The Chancellorsville Campaign

April 27 – May 6, 1863

Debacle and Deliverance

TVCWRT "Little Round Table," September 24 and October 22, 2026
Facilitator Notes

My plans are perfect, and when I start to carry them out, may God have mercy on General Lee, for I will have none.
Major General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker, April 25, 1863

The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.
Robert Burns, "To a Mouse," 1785

CONTEXT.

The battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, occurring less than five months apart, were fought for the same reason: the Union desire to cross the Rappahannock River, called the Dare Line, defeat the Army of Northern Virginia or force it to retreat, and take Richmond. One battle flowed from the other, with the Mud March in between (undertaken for the same reason). The "Dare Line," or "Dare Mark," was a defiant nickname Confederate soldiers gave to the Rappahannock River in Virginia, meaning: "We dare you Yankees to cross it." It served as the primary staging area and defensive border during the winter of 1862-63. *("The Dare Mark Campaign," Daniel E. Sutherland. "Great Campaigns of the Civil War," edited by Anne J. Bailey and Brooks D. Simpson. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. Pp. xiv, 234. Also, see Fredericksburg-LRT-Notes-Final-220620.pdf.)*

By April 1863, the Army of the Potomac, under Maj. General Joseph Hooker since January 26, had recovered from the disaster at Fredericksburg. Hooker had some 130,000 men — nearly twice Lee's 60,000 — and had devised a sound plan: pin the AoNV at Fredericksburg with a large holding force under Major General John Sedgwick while swinging the bulk of the army around Lee's left flank to strike from the rear near the crossroads hamlet of Chancellorsville.

(Note that troop strengths vary among the many sources. I use figures included in Brig. Gen. Vincent J. Esposito, USA (ret), Chief Editor, "The West Point Atlas of American Wars, Volume I 1689-1900," New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1959.)

- After Maj. General George B. McClellan had failed to follow up the Battle of Antietam, President Lincoln relieved him. He wanted to put Hooker in his place – Hooker certainly pushed for such an appointment – but was opposed by both Maj. General Henry Halleck and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who wanted Maj. General William Rosecrans for the job. Neither Stanton nor Halleck liked Hooker, but this time, after Fredericksburg, President Lincoln stood his ground.
    - To Halleck and Stanton –
        - Rosecrans was a proven winner having just won a victory at Stone's River (December 21, 1862 – January 2, 1863).
        - Both placed a premium on military hierarchy, discipline, and loyalty to the administration. Hooker was notoriously outspoken and had spent months openly criticizing his superiors. He had undermined McClellan, fiercely criticized Burnside's leadership, and even made public remarks

disparaging President Lincoln's administration. Stanton deeply disliked Hooker's political maneuvering and viewed him as dangerous and unprincipled.
    - Halleck preferred the traditional administrative competence of a West Point graduate like Rosecrans. Moreover, Hooker had a historic, bitter personal feud with Halleck dating back to pre-war service in California. Halleck intensely distrusted his character, motives, and personal habits.
- Hooker took command of the AoP on January 26, 1863. He was the obvious choice given his reputation as a tough and aggressive fighter. Almost immediately, two division commanders resigned (William Franklin refused to serve under Hooker; Edwin Sumner had poor health) and Daniel Butterfield became chief of staff. Hooker created the Bureau of Military Information, appointing Colonel George Sharpe to command, who utilized cavalry reconnaissance, spies, scouts and aerial balloons. Consequently, Hooker knew that Lee had covered all of the crossings of the Rappahannock.

Hooker thought he had the perfect plan. How close did it come to working?

1. What was the state of the AoP's morale and leadership after the Battle of Fredericksburg, and how did this lead to Hooker taking command?

The Battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862 arguably left the AoP in its deepest crisis of morale and leadership during the Civil War. As described by Bradford A. Wineman, "The debacle at Fredericksburg sent reverberations throughout the ranks of the AoP and the Northern home front. Officers, politicians, and citizens alike lambasted Burnside. Eager to redeem his reputation, on January 20, 1863, he initiated a new campaign against the Confederates to dislodge them from their positions around Fredericksburg. He attempted to move west along the north bank of the Rappahannock, cross the river, and get behind the Southerners. The operation met with adversity almost immediately. On the first night, a heavy winter rain poured down on the marching soldiers, turning the roads into rivers of mud. The soggy conditions paralyzed the march as soldiers, horses, artillery pieces, and wagons became mired in the muck, all the while being taunted by amused Confederates observing the fiasco from the opposite side of the river. Burnside called off the operation and returned his frustrated brigades to their camps. The infamous "Mud March" lowered Federal morale even further, creating great discontent within the officer corps against its commander." *(https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/hooker-joseph-1814-1879/, Joseph Hooker (1814–1879) - Encyclopedia Virginia, "The Chancellorsville Campaign January – May 1863," Bradford A. Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 8-9; see also Conner, Albert Z. and Mackowski, Chris, "Seizing Destiny: The Army of the Potomac's 'Valley Forge' and the Civil War Winter that Saved the Union," El Dorado Hills: Savas Beatie, 2016)*

Post-Battle Morale: "The Army is Despondent."

- **Mass Desertions**: While Union desertion ran the full course of the war, there were periods when it spiked, most notably the winter and spring of 1863 in the wake of the Union army's devastating defeat at Fredericksburg. An estimated 200 soldiers deserted every single day during the winter of 1862–1863. *("Fighting Joe" Hooker Literally Cleaned Up the Army of the Potomac During the Civil War and Desertion, Cowardice and Punishment - Essential Civil War Curriculum.)*
- **Severe Deprivation**: Troops lacked adequate food, winter clothing, blankets, and medical supplies. *(Old Historical Pictures | "History offers powerful leadership lessons from unlikely sources." | Facebook.)*

- **Political Cynicism**: Soldiers openly questioned the competence of the Lincoln administration and the war's purpose.

Leadership Crisis: The Fall of Burnside. *("Victors in Blue: How Union Generals Fought the Confederates, Battled Each Other, and Won the Civil War," Albert Castel with Brooks D. Simpson," Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011, 171-177.)*

- **Loss of Trust**: Burnside lost the confidence of both his officer corps and the rank-and-file soldiers.
- **Internal Mutiny**: Subordinate generals, including Hooker, openly criticized Burnside and plotted to have him removed.
- **The Ultimatum**: In transmitting to President Lincoln a draft of AoP *General Orders No. 8* om January 23, Burnside demanded the president either fire his insubordinate generals (including Hooker) or accept his own resignation. *(For a transcript of Burnside's missive to President Lincoln wherein he presented GO8, see Hooker Takes Command (U.S. National Park Service).)*
- **Lincoln's Choice**: To preserve what was left of the army, Lincoln accepted Burnside's resignation on January 25, 1863, and on January 26, placed Hooker in command of the AoP. *(For a transcript of President Lincoln's letter of appointment to Hooker, see Hooker Takes Command (U.S. National Park Service).)*

Hooker Takes Command. *(Wineman, 9-10; and Hooker Replaces Burnside as Commander of the Army of the Potomac – 150 Years Ago Today | Enfilading Lines.)*

- **Aggressive Reputation**: Known as "Fighting Joe," Hooker was popular with the public and politicians for his aggressive fighting style.
- **Political Backing**: He had strong support from radical Republicans in Congress who demanded a leader who would fight.
- **Lack of Alternatives**: Other high-ranking generals were either politically unpopular or viewed as lacking the drive to lead the whole army.
- **Lincoln's Famous Caveat**: Lincoln appointed Hooker but sent him a famous letter warning him against his ambition and his previous remarks about the need for a "dictator" to win the war.

2. What reforms did Hooker implement to improve the army's organization, supply, and morale before the campaign?

After his assumption of command, Hooker put the AoP through a significant structural and compositional reorganization that fundamentally altered how the army functioned, communicated, and fought. He recognized that high morale required physical well-being, efficient organization, and a sense of pride. *("Fighting Joe" Hooker Literally Cleaned Up the Army of the Potomac During the Civil War, Emerging Civil War, , and Hooker Reorganizes the Army of the Potomac – The Civil War Months.)*

A. Sanitary and Dietary Reforms.

- **Fresh Rations**: He replaced rotten hardtack with soft, freshly baked bread and introduced fresh vegetables, potatoes, and onions.

When Hooker took command of the AoP, the force was suffering from abysmal morale, a 10% desertion rate, and rampant malnutrition. He accomplished his dramatic overhaul of the soldiers' diet by addressing widespread supply chain corruption, building new infrastructure, and reforming accountability.

- **Eradication of Internal Corruption.**
  - **Cracking Down on Profiteering**: Regimental commissary officers had been secretly selling the army's fresh food rations to local civilians for cash, leaving the soldiers with nothing but rotten hardtack and salt pork. Hooker put an immediate end to this black-market profiteering.
  - **Replacing Incompetent Quartermasters**: Quartermasters and commissary staff who failed to deliver adequate rations or who were suspected of corruption were summarily fired and replaced with efficient officers.
- **Improving Field Messing Capabilities.**
  - **Erecting Camp Bakeries**: Rather than waiting for complex supply lines to ship fresh bread from distant cities, Hooker ordered the immediate construction of large, centralized baking ovens directly inside the military camps.
  - **Employing Dedicated Company Cooks**: He ended the practice of individual soldiers trying to cook their own raw rations. Instead, he mandated that each company assign permanent, trained cooks to run the kitchens and bake fresh bread.
  - **Mandating Written Explanations**: Hooker issued strict administrative orders declaring that fresh bread must be provided four times a week, and fresh onions or potatoes twice a week. Any commissary officer who failed to meet these strict quotas was forced to submit a written explanation directly to headquarters.
  - **Revitalizing the Inspector General**: He empowered the Office of the Inspector General to conduct surprise, rigorous checks of camp kitchens, storage facilities, and food quality to ensure compliance.

- **Scurvy Eradication**: The addition of fresh food and citrus quickly eliminated the scurvy epidemic ripping through the winter camps.
- **Camp Hygiene**: He enforced strict sanitation rules, requiring proper drainage, new latrines, and the regular airing out of tents.
- **Medical Overhaul**: He modernized the field hospital system and gave the medical corps independent control over its own transport ambulances. He accomplished these massive logistical reforms by fully backing, enforcing, and institutionalizing the organizational plans of his Medical Director, Dr. Jonathan Letterman. While Letterman had originally drafted the blueprints for the Ambulance Corps in August 1862, previous army commanders failed to execute them uniformly, leaving transport tethered to traditional supply lines.
  - **Stripping Control from the Quartermaster Department.**
    - Prior to Hooker's command, ambulances were managed by the Quartermaster Department, who frequently commandeered medical wagons to move ammunition, food, or tents.
    - Hooker enforced orders that strictly prohibited the use of ambulances for anything other than transporting the sick and wounded.
  - **Establishing an Independent Command Hierarchy.**
    - Hooker gave Letterman the administrative power to create a rigid, independent military framework just for medical transport.

        - A Captain was appointed as the commandant of each army corps' ambulance team.
        - Lieutenants were assigned to direct transport at the division and brigade levels.
        - Sergeants managed the vehicles and horses at the regimental level.
        - This structure meant medical personnel reported exclusively to the Medical Department rather than combat line officers.
    - **Modernizing and Centralizing Field Hospitals.**
        - Hooker consolidated scattered, inefficient regimental hospitals into centralized division field hospitals, to be positioned safely 1 to 1.5 miles behind battle lines, out of artillery range.
        - This step created a clear "echelon of care" moving from immediate frontline triage to mobile dressing stations via dedicated ambulances, and finally to centralized surgical tents.
    - **Training Dedicated Personnel.**
        - Hooker stopped the practice of using random, unmotivated soldiers or civilian drivers as ad-hoc ambulance staff.
        - Soldiers were permanently detailed to the Ambulance Corps and underwent strict daily drill training in stretcher-bearing and rapid casualty evacuation.

    By April, Hooker's strict execution of the "Letterman System" kept the army intact, dramatically reduced mortality rates, and served as the direct blueprint for Congress when it passed the Ambulance Corps Act of 1864 to reform the entire Union Army.

[Refer to Orders of Battle]

B. Structural Changes. *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 11-12)*

- **Abolished the Grand Divisions**: At Fredericksburg, Burnside had grouped the army's individual corps into three massive, unwieldy "Grand Divisions" (Right, Center, and Left). Hooker completely dismantled them on February 5. *(Welcher, 659)* He deemed them an unnecessary bottleneck that sluggishly impeded communications and delayed battlefield orders. This returned the AoP to a streamlined structure of seven infantry corps, each led by a Major General. All corps commanders reported directly to Hooker.

    I Corps (John Fulton Reynolds)
    II Corps (Darius Nash Couch)
    III Corps (Daniel Edgarf Sickles)
    V Corps (George Gordon Meade)
    VI Corps (John Sedgwick)
    XI Corps (Oliver Otis Howard)
    XII Corps (Henry Warner Slocum)

- **Compositional Changes and New Corps:** Burnside's old IX Corps departed the army to serve in the Western Theater. To offset this loss, the veteran XI Corps and XII Corps rejoined the army.
    - IX Corps transferred to Kentucky under the Department of Ohio, now commanded by Burnside.
    - XI Corps and XII Corps had been stationed in northern Virgina as part of the defense ring in front of Washington, DC.
- **Cavalry Consolidation**: He consolidated scattered cavalry units into a single, unified Cavalry Corps under Brigadier General George Stoneman. Previously, Union cavalry regiments were scattered across different infantry divisions, primarily serving as localized scouts, pickets, or messengers rather than a cohesive

fighting force. Hooker's consolidation resulted in a 10,000-man strike force capable of conducting large-scale, independent strategic operations — such as the deep-raid behind enemy lines planned for the Chancellorsville campaign.

C. Artillery Decentralization: Maj. General George B. McClellan, then commander of the AoP, had increased the tactical authority of Brigadier General Henry Jackson Hunt by appointing him Chief of Artillery back on September 5, 1862 (just prior to the Maryland Campaign), to provide a unified, flexible artillery command. Hunt was entirely capable of that role. During this period of reorganization, he wanted to take it a step further. He wanted to centralize the army's artillery into a Corps with himself in command. Hooker, based on his experience as a division and corps commander, believed the guns better served the tactical situation when virtually all batteries were distributed down to division level. *(Sources vary. For example, there is no army-level Artillery Reserve included in the Order of Battle listed in Sears, 453-467; an Artillery Reserve of only four batteries of light artillery included in Welcher's listing, 656-659, and Arnold Blumberg, in "The Artillery Reserve of the Army of the Potomac," "Military Heritage, Early Spring 2014," puts it as "six field batteries and six siege batteries out of 71 batteries in the army." Also, see "Two Roads to Gettysburg,"* *Nooks & Crannies – Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table.)*

- Hunt put Hooker off by vigorously disagreeing. "He showed so much ill feeling, that I was unwilling to place my artillery in his charge." Hooker stripped him of direct control over the artillery reserve and ordered him to administrative duties only. In battle, Hunt was expected to "be about" but to direct batteries only for a specific purpose and on Hooker's specific authority. *(Sears, 68)*
    - This was a critical error that would come back to haunt Hooker in spades, coming to a head during the fierce fighting around Chancellorsville Crossroads on May 3.
    - For most of the operation the Artillery Reserve, such as it was, was placed near Falmouth to aid the Union crossing of the Rappahannock River north of Fredericksburg. Its only real contribution to the campaign was long-range fire support at the Battle of Salem Church on May 4 and then providing covering fire as VI Corps recrossed to the north side of the Rappahannock during the night of May 5-6. *(Blumberg, "The Artillery Reserve of the Army of the Potomac")*
- **Improved Intelligence Capabilities:** He enhanced his intelligence gathering capabilities by creating a Bureau of Military Information under his deputy provost marshal, Colonel George H. Sharpe, whose mission was to discern the enemy's intentions through secret agents and the interrogation of prisoners.
    - Presumably Hooker was aware Longstreet and half of his First Corps had been detached to southeastern Virginia.

D. Administrative Changes.

- **Furlough System**: He established a structured system for home leave, giving homesick soldiers something to look forward to and drastically cutting desertion rates.
- **Pay Recovery**: He pressured the government to secure back-pay for soldiers, some of whom had not been paid in over six months.

E. Psychological and Pride Innovations.

- **Corps Badges**: He adopted Chief of Staff Colonel Daniel Butterfield's idea to assign a unique flannel shape (like a clover, diamond, or cross) and color to each corps. Soldiers sewed the patches onto their caps, promoting unit pride, accountability, and rivalry.
    - By 1864, nearly every active Union corps adopted its own unique symbol and the matching division color system. *(Union Corps Badge System)*

- **Rigorous Training**: He filled idle winter hours with structured drills and target practice to sharpen fighting skills and rebuild confidence and unit cohesion.
- **Amnesty Proclamation**: He offered a temporary amnesty for deserters who returned voluntarily, successfully bringing thousands of men back into the ranks.

By the spring of 1863, Hooker had successfully transformed a defeated force into what he confidently called "the finest army on the planet." *(Conner and Mackowski, 230)* One corps commander, Couch, stated that Hooker had "infused new life and discipline into the Army." There was some urgency to getting operations underway before the nine-month and two-year enlistments within the army expired. *(Welcher, 659)* After we discuss the battle in detail, we will loop back to these and discuss how well the structural changes succeeded or backfired during the actual maneuvering in the Wilderness.

3. How about the Army of Northern Virginia? *(Google AI)*

Lee radically transformed his army's administrative and tactical makeup to maximize speed, lethality, and flexibility in the field.

A. The Battalion System for Artillery.

- **The Old System**: At Fredericksburg, Confederate artillery was largely tied to individual infantry brigades. This distributed system made it difficult to mass firepower quickly, and the lack of standardized ammunition coordination caused chaotic logistical bottlenecks.
- **The Change**: In February 1863, Lee and his artillery chiefs formally abolished brigade artillery and instituted the Battalion System. Guns were organized into independent battalions of 4 to 6 batteries (roughly 16 to 24 guns) under the command of dedicated artillery officers.
- **The Result**: This was the single most successful Confederate structural change of the campaign. Instead of answering to infantry brigadiers, artillery battalion commanders operated with tactical autonomy. This allowed, for example, Colonel Edward Porter Alexander to rapidly mass artillery at Hazel Grove, creating a devastating 30-gun bombardment that broke the Union line and secured a Confederate victory.

B. Detaching Half of an Infantry Corps.

- **The Old System**: The AoNV was built on two massive, balanced pillars: the First Corps under Lt. Gen. James Longstreet and the Second Corps under Lt. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.
- **The Change**: Due to severe subsistence and forage crises in Virginia, Lee was forced to detach Longstreet with two full divisions (Maj. Generals John Bell Hood's and George Edward Pickett's) to southeastern Virginia to forage for food and counter Union threats near Suffolk.
- **The Result**: Lee went into Chancellorsville with his infantry corps composition reduced by nearly one-third. Jackson's Second Corps remained intact, but Longstreet's First Corps was reduced to just two divisions (McLaws and Anderson) operating under Lee's direct supervision. This structural imbalance accidentally created the exact conditions for Jackson's massive, singular flank attack, as his intact corps represented the bulk of Lee's available striking power.

C. Consolidation of Horse Artillery.

- **The Old System**: Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry Division had its own attached horse artillery batteries, but they were often assigned piecemeal to accompany individual cavalry brigades on scouting missions.

- **The Change**: Stuart and his brilliant young artillery commander, Major John Pelham, consolidated the fast-moving guns into a unified Horse Artillery Battalion.
- **The Result**: Though Pelham was tragically killed in a skirmish at Kelly's Ford in March 1863, his structural legacy endured. At Chancellorsville, the highly mobile horse artillery kept pace with Stuart's cavalry, providing immediate, heavy fire support on narrow Wilderness roads where traditional, heavier infantry artillery could not easily deploy.

D. Severe Compositional Depletion.

- **The Numbers Crisis**: Due to a combination of winter desertions, rampant disease, a lack of shoes, and Longstreet's detachment, the army's raw composition shrank drastically. Lee faced Hooker's 130,000-man army with only about 60,000 effective Confederate soldiers.
- **The Reaction**: To compensate for fewer boots on the ground, Lee stripped his rear-area garrisons and consolidated diminished regiments. He relied entirely on the superior cohesion, high morale, and aggressive command structure of his remaining veteran units to offset the massive mathematical deficit.

4. What was the size and condition of the AoNV at the outset of the campaign?

A. The Condition of the Army. *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 12-13. Also see "The High Water Mark of an Army: The Characteristics of the Army of Northern Virginia during The Gettysburg Campaign," John S. Heiser. Microsoft Word - pages 1-18 Heiser 98.doc.)*

The physical state of the Confederate army stood in sharp, paradoxical contrast to its psychological state. The winter of 1862–1863 had not been kind.

- **Deplorable Physical Condition**: The winter of 1862–1863 had severely punished the Confederate rank-and-file. Soldiers suffered from chronic shortages of clothing, blankets, and quality shoes. Rations were meager and tightly rationed, causing scurvy and malnutrition across the camps. Sickness was a constant threat, and the army was desperately short on fresh horses for its artillery and cavalry.
- **Morale**: In spite of this, the army's morale remained high. Their victory at Fredericksburg had reinforced their faith in Lee. The men possessed a sense of invincibility, believing they could outfight any force the Union threw at them, regardless of the odds. Morale was affected by reports from home of food shortages and other suffering — e.g., Jefferson Davis's calling for a national day of fasting on March 27 and the subsequent Richmond bread riot of April 2 — but did not eliminate it.
- **Desertions**: During January to June 1863, the AoNV experienced a low-to-moderate desertion trend, maintaining a relatively stable, high-morale force compared to later stages of the war.* While unauthorized absences remained a constant background issue, the army was at its operational and psychological peak. *(For a general discussion, see "Desertion, Cowardice and Punishment," Mark A, Weitz, Essential Civil War Curriculum, Desertion, Cowardice and Punishment - Essential Civil War Curriculum.)*

  ** While soldiers were steadily slipping away from the army, the volume of departures was manageable and did not threaten the army's ability to fight; losses to desertion hovered around **2% to 7%** of the total force at any given time.*

  - Exact statistical desertion percentages for these specific six months are difficult to isolate due to lax Confederate bookkeeping. However, historical data and military records from this timeframe outline clear trends: *(Google AI)*

        - **The Winter Lull (January–February 1863):** Desertion rates spiked briefly but were managed. Following the December 1862 victory at Fredericksburg, morale was high but winter camp conditions were brutal. Lack of rations, inadequate clothing, and desperate letters from home regarding economic inflation caused a steady stream of men—particularly from Virginia and North Carolina—to slip away to help their families.
        - **General Lee's Crackdown (March–April 1863):** Desertion slowed down significantly. In response to the winter absenteeism. Lee and the Confederate War Department enforced stricter measures. Stricter definitions under the Conscription Act, rigorous camp enforcement, and the implementation of public executions by firing squad served as highly effective deterrents during the spring buildup.
    - Unlike the AoP, which hit its absolute highest desertion crisis in early 1863 following the Fredericksburg debacle, Lee's army remained largely cohesive. It was not until after the defeat at Gettysburg (July 1863) and the deepening economic collapse of the late-war period (1864–1865) that desertion in the AoNV spiraled uncontrollably.

- **A Hardened Core**: While smaller, the AoNV was highly cohesive. It was comprised mostly of battle-hardened veterans who were closely attuned to their officers. This operational familiarity allowed Lee to rely on his subordinate commanders to execute complex, aggressive, and highly risky maneuvers immediately as the need arose.

B. The Confederate supply and forage crisis of the 1862–1863 winter.

The winter of 1862–1863 was arguably the darkest logistical period for the AoNV. Following the Battle of Fredericksburg, the army went into winter quarters along the Rappahannock River. What followed was a brutal, slow-motion crisis of starvation and deprivation that nearly broke the army before the spring campaign even began. This can be broken down into four devastating layers:

- **The Starvation Rations:** The Confederate logistical system, managed by the notoriously incompetent Commissary General Lucius B. Northrop, completely collapsed. Virginia's agricultural infrastructure was exhausted, and the South's railroad network was rapidly disintegrating. *(See, for example, Jerrold Northrop Moore, "Confederate Commissary General: Lucius Bellinger Northrop and the Subsistence Bureau of the Southern Army," Shippensburg: White Maine Publishing, 1996; cf. Ezra J Warner, "Generals in Gray: Lives of Confederate Commanders," Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1995, 225)*
    - **The "Nassau Bacon"**: Meat rations shrank to a mere quarter-pound of salt pork or beef per day, which soldiers frequently complained was rancid, rusted, or imported from Nassau and practically inedible.
    - **Hardtack and Peas**: Flour was so scarce that men were rationed a few ounces of cornmeal or moldy hardtack. To survive, soldiers boiled cowpeas (field peas meant for livestock) into a watery, nutrient-deficient mush.
    - **The Scurvy Outbreak**: Due to a total absence of fresh vegetables or citrus, scurvy tore through the camps. Men's teeth loosened, gums bled, and old wounds reopened. Lee grew so desperate that he issued orders commanding his soldiers to scour the frozen Virginia woods for wild onions, garlic, and sassafras to boil into medicinal teas.
- **The Forage Crisis and Dying Horses:** By early 1863, there was virtually no grain or corn left in northern Virginia.

    - **The Skeleton Teams**: Pack mules and artillery horses were reduced to eating pine straw, twigs, and bark. Observers noted that the animals looked like walking skeletons, their ribs sharply protruding through their hides.
    - **Mass Die-Offs**: Thousands of horses starved to death in their picket lines. The stench of decomposing animal carcasses hung heavily over the winter camps around Fredericksburg.

- **The "Barefoot" Army and Exposure:** While the men were starving internally, they were freezing externally. The Confederate Quartermaster Department failed to provide adequate clothing, blankets, or footwear for the bitter Virginia winter.
    - **The Blood-Stained Snow**: Thousands of soldiers lacked shoes. When the army marched or pulled picket duty in the snow, men wrapped their feet in raw, un-tanned beef hides (called "beef-moccasins") or filthy rags. The trails around the camps were literally stained with blood from cracked, frostbitten feet.
    - **The Vermin Epidemic**: Due to a lack of soap and clean water, the entire army was infested with body lice, which the soldiers grimly nicknamed "graybacks." Men would sit naked around campfires in freezing temperatures, holding their clothes over the flames to pop the lice eggs in the seams.

C. The Absence of Longstreet's Corps.

In February 1863, Lee made the difficult decision to detach Longstreet and two of its veteran divisions on an independent expedition to southeastern Virginia, leading to the Siege of Suffolk. This deployment had two major purposes:

- **The Logistical Crisis**: The primary mission was foraging. Central Virginia's forage was exhausted, and Lee's men were starving. Longstreet was sent to gather vital food, cured meats, corn, and animal fodder from the richer coastal regions.
- **Coastal Defense**: Longstreet's presence also blocked potential Union advances threatening Richmond from the coast.

"Ideally, Lee wanted to invade the North again, but not without Longstreet and his two divisions. He contemplated relocating to the Shenandoah Valley where he could re-provision his troops and hope that Hooker would give chase, but that would leave Richmond dangerously exposed. He could also pursue the more prudent course of action, given his substantial numerical disadvantage, and fall back to a new line of defense closer to Richmond. This, however, would surrender the territorial and psychological advantages the Confederates had gained over the previous year. Lastly, he could maintain his solid defensive position at Fredericksburg and hope to lure the Yankee forces into attacking as they had in December. Supply problems notwithstanding, this plan would forfeit the initiative to the enemy, a concept that contradicted the essence of Lee's aggressive nature. But at the time, it seemed he had little choice than to wait and react to the Union Army's next move." *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 13)*

Only two divisions of Longstreet's corps remained with Lee — those of McLaws and Anderson. Because Hooker launched his offensive with unexpected speed, Lee was unable to recall Longstreet in time, leaving him with a significantly lopsided army consisting mainly of Jackson's Second Corps.

5. Describe the terrain involved in the Chancellorsville campaign (Fredericksburg - the Wilderness - the Rappahannock River and associated fords).

The campaign unfolded across a roughly 15-by-20-mile stretch of Spotsylvania County, Virginia, bounded by the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers to the north and northwest, and centered on the crossroads hamlet of Chancellorsville. The terrain fell into two starkly different zones: open, cultivated ground near Fredericksburg, and the dense second-growth forest known as the Wilderness to the west. This contrast shaped nearly every tactical decision Hooker and Lee made.

- **Chancellorsville:** Although its name implies that it was a village Chancellorsville was actually just a large brick house with a few scattered dependencies set in the heart of the Wilderness. The building was constructed by the Chancellor family in the early 1800s as an inn to accommodate travelers using Orange Turnpike. Traffic had decreased markedly by 1860, and the Chancellors then used the structure, which they called Chancellorsville, as a family home. Frances Chancellor and her family were living at the house in 1863, when Joe Hooker occupied it as his headquarters. For two days Mrs. Chancellor, her children, and a few other local people remained sheltered in the house while the battle raged around them. But on May 3 Confederate artillery shells set the building on fire, compelling those inside to flee for safety.
    - Once at the crossroads, Hooker brimmed with confidence. Sickles's III Corps would join the turning column early the next morning. Hooker would then oversee an advance he believed certain to unnerve Lee. Within earshot of a newspaper correspondent, Hooker stated, "The rebel army is now the legitimate property of the Army of the Potomac. They may as well pack up their haversacks and make for Richmond. I shall be after them."
      (https://npshistory.com/publications/civil_war_series/8/sec2.htm#2)
- **The Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers and their fords:** The Rappahannock flowed southeasterly past Kelly's Ford to its junction with the Rapidan above United States Ford, past Bank's Ford, and then past Falmouth and Fredericksburg as it continues southeasterly to the Chesapeake Bay. The Rapidan flows south of the Rappahannock on a more easterly course past German Ford to its confluence with the Rappahannock. This river system was the campaign's defining obstacle. Hooker's plan exploited the fact that the Rappahannock/Rapidan line was too long for Lee to picket everywhere in strength, so the upper fords were lightly guarded. Despite the rivers being high and running fast due to spring rains *(Sears, 164)*, roughly 42,000 Federal troops crossed virtually unopposed and appeared unexpectedly on Lee's flank and rear northwest of Chancellorsville, while Sedgwick's wing pinned the Confederates at Fredericksburg.
    - **Key crossing points:** *(Rivers, Rails, and Wooden Bateaux Civil War Pontoniering in the East Theater; also see Engineers on the Rappahannock (Part 7) – Franklin's Crossing | Mercer Square and 15th Engineer Regiment :: New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center)*
        - **Fredericksburg** — where the river was wide, deep, and unfordable, requiring pontoon bridges (at the same sites as in December 1862). This was where Sedgwick's VI Corps demonstrated and later advanced to engage Lee's forces covering the main body's rear.
            - **Franklin's Crossing:** Roughly 1.75 miles downriver of Fredericksburg, three pontoon bridges built by the 15th New York Volunteer Engineers and the U.S. Engineer Battalion. *(50th New York Engineer Regiment - Wikipedia)*
            - **Fitzhugh's Crossing:** About 1.5 miles further downstream, two pontoon bridges built by the 50th New York Engineer Regiment.
        - **Kelly's Ford** — On the Rappahannock, far upstream (about 27 miles above Fredericksburg), used by the Union cavalry and by the flanking infantry columns (XI, XII, and part of V Corps) to cross largely undetected via pontoon bridges and by wading the ford itself. *(Sears, 162)*

- **United States (US) Ford** — On the Rappahannock, roughly 11.5 miles upstream from Fredericksburg, near the confluence with the Rapidan. This became the critical link between Hooker's two wings once he moved to Chancellorsville. Two pontoon bridges were built for this crossing.
    - "The volunteer engineers' work at United States Ford saved Hooker's army after the defeat at Chancellorsville. Inside a fortified bridgehead laid out by the army's chief engineer, both New York engineer regiments struggled to prepare three crossings for the army's withdrawal. Just as they finished the approach roads, it started raining in sheets. Within hours, the river rose 6 feet, and the current accelerated enough to threaten the bridges. The uppermost span took most of the damage, so the pontoniers dismantled it and used its pontoons to strengthen the other two. By midnight, they had completed the two remaining bridges, allowing the army to return to the safety of its camp at Falmouth…" (Rivers, Rails, and Wooden Bateaux Civil War Pontoniering in the East Theater and Noe, 274)
- **Banks' Ford** — On the Rappahannock, at a sharp bend in the river about midway between Fredericksburg and US Ford, a shorter route Hooker never fully exploited.
- **Scott's Ford** — On the Rappahannock, a bit less than a mile downriver of Bank's Ford. It was used in Sedgwick's withdrawal after Salem Church. This May 5 withdrawal was via pontoon bridges built by the 15th New York Volunteer Engineers and the 50th New York Engineer Regiment. *(50th New York Engineer Regiment in the American Civil War)*
- **Germanna Ford** — On the Rapidan almost due south of Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock. Before the war, a trestle bridge had crossed the Rapidan here, but during 1862 it was burned, leaving only the tall stone piers in the stream bed. In mid-April, the Confederates had dispatched a party of pioneers, with a guardian force of infantry and cavalry, to build a bridge that Lee wanted for his proposed march into Maryland. They set up a sawmill and fashioned stringers to rest atop the piers and had cut planking and were preparing to start their bridge building in these last days of April. XII Corps engineers decided to complete the job and, thus, the column crossed the ford. *(Sears, 164-165)*
- **Ely's Ford** — On the Rapidan (a major tributary joining the Rappahannock near US Ford), used by the flanking column to complete its swing into the Confederate rear. It was a rough and rocky Ford, and the current was swift. It was originally intended that the pontoon bridge at Kelly's Ford would be reused at the Ely's crossing, but there were so many delays at Kelly's during the day that the bridge train was not ready to March until 11:30 that night. V Corps crossed by foot. *(Sears, 165-166)*

- How long would it take a typical Union infantry regiment to cross these fords via wading? Rough time estimates:
    - **Shallow, firm-bottomed ford (knee-to-thigh deep, moderate current)** — a regiment of ~400 men in column of twos, moving steadily: roughly **8–12 minutes** to clear the water itself, though total time including the approach, halting to assess the crossing, and re-forming ranks on the far bank often ran 20–30 minutes.
    - **Deeper or swifter ford (waist-deep or more)**, which several of the upper Rappahannock/Rapidan fords could be in spring, especially after rain — men often had to cross in file, holding rifles and cartridge boxes overhead, sometimes linking arms or using a rope line for support. This could stretch a single regiment's crossing to 30–45 minutes, particularly with wagons, artillery, or hesitant new recruits mixed in.

- **What Slowed Things Down Further.**
  - **Massed columns**: At Kelly's Ford and the Rapidan crossings (Germanna, Ely's), Hooker was moving three corps — not a single regiment in isolation but a dense column stretching for miles. Even if one regiment took 20 minutes, the corps behind it might take most of a day to fully close up and cross, since each regiment had to wait its turn and the ford itself could only handle one column at a time.
  - **Artillery and wagons**: Guns and supply trains crossing the same ford dramatically slowed the pace, since they needed firmer footing and more careful handling than infantry.
  - **Weather**: Heavy rains just after the crossing (April 29–May 1, 1863) raised the Rappahannock and nearly stranded parts of the army on the wrong side, which is part of why Hooker's timetable slipped.
    - The Rappahannock and Rapidan rose quickly, and fords that had been passable for artillery on April 28 became marginal or impassable within a day.
    - Artillery trains often had to be rerouted to use the pontoon bridges laid at US Ford rather than risk the natural fords once water levels rose, which is part of why Hooker's artillery concentration around Chancellorsville lagged behind his infantry's arrival — guns simply could not keep pace with foot soldiers through deteriorating fords, and the army's most decisive tactical disadvantage (weaker artillery presence in the Wilderness clearings) was partly a direct consequence of this crossing bottleneck.
- **Historical Benchmark:** The actual Union flanking movement is instructive: roughly 42,000 men (XI, XII, and part of V Corps) crossed at Kelly's Ford and then the Rapidan at Germanna and Ely's Fords between April 27 and April 30 — about three to four days for the full movement, though that includes marching time between crossings, not just the fords themselves. A single regiment at the head of the column could clear a given ford in well under an hour; the bottleneck was always the mass of men behind it, not the physical act of wading.
- **How about artillery batteries and battalions?** Artillery moved far slower through a ford than infantry, and the numbers below reflect the mechanics of the guns themselves rather than just manpower.
  - **The Artillery Unit and Its Vehicles.**
    - A typical Union battery in 1863 had 6 guns (commonly 12-pounder Napoleons or 3-inch Ordnance Rifles), each towed by a limber (ammunition chest on wheels, pulled by 6 horses), plus a matching caisson (extra ammunition, also 6-horse team) for each gun, plus a battery wagon and traveling forge. That's roughly 14–16 wheeled vehicles per battery, each 6-horse team, strung out over several hundred yards of road when marching in column.
    - A battalion (grouping of 4–6 batteries under Hooker's reorganized artillery system) could mean 60–90 vehicles with their teams — a formation that could stretch a mile or more on the march.
  - **Why Fords Were Harder for Guns Than Men.**
    - **Wheeled vehicles need a firm, even streambed.** A ford that infantry crossed easily could still mire a gun carriage if the bottom was soft, rocky, or uneven — sudden drops or boulders could snap an axle or overturn a limber.
    - **Horses balked or panicked** in swift or deep water more readily than men, especially with a loaded ammunition chest behind them.

- **Ammunition had to stay dry.** Deep fords risked spoiling powder in the limber chests, so batteries sometimes had to find the shallowest possible line of crossing, even if it meant a longer approach or a diagonal line through the water rather than a direct crossing.
- **Single-file necessity.** Unlike infantry, which could sometimes cross several files wide, guns and caissons almost always had to cross one vehicle at a time in the wheel-tracks of a scouted safe path, since drivers needed to follow a known firm line.
    - **Single gun with limber and caisson, shallow firm ford**: 3–5 minutes to cross, including the team picking its way carefully.
    - **Full battery (6 guns, 6 caissons, plus wagon/forge) at a good ford**: 30–45 minutes to get the whole unit across in sequence, assuming no mishaps.
    - **Battery at a difficult ford** (deep, uneven bottom, or after rain raised the water): could run 1–2 hours, especially if a vehicle stalled or had to be manhandled out by hand and rope — which did happen and could back up an entire column behind it.
    - **Battalion (4–6 batteries)**: 3–6 hours to fully clear a single ford, given that each battery had to wait for the one ahead to clear the crossing point before starting, and any mishap multiplied delay down the whole line.

- **Fredericksburg and the Heights.**
    - South and west of the town, the ground rose to Marye's Heights and the ridgeline continuing south toward Prospect Hill, offering a naturally strong defensive line with clear fields of fire across the open plain below — the same position that had shattered Burnside's assaults in December 1862. This high ground would be by a much-reduced Confederate force (Early's division plus Barksdale's brigade from McLaws' division, roughly 10,000 men) during the main battle, screening Lee's rear while he took the bulk of the army west.
    - The Sunken Road and stone wall at the base of Marye's Heights, and the open, gently rolling farmland between the town and the ridge, gave defenders devastating advantages — a fact Sedgwick's men confirmed again in the Second Battle of Fredericksburg on May 3, though this time the thinner Confederate line was overrun.

- **The Wilderness:** West of Fredericksburg, roughly from the vicinity of Chancellorsville extending toward the Rapidan and beyond toward Mine Run, lay the Wilderness of Spotsylvania — a name applied to a dense tract of second-growth scrub oak and pine, and dense, tangled underbrush — the product of decades of charcoal-cutting to feed local iron furnaces. Moreover, the area was cut up by many swampy little streams. With severely limited visibility, movement off the few roads was difficult for individuals and next to impossible for formed bodies of troops. *("The Wilderness during the Civil War," "Encyclopedia Virginia," Wilderness during the Civil War, The - Encyclopedia Virginia)*
    - **Key characteristics:**
        - Standard Historical Definition: Approximately 72 square miles (46,080 acres).
            - Maximum Geographic Range: 132 to 156 square miles (84,480 to 99,840 acres).
            - Approximate Dimensions: Roughly 12 miles wide by 6 miles long.
        - Visibility often reduced to a few dozen yards, sometimes less.
        - Few clearings, and those that existed (such as those at Chancellorsville itself, Hazel Grove, and Fairview) took on outsized tactical importance as the only ground where artillery could be massed or deployed effectively.

- Dense terrain nullified much of the Union's numerical and artillery superiority, since units could not see each other, coordinate movements, or maintain formation — a decisive factor in enabling Jackson's flank march and surprise attack to succeed on May 2.
- The few roads through the Wilderness became critical arteries. The Orange Turnpike and Orange Plank Road ran roughly parallel east-west through the forest toward Fredericksburg and Orange Court House; the Furnace Road (leading past the Catharine Furnace) provided the route for Jackson's 12-mile flanking march on May 2, screened from Union observation by the woods themselves. *(Google AI)*
- Orange Turnpike and Orange Plank Road earned their names based on where they led and how they were constructed to serve 19th-century trade. Both functioned as critical toll roads connecting the port of Fredericksburg to agricultural markets further inland.
    - Orange Turnpike.
        - The "Orange" Connection: Begun around 1810 by the Swift Run Gap Turnpike Company, the road was meant to stretch all the way to the Blue Ridge Mountains. However, the project ran out of momentum and never extended past Orange Court House in Orange County, Virginia. Because Orange Court House became its final major destination, locals naturally dubbed it the "Orange Turnpike."
        - The "Turnpike" Style: It was built as a classic crushed-stone macadam turnpike, featuring tollgates (or "pikes") where travelers paid a fee to pass.
    - Orange Plank Road.
        - The "Orange" Connection: Built in the mid-19th century as a successor to parts of the old turnpike, this competing pay road followed a similar but slightly modified path, aiming for the same western trade markets toward Orange County. It diverged from the Turnpike in certain sections to offer wagons gentler slopes and easier traction.
        - The "Plank" Style: To prevent heavy commercial wagons from sinking into the notoriously thick, muddy Virginia clay, the builders paved half of the roadbed with thick wooden planks. Heavily loaded wagons heading east toward the Rappahannock River were legally given the right-of-way on the smooth wooden planking, while empty wagons heading west had to pull off into the unpaved mud.
    - By the time of the Civil War, these parallel roadways formed the famous bottleneck intersection at Chancellorsville Crossroads, dictating how Union and Confederate forces maneuvered through the dense wilderness terrain.
- **Catharine Furnace**, an old iron furnace clearing along Jackson's route, briefly exposed his column to Federal observation and attack (Sickles' probe), a moment of real vulnerability in the march.

- **Chancellorsville Crossroads:** Chancellorsville was a hamlet at a road intersection (Chancellorsville Crossroads) surrounded by the Wilderness on nearly all sides, with only a modest clearing around it. Chancellor's House was the residential structure now serving as an inn. Hooker's decision to concentrate his army here rather than push out of the Wilderness onto more open ground to the east (toward Banks' Ford and Zoan Church) surrendered the advantage of numbers and artillery that open terrain would have given him, and instead played to Confederate strengths in a fight where boldness and local knowledge of obscure trails (used by Jackson's guide, Rev. Beverly Tucker Lacy, and local resident Charles Wellford) mattered more than mass.

- **Hazel Grove and Fairview:** Two clearings just south and east of Chancellorsville became the tactical fulcrum of May 3:
    - **Hazel Grove**, a slightly elevated open area that was, as described by (then) Colonel Edward Porter Alexander, "…a beautiful position for artillery, an open grassy ridge, some 400 yards long, extending N.E. and S.W., & only about 200 yards from the forest…" *(Gary W. Gallagher, ed., "Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander," Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989, 204)* The position was abandoned by Sickles' III Corps on Hooker's orders — a costly error, since Stuart's artillery immediately occupied it and used the elevation to enfilade the Union position at…
    - **Fairview**, another clearing that anchored the Federal line's massed artillery. The loss of Hazel Grove effectively doomed the Union center.

- **Strategic Significance of the Terrain**
    - **Approximate road distances** (As with strength and casualty estimates, distances can vary with the source. The battlefield distances I use are based on Esposito's maps.) –

Fredericksburg to Salem Church:	4	miles
Salem Church to Zoan Church:	2.5	miles
Zoan Church to Chancellor House:	3.5	miles
	10	miles

    - **The river system** gave Hooker the opportunity for surprise (wide, lightly guarded upper fords) but also constrained his logistics and line of retreat to a handful of crossings, which became critical once the battle turned against him.
    - **The Wilderness** neutralized Union advantages in numbers and artillery, enabled Confederate audacity (the divided-army gamble and Jackson's flank march), and turned the battle into a series of close, confused, brigade-and-division-level fights rather than a single coordinated field action.
    - **The Fredericksburg heights** allowed Lee to hold his rear with a skeleton force, freeing the bulk of his army to concentrate against Hooker in the west — an economy-of-force solution only possible because the terrain there so heavily favored the defender.
    - **Isolated clearings and roads** (Chancellor House Hazel Grove, Fairview, Catharine Furnace) became disproportionately decisive because they were the only places where artillery, cavalry, and organized formations could function at all — control of these few open patches often determined the outcome of entire days' fighting. *(Espisito, 85, and Sears 193)*

6. How did weather and ambient light affect operations?

Weather is one of the more underappreciated factors in this campaign, and historian Kenneth Noe devotes an entire chapter of *The Howling Storm* to it, titled "Nature Conspired against Us: Chancellorsville, January-May 1863" — a title borrowed directly from a Union soldier's own post-battle assessment. *(Noe, 260-275)*

A. Before Battle (roughly mid-March through April 26).

- The dominant story of this period was persistent wet weather working against Hooker's timetable. Unusually wet weather in Virginia in spring 1863 hindered Joseph Hooker's rejuvenation of the AoP and made chaos out of the army's initial offensive moves in April 1863.

- The clearest single episode came on April 13, when Hooker first tried to launch Stoneman's cavalry on its deep raid behind Lee's lines. Stoneman attempted to execute this turning movement on April 13, but heavy rains made the river crossing site at Sulphur Springs (Kelly's Ford) impassable. A contemporary account describes the scene vividly: high water surged down from the Blue Ridge, the river rose 7 feet in a few hours, and the cavalrymen who had crossed scurried back — a few drowned in the process and several dozen stranded men fell into Confederate hands. Storms continued for nearly two weeks, and it was not until April 28 that the Union cavalry could finally cross the Rappahannock. *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 14.)*
- This forced Hooker into a new strategic conference — unable to proceed, he met with Lincoln, Secretary of War Stanton, and general-in-chief Major General Halleck at Aquia on April 19 to rework his plan, which emerged as the double-envelopment scheme actually executed in late April. In effect, three weeks of bad weather directly reshaped the campaign's strategic design before a shot was fired.
    - Halleck enjoined Hooker that the destruction of Lee's army, and not the capture of Richmond, should be the object of the upcoming campaign. *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 11.)*
- The pattern broke just in time for the real advance. On April 27, conditions turned favorable: brisk breezes had dried the roads and temperatures rose into the 70s as Hooker's units finally got underway.

B. Day-by-Day During the Battle.

- **April 27–29 (march and crossing):** Dry, mild, favorable marching weather allowed Hooker's flanking columns — V, XI, and XII Corps — to move quickly and largely undetected via Kelly's Ford and then the Rapidan fords. By April 30, the maneuver was proceeding smoothly, with the flanking force concentrating around the Chancellorsville crossroads. This dry stretch was essential — it let Hooker complete an complex multi-corps river crossing on schedule, something the earlier April rains had denied Stoneman.
- **April 29 – May 1 (rain returns):** A new rain system moved in as Hooker's infantry was completing its concentration. This is the stretch most historians credit with the campaign's most consequential weather effect: it dampened dust on the roads at exactly the moment Jackson would need concealment. As one historian, Robert K. Krick, put it, the element of surprise that contributed to Jackson's success could not have been achieved without the preceding two days of spring showers — the rain had wet the road and prevented a column of dust from giving away the men as they marched on the Union forces. *(Weather during the Civil War - Encyclopedia Virginia.)*
- **May 1–2 (Jackson's flank march):** With roads damp but passable, and skies apparently having cleared enough for full-day marching, Jackson's corps made its famous 12-mile march around the Union right without raising the telltale dust cloud that dry conditions would have produced. This is the single clearest instance in the whole campaign of weather directly enabling a decisive tactical maneuver — normally a march of this size on dry Virginia roads in spring would have kicked up a visible plume for miles, alerting Federal lookouts (as nearly happened anyway when Sickles spotted the column near Catharine Furnace, but weather likely reduced how far and how obviously that dust was visible).
- **May 3 (heaviest fighting):** No major weather disruption is recorded for this day; conditions appear to have remained fair, allowing the massed artillery duels at Hazel Grove and Fairview and the large-scale infantry assaults to proceed without the mud or visibility problems that plagued other phases of the campaign. This was militarily significant in its own right — clear weather meant Confederate artillery could exploit the high ground at Hazel Grove to full effect against the Union line at Fairview.
- **May 4–5 (Lee turns on Sedgwick, then back to Hooker):** Fighting at Salem Church and the subsequent Confederate attacks against Sedgwick's isolated corps took place without major weather interference, but conditions were shifting. By May 5, a new storm system was moving in.

- **May 5–6 (the decisive rain):** This is the second most important weather turning point of the campaign, and it broke against Hooker again. On May 5, heavy rain began to fall, swelling the rivers and turning roads to mud. Fearing his army would be trapped south of the Rappahannock, Hooker convened a council of war, and despite resistance from some of his corps commanders, he ordered a general withdrawal. The retreat itself became a race against the rising river: rains caused the river to rise and threatened to break the pontoon bridges even as Hooker's army was still filing across at US Ford during the night of May 5–6.

C. Net Effect on the Outcome.

- **Early rains (mid-April) hurt the Union** by wrecking Stoneman's first cavalry effort and forcing Hooker to redesign his plan — though the eventual plan he adopted was arguably superior to the original.
- **Dry weather (April 27–29) helped the Union** by allowing the flanking march and river crossings to proceed on schedule, achieving genuine strategic surprise against Lee.
- **Light rain just before Jackson's march (April 29 – May 1) helped the Confederacy decisively** by suppressing the dust cloud that should have betrayed Jackson's flanking column, directly enabling the single most consequential tactical event of the battle.
- **The final storm (May 5–6) arguably helped the Confederacy again**, though indirectly — by pressuring Hooker into a hasty withdrawal before Lee could deliver what he intended as a final, possibly even more damaging blow on May 6. Some historians have noted the irony that the rain that nearly trapped Hooker's army against a flooding river also let him escape a battle he was already losing, since Lee's planned final assault never got the chance to unfold.
- Fog had notable impact intermittently on movements. *(Google AI)*
    - On the morning of May 1, a thick, low-lying blanket of fog settled along the Rappahannock River. Lee took advantage of this natural camouflage to split his outnumbered forces.
    - The loss of visibility severely hampered the Union's right wing, commanded by Major General John Sedgwick at Fredericksburg. Unable to gauge Confederate strength or discern Lee's intent through the fog, Sedgwick chose to hold his positions rather than push forward aggressively.
    - VI Corps' Withdrawal across Scott's Ford on May 5.

Taken as a whole, the weather record supports Noe's broader thesis: this was not simply a battle decided by generalship and terrain, but one in which two distinct rain events — one enabling Jackson's surprise, the other precipitating Hooker's retreat — bracket the campaign's decisive moments almost perfectly. The element of surprise that contributed to Jackson's success could not have been achieved without the preceding two days of spring showers — a single, fairly ordinary bit of spring weather that arguably shaped the entire course of the Eastern Theater for the next year.

Light data— *(Google AI for specific dates and times; FM 30-5, Combat Intelligence, (Hq DA, January 1960), Appendix VIII, Analysis of Area of Operations, 127, and NOAA National Weather Service Glossary for definitions.)*

	BMNT	BMCT	Sunrise	Sunset	EECT	EENT	Day Length
Mon, Apr 27	4:06 AM	4:39 AM	5:23 AM	6:58 PM	7:22 PM	7:55 PM	15:49
Tue, Apr 28	4:04 AM	4:38 AM	5:21 AM	6:59 PM	7:23 PM	7:56 PM	15:52
Wed, Apr 29	4:03 AM	4:36 AM	5:20 AM	7:00 PM	7:24 PM	7:57 PM	15:54
Thu, Apr 30	4:01 AM	4:35 AM	5:19 AM	7:01 PM	7:25 PM	7:58 PM	15:57
Fri, May 1	4:00 AM	4:34 AM	5:18 AM	7:02 PM	7:26 PM	7:59 PM	15:59
Sat, May 2	3:59 AM	4:32 AM	5:17 AM	7:03 PM	7:27 PM	8:01 PM	16:02
Sun, May 3	3:57 AM	4:31 AM	5:16 AM	7:04 PM	7:29 PM	8:02 PM	16:05
Mon, May 4	3:56 AM	4:30 AM	5:14 AM	7:05 PM	7:30 PM	8:03 PM	16:07

- BMNT (Begin Morning Nautical Twilight): The geometric center of the sun is 12° below the horizon; outlines of objects are faintly distinguishable, and ambient light is sufficient for infantry to move, coordinate, and navigate under natural cover relatively unobserved.
    - Typically, when tactical stand-to begins.
- BMCT (Begin Morning Civil Twilight): The geometric center of the sun is 6° below the horizon, generally corresponds to dawn/daybreak; providing enough natural light for ordinary outdoor activities, there is adequate light for large-scale operations and visibility of details.
- EECT (End Evening Civil Twilight): The geometric center of the sun is 6° below the horizon; the last point in the evening with adequate light for large-scale operations and clear visibility before visibility severely degrades.
- EENT (End Evening Nautical Twilight): The geometric center of the sun is 12° below the horizon; (End Evening Nautical Twilight): The official end of twilight when darkness fully sets in and unassisted military coordination/observation ceases.
- Day length: BMNT to EENT.
    - Given the dense terrain, using BMCT to EECT instead would reduce about one hour of daylight each day.
    - *Dusk* is the final, darkest phase of twilight just before complete night. In astronomy, it refers to the when geometric center of the sun hits 18° below the horizon (the end of astronomical twilight).
- Visibility also is affected by factors such as weather, position of the observer with respect to the object and sources of light, terrain configuration, color and reflective quality of clothing, other sensations (such as noise), and such. Moon phases and other phenomena such as atmospheric conditions and star brilliance, influence night operations. During full moonlight, conditions of visibility sometimes approach that of daylight but not in the dense vegetation of the Wilderness.

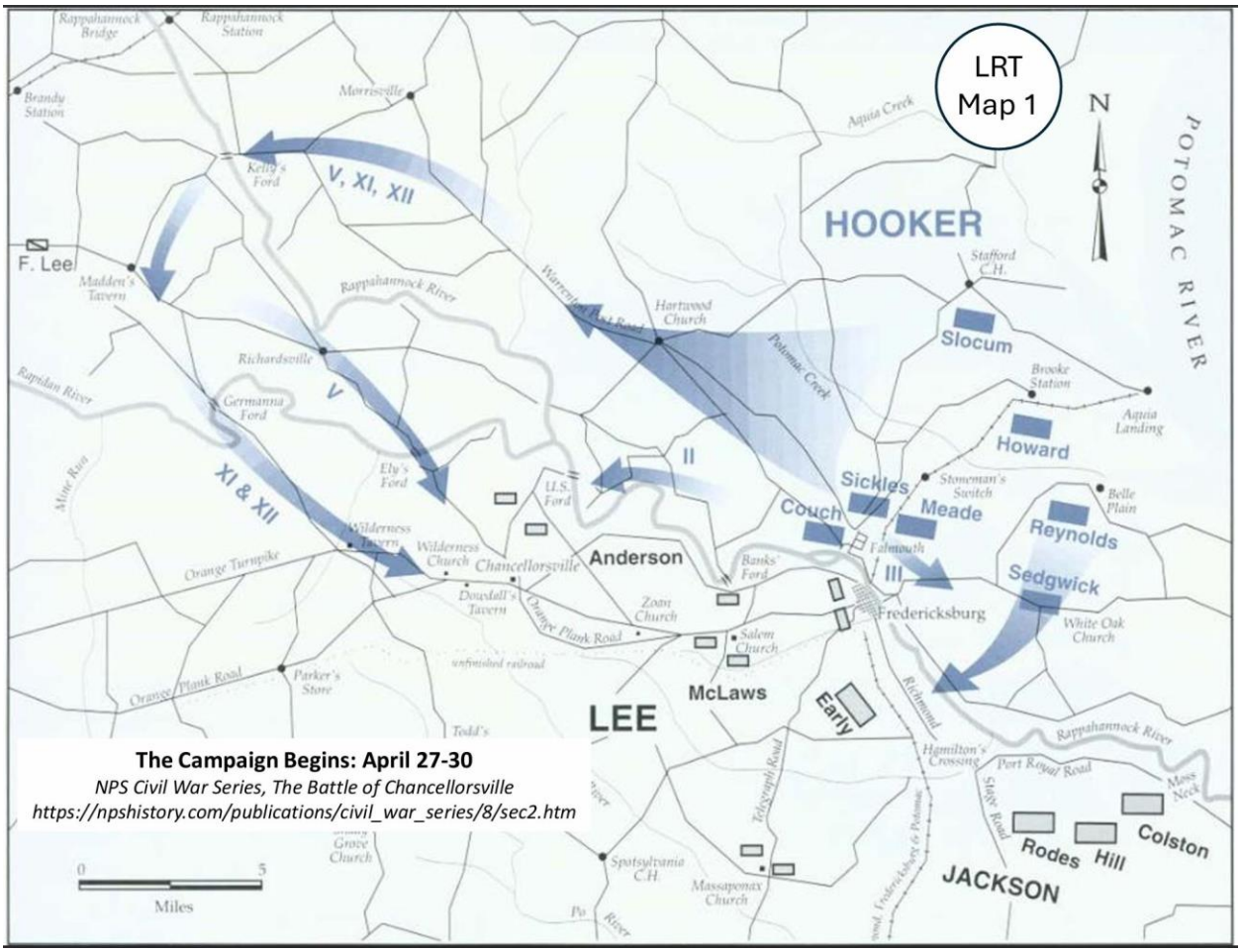
During this period, the moon was nearing Full Moon:

	Moonrise	**Moonset**	**Phase**	**Illumination *(at Midnight)***
April 27	1:15 PM	3:10 AM	Waxing Gibbous	~63%
April 28	2:16 PM	3:41 AM	Waxing Gibbous	~73%
April 29	3:19 PM	4:12 AM	Waxing Gibbous	~82%
April 30	4:24 PM	4:44 AM	Waxing Gibbous	~91%
May 1	5:31 PM	5:20 AM	Waxing Gibbous	~97%
May 2	6:40 PM	6:00 AM	Full Moon *(11:32 PM)*	**100%**
May 3	7:51 PM	6:47 AM	Waning Gibbous	~99%
May 4	9:02 PM	3:10 AM	Waning Gibbous	~95%

- The Night of May 2: Because the moon was 100% full and rose early in the evening (6:40 PM), the battlefield was illuminated in a bright, pale glow.

Temperature had no significant effect on operations beyond what would normally be expected at this ti,e of year.

[Refer to LRT Map 1]



HOOKER STEALS A MARCH.

7. What was Hooker's plan for the campaign, and how did it differ from Burnside's approach at Fredericksburg?

With the Fredericksburg debacle in mind, Hooker did not want to directly assault Confederate lines. Rather, he wanted to put Lee in an impossible position — squeeze the AoNV, which he presumed would still be focused on Fredericksburg, and force it to either *fight on Hooker's terms* or *flee*. Thus, even though taking a defensive posture, Hooker would retain the initiative because he would be forcing Lee's response.

Hooker's plan relied on speed, deception, and maneuver. It stood in stark contrast to Burnside's rigid and unimaginative, head-on approach at Fredericksburg. Whereas Burnside had attempted to smash through the Confederate defenses, Hooker sought to bypass them entirely and force Lee out of his position.

- **The Double Envelopment:** Hooker believed attacking Lee's heavily fortified positions behind Fredericksburg was suicide. Instead, he designed a multi-part turning movement to trap the Confederate Army.
    - As described by Stephen Sears, "Wholly dedicated as he was to avoiding frontal assaults and 'needless dashes at the enemy,' Joe Hooker gave the highest priority to finding some way to flush Lee out of his Fredericksburg fortifications. The slaughter of the December battle there still haunted him… The

Confederates supply crisis seemed to offer the answer to his needs. Without a stockpile of supplies, Hooker reasoned, Lee would be forced to react immediately to any cut in his railroad lifeline between Fredericksburg and Richmond. He would have to either move out to restored quickly or retreat to a new source of supply. The one thing he could not do was stay where he was, behind his fortifications." *(Sears, 118-119)*

- **The Grand Flanking Maneuver**: Hooker secretly sent the bulk of his army (initially some 42,000 men) 27 miles upriver. They crossed the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers to march behind Lee's far left flank. He intended to establish a defensive position along the ridge running from Bank's Ford to Salem Church, forcing Lee to fight against forces on two sides or retreat towards Richmond. Slocum would be in command of the movement until Hooker joined the main body at Chancellorsville, *(Welcher, 659)*
- **The Diversionary Fix**: He left Sedgwick and his VI Corps, along with I and III Corps, to fix Lee in his defenses around Fredericksburg through demonstrations. Sedgwick would be in command of this force.
- **The Cavalry Raid**: Hooker dispatched Stoneman's cavalry, some 10,000 strong, deep into the Confederate rear. Their mission was to sever Lee's supply lines, cut his railroads and telegraph lines to Richmond, and block his path of retreat. Only one brigade of cavalry accompanied the flanking force.
    - "To sever the Confederates lifeline General Hooker had at hand what amounted to a secret weapon, so far as the Army of the Potomac was concerned—General Stoneman's newly organized cavalry corps." *(Sears, 119)*
- **The Ultimate Goal**: Trapped between Hooker to his west and Sedgwick to his east, Lee would be forced to either abandon Fredericksburg and retreat, or fight on unfavorable ground in the open.

8. Because Hooker launched his Chancellorsville offensive with incredible speed, Lee was unable to recall Longstreet in time. Elaborate on the speed of Hooker's offensive.

A. Hooker's Concept of Operation. *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 11-12.)*

- Stoneman's cavalry corps would make a circuitous march around the western side of the battle area to bring it behind Lee's position. Hooker had explained to Stoneman, "throw your command between him [Lee] and Richmond, and inflicting on him every possible injury which will tend to his discomfiture and defeat." Cutting Lee's supply line back to Richmond had to be done with speed and boldness, with Hooker telling his cavalry commander, "Let your watchword be *fight*, and let all your orders be *fight, fight, fight*."
- "After the cavalry had marched, Hooker's infantry would threaten crossings at several points to unsettle the enemy. Hooker did not specify the actual intended crossing point once the enemy fell back, and might not yet have decided on one; events would dictate his choice." *(Sears, 119)*
    - In late April, Hooker ordered a number of demonstrations that were intended to confuse Lee as to his real intentions. He threatened Kelly's Ford on April 21 and sent expeditions to Port Conway and Port Royal, 20 miles below Fredericksburg, April 21-24, to make a pretense of crossing the Rappahannock there. *(Welcher, 660)*
- Hooker planned to have Sedgwick's VI Corps and Reynolds' I Corps, supported by Couch's II Corps, cross the Rappahannock directly below Fredericksburg to fix the Confederates in place.
- With Lee cut off to his rear by Stoneman and distracted by the demonstration to his front, Hooker would personally lead the main body of his army from its position behind the AoNV. He planned to give battle in the open country near Bank's Ford and take the confederate lines on the heights of Fredericksburg in reverse. *(Welcher, 659)*

- Once the main army was in position, he would hammer Lee's army against Sedgwick's anvil outside of Fredericksburg. Lee would be trapped, he explained, and "must either ingloriously fly, or come out from behind his defenses and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits him." In either case, the Confederates would be defeated and forced to retreat southward toward Richmond where they would run into Stoneman's cavalry waiting to strike the final blow.
- In short, Hooker's plan was an improved version of the operation that Burnside had attempted during the Mud March in January. This time, however, the Union would prevail.

B. The Turning Movement (April 27-30).

Hooker launched his flanking march in the early morning of April 27. He would march three corps — V, XI, and XII Corps, roughly 42,000 men — in four days over 40 miles through difficult terrain, crossing two major rivers and put them directly in Lee's rear at Chancellorsville.

- Colonel John A. Buschbeck's Brigade (Brig. General Adolf von Steinwehr's Second Division) of Howard's XI Corps began crossing the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford at 6:00 PM, April 28. A pontoon bridge was laid by 10:30 PM and the rest of the XI Corps began crossing. They were followed by Slocum's XII Corps and Meade's V Corps.
- The movement was a "masterpiece of efficiency and deception." Hooker shrouded the operation in secrecy, even keeping the details from his own corps commanders.
    - Knowing that Confederate observers would be fixated on the forces directly across the Rappahannock from Fredericksburg, he ordered the units farthest from the enemy's line of sight to move first, while those at Falmouth [Gibbon's Division, whose camp was visible to Confederate observers] remained in place, thereby shielding the movement of the army from Confederate pickets opposite the river.
    - V, XI and XII Corps, encamped several miles northeast of Fredericksburg, moved first without detection. The troops departed camp in light marching order, traveling with minimal baggage and logistical train, to facilitate the advance. While on the march, they left guards at local houses to sequester the inhabitants to prevent them from warning the Confederates of the Union Army's movements. *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 14.)*
    - The Union soldiers marched with unprecedented heavy loads, carrying eight days' worth of rations and 60 rounds of ammunition per man to eliminate reliance on slow supply wagons.
- More than just strategy motivated the timing of Hooker's offensive. The enlistments of over 35,000 Union soldiers would expire in April, May, and June. Army officials expected some of these men to reenlist, but only after they had returned to their homes for several weeks and reaped the benefits of recruiting bonuses. The earlier the AoP could take the field, the stronger it would be and the less internal disruption it would face. *(Wineman, CMH Pub 75-9, 12.)*
    - Presumably, Hooker was aware that Longstreet along with half of his First Corps had been detached to southeastern Virginia. Bringing battle to Lee before Longstreet and his two divisions could return was another reason for speed.

On the night of April 28, the three infantry corps crossed over the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford using pontoon bridges. On April 29, XI and XII Corps crossed the Rapidan at Germanna Ford while V Corps made its crossing at Ely's Ford a few miles to the east.

- When the force began its march from Kelly's Ford on April 29, Hooker returned to his headquarters. He turned over direct command of the flanking force – Hooker's "right wing" – to Slocum. (Slocum's First Division commander, Big. General Alpheus S. Williams, assumed command of XII Corps.) *(Sears, 161.)*
- The plan was for the wing to divide.
    - Meade's V Corps would bear left just beyond Kelly's on the road that paralleled the Rappahannock southeasterly and crossed the Rapidan at Ely's Ford.
    - The XII Corps, followed by Howard's XI Corps, would continue southward from Kelly's toward Culpeper Court House for four miles before also turning southeasterly to cross the Rapidan farther upstream at Germanna Ford.
    - Pleasanton's cavalry brigade would escort the march.
    - Once across the Rapidan, the three corps were to reunite at Chancellorsville on Day 4 (April 30). Slocum's marching orders for April 29 called for both columns to seize their Rapidan crossings before nightfall.
- Hooker's flanking maneuver caught Lee by surprise. Believing the main threat was still at Fredericksburg, halfway through April 29, Lee still did not realize the true gravity of the flanking movement – the essential secret of Hooker's turning movement remained intact. *(Sears, 163)*
- By 3:00 PM on April 30, Hooker had three corps in Lee's rear near Chancellorsville, and two of Couch's divisions (called forward from Banks' Ford) were close behind. A prompt advance would have gotten his force into more open ground, cleared Banks' Ford, and halved the distance between it and Sedgwick. Hooker, however, halted the three corps to await reinforcements.
- By the time Lee comprehended the trap on April 30, Hooker's envelopment had closed. Longstreet's two veteran divisions, which had been detached on a foraging and siege operation near Suffolk, Virginia (over 120 miles away), could not be recalled in time to participate in the battle.

Farther east, the two corps under Sedgwick's command demonstrated by crossing the Rappahannock via pontoon bridges immediately south of Fredericksburg, moving elements of each corps to Lee's side of the river. *(Welcher, 662)*

- On April 29, Brig. General James S. Wadsworth's First Division of Reynolds' I Corps crossed at the mouth of White Oak Creek.
- On April 30, Brig. General William T. H. Brooks' First Division of Sedgwick's VI Corps crossed near the mouth of Deep Run.
- Sickles' III Corps stayed on the Union side of the river in reserve in supporting distance of the other two corps. On April 30, when it became evident that Lee did not intend to attack the bridgeheads of I Corps and VI Corps below Fredericksburg, Hooker moved III Corps to US Ford in preparation for joining the main body near Chancellorsville.
- The distraction of this crossing allowed Couch's II Corps (less Gibbon's division at Falmouth), which had been holding in the immediate vicinity of Bank's Ford, to begin marching late on April 29 toward and crossing US Ford to join the flanking movement.

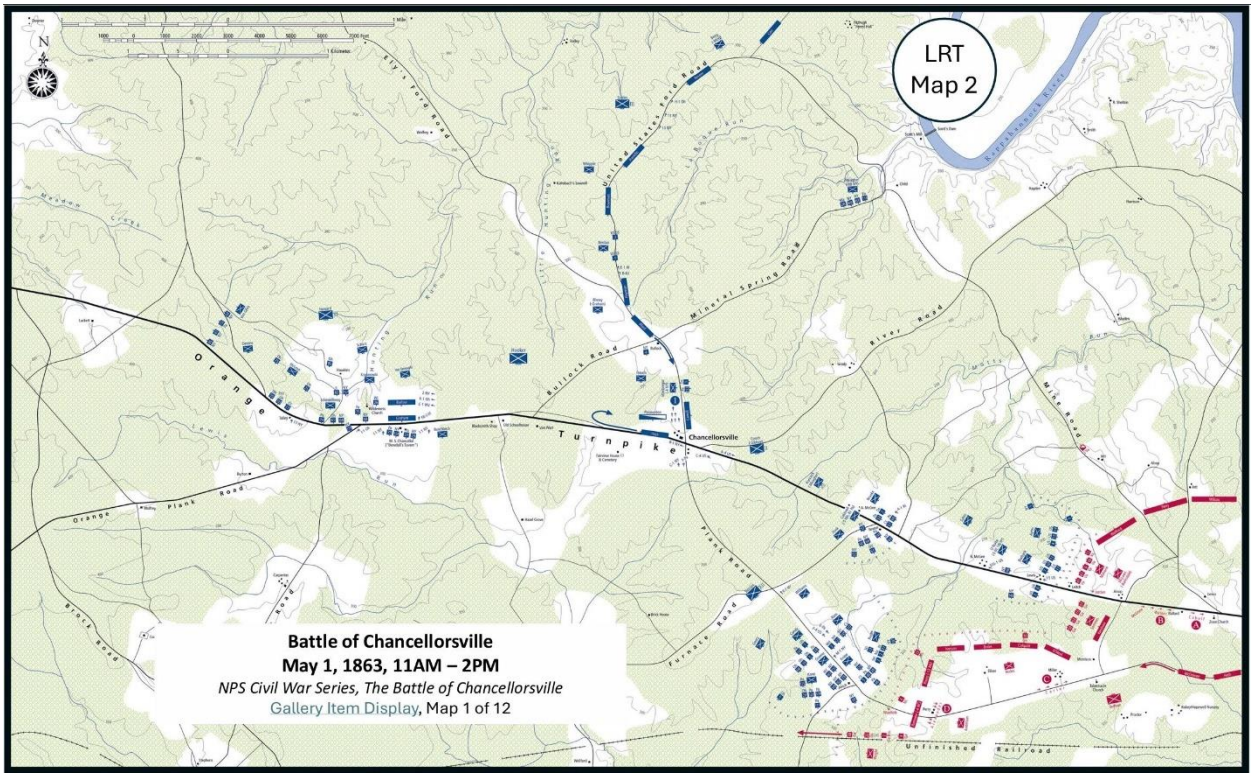
Confronted by two threats, Lee initially evaluated the crossings below Frederick as Hooker's primary offensive. However, late-day reconnaissance from Major General J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry revealed the massive Union infantry presence moving into the Wilderness from the west. Lee realized he was caught in a vice.

- Lee had been planning an offensive movement in the Shenandoah Valley. Now, the extent of Hooker's movements temporarily baffled him. He concluded that Slocum's XII Corps might be striking at Gordonsville. The Federal advance had gotten between him and Stuart, so that it took considerable time for the Stuart's dispatches to reach him (Stuart had soon detected Slocum's column). *(Esposito, 84)*
- Stuart supplied intelligence on April 29 about Federal crossings at Kelly's Ford and enemy columns moving toward the fords on the Rapidan. Having decided that Sedgwick was a diversion and, therefore, posed no immediate threat, Lee moved the three divisions of Jackson's Second Corps, which had been on his right flank down the Rappahannock, to positions closer to and behind Fredericksburg, and sent Maj. General Richard H. Anderson's division and Maj. General Lafayette McLaws' division to occupy blocking positions *near Chancellorsville*. Anderson would be in command. (Recall that these two divisions were part of Longstreet's First Corps. In Longstreet's absence, they were under Lee's direct control.)
- That evening Lee ordered Maj. General Richard H. Anderson to go to Chancellorsville and instructed Maj. General Lafayette McLaws to prepare his division to follow. *(https://npshistory.com/publications/civil_war_series/8/sec2.htm#2)*
    - Anderson reached his destination about midnight to find Brigadier General William Mahone's and Brig. General Carnot Posey's brigades, which had fallen back from US Ford earlier in the day. Apprised that a heavy force of Union infantry was bearing down on the crossroads — and under orders from Lee "to select a good line and fortify it strongly" — Anderson withdrew to a ridge just beyond the eastern edge of the Wilderness. This position, near a small Baptist church with the unusual name Zoan, covered Plank Road, the turnpike, and Old Mine (or Mountain) Road that linked the turnpike with US Ford.
    - Soon reinforced by a third of his brigades, Brig. General Ambrose R. Wright's Georgians, Anderson ordered the men to dig in. Their efforts created some of the first field fortifications constructed by the AoNV.
- Around 3:00 AM, Jackson had three divisions of his Second Corps (those of Maj. General Ambrose Powell Hill, Brig. General Robert E, Rodes, and Brig. General Raliegh E. Colston) begin their march westward from Fredericksburg toward Anderson at Zoan Church.
    - Jackson left Maj. General Jubal A. Early's division along with Brig. General William Barksdale's brigade of McLaws' Division to screen his rear at Fredericksburg and the Union bridgehead across the Rappahannock to its south – some 10,000 men to defend against some 40,000. *(Esposito, 85)* Early's division was on Prospect Hill south of the town. Once again, Barksdale's brigade defended the heights above Fredericksburg. *Wikipedia*)
- Anderson had begun entrenching a position between Tabernacle Church south to Duerson's Mill. Jackson arrived around 8:00 AM, took command, and told Anderson and McLaws to stop their entrenching and prepare to march west and engage the Union forces.
- Stuart, meanwhile, detaching one brigade to watch Stoneman, clung to Slocum's flank.
- Hooker arrived at Chancellorsville between 5:00 PM and 6:00 PM on April 30 and resumed direct command of troops on that part of the field. Slocum resumed direct command of XII Corps. *(Welcher, 661)*

By the evening of April 30, Hooker had approximately 73,000 men concentrated in and around Chancellorsville. *(Esposito, 85)* "This is splendid," Meade said. "We are on Lee's flank, and he does not know it." *https://emergingcivilwar.com/2013/05/06/where-did-joe-hooker-lose-the-battle-of-chancellorsville/)* The stage is set.

THE BATTLE.

[Refer to LRT Map 2]



May 1:

During the morning, the troops that were under orders to join Hooker near Chancellorsville began to arrive. *(Welcher, 662)*

- Humphreys 3rd Division, V Corps, came up about 7:00 AM and joined the other two divisions of the corps.
- III Corps began crossing the Rappahannock at US Ford. Birnie's 1st Division crossed first, followed by Whipple's 3rd division and Berry's 2nd Division.
    - Sickles reported in person to Hooker at Chancellorsville at 9:00 AM.
- About 8:00 AM, French's 3rd Division of Couch's II Corps was ordered to march to Todd's Tavern, some 6 miles by road southwest of Chancellorsville Crossroads. After advancing about one mile, French was delayed by troops of XII Corps on Plank Road and was then ordered back to his original position at Fairview.
- Between 9:00 and 10:00 AM, Cross' Provisional Brigade crossed the Rappahannock and joined Hancock's division about 4:00 PM that afternoon.

In the meantime, these forces were assembling on Hooker's front. *(Welcher, 663)*

- On the night of April 29, Anderson's division was sent from Fredericksburg towards Chancellorsville. He learned that some of Hooker's troops had crossed the Rapidan and were approaching in considerable

force. Accordingly, he retired on the morning of April 30 to the intersection of Mine Road and Plank Road near Tabernacle Church and entrenched.

- The inactivity of I Corps and VI Corps below Fredericksburg indicated to Lee that the principal attack would be made from the west.
    - He kept Early's division and Barksdale's brigade of McLaws' division at Fredericksburg.
    - He sent the remainder of McLaws' division to support Anderson. McLaws set out at midnight and at 6:00 AM the next morning took position on Anderson's right.
    - Jackson followed McLaws at dawn on May 1 with the remaining divisions of his corps. He reached Anderson's position at 8:00 AM. Upon arriving there, Jackson assumed command, and at 11:00 AM McLaws and Anderson moved forward on the Turnpike then on Plank Road. Jackson followed Anderson on Plank Road.

Hooker delayed in the area and did not advance from Chancellorsville until about 11:00 AM. As his forces pushed east from Chancellorsville toward open ground, he halted the advance and pulled back to a defensive posture at Chancellorsville — surrendering the initiative to Lee at the moment it mattered most.

Hip pocket question: What was Hooker's plan fail?

The fatal downfall of Hooker's plan would be not just that the plan itself was flawed, but that Hooker's ultimate failure of nerve magnified the flaw. By design, the strategy carried a massive inherent risk: it relied on establishing defensive, field-fortified lines to trap the Confederates, which meant Hooker willingly yielding the initiative to Lee. This gamble could only succeed if Hooker aggressively seized the Bank's Ford-Salem Church line to truly box Lee in.

Instead, Hooker's execution faltered at the critical moment. Whether driven by a loss of nerve, sudden caution, or poor judgment, his decision to halt and pull back stopped the Union advance short of its objective line. By retreating into a defensive posture without actually trapping the enemy, Hooker compounded the plan's structural flaw. He gave Lee a lifeline of space, time, and the initiative, turning a calculated strategic risk into a decisive self-inflicted defeat.

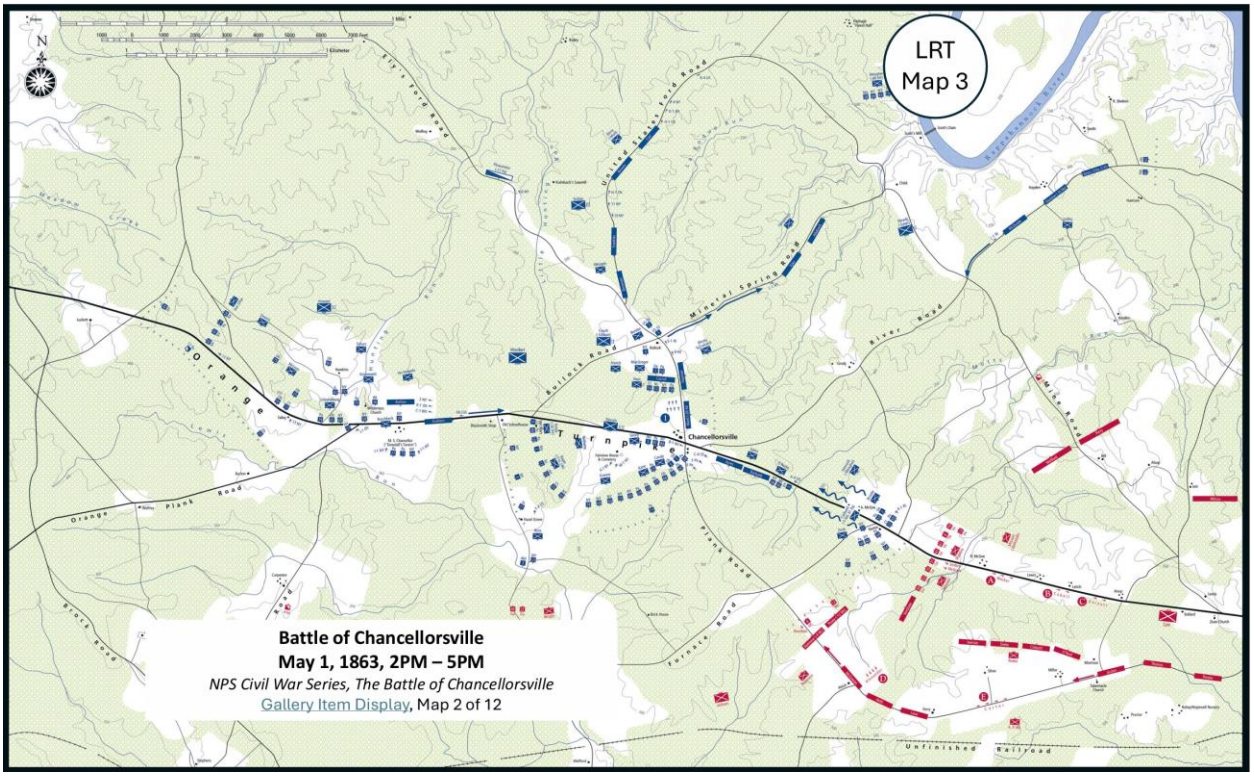
- Hooker overreacted to Lee's moving (reorientation of) Jackson's II Corps and not only prematurely halted his advance but pulled back around Chancellorsville — ground he erroneously felt was more defensible. By not putting sufficient squeeze on Lee, he gave Lee an opportunity to act, thus relinquishing the initiative to Lee. Bad move. (In fact, Lee would retain the initiative for two full months, until July 3, 1863.)

Had Hooker that day been going up against Joe Johnston, Braxton Bragg, or P. G. T. Beauregard, he might well have pulled it off anyway. But not against Lee, and especially not with Jackson as Lee's hammer. Lee and Jackson seized the initiative, destroyed Hooker's plan, and put him on the defensive for the remainder of the battle. Lee would retain the initiative for the remainder of the battle (and, in fact, would retain the initiative until June 4, the day he began his withdrawal from Gettysburg).

The next three days would see hard fighting, but the battle was all but decided on May 1. To some extent, the battle ended in a Confederate victory because Hooker was outgeneraled, but Hooker largely defeated himself.

THE BATTLE (continued).

[Refer to LRT Map 3]



May 1 Afternoon: Quoting Esposito *(86)*, "Hooker having ordered the Chancellorsville position fortified, the federal troops rapidly constructed log breastworks and obstacles consisting of interlaced filled trees (abatis). Lee considered these defenses formidable and confined his operations during the afternoon to skirmishing and reconnaissance. He fully appreciated the seriousness of the situation. He could not assault Hooker's position east and south of Chancellorsville successfully; and Early would not be able to stop Sedgwick if the latter attacked vigorously. Something had to be done quickly; consequently, a weak point in Hooker's defenses must be found. While awaiting the reports of various staff officers he had sent to scout the federal positions, Lee began to consider a possible attack on Hooker's right. Then Stuart appeared with the news that the Union right flank was exposed and vulnerable to a surprise attack."

- Clausewitz's "*On War*" states that the "first principle [of warfare] is to act concentrated as much as possible." Dividing one's force in the face of a numerically superior enemy was considered to be a sure path to defeat. That was not to be the case this time.
- Hooker, too, had split his force in the face of the enemy, but the AoNV was a numerically <u>inferior</u> enemy.

About 11:00 AM, Slocum's XII Corps had advanced south of Chancellorsville on Plank Road towards Fredericksburg. About a mile out, he encountered enemy skirmishers and formed his corps in line of battle. He completed his deployment about 1:00 PM and then advanced about a mile where he found the brigades of Wright and Posey of Anderson's division and Ramseur's brigade of Rodes' division. At about 1:30 PM, Hooker ordered XII Corps return to its positions of the night before.

- At noon, Howard's XI Corps was ordered to take part in the general advance, and was directed to move forward on Plank Road and take position about one mile in the rear of XII Corps. Almost immediately, however, the order was countermanded, and the corps returned to its former positions.
- A little after 2:00 PM, Couch, who is advancing with Hancock's division on the Turnpike, met Sykes about one mile east of Chancellorsville. Sykes was withdrawing to his position of the night before, on the left of XII Corps. Hancock covered Sykes withdrawal and then was ordered to fall back to the position that he had occupied that morning, about 3/4 of a mile east of Chancellorsville.
- About 1:00 PM, Hooker ordered the two divisions of V Corps, which were then advancing on River Road, to return to Chancellorsville. The order apparently was not received, however, until about two hours later, at which time they had arrived at Decker house, about two miles from Bank's Ford. Humphries immediately turned back, but Griffin appears not to have received the order until between 5:00 and 6:00 PM, and then he too hurried back.

After the collapse of his advance towards Fredericksburg, Hooker formed a defensive line in front of Chancellorsville to await an attack by Lee. At 4:20 PM, he sent orders to that effect to his corps commanders. *(Welcher, 664-666)*

- XI Corps was on the right, along Orange Turnpike: 1st Division (Devens) on the left, 3rd Division (Schurtz) in the center, and 2nd Division (von Steinwehr) on the right.
    - There was a gap of about 1/2 mile between the left of XI Corps and the right of XII Corps, strengthened later by Birney's 1st Division of III Corps.
- XII Corps in the center, in a bulge west of Chancellorsville: 1st Division (Williams) stretching from the Orange Turnpike-Bullock Road intersection south to Hazel Grove and 2nd Division (Geary) from Fairview on around to Chancellors House.
- II Corps northeast of Chancellors House: 1st Division (Hancock) in front backed up by 3rd Division (French) along Ely's Ford Road.
    - 2nd Division (Gibbons) remained at Falmouth.
- V Corps stretched along Mineral Spring Road: 2nd Division (Sykes) on the right (linked to Hancock's division), 1st Division (Griffin) in the center, and 3rd Division (Humphreys) on the left stretching to the Rappahannock at Scott's Dam.
- III Corps was placed in reserve in the rear of Chancellorsville Crossroads while V Corps and XII Corps advanced eastward from Chancellorsville toward the rear of Fredericksburg. Late that evening, after V Corps and XII Corps had been recalled, III Corps moves up and took position near Plank Road, in rear of the junction of XI Corps and XII Corps. On the morning of May 2nd, III Corps moves south of Plank Road and occupies the space between the right of XII Corps and the left of XI Corps. *(Welch, 349)* Note that this is at Fairview; Sickles' men have not yet occupied Hazel Grove.

9. Why did Hooker halt his advance and adopt a defensive posture in the Wilderness rather than continue advancing to close the trap on Lee? *("Commander's Intent of Major General Joseph Hooker during*

the Chancellorsville Campaign," Major William M. Jurney. Master Of Military Studies theses, USMC Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, 2001.)

Hooker stopped his advance primarily because he intended to fight a defensive battle on ground of his own choosing, coupled with a loss of nerve when faced with Lee's aggressive counter-movement. Despite executing a successful flanking maneuver that initially trapped the Confederate army, Hooker ceding the tactical initiative remains one of the greatest command failures of the war. The decision to halt instead of closing the envelopment trap was driven by several strategic, tactical, and psychological factors:

- **The Strategy of Forcing Lee to Fight or Flee:** Hooker believed Lee could not sustain a defeat and keep an effective army in the field, so he ordered his men to withdraw back into the Wilderness and take a defensive position around Chancellorsville, which he thought was better ground. He chose to build breastworks and wait for Lee to break himself against them.
- **The Hasty Retreat:** When they ran into unexpected Confederate resistance, Hooker panicked and ordered his corps commanders to fall back into the thickets. His subordinates, particularly Meade and Couch, fiercely protested because falling back meant fighting in dense woods that neutralized the Union's numerical and mathematical artillery advantages.
    - Couch had sent Hancock forward to help Slocum, but by the time Hancock arrived, Slocum was already withdrawing. Couch realized Hancock would have to do so, likewise. Couch was not a happy man, "to hear from his own lips that the advantages gained by the successful marches of his lieutenants were to culminate in fighting a defensive battle in that nest of thickets, was too much, and I retired from his presence with the belief that my commanding general was a whipped man." The problem was, by the time Couch could have brought up the rest of his corps, Slocum could have been off the field.
- **Misjudgment of Confederate Strength and Audacity:** Hooker possessed a massive numerical advantage (roughly 130,000 Union troops to Lee's 60,000). *(Esposito, 84)* Military doctrine dictated that Lee should retreat south. However, Lee defied conventional rules by splitting his smaller army — leaving a token force at Fredericksburg and marching west to confront Hooker head-on.
    - **Loss of Initiative:** The sheer audacity of Lee's counter-advance stunned Hooker.
    - **Flawed Intelligence:** Because Hooker's cavalry corps had been sent away on a separate raid, he lacked adequate scouting eyes. He became paralyzed by uncertainty, overestimating the Confederate forces immediately in front of him.
- **Psychological Collapse ("Loss of Confidence"):** Hooker was famously aggressive as a division and corps commander, earning the moniker "Fighting Joe". However, the immense burden of army-level command crippled his decisiveness at the critical moment. He effectively locked down mentally once Lee refused to play by his script.

By halting and assuming a passive defense, Hooker surrendered the initiative. This would give Lee the time and space the next day (May 2) to split his army a *second* time, allowing Jackson to execute the legendary flanking march that crushed the Union right flank and doomed Hooker's campaign.

As described by Esposito: *(Esposito, 85)*

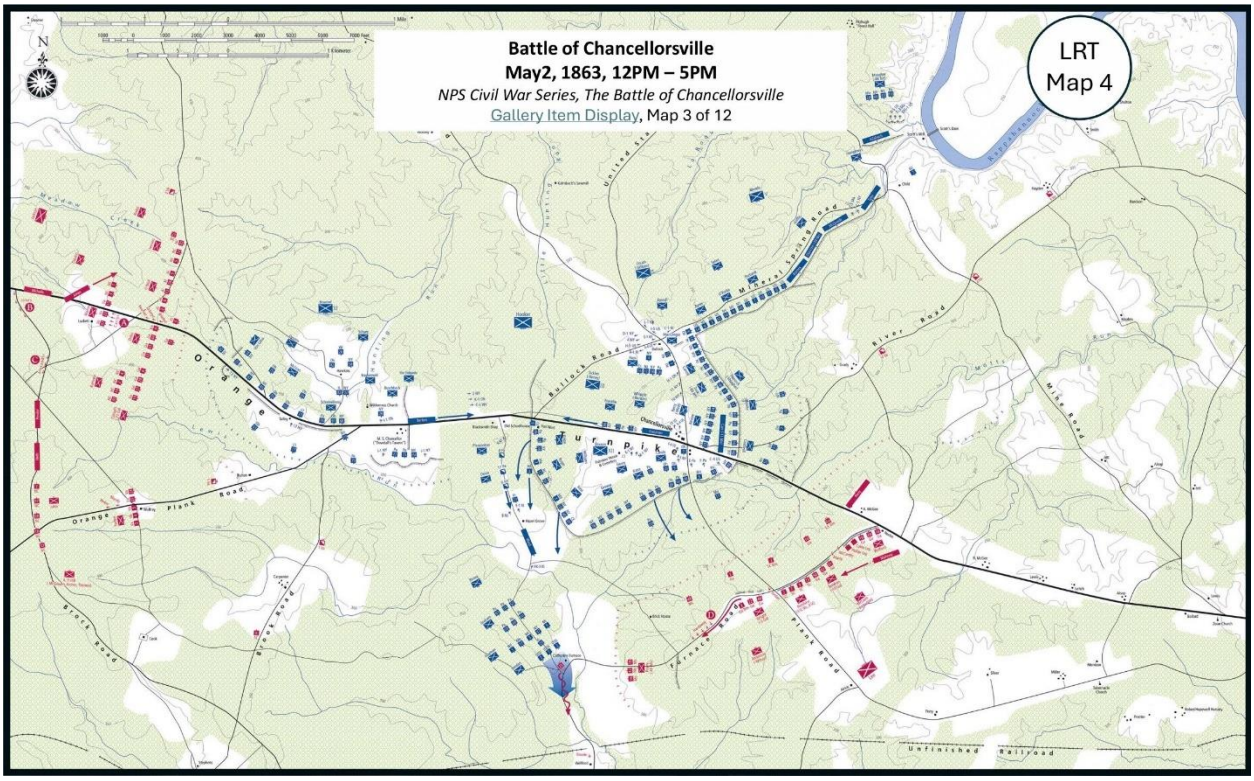
- Hooker did not expect Lee to respond as quickly as he did. With Slocum's XII Corps coming into contact with an enemy underestimated in strength, Hooker had to decide if the ground atop the ridge was better than what he already had at the crossroads.
    - The main problem was that Slocum ran into Jackson, and Sedgwick was doing little to keep Lee's attention centered at Fredericksburg. With Second Corps moving towards him, Hooker had to scramble to change plans.
    - Anderson had reached the high ground around Zoan Church first, in greater numbers than anticipated. *Hooker's element of surprise gone!*
        - Anderson's division was on the left (the Union's right) along Orange Plank Road, and McLaws was on the right along Orange Turnpike.
    - The wooded ground also meant Slocum was on his own without support from Meade or Howard. Hooker had planned on a defensive fight farther east in the vicinity of Salem Church where Lee would have been attacking on favorable ground.
    - Pulling Slocum back made sense to Hooker, ending an offensive unsupported attack on unfavorable ground. Instead of having his three columns fighting separate battles – River Road, Orange Plank Road, and Orange Turnpike – the AoP could concentrate.
- The initial clashes were indecisive. Both Slocum's XII Corps and Hancock's division of Couch's II Corps had gotten into relatively open ground and reached strong positions. Meanwhile Meade's V Corps, advancing along River Road, met no resistance and was soon crossing the flank of the Confederate line. Hooker's observation balloons had detected Lee's movement and the weakness of Early's forces on Marye's Heights.
- At that point, Hooker's courage seemed to have failed him. Over protests of his corps commanders, he ordered the troops back into their positions of the night before around Chancellorsville. He later countermanded this order, but by then his troops had withdrawn. Meanwhile, Sedgwick (with his VI Corps and Reynolds' I Corps, across the Rappahannock below Fredericksburg) received several conflicting orders, and so did nothing aggressive.
    - Meade and Couch saw that the position they were fighting for near the Zoan Church was relatively high ground and offered an opportunity for the infantry and artillery to deploy outside the constraints of the Wilderness. Meade exclaimed, 'My God, if we can't hold the top of the hill, we certainly can't hold the bottom of it!'
- It is difficult to explain Hooker's unwarranted surrender of the initiative under these seemingly favorable circumstances. It may have been that it was difficult for him to visualize and assess properly a military operation on such a large scale that many of its phases were beyond the range of its direct control. Possibly it was his innate lack of self-confidence which, at this critical moment, weakened his determination.
- When the Union forces withdrew, the Confederates followed carefully, puzzled and suspicious of such an easy victory. It was apparent to Lee that Hooker would do his fighting defensively. Instead of making the next move with his dominant force, he was waiting for Lee to move. By seizing the initiative, Lee went a long way toward lowering the odds against him. *(Sears, 240)*

May 1 Evening: Lee and Jackson met by firelight and developed the plan for Jackson's flanking assault. Jackson would take some 33,000 men — most of the Confederate strength not facing Sedgwick — on a 12-mile flanking march around Hooker's exposed right flank, held by Howard's XI Corps. Lee would

remain with only some 14,900 men of Anderson's division and McLaws' division (comprising ~13,915 men, six batteries – 24 guns – and one and a half regiments of Stuart's cavalry) to fix Hooker's attention in front of Fredericksburg. *(Sears, 239)*

- Although Hooker's left flank was firmly anchored by Meade's V Corps on the Rappahannock and his center was strongly fortified, his right flank was 'in the air.' Howard's XI Corps was camped along Orange Turnpike, extending past Wilderness Church, and was vulnerable to a flanking attack.
- The AoNV would now be split into three segments, each out of supporting distance of the other two. If either Hooker or Sedgwick took the offensive, the Confederates might be destroyed in detail.
    - There was also the possibility that Gibbon's division (of II Corps and currently at Falmouth) might cross suddenly at Banks' Ford, and so Lee sent Brig. General Cadmus M. Wilcox's brigade (R. H. Anderson's division) to take station there.
- Stoneman's cavalry, meanwhile, was continuing its raid.
- Sedgwick, lacking definite orders, remained inactive. *(Esposito, 86)*

[Refer to LRT Map 4]



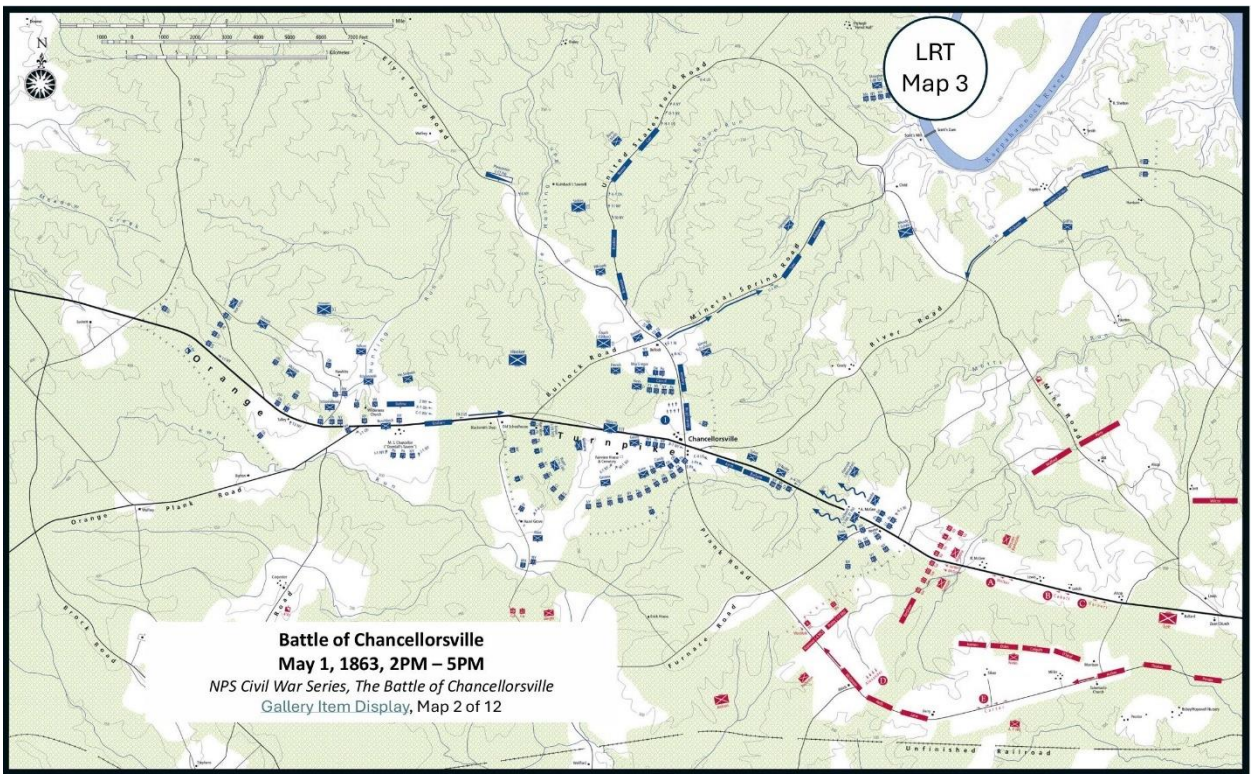
May 2, morning: Hooker had occupied the high ground at Hazel Grove, strengthened his lines, and called in Reynolds' I Corps to join the main body. His troops were in good spirits, but his behavior the previous day had shaken the confidence of his corps commanders.

- Early on the morning of May 2, Hooker rearranged the left of his line east of Chancellorsville. *(Welch, 666)*
    - Sykes division of V Corps withdrew from its position along the Turnpike and moved north, then entrenched along Mineral Spring Road, with its right near the Chandler house.

- Immediately after Sykes had departed, Hancock's division of II Corps moved back about 1/2 mile and formed a new line. It connected on its right with Geary's division of XII Corps near Plank Road, and from that point it ran northeast about 400 yards to the Turnpike. There it turned back and ran in front of, and nearly parallel to, the road running up from Chancellorsville, past Chandler's, and on to US Ford.
- Col. Edward E. Cross' Provisional Brigade (comprising two regiments *(Welch, 662)*) was on the right, in the angle between Plank Road and the Turnpike, facing southeast.
- Then, in order from right to left, were Caldwell's 1st Brigade, Brooks 4th Brigade, and Zook's 3rd Brigade. Zook's left was near the right of Sykes' near Mineral Spring Road.
- Meagher's 2nd Brigade withdrew from Scott's Dam to a position in the rear of Humphrey's Division of V Corps.

- Also during the morning, Meade's V Corps united on a line along Mineral Spring Road from Chandler's House to Scott's Dam on the Rappahannock. *(Welch, 667)* (Chandler's House is located about a half-mile north of Chancellorsville crossroads, where Mineral Spring Road splits from Ely's Ford Road.)
  - Griffin's division of V Corps moved northward and entrenched along Mineral Spring Road between Sykes' and Humphrey's divisions. Barnes' 1st Brigade was on the right, next to Sykes; Stockton's 3rd Brigade was on the center of the line; and McQuade's 2nd Brigade was on the left, next to Humphreys.
  - Between 7:00 and 8:00 AM, Caroll's 1st Brigade of French's Third Division, II Corps, moved up between the right of Sykes and the left of Hancock.
  - McGregor's 3rd Brigade was massed in the rear of Caroll, and Hayes' 2nd Brigade was in line north of Chancellorsville, facing south.
- Hooker believed he was ready for Lee's attack – <u>from the east</u>. And though he thought Lee was retreating from Chancellorsville, he took some effort to safeguard his flanks. He knew there was little in the way of enemy at Fredericksburg by now. Since Sedgwick had done little in the way of demonstrating, Hooker ordered him to stay where he was and protect the supply lines, freeing up Reynolds I Corps to join Hooker.
- Howard, too, thought the enemy was retreating. He sent Barlow's brigade (his reserve brigade) forward to Catherine's Furnace to support Sickles. *(Esposito, 87)*
  - Howard was not troubled. He was a brave and devoted soldier, but he was also an opinionated individual and ignored repeated warnings.
    - Brig. General Alexander Schimmelfinnig reported a buildup on the right, but Howard told Schimmelfinnig's aide to tell his general to stop reconnoitering and hold his position. Howard was convinced the forest was impenetrable and did not want to move his men so they could face the west.
    - One patrol after another reported the impending attack while Jackson's men were forming up in the heavy brush, but he remained convinced Jackson was retreating.
  - Hooker was aware of the vulnerable right flank and pointed it out to Howard as did others of his staff.
    - The extent to which Hooker was truly concerned about a possible flanking March by Jackson isn't clear. What is clear, though, is that he paid scant attention to XI Corps lines.
- The success of Jackson's flank attack would lie on Howard's failure alone.

[Refer to LRT Map 3]



10. How did Jackson's flank march on May 2 unfold? Why did Union forces fail to respond to it effectively?

Jackson's flanking maneuver, encompassing three divisions with a combined total of fifteen brigades covering a total distance of approximately twelve miles, took nearly seven hours to complete. Veterans among on the march would rank this one as considerably less demanding than some of their marches under Jackson in the Shenandoah the spring before and during the Second Manassas campaign the previous summer. *(Sears, 242)*

A. Flanking March.

- **Distance**: Approximately 12 miles total.
- **Forces**: ~33,000 men. *(Sears, 239-243)*
    - 26,000 men in all – 15 brigades of Rodes', Colston's, and A. P, Hill's divisions, in that order. *(Esposito, 87)*
    - 108 pieces of artillery (27 batteries). *("Hiking Jackson's Flank March at Chancellorsville," Bert Dunkerly, Emerging Civil War)*
        - They did not factor into the surprise assault late that day but were critical to success on May 3. *The Decisive Day | American Battlefield Trust*)
    - Minimal trains (ammunition wagons and ambulances; no baggage or commissary wagons).
    - Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry brigade (three and a half regiments) covering as escorts and guards.
- **Column length**: Upwards of ten miles long (maximum of four men abreast).

- **Start time**: 7:00 AM, well after sunrise.
- **Arrival time of first elements**: 3:00 PM.
- **Attack time**: 5:15 PM.

B. Timeline.

(Exact clock times vary slightly between sources since few participants carried synchronized watches, and after-action reports were written from memory. This sequence reflects a consensus range among sources consulted.)

Phase 1: Planning and Briefing. *(The Battle of Chancellorsville – Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park (U.S. National Park Service)*

- **May 1, Evening (Approx. 8:00 PM – Midnight)**: Lee and Jackson meet at their bivouac site at the intersection of Orange Plank Road and Furnace Road. Intelligence brought by Stuart reveals that Howard's XI Corps has an exposed right flank that is completely "hanging in the air".
- **May 2, Pre-Dawn (Approx. 3:30 AM – 5:00 AM)**: After Jackson's mapmaker Colonel Jedediah Hotchkiss, aided by Charles C. Wellford, proprietor of Catherine Furnace, identifies a network of hidden logging and furnace roads, Lee and Jackson finalize their plan. Lee decides to divide his outnumbered army for a second time. He commands Jackson to take his entire 26,000-man II Corps on the flanking march, while Lee remains behind with just 14,000 men to distract the main Union force. *(Esposito, 87)*

Phase 2: The March.

- **7:00 AM – 7:30 AM**: Jackson's lead elements begin their march. Their rate of march would average about two miles an hour.
    - The typical rate of march for Civil War infantry and accompanying artillery was 2-2.5 miles per hour under normal conditions. On an average marching day, a column could cover 12 to 15 miles in roughly 6 to 8 hours, accounting for rests and typical delays.
    - Thick mud, heavy dust, or steep terrain often could drastically slow movement. These conditions were not in place for this march, but rain over the preceding two days had wet the road and prevented a column of dust from giving away the men as they marched on the Union forces
    - Columns stretching for miles caused a "snaking" effect in which the rear constantly halted and hurried. *(Sears, 243)*
- **8:00 AM – 9:00 AM**: As the column passed a clearing near the Catharine Iron Furnace, they are spotted by Union scouts perched in treetops at Hazel Grove. Union artillery opens fire on the column. Hooker received reports of the movement, which he misinterpreted as a Confederate retreat.
- **9:30 AM:** Having received various reports indicating the Confederates were on his right flank, Hooker sends word to Howard and Slocum, "We have good reason to suppose the enemy is moving to our right. Please advance your pickets for purposes of observation as far as may be safe in order to obtain timely information of their approach." *(American History Central, Jackson's Flank Attack at Chancellorsville | Lee's Greatest Victory)*
- **11:00 AM:** The last of A. P. Hill's men set out. All of Jackson's Second Corps are now on the march. *(Sears, 243)*
- **Early Afternoon**: Sickles' III Corps pushes south to harass the rear of Jackson's column near Catharine Furnace. Most of the 23rd Georgia Infantry Regiment, the column's rearguard, were captured by elements

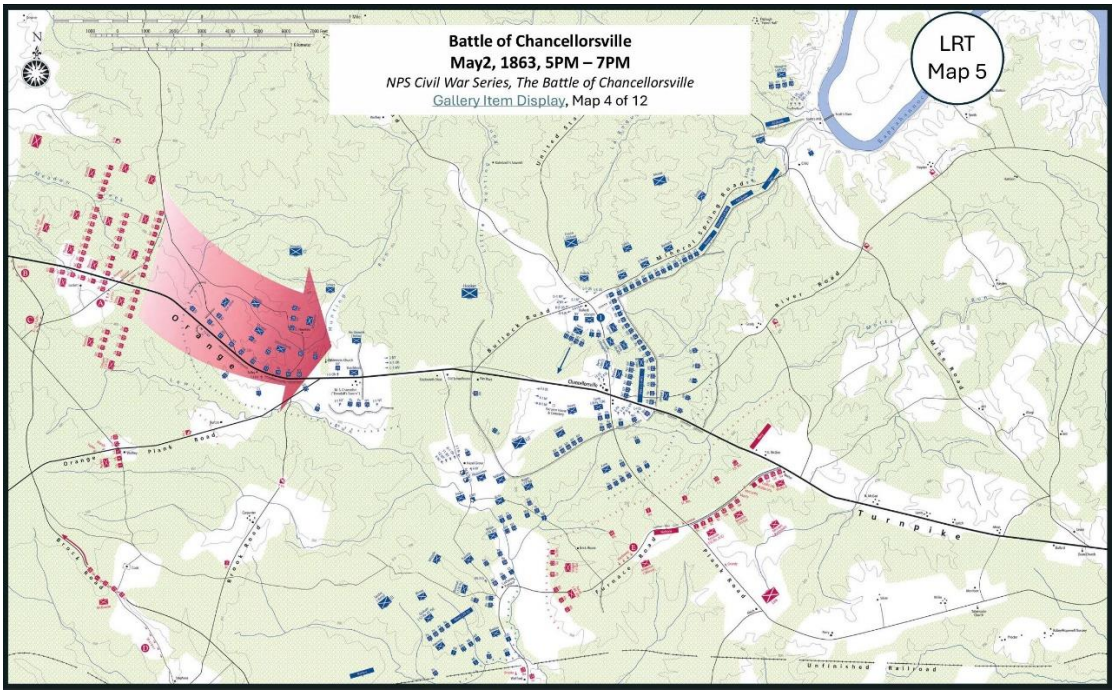
of Sickles' corps. (NPS estimates "more than 275 men were captured. *(Battle Unit Details – The Civil War (U.S. National Park Service)*)

- Hooker sends brigades from II, XI, and XII Corps to aid Sickles. These movements create a gap between the rest of Howard's men, on the far right of the line, and Chancellorsville. *(American History Central, Jackson's Flank Attack at Chancellorsville | Lee's Greatest Victory)*
- The action is too late to stop Jackson's column as it marched away and disappeared into The Wilderness, heading south. This strengthened Hooker's belief that the Confederates were retreating.

Phase 3: Arrival and Attack.

- **2:30–3:00 PM:** Lead elements (Rodes' division) reach the vicinity of Orange Turnpike near the Wilderness Church/Talley farm area, west of XI Corps' flank.
- **3:00 PM – 4:00 PM**: Jackson's lead elements reach the junction of Brock Road and Orange Turnpike. Jackson realizes he is not yet far enough around the Union line. He continues a bit further north to position his troops directly behind and to the west of XI Corps.
    - On May 1, Brig. General Fitzhugh Lee's scouts had discovered that the XI Corps' right flank was "in the air." During the march on May 2, Lee personally led Jackson to a vantage point to observe this vulnerability. This, in turn, led to Jackson's adjustment.
- **4:00 PM – 5:00 PM**: Jackson's carefully deploys his divisions (Rodes, Colston, and A.P. Hill) into a massive, two-mile-long battle formation hidden within the dense woods. The Union soldiers to their front are completely unaware. (Recall that Jackson had left his fourth division, Early's, to screen his rear at Fredericksburg and the Union bridgehead across the Rappahannock to its south.)
- **5:15 PM – 5:30 PM**: Jackson checks his watch, turns to Rodes, and asks, *"Are you ready, General Rodes?"* Upon Rodes' affirmation, Jackson replies, *"You can go forward then."* The Confederate attack commences, rushing out of the woods and instantly routing the closest elements of XI Corps.

[Refer to LRT Map 5]



11. Assess the actions of XI Corps during Jackson's flank attack.

XI Corps was subjected to a devastating surprise flank attack. Commonly scapegoated as cowards and labeled the "Flying Dutchmen" for their rapid retreat, a closer tactical look reveals that the corps was victim of a profound command failure. Despite being completely blind-sided, isolated, and outnumbered, elements of XI Corps mounted desperate, localized stands that ultimately bought the rest of the right wing the precious minutes it needed to rally to receive the attack.

A. The Disastrous Disposition: "Hanging in the Air": XI Corps anchored the extreme right flank of the Union army. Its position was a tactical nightmare:

- **The Vulnerable Alignment**: The corps line stretched for nearly two miles along Orange Turnpike. However, the vast majority of the 11,000 men were facing south, expecting an attack from that direction.
- **The "Air" Flank**: The westernmost end of the line simply stopped in the middle of the woods, unanchored by any natural geographic features like a river or a mountain.
- **The Fatal Gap**: Earlier that afternoon, Hooker ordered the adjacent III Corps (Sickles) forward to pursue what he mistakenly thought was a Confederate retreat. This opened a gap nearly a mile wide between XI Corps and the rest of the Union army, leaving Howard isolated.

B. The Ignored Warnings: Throughout the day, frontline officers in XI Corps spotted signs of trouble. Colonel Leopold von Gilsa and others sent scouts into the western woods, who returned warning that a massive Confederate force was massing. When these warnings were forwarded to Howard's headquarters at Dowdall's Tavern, they were dismissed. Howard and Hooker were convinced Lee was retreating. Confident the danger had passed, Howard permitted his men to stack their rifles, butcher cattle, and begin cooking supper.

- That said, Hooker sent messages that morning to Howard (~9:30 AM and delivered ~10:00 AM) and later to Howard and Slocum cautioning them to consider the possibility of an attack from their flank instead of just from their front. Some 25 years later, Howard insisted he never saw the messages in spite of their having been receipted for and preserved in corps files. *(Sears, 245-247)*

C. The Onslaught Begins (5:15 PM): The first indication of the attack was not gunfire, but a stampede of wild animals—deer, rabbits, and turkeys—bursting out of the western woods into the Union clearings, driven forward by the Confederate advance. Minutes later, yelling Confederates erupted from the tree line. Jackson's battle line was over a mile wide, easily overlapping and wrapping around the narrow Union flank.

D. Tactical Breakdown, the Sequential Collapse: Because XI Corps was hit broadside from the flank, they could not easily return fire; to shoot at the enemy, regiments had to pivot 90 degrees while under a hail of bullets.

- **Von Gilsa's Brigade Overrun**: Positioned at the very tip of the line, Colonel Leopold von Gilsa's brigade, 1,400 men, were hit by an entire Confederate division. Though a few regiments managed to fire one or two ragged volleys, they were instantly swamped and broken within ten minutes.
- **Devens' Division Disintegrates**: The remainder of Brig. Gen. Charles Devens' division was next. Attempting to reform amidst a wave of retreating men, Devens' lines dissolved. Devens himself was wounded, and his men fled eastward down Orange Turnpike in chaos.
- **Schurz's Fighting Attempt**: Maj. Gen. Carl Schurz, next in line, frantically tried to pivot his division to face west near the Talley Farm. He managed to deploy a thin line of infantry, but the sheer momentum of the Confederate tidal wave pushed them back through the choking undergrowth before a coherent defensive front could solidify.

E. The Heroes of XI Corps: Though the overall picture was a rout, highly competent tactical resistance occurred on the micro-level.

- **Captain Hubert Dilger's Lone Gun**: Captain Hubert "Leatherbreeches" Dilger, commanding Battery I of the 1st Ohio Light Artillery, refused to abandon his post. He ordered his six cannons to fire double-shotted canister directly down the narrow Orange Turnpike. Practicing a fighting retreat, Dilger would fire a gun, limber it up, move back a few yards, and fire again. His delaying action single-handedly slowed down the core Confederate advance along the road. *(Sears, 277)*
- **The Buschbeck Line**: The first major, organized Union stand occurred near Wilderness Church, led by Colonel Adolphus Buschbeck's brigade. Buschbeck had his men dig into a shallow, inward-facing line of rifle pits. Joined by remnants of Schurz's division, roughly 4,000 Union soldiers held their ground against overwhelming odds for nearly 20 to 30 minutes, delivering ferocious volleys that finally forced Jackson to deploy his second and third waves of infantry. *(Sears, 280)*

The Aftermath: By 7:00 PM, the Buschbeck line was completely outflanked and forced to retreat, but their sacrifice was monumental. The friction generated by XI Corps' individual stands, combined with the dense Wilderness terrain and mounting Confederate casualties, bled the momentum out of Jackson's attack. By the time XI Corps had streamed past Chancellorsville, night had fallen. Jackson's lines had become deeply disorganized, preventing the Confederates from cutting off the Union army's retreat routes and setting up the night sequence where Jackson was accidentally shot by his own men.

Howard's Rationale: Howard's explanation for not preparing a sound defensive position on the Union right was his conviction that Lee was in full retreat rather than preparing an attack. When Hooker warned Howard that his flank was "in the air" and vulnerable, Howard misread the battlefield intelligence. His justifications for his lack of preparation stemmed from several specific miscalculations:

The "Retreat" Delusion.

- The Catherine Furnace Sighting: Earlier in the day, Union forces observed Jackson's column moving south past Catherine Furnace. Howard, along with Hooker, erroneously concluded this meant the Confederates were retreating toward Richmond.
- Because Sickles' forces going south to harass the rear of this "retreating" column, Howard believed his flank was protected by active Union operations to his south and west, leaving him isolated without realizing it.

Topographical and Tactical Assumptions.

- Howard argued that the dense, tangled forest of the Virginia Wilderness served as a natural barrier. He believed it was impossible for a large Confederate force to navigate the thick undergrowth and launch a coordinated assault from the west.
- Believing any potential engagement would come directly from the south rather than a wide flanking maneuver from the west, Howard kept the majority of XI Corps facing south. Only a tiny fraction of his command (two regiments) was deployed facing west to watch the turnpike.

Because of these assumptions, Howard consistently dismissed numerous frantic reports from his own scouts, pickets, and officers—even threatening one colonel with arrest for spreading "panic" — until Jackson's men crashed through the woods into his unprepared camps.

Although the XI Corps had been defeated, it had retained some coherence as a unit. The corps suffered nearly 2,500 casualties (259 killed, 1,173 wounded, and 994 missing or captured), about 25% of those engaged, including 12 of 23 regimental commanders (3 of whom were killed), which suggests that they fought fiercely during their retreat. (Note that figures vary by source, so take these as illustrative of the magnitude of losses rather than exact numbers.) *(Google AI and Christian B. Keller, "Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory," New York: Fordham University Press, 2007, 73)*

12. What was the ethnic breakdown and history of the XI Corps? Were they unfairly scapegoated?

The scapegoating of XI Corps following Chancellorsville was deeply rooted in antebellum nativism, cultural xenophobia, and an institutional bias within the AoP. The Northern press and Anglo-American officers eagerly blamed the "foreigners" to deflect from the systemic leadership failures of Hooker, Howard, and Sickles.

The exact composition, complex history, and unique cultural dynamics may explain why XI Corps was unfairly targeted.

A. The Exact Ethnic Breakdown: Contrary to popular Civil War myths propagated by wartime newspapers, XI Corps was not entirely German. In reality, the corps was a near-even split of immigrant and native-born soldiers:

- **Total Infantry Regiments**: 27.
- **"Foreign" Regiments**: 15 out of 27 (roughly 55%).
- **Exclusively German**: 11 regiments were composed entirely of German immigrants or first-generation German-Americans.
- **Mixed Nationalities**: 4 regiments featured a heavy mix of German, Irish, French, and other European immigrants.
- **Native-Born Regiments**: 12 out of 27 (roughly 45%) were comprised of traditional Anglo-American soldiers primarily raised in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

Because the "foreign" elements were highly concentrated into homogeneous, German-speaking enclaves, the entire 11,000-man unit was broadly painted with a xenophobic brush by the rest of the army.

B. The Fragmented History of the Corps: XI Corps carried an institutional "outsider" status because they were entirely new to the AoP, having only been attached to it in early 1863.

- **The Origin**: The backbone of the corps was forged from Maj. General Louis Blenker's original "German Division" and Maj. General John C. Frémont's Mountain Department.
- **The "Minor" Track Record**: They spent 1862 fighting grueling, chaotic, and poorly supplied campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley and western Virginia. They suffered a rough defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run.
- **The Veteran Cold Shoulder**: Because XI Corps missed the bloody meat-grinders of Antietam and Fredericksburg, the veterans of the AoP viewed them with open contempt, openly questioning whether the "Dutchmen" had the stomach for real fighting.

C. The Cultural Friction and "Nativism": Mid-19th-century America was gripped by a strong wave of Know-Nothing nativism — a political and social movement deeply hostile to immigrants.

- **The Language Barrier**: Many German regiments conducted drills, issued orders, and sang camp songs exclusively in German. This isolated them from neighboring Anglo-American units who could not understand them.
- **Lifestyle Clashes**: The Germans retained their European customs, famously enjoying lager beer, secular music, and Sunday socializing. To the puritanical, old-line Yankee officers in the army, these cultural habits were viewed as undisciplined and un-American.

D. The Leadership Catalyst: Sigel vs. Howard: Just weeks before Chancellorsville, the corps experienced a massive leadership shift that permanently fractured its internal morale.

- **The Idolized Leader**: The corps had originally been commanded by Major General Franz Sigel, a hero of the 1848 German revolutions. Sigel was a massive recruiting tool; German immigrants proudly enlisted under the slogan, *"I'm going to fight mit Sigel!"* When Sigel resigned in March 1863 over a dispute with Hooker, the German soldiers felt personally slighted.
- **The Religious Clash**: Hooker replaced Sigel with Howard, a deeply pious, West Point-educated evangelical Christian. Howard immediately attempted to reform the "lax" morals of his new command by banning alcohol and enforcing religious observation. This deeply alienated the anti-clerical, freethinking, and Catholic Germans, building a wall of mutual distrust between the corps commander and his men.

E. The Birth of the "Flying Dutchmen" Legend.

When Jackson's flank attack struck, XI Corps men were left dangling, blindsided, and outnumbered nearly 3-to-1 due to the command oversights of Hooker, Howard, and Sickles. Despite the fact that German-dominated units like Buschbeck's brigade mounted a ferocious delaying action that took heavy casualties, the narrative was immediately hijacked.

Anglo-American officers and war correspondents—many of whom were nowhere near the right flank during the battle — published scathing reports painting the entire retreat as an act of collective ethnic cowardice. They weaponized the cruel nickname "The Flying Dutchmen" (a play on the ghostly ship and the corruption of *Deutsche*).

By blaming the failure on the "cowardly Germans who ran without firing a shot," Anglo-American leadership successfully created a convenient, culturally distinct scapegoat that shielded the army's high command from the professional consequences of their own catastrophic tactical blunders.

Unfortunately, XI Corps' streak of bad luck would continue at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. But after being reassigned to the Western Theater, many of these Chancellorsville veterans proved their fighting worth in the famous storming of Missionary Ridge in November of 1863.

Hooker later ordered Sickles to make a night attack from Hazel Grove against the right flank of Jackson's command. This attack lost its way, got involved in a firefight with other Union troops around Fairview, and fell back to Hazel Grove. Thus, Hooker's one aggressive move during the battle came to naught. *(Esposito, 87)*

At Hazel Grove, Sickles requested permission to make a night attack in order to regain Plank Road to the north, and also to recover some of Whipple's guns and caissons, and a part of his ammunition train that

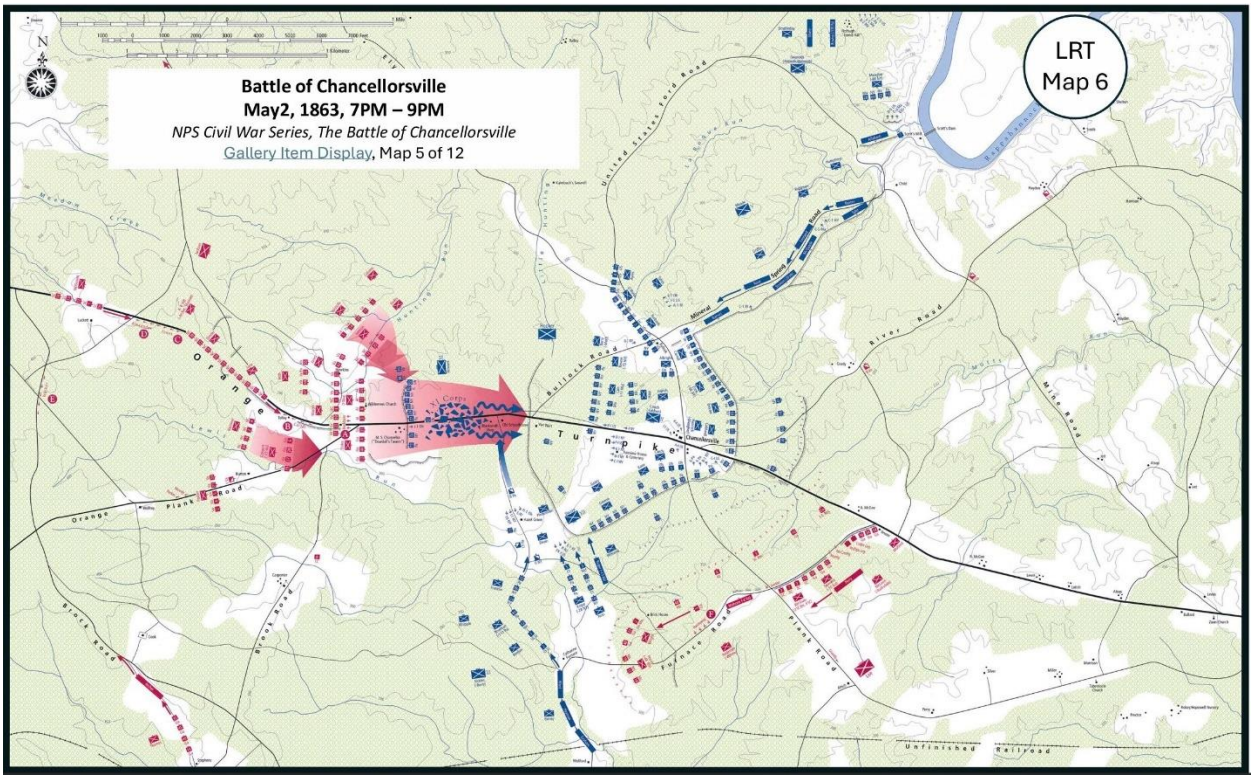
had been left outside the federal lines earlier that evening. Permission was granted at 11:00 PM, and Sickles ordered Birney to advance. *(Welcher, 673)*

- Birney's attack was generally in a northerly direction toward Plank Road and along the front of Williams division on the right and lane's confederate brigade on the left. Bernie's men were forced were fired on in the darkness from both sides, but the center of his line succeeded in reaching plank Rd.

In short time, the attack was driven back, however, it was not a complete failure because he did succeed in bringing back Whipple's guns, caissons, and ammunition, and he took and held a more advanced position from which he was able to open a road and establish connection with XII Corps.

About 10:30 PM, Brig. William W. Averell arrived at Ely's Ford with his own 2nd Cavalry Division, Colonel Benjamin F. Davis' 1st Brigade of Pleasanton's 1st Cavalry Division, and a battery US artillery. He went into bivouac on the north side of the river, and on the opposite bank was Stuart, with his available cavalry and an infantry regiment. *(Welcher, 673)*

[Refer to LRT Map 6]



Hip pocket question: What were Jackson's intentions as darkness fell, and were those intentions realized? *(Bierle 72-73 and 80, and Welcher 673)*

Jackson faced the possibility that with XI Corps' hasty retreat likely causing a panic farther back in the Union rear positions, Hooker might seek to withdraw. His decisions on the previous day had indicated an unwillingness to continue offensive operations, and his faulty defensive alignments had given Lee an opportunity for making the flank attack. If Hooker chose to retreat, could his escape route be cut off or

at least threatened? US Ford was close to five miles from the Chancellorsville crossroads. The primary advantage of US Ford was that it would allow the Union force to retreat northward across the river without having to cross both the Rapidan and the Rappahannock rivers. The advantage to moving Confederate troops north and toward the river was that soldiers possibly could get into position to threaten or block a Union retreat route. The disadvantages were numerous.

- Moving troops toward the river took them farther away from the rest of Lee's army, and if Union generals realized the Confederates divided strength and position, they could launch a significant counterattack.
- The position of the Union's reserves needed to be identified. Without this information, Jackson might move so deep into Federal lines that they could be surrounded, turning the thus-far-successful flank attack into a disaster.
- Getting Second Corps organized, faced in a new direction in the dense woods and limited roads, and able to make a quick march would be logistically challenging, if not impossible.
- This maneuver could expand and rewrite Lee's orders in the agreed-on plan, taking much initiative and moving the corps in an opposite direction from reuniting the army.

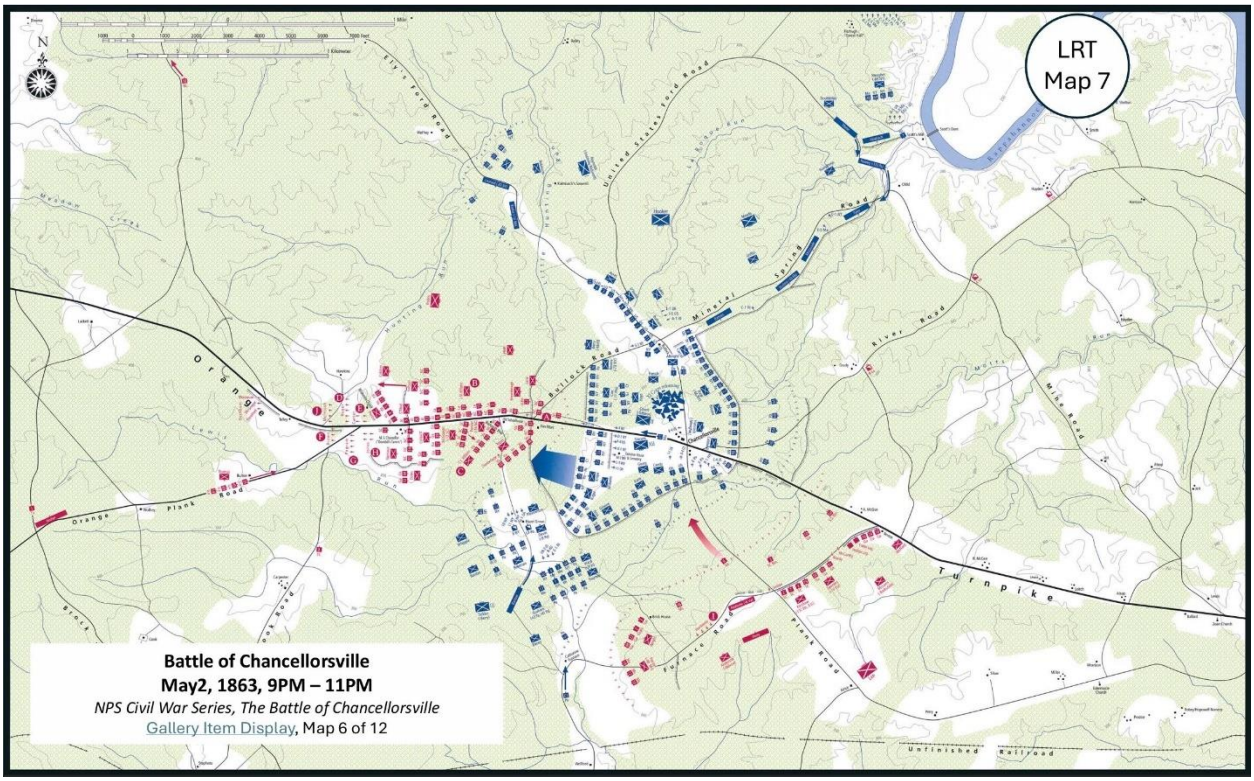
Jackson decided to head north to reconnoiter the feasibility of cutting off or at least threatening a Union retreat. He explored forested routes and positions to the north and toward US Ford. He deployed his staff and more local scouts into the darkness. As he met division of brigade commanders, he urged them to organize their lines and keep pressing forward. Both actions were to keep Union troops nervous and prevent them from digging more trenches.

Jackson had been in the battle area throughout the late afternoon and early evening, complimenting artillerymen on their skill, directing officers, and observing the attack near the front. His anxiousness and decision kept him close to the front lines as darkness settled. This, of course, led him into the situation in which he was shot and grievously wounded by friendly fire. Whether he would have decided to press the attack northward we'll never know.

An order from Lee to Stuart, pinned at 3:00 AM on May 3, settled the matter. He directed Stuart to coordinate an attack that would move Second Corps closer to Chancellorsville and reunite the Confederate army. Jackson's decision to move toward the Rappahannock became obsolete. Lee wanted to put these two wings of his army back together and drive an attack to break the Union lines around the Chancellorsville Crossroads.

It begs the question of whether Lee would have given this direction to Jackson had he not been wounded versus letting Jackson proceed as he had planned.

[Refer to LRT Map 7]



Hip pocket question: How did Hooker miss the opportunity to crush Stuart's isolated Second Corps before dawn? *(Sears, 317-325)*

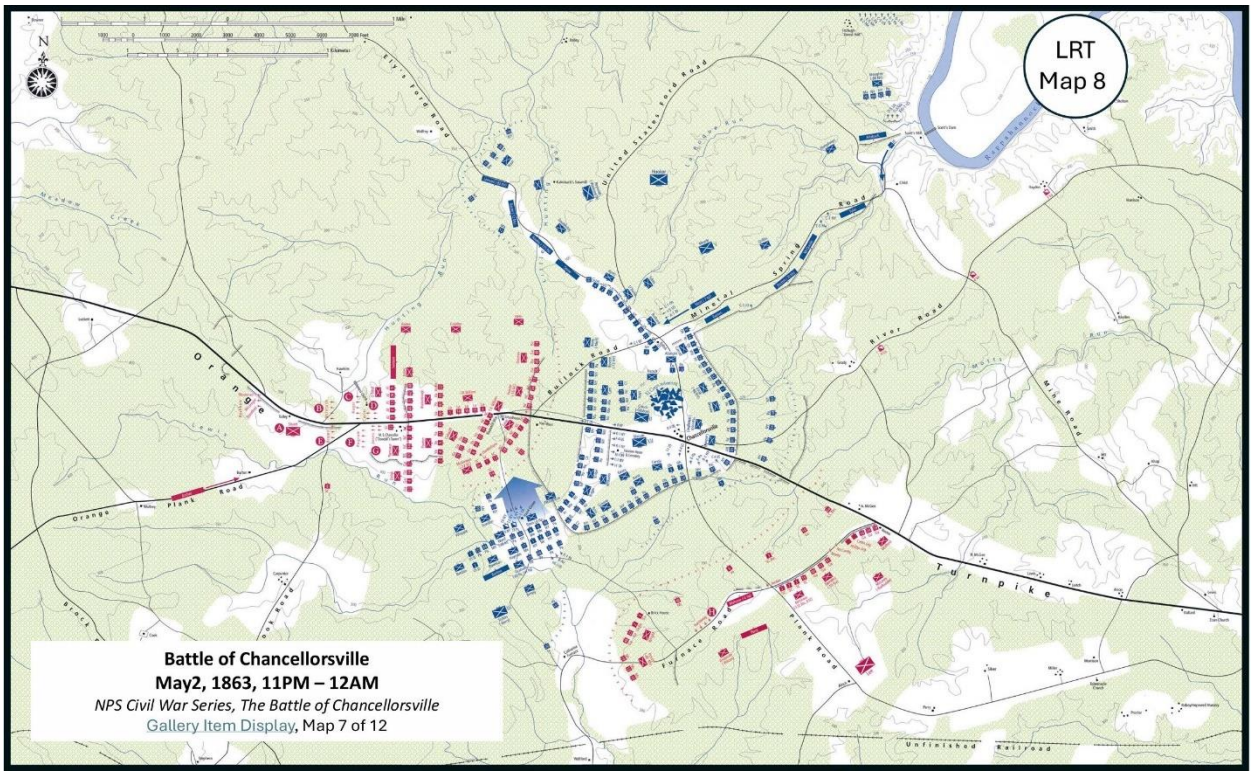
On the night of May 2, the Confederate army was divided into two isolated wings separated by the Union Army of the Potomac. Stuart's newly inherited corps was disorganized and vulnerable, while Hooker sat on a massive numerical advantage. Hooker failed to exploit this critical window due to several key tactical errors:

- **Psychological Paralysis and "Loss of Confidence":** Despite his nickname "Fighting Joe," Hooker was psychologically shattered by Jackson's surprise flank attack on May 2.
    - **Mental Surrender:** Hooker completely surrendered the operational initiative to Lee. As his second-in-command, Couch, bitterly noted that night, Hooker had become a "whipped man" who could only think about survival rather than victory.
- **Failure to Unleash Fresh Corps on Stuart's Flank:** Hooker actually discussed a plan with his chief engineer, Maj. General Gouverneur K. Warren, to "flank the flankers" and destroy Jackson's old corps before dawn. However, he never executed it.
    - **Idled Troops:** Hooker had I Corps and the V Corps positioned in perfect striking distance of Stuart's exposed left flank.
    - **Wasted Manpower:** These two corps—comprising tens of thousands of fresh, eager Union soldiers who had barely fired a shot—were left completely idle. Instead of ordering Reynolds and Meade to launch a devastating dawn assault to smash Stuart from the north, Hooker ordered them to dig in and stay put.

- **Mismanaging the Artillery at Hazel Grove:** Instead of using the darkness to mass artillery and troops to sweep Stuart's front, Hooker did the opposite at dawn.
    - **The Retreat:** Believing his lines were too extended, Hooker visited General Daniel Sickles at the Hazel Grove plateau around dawn.
    - **Giving Away the Key:** Fearing the position was a vulnerable salient, Hooker ordered Sickles to abandon this crucial high ground. By ceding Hazel Grove without a fight, Hooker handed Stuart the exact geographic platform he needed to link up with Lee and turn his artillery on the Union center.
    - **Relying on an Out-of-Touch Plan for Sedgwick:** Instead of using the massive force immediately at his disposal to crush Stuart, Hooker tried to shift the burden of the offensive to Sedgwick, who was miles away at Fredericksburg. Hooker sent orders for Sedgwick to break through the Confederate rear guard and march west to rescue the main army. This plan completely ignored the immediate tactical reality: Hooker could have destroyed Stuart himself before Sedgwick even finished crossing the river.

By choosing to fight a passive, defensive battle inside the Wilderness, Hooker allowed Stuart the time he needed to organize his infantry, mass his guns, and launch the offensive that ultimately won the battle for the Confederacy. *This was another flaw of execution (the first being the pullback to Chancellorsville Crossroads the day before, May 1), attributed to Hooker's failure of nerve.*

[Refer to LRT Map 8]



13. How did Sickles contribute to the tactical failure on May 2?

Sickles (along with Hooker and Howard) misinterpreted Jackson's flank march as a retreat and aggressively moved III Corps forward, creating a dangerous gap in the Union line that left the adjacent XI

Corps isolated and vulnerable to defeat in detail. Jackson's victory on May 2 was not decisive for Lee. XI Corps had been defeated, but the rest of Hooker's force remained potent. Reynolds's I Corps had arrived overnight and took up the slack from XI Corps. Hooker now had some 76,000 men facing 43,000 Confederate around Chancellorsville. The two halves of Lee's army at Chancellorsville were separated by III Corps, which occupied a strong position on high ground at Hazel Grove.

The tactical failure of the III Corps boils down to four critical missteps:

A. The Misinterpreted "Retreat": On the morning of May 2, Union lookouts spotted a massive Confederate column moving south and west away from the main lines. They were mistaken. This was actually the beginning of Jackson's flank march.

- **The Flawed Assumption**: Sickles (along with Hooker and Howard) completely misread the movement. They assumed Lee's army was in a retreat toward Richmond because they were low on supplies.
- **The Eager Push**: Sickles, a politically appointed general hungry for military glory, begged Hooker for permission to launch an attack. Hooker granted it, instructing Sickles to advance south and strike the "retreating" enemy column in the flank.

B. Creating the Mile-Wide Gap: To launch his attack, Sickles moved two regiments (the 26th Pennsylvania and the 11th Massachusetts, of Maj. General Hiram G. Berry's division, Hooker's old division) southward from their central position at Hazel Grove toward Catharine Furnace. *(Sears, 248)*

- **The Severed Link**: As the III Corps regiments pushed deeper into the woods to engage Jackson's rear guard, they physically moved out of alignment with the rest of the army.
- **The Vacuum**: This advance opened a massive, mile-wide gap in the center of the Union line. The right flank of III Corps had previously been locked tightly against the left flank of XI Corps. By moving south, Sickles left XI Corps isolated, vulnerable, and dangling "in the air."

C. Sucking Away XI Corps' Support: As Sickles became heavily engaged with Jackson's rear-guard brigade near the furnace, he realized he needed more men to secure his flanks.

- **Stripping the Defense**: Sickles requested reinforcements. Hooker complied by ordering Howard to send his best, most reliable reserve unit—Brig. General Francis C. Barlow's brigade—southward to support Sickles.
- **The Consequences**: Barlow's brigade was the only mobile reserve XI Corps had to protect its vulnerable western flank. By marching Barlow away to help Sickles chase a ghost, XI Corps was stripped of its structural safety net just one hour before Jackson launched his attack.

D. The Trap Springs: Sickles Cut Off: When Jackson's 28,000 men erupted out of the woods at 5:15 PM, they did not strike a continuous Union line; they struck the open flank of XI Corps, i.e., the open flank of Hooker's flanking force.

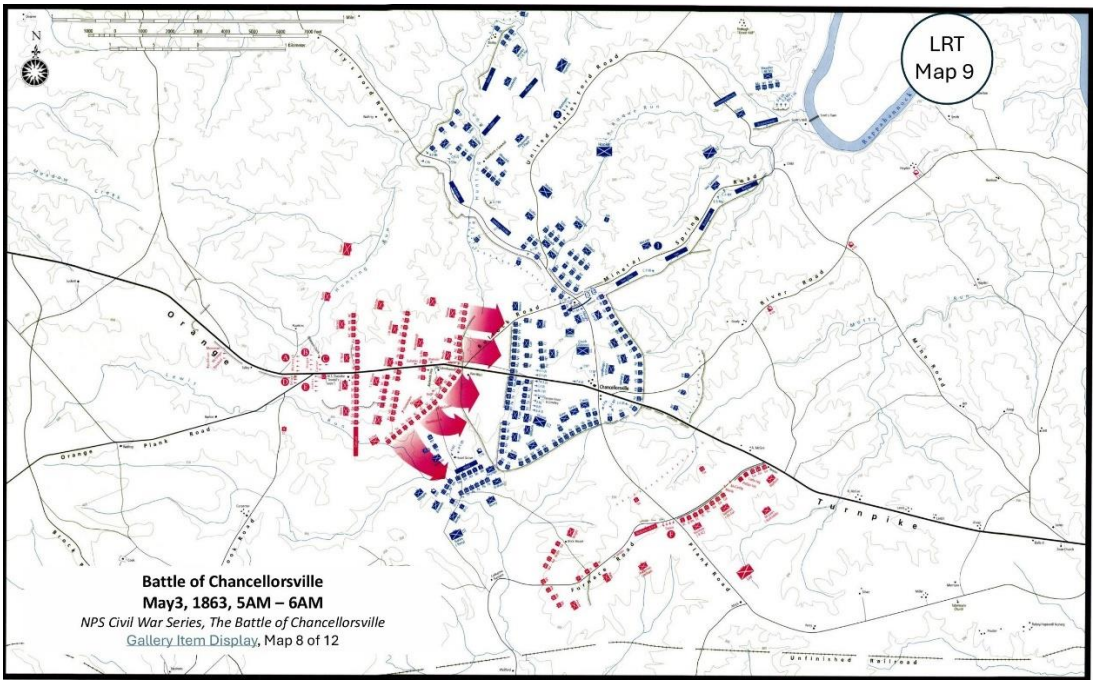
- **The Rout**: As XI Corps collapsed eastward in panic, they did not run toward Sickles — they ran *past* the gap he had created.
- **The Isolation**: Sickles suddenly realized that Jackson's forces were now between III Corps and the rest of the Union army. Sickles was effectively cut off in the dark, trapped in the woods south of the battlefield, while the main Union line around Chancellorsville was on the verge of collapse.

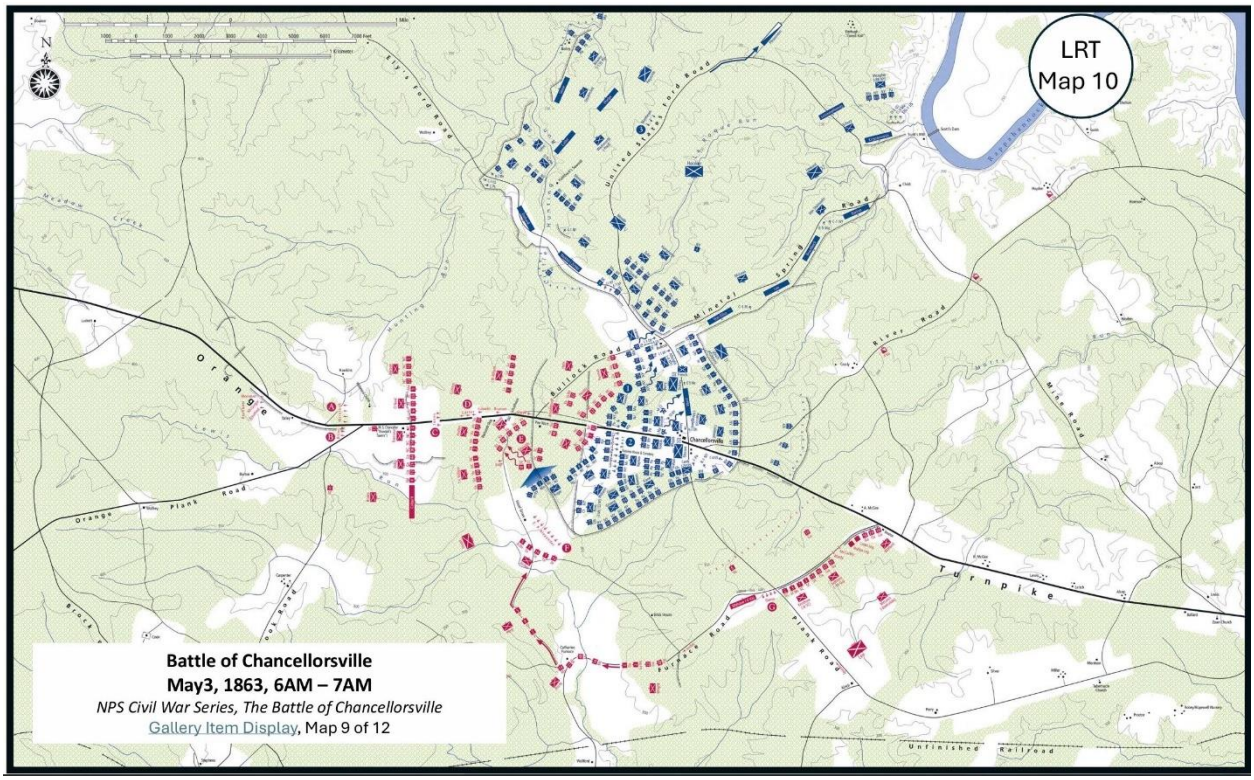
Following Jackson's flank attack, III Corps was dangerously isolated south of the main Union line. Around midnight, under the light of a full moon, Sickles ordered a desperate counterattack to clear Orange Plank Road and re-establish a connection to Hooker's forces at Chancellorsville.

E. The Aftermath: Hooker formed a new defensive line around Chancellorsville after Jackson's attack routed XI Corps. He stemmed the rout by putting III Corps into the breach to settle the line.

- Hooker still hoped to turn the battle around at the end of the night of May 2. Sedgwick was to attack and fall on Lee's rear while the rest of the Federal forces arrayed around Chancellorsville settled down to defend against expected Confederate attacks the next day.
    - **The Plan**: Brigadier General David Birney's division formed the attack columns, with Ward's and Hayman's brigades leading the assault with fixed bayonets and strict orders *not* to load their muskets to maintain surprise.
    - **The Friendly Fire Chaos**: The advance devolved into a nightmare of confusion in the pitch-black Wilderness thickets. Sickles' men accidentally stumbled into the lines of their own comrades—the Union XII Corps under Alpheus Williams—triggering a fierce, tragic friendly-fire engagement.
    - **The Result**: Despite the chaos, the charge succeeded in its primary strategic goal. It panicked the Confederate lines, halted their nighttime momentum, and allowed Sickles to safely reconnect his corps with the main army by morning.
- Sickles spent the night launching frantic, uncoordinated night attacks just to claw his way back north to the main army. Though Sickles later spun his actions as heroic, his aggressive, uncoordinated advance toward Catharine Furnace doomed XI Corps by stripping their reserves and leaving them entirely exposed to Jackson's devastating blow. (It also would come back to haunt him on July 2 at Gettysburg.)

[Refer to LRT Map 9 and 10]





THE BATTLE (continued).

May 3: This would be the battle's bloodiest and most intense day of combat — and the second bloodiest day of the war — with fighting raging across two primary fronts located some ten miles apart: the main clearing around the Chancellorsville crossroads and the heights of Fredericksburg, and at Salem Church in the middle. As described by Sarah Kay Bierle, "The fighting at each place directly affected the decision and results of the engagements at all the other locations. While the Confederates kept the advantage of offense around chancellorsville, they had to employ defensive operations to slow sedgwick's advancing troops from the east. Union generals had advantages in all locations, and with hindsight, they had a strong opportunity to crush general Lee's divided Confederates." (Bierle, 107)

"[This morning,] Hooker again had a splendid opportunity to defeat Lee. The Confederate army around Chancellorsville was completely split, with its two halves almost a day's march apart. Furthermore, the arrival of Reynolds' I Corps and the relatively prompt rally of most of Howard's XI Corps gave Hooker an approximately 2-to-1 numerical superiority in the area. Nevertheless, he made no effort to regain the initiative. Instead, he ordered a secondary line of defenses prepared north of Chancellorsville." *(Esposito, 88)*

- September 17, 1862 (Antietam) was the bloodiest single day of the war, with total casualties reported as 22,726 (Union 12,410 and Confederate 10,316). *(Battle of Antietam - Wikipedia)*
- May 3, 1863 (Chancellorsville) was the second bloodiest day, with total casualties some 17,250 (Union ~8,300 and Confederate ~8,950). *(Emerging Civil War)*
    - July 2, 1863 (Gettysburg) was the third bloodiest day with total casualties estimated at 16,500 – 20,000.

- The bloodiest battles of the Civil War were: *(Civil War Facts: 1861-1865, Facts - The Civil War (U.S. National Park Service)*
    - Gettysburg: 51,116 casualties.
    - Seven Days: 36,463 casualties.
    - Chickamauga: 34,624 casualties.
    - Chancellorsville: 29,609 casualties.
    - Antietam: 22,726 casualties.

14. Why was Hazel Grove critical on May 3?

The night before, after Jackson's attack had been stopped just west of Fairview Hill, Sickles' III Corps had fought its way back from Catherine Furnace and taken up a position which included the high ground at Hazel Grove. This high ground dominated that at Fairview Hill and the surrounding area. Hooker visited Hazel Grove early on May 3 and should have perceived that a federal attack from Hazel Grove could strike the flank of either half of Lee's army. Nevertheless, he ordered the Hazel Grove position abandoned, and Sickles fell back to Fairview. *(Esposito, 88)* This withdrawal was probably the greatest of Hooker's blunders. It left the Confederates free to use the Dowdall's Tavern-Catherine Furnace Road, thus reuniting their separated army. It also gave up the dominating terrain in the area.

Meanwhile, Lee chose Stuart to temporarily command the Second Corps because A.P. Hill was also wounded, and the next-ranking infantry officer, Rodes, lacked experience and deferred to Stuart.

Stuart arrived at the front from Ely's Ford about midnight and assumed command of Second Corps. At 3:00 AM, he received orders from Lee to attack as soon as possible and effect a junction of the two wings of the army by driving the Federal troops from Chancellorsville. *(Welcher 673)*

The Union divisions surrounding Chancellor Crossroads in effect formed a bulge, or a *cul-de-sac*. This would be the center of the battle on May 3.

- Brig. General Henry Heth, then commanding A.P. Hill's division, had his six brigades in line across and perpendicular to Plank Road, one mile west of Chancellorsville, and facing east. In lines behind him were Colston's division (four brigades) and behind him, Rodes (five brigades).
- Opposing Heth were III Corps and XII Corps intermixed.
    - On the Union's left was Sickles' III Corps around Union Grove with 3rd Division (Whipple) on the far left and 1st Division (Birney) to his right.
        - Berry's 2nd Division was on the far right, straddling Bullock Road, on the other side of XII Corps' 1st Division (Williams).
    - Next was Slocum's XII Corps on the Union left, with 1st Division (Williams) in line up to Orange Turnpike.
        - Geary's 2nd Division was at an angle and facing southeastwards.
    - North of Orange Turnpike and facing west was III Corps' 2nd Division (Berry).
- East of Chancellor Crossroads were two divisions of II Corps: 1st Division (Hancock) on the right and 3rd Division (French) on the left.

- To their north V Corps stretched northwestward along Ely's Ford Road and XI Corps northeastward along Mineral Spring Road to the Rappahannock.

Stuart advanced at daybreak, rapidly got 31 guns — later increased to 50 — on the abandoned hilltop, and opened a destructive enfiladed fire against the lines of both Sickles and Slocum. At the same time, the Confederates attacked both sides of the Union perimeter, especially from the west, where Stuart sent in charge after charge against the Federal earthworks. After several hours of furious fighting, Federal ammunition began to run short, and the Confederate attacks slowly gained ground. *(Esposito, 88; for a detailed description, see Welcher, 675-679)*

- Hooker was little more than a passive spectator. He was injured by a Confederate artillery shell. When revived, he was in great pain and partially paralyzed. Couch was next in command. I Corps and V Corps were fresh and ready to attack, and XI Corps was only lightly engaged. Lee's forces, on the other hand, were almost completely committed and had taken heavy losses. But Hooker did not relinquish command. At about 9:30 AM, Hooker ordered Couch to pull the army back to the prepared line north of Chancellorsville. Lee, on his part, pushed his tired troops forward in an attempt to complete his success. *(Esposito, 88)*

Despite the stunning blow delivered by Jackson's forces on May 2, Hooker's remained the far larger force, and it occupied many of the most strategic spots on the battlefield.

The night before, after Jackson's attack had been stopped just west of Fairview Hill (essentially, the heart of the battlefield at Chancellorsville), Sickles attempted to attack the Confederate position north of Hazel Grove. *(Chancellorsville Battlefield Tour - Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park (U.S. National Park Service), 9. Hazel Grove)* However, the dark woods created too much confusion and chaos for an effective assault. Sickles had returned from Catherine Furnace and taken up a position which included the high ground at Hazel Grove. This high ground dominated that at Fairview hill and the surrounding area. Hooker visited Hazel Grove early on the May 3 and should have perceived that a federal attack from Hazel Grove would could strike the flank of either half of Lee's army. Nevertheless, he ordered the Hazel Grove position abandoned, and Sickles fell back to Fairview. *(Esposito, 88)*

- **Confederate Assault**: Stuart assumed temporary command of Jackson's corps. He determined he could not attack northwards into Meade's V Corps and Reynolds' I Corps, they being fresh, so he pressed the attack eastwards in aggressive, straight-in frontal assaults starting at daybreak. He adopted Jackson's approach from the previous evening, stacking divisions in offensive depth.
- **Hazel Grove Evacuation**: Hooker made the tactical error of ordering his troops to abandon Hazel Grove, a vital piece of high ground. *(Chris Mackowski, "Where Did Joe Hooker Lose the Battle of Chancellorsville?", May 6, 2013, Emerging Civil War)*
    - It was the lynchpin of the battlefield: high ground occupied by III Corps that separated Jackson's portion of the army from Lee's. Even as Confederate leadership plotted to reunite the wings of the army by assaulting Hazel Grove, Hooker ordered Sickles to abandon the position because it was too exposed out at the very tip of the Federal formation. Under protest, Sickles obeyed, pulling out even as Confederates swept onto the hill.
    - Had Hooker's order not given Confederates (which is to say, Colonel Edward Porter Alexander) an artillery platform that let them duel on equal footing with the Federal artillery, his compact formation might have allowed him to resist Confederate infantry assaults because he had so much concentrated

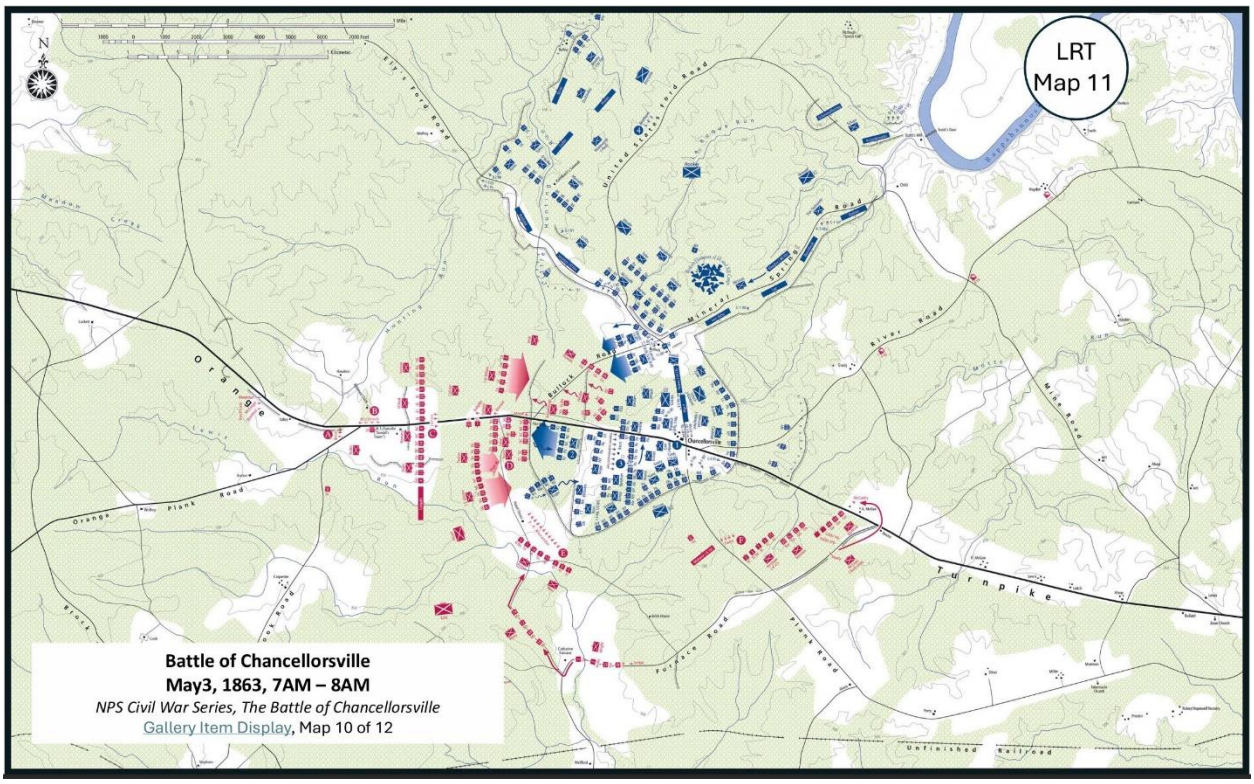
firepower and good interior lines in his position around the intersection. Instead, he turned that position into a lucrative, concentrated target.

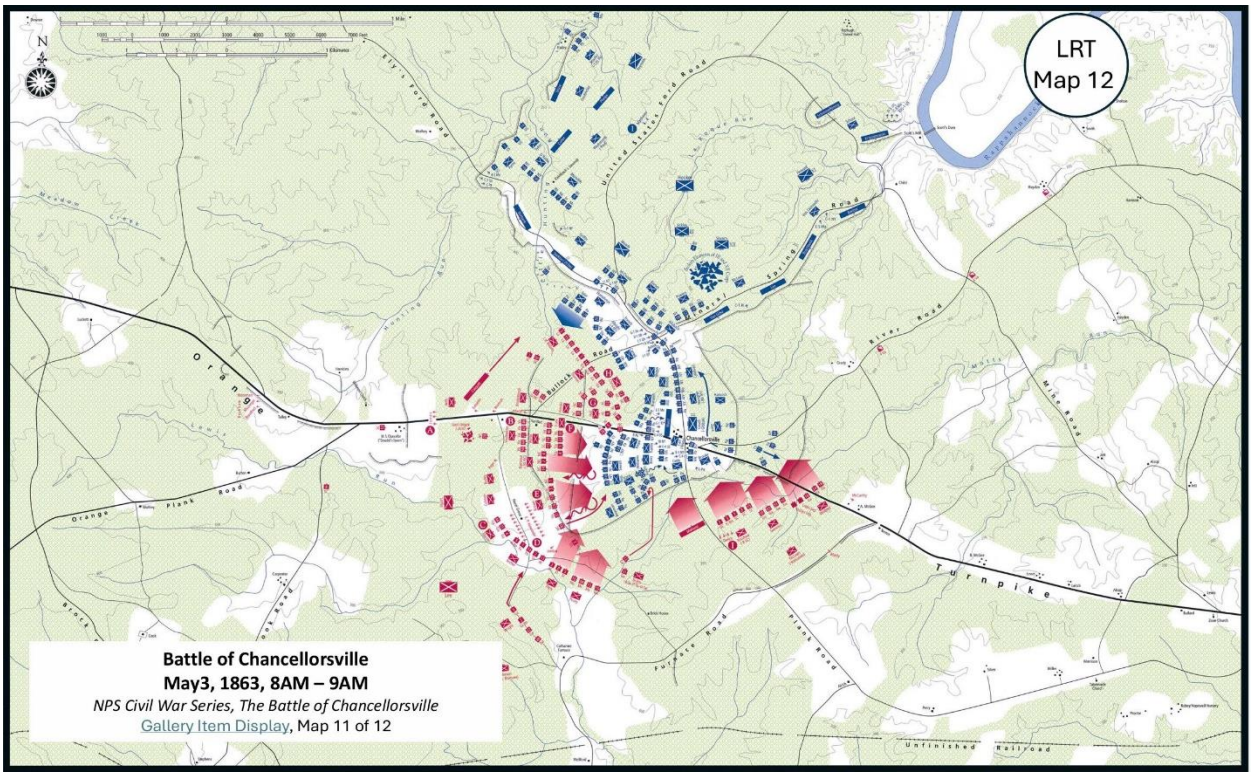
- **Artillery Squeeze**: "The Confederate capture of the Hazel Grove plateau and its use as an artillery position was one of the decisive factors leading to the Confederate triumph on May 3, 1863." They used this high ground to relentlessly bombard the Union lines at Fairview. *("Bloody Sunday - The Fight for Fairview at Chancellorsville: Chancellorsville 160," American Battlefield Trust, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5_xTfrW4GQ)*
    - During the night of May 2, Col. Edward Porter Alexander of Georgia discovered Hazel Grove during an evening scouting mission. He persuaded Stuart to make its capture the first priority. At dawn on May 3, Confederates under the command of Brig. Gen. James J. Archer charged up the slope of Hazel Grove and captured four artillery pieces and roughly 100 men – this small Union force was already in the process of retreating from this important high ground.
    - Employing the new system of artillery battalions—clustering batteries into larger groups— Alexander filled Hazel Grove with 30 cannons and turned them loose on Hooker's lines.
    - The sheer weight of artillery fire from Hazel Grove, coupled with more guns along the Orange Turnpike, was too much for the Union troops around the Chancellorsville clearing. The clearing was abandoned and Confederate troops and their hero, Robert E. Lee, rode into the clearing, victors of the day.
- **Hooker Wounded**: During the morning bombardment, a Confederate artillery projectile struck a pillar of the Chancellor mansion that Hooker was leaning against, knocking him senseless and leaving him groggy for the rest of the day.
- **Union Retreat**: Despite determined rearguard fighting by Union divisions under Hancock and Brig. General John White Geary, the Confederate wings successfully reunited by mid-morning. The combined Southern forces smashed the Union salient, forcing the Federal army by noon to retreat into a tighter defensive perimeter north of the crossroads.
- **Hooker's rational for the withdrawal from Hazel Grove:** Hooker ordered the withdrawal from Hazel Grove because he viewed the high ground as a dangerously exposed salient. His primary goal going into the early morning of May 3 was to consolidate his scattered forces into a tighter, more compact, concentric defensive perimeter around the Chancellorsville crossroads. Unfortunately, from Hazel Grove, Stuart's guns would have a direct, unobstructed line of fire into the next Union stronghold at Fairview, as well as the Chancellorsville. His artillery broke the back of the Union defense, pinning down Federal infantry and knocking out opposing batteries.
- **The Salient Threat:** III Corps held Hazel Grove, which jutted out significantly to the south of the main Union line. Hooker feared this position left Sickles' men isolated, and vulnerable to being enveloped and assailed from both sides by Lee and Stuart.
- **Minimizing Casualties:** Hooker believed that trying to reinforce and hold an exposed position like Hazel Grove would result in a massive, unnecessary loss of life. He preferred to let the Confederates exhaust themselves throwing infantry against a more stable, fortified Union position.
- **Fallback to Fairview:** By pulling Sickles back, Hooker intended to form a unified, heavily defended front anchored slightly further north at Fairview Heights, an elevated clearing closer to his Chancellorsville headquarters.
- Fairview was evacuated at 9:30 a.m., briefly recaptured in a counterattack, but by 10:00 AM, Hooker ordered it abandoned for good. The loss of this artillery platform doomed the Union position at the

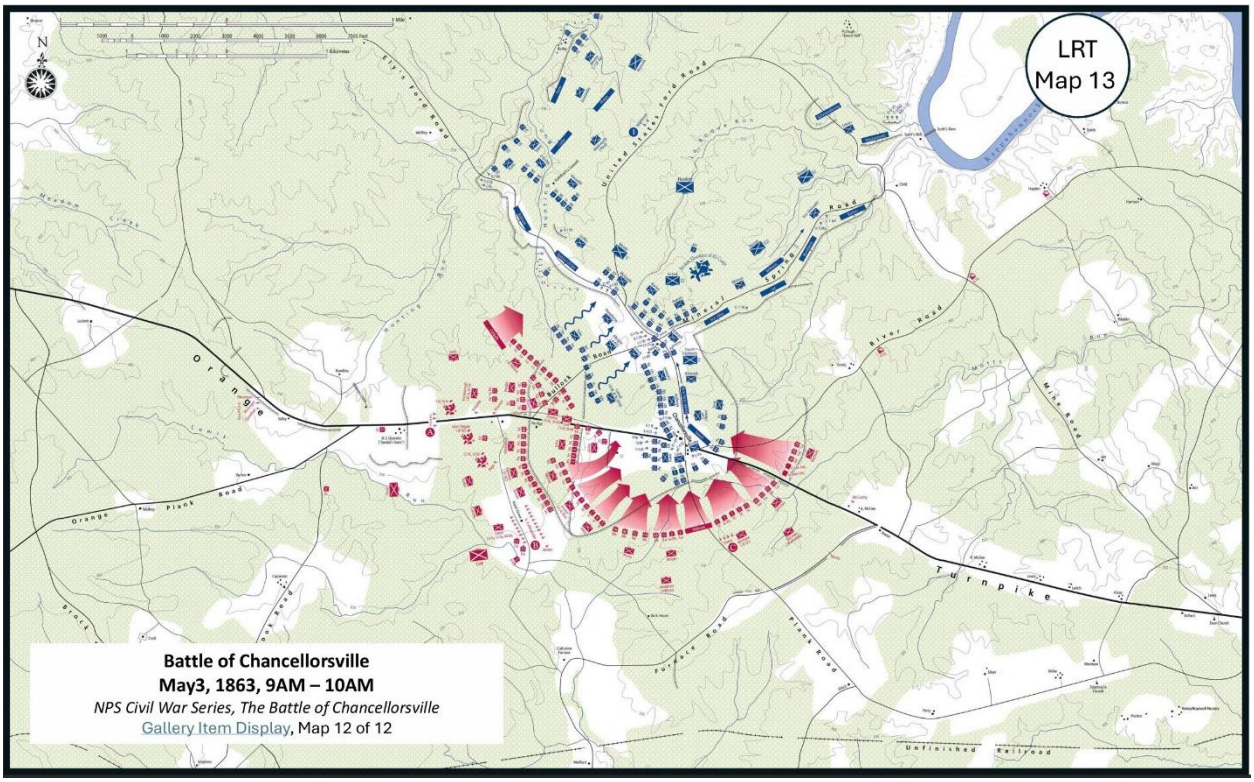
Chancellorsville crossroads as well, and the Army of the Potomac began a fighting retreat to positions circling US Ford. The soldiers of the two halves of Lee's army reunited shortly after 10:00 AM.

Despite intense protests from Sickles, and against the advice of Brig. General Henry J. Hunt, Hooker insisted on the evacuation. Historians overwhelmingly view this as one of Hooker's gravest blunders of the campaign. As soon as the Union forces moved out in an orderly fashion, Confederate Colonel Porter Alexander immediately seized the high ground and massed over 30 artillery pieces on Hazel Grove, raining down a devastating bombardment on the Federal lines that ultimately forced a full Union retreat.

[Refer to LRT Map 11 – 13]







Hip pocket question: Why did Hooker return Brig. General Hunt, his Chief of Artillery, to the front?

Hooker's decision to restore Hunt to tactical control of the artillery on May 3 stands as a confession of error.

A. The Sidelining of Hunt: When Hooker took command of the AoP in January 1863, he instituted various organizational reforms that improved efficiency and morale within the AoP. However, his "reform" of how his artillery would be handled had the Impact.

Hooker and Hunt clashed repeatedly over the administrative and tactical employment of cannon. Hunt was a brilliant artillerist who championed the doctrine of centralized command. He believed that artillery was most effective when controlled at the army or corps level, allowing a commander to rapidly mass hundreds of guns to shatter enemy infantry lines or silence opposing batteries.

Hooker, though, believed that artillery should be subordinate to local infantry division commanders to foster a closer emotional and tactical bond between foot soldiers and their supporting batteries. On the eve of the Chancellorsville campaign, Hooker stripped Hunt of his direct command over the army's Artillery Reserve and parceled the batteries out to individual infantry divisions. Hunt was effectively reduced to an administrative staff officer, forbidden from ordering batteries into position or coordinating large-scale bombardments on the battlefield.

B. The Disastrous Failure of Decentralized Artillery: This decentralized structure proved to be a fatal flaw when the fighting began in the dense Wilderness. When Jackson launched his flank attack against XI Corps on the evening of May 2, the lack of a centralized artillery authority caused immediate chaos. Division commanders did not understand how to effectively manage multiple batteries under pressure. Batteries were caught in narrow roads, blocked by retreating infantry, or thrown into action piecemeal. While individual artillery officers performed heroically to check Jackson's advance at places like Hazel Grove, there was no overall guiding hand to construct a comprehensive defensive barrier of cannon.

The crisis reached its zenith on the morning of May 3. Stuart launched a relentless, synchronized assault to reunite the two wings of Lee's forces facing Chancellorsville Crossroads. The focal point of the fighting was Hazel Grove, a critical piece of high ground that dominated the clearing around Chancellorsville.

Sickles requested reinforcements to hold Hazel Grove, but Hooker, adopting a strictly defensive mindset, ordered him to evacuate the position. The abandonment of Hazel Grove was a monumental tactical blunder. Confederate artillerist Edward Porter Alexander immediately seized the high ground and unlimbered dozens of cannon.

From Hazel Grove, the Confederate guns unleashed a devastating enfilading fire upon the Union lines at Fairview Knoll and around the Chancellorsville clearing. Because Hunt had been sidelined, the Union response was fractured. Individual Federal batteries ran out of ammunition because there was no centralized system to resupply them from the rear reserve. Battery commanders looked for higher authority to coordinate relief or counter-battery fire, but found only confusion. The superior material and training of the Union artillery were entirely neutralized by Hooker's broken command chain.

C. The Injury to Hooker and the Recall of Hunt: As the morning wore on, the Chancellorsville clearing became an inferno of shell fragments and exploding gunpowder. Around 9:00 AM, Hooker was standing on the wooden porch of the Chancellor house headquarters when a solid shot from a Confederate gun at Hazel Grove smashed into a pillar. The pillar split, violently striking Hooker down the side of his body.

The impact left him unconscious for several minutes, likely suffering a severe concussion. When Hooker regained consciousness, he was dazed, in significant physical agony, and mentally incapacitated. He refused to yield formal command of the army to his senior corps commander, Couch, but he was aware that his army was collapsing around him.

At this point, Colonel Charles S Wainwright, chief of artillery for I Corps, arrived. He urgently requested to speak to Hooker directly. Essentially, what he wanted to know was, "Where is General hunt?" This was veiled criticism of Hooker. As described by Bierle, "Hooker had broken a system that had worked well at two previous battles, reduc[ing] his army's chief of artillery to administrative work and watching river fords, and let[ting] officers who did not understand artillery give orders affecting the cannon and the gunners. Artillery batteries had run out of ammunition and been forced to retreat, contributing in part to the overall federal retreat from the defensive lines around Chancellorsville. The roads of the Wilderness were traffic logged, and in the new defensive lines, artillery struggled to find their positions or get their needed ammunition. The corps-level artillery officers had tried to remedy the situation, and battery commanders had protested bad positions. Yet all of them lacked the authority and rank to override the infantry officers' poor decisions." *(Bierle, 119-122)*

Hooker swallowed his pride and on the afternoon of May 3 officially restored Hunt to full tactical command of the AoP's artillery.

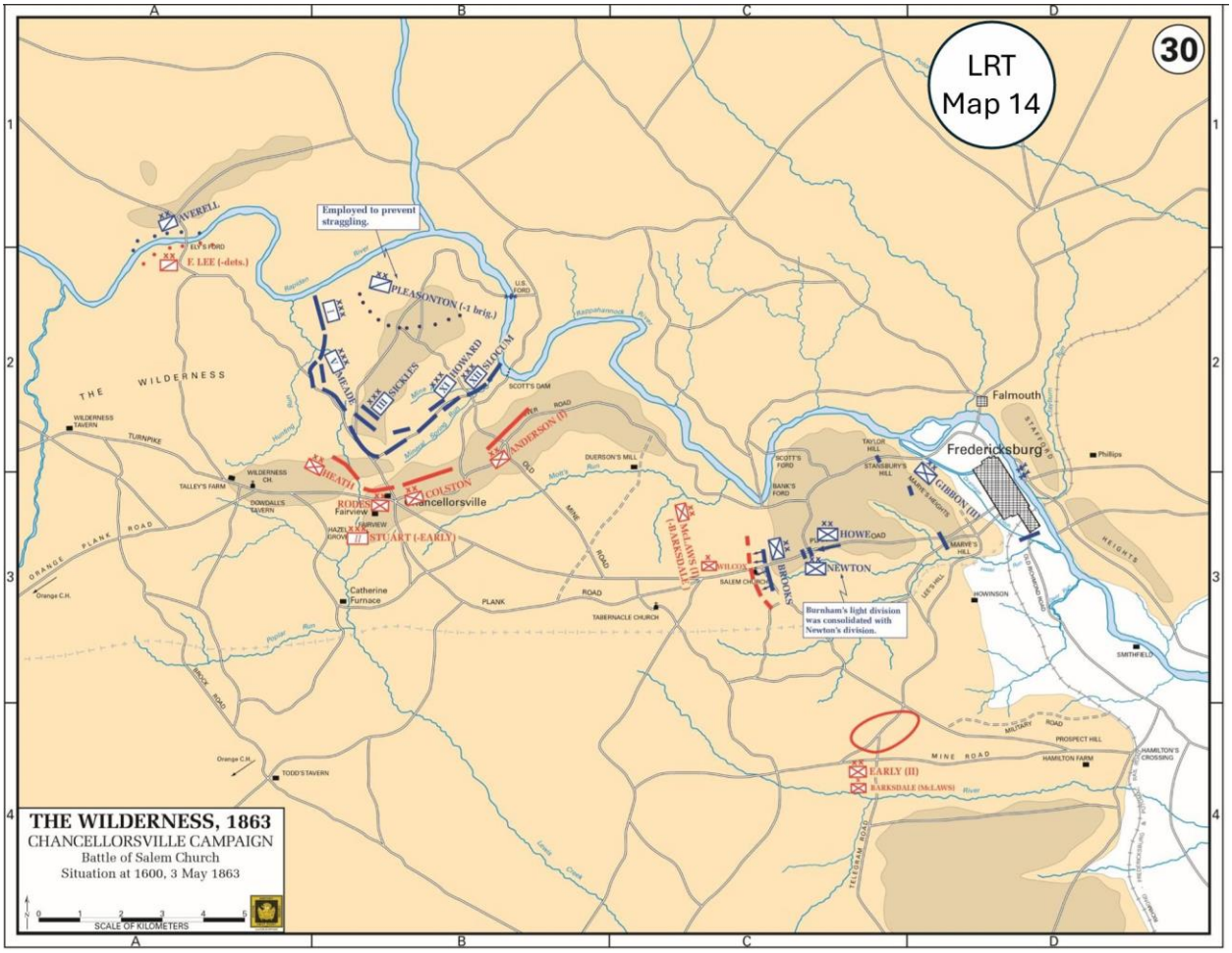
D. Hunt's Immediate Impact and Legacy:

Though the restoration came too late to save the positions at Hazel Grove or Fairview, Hunt's return to the fight quickly transformed the Union defensive posture. Operating with his characteristic energy and technical expertise, Hunt immediately went to work stabilizing the retreating Union forces.]

- **Rebuilding the Ammunition Line:** Hunt solved the supply bottleneck, organizing a steady flow of artillery ammunition from the rear parks to the frontline batteries.
- **Massing the Guns:** He began assembling a massive, concentrated line of field pieces along the new, contracted apex of the Union defensive perimeter north of Chancellorsville.
- **Deterring the Confederate Advance:** When Lee's exhausted infantry attempted to press their advantage against this revised Federal line, they found themselves facing a cohesive, devastating wall of concentrated canister and shell fire directed by Hunt. The sheer volume of Hunt's massed artillery took away Lee's momentum and prevented a tactical retreat from turning into a total rout.

When Meade replaced Hooker just two months later, he fully restored Hunt's doctrine of centralized artillery command. It was this restored administrative authority that allowed Hunt to effectively mass the Union guns on Cemetery Ridge in July 1863, providing the decisive firepower necessary to break Pickett's Charge and win the Battle of Gettysburg.

[Refer to LRT Map 14]



To the east, Sedgwick had received Hooker's order to attack about midnight, May 2-3. It directed him to cross the Rappahannock and move towards Chancellorsville, so as to be in rear of Lee's army at daylight on May 3. In fact, VI Corps was already across the Rappahannock, about 3 miles below Fredericksburg, not at Falmouth as the order appears to have implied. Thus, it was impossible for Sedgwick to be near Chancellorsville (some 10 miles away) at daylight the next morning nevertheless, Sedgwick had his corps marching toward Fredericksburg shortly after midnight.

- Pushing back some light Confederate outposts, he occupied Fredericksburg by 5:00 AM. Another pontoon bridge was thrown into position to enable Gibbon to join him there. *(Esposito, 88)*

Four Union divisions stood opposite Early's soldiers by 7:00 AM.

- Gibbon's 2nd Division (II Corps) was farthest north, its right resting on the Rappahannock above town.
- Next came the three VI Corps divisions: 3rd Division (Newton, in Fredericksburg), 2nd Division (Howe, south of the town), and 1st Division (Brooks, south of Deep Run).

Early's line defended everything from Orange Plank Road to a point well beyond Brooks's position.

- Barksdale's Mississippians held the Confederate left; Early understandably allocated most of his men to the right, where Burnside's Federals had achieved their only success in the battle of Fredericksburg five months earlier.
- A last-minute adjustment shifted Hays's Louisiana brigade from the far right to Barksdale's left.
- A thin line of men from the Twenty-first and Eighteenth Mississippi, supported by the Washington Artillery of New Orleans, watched from behind the stone wall that bordered the sunken road below the crest of Marye's Heights.

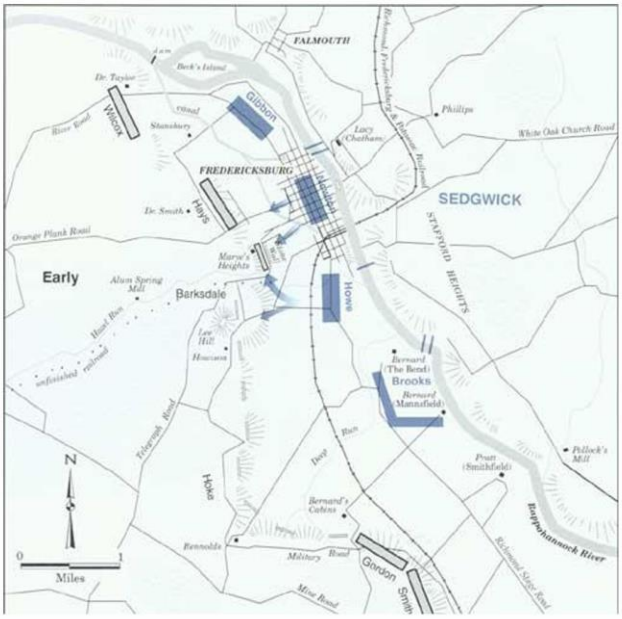
The Federals attacked the thinly held Confederate position behind the town. The first three Union assaults were repulsed. Then Wilcox (Anderson's Division) arrived from Bank's Ford to strengthen the left of the Confederate defenses. He had moved to the sound of the cannon on his own initiative upon noticing that the Union troops opposite Bank's Ford were decreasing in numbers and that those who remained were wearing their full equipment, as if in readiness to move off. But in spite of Wilcox's arrival, Sedgwick's fourth effort – a combined penetration and development — carried Marye's Heights and overran part of the Confederate artillery there. *(Esposito, 88)*

After occupying Marye's Heights, Sedgwick did not move immediately towards Chancellorsville. Instead, he ordered Gibbon's division (II Corps, that had been brought forward from Falmouth) to hold Fredericksburg and cover the bridges there, and then proceeded to reorganize his command. It was not until 3:00 PM that he resumed the advance.

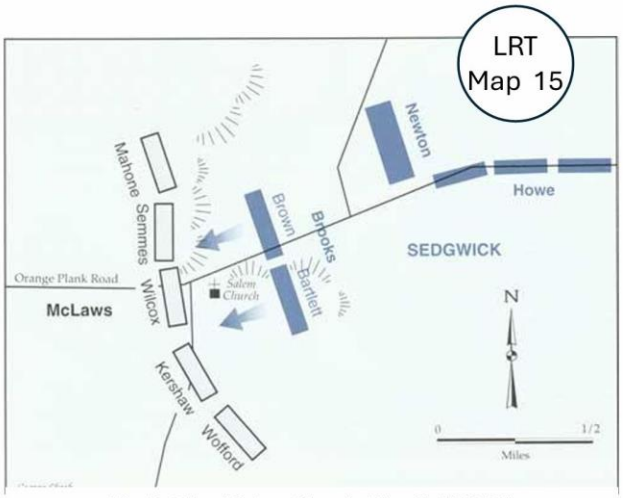
Lee began moving aggressively against Hooker above Chancellorsville but stopped when he received a report that Sedgwick was on Marye's Heights. Lee immediately sent McLaws and his four brigades to meet this new threat. *(Esposito, Map 89, and Sedgwick Storms Marye's Heights: May 3, Morning, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*

- Jubal Early kept his head and conducted a skillful retreat along the Telegraph Road, putting together a defensive line near the Cox house some two and a half miles south of Marye's Heights.
- With Brooks's division in the lead, followed by Newton's and Howe's, VI Corps ran into Wilcox's brigade of five Alabama regiments.

[Refer to LRT Map 15]



Sedgwick Storms Marye's Heights, May 3, Morning
NPS Civil War Series, The Battle of Chancellorsville
https://npshistory.com/publications/civil_war_series/8/sec8.htm



The Battle of Salem Church, May 3, 5:30 PM
NPS Civil War Series, The Battle of Chancellorsville
https://npshistory.com/publications/civil_war_series/8/sec9.htm

Under Sedgwick's assault, Early retreated southward along Telegraph Road. Wilcox fell back toward Chancellorsville, seeking to delay the Union advance. Sedgwick, with some 23,000 men, followed along Orange Plank Road about 2:00 PM, leaving Gibbons' division to hold Marye's Heights in his rear but requesting that an alternate line of communications be established by way of Bank's Ford in the event he was cut off from Fredericksburg.

- Deployed early that morning at Bank's Ford on the Rappahannock, Wilcox had marched his troops toward Fredericksburg in time to witness the loss of Marye's Heights.
- He spent the next several hours executing delaying actions: first on a ridge about 800 yards west of Marye's Heights, a second time a little farther on, a third time at the toll gate on Orange Plank Road not quite three and a half miles west of Fredericksburg, and finally along a ridge at Salem Church, a modest brick Baptist meetinghouse standing 1,000 yards beyond the toll gate on the south side of the road.

McLaws (less Barksdale's brigade) reached Salem church before 3:00 PM and took up position there. Wilcox joined him shortly thereafter. Approximately an hour later, Sedgwick came up and — probably concluding that Hooker was engaging practically all of Lee's army and, thus, the forces in front of him could not be large — attacked immediately with his leading division, Brooks, directly from his column of march.

- The Rebel line extended a mile and a quarter across Orange Plank Road and facing east. Wilcox's brigade occupied the center, with two regiments north and three south of the road. The brigades of Brig. Generals Paul J. Semmes and William Mahone extended Wilcox's left, those of Brig Generals Joseph Kershaw and

William T. Wofford his right. (*The Battle of Salem Church, May 3, 5:30 PM, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*

- Initially successful, the attacking Union division was finally checked and thrown back by superior numbers. Sedgwick's second division, in turn, checked McLaws.
- About 5:30 PM, two brigades of Brooks's division launched a determined assault along both sides of the plank road.
- As darkness approached, both forces bivouacked on the field. *(Esposito, 89)*

Nightfall terminated what Sedgwick called a "sharp and prolonged contest." Wilcox characterized the Federal effort as "a bloody repulse to the enemy, rendering entirely useless to him his little success of the morning at Fredericksburg." (*The Battle of Salem Church, May 3, 5:30 PM, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*

During the night, Lee ordered Early to attack Sedgwick's left flank in the morning, while McLaws attacked the Union right. Sedgwick received no further orders from Hooker other than authorization to retreat across the river if Sedgwick thought the move was necessary.

15. What occurred at Salem Church and Fredericksburg involving Sedgwick's corps on May 3, and how did this affect Hooker's decisions?

Hooker's withdrawal enabled Lee to occupy the Chancellorsville position and reunite his army along the line of Orange Turnpike. Though the new Union position was strong and was further strengthened by field fortifications, Lee started to move aggressively against it, only to be stopped by a report that Sedgwick was on Marye's Heights. He immediately sent McLaws to meet the new threat.

- **Union Breakthrough**: Ten miles to the east, Sedgwick obeyed orders to advance against the Confederate rear guard. After two failed attempts, his VI Corps successfully broke through Early's thinly held line at Marye's Heights.
- **Lee Divides His Army**: Upon hearing that Sedgwick had captured Marye's Heights and was marching west to trap him, Lee divided his army yet again. He left Stuart to watch Hooker and rushed McLaws' division eastward to reinforce the retreating Confederates.
- **Delaying Action:** Meanwhile, Wilcox's brigade (of Anderson's division, that had been screening Bank's Ford) conducted a delaying action along Orange Plank Road and prevented Sedgwick from reaching Hooker. It also allowed time for reinforcements to arrive at Salem Church.
- **Salem Church Standoff**: McLaws arrived about 3:00 PM. Sedgwick's advancing column, Brooks' division, arrived about an hour later and clashed with McLaws' reinforced line. McLaws fought Sedgwick to a standstill, preventing him from reaching Hooker's main force backed up against the Rappahannock in front of Bank's Ford.

Hip pocket question: Was Hooker's call for Sedgwick and VI Corps to advance west and link-up with the main body in the vicinity of Chancellorsville a feasible course of action or a measure of desperation?

Hooker's midnight order on May 2–3 for Sedgwick's VI Corps to seize Fredericksburg, advance west along the Orange Plank Road, and link up with the main army at Chancellorsville is widely viewed by historians as a measure of desperation that was structurally unfeasible.

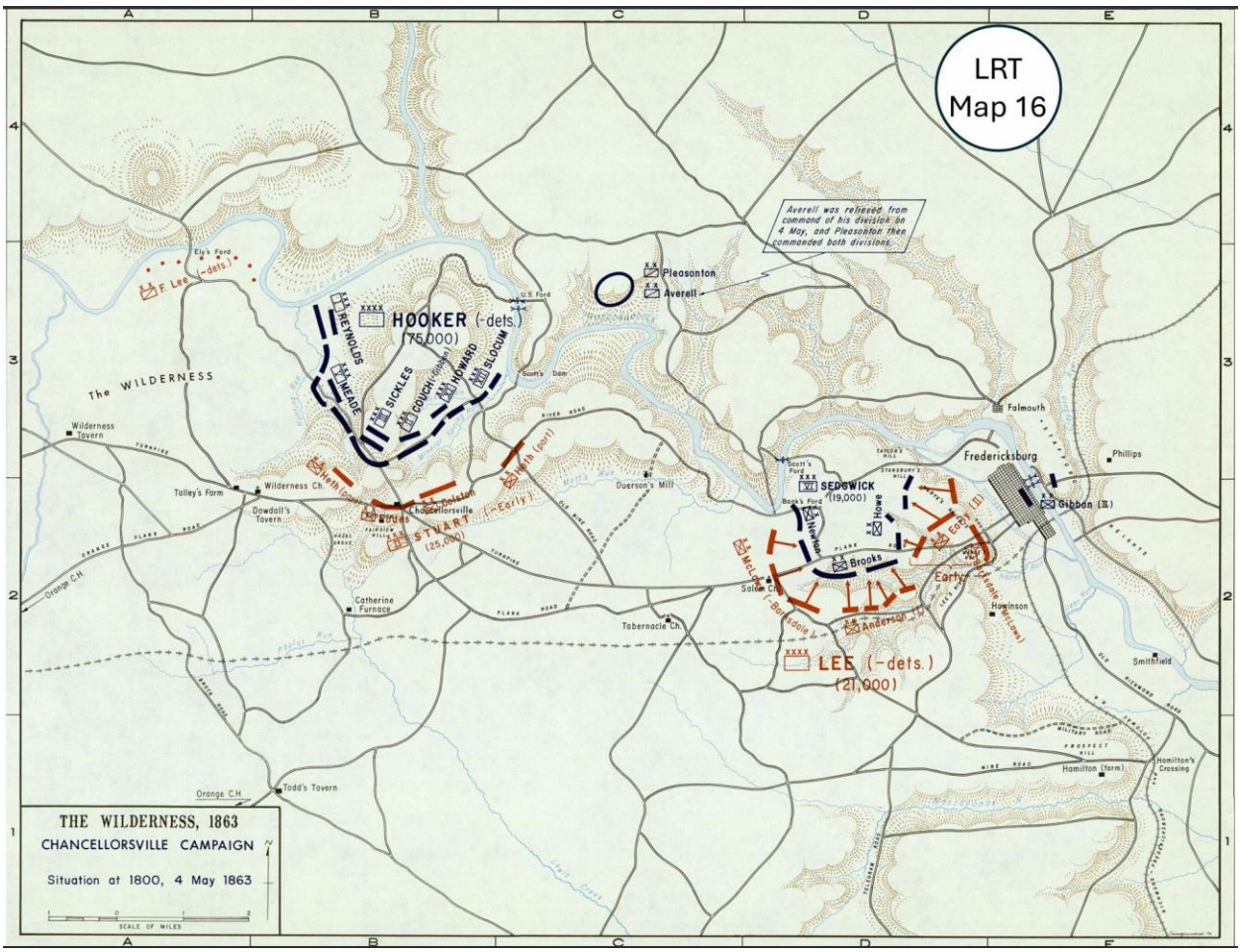
While the order made conceptual sense on a map — creating a classic "hammer and anvil" movement to trap Lee — it ignored the realities of time, space, and the specific operational constraints facing the VI Corps.

- The order was dispatched late on May 2, immediately following Jackson's devastating flank attack on XI Corps. Hooker was rattled, and his headquarters at Chancellorsville was under intense tactical pressure. By demanding that a single corps act as the savior of the entire army, Hooker shifted the burden of victory onto Sedgwick while Hooker himself possessed a vastly superior, yet largely idling, force.
    - **Impossible Timelines:** Hooker's order reached Sedgwick around 11:00 PM on May 2, instructing him to carry Marye's Heights, march 10 miles west, and link up by daylight on May 3. Accomplishing a night march, defeating a fortified enemy, and marching 1o miles in less than six hours was impossible.
    - **The Ghost of Fredericksburg:** To advance west, Sedgwick first had to storm Marye's Heights—the exact Confederate stronghold that had utterly destroyed Ambrose Burnside's army five months earlier. Though Jubal Early's defending Confederate force was small, it still required a bloody, time-consuming assault to carry the heights on the morning of May 3.
    - **The Delaying Tactics of Wilcox:** Even after breaking through at Fredericksburg, Sedgwick had to advance along a single, easily defensible corridor (the Orange Plank Road). A brilliant delaying action by a single Confederate brigade under Brigadier General Cadmus Wilcox successfully bled Sedgwick's momentum, buying Lee enough time to pivot.
    - **Lee's Internal Lines:** Because Hooker remained entirely passive in his Chancellorsville defensive perimeter, Robert E. Lee was free to leave a skeleton crew facing Hooker and march the bulk of his army east to confront Sedgwick. This culminated in the Battle of Salem Church, where Sedgwick was checked, surrounded on three sides, and ultimately forced to retreat across the river.

Ultimately, Hooker's plan failed because he treated the VI Corps as a primary offensive hammer while refusing to use his own massive force as the anvil**.** Sedgwick's corps fought bravely and achieved a major tactical success by capturing Marye's Heights but asking them to single-handedly slice through Lee's army to rescue Hooker was an unrealistic expectation born out of battlefield panic.

THE BATTLE (continued).

[Refer to LRT Map 16]



May 4: During the night, Hooker's troops had strengthened their already strong position. Judging this to be an indication that Hooker intended to remain on the defensive, Lee decided to concentrate against Sedgwick, in the hope of destroying his corps. He left Stuart with 25,000 men to contain Hooker's 75,000, while he moved with 21,000 men against Sedgwick's 19,000. *(Esposito, 90)*

- Because Hooker displayed no hint of aggressiveness, Lee believed Second Corps' three divisions to be sufficient at Chancellorsville.
    - Lee took Anderson's division (less Wilcox's brigade, which was already there) east to assist Early and McLaws in confronting Sedgwick. He intended to attack the Union VI Corps to either destroy Sedgwick or force him from the field.
    - Early advanced his division up the Telegraph Road towards Fredericksburg and easily reoccupied Lee's Hill and Marye's Heights by 8:00 AM. Early's movement cut Sedgwick off from Fredericksburg and Gibbons division stationed within the city after the May 3 fighting.
    - With Confederate forces on both sides—McLaws to the west, Anderson to the south, and Early to the east—Sedgwick repositioned into a tighter defensive position protecting his retreat point at Scott's Ford.
    - VI Corps hunkered down behind a U-shaped complex of earth-works with both flanks anchored on the Rappahannock, protecting Scott's Ford.

- Stuart spread Hill's, Colston's, and Rodes' commands across a two-mile front south of Hooker's works: three brigades of Anderson's division blocked the Old Mine Road where it crossed the River Road, thereby denying Hooker a direct route between the wings of his army. Stuart successfully pinned the passive Union army in place by skirmishing along the lines.

During the night, Early had reoccupied the heights west of Fredericksburg and cut off Sedgwick from Fredericksburg and threatened to interpose between him and Bank's Ford. To complicate matters, Hooker had instructed Sedgwick to look after the safety of VI Corps without additional help, and also to recross the river at Bank's Ford if that became necessary. That day, Sedgwick formed his corps on three sides of a rectangle in front of Scott's Ford.

Lee led Anderson's division to Salem Church and joined forces there with McLaws and Early in attacking Sedgwick. Sedgwick successfully resisted the Confederates until dark, then retreated across Scott's Ford. Finding himself cut off from Sedgwick by the Confederates, Gibbon, too, retreats. Stuart meanwhile keeps an eye on Hooker who holds a strong entrenched position — incorporating logs, knapsacks, limber chests, and even dead horses into the works, whatever happened to be at hand — covering US Ford.

- Hooker remained entrenched in a tight defensive perimeter north of the crossroads. Despite holding a massive numerical advantage, Hooker took no offensive action.
    - Although unwilling to act offensively himself against Lee's vastly outnumbered force at Chancellorsville, Hooker criticized Sedgwick for moving lethargically. "My object in ordering General Sedgwick forward ... was to relieve me from the position in which I found myself at Chancellorsville ...," asserted Hooker shortly after the battle. "In my judgment General Sedgwick did not obey the spirit of my order, and made no sufficient effort to obey it…. When he did move, it was not with sufficient confidence or ability on his part to manoeuvre his troops." *(The Battle of Salem Church: May 3, 5:30 PM, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*
- During the night of May 3/4, Sedgwick had established communications with the north bank of the Rappahannock by means of a pontoon bridge laid at Scott's Ford. A detached brigade from II Corps set up a protective bridgehead on the south bank. *(Esposito, 90)*
- Early in the morning on May 4, Sedgwick received a message from Hooker stating that Hooker intended to await Lee's attack in his new position and that Sedgwick had permission to go either to Bank's Ford or Fredericksburg, if the safety of his corps required it.
- Lee, having concentrated his force, attacked Sedgwick from the west and south and drove him back to Scott's Ford, surrounding them on three sides with Early to the east, and McLaws and R. H. Anderson on the south and west.
- Despite being heavily compressed and cut off from Fredericksburg, VI Corps maintained cohesion. They successfully fought a bloody rearguard action to hold open their escape route.
    - By 11:00 AM on May 4, Sedgwick was facing three directions: west towards Lee's main body and the Salem Church, south towards Anderson's division, and east towards Early's division.
    - When Sedgwick heard rumors that reinforcements from Richmond had arrived, he felt his situation was becoming more difficult. He already had a six-mile-long line held by 20,000 troops against now 25,000 Confederates with only a bridgehead to retreat upon in failure, with more Confederates possibly arriving and himself with over 5,000 casualties.
    - He reported his difficult situation to Hooker and requested the main army assist him. Hooker, however, replied not to attack unless the main army did the same.

- Meanwhile, Lee arrived at McLaws' headquarters at 11:00 AM. McLaws informed him that he did not feel strong enough to launch an attack and asked for reinforcements. Anderson was ordered to bring the other three brigades of his division and position them between McLaws and Early.
- The attack finally began around 6 p.m. Two of Early's brigades (under Brig. Generals Harry T. Hays and Robert F. Hoke) pushed back Sedgwick's left-center across Orange Plank Road, but Anderson's division showed considerably less spirit, and McLaws once again contributed nothing. The final Confederate attack was made and repulsed.
- After the war, Fitzhugh Lee expressed bafflement at McLaws's behavior. "I know the difference between hindsight & foresight," he stated in a letter to Jubal Early, "but between you & I, what was the matter with McLaws in connection with the attack on Sedgwick on Tuesday 4th May!" *(The Battle of Salem Church: May 3, 5:30 PM, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*

- Throughout the day, Hooker had provided no assistance or useful guidance to Sedgwick even with the sound of Sedgwick's cannon plainly the audible, and Sedgwick thought about little else than protecting his line of retreat.

The curiously bungled Confederate offensive at Salem Church on May 4 marked the end of significant fighting during the Chancellorsville campaign. Sedgwick withdrew across Scott's Ford early the next morning, freeing Lee to hurry back to Chancellorsville for one last effort against Hooker.

Although still badly outnumbered, Lee issued orders for his artillery to select positions from which to enfilade Hooker's powerful line. The projected attacks, which almost certainly would have been bloody failures, never materialized because during the night of May 4-5, Hooker decided to retreat.

In the waning hours of May 4, Hooker held a council of war with his corps commanders, who voted three (Reynolds, Meade, and Howard) to two i(Sickles and Sedgwick) in favor of resuming the battle. Hooker promptly overruled them and ordered a withdrawal back across the river.

- "What was the use of calling us together at this time of night when he intended to retreat anyhow?" groused Reynolds, who actually napped through part of the council. *(Chris Mackowski, "Where Did Joe Hooker Lose the Battle of Chancellorsville?", May 6, 2013, Emerging Civil War)*

In the postwar years, Hooker tried to blame his loss at Chancellorsville, in part, on Sedgwick, who got bottled up at Salem Church on May 3 and then shrunk under Confederate pressure on May 4. Hooker was actually the one who failed to take advantage of the situation at Salem Church, though. While Lee personally oversaw the action there, Stuart kept Hooker's vastly superior force at bay through simple bluster. *(The Battle of Salem Church: May 3, 5:30 PM, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*

May 5: The battle drew to a tactical close as severe weather, logistical exhaustion, and Union decisions resulted in a total Federal retreat across the Rappahannock River. All pontoon bridges downstream of US Ford were taken up. *(Esposito, 90)*

- Lee turned back to confront Hooker. Confronted by Lee's reinforcements from the Wilderness combined with bad communication, frayed nerves, and the fear of Longstreet's men finally appearing from the south, Sedgwick decided to retreat across the Rappahannock early in the morning on May 5. *(Chancellorsville Campaign - Encyclopedia Virginia)*
- Hooker withdrew the remainder of his army across US Ford the night of May 5–6.

- Confederates such as cartographer Jedediah Hochkiss marveled that Hooker had given up so easily. After a day of taking measurements in the area for a map of the campaign, Hotchkiss recorded in his journal on May 12, 1863, that he "had no idea the enemy were so well fortified and wonder they left their works so soon." *(Hooker Retreats: May 5-6, Night, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*

A. The East Front: Scott's Ford (Early Morning).

- Under the cover of darkness and a dense ground fog, Sedgwick completed the retreat of VI Corps across the Rappahannock River via the pontoon bridge at Scott's Ford.
- Confederate forces advanced at dawn to find the Union lines empty, completely securing the south side of the river and the heights above Frederick, eliminating the threat to Lee's rear.

B. The West Front: Chancellorsville Perimeter.

- Hooker's Retreat Decision: On the evening of May 5/6, Hooker, now stymied, was unwilling to attack the much smaller enemy force in his front at Chancellorsville. Nor was he prepared to assist Sedgwick to the east with his much larger force, perhaps aggravated that Sedgwick was supposed to support him at Chancellorsville. He decided to hold a council of war with his corps commanders. Despite a majority of them voting to stay and fight, Hooker decided to abandon the campaign and retreat.
    - Meade, Reynolds, and Howard voted to advance; Sickles, stating that he was an amateur soldier and could not speak with authority, voted for a retreat; Couch bitterly chose to retreat because Hooker intended to continue in command; Slocum was absent. Hooker took upon himself the responsibility of ordering the withdrawal. *(Esposito, 91)*
- Around 4:30 PM, a violent, unseasonal rainstorm broke over the battlefield. The downpour swelled the Rappahannock River, threatened to sweep away the Union pontoon bridges, and turned the roads into deep mud, making offensive infantry maneuvers nearly impossible for both sides.
- Lee was preparing for a massive, final assault against Hooker's lines. However, the blinding storm and muddy terrain delayed his plans, forcing the Confederates to limit their actions to minor artillery shelling and skirmishing.
- As night fell, Union engineers muffled the pontoon bridges with pine boughs to deaden the sound. Hooker's massive army began a stealthy, organized withdrawal across the river, leading with the artillery. *(Esposito, 91)*

16. Explain how Confederate delay allowed Sedgwick to escape across the Rappahannock on May 5.

The escape of Sedgwick's VI Corps across the Rappahannock at Scott's Ford on the night of May 4 represents one of Lee's greatest tactical frustrations at Chancellorsville. Lee had a realistic opportunity to completely surround and destroy one-third of the Union army. However, a combination of friction, poor communication, and exhaustion among his subordinates created a fatal, day-long delay that Sedgwick utilized to save his command.

A. The Tactical Dilemma: Lee Divides His Army Again: By the morning of May 4, Lee had achieved victory over Hooker's main force around Chancellorsville. However, Sedgwick's VI Corps had pushed back the Confederate rear at Fredericksburg and was now sitting directly on Lee's flank near Salem Church. With Hooker dug into a defensive shell, Lee decided to divide his army for a third time.

- He left a skeleton force of just 25,000 men under J.E.B. Stuart to keep Hooker's 75,000 pinned down.

- He personally took three divisions east to join Jubal Early and Lafayette McLaws, intending to trap and destroy Sedgwick against the river.

B. The Anatomy of the Delay: Lee arrived in the eastern sector around noon on May 4, expecting an immediate, coordinated assault. Instead, the entire afternoon evaporated due to breakdowns in Lee's chain of command.

- **Jubal Early's Misdirection:** Early had successfully reoccupied Marye's Heights in Sedgwick's rear, cutting him off from Fredericksburg. However, Early mistakenly believed Sedgwick was trying to retreat eastward back into the town. Early spent hours repositioning his troops to block an escape path that Sedgwick was not taking, delaying the alignment of the Confederate right wing.
- **The Terrain of the Wilderness Edge:** The ground between Salem Church and the Rappahannock River was a labyrinth of dense thickets, deep ravines, and muddy tracks. Bringing up Anderson's division to form the Confederate center required marching through almost impassable terrain. Regiments became separated, and it took until nearly 4:00 PM just to get the troops into their jumping-off positions.
- **McLaws' Excessive Caution:** McLaws, holding the Confederate left, was highly capable but notoriously methodical. Haunted by the fierce resistance Sedgwick had put up the previous day at Salem Church, McLaws refused to launch an attack until he was completely certain that Anderson and Early were perfectly aligned. His hesitation cost Lee hours of daylight.

C. The Late Attack and the "Savage Fight": Lee, visibly irritated by the delays, finally ordered the attack to commence at 5:30 PM, with only a few hours of daylight remaining. The assault was fierce, particularly from Early's division, which slammed into Sedgwick's southeastern flank. VI Corps was compressed into a tight, three-sided defensive pocket with its back against Scott's Ford.

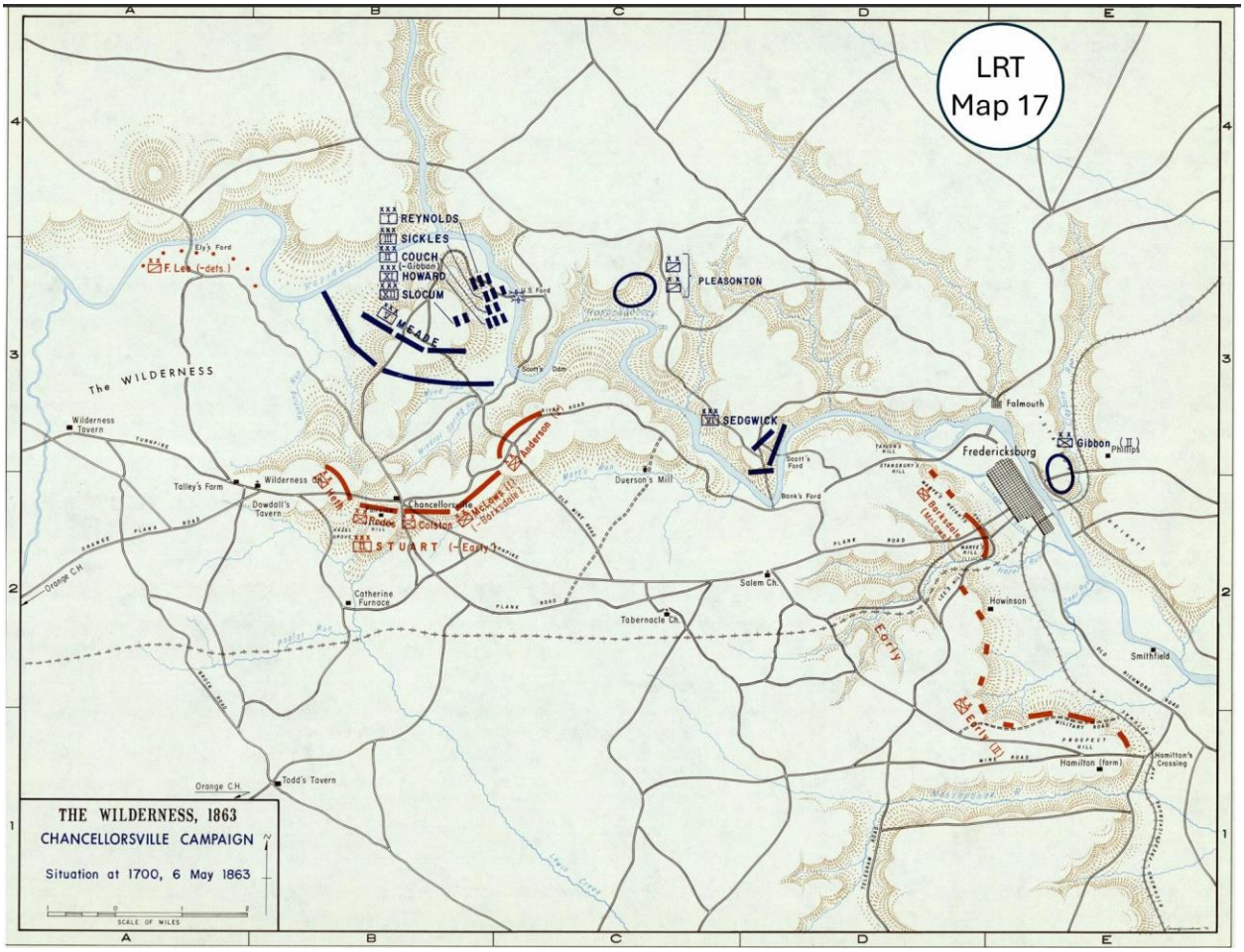
- Despite being outnumbered, Sedgwick's men fought tenaciously. Brig. Gen. Thomas Neill's brigade (Howe's division) held off repeated charges, and the Union artillery, massed near the riverbank, poured canister shot into the advancing Confederates. The thick smoke of the burning woods, combined with the rapidly approaching darkness, brought the uncoordinated Confederate advance to a grinding halt by nightfall.

D. The Night Escape at Banks' Ford: Because the Confederate delays pushed the battle into the evening, Sedgwick was given the cover of darkness he needed to execute a withdrawal.

- **The Pontoon Bridges:** Union engineers had laid pontoon bridges at Scott's Ford. As night fell, Sedgwick began funneling his artillery and wounded across the river.
- **Hooker's Contradictory Orders:** In a bizarre sequence of events, Hooker sent an order at midnight telling Sedgwick to hold his position, followed by a counter-order at 1:00 AM telling him to withdraw.
- **The Fog of War:** Under the cover of a dense midnight fog and heavy rain, the remaining Union infantry silently slipped away. By the time Confederate scouts cautiously advanced toward the riverbanks at dawn on May 5, the last Union bridge was being swung back to the northern side of the river.

E. The Strategic Consequence: Lee was furious that Sedgwick had slipped through his fingers, reportedly rebuking McLaws for his lack of aggression. Had the Confederates attacked at noon instead of 5:30 PM, Sedgwick's 19,000 men likely would have been forced to surrender. Instead, VI Corps escaped intact with its artillery. Just two months later at Gettysburg, this same corps would perform a grueling march to arrive on July 2, providing Meade with the vital strategic reserve he needed to secure the Union left flank and win the battle.

[Refer to LRT Map 17]



THE AFTERMATH.

May 6: This marked the official conclusion of the battle of Chancellorsville, cementing it as a stunning but costly Confederate victory against an army twice its size.

- Hooker's main force began crossing the Rappahannock at 5:00 AM. Under the cover of a massive rainstorm, Hooker completed the evacuation of the AoP across the Rappahannock River to its north bank that day.
- At daybreak, Lee's scouts advanced to find the Union's heavily fortified positions completely empty. Only a few of his advanced scouts even made contact with the withdrawing Federals. The active threat to Richmond was neutralized.
- When President Lincoln received word that Hooker had given up the initiative and retreated, he reportedly paced the room in despair, exclaiming: "My God! My God! What will the country say?"

The campaign ended on May 7 when Stoneman's cavalry, after a week of ineffectual raiding in central and southern Virginia in which they failed to attack any of the objectives Hooker established, withdrew into Union lines east of Richmond — the peninsula north of the York River, across from Yorktown. Both armies resumed their previous positions across the Rappahannock from each other at Fredericksburg.

17. Why did Hooker ultimately decide to withdraw his army back across the Rappahannock?

In public statements, official military orders, and postwar testimonies, Hooker steadfastly refused to admit personal failure and blamed his subordinates, the terrain, and a lack of support for the retreat. *(James K. Bryant II. "Chancellorsville," Essential Civil War Curriculum; also Joseph Hooker (1814–1879) - Encyclopedia Virginia)*

A. The Collapse of the Eleventh Corps: Hooker pointed his finger at Howard and XI Corps, which had borne the brunt of Jackson's flank attack on May 2. He claimed that the panic and retreat of Howard's men broke the structural integrity of his original battle lines, forcing him into an entirely defensive crouch from which the army could not easily recover.

B. Sedgwick's "Failure" to Reach Him: Hooker also blamed Sedgwick. In letters and subsequent testimonies before Congress, Hooker claimed that his own retreat was forced because Sedgwick failed to break through Lee's rear at Salem Church and Fredericksburg and march to his aid. In late May 1863, Hooker told a gathering of officers that Sedgwick was *"slow and afraid to fight"* and accused him of directly disobeying orders. From Hooker's perspective, once Sedgwick retreated back over the river on May 4, Hooker's own position was completely compromised.

C. Stoneman's Failed Cavalry Raid: Stoneman received his share of blame, too. Hooker argued that Stoneman's failure to sever Lee's supply lines meant the Lee could afford to stay and fight indefinitely, leaving the Union army at a strategic disadvantage despite its superior numbers.

D. The Obstacles of "The Wilderness" Terrain: And, of course, the terrain had been his enemy. Hooker heavily criticized the dense, choked, secondary-growth forest known as the Wilderness. He claimed that the blinding terrain made it entirely impossible to leverage his superior numbers or effectively deploy his overwhelming artillery advantage. Never mind that Lee and the AoNV had to fight in the same terrain.

E. Hooker's Surreal "Congratulatory Order": Perhaps the most bizarre insight into Hooker's self-justification came from General Order No. 49, which he issued to his own wet, defeated soldiers immediately after the retreat on May 6, 1863:

> *"In withdrawing from the south bank of the Rappahannock before delivering a general battle to our adversaries, the army has given renewed evidence of its confidence in itself and its fidelity to the principles it represents."*

President Lincoln and Maj. General Henry Halleck thought otherwise. Hooker was relieved of command on June 28, just days before the next great clash at Gettysburg. Hooker and the AoP had trailed along on a parallel course, avoiding all contact. At one point after Lee had begun his northward march, Hooker had told President Lincoln he could take Richmond. The President had to tell him yet again that Lee's army, not Richmond, was his objective.

What happened to Hooker at Chancellorsville? He was a highly experienced officer doing what he had been trained to do in a position he was delighted to hold. Military operations were, after all, his stock-in-trade. He knew this stuff. It was possible that he could have crushed Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia and been revered for having dealt the death blow to the Confederacy. As Joseph Pierro said,

"The general stood at the brink of victory in May 1863—and then it all went wrong." He went on to say – *(Joseph Pierro, "Joe Hooker's Chancellorsville," Joe Hooker's Chancellorsville)*

> Hooker had appeared the ideal soldier, and his reputation for aggressive action and hard fighting made it impossible for his superiors—toward whom Hooker directed a string of public criticisms— to deny him advancement. McClellan named him to corps command during the Maryland campaign, and Burnside elevated him to lead one of the grand divisions at Fredericksburg. During each operation Hooker turned in one of the few quality performances among the army's senior commanders, and after Burnside's resignation in January 1863, Hooker was given command of the army.

Many ascribe his failure ultimately to a loss of nerve just when victory was within reach. It is difficult to argue otherwise. He had surprised Lee with his own flanking maneuver across the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers, and the flanking force was in a strong position east of Chancellorsville as evening closed on April 30. But there, he stalled. Whether due to innate timidity, an overabundance of caution, lack of self-confidence, intimidation at facing Lee on the battlefield, poor battlefield assessment, or just plain bad luck, he not only stopped but backed up and in so doing gave the initiative over to Lee. Moreover, all aggressiveness seemed to go out of him. In stages, he stepped his flanking force back across the Rappahannock. He called Sedwick and VI Corps for help but then passively treated them as little more than a sideshow.

I come down on the side of Hooker being outgeneraled. He (and Sedgwick, for that matter) made mistakes that he might have survived had he faced other Confederate generals, but not Lee.

AFTER-ACTION ASSESSMENTS.

Our movements up to the arrival at Chancellorsville were very successful and were well planned. Everything after that went wrong, and Fighting Joe sunk into a poor dribbling cur.
— Maj. General Henry Slocum, from the National Park Service's Chancellorsville Intersection wayside marker

Slocum penned these words to his friend, New York politician and former Comptroller Homers A. Nelson, just two weeks after the disastrous Union defeat. The complete passage reads, "It was a sad failure, a bitter disappointment to us all. Our movements up to the arrival at Chancellorsville were very successful and were unflawed. Everything after that went wrong, and fighting Joe sunk into a poor driveling cur. The fact is whisky, boasting, and vilification have been his stock and trade. Sickles and Butterfield are his boon companions, and everything is conducted as might be expected with such leaders."

Final Casualty Totals.

The campaign resulted in almost 31,000 casualties, making it one of the bloodiest clashes of the war.

Casualty Category	AoP	AoNV
Killed	1,694	1,724
Wounded	9,672	9,233
Missing / Captured	5,938	2,503
Total Casualties	**17,304**	**13,460**

While the Union suffered higher losses and was humiliated yet again, the battle was more costly for the South. Lee lost a higher percentage of his smaller army — losses the Confederacy lacked the manpower to replace. Most damaging of all was the loss of Jackson, who succumbed on May 10 to complications from friendly-fire wounds received just eight days earlier.

- Chancellorsville was the bloodiest battle in American history up to that point. The 30,764 combined casualties eclipsed the losses suffered at Shiloh (23,746), Second Manassas (22,180), Antietam (22,717), and Stones River (23,515).

By far the bloodiest day of the battle was May 3 when Stuart sent wave after wave against Union forces positioned in prepared defenses. The aggressive fighting at places like Salem Church produced more casualties than the entire First Manassas (Bull Run).

- "Lee felt the manpower need acutely, especially after his losses of over 12,000 officers and men at Chancellorsville. Jackson's Corps suffered heavily, especially in the brigades of Ambrose P. Hill's Light Division. Stephen D. Ramseur's North Carolina brigade [Rodes' division] suffered such grievous losses that Lee went to the extraordinary effort to contact Governor Zebulon Vance of North Carolina to ask for recruits specifically for the brigade, including any conscripts that might be available. Secretary of War James Seddon forwarded the telegram with his signature and plea for Vance's help in recruiting the brigade up to a respectable strength." *("The High Water Mark of an Army: The Characteristics of the Army of Northern Virginia during The Gettysburg Campaign," John S. Heiser. Microsoft Word - pages 1-18 Heiser 98.doc, 11.)*

Chancellorsville's title of bloodiest battle in American history would be short-lived. From Chancellorsville, Lee began his journey towards Gettysburg and the epic fighting to come on July 1-3, 1863. But even at the end of the American Civil War, Chancellorsville was still ranked as the fourth bloodiest battle of the Civil War, after Gettysburg, Chickamauga, and Spotsylvania Courthouse.

The Union army lost a total of fourteen field artillery pieces, all captured by the Confederate army and subsequently put into service for the Confederacy. No Confederate guns were lost to Union forces.

- According to the official report filed by the Union Chief of Artillery, Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt, eight guns were captured during Jackson's rout of XI Corps on the evening of May 2, four guns were captured the following morning at Hazel Grove, and two guns were lost during other heavy tactical engagements across the battlefield lines. *(https://www.worldaffairsboard.com/index.php?threads/union-artillery-at-chancellorsville.45766/)*

18. How did the structural changes succeed or backfire during the actual tactical maneuvering in the Wilderness?

Hooker's structural innovations faced their combat test in this campaign. While some succeeded in streamlining the army, others backfired due to poor execution, underestimating the terrain, and aggressive Confederate countermoves. For example,

A. Abolition of the Grand Divisions.

- **How it Succeeded**: Bypassing the intermediate layer allowed Hooker to execute a successful, secretive opening flank march. Orders moved rapidly from headquarters to individual corps commanders, catching Robert E. Lee completely off guard.
- **How it Backfired**: Once heavy combat began, the flat reporting structure overwhelmed Hooker. Managing seven individual infantry corps proved too wide a "span of control" for a single commander under immense tactical stress. When Hooker became dazed by a near-miss artillery strike at the Chancellor house, army command effectively paralyzed because there were no Grand Division commanders to seamlessly assume broad, regional control of the field.

B. Centralization of the Cavalry Corps.

- **How it Succeeded**: On paper, creating a unified Cavalry Corps was a visionary move that would later win the war. It allowed Hooker to mass a massive force for a strategic raid deep behind Confederate lines to sever Lee's supply and communication links with Richmond.
- **How it Backfired**: Sending nearly the entire Cavalry Corps away under George Stoneman left Hooker blind in the Wilderness. Without screening cavalry, Hooker failed to detect Jackson's massive march around the Union flank. Stoneman's raid ultimately did minor, temporary damage to Confederate railroads, meaning the Cavalry Corps was entirely wasted when it was needed most on the battlefield.

C. Structural Shifts in the Artillery.

- **How it Succeeded**: As a structural change, it did not succeed.
- **How it Backfired**: Stripping Hunt of his tactical authority and effectively doing away with an organized artillery reserve at the army level, weakened Hooker's artillery arm. *(Sears speaks often to this; see, for example, 237, 313, 320, 332-333, and 373)* Assigning artillery battalions directly to infantry divisions with relatively little time for integration led to division commanders handling their guns poorly in the choking woods. Units got stuck on narrow Wilderness roads, blocking infantry. Worse, non-artillery officers ordered the abandonment of the vital high ground at Hazel Grove on May 3, allowing Confederate guns to occupy the spot and ruthlessly shell the Union lines. *(e.g., Sears, 237)*
    - As I Corps artillerist Charles Wainwright noted in his diary, "No one appeared to know anything, and there was a good deal of confusion." Following the devastating defeat, Hooker quietly restored Hunt to command before being removed himself.
- For most of the operation the Artillery Reserve, such as it was, was positioned near Falmouth to aid the Union crossing of the Rappahannock north of Fredericksburg. Its only real contribution to the campaign was long-range fire support at the Battle of Salem Church on May 4 and then covering fire as VI Corps recrossed to the north side of the Rappahannock after the fight.

D. Compositional Changes and New Corps.

- **How it Succeeded**: The Corps badges system was a success. Amid the chaos, smoke, and blinding undergrowth of the Wilderness, officers and stragglers could instantly identify friendly units by the symbols on their caps, preventing total breakdown of cohesion during retreats.
- **How it Backfired**: The integration of the newly arrived XI Corps proved disastrous. The corps contained a high percentage of German immigrants who were unfairly scapegoated by the rest of the army. Because Hooker's missing cavalry failed to scout the flank, XI Corps was left completely exposed in the woods. Jackson's flank attack struck them broadside, routing the corps and cementing a deep, long-lasting institutional distrust within the army's composition.

19. Assess the impact – the effectiveness – of Stoneman's raid.

Hooker's most promising new weapon was his Cavalry Corps, 10,000 strong. For the first time, the Union detached its horse soldiers from the infantry, creating a single independent command under Stoneman. Independent cavalry had proved invaluable to the Confederates. Hooker hoped his corps would sever Lee's supply and communication lines, then keep the AoNV in check until the main body of the AoP could sweep across the Rappahannock and cut off any escape routes. *(Christine M. Kreiser, "A Wild Tear Across Virginia, 7/7/2017, A Wild Tear Across Virginia)*

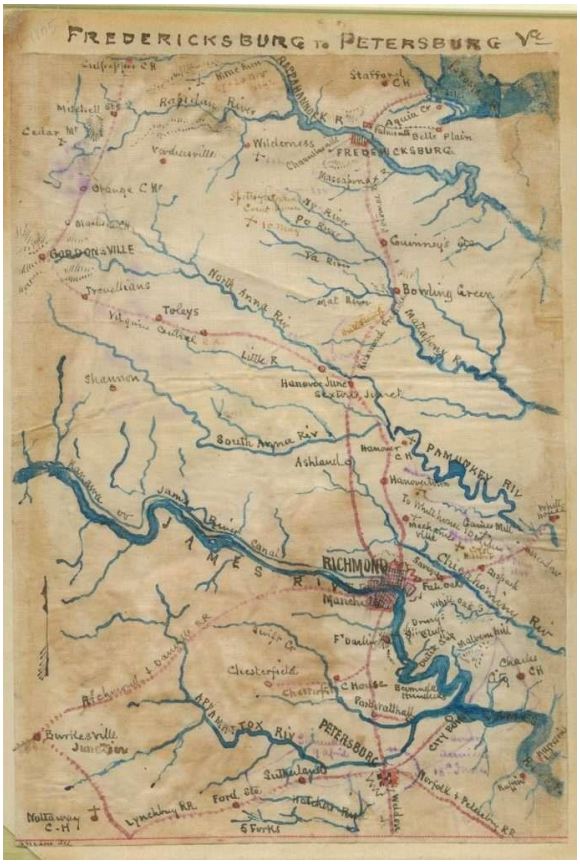
The raid was a strategic failure that completely failed to disrupt Lee's supply lines. *(Daniel Davis, "Remembering Stoneman's Raid in the Chancellorsville Campaign, Emerging Civil War, and The Chancellorsville Campaign Ends – The Civil War Months)* While the unified organization gave the Union cavalry a massive, permanent boost in morale and operational self-respect, the raid itself was a tactical failure. Heavy rains delayed them, Lee did not panic, and Hooker was left blind on the battlefield without his eyes and ears—ultimately using Stoneman as a scapegoat for the Union defeat. *(Kreiser, A Wild Tear Across Virginia)*

- Hooker ordered Stoneman, to lead 10,000 horsemen behind Confederate lines. Their explicit mission was to sever the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, isolate Lee from Richmond, and turn a Union victory into a total rout. Instead, the raid did minimal permanent damage and actively contributed to the Union defeat at Chancellorsville. *(Operational Raids During the Civil War: Are They Relevant Today?)*

On April 28, Stoneman received new orders to divide his force into two columns and cross the Rappahannock with each trooper carrying what rations he could. A small force under Brig. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton would stay behind near Kelly's Ford, where Hooker's V, XI and XII corps were arriving from Fredericksburg.

- The first column, led by Brig. Gen. William Averell, moved through Culpeper Court House and on to Rapidan Station, where it ran into Brig. Gen. Rooney Lee's Virginia cavalry. Faulty intelligence indicating a large enemy force was nearby combined with vague orders from Stoneman to stop Averell's advance. When Hooker learned on May 2 that Averell was stuck behind the Rapidan River, he angrily ordered the entire column of 3,500 troopers back to the Rappahannock. *(Kreiser, A Wild Tear Across Virginia)*

After crossing the Rappahannock River at Kelly's Ford, Stoneman moved his force south toward the Virginia Central Railroad (which runs from Gordonsville to Hanover Junction). He established his operational headquarters at Thompson's Crossroads on the South Anna River north of Ashland. From this central node, Stoneman decided to break his 10,000-man cavalry corps like a "shell", sending independent raiding columns in multiple directions across central Virginia. *(Kreiser, A Wild Tear Across Virginia)*



- **The Core Command (Stoneman & Buford):** Stoneman stayed at Thompson's Crossroads with a small reserve. Meanwhile, Brigadier General John Buford's brigade struck toward Louisa Court House, Tolersville, and Frederickshall to tear up the tracks of the Virginia Central Railroad and destroy infrastructure along the North Anna River.
- **Colonel Percy Wyndham's Column:** Wyndham led his detachment directly south to Columbia on the James River. His objective was to destroy the James River Canal infrastructure and cut secondary supply lines, but he encountered minimal military infrastructure to permanently disable.
- **Major General David Gregg's Column:** Gregg marched his troopers down the banks of the South Anna River, burning bridges and severing local telegraph wires before looping back to headquarters.
- **Colonel Judson Kilpatrick's Column:** Striking further east, Kilpatrick moved aggressively toward Hanover Junction. Deflecting away from heavy Confederate infantry, he rode entirely around Lee's army, slashing through the outer defenses of Richmond, and ultimately escaped down the Virginia Peninsula to Union-held Yorktown.
- **Brigadier General William Averell's Deflection:** Tasked with a parallel mission to pin down Confederate cavalry, Averell marched toward Rapidan Station. He became overly cautious, hesitated in front of a much smaller force led by Fitzhugh Lee, and was recalled early by Hooker for his lack of aggression.

Several critical factors combined to doom the raid from its inception to its execution:

- **Severe Weather Delays**: Scheduled to launch on April 13, the raid was immediately halted by torrential spring rains. The Rappahannock River flooded, making crossings impossible and stranding the cavalry for nearly two weeks. This destroyed the element of surprise.
- **Diluted Combat Power**: Upon finally crossing the river, Stoneman chose to break his massive, unified force into multiple small detachments. Instead of striking a concentrated, devastating blow to major supply hubs, these small squads burned minor bridges, seized livestock, and cut secondary telegraph lines. *(Esposito, 86)*

- **Rapid Confederate Repairs**: Because the damage inflicted was decentralized and superficial, Confederate engineering crews repaired the cut rail lines with astonishing speed. Most of the damaged infrastructure was fully operational again by May 7, just one day after the campaign ended. *(Davis, Emerging Civil War)*
- **Targeting the Wrong Depots**: Stoneman focused heavily on the Richmond area. He completely overlooked Guiney's Station, located just 18 miles from Chancellorsville. Guiney's Station held nearly all of Lee's transportation and immediate supply assets, leaving it unmolested. *(Esposito, 86)*

The Disastrous Fallout for Hooker.

While the raid did little to hurt Lee, it inadvertently crippled Hooker's main army:

- **Failure to Destroy the RF&P Railroad:** Hooker's explicit strategic intent was for the cavalry to completely sever Lee's primary supply line, the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad. By scattering his men into small fragments to "create terror", Stoneman left the main supply line mostly intact. *(Kreiser, A Wild Tear Across Virginia)*
    - The RF&P ran directly north from Richmond up to Guinea Station, which served as Lee's primary forward supply depot. Additionally, the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and the Virginia Central Railroad served as critical secondary supply and communication corridors through central Virginia.
- **Blind Union Infantry**: By sending the vast majority of his cavalry away, Hooker left the main army at Chancellorsville with just a single brigade of horsemen.
- **The Vulnerable Flank**: Without adequate cavalry to scout, screen, and patrol the dense forests, Hooker had no eyes on the battlefield. This total lack of intelligence left the Union right flank wide open, directly allowing Confederate General Stonewall Jackson to execute his legendary, devastating surprise flank attack that won the battle for the South.

The Silver Lining.

Though the raid was a logistical and tactical bust, it did have one long-term benefit for the Union. Operating as a unified corps deep in enemy territory infused the Union cavalry with unprecedented confidence and morale. It helped forge officers like Buford into elite leaders, setting the stage for the Union cavalry to finally go toe-to-toe with the Confederates at the Battle of Brandy Station just a month later. *(Kreiser, A Wild Tear Across Virginia and J. David Petruzzi, "Faded Hoofbeats – George Stoneman," Hoofbeats and Cold Steel: Thoughts of Civil War Cavalry, Faded Hoofbeats – George Stoneman | Hoofbeats and Cold Steel)*

- "For the first time the cavalry found themselves made useful," wrote Henry Pyne of the 1st New Jersey Cavalry. "It gave our troopers self-respect, and obliged the enemy to respect them."
- General Lee himself recognized the threat in a May 7 letter to President Jefferson Davis asking for more cavalry: "Every expedition will augment their boldness and increase their means of doing us harm."

20. How well did the Union corps commanders fight?

While Hooker suffered from tactical paralysis at the top, his corps commanders frequently demonstrated aggressive initiative, tactical competence, and a willingness to fight fiercely whenever they were not actively restrained by orders from headquarters. The battle was not lost due to a failure of the Union rank-and-file or its immediate leadership, but rather because Hooker systematically neutralized his own commanders' successes.

A. Reynolds (I Corps): *(Claude AI)*

- **Role in the campaign:** Reynolds' I Corps (~16,000 men) was initially left near Fredericksburg with Sedgwick's VI Corps to stage a demonstration crossing, pinning Lee's attention while Hooker's main flanking force (V, XI, XII Corps) swung around to Chancellorsville. This was sound use of I Corps in Hooker's original plan.
- **The recall and march:** On April 30–May 1, Hooker changed his mind and summoned I Corps to reinforce the main army. Reynolds executed a grueling overnight march of roughly 20+ miles, crossing the Rappahannock and Rapidan, and arrived at Chancellorsville early on May 2 — but too late and too far to the rear to influence the day's critical event: Stonewall Jackson's flank attack that shattered Howard's XI Corps that evening. I Corps was placed on the extreme right/reserve and essentially missed the chance to blunt or exploit the attack.
- **2–3 performance:** Once in position, Reynolds' corps performed competently in a defensive, largely static role — helping anchor part of the Union line during the fighting of May 3 — but Hooker never committed it to a decisive counterattack despite having fresh troops available. I Corps' casualties were comparatively light (well under 300), reflecting its limited engagement rather than any lack of quality; contemporaries and historians generally rate Reynolds as one of the army's most capable and aggressive corps commanders, hamstrung by Hooker's indecision.
- **Impact on the outcome:** Reynolds' personal conduct was solid, but the campaign illustrates poor high-command coordination rather than any failing on his part — I Corps' late, exhausting march and subsequent idleness meant a substantial, fresh body of troops never factored into the battle's decisive moments. Reynolds was reportedly openly critical of Hooker afterward, frustrated that superior Union numbers (including his own uncommitted corps) went unused. This episode reinforced Reynolds' reputation for sound judgment relative to Hooker's, a reputation that contributed to Lincoln offering him army command that June (which he declined) shortly before his death at Gettysburg.

B. Couch (II Corps): *(Google AI and Claude AI)*

- Even though Couch became increasingly disillusioned with Hooker as the battle progressed, II Corps emerged with its reputation enhanced despite the army's overall failure. It functioned as the operational anchor of the AoP, maintaining strict battlefield cohesion and preventing a tactical retreat from turning into a rout.
- **Command position:** Couch was Hooker's senior corps commander and de facto second-in-command of the Army of the Potomac. His II Corps (minus Gibbon's division, left at Fredericksburg) formed part of the main flanking force that crossed the Rappahannock and Rapidan to concentrate at Chancellorsville by April 30.
- **April 30–May 1:** Couch's divisions (French's and Hancock's) advanced with the army toward Fredericksburg on May 1. When Hooker unexpectedly halted the advance and ordered a pullback into a defensive perimeter around the Chancellorsville crossroads, Couch was reportedly stunned and dismayed — he believed the army held the advantage and that Hooker was surrendering the initiative. This moment marked the start of Couch's private loss of confidence in Hooker.
- **May 1 Shield:** As General Joseph Hooker ordered a premature retreat, Hancock's and French's divisions acted as a crucial shield, holding off Confederate advances to let the army safely form its main defensive line.
- **May 2 – Jackson's flank attack:** After XI Corps collapsed under Jackson's assault, Couch's II Corps divisions were critical in stabilizing the line, helping check the Confederate advance in the growing darkness and confusion near the Chancellorsville clearing.

- **The May 3 Crossroads Defense:** This was Couch's defining moment. As furious fighting raged around the Chancellorsville house, Hooker was struck and stunned by a shell fragment/wooden pillar, becoming semi-incapacitated. As senior corps commander, Couch was effectively in command on the field and, by protocol, could have assumed formal army command given Hooker's condition. Hancock's division (II Corps) fought a tough delaying action to allow withdrawal to a new defensive line. Couch went to Hooker for orders and found him dazed but still nominally in charge; Hooker ordered a general withdrawal to a fallback position — a decision Couch executed but privately regarded as needlessly abandoning good ground and further squandering Union advantages in troops and terrain.

Disgusted by Hooker's timid handling of the battle, Couch requested a transfer. This opened the door for Hancock to take command of II Corps, a leadership shift that proved decisive just two months later at Gettysburg.

C. Sickles (III Corps): *(Google AI)* Though politically controversial, Sickles was a fierce fighter who aggressively sought out the enemy rather than waiting to be hit. He delivered an aggressive, highly controversial, and tactically flawed performance as commander of III Corps. While his fierce combat drive contrasted sharply with the passivity of his peers, his rash decisions isolated his corps, triggered a devastating artillery duel, and ultimately weakened the Union defensive line.

- **The Aggressive Advance to Hazel Grove.**
    - **The Promising Feint**: Sickles began the campaign by executing a successful diversionary demonstration near Fredericksburg before rapidly marching his corps to reinforce Hooker's main force in the Wilderness.
    - **Pursuing Jackson**: On May 2, after spotting Jackson's flanking column marching across the Union front, Sickles received permission to advance. Believing the Confederates were retreating, he aggressively pushed his corps south toward Catharine Furnace. He intercepted the tail end of Jackson's column, capturing hundreds of Georgians. Sickles believed he was routing a retreating enemy.
    - **The Isolated Corps**: This aggressive advance created a massive, dangerous gap in the main Union line. It inadvertently isolated XI Corps on his right, leaving them completely vulnerable to Jackson's surprise flank attack.
- **The Midnight Charge and Crushing Fire (May 2–3).**
    - **The Midnight Chaos**: When XI Corps collapsed to his rear, Sickles found his corps cut off. In pitch darkness around midnight, he launched a famous, chaotic counterattack from Hazel Grove to re-establish connections with Hooker's main line.
    - **The Strategic Blunder**: On the morning of May 3, Hooker ordered Sickles to abandon Hazel Grove. Sickles vigorously protested but ultimately complied.
    - **The Artillery Slaughter**: Confederate artillery immediately seized Hazel Grove, using the elevation to unleash a devastating enfilading fire on Sickles' new position at Fairview, inflicting massive casualties on III Corps.
- **Wounding at Chancellorsville Crossroads.**
    - **A Grinding Defense**: Despite being bombarded from three sides, Sickles stubbornly held the Chancellorsville clearing for hours in brutal, close-quarters infantry fighting.

- **The Wounding**: During the height of the defense on May 3, a piece of Confederate artillery canister shot tore through the saddle of Sickles' horse and narrowly missed his leg. Sickles was not wounded here, but the shell concussion temporarily stunned him, forcing him to briefly cede field command.

- **The Abandonment of Hazel Grove (May 3):** The fight over Hazel Grove, a wide clearing on a prominent ridge, was the tactical turning point of the entire campaign and the source of immense postwar bitterness between Sickles and Hooker.
  - **Sickles' Position**: By dawn on May 3, Sickles realized Hazel Grove was the key to the entire battlefield. It was the only high ground that allowed Union artillery to command the surrounding woods and prevent the two separated wings of Lee's army from linking up. Sickles recognized its immense tactical value and begged Hooker for reinforcements to hold it.
  - **Hooker's Inexplicable Order**: Paralyzed by a concussion and a loss of nerve, Hooker ordered Sickles to abandon Hazel Grove and fall back to a tighter defensive line at Fairview.
  - **The Clash**: Sickles furiously protested the order via courier, arguing that giving up the ridge would doom the army. Hooker remained inflexible, and Sickles was forced to pull his infantry and guns back.
  - **The Immediate Consequence**: The moment the Union troops stepped off the ridge, Confederate artillery commander Edward Porter Alexander rushed 30 cannons onto Hazel Grove. From this perfect vantage point, Alexander unleashed a merciless enfilading fire that raked Sickles' new position, turning the Fairview clearing into a slaughterhouse and forcing the ultimate Union retreat.

- **Impact on the Campaign Outcome.**
  - **Drove the Confederate Momentum**: Sickles' aggressive push south on May 2 inadvertently cleared the path for Jackson's flank attack to succeed, transforming the battle into a Union crisis.
  - **Exhausted the Main Line**: By fiercely defending the Chancellorsville intersection on May 3 without receiving reinforcements from a paralyzed Hooker, Sickles' corps absorbed the brunt of the campaign's casualties, effectively breaking the fighting spirit of the Union army center.
  - **The Prelude to Gettysburg**: The tactical lessons of Chancellorsville deeply warped Sickles' psychology. His anger over being forced to abandon the high ground at Hazel Grove directly motivated his insubordinate, near-disastrous decision to advance III Corps into the Peach Orchard at Gettysburg two months later.

- **III Corps casualty breakdown:** Because Sickles' men bore the brunt of the heavy infantry fighting on May 3, the III Corps suffered the highest number of casualties of any Union corps during the Chancellorsville campaign.

Category	III Corps Losses (Sickles)	Total Union Army Losses	III Corps % of Total
Killed	378	1,606	23.5%
Wounded	2,634	9,762	27.0%
Captured / Missing	1,107	5,919	18.7%
Total Casualties	4,119	17,287	23.8%

Note: Nearly 75% of these 4,119 casualties were sustained in just five hours of brutal fighting on the morning of May 3 following the abandonment of Hazel Grove.

- **Chancellorsville Legacy: The Lessons Sickles Learned:** The Union defeat at Chancellorsville taught Sickles three highly dangerous lessons that he carried forward:

- **High ground is everything:** He believed that giving up a prominent hill meant total annihilation for his men.
- **West Point commanders cannot be trusted:** He grew convinced that professional officers like Hooker lacked the nerve to fight and would leave his corps to be slaughtered.
- **Act first, ask later:** He concluded that a commander must rely on his own tactical intuition rather than strict adherence to orders from above.
- **The Parallel Situations:** Sickles viewed the terrain at Gettysburg through the exact tactical lens of his experience at Chancellorsville.

Tactical Element	Chancellorsville (May 3)	Gettysburg (July 2)
The Target Terrain	**Hazel Grove**: A high, open ridge commanding the surrounding fields.	**The Peach Orchard**: A high, open ridge commanding the surrounding fields.
The Assigned Position	Low, wooded ground at Fairview (easily bombarded from above).	Low, swampy ground at the base of the Round Tops (easily bombarded from above).
The Commander's Order	Hooker ordered him to abandon the high ground and pull back.	Meade ordered him to stay put in the low ground and hold the flank.
Sickles' Resolution	Obeyed the order, lost the high ground, and his corps was slaughtered.	**Vowed never to let a defensive commander dictate his positioning again.**

D. Meade (V Corps): Command position: Meade's V Corps led the main flanking column, spearheading the Union crossing of the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers to reach Chancellorsville — a difficult, well-executed maneuver that got Hooker's turning movement off to a strong start by April 30. *(Claude AI)*

- **April 30 – May 1: The advance and the halt:** On May 1, with the army converging successfully and Lee's position seemingly compromised, Meade's corps (along with Slocum's XII Corps and elements of others) advanced east out of the Wilderness toward open ground near Fredericksburg — terrain far more favorable to the larger Union army than the tangled Wilderness. When Hooker suddenly ordered a withdrawal back to the defensive perimeter around Chancellorsville, Meade was reportedly furious, believing (like Couch) that the army was surrendering hard-won initiative and good ground for no clear reason. He is said to have protested vigorously, viewing the retreat as a critical strategic error made at the worst possible moment.
- **May 2 – Limited engagement:** V Corps was posted on the Union right-center/left area and saw comparatively little direct combat during Jackson's flank attack, which struck Howard's XI Corps well to the north. Meade's men were largely held in a supporting/reserve capacity rather than being used offensively, despite being fresh and available.
- **May 3 – Underutilization:** As the battle reached its climax around the Chancellorsville clearing, Meade requested permission to advance his corps against Lee's now-divided and exposed forces, arguing the Confederate army was vulnerable given how thinly it was stretched between Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg. Hooker denied or failed to act on these requests, keeping V Corps largely inactive while other corps bore the brunt of the fighting. This was part of a broader pattern criticized by contemporaries: substantial Union combat power (I and V Corps especially) sat underused while Hooker fought a defensive battle with a numerically superior army.
- **Impact on outcome:** Meade's own performance was capable and professionally sound, but like Reynolds and Couch, his corps' story at Chancellorsville is really about missed opportunity rather than combat

achievement — a well-led, largely fresh corps whose potential was never unlocked by Hooker's increasingly passive generalship. Meade's private frustration with Hooker's leadership, shared openly among the senior corps commanders, contributed to the command climate that led to Hooker's replacement. Meade himself would be elevated to army command just over a month later, on the eve of Gettysburg — a promotion his steady, critical performance (and visible frustration with Hooker's caution) at Chancellorsville helped set the stage for.

E. Sedgwick (VI Corps): Sedgwick delivered a mixed, overly cautious, but tactically successful performance as commander of the Union VI Corps. While his deliberate pace prevented a decisive envelopment of the Confederate army, his aggressive breakthrough at Fredericksburg saved the Union from an immediate strategic disaster. *(Google AI)*

- **The Diversionary Role**: Sedgwick initially commanded the Union left wing, executing a successful feint below Fredericksburg to pin Lee's forces.
- **Excessive Caution**: Sedgwick moved slowly due to heavy fog and ambiguous orders from Hooker, failing to press his massive numerical advantage early on.
- **The Delay at Fredericksburg (May 2).**
    - Late that night, Hooker sent a desperate dispatch to Sedgwick. He ordered VI Corps to sweep Early aside, seize Fredericksburg, and march rapidly west along Orange Plank Road. Sedgwick was expected to strike Lee's rear by daylight on May 3.
    - Sedgwick received this order near midnight. The timeline was mathematically impossible. To comply, his men had to form attack columns in total darkness, clear a heavily mined city, and storm fortified high ground.
    - Sedgwick moved with characteristic caution. He spent the early morning hours of May 3 probing Early's lines. He feared a massive counterattack and overestimated the garrison's strength. This methodical approach cost the Union precious time while Hooker's main force absorbed a brutal pounding miles away.
- **Battle of Second Fredericksburg (May 3).**
    - **The Irony of Marye's Heights**: Ordered to advance and strike Lee's rear, Sedgwick's men successfully stormed Marye's Heights.
    - **Tactical Triumph**: He executed a brilliant bayonet charge that broke through Jubal Early's thin Confederate line, capturing the very high ground that had slaughtered thousands of Union soldiers the previous December.
- **Battle of Salem Church and Retreat (May 3–5)**
    - **The Advance Stalled**: After taking the heights, Sedgwick marched west toward Hooker but was delayed by a lone Confederate brigade under Cadmus Wilcox.
    - **Surrounded by Lee**: This delay allowed Lee to split his army again, rushing reinforcements to ambush Sedgwick at Salem Church.
    - **The Defiant Escape**: Facing attacks from three sides on May 4, Sedgwick skillfully established a defensive perimeter and successfully withdrew his corps across the Rappahannock River at Banks' Ford.
- **Impact on the Campaign Outcome.**

- **Relieved Pressure on Lee**: Sedgwick's slow movement allowed Lee to focus his attention on destroying Hooker's main force in the Wilderness.
- **Forced Lee to Subdivide**: Conversely, Sedgwick's sudden breakthrough at Marye's Heights panicked the Confederate high command, forcing Lee to halt his annihilation of Hooker to deal with the VI Corps threat.
- **The Catalyst for Final Retreat**: When a defeated Sedgwick withdrew across the river on May 5, it stripped Hooker of his second front. This prompted Hooker to abandon the entire campaign and order a general Union retreat.

- **Hour-by-Hour Timeline of messages sent between Hooker and Sedgwick (May 2–4, 1863):** The communication breakdown between Army commander Joseph Hooker and John Sedgwick was a primary driver of the Union defeat.
  - **May 2 (9:00 PM)**: Hooker sends a critical order to Sedgwick: *"Cross the Rappahannock... march on the Chancellorsville road... and attack Lee's rear."*
  - **May 3 (12:00 AM)**: Sedgwick receives the order. He is delayed by heavy fog, skirmishers, and the mistaken belief that the Confederate force in front of him is much larger than it actually is.
  - **May 3 (11:00 AM)**: After hours of delays, Sedgwick's VI Corps successfully storms **Marye's Heights** during the Second Battle of Fredericksburg.
  - **May 3 (1:00 PM)**: Hooker, heavily concussed by a shell striking his headquarters, sends a defensive message telling Sedgwick to look to his own safety rather than pushing aggressively.
  - **May 3 (4:00 PM)**: Delayed by Cadmus Wilcox's Confederate brigade, Sedgwick is ambushed and halted at **Salem Church**.
  - **May 4 (11:00 AM)**: Hooker sends a conflicting dispatch stating he cannot support Sedgwick and instructs him to hold a bridgehead at Banks' Ford if possible.
  - **May 4 (6:00 PM)**: Lee counterattacks Sedgwick with three divisions. Sedgwick sends an urgent dispatch to Hooker: *"My army is surrounded... I must collapse into a bridgehead."*
  - **May 5 (2:00 AM)**: Due to delayed communications, Hooker sends permission to retreat after Sedgwick has already begun successfully pulling his men across Banks' Ford.

- **Analysis of Chancellorsville's Outcome:** Sedgwick's actions directly impacted the outcome of the Chancellorsville campaign in several key ways:
  - **Relief of Pressure on Lee:** Sedgwick's slow movement in the early morning of May 3 allowed Lee to focus entirely on Hooker's main force, securing the vital crossroads of Chancellorsville.
  - **Failure to Synchronize:** The multi-hour delay after capturing Marye's Heights allowed Lee to divide his forces a second time. Lee successfully blocked Sedgwick at Salem Church without exposing his rear.
  - **The Banks' Ford Defense:** Sedgwick's stubborn defense at Banks' Ford preserved VI Corps as an effective fighting unit, preventing a total operational rout of the Union left wing.

- **VI Corps Casualty Breakdown:** Sedgwick's VI Corps bore a massive operational burden during the campaign, sustaining nearly 27% of all Union casualties at Chancellorsville.

Category	VI Corps Losses (Sedgwick)	Total Union Army Losses (Hooker)	VI Corps % of Total
Killed	**493**	1,606	30.7%
Wounded	**2,711**	9,762	27.8%

Captured / Missing	**1,496**	5,919	25.3%
Total Casualties	**4,700**	**17,287**	**27.2%**

- **Command Comparison, Sedgwick vs. Hooker:** While both generals faced intense scrutiny after the campaign, their operational failures stemmed from completely opposite tactical flaws.
    - **Psychological Mindset**: Hooker suffered a total failure of nerve. He started with an aggressive, brilliant strategy but collapsed into complete passivity once Robert E. Lee countered him. Sedgwick, by contrast, remained steady but suffered from an inherent, methodical slowness.
    - **Handling Numerical Advantage**: Hooker commanded over 70,000 men in the Wilderness but allowed himself to be pinned and outmaneuvered by 40,000 Confederates. Sedgwick commanded 24,000 men against roughly 12,000 under Early; while Sedgwick eventually won, his extreme caution delayed the victory by several crucial hours.
    - **Tactical Under-Fire Performance**: When his lines were broken, Hooker froze and failed to commit his massive infantry reserves. When Sedgwick found himself completely surrounded on three sides on May 4, he handled his troops masterfully, executing a fighting retreat that saved the VI Corps from total annihilation.

F. Howard (XI Corps): Howard delivered a catastrophic, deeply flawed performance as commander of XI Corps. His stubborn refusal to heed warnings directly enabled a successful Confederate flanking maneuver of the war, resulting in the collapse of the Union right wing and cementing the campaign as a Union disaster. ***(Google AI)***

- **Taking Command and Early Missteps.**
    - **A Fractured Command**: Howard had taken command of the XI Corps just weeks before the battle. The corps was largely made up of German immigrants who resented Howard for replacing their beloved previous commander, Franz Sigel.
    - **The Vulnerable Flank**: On May 1–2, Howard's 11,000-man corps was positioned on the extreme right flank of the Union army along the Orange Turnpike. His line ended abruptly "in the air" in dense woods, without being anchored to any natural geographic defense or reinforced with heavy fortifications.
- **The Blind Spot: Ignoring Intelligence (May 2):** Howard's greatest failure at Chancellorsville was his absolute refusal to believe that the enemy could launch a major attack against his position.
    - **Disregarding the Signs**: Throughout the day on May 2, Union scouts, pickets, and officers repeatedly reported seeing a massive column of Confederate troops moving across their front toward the west.
    - **Dismissing Hooker's Warning**: At 9:30 AM, Army commander Joseph Hooker sent a written warning to Howard stating that the enemy might be trying to turn his flank and ordered him to advance scouts and prepare for an attack. Howard largely ignored it.
    - **Arrogance Under Fire**: When his own subordinates, such as Carl Schurz, begged him to reorient the troops to face a threat from the west, Howard dismissed their fears. He famously told one warning officer that he was imagining things, believing that Robert E. Lee's army was actually in full retreat.

- **The Flank Attack and Collapse (May 2, 5:15 PM):** Because of Howard's negligence, the XI Corps was completely unprepared when Lieutenant General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's 26,000 Confederates burst out of the woods.
    - **Total Surprise**: Most of Howard's men were resting, butchering cattle, or playing cards. Their muskets were stacked, and they faced south rather than west toward the incoming assault.
    - **A Futile Rally**: Once the attack commenced, Howard acted with immense personal bravery. He rode into the chaos, tucking a Union flag under the stump of his missing right arm to rally his fleeing troops.
    - **The Rout**: It was too late. Despite isolated pockets of fierce resistance from individual regiments, the XI Corps was swiftly overwhelmed, routed, and driven back two miles in utter chaos before Jackson's momentum was finally halted.
- **Impact on the Campaign Outcome.**
    - **Destroyed Hooker's Strategic Plan**: Howard's failure shattered Hooker's brilliant opening strategy. It instantly transformed a successful Union offensive into a desperate defensive struggle for survival.
    - **The Scapegoat of Chancellorsville**: The disaster deeply demoralized the Army of the Potomac. The rest of the army—and the Northern press—viciously blamed Howard and the German-American soldiers of the XI Corps for the defeat, branding them the "Flying Dutchman."
    - **Costly Confederate Triumph**: While Howard's failure gave Lee his greatest tactical masterpiece, it ironically led to the mortal wounding of Stonewall Jackson in the night-time confusion following the flank attack, fundamentally altering the trajectory of the war.
- **XI Corps Casualty Breakdown, May 2, 1863:** During Jackson's devastating flank attack, Howard's XI Corps suffered catastrophic losses. In less than three hours of chaotic fighting, the corps lost nearly one-fourth of its entire effective strength (approximately 2,500 out of 11,000 men).

Category	XI Corps Losses	% of Engaged Force
Killed	**242**	2.2%
Wounded	**979**	8.9%
Captured / Missing	**1,201**	10.9%
Total Casualties	**2,422**	**22.0%**

G. Slocum (XII Corps): Slocum's corps held the Union right-center and bore the brunt of the heavy, close-quarters infantry fighting on May 3 as Lee tried to reunite his divided army. *(Claude AI)*

- **April 30 – May 1: the advance:** Slocum's corps executed the flanking march competently, crossing the Rapidan at Germanna Ford and reaching Chancellorsville on schedule as part of the successful opening phase of Hooker's plan. On May 1, XII Corps advanced east alongside Meade and Sykes into more open ground, part of the movement that Hooker then abruptly reversed — Slocum, like Meade and Couch, is reported to have been unhappy with the order to fall back into the defensive perimeter, though he was less vocally critical in the record than Meade or Couch.
- **May 2 – position and Jackson's attack:** XII Corps held a position in the center-right of the Union line, south of XI Corps. When Jackson's flank attack shattered Howard's corps that evening, Slocum's men were

among those drawn into the effort to check the Confederate advance as it rolled up the Union line, helping form part of the new defensive front that stabilized around Fairview and Hazel Grove as night fell.

- **May 3 – heavy fighting:** XII Corps was engaged in the intense combat of May 3 around the Chancellorsville clearing, one of the war's bloodiest single days, as Lee's reunited army (Jackson's wing under Stuart after Jackson's wounding, plus Lee's own wing) pressed the Union center. Slocum's troops, along with II and III Corps elements, bore significant fighting in the effort to hold the shrinking Union perimeter before the general withdrawal to the final defensive line north of Chancellorsville.
- **Impact on outcome:** Slocum's personal performance was solid and professional but not distinguished by any singular tactical initiative or controversy — he executed orders competently in both the advance and the defensive fighting, without the command friction that marked Couch's or Meade's relationship with Hooker, and without a signature success (like Sedgwick at Marye's Heights) or failure (like Howard's collapse) attached to his name. His corps' steady performance during the critical May 2–3 fighting helped prevent the Jackson flank attack from becoming a total rout, contributing to the army's survival even as the campaign overall ended in defeat. Slocum's comparatively unblemished record at Chancellorsville — combined with solid service afterward — sustained his reputation through the rest of the war, in contrast to the lasting damage done to Howard's.

H. Stoneman (Cavalry Corps): *(Claude AI)*

- **Command position:** Stoneman commanded the Cavalry Corps, roughly 10,000 troopers — by far the largest concentration of Union cavalry yet assembled in the Eastern Theater.
- **Hooker's plan for the cavalry:** Rather than using the cavalry for traditional screening and reconnaissance duties during the army's advance, Hooker dispatched the bulk of Stoneman's corps on a deep independent raid, launched in late April, intended to cut Lee's rail and communication lines south of Fredericksburg (toward Richmond) and disrupt Confederate supply and reinforcement, ideally forcing Lee to retreat or fight at a disadvantage. Only a small cavalry brigade under Pleasonton was retained with the main army.
- **Execution of the raid:** Stoneman's raid was plagued by delay from the outset — heavy rains and flooded rivers in mid-April forced a postponement of nearly two weeks from the original start date, undermining the raid's intended synchronization with the main campaign. Once launched, Stoneman's columns fanned out and did succeed in tearing up sections of railroad, destroying some supplies, and causing localized panic as far as the outskirts of Richmond, but the raid was diffuse — divided into multiple detachments pursuing separate objectives — and failed to inflict any single decisive or concentrated blow on Lee's supply lines or communications.
- **The critical cost — absence from the battlefield:** Because nearly the entire Cavalry Corps was detached on the raid, Hooker's main army was left with minimal cavalry screening on its exposed right flank. This was a direct and significant contributing factor to the disaster of May 2: Jackson's 12-mile flanking march went largely undetected and unchallenged in part because there was insufficient Union cavalry present to scout and screen the army's right flank, the exact role cavalry existed to perform. The small force left behind under Pleasonton, while it fought well in the aftermath of Howard's collapse (helping organize the scratch defense at Hazel Grove), was far too small to have provided adequate advance warning.
- **Impact on outcome:** Stoneman's raid is generally judged a strategic failure and a significant contributing cause of the campaign's disaster. It achieved negligible lasting damage to Confederate logistics or communications, failed to draw Lee out of position or meaningfully affect his decision-making at Chancellorsville, and — most damningly — stripped the main Union army of the reconnaissance capability that might have detected Jackson's flank march in time to prevent or blunt it. Hooker himself later blamed Stoneman for the raid's lack of results, and Stoneman was relieved of cavalry command shortly after the campaign (officially citing poor health, specifically hemorrhoids that had hampered him during the raid),

replaced by Pleasonton. Of all the corps-level performances in the campaign, Stoneman's is among the most clearly judged a failure, both in its own execution and in its broader contribution to the Union defeat.

I. Postscript: George Meade (V Corps) and John Reynolds (I Corps): The ultimate tragedy of the Union corps leadership at Chancellorsville lies in these two commanders, who desperately wanted to fight but were entirely sidelined by Hooker.

- **The Subdued Fury:** Reynolds' I Corps (17,000 men) arrived on the field fresh and unengaged. Meade's V Corps was highly capable and anchored the Union left. On May 4, with Lee's army stretched to the breaking point, Meade and Reynolds personally went to Hooker's tent.
- **The Confrontation:** They fiercely argued for a massive, coordinated counterattack using their combined 30,000 fresh troops to crush Lee's exhausted forces. Hooker flatly refused, leaving both commanders furious. Meade later wrote that he could have wrapped his corps around Lee's flank and won the war right there if Hooker had simply let them go.

21. Assess Stuart's performance in command of Second Corps.

After Jackson was wounded on May 2, command of the Second Corps fell to his senior division commander, Maj. Gen. A.P. Hill. Hill was soon wounded himself. He consulted with Brig. Gen. Robert E. Rodes, the next most senior general in the corps, and Rodes acquiesced in Hill's decision to summon Stuart to take command, notifying Lee after the fact. Heth replaced Hill in division command.

Although Stuart was a cavalryman who had never commanded infantry before, he was to deliver a successful, aggressive, and strategically effective performance at Chancellorsville. He successfully reunited the split halves of the Confederate army, drove Union General Joseph Hooker from a critical defensive position, and secured Robert E. Lee's greatest tactical victory.

By the morning of May 3, the Union line resembled a horseshoe. The center was held by the III, XII, and II Corps. On the left were remnants of XI Corps, and the right was held by the V and I Corps. On the western side of the Chancellorsville salient, Stuart organized his three divisions to straddle Orange Plank Road: Heth's in the advance, Colston's 300–500 yards behind, and Rodes's, whose men had done the hardest fighting on May 2, near the Wilderness Church.

As described by Sears *(324)*, "Stuart was everywhere that morning, seeing and being seen, leading troops forward and rallying them when they fell back. His battle tactics were not subtle. He had taken Jackson's corps where he found it at midnight, and under Lee's preemptory orders he felt obliged to attack at dawn, without waiting to rearrange his forces or to explore the enemy line for a weak spot. That Sunday, said Porter Alexander, Stuart 'never seemed to hesitate or to doubt for one moment that he could just crash his way wherever he chose to strike.'"

Critics find Stuart's tactics unimaginative, suggesting it would have been wiser to faint from the West and attack from the South, behind the batteries placed at Hazel Grove. But Lee's orders were what they were. Stewart had little real choice but to strike with his forces arranged as they were.

Under these conditions, it is hard to see how Stuart, in a new command, a cavalryman commanding infantry and artillery for the first time, could have done a better job. Edward Porter Alexander believed

credit was due: “Altogether, I do not think there was a more brilliant thing done in the war than Stuart’s extricating that command from the extremely critical position in which he found it…”

- **Reuniting the Army:** Stuart's primary objective on the morning of May 3 was to launch an attack that would link Jackson’s separated corps with Lee’s remaining wings to the east. Stuart coordinated heavy, sustained frontal assaults that successfully breached the Union lines and merged the Confederate forces.
- **Exploiting Hazel Grove:** Stuart recognized the supreme tactical importance of Hazel Grove, a high, open plateau on the battlefield. When Union forces foolishly evacuated the position, Stuart immediately seized it and deployed roughly 30 pieces of artillery. This high ground allowed Confederate gunners to rain devastating enfilade fire down upon the Union lines at Fairview and Chancellor House.
- **Aggressive, Inspiring Leadership:** Stuart brought his signature cavalry dash to the infantry. He rode along the front lines, famously singing the song *"Old Joe Hooker, won't you come out of the Wilderness,"* which wildly boosted the morale of Jackson's exhausted men. *(Edward Porter Alexander, “Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative,” New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907, 340)*
- **Driving Hooker Back:** Stuart’s unrelenting morning assaults forced the Union Army of the Potomac into a full tactical retreat toward a secondary defensive line near the Rappahannock River.

Military historians largely praise Stuart’s performance because he inherited a highly volatile situation and successfully executed Lee's intent. However, his reliance on costly, direct frontal attacks resulted in some of the bloodiest fighting of the war for the Second Corps. While his success prompted rumors that he might permanently replace Jackson, Lee ultimately chose to return Stuart to his indispensable role leading the cavalry, splitting the Second Corps between Richard Ewell and A.P. Hill.

- Stuart remained in command for a few days until the campaign concluded. Once A.P. Hill sufficiently recovered from his injuries to return to active duty on May 6, Stuart stepped down and returned to his permanent role leading the Cavalry Division.
- A.P. Hill held the temporary command of Second Corps until May 30. Following Jackson's death, Lee formally reorganized the army into three corps; Maj. Gen. Richard S. Ewell, having recovered sufficiently from serious injury in action at Brawner’s Farm on August 28, was promoted to Lieutenant General on May 23 and took over the Second Corps, while A.P. Hill was promoted to lead the newly-created Third Corps. *(Richard S. Ewell - Wikipedia)*

22. Assess Edward Porter Alexander's artillery tactics at Chancellorsville.

At Chancellorsville, Alexander utilized Lee’s new Artillery Battalion System to deliver what is widely considered the finest exhibition of artillery command in the War. *(Google AI)* Operating as a battalion commander in Longstreet’s First Corps (but temporarily attached to Jackson), Alexander weaponized mobility, aggressive positioning, and concentrated firepower to turn the dense thickets of the Wilderness into a lethal artillery platform. His tactics dominated the battlefield:

A. The Tactical Exploitation of Hazel Grove: Alexander's crowning achievement occurred on the morning of May 3 at Hazel Grove, a crucial clearing that represented the highest geographic ground in the immediate area.

- **Recognizing the Flaw**: On May 2, Alexander accompanied Stonewall Jackson's flank attack. As the sun set, he recognized that the dense Wilderness woods rendered artillery useless unless a clearing could be seized. He spotted Hazel Grove and realized whoever controlled it would control the battlefield.
- **The Midnight Reconnaissance**: Armed with this tactical insight, Alexander personally reconnoitered the area during the night. When Union forces inexplicably evacuated the high ground at dawn on May 3, Alexander did not hesitate.
- **The Rapid Occupation**: He immediately rushed his battalion forward, occupying the crest before Union forces could realize their mistake and re-establish their lines.

B. Massing Firepower via the Battalion System: Before the 1863 reforms, a Confederate artillery officer would have had to beg individual infantry brigade commanders for permission to move guns. Alexander utilized the new structure to bypass this bureaucracy completely.

- **Creating a Grand Battery**: Once on Hazel Grove, Alexander did not just deploy his own four batteries (roughly 16 guns). Using his authority as a battalion commander, he absorbed passing batteries from Jackson's Second Corps.
- **The 30-Gun Convergence**: Within an hour, Alexander had stitched together a massive, continuous line of 30 to 36 guns.
- **Enfilade Fire**: He aimed this concentrated mass of firepower directly at Fairview, a lower Union artillery position, and the clearing around the Chancellor House. Because of his superior elevation, Alexander's guns could fire *enfilade* — meaning his shots plowed down the length of the Union lines rather than striking them head-on, multiplying the structural and psychological damage.

C. Aggressive Forward Displacement: Standard 19th-century military dogma dictated that artillery should fire from a safe distance behind advancing infantry. Alexander completely rejected this, practicing a tactic known as forward displacement.

- **Leapfrogging the Infantry**: As the Confederate infantry charged forward into the woods on May 3, Alexander ordered his cannoneers to limber up their horses and gallop directly alongside the infantry.
- **Point-Blank Canister**: He unlimbered his guns within musket range of Union lines, firing devastating loads of canister (essentially turning the cannons into giant shotguns) into the woods to break Federal counterattacks.
- **The Ultimate Complement**: Alexander's aggressive forward movements were so effective that when an infantry brigade began to waver, its commander, Brig. General Carnot Posey *(yes, a relative!)*, reportedly yelled, *"Don't borrow any trouble, men, Alexander is checking them!"*

D. Directing the Army's Fire: When Stuart took command of Jackson's corps after Jackson was wounded, he leaned heavily on Alexander's tactical vision. Stuart essentially gave Alexander functional control over the entire army's artillery footprint on that sector of the field.

- **The Unification of the Wings**: Alexander used his massed artillery at Hazel Grove as a literal anvil. By pounding the Union center, he forced the Federal troops to contract their lines.
- **The Link-Up**: This retraction allowed the two separated wings of Lee's army (Stuart's forces to the west and Lee's forces to the south) to finally link up physically around the Chancellor clearing, achieving Lee's primary strategic objective for the battle.

E. The Turning Point: Hazel Grove and Fairview: The climax of the artillery action occurred on the morning of May 3 centered around two competing clearings:

- **Hazel Grove:** This open, grassy ridge was initially held by the Union III Corps. Recognizing its value, Confederate artillery commanders desperately needed to seize it to unite the split wings of Robert E. Lee's army. In a controversial move, Union Major General Joseph Hooker ordered his troops to abandon this dominant high ground. Colonel Edward Porter Alexander immediately capitalized on the blunder, crowning the hill with roughly 30 to 36 Confederate cannons.
- **Fairview:** The retreating Federal troops pulled back 1,200 yards to an elevated clearing named Fairview, where they massed approximately 34 artillery pieces to defend their lines.
- **The Duel:** For roughly five hours, a massive artillery duel raged between Hazel Grove and Fairview. "The Confederate artillery is triumphant. It was recently reorganized into a battalion system, allowing it to have an ample number of guns in large, mobile groups." *(Nellaware)* This concentrated firepower from Hazel Grove pounded the Union infantry positions, broke their defenses, and successfully knocked out the Yankee pieces one by one. From Hazel Grove, Southern guns also targeted and destroyed the Chancellor House, Hooker's headquarters.

Hip pocket question: Sum up Hancock's performance in the battle.

Hancock's division performed masterfully as the defensive anchor of the Union center around the Chancellorsville clearing, showing the exact tactical grit that would later make him famous at Gettysburg.

- On May 1, when Hooker ordered a general retreat just as Union forces were successfully pushing out of the Wilderness brush, Hancock was tasked with holding the line. He effectively checked initial Confederate advances, allowing the rest of the Union forces to pull back and establish a defensive perimeter around the Chancellorsville clearing.
- On May 2, his division held the vital crossroads under relentless pressure from Lee's main force.
- Hancock's finest hour during the battle came on May 3. Facing attacks from multiple directions, Hancock formed his lines back-to-back. He personally directed troops under heavy artillery fire, ensuring they kept firing even as Confederate sharpshooters and artillery decimated his gun crews. He quickly shifted regiments to plug gaps. Even as Chancellor House burned behind him and the rest of the army retreated around him, Hancock held his position until explicitly ordered by Hooker to withdraw.

Military historians widely praise Hancock's leadership at Chancellorsville. While the battle was a catastrophic Union defeat due to Hooker's failures, Hancock exhibited exceptional tactical skill, personal bravery, and superb organizational control. His division suffered heavy casualties but maintained its cohesion under immense pressure. This stellar performance directly influenced his promotion to command the entire II Corps just a few weeks later, setting the stage for his famous role at Gettysburg.

23. Chancellorsville is often called Lee's perfect battle. Was it? What did Longstreet, for example, think of it?

Chancellorsville is known as Lee's 'perfect battle' because his risky decision three times to divide his army in the presence of a much larger enemy force resulted in a significant Confederate victory. A product of Lee's audacity and Hooker's timid decision-making, the victory was tempered by heavy casualties, including Jackson.

The Confederate public had mixed feelings about the result, joy at Lee's tactical victory tempered by the loss of their beloved general, Jackson.

Lee took a far more subdued view. "At Chancellorsville we gained another victory; our people were wild with delight," he stated shortly after Gettysburg. "I, on the contrary, was more depressed than after Fredericksburg; our loss was severe, and again we had gained not an inch of ground and the enemy could not be pursued." (*Hooker Retreats: May 5-6, Night, National Park Civil War Series: The Battle of Chancellorsville)*

After Longstreet rejoined the main army, he was highly critical of Lee's strategy, saying that battles like Chancellorsville cost the Confederacy more men than it could afford to lose. *(Smith, Derek, "The Gallant Dead: Union & Confederate Generals Killed in the Civil War," Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005, 127)*

Hip pocket question: Would the Confederacy have been better served had Lee chosen to withdraw to a better defensive position such as the North Anna River and let Hooker attack him there rather than fight at Chancellorsville? *(Google AI)*

No, the Confederacy would likely not have been better served had Lee withdrawn to a defensive line like the North Anna River instead of fighting at Chancellorsville. While a retreat to the North Anna would have preserved irreplaceable Southern manpower and avoided the devastating loss of Jackson, it would have brought severe political, strategic, and logistical consequences that could have hastened the collapse of the Confederacy.

Historians heavily debate this counterfactual, weighing the short-term tactical advantages of a defensive stand against the broader strategic realities of 1863. *(Ethan S. Rafuse, "Battlefield Echoes: MOPs, MOEs, and Chancellorsville," The Civil War Monitor, Spring 2013)*

A. Tactical Advantages of a North Anna Withdrawal

Had Lee chosen to "ingloriously fly" south to the North Anna River (the strategy he eventually used against Grant in May 1864), he would have gained several localized tactical benefits:

- **The Inverted "V" Defense**: At the Battle of North Anna in 1864, Lee utilized a brilliant, apex-shaped defensive line anchored on the river. If Hooker had followed him there, the terrain would have forced the Union army to split into isolated wings to cross the river, allowing Lee to attack a divided enemy in detail.
- **Manpower Preservation**: At Chancellorsville, Lee suffered over 12,000 casualties—roughly 20% of his army. A defensive battle behind prepared breastworks would have drastically skewed the casualty math in the South's favor. *(https://www.historyonthenet.com/effective-robert-e-lee-tactics-during-civil-war)*
- **Consolidated Forces**: Lee fought at Chancellorsville without Longstreet's corps, which was detached on a foraging mission in southern Virginia. Withdrawing closer to Richmond would have allowed Lee to quickly reunite with Longstreet, bringing the AoNV to full strength before engaging Hooker.

B. Strategic Disadvantages: Why Lee Chose to Fight

Despite the tactical appeal of a strong defensive river line, withdrawing would have bad optics for the Confederacy strategically and politically:

- **Devastating Loss of Northern Political Will:** Lee's core strategic objective was never just to defend territory, but to destroy the Union's political will to sustain the war. A voluntary, deep retreat by the South's premier army would have signaled weakness and boosted Northern morale. Conversely, the stunning victory at Chancellorsville deeply humiliated the Lincoln administration, severely damaged Northern public morale, and directly set the stage for Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania. *(https://www.quora.com/Could-Lee-have-won-the-war-or-sued-for-peace-if-he-purely-ran-a-defensive-campaign and https://www.quora.com/Was-General-Robert-E-Lee-wrong-to-have-acted-so-aggressively-Wouldnt-the-Confederacys-secession-have-had-a-better-chance-of-succeeding-if-Lee-had-focused-on-building-a-defensible-South-instead-of-attacking-the-North)*
- **Abandonment of Critical Virginia Infrastructure:** Retreating to the North Anna River meant completely abandoning Fredericksburg and the rich agricultural lands of the Rappahannock valley. It would have conceded the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad to the Union, allowing Hooker to establish a secure, short supply line directly into the heart of Virginia.
- **Logistical Starvation:** Central Virginia was already entirely stripped of food and supplies by early 1863. Hemming the Army of Northern Virginia into a tighter pocket closer to Richmond would have exacerbated the Confederacy's logistical crisis. Winning at Chancellorsville allowed Lee to keep the initiative, clear Virginia of Union forces, and launch the Gettysburg campaign specifically to forage and plunder the rich, untouched farms of Maryland and Pennsylvania.
- **The Specter of a Siege:** Lee was acutely aware that a purely defensive, space-trading Fabian strategy would inevitably end in a war of attrition that the South could not win due to the North's massive superiority in manpower and industrial capacity. He warned the Confederate leadership that if he were forced into static trench lines guarding Richmond, it would only be a matter of time before his army was bottlenecked and starved out—a prophecy that ultimately came true during the Overland Campaign and the subsequent Siege of Petersburg. *(https://www.quora.com/Why-was-Robert-E-Lee-s-Confederate-Army-successful-at-Fredericksburg-but-unsuccessful-at-Chancellorsville-and-Gettysburg)*

Conclusion: While a retreat to the North Anna River might have saved Jackson's life and reduced immediate Confederate casualties, it would have traded a brilliant, offensive-defensive victory for a passive strategy. By abandoning the initiative, Lee would have accelerated the exact scenario he feared most: a slow, grinding Union advance that would have pinned his army against Richmond a year earlier than it actually happened.

Hip pocket question: Would the ridge and contiguous area around Zoan Church, where Slocum's XII Corps reached on May 1, 1863, have been a better defensive position for Hooker rather than the position he retreated to around Chancellorsville?

Yes, the ridge and contiguous area around Zoan Church would have been a vastly superior defensive position. *(https://emergingcivilwar.com/2013/05/06/where-did-joe-hooker-lose-the-battle-of-chancellorsville/)*

- **Tactical Advantages of the Zoan Church Ridge:** The high ground at Zoan Church offered structural advantages that addressed almost every tactical vulnerability the Union army later suffered:
- **Open Fields of Fire:** The Zoan Church ridge sat at the eastern edge of the infamous "Wilderness". East of the ridge, the landscape cleared out into open, rolling terrain toward Fredericksburg. This would have allowed the Union army to deploy its massive, superior artillery units with clear sightlines to devastate any Confederate frontal assault.
- **Freedom of Maneuver:** At Chancellorsville, the Union army was choked by thick secondary growth that made moving troops and maintaining lines nearly impossible. The Zoan Church area provided the geographic space required to deploy Hooker's massive numerical advantage (nearly 2-to-1).
- **Secure Flanks:** The ridge connected logically to terrain features that could anchor an army. Most importantly, it sat near Banks' Ford on the Rappahannock. Holding Zoan Church would have shortened the communication and supply lines between Hooker's main force and Sedgwick's forces back at Fredericksburg.
- **Neutralization of Jackson's Flank March:** Had Hooker dug in on the Zoan Church ridge, his right flank would not have been hanging blindly in the deep woods of the Wilderness, and Jackson would not have had the dense forest cover necessary to secretly march 30,000 men around the Union army.

The Consequences of the Retreat to Chancellorsville: When Slocum's XII Corps and Meade's V Corps encountered the Confederates on May 1, they were successfully pushing toward this ridge. Hooker's sudden, unexpected order to retreat to Chancellorsville forced the Union army into a tactical nightmare:

- **Surrendered Initiative:** By retreating, Hooker handed the tactical initiative entirely to General Robert E. Lee.
- **Blindness in the Wilderness:** The Union army confined itself back inside the thick brush, effectively neutralizing its artillery advantage and making visibility poor.
- **Exposed Positions:** The Chancellorsville position left the Union right wing (Howard's XI Corps) isolated, unanchored, and vulnerable in the woods, directly inviting Jackson's catastrophic flank attack.

Upon receiving the retreat order on the cusp of taking the ridge, a disgusted Meade famously exclaimed: *"My God, if we can't hold the top of the hill, we certainly can't hold the bottom of it!"* Military analysis has overwhelmingly proven Meade right.

24. How did the outcome of the battle affect the strategic situation of each side in the Eastern and Western theaters of operations? In other words, what did the outcome of the battle mean to each side?

Lee's victory shifted the strategic landscape of the war, altering plans in both theaters of operation.

The Eastern Theater.

A. The Confederacy (Strategic Momentum).

- **Invasion Planning**: Victory gave Lee the strategic initiative to launch his second invasion of the North, leading directly to the Gettysburg Campaign.
- **Logistical Relief**: Moving the war into Pennsylvania relieved war-torn Virginia agricultural lands and allowed the Confederate army to forage in fertile Union territory.

- **Irreplaceable Loss**: The mortal wounding of Jackson severely damaged the Army of Northern Virginia's command structure, forcing a difficult reorganization into three corps just before Gettysburg.
- **Political Leverage**: Lee hoped a successful offensive on Northern soil would bolster the peace movement in the North and encourage European recognition.

B. The Union (Crisis and Regrouping).

- **Morale Blow**: The defeat deeply demoralized the AoP and shocked the Lincoln administration, prolonging the political pressure on the war effort.
- **Command Turmoil**: Hooker lost the confidence of Lincoln and his fellow officers, leading to his replacement by Meade just days before Gettysburg.
- **Defensive Posture**: The Union army was forced to abandon its offensive designs on Richmond and pivot to tracking Lee's movements to protect Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.

The Western Theater.

A. The Confederacy (Missed Opportunities).

- **Vicksburg Neglect**: The victory in Virginia reinforced a "Virginia-first" bias among Confederate leadership, causing them to reject proposals to detach troops from Lee's army to reinforce Vicksburg.
- **False Security**: The triumph blinded Confederate leadership to the worsening crisis in the West, where Grant was successfully isolating Vicksburg.

B. The Union (Unchecked Progress).

- **Strategic Isolation**: Because Lee did not send troops West, Grant's operations around Vicksburg faced no external relief forces, allowing the Union to maintain its tightening grip on the Mississippi River.
- **No Diversion**: The Eastern defeat did not force President Lincoln to siphon resources away from the Western Theater, ensuring that Union momentum toward cutting the Confederacy in two remained entirely unchecked.

25. How did the battle influence Lee's tactics at Gettysburg?

Arguably his greatest victory of the war, the victory at Chancellorsville fostered a dangerous sense of invincibility within the AoNV. This psychological shift, combined with severe structural changes, directly dictated Lee's aggressive and overly optimistic tactics two months later at Gettysburg.

The death of Jackson pushed Lee to make the long-needed reorganization of the AoNV from two large corps into three, under Longstreet, Ewell, and A.P. Hill. The new assignments for the latter two generals caused some command difficulties in the upcoming Gettysburg campaign, which began in June. Of more consequence for Gettysburg, however, was the supreme confidence that Lee gained from Chancellorsville that his army was virtually invincible and would succeed at anything he asked it to do.

A. Overconfidence in Confederate Infantry.

- **The "Invincibility" Myth**: At Chancellorsville, Lee defeated a force twice his size. This led him to believe his infantry could achieve almost any objective, a mindset that directly manifested in his authorization of Pickett's Charge against a fortified Union center.

- **Underestimating Union Resolve**: Because the AoP broke and retreated at Chancellorsville, Lee underestimated their fighting capacity when holding strong, defensive high ground like Cemetery Ridge and Little Round Top.

B. Disastrous Command Restructuring.

- **Loss of Jackson**: The mortal wounding of Jackson at Chancellorsville shattered Lee's highly effective two-corps command structure (led by Longstreet and Jackson).
- **The Three-Corps Expansion**: Lee reorganized the army into three corps, elevating Ewell and A.P. Hill to corps command. Both were inexperienced at this level of leadership.
- **Vague Discretionary Orders**: At Chancellorsville, Jackson required little supervision. Relying on that same style, Lee gave Ewell discretionary orders on July 1 at Gettysburg to take Cemetery Hill "if practicable." Lacking Jackson's aggression, Ewell chose not to attack, costing the Confederates the key high ground.

C. Misplaced Trust in Stuart.

- **Stuart's Chancellorsville Success**: After Jackson was wounded, Stuart took temporary command of Jackson's infantry corps and performed exceptionally well.
- **Leash Too Long**: Because of Stuart's stellar performance, Lee granted him wide discretion during the march north. Stuart used this latitude to launch a controversial raid completely around the Union army, leaving Lee strategically blind without cavalry scouts during the crucial first two days at Gettysburg.

D. Rejection of Defensive Tactics.

- **Longstreet's Frustration**: At Gettysburg, Longstreet argued for a strategic maneuver around the Union left flank to find good defensive ground and force the Union to attack them.
- **Lee's Aggressive Flanking Focus**: Having successfully used a daring flank attack to crush the Union right at Chancellorsville, Lee rejected Longstreet's defensive advice. Instead, he insisted on duplicating offensive flank attacks on July 2 (against the Union left and right) and a direct assault on July 3, believing offense would always yield victory.

My God! My God! What will the country say? What will the country say?
President Lincoln

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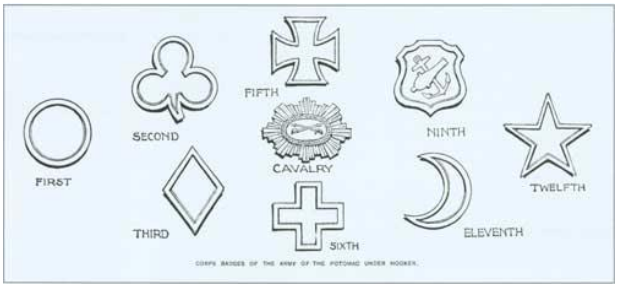
Battlefield Echoes - MOPs, MOEs, and Chancellorsville.pdf

Orders of Battle



Union Army of the Potomac (Maj. General Joseph Hooker)

- **First Army Corps** (Maj. Gen. John Reynolds) – 16,908 52 guns
    - **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. James Wadsworth)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. Walter Phelps Jr.)
        - 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Lysander Cutler)
        - 3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Gabriel R. Paul)
    - **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. John C. Robinson)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Abram Duryée)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Roy Stone)
    - **3rd Division** (Maj. Gen. Doubleday)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Soloman Meredith - "Iron Brigade")
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. George J. Stannard / Brig. Gen. T. Cooper)
- **Second Army Corps** (Maj. Gen. Darius Couch) – 16,893 46 guns
  (formerly Maj. Gen. Edwin V. Sumner who was relieved at his own request and died in March 1863)
    - **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. John C. Caldwell)
        - 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Meagher - "Irish Brigade")
        - 3rd Brigade (Col. Samuel K. Zook)
    - **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. John Gibbon)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alfred Sully)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Joshua Owen)
        - 3rd Brigade (Col. Nelson A. Miles)
    - **3rd Division** (Maj. Gen. Mary French)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. Samuel S. Carroll)

        - 2nd Brigade (Col. William B. Smyth)
        - 3rd Brigade (Col. Nathan Kimball)
- **Third Army Corps** (Maj. Gen. Dan Sickles) – 18,721 60 guns
  (formerly Maj. Gen. George Stoneman)
    - **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. David B. Birney)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Charles K. Graham)
        - 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. J.H. Hobart Ward)
        - 3rd Brigade (Col. Regis de Trobriand)
    - **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. Hiram A. Berry)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Carr)
        - 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph W. Revere)
        - 3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. J. H. Hobart Ward / similar acting)
    - **3rd Division** (Maj. Gen. Amiel W. Whipple)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. E.B. Tyler)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Nathaniel McLean)
- **Fifth Army Corps** (Maj. Gen. George G. Meade) – 15,824 40 guns
  (formerly Maj. Gen. Daniel Butterfield, whom Hooker promoted to Army Chief of Staff)
    - **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. Charles Griffin)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. James Barnes)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Jacob B. Sweitzer)
        - 3rd Brigade (Col. T. Howard)
    - **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. Andrew Porter / Maj. Gen. George Sykes)
        - 1st Brigade (Lt. Col. Robert C. Buchanan)
        - 2nd Brigade (Maj. Charles S. Lovell)
    - **3rd Division** (Brig. Gen. A.A. Humphreys)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Erastus B. Tyler)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Peter Allaben)
- **Sixth Army Corps** (Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick) – 23,667 54 guns
  (formerly Maj. Gen. William F. "Baldy" Smith, who fell out of favor after criticizing Burnside)
    - **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. William T. H. Brooks)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. Henry W. Brown)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Joseph N. Bartlett)

        - 3rd Brigade (Col. William H. Irwin)
    - **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. Albion P. Howe)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Grant)
        - 2nd Division 2nd Brigade (Col. Thomas H. Neill)
    - **3rd Division** (Maj. Gen. John Newton)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alexander Shaler)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Henry L. Eustis)
        - 3rd Brigade (Col. David J. Nevin)
- **Eleventh Army Corps** (Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard) – 12,977 28 guns
  (formerly Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel, who resigned his post in a dispute over the size of his command)
    - **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. Charles Devens Jr.)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. Leopold von Gilsa)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Nathaniel C. McLean)
    - **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. Adolph von Steinwehr)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. Gustave von Buschbeck)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Francis C. Barlow)
    - **3rd Division** (Maj. Gen. Carl Schurz)
        - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alexander Schimmelfennig)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski)
- **Twelfth Army Corps** (Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum) – 13,450 28 guns
    - **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. Archibald L. McDougall)
        - 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph F. Knipe)
        - 3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Ruger)
    - **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. John W. Geary)
        - 1st Brigade (Col. Charles Candy)
        - 2nd Brigade (Col. George A. Cobham Jr.)
        - 3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. George S. Greene)

The Cavalry Corps (Maj. Gen. George Stoneman) – 11,451 24 guns

- **1st Division** (Brig. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton) (P*leasonton's division was the only cavalry kept on the field with Hooker's main army)*
    - **1st Brigade** (Col. Benjamin F. Davis)

    - **2nd Brigade** (Col. Thomas C. Devin)
- **2nd Division** (Brig. Gen. William W. Averell)
    - **1st Brigade** (Col. Horace B. Sargent)
    - **2nd Brigade** (Col. John B. McIntosh)
- **3rd Division** (Brig. Gen. David McM. Gregg)
    - **1st Brigade** (Col. Judson Kilpatrick)
    - **2nd Brigade** (Col. Percy Wyndham)
- **Regular Reserve Cavalry Brigade** (Brig. Gen. John Buford)
    - *Composed primarily of elite U.S. Regular Army cavalry units.*

Artillery Reserve (Maj. Gen. George Stoneman) – 1,610 56 guns

Source: "The Army of the Potomac: Order of Battle, 1861-1865, with Commanders, Strengths, Losses, and More," Darrell L. Collins, McFarland and Co., 2013, 100-115.

Confederate Army of Northern Virginia (General Robert E. Lee) *(No major changes of command)*

- **First Corps** (Detached elements under Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson)
    - **Anderson's Division** – 8,491
        - Wilcox's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Cadmus M. Wilcox)
        - Mahone's Brigade (Brig. Gen. William Mahone)
        - Posey's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Carnot Posey)
        - Wright's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Ambrose R. Wright)
        - Perry's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Edward A. Perry)
    - **McLaws' Division** (Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws) – 8,855
        - Kershaw's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw)
        - Wofford's Brigade (Brig. Gen. William T. Wofford)
        - Semmes' Brigade (Brig. Gen. Paul J. Semmes)
        - Barksdale's Brigade (Brig. Gen. William Barksdale)
- **Second Corps / Stonewall Jackson's Corps** (Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, later Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart)
    - **A.P. Hill's Light Division** (Maj. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill) – 11723
        - Heth's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Henry Heth)
        - Lane's Brigade (Brig. Gen. James H. Lane)
        - Pender's Brigade (Brig. Gen. William Dorsey Pender)
        - Thomas's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Edward Thomas)
        - McGowan's Brigade (Col. Abner Perrin / Brig. Gen. Samuel McGowan)
        - Archer's Brigade (Brig. Gen. James J. Archer)
    - **Rodes's Division** (Maj. Gen. Robert E. Rodes) – 8,581
        - Colquitt's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alfred H. Colquitt)
        - Iverson's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Alfred Iverson)
        - Doles's Brigade (Brig. Gen. George Doles)
        - Ramseur's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Stephen D. Ramseur)
        - Rodes'/O'Neal's Brigade (Col. Edward A. O'Neal)
    - **Colston's Division** (Brig. Gen. Raleigh E. Colston) – 7,335
        - Nichols's Brigade (Col. J. Williams Trimble / Brig. Gen. Francis T. Nicholls)
        - Colston's/Jones' Brigade (Brig. Gen. John R. Jones / Col. T.S. Garnett)
        - Paxton's Brigade (Brig. Gen. Elisha F. Paxton)

        - Wall's Brigade (Col. Arthur H. Stafford / Major R.W. Baylor)
    - **Early's Division** (Maj. Gen. Jubal A. Early) – 7,796
        - Gordon's Brigade (Brig. Gen. John B. Gordon)
        - Hoke's Brigade (Col. Archibald C. Godwin / Brig. Gen. Robert F. Hoke)
        - Smith's Brigade (Brig. Gen. William Smith)
        - Hays' Brigade (Brig. Gen. Harry T. Hays)
- **Cavalry Division** (Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart) (or Cavalry *Corps* to some)
    - 1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton)
        - Some 1,200 men present for duty, accompanied Longstreet
    - 2nd Brigade (Brig. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee)
        - Some 2,000 men present for duty, tasked with reconnaissance and screening for the Jackson's flanking march
    - 3rd Brigade (Brig. Gen. W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee)
        - Some 1,800 men present for duty, tasked with shadowing, delaying, and harassing Stoneman's columns
    - 4th Brigade (Brig. Gen. William E. "Grumble" Jones)
        - Some 3,500 men present for duty, detached in the Shenandoah Valley

Sources:
Infantry: "The Army of The Army of Northern Virginia: Organization, Strength, Casualties, 1861-1865," Darrell L. Collins, McFarland and Co., 2016, 289-297.

Cavalry: Collins had incomplete data, so went with Google AI.