

## THE CIVIL WAR, 1863

**A**t the beginning of 1863 the Confederacy seemed to have a fair chance of ultimate success on the battlefield. But during this year three great campaigns would shape the outcome of the war in favor of the North. One would see the final solution to the control of the Mississippi River. A second, concurrent with the first, would break the back of any Confederate hopes for success by invasion of the North and recognition abroad. The third, slow and uncertain in its first phases, would result eventually in Union control of the strategic gateway to the South Atlantic region of the Confederacy—the last great stronghold of secession and the area in which the aims of military operations were as much focused on destroying the economic infrastructure of the South as defeating main-force rebel units.

### The East: Hooker Crosses the Rappahannock

The course of the war in the east in 1863 was dramatic and in many ways decisive. After the battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside's Army of the Potomac went into winter quarters on the north bank of the Rappahannock, while the main body of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia held Fredericksburg and guarded the railway line to Richmond. During January of the new year, Burnside's subordinates intrigued against him and went out of channels to present their grievances to Congress and President Abraham Lincoln. When Burnside heard of this development, he asked that either he or most of the subordinate general officers be removed. The President, not pleased with either Burnside's string of failures or his ultimatum, accepted the first alternative and on January 25, 1863, replaced Burnside with Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker. The new commander had won the sobriquet Fighting Joe from overly enthusiastic journalists because of his reputation as a hard-fighting division and corps commander. He was highly favored in Washington, but in appointing him the President wrote a fatherly letter in which he warned the general against rashness and overambi-



Joseph L. Hooker  
*Matthew Brady, n.d.*

tion, reproached him for plotting against Burnside, and concluded by asking for victories.

Under Hooker's able administration, discipline and training improved. Morale, which had fallen after the Fredericksburg debacle, rose as Hooker regularized the furlough system and improved the flow of rations and other supplies to his front-line troops. Abolishing Burnside's grand divisions, Hooker returned to the previous corps organization of seven corps, each numbering about 15,000 men. One of Hooker's most effective innovations was the introduction of corps badges to provide a sense of identity in a unit and improve esprit de corps. He also took a long step toward improving the army's cavalry arm, which up to this time had been assigned many diverse duties and was split up into small detachments. Hooker regarded cavalry as a combat arm of full stature, and he concentrated his units into a cavalry corps of three divisions under Brig. Gen. George Stoneman. On the other hand, Hooker made a costly mistake in decentralizing tactical and administrative control of his artillery to his corps commanders. This may have improved tactical usage of artillery, but it prevented the focusing of massive amounts of artillery on a single front. As a result the artillery, in which the Union had a distinct advantage in numbers, would not be properly massed in the coming action at Chancellorsville and thus was not as effective as it could have been.

Hooker had no intention of repeating Burnside's tragic frontal assault at Fredericksburg. With a strength approaching 134,000 men, Hooker planned a bold double envelopment that would place strong Union forces on each of Lee's flanks. (*Map 28*) He hoped to take advantage of his superior numbers to outmaneuver Lee. He ordered three of his infantry corps to move secretly west up the Rappahannock and Rapidan and to ford the streams to outflank Lee to the north. Meanwhile, two more corps, having conspicuously remained opposite Fredericksburg, were to strike across the old battlefield there to tie down Lee's forces. Two more corps were held in reserve. The cavalry corps, less one division that was to screen the move upriver, was to raid far behind Lee's rear to divert him.

Hooker's plan was superb, his execution faulty. The three corps moved quickly up the river and by the end of April had crossed and advanced to the principal road junction of Chancellorsville. They were now in the so-called Wilderness, a low, flat, confusing area of scrub timber and narrow dirt roads in which movement and visibility were extremely limited. Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick crossed the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg on the twenty-ninth, and the two remaining corps moved to within supporting distance of Hooker at Chancellorsville. So far everything had gone according to plan, except that Stoneman's diversion had failed to bother Lee. One of Brig. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart's brigades kept Stoneman under surveillance while the main body of cavalry shadowed Hooker so effectively that the Southern commander knew every move the Union Army made. By the morning of April 30, Lee was aware of what was afoot and knew that he was threatened by double envelopment. Early on May 1, Hooker was sending his columns east, toward the back door to Fredericksburg. A less bold and resolute man than Lee would have retreated south at once and with such ample justification that only the captious would have found fault. But the

### BATTLE OF CHANCELLORSVILLE 1-6 May 1863

- Union Position, Date Indicated
- Confederate Position, Date Indicated
- Axis of Union Movement
- Axis of Confederate Movement

ELEVATION IN FEET

0 100 200 300 400 and Above

1 2 Miles

### APPROACH TO THE BATTLE 27-30 April 1863

- Axis of Union Movement
- Axis of Confederate Movement
- High Ground Above 300 Feet

1 5 Miles

## GENERAL ORDERS 100

General Orders 100, Instructions for the Government of the Armies of the United States in the Field, dated April 24, 1863, was drafted by professor Francis Lieber, a German immigrant who had sons fighting on both sides of the Civil War. The orders established guidelines for the conduct of war, particularly with regard to the treatment of enemy soldiers, prisoners, and occupied civilian populations. The orders attempted to strike a balance between humanitarian impulses and the brutal necessities of war. They were widely copied by European armies and provided a framework upon which subsequent international law would be based.

Southern general, his army numbering only 60,000, decided to take a bold risk. Using the principles of the offensive, maneuver, economy of force, and surprise to compensate for his inferior numbers, he decided to attack an enemy almost twice his size. Instead of retreating, he left a small part of his army to hold the heights at Fredericksburg and started west for Chancellorsville with the main body. Lee's superb intelligence and reconnaissance, based largely on his expert cavalry force, provided him with accurate and timely intelligence so Hooker's every move was known to him while his own were hidden from Hooker.

### Chancellorsville: Lee's Boldest Risk

It seemed as if at this point in the battle Hooker simply lost his courage. Since he did not know exactly where Lee was, he began taking counsel of his fears and failed to follow his own plan. Over the vehement protests of his corps commanders, he ordered the troops back into defensive positions around Chancellorsville, surrendering the initiative to Lee. The Federals established a line in the forest, felled trees for an abatis, and constructed earth-and-log breastworks. Their position faced generally east and south, anchored on the Rappahannock on the east; but in the west along the Orange turnpike, it was weak, unsupported, and hanging in the air. Lee brought his main body up and on May 1 made contact with Hooker's strong left. At the same time, Stuart's cavalry discovered Hooker's vulnerable right flank and promptly reported the intelligence to Lee. Conferring that night with Lt. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, Lee made a truly daring decision. Facing an army much greater than his own, having already divided his forces by leaving some units back at Fredericksburg, he decided to divide his forces again to further envelop the envelopers. Accordingly, Lee committed 17,000 men against Hooker's left to hold it in place while Jackson with 26,000 men made a wide, fifteen-mile swing to get beyond Hooker's right flank. Lee's decision was technically a violation of the principles of mass and concentration; but the principles are guides, not laws. A bold commander can knowingly undertake a higher measure of calculated risk if the potential reward is high enough. And Lee was probably the boldest risk taker of the war. In addition, while Lee's two forces were separated, their common objective was the Army of the Potomac and their ultimate routes converged on a common center.

Jackson's force, in a ten-mile-long column, moved out before daybreak on May 2, marching southwest first then swinging northwest to get into position. The Federals noted that something was happening off to the south but were unable to penetrate the defensive screen; Hooker soon began to think that Lee was actually retreating. In the late afternoon Jackson turned onto the Orange turnpike beyond Wilderness Tavern. This move put him west of Hooker's right flank; since the woods thinned out a little at this point, it was possible to form a line of battle. Because time was running short and the hour was late, Jackson deployed in column of divisions, each division formed with brigades abreast, the same kind of confusing formation General Albert S. Johnston had used at Shiloh. Shortly after 5:00 P.M. Jackson's leading division, shrieking the "rebel yell" and driving startled rabbits and deer before it, came charging out of the woods, rolling up the different brigades of Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's XI Corps. Despite a few heroic attempts to stand in the face of the rebel onslaught, the Union troops retreated in disarray. Jackson pressed forward, but fresh Union troops, the disorganization of his own men, and oncoming darkness stymied the attack. While searching for a road that would permit him to cut off Hooker from United States Ford across the Rappahannock, Jackson fell victim to friendly fire. The Confederate leader was wounded and died eight days later. During the night of May 2, Stuart, Jackson's temporary successor as corps commander, re-formed his lines. Against Stuart's right Hooker launched local counterattacks that at first gained some success, but the next morning he withdrew his whole line. Once more Hooker yielded the initiative at a moment when he had a strong force between Lee's two divided and weaker forces.

Stuart renewed the attack during the morning as Hooker pulled his line back. To complicate matters further, Hooker was knocked unconscious when a shell struck the pillar of the Chancellor house against which he was leaning. Until the end of the battle he was dazed and incapable of exercising effective command, but he did not relinquish it nor would the army's medical director declare him unfit. Union artillery, centrally located but not centrally controlled, might have proven decisive at this point of the battle; but its fires were not coordinated. Meanwhile Sedgwick, who shortly after Jackson's attack had received orders to pro-

## THE DEATH OF STONEMAN JACKSON

Soon after dark on the second day of fighting at Chancellorsville, a bullet fired by his own troops struck down one of the South's most celebrated soldiers, the corps commander Thomas Jackson (1824–1863). Confederate soldiers in the part of the battle line where Jackson fell were understandably nervous, for a band of 200 federal troops had just been discovered and taken prisoner in the woods behind the Confederate front line. Not long after, some Confederates caught sight of a lone Union officer between the two armies, and a few shots fired at him grew into a general fusillade along a brigade-wide front. A little while later, on a path through another part of the woods, Jackson received the wounds that contributed to his death from pneumonia a week later. The shots that felled him may not have "doomed the Confederacy," as one historian has put it, but it was certainly the most famous friendly fire incident in American history.

ceed through Fredericksburg to Chancellorsville, had assaulted Marye's Heights. He carried it about noon on May 3, but the next day Lee once more divided his command, leaving Stuart with 25,000 to guard Hooker, and moved himself with 21,000 to thwart Sedgwick. In a sharp action at Salem Church, Lee forced the Federals off the road and northward over the Rappahannock at Banks' Ford. Lee made ready for a full-scale assault against the Army of the Potomac, now huddled with its back against the river on May 6; but Hooker ordered retirement to the north bank before the attack. Confederate losses were 13,000, Federal losses 17,000. But Lee lost a great deal with the death of Stonewall Jackson. Actually, Lee's brilliant and daring maneuvers had defeated only one man—Hooker—and in no other action of the war did moral superiority of one general over the other stand out so clearly as a decisive factor in battle. Chancellorsville exemplified Napoleon's maxim: "The General is the head, the whole of the army." When the general was offensively minded and not averse to calculated risks, the result was dramatic. Chancellorsville remains an example of what a bold commander can accomplish against a larger, but poorly coordinated, enemy. Using trusted corps commanders, operating along interior lines, and carefully orchestrating a maneuver led Lee to what many consider his boldest victory.

Lee was so successful in part because Hooker made so many mistakes. Hooker was in many ways a talented tactical commander with a good reputation. But in spite of Lincoln's injunction, "This time, put in all your men," he allowed nearly one-third of his army to stand idle during the heaviest fighting. Here again was a general who could effectively lead a body of troops under his own eyes but could not use maps, reports, and messages to evaluate and control situations that were beyond his range of vision. Hooker, not the Army of the Potomac, lost the battle of Chancellorsville. Poor coordination, poor intelligence, irresolute decisions, and timid reactions to setbacks led to Hooker's being completely "out-generaled." Yet for the victors, Chancellorsville was in many ways a hollow triumph. It was dazzling, a set piece for the instruction of students of the military art ever since, but it had been inconclusive, winning glory and little more. It left government and army on both sides with precisely the problems they had faced before the campaign began. However, Lee had triumphed once again as he drove the Union forces back onto the defensive. His logistical lines were secure, and Richmond remained unthreatened. Now it was time again for him to take the war into the North.

### Lee's Second Invasion of the North

By 1863 the war had entered what Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman later called its professional phase. The core of troops was well trained, although a constant flow of new replacements required constant "seasoning"; and large numbers had ample combat experience. Officers had generally mastered their jobs and were deploying their forces fairly skillfully in accordance with the day's tactical principles. Furthermore, the increased range and accuracy of weapons, together with the nature of the terrain, had induced some alterations in tactics—more skirmishers and increasing distance between soldiers as they sought to avoid the worst effects of the hail of rifled musket fire—alterations that were

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embodied in a revised infantry manual published in 1863. Thus, by the third year of the war, battles had begun to take on certain definite characteristics. The battle of Gettysburg in early July is a case in point.

Gettysburg was, first of all, a generally unplanned battle—neither side knew that their forces would be brought together at that obscure crossroads for the greatest land battle on the North American continent. It stands out in American myth as one of the most dramatic battles with individual heroism and extraordinary valor on both sides as victory or defeat seemed separated by only a hair's breadth. The three-day battle began as a meeting engagement, followed by each side's attempting to bring a preponderance of troops onto the field as the battle raged. Some 43,500 Americans were casualties of this great battle, and Lincoln's address over the cemetery of the dead was to be enshrined as a masterpiece of American historic prose. Gettysburg has become the most famous of the battles of that cruel war.

After the great victory at Chancellorsville in May, the Confederate cause in the Eastern Theater had looked exceptionally bright. If 60,000 men could beat 134,000, then the Confederacy's inferiority in manpower was surely offset by superior generalship and skill at arms. Vicksburg was not yet under siege, although Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant had ferried his army over to the east bank of the Mississippi. If Confederate President Jefferson Davis and General Lee were overly optimistic, they could hardly be blamed. Both felt it important to take the battle into the enemy's territory to relieve the threat against Richmond, gather subsistence for the troops from the rich Northern farmland, and perhaps, just perhaps, garner another astounding victory that might capture Washington itself or force the Union to sue for peace. It was a gamble, of course, but Lee was a gambler and Davis only slightly less so. Lee made ready to move into Pennsylvania. By this time the Union objectives in the east were clearly defined: to continue operations against Confederate seaports—an attempt to seize Fort Sumter on April 7 had failed—and to destroy Lee's army. President Lincoln's orders made clear that the destruction of the Army of Northern Virginia was the major objective of the Army of the Potomac. The capture of Richmond was to be only incidental.

On June 30, 1863, the Army of the Potomac numbered 115,256 officers and enlisted men with 362 guns. It consisted of 51 infantry brigades organized into 19 divisions, which in turn formed 7 infantry corps. The cavalry corps had 3 divisions. The field artillery, 67 batteries, was assigned by brigades to the corps, except for army reserve artillery, restoring much of the power of the chief of artillery and redressing the problem of decentralized misuse of artillery noted at Chancellorsville. The Army of Northern Virginia, having numbered 76,224 men and 272 guns in late May, now was organized into 3 infantry corps, each led by a lieutenant general and larger than its Union counterpart. The death of Jackson had forced this change, with Richard S. Ewell and Ambrose P. Hill joining James Longstreet as lieutenant generals and commanders of the reorganized corps. Stuart's cavalry retained its role, directly answering to Lee. In each corps were 3 divisions, and most divisions had 4 brigades. Of the 15 field artillery battalions of 4 batteries each, 5 battalions were attached to each corps under command of the corps' artillery chiefs, leaving no artillery in army reserve.



*A Battle Flag for the Army of Northern Virginia, ca. 1863*

## JAMES LONGSTREET (1821–1904)

Known as Old Pete and Lee's War Horse, Longstreet became one of the Civil War's most controversial figures. Hard hitting in the attack, he nevertheless sensed the power of the tactical defense in an age of rifled weapons and field fortifications and preferred to fight from the defensive. His performance at Gettysburg drew fire from postwar critics who believed that, when Lee rejected his repeated advice to outflank the strong Federal position, Longstreet sulked and thereby cost the South the battle. Yet Lee never uttered direct criticism of Longstreet, who stood by him to the end at Appomattox. He was one of the most valued and trusted lieutenants to General Lee.

In early June Lee began moving his units away from Fredericksburg. In his advance he used the Shenandoah and Cumberland Valleys, for by holding the east-west mountain passes he could readily cover his approach route and lines of communications. Hooker got wind of the move; he noted the weakening of the Fredericksburg defenses, and on June 9 his cavalry, commanded by Brig. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton, surprised Stuart at Brandy Station, Virginia. Here on an open plain was fought one of the few mounted, saber-swinging, cut-and-thrust cavalry combats of the Civil War. Up to now the Confederate cavalry had been superior; but at Brandy Station, the Union horsemen "came of age," and Stuart was lucky to hold his position.

When the Federals learned that Confederate infantrymen were west of the Blue Ridge and heading north, Hooker started to move to protect Washington and Baltimore. Earlier Lincoln had vetoed Hooker's proposal to seize Richmond while Lee went north. As the Army of Northern Virginia moved through the valleys and deployed into Pennsylvania behind cavalry screens, the Army of the Potomac moved north on a broad front, crossing the Potomac on June 25 and 26. Lee dispersed his forces to gain speed of movement and gather as much in the way of supplies as possible. He had extended his infantry columns from McConnellsburg and Chambersburg on the west to Carlisle in the north and York on the east.

After Brandy Station and some sharp clashes in the mountain passes, Stuart set forth on another dramatic ride around the Union Army. Granted a maximum degree of discretion by Lee, Stuart operated largely on his own initiative but forgot that his primary role was to serve as Lee's eyes and ears. He failed to send back messages on the movements of the Union Army and did not adequately screen Confederate movements from Union cavalry. The results were disastrous. It was only on the afternoon of July 2, with his troopers so weary they were almost falling from their saddles, that Stuart rejoined Lee in the vicinity of Gettysburg, too late to have an important influence on the battle. His absence had deprived Lee of prompt, accurate information about the Army of the Potomac. When Lee learned from one of Longstreet's spies on June 28 that Hooker's men were north of the Potomac, he ordered his widespread and vulnerable units to concentrate at once near Cashtown.

After Chancellorsville, Lincoln, though advised to drop Hooker, had kept him in command of the Army of the Potomac on the theory

that he would not throw away a gun because it has misfired once. But Hooker soon became embroiled with Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck over whether or not he had the authority to move troops out of Harpers Ferry to reinforce his army and, in a moment of pique, requested his own relief. Lincoln, losing all confidence in Hooker's judgment, promptly took him up on his offer. Hooker was replaced by one of his corps commanders, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, who was awakened unexpectedly before dawn on June 28 to receive word of his promotion. He immediately faced the challenge of assuming command of an Army that had only limited time to find, fix, and defeat a dangerous foe. Meade, who was to command the Army of the Potomac for the rest of the war, started north on a broad front at once but within two days began planning to fight a defensive action in Maryland and issued orders to that effect. However, not all his commanders received the order, and events overruled him.

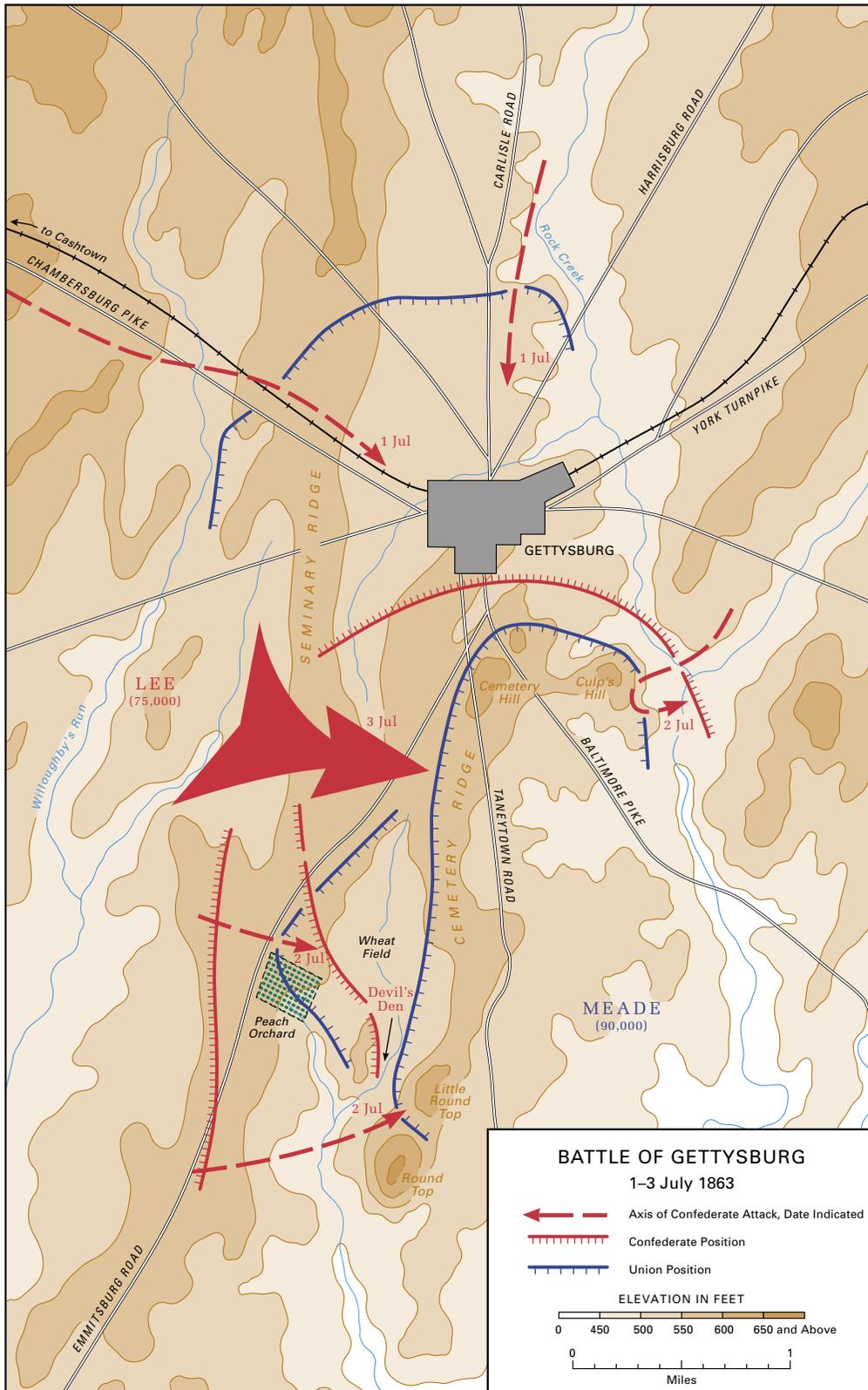
## Gettysburg

During the afternoon of June 30 outposts of both armies clashed north and west of the quiet little Pennsylvania market town of Gettysburg. The terrain in the area included rolling hills and broad, shallow valleys. Gettysburg was the junction of twelve roads that led to Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and the mountain passes to the west that Lee controlled. As initial elements of both forces collided, the local commanders sent reports and recommendations to their superiors, who relayed them upward; both armies, still widely dispersed, started moving toward Gettysburg. (*See Map 29.*)

On July 1 Union cavalymen under the command of Brig. Gen. John Buford, Jr., fought a dismounted delaying action against infantry troops of General Hill's Third Corps northwest of town. By this stage of the war cavalymen, armed with saber, pistol, and breechloading car-



*Part of the Gettysburg Battlefield, ca. 1863.  
Matthew Brady, a photographer who organized and led a significant effort to chronicle the Civil War in photographs, stands in the center.*



Map 29

bine, were often deployed as mounted infantrymen who rode to battle but fought on foot. The range and accuracy of the infantry's rifled muskets made it next to impossible for mounted men to attack foot soldiers in position, but in this instance the infantry was attacking dismounted troopers in defensive positions. With their superior speed, mobility, and firepower, cavalymen, as witnessed in the Gettysburg campaign, were especially useful for screening and reconnaissance but also for advance guard actions in which they seized or held important hills, river crossings, and road junctions pending the arrival of infantry. During the morning hours of July 1, this was the role Union horsemen played on the ridges north and west of Gettysburg. Buford, with a keen eye for terrain and confidence in his troops, identified the key terrain of Cemetery Hill and held the enemy in place until the arrival of Maj. Gen. John F. Reynolds' I Corps at ten o'clock in the morning and Howard's XI Corps by noon.

By midday on the first, two corps of the Army of the Potomac were locked in battle with Hill's Confederate Corps, with elements of Ewell's Corps moving up to support it. The latter, advancing from the north and northeast, broke the stretched lines of the XI Corps and drove the Federals back through Gettysburg in confusion. The Union infantry rallied behind artillery positioned on Cemetery Hill south of the town. Lee, who reached the field about 2:00 P.M., ordered Ewell at about 4:30 or 5:00 to take Cemetery Hill, "if he found it practicable." However, before preparations were complete for an attack, it began to get dark and Ewell failed to press his advantage. By nightfall the Confederates settled into positions extending in a great curve from northeast of Culp's Hill, westward through Gettysburg, thence south on Seminary Ridge. During the night the Federals, enjoying interior lines, moved troops in strength onto the key points of Culp's Hill, Cemetery Hill, and Cemetery Ridge, forming a great inverted "fishhook."

Meade arrived on the battlefield at midnight and, despite the confusion inherent in arriving in the midst of operations, quickly had a grasp of the battle. He decided to fight on that ground and not retreat. Accordingly, he put his forces in movement for a major defensive battle and completed his dispositions by the morning of July 2. The Union line was strong except in two places. In the confusion of battle, Little Round Top was unoccupied except for a series of small signal detachments. And the commander of the III Corps, Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Sickles, on his own responsibility moved his line forward from the south end of Cemetery Ridge to higher ground near the Peach Orchard; his corps lay in an exposed salient. He believed he was moving forward onto higher and more easily defensible ground, but he completely failed to coordinate his action. By early afternoon, five corps were arrayed along the Union battle line with one in reserve and one more still marching to reach Gettysburg.

On the Confederate side, Lee still retained the power of choice. He could continue the attack, despite the unfavorable ground and the fact that not all his troops were yet in place. He could play it safe and wait, bring up the rest of Longstreet's corps, or even try to get the Union Army to attack him in his own strong position on Seminary Ridge. Or he could break contact and retreat, hoping to bring the Union Army out of its positions and maneuver against it as it attempted to pursue



*Little Round Top Signal Flag*

## JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN (1828–1914)

A former Bowdoin College professor, Colonel Chamberlain had led the 20th Maine for only a month when they met destiny at Gettysburg. Late in the afternoon of July 2, 1863, the 20th Maine repulsed three Confederate assaults against the extreme Union left among the boulders and trees along the southern slopes of Little Round Top. Again, enemy infantry climbed the hill. Low on ammunition with no help available and retreat inadmissible, a wounded Chamberlain ordered a bayonet charge. Those Confederates not killed or captured fled in panic; and Little Round Top, key to the Union line, was secured. Chamberlain received the Medal of Honor.

him. However, Lee was not in the mood to retreat or passively defend; he wanted to attack despite his disadvantages.

Lee was faced with the usual dilemma of generals on the attack during the Civil War. Every commander wanted to combine frontal assaults with envelopments and flanking movements, but the difficulty of timing and coordinating the movements of such large, often not fully trained, bodies of men in broken terrain made intricate maneuvers difficult. The action on the second day at Gettysburg graphically illustrates the problem. Lee wanted to bring up Longstreet's corps to strike at the Federal left while Hill and Ewell attacked to their fronts. However, coordination broke down. Longstreet's men were forced to march almost in front of Union positions to reach their attack positions and had to countermarch on a number of occasions to avoid being observed. The attack did not start until almost four in the afternoon. As they moved forward, they struck strong Union positions at a jumbled pile of rocks, south of the Peach Orchard and forward of Little Round Top, nicknamed the Devil's Den. The smoke of battle was thick over the fields south of Gettysburg, and the cries of the wounded mingled with the crash of musketry. The whole sector had become a chaos of tangled battle lines as units overlapped each other.

As the battle was raging to the east of Little Round Top, Brig. Gen. Gouverneur Warren discovered that no infantry held this critical position. Through General Meade he passed a request to the commander of the V Corps, Maj. Gen. George Sykes, to send two brigades and some artillery to the hill. They arrived just in time. The Confederates moved through the Devil's Den and launched a furious assault against Little Round Top, now defended by Col. Strong Vincent's brigade composed of regiments from Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. The Union soldiers threw assault after assault back. Particularly hard hit was the 20th Maine, commanded by Col. Joshua Chamberlain. The Confederates attacked time and time again, but were each time driven back. Finally, running short on ammunition, Colonel Chamberlain ordered a desperate bayonet charge that broke the rebel attackers' spirit. The position at Little Round Top was safe.

With Little Round Top secured by the Union, Longstreet threw a second division against Sickles' troops in the Peach Orchard and Wheatfield; this cracked the Federal line, and the Confederate troops drove as far as Cemetery Ridge before Meade's reserves halted their advance. Lee

attempted to coordinate his units so that they would attack progressively from right to left, and one of Hill's divisions assaulted Cemetery Ridge in piecemeal fashion but was driven off. In the north, Ewell attacked about 8:00 P.M. and captured some abandoned trenches near Culp's Hill, but Federals posted behind stone walls proved too strong. As the day ended the Federals held all their main positions. The Confederates had fought hard and with great bravery, but the Union Army, operating in interior lines, had been able to move troops in a timely fashion to all threatened spots in the line and had stubbornly defended against the Confederate assaults.

Meade, after requesting the opinions of his corps commanders in a council of war, decided to defend, rather than attack, on July 3. Lee planned to launch a full-scale, coordinated attack along the line with all the forces he could muster. The main attack, however, was to be a massive frontal assault by nine brigades from three divisions of Longstreet's and Hill's corps against the Union center, which was held by Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock's II Corps. The assault was to be preceded by a massive artillery barrage.

The infantry's main fire support during the war was provided by direct-firing field artillery. Rifled guns of relatively long range were available and could have provided indirect fires, but the soldiers on both sides preferred the 12-lb. smoothbore cannon, especially the popular Napoleon. Rifled cannon were harder to clean; their fuses were not always as effective; their greater range could not always be effectively used because development of a good indirect fire control system would have to await the invention of the field telephone and the radio; and the rifled guns had to be rebored once the rifling wore down. Both types of cannon were among the artillery of the two armies at Gettysburg.

About 1:00 P.M. on July 3, Confederate gunners opened fire from 140 pieces along Seminary Ridge in the greatest artillery bombardment witnessed on the American continent up to that time. For perhaps two hours the barrage continued, destroying Union artillery and caissons in the center of the line. The Union infantry was able to shelter behind a stone wall that ran in front of its position and was relatively unharmed.

## "PICKETT'S" CHARGE

"For every Southern boy fourteen years old," William Faulkner wrote, "not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863." It was then, on the third day of the battle of Gettysburg, that the Confederates launched an assault by more than 10,000 infantry, intended to break the Union line on Cemetery Ridge. A low rise divided the approach to the Union lines, so that neither Pickett's Virginian Division nor the predominantly North Carolinian Division to its left could see, much less support, the other during most of the advance. Under heavy artillery fire all the way, the attack failed. Union forces held their ground, and Lee's army began its retreat to Virginia the next day. Recriminations continued for decades afterward, with North Carolinians blaming Virginians for the failure and Virginians blaming General Longstreet, a Georgian. Asked in later years why the charge had failed, Pickett himself is supposed to have answered, "Well, I always thought the Yankees had something to do with it."



Rudolph Ellis of Philadelphia as Officer of the Day, *Jefferson Chalfont, n.d.*

The Union artillery, while taking a beating, was not knocked out; artillery reinforcements were quickly rushed to the threatened center. Union guns did slow their rate of firing, in part to conserve ammunition, and the silence seemed to be a signal that the Confederates should begin their attack.

Under the overall tactical command of General Longstreet, around 11,000 men emerged from the woods on Seminary Ridge, dressed their three lines as if on parade, and began the mile-long, twenty-minute march toward Cemetery Ridge. Although known popularly as Pickett's Charge after Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett, over half the soldiers belonged to units other than Pickett's division. Brig. Gen. James J. Pettigrew, in charge of Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's division of four brigades, led another main element. Two brigades from Maj. Gen. William D. Pender's division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Isaac R. Trimble, joined them. In essence there were two poorly coordinated assaults on the Union Center with Trimble and Pettigrew on the Confederate left and Pickett's three brigades on the right.

The assault force, forty-seven regiments altogether, moved at a walk until it neared the Union lines then broke into a run as it neared the summit of the ridge. Union artillery on the south end of the ridge opened fire and enfiladed the gray ranks. Despite heavy casualties the

Confederates kept their formation until they came within rifle and canister range of the II Corps; by then the lines and units were intermingled. Remnants of Pickett's three brigades actually reached and crossed the stone wall defended by Brig. Gen. John Gibbon's 2d Division of the II Corps, only to be quickly cut down or captured. Pettigrew's men were hit in the front and flank by deadly rifle fire and canister and fell short of breaching the Union lines north of a sharp turn in the stone wall called the Angle. Trimble's men tried to support Pettigrew's attack but were broken by Union fire and could go no farther. The survivors of all three divisions withdrew to Seminary Ridge, and the field fell quiet.

Both Union and Confederate forces were too exhausted for further attacks. Both sides had fought hard and with great valor. Among 90,000 effective Union troops and 75,000 Confederates, there were more than 51,000 casualties. The Army of the Potomac lost 3,155 killed, 14,529 wounded, and 5,365 captured or missing. Of the Army of Northern Virginia, 3,903 were killed, 18,735 wounded, and 5,425 missing or captured. If Chancellorsville was arguably Lee's finest battle, Gettysburg was clearly his worst; yet the reversal did not unnerve him or reduce his effectiveness as a commander. The invasion had patently failed, and on July 4 he began to retreat toward the Potomac. As that river was flooded, it was several days before he was able to cross. Mr. Lincoln, naturally pleased over Meade's defensive victory and elated over Grant's capture of Vicksburg, thought the war could end in 1863 if Meade launched a resolute pursuit and destroyed Lee's army on the north bank of the Potomac. But Meade's own army was too mangled; and the Union commander moved cautiously, permitting Lee to return safely to Virginia on July 13.

Gettysburg was the last important action in the Eastern Theater in 1863. Lee and Meade maneuvered against each other in Virginia, but there was no more significant fighting in the East. There were stirring events in the Western Theater, however.

## **The West: Confusion over Clearing the Mississippi**

In the west, the major challenge facing the Union armies was the capture of Vicksburg and the seizure of control of the Mississippi River. Initially, however, the Federals faced the same problems of divided command that had plagued armies in the east. General Grant, with over 60,000 men, remained in western Tennessee guarding communication lines. Brig. Gen. Don Carlos Buell's army of 56,000, after containing Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, had been taken over by Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans, whose hard-won victory at Murfreesboro at the end of 1862 had nevertheless immobilized the Army of the Cumberland for nearly half a year. To the south, Union forces under the command of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks controlled New Orleans as part of the Department of the Gulf. Coordinating the movement of all these forces would prove a true leadership challenge.

Late in 1862 President Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton worked out their own plans to accomplish the fall of Vicksburg, however without coordinating that plan effectively with their senior military commanders. They wrote somewhat vague orders for a simultaneous advance north from New Orleans and south from Ten-

nessee. General Banks was to command the move northward from New Orleans, and command of the southbound expedition was to go to Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand. Both were relatively untried as Army commanders. They were also volunteer officers and politicians who often dabbled in intrigue to gain favors. Further, McClernand was to operate within Grant's department but independently of him, often a recipe for trouble. When General Halleck found out about the Lincoln-Stanton plan, he persuaded the President to put Grant in command of the southbound expedition and to make McClernand one of his subordinates.

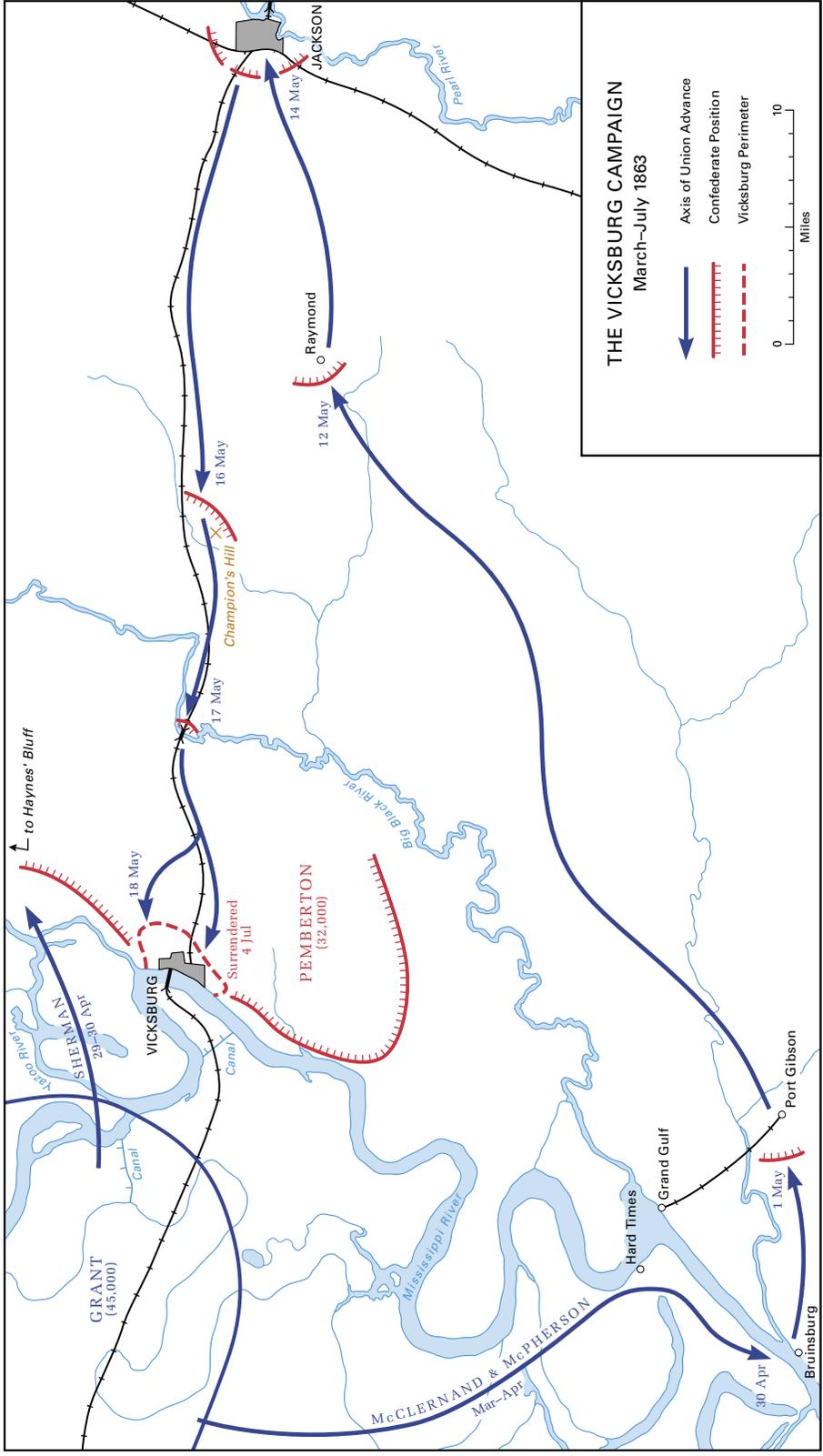
### Grant's Campaign against Vicksburg

General Grant first tried a combined land and water expedition against Vicksburg in December 1862–January 1863. He sent General Sherman downriver from Memphis, but the Confederates under Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn and Brig. Gen. Nathan B. Forrest raided and cut his 200-mile-long line of communications. Sherman himself bogged down before Vicksburg; Grant, perhaps also wishing to keep close rein on McClernand, who ranked Sherman, then determined on a river expedition that he would lead in person. Late in January Grant arrived near Vicksburg with upwards of 45,000 men organized into three corps: the XIII Corps under McClernand, the XV Corps under Sherman, and the XVII Corps under Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson. During the ensuing campaign Grant received two more corps as reinforcements to bring his total strength to 75,000 men.

Vicksburg had almost a perfect location for defense. (*Map 30*) At that point on the river, bluffs rose as high as 250 feet above the water and extended for about 100 miles from north to south. North of Vicksburg lay the Yazoo River and its delta, a gloomy stretch of watery, swampy bottom land extending 175 miles from north to south, 60 miles from east to west. The ground immediately south of Vicksburg was almost as swampy and impassable. The Confederates had fortified the bluffs from Haynes' Bluff on the Yazoo, 10 miles above Vicksburg, to Grand Gulf at the mouth of the Big Black River 40 miles below. Vicksburg could not be assaulted from the river, and sailing past it was extremely hazardous. The river formed a great "U" there, and Vicksburg's guns threatened any craft that tried to run by. For the Union troops to attack success-

## GRANT AND HEADQUARTERS

Grant prospered because he could learn the complexities of command away from Washington and the glare of newspaper publicity. He made mistakes and learned from them. Because of the scarcity of trained officers, his staff initially consisted of civilians in uniform; and he formed the habit of writing his own orders. They were clear, succinct, unambiguous—like the man himself. He cultivated a climate at his headquarters that allowed free-wheeling discussion of the difficulties and possibilities facing his forces, what one historian has labeled "an open headquarters." Junior officers could express their opinions, and Grant could pick and choose among them.



Map 30

fully, they would have to get to the high, dry ground east of town. This would put them in Confederate territory between two enemy forces. Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton commanded some 30,000 men in Vicksburg, while the Confederate area commander, General Joseph E. Johnston (now recovered from his wound at Fair Oaks), concentrated the other scattered Confederate forces in Mississippi at Jackson, the state capital, 40 miles east of Vicksburg.

During late winter and early spring, with the rains falling, the streams high, and the roads at their wettest and muddiest, overland movement was impossible. Primarily to placate discontented politicians and a critical press, Grant made four attempts to reach high ground east of Vicksburg. All four were unsuccessful, foiled either by Confederate resistance or by natural obstacles. One of the more spectacular efforts was digging canals. These projects had as their objective the clearing of an approach by which troops could sail to a point near the high ground without being fired on by Vicksburg's guns. All failed. That Grant kept on trying in the face of such discouragement is a tribute to his dogged persistence, and that Lincoln supported him is a tribute to his confidence in the general. The trouble was that Grant had been on the river for two months, and by early spring Vicksburg was no nearer falling than when he came.

On April 4 in a letter to Halleck, Grant divulged his latest plan to capture Vicksburg. Working closely with the local naval commander, Rear Adm. David D. Porter, Grant evolved a stroke of great boldness. He decided to use part of his force above Vicksburg to divert the Confederates. The main body would march southward on the west side of the Mississippi, cross to the east bank below the city, and, with only five days' rations, strike inland to live off a hostile country without a line of supply or retreat. As he told Sherman, the Union troops would carry "what rations of hard bread, coffee, and salt we can and make the country furnish the balance." Porter's gunboats and other craft, which up to now were on the river north of Vicksburg, were to run past the batteries during darkness and then ferry the troops over the river. Sherman thought the campaign too risky, but the events of the next two months were to prove him wrong.

While Sherman demonstrated near Vicksburg in March, McClelland's and McPherson's corps started their advance south. The rains let up in April, the waters receded slightly, and overland movement became somewhat easier. On the night of April 16 Porter led his river fleet past Vicksburg, whose guns, once the move was discovered, lit up the black night with an eerie bombardment. All but one transport made it safely; and starting on April 30, Porter's craft ferried the troops eastward over the river at Bruinsburg below Grand Gulf. The final march against Vicksburg was ready to begin.

At this time the Confederates had more troops in the vicinity than Grant had but never could make proper use of them. Grant's swift move had bewildered Pemberton. Then too, just before marching downstream, Grant had ordered a brigade of cavalry to come down from the Tennessee border, riding between the parallel north-south railroad lines of the Mississippi Central and Mobile and Ohio. Led by Col. Benjamin H. Grierson, this force sliced the length of the state, cutting railroads, fighting detachments of Confederate cavalry, and finally reaching Union

lines at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Most important, for the few days that counted most, it drew Pemberton's attention away from Grant and kept the Confederate general from discerning the Union's objectives.

Once more, divided counsel hampered the coordination of Confederate strategy. Davis had sent Johnston west in December 1862 to take overall command of the theater, an imposing task, for Pemberton's army in Mississippi and Bragg's in Tennessee were widely separated. Things were further confused by Davis' directive to Pemberton to hold Vicksburg at all costs while Johnston recognized the potential trap and ordered him to move directly against Grant. In such a situation Pemberton could do little that was right. He tried to defend too great an area; he had not concentrated but dispersed his forces at Vicksburg, the Big Black River, and along the railroad line to Jackson, where Johnston was gathering more troops. As is often the case, whoever tries to defend everything often ends up losing everything.

Grant took Port Gibson on May 1, and Sherman's corps rejoined the main force. Now the Union commander decided that he must defeat Johnston before turning on Vicksburg. He moved northeastward and fought his way into Raymond on May 12, a move that put him squarely between Johnston and Pemberton and in a position to cut the Confederate line of communications. The next day Sherman and McPherson marched against the city of Jackson with McClernand following in reserve ready to hold off Pemberton if he attacked. The leading corps took Jackson on May 14 and drove its garrison eastward. While Sherman occupied the state capital to fend off Johnston, the other two corps turned west against Pemberton and Vicksburg. Pemberton tried too late to catch Grant in open country. He suffered severe defeats at Champion's Hill (May 16) and Big Black River Bridge (May 17) and was shut up in Vicksburg. In eighteen days Grant's army had marched 200 miles, had won four victories, and had finally secured the high ground along the Yazoo River that had been the goal of all the winter's fruitless campaigning. In this lightning operation, Grant had proven himself a master of maneuver warfare and a bold risk-taker.

Grant assaulted the Vicksburg lines on May 15 and 22, but as Sherman noted of the attacks: "The heads of columns have been swept away as chaff from the hand on a windy day." The only recourse now was a siege. Grant settled down and removed McClernand from command after the attack of May 22, during which the corps commander sent a misleading report, then later slighted the efforts of the other corps and publicly criticized the army commander. Grant replaced him with Maj. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord and ordered the army to dig trenches around the city and place powerful batteries of artillery to command the enemy positions.

The rest was now a matter of time, as Sherman easily kept Johnston away and the Federals advanced their siege works toward the Confederate fortifications. Food became scarce, and the troops and civilians inside Vicksburg were soon reduced to eating mules and horses. Shells pounded the city, and the Federal lines were drawn so tight that one Confederate soldier admitted "a cat could not have crept out of Vicksburg without being discovered." The front lines were so close that the Federals threw primitive hand grenades into the Confederate works. By July 1 the Union troops had completed their approaches and were ready

**Food became scarce, and the troops and civilians inside Vicksburg were soon reduced to eating mules and horses.**

for another assault. But Vicksburg was starving, and Pemberton asked for terms. Grant offered to parole all prisoners, and the city surrendered on Independence Day. Since Grant was out of telegraphic contact with Washington, the news reached the President via naval channels on July 7, the day before General Banks' 15,000-man army, having advanced upriver from New Orleans, captured Port Hudson. The Union now repossessed the whole river and had sliced the Confederacy in two. Once more Grant had removed an entire Confederate army—40,000 men—from the war, losing only one-tenth that number in the process.

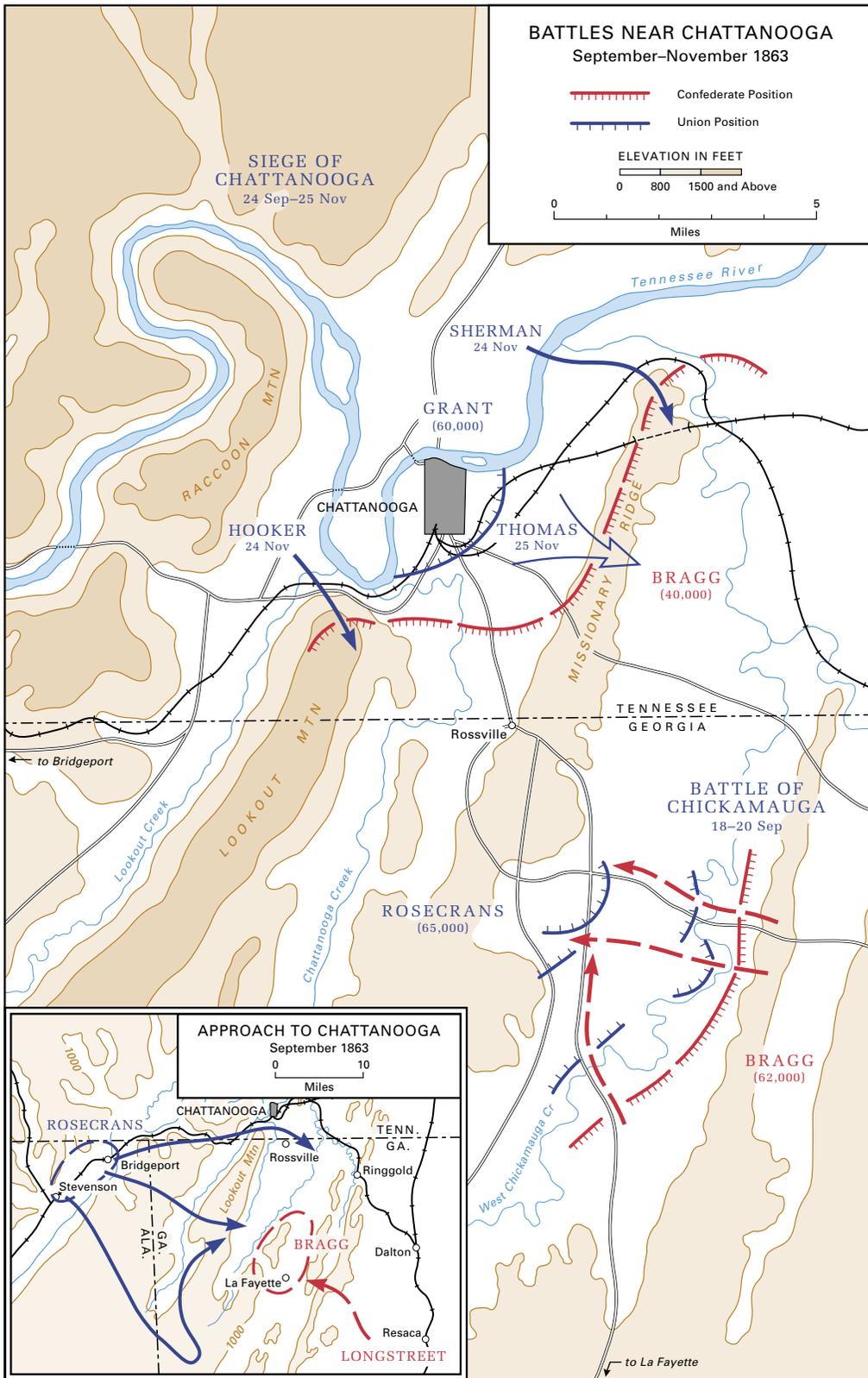
### The Chickamauga Campaign

One week before the surrender of Vicksburg and the Union victory at Gettysburg, General Rosecrans moved out of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and headed for Chattanooga, one of the most important cities in the south because of its location. (*Map 31*) It was a main junction on the rail line linking Richmond with Knoxville and Memphis. President Lincoln had long recognized the importance of railroads in this area. In 1862 he said, "To take and hold the railroad at or east of Cleveland [near Chattanooga], in East Tennessee, I think fully as important as the taking and holding of Richmond." Furthermore, at Chattanooga, the Tennessee River cuts through the parallel ridges of the Appalachian Mountains and forms a natural gateway to north or south. By holding the city, the Confederates could threaten Kentucky and prevent a Union penetration of the southeastern part of the Confederacy. If the Union armies pushed through Chattanooga, they would be in position to attack Atlanta, Savannah, or even the Carolinas and Richmond from the rear. As Lincoln told Rosecrans in 1863, "If we can hold Chattanooga and East Tennessee I think the rebellion must dwindle and die."

After the spring and summer campaigns in the east, the Davis government in Richmond approved a movement by two divisions of Longstreet's corps of Lee's army to the west to reinforce the hard-pressed Bragg. Longstreet's move, a 900-mile trip by rail involving 10,000–15,000 men and six batteries of artillery, began on September 9. But

## RAILROADS IN THE CIVIL WAR

During the decade before the Civil War U.S. railroads expanded from 9,000 miles of track to over 30,000, located disproportionately in the North; the Northern railroads were also generally better constructed, managed, and maintained. Superior rail communications gave the Union an enormous advantage in strategic mobility, largely negating the Confederacy's nominal possession of interior lines. Movement of supplies by rail was crucial for both armies, so that the securing or destruction of railways were important campaign objectives. In addition, substantial troop movements by rail were an important feature of Civil War operations, most notably the transfer of two Union corps totaling 25,000 men from Virginia to Tennessee in autumn 1863 to lift the siege of Chattanooga. Union forces advancing into Confederate territory were supported by the U.S. Military Railroad—by the end of the war, the largest railroad in the world—whose operations were overseen by the West Point-trained engineer Herman Haupt.



Map 31

a force under Burnside, who now commanded the Department of the Ohio, which was not part of Rosecrans' command, had penetrated the Cumberland Gap and had driven the Confederates from Knoxville. Longstreet had to go around by way of Augusta and Atlanta and did not reach Bragg until September 18. The rail network was rickety, and Longstreet's soldiers quipped that such poor rolling stock had never been intended to carry such good soldiers. Movement of Longstreet's troops from Virginia was nevertheless an outstanding logistical achievement for the Confederacy and a bold operational move.

Rosecrans meanwhile began planning how to use his numerical superiority (he had 65,000 available troops to Bragg's 46,250) to maneuver Bragg out of his positions in eastern Tennessee and move against Chattanooga. Faced with Confederates in strong positions around his base at Murfreesboro, Rosecrans decided to conduct a series of feints to mislead the enemy. Starting on June 24, he dispatched one division to the southwest of the city and a corps to the east to distract Bragg while moving the bulk of his army under corps commanders Maj. Gens. George H. Thomas and Alexander M. McCook to the southeast in a main attack on a critical mountain gap. Despite torrential rainfall and problems with muddy roads, the Union troops successfully seized Hoover's Gap, unhinging the Confederate defensive line. Forced to retreat, Bragg fell back on Tullahoma to defend his supply lines. However, after a few days of recovery it was apparent to him that Rosecrans intended to use his superior forces to continue trying to outflank his position. Rather than be trapped, Bragg retreated again and, abandoning eastern Tennessee, he moved back over the rain-swollen Tennessee River on July 6. He returned to Chattanooga and prepared to defend that key city. In a few weeks of rapid maneuvering, Rosecrans had driven Bragg's forces back to where they had started their offensive almost a year before.

After months of delay Rosecrans had accomplished the feat of completely outmaneuvering Bragg without a major battle. He next demonstrated across the river from Chattanooga as a diversion while actually sending the bulk of his army to cross the Tennessee River miles to the southwest. He planned to get in behind Bragg and bottle him up in Chattanooga. However, the Confederate general saw through the scheme and slipped away southward, abandoning the city while carefully planting rumors that his army was demoralized and in flight. Rosecrans then resolved to pursue, a decision that would have been wise if Bragg had been retreating in disorder.

There were few passes through the mountains and no good lateral roads. In full pursuit mode, Rosecrans dispersed his army in three columns over a forty-mile front to make use of the various passes. Watching Rosecrans carefully, Bragg stopped his retreat and concentrated his army about September 9 at La Fayette, Georgia, twenty miles south of Chattanooga. As his force was three times as large as any one of the Union columns, Bragg anticipated that he could hit each column in turn and defeat Rosecrans in detail. But his intelligence service failed him: he thought there were two, rather than three, Union columns and prepared plans accordingly. He first planned to strike what he thought was Rosecrans' right (actually Thomas' corps in the center) at McLemore's Cove on September 10. However, his subordinates moved slowly, and

the attacks were made in desultory fashion. By the time Bragg's forces could converge, Thomas had pulled his troops back into safe positions. Bragg next planned to strike at Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden's corps on the Union left flank. Again, poor coordination prevented him from catching the enemy; Crittenden also pulled back behind the safety of Missionary Ridge. Thus, twice in three days Bragg missed a fine opportunity to inflict a serious reverse upon the Federals because of his subordinates' failure to carry out orders.

By September 13 Rosecrans was at last aware that Bragg was not retreating in disorder but was preparing to fight. The Union commander ordered an immediate concentration, but this would take several days and in the meantime his corps were vulnerable. Although Bragg was usually speedy in executing attacks, this time he delayed, awaiting the arrival of Longstreet's corps. He intended to attack the Union left in an attempt to push Rosecrans southward away from Chattanooga into a mountain cul-de-sac where the Federals could be destroyed.

By September 17 Bragg was positioned just east of Chickamauga Creek, a sluggish stream surrounded by dense woods. (*See Map 31.*) When Longstreet's three leading brigades arrived on September 18, Bragg decided to cross the Chickamauga and attack the Federal left. But Rosecrans's forces there, with two corps almost fully concentrated, defended the fords so stoutly that only a few Confederate units got over the creek that day. During the night more Confederates slipped across, and by morning of the nineteenth about three-fourths of Bragg's army was over the creek and poised to attack.

By then, however, Rosecrans' third corps had arrived on the scene and Bragg faced a much stronger force than he had expected. The heavily wooded battlefield had few landmarks, and some units had difficulty maintaining direction. Bragg planned to attack all along the Union line, starting on its left and rippling down the line to the Union right in quick succession from roughly northeast down to the southwest. Over the course of the day, several of Bragg's toughest divisions (Maj. Gens. Alexander P. Stewart's, John Bell Hood's and Patrick R. Cleburne's) attacked and almost broke through the Union line on three separate occasions. Only the hasty movement of Union reserves stemmed the tide in each case.

The fighting was brutal and often hand-to-hand in the dense woods along the choked Chickamauga Creek. It was afterward called a soldier's battle, with little chance for grand strategy or operational deployments

## THE NEW YORK DRAFT RIOTS

On July 13–17, 1863, several thousand rioters, mostly working-class Irish Catholics, smashed and burned government buildings and facilities belonging to the Republican Party to protest a newly implemented federal conscription system. They also attacked some well-to-do citizens on the street because they resented the \$300 dollar commutation clause that allowed a wealthy man to hire a substitute to go in his place. Many rioters also vented their anger against blacks, killing at least a dozen, because they objected to fighting for the freedom of slaves who might then take their jobs by working for lower wages.



Battle of Chickamauga, *James Walker, 1864*

except for the tactical shifting of small units in response to crisis. By the evening of the nineteenth neither side had gained much terrain and the troops lay exhausted in the dense woods. The Union troops labored all night to cut down trees to fortify their positions as the Confederates gathered and reorganized for the next day's attacks.

Bragg, sensing victory but seeking to ensure a coordinated attack on the twentieth, reorganized his army into two wings: the right wing under the command of corps commander Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk and the left wing under the newly arrived General Longstreet. He planned to begin the attack again in the north with Polk attacking at dawn followed by attacks all along the front from northeast to southwest. Longstreet would attack last with three divisions into nearly the center of the Union line.

Confusion started the day on the twentieth; Lt. Gen Daniel H. Hill, now subordinate to Polk, failed to receive any orders to attack as the lead element of Polk's wing. Polk had not been found by a messenger the night before and had no knowledge of the day's plan. Finally, Hill's corps attacked at 9:30. The attack against Thomas' corps was delivered with spirit; and Thomas began requesting, and Rosecrans providing, reinforcements to fight off the rebels. By late morning it seemed as if the line was holding, but even more reinforcements were being readied to move to the aid of the Union left. At that moment, Longstreet attacked with four divisions in column formation against the Union center and right. Moving along a road but under cover of the dense woods, Longstreet's men exploded out of the tree line and attacked the Union positions. Their attack had even more impact since they hit a hole in the Union line created inadvertently by Rosecrans' moving a division out of line because of an erroneous staff report. The combination of a gap in the lines and a powerful Confederate attacking column blew away Union defenses. As the lead Confederate division commander later put it, the attack "cast the shattered fragments to the right and left." The attack penetrated a mile into Union lines, and Rosecrans' right wing and center evaporated. The men fled in panic back toward Chattanooga. General Rosecrans himself was caught up in the rout and fled on horseback with most of his staff to the safety of the city.

The only major Union units left on the field of battle by early afternoon of September 20 were the hard-pressed divisions of Thomas' corps. Adding to these units as they stood their ground were bits and pieces of regiments fleeing from the disaster on the Union right flank. These units and survivors pulled back onto a small piece of high ground called Snodgrass Hill to the rear of Thomas' original defensive position. Arriving at this site in the early afternoon, Thomas saw that only a strong defense would preserve what was left of the army. If the position fell, he stood a good chance of losing the entire army and the city of Chattanooga. He began shifting units from different parts of his hasty defensive line to deal with successive Confederate attacks. When Longstreet brought his divisions on line against him, he must have despaired of holding; but the timely arrival of elements of Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger's reserve corps with fresh troops and more ammunition stemmed the Confederate tide. From then until darkness fell, Longstreet sent attack after attack up the hill against the stubborn federals. But Thomas, who won for himself and the U.S. 19th Infantry the title Rock of Chickamauga, held the line. A Confederate remembered that afternoon how "the dead were piled upon each other in ricks, like cord wood, to make passage for advancing columns." As darkness fell and the exhausted Confederates ceased their attacks, Thomas slowly withdrew his units from Snodgrass Hill and conducted a careful withdrawal back toward Chattanooga. His retreat was in good order, saving almost two-thirds of the Army of the Cumberland from total destruction.

After the draining daylong attacks, Bragg concluded that no further results could be attained that day. Polk, Longstreet, and Forrest pleaded with him to push the defeated Federals and recapture Chattanooga. But 18,000 casualties (the Federals had lost only 1,500 fewer) so unnerved Bragg that he permitted Thomas to withdraw unmolested from the field to a blocking position extending from Missionary Ridge west to Lookout Mountain. The next day Thomas retired into Chattanooga. Polk wrote to President Davis of Bragg's "criminal negligence," and Forrest a week later insubordinately told the army commander, "You have played the part of a damned scoundrel, and are a coward and if you were any part of a man I would slap your jaws." Yet nothing could erase completely the fact that the Confederates had won a great victory and had Rosecrans' army in a trap.

## SNODGRASS HILL

At approximately 11:20 A.M. on September 20, 1863, General Longstreet's corps of Bragg's Army of the Tennessee smashed through a gap in the Federal lines along Chickamauga Creek, Georgia. North of the break, the troops under General Thomas fell back to a natural defensive position provided by Snodgrass Hill and Horseshoe Ridge. By early afternoon the Confederates appeared ready to carry this position, but General Granger, who had marched to the sound of the guns, arrived with reinforcements just in time. Thomas and Granger held the position until nightfall, protecting the retreat of Rosecrans' shattered Army of the Tennessee. That evening Thomas broke contact and withdrew, ending one of the great defensive stands of the Civil War that earned Thomas his nickname: Rock of Chickamauga.



Union Officers on Missionary Ridge, *James Walker, 1864*

### Grant at Chattanooga

Rosecrans' army, having started out offensively, was now shut up in Chattanooga as Bragg took up positions on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge dominating the city. The Union commander accepted investment and thus surrendered his freedom of action. Burnside, at Knoxville, was too far away to render immediate aid. There were no strong Confederate units north of Chattanooga, but Rosecrans' line of communications was cut away. The Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, instead of running directly into the city, reached the Tennessee River at Stevenson, crossed at Bridgeport southwest of Chattanooga, and ran through Confederate territory into town. River steamers could get to within only eight miles of Chattanooga; beyond, the Tennessee River was swift and narrow. Supplies therefore came over the mountains in wagons; but starting September 30, Confederate cavalry under Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, one of Bragg's cavalry commanders, raided as far north as Murfreesboro. Though heavily and effectively opposed in his effort to tear up the railroad, he managed to destroy many precious Union supply wagons. With the mountain roads breaking down under the heavy traffic in wet weather, rations in Chattanooga ran short. Men went hungry, and horses and mules began to die of starvation. Rosecrans prepared to reopen his line of communications by means of an overland route to the west. But this route was dominated by Confederate troops on Raccoon and Lookout Mountains. Additional troops to clear these strong points were required if the Army of the Cumberland was to survive.

Washington finally awoke to the fact that an entire Union army was trapped in Chattanooga and in danger of capture. In a midnight coun-

cil meeting on September 23, the President met with Secretary Stanton, General Halleck, and others to determine what could be done. As General Meade was not active in the east at that time, they decided to detach two corps, or about 20,000 men, from the Army of the Potomac and send them by rail to Tennessee under the command of General Hooker, who had been without active command since his relief in June. The selected forces included ten artillery batteries with over 3,000 mules and horses. The 1,157-mile journey involved four changes of trains, owing to differing gauges and lack of track connections, and eclipsed all other such troop movements by rail up to that time. The troops began to entrain at Manassas Junction and Bealton Station, Virginia, on September 25, and five days later the first trains arrived at Bridgeport, Alabama. Not all the troops made such good time: for the majority of the infantry the trip consumed about nine days. And movement of the artillery, horses, mules, baggage, and impedimenta was somewhat slower. Combined with a waterborne movement of 17,000 men under Sherman from Mississippi, the reinforcement of the besieged Rosecrans was a triumph of skill and planning.

Chickamauga had caused Stanton and his associates to lose confidence in Rosecrans. For some time Lincoln had been dubious about Rosecrans, who, he said, acted "like a duck hit on the head" after Chickamauga; but he did not immediately choose a successor. Finally, about mid-October, he decided to unify command in the west and to vest it in General Grant, who still commanded the Army of the Tennessee. In October Stanton met Grant in Louisville and gave him orders that allowed him some discretion in selecting subordinates. Grant was appointed commander of the Military Division of the Mississippi, which embraced the Departments and Armies of the Ohio, the Cumberland, and the Tennessee and included the vast area from the Alleghenies to the Mississippi River north of Banks' Department of the Gulf. Thomas replaced Rosecrans as Commander of the Army of the Cumberland, and Sherman was appointed to command Grant's old Army of the Tennessee.

Now that Hooker had arrived, the line of communications, or the "cracker line" to the troops, could be opened. Rosecrans had actually shaped the plan, and all he needed was combat troops to execute it. On October 26 Hooker crossed the Tennessee at Bridgeport and attacked eastward. Within two days he had taken the spurs of the mountains, other Union troops had captured two important river crossings, and the supply line was open once more. Men, equipment, and food moved via riverboat and wagon road, bypassing Confederate strong points, to reinforce the besieged Army of the Cumberland.

In early November Bragg weakened his besieging army by sending Longstreet's force against Burnside at Knoxville. This move reduced Confederate strength to about 40,000 about the same time Sherman arrived with two army corps from Memphis. The troops immediately at hand under Grant (Thomas' Army of the Cumberland, two corps of Sherman's Army of the Tennessee, and two corps under Hooker from the Army of the Potomac) now numbered about 60,000. Grant characteristically decided to resume the offensive with his entire force.

The Confederates had held their dominant position for so long that they seemed to look on all of the Federals in Chattanooga as their

ultimate prisoners. One day in November Grant went out to inspect the Union lines and reached a point where Union and Confederate picket posts were not far apart. Not only did his own troops turn out the guard, but a smart set of Confederates came swarming out, formed a neat military rank, snapped to attention, and presented arms. Grant returned the salute and rode away. But plans were already afoot to divest the Confederates of some of their cockiness.

Grant planned to hit the ends of the Confederate line at once. Hooker would strike at Lookout Mountain; Sherman, moving his army upstream across the river from Chattanooga and crossing over by pontoons, would hit the northern end of Missionary Ridge. While they were breaking the Confederate flanks, Thomas' men could make limited, holding attacks on the center. The Army of the Cumberland's soldiers, already nursing a bruised ego for the rout at Chickamauga, realized that in the eyes of the commanding general they were second-class troops.

Hooker took Lookout Mountain on November 24 after a short struggle known as the Battle above the Clouds because of the height of the mountain and the mist that enshrouded it. On the same day Sherman crossed the Tennessee at the mouth of Chickamauga Creek and gained positions on the north end of Missionary Ridge. The next day his attacks bogged down as he attempted to drive south along the ridge. To help Sherman, Grant directed the Army of the Cumberland to take the rifle pits at the foot of the west slope of Missionary Ridge. These rifle pits were the first of three lines of Confederate trenches. Thomas' troops rushed forward and seized the pits. Then, having a score to settle with the Confederates positioned above them, the troops kept going up the hill despite attempts by their officers to stop them. Coming under fire from the pits above and in front of them, the Federals inexorably swept up the hill. One of the charging Union soldiers, Lt. Arthur MacArthur, father of Douglas MacArthur, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism.

When Grant observed this movement, he muttered that someone was going to sweat for it if the charge ended in disaster. But Thomas' troops drove all the way to the top, some shouting "Chickamauga, Chickamauga"; in the afternoon Hooker swept the southern end of the ridge. The Federals then had the unusual experience of seeing a Confederate army disintegrate into precipitate retreat, throwing their blankets, knapsacks, and even weapons away as they ran. The surprised bluecoats beckoned to their comrades: "My God! Come and see them run!" Bragg personally mounted his horse and tried to stem the rout, but to no avail. Grant pursued Bragg's army the next day, but one Confederate division skillfully halted the pursuit while Bragg retired into Georgia to regroup.

The battles around Chattanooga and the subsequent campaign in eastern Tennessee ended in one of the most complete Union victories of the war. Bragg's army was defeated, men and materiel captured, and the Confederates driven south. The mountainous defense line that the Confederates had hoped to hold had been pierced; the rail center of Chattanooga was permanently in Union hands; and the rich, food-producing eastern Tennessee section was lost to the Confederacy. Relief had come at last for the Union sympathizers in eastern Tennessee. With

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Chattanooga secured as a base, the way was open for an invasion of the lower South.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What strategic challenges and choices did the North and South face in the opening days of 1863? What did each side choose to do with their opportunities and dangers?
2. Compare Hooker's plan to attack the Army of Northern Virginia with Rosecrans's plan to seize Chattanooga. Why did one fail and the other succeed?
3. Compare Lee's second invasion of the North with his first. What are the similarities and differences in rationale, plans, and outcomes?
4. It is nearly midnight, July 1, 1863, at Gettysburg. Choose the role of Lee or Meade, devise a plan for the next day, and describe the steps you would need to follow to implement that plan.
5. What opportunities were available to Bragg after the battle of Chickamauga? What possibilities were left in November 1863? What would you have done?
6. Did the Confederacy stand any chance of independence by the end of 1863? To what degree would a negotiated settlement have been the best course of action for President Davis?

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