstreet. Assuming that Longstreet would obey his orders to advance rapidly against the Union left flank, Lee rode off to Ewell's headquarters.

When Lee returned around 1100, he was upset to discover that Longstreet had not yet moved. Yet again he rejected his subordinate's objections and ordered him to attack at once. Longstreet's columns soon began their march to the southeast, but they halted just south of the Fairfield Road. The advance had spotted a Union signal station on Little Round Top, which no doubt would have seen them had they continued on their current route. Longstreet therefore ordered his columns to face about and countermarch. Their detour took them between intervening ridges that screened their movement but cost the attackers valuable time.

At 1515, McLaws' lead brigade reached the base of Seminary Ridge several miles southwest of Gettysburg where the Millersville Road crested the ridge and then proceeded eastward to intersect with the Emmitsburg Road. The Confederates' revised plan of attack was to follow the Millersville Road over the crest, halt at the Emmitsburg Road, face left, and advance north toward the Union left flank. At the top of the ridge, however, where McLaws and Longstreet had expected to see empty fields and quiet orchards, they found Sickles' III Corps deployed for battle.

Sickles' actions on 2 July remain a contentious issue to this day. Meade had intended for the III Corps to occupy the defensive fishhook along the

---

*General Sickles (Library of Congress)*



southern portion of Cemetery Ridge and to protect Little Round Top until the arrival of the V Corps. From the start, however, Sickles disliked his assigned position. If the Confederates placed artillery on the high ground half a mile or so in his front, Sickles reasoned, his entire line would be at their mercy. The knoll that caused Sickles so much concern was the site of Joseph Sherfy's Peach Orchard; it reminded him of a similar position at Chancellorsville known as Hazel Grove. Sickles did not want to repeat what had occurred there: soon after he obeyed orders to abandon Hazel Grove, enemy guns occupied the rise and inflicted heavy losses on his men.

Therefore, Sickles requested that Meade let him advance the III Corps from Cemetery Ridge to the high ground near the Emmitsburg Road, but Meade refused. A second plea from Sickles brought Meade's chief of artillery, Brig. Gen. Henry J. Hunt, to make a reconnaissance of the ground in question. While conceding that the position held certain advantages, Hunt also informed Sickles that he did not have the authority to approve Sickles' request. About 1200, Sickles' skirmishers—consisting of a hundred-man detachment of Col. Hiram Berdan's U.S. Sharpshooters—spotted some Confederates (though not from Longstreet's command) in the woods just beyond the Emmitsburg Road and briefly exchanged fire with them. The skirmish further convinced Sickles of the soundness of his plan.

Around 1400, Sickles ordered his command to move forward with flags flying and drums beating—and while still lacking permission to do so. The problems he created by seizing the high ground at the Peach Orchard far outweighed the advantages gained. First, Sickles placed Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys' division along the Emmitsburg Road, exposing it to interlocking fields of Confederate artillery fire and leaving it without enough cannon to mount an effective counterbattery response. Then he ordered Maj. Gen. David B. Birney's division to form on Humphreys' left and extend the line eastward from the Peach Orchard to the Wheatfield and from there southeastward all the way to Devil's Den. Birney soon discovered that he lacked the troops to cover his new front. A small gap isolated his left brigade at Devil's Den from the regiments he had deployed in the Wheatfield near the Rose farm buildings, and an even larger gap separated the troops in the Wheatfield from those Birney had posted near the Peach Orchard. Worse yet, the

bend in Sickles' line at the Peach Orchard created a vulnerable salient that the Confederates could attack from both the south and the west. In addition, Sickles' decision to abandon his position on the southern stretch of Cemetery Ridge uncovered the Taneytown Road, an essential line of communication for Meade's army.

Sickles' movement did succeed in complicating Longstreet's assault, however. Since the Confederates could not execute their plan to attack up the Emmitsburg Road, Longstreet ordered McLaws to deploy his men along the crest of Seminary Ridge parallel to—rather than perpendicular to—the roadway. He then told Hood to extend McLaws' line to the south and prepare to assault Sickles' new position. The Round Tops had played no role in the original attack plan, but now they had to be taken into account. Hood sent out scouts, and he reported to Longstreet that the way to the Army of the Potomac's left flank and rear east of those hills remained clear of enemy troops. He asked permission to bypass the Round Tops by sweeping around them rather than attack the hills straight on.

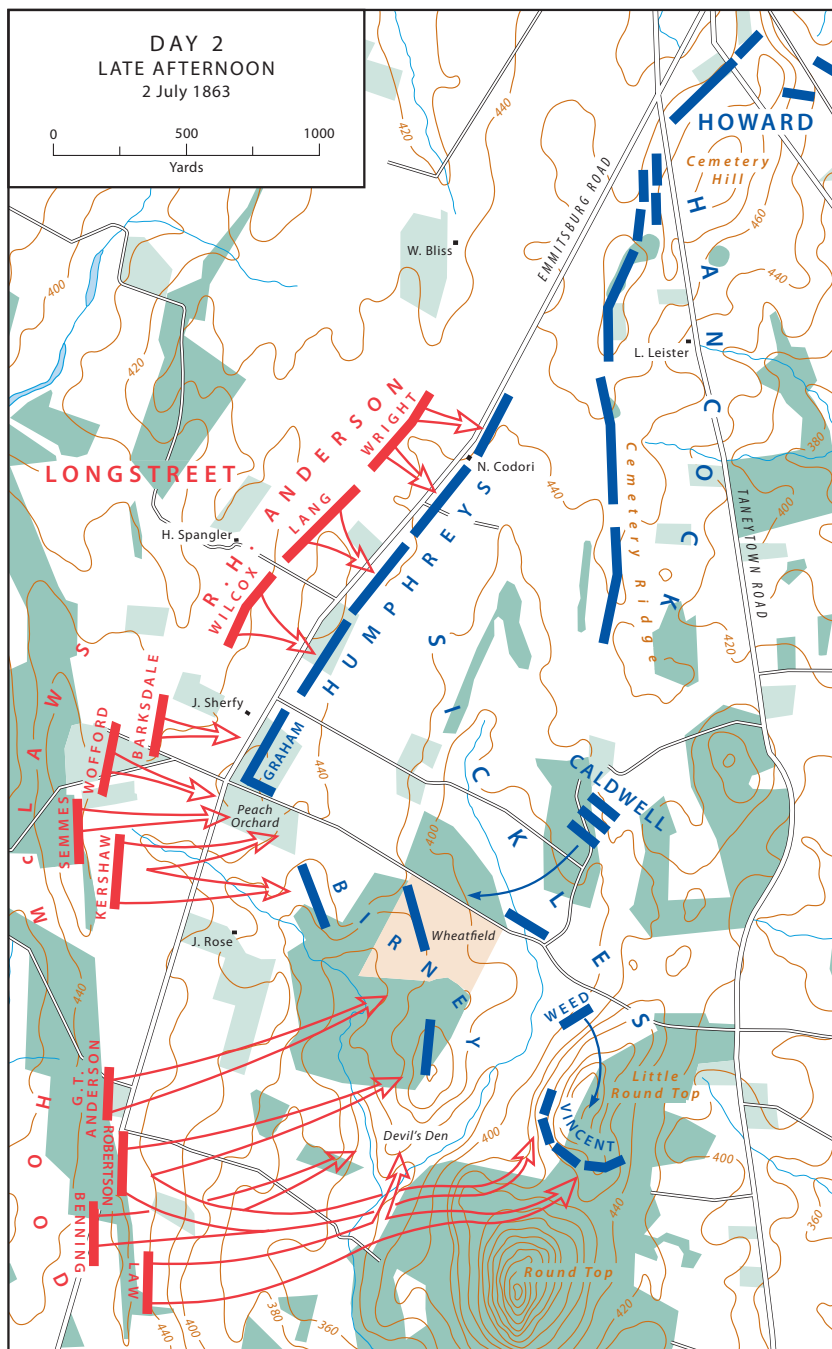
But the clock had advanced to 1600, and Lee had grown impatient. When Longstreet reported that the situation had changed dramatically since the crafting of the original attack plan, Lee proved unwilling to reconsider his options. Longstreet betrayed his frustration with Lee in his comments to Hood. He rejected Hood's repeated appeals to bypass the Round Tops and ordered the attack to start at once. Hood's division would strike first, followed by McLaws and then Anderson, the attack proceeding from south to north. A frustrated Hood lodged a formal protest, the first time that the hard-fighting general had ever done so. But he continued his preparations notwithstanding.

As Hood prepared to attack, Sickles inspected his new line. General Meade and his staff caught up with him near the Peach Orchard, and after a colorful and mostly one-sided verbal exchange—Meade was notorious for his hot temper—Sickles offered to pull back to Cemetery Ridge. At that moment, Longstreet's artillery opened fire. To prevent the III Corps' withdrawal from becoming a rout should the Confederates attack, Meade ordered Sickles to stay put and await reinforcements. Sickles' advocates later tried to turn Meade's order into a belated endorsement of his subordinate's initiative, but the commander clearly meant no such thing.

Hood's attack plan for his four brigades seemed straightforward enough (*Map 5*). Brig. Gen. Evander M. Law's Alabamians would step off first, seize the crest of Round Top and move on Little Round Top, bypassing the III Corps' left flank at Devil's Den entirely. The next unit to step off, Brig. Gen. Jerome B. Robertson's brigade, would assault Devil's Den. Brig. Gen. Henry L. Benning's Georgians would follow the Alabama flags, presumably to the Round Tops. Brig. Gen. George T. "Tige" Anderson's Georgians would support Robertson. Early in the action, Hood fell badly wounded; from that point on, his division lacked effective direction, and the attack soon began to fragment.

Harassed all the way to the Round Tops by Berdan's Sharpshooters in their distinctive green uniforms, Law's brigade split in two, with three regiments heading toward the Round Tops as planned, while the remaining two regiments veered off to deal with a troublesome Union artillery battery at Devil's Den. Law's 44th and 48th Alabama thus fired the first Confederate volleys that bloody afternoon amid Devil Den's giant boulders. "The enemy were as invisible to us as we were to them," recalled Col. W. F. Perry of the 44th Alabama. As his men emerged onto open ground, "a sheet of flame burst from the rocks less than a hundred yards away." The fire came from the rifle muskets of the 4th Maine, which constituted Birney's—and by extension, the Army of the Potomac's—left flank just then. The 4th Maine defended the rocky gorge at the southern end of Devil's Den.

Robertson's brigade also split as it advanced. The 4th and 5th Texas formed on Law's left flank, a move that carried them toward the Round Tops. The 1st Texas and the 3d Arkansas, meanwhile, attempted to follow orders directing them to keep their left flank on the Emmitsburg Road, and were swept into the fight at Devil's Den. They advanced into a triangular field enclosed by stone walls on the Devil's Den's steep western slope. Col. A. Van Horn Ellis' 124th New York—nicknamed the "Orange Blossoms" in honor of their home county—manned the wall at the far end of the field. Pvt. James O. Bradfield of the 1st Texas described the fight: "The enemy stood their ground bravely, until we were close on them, but [they] did not await the bayonet. They broke away from the rock fence as we closed in with a rush and a wild rebel yell." The New Yorkers lost heavily in a counterattack down the slope, and the Texans drove them back to a stone wall at the top of the hill. "Here occurred one of our wildest fiercest struggles of the war," Bradfield recalled, "a struggle such as



## MAP 5

it is given to few men to pass through and live.” It was a chaotic fight—one in which “every man became his own commander.”

The confusion quickly worsened. Under Hood’s original plan, Benning’s Georgians should have followed the Alabamians toward the Round Tops, but as General Benning later explained, a “wood on the right” had concealed “most of Law’s brigade” from him. Benning therefore led his men into the fight at Devil’s Den. Pvt. Thomas Fluker of the 15th Georgia recalled: “We raised a deafening yell and went over the rock fence and up the hill shouting and yelling like demons.” Birney shifted troops from other parts of his thin line to reinforce Devil’s Den, but the combined force of Alabamians, Arkansans, Georgians, and Texans overwhelmed the defenders, who grudgingly yielded both the position and several artillery pieces to the victorious Confederates. In truth, serendipity played a greater role in the Confederates’ success than deliberate execution. With Hood down, the assault lacked a guiding hand to

separate the entangled brigades and put them back on track. The absence of capable senior leadership on the Confederate right flank stymied Longstreet’s efforts on 2 July.

In contrast, the Union commanders who directed the defense of Little Round Top displayed remarkable skill and initiative. On top of the hill with only a small signal detachment, Brig. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren, Meade’s chief engineer, spotted Longstreet’s line of battle extending beyond Sickles’ left flank at Devil’s Den and recognized Little Round Top’s vulnerability. Knowing that Meade intended to anchor the left of his fishhook on that hill, Warren realized that he had to act. He saw reinforcements from the V Corps marching toward Sickles’ line

---

*General Warren (Library of Congress)*



and directed one brigade to occupy Little Round Top. Col. Strong Vincent turned his column up the hill and deployed on the spur of its southern slope.

Three Alabama regiments of Law's brigade, along with the 4th and 5th Texas of Robertson's brigade, soon approached Vincent's position, where his four regiments—the 20th Maine, 83d Pennsylvania, 44th New York, and 16th Michigan—formed in line from left to right. The fighting first raged on the right of Vincent's line where Texans took on Michiganders and New Yorkers. Sgt. Valerius Giles of the 5th Texas recalled that he and his comrades used "every tree, rock and stump that gave any protection from the rain of minie balls." Both Sergeant Giles and Pvt. John Griffith took cover behind a "moss-covered old boulder about the size of a 500-pound cotton bale." The rough terrain quickly disrupted attack formations, so "every fellow was his own general," Giles continued. "Private soldiers gave commands as loud as the officers. Nobody paid any attention to either." A few moments later, Law's Alabamians launched an assault on the 83d Pennsylvania and the 20th Maine.

Colonel Vincent had made clear to Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain that his 20th Maine now held the extreme left flank of the entire Union line. As a consequence, retreat was not an option. Firing first broke out on the regiment's right and soon spread along Chamberlain's entire line. After repulsing several attacks, the Maine soldiers noticed that troops of Col. William C. Oates' 15th Alabama were sweeping around their left flank. In response, Chamberlain bent

---

*Colonel Chamberlain, pictured here as major general* (Library of Congress)





back—or refused—his leftmost companies to confront them directly. Cpl. Theodore Gerrish never forgot “how rapidly the cartridges were torn from the boxes and stuffed in the smoking muzzles of the guns; how the steel rammers clashed and clanged in the heated barrels; how the men’s hands and faces grew grim and black with burning powder; how our little line, baptized with fire, reeled to and fro as it advanced or was pressed back.” He recalled as well “a terrible medley of cries, shouts, cheers, groans, prayers, curses, bursting shells, whizzing rifle-bullets, and clanging steel.”

When the men of the 20th Maine had exhausted their ammunition, Chamberlain ordered them to fix bayonets. Accounts vary about the impetus for what happened next, but suffice to say that the 20th Maine’s refused flank led the charge down Little Round Top’s eastern slope, the line of onrushing men swinging out like a giant gate. “The effect was surprising,” Chamberlain reported, “many of the enemy’s first line threw down their arms and surrendered.” A Confederate officer fired his pistol at Chamberlain while offering his sword in token of surrender. The 20th Maine routed the exhausted Alabamians, but Chamberlain lost 124 of his 386 men during the fight, 42 of them killed or mortally wounded.

History has immortalized the 20th Maine for its stand on Little Round Top, but a similar crisis threatened Vincent’s right flank, where the line of the 16th Michigan nearly gave way. The timely arrival of Brig. Gen. Stephen H. Weed’s V Corps brigade, with Col. Patrick H. O’Rorke’s 140th New York in the lead, made the difference. “Bloody work was ready for us at our very feet,” Adjutant Porter Farley recalled. Many New Yorkers had no time to load their rifles or fix bayonets. “Down this way,” O’Rorke shouted, and according to Farley, the 140th “rushed down the rocky slope with all the same moral effect upon the rebels, who saw us coming, as if our bayonets had been fixed and we ready to charge upon them.” Little Round Top remained securely in Union hands—but at a terrible cost. Warren was wounded, and Vincent, Weed, O’Rorke, and Lt. Charles E. Hazlett, the commander of Battery D, 5th U.S. Artillery, all lost their lives defending it.

While the Confederates succeeded in overrunning Devil’s Den and the Federals managed to hold on to Little Round Top, the outcome of the clash in the Rose Wheatfield was not so clear-cut. At first only a handful of III Corps regiments defended the position, but they were soon reinforced by two small V Corps brigades. After being crowded out of the fight at Devil’s Den, General “Tige”



Anderson's Georgians attacked the Union line in the Wheatfield. The 17th Maine, posted behind a stone wall at the southern edge of the field, bore the brunt of the Georgians' first attack. According to the 17th Maine's commander, Lt. Col. Charles B. Merrill, "The contest became very severe, the enemy at times being driven back by our line, and then by superior numbers compelling us in turn to give way." The heavily outnumbered Union defenders began to buckle under the pressure of the Confederate attacks.

At that moment, Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell's division from Hancock's II Corps arrived to stabilize the position. Each of Caldwell's four brigades launched a separate attack. Brig. Gen. Samuel K. Zook's brigade swept the woods and the western part of the Wheatfield, while Col. Edward E. Cross' brigade attempted to clear the eastern half. Col. Patrick Kelly's Irish Brigade engaged Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw's South Carolinians—the first of McLaws' brigades to enter the fight—on a little knob of ground in the Wheatfield's southwestern corner. Relieving Cross' men, Col. John R. Brooke's brigade surged into the woods south of the Wheatfield and reached a high rocky shelf, where they collided with the Georgians of Brig. Gen. Paul J. Semmes' brigade. The Confederates counterattacked and drove back the Union brigades with heavy losses; in the process, Brooke was severely wounded, and Cross, Zook, and Semmes all fell with mortal wounds.

The intense combat in the Wheatfield seared itself into the survivors' memories. Pvt. James Houghton of the 4th Michigan described one horrific moment: "My tent mate James Johnston was shot. He was but a few feet in front of me when he fell. I heard him say I am killed. This was the last words that I heard him speak. The rest was groans. There was no help for him. He was shot seven times." A terrified Capt. Charles Fuller of the 61st New York, wounded in the leg and unable to move to safety, had to lie "entirely helpless . . . hearing those vicious bullets singing over my head."

Among the steady succession of reinforcements that Meade fed into the Wheatfield were two small brigades of U.S. Regular infantry from the V Corps; they briefly restored the numerical balance and prolonged the seesaw fight across the trampled grain. As sunset neared, however, the Confederates gained the upper hand. By 1830, Brig. Gen. William T. Wofford's Georgians had pushed the Regulars out of the Wheatfield and pursued them to the foot of Little Round Top. Lt. John Page of the 3d U.S. Infantry remembered seeing artillerymen on the hill

waving their kepis as a signal to get out of the way. "We realized that they wished to use canister," Page wrote, "so we took up the double quick." In addition to Union artillery, a brigade of the Pennsylvania Reserves Division, the V Corps' last reserve unit, as well as a fresh brigade of VI Corps troops, stopped Wofford's advance.

The Confederates withdrew to the western edge of the Wheatfield, while the Pennsylvania reserves deployed along the eastern tree line, transforming the trampled field into a grisly no-man's-land strewn with dead and wounded men. One of the casualties, a Pennsylvania soldier named Lt. J. Jackson Purman, lay "in sleepless pain, during the long hours of that midsummer night" and worried about being hit by a stray shot from a nervous picket. Purman had good reason to be concerned. He noted that some men were wounded a second time—including himself—while others were killed outright. Pvt. John Coxe of the 2d South Carolina "felt sorry for the wounded enemy," but he and his comrades could do little for them. Coxe gave a wounded Union officer a drink of water and never forgot "his profuse thanks for the little service I was able to render him."

In contrast to the Wheatfield, there was little doubt about the fate of Sickles' vulnerable Peach Orchard salient. Although the Union artillery chief, General Hunt, supplied several reserve batteries to defend that exposed ground, no infantry reinforcements from outside the III Corps were forthcoming. As a result, the position finally collapsed under the combined attacks of Kershaw's South Carolinians from the south and Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's Mississippians from the west. Several III Corps regiments fought in the Peach Orchard itself, and Brig. Gen. Charles K. Graham, whose brigade was posted just north of it, tried several times to shift his Pennsylvania regiments there before he fell wounded and became a prisoner. One of Graham's men, William E. Loring of the 141st Pennsylvania, recalled fighting the Confederates at "close quarters" until the Federals were compelled to "fall back, our ranks . . . rapidly being thinned" while "the exultant enemy" pressed on in pursuit. As his troops gave way, Sickles realized that his worst fear had become reality: Confederate batteries wheeled into position on the high ground at the Peach Orchard and opened fire on his command. A shell from one of those guns nearly severed Sickles' right leg, and it was amputated that night.



*Confederate Dead at the Edge of the Rose Woods (Library of Congress)*

Worse yet for Meade's army, the loss of the Peach Orchard uncovered the left flank of Humphreys' division posted along the Emmitsburg Road. This threat, combined with the advance of three of General Richard Anderson's Third Corps brigades—Brig. Gen. Cadmus M. Wilcox's Alabamians, Col. David Lang's Floridians, and Brig. Gen. Ambrose R. Wright's Georgians—against Humphreys' front, succeeded in breaking the stubborn resistance of the III Corps and finally forcing it back. The collapse of the Emmitsburg Road line created yet another crisis for the Union high command. A huge gap remained in the Union line along lower Cemetery Ridge in the area formerly held by Sickles' men and Caldwell's II Corps division. A determined push by Barksdale, Wilcox, Lang, or Wright could have severed the Union supply line on the Taneytown Road just behind the ridge.

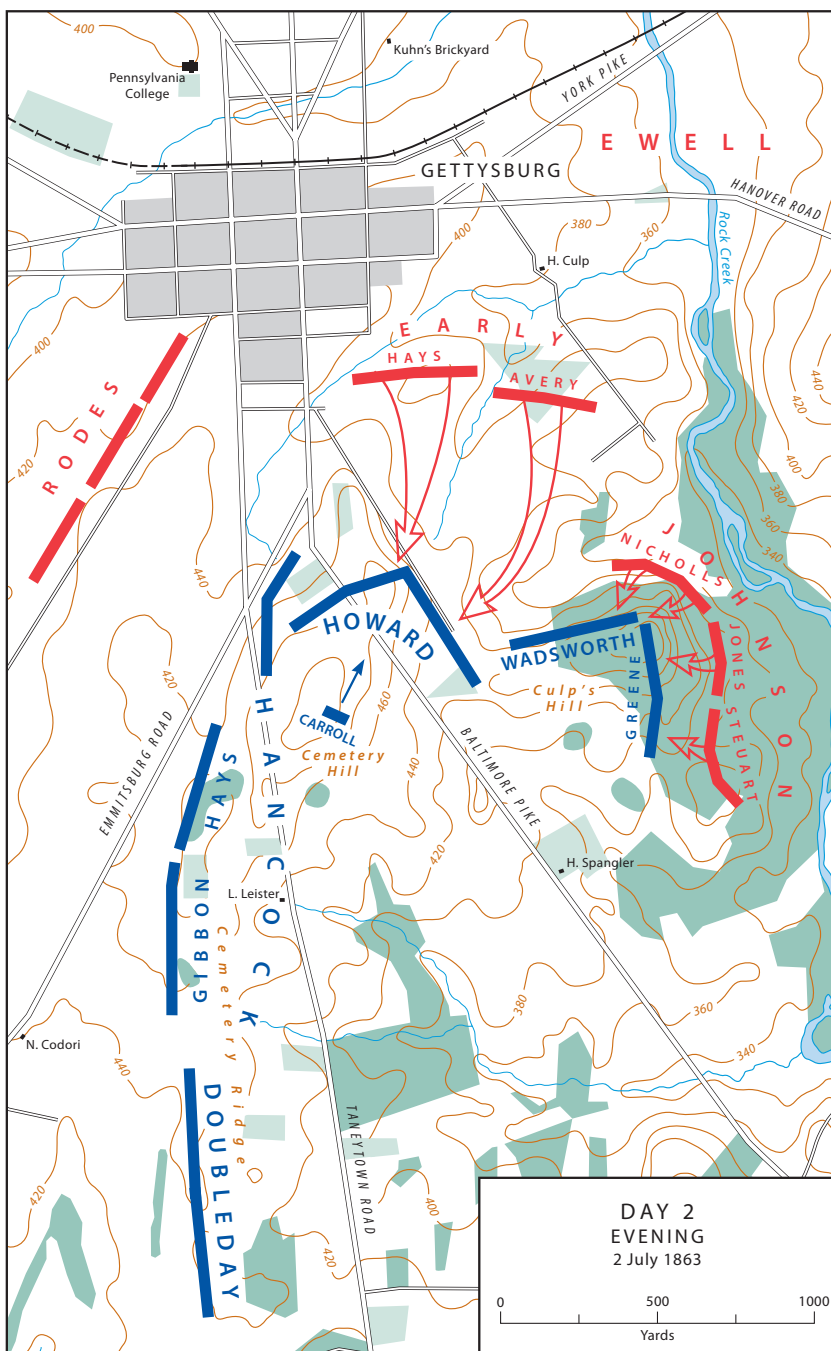
General Hancock displayed great initiative in shifting units from quiet sectors of his II Corps line to stop the attacking Confederates. Col. George L. Willard's New York brigade slowed

Barksdale's advance, with both commanders losing their lives in the desperate fighting. The famous charge of the 1st Minnesota helped to stop Wilcox's Alabamians and some of Lang's Floridians. The regiment lost 82 percent of the Minnesotans who went into the charge, but the frightful losses did not deter the survivors from accomplishing their mission. According to Sgt. Alfred Carpenter, "Bullets whistled past us; shells screeched over us; canister and grape fell about us; comrade after comrade dropped from the ranks; but on the line went. No one took a second look at his fallen companion. 'We had not time to weep.'"

Wright's Georgians crested Cemetery Ridge and captured several artillery pieces, only to collide with counterattacking II Corps soldiers. Meade also sent in XII Corps troops from Culp's Hill, the battered remnants of several I Corps regiments, and even rallied some III Corps units to fill gaps in the Union line. As daylight faded and Anderson's last two brigades failed to support the Confederate attacks up Cemetery Ridge, Longstreet's assault finally foundered. The Union left flank and center had held.

While Longstreet's attack unfolded, General Ewell prepared to launch his assault on the Confederate left (*Map 6*). By 1600, Ewell had deployed most of his artillery on Benner's Hill east of town and opened a heavy bombardment on Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill. Although Ewell's cannonade did considerable damage, the Union artillerymen responded with an even heavier counterbattery fire that soon silenced the Confederate guns. Then, following Lee's orders to mount a full-fledged assault—and perhaps regretting his inaction of the previous evening—Ewell sent his infantry against the two heights.

On the evening of 2 July, three brigades of Maj. Gen. Edward "Allegheny" Johnson's division attacked Culp's Hill. Only the 1,400 officers and men of Brig. Gen. George S. Greene's New York brigade remained to defend the section of the line vacated by the rest of the XII Corps, which had gone to Sickles' aid. An engineer, Greene had put his men to work building breastworks that afternoon. The entrenchments proved invaluable to the heavily outnumbered defenders. Near the crest of the hill, the 60th New York repelled Brig. Gen. John M. Jones' Virginians, capturing both prisoners and battle flags. According to the 60th New York's historian, "The effects of our fire were so terrible that the [enemy's] flags were abandoned, and the prisoners were afraid to either advance or retreat."



**MAP 6**

Greene's men, however, could not repulse Johnson's attacks against the lower part of the hill. Brig. Gen. George H. Steuart's swarming North Carolinians, Virginians, and Marylanders threatened the overextended 137th New York and forced them to withdraw up the hill to an earthen traverse that lay perpendicular to Greene's original line. Together with reinforcements amounting to 750 men from at least three other corps, the 137th New York continued to defend Culp's Hill from its new position. But it had been a near thing. In the darkness, Johnson's Confederates had advanced to within a few hundred yards of the Union supply line on the Baltimore Pike but failed to press their advantage.

Ewell, meanwhile, ordered Hays' Louisiana brigade and Avery's North Carolina brigade from Early's division to assault the eastern slope of Cemetery Hill. Ewell also had intended for Pender's and Rodes' divisions to participate by attacking on Early's right. Pender had been severely wounded earlier that day, and command of the division devolved on Brig. Gen. James H. Lane. Both Lane and Rodes were slow to deploy their forces, and by the time they were ready to step off, the fight on Cemetery Hill was over.

In any event, Hays' Louisianans scattered the XI Corps defenders at the eastern base of the hill and headed for the New York and Pennsylvania batteries on the crest. As one Union battery commander reported, the Louisianans charged his guns "and succeeded in capturing and spiking my left piece. The cannoneers fought them hand-to-hand with handspikes, ramrods and pistols." Although Colonel Avery, commanding on the Confederate left, fell mortally wounded early in the attack, his Tar Heels managed to advance across open fields swept by Union artillery and broke the XI Corps' line in their front. As darkness fell, Col. Samuel S. Carroll's brigade from Hancock's II Corps double-quickd through Evergreen Cemetery, plugging the gap in the XI Corps' line and pushing the Confederates off the hill. By then it was so dark that Carroll's men could distinguish friend from foe only by the location of their muzzle flashes. While Ewell's assaults on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill had met with initial success, the attackers lacked sufficient striking power to exploit it.

### **THE THIRD DAY OF BATTLE, 3 JULY**

Around 2400, Meade summoned his senior subordinates to his headquarters at the Leister house. Although the meeting was



not a formal council of war—Meade did not regard its decisions as binding—the commanding general's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Daniel A. Butterfield, nonetheless kept a record of the votes on three main questions. First, should the army stay or withdraw? The generals wanted to stay. Second, should the army attack or await Lee's next move? This question inspired greater discussion, but the majority preferred to remain on the defensive. Third, how long should the army wait for Lee to move? The generals agreed that if Lee did nothing over the next twenty-four hours, they should reconsider their own options.

As the meeting broke up, Meade spoke to Brig. Gen. John Gibbon, whose II Corps division held a portion of Cemetery Ridge close to Army headquarters. "If Lee attacks tomorrow," Meade reportedly told Gibbon, "it will be *in your front*." Gibbon assured Meade that his men would be ready. After the generals departed, Meade worked through the night to strengthen weak spots in his fishhook line. He paid special attention to his left flank on the Taneytown Road behind the Round Tops, the area that Hood had wanted to attack on 2 July. Had the Confederates tried to turn that flank on 3 July, they would have found two well-posted infantry brigades, supported by artillery, waiting for them.

General Lee, for his part, did not hold a meeting of his senior leaders but instead formulated his own plans for 3 July. Because he considered the results of both Longstreet's and Ewell's efforts against the Union flanks on 2 July to be partial successes, he determined to renew the attacks on those points. As he later wrote, "the general plan was unchanged." He issued orders for early morning assaults against both Union flanks.

Around 0430, cannon fire shattered the predawn stillness. In an effort to reclaim possession of his trenches on lower Culp's Hill, the acting XII Corps commander, Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams, ordered his batteries to fire on the Confederate troops occupying them. In response, Ewell launched the early morning attack that Lee had ordered. Flashes of musketry soon lit up the slopes of the hill. During the night, Ewell had doubled the size of his attacking force. But the entire XII Corps had since returned to join Greene's brigade in the trenches, and Meade had sent a brigade from the VI Corps as additional reinforcement. Hundreds of Confederate attackers fell before sheets of unrelenting Union musketry, as fresh regiments swapped places with frontline units that had emptied their cartridge boxes. A soldier in the 149th



New York recalled: "It was surprising to behold the number of the enemy's dead, which were scattered on the ground, behind rocks, and even hanging on the limbs of trees." The Union right flank on Culp's Hill remained secure.

Once the firing on the hill had died down, orders came from XII Corps headquarters for skirmishers to probe the Confederate line at Spangler's Spring. The message became garbled in transmission and reached the commander of the 2d Massachusetts, Lt. Col. Charles R. Mudge, as an order for a full-blown attack. "It is murder, but it's the order," observed Mudge, who then shouted: "Up, men, over the works!" The 2d Massachusetts and the 27th Indiana advanced into an open field, only to be mowed down by Confederates posted behind strong stone walls. Mudge himself fell mortally wounded while leading the futile charge. The two Union regiments fell back with heavy losses.

On Seminary Ridge, meanwhile, Lee listened to the firefight on Culp's Hill with growing concern. Mistaking the artillery fire as Ewell's early morning assault, he soon learned that the Union army had taken the initiative. He also listened for the sound of Longstreet's attack on the Union left, but discovered that his senior subordinate had not yet launched his own assault and showed no inclination to do so. In any case, the duration and intensity of the fighting on Culp's Hill convinced Lee that Meade had reinforced his right flank overnight and that he had done the same for his left. Lee thus surmised that the Union line must be weakest in the center, and he considered the possibility of attacking Cemetery Ridge itself. Longstreet once again offered his frank assessment and restated his preference for alternative courses of action; he took seriously his responsibility as Lee's senior subordinate to provide such advice. "General," he said, "I have been a soldier all my life. . . . It is my opinion that no fifteen thousand men arranged for battle can take that position."

After listening to Longstreet state his case, Lee decided on the attack that came to be known as "Pickett's Charge." Col. Armistead L. Long of Lee's staff later refuted what he considered to be a glaring misconception about the commanding general's decision: "The attack of Pickett's division on [3 July] has been more criticized, and is still less understood, than any other act of the Gettysburg drama." Long noted that "it has been characterized as rash and objectless, on the order of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'; nevertheless it was not ordered

without mature consideration, and on grounds that presented fair prospects of success.”

Lee made several important decisions regarding the attack on the Union center. First, he selected the troops. He chose his only remaining fresh units, Pickett’s three Virginia brigades from Longstreet’s First Corps. They seemed primed for action. According to Lt. Col. Rawley Martin of the 53d Virginia, “The esprit de corps could not have been better.” But the division numbered only about 5,500 officers and men. To add more weight to the attack, Lee turned to Heth’s division, the unit from Hill’s Third Corps that had opened the battle on 1 July. Knowing that the division had suffered heavy casualties—including the wounded Heth, who was replaced by Pettigrew—Lee added two brigades from Pender’s division under the command of Maj. Gen. Isaac R. Trimble and directed him to support Pettigrew. Lee thus planned to send about 13,000 soldiers against the Union center, but the commands of Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble came from two different corps, and two of the three senior leaders were new to their duties.

Lee’s second decision called for an artillery bombardment of the Union center to precede the infantry assault. The attackers had to cross undulating, open ground for nearly a mile, and Lee worried about the impact of massed artillery on his ranks. He therefore exploited one of the few advantages his sprawling exterior lines offered: the ability to concentrate artillery fire on a specific point. His target was a prominent copse of trees near the center of the enemy line on Cemetery Ridge.

Third, Lee decided to place Longstreet in command of the attack. Lee’s senior subordinate tried to sidestep the assignment by suggesting that General Hill should be the commander, because slightly more than half of the assaulting force came from his Third Corps. A withering look from Lee quickly put that notion to rest. Like it or not, Longstreet now had to execute Lee’s plan. As Longstreet later noted, “Nothing was left but to proceed.”

About 1300, the Confederate artillery opened fire on the guns positioned along the center of the Union line. Many projectiles overshot their target and landed among the supply wagons and ambulances behind Cemetery Ridge or crashed into Meade’s headquarters at the Leister house. The errant rounds wounded several of Meade’s staff and forced the temporary evacuation of the Union Army headquarters. Yet a large number of Confederate shells found their targets, dismounting guns, exploding caissons,

and killing or disabling artillerymen and draft horses. Union batteries answered the Confederate cannonade, of course, but Generals Hancock and Hunt engaged in a contest of wills over fire control. As the army's chief of artillery, Hunt ordered all Union guns to "fire deliberately, and to husband their ammunition," while Hancock instructed his II Corps batteries to maintain a steady fire to bolster the morale of his infantrymen, "covering themselves as best they might by the temporary but trifling defenses they had erected and the accidents of the ground."

Union counterbattery fire took a heavy toll on Lee's guns. Hunt's inspection of the Confederate line on 5 July convinced him that the enemy's "losses in materiel in the artillery combat were equal to ours." Any shots that sailed long plunged into the ranks of the Southern infantrymen deploying for the attack. Sgt. Maj. David Johnston of the 7th Virginia never forgot the "fiery fuses and messengers of death, sweeping, plunging, cutting, plowing through our ranks, carrying mutilation, destruction, pain, suffering and death in every direction." Gettysburg eyewitness accounts that mention the bombardment vary widely as to estimates of duration, demonstrating the fluidity of time in such stressful circumstances. Those who listened far from the scene recall a shelling of only a few minutes' duration, while others within range of the projectiles claim that the bombardment lasted from two to four hours.

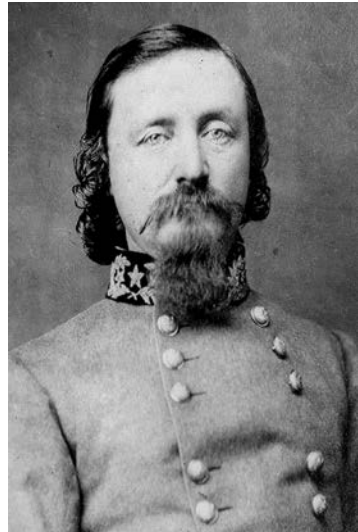
At the height of the cannonade, Longstreet received a note from his acting First Corps artillery chief, Lt. Col. E. Porter Alexander, warning that he was running low on ammunition. He added this plea: "If you are coming at all you must come at once, or I cannot give you proper support; but the enemy's fire has not slackened at all; at least eighteen guns are still firing from the cemetery itself." A second message soon followed: "For God's sake, come quick. The eighteen guns are gone; come quick or my ammunition won't let me support you properly." In truth, Alexander had observed the removal of several damaged Union batteries on Cemetery Hill, unaware that reserve guns were standing by to replace them.

The firing at last stopped, and everyone knew that the Confederate infantry would soon advance, but Longstreet hesitated to give the order. As he told Alexander, "I would stop it now but that General Lee ordered it and expects it to go on. I don't see how it can succeed." When Pickett arrived for the order to advance, Longstreet could only nod in assent.

Hundreds of wartime and postwar illustrations of “Pickett’s Charge” depict straight, unbroken battle lines emerging from the tree line on Seminary Ridge; extending over a mile in length, they advance with parade-ground precision across terrain as flat as a table top (*Map 7*). All such depictions are mistaken. By midmorning, Pickett’s Virginians had taken position in the swales around the Spangler farm buildings on the right-center of Lee’s line, well beyond the Seminary Ridge tree line. The brigades commanded by Brig. Gens. Richard B. Garnett and James L. Kemper formed ranks in front of the farm buildings, while Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Armistead’s brigade deployed behind a low ridge in Garnett’s rear. From their position, they could not see the clump of trees on Cemetery Ridge, but neither could the Union infantry and artillery see Pickett’s men.

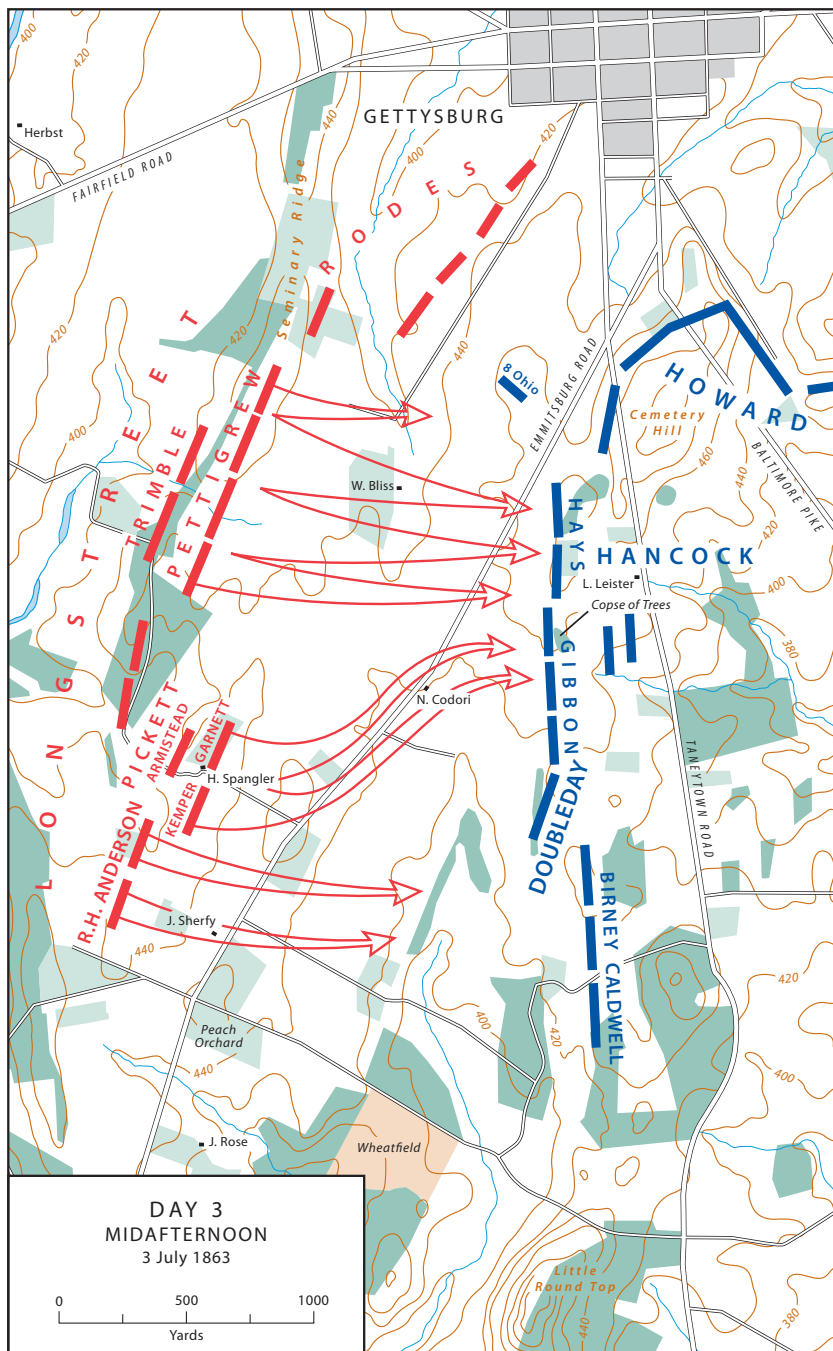
---

*General Pickett (Library of Congress)*



Pettigrew’s and Trimble’s Alabamians, Mississippians, North Carolinians, Tennesseans, and Virginians enjoyed similar protection in their preattack position on the reverse slope of Seminary Ridge, behind the tree line and about 600 yards north of Pickett’s lines. As these deployments suggest—but most popular illustrations fail to depict—the Confederate juggernaut that swept eastward toward the Union center on Cemetery Ridge actually consisted of two distinct forces: Pickett’s division advancing from the low ground on the Spangler farm, while Pettigrew and Trimble marched out of the tree line on Seminary Ridge.

The assault force suffered comparatively light losses until it passed the halfway point to Cemetery Ridge. Pickett’s men marched by left oblique, angling forward and to the left in order to close on Pettigrew’s line prior to the final push on the Union center near the clump of trees. As Pickett’s three brigades approached the Emmitsburg Road, they came into full view of



**MAP 7**

Hancock's II Corps artillery and several batteries that Hunt had massed along the portion of the II and III Corps line reconstructed the previous evening. The Union artillery maintained a deliberate fire as it switched from shell to canister, a short-range round filled with lead balls that transformed cannon into giant shotguns. To increase the lethal effect, Union gun crews on Cemetery Ridge also fired double canister—two rounds loaded simultaneously into the gun tube and fired using a single charge. Until Pettigrew's and Trimble's men cleared the smoky Bliss farmyard, they enjoyed some protection from the Union guns. But the batteries soon found their range. On Pettigrew's left, Col. John M. Brockenbrough's brigade of Virginians advanced a short distance before heavy musketry from the 8th Ohio Infantry and cannon fire from Cemetery Hill caused the men to break to the rear.

As they approached the Emmitsburg Road, Pickett's and Pettigrew's men could finally see each other, but whatever success they enjoyed in coordinating their actions was more accidental than deliberate. The two forces brushed aside a line of Union skirmishers, only to confront a pair of post and rail fences that lined each side of the road—a daunting obstacle that broke the forward momentum of the Confederate advance. Once over the fences, Pickett's troops dressed their lines and pressed on toward Hancock's defenders at the copse of trees. Garnett's men broke to the left of the Codori farm while Kemper's brigade swung to the right, angling toward the copse of trees where Brig. Gen. Alexander S. Webb's Philadelphia Brigade waited. In doing so, the Virginians swept past the front of the other two brigades of Gibbon's division, each brigade later claiming that the intensity of its fire had driven the Confederates from its sector. According to Capt. Henry L. Abbott, the commander of the 20th Massachusetts, his men began "shouting out 'Fredericksburg,' imagining the victory as complete everywhere as it was in front of the Third Brigade." Indeed, many II Corps veterans at Gettysburg saw this battle as an opportunity to exact revenge for their bloody repulse in the Battle of Fredericksburg seven months earlier.

Pettigrew's and Trimble's line of advance carried them toward the section of the II Corps line on Gibbon's right, which was held by Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays' division. Gibbon's and Hays' men enjoyed the cover of rock walls that ran north and south along Cemetery Ridge, but the wall in front of Hays' division stood closer

to the crest than the wall protecting Gibbon's men. A perpendicular rock wall that connected the walls fronting Gibbon's and Hays' divisions formed an area behind Gibbon's right flank known as the Angle. Should the Confederates reach the Union line, Pickett's Virginians would first strike Gibbon's position at the Angle.

The Confederate advance took about twenty minutes. Garnett's and Kemper's men halted before the stone wall and traded their first volleys with Gibbon's troops. At first Webb's men behind the rock wall at the Angle held fast, but they began to waver as the Confederate attackers drew near. Nearby, Lt. Alonzo H. Cushing, the commander of Battery A, 4th U.S. Artillery, pushed forward his three undamaged cannon to the wall in preparation for the Confederate onslaught. The severely wounded Cushing was so weak that he had to issue orders through one of his men. During the final rush to the wall, Lt. John Dooley of the 1st Virginia called out: "On, men, on! Thirty more yards and the guns are ours!"

Pickett's men breached the Union line in two places. Firing double canister at point-blank range, Capt. Andrew Cowan's 1st New York Independent Battery quickly sealed the smaller gap just south of the clump of trees. A few yards shy of the wall, both Kemper and Garnett fell—the former severely wounded and the latter killed—leaving Armistead to lead a sizeable number of Confederates through a second, and much larger, penetration of the wall at the Angle just north of the copse of trees. Moments after firing his last canister round, Cushing fell dead, the bullet entering his mouth and exiting out the back of his skull. As the Confederates swarmed over the wall, many of Webb's Pennsylvanians panicked and fled. First Lt. Frank A. Haskell of Gibbon's staff recalled: "Great heaven! Were my senses mad? The larger portion of Webb's brigade . . . was falling back, a fear-stricken flock of confusion! The fate of Gettysburg hung upon a spider's single thread!"

Webb managed to rally a part of his brigade, and his command was soon joined by other regiments from Gibbon's division. The defenders sealed the breach at the Angle and then drove Pickett's men back to the stone wall. During the melee, Armistead fell mortally wounded, while Webb was shot in the groin and both Gibbon and Hancock were severely wounded. Many of the remaining Virginians cast anxious glances over their shoulders in expectation of reinforcements. Two of General Hill's brigades—Wilcox's and Lang's—advanced to support Pickett's right flank, but rather than move toward the clump of trees as intended, they



marched toward Hunt's massed batteries, whose canister fire soon halted the Confederates. In the meantime, three regiments of Brig. Gen. George J. Stannard's Vermont brigade swung out and poured a deadly fire into the right flank of Pickett's division. Hard-pressed by Stannard's Vermonters and with no reinforcements in sight, some of the surviving Virginians surrendered while the remainder slowly fell back. The fight at the wall had lasted about twenty minutes.

On Pickett's left, some of Pettigrew's and Trimble's men advanced to a point farther up the slope of Cemetery Ridge than Pickett's troops had reached. Try as they might, however, the Confederates could not penetrate the recessed wall that protected General Hays' division. As Hays reported, "Four lines rose from behind our stone wall, and before the smoke of our first volley had cleared away, the enemy, in dismay and consternation, were seeking safety in flight. . . . In less time than I can recount it, they were throwing away their arms and appealing most piteously for mercy."

Both North Carolina and Mississippi claimed the laurels for the farthest Confederate advance on 3 July. Based in part on the spot where Capt. E. Fletcher Satterfield of the 55th North Carolina reportedly fell dead, North Carolina later adopted as its state motto: "First at Bethel, Farthest to the front at Gettysburg and Chickamauga, and Last at Appomattox." Regardless of the truth of these claims, the combined firepower of Hays' infantry and the Union artillery on Cemetery Hill succeeded in stopping Pettigrew and Trimble.

Although no one—least of all Lee or Meade—could have known it at the time, the main infantry fight at Gettysburg had ended with Pickett's Charge. Col. Norman J. Hall, who commanded a Union brigade near the copse of trees, assessed the decisiveness of the final major action: "The decision of the rebel commander was upon that point; the concentration of artillery fire was upon that point; the din of battle developed in a column of attack upon that point; the greatest effort and greatest carnage was at that point; and the victory was at that point."

Lee met Pickett's men as they returned to Seminary Ridge. "It's all my fault," he told them, but he also urged them to do their duty. When he met Pickett, Lee ordered him to rally his division to repulse an expected Union counterattack. "General Lee," Pickett reportedly told him, "I have no division." Pickett had in fact lost roughly 60 percent of his men in the assault. Pettigrew's and Trimble's commands also lost heavily, but it is impossible to be more specific, given that their casualty figures for the three days of battle

are combined. Horrific memories of the 3 July charge haunted many of the survivors long after it was over. In a Christmastime letter to his family, Capt. Henry T. Owen of the 18th Virginia described a recurring nightmare in which he saw once more “the lofty hills, broken rocks and frightful precipices which resembled Gettysburg . . . and went all through the Battle of Gettysburg again.”

As Lee launched his assault on the Union center, General Stuart—who had finally rejoined the Army of Northern Virginia on 2 July—became locked in a heated clash with Union cavalry four miles east of Gettysburg. In his report, Lee had little to say about Stuart’s mission on 3 July, but the cavalry chief offered his own account. At Lee’s behest, Stuart rode out beyond the army’s left flank toward Hanover, where he found “a commanding ridge” that “completely controlled a wide plain of cultivated fields stretching toward Hanover.” From this vantage point, he rendered “Ewell’s left entirely secure” and “commanded a view of the routes leading to the enemy’s rear.” Indeed, Stuart’s position placed him near the key intersection of the Hanover Road and the Low Dutch Road. A few miles farther south, the Low Dutch Road intersected with the Baltimore Pike. If Stuart could reach that point, he would be “in precisely the right position” to disrupt the Union retreat should “the enemy’s main body [be] dislodged, as was confidently hoped and expected.”

Stuart also found elements of Brig. Gen. David M. Gregg’s Union cavalry division blocking his route to the intersection. Dismounted Union troopers fired on the advancing Confederates from behind trees, stone walls, and the Rummel farm buildings. The fighting soon intensified, culminating in one of the war’s greatest mounted charges. Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton’s Southern cavalymen drew sabers and charged south across open fields toward the Hanover Road, while reinforcements from a Michigan cavalry brigade led by the newly promoted Brig. Gen. George Armstrong Custer raced to intercept them. According to a Pennsylvania cavalryman,

The gait increased—first the trot, then the gallop. . . . The words of the Confederate officers could be heard by those in the woods on their left: “Keep to your sabres men, keep to your sabres!” for the lessons they had learned at Brandy Station and at Aldie had been severe. There the cry had been: “Put up your sabres! Draw your pistols and fight like gentlemen!” . . . As the charge was ordered the speed increased, every horse on the jump, every man yelling like a demon.

At first, the Michigan men wavered, but then Custer “waved his sabre and shouted, ‘Come on, you Wolverines!’” Led by the Michigan brigade, Gregg’s Union cavalry broke the Confederate charge. Custer later boasted, “I challenge the annals of warfare to produce a more brilliant or successful charge of cavalry than the one just recounted.”

Several miles to the southwest, Union cavalry spent 3 July launching their own assaults against the Confederate right flank and rear. Brig. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick’s Union cavalry division—less Custer and his Wolverines, who were busy making their names east of town—advanced up the Emmitsburg Road late that afternoon and probed Lee’s right flank just south of the Round Tops. General Law, commanding Hood’s battered division, quickly shifted General “Tige” Anderson’s Georgia brigade to a new line astride the road and facing south to repel the advance of Brig. Gen. Wesley Merritt’s brigade.

On Merritt’s right, Brig. Gen. Elon J. Farnsworth led his brigade into position. Kilpatrick ordered Farnsworth to advance into the rough low ground in his front, pass through the Snyder farm, cross the southwest slope of Round Top, and attack the Confederate line held by the Texans and Alabamians of Hood’s division. Farnsworth and Kilpatrick allegedly exchanged heated words over the mission, during which Kilpatrick accused his subordinate of cowardice. Farnsworth led the charge as ordered, and his brigade suffered a bloody repulse. Among the casualties was Farnsworth, who became the last general officer to be killed in action at Gettysburg. Farnsworth’s futile charge marked the end of the fighting on 3 July.

#### **AFTER THE BATTLE: 4 JULY AND BEYOND**

On 4 July, the two armies still confronted each other, but only an occasional crack of musketry broke the calm that had descended on the battlefield. Meade issued orders congratulating his army for its victory and directing that the enemy’s dead within their lines be buried. The midsummer heat and humidity spawned heavy afternoon thunderstorms, resulting in flash floods that evening. Creeks rose so quickly that badly wounded soldiers drowned before their comrades could rescue them. During the night, Lee withdrew Ewell’s Second Corps from its position around Culp’s Hill and consolidated his army along Seminary Ridge. On the morning of 5 July, Union skirmishers entered Gettysburg and discovered that Lee’s men had evacuated the town.

The Confederates, meanwhile, began the long march south to Virginia. Lee sent his infantry and artillery on the Fairfield Road,

bearing southwest toward the Monterrey Gap, Hagerstown, and the Potomac River crossings at Williamsport and Falling Waters. About 5,000 Union prisoners marched with the column, guarded by the remnant of Pickett's division. Lee directed that the wounded able to travel be loaded into wagons, and he sent the column on the Chambersburg Pike under the protection of Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden's cavalry brigade. The wagon train reportedly stretched for seventeen miles, its route leading through Cashtown, Greencastle, Hagerstown, and Williamsport.

On 4 July, Meade had sent his cavalry around the Army of Northern Virginia to disrupt the enemy's retreat. The blue-clad horsemen struck Lee's long wagon trains, liberating many Union prisoners while capturing hundreds of wounded Confederates. On 5 July, Meade directed that his freshest unit, Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick's VI Corps, conduct a reconnaissance in force on the Fairfield Road, but Sedgwick halted his advance when the Confederate rear guard offered battle a few miles east of Fairfield. Sedgwick reported that the enemy was marching through narrow mountain passes. Concluding that a small force could easily defend those passes, Meade abandoned the idea of direct pursuit and decided to cut off Lee's army from its Potomac River crossings. He directed the Army of the Potomac to head due south into Maryland and then turn west, passing through Turner's and Fox's Gaps—familiar terrain to veterans of the 1862 Maryland Campaign.

Meade moved cautiously, enabling Lee's army to concentrate at Williamsport by 10 July, well ahead of the Union army. But the Confederates discovered that Union cavalry had dashed in ahead of them and destroyed the pontoon bridge at Falling Waters, and that heavy rains had flooded the ford at Williamsport. Lee therefore had his exhausted men construct strong fortifications to defend the crossings while his engineers rebuilt the pontoon bridge.

On 12 July, Meade's advance reached Williamsport. By that time, however, Lee's men had built a formidable line of earthworks. Meade nevertheless decided to attack Lee's army the next day. Once again he summoned his corps commanders to obtain their views on the situation. While all agreed that a golden opportunity to end the war lay within their grasp, the strength of the Confederate earthworks gave them pause. An attack on those works, General Howard asserted, could result in a Pickett's Charge in reverse. In the end, Meade decided to delay the attack for one more day in hopes of better weather. On 13 July, the Confederates completed their pontoon bridge—"new



Pursuit of Lee's army. Scene on the road near Emmitsburg—marching through the rain. 7 July 1863. By Edwin Forbes. (Library of Congress)

boats having [been] constructed and some of the old recovered,” Lee reported. Under the cover of yet another heavy rain, the bulk of the Army of Northern Virginia safely crossed the Potomac that night, with some intrepid Confederates using the rain-swollen ford. The fourteenth of July dawned bright and fair, but the Federals were chagrined to find the Confederate works empty. Elements of Buford’s cavalry briefly clashed with the Confederate rear guard at Falling Waters; during the skirmish, General Pettigrew was mortally wounded, but Lee’s army was once more on Virginia soil.

Meade’s—and Lincoln’s—hopes for a decisive end to the campaign thus met with disappointment. Buoyed by news of Grant’s great victory at Vicksburg, Lincoln had expected similar tidings from Meade. “We had them within our grasp,” Lincoln said. “We had only to stretch forth our hands and they were ours. And nothing I could say or do could make the Army move.”

Lincoln failed to appreciate that Meade’s army was as disorganized in victory as Lee’s army was in defeat. Meade had lost heavily in officers and men, including two trusted corps commanders, Reynolds and Hancock. His men desperately needed food and other supplies—above all, new shoes to replace the ones they had worn out while marching on Pennsylvania’s paved roads or that had been sucked off while slogging along Maryland’s muddy thoroughfares. Throughout the pursuit, Meade received messages from General Halleck urging him forward. But it never occurred to either Lincoln or Halleck that they could have supported Meade by detaching troops from the Washington defenses or other nearby garrisons. In

their frustration over Lee's escape across the Potomac, they failed to grasp the extent of Meade's victory at Gettysburg or of the damage done to the Army of the Potomac.

### *Analysis*

Despite the Union victory at Gettysburg and the resulting euphoria in the North, the war seemed no closer to winding down. Nobody understood this dichotomy better than President Lincoln. "I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape," the president wrote to General Meade in a letter that he never sent. "Your golden opportunity is gone and I am distressed immeasurably because of it." Gettysburg had cost the Army of the Potomac dearly. Meade lost 3,155 soldiers killed in action, 14,529 wounded—including as many as 2,000 who later died of their injuries—and 5,365 missing, for a total of 23,049 casualties. That amounted to roughly one-fourth of the Union soldiers engaged in the battle.

Despite the criticism leveled at him for not crushing Lee's army, Meade realized what he had accomplished. Halleck had given him a mission: protect Washington and Baltimore, and bring Lee to battle. Meade had done all that and more—and he knew it. In his official report, Meade listed his army's achievements: "the defeat of the enemy at Gettysburg, his compulsory evacuation from Pennsylvania and Maryland and withdrawal from the upper Shenandoah, and . . . the capture of 3 guns, 41 standards and 13,621 prisoners and 24,978 small arms."

Even so, few of Meade's contemporaries gave him credit for the skill that he had demonstrated at Gettysburg. He made effective use of both his numerical superiority and his interior lines in shuttling troops from quiet sectors to crisis points, and above all, in shoring up Sickles' shattered line on 2 July. At long last the Army of the Potomac had a commander who made full use of the manpower at his disposal. Meade also obtained consensus—though without seeking permission—from his subordinates to continue the fight on 3 July. He accomplished all of this during his first week as army commander.

Meade's success also meant that Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia had to deal with the unaccustomed consequences of defeat. The casualty lists for Lee's army testify to the extent of the

disaster. According to Medical Director Lafayette Guild, the Army of Northern Virginia lost 2,592 killed, 12,709 wounded, and 5,150 missing, for a total of 20,451 casualties, nearly one-third of Lee's troop strength. Lee also lost the services of several key division commanders—most notably, the mortally wounded Pender and the severely injured Hood. Many of Lee's regiments never recovered from their losses at Gettysburg. Lee blamed himself for the defeat and offered his resignation, but President Davis immediately rejected it.

There was certainly plenty of blame to go around. In the weeks following the battle, Richmond newspapers criticized General Stuart for his long absence, General Ewell for his failure to take Cemetery Hill on 1 July, General Richard Anderson for putting only three of his five brigades into action on 2 July, and General Pettigrew for not properly supporting what Richmond journalists increasingly referred to as Pickett's Charge. Even Lee's judgment came under scrutiny—something rarely done up to then. Yet Longstreet managed to escape much of the opprobrium attached to the Confederate high command, which is ironic given that he would become a lightning rod for controversy after the war.

Within a few short years, the Battle of Gettysburg attained a special aura that has distinguished it ever since. Boston journalist Charles Carleton Coffin dubbed it "the high water mark" of the rebellion, while others described it as the "turning point of the war." But it was President Lincoln who most eloquently expressed Gettysburg's significance. On 19 November 1863, Lincoln delivered "a few appropriate remarks" at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery that became known as the Gettysburg Address: "We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."





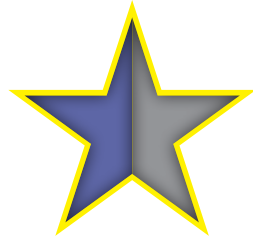
## THE AUTHORS

Carol Reardon holds a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky and is the George Winfree Professor of American History at Pennsylvania State University. Her publications include *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (1997) and *With a Sword in One Hand and Jomini in the Other: The Problem of Military Thought in the Civil War North* (2012). Tom Vossler is a retired U.S. Army colonel and former director of the U.S. Army Military History Institute. Since 1998, he has worked as a licensed battlefield guide at Gettysburg National Military Park where he conducts military staff rides, civilian corporate leadership seminars, and general interest tours of the battlefield.

## FURTHER READINGS

- Coddington, Edwin B. *Gettysburg: A Study in Command*. New York: Touchstone, 1997.
- Hess, Earl J. *Pickett's Charge: The Last Attack at Gettysburg*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Pfanz, Harry W. *Gettysburg: Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- . *Gettysburg: The First Day*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- . *Gettysburg: The Second Day*. University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- Reardon, Carol. *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Sears, Stephen W. *Gettysburg*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.
- Trudeau, Noah Andre. *Gettysburg: A Testing of Courage*. New York: Harper, 2002.
- Wert, Jeffry D. *Gettysburg: Day Three*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Woodworth, Stephen E. *Beneath a Northern Sky: A Short History of the Gettysburg Campaign*. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2003.

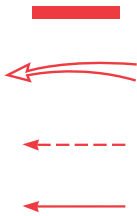
For more information on the U.S. Army in the Civil War, please read other titles in the U.S. Army Campaigns of the Civil War series published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History.



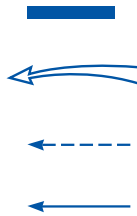
## MAP SYMBOLS

### *Military Symbols*

Confederate



Union



Units of various strength

Axis of Advance

Axis of Retreat

Unit Movement

### *Vegetation*



Orchard



Woods



Wheatfield

### *General Symbols*



Buildings



Major Road



Minor Road

The topographic contour lines on the maps in this publication are based on the 1895 Map of the Battle-field of Gettysburg, surveyed and drawn under the direction Maj. Gouverneur K. Warren. This map used a local datum on the Gettysburg battlefield—the plane of reference is taken 500 feet below a benchmark on Cemetery Hill. The contour intervals are 20 feet.

