

Confederate Invasions – The Union in Peril
The Antietam and Gettysburg Campaigns
Class Notes

Lecture 5 – Gettysburg Campaign: Lee Invades Pennsylvania
Meeting Engagement; Fight for the High Ground

A. Gettysburg: Strategic Situation

- War's third summer: Despite Union successes in the West, Northern civilian & troop morale is low. Confederate hopes for independence remain strong.
- Lee persuades Davis & Cabinet of wisdom of another invasion of North.
- Despite Chancellorsville defeat, Hooker still in command of the Union Army.
- Confederate invasion has shifted the moral "high ground" to the Union. Now the Army of Potomac is fighting to repel the invader from its soil.

B. Gettysburg Campaign: Opening Phase Goes Well for Army of Northern Virginia

- Lee's plan: Move west into Shenandoah Valley to mask his intentions
- Deception is key: Lee must keep Hooker focused on his Rappahannock line
- On 3 June, Lee moves; uses Stuart's cavalry to screen his activities
- Battle of Brandy Station: Largest cavalry engagement of the war
- Union Intelligence (BMI) reporting improves dramatically; provides accurate reporting on Confederate strength, intentions
- On 14 June, at Battle of Second Winchester – Ewell defeats small Union force.
- Hooker is shocked into action; orders the Army of the Potomac to pursue Lee north.
- Bedlam, panic among Northern civilians spreads to Philadelphia and Washington.

C. Crossing the Potomac: Rebel Invasion Begins; Union Army Gets New Commander

- From 20-25 June, the two armies cross the Potomac only about 10 miles apart, on parallel northward tracks. Neither knew the other's exact whereabouts
- On 24 June, Lee sends Stuart's cavalry to scout, report on Union troop movements.
- Lincoln & Halleck lose confidence in Hooker; who complains, demands more troops.
- On 27-28 June, Lincoln relieves Hooker; orders George Meade to assume command
- Army of Potomac totals 95,000 men in seven Corps, plus cavalry & artillery reserve
- Meade is the fourth army commander in 7 months; experienced, solid career officer

- Lee lacks solid intelligence on Federals location because of Stuart's absence. Confederate army is divided and moving blindly in enemy territory – critical situation
- On the evening of 28 June, Lee learns from Longstreet's spy/scout, Harrison that Union Army is only 12 miles away!
- On 29 June, Lee orders his army to concentrate west of Gettysburg, where 11 roads converge. He cautions his commanders not to bring on a general engagement until the entire army can concentrate.

- On 30 June, Confederates from Heth's Division of Hill Corps run into Buford's Union cavalry in Gettysburg & withdraw under orders not to bring on a general engagement.
- Hill grants permission for Heth to advance on Gettysburg the next day, 1 July.
- Buford relays numbers, locations of Lee's corps to Meade. Nearest Union infantry, Reynolds I Corps is 8 miles away. Buford decides to fight delaying action.

D. The Battle of Gettysburg Begins: Dawn, 1 July 1863

- Contact is initiated at 5:00am by Buford's Union cavalry northwest of Gettysburg
- Heth's Division deploys against cavalry pickets on Herr Ridge
- Union I Corps under Reynolds arrives at 10:30am; deploys on McPherson's Ridge
- At 11:00am, Reynolds is killed. Doubleday assumes command.
- Meredith's Iron Brigade advances against Archer's and Pettigrew's Brigades
- At Noon there is a lull in fighting, as Heth waits for rest of AP Hill's Corps to arrive.
- Howard's Union XI Corps approaches at noon; Howard assumes overall command; deploys his corps north of town; places a division in reserve on Cemetery Hill.
- Ewell's Confederate II Corps arrives from north; deploys artillery on Oak Hill.

E. Lee Arrives on the Field; Makes Critical Decision to Continue the Attack

- Confederates attack the Union I Corps and left flank of XI Corps; suffer heavy losses
- Late afternoon: More Confederate troops arrive; increase pressure on Union XI Corps
- At 4:00pm, XI Corps breaks under pressure; many panic, flee toward town
- I Corps holds briefly, but is forced to retreat through Gettysburg.
- Gettysburg streets become a bottleneck: many Union troops captured in the confusion

F. Union General Hancock Reaches Cemetery Hill; Rallies Retreating Union Troops

- Hancock's actions stop Union rout; lines stabilize on heights south of town
- Lee consults with Ewell; orders him to take Cemetery Hill "if practicable."
- Darkness falls before Ewell can complete preparations; attack is called off
- Union Army General Meade arrives at midnight; consults with his commanders
- Opposing armies deploy as troops continue to arrive during the night; fill in the lines forming inverted "fishhooks."

G. Lee's Confederates Are Victorious on Day One – Implications

- Neither army commander planned to fight at Gettysburg
- Lee exploits 2:1 Confederate numerical advantage; routes two Union corps
- Lee's victory is costly for both sides (20,000 total casualties); blemished by Ewell's failure to take Cemetery Hill
- Foresight of Buford and Howard, and Hancock's leadership, enable Union troops to consolidate a strong defensive position on high ground, with good interior lines.
- Union troops, for most part, fought well & retreated in good order.