

# **The US Army in the Civil War**



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The US Army in the Civil War tells how the Federal forces fought to preserve the

Union and seeks to avoid the political aspects and focus instead on the military actions and the soldiers who fought the war.

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## **Fort Sumter**

War by its very definition is violent and bloody, and history has shown us that civil wars compound these elements. I'm not going into the causes that started the war, I'm just going to write about the men involved, and the battles they

fought. The causes were complex, but the outcome was decisive, and set the direction of the future for America. Three million Americans fought in this war that raged for four bloody years.

For years the rivalry between the northern and southern states festered until it came to a head in 1860, when South Carolina seceded from the Union. Slavery and economics were the main bones of contention. South Carolina announced its secession on the 20th of December, stating that it would become official on the 24th. The rest of the southern states seceded in 1861 in the following order: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas,

Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The war began before the last four seceded.

Missouri did not secede, but some secessionists adopted a resolution of secession and the Confederate Congress seated these men as representatives from that state. Kentucky also did not secede, but a part of the state that was under Confederate Army control sent delegates to the Congress.

Sumter was a pentagon shaped fort in the middle of Charleston harbor. Its importance was more symbolic than anything else. It was one of the few Federal Forts in the territory now held by the seven seceded states. The others

being Fort Pickens in Pensacola Harbor, and two minor forts further down in the Florida Keys. There were actually two Federal forts in Charleston Harbor. The other being Fort Moultrie adjacent to the mainland. Major Robert Anderson, seeing that Moultrie would be impossible to defend, decided to move its troops out into the stronger Fort Sumter. Anderson was a career soldier (36 years in the army) and a Kentuckian married to a Georgia woman. Despite these ties to the South, he was staunchly loyal to the Union. He thought he was defusing a volatile situation by removing the troops away from the South Carolina Militia, but it had the reverse effect. The Southerners saw this as a repudiation of

President Buchanan's pledge to leave Charleston Harbor alone; To keep it's status Quo. The North considered Anderson a hero for this move.

The Federal government decided to reinforce Sumter with 200 more men. They sent them into the harbor, January 9th, 1861, on a civilian ship, "*Star of the West*", so as not to look too warlike. The stratagem didn't work. The South Carolina batteries circling the harbor opened fire on the ship and it sailed away. Anderson had the guns of the fort remain silent so as not to start a war. The next three months were tense, but no open hostilities erupted between the forces. In this period of time Jefferson

Davis was elected president of the Confederate States of America (seven states at this time). Davis appointed General Pierre Beauregard to command all the forces besieging Fort Sumter. All Federal property in these seven states were taken over by the Confederacy.

Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4th 1861, and one of his first duties was to find a solution to the Fort Sumter problem. He knew Anderson only had about six weeks of food left. Lincoln's solution was a good one. He didn't want to be the one to start the war. He announced to the Governor of South Carolina that the Union was going to send ships to Sumter with food, and food

only. If they would decide to send troops they would not send them without informing South Carolina beforehand. This way the onus was on the South whether to open fire or not. This message was delivered to Governor Pickens of South Carolina on the 6th of April. The Carolinians discussed what to do and decided to start the hostilities before the ships arrived.

At 4:30 on the morning of April 12th, 1861 the batteries surrounding the harbor opened fire on Fort Sumter. The bombardment lasted 33 hours with the Confederates firing 4,000 rounds and the fort answering with 1,000, before Anderson surrendered the fort, knowing

the situation was hopeless. There were no deaths from the bombardment, but as the Union troops fired a last volley (actually a fifty gun salute to the colors before they were lowered) a keg of powder was ignited by a spark and the explosion killed Private Daniel Hough, the first American to be killed in the war. Anderson and the remaining troops were allowed to go north on a Federal ship that had wisely stayed out of firing range during the battle.

This attack on the fort enraged the people of the North in the same way the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would enrage the whole American people 80 years later. On the 15th of April, Lincoln

called for volunteers to suppress the "insurrection" and Northerners flocked to the colors. Southern males did the same as the last four southern states seceded.

There was going to be Hell to pay, and these South Carolinians, who were so eager to start the war, would wind up paying a fair share of it.

## **Bull Run**

Now that the war had begun, the people of the North thought it would be over very quickly. They expected one big battle between the Confederate and Union Armies that would settle the

matter. They of course were confident the North would win, just as the South was confident they would win. When the Confederates made Richmond, Virginia their capitol, most people assumed this first and last battle would be in the area between the two capitols. (They're about 100 miles apart)

The Federals marched out of Washington and occupied the high ground around Arlington, Virginia, and also occupied the city of Alexandria, and started on fortifications immediately. This would give some breathing room for the capitol, for they were expecting the Rebel armies to march on Washington.

General Winfield Scott, the hero of the

Mexican War, was in over-all command of the Federal troops, but General Irvin McDowell was in charge of these troops in the field. Scott was obese, and elderly, and wasn't in any physical condition to lead an army in the field.

General Beauregard, of Fort Sumter fame, was commanding the rebel troops in the area. Battles in this war usually had two names, one given by the North and one given by the South. The North usually named battles after the nearest body of water, and the South named them after the nearest town.

McDowell wanted to train this army. It was extremely green. He knew

patriotism could get a man into a uniform, but it couldn't get him to stand and face bullets or bayonets coming his way without proper training. They were not to get this training. The cry on the lips of every politician in Washington was, "on to Richmond", and he was ordered to start the army southward by the end of July. So, orders being orders, he started the army toward the Confederates at Manassas Junction on the 16th of July, 1861.

The going was extremely slow, and Beauregard had time to fall back and fortify the area around Bull Run. Run is an old English word for stream or creek. He also picked up some more troops

while McDowell's army was crawling southward. McDowell sent General Robert Paterson, with part of the army to Harpers Ferry, in western Virginia, to confront the southern troops there under General Joe Johnston. Harpers Ferry had been taken over by the rebels when Virginia seceded. He was ordered to keep Johnston from joining Beauregard. McDowell figured he'd have a good chance at beating Beauregard then, even with a green army, since he outnumbered the rebels almost two to one.

The Union troops reached Fairfax the next day, and McDowell halted them while he figured out a route that would enable him to flank the Confederates.

While they halted, he sent General Tyler on with a large unit to take Centerville, but Tyler ran into Confederate troops and was halted after a short battle.

McDowell came on then with the balance of the army and they occupied Centerville. Two more days were wasted while McDowell tried to come up with a new plan, and the army sat there. This delay proved to be disastrous for the Union. It gave Beauregard time to get reinforcements. By a series of maneuvers and ruses, Joe Johnston broke away from Paterson's army and marched to Beauregard's aid. His lead Brigade was led by Brigadier Thomas Jackson, (later to be nicknamed "Stonewall") and they arrived at Bull Run on the 19th. a

full day ahead of Johnston's other Brigades.

Beauregard deployed his troops along a six mile front on the south bank of Bull Run. There were a lot of fording places available for the attackers though. McDowell started his advance on the 21st and attacked the Confederates on Matthews Hill, near Sudley Springs Ford. The hill was defended by troops under Colonel Nathan Evans, and some elements of the newly arrived brigades from Harpers ferry. The Federals attacked and pushed the rebels from their positions. The Union troops fought well, but weren't seasoned or disciplined enough to pursue the retreating rebels.

The shattered units of the Confederates retreated to a piece of high ground called Henry House Hill. Here they joined up with Thomas Jackson's Brigade, that was standing patiently on the hill awaiting whatever came along. It was here that Jackson earned his nickname. General Bernard Bee, commanding one of the retreating Brigades looked at the waiting troops and stated, "there is Jackson standing like a stone wall." There are some who think Bee meant this as a compliment to Jackson's patience and strict obedience to orders, and his steadfastness in the face of chaos. Others think Bee was being sarcastic and was annoyed that Jackson didn't leave the hill and help the

retreating Brigades. Jackson's men, though, were proud of the name. Either way, the Union troops now faced a united front, and the battle was joined.

McDowell wasn't aware that Johnston's army had arrived, and attacked as if he was much stronger than the Confederates. The right side of his line started to crumble before the pressure of a Confederate counter attack.

At the precise moment of this falling back of the Union right, the Rebels attacked in force all along the line, and a general retreat of Union forces began. Since the men were so inexperienced and un-disciplined, the retreat soon turned into a rout. The Confederates

followed the retreat as far as Centerville but went no further. They were also green, and a good opportunity to deliver a major blow to the Union was lost. The Union Army made it back to Washington beaten and demoralized, but at least it was still an army.

Casualties weren't as bad as one would expect though. The Union forces lost 2,896 killed, wounded and missing. Also a great amount of arms and material were left behind. The Confederate Army lost 1,982 killed and wounded.

Beauregard got all the credit in the South for this victory, even though it was really won by the actions of Joe

Johnston. McDowell took the full share of the blame for the Union defeat, even though his Field Officers made a lot of the mistakes. The common soldier on both sides fought well considering their inexperience. The Union soldiers were really beaten by the superior tactics of the Confederate leaders. In any case, the soldiers now knew that it would not be a short war.

## **War in the West**

Immediately following the defeat at Bull Run, Lincoln put Major General George McClellan in command of the army protecting Washington. It was named the Army of the Potomac. McClellan was

eventually to be put in command of all federal armies. Both these appointments would be a mistake. While McClellan was starting a training regimen for the army, Lincoln also set legislation for the enlistment of one million men. He also had the foresight to see the war would have to be fought further west also, notably in Missouri and other border areas border areas. Missouri was important due to the westward trails emanating from it, and the three rivers that ran through it; the Mississippi, Missouri, and the Ohio.

A strong rebel force under Ben Mccullough was already operating in the state. He had 13,000 troops under him

camped where the main road from Springfield crossed a large stream called Wilson's Creek. The Union forces at Springfield, under the command of General Nathaniel Lyon were in poor shape material wise and were 90 day enlistees that were coming to the end of their enlistment. Lyon requested aid from John Fremont, the commander of the area and was rebuffed. He had only one choice then,if he was going to save the area for the Union, and that was to attack while he still had the capabilities.

On August 10th, 1861, leaving part of his forces to guard Springfield and his supplies, he launched a two pronged attack against the Confederates at

Wilson's Creek. He led one column and a General Franz Siegel led the other. Lyon's force hit the rebels on a hill they aptly named "Bloody Hill" and drove them off. But upon reaching the summit, they were subjected to a heavy artillery barrage and the attack bogged down.

Siegel's men were about two miles to the south, to block any Confederate aid from reaching Bloody Hill. McCulloch sent three regiments against Siegel. Siegel's force was defeated and routed when they mistakenly let the Confederates approach them thinking they were Federal troops. When the rebels let loose a surprise volley at close range, the devastation was too much for the

new enlistees to overcome and they fled.

The Confederates then turned their full attention to Lyon and his men at Bloody Hill. The Union troops repelled three all out attacks and held the hill. General Lyon was killed, the first General to be killed in the war. At 11 AM, the battle, which started at 7:30 AM, ended when the Confederates pulled away. The exhausted Federals, almost out of ammunition, also left the hill, and after picking up their men and supplies at Springfield, retreated to the railhead at Rolla, Missouri. This first battle of the West cost the Union 1,317 casualties and the South, 1,222 in just over three hours of fighting. The Federal government,

realizing the importance of this state, sent troops in and effectively kept it in the Union, even though the Governor set up what he called the Confederate government at Neosha.

Meanwhile McClellan still trained his army and made no substantial move against the South. The troops, demoralized after Bull Run, took to this constant drilling and started looking like soldiers. The question was though, when would McClellan give them the chance to see if they could fight like soldiers?

## **Grant Fights**

After the new year, two forts in the West

got the attention of the Federals. Both were on rivers in Tennessee. Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Donelson on the Cumberland. General Ulysses Grant was ordered by General Halleck (he had replaced Fremont) to take both of these forts. On February 6th, Grant attacked Henry with infantry and gunboats. The gunboats reduced the fort to rubble before the infantry even attacked and Grant immediately marched on Donelson. This proved to be a harder nut to crack. But even so, after three days of bombardment it too surrendered. It was this victory that made Grant famous, and he became a hero to the people of the North. It wasn't so much the Confederates he captured (15,000) but

for the note he sent the Confederate commander demanding his surrender, and that there'd be "no terms except an immediate and unconditional surrender." He became known as Unconditional Surrender Grant from then on.



Grant wanted his army to continue on and hit the Confederates again and moved them to Pittsburgh landing. Here he was forced to stop and await the troops of General Halleck. It was a this

point that the Confederates decided it would be best for them to hit Grant before he was re-inforced. They started to move their force toward Grant's men that were now camped at a place near Pittsburgh Landing called Shiloh Church.

Most of the attention in those days, like it is today, was given to the armies fighting around the east, but it was in these battles in the west where the first seeds were sown that would grow into a Union victory.

## **Shiloh**

After Grant took Forts Henry and Donelson, General Albert Sidney

Johnston took his Confederate Army of the Mississippi out of Tennessee to Corinth Mississippi. Grant was of a mind to follow the rebels and force another punishing engagement on them, but was forced to hold up and wait at Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River and wait for Generals Halleck and Buell. Neither of these generals were the aggressive fighter that Grant was. Don Carlos Buell headed the Army of the Ohio and Grant had to cool his heels until they joined up so he could hit the Confederates with a superior force.

The Confederates knew that Grant was getting reinforcements and decided to hit him before they arrived. General

Beauregard was 2nd in command now of the Army of the Mississippi, and he planned the attack. Most of Grant's forces were encamped at a place called Shiloh Church, (a Methodist church) and it was here that the confederates struck on the 6th of April, 1862. The attack was initially successful due to one of the few mistakes Grant made in this war. He neglected to put out pickets and patrols, due to the fact he assumed that Johnston would go into defensive positions at Corinth and await Grant's attack. This enabled three brigades of the enemy to get within a mile of his camps and launch a surprise attack.

The Union divisions of Prentiss and

Sherman were smashed into by the brigades and pushed back with heavy losses. Much to their credit though, they didn't panic, but had a fighting withdrawal. Twice they made stands, only to be overrun and pushed back again. Grant gave orders that there'd be no more retreating and they finally formed a line with the Tennessee on their left and a stream called Owl Creek on their right. The center of this line earned the name "the Hornets Nest" due to the amount of artillery and rifle fire pouring through it. It was defended by the survivors of Prentiss' Division and two Brigades of Wallace's 2nd Division. (about 6,000 men) This line was held from 10:00 AM until 5:30 PM during

which time the Confederates launched eleven attacks that were repelled. The Confederate artillery kept up a steady bombardment the whole time.

General Beauregard took over the Command of the southern troops when General Johnston was killed in a flanking attempt through a peach orchard on the left of the hornets nest. The troops at the Hornets Nest had to give way at 5:30 PM when they were flanked and in danger of being surrounded. The Hornets Nest was overrun by the rebels. Wallace was killed and Prentiss and 2,100 men were captured.

Now Grant made one final line. It had water on either end (the Dill and the

Tilghman Branches) and it was centered on the Corinth Road. Grant massed his artillery on both sides. This was protecting Pittsburgh landing where Buell was finally arriving, and the Hamburg/Savannah Road, up which more Union troops were marching. It was a formidable line, but the gallant Rebels attacked, even after thirteen hours of combat. They had some small success at first, but were driven off with severe losses.

Darkness finally fell and both armies rested. The Federals had been pushed back three miles. Of Grant's five divisions, one no longer existed, and the other four were badly mauled. He also

lost supplies and ammunition in the retreat, but he had something that the Confederates didn't have; he had fresh troops on the way.

The next day, the 7th, Grant moved on the Confederates and kept the pressure on as they made a fighting withdrawal. In the afternoon the Rebels made a counter attack that failed, and they then retreated to Corinth, Mississippi. Grant started getting men and supplies at the river landings at Hamburg and Pittsburgh Landing, and was readying a campaign against Corinth. The city was doomed and the Confederates knew it. It was abandoned by the Confederates at the end of May. This also doomed Memphis,

with its boat yards and industries. The Union now also gained the iron producing areas of Tennessee.

Shiloh now became the largest battle ever fought in America at this point in time. The Union had 13,047 casualties and the Confederates 11,694 in two days of fighting.

A month before Shiloh, the South suffered another setback at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, when Union forces under General Samuel Curtis defeated Confederate forces under General Earl Van Dorn on March 7th and 8th. This battle, little noted among historians, was a decisive one that put an end to any Confederate ideas about taking

Missouri. The Union losses were 1,384 men, and the South lost 1,500 men. It's worth noting that 800 men from the Cherokee Indian Tribe fought with the South in this battle. There were also losses on the rivers by the South. An Island stronghold called #10 was leveled by cannons and the Confederate river fleet was destroyed in Memphis Bay by Union gunboats.

Now the stage was set for a complete defeat for the Confederacy in the West. But, in the east it was a horse of a different color.

## **Shenandoah Campaign**

The Spring of 1862 gave the world the start of the most romanticized and most written about campaign of the war. It was also the start of two Southern military legends. This was the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia Campaign; and the two men were Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.

The valley, between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains, ran southwest to northeast through Virginia. It was a natural invasion route that pointed at both Capitols. Add to this the fact that the fertile soil was capable of sustaining armies in food and you can see the importance of the valley.

Lincoln had replaced the aged Winfield Scott with McClellan as Commander of all armies of the Union. McClellan also kept command of the Army of the Potomac. It was with this army that Lincoln wanted him to proceed down the Shenandoah and engage the Confederates and perhaps bring the war to a conclusion. McClellan kept putting it off.

Finally McClellan started the army south, but not overland. He put the army on ships and sailed down river to near Yorktown. His plan was to hit Richmond from the rear. The Government was worried that the Rebels would advance on Washington if all the Union troops were south of Richmond, so they took

some troops away from McClellan and kept them at the north end of the valley. Before he left, Lincoln showed his displeasure at what seemed a reluctance to do battle, and relieved him of the overall command of the Union armies.

On the fourth of April, McClellan marched the army against Yorktown, but cancelled the attack at the last moment, due to his false impression that he was greatly outnumbered. The Confederate General Magruder had continuously maneuvered his troops back and forth, giving the impression of more troops than he actually had. In the meantime, Joe Johnston put his army behind Yorktown to block any advance to

Richmond. McClellan waited a whole month before he got the courage to attack and when he did the rebels had already left.

Now the Army of the Potomac turned its attention to Williamsburg. The battle was engaged and it pitted old comrades from the Mexican war against each other. The Division Commanders defending the town for the Confederacy were Generals James Longstreet and D.H. Hill. The Union division commanders were Generals Joe Hooker, Phil Kearny, and Winfield Scott Hancock. They had all befriended each other in the rigors of that last war. The Union army carried the day, forcing the

Confederates to abandon the city after two days of savage fighting. But strategically, it was a victory of sorts for the South, because the battle gave Joe Johnston time to pull his army back to Richmond. McClellan wasted another month in front of the Southern Capitol without attacking. This was due in part to bad information from his intelligence Chief, Alan Pinkerton, and in part to his natural over caution.

## **Stonewall's "Foot Cavalry"**

When the Army of the Potomac had set sail down the York Peninsula, Stonewall Jackson saw to it that the Union wouldn't send any more troops South by becoming

active in the northern end of the Shenandoah. On March 23rd. he hit an army commanded by General Banks at Kernstown, just south of Winchester. He was beaten off with losses but it so upset Washington that they flooded the northern part of the valley with troops. They kept as many troops as they had there to block any move against the Capitol. This is just what Jackson wanted.

Near the end of April, leaving a division under General Ewell in front of Banks' line, Jackson took off with the rest of his command. The Federals assumed he was heading for Richmond. To their surprise, he showed up at the town of McDowell

on May 8th over the mountains near Staunton, Virginia and attacked the federals there. He suffered twice the casualties the North did, but he was victorious. Jackson no longer had to worry about this flank. He then recrossed the mountains and on May 23rd, he overran the Union unit at Front Royal, Virginia. Two days later he made an all out attack on Banks' main Army at Winchester and thoroughly beat them. The Federals retreated in disorder. This rapid marching earned his men the name "Jackson's Foot Cavalry."

There were two more immediate battles. The Union forces tried to take Jackson at Port Republic and Ewell at Cross Keys,

and were beaten at both places. For the time being the Shenandoah was kept out of Union hands and Richmond was saved from any attack from the north. Stonewall did this with 16,000 men as opposed to 64,000 Union troops. He suffered 2,500 casualties and inflicted 7,000 on the Federals. He then headed south to help Joe Johnston in the defense of their Capitol. There was one more Southern Hero waiting in the wings down there, Robert E. Lee.

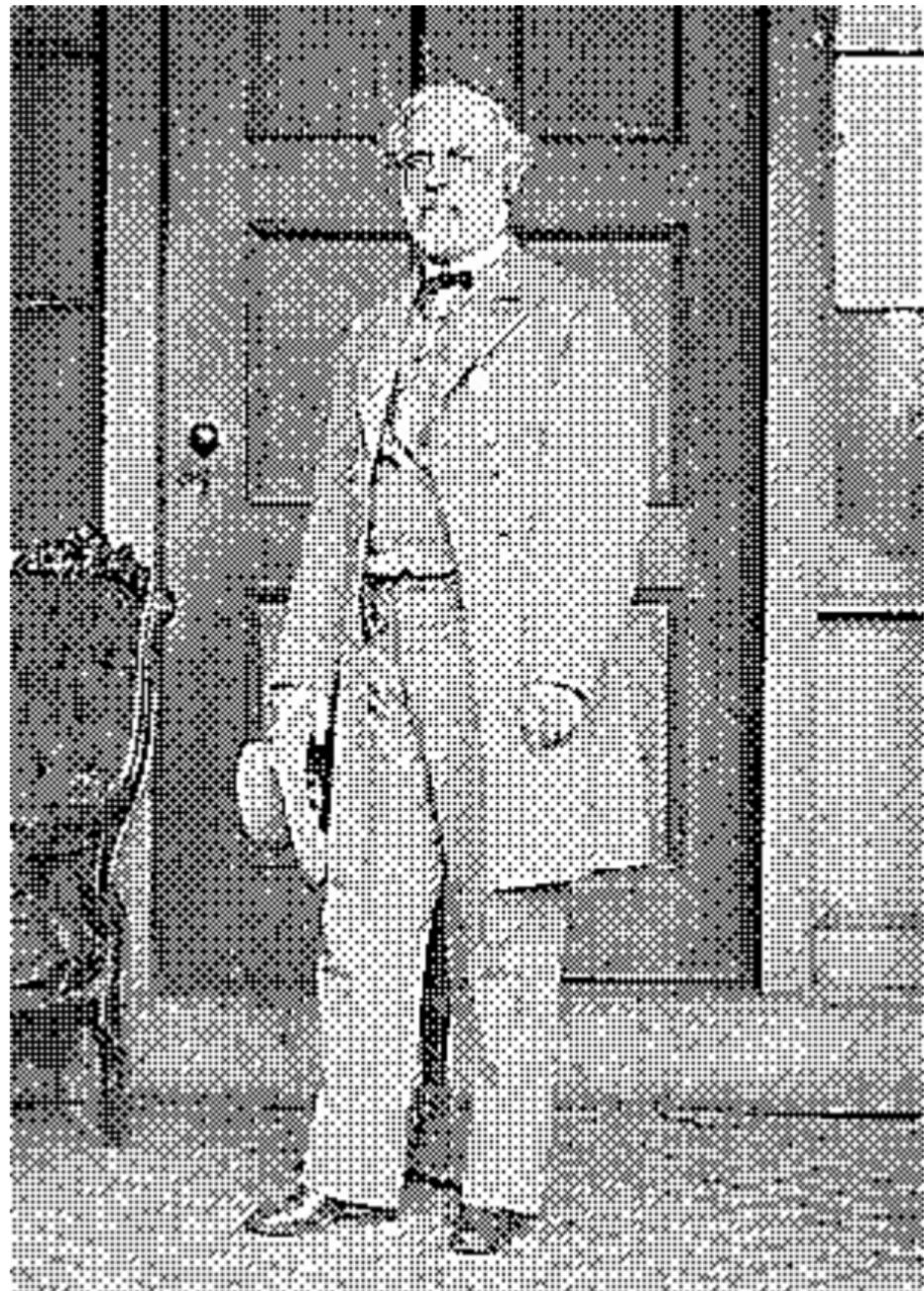
## **Lee Takes Command**

After wreaking havoc on the Federals in the Shenandoah, Stonewall Jackson slipped away and headed for Richmond.

The Federals weren't aware of this, and kept the bulk of their troops in the northern end of the valley, thinking he was still a threat to Washington.

At the end of May, McClellan, who could have used the troops kept further north, clashed with the rebels at a place called Fair Oaks. The battle lasted two days and wasn't decisive in either side's favor. It did change the war though. Joe Johnston was wounded severely (his 7th & 8th wound) and would be laid up for some months. Jefferson Davis appointed his Military Aide as his replacement. This was General Robert E. Lee, and he was never to go back to being an aide. He was put in command of what was to

be called the Army of Northern Virginia.  
It was to become the most famous of the  
Confederate Armies and he was to  
become it's most famous soldier.



At the end of June, Lee roared out of Richmond and hit McClellan hard on the banks of the Chickahominy River. For the next seven days he kept hitting and punishing the Federals hard. The Federals finally were pushed up against the James River pretty well beaten ragged. They had been mauled by the Army of Northern Virginia in places like Mechanicsville, Gaines Mills, Savage's Station, Frayser's Farm, and in many other smaller skirmishes. Now they were desperately hanging on at Harrison's Landing on the James. They were under the protection of Union gunboats on the river and massed artillery on a height in front of their ragged lines called Malvern Hill.

Lee and Longstreet wanted to hit the Federals one more time, and perhaps put this army out of the war for once and for all. General D.H. Hill advised against it. Lee, of the mind that the Federals were thoroughly demoralized, ignored this advice of Hill's and ordered his army to attack. It was a disastrous decision. Lee might have been right about the morale and fighting ability of the infantry divisions, but miscalculated on the Union Artillery. The Southern boys were cut down by a continuous barrage as they moved forward. The field in front of Malvern Hill was littered with 5,500 dead and wounded. A general who later surveyed the scene, stated that it wasn't war it was murder. Lee pulled the

survivors back.

This "Seven Days Battle" which started on the 25th of June, at Mechanicsville, and ended on the 1st of July at Malvern Hill, cost the Union 16,000 casualties, and the South, 20,000. Even so, it was McClellan that decided to break off contact and withdraw. His generals were furious, especially one-armed Phil Kearney, who accused the Commander of treason.

In the meantime, Lincoln was making more moves. He appointed Henry Halleck as General in Chief of all United States armies. He also formed a new army to operate in the Shenandoah. It was called the "Army of Virginia",

and was put under the command of General John Pope. His orders were to protect Washington from attack, and at the same time disrupt the supply lines of the Confederates in the Valley.

When Halleck was appointed his first order of business was to head south into Virginia and find out what was holding McClellan from attacking. McClellan gave him the same story about the large amount of rebel troops facing him. Halleck decided that if this overly cautious General wouldn't attack he might as well return the Army of the Potomac to the Washington area, and ordered McClellan to do so. Thus ended McClellan's grand scheme to become the

hero of the nation by taking the Confederate capitol. It ended in humiliating defeat. Even in this, McClellan dragged his feet. Before he could bring his bedraggled army North, Lee and Jackson would make a move against Pope and the Army of Virginia. It would be a while yet before it was discovered that the Union troops could fight, that all they needed was competent leaders.

## **Second Battle of Bull Run**

By mid-summer, with the threat to Richmond just about eliminated, Lee decided to take the war to northern Virginia. He got wind of the new Army

of Virginia, commanded by General John Pope, and ordered Jackson to proceed north with three divisions and "suppress" this new enemy. Lee would follow with the balance of the army once McClellan's forces finally left.

Jackson arrived in northern Virginia and camped near Orange Courthouse, across the Rapidan River from the federal forces. He bided his time and then saw an opportunity to attack a Union force of 12,000 men near Culpepper Courthouse. He had 22,000 men and wanted to strike before Pope reinforced this unit. He crossed the Rapidan, but bad weather, poor roads, and bad communications delayed the Confederates, and it took a

full day before they were able to attack on the 9th of August. It was the lead Brigade under General Jubal Early that made the initial contact with the federals at Cedar Mountain, near Culpepper, Virginia.

It started with artillery from both sides duelling. The Union troops under General Crawford then attacked and hit the rebels at a weak spot in the line and started rolling over regiment after regiment. The Confederates started to retreat in confusion, until Stonewall Jackson appeared in the midst of all this chaos waving his sword in one hand and a battle flag in the other. The sight of their almost legendary leader calmed the

retreating troops down and they started to make a stand. They held on until more troops arrived and pushed the Union forces from the field. The Federals lost 2,500 men and the Confederates lost 1,400. But considering that the federals were outnumbered almost two to one, they fought gallantly. After this costly victory, Jackson recrossed to the south side of the Rapidan, and waited for Lee.

## **2nd Battle of Bull Run**

Lee arrived in early August, and for two weeks skirmished with Pope off and on along the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers. Pope was the bombastic type, always boasting of what he would do to

the enemy. But that's what it was empty boasting. Today they'd say, "he talks the talk, but doesn't walk the walk."

On August 25th, Jackson made his move. He flanked Pope, and marched his men 54 miles in 34 hours, and hit the Union supply depot at Manassass Junction. What he couldn't carry off, he burned, and was gone by the time Pope arrived. What Pope didn't know though, was that Jackson was dug in only 5 miles away at the old Bull Run battlefield. He knew Lee was coming and waited for him there. He knew Pope was coming too, and also waited for him.

On the evening of the 28th of August, the Yanks came down the road in the form

of a Brigade of Indiana and Wisconsin men. This Brigade was to later earn the name "The Iron Brigade." They marched right into Jackson's ambush, and were hit by artillery. Not panicking, they took to the fields, formed battle lines, and advanced on the Rebels. They marched straight to the Rebels and for two hours both sides fired at each other almost from point blank range. When darkness put an end to the battle, both sides had lost a third of their men.

The next morning the Yanks opened the attack. Pope was sure he had Jackson just where he wanted him. But, instead of hitting the Confederates with a massive attack, pope entered the battle

piecemeal. Four times he hit the rebel lines with small groups, and when they broke the line, he didn't follow it up with reserves. So each time the Federals were pushed back again with needless losses. Pope called off the attacks, fell back a ways, and regrouped. He planned to resume the attack in the morning. But, during the night the rest of the Confederates under Lee and Longstreet arrived.

These new troops were positioned around Pope's exposed left flank. In the morning Pope sent 2,000 men against a spot in the Rebel line called the "Deep cut." With the new Confederates now in position, the Yanks were cut down in

droves as they crossed the open field. The Federals tried to cut away from the battle now, but Lee kept the pressure on.

The yanks made a desperate stand on a ridge but were forced back to a final line at Henry Hill. This was the hill upon which the final fighting of the first battle of Bull Run was fought. Longstreet attacked the hill and inflicted heavy losses before darkness put an end to the bloodletting. The Union troops retreated under the cover of darkness, and were pursued by the Confederates the next morning. On the 1st of September they fought again at Chantilly, Virginia in a violent thunderstorm. It was at this battle that valiant Phil Kearny was shot and

killed. The federals retreated again, and this time Lee let them go. The Union army was thoroughly beaten and demoralized as they made their way toward Washington. One thing did perk them up though. Rumors started to spread through the ranks that General McClellan was coming back. When all of a sudden, he appeared riding down the ranks the troops cheered wildly. Even though they never won under him, for some reason they adored "Little Mac" as they referred to him. Lincoln had him relieve Pope because he knew there was no one better at organizing and training an army, and Lord knows this army needed organizing and training. The matter of making him fight could be

handled later. Pope was reassigned out west to subdue the Indians.

The 2nd battle of Bull Run cost the Union 9,000 casualties and the South, 8,000. The Union also lost about 4,000 men as prisoners. Lee now decided to take the war to northern territory and perhaps fight one last major battle, that if won, would insure the South independence. This plan would lead to a fight in which more Americans were killed than anytime in our history, up to and including today.

## **Lee Invades the North**

After the 2nd Battle of Bull Run, Lee

decided to invade the North through Maryland. It was his hope to force a major battle on Northern territory and by beating the Union Army, earn complete independence for the Confederate states. There was a hitch to these plans, though. The Union garrison at Harper's ferry was a threat to his lines of supply and communication. He again split his forces and sent Jackson with three divisions to eliminate this threat.

Harper's Ferry was defended by 14,000 troops under the command of Colonel Dixon Miles. His command was mostly raw recruits, most having only three weeks time in the army. Even so, his orders were to hold the post "to the last

extremity," and he planned to do so. He split his garrison between two heights, called Maryland and Boliver Heights. It was a mistake because when Jackson's divisions hit Maryland Heights, on the 13th of September, they took it in six hours. The troops on Boliver Heights put up a better defence. They withstood a fierce artillery attack on the 14th, that lasted all day, and were still in control of the hill when darkness halted the fighting. It was during the lull this night, that Jackson received word from Lee to step up the attack. If Harpers ferry wasn't taken right away, the Maryland invasion would have to be called off. It seems the Union Army surprised Lee by advancing toward him, and he needed

Jackson's divisions. The next day, the 15th, Jackson ordered an all out assault. He hit the Heights with everything he had, and Miles was forced to surrender. It was the largest surrender of Union troops in the war; 12,500 men. There were also 200 men killed and much military supplies lost to the Confederates. Lee's lines of supply and communications were now secure and he could have Jackson rejoin him, and proceed with the invasion of Maryland.

## **Antietam**

Through a freak happenstance McClellan came into a copy of Lee's operational orders concerning the invasion of

Maryland while Jackson's forces were still at Harper's Ferry.<sup>1</sup> A Confederate courier had lost them and two Union soldiers found them and turned them into their superiors. Now was McClellan's time to move swiftly and hit Lee before the divisions with Jackson arrived.

McClellan moved, but with his characteristic caution. He went through a gap in the mountains, and Lee went into defensive positions at Sharpsburg on Antietam Creek in Maryland. Even though he was out numbered, Lee still thought he could beat McClellan. Lee did have the perfect ground for a defensive battle. He was on high ground with the creek before him. McClellan massed his troops, artillery and infantry,

75,000 strong, on the west side of the creek.

The battle started on the 17th of September when General Joe Hooker's 1st Corps hit the Confederate left side of the line. This area was defended by Jackson's newly arrived divisions. Hooker's objective was the Southern artillery based in front of the "Dunkers" Church. For four hours both sides charged and counter charged in this area, which included a 30 acre corn field, without either one gaining the upper hand. It was pure savagery though, 13,000 men were killed or wounded between the two adversaries in that span of time.

Mid way through the morning Lee almost lost the battle by accident. His line was hit in the middle by a massive Union attack along a road that was called the Sunken Road, but became known to the troops as "Bloody lane." The Union troops attacked and wrong orders were given to the Rebels causing them to retreat. McClellan didn't take advantage of this by pushing more reserves into the fray and the Confederate orders were reversed stopping the retreat. The Rebels were able to hang on then, and an opportunity was lost again through McClellan's timidity. How many lives this would cost isn't known, but it did cost many more to die needlessly.

While this fighting was going on at Bloody Lane, General Ambrose Burnside's Union Corps attacked across the creek against the Southern right flank. The Corps forced a crossing at one of the bridges fording the creek, and advanced against the out numbered Confederates. Lee had been taking units from this area to defend against Hooker's Corps. Burnside's Corps was pushing toward Sharpsburg, and it looked like they would take the day. It was then that A.P. Hill's Division arrived and smashed into the Union Corps flank forcing them back to Antietam Creek. Darkness then mercifully fell, bringing the day's carnage to a halt.

The morning of the 18th found both bloodied armies facing each other. Lee was ready for another attack by the Federals, but McClellan hadn't the stomach for it. When the Union forces didn't attack on the 18th, Lee pulled out that night and went back to Virginia. The bloodiest day in American military history was over. There has never been a single day of combat like it. 23,000 Americans were killed or wounded in one day. The idea is mind boggling.

Even though McClellan's timidity stopped the Union from having a victory, the South lost from a diplomatic point. It was after this battle that the Emancipation Proclamation was issued

by Lincoln. Now it wasn't a war just to keep the South from seceding; it was now a war against slavery. This would keep England and other nations from recognizing and perhaps supplying the Confederacy. No country would want to look like they supported slavery. But the war would still go on.

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## **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> *Many historians believe that it is this freak accident that caused the South to lose the Civil War. A courier was carrying orders from Lee's headquarters to General Jackson that detailed the plans for the Army of*

*Northern Virginia's entire invasion of the North. Somehow, those orders fell out of the couriers pouch and were discovered on a road by two Union Soldiers who happened to be walking by. In applying the "What if..." question to this event, many people believe that Lee could have taken McClellan by surprise and achieved a great victory. The Union could have suffered a defeat of such magnitude that pressure would have been put on Lincoln to find a peaceful end to the war. An excellent book to read is "How Few Remain" by Harry Turtledove which uses just this event as the basis for his "What if..." novel about the Civil War.*

## 1862 EILUS

Shortly after Lee retreated from Antietam the South suffered losses in the West. On October 3rd, 1862, a Confederate army was badly mauled attacking Corinth, Mississippi. Corinth was defended by the Union Army of the Mississippi under General Rosecrans. Grant was in charge of the whole area, but Rosecrans was given the responsibility of Corinth. The rebels, under General Van Dorn attacked on the 3rd and the battle lasted as long as the light did.

The Federals were entrenched in the fortifications built earlier by the Confederates, and threw back every

assault. Van Dorn regrouped his command and attacked again on the 4th. Once more their attack was smashed with heavy losses (4,800 men). The Confederates now retreated from Cornth, and much to Grant's dismay, Rosecrans didn't pursue them. The defense had cost the Union 2,350 casualties.

Kentucky was saved for the Union for good after General Buell, commanding the Army of the Ohio, beat the Confederate Army of the Mississippi commanded by General Braxton Bragg, at the battle of Perryville, Kentucky. It is a little known battle, but is noteworthy for the savagery of the fighting. In a few hours on October 8th, 1862, the

Confederates lost 3,145 men and the Union 3,696. Bragg retreated to Tennessee, and once more a Union Commander failed to pursue the enemy. For this lapse in judgement Buell lost his command and was replaced by Rosecrans.

McClellan also lost his job, this time for the duration of the war. After Antietam, he didn't make an offensive move for six weeks. When he did start to go south it was at a snail's pace. Lincoln finally had enough, and replaced him with General Ambrose Burnside in July of '62. After much planning and maneuvering Burnside took the Army of the Potomac, and attacked Fredericksburg, Virginia on

December 11th. He had 120,000 men.

The crossing of the Rappahannock had been delayed for lack of equipment for a week. So by the time they did attempt a crossing on the 11th, the Confederates were well prepared for them. The first crossing was a failure. The next attempt was made by volunteers from Michigan, New York, and Massachusetts. They were able to cross under a barrage of artillery from 150 Union cannons. When they made a foothold on the Fredrickburg side of the river, the Confederates retreated to prearranged positions beyond the city. The rest of the Union army crossed on the 12th. Another day was wasted when the Federal troops lost

all discipline and looted the abandoned city of all they could carry.

Burnside ordered an attack against the rebel positions on the 13th. What he didn't realize was that this is where Lee had planned the battle to be fought all along. The defense at the river by the Confederates under General Barksdale had been an extra piece of luck. It gave Lee more time to dig in, and it also gave time for Stonewall Jackson to bring his troops over to Lee. He had been stationed further down the river.

Burnside had divided his army into four Grand Divisions. They were under Generals Sumner, Hooker, Franklin, and Sigel. The last, Sigel's was in reserve

and didn't partake in the fighting. The attack was to be two-fold. The Union was to hit the Rebels at Hamilton's Crossing at the river, and then a combined attack on Marye's Heights behind the city would be made. Franklin was assigned the job of taking the Crossing, and he gave the job to General Meade. The trouble with that was Meade had only 4,500 men to attack with. Even so, they broke into the Rebel lines but were unable to hang on due to lack of support. Franklin didn't send any reserves to help them, and they were pushed back.

Burnside ordered the Attack on Marye's Heights anyway, and it was a full fledged

disaster for the Union. The Union Infantry had to cross 400 yards of open ground under intense artillery and rifle fire. The troops kept trying and they kept dieing. Burnside was extremely stubborn. He sent 15 Brigades,one after the other,in these fruitless charges.The day finally ended and not one Union soldier had reached the Confederate line.

The two armies then sat facing each other without any further attacks until Burnside ordered a retreat on the night of the 15th,and the survivors recrossed the Rappahannock. The Union lost 12,600 men as opposed to 5,300 for the South. The spirit of the Army of the

Potomac was low, but not entirely broken. The Union would be able to replace these losses, but for now the Army wasn't an effective fighting force. In fact it wouldn't be an effective fighting force until Spring of '63, and by then Burnside would no longer command it.

## **Mufreesboro & Chancellorsville**

The Army of the Potomac wasn't the only Union army rendered ineffective due to heavy casualties. The Army of the Cumberland, commanded by General Rosecrans, suffered the same fate at the turn of the new year. On the 31st of

December, 1862, it clashed with the army of Confederate General Braxton Bragg at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Rosecrans was getting ready to attack when the Rebels struck his line and almost took the day immediately. General George Thomas, commanding the middle of the Union line, held his troops in place while the other divisions to the right and left fell back. The retreating troops finally stopped and regrouped. At the end of the day the Union army was bent backward like a Vee, but holding on. The day ended with Bragg sending a message to Richmond that he had won a victory. He didn't mention the enemy was still capable of fighting. For some inexplicable reason,

when the sun came up New Years day, he failed to attack.

Late on the 2nd of January, the Confederates launched an attack that was beaten back after heavy losses to each side, and the lines remained right where they were when it all started. The 3rd. of January saw little action between the two adversaries, and when the sun went down Bragg retreated all the way to Tullahoma, 36 miles away. Rosecrans kept the army at Murfreesboro, it being too beaten to pursue the Rebels. It would be many weeks before it would be considered fit for any major fighting. The losses were horrendous to both sides. The Union lost 13,000 men, and

the South over 10,000. The Union counted it a victory. But the only way this was a victory would be that the North would be able to replace those lost, while the South didn't have the population where they could absorb this sort of attrition.

## **Chancellorsville**

As spring came to the year 1863, so a new commander came to the Army of the Potomac. General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker replaced General Burnside. At the end of April, he moved against Lee at Fredericksburg. Leaving part of the army in front of the city, he marched a portion of it away and crossed the

Rappahannock 25 miles above Fredericksburg, with the intent of surprising Lee with an attack on his rear. It went well at first, but then Hooker lost his aggressiveness and stopped at the wilderness crossroads called Chancellorsville. Jeb Stuart, the noted Rebel cavalry Commander had kept the Union scouts from reporting the location of any Confederates in the area. This was probably why Hooker suddenly got an attack of the nerves.

Now Lee pulled one of his daring maneuvers again. Leaving a force at Fredericksburg, he advanced toward Hooker with 45,000 men. Hooker had more than 70,000 men. When the Rebels

got close, Lee sent Jackson with half of the force on a swing around the Union right flank. The area around Chancellorsville was a tangled forest. It was a poor choice of a battlefield Hooker made. He could have marched further on and found open country where his superior numbers would have given him the advantage. Just as the afternoon of the 2nd of May was dwindling down, Jackson's men came screaming out of this wilderness and hit the Union troops with such force that they immediately destroyed a Corps and threw the rest of the Union line into utter chaos.

Lee and Jackson kept the pressure on, and Hooker's men held on by the skin of

their teeth. The next two days were filled with desperate fighting. Hooker even ordered an attack on Fredericksburg, hoping that Lee would break off and defend the city. it didn't happen that way. The force Lee left at the city was able to successfully drive off the attacking federals.

Hooker finally ordered a retreat and his army, with a staggering loss of 17,000 men, recrossed the Rappahannock. The battle was badly managed by Hooker. With an army twice the size of the one he faced, he didn't even use his reserves. He was out-generaled by Lee, who once again got away with "throwing away the book." It was a great victory for the

South, but they paid for it by the loss of Stonewall Jackson. On the night of the 2nd of May, he was accidentally shot by Southern pickets when he was returning from a scouting expedition and died 8 days later. It was a great loss to Lee and the Southern cause.

This victory paved the way for another invasion of the North by Lee. This time it would be into Pennsylvania.

## **Vicksburg**

As March of '63 closed, Grant began a determined move against Vicksburg. If this city was taken it would cut the Confederacy in half. He devised a very

daring maneuver, that would require perfect timing and discipline. He marched his troops down the Louisiana side of the Mississippi to twenty five miles below Vicksburg. That march in itself was a triumph of the American spirit over very adverse conditions. Many swamps and bayous had to be crossed and the western born soldiers were more than a match for the terrain. A fleet of gunboats and transports then ran a gauntlet of cannon fire past the shore batteries of Vicksburg to reach Grant and ferry the troops across too the Mississippi side. The plan worked almost perfect. He had to land five more miles below where he intended due to a heavy concentration of rebels at Grand

Gulf. This left him more like thirty miles from Vicksburg.

Once he was across, Grant realized that he would have to take the capitol city of Jackson before he headed to Vicksburg. Jackson was an important railhead, and any troops and supplies that Vicksburg would need would come through here. Grant started to Jackson with 30,000 men. On May 5th, he defeated a Confederate force at the town of Raymond, Mississippi, forcing them to retreat to Jackson ahead of his army.

Before Grant started out again, he ordered a Colonel Ben Grierson with a Brigade of cavalry on a raid clear across the state from the Tennessee

border to the Union lines at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This large scale raid was a smoke screen for Grant's main army. Grierson destroyed everything in his path that he could, and kept the Rebels busy chasing him. This kept their minds off what Grant was doing.

On May 14th. Grant took the city of Jackson forcing the defending army, under a recuperated Joe Johnston to retreat further east. Johnston sent messages to General Pemberton, Commander of the Confederate army at Vicksburg to leave the city and join him in retreat. He could see that the city would be eventually doomed, and saw no use in having Pemberton's army taken

also. Pemberton was in a tough spot. He agreed with Johnston, but was under orders from Jeff Davis to hold the city. He marched his troops from the fortified positions around the city to engage the Union army. He then changed his mind and headed north east to join Johnston. This course took him right into the Union army halfway between Jackson and Vicksburg, at a place called Champion Hill. The Rebels were beaten and pushed all the way back to their original positions at Vicksburg. Grant put his army on the heights over the Yazoo River. On the 19th and on the 22nd. Grant assaulted the Rebel positions and was beaten back both times with heavy losses. He now settled in for a siege.

His army was being constantly re-inforced and he now had 75, 000 men, in 15 miles of trenches around the city. He had a force stationed between himself and Johnston's army to keep them from coming to Pemberton's aid. With no food entering the city and a constant artillery barrage daily, the civilian population suffered as much as the soldiers. By Jun 1st. it was apparent that the city couldn't hold out, and yet these courageous soldiers and civilians withstood it another month. On July 3rd. Pemberton asked for terms. Grant gave his usual "unconditional surrender" reply which was rejected by Pemberton. It was then agreed that the Rebel soldiers would be paroled after surrendering, and on the

morning of the 4th they marched out and gave up their weapons. Old Glory once again flew over the city, and when Port Hudson\* fell a week later, the Mississippi was open all the way to the sea for the Union.

The South was now split in two and for it the "writing was on the wall." For Grant it meant he was now a household name in the North. Between March 29th and July 4th, 1863, he marched his men 200 miles, outfought two armies whose total strength outnumbered his, destroyed one of them, and pushed the other into retreat. He had met the enemy on five occasions and beat them each time. It did cost him 10,000 men though. Some

historians say "only 10,000" men, but I don't agree with that word. There's no such thing as "only" when it's said about a dead American soldier.

\*Port Hudson is another of those little publicized battles in which the conditions were extremely vicious. General Banks with an army of 40,000 men laid siege to the 7,500 Confederates holding the area from the 22nd of May until it capitulated on the 9th of July, 1863, making it the longest siege in American history. The Union lost 10,000 men, half of them to disease and sunstroke. The South lost 1,000 dead and 6,500 taken prisoner.

# Gettysburg

While Grant was pounding away against Vicksburg, Lee decided to invade the North once more. This time through Pennsylvania. Some people today, using hindsight, say he would have been better off to stay in Virginia and fight it out there. Lee knew that the Union would keep sending an army South with the battle cry, "on to Richmond." He was confident he would beat them, but how long could the South supply him men and materials for these battles? Then there was also the worsening conditions for the Confederacy in the West.

A movement into the North by his army

might just pull enough Union soldiers away from Vicksburg to enable the struggling rebel armies to win out. There was also still a slim hope for European aid, despite their aversions to slavery. One good victory on Northern soil might make the Europeans recognize the Confederacy. It might just make the North sick enough of the war that they'd sue for peace too. These things were all on his mind, and when he thought of the possibility of getting captured supplies in the north also, there was no way he was'nt going.

Lee started the Army of Northern Virginia North from Fredericksburg on June 3rd, 1863. The army was split into

three corps, Generals Lonstreet, Ewell, and A.P.Hill each commanding one. The rebel cavalry, commanded by Jeb Stuart was out ahead of the army scouting the different roads and skirmishing with the Union cavalry. On June 9th, Stuart clashed with the Union cavalry under the command of General Buford at Brandy Station, Virginia, It was the largest battle between cavalry units in the war. The 6th Pennsylvania cavalry made a glorious charge against Southern artillery and dismounted cavalry that was looked upon as courageous and glorious by both sides. The 6th lost a good many men though. The day ended with the Confederates holding the field, but with a new found respect for Union

cavalry. The North lost over 800 men, and the South over 500.

Jeb Stuart then got the idea to make a wide sweep around the Union army and get across the Potomac to scout out the area. He didn't count on so much Union activity in Virginia and was pushed further and further away from Lee. It would be 10 days before the "eyes of the Confederate army" would hook up with Lee. The damage done by this action was very detrimental to Lee's battle plans. When Lee crossed the Potomac he not only learned that the Union Army of the Potomac was already across, but it had a new commander. General George Meade had replaced Hooker. This news

alarmed him, because his command was still split up. He put out the word for all units to concentrate at the nearest village to him. This was Cashtown, Pennsylvania, about six miles from Gettysburg. He also stipulated that no unit was to start a battle until the entire southern force was united. One of his Generals didn't exactly agree with this last part. When he heard of a shoe factory in the town Of Gettysburg, he asked permission of his superior, General Hill, to enter the city with his division and get the shoes. Hill saw no harm in this, and he started out.

As luck would have it, this very day, the 30th of June, General Buford arrived in

Gettysburg with his Cavalry Division. He was the advance of general Reynolds' command. Upon seeing the roads that converged here, Buford immediately saw the importance of this bucolic town and sent word back to Meade. He dug his men in across the Chambersburg Pike, on a height called McPherson's Ridge. He also covered other roads with his dismounted cavalry and awaited Reynolds. He warned his officers to keep their men alert and predicted that the rebels would come in force in the morning.

He was proven a prophet when Heth's Division came up the Pike in the morning with skirmishes out on both

sides and the battle of Gettysburg was on. Artillery of both sides opened up, and the Rebel infantry attacked the ridge. They were thrown back with heavy losses due to the repeating rifles the Union Cavalry had. The Confederates kept up the pressure and Buford's men were about to be overwhelmed when Reynolds arrived with reinforcements. He himself was shot and killed, but the Union held the ridge. They were finally dislodged later in the day, and then were forced to retreat to a hill aptly called Cemetery Hill to their rear. There was a graveyard on the summit. The "Iron Brigade" held on at McPhersons Ridge until the last possible moment. When they finally did retreat only 600 of their

original 1,800 men made it safely to Cemetery Hill. Lee wanted Ewell to attack Cemetery Hill immediately, but he procrastinated until it was too dark to fight.

General Howard was in command of Cemetery Hill now, and he sent word to Meade that he had better commit the rest of the army to this battle, the outcome of which was still very much in doubt. The commanders on the scene from both sides now realized the importance that would be placed on this battle. For now they rested or planned, and tomorrow the bloodshed would start anew.

The balance of the two opposing armies kept arriving during the night of July 1st

and lines were established before the sun came up the next morning. The Union army was in a hooked line from a place called Culp's Hill on its right, through Cemetery Hill, and Cemetery Ridge, and south to two hills called Round Top, and Little Round Top. The Southerners took up positions facing them, on Cemetery Hill, Seminary ridge, and along a road (Hanover Road) between cemetery Hill and the town.

General Daniel Sickles, commander of the 10,000 man 3rd Corps (Union) opened the action with an ill advised move. He advanced from Cemetery ridge to heights along the Emitsburg Road between the ridges. The

Confederates attacked him (Longstreet was in command) with two divisions and smashed his corps. The attack started about noon, and Sickles was just about through when Meade sent in enough men to break the rebel attack about dusk. This defense and the arrival of the 6th Corps secured the Union middle at Cemetery Ridge. Lee also set troops against Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. They reached the top of the Ridge but were thrown back. On Culp's hill they fared a little better by digging in on the slope near the top and hung on all night.

At sun up the battle on Culp's Hill resumed, and they fought for six hours

until the Rebels retreated from their positions. Lee had ordered a general assault on Cemetery Ridge. This was supposed to be supported by the Confederate Unit that was supposed to take Culp's Hill. At the same time Jeb Stuart (he arrived the night before) was to take his cavalry and out flank the Union right. The attack on Cemetery Ridge was called off after the retreat from Culp's Hill. Stuart took his 10,000 tired cavalry men on the flanking attempt anyway.

They got no further than a few miles east of town and were stopped and defeated by General Gregg's Union horse soldiers in a fierce battle that included mounted

charges.

Lee now ordered an all out assault on the Union center at Cemetery Ridge that went down in history as "Pickett's Charge" even though Pickett didn't actually lead it in person. After a two hour bombardment 12,000 Confederate soldiers started to march across open fields at 3 PM, toward the Union troops behind fortifications on Cemetery Ridge.

These bravest of the brave Rebels of divisions commanded by Generals Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble had to cross three quarters of a mile of open ground. They could see the massed rifles awaiting them across the field. There would also be artillery on their flanks.

They started off in parade ground, close quarter formations with battle flags waving. They were slaughtered, and still they came on. They came close to breaching the Union lines in a few spots but by that time there wasn't enough of them left to do any damage. The survivors fell back, and for all intents and purposes the battle of Gettysburg was over.

7,500 Southern boys and men were left on that field. The battle lasted an hour. The loss of men was a terrible blow, but it was even made worse when you consider that these men were the "cream of the crop," and would be sorely missed.

Lee's great gamble had failed, and he took his battered army (casualties were a staggering 28,000 men) and headed for the Potomac on the Fourth of July, 1863. The river was swollen and he had to wait until the 13th to get back into his home state of Virginia. Meade at first followed him, but being overly cautious he felt his army was in no shape (23,000 casualties) to force another engagement at this time. He might have destroyed the Army of Northern Virginia, but now the war would go on for almost two more years. But with the combined victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, the outcome was a little more apparent.

## **Chickamauga**

After the battle of Gettysburg, both the Army of the Potomac, and the Army of North Virginia limped back to Virginia, neither one looking for a major confrontation. There were some maneuvering and skirmishing, but it was apparent that there'd be no battle between them for the rest of '63. The same was to be said for Grant's army. He wanted to find and do battle with the Rebels, but the powers that be in Washington wanted him to stay put and occupy territory in the West. So his army was scattered into different spots as an army of occupation.

The situation was different with the Army of the Cumberland in central

Tennessee It was commanded by General Rosecrans, and was facing the Army of Tennessee, led by general Braxton Bragg. Rosecrans had his eye on the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee Taking this City would also make it possible for him to take Knoxville, and thus hold all of the eastern part of that state. There happened to be lots of Union loyalist in eastern Tennessee.

Rosecrans made his move in late June of '63, and by expert and daring maneuvers got his army in the rear of Braggs, which was covering Chattanooga. More feints and bluffs were made by the Union and Bragg pulled his army back into the city. The situation was a stalemate until

August when Rosecrans made another brilliant move and cut Braggs line of supply. Bragg had no choice but to vacate the premises, and the Union army marched into Chattanooga without any blood being shed. Rosecrans didn't stay put. He should have, because when his troops left and ran into Braggs army at Chickamauga Creek 12 or so miles below Chattanooga, they took an awful beating.

Bragg hit the advance elements of the Union on September 19th.in thick forests between the creek and the La fayette Road. Neither side had wanted to do battle in this tangled area, but it was too late now, and both sides started to sent

in more units. The day ended with the Union troops pushed back but hanging on. The next day Bragg threw everything at the Union forces. It was at this battle that General George Thomas earned the nick name "Rock of Chickamauga" by holding he line while other divisions left in a rout. As this day ended the Union army retreated back into Chattanooga, and when Bragg occupied the surrounding hills the Federals found themselves under siege.

It was a devastating defeat for the Union, but it could have been worse. Bragg could have, and should have, attacked the Army of the Cumberland while they were still in disarray entering

Chattanooga. He could have destroyed the army, and who knows what consequences that would have had. He didn't, and it was an opportunity that the South wouldn't see again. The Union campaign was wrecked and so was Rosecrans' career. he was replaced by Thomas.

The Union suffered over 18,000 casualties and the south almost 15,000. Bragg almost was relieved due to the dissatisfaction with him for not being more aggressive, but Jeff Davis finally let him stay in command of the Army of the Tennessee. The Federal Army of the Cumberland, stuck in Chattanooga was in dire straits. But some good came out

of this defeat. The powers in Washington realized that the system of scattering units wasn't working. This scare of losing the army in Tennessee put in motion a series of moves that would put Grant into the big picture. His move to the top was about to begin.

## **Chattanooga**

By the end of 1863, the Army of the Cumberland, not being strong enough to break out of besieged Chattanooga, was in danger of being starved into submission. The Federal Government couldn't afford to lose this army, and took drastic steps to save it. Hooker was dispatched there with two brigades.

Sherman was sent with a portion of the Army of the Tennessee, and Grant went to take over the whole business. Grant, at the same time, was also put over all troops west of the Alleghenies. There was one section out west where Grant didn't command: a campaign by General Banks in Louisiana and Texas. It ended in a defeat for the Union.

Grant got down to brass tacks immediately upon arriving in the area. He had Hooker blast a route through the Confederate lines from the Tennessee River to Chattanooga. This route went west of the rebel positions on a high mountain overlooking the city called Lookout Mountain. Now at least food

would get through to the city. With the arrival of Sherman, the Union had three of its fightingest Generals on the scene. In spite of this, Bragg made the blunder of weakening his army by sending Longstreet with 12,000 men to attack the Union army at Knoxville.

Grant started the breakout by ordering Hooker to attack Lookout Mountain. His men did this in quicker time than would have been thought. The Confederates had fortified the slopes, not the crest, and were overrun by the charging Yankees. Due to the height of the mountain, and the low lying clouds on this day, the battle was billed as "the battle above the clouds."

Sherman was also attacking further up river and was running into stiff opposition. To relieve some of the pressure on him, Grant ordered Thomas to take the rifle pits at the bottom of a height called Missionary ridge.

Thomas's men did this in short order. Then without orders from above, the infantrymen of Thomas's Army of the Cumberland, started to charge up the hill. They reached the top in such a fierce charge that the defenders were routed. These men had been feeling ashamed for being beat at Chickamauga, and then for having to be rescued at Chattanooga. They didn't wait to be told what to do. They attacked the strongest part of the rebel lines and sent the enemy

in full blown retreat. They had recovered their pride, and what was called the "battle of Chattanooga" ended in a Union victory.

## **Grant Takes Command**

On March 9th 1864, Lincoln put Grant in full command of all federal armies. Grant saw his job as having but one goal; destroy the Confederate Armies. The two he considered most important to be destroyed were the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by Robert E. Lee, and the Army of Tennessee, which was now commanded by General Joe Johnston. Johnston had by this time replaced Bragg. Grant decided to

concentrate on Lee, and told Sherman to get Johnston.

Grant made his Headquarters with the Army of the Potomac. Meade was left in charge of the army, but in reality it was Grant's army. The only other major command change was the cavalry command was given to General Phil Sheridan.

The Union plan was now very simple. Grant would head for Richmond, and Sherman would head for Atlanta. They knew the Confederates would put armies in front of both of the advancing Union armies to protect these cities. Then they would hit these armies, and keep on hitting them, until they were destroyed. It

was to be a war of attrition.

## **The Battle of the Wilderness**

On the 4th of May, the Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan, and headed south. It entered an area of jungle like forest and undergrowth known as "the wilderness." This area, ten miles from Fredericksburg, was on the south bank of the Rapidan, and covered an area 12 miles by 6 miles. It was Grant's plan to get through this area, and force Lee into a battle on the open ground where his numerically superior army would have the advantage. Lee saw what Grant was up to, and entered his army into the Wilderness and hit Grant's army

by surprise.

There followed two days of the most horrifying fighting the war had yet seen. There was no room for any maneuvering and the men just blasted away at each other in the tangled undergrowth. In many instances wounded men were burned to death when the bushes caught fire. In the two days of fighting the Union forces took quite a beating to the tune of 17,000 casualties. On the 7th. Grant then pulled them from the woods, got them on the road, and instead of retreating he moved them around the Confederate left, and started South again. His men, though thoroughly exhausted, started to cheer when they realized it wasn't another

retreat. Grant headed them toward Spottsylvania Courthouse, still on the road to Richmond.

## **Spottsylvania**

When Lee saw the Union Army pull an end run around his flank and heads south, he correctly guessed where they were heading. It became a race, with both generals pushing their armies to the limit. Lee arrived at Spottsylvania, Virginia first, and when Grant arrived on the 8th of May, a nine day battle began. There was no let up in the fighting for a single day as Grant kept moving his army to the left and hitting the rebels on the flank.

It was during this period, that the South lost another of its heroes. Sheridan sent his cavalry on a raid toward Richmond, and they were met at a place called Yellow Tavern by rebel cavalry under Jeb Stuart. The Union force was driven off, but Stuart was killed in the action.

Grant again went around the Army of Northern Virginia's left and headed south. The Union had suffered almost 18,000 casualties and the Confederates almost 10,000. Lee again moved south and kept his army in front of the advancing Federals. He was biding his time, hoping he'd catch Grant in a precarious position and deal his army a death blow. It almost happened at the

battle of North Anna River on the 23rd of May.

Lee put his army in a formation of an inverted Vee and when the Federals moved against it they were split part. They suffered heavy losses until Grant called off the attack and had them dig in. The Union forces were in a desperate position, and on the 26th Grant pulled back, regrouped, and started around the rebels; again heading toward Richmond. If the Confederates attacked before Grant pulled his army away, they might have dealt that death blow Lee was hoping for. As luck would have it, Lee was very sick that day and couldn't leave his tent. If Stonewall Jackson had still

been with him, things probably would have turned out different. Jackson would have taken the initiative and attacked on his own. But it was not to be. This was only one of the many times Lee would miss Jackson. The losses were about 2,500 casualties on each side.

The two armies clashed again at Cold Harbor, after skirmishing along the way. Cold Harbor was very close to the Southern Capitol, and Lee would have to almost pull a miracle out of his hat now to stop Grant. Grant ordered an all out assault against the defenses at Cold Harbor, and it was repulsed with fearfully heavy losses. The next ten days were filled with fighting from trenches.

Then Grant did it again. He sideslipped the army around the rebel left and crossed the James River. He didn't stop until he was outside of Petersburg. If this important railhead fell to the Union, the capitol would be lost. So far this campaign of almost daily combat had resulted in almost 60,000 Union dead and wounded, but it mattered not to their Commander. He was going to end this war no matter what it cost.

On the 15th of June Grant sent three divisions against the defenders of Petersburg. The Union troops breached the line, and the Confederates fell back to a secondary defensive line closer to the city. Grant ordered an all out assault

against this line and it failed. He now settled his army in for a siege. This siege and campaign covered almost two hundred square miles and consisted of six major battles and numerous smaller engagements. Lee's army was stretched over 15 miles in defensive positions. Grant's siege lines extended all the way to the outskirts of Richmond. To relieve some of the pressure on his army, Lee sent Jubal Early on a cavalry raid toward Washington. He was turned back, but not before throwing a scare into the politicians.

Grant then sent the Union cavalry under Sheridan into the Shenandoah Valley to get Early. He also ordered him to slash

and burn his way through the valley. It was his intent to devastate this "breadbasket of the south" once and for all. Total warfare was beginning. The Union cavalry clashed with Early's men on September 19th at Winchester and the Confederates, after some initial success were driven off.

They met again three days later at Fisher's Hill and again the rebels were driven off. Sheridan's men then went about laying waste to the valley with a vengeance. This destruction continued and then the Federals were surprised by Early's troopers again in the middle of October at Cedar Creek, Virginia. Sheridan had been away, and was

returning from a trip to Washington when this attack occurred. He was at Winchester when he ran into some retreating Federals. He rallied them, and they dashed back to Cedar Creek, and won the day for the Union. This went down in history as "Sheridan's Ride from Winchester. "

The months were started to drag along and still the Army of the Potomac was in front of Petersburg. Grant had them pounding the defenders ever day. It was taken its toll on Lee's army. They were always at their best when he could maneuver them about the country side. Now they were forced to stay in between their Capitol and the invaders.

Meanwhile, Sherman was pushing through Georgia, heading for Atlanta. So far he wasn't successful in forcing the Army of Tennessee into a conclusive battle.

## **Sherman at Atlanta**

The Atlanta campaign was started by Sherman on May 7th, 1864. His army group consisted of Thomas's Army of the Cumberland, McPherson's Army of the Tennessee, and Schofield's Army of the Ohio. He had almost 100,000 troops with him. Facing this horde was General Joe Johnston's Army of Tennessee with a grand total of 65,000 men. The battle started with Thomas hitting the Rebels at

Dalton, Georgia and driving them back.

It became a chess game after that. Sherman would attack the Confederates with a head on assault by Thomas's army, and at the same time send the other two armies in flanking moves to surround them. Johnston always slipped from the trap, and they'd start maneuvering all over again. But all the while Sherman had Atlanta in his sights. He finally reached the outskirts of that city in mid July and bogged down. Johnston still wouldn't let his army be drawn into a large engagement. He knew if he was beaten, the cause was lost here in the west. This irked Jeff Davis, who held some animosity toward Johnston

anyway. davis wanted the Yankees hit and stopped. he finally replaced Johnston with General Hood, an aggressive leader.

Knowing what was expected of him, Hood attacked the invading Federals twice in July of '64 and was beaten off both times with a total of 13,000 casualties. Incredibly, he tried a third time and was again given a serious beating. This weakened his army so much he was forced to vacate the city and Sherman marched his troops in on September 2nd, 1864. He now changed his tactics. Resolved that he wasn't about to catch the rebels in a conclusive battle in the near future, he decided to make the

civilian population of the South get sick and tired of this war. The total warfare that was taking place in the Shenandoah, was now about to start in the deep South.

On the 16th of November, Sherman started on his famous march to the sea. He was about to prove that the Confederacy couldn't protect its citizens, and their property, by marching an army, 60,000 strong, right through its heart. The men were ordered to destroy everything in their path, and to live off the country. His army covered a 60 mile wide front as they slowly made their way through Georgia. Everything that couldn't be carried off was given to the slaves or burned. A waste land was left in the

army's wake. They reached Savannah on the coast Christmas Eve and Sherman wired Lincoln that he was giving him that city as a Christmas present.

Hood had moved out of the way into Tennessee where Thomas caught up to him and virtually destroyed his army. So the year 1864 ended with the Confederacy being reduced to the Carolinas, and a part of Virginia. Sherman was now about to bring his total warfare into South Carolina and show these people of the state that started the war, what a hell war really is.

The Summer and fall of 1864 passed and Grant was still trying to smash his way

into Petersburg and Richmond He even had soldiers who had been miners dig a tunnel under the Confederate lines and detonated explosives in it. It was a success as far as blowing a hole in the lines, but that was all. On July 30th when the troops rushed through the crater, they were slaughtered, and the siege went on.

Finally, when the winter went by, the Federals made some headway. Lee knew now it was just a matter of time for his battered army and tried a breakout on March 25th that was broken up by the Federals. Lee then retreated back into Petersburg. On the 29th some units of the Army of the Potomac entered the city,

but Lee still fought on. Then Pickett's command at Five Forks was smashed and a wide route was open into the city. Grant ordered an all out attack through this route on the 2nd of April. They took the city, but Lee was able to slip away with his small army. His plan was to get to North Carolina and join up with Joe Johnston, who once again was in command of what was left of the Army of Tennessee. Hood, after being soundly thrashed by Thomas, had asked to be relieved , and Davis accommodated him.

Sherman by this time was well into North Carolina. He had started out from Savannah in January, and had cut a forty five mile wide front of devastation and

destruction all the way through both states. South Carolina suffered even more than Georgia and North Carolina. The invaders seemed to take a personal joy in bringing the war to the state that they felt started all this killing. The climatic battle of this march was at Bentonville North Carolina in which Johnston lost 2,000 of his small army. Sherman lost 1,200. Johnston knew he didn't have a chance but still fought on. He was hoping Lee would make it to him, but it was not to be. Lee was forced by the Federals westward toward the Appomattox River. He then lost 8,000 of his 30,000 man army when they were cut off at Sayles Creek. He had one chance to prolong this war, and that was for him

to reach a Rebel supply depot at Appomattox Station.

The Confederates pushed through a Federal force at Farmville, Virginia and reached Appomattox Court House on the 8th of April. Even though Grant was behind him, and strong units were on each of his flanks, Lee still decided to go ahead and try for the supplies. He thought only cavalry was ahead of him, and ordered an attack on the 9th of April to begin at 5:30 AM. It soon became apparent that there was infantry backing up the cavalry and Lee called the attack off. Lee told his officers that he'd have to go and see Grant, (Grant had already sent a note requesting that Lee surrender)

and that "I'd rather die a thousand deaths." The rest is well known history. The two generals met and for all practical purposes the war was over. Johnston upon hearing the news surrendered a few days later, and over the next two months other small units lay down their arms. The cause was lost.

Three million men served and fought in this war. Over a half million perished from battle deaths and diseases. This is a huge amount of deaths when you take into consideration that the whole population of the country then was only 31 million. But before the last veteran of this horrible, bloody carnage passed from this earth, their descendants would

fight side by side, again and again, in common causes for their country, the UNITED States of America.

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