

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

**Lecture 6 – Battle of Gettysburg Day Two: A Very Near Thing**

**A. Day One Review**

- Confederates win a tactical victory; inflict 12,000 Union casualties; but suffer 8,000 casualties of their own.
- Ewell fails to attempt attack to dislodge Union forces from Cemetery Hill.
- Despite being driven back, the Army of the Potomac holds the high ground - a strong defensive position - thanks to Howard's reserve and Hancock's leadership.

**B. Preparations for Day Two: Meade, Lee Meet with Subordinates; Formulate Plans**

- Meade decides to stay, fight. He is encouraged by Army's strong position, good performance.
- He has 5 corps present (I, II, III, XI, XII) with V, VI Corps on the march.
- Lee is determined to exploit Day 1 gains by attacking. He considers but rejects Longstreet's alternative proposal to maneuver and force Meade to attack.
- Impact of Stuart's Absence: Lee has poor intelligence on Union strength & locations.
- Lee plans for a coordinated attack on both Union flanks.

**C. Day Two Morning Phase: Confederates Maneuver**

- Before dawn, Lee orders reconnaissance of Union lines, which reports Union left is "in the air" north of Little Round Top, along Emmitsburg Road.
- Lee is forced to delay the attacks: Longstreet's exhausted Corps arrives at dawn.
- Longstreet moves into position, but with confusion & countermarches.
- Longstreet has to adjust Lee's plan of attack.

**D. Day Two Morning Phase: Crisis on Union Left**

- Sickles moves III Corps forward, exposing his left flank & extending his lines.
- Meade confronts Sickles over his unauthorized advance; but it is too late to retreat
- Meade acts quickly: Orders V Corps to support Sickles; sends General Warren to scout Little Round Top, find the Union left flank.

**E. Day Two Afternoon Phase: Longstreet Launches Largest Attack of the Battle**

- At 4:00pm, Longstreet rejects Hood's appeal; launches attack "en echelon" (from right to left).
- Hood's wounding disrupts attack coordination; units on Confederate right swing much further south and east than intended.

- General Warren finds Little Round Top undefended. He sends staff to find help.
- Messenger intercepts Vincent's Brigade. Vincent moves up Little Round Top; deploys 20<sup>th</sup> Maine on extreme left flank.
- Little Round Top is secured by Union troops after fierce fighting
- Meanwhile, Meade enlists Hancock's help in sending help to Sickles.
- Fighting erupts in the Devil's Den; across the Wheatfield; to the Peach Orchard.
- In 3 hours, the Wheatfield changes hands 6 times; 3,800 casualties (1,000 killed).
- Sickles is wounded near the Trostle Farm; carried from field smoking cigar.
- Barksdale's Mississippi brigade attacks the Peach Orchard; routes Humphrey's division.
- Longstreet personally leads a late attack, which breaks Union III Corps.
- As darkness nears, AP Hill's brigades attack Union center
- Charge of 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota halts the attack & buys time, for reinforcements to arrive
- The Union lines stabilize; Confederates withdraw beyond the Emmitsburg Road.

#### **F. Ewell's Attacks on Culp's Hill, Cemetery Hill Come Too Late**

- Ewell claims not to hear sounds of Longstreet's attack. After delay, begins artillery bombardment of Union right.
- Belatedly, near dusk, Ewell launches infantry attacks, which come too late to hold Union troops in place.
- On Culp's Hill, General Greene has only 2,200 men. He uses breastworks, steep slope to hold off Confederate attack by over 7,000 men.
- Col. Ireland's 137<sup>th</sup> N.Y. holds the right flank with heroism similar to 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.
- Stuart's Confederates seize abandoned Union trenches; but halt in the darkness.
- Union artillery on Cemetery Hill is attacked by Early's division as darkness falls.
- Fighting is hand-to-hand in the cemetery; but Early's breakthrough is not supported.
- Union reinforcements repulse the Confederates in rare night fighting.

#### **G. Day Two Is a Draw; but Union Still Holds High Ground - Implications**

- Confederate leadership is uncharacteristically weak.
- Lee does not closely supervise Hill or Ewell; poor coordination with Longstreet
- Ewell's delay allows Meade to shift troops from Union right to save III Corps.
- Once the Confederate attack is launched, Longstreet performs very well.
- The Union Army of the Potomac leadership and performance is much improved.
- Meade is active in defense; delegates well to subordinates Slocum and Hancock.
- Individual Union commanders stand out at corps, division, brigade and regimental levels
- Notable exception is III Corps Commander Dan Sickles
- Confederate Cavalry Commander JEB Stuart finally returns in late afternoon. Stuart knows he has failed Lee. He is ordered to stand by.
- Lee's attacks have gained little ground. He is in enemy territory, far from his base of resupply. He continues to feel the pressure to act.