

MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE GORDON MEADE AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF MISSION COMMAND AT THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

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Military History

by

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ABSTRACT

MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE GORDON MEADE AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF MISSION COMMAND AT THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, by MAJ Gregory A. Bassett, 132 pages.

This research studies Meade's leadership during the Battle of Gettysburg through the lens of the Army's 2019 leadership doctrine, specifically the philosophy of mission command. Gettysburg was Meade's first battle as commander of the Union Army of the Potomac and occurred only three days after he assumed command. This paper explains the Army doctrine on the philosophy of mission command from the March 28, 2014 version of ADRP 6-0 which contains change two. It then assesses Meade's leadership during each of the three days of battle and how it enabled his corps commanders. Each of these days provided Meade with different and difficult problems. While acknowledging that the philosophy of mission command was not Army doctrine or formally codified for several more decades, the analysis of Meade's leadership during Gettysburg shows that he led in a manner that resembles modern doctrine. This historical example can be useful when envisioning leadership in a communications degraded environment.

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ACRONYMS

GEN	General
LTG	Lieutenant General
MG	Major General
BG	Brigadier General
COL	Colonel
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MAJ	Major
CPT	Captain
1LT	First Lieutenant
2LT	Second Lieutenant

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My God! My God! What Will the Country Say?¹

— President Abraham Lincoln

On June 28, 1863, MAJ James Hardie arrived in Frederick, Maryland, from the adjutant general's office in Washington, DC, carrying General Orders No. 194. At 0300 the major woke the V Corps Commander, MG George Gordon Meade, who told Hardie that his "conscience was clear" on whatever charges Hardie might deliver.² Instead, Hardie handed the forty-seven-year old Pennsylvanian the message which read, "By direction of the President, Major General Joseph Hooker is relieved from command of the Army of the Potomac, and Major General George G. Meade is appointed to the command of that Army and the troops temporarily assigned to duty with it."³ Three days later Meade commanded the Union Army in the largest battle ever fought in the western hemisphere. Six days later Meade accomplished something many had considered

¹ Mark Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion: The Complete Guide to America's Most Famous Battle* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008), 26.

² Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 123.

³ U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records (OR) of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), series I, volume XXVII, part III, 369.

impossible. The Army of the Potomac had decisively defeated *GEN Robert E. Lee*⁴ and the *Army of Northern Virginia*.

MG Meade's leadership from June 28, 1863, through July 3, 1863, offers an amazing case study and example for Army officers on leadership under challenging conditions. On June 28, 1863, Meade was ordered to assume command of the Army of the Potomac after several of his peers turned the offer down. Meade inherited a dispersed army that had just been humiliated at Chancellorsville by an army half its size, against a seemingly invincible army who had just invaded the North. The task of just assuming command was daunting and filled with leadership lessons. Three days later, Meade commanded in the largest battle in America's deadliest war. Each day of the battle offers unique challenges and situations from which current Army leaders can draw lessons. July 1 saw Meade trying to command a battle thirteen miles from the action through spotty communication, confused understanding, and a rapidly changing unclear situation. July 2 saw Meade finally on the field dealing with an insubordinate corps commander, a plan destroyed by enemy action, and a crisis that threatened the entire army. After weathering the crises Meade had to decide what to do and influence his corps commanders for the high-water mark of the war. Both days saw Meade reacting to replacing fallen corps commanders and adjusting to new subordinates who he did not know or trust. Finally, July 3 saw Meade preparing for a potential Confederate assault, reacting to the cannonade, and ultimately being hamstrung by his failure to plan for a sequel possibility, a counterattack against the Confederates. Looking at the battle from July 1, 1863 to July

⁴ Confederate officers and units brigade and above will be italicized throughout to avoid confusion with Union forces.

3, 1863, Meade's leadership style of the Army of the Potomac closely aligned with modern American Army philosophy of mission command.

The Battle of Gettysburg is probably the most studied battle in American history, with historians looking at the battle from almost every angle. Despite this, they have not comprehensively looked at Meade's leadership at the battle through the lens of and a focus on the current Army leadership doctrine, including the philosophy of mission command. Looking at the battle through this lens can provide a new view on the effectiveness of Meade's leadership during the battle. In addition, studying Meade's leadership at Gettysburg can offer insights into mission command itself and act as a guide for its application for Army leaders in the future.

George Gordon Meade was born on December 31, 1815, in Cadiz, Spain, to Richard Worsam Meade, a Philadelphian exporter and merchant, and his wife Margaret Coats Butler Meade. George returned to Pennsylvania and the United States in 1816. His father suddenly died in 1828 leaving his widow and 11 children in a strained financial situation as the American government owed Richard Meade \$373,879.75, approximately \$10 million today, for assuming Spanish debts to American citizens as part of the Adams-Onís Treaty.⁵ This financial situation was the reason George Meade attended West Point starting in 1831. Meade graduated 19th out of 56 cadets as an artillery lieutenant assigned to the Third Artillery Regiment.⁶ Meade served without any notable incident in Florida

⁵ CPI Inflation Calculator, "U.S. Dollar Inflation Calculator," accessed May 21, 2019, <https://www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1828?amount=373879.75>.

⁶ Freeman Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 3-12.

during the Seminole War from 1835 to 1836. In 1836 Meade resigned from the Army and began intermittent work in the Topographical Bureau. Meade married Margaret Sergeant on Meade's 25th birthday in 1840. Margaret was the daughter of John Sergeant, a Congressman who had helped free Meade's father from a Spanish prison in 1818.⁷ George and Margaret would have seven children including a son, George Meade, who served as MG Meade's aide-de-camp during the Battle of Gettysburg.⁸ Meade rejoined the Army May 19, 1842, after Congress passed a bill limiting all government surveys to the Topographical Engineers. Meade was appointed a 2LT in the Topographical Engineers after he had finished seventeen spaces too low at West Point to be commissioned as an engineer in 1835 when he graduated.⁹

On August 12, 1845, Meade received orders for Aransas Bay, Texas, to serve along the disputed Mexican-American border. Meade arrived at Corpus Christi on September 14 and joined MG Zachary Taylor's staff making maps and reconnaissance of the surrounding area.¹⁰ After marching to the Rio Grande and participating in sporadic clashes with Mexican forces Meade served as MG Taylor's aide delivering orders during the Battle of El Palo Alto on May 8, 1846.¹¹ This was Meade's first time in combat and he acquitted himself well. Meade later served in the Battle of Monterey, helping guide

⁷ Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg*, 15-17.

⁸ Richard A. Sauers, *Gettysburg: The Meade-Sickles Controversy* (Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2003), 32.

⁹ Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg*, 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

MG William J. Worth's division on the western flank of the American army. The victory at Monterey marked the end of combat for Meade during the Mexican-American War. Meade was transferred out of MG Taylor's army and served under MG Robert Patterson and was ordered to return home in March 1847, but not before meeting a fellow engineer officer named Captain Robert E. Lee. 2LT Meade played a small but important part in the stages of the Mexican-American War. He was breveted to 1LT for his actions at Monterey and had proven to himself that he had what it took to serve under fire.¹²

Meade returned to Philadelphia and spent the next 14 years conducting survey missions along the eastern coast and then the Great Lakes. On April 14, 1861, George Gordon Meade was a CPT, based out of Detroit, surveying harbors and building lighthouses on Lake Superior as Confederate forces bombarded Fort Sumter, South Carolina.¹³ On August 31, 1861, George Meade was commissioned as a BG in the volunteer force.¹⁴ Meade served as a brigade commander during the Peninsula Campaign until he was wounded during the Battle of Glendale while leading from the front.¹⁵ After

¹² Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg*, 33-35, 38, 42-43.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴ Many regular officers in the Union Army during the Civil War held at least two different ranks. One rank in the volunteer army and one rank in the regular army. The volunteer rank was almost always higher and often by several paygrades. For example, William Sherman was a MG of volunteers for over a year while remaining a COL in the regular army. Further confusion matters were brevet ranks which were temporary promotions based on some action that allowed the holder the rank but not the pay or seniority. For example, an officer could be a MAJ in the regular army, a COL in the volunteers, with brevet rank of LTC and BG respectively. Even today the process is confusing.

¹⁵ Ethan S. Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East* (Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2003), 34-36.

recovering from his wounds, Meade returned to command his brigade within the Pennsylvania Reserves at Second Bull Run in late August 1862, where his brigade secured the army's lines of communication and held its ground at the Henry House Hill to conduct the rearguard action as MG Pope's Army of Virginia retreated towards Washington. Only a few days later, Meade assumed command of 3rd Division, I Corps under Hooker as *Lee* began his first invasion of the North.¹⁶ At the Battle of South Mountain Meade's division performed well seizing the high ground on the Union right which rendered untenable the Confederate position at Turner's Gap, forcing *Lee* to retrograde to Sharpsburg, Maryland. At the Battle of Antietam, McClellan ordered that Meade assume command of I Corps after Hooker was wounded in The Cornfield. Meade held command until MG Reynolds returned to command from training Pennsylvanian militias.¹⁷

At Fredericksburg Meade still held division command and conducted an attack on the right-center of the Confederate position. Meade's division broke through the Confederate lines but could not hold their position against Confederate reinforcements. With no Union forces moving to assist his division, Meade had to order it to withdraw before it was destroyed. This brief penetration would be the only success on that day. After the battle MG Burnside selected Meade to become the commander of V Corps.¹⁸ Meade led V Corps during the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863. Despite initially

¹⁶ Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg*, 74-76.

¹⁷ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 39-45.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-53.

catching *Lee* off guard, Hooker, now in command of the Army of the Potomac, stopped his advance and pulled back into a defensive perimeter. On May 2, *Stonewall Jackson* marched around the Union position and assaulted XI Corps, whose right flank was unsecured. *Jackson* crushed XI Corps, but darkness and Union resistance allowed the Union forces to reestablish a new line. The next night Meade strongly argued for Hooker to launch a counterattack against the Confederates. Hooker, however, after being assaulted by several more Confederate attacks, decided to retreat.¹⁹ Upon hearing of the defeat President Lincoln exclaimed, My God! My God! What will the country say?"²⁰ After this victory, *Lee* decided to launch a second invasion of the North and began moving north on June 3. Hooker and the Army of the Potomac followed until June 28, 1863, when Meade was ordered to assumed command of the Army of the Potomac.²¹ By this time Meade was a capable and competent commander, who if not as daring or bold as a Grant or Sherman, was dependable with a keen topographical eye. Along with this, Meade displayed a notable temper. Grant described Meade as such in his memoirs,

[Meade] was brave and conscientious, and commanded the respect of all who knew him. He was unfortunately of a temper that would get beyond his control. No one saw this fault more plainly than he himself, and no one regretted it more. This made it unpleasant at times, even in battle, for those around him to approach him even with information.²²

¹⁹ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 62-66.

²⁰ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 26.

²¹ Richard A. Sauers, *Meade: Victor of Gettysburg* (Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2003), 44-45.

²² Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 581.

While famous for his temper, it appears that Meade was able to keep it in check for most of the battle with only a few instances of his temper appearing. This was important for keeping the trust of his subordinates so that they could exercise disciplined initiative and allowing them to create a shared understanding of the situation through updates and reports.

By June 28, 1863, the Army of the Potomac consisted of nine major subordinate formations; seven infantry corps, one cavalry corps, and an artillery reserve. The seven infantry corps were I Corps commanded by MG John F. Reynolds, II Corps commanded by MG Winfield S. Scott, III Corps commanded by MG Daniel E. Sickles, V Corps now commanded by MG George Sykes, VI Corps commanded by John Sedgwick, XI Corps commanded by Oliver O. Howard, and XII Corps commanded by MG Henry W. Slocum. BG Robert O. Tyler commanded the Army Artillery Reserve while BG Henry J. Hunt served as the army's chief of artillery. Finally, MG Alfred Pleasonton commanded the Cavalry Corps. Meade had fought alongside most of these men for the entire war and knew them. Mutual trust is the starting point of the philosophy of mission command. That means that the commander must trust his subordinates and that the subordinates must trust their commander. Most of the senior officers in the Army of the Potomac were pleased with the change of command, with only Sickles disappointed.²³ The other infantry corps commanders knew and respected Meade. The feeling was the same on the other side. When *Lee* found out that Meade commanded the Army of the Potomac, he

²³ Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The First Day* (Chapel Hill: NC, The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 31.

stated that Meade would “commit no blunder on my front, and if I make one he will make haste to take advantage.”²⁴

Reynolds, a fellow Pennsylvanian, was probably Meade’s most trusted subordinate going into the Battle of Gettysburg as another officer stated that Reynolds was very high in Meade’s confidence.²⁵ Reynolds was the senior corps commander and one of the most respected officers in the entire army, and had served as Meade’s direct superior for much of the war up to Chancellorsville. Lincoln offered command of the Army of the Potomac to Reynolds before Meade, but Reynolds declined because Reynolds wanted complete independence from Washington, DC, in military matters. This did not lead to any conflict and Reynolds served under Meade without any complaining. Reynolds was the first corps commander to meet with Meade after Meade assumed command and Reynolds expressed his satisfaction with Meade’s new position.²⁶ On June 30, Meade placed Reynolds in charge of the left wing consisting of I, III, and XI corps.²⁷ Like Reynolds, Hancock, another Pennsylvanian, fully had Meade’s trust. After the war, Meade’s son and aide during Gettysburg stated that his father and Hancock were true “brothers-in-arms” during the Civil War.²⁸ Although Gettysburg was Hancock’s first

²⁴ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 71.

²⁵ Bill Hyde, ed., *The Union Generals Speak: The Meade Hearings on the Battle of Gettysburg* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 68.

²⁶ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 72-73.

²⁷ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 414-415.

²⁸ Almira Hancock, *Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1887), 291.

battle as a corps commander he had a strong reputation as a leader and earned the name of Hancock the Superb earlier in the war.²⁹ Grant rated Hancock as “the most conspicuous figure of all the general officers who did not exercise a separate command.”³⁰

While Meade trusted Reynolds and Hancock, he did not trust Sickles, the only political general in command of a corps. Meade did not trust political generals who lacked military education and Sickles was the highest ranking one in the Army of the Potomac. Meade also did not care for much of Sickles’ personal behavior either. Meade surely remembered that Sickles alone supported Hooker’s retreat at the end of Chancellorsville. Furthermore, Meade reprimanded Sickles twice between June 28 and July 1 for issues that arose with the army’s march. By July 1, the relationship was strained in both directions.³¹ When Meade assumed command of the army, Sykes rose to command of V Corps. Sykes had a solid war so far as a brigade and division commander, mostly on the defense. Sykes was dependable and solid if unemotional and hard for soldiers to connect with. Sykes also had a reputation for being methodical and slow, not mentally but in his actions. Because Sykes had been a division commander under Meade, the new army commander would have known well the strengths and weaknesses of his

²⁹ Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The Second Day* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 37-38.

³⁰ Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 582.

³¹ Larry Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg: The Leaders of America’s Greatest Battle* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 62-63; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 399, 420.

newest corps commander.³² VI Corps was the largest in the army and had the longest serving commander, the much beloved Sedgwick. Sedgwick was an able commander with extensive combat experience from the Mexican War through the Civil War, leading from the front in the thick of battle, being seriously wounded when his division was wrecked in the West Woods of Antietam. While not a daring tactician he was beloved and trusted by much of the army.³³

XI Corps was the most suspect formation in the Army of the Potomac. *Jackson* had smashed XI Corps at Chancellorsville, and many in the army blamed the “Flying Dutchman,” many soldiers of XI Corps were Germans, for this humiliating defeat. The thirty-two-year-old Howard commanded this pariah corps. Howard was unquestionably religious, physically courageous, and a gentleman. The one-armed Howard was the youngest corps commander in the army and had risen in the ranks without the help of intrigue. Despite this, Howard was under the same wary eye as his corps. The debacle at Chancellorsville must have been in Meade’s mind heading towards Gettysburg.³⁴ Slocum, the commander of XII Corps, was the senior officer in the entire Army of the Potomac although he had not been a serious contender to replace Hooker. He was cautious and careful as well as intensely focused on attention to detail and army protocol. Slocum was an able general and had given Meade little reason to not trust his abilities

³² Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 81-83.

³³ *Ibid.*, 103-105.

³⁴ Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp’s Hill and Cemetery Hill* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1, 6-10; Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 121-124.

while also nothing to indicate a propensity to make dynamic and bold decisions. During the march to Gettysburg, Slocum was in charge of the right wing consisting of V and XII Corps.³⁵

The seven infantry corps were aided by the Artillery Reserve and the Cavalry Corps. These two formations and their commanders were different in their effectiveness and capabilities. While Tyler was the commander of the Artillery Reserve, Hunt was the chief of artillery and *de facto* controlled the Union reserve artillery while having significant influence over how corps commanders used the corps artillery assets. Hunt was known as the war's most gifted artillery leader, respected by both Union and Confederate forces. In fact, Hunt wrote the manual on artillery tactics used in the Civil War. Both Meade and Hunt respected and trusted each other and each other's abilities. This would pay great dividends over the course of the battle.³⁶ While the Confederates often envied Union artillery, the Union cavalry was often considered inferior to their Confederate counterparts; however, by the time of Gettysburg they were improving as shown by the Battle of Brandy Station. Unfortunately, they were often hampered by inept leadership to include their corps commander, Pleasonton. Unlike Hunt who served as commanding the artillery, Meade utilized Pleasonton as more of an administrative leader more as a chief of cavalry than as a commander. Quick to take credit, pass blame, and exaggerate his actual accomplishments, he had a poor reputation amongst his own

³⁵ Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 143-146; Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 273.

³⁶ Edward G. Longacre, *The Man Behind the Guns: A Military Biography of General Henry J. Hunt, Chief of Artillery, Army of the Potomac* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 11; Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 187-189.

troopers. The fact that Meade frequently detached divisions from Pleasonton's command and put them under the control of corps and wing commanders Pleasonton speaks volumes of Meade's opinion of his cavalry commander.³⁷

Fortunately for Meade, he had the authority to build his team of subordinates as he saw fit. MG Halleck, the general-in-chief of the entire Union Army, gave Meade wide reaching powers for the upcoming campaign. Halleck granted Meade the ability "to remove from command, and to send from your army, any officer or other person you may deem proper, and to appoint to command as you may deem expedient."³⁸ This provided Meade with flexibility to create a team of leaders that he trusted as the situations presented themselves.

When Meade assumed command on June 28, the army was dispersed but concentrating near Frederick, Maryland. I Corps was north of Frederick with V Corps south of the town, and III, XI, and XII Corps to the west between South Mountain and the Catoctin Mountains. II Corps was farther south and VI Corps was near Poolesville. The Union cavalry was still south of the Potomac River near Centreville. At the same time, the Confederates had crossed over into Pennsylvania. *Hill's* and *Longstreet's Corps* were southeast and southwest of Chambersburg respectively while *Ewell's Corps* was split between Carlisle and York.³⁹ By the night of June 30 the Union army was spread over a twenty-mile frontage to protect the approaches to Baltimore and Washington, DC. I, XI,

³⁷ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 188-189; Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 167.

³⁸ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 61.

³⁹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 122.

and III Corps were north, at and south of Emmitsburg, Maryland. XII Corps was near Littlestown, Pennsylvania. II, V, and VI Corps were at Uniontown, Union Mills, and Manchester, all in Maryland, respectively. Buford's cavalry division was at Gettysburg.⁴⁰ Buford was able to locate *Hill's Corps* west of Gettysburg at Cashtown and gained information that *Ewell* was rumored to be heading south from Carlisle. Buford informed Reynolds and headquarters of this information through a series of dispatches written after 2200 on June 30.⁴¹ The stage was setting for the Battle of Gettysburg although neither commander knew it that night.

⁴⁰ Bradley M. Gottfried, *The Maps of Gettysburg: An Atlas of the Gettysburg Campaign, June 3–July 13, 1863* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2007), 991, 1107, accessed January 24, 2019, <https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B0047O2IXC>, eBook.

⁴¹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 922-924.

CHAPTER 2

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MISSION COMMAND

You know the general's views.⁴²

— MG Daniel Butterfield

Mission command is “the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.”⁴³ It exists within the United States Army as both a warfighting function and a philosophy. A warfighting function is a “group of tasks and systems (people, organizations, information, and processes), united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions and training objectives.”⁴⁴ The mission command warfighting function is “the related tasks and systems that develop and integrate those activities enabling a commander to balance the art of command and the science of control in order to integrate the other warfighting functions.”⁴⁵ Currently that would consist of radios, blue force tracking system, computer systems, networks, and the like. In 1863 the mission command warfighting function would consist of the telegraph, the general’s staff, the Union signal

⁴² U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 461.

⁴³ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command*, C2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), 1-2.

⁴⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 2016), 1-101.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-63.

corps, and couriers. Despite technological differences the mission command equipment existed to fulfill the same role. While the mission command warfighting function is important, the mission command philosophy of command is more timeless and the focus of this study.

The mission command philosophy of command is one that enables freedom of action and initiative to lowest levels, while being guided by the commander's intent in order to react quickly to changing situations and to seize limited windows of opportunity. Subordinates are instructed what to accomplish but not how to accomplish it. Commanders must still synchronize and direct operations so the enemy fights one large unit, not several piecemealed smaller units. This requires extensive training, experience, and education. It also requires subordinates to coordinate their actions both laterally and vertically within the organization.

It is important to readily acknowledge that the United States Army did not adopt mission command as the favored form for exercising command until the 1980s.⁴⁶ This means that there should be no expectation that leaders from the Civil War followed its specific principles or had a conscious knowledge of its elements. However, as ADRP 6-0 states "command is essentially a human endeavor."⁴⁷ Thus, while technology and capabilities change, people rarely do. If the philosophy of mission command is correct, then we should see commanders at least using elements of what would become known as mission command to solve the same type of problems that commanders face today.

⁴⁶ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, v.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-4.

Namely, commanders had to frame orders and build teams of subordinates that allowed for disciplined initiative to exploit windows of opportunity on a fluid battlefield.

What became known as mission command was born out of the Prussian concept of *Auftragstaktik*,⁴⁸ German for mission-type tactics, ultimately as a response to their defeat to Napoleon at the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt and to the growing dispersion found on the battlefields. On October 14, 1806, Napoleon decisively defeated the Prussian Army at the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt, leading to the capture of Berlin and Prussia becoming a vassal of the French Empire. The defeat was a wake-up call to the Prussians and instigated both military and societal reform within Prussia. Field Marshal August Graf Neidhardt von Gneisenau, General Gerhard Johann David von Scharnhorst, and General Carl von Clausewitz were just three of the leaders who studied why Prussia had lost and how to modernize the Prussian Army to defeat the French during the six-year Military Reorganization Commission.⁴⁹ One of the major findings of the commission was that the Prussian command system was too rigid and unresponsive to combat the French.

The Prussians still fought in the style of Frederick the Great where every action was “the work of a single man,” and that “[n]o one reasons, everyone executes,” with the commander seated on a commanding hill directing the entire battle.⁵⁰ This worked fine in the pre-Revolutionary era of limited war. The French Revolution and its mass

⁴⁸ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, v.

⁴⁹ Keith G. Stewart, “The Evolution of Command Approach (Paper 192), Track 7: C2 Approaches and Organization,” accessed December 2, 2018, http://www.dodccrp.org/events/15th_icrts_2010/papers/192.pdf.

⁵⁰ Peter Paret, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 99-103.

nationalism had created armies, battles, and operations that were too large for one man to effectively control. The French on the other hand, were much more responsive, adaptive, and mobile. The Prussians determined that “Napoleon was able to communicate very rapidly with the Marshals because they shared a basic operating doctrine, and he explained his intentions as well as what he wanted them to do. He expected them to use their initiative and act without orders in line with his intentions.”⁵¹ This gave the French the flexibility to react much faster than the Prussians, enabling the French to tactically and operationally outmaneuver the Prussians.

In addition, there was a fog and friction to war that prevented a commander from seeing everything. The fog being that commanders never fully know what is going on due to various natural and manmade factors, while the friction being that with so many moving parts even the simplest things in an operation or battle become difficult and sometimes impossible.⁵² The United State Army still recognizes these conditions as ADRP 6-0 states that “military operations are complex, human endeavors characterized by the continuous, mutual adaptation of give and take, moves, and countermoves among all participants.”⁵³

⁵¹ Stephen Bungay, “The Road to Mission Command: The Genesis of a Command Philosophy,” *The British Army Review* (Summer 2005): 22-29, quoted in Keith G. Stewart, “The Evolution of Command Approach (Paper 192), Track 7: C2 Approaches and Organization,” accessed December 2, 2018, http://www.dodccrp.org/events/15th_icrts_2010/papers/192.pdf.

⁵² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans, Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 101, 119-121.

⁵³ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 1-1.

While the initial seeds of *auftragstaktik* were planted during the Napoleonic Wars, Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke was the man to see it to fruition. The development of rapid firing and accurate weapons after the Napoleonic Wars meant that formations would have to disperse farther and farther to mitigate the effects of these new weapons. The introduction of railroads as a means of rapid transit meant that the areas of operations would continue to grow and develop more rapidly than ever. These developments called for greater delegation and empowerment of subordinate leaders and units. As a relatively poor and sparsely populated European power Prussia was looking for any way to overcome these strategic weaknesses. Moltke sought to achieve this at the tactical and operational level by empowering subordinates to rapidly react to the chaotic and increasingly dispersed battlefield of the late 1860s. This would enable them to seize fleeting opportunities and react quicker than their opponents. This worked quite well during the Austro-Prussian War at the Battle of Königgrätz on July 3, 1866, exactly three years after the Battle of Gettysburg. Prussian initiative and superior firepower allowed them to outmaneuver the massed and methodical Austrians, completely defeating them and clearing the road to Vienna. Prussia was able to unify northern Germany and gain control over southern Germany as well. *Auftragstaktik* also worked during the Franco-Prussian War. The Prussians were more agile, adaptive, and responsive at the operational level. This allowed them to envelop and destroy two French armies and capture the French emperor, Napoleon III, himself.⁵⁴ This victory created the German Empire and established Germany as the most powerful land force in Europe.

⁵⁴ Geoffrey Parker, ed., *The Cambridge History of Warfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 243-247.

In a way, the lack of instantaneous communications on the battlefield increased the need for mission command principles. By the Napoleonic Wars battles and armies had grown too large for army commanders to see and command on their own and there was no technology to help them do so at the tactical level. This has stayed constant until recently. Modern technology, instantaneous communications and tracking equipment, have allowed commanders to once again see their formation. The technology exists now for a General to follow the actions of a single vehicle or individual Soldier half the world away. There is the risk that the American Army could revert to a command style like that of Frederick the Great. This could work in a low intensity environment with limited activity and uncontested communications. However, the Army is not preparing for that environment. The Army is shifting and preparing for large scale ground combat operations against a near-peer enemy contesting in all five domains; land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace. This means that communications will be degraded if not denied and may, for periods, look more like 1863 than they did in 2015. Therefore, studying command in 1863 can be instructive for the future. This potential future environment would require a decentralized command style that can rapidly adapt and seize advantages. The Army must reinforce the importance of the six priorities of the philosophy of mission command.

As defined by today's US Army doctrine, the philosophy of mission command consists of six priorities. These priorities are to "build cohesive teams through mutual trust, create shared understanding, provide a clear commander's intent, exercise disciplined initiative, use mission orders, and accept prudent risk."⁵⁵ While these

⁵⁵ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-1.

priorities did not exist as leadership doctrine during the Civil War, there are numerous examples of leaders in the Civil War that successfully implemented the priorities. These examples show that view Meade's leadership through the lens of mission command is not shoehorning a modern theory into the past. To execute the philosophy of mission command, commanders and subordinates must mutually trust each other throughout all echelons.

This mutual trust between levels of command is the foundation of the philosophy of mission command. ADRP 6-0 defines mutual trust as the "shared confidence among commanders, subordinates, and partners. Effective commanders build cohesive teams in an environment of mutual trust."⁵⁶ This trust is vital to execute the philosophy of mission command and must flow both up and down the chain of command. Trust is often gained in war by proving oneself up to the trials of combat. Commanders trust subordinates who accomplish the mission, while subordinates trust their commander who display personal and moral courage, show they care for their Soldiers, and who win. Commanders must trust their subordinate commanders in order to allow them the required flexibility. Commanders will empower subordinates they trust. Commanders will also assign the difficult missions to trusted subordinates. Subordinates must also trust their commander. They must trust that the commander is confident, competent, has resourced them properly, and has chosen the correct plan and desired end state. In order to frequently use disciplined initiative and accomplish the commander's intent in changing situations,

⁵⁶ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-1.

subordinates must trust that their commanders will support the subordinate's decisions and outcomes.⁵⁷

The relationship between LTG Grant and MG Sherman is an excellent example of mutual trust and its effects. Throughout the course of the war Grant and Sherman developed a professional and personal friendship that was based on mutual trust. They had built this trust by fighting for over 3 years often coming to each other's aid in times of need, on and off the battlefield. Sherman best explained their relationship when he said, "Grant is a great general. I know him well. He stood by me when I was crazy and I stood by him when he was drunk; and now, sir, we stand by each other always."⁵⁸ This trust was vital when Grant moved east in 1864 to command the entire Union Army. On September 20, 1864, Sherman submitted his plan for the operation that would be known as Sherman's March to the Sea.⁵⁹ It was an audacious plan that called for Sherman to leave his own lines of communication, live off the land, and march from Atlanta to Savannah destroying Georgia's ability to support the war. President Lincoln, his cabinet, and even Grant had reservations about the plan as it was unorthodox and extremely bold. However, Grant stated "I must trust to your own judgment" and eventually approved the

⁵⁷ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-2.

⁵⁸ L. P. Brockett, *Our Great Captains: Grant, Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan, and Farragut* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1866), 175, accessed May, 4, 2019, https://books.google.com/books/about/Our_Great_Captains.html?id=jcxEAAAIAAJ, 175, eBook.

⁵⁹ Charles B. Flood, *Grant and Sherman: The Friendship That Won the Civil War* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 263.

plan.⁶⁰ Sherman's march was an unmitigated success and ripped the heart out of the Confederacy.

With trust established, commanders must ensure that everyone has the same picture moving forward. This will ensure unity of effort towards a common goal. To accomplish this, commanders must create shared understanding within their organization. Commanders must create shared understanding of the "operational environment, the operation's purpose, problems, and approaches to solving them" in order to facilitate disciplined initiative and further cement mutual trust.⁶¹ The operational environment is a "composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander."⁶² This includes the weather, terrain, enemy, and civil populations within the commander's area of operations. An example of shared understanding is the practice that *GEN Lee* and *LTG Longstreet* normally conducted during battles. It was *Longstreet's* custom to personally go to *Lee's* tent after each day of fighting in order to speak with *Lee*, share his observations of that day's battle, and to understand what *Lee* had planned for next.⁶³ This created shared understanding between the two commanders allowing *Lee* to understand how the fighting

⁶⁰ H. W. Brands, *The Man Who Saved the Union: Ulysses Grant in War and Peace* (New York: Random House, 2012), 336.

⁶¹ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-2.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Glossary 3.

⁶³ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 455-457.

had actually gone at the front and for *Longstreet* to understand his commander's vision and intent. This allowed them to work effectively together throughout most of the war.

While these two principles are important there needs to be some guiding force to ensure that the subordinate units are moving in the correct direction and focusing on the proper goals. The commander's intent that provides the purpose for the operation and the desired results, is this focus point. The commander's intent must be clearly stated and understood to ensure unity of effort without detailed micromanaging from higher echelons. A good commander's intent should form the basis and inform the plans and missions of all subordinates, allowing for unity of effort even with degraded communications. "You know the general's views" is what MG Butterfield, Meade's chief of staff, put into the order as a reason why Meade was placing Hancock in charge of the forces at Gettysburg over Howard who was senior to Hancock.⁶⁴ Commander's intent is "a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state . . . provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander's desired results without further orders, even when the operation does not unfold as planned."⁶⁵ While important now, this was even more important when orders were often physically relayed by courier. This limited means does not even consider the possibility that the commander may have relocated by the time the courier arrived. With such a delay in communications subordinates needed to understand the purpose and desired end state for a mission so they could react to the

⁶⁴ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 461.

⁶⁵ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-3.

changing scenario. The intent should explain the why for the overall mission and their assigned tasks which is often more important than the what. This allows the commanders to understand their boundaries, prioritize actions, and make decisions. A clear commander's intent can, for example, help a subordinate determine if it is more important to retain a piece of high ground or to block an enemy's movement. A famous example of commander's intent was Grant's instructions to Meade on April 9, 1864. Grant wrote, "[Lee's] army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also."⁶⁶ This order established clear intent; every action the Army of the Potomac took should help destroy the *Army of Northern Virginia*. Richmond no longer mattered.

Finally, commander's intent is required for subordinate commanders to exercise disciplined initiative, react to changing situations, and take advantage of windows of opportunity. Discipline initiative is the "action in the absence of orders, when existing orders no longer fit the situation, or when unforeseen opportunities or threats arise."⁶⁷ For commanders to exercise disciplined initiative they must understand the higher commander's intent and the why for their actions more than just the what. Battles are always changing situations and often at a rapid pace. Windows of opportunity often open and close before higher echelons can react. In order to exploit these windows subordinates forward must have the trust and ability to rapidly react using their own initiative and decision-making based off the current situation and their commander's intent. If they wait to report the opportunity to higher levels and then wait for guidance or

⁶⁶ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXXIII, 828.

⁶⁷ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-4.

approval, they will often miss the opportunity and fall behind the enemy's decision-making cycle. Subordinates should act and report their actions and initiative to higher to ensure continued synchronization. Exercising disciplined initiative is also important when the situation has changed, and previous orders are no longer valid. Sometimes the situation changes so rapidly that by the time the order is transmitted to the executing force that order is no longer the proper course of action. In situations like these subordinates can use their own initiative and understanding of the intent and the current environment. BG John F. Hartranft exercised disciplined initiative during the Battle of Fort Stedman on March 25, 1865. After an initially successful Confederate attack that threatened the Army of the Potomac's main supply base, Hartranft assembled a force to counterattack and recapture Fort Stedman. As Hartranft was about to counterattack a courier from his corps commander arrived and ordered Hartranft to wait for reinforcements. Hartranft assessed the situation and ordered his force to still attack, later, stating that "I saw that the enemy had already commenced to waver, and that success was certain. I, therefore, allowed the line to charge."⁶⁸ Hartranft's force was successful and defeated the *Army of Northern Virginia's* final offensive.

To exercise discipline initiative, subordinates must understand their higher commander's intent but also what resources have been allocated to them, the concept of the operation, coordination measures, and other aspects of the plan to synchronize the entire unit. This is done through issuing mission orders. Mission orders are "directives that emphasize to subordinates the results to be attained, not how they are to achieve

⁶⁸ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XLVI, part I, section I, 348.

them.⁶⁹ This clearly ties into the previous principles of issuing a clear commander's intent and exercising disciplined initiative. In fact, mission orders facilitate disciplined initiative and flexibility during the battle. The tasks in the mission order, combined with a clear commander's intent, should guide the subordinates' initiative.⁷⁰ This style of order relies on units coordinating between adjacent units as well as between the higher and lower echelons. Mission orders contain "the task organization, commander's intent and concept of operations, mission, tasks to subordinate units, and minimum essential coordinating instructions."⁷¹ This provides the required structure allowing maximum flexibility for subordinates. Discretion was often used in the Civil War as commanders lacked the ability to micromanage the massive forces found throughout the war. An order similar to a modern mission type order also gave the commander's intent, some coordination, and the required resources to accomplish the mission. MG George Thomas used this in his Special Field Orders 342 which outlined his plan of attack on the first day of the Battle of Nashville. In this order Thomas described the tasks that each of his seven main subordinate units were to accomplish as well as the purpose for several of them. This enabled his subordinate commanders the flexibility to react when the initial plan failed and destroy the *Army of Tennessee* over the two days of December 15-16, 1864.⁷²

⁶⁹ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-5.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XLV, part II, 183-184, 194, 210, 756; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XLV, part I, 654-655, 756.

Even the perfect mission executed perfectly will not create a perfect and risk-free mission. The enemy gets a vote as well. The fog and friction of war dictate that commanders at all levels must be willing to take chances and accept prudent risk while working to mitigate as much risk as possible. They must not carelessly gamble, but commanders can be so cautious and risk averse that they place their mission and force at even greater risk than an audacious commander who takes prudent risks. Prudent risk is the “deliberate exposure to potential injury or loss when the commander judges the outcome in terms of mission accomplishment as worth the cost.”⁷³ Clausewitz stated that “[w]ar is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty.”⁷⁴ Because of the nature of war commanders will never have a complete and accurate picture of the current situation. Commanders and their staffs will receive reports out of order in a piecemeal fashion. Often reports are incorrect, contradictory, or miscommunicated. Additionally, commanders will not have any information on entire enemy elements. This foggy view of the battle forces commanders into taking risk with only partial information. In order to obtain victory commanders must be willing to take these risks to seize opportunities. Failing to do so may seem safer initially but place the force at a greater risk over the long-term. MG McClellan’s refusal to assume prudent risk at the Battle of Antietam may have saved the lives of many Union Soldier on that day, but it cost them many more over the following three years for failing to destroy the *Army of Northern Virginia*.

⁷³ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-5.

⁷⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 101.

While commanders need to take prudent risk, they must also accept and encourage their subordinate commanders to accept prudent risk. In order to exercise disciplined imitative within commander's intent subordinates will need to assume risk. This is most likely to occur if the subordinates trust their higher commander to support their decisions and accept reasonable mistakes. However, commanders must not confuse accepting prudent risk with gambling. Gambling is staking the success of an entire action on a single event without considering the hazard to the force should the event not unfold as envisioned.”⁷⁵ When a commander assumes prudent risk, they take into account factors that mitigate the risk from gambling down to a calculated and prudent risk. One of the most famous examples of accepting prudent risk is *Lee's* actions during the Battle of Chancellorsville. *Lee* had situational understanding that the Union right flank, XI Corps, was exposed and that the Union commander, Hooker, had given up the initiative. He also had mutual trust with *LTG Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson*, his Second Corps commander. *Lee* split his army in the face of superior numbers and sent *Jackson* on a long march to conduct a flank attack on the Army of the Potomac. *Jackson* achieved complete surprise and routed XI Corps, secured *Lee's* greatest victory, but failed to destroy the Army of the Potomac.⁷⁶

It is clear that while mission command was not a codified structure in 1863, commanders often executed their commands in a way that reflected the principles of mission command throughout the war. This was the case looking at the principle of

⁷⁵ HQDA, ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command*, 2-5.

⁷⁶ John Keegan, *The American Civil War: A Military History* (New York: Random House, 2009), 180-183.

mission command and examples from the Civil War. It is also important to look at mission command in earlier conflicts as today's American Army faces a potential trap. The Army is also preparing for wars where communications could be denied, making centralized command and control as outdated in 2019 as it was in 1863. With that it is important to look at commanders who fought before instantaneous communications through the lens of mission command to assess how well they performed. It can also teach observers about the philosophy of mission command itself and prepare them for the future. With that said, studying MG Meade at the Battle of Gettysburg provides this opportunity. MG Meade faced many challenges such as assuming command of the dispersed Army of the Potomac only three days before the Battle of Gettysburg with a fractured staff. He had to replace key subordinates, face insubordination from others, and defeat an enemy army that seemed unbeatable. His actions are a great case study to learn about the timeless human aspects of mission command.

CHAPTER 3

JULY 1, 1863

Forward Men, Forward, For God's Sake.⁷⁷

— MG John F. Reynolds

July 1, 1863, was supposed to be a relatively quiet day for both armies as neither commander wanted a general engagement before, they could consolidate their armies. At 0400, Reynolds received orders to take I and XI Corps in the direction of Gettysburg. At 0800, I Corps began to move and by 0930 the entire corps was off towards Gettysburg.⁷⁸ These marching orders, dated June 30, sent I Corps to Gettysburg with XI Corps to within supporting distance of I Corps. III Corps went to Emmitsburg with XII Corps going to Two Taverns. V Corps was ordered to march to Hanover with VI Corps moving to Manchester. Finally, II Corps marched to Taneytown where the army headquarters was located. The orders also updated the corps commanders with the last known Confederate locations. The orders said that *Longstreet's* and *Hill's Corps* were near Chambersburg on the way to Gettysburg and *Ewell's Corps* was split between Carlisle and York.⁷⁹ At the time of this movement order there were indicators of Confederate movement to

⁷⁷ Pfanz, *The First Day*, 77.

⁷⁸ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 261; Stephen M. Weld, *War Diaries and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld 1861-1865* (Cambridge: MA, The Riverside Press, 1912), 229, accessed March 24, 2019, <https://archive.org/details/wardiaryletterso00weld>, eBook.

⁷⁹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 416.

Gettysburg but Meade and the Army of the Potomac were not certain of Confederate intentions and where the Confederates would concentrate their forces.

That same morning, Meade issued an order to the army which would become known as the Pipe Creek Circular. This order described how Meade wanted to fight the upcoming battle. It was prepared on June 30, but due to the usual difficulties in transcribing and issuing multiple copies of orders, it was not issued until early on July 1. In the order Meade stated that he wanted to delay the Confederates and then fight a defensive battle along the Pipe Creek between Middleburg and Manchester just south of the border between Maryland and Pennsylvania. I, III, V, VI, XI, and XII Corps would form the main defensive line with II Corps acting as the army reserve.⁸⁰ Meade was attracted to this Pipe Creek line after seeing the terrain while passing north.⁸¹ Holding the Pipe Creek line would also present *Lee* with a vexing operational problem. The Pipe Creek positions defended the main routes to both Washington, DC, and Baltimore while providing a secure logistics node and railhead at Westminster to the rear. The position had secure flanks and open fields of fire to the front while it threatened the eastern flank of *Lee's* lines of communication to the south. BG Hunt believed that the Pipe Creek line answered all of Meade's tactical and operational problems.⁸²

However, events were rapidly changing, impacting Meade's view of the current situation, the Confederate locations, and where the Confederates were concentrating.

⁸⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 458.

⁸¹ Longacre, *The Man Behind the Guns*, 154-155.

⁸² Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 75-76.

Sometime on the morning of July 1, Meade sent a message to Reynolds and copied

Howard, stating:

The telegraphic intelligence received from General Couch, with the various movements reported from Buford, seem to indicate the concentration of the enemy either at Chambersburg or at a point situated somewhere on a line drawn between Chambersburg and York, through Mummasburg and to the north of Gettysburg.

The commanding general cannot decide whether it is his best policy to move to attack until he learns something more definite of the point at which the enemy is concentrating. This he hopes to do during the day. Meanwhile, he would like to have your views upon the subject, at least so far as concerns your position.

If the enemy is concentrating to our right of Gettysburg, that point would not at first glance seem to be a proper strategic point of concentration for this army. If the enemy is concentrating in front of Gettysburg or to the left of it, the general is not sufficiently well informed of the nature of the country to judge of its character for either an offensive or defensive position. The numbers of the enemy are estimated at about 92,000 infantry, with 270 pieces of artillery, and his cavalry from 6,000 to 8,000. Our numbers ought to equal it, and, with the arrival of General French's command, which should get up to-morrow, exceed it, if not too much weakened by straggling and fatigue.

The general having just assumed command, in obedience to orders, with the position of affairs leaving no time to learn the condition of the army as to morale and proportionate strength compared with its last return, would gladly receive from you any suggestions as to the points laid down in this note. He feels that you know more of the condition of the troops in your vicinity and the country than he does. General Humphreys, who is at Emmitsburg with the Third Corps, the general considers an excellent adviser as to the nature of the country for defensive or offensive operations. If near enough to call him to consultation with you, without interference with the responsibilities that devolve upon you both, please do so. You have all the information which the general has received, and the general would like to have your views.

The movement of your corps to Gettysburg was ordered before the positive knowledge of the enemy's withdrawal from Harrisburg and concentration was received.⁸³

⁸³ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 460-461.

This dispatch was probably sent around the same time as the Pipe Creek Circular and was meant to supplement it. Like the Pipe Creek Circular, is likely that it never reached Reynolds.⁸⁴ That fact is not important when studying Meade. The circular and supplemental message showed his thought process and his method for commanding the army. The messages showed that while Meade had formulated a plan to fight along the Pipe Creek, he had not decided on it completely and was open to other options. This was further exhibited by ordering BG Andrew A. Humphreys, the same BG Humphreys as mentioned above, to examine the terrain surrounding Emmitsburg on its suitability for battle.⁸⁵ It also showed the trust that Meade had in Reynolds.

The Battle of Gettysburg began at 0730 on July 1, 1863, when LT Marcellus Jones of the 8th IL Cavalry fired a lone carbine shot from Herr Ridge towards the Marsh Creek at *BG James J. Archer's Brigade*, which was the lead brigade of *Heth's Division*, advancing along the Chambersburg Pike.⁸⁶ *Archer's Brigade* deployed and slowly pushed Gamble's Brigade from Herr Ridge to McPherson's Ridge where Gamble's Brigade made a stand aided by a battery of horse artillery. The Union cavalymen were fighting hard and delaying the Confederate advance, trying to buy enough time for I Corps, led by its 1st Division, to arrive. Reynolds, riding ahead of the marching infantry of his corps, arrived at approximately 1000 and met with Buford. Assessing the strength

⁸⁴ Pfanz, *The First Day*, 49.

⁸⁵ Hyde, *The Union Generals Speak*, 184; U.S. Congress, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Volume 4* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1999), 388-389.

⁸⁶ Pfanz, *The First Day*, 52-53.

and importance of McPherson's Ridge, Reynolds ordered Buford to hold on so that his infantry could arrive and fight to the north and west of Gettysburg. He also sent a message to Meade alerting him to the Confederate advance and Reynolds' desire to hold the ground west of Gettysburg.⁸⁷ He further ordered XI Corps forward to Gettysburg as quickly as possible and for III Corps to come forward towards Gettysburg.⁸⁸ Reynolds made his decision on his own initiative to fight for Gettysburg and become decisively engaged. Meade was unaware of this decision and was not aware that the fighting had begun and he also believed that Reynolds knew of Meade's intent to fight a delay from Gettysburg back to the Pipe Creek line if the left wing was engaged as described in the Pipe Creek Circular. This illustrates how important a clear commander's intent is in order for a subordinate to exercise disciplined initiative. Reynolds was unknowingly acting outside of Meade's intent, with important impacts throughout the rest of the battle. While Meade's intent in the Pipe Creek Circular was clear, Reynolds did not possess it. This is what allowed Reynolds to make a decision that Meade was not anticipating.

At this time, Buford's Division was fighting two Confederate brigades from *Heth's Division*. *Archer's Brigade* was advancing south of the Chambersburg Pike, with *BG Joseph R. Davis*'⁸⁹ *Brigade* advancing north of the pike. To counter this threat Buford had both of his brigades on McPherson's Ridge. The cavalry was holding, but the

⁸⁷ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 267; Weld, *War Diaries*, 229-231.

⁸⁸ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 166.

⁸⁹ BG Davis was the nephew of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 346.

Confederate infantry was beginning to overpower the Federals. The question was, would the cavalry hold long enough?

They did not have to wait long for an answer. By 1030, the 1st Division and the infantry began to arrive. The infantry of the 2nd Brigade of Reynolds' corps, commander by BG Lysander Cutler, was in the lead followed by Battery B, 2nd Maine Artillery, led by CPT James Hall, and then the 1st Brigade, the famed Iron Brigade, commanded by BG Solomon Meredith. Reynolds personally placed Hall's battery to the north of Chambersburg Pike, between the road and the unfinished railroad cut that ran parallel to the north by about 150 meters. Buford's cavalry had been in contact for over three hours and over ninety minutes since the Confederate infantry fully deployed.⁹⁰ Three of Cutler's regiments deployed to the north of the battery and Reynolds placed two to the south. As Cutler's brigade deployed it quickly engaged *Davis' Brigade*. The Confederates charged and were able to flank Cutler's regiments, driving them back into some woods and forcing Hall to withdraw his guns under pressure. The Confederates pursued the Union troops east, but could easily turn south and threaten the entire Union line.⁹¹

As this was happening, the Iron Brigade was arriving in the south. The brigade went into the attack off the march to stop the advance of *Archer's Brigade* as the Confederates crossed Willoughby Run. The brigade attacked in an impromptu echelon formation led by the 2nd Wisconsin. As the 2nd Wisconsin rushed past, Reynolds called

⁹⁰ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 268; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 163; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 359.

⁹¹ Pfanz, *The First Day*, 83-90.

out, “Forward men, forward, for God’s sake, and drive those fellows out of the woods,” when a bullet struck him, killing him. Undeterred the Iron Brigade continued the attack. The 2nd and 7th Wisconsin along with the 19th Indiana checked the Confederate advance while the 24th Michigan successfully flanked *Archer’s Brigade* from the south. The Iron Brigade severely mauled *Archer’s Brigade*, capturing a large portion of the unit, almost 1000 prisoners, including *BG Archer* himself.⁹² Due to Reynolds’ death, full command of I Corps passed to MG Abner Doubleday, the commander of 3rd Division, I Corps, who was arriving on the field as the highest-ranking commander on the field and was the highest-ranking division commander in the Army of the Potomac.⁹³ Doubleday had not spoken to Reynolds before his death, but a staff officer had directed Doubleday to the southern portion of the I Corps line.

Despite the Iron Brigade’s success in Herbst’s Woods, the Union position was in danger as *Davis’ Brigade* could turn south in a flank attack against the southern two regiments of Cutler’s brigade and the Iron Brigade. Doubleday had held 6th WI of the Iron Brigade in reserve and it had not taken part in the brigade attack.⁹⁴ He committed his reserve to defeat this threat. In a gallant charge the 6th Wisconsin and the Iron Brigade guard (a special group of 100 men collected from all of the brigade’s regiments), assisted by the 95th and 84th New York regiments of Cutler’s brigade, caught *Davis’ Brigade* in

⁹² U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I 245; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 171-172. BG Archer was the first Confederate general captured under GEN Lee’s command. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 271.

⁹³ Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 25.

⁹⁴ Pfanz, *The First Day*, 102.

the unfinished railroad cut and severely battered it, taking over 200 prisoners and the colors of the 2nd Mississippi as *Davis' Brigade* withdrew to the north and the west. It was about 1130 with the infantry battle having raged for approximately one hour.⁹⁵ With this victory and the Confederate withdrawal, I Corps held the field and a lull in the fighting fell over Gettysburg from approximately 1200 to 1400 as both sides brought reinforcements forward.⁹⁶

Meade first found out about the growing conflict at Gettysburg at approximately 1130 when CPT Stephen Weld, one of Reynolds' aides, arrived at headquarters. Hancock and Meade had just finished a long conversation in which Meade went over his visualization and plans as well as his commander's intent for the upcoming battle.⁹⁷ CPT Weld had left Gettysburg around 1000 with Reynolds' message after his initial meeting with Buford. Weld had ridden as quickly as possible, and followed Reynolds' instructions to not concern himself if Weld killed his horse from exertion. Weld relayed Reynolds' message which stated that the Confederates were advancing in strong force and that Reynolds feared they would seize the heights to the west and north of Gettysburg before I Corps was able to.⁹⁸

It is at this time that Meade must have realized that Reynolds never received the Pipe Creek Circular. Weld wrote that Meade damned MG Butterfield for the delay in

⁹⁵ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 351.

⁹⁶ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 344-352; Pfanz, *The First Day*, 102-114.

⁹⁷ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 348, 403-404; Pfanz, *The First Day*, 337.

⁹⁸ Weld, *War Diaries*, 229-233.

issuing the Pipe Creek Circular. Meade stated that he had created a plan and now because it had taken so long to issue, the plan was now worthless. This outburst is an example of Meade's often explosive temper. Weld relayed that Reynolds' forces would fight them "inch by inch, and if driven into the town, [they would] barricade the streets and hold them back as long as possible." After seeking clarification from Weld, Meade stated "Good! That is just like Reynolds." Shortly after this Meade received a report from Buford sent at the same time as Reynolds' assessing that the entirety of A.P. Hill's Corps was advancing on Gettysburg.⁹⁹ The enemy picture was becoming clear for Meade; the Confederates were moving in force to Gettysburg. However, Meade was still unsure of how best to respond. Despite this he must have felt confident. He thought that he had one of the most respected generals in the army on the scene to control the left wing and advise Meade on where to best fight the impending battle. After Weld's message, Meade sent a dispatch to Sedgwick informing Sedgwick of the current situation and ordered that VI Corps be prepared to either institute the Pipe Creek Circular or assist the main body of the army if they had to fight on that day.¹⁰⁰ Meade also sent a dispatch to Halleck informing Halleck that Meade intended to defend against a Confederate attack along Pipe Creek between Middleburg and Manchester. He also informed Halleck that the

⁹⁹ George Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Volume II: Gettysburg and Beyond* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 39-40; Weld, *War Diaries*, 230-232; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part 1, 924

¹⁰⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 462.

Confederates were massing at Gettysburg and that Meade expected the battle to begin that day.¹⁰¹

It was 1130, almost the exact same time that Meade learned of the battle, when MAJ William Riddle, another of Reynolds' staff, informed Howard that Reynolds was dead, and Howard had command of the field at Gettysburg and I, III, and XI Corps. Howard turned command of XI Corps over to MG Schurz. MAJ Riddle then left to relay this news to Meade.¹⁰² During the lull both sides rushed new forces to the area around Gettysburg. By noon, the entire I Corps was on the field. XI Corps began to arrive around 1230. At 1300, Buford reported to Howard that a mass of enemy forces, *Ewell's Corps*, was located approximately three to four miles north of Gettysburg between the roads leading to York and Harrisburg.¹⁰³ At this time Howard send a message to both Slocum and Sickles stating that *Ewell's* 2nd Confederate Corps was approaching Gettysburg from York to the north and that I and XI were engaged with Hill's Corps.¹⁰⁴ It is important to note that Howard did not order Sickles to advance III Corps to Gettysburg or explicitly request aid from Slocum and XII Corps.

At around 1300 MAJ Riddle arrived in Taneytown and informed Meade that Reynolds was dead, leaving Howard in charge of the forces at Gettysburg and III Corps. As stated earlier, Meade did not have full trust in Howard or the XI Corps, especially

¹⁰¹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 70-71.

¹⁰² U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 702; Pfanz; *Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 20-22; Pfanz, *The First Day*, 402.

¹⁰³ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 702.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 463.

with such an independent command and with important decisions to make. Meade's caution when it comes to Howard appeared to be confirmed. Two hours later, at 1520, Buford sent a message to headquarters stating that the battle was raging, Reynolds was dead, and that, in Buford's opinion, "there seems to be no directing person."¹⁰⁵ Shortly after receiving MAJ Riddle's message, Meade chose Hancock to replace Reynolds and take command of I, III, and XI Corps until Slocum and XII Corps arrived. Hancock was to turn II Corps over to BG John Gibbon even though Howard was senior to Hancock and Gibbon was not the senior division commander in II Corps.¹⁰⁶ Meade was using the authority from MG Halleck to make appointments as he saw fit.

Meade's order to Hancock at 1310 also stated that if Hancock thought that "the ground and position there a better one to fight a battle under existing circumstances [Hancock would] advise [Meade] and [Meade would] order all the troops up. You know [Meade]'s views."¹⁰⁷ Meade chose Hancock for a variety of reasons, many of which tie in with the philosophy of mission command. Meade fully trusted Hancock's abilities, Hancock had shared understanding and fully understood Meade's intent from their recent conference.¹⁰⁸ Meade went so far as to even say as much when Hancock pointed out that Howard was senior to him. Meade replied that he knew and trusted Hancock more than

¹⁰⁵ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 924-925.

¹⁰⁶ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 188-189.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 461.

¹⁰⁸ Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg*, 135; George G. Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg* (Philadelphia, PA: The John C. Winston Co., 1930), 63.

Howard and that he needed such officer during this important time.¹⁰⁹ Mutual trust, shared understanding, and commander's intent all allowed Meade and send Hancock to Gettysburg to determine if the army should fight at Gettysburg or fall back, while Meade stayed at Taneytown, and gave Hancock the ability to accept prudent risk—advising his commander to stay and fight at Gettysburg.

As Hancock was travelling to Gettysburg, renewed hostilities grew more imminent. At about 1330, Howard sent an order to Sickles to bring III Corps forward to Gettysburg.¹¹⁰ In the meantime, Howard held the last element of XI Corps, 3rd Division under BG Adolph von Steinwehr, as his reserve on Cemetery Hill when the division arrived at 1400. By this time, I and XI Corps were at Gettysburg opposed by *Hill's Corps* and a majority of *Ewell's Corps*. Around the same time, Howard finally updated Meade on the situation at Gettysburg. The message probably arrived to Meade around 1530. Howard laid out the general defensive arrangements as well as the fact that *Ewell* was expected to arrive from York. Finally, he stated that he had ordered III Corps to march to Gettysburg.¹¹¹ This must have been his 1330 message to Sickles. It was surely an agonizingly short update for Meade, who must have been starved for information from the front.

¹⁰⁹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 188.

¹¹⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 463-464.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 457-458.

At about the same time of Howard's message, *MG Rodes of Ewell's Corps* began his attack from Oak Hill against the northern flank of I Corps.¹¹² This attack was repulsed, and by the time of the Confederate attack, both Union Corps had consolidated at Gettysburg. I Corps was aligned from northeast to southwest along McPherson's and Oak Ridges between the Mummasburg and Fairfield Roads. Howard connected XI Corps to within 400 meters of I Corp's northern flank and had it running west to east oriented north. While I Corps' terrain was well-suited for defense, the terrain north of Gettysburg was open and generally slightly undulating without strong features that were easily defended. The Gettysburg Plain, as it was called, ran for about three-quarters of a mile from Oak Ridge in the west to the Rock Creek in the east. It was dominated in the northwest by Oak Hill and the northeast by Blocher's Knoll, later called Barlow's Knoll. Both of these were held by elements of *Rodes' division* when XI Corps arrived at Gettysburg. After reaching the field, BG Francis C. Barlow moved his division forward and seized Barlow's Knoll lengthening the already thin XI Corps line.¹¹³ As I Corps battled in the west, the clock moved past 1500. I and XI Corps were still fighting alone. III Corps and XII Corps were nearby, in supporting range, but would they reach the field in time?

At 1515, Sickles informed army headquarters of his decision to march from Emmitsburg towards Gettysburg and the enemy. Additionally, he informed them which of the two roads his corps would be on so that headquarters could locate him during the

¹¹² Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 354-355.

¹¹³ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 371-373; Pfanz, *The First Day*, 141, 217, 223, 230; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 727-728.

move. He also left two brigades in Emmitsburg to defend it from any Confederate activity.¹¹⁴ This was a compromise between the orders of his direct superiors, first Reynolds then Howard, and those of the army commander. Early in the morning, Sickles sent a staff officer to Gettysburg to receive any orders from Reynolds. When the officer arrived at Gettysburg, before I Corps' infantry, Reynolds told Sickles that he believed that Sickles "had better come up" to Gettysburg.¹¹⁵ This conflicted with the Pipe Creek Circular Sickles had received prior to the return of his staff officer which ordered III Corps to hold Emmitsburg. Sickles played it safe and sent a different staff officer to Reynolds for clarification and guidance. While awaiting a response from Reynolds, two couriers arrived at III Corps Headquarters almost simultaneously. The first had an oral message from Howard relaying that Reynolds was dead and requested that III Corps move to Gettysburg. The second courier bore a written message that stated, "General Reynolds is killed. For God's sake, come up. Howard."¹¹⁶ This must have been Howard's 1330 message, which was lost to the official record, to Sickles. Based on the timing of Sickles' message to Meade, these couriers probably arrived around 1500. Sickles made his decision. Using his initiative Sickles accepted the risk inherent to his decision. The majority of III Corps marched to Gettysburg and the sound of the guns. Ultimately,

¹¹⁴ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 464.

¹¹⁵ Henry E. Tremain, *Two Days of War: A Gettysburg Narrative and Other Excursions* (New York: Bonnell, Silver and Bowers, 1905), 12-14, accessed March 26, 2019, <https://archive.org/details/twodaysowfargett00trem>, eBook.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

Sickles' decision to order most of III Corps to Gettysburg was correct.¹¹⁷ Sickles exercised disciplined initiative within his commander's intent by marching to Gettysburg while still guarding the eastern flank of the army at Emmitsburg.¹¹⁸

After sending Hancock forward to Gettysburg at 1310, Meade could only wait for more information before making any final decision on where to mass the army and fight the Confederates. Throughout the afternoon, more and more information came back to headquarters and slowly filled in the picture within Meade's mind. Howard's 1400 report was short, six lines long, and did not say much. Buford's report from 1520 confirmed that two enemy corps had joined near Gettysburg.¹¹⁹ As all of this information made its way to headquarters, Meade became more and more settled on a battle near Gettysburg, but his final decision would not occur until after 1600.¹²⁰

Slocum's XII Corps, which was not part of Reynold's left wing, acted differently from Sickles' III Corps. For a variety of reasons, XII Corps was slow moving to Gettysburg. At 1535 Slocum informed Hancock and Howard that XII Corps was marching to within a mile east of Gettysburg.¹²¹ The Union position began to give way starting at approximately 1530, most likely from east to west starting with Barlow's units

¹¹⁷ Sauers, *The Meade-Sickles Controversy*, 26.

¹¹⁸ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 325.

¹¹⁹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 924-925.

¹²⁰ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 324; Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg*, 137.

¹²¹ Pfanz, *Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 88-93; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 465.

on Barlow's Knoll.¹²² Nearly simultaneous, although by coincidence, the entire Confederate front attacked forcing the Union forces from their positions through Gettysburg and to Cemetery Hill.¹²³ By 1600 *Ewell* had defeated XI Corps to include a reserve brigade that Howard belatedly sent forward from Cemetery Hill.¹²⁴ Finally, at 1610, Howard ordered both corps back to Cemetery Hill, but the retreat had already begun before that.¹²⁵ The retreat through the town by the two corps quickly became a jumbled mess of confusion that looked very much like a rout. As the Union forces moved through the town the Confederates were close behind pressing forward. Around 1630 Doubleday arrived at Cemetery Hill, meeting Hancock there. Howard claimed that he and Hancock split responsibility for the defense of Cemetery Hill, but most likely Howard acquiesced to Hancock's command of the field.¹²⁶

In any case, with the help of Howard, Doubleday, and the reserve brigade already on Cemetery Hill, Hancock was able to restore the Union cohesion and form a defensive line supported by massed artillery. Hancock also sent the Iron Brigade to defend Culp's Hill on the eastern flank. Hancock's presence alone seemed to bolster the troops and their

¹²² Pfanz, *The First Day*, 235-236.

¹²³ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 371-386.

¹²⁴ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 217.

¹²⁵ Pfanz, *The First Day*, 294, 331; Hancock, *Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock*, 337.

¹²⁶ Hyde, *The Union Generals Speak*, 210; E. P. Halstead, "Incidents of the First Day at Gettysburg," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume 3*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Co., 1888), 285.

defense.¹²⁷ The reformed Union lines on Cemetery and Culp's Hills, the massed artillery, as well as Confederate fatigue prevented the Confederates from attacking the Union forces again on July 1. As the time passed the Union commanders felt more and more secure. Even before reorganizing defenses south of Gettysburg, Hancock had sent a verbal message to Meade that the Union forces could hold their current position until dark, allowing Meade to make the decision on where to fight the battle.¹²⁸ At 1725 Hancock sent a detailed report to Meade relaying the current situation, Hancock's assessment was that the Union forces could hold until night, and that the terrain seemed to be acceptable for a battle. Shortly after writing this dispatch, Hancock met with Slocum and transferred command of the field to Slocum before Hancock left to see Meade in person. While Hancock had advised on fighting at Gettysburg, Meade had already begun to order the army to consolidate there before Hancock's messages arrived at army headquarters.¹²⁹

Sometime after 1600 Meade was convinced that the battle would be fought at Gettysburg, not Pipe Creek. At 1630 he ordered VI Corps to Taneytown. Meade would later direct this corps to Gettysburg at 1930. Around the same time, he sent II Corps, under Gibbon from Taneytown to Gettysburg. Soon after, Meade ordered Sickles to remain at Emmitsburg to protect the western flank until Hancock called for III Corps and then to leave a division holding the town. Sickles was well on his way to Gettysburg

¹²⁷ Pfanz, *Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 101-105.

¹²⁸ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 405.

¹²⁹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 366; Sauers, *Victor of Gettysburg*, 49.

when he received this dispatch. He continued on to Gettysburg believing that Meade's order was outdated and that leaving his two brigades and batteries at Emmitsburg still fulfilled the intent of Meade's directive. Sickles was correct and arrived at Gettysburg around 1800. Hancock sent his two messages by 1725 but it seems that neither of them reached Meade before 1800 when Meade informed Hancock and Doubleday that he had concentrated the army around Gettysburg because "a battle at Gettysburg is now forced on us." Meade simultaneously sent a report to Halleck which updated him on the fighting of the day, current Confederate positions, and the fact that all of the corps except for VI Corps were heading towards Gettysburg where Meade believed that he would have to risk a general battle. When Hancock's messages did arrive, they must have helped convince Meade that he was making the right decision to fight at Gettysburg. Finally, at 1900 V Corps received orders to proceed to Gettysburg at once if Slocum had not already ordered them to do so. By 1930 the entire army to include III Corps' brigade at Emmitsburg had been directed to Gettysburg. The trains were directed to Westminster and the provost marshal was sent to round up the stragglers.¹³⁰ The army headquarters was about to leave Taneytown at approximately 2200 when Hancock and BG Warren, the chief engineer, surprised Meade by arriving in person. They spoke for a bit on the terrain and the situation at Gettysburg, both of the enemy and friendly forces.¹³¹ Afterwards,

¹³⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 465-468, 645; U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 405; Sauers, *The Meade-Sickles Controversy*, 25; Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg*, 68.

¹³¹ Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg*, 69.

Meade left for Gettysburg, arriving sometime early on July 2, 1863.¹³² The first day was finished, but two more days of hard fighting remained.

It appears that Meade was willing to conduct command and control of his forces on July 1, 1863, in a manner that closely follows the modern philosophy of mission command. There was about a ninety-minute delay between Meade and Gettysburg and a minimum of a three-hour delay for a commander to request guidance and receive it from Meade.¹³³ This meant that key subordinate commanders had to make important decisions throughout the battle. Meade wanted to give his intent and create a shared understanding with a trusted subordinate and then allow that subordinate to exercise disciplined initiative and assume prudent risk regarding where to consolidate the Army of the Potomac and to fight the *Army of Northern Virginia*. Originally this was to be Reynolds at the lead of the army. Meade attempted to do this through the Pipe Creek Circular and the order sent to Reynolds and copied to Howard which described the most recent intelligence, Meade's visualization, understanding, and intent, and his intent to use BG Humphreys of III Corps to advise Reynolds on the terrain. With these conditions, Meade seemed content to allow his trusted corps commander to accept prudent risk, manage the fight, and make recommendations regarding whether Gettysburg or Pipe Creek was better terrain on which to fight. On the other hand, he was also content to trust that Reynolds could conduct a delaying action from Gettysburg to Pipe Creek, allowing for the Army of the Potomac to concentrate at Pipe Creek while Meade commanded the army from a

¹³² Sauers, *Victor of Gettysburg*, 49.

¹³³ This amount of delay time is based on the 80-minute travel time of Reynolds' aide, CPT Weld, after being told to not spare his horse. Weld, *War Diaries*, 232.

central position. While visibly angry at Butterfield for not issuing the Pipe Creek Circular earlier, Meade let his primary subordinate develop the situation and exercise disciplined initiative when CPT Weld arrived with Reynold's message of attempting to hold the positions at Gettysburg. Meade did not go forward and seemed to be waiting for the situation to develop, still hoping to defend at Pipe Creek, but open to a potential battle at Gettysburg.

This changed when MAJ Riddle informed Meade of Reynolds' death. He no longer had a subordinate he trusted on the ground. It probably removed any hope in Meade's mind that I and XI Corps had received his intent. Meade entrusted much to Reynolds as the commander of the left wing of the Army of Potomac. Reynolds was Meade's most trusted subordinate and personal friend.¹³⁴ Because Reynolds had not received the Pipe Creek Circular, he was operating on an understanding that was out of date when he committed I Corps to battle on July 1. Reynolds committed the Union left wing to battle not because of Meade's intent but rather because he was personally eager for the conflict.¹³⁵ This lack of shared understanding and commander's intent was never rectified as Reynolds was killed in the opening moments of the battle. It may not have been rectified until Meade arrived on the battlefield as Howard never knew about the Pipe Creek Circular until talking to Meade in person early on July 2.¹³⁶ However, this

¹³⁴ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 79.

¹³⁵ Henry J. Hunt, "The Second Day at Gettysburg," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume 3*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Co., 1888), 291.

¹³⁶ Pfanz, *Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 107.

does not change how Meade sought to employ Reynolds, the subordinate closest to the enemy. As described earlier, all indications are that Meade, in his dealing with Reynolds, planned to implement a command and control style that is similar to the modern philosophy of mission command.

In issuing the Pipe Creek Circular Meade intended to create a shared understanding among his commanders. He sent the supplement to Reynolds which laid out the most recent enemy picture. In both of these documents, Meade also clearly explained his intent for the operations to Reynolds. In mission command terms the Pipe Creek Circular was a mission order for the left wing. It described what Meade wanted accomplished and the necessary synchronization efforts, such as which roads to take to avoid creating a gap or congestion, but left the specifics for the fight of the left wing to Reynolds and his staff. With these measures in place, Meade was comfortable in allowing Reynolds to exercise what is now termed disciplined initiative and accept prudent risk within Meade's intent. The fact that Reynolds was killed before he received either of these dispatches does not change how Meade wanted to exercise his command and control. After Reynolds' death, Meade used the same style when he sent Hancock forward to Gettysburg.

The bedrock of the philosophy of mission command is cohesive teams built on mutual trust. This concept is nothing new and commanders throughout history have always tried to surround themselves with subordinates that they trust. We can see that in the decisions on leadership that Meade made on July 1. These decisions included: who would permanently replace Reynolds in command of I Corps, who would command the field at Gettysburg and decide where the army would fight, and who would replace

Hancock in command of II Corps after Hancock left for Gettysburg. In all three of these cases Meade made his decisions based on who he trusted, not merely seniority. The special authority given to Meade by Halleck to make appointments allowed Meade the flexibility to make these appointments. Meade used to it great effect on July 1.

Command and the philosophy of mission command are ultimately about leadership and the human interactions. Reynolds' death created a leadership problem for Meade. Doubleday remained the commander of I Corps, but Meade was not impressed with Doubleday. Meade knew Doubleday well as they had spent almost a year in 1862 serving together as division commanders in I Corps.¹³⁷ In fact, Doubleday took Meade's division when Meade took command of V Corps after the Battle of Fredericksburg. This pleased Meade as evidenced when he wrote his wife, Margaretta, on January 23, 1863, that he was happy Doubleday was taking his old division because now the division would "think a great deal more of me than before."¹³⁸ Unlike Reynolds, Doubleday clearly did not possess Meade's trust or confidence. Meade sought to replace him with a general he trusted.

Meade had four realistic options, one of which was to keep Doubleday in place. Besides Newton the other two MGs available were MG David B. Birney of 1st Division, III Corps, and MG Carl Schurz of 3rd Division, XI Corps. Every other division

¹³⁷ Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 26.

¹³⁸ George Gordon Meade to Margaretta Meade, January 23, 1863, in George Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Major-General United States Army, Volume I* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 349.

commander in the Army of the Potomac was a BG.¹³⁹ Keeping Doubleday was out of the question in Meade's mind. Birney had just been promoted to MG in June of that year so was not a viable option. Schurz was a political general and Meade did not think favorably of political generals. Schurz was also from the untrusted XI Corps. This left Newton, although he should not be thought of as merely a default choice. Newton was a West Point graduate, second in the class of 1842, an engineer by trade, like Meade himself, and the other generals in the army generally thought well of him. Even those who disliked some of Newton's qualities admitted that he was competent.¹⁴⁰ Based on this, Meade selected MG John Newton, commander of 3rd Division, VI Corps, to replace Doubleday issuing Special Order 178 late on July 1.¹⁴¹

Newton had successfully commanded at the brigade and division level with success in most of the major eastern battles from the Peninsular Campaign through Chancellorsville. During the Battle of Chancellorsville Newton's division took Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg, the same heights where the *Army of Northern Virginia* had devastated the Army of the Potomac the preceding December. This recent success may have influenced Meade's decision. The more important point is that Meade made a command change based on a degree of trust. To properly command his army Meade needed to trust his key subordinates and for them to trust him. Meade did not trust Doubleday so he replaced Doubleday with Newton, a more junior officer but one whom

¹³⁹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 155-168.

¹⁴⁰ Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 13.

¹⁴¹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume LI, part I, section 2, 1066.

Meade trusted more so than others. Meade further showed his trust in Newton by placing him in charge of I, II, and III Corps on July 3, after Hancock was wounded. Newton would remain in command of I Corps until it was dissolved in March 1864.¹⁴² Here again, Meade was utilizing his special authority to make appointments as he saw fit to ensure mutual trust, shared understanding, and vision of his intent throughout his corps commanders.

Reynolds' death came as a personal and professional shock to Meade. He lost a friend and his most trusted subordinate who had the most important task within the army. As seen in Meade's early morning message to Reynolds, Meade was also uncertain of the terrain to the south and east of Gettysburg. Was it an acceptable place to consolidate the Army of the Potomac and fight a battle? What portion of *Lee's* army was at Gettysburg? Meade needed a trusted subordinate on the scene to answer these and other questions. Fortunately, II Corps and Hancock had arrived two hours earlier and were collocated with the army headquarters at Taneytown. Even more fortunately, Hancock and Meade had met when II Corps arrived near Taneytown. Meade wasted little time and selected Hancock to assume command of the field at Gettysburg even though the current commander at Gettysburg, Howard, was senior to Hancock. Meade chose Hancock because of Meade "knew Hancock better than Howard"¹⁴³ and that Hancock knew Meade's "understood and could carry out [Meade's] views" and that Hancock "knew

¹⁴² Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 12-14; John Gibbon, *At Gettysburg and Elsewhere: The Civil War Memoir of John Gibbon* (Bellevue, WA: Big Byte Books, 2016), 109, accessed February 5, 2019, <https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B01GWN3O6U>, eBook.

¹⁴³ Pfanz, *The First Day*, 337.

[Meade's] plans and ideas.”¹⁴⁴ These reasons are very similar to the concepts of mutual trust, shared understanding, and a clear commander's intent. These three factors allowed Meade to empower Hancock to exercise disciplined initiative at Gettysburg and make the decision on where the army would fight. Hancock could also accept prudent risk while commanding the left wing as he understood how his actions would fall within Meade's intent and plan.

With this in place Meade was content to allow Hancock to not only fight the left wing of the army but to decide where it would fight while Meade controlled the movement of the rest of the army from Taneytown which is where he could best command and control the army. Viewed through the lens of mission command, Meade trusted that his subordinate commanders understood the situation and his intent. Discretion and independent action by subordinates during the Civil War was common given the disposition of forces. What set Meade apart was that he ensured that his subordinates had the same situational understand as he did and that they understood his intent. This showed the power of the philosophy of mission command and how it could be effectively used before it became written doctrine. It also shows that the philosophy of mission command came out of effective practices as commanders faced combat situations that changed quicker than commanders could control. Finally, it shows modern observers how it can be used in an environment where communications are degraded.

Meade's first two uses of his special appointment authority was to send Hancock to take command at Gettysburg and replace Doubleday with Newton in command of I

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 348, 404-405.

Corps. Meade's third use of his special appointment power was to place BG Gibbon in command of II Corps when Hancock left for Gettysburg although Gibbon was not the senior division commander within the corps. In fact, Gibbon was the junior division commander within the corps.¹⁴⁵ However, Meade picked Gibbon to command II Corps because Meade trusted him the most and felt that Gibbon was the officer best suited for the position.¹⁴⁶ Meade's trust and confidence in Gibbon probably stemmed from their time together as division commanders under Reynolds in I Corps during the Battle of Fredericksburg or from Gibbon's time as the commander of the Iron Brigade when it earned its nickname.¹⁴⁷ The choice of Gibbon would prove to be a wise one given the events of the next two days.

Meade faced a difficult situation on July 1. The vanguard of his army made contact with the lead elements of the enemy force early in the day while the Army of the Potomac was still widely dispersed. Due to the delay in publishing the Pipe Creek Circular, Reynolds committed the left wing before Meade had made his intent known. While Reynolds probably was still within Meade's intent—which allowed considerable freedom of action to Reynolds—the wing commander was then killed in the opening moments of the battle, and Meade did not have confirmation that Reynolds had made the correct decision to fight the wing at Gettysburg. Despite this, Meade handled the army well on July 1. He empowered subordinate leaders he trusted by ensuring they understood

¹⁴⁵ Hancock, *Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock*, 186-187.

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 404; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 461.

¹⁴⁷ Gibbon, *At Gettysburg and Elsewhere*, 81-82, 61-62.

his intent and the situation and then allowed them flexibility to operate through mission orders by allowing them to accept risk. This can be seen in his early correspondence with Reynolds and when he sent Hancock forward to replace the fallen Reynolds as the leader of the left wing.

Meade's belief in and reliance on what are now mission command tenets is best seen in the three leadership changes Meade made on July 1. In each case his decision was shaped by the first three principles of the philosophy of mission command: building cohesive teams built through mutual trust, creating a shared understanding, and issuing clear commander's intent. Mutual trust played a role in all three decisions. The last two played a role in Meade's selection of Hancock to assume command at Gettysburg. Meade also accepted prudent risk and exercised disciplined initiative because he understood his superior's intent that the Army of the Potomac act as both the army of action against *Lee* and the army of protection for Baltimore and Washington, DC. This allowed him to assume the risk and make the bold choice to go to Gettysburg.¹⁴⁸ Meade had commanded well on July 1, during his first engagement as the army commander, and consolidated his army at Gettysburg. Despite the bloodshed, July 1 was merely the opening act. The next two days would further test Meade's leadership.

¹⁴⁸ Henry J. Hunt, "The Second Day at Gettysburg," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 291.

CHAPTER 4

JULY 2, 1863

My God! Are these all the men we have here?¹⁴⁹

— MG Winfield S. Hancock

Meade arrived at Gettysburg shortly after midnight on July 1-2. After meeting Howard on Cemetery Hill, Meade met with several generals inside the cemetery gatehouse. Howard, Sickles, and Slocum all stated that Gettysburg was good ground for the Army of the Potomac. Meade responded that he was “glad to hear you say so, gentlemen, for it is too late to leave it.”¹⁵⁰ After this meeting, Meade conducted a reconnaissance of the terrain and surroundings from Culp’s Hill to Little Round Top with his son, Hunt, Warren, and CPT William H. Paine who was from the engineer staff before establishing his headquarters within the house of Lydia Leister, a local widow. They conducted this reconnaissance before sunrise and Meade did not reach Little Round Top during this reconnaissance but rather the location on Cemetery Ridge where the elevation drops before rising up to Little Round Top. CPT Paine made a map of the terrain during the reconnaissance and once it was complete, Meade annotated on the map each corps’ intended position. CPT Paine then made a tracing of the positions for each corps.¹⁵¹ As morning arrived on July 2, Meade focused most of his efforts and attention

¹⁴⁹ Richard Moe, *The Last Full Measure: The Life and Death of the First Minnesota Volunteers* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 2001), 268.

¹⁵⁰ Pfanz, *Culp’s Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 107.

¹⁵¹ Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg*, 96.

on his northern, right, flank near Cemetery and Culp's Hills. He was focused on this flank rather than his southern flank for a few reasons. First, he knew for certain that a large mass of the Confederates were on that flank. They were visible in and around the town of Gettysburg and had attacked from that direction on July 1, pushing I and XI Corps back to their current location. Secondly, Culp's Hill sat near the Baltimore Pike which was the major line of communication from the Army of the Potomac to its logistics base at Westminster, Maryland. As the rest of the Army of the Potomac arrived, Meade established his defensive perimeter, placing XII Corps on Culp's Hill, XI Corps remaining on Cemetery Hill, I Corps connecting Cemetery Hill to Cemetery Ridge with one division on western Culp's Hill, and II Corps defending Cemetery Ridge. III Corps was to defend southern Cemetery Ridge connecting II Corps to Little Round Top, but circumstances would find Sickles' corps in a different location later in the day. Meade shifted V Corps, whose first two divisions arrived around 0800 and the third at noon, to several locations before they ended up in a central reserve position near Power's Hill. Initially, Buford's cavalry division was screening the southern flank of the army near the Peach Orchard. VI Corps was marching towards Gettysburg, but was still several hours away.¹⁵²

Despite the events on July 1, Meade tentatively thought of offensive action on the morning of July 2, if possible. At 0930, he ordered Slocum, with the help of Warren, to examine the ground in front of XII Corps and to report back to headquarters with their

¹⁵² Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 79-80; David Reisch, *Gettysburg: The Story of the Battle with Maps*, ed. David M. Detweiler (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2013), 55; Sauer, *The Meade-Sickles Controversy*, 30-31.

assessment as to the ground's favorability for the attack. At 1000, Meade ordered Slocum to prepare his corps for a "strong and decisive attack" with the support of V Corps against the Confederates around Culp's Hill. Meade would order the attack to begin after determining the location of VI Corps which would support the attack. At 1030, Slocum wrote back and advised against an attack from the Union right. Warren seconded this recommendation so Meade dropped the idea.¹⁵³ This showed how Meade was leading the Army of the Potomac. He was continuing to build a cohesive team through mutual trust by tasking his subordinates and then valuing their input. He also created a better shared understanding by describing his plans and intentions to his subordinates those plans impacted.

During the day Meade instructed Butterfield to draw up a contingency order on where the corps were to go if the Army of the Potomac was forced out of Gettysburg. Meade did not intend to leave Gettysburg, rather he was preparing for a potential sequel if required.¹⁵⁴ While Meade was focused on his right flank a situation was developing on his left flank that ended up threatening the entire army and became a sore spot for the rest of Meade's life.

Early in the morning, Meade ordered III Corps to occupy Cemetery Ridge with the corps' right flank connecting with II Corps and its left flank resting on Little Round Top and to occupy the hill if possible.¹⁵⁵ Sometime, most likely around 0700, Meade sent

¹⁵³ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 437-438, 377.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 442.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 331.

his son to III Corps to confirm that Sickles knew the location of the army headquarters and that III Corps was in position.¹⁵⁶ After arriving at III Corps, CPT Meade learned that Sickles had questions on where III Corps was to form so they had not moved yet. CPT Meade reported this to his father who sent CPT Meade back to Sickles to inform him that III Corps was to position itself on the left of II Corps with right connecting with II Corps and for III Corps to extend its line to occupy the position that BG John W. Geary's division of XII Corps had occupied the night before. This position put the left flank on the northern edge of Little Round Top. CPT Meade returned to Sickles with this order and Sickles responded that III Corps was moving and would be in position shortly, before mentioning the Geary had no position the night before but was massed nearby. With this conversation, CPT Meade believed that Sickles understood where to place his corps and reported as much back to his father.¹⁵⁷ MG Birney, commander of 1st Division, III Corps, reported that at 0700 his division relieved Geary's division and rested its left on Little Round Top and continued north on a direct line towards the Gettysburg cemetery connecting with 2nd Division, III Corps to the north.¹⁵⁸ By midmorning at the latest, III Corps was in, or at least near, its intended position. However, Sickles was not content with his location. He was concerned that his line was in generally low ground, specifically his left near Little Round Top and that the high ground to his front around the Peach Orchard commanded his position. The Confederates could use it as an artillery

¹⁵⁶ Sauers, *The Meade-Sickles Controversy*, 31-32.

¹⁵⁷ Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg*, 100-102; Reisch, *Gettysburg: The Story of the Battle with Maps*, 47.

¹⁵⁸ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 481.

platform or a position to launch an attack against III Corps. At 1030, Buford and his cavalry division left the area near the Peach Orchard to refit and guard Westminster. This flank protection was not replaced even though Meade ordered Pleasonton to do so at 1250 and 1255. This lack of protection concerned Sickles about his flank and his position. By 1100 Sickles was worried enough to visit Meade in person at army headquarters.¹⁵⁹

When Sickles arrived at headquarters, he told Meade that he was not sure where his corps should go. Meade reiterated that III Corps' right should connect with II Corps, the corps should run along Cemetery Ridge with its left up Little Round Top which Meade pointed out to Sickles.¹⁶⁰ BG Hunt, chief of artillery, arrived at army headquarters during this discussion. Upon his arrival, Meade tasked Hunt to accompany Sickles and evaluate the ground Sickles wished to occupy from an artillery perspective.¹⁶¹ Before leaving, Sickles asked if he could post his men as he saw fit. Meade replied that Sickles could "within the limits of the general instructions I have given you; any ground within those limits you chose to occupy I leave to you."¹⁶² Here, Meade was trying to act in accordance with what is now the philosophy of mission command. He was giving guidance and intent to his subordinate, Sickles, while leaving the specifics of how to do it to the commander on the scene. Meade even sent a trusted subordinate, Hunt, with

¹⁵⁹ Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 86-87, 97.

¹⁶⁰ Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Volume II: Gettysburg and Beyond*, 77-78.

¹⁶¹ Longacre, *The Man Behind the Guns*, 161.

¹⁶² Sauers, *The Meade-Sickles Controversy*, 34.

Sickles to help advise on the situation. However, Meade failed to confirm that Sickles did understand his intent. Meade also failed to recognize the issues Sickles was having and failed to utilize direct leadership, which is sometimes required. Hunt traveled with Sickles to the Peach Orchard and listened to III Corps' pitch to occupy the terrain. While acknowledging that it had some strengths, Hunt cautioned that it would form a salient, vulnerable to attack from two sides at once, and that Sickles' new line would be too long for III Corps to hold alone. Hunt could not authorize the move on his own, but did recommend that III Corps recon Pitzer's Woods, about 500 yards west of the Peach Orchard, for rebels. With that Hunt left III Corps.¹⁶³ III Corps complied, sending elements of the 1st US Sharpshooters Regiment and the 3rd Maine Regiment. These forces got into a sharp, short fight with three columns of Confederate infantry changing direction by the right flank. As the Confederates counterattacked, the regiments fell back and COL Hiram Berdan, commander of the sharpshooters, reported the results of the reconnaissance.¹⁶⁴ This action was also reported to Butterfield by 1LT Aaron B. Jerome from the signal station on Little Round Top.¹⁶⁵ This contact, along with the lack of cavalry on his flank and his belief that the terrain at the Peach Orchard was key to the area, caused Sickles to act unilaterally.

Hancock and Gibbon were together when they saw Union infantry and artillery, BG Humphreys' Division of III Corps, moving forward on their left towards the Peach

¹⁶³ Henry J. Hunt, "The Second Day at Gettysburg," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 301-302.

¹⁶⁴ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 515.

¹⁶⁵ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 488.

Orchard. Both generals were confused as they had heard no order to advance and the advance was breaking the line between II and III Corps.¹⁶⁶ Hancock admired the “splendid advance”, but said that “those troops will be coming back very soon.”¹⁶⁷ Although they could only see Humphreys’ Division moving forward, all of III Corps was advancing to include MG David B. Birney’s Division. Humphreys’ Division moved forward to the Emmitsburg Road with its left flank resting on the right edge of the Peach Orchard and its right flank about a half-mile from II Corps. Birney’s Division was in three areas. From south to north, BG J. H. Hobart Ward’s brigade ran from Devil’s Den towards the Wheatfield, COL Philip R. de Trobriand’s brigade was on the west edge of the Wheatfield extending to the Stony Hill, and BG Robert Graham’s brigade was at a right angle along the apex of the Peach Orchard. Graham’s and de Trobriand’s brigade were not connected, with an approximately quarter-mile gap between the two brigades running along Millerstown Road. Additionally, Ward’s brigade was not connected to de Trobriand’s brigade and none of Birney could see each other due to the terrain.¹⁶⁸

Just before 1500 the lead elements of VI Corps were sighted heading up the Baltimore Pike.¹⁶⁹ This was most welcome news for Meade as his entire army would soon be concentrated at Gettysburg. At 1500, he sent Halleck an update. Meade informed

¹⁶⁶ Gibbon, *At Gettysburg and Elsewhere*, 106.

¹⁶⁷ Francis A. Walker, *General Hancock* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1894), 125, accessed March 1, 2019, https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=DKrpfj_DPKMC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP13, eBook.

¹⁶⁸ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 406.

¹⁶⁹ Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg*, 147.

Halleck that the entire army was concentrated at Gettysburg with VI Corps just arriving. Meade was not determined to attack until his men could be rested and he could develop the enemy position; moreover, he was in a strong defensive position. If Lee was trying to get between Meade and Washington, Meade would fall back to Westminster. Meade also reported that the enemy was moving on both his flanks, but that he could not discern their intentions.¹⁷⁰ At about this time, Meade summoned his corps commanders for a meeting. Sickles did not appear so a second order was sent, then Meade heard cannon fire from the III Corps front. An aide from Warren arrived just after the cannon fire and reported that Sickles' front was not correct. This finally caused Meade to mount his horse and personally go to III Corps. He also ordered Sykes to move V Corps to the left flank as quickly as possible. Sickles then arrived at headquarters. Meade redirected him to his corps and said that he would be over there quickly. When Meade arrived, he was understandably irate. He pointed to the line Sickles should have held and called the Peach Orchard area neutral ground, unable to be held by either side.¹⁷¹ Sickles offered to withdraw but Meade said that the enemy would not let them. Just then the rebel artillery opened up upon III Corps. Meade instructed Sickles to hold his position as V Corps and a division from II Corps would reinforce III Corps. He also told Sickles to call on the artillery reserve if III Corps needed more cannons.¹⁷² Hunt responded by posting five batteries, twenty-eight cannons, along the Millerstown Road connecting III Corps'

¹⁷⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 72.

¹⁷¹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 1086; Sauers, *The Meade-Sickles Controversy*, 42.

¹⁷² Tremain, *Two Days of War*, 63.

line.¹⁷³ Meade left for headquarters and sent Warren to investigate the far left of the Union line. Warren rode to Little Round Top and found it empty except for the signal station. Warren sent aides to Meade and Sickles seeking forces to hold the hill. Meade initially selected Humphreys' division to occupy Little Round Top. Shortly after, another message arrived to Meade informing him that V Corps would occupy the hill. Meade then decided to keep III Corps intact.¹⁷⁴

Despite the Federal confusion over III Corps' position, Sickles' move forward prompted the Confederate attack to end as an echelon attack starting from the south and working north. After a faulty reconnaissance by *CPT Samuel R. Johnson*, a member of *Lee's* staff, which reported that only Union skirmishers were on the southern portion of Cemetery Ridge and there was no Union force on either Round Top, *Lee* finalized his attack plan for July 2. *Longstreet's Corps* with *MGs John B. Hood's* and *Lafayette McLaws' Divisions*—*MG George S. Pickett's Division* was still marching to Gettysburg -- would attack up the Emmitsburg Road, rolling up the exposed Union flank like *Stonewall Jackson* had done at Chancellorsville. Elements of *Hill's Corps* would support *Longstreet*. *Ewell* would feint near Cemetery and Culp's Hills once *Longstreet* began his attack and transition from a demonstration to an assault if the opportunity presented itself.¹⁷⁵ *Hood's Division* was the first to attack around 1600. While the bulk of

¹⁷³ Longacre, *The Man Behind the Guns*, 165.

¹⁷⁴ Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg*, 119; Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 83.

¹⁷⁵ Champ Clark, *Gettysburg: The Confederate High Tide* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1985), 68-69.

three of *Hood's* four brigades fought BG Ward's brigade at Devil's Den and Houck Ridge, one brigade split in two with two regiments conducting a flank attack on Devil's Den and three regiments passing over Big Round Top and heading towards Little Round Top. These three regiments were reinforced by the 4th and 5th Texas regiments of *BG Jerome B. Robertson's Brigade*.¹⁷⁶

As time ticked by, Warren grew more and more concerned about the vacancy on Little Round Top. Warren found Sykes conducting a reconnaissance to determine where he should place his corps. Warren convinced Sykes to send a brigade from BG James Barnes' division to Little Round Top. As the aide searched for Barnes, he came across COL Strong Vincent and his brigade. Vincent asked what the orders were and the aide reluctantly told him that they were for a brigade of Barnes' division to occupy Little Round Top. COL Vincent showed great initiative and moral courage by stating that he would take his brigade, which included the 20th Maine Regiment, to Little Round Top.¹⁷⁷ The brigade hurried to the hill, arriving minutes before the 15th and 47th Alabama regiments of *BG Evander M. Law's Brigade*. Vincent's brigade was able to hold Little Round Top with the help from BG Stephen Weed's brigade, specifically the 140th New York Regiment, and LT Charles Hazlett's battery, all from V Corps.¹⁷⁸ The Army of the Potomac's southern flank was secure. While this was happening, Ward's brigade and the 4th New York Light Artillery Battery were defending Devil's Den and Houck's Ridge

¹⁷⁶ Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 180.

¹⁷⁷ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 389.

¹⁷⁸ Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 236-240.

from the remainder of *Hood's Division*. After an initial repulse of *Robertson's Brigade*, the second echelon of *BG Henry L Benning's Brigade* of Georgians succeeded, after much savage fighting, in pushing the Union forces back to the Union rear.

It was about an hour after *Hood's Division* began its attack on the Union far left that Longstreet gave the order for *McLaws' Division* to begin their assault on the Union positions at the Peach Orchard. *McLaws* in turn attacked in echelon with his southern two brigades attacking about thirty minutes prior to the northern two. This delay allowed V Corps to additionally reinforce III Corps, particularly in the Wheatfield. Meade's swift decision to move V Corps to the support of Sickles' position continued to pay dividends. Meade had used a mission type order to Sykes to bring V Corps forward and assist III Corps. This guidance allowed Sykes to react rapidly and move his corps while Meade focused on the entire army and not just a section of it. Meade took a risk in committing his reserve to the threatened area of his line, but he did this with a clear intent to support Sickles and a mutual understanding with Sykes. The remaining two brigades of Barnes' division fell in on de Trobriand's right, connecting de Trobriand's brigade at the southwest corner of the Wheatfield with the Millerstown Road. *Kershaw's Brigade* from South Carolina along with *Anderson's Brigade* of *Hood's Division* attacked into the Rose Woods near the Wheatfield. As they were advancing, Kershaw directed his left two regiments to charge the cannons at the Peach Orchard while the remainder of the brigade assaulted into Rose Wood. As the two South Carolinian regiments neared the guns and the artillerymen prepared to retire, the Confederate regiments inexplicitly wheeled right, towards the Rose Wood, and offered their flank to the gun line Hunt had prepared along the Millerstown Road. The Union artillerymen of the Artillery Reserve and the infantry

of both III and V Corps held their ground and checked the Confederate advance. Hunt's gun line also stopped *BG Paul J. Semmes' Brigade* of Georgians, the second echelon behind *Kershaw's Brigade*, which did not enter Rose Wood. At this time the Union commanders erred. Barnes, who felt his right flank was threatened ordered his two brigades to fall back, forcing de Trobriand to follow suit, which allowed the Confederates to take possession of Rose Wood, Stony Hill, and the Wheatfield around the same time *Hood's Division* forced Ward's brigade off of Houck's Ridge.¹⁷⁹

Meade's decisive actions at the start of *Longstreet's* attack had helped stabilize the situation. While these decisions were not necessarily tied to the philosophy of mission command, they were still timely and relevant. Meade was able to give quick guidance and intent to two subordinates, Hancock and Sykes, Sykes, which enabled his subordinates to re-establish the Federal left flank. Caldwell's division of II Corps arrived before the Confederates could consolidate their new position. They had been sent earlier to reinforce III Corps but returned upon discovering that Barnes' division had already arrived to help.¹⁸⁰ Shortly after this Meade sent them back to reinforce III Corps. Caldwell's division counterattacked into the Wheatfield directly off of the march and succeeded in driving both *Kershaw* and *George Anderson* back through Rose Woods.¹⁸¹ However, this triumph was merely temporary as *Longstreet* finally committed his last

¹⁷⁹ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 422-425; Reisch, *Gettysburg: The Story of the Battle with Maps*, 70-73; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 286; Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 259-262.

¹⁸⁰ Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 267-268; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 386, 413-414.

¹⁸¹ Reisch, *Gettysburg: The Story of the Battle with Maps*, 74-77.

two brigades, *BG William Barksdale's* Mississippians and *BG William T. Wofford's* Georgians, to the fight. This was approximately thirty minutes after *Kershaw* began his attack. *Barksdale* focused on Graham's brigade and the salient at the Peach Orchard while *Wofford* attacked down Millerstown Road. *Barksdale's Brigade* crushed the Union forces at the Peach Orchard and then split into two with half conducting a flank attack on Humphreys' division and the other half attacking astride *Wofford's Brigade*. It was during this attack that a rebel cannonball crushed Sickles' right leg and he was carried from the field. Here again Meade used his special authority from Washington to make appointments as he saw fit to build a cohesive team built on mutual trust. Meade placed Hancock, his trusted subordinate, in charge of III Corps as well as II Corps after Sickles' injury and allowed Hancock to manage the fight between I and V Corps. Hancock had been near headquarters throughout the day and understood Meade's intent for the fight. While Hancock was fighting 'wing,' Meade managed the entire army and provided Hancock the resources required to accomplish the mission. Around this time Meade began to pull from all of his other corps to save his left flank. He requested a division from XII Corps to reinforce the south, but due to some confusion caused by a messenger's bad verbal instructions, Slocum sent from Culp's Hill all of XII Corps except for one brigade. Meade also ordered II Corps to send an additional brigade to the south and for I Corps to reinforce south as well. Meade also sent all of VI Corps, which

had just arrived, except for one brigade, to the southern edges of Cemetery Ridge to secure that flank.¹⁸²

As *Barksdale's* Mississippians were rolling up Humphreys' southern flank, *MG Richard H. Anderson's* Division of Hill's Corps joined Barksdale's attack to the north. This attack was too much for Humphreys who was forced to fall back to Cemetery Ridge with only CPT Bigelow's 9th Massachusetts artillery battery covering the withdrawal and buying time for the rest of the army. To the south, the combined attacks of *George Anderson's*, *Semmes'*, *Kershaw's*, *Wofford's*, and a part of *Barksdale's* brigades forced the Union forces out of the Wheatfield towards the north of Little Round Top. The exhausted Confederate forces pushed on to the east but it was too late. The remaining elements of V Corps were in position just north of Little Round Top and VI Corps, the largest in the army, was arriving to reinforce their V Corps brethren. A combination of a Union counterattack and a retrograde order from *Longstreet*, who had seen the arrival of VI Corps, allowed V and VI corps to stabilize the southern flank to include Little Round Top and the seizure of the summit of Big Round Top.¹⁸³

As the Confederates were seizing the Wheatfield, *Barksdale* and *George Anderson* continued their assault towards Cemetery Ridge. *Barksdale's Brigade* was checked and forced back by the counterattack of 3rd Brigade, 3rd Division, II Corps under COL George Willard. Most of Williams' division from XII Corps arrived and

¹⁸² Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg*, 64; Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 401-402; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 313-314; Reisch, *Gettysburg: The Story of the Battle with Maps*, 72-80.

¹⁸³ Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 394-409.

secured Willard's southern flank. *Barksdale* himself was mortally wounded, and his division lost its momentum after the loss of its commander. Hancock, who had seen Willard's brigade into action noticed trouble to the north as a Confederate brigade was advancing towards a large gap in the Union line. Reinforcements that Meade had ordered from I and XII Corps were on their way, but their arrival time was uncertain. Hancock needed to buy time to ensure their timely arrival. As Hancock arrived near the center of Cemetery Ridge, he saw *BG Cadmus M. Wilcox's Brigade* advancing towards the open center of the Union line. Looking around he saw only one formed regiment amongst many retreating Union soldiers. Hancock asked, "My God! Are these all the men we have here?" Upon learning that the regiment was the 1st Minnesota Regiment, Hancock accepted prudent risk and ordered the regiment to charge the Confederate brigade. They did so, halting the Confederate advance long enough for reinforcements to arrive at the cost of around 82 percent casualties for the Minnesotans.¹⁸⁴

Just to the north, the afternoon attack was playing out its final act. *BG Ambrose R. Wright's Brigade* of Georgians advanced towards the copse of trees and the angle of a stone wall at the center of the Federal position. Meade directed I Corps to reinforce II Corps and then rode himself towards the threatened point. Gibbon's division began to engage the Confederates and succeeded in turning their northern flank. At the same time, the Georgians were moving toward the exposed southern flank of Gibbon's men. Commitment of 20th Massachusetts Regiment forced *Wright* to withdraw and a counterattack from the 13th Vermont Regiment from I Corps, the lead element of the I

¹⁸⁴ Moe, *Last Full Measure*, 268-269, 275.

Corps reinforcements, drove them back and recaptured several Union cannons.¹⁸⁵ This repulse ended the fighting south of Cemetery Hill for the day. An unauthorized move by Sickles and III Corps had endangered the entire Union position. However, by the end of the fight the entire Army of the Potomac was on the field and in a more defensible position than it had been at the beginning of Longstreet's attack. While admitting that the fight was "pretty desperate" at points, Meade stated that "it is all right now, it is all right now."¹⁸⁶

The Union successful defense was in large part due to the personal actions of Meade himself who was seemingly everywhere on the battlefield and extremely active, at one point manning a gap in the line with only himself and his staff before reinforcements arrived. As *Wright's Brigade* was driving for the gap in the Union line, Meade with some of his staff and orderlies were the only men in blue manning the line. As they waited for reinforcements from I Corps, led by the 13th Vermont, Meade "straighten[ed] himself in his stirrups, as do also the aides who now ride closer to him, bracing themselves up to meet the crisis." Some of those with Meade believed that he would have charged the Confederate brigade to buy the required time. Before this was required, I Corps arrived to close the gap.¹⁸⁷ His corps commanders were also very active throughout the day.¹⁸⁸ Meade directed reinforcements from almost every other corps to try to blunt the

¹⁸⁵ Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 415-421.

¹⁸⁶ Meade, *With Meade at Gettysburg*, 128.

¹⁸⁷ Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Volume II: Gettysburg and Beyond*, 98-99.

¹⁸⁸ Pfanz, *The Second Day*, 415.

Confederate attack. He again turned to his trusted subordinate, Hancock, to take direct command of the fight in the threatened area by assuming command of both II and III Corps after Sickles lost his leg. Finally, he took the risk of committing his reserves and forces from his right flank to stabilize the situation on his left.

Around 1900, the second phase of *Ewell's* demonstration, designed to support *Longstreet's* attack, began. This came several hours after the first phase which was when Confederate artillery on Benner's Hill was neutralized by Union guns. This artillery duel began around 1600, lasted about two hours, and achieved nothing of note from a Confederate perspective. After this failure and most of XII Corps' departure from Culp's Hill, *Ewell* sent in the infantry. First, *MG Edward Johnson's Division* attacked Culp's Hill from the east making contact around 1930. By the time *Johnson* attacked, XII Corps had only one brigade, under BG George S. Greene, on the hill although the Union soldiers were protected by a series of breastworks.¹⁸⁹ XII Corps, aided by I, II, and XI Corps as well as the growing darkness, halted the Confederate advance, losing little except for a small section of unoccupied breastworks on the lower section of Culp's Hill. While BG Greene had sent requests for the I and XI Corps troops, he had not done so for the II Corps soldiers. Hancock, hearing fighting off on XII Corps' front and understanding that XII Corps had sent most of its units to assist the Union left, sent two regiments on his own initiative to aid XII Corps.¹⁹⁰ This can be seen as a reflection of Meade's style, especially his special trust with Hancock that allowed Hancock to show

¹⁸⁹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 326, 281-283; Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 444-445.

¹⁹⁰ Pfanz, *Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 213, 220.

initiative. While the rebels on Culp's Hill were stopped with little penetration of the Union lines, things developed differently during the Confederate attack on Cemetery Hill. *MG Jubal Early* began his attack on East Cemetery Hill around 2000. *Early's* men were able to penetrate the front lines of the XI Corps and some rebels made it to the crest of the hill where they engaged in hand-to-hand combat with Union artillerymen who fought with rocks, "pistols, handspikes, and rammers." Howard sent to II Corps for help and COL Samuel S. Carroll's brigade from II Corps' 3rd Division was sent to Cemetery Hill. Counterattacks from other XI Corps brigades and Carroll's brigade drove the Confederate forces from Cemetery Hill, restoring the original Union lines. *Early* had attacked alone as *Rodes' Division* took longer than its commander expected to form up for attack and aborted its advance in the dark after it became clear that *Early* had been repulsed. With this the fighting on July 2 was over.¹⁹¹

At 2000, just as *Early's* attack was beginning, Meade sent an update to Halleck. In addition to summarizing the day's battle, Meade clearly stated his intent to remain at Gettysburg on July 3. However, he could not tell Halleck if he would attack or defend until he better understood the army's condition.¹⁹² After this telegraph, Meade received an intelligence update from COL George H. Sharpe of the Bureau of Military Information. Meade already knew that the Army of the Potomac had fought every division in the *Army of Northern Virginia* except for *Pickett's* because of a report from the army's chief of intelligence. Sharpe briefed that *Pickett's Division* had arrived and

¹⁹¹ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 444-445; Pfanz, *Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 263-264, 273-276; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 339.

¹⁹² U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 72.

would be ready on July 3. VI Corps' arrival more than offset *Lee's* addition of *Pickett's Division*. With a clear picture of the enemy, Meade needed one of his own Army of the Potomac. To this end, Meade called a meeting of his commanders, the now famous first council of war, which occurred around 2100.¹⁹³

Gibbon left the most detailed account of the war council. His memory was aided by the original minutes of the meeting which had been found eighteen years after the war in Meade's papers. Meade, Butterfield, and Warren were all present from the army headquarters. Newton, Sykes, Sedgwick, and Howard were representing their corps. Birney was there as the acting III Corps commander as was Gibbon for II Corps. Hancock was there as the commander overall in charge of the left wing of II and III Corps. Finally, BG Williams was there as the XII Corps commander while Slocum thought, incorrectly and unbeknownst to Meade, he was the commander of the right wing. There were twelve officers present although only eleven were awake for the meeting. Warren slept through the meeting as a result of exhaustion and his neck wound. The meeting was at first informal with each officer going over the day's fight including the strength of each corps, which was recorded as 58,000 between the seven infantry corps. However, several of the units were severely damaged. I Corps would never recover from July 1 and Birney believed that III Corps was "used up and not in good condition to fight." This was somewhat offset by the arrival of the unbloodied VI Corps and its 12,500 available soldiers.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 450; timing of council, Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 449.

¹⁹⁴ Gibbon, *At Gettysburg and Elsewhere*, 109-113.

After a while Butterfield, with Meade's permission, posed three questions to the council. The first was "Under existing circumstances is it advisable for this army to remain in its present position, or to retire to another, nearer its base of supplies?". The next question was "It being determined to remain in present position, shall the army attack or await the attack of the enemy?". The final query was; "If we await attack, how long?" The answers to the first two were unanimous. Each commander advised to stay in their current position, perhaps with some minor adjustments to the line, and to await the Confederate assault. Hancock was the only one who recommended any offensive action, but only in response to the rebels cutting the Union lines of communication. How long to wait was a different issue. Williams, Birney, Sykes, and Sedgwick all wanted to wait one day. Howard wanted to wait until 1600 on July 3, and then attack. Gibbon advised waiting until the Confederates moved, while Hancock and Newton both felt that the army could not wait long for fear of the Confederates cutting their lines. Sedgwick advised simply to "[s]tay and fight." Meade did not say much during the council, but he had already made his decision to stay at Gettysburg prior to the council. Once the discussion was complete Meade quietly said "[s]uch then is the decision." The meeting lasted almost an hour, ending before midnight, and they could hear the fighting occurring on the right flank. As the council departed, Meade told Gibbon that "[i]f [Lee] attacks tomorrow it will be on your front" because Lee had attacked and failed on both flanks so if Lee tried again it would be in the center. With that the council broke up and the leaders went off for some much-needed sleep.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Gibbon, *At Gettysburg and Elsewhere*, 109-113; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 73-74.

This meeting was key for establishing the conditions for success on July 3, and it illustrates several principles of mission command. First, each corps commander had a shared understanding of the current situation. Each corps briefed their current numbers and an assessment of their fighting capability. This gave them an understanding of the capability throughout the army as well as of the units to their left and right. It also clearly stated Meade's intent for the fighting on July 3. Meade had already messaged Halleck that he intended to stay at Gettysburg. This portion of the meeting probably served two purposes. One, it solidified Meade's decision in his mind. Most likely Meade could have been talked out of his decision if a significant majority of his subordinates, or key ones, disagreed with his decision and could articulate their reasons why as shown by the council on July 13, 1863, where several of the corps commanders convinced Meade not to attack *Lee* at Williamsport for the Confederates could cross south of the Potomac River.¹⁹⁶ That they all agreed with Meade must have been of great reassurance to him. Second, the council generated buy in from his subordinates to his plan. Now they had a stake in the plan and felt that it was at least partly their own. This enabled his commanders to exercise disciplined initiative on the next day without direct approval from Meade, greatly increasing their adaptability and flexibility when facing *Pickett's Charge*. There was some downside to Meade's actions, or rather the lack of an action. Even after the council Meade was not aware that Slocum still considered himself the commander of the army's right wing and not just the XII Corps commander. This even though the right wing now only consisted of XII Corps. Meade did not go over the

¹⁹⁶ Hyde, *The Union Generals Speak*, 116-18.

changing command structure since July 1 when the army was split into several wings. This would have been prudent as there had been much change since then. Corps had moved around and commanders changed. One corps commander was dead and another gravely wounded. Clearing up the command picture would have prevented unnecessary confusion.

July 2, 1863, proved to be a very different day for Meade than July 1. July 1 saw Meade over a dozen miles from the fight and relying on trusted subordinates empowered with his intent to fight on the ground while Meade controlled the army. On July 2, Meade was in the center of the fight personally leading the army and often times at key points, once alone with his staff within sight of the enemy. This is an important point. There are times when the philosophy of mission command must give way to the requirements of the moment and the best solution may be personal leadership and intervention. Meade still relied on his trusted subordinates when required; he tasked Hancock once again, this time to assume command of III Corps and II Corps once Sickles was wounded. The great leadership problem from July 2, was the controversy with Sickles and III Corps along Cemetery Ridge.

During the morning hours, Meade was more concerned with his northern flank than his southern flank. This was fair for a few reasons. First, he knew that the rebels had forces on that flank. Second, they threatened Meade's ground line of communication back to his logistics node at Westminster. Third, Meade was considering an attack with V and XII Corps on his northern flank. This caused him ignore III Corps and his southern flank. During that time, he sent his son and aide to III Corps to ensure compliance. Even when Sickles visited army headquarters in person, Meade was most likely focused on the

north. Meade was content to have his chief of artillery scout the position with Sickles as Meade believed that his instructions to Sickles were clear and that Sickles understood. However, Meade erred in not visiting III Corps after he abandoned his offensive plan for the XII Corps but before 1500. Meade knew that Sickles was having issues with his positioning both from CPT Meade and BG Hunt. Meade should have visited Sickles between 1200 and 1400 to ensure understanding and to verify the actions of his subordinates. Sickles did not exercise disciplined initiative in moving his corps forward as he was not acting within Meade's intent. For initiative to be disciplined it must be within the higher commander's intent. The move to the Peach Orchard was not. The timing of Meade's visit to III Corps with the opening of *Longstreet's* attack meant that that Union reinforcements were sent in piecemeal. This caused confusion as units from different divisions and even corps fought together and allowed the Confederates to overwhelm the Union forces in detail before the Union forces could mass.¹⁹⁷

Despite this failure on Meade's part, Sickles bears much of the blame as well. On July 1, Sickles exercised disciplined initiative in ordering most of III Corps to Gettysburg despite orders from Meade not to do so and to defend Emmitsburg. On July 1, Sickles was operating within his higher headquarters intent. Based on seemingly conflicting orders from Reynolds and Meade, Sickles found a way to fulfill both by leaving two brigades and artillery to defend Emmitsburg and marching the remainder of the corps to Gettysburg. In contrast, on July 2, Sickles did not exercise disciplined initiative. Meade's intent was very clear to tie in with II Corps and to secure the Union southern flank on, or

¹⁹⁷ Sauer, *The Meade-Sickles Controversy*, 46.

at least up to, Little Round Top. Sickles, in ordering III Corps forward, did not fulfill the intent. He was neither tied in with II Corps nor able to secure the flank of the army by utilizing Little Round Top. In addition, he had no orders from higher that changed this intent. Sickles exercised initiative outside of Meade's intent and it almost cost the Army of the Potomac the battle. Despite this Meade reacted well to the crisis. He acted decisively, sending reinforcements to the threatened area as needed and stabilized the situation.

Finally, Meade prepared his command for the fight that occurred on July 3. His council of war on the night of July 2 set the conditions for a successful fight on the next day. Due to the council, each corps commander knew the strength and status of the other corps in the army. They also understood Meade's intent for the fighting on July 3 and how they could operate within this intent. This would prove invaluable on the next day, enabling his subordinates to react rapidly to the changing situation with orders from headquarters and causing the Confederate wave to break against the Army of the Potomac and recede forever south.

CHAPTER 5

JULY 3, 1863

There are times when a corps commander's life does not count.¹⁹⁸
— MG Winfield S. Hancock

With the day's actions complete Meade went to sleep to await the renewed Confederate attack in the morning. As Meade had predicted, *Lee* launched his main attack on July 3, 1863, against the Union center, although this was not *Lee*'s original plan. Initially this was to be a multi-flank attack. *Ewell*'s corps would assault the Union right at daylight in conjunction with *Longstreet*'s Corps, spearheaded by MG George S. *Pickett*'s fresh division, assaulting the Union left-center to the west of the Peach Orchard. As stated before, *Longstreet* had the custom of reporting to *Lee*'s headquarters after each day of fighting to create shared understanding and to receive *Lee*'s intent for future operations. It is notable that *Longstreet* did not visit *Lee*'s headquarters on the night of July 2, 1863. In fact, *Lee* did not meet with any of his corps commanders that night. This resulted in confusion and desynchronization. The next morning when *Lee* went to *Longstreet*'s Corps he found it not only unprepared to attack but about to start a flanking march around the Union southern flank. It was too late to call off *Ewell*'s attack so *Lee* had to improvise. The resulting plan would become what is now known as *Pickett's Charge* and would match Meade's prediction from the night before.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Sauers, *Gettysburg*, 400.

¹⁹⁹ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 347-348. Pickett's Charge should probably be called the Pickett-Pettigrew-Tremble Charge or something of that nature.

Meade awoke at dawn on July 3, 1863, and began by inspecting his positions with BGs Hunt and Warren. The party stopped first at Culp's Hill, where at 0430 the Union artillery had attacked the entrenchments on Culp's Hill the Confederates had captured on July 2. This artillery fire preempted *MG Johnson's* planned divisional Confederate attack. Meade reinforced XII Corps with BG Shaler's brigade from VI Corps and the battle raged back and forth. He also ordered that the cavalry guarded the Hanover Road to the east of Gettysburg.²⁰⁰ MG Slocum, the XII Corps, and their position had Meade's trust so Meade did not stay at Culp's Hill long, riding south to inspect the rest of his lines. Meade continued to build shared understanding and describe his commander's intent throughout the morning. At 0800 MG Butterfield sent a message to VI Corps stating that Meade believed that the intention of the Confederates was to "make the attempt to pierce our center" and requested that VI Corps use two of its three reserve brigades to mass "in a central position near where they can support Howard or be thrown to the right or left, as required."²⁰¹

Between 0700 and 0840, Meade extended his understanding and intent to MG Darius Couch, commanding the local militia and the Department of the Susquehanna, and MG French, who was commanding the garrison at Harper's Ferry, in order to synchronize the actions of all three elements against the Confederates. The dispatches that Meade sent to French and Couch described Meade's current situation and the events

The plan was for three divisions; Pickett's, Pettigrew's, and Tremble's to assault the center of the Union line.

²⁰⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 502.

²⁰¹ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume LI, part I, section 2, 1068.

of previous days before giving instructions to each element through mission orders on what their commands were to do should the Union be victorious, as well as if the Army of the Potomac was defeated on July 3.²⁰² Hancock and Meade inspected II Corps at approximately 0900. Meade was pleased with the situation on both flanks. He believed that his artillery had good coverage in the center, and thought that he could reinforce the center with infantry if needed. As Meade described it to Hancock, if the Confederates attacked II Corps then Meade would attack the Confederates' southern flank with the V and VI Corps.²⁰³ After synchronizing with Hancock, Meade rode south to speak with MGs Newton and Sedgwick, before ending his inspection on Little Round Top and returning to his headquarters.²⁰⁴ Back on Culp's Hill, *MG Johnson* launched three attacks against the Union forces, but the Federals were dug in too well for the Confederates to succeed. *MG Johnson* admitted defeat and called off the attacks at approximately 1100.²⁰⁵

Around 1100, after he inspected the entire Union line of artillery, Hunt moved from Culp's Hill to Cemetery Hill and observed that the whole Union front was covered by Confederate batteries either already in position or moving into their firing positions. Hunt believed this artillery positioning was to cover a large Confederate assault on the center of the Union line along Cemetery Ridge, based off of his shared understanding

²⁰² U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 499, 501-503.

²⁰³ Frank A. Haskell, *The Battle of Gettysburg* (Bellevue, WA: Big Byte Books, 2016), 51; U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 408.

²⁰⁴ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 372-373.

²⁰⁵ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 458-461.

with Meade on what the commander believed the Confederates' next move would be. Hunt ordered the corps' artillery chiefs and the artillery reserve battery commanders to hold their fire for "fifteen or twenty minutes after the cannonade commenced" in order to focus the Union counter-battery fire on the effective Confederate batteries as well as to save ammunition for the impending infantry assault. Hunt did this on his own initiative since he believed that "there was neither time nor necessity for reporting this to General Meade."²⁰⁶ This decision would prove to be important during *Pickett's Charge* as the batteries who did not hold their fire ran out of long-range ammunition prior to the charge. The fact that Hunt was able to make this decision without going back to Meade, enabled him to make the decision before it was too late. Had Hunt been required to gain clearance from Meade to issue the order to the batteries the order probably would have never been given before the Confederates opened fire.

Around noon Meade joined Hancock and Gibbon for lunch, including some chickens of questionably old age, near Gibbon's headquarters. They were soon joined by MG Newton and MG Pleasonton. At 1220 MG Slocum demonstrated his shared understanding of Meade's intent when he informed Meade that XII Corps had "gained a decided advantage on my front, and hope to be able to spare one or two brigades to help you on some other part of the line." Meade responded with instructions to position Shaler's brigade in a central location as a reserve. At around 1230 Meade returned to his headquarters and slowly the lunch party broke up. Just as Hunt completed his task of

²⁰⁶ Henry J. Hunt, "The Third Day at Gettysburg," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 371-372.

giving the order to his batteries to wait fifteen to twenty minutes, the Confederate signal guns open fire, thus beginning the largest artillery duel of the war. The time was 1307.²⁰⁷

The Confederate batteries were shooting long that days paring most of the Union regiments and batteries posted on the front lines with the notable exception of II Corps' artillery. During this barrage Hancock continued to ride mounted to encourage his men. When an aide asked him to not risk himself in such a display, Hancock replied that ““there are times when a corps commander's life does not count.”²⁰⁸ Meade and his staff were not as lucky as the infantryman along the forward lines. Much of the Confederate artillery fell in the Union rear area and Meade's headquarters received quite a bit of unintended attention. The fire forced Meade to move his headquarters farther to the rear and ultimately to Power's Hill with Slocum, almost a mile behind the lines, after the fire wounded Butterfield, killed several of the headquarters' horses, and grazed Meade himself. Before Meade relocated his headquarters, he continued to issue orders and called for reinforcements to the center.²⁰⁹ Throughout this artillery duel, Meade shifted his reserves in order to repel the now apparent forthcoming assault. However, it was still only an artillery battle, consuming large quantities of ammunition with no sign of the Confederate infantry. At 1345 Sykes reported that his units observed the enemy advancing on V Corps' left and front. This message wasn't received by Meade until 1425

²⁰⁷ Haskell, *The Battle of Gettysburg*, 52-55; U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 500; Sears, *Gettysburg*, 396.

²⁰⁸ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 400.

²⁰⁹ Sauer, *Victor of Gettysburg*, 56-57.

and at 1430 Meade responded to Sykes that if attacked it was not within his intent to move any troops from V Corps.²¹⁰

Hunt was riding the line during this time, inspecting the batteries as well as their ammunition levels. Upon discovering that the ammunition levels were getting low Hunt rode to find Meade and to recommend that the Union artillery cease counter-battery fire and prepare to engage the Confederate infantry assault. The ammunition level was important for the Army of the Potomac because their closest artillery depot was located at Westminster, Maryland, over 20 miles away and they had been firing for over an hour.²¹¹ Hunt was unable to find Meade at army headquarters or Cemetery Hill, but Hunt did meet with Howard and MAJ Osborne, XI Corps' head of artillery. The three officers spoke, and Hunt discussed his desire for a cease fire in order to conserve ammunition for the impending attack. Hunt explained to the two XI Corps officers that Meade wanted the Confederates to attack. Howard stated that such a ceasefire may draw the Confederates out. Hunt exercised disciplined initiative and decided to give the ceasefire order himself and inform Meade of his actions when he next ran into Meade.²¹² MAJ Osborne gave the order to his batteries while Hunt left to give the order to those along Cemetery Ridge. This cessation of firing caused the Confederates to believe that they had neutralized the

²¹⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part III, 500.

²¹¹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 380.

²¹² Pfanz, *Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill*, 362-363.

Union batteries and stopped firing.²¹³ A few minutes later, at approximately 1500 almost thirteen thousand Confederate soldiers emerged from the woods and began their almost mile long march towards the Union lines.²¹⁴ *Pickett's Charge* had begun.

The long Confederate line marched out in a grand spectacle. *Lee* had counted on his artillery to better the odds for his infantry. However, the Confederate artillery had failed. The Union batteries sprung back to life, but now focused on the Confederate infantry.²¹⁵ Hunt had replaced the damaged batteries and the Union artillery continued to engage with long-range munitions. The Union artillery fired all along their line except for the batteries that belong to II Corps which were short on long-range ammunition after Hancock ordered them to not wait the 15 to 20 minutes in order to improve the morale of the infantry. The Confederate infantry continued forward, filling the huge gaps torn into their line by the Union guns. The Confederate assault began to come apart as the first echelons hit the Emmitsburg Road. *COL John M. Brockenbrough's Virginian Brigade* from *MG J. Johnston Pettigrew's Division*, under *MG Heth* until he was wounded, was the first to go as it received enfilade fire from XI Corps' artillery and a flank attack from the forward positioned 8th Ohio Regiment of BG Alexander Hays' Third Division, II Corps as the Confederate brigade passed the Bliss Farm. The 8th Ohio, joined by the 1st

²¹³ E. Porter Alexander, "The Great Charge and Artillery Fighting at Gettysburg," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume 3*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Co., 1888), 364.

²¹⁴ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 502; Henry J. Hunt, "The Third Day at Gettysburg," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 374.

²¹⁵ E. Porter Alexander, "The Great Charge and Artillery Fighting at Gettysburg," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 365.

Massachusetts Sharpshooters, 126th New York Regiment, and 108th New York Regiment, then flanked *Davis' Brigade*. On the southern flank the 13th and 16th Vermont Regiments were able to flank *BG Richard B. Garnett* and *BG James L. Kemper's Brigades* from *Pickett's Division*. The surviving Confederates pushed on, focusing on the Angle and the Copse of Trees as their markers, receiving intense rifle and canister fire.²¹⁶

The Confederates slammed into the divisions of BGs Gibbon and Hays, respectively the second and third divisions of II Corps. Portions of *Pickett's Division* were able to breach the stone wall at the Angle forcing the 69th Pennsylvania Regiment to refuse its right flank. As the Confederates pushed forward more Union units arrived. The brigades of BG William Harrow and COL Norman J. Hall, both of Gibbon's division arrived to pour fire on the Confederates. At about this time Hancock and Gibbon fell wounded. After several minutes of close fighting the Confederates started to withdraw. The entire advance had taken about one hour.²¹⁷

To the south the Union forces defeated the supporting attack by *COL David Lang's Florida Brigade* and *BG Wilcox's Brigade*, both from *Richard Anderson's Division* of *Hill's Corps*. They started late and did not contribute significantly to the Confederate effort. *Lang's Brigade* suffered heavily from a flank attack by the 14th and 16th Vermont regiments. While the fighting was going on Meade was busy ordering reinforcements from all over the army to include VI and III Corps forward to support II Corps. Towards the end of the fighting Meade and his son rode from near the Leister

²¹⁶ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 504-516.

²¹⁷ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 448-454.

House towards the fighting. As Meade and his son approached the fighting, they encountered 1LT Frank Haskell, Gibbon's aide. Meade asked Haskell how the fight was going and Haskell responded that "the enemy's attack is repulsed." Meade was surprised by this information, but just then reached the crest of the ridge and saw the surviving Confederates in retreat and the masses of Confederate prisoners. He stated, "Thank God."²¹⁸

The Battle of Gettysburg had been decided but the fighting was not completely over. After defeating Pickett's Charge, BG Judson Kilpatrick ordered a disastrous cavalry charge by BG Elon J. Farnsworth's brigade against the Confederate southern flank which was easily repulsed and resulted in BG Farnsworth's death. At approximately 1630 Sykes ordered one brigade to conduct a reconnaissance in force in vicinity of The Wheatfield. This brigade, First Brigade, Third Division, V Corps, along with COL David J. Nevin's Third Brigade, Third Division, VI Corps came into contact with an already withdrawing 15th Georgia regiment from *Hood's Division*, but reported driving the entire division back to Seminary Ridge. This misrepresentation, coming into contact with a withdrawing regiment was seen as forcibly driving back an entire division, would cause confusion and trouble for Meade later. This action apparently showed that an advance could have easily crushed the Confederate southern flank.²¹⁹ With this action complete, the Battle of Gettysburg was over.

²¹⁸ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 504-531; Haskell, *The Battle of Gettysburg*, 76.

²¹⁹ Hyde, *The Union Generals Speak*, 345-347.

Meade received criticism from contemporaries and historians for not aggressively counter-attacking the Confederates after defeating *Pickett's Charge*. Whether such an attack would have succeeded is up for debate. An attack by XII Corps on the right flank would have achieved little. While XII was the second least damaged corps in the army, it was located on the extreme right of the Union line. They could at best force back *MG Johnson's Division* but not more than that. It would have been an isolated tactical success at best. I and XI Corps were used up from the fighting on the first two days. In addition, the Union command had no faith in the ability of XI Corps to defend let alone conduct a major attack. Additionally, Meade already decided on July 2, that the terrain around XII Corps was not favorable for an attack. II Corps was still severely disorganized from defeating *Pickett's Charge*. They had taken numerous casualties and units became intermixed in the confused fighting near The Angle. In addition, the corps' two ranking officers were wounded. Any attack by II Corps would have had to occur over the same open field that had proved so deadly to the Confederates. Even if the Confederate infantry did not regroup, the Union forces would conduct their attack against massed Confederate artillery. Although the rebel guns were low on long-ranged ammunition, they were relatively well-stocked on canister rounds. III Corps was still "used up", as stated by its commander during the July 2 council.²²⁰ While the right flank and center did not offer much benefit for a counterattack, the situation on the Union left with the V and VI Corps was more favorable.

²²⁰ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 74.

First, the Union left flank was much closer to their Confederate counterparts, in many places only a couple hundred yards separated the two forces. Secondly, the two corps were relatively intact up to that time. V Corps had suffered approximately 20 percent casualties from the fighting so far.²²¹ While severe, this was the third lowest in the army. VI Corps was the obvious choice to serve as the main effort for a Union counterattack. It was the largest corps in the Army of the Potomac and had suffered minimal casualties, only 204 casualties for the entire battle.²²² Finally, a successful Union attack on *Longstreet's Corps* offered the chance for operational and even strategic impacts. Even an immensely successful attack from the Union right flank would have merely pushed the Confederates back onto the lines of communications to the south. An attack from the Union left flank, however, could cut these lines of communication to the south and trapping the *Army of Northern Virginia* in place.

It appears that Meade came to the same conclusion. Hancock testified that prior to *Pickett's Charge* Meade told him that if *Lee* attacked II Corps on July 3, that Meade would attack the Confederate southern flank with V and VI Corps.²²³ Whether or not Meade should have counterattacked is up to debate and is outside the scope of this paper. What matters is that before *Pickett's Charge* Meade stated to Hancock that if the Confederates attacked his center, he wanted to counterattack with V and VI Corps. It is not clear if this was indeed Meade's intent before the charge or if Meade simply

²²¹ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 37.

²²² U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 180-182.

²²³ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 408.

entertained the idea out loud. If Meade was merely entertaining the idea then Sykes and Sedgwick understood Meade's intent and acted accordingly. If Meade did intent to counterattack then Meade failed to clearly articulate this new intent to his subordinates.

While the VI Corps was the strongest in the army, Meade had dispersed it all over the field to plug gaps and serve as reinforcements.²²⁴ It had one brigade on the far right of the army supporting XII Corps while another on the far left blocking the Taneytown Road to guard from any Confederate flanking attack.²²⁵ This disposition caused Sedgwick to complain that he "might as well go home."²²⁶ Meade made no effort to untangle the Union disposition in order to prepare for an attack. That neither corps commander did also indicated that they were not aware of Meade's intent.

As this was the case then one must admit that Meade failed in that respect and in the philosophy of mission command when it came to this contingency. While Meade had mutual trust with both Sykes and Sedgwick, he failed to create a shared understanding with them over his intent on a potential counterattack. Had they possessed a shared understanding of Meade's intent they could have reorganized the Union southern flank to make it cohesive with corps integrity, vital for any offensive operations. They also could have initiated the attack soon after the repulse of *Pickett's Charge*. This would have eliminated the problem of the late hour and the setting sun. There is debate over when Meade gave Sykes the order to push out into the Wheatfield. Sedgwick, who was with

²²⁴ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 460.

²²⁵ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 464-465.

²²⁶ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 272.

Sykes at the time, believed that Sykes gave the order around 1600, but it could have been past 1800. *LTC Fremantle*, a British officer embedded in the *Army of Northern Virginia* as an observer, saw a mounted officer with a large staff riding south to the cheers of his soldiers at approximately 1800. This was most likely Meade riding to confer with V and VI Corps after checking on the Union right flank. If *LTC Fremantle* is correct with the time, then the order would have been given much later than Sykes recalled.²²⁷ While Meade failed to carry out his intended counterattack, this must not distract from the fact that Meade enabled the Union forces to defeat *Pickett's Charge* without major direct input from Meade himself. This was possible because Meade had created shared understanding, clearly described his intent, accepted prudent risk, and empowered his subordinates, especially the Union Chief of Artillery, BG Hunt.

Hunt must receive much credit for the Union defeating Pickett's Charge. The Union artillery caused much havoc within the Confederate lines throughout the entire assault from long-range shot to close in canister fire. Hunt exercised disciplined initiative at least twice on key decisions that enabled this victory. First, when ordering his batteries to hold fire for fifteen to twenty minutes to save long-range ammunition and a second time when he ordered the ceasefire to lure out the Confederate assault and to once again conserve his long-range ammunition. Both of these decisions proved to be well within Meade's intent and were vital, timely decisions made by an empowered and informed subordinate leader.

²²⁷ U.S. Congress, *Conduct of the War*, 462; Arthur J. Freemantle, *Three Months in the Southern States: April-June 1863* (New York: John Bradburn, 1864), 270, accessed May 9, 2019, <https://ia802606.us.archive.org/15/items/threemonthsinsou00frem>, eBook.

This success was due, in large part, because Meade exercised and enabled the priorities of the mission command philosophy. First, Meade and Hunt were a cohesive team that had been developed through mutual trust. Hunt was known during the war as the foremost expert on the use and employment of artillery. Meade empowered Hunt to fully command the artillery within the Army of the Potomac. After the disastrous loss at Chancellorsville in May 1863, MG Hooker returned full control of the Union artillery to Hunt.²²⁸ However, Meade was not bound to maintain the current organization whereby the army maintained a large artillery reserve and Hunt remained in control of the Union artillery. While the timing of his assumption of command made such a reorganization at that moment unwise, Meade did not need to give Hunt this control and freedom of action. He could have required Hunt to gain permission before issuing orders or have Hunt serve in an administrative role as MG Hooker had Hunt do during Chancellorsville. That Meade did not keep Hunt in an administrative role showed his trust in Hunt. Hunt also trusted that Meade would accept and support his decisions as long as they were reasonable. This mutual trust enabled Meade to empower Hunt to fight the Union artillery, freeing Meade to focus on the infantry. It also enabled Hunt to exercise his disciplined initiative based on the current situation. Along with this mutual trust Meade and Hunt shared an understanding of the operational environment and of Meade's intent for the actions on July 3.

Meade must be credited for creating this shared understanding with his chief of artillery. Hunt was not at the council on July 2 although Meade had requested his

²²⁸ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 355.

presence. Hunt had spent most of the night with BG Tyler re consolidating and reorganizing the Union artillery.²²⁹ Despite Hunt's absence he was informed of the unanimous result and the decision to hold the lines and await a Confederate attack.²³⁰ This was most likely done by either MG Butterfield or Meade himself once Hunt returned to army headquarters. This means that Hunt had a shared understanding of the operational plan and of Meade's intent. Hunt would have known the relative combat strengths of each corps and obviously of each of the artillery batteries. He knew Meade wished to remain on the defensive for at least one more day awaiting a Confederate assault. It also seems likely, however not proven, that Meade also informed Hunt that he expected the Confederates to attack the Union center on July 3. However, it is known that Meade made his interest on his center clear to Hunt on July 3 a little before 1100. Hunt had just finished inspecting the entirety of the Union artillery and delivering his report to Meade at his headquarters when Meade spoke to him about his concerns for the center of the Union line.²³¹ The trust between the two generals combined with the shared understanding and Meade's clear intent is what enabled Hunt to exercise his disciplined initiative on July 3.

As previously stated, Hunt exercised disciplined initiative twice during key points on July 3. The first was when Hunt ordered the Union batteries to wait 15-20 minutes from the start of the Confederate bombardment and then to focus their counter-battery

²²⁹ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 155.

²³⁰ Henry J. Hunt, "The Second Day at Gettysburg," in Johnson and Buel, *Battles and Leaders*, 313.

²³¹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 375.

fire on the most effective Confederate batteries after he observed the Confederate artillery moving into position. Hunt made this decision on his own as there was not enough time to inform Meade of his decision. The only portion of the Union artillery that did not follow this guidance was II Corps' artillery, which Hancock ordered to continue firing. Hunt's order was important because the II Corps artillery ran out of long-range ammunition prior to Pickett's Charge while the rest of the Union artillery did not. This was important in disrupting the Confederate attack before it got within rifle range. The second is when Hunt ordered the artillery to cease firing during the artillery duel. This was clearly within Meade's intent because shortly after issuing this ceasefire order to the batteries, a II Corps staff officer found Hunt with orders from Meade to cease fire. Warren had signaled Meade from his observation point on Little Round Top that the Union counter-battery fire was having little effect on the Confederates except for creating smoke that would conceal the Confederate assault and recommended the Union batteries cease fire.²³²

Finally, Hunt did not gamble when he made his decision, instead accepting prudent risk. There were several risks that Hunt had to account for when ordering the ceasefire. These risks were the effects of the unmolested Confederate artillery fire, expending all the Union ammunition prior to the assault, and the drop in the Union infantry's morale if their batteries did not return fire. Hunt could see that the Confederate artillery fire against the Union infantry and most of the Union batteries was ineffective even during the first twenty minutes when the Confederate batteries were firing

²³² Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg*, 161.

unmolested. Therefore, the risk of using all the available long-range ammunition prior to the infantry assault was greater than the risk provided by the Confederate artillery. Hunt also considered the effect on the Union infantry. Hunt asked MG Howard and MAJ Osborne if the XI Corps, the most suspect in the Army of the Potomac, would stay if the artillery ceased firing. MG Howard stated that his men would fight. Finally, Hunt considered other mitigating factors when making his decision. Hunt believed that the Union artillery ceasing fire would deceive the Confederates into believing that they had neutralized the Union artillery. The Confederates would then cease their own artillery fire and they would start their infantry assault shortly after this. This would further reduce the risk of ordering the ceasefire. As it played out Hunt was correct in the belief that the benefits of the ceasefire outweighed the risks. His artillery played a vital role in crushing *Pickett's Charge* and defeating the Confederacy's last strategic offensive in the east.

Meade had little direct impact during the actual repulse of *Pickett's Charge* on July 3. Most of the actual direct leadership was provided by Hancock, BGs Gibbon and Hays, and their subordinates along with artillery assistance from Hunt. Meade should not be criticized for not needing to be directly involved. In fact, he should be praised for this fact. Due to this, it must be said that Meade succeeded on July 3 and not only because the Army of the Potomac defeated *Pickett's Charge*. In fact, this is the exact situation where employing the philosophy of mission command is most important. It is also where modern readers can gain insights on how to operate in a communications-degraded environment. It must be acknowledged that an area defense requires less coordination and command and control than an attack does. During the assault itself, Meade mostly issued orders directing his reserves to central positions in order to rapidly reinforce II Corps.

Meade was also aware of the corps' actions as evidenced by his redirection of Shaler's Brigade enroute to MG Wadsworth to the rear of the III Corps area and reserve instead.²³³ However, Meade established the conditions for success on the afternoon of July 3 during the night of July 2 and the morning of July 3 prior to the assault. Meade ensured that he and his corps commanders had a shared understanding of the situation as well as his commander's intent for the defense on July 3. Meade was also willing to let his trusted subordinates accept prudent risk to react to the developing situation. This enabled Meade's subordinates, specifically the commanders and staff within II Corps and Hunt, to react rapidly as required by the situation and defeat *Pickett's Charge* and win the Battle of Gettysburg.

²³³ U.S. War Department, *OR*, series I, volume XXVII, part I, 681.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The World . . . Can Never Forget What They Did Here.²³⁴
— President Abraham Lincoln

The four score and seventh Independence Day was one of great celebration in the North. News of Meade's victory at Gettysburg was soon met by word of MG Grant's capture of Vicksburg, securing the Mississippi River for the Union and splitting the Confederate States of America. The fighting would not continue at Gettysburg on July 4 as *Lee* began to withdraw his army and Meade awaited a fourth Confederate attack. While Meade's listless pursuit of *Lee* caused Meade professional headaches down the road, he had won a famous and important victory during those three days in southern Pennsylvania.

The philosophy of mission command was not American leadership doctrine at the time of the American Civil War. The first doctrinal use of a form of mission command would come three years after the Battle of Gettysburg by the Prussians in their 1866 war against the Austrians and slowly morph into the current Army philosophy of mission command. However, mission command was developed to solve the problems that began in the Napoleonic Wars and were fully evident by Gettysburg. Namely, how do you lead a large army on battlefields too large for a single leader to exert direct control. The current philosophy has six principles: build cohesive teams through mutual trust, create shared understanding, provide a clear commander's intent, exercise disciplined initiative,

²³⁴ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 535.

use mission orders, and accept prudent risk. Elements of these principles are visible in successful Civil War leaders. Looking at Meade's actions at Gettysburg shows that Meade did use many of these elements throughout the battle and that they were often important factors in the victory.

The first and foundational step for mission command is to build a cohesive team through mutual trust. Meade attempted to do this when possible with great effect. When Meade assumed command on June 28, he had trust with most of his subordinates. Meade was in command for only three days before the Battle of Gettysburg. As such, he was not able to use traditional team-building methods with those subordinates he did not share mutual trust with to bring them onboard. This forced Meade to use his subordinate he already trusted. His actions before and during the battle demonstrate that he clearly trusted Reynolds and Hancock, whom Meade entrusted with great responsibility. He also trusted Hunt, to whom he restored command of all Union artillery, as well as Sykes, Sedgwick, and Slocum. He did not trust Pleasanton, who was used in a reduced role and not as the overall cavalry commander. He did not trust Sickles, a political general who was the only general to advise Hooker to retreat at Chancellorsville, and Meade appeared to be lukewarm on Howard.²³⁵ MG Halleck had given Meade the authority to make appointments as he saw fit, regardless of seniority or customs, and Meade did so on multiple occasions. He promoted Newton to command I Corps even though Doubleday was senior and already a member of I Corps. Meade did this because he did not have faith in Doubleday based on their previous time together. Meade sent Hancock to take charge

²³⁵ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 65.

of the field from Howard on July 1 after Reynolds was killed in action. Meade chose Hancock because Hancock knew Meade's intentions and because Meade knew Hancock but did not know Howard. On July 2, Meade chose Hancock again, this time to take charge of III Corps and II Corps after Sickles was wounded.²³⁶ He chose Gibbon to replace Hancock each time even though Gibbon was not the senior division commander in II Corps. Meade knew Gibbon from earlier in the war and believed in Gibbon. This choice seemed to be the correct one as Gibbon handled the corps well both times, validating Meade's trust in him. Each time, Meade chose to empower and select a subordinate that he trusted over one that he did not trust. The philosophy calls for mutual trust and luckily for Meade most of his key subordinates trusted him. This was due to Meade's successful history in the war as well as his vocal attempts to convince MG Hooker, the previous commander of the Army of the Potomac, to counterattack the Confederates at Chancellorsville.²³⁷

The next two principles are to create shared understanding and to provide a clear commander's intent. This enables the subordinate commanders to understand the situation and the commander's desired endstate. There was almost always discretion built into orders in the Civil War. Most commanders recognized that they could not control all of the details of the entire fight. However, most of the time Meade made certain to share his intent. Meade was open to sharing what he was thinking with his subordinates.²³⁸ This

²³⁶ Gibbon, *At Gettysburg and Elsewhere*, 113.

²³⁷ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 66.

²³⁸ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 186.

could have been influenced by Meade's frustration at Hooker with Hooker's habit of keeping his corps commanders in the dark while he was in command of the army.²³⁹ Throughout the battle Meade created a shared understanding with his corps commanders. Often Meade also shared his commander's intent at the same time. Early on July 1, he sent the dispatch to Reynolds that contained the lengthy update describing the enemy situation as well as his plans for the battle while asking for Reynolds' opinion on the matters. Later that day when Hancock arrived at Taneytown Meade gave an update to Hancock that included the current situation and his intentions. This proved to be very useful, when shortly after, Meade learned that Reynolds was dead, he sent Hancock forward to take command at Gettysburg until Slocum arrived. Around midday on July 2 Meade attempted to hold a council with his corps commanders to go over the current situation but other events got in the way.

Meade was successful with his famous council on the night of July 2. During this council each corps commander briefed their strength, the fight from that day, and the current condition of their corps. This gave Meade and each of the corps commanders an understanding of the current situation. They knew which corps were weak, which were relatively strong and their current disposition. After this, the discussion moved to future plans. All of the officers present were unanimous that the army should stay and await a Confederate attack in their current location for at least one day. Concerning mission command, the second part of the council also had a purpose. The council created buy in from the corps commanders for Meade's plan for July 3. It clearly established Meade's

²³⁹ Rafuse, *George Gordon Meade and the War in the East*, 67.

intent for the fighting on July 3. The corps commanders all understood the plan and how Meade envisioned the battle developing. This had great effect on July 3, enabling Union officers to make rapid and timely decisions without needing to seek clearance from Meade. This is easily compared with the actions within the *Army of Northern Virginia*. There, the army commander never met with all of the corps commanders at once to create a shared understanding to establish *Lee's* intent for the next day's fighting. This often led to desynchronization in the Confederate actions.²⁴⁰

Hunt was not at the council on July 2, but was briefed on the meeting when he returned to headquarters. With this understanding and intent Hunt was able to exercise disciplined initiative on July 3, allowing the Union artillery to play a key role in defeating *Pickett's Charge*. During July 3 though, Meade did fail to properly express his intent with enough forewarning. Before *Pickett's Charge* Meade described to Hancock how he wanted to attack with V and VI Corps on the Union left flank if *Lee* attacked the center of the Union line. However, Meade did not clearly state this intent to either Sykes or Sedgwick before the repulse of *Pickett's Charge*. Had he done so the two commanders might have been able to untangle their two corps and launch a counterattack hours before the reconnaissance actually went out on the end of July 3.

Shared understanding and a clear commander's intent are vital for subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative. Most of the disciplined initiative during the battle was from Meade's subordinates which was enabled by Meade's habit of disclosing his intent and the current situation to them. However, Meade himself exercised disciplined

²⁴⁰ Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 455.

initiative throughout the campaign by operating within the intent provided from Washington that the Army of the Potomac act both as the army of action against the *Army of Northern Virginia* as well as the defensive army protecting Baltimore and Washington, DC. This guidance played a key role in Meade's mind when he selected Pipe Creek as a possible defensive position and issued the Pipe Creek Circular. It also impacted how Meade fought the battle.

In addition to Meade's use of disciplined initiative, the more important factor was how Meade's leadership enabled his subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative. There are numerous examples of this throughout the battle. One clear example is Hunt's actions on July 3. As stated earlier, Hunt was not at Meade's council on July 2 but he was briefed on it when he returned to headquarters. Armed with this knowledge he exercised disciplined initiative on two separate occasions. The first was to order the Union artillery to wait about fifteen minutes until responding to the Confederate artillery barrage in order to save long-range ammunition. This was key because the II Corps artillery did not hold fire and subsequently ran out of long-range ammunition before the infantry assault, reducing the effectiveness of the II Corps defense. The second decision was to order the Union artillery to ceasefire during the Confederate barrage to once again conserve ammunition and to entice the Confederate attack. This plan worked and brought forward the Confederate infantry. Hunt made both of these decisions based on his understanding of Meade's intent and without reaching back to Meade for permission. This sped up the Union decision making timeline and allowed them to quickly react to the changing situation.

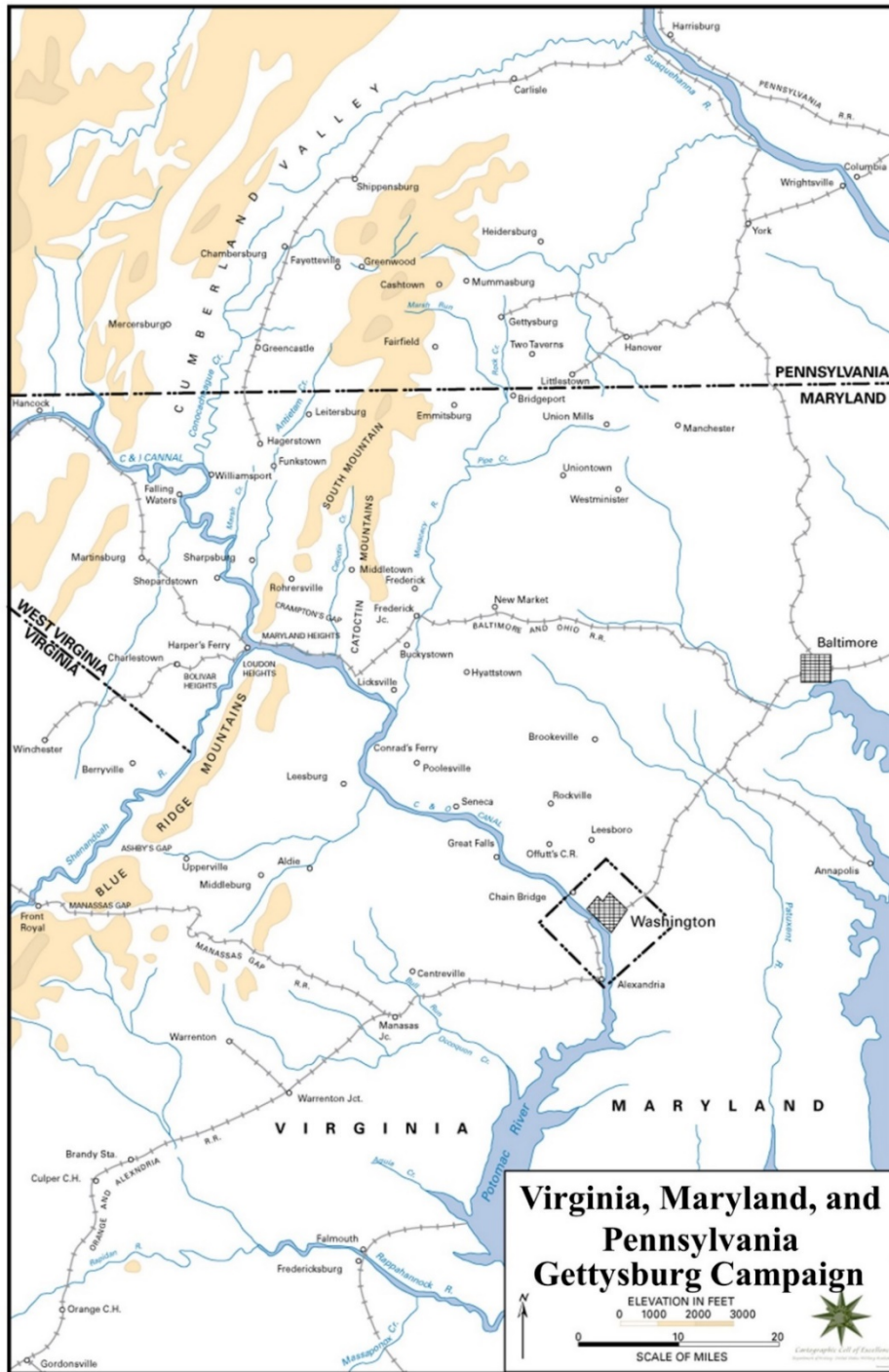
The final two principles of the philosophy of mission command are to use mission orders and to accept prudent risk throughout the operation. As stated earlier, many of the orders issued during the Civil War by high-level commanders would be considered mission orders today. The commanders knew that they simply did not have the technology or the capability to micromanage the fight and would have to give their subordinate commanders latitude. Meade did this as well, to include his orders to Sickles on July 2 and his orders to Reynolds on July 1. At Gettysburg, Meade often stated what to do, not specifically how to do it. What made Meade more successful at Gettysburg is that he paired this latitude with his intent. Finally, there is accepting prudent risk. Meade's leadership allowed his subordinates to accept prudent risk such as Hancock sending the 1st Minnesota forward on July 2, Sickles marching to the sound of the guns on July 1, or Hunt commanding his cannons on July 3.

Meade did not fight a perfect battle. He gave Sickles too much leeway on July 2 and did not inspect III Corps position until it was too late and well after he should have. He also failed to clearly state his intent for V and VI Corps to counterattack on July 3 until well after the Union repulsed *Pickett's Charge* and it was too late in the day to have an effect. Despite this Meade deserves much praise for his actions during Gettysburg. Within six days of taking command of the Army of the Potomac Meade won a massive battle, stopping *Lee's* second invasion of the North, and shattering the aura of invincibility around the *Army of Northern Virginia*. Much of this must be credited to Meade's leadership during the battle. Meade used a style of leadership that often gave leeway to his subordinate commanders like many of the commanders during the Civil War. Where Meade differed at Gettysburg was that he often made it a point to create

shared understanding and to clearly state his intent which allowed his corps commanders to exercise disciplined initiative and accept prudent risk. Meade also effectively used direct leadership when called for, specifically in the early evening of July 2, leading reinforcements forward and at one point appearing in the line with his staff alone. Meade's actions at Gettysburg show that he used elements from the philosophy of mission command during the battle because they were the right way to fight it. His actions also give an example to a contemporary student on how the philosophy of mission command can be used in a degraded communications environment. In November 1863 Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address to help dedicate the new national cemetery at Gettysburg. During his famous 271 words the president declared that "[t]he world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."²⁴¹ At the very least the Army and its officers should not forget what Meade did in southern Pennsylvania in July 1863.

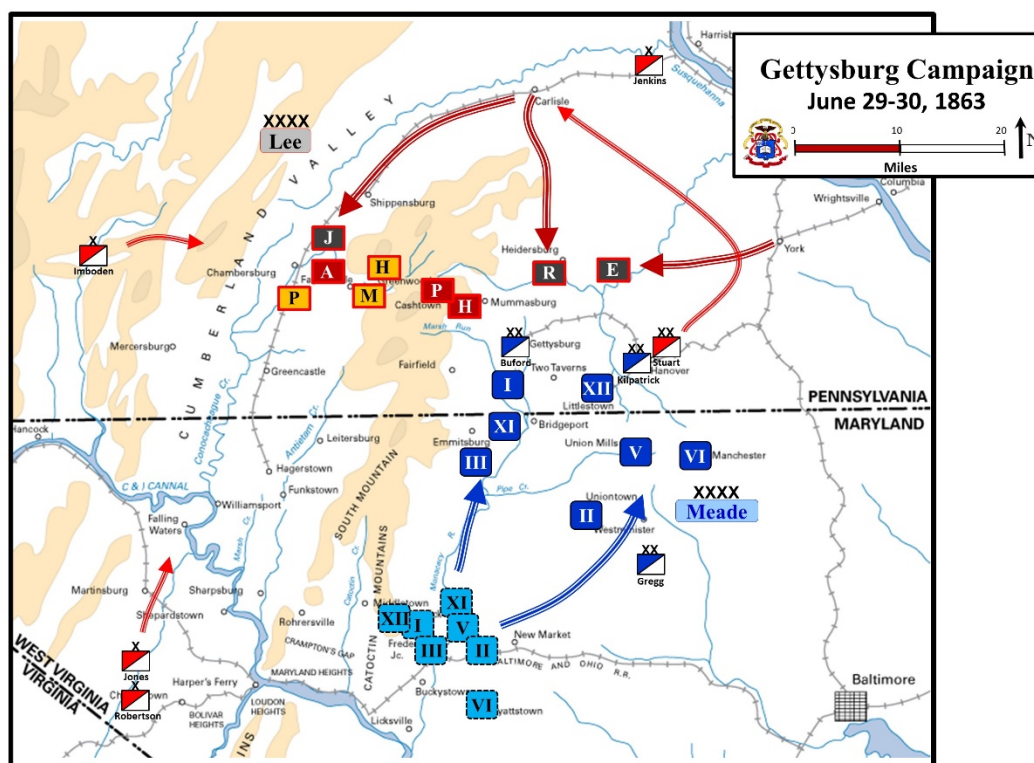
²⁴¹ Adkin, *The Gettysburg Companion*, 535.

ILLUSTRATIONS



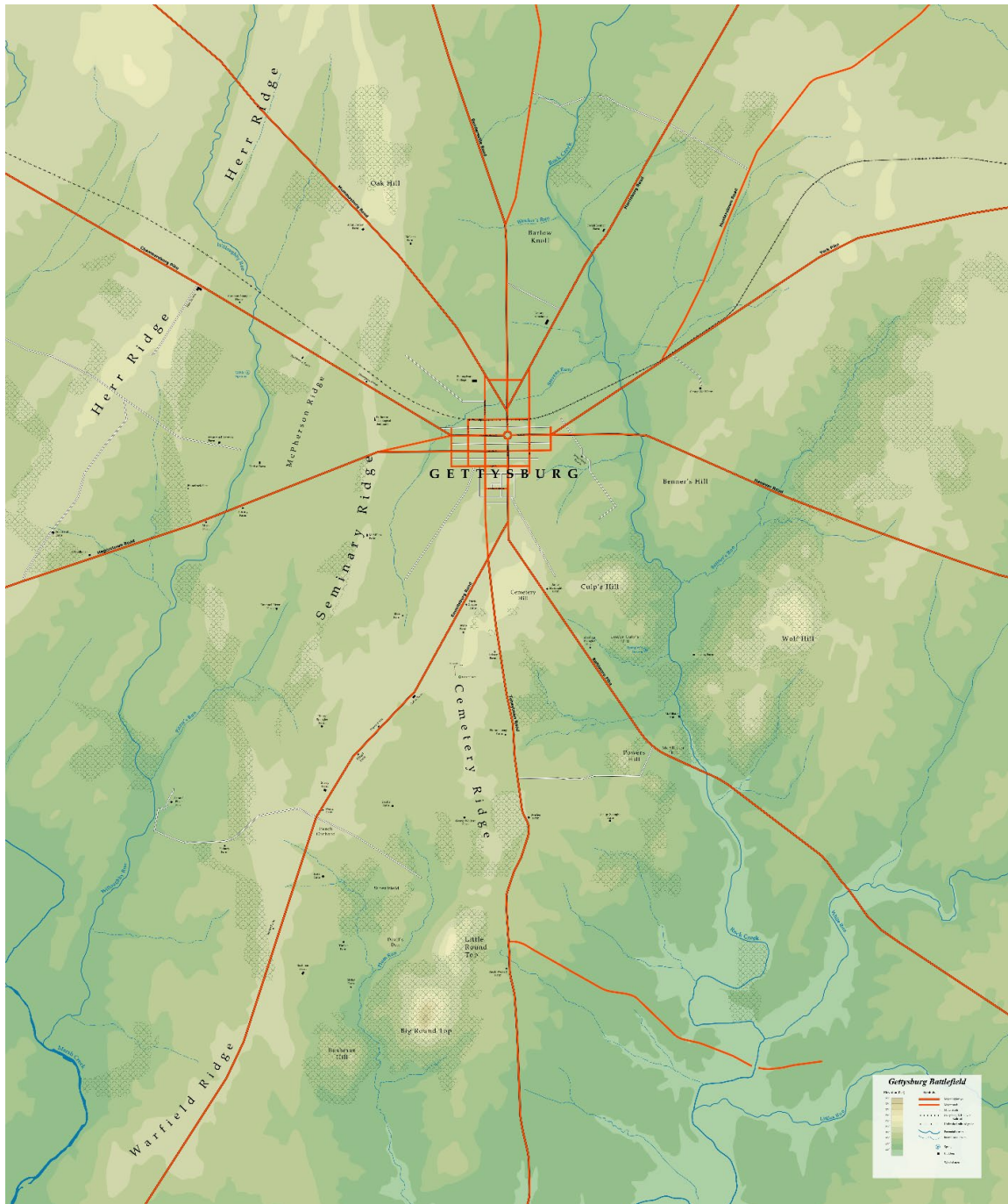
Map of the Gettysburg Operational Area

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, “Map of the Gettysburg Operational Area” (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



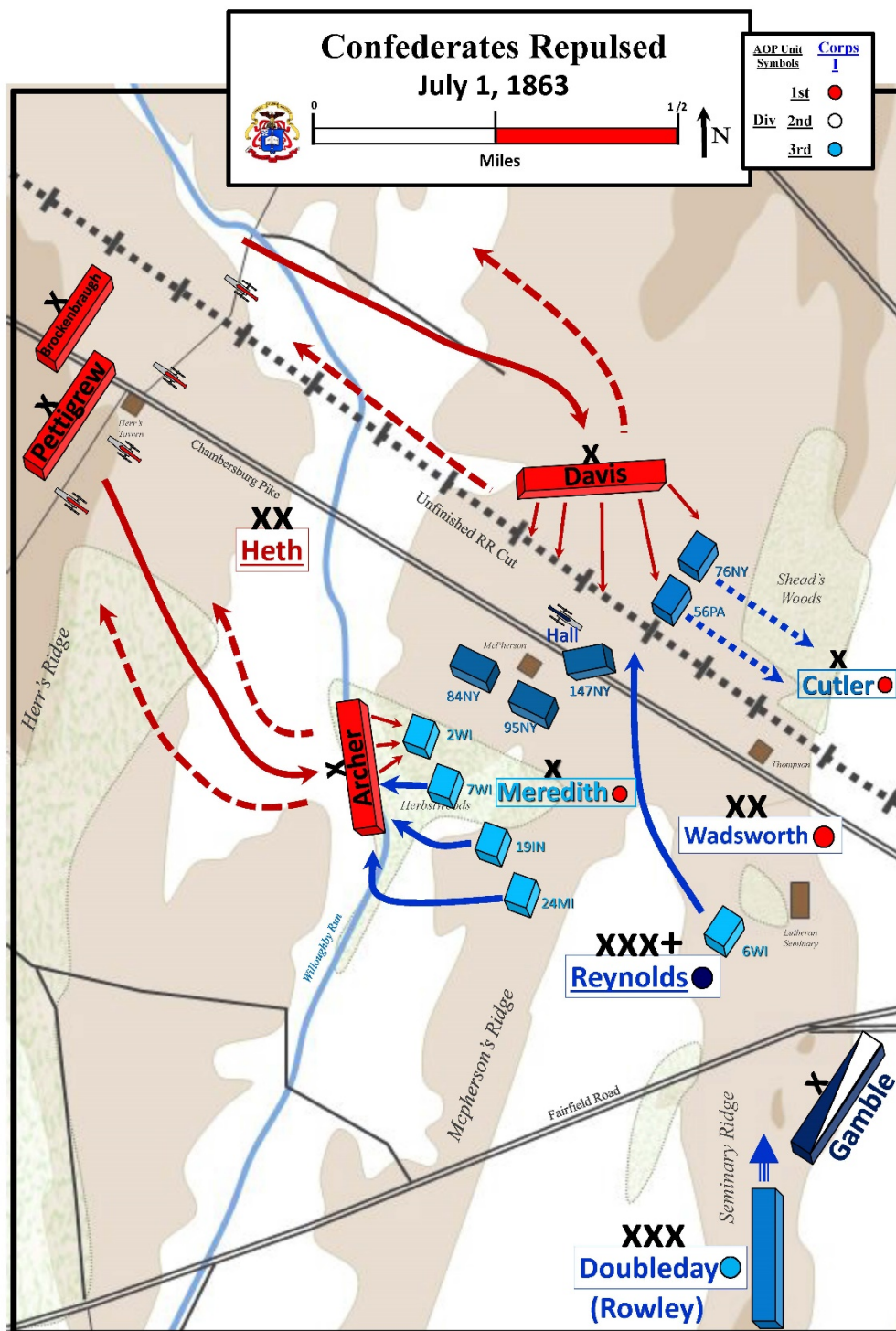
The Gettysburg Campaign: June 29-30, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, “The Gettysburg Campaign: June 29-30, 1863” (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



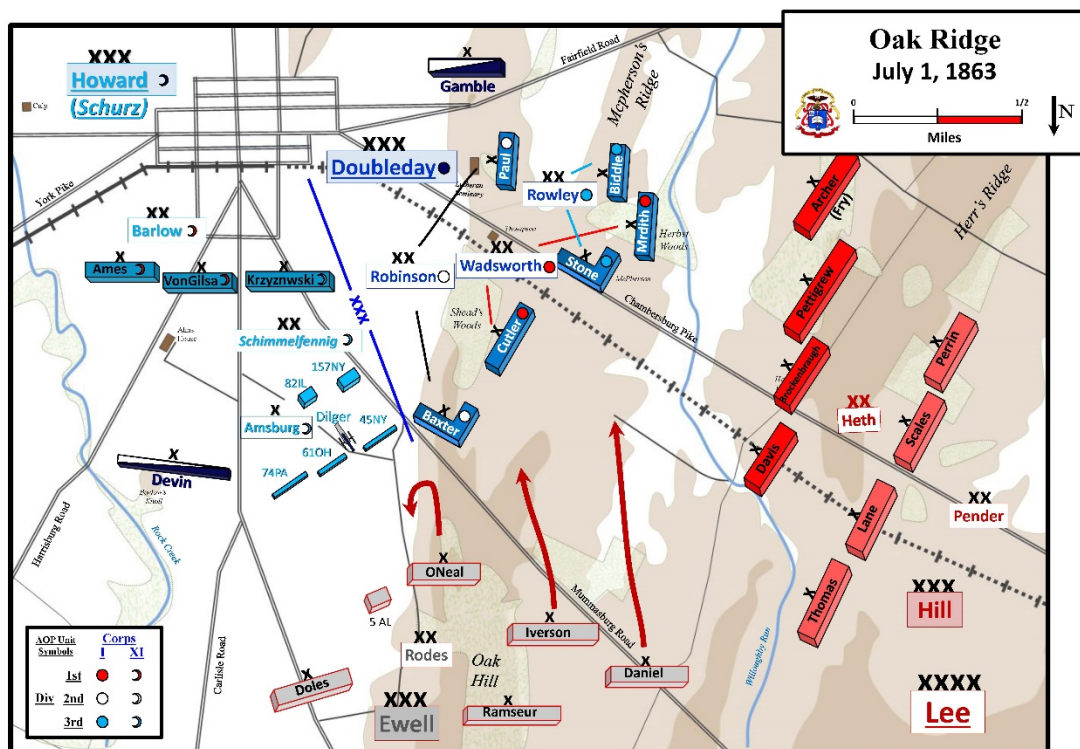
The Gettysburg Battlefield

Source: Wikipedia, "Gettysburg Open Battlefield," accessed May 9, 2019, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/94/Gettysburg-Open-Battlefield.svg/5613px-Gettysburg-Open-Battlefield.svg.png>.



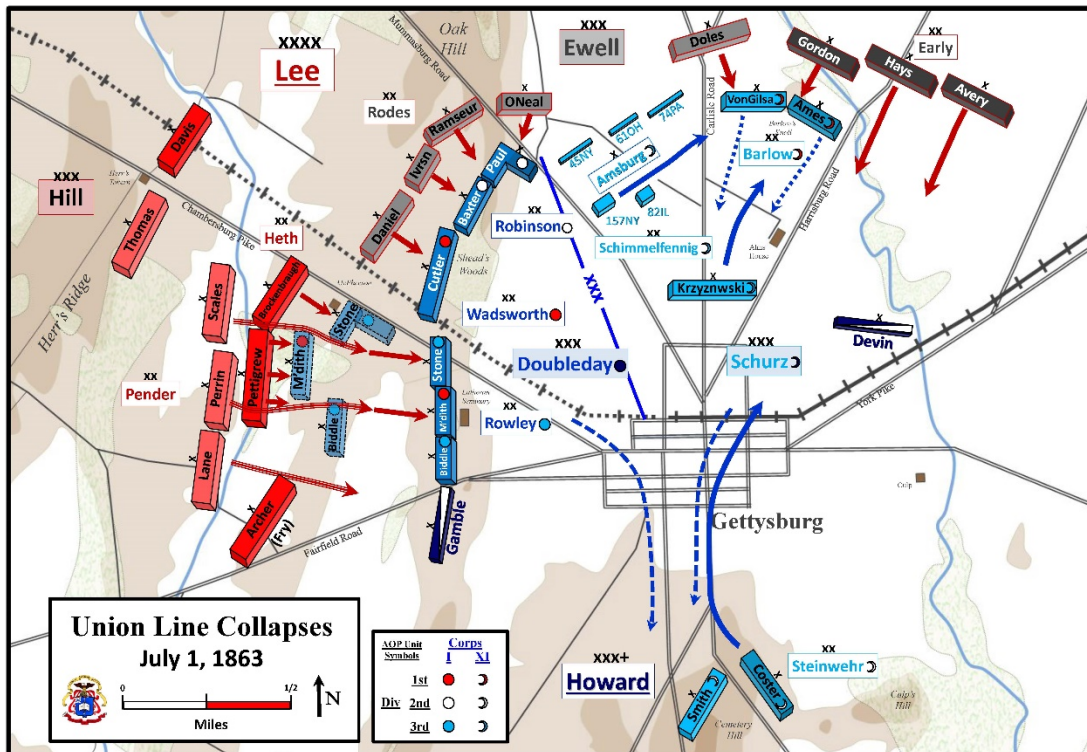
Confederates Repulsed: July 1, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "Confederates Repulsed: July 1, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



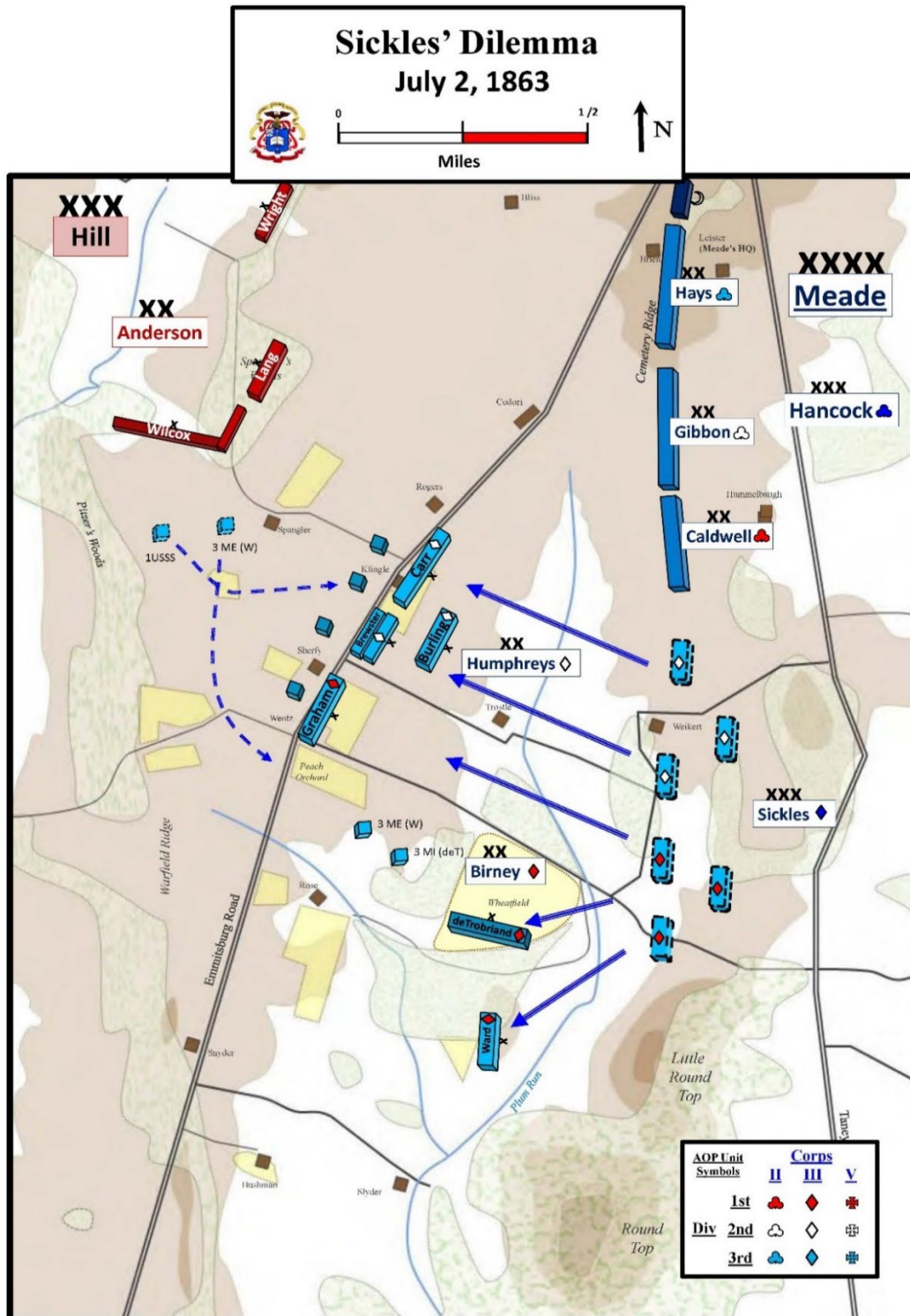
Oak Ridge: July 1, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "Oak Ridge: July 1, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



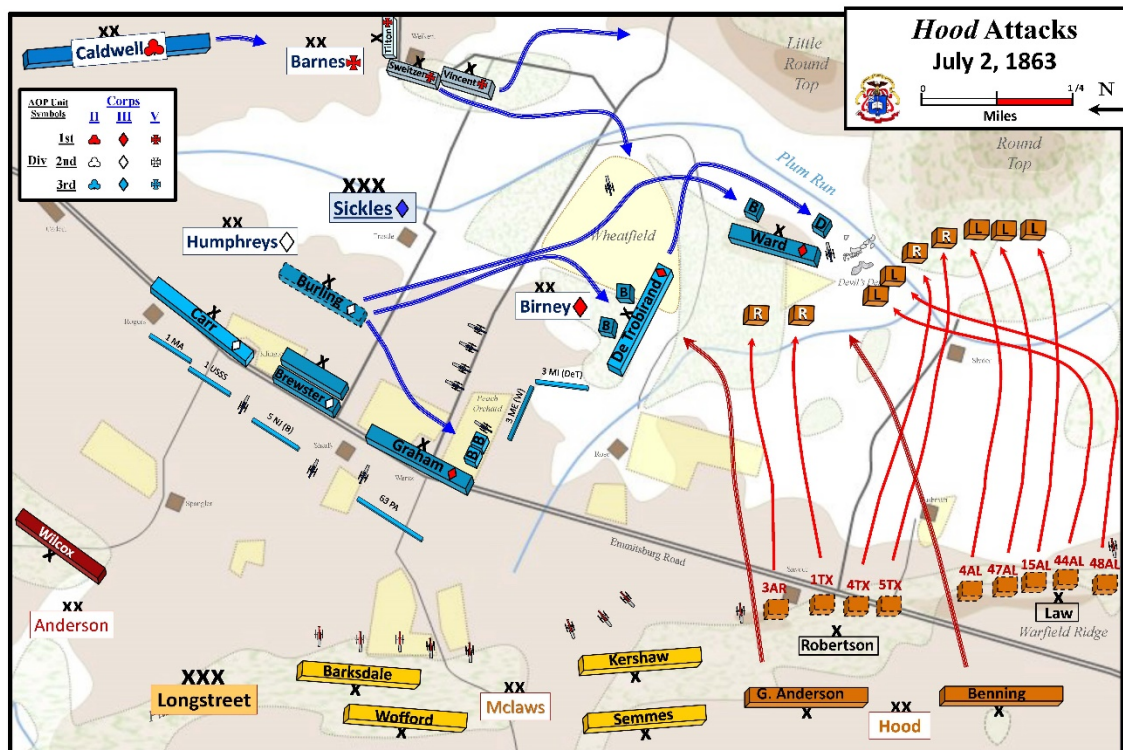
Union Line Collapses: July 1, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "Union Line Collapses: July 1, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



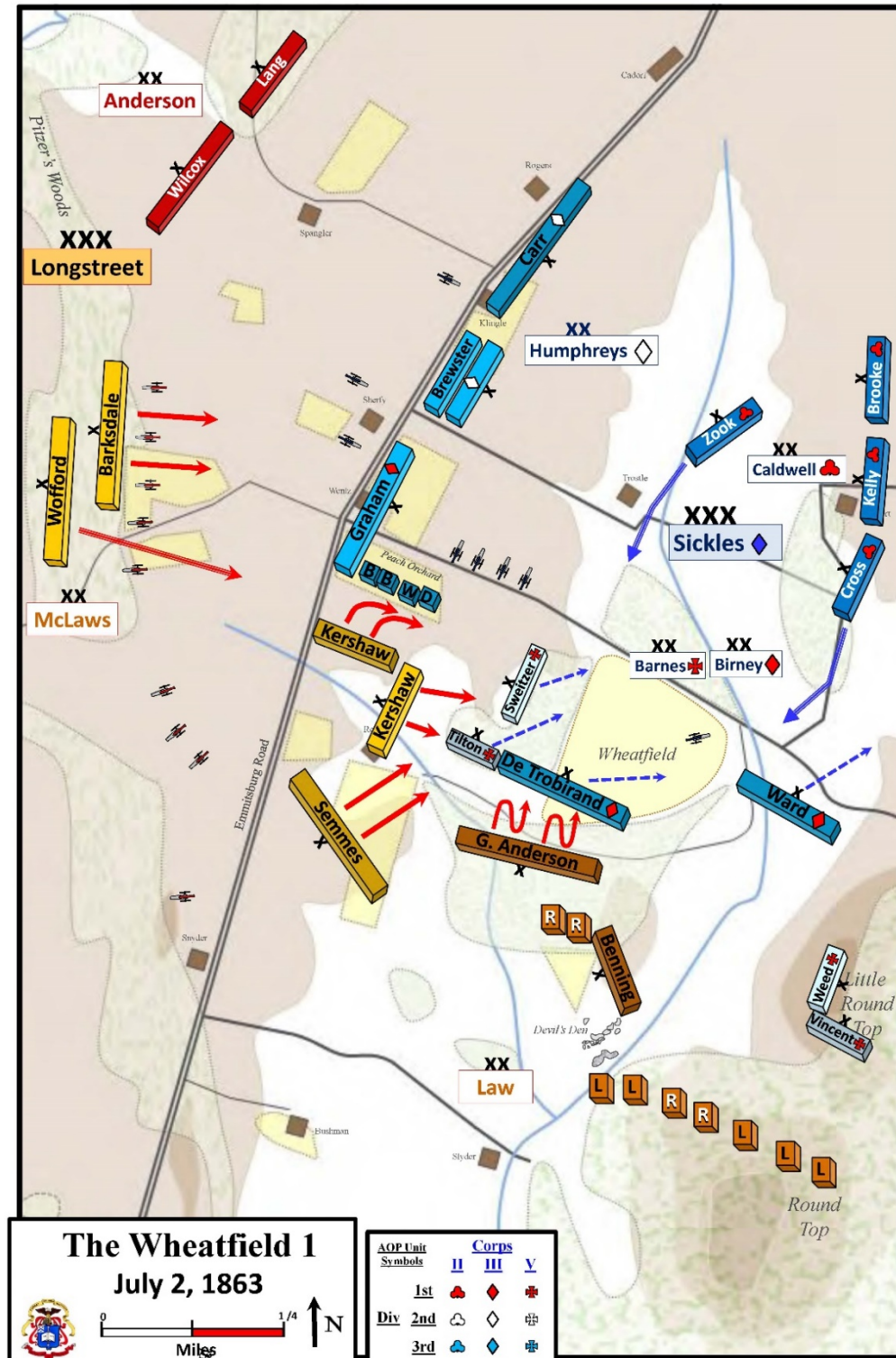
Sickles' Dilemma: July 2, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "Sickles' Dilemma: July 2, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



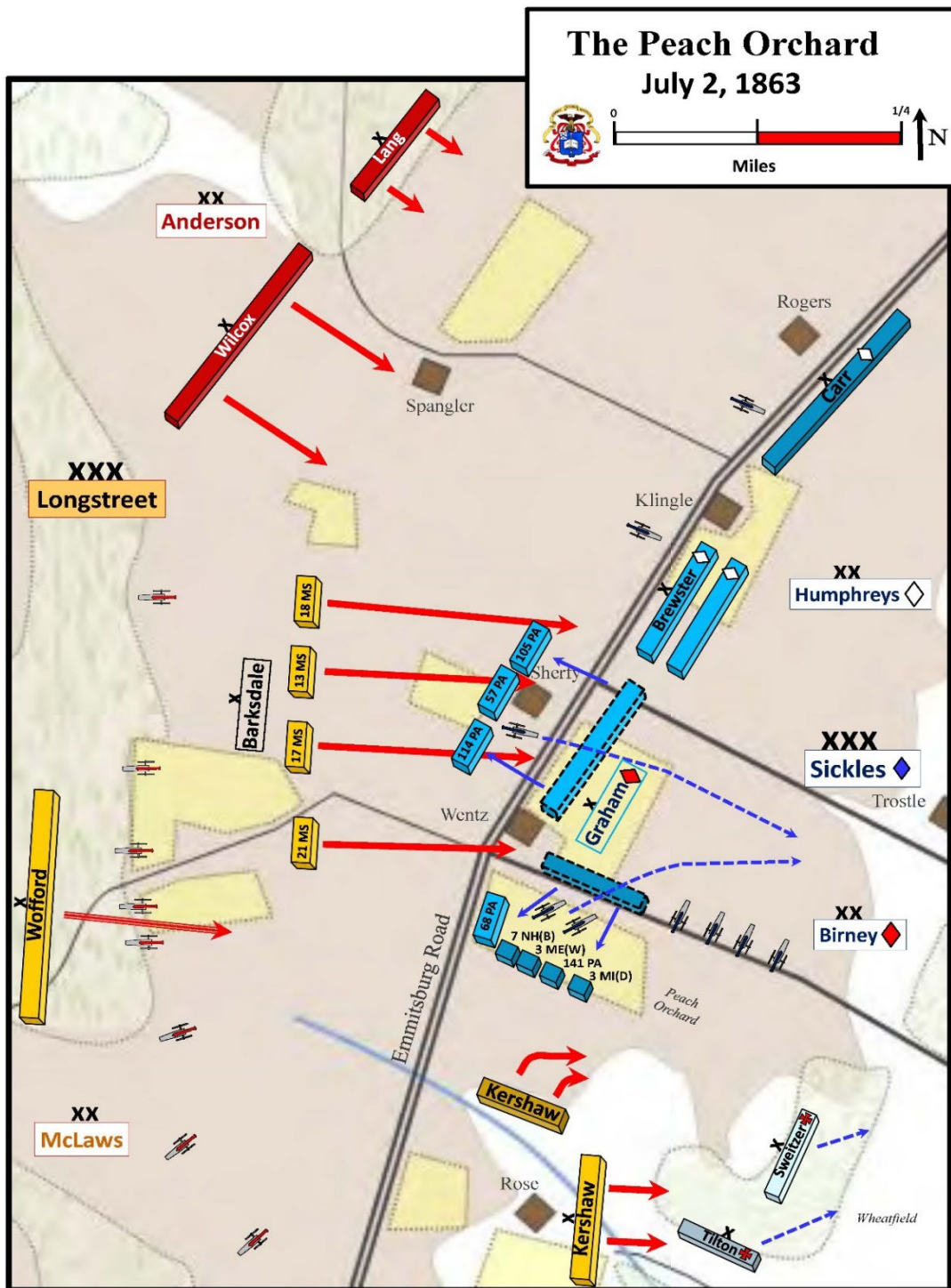
Hood Attacks: July 2, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "Hood Attacks: July 2, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



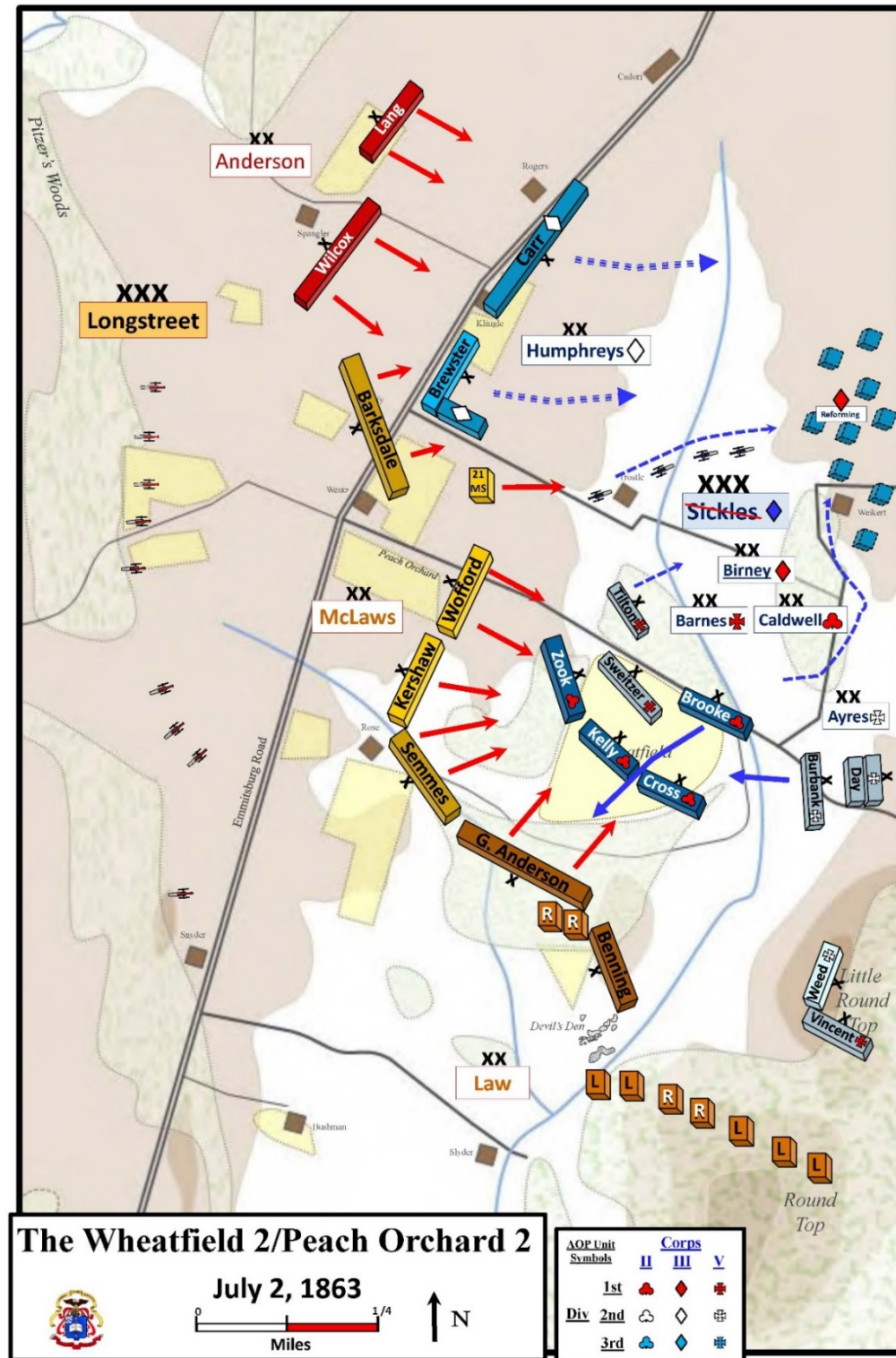
The Wheatfield 1: July 2, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "The Wheatfield 1: July 2, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



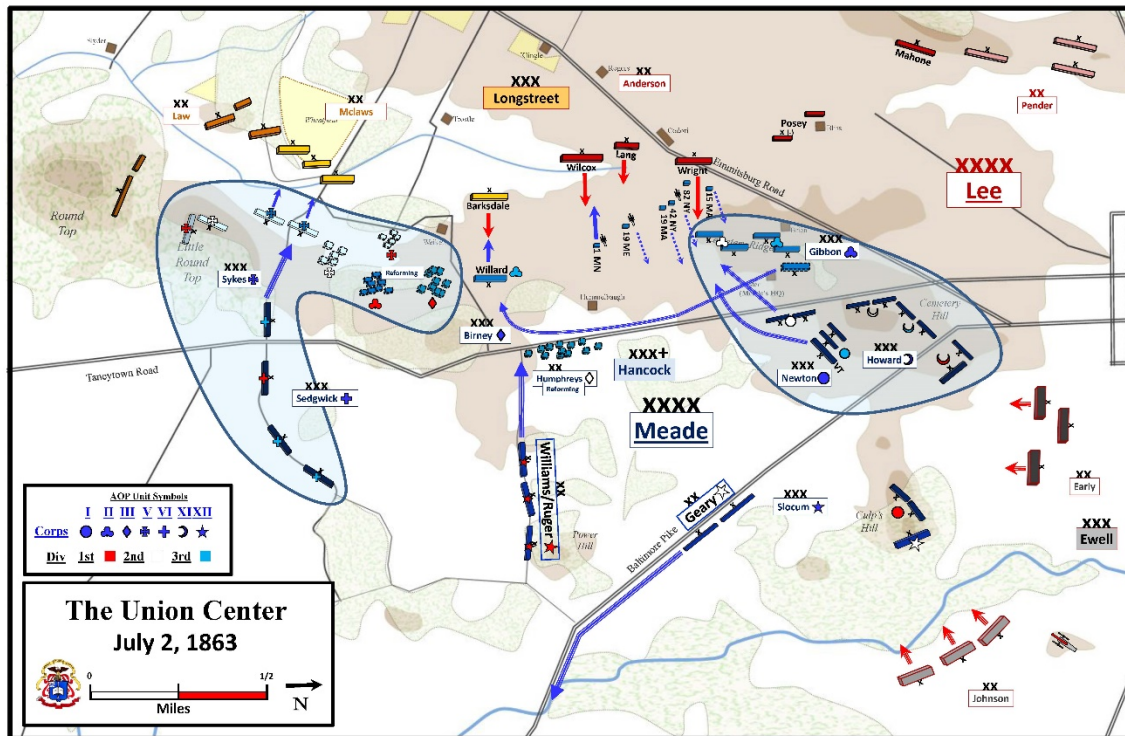
The Peach Orchard: July 2, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "The Peach Orchard: July 2, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



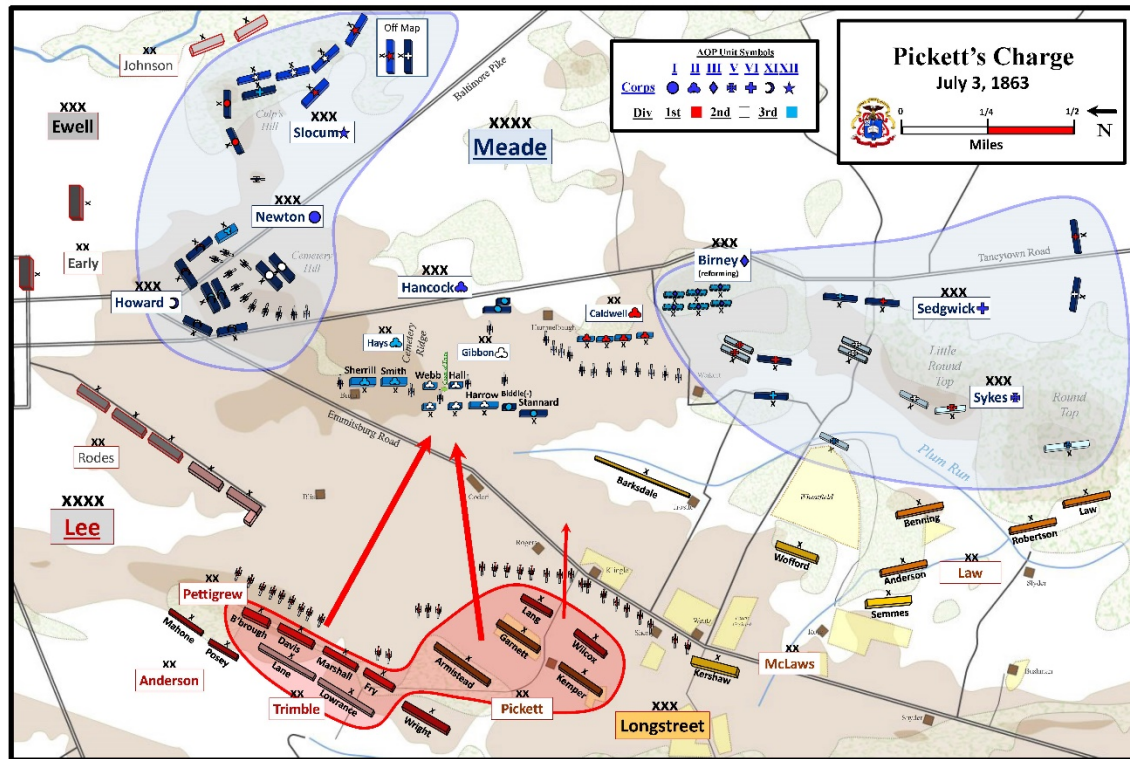
The Wheatfield 2/Peach Orchard 2: July 2, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "The Wheatfield 2/Peach Orchard 2: July 2, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



The Union Center: July 2, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "The Union Center: July 2, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).



Pickett's Charge: July 3, 1863

Source: Combat Studies Institute Staff Ride Team, "Pickett's Charge: July 3, 1863" (Slide, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2015).

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