Padre Steve's World: Resist the Beginning, Consider the End
The Hero Betrayed: Gouverneur Warren, Little Round Top and Moral Injury
Since this study we have been looking at how leaders at various levels in conduct of campaigns as well as battles make decisions. Likewise we examine the lives and character of those leaders as it applies to their actions at critical points of a battle. In this chapter we will examine three officers whose lives, character and actions at Gettysburg, specifically at Little Round Top exemplify two of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Desired Leader Attributes, “to anticipate and adapt to surprise and uncertainty” and the principle of Mission Command, to “operate on intent through trust, empowerment and understanding.” It is from those perspectives that we will look at this part of the battle, but we would be amiss if we did not address the nearly mythical status to which this action has risen.

The actions of three men at the Battle of Little Round Top; Brigadier General Gouverneur Warren, the Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac, Colonel
Strong Vincent, commanding Third Brigade, First Division, V Corps and Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, commanding the 20th Maine Infantry Regiment of Vincent’s brigade are very important to the outcome of the battle, but also for what they teach us about leadership and the profession of arms. This chapter focuses on Warren, in particular with his work with the Commander of the Army of the Potomac, George Meade and his actions to secure Little Round Top on July 2nd 1863, the next will deal with Chamberlain and Vincent.

The battle at Little Round Top is an iconic part of American History and in particular for the Army, a key element of how leadership has been studied. It has achieved nearly mythical status due to the actions of Colonel Joshua Chamberlain which have been told many times in history, fiction and in film, particularly Michael Shaara’s classic historical novel *The Killer Angels* and its film adaptation *Gettysburg*. While these accounts are certainly inspiring and allow us to experience the emotion and near spiritual quality of what Chamberlain writes, there is much more to learn.

That near spiritual quality and mythic status that we accord Gettysburg is important, for in large part it is why we come to the battlefield, and why we study. Chamberlain said it well many years after Gettysburg at the dedication of the Maine Monuments:

“In great deeds, something abides. On great fields, something stays. Forms change and pass; bodies disappear; but spirits linger, to consecrate ground for the vision-place of souls... generations that know us not and that we know not of, heart-drawn to see where and by whom great things were suffered and done for them, shall come to this deathless field, to ponder and dream; and lo! the shadow of a mighty presence shall wrap them in its bosom, and the power of the vision pass into their souls.” [1]

So as we endeavor to look at the actions of these leaders on that fateful day it is important to recognize that we cannot totally separate those actions that helped decide the battle from the mythos that surrounds the story. [2] Likewise, it important to acknowledge that we cannot separate their character and the totality of military leaders lives from their actions on a particular battlefield. Unlike Chamberlain Warren does not engender myth, and that is why he is often overlooked by many casual students and observers of the Battle of Gettysburg.

For the purposes of this study it is important to note that Warren was not a
commander during this action, he was, like most senior officers today, a staff officer. Many times students of military history and theory are inclined to dismiss the contributions of staff officers because they do not have the overall responsibility of a battle, or the glamour of the limelight of the commanders that they serve under. However, for military professionals, especially those serving on senior staffs who prepare campaign plans, contingency plans and crisis plans the study of officers like Warren is essential.

The Federal Army at Gettysburg, like its Confederate opponent had a wide variety of officers serving in its ranks. Many of its senior officers were graduates of West Point. Many had served together in Mexico and in the various campaigns against Native American tribes. Those who stayed in the Army during the long “peace” between the Mexican War and the outbreak of the Civil War endured the monotony, boredom and often miserable conditions of isolated army posts, long family separations, as well as low pay, slow promotion and often low social status. In light of such conditions, many resigned their commissions to undertake various professional, business or academic pursuits; in fact Samuel Huntington noted that in the years before the Civil War that “West Point produced more railroad presidents than generals.” However, on the outbreak of the war returned to service whether in the service of the Union, or the Confederate States.

When the war began the Army underwent a massive expansion, which it met through and the call of up militia and raising new units from the various states. In the expansion many officers were appointed who had no prior military service, or if they did it was performed years or even decades before the war. Some of these men were simply patriots who rallied to the flag, others due to a sense of righteousness about their cause, while others were political opportunists or appointees. In the north this was a particular problem as “professional officers were pushed aside and passed over in the Union, the higher commissions going, in the first stages of the war at least to officers called back into service or directly appointed from civilian life, many of them “political” appointees.”

At times the lack of experience, training and sometimes the poor character of these men was tragic. However, many of these men performed as well or better than some of their regular army counterparts at various levels of command. At the same time a good number of Regular Army officers were allowed to assist states in the formation and training of these new units, one of whom was Gouverneur Warren. Gettysburg would provide opportunity for the best and worst of all of
these types of officers to succeed or fail. In this chapter we will look at one of the regular officers and two of the volunteer whose lives intersected on July 2nd 1863.

Brigadier General Gouverneur Warren was typical of the many professional officers of the old army. An 1850 graduate of West Point, Warren was a bright student who had absorbed the teachings of his professor, Dennis Hart Mahan “as the core of his own military thought, both in his senior year in college and through reinforcement as a faculty member.” Warren was commissioned as a Brevet Second Lieutenant and because of his high standing in his class was assigned to Corps of Topographical Engineers. He spent his first seven years in a number of assignments which took him throughout much of the country.

Warren’s work involved exploring and mapping for various enterprises including the project to help tame the Mississippi River, and the exploration of the Great Plains and Black Hills where he developed a sympathy for the various Sioux tribes he encountered noting on completion of his mission in 1858, writing that "He had never heard a Sioux chief express an opinion in regard to what was due them in which I do not concur" and that "many of them view the extinction of their race as an inevitable result of the operation of present causes, and do so with all the feelings of despair with which we should contemplate the extinction of our nationality.” Following his years in the west he returned as faculty to West Point where he as an Assistant Professor, shared mathematics instructional duties with Oliver O. Howard and resumed his relationship with his former professor Mahan.

On the outbreak of war Warren was granted leave from his duties at West Point to serve as Lieutenant Colonel of Volunteers in the 5th New York Infantry Regiment, also known as Duryee’s Zouaves. Where Duryee was appointed as a Brigadier General, Warren became its Colonel, serving with it during the Peninsula campaign where he was eventually given command of a provisional brigade and promoted to Brigadier General, serving as a Brigade Commander in at Second Manassas, Antietam and Fredericksburg.

At Chancellorsville he was pulled from his brigade duties by Hooker who employed him with good effect to assist his engineering staff, first with mapping and then building the fortifications that stopped the ferocious Confederate storm on the second day of battle. In less than 48 hours Warren’s troops “threw up five miles of the most formidable entrenchments yet constructed under battlefield conditions.” Edward Alexander, Longstreet’s artillery officer noted
that when the Confederates came upon the fortifications after Hooker’s withdraw that “they were amazed at the strength and completeness of the enemy’s fortifications.” [11] Following the battle Warren was appointed as Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac on May 12th 1863 by Hooker. When Hooker was relieved of command and was replaced by Meade on June 28th 1863, he was kept in that position by his fellow engineer Meade rather than being promoted to a division or being assigned as Meade’s Chief of Staff. As this turned out it was a wise choice.

Warren along with Major General Winfield Scott Hancock arrived at Cemetery Hill on the night of July 1st. As Meade organized his defenses he not only depended on his advice about the ground, but “consulted him constantly at headquarters or sent him off on matters of highest importance.” [12] Meade respected Warren and had offered Warren the chance to serve as his Chief of Staff, a position that Warren, like Seth Williams, the Adjutant General declined that offer indicating that he had “too much work in their departments to take on the burdens of a new job.” [13] Lee appreciated Warren’s “calm, absorbed, and earnest manner, his professional skill and sound judgment.”[14] These qualities would serve both men and the army well on July 2nd.

When Sickles moved III Corps forward during the afternoon without permission moved his Corps forming a vulnerable salient at the Peach Orchard leaving the southern flank in the air, Meade was aghast. Warren who from his reconnaissance of the previous day and the morning knew the position better than anyone recognized that “something was badly awry on Sickles’ Third Corps front – matters there were “not all straight.” [15] He had sent an officer to discover to investigate Sickles’ front and that officer reported that the section of Cemetery Ridge assigned to III Corps “was not occupied.”[16]

Meade and Warren discussed the situation and realized that III Corps “could hardly be said to be in position” [17] and knowing VI Corps was now close at hand order V Corps, at the time his only reserve into the position vacated by Sickles. They went forward and seeing the empty spaces Warren told Meade “here is where our line should be” to which Meade replied: “It’s too late now.” [18] Warren, whose familiarity with the whole of the battlefield gave him concern about Sickles’ corps dispositions suggest that Meade send him to the Federal left, “to examine the condition of affairs.” [19]

Meade concurred with his Engineer and in dispatching him he also gave Warren
the authority to take charge as needed saying “I wish you would ride over there and if anything serious is going on, attend to it.” [20] Again Meade’s choice of Warren for the task demonstrated the trust that is essential in command. The two officers worked together seamlessly and as Coddington described their relationship that day: “Meade chose him to act as his alter ego in crucial moments of the battle, and Warren rendered services for which Meade and the country were to be eternally grateful.” [21] Warren would not see Meade again “until the attack had spent its force.” [22]

Hunt noted that “The duty could not have been in better hands.” [23] When Warren arrived on Little Round Top he found it unoccupied save for a few signal corps soldiers. Warren immediately recognized the tactical value of Little Round Top and noted that it was “the key of the whole position.” [24] Warren saw that the Confederates were massing not more than a mile away and that there were no troops on the hill to stop them. He believed that an area “of woods on the near side of the Emmitsburg Road as “an excellent place for the enemy to form out of sight” [25] which was exactly what Major General John Bell Hood’s division was doing, as Henry Hunt noted “The enemy at the time lay concealed, awaiting signal for the assault…” [26] To test his suspicions Warren sent a messenger to Captain
James Smith’s 4th New York artillery battery on Devil’s Den to fire a single shot into the woods. Warren described the situation:

“As the shot went whistling through the air the sound of it reached the enemy’s troops and caused every one to look in the direction of it. This motion revealed to me the glistening gun-barrels and bayonets of the enemy’s line of battle, already formed and far outflanking the position of any of our troops; so that the line of his advance from the right to Little Round Top was unopposed. I have been particular in telling this, as the discovery was intensely thrilling to my feelings, and almost appalling.”

Upon confirming his fears Warren resorted to ruse and action. He ordered the “signalmen to keep up their wigwag activity, simply as a pretense of alertness, whether they had any real signals to transmit or not…” He also sent messengers to Meade, Sickles and Sykes, the commander of V Corps asking Meade to “Send at least a division to me” instructing the messenger, Lieutenant Randall Mackenzie to tell Meade “that we would at once have to occupy that place very strongly.” Sickles refused on account of how badly stretched his lines were, however George Sykes of V Corps responded sending Captain William Jay to find Barnes commander of his 1st Division. The messenger could not find Barnes, but instead came across the commander of the division’s 3rd Brigade Colonel Strong Vincent. Vincent knew that Barnes was self-medicating his “pre-battle anxieties out of a black commissary quart bottle” and was already “hollow from skull to boots” and demanded “What are your orders? Give me your orders.” Upon learning that Sykes wanted a brigade to proceed
to Little Round Top Vincent responded immediately to take the initiative and ordered his four regiments up Little Round Top without waiting for permission. Vincent told Sykes messenger “I will take the responsibility myself of taking my brigade there.” [32]

Meade’s choice of Warren was demonstrated in how Warren continued to act with alacrity and decisiveness throughout the afternoon. “As the Union line began to crumble on Little Round Top, Warren, vested with the authority of Meade’s chief representative, emerged as the right man at the right place at the right time.” [33] Warren did not stop with sending messengers, but seeing the danger building he noted that the northwest face of the hill was still unoccupied and open to attack. Warren forgot “all about a general’s dignity” he “sprinted down the east slope of the hill like a rabbit.” [34] There he found Brigadier General Stephen Weed’s brigade which he had previously commanded. Since he did not see Weed, but he found Colonel Patrick O'Rorke of the 140th New York and ordered him to follow him up the hill, saying “Paddy… give me a regiment.” [35] When O'Rorke said that Weed expected him to be following him Warren took the responsibility telling O'Rorke “Bring them up on the double quick, and don’t stop for aligning. I’ll take responsibility.” [36] O'Rorke followed with his gallant regiment with the rest of the brigade under Weed following. Warren’s actions were fortuitous as the 140th New York and Lieutenant Charles Hazlett’s battery of the 5th Artillery arrived at the crest just in time to repulse the advancing Confederates. In the fight the brigade would take fearful casualties and by the end of the battle, Weed, O'Rorke and Hazlett would all be dead, but with Vincent’s brigade they held on and saved the Union line. [37]

Warren continued to urge on the Federal troops despite being wounded, in the words of a reporter who observed him in “a most gallant and heroic manner, riding with utmost confidence over fields swept by the enemy’s fire, seemingly everywhere present, directing, aiding, and cheering the troops.” [38] Once he was assured that Little Round Top was secure he proceeded to rejoin Meade “near the center of the battlefield where another crisis was at hand.” [39]

Warren distinguished as a Corps commander until he ran afoul of the fiery General Phillip Sheridan in 1865. Sheridan relieved Warren of command of V Corps following the Battle of Five Forks where Sheridan believed that Warren’s Corps had moved too slowly in the attack. The relief was brutal and ruined his career. Warren was a professional soldier and took the relief hard. Unfortunately as a topographic engineer he was an outsider to many in the army and not fully
appreciated by Grant or Sheridan who in their haste at Five Forks destroyed his career.

After the war Warren resigned his commission as a Major General of Volunteers and returned to his permanent rank as a Major of Engineers. He served another 17 years doing engineering duty and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1879, but his past always haunted him, even his sleep. He wrote his wife while supervising a major bridge construction project over the Mississippi River in 1867: “I wish I did not dream so much. They make me sometimes to dread to go to sleep. Scenes from the war, are so constantly recalled, with bitter feelings I wish never to experience again. Lies, vanity, treachery, and carnage.” [40]

He sought a Court of Inquiry to exonerate himself but this was refused until President Grant left office. The Court eventually exonerated him but he died three months before the results were published. Embittered he directed that he be buried in civilian clothes and without military honors. His funeral was attended by his friends Winfield Scott Hancock and Samuel Crawford, his oldest army friend and mentor Andrew Humphreys was called away before the service due to the sudden illness of his son. [41] The Washington Post noted that Warren “had gone where neither the malevolence nor the justice of this world can reach him. He had enough of the former; and denial of the latter not only embittered his closing months of his life, but undoubtedly hastened his end.” [42]

Warren’s actions on that hot and muggy July 2nd exemplified the leadership qualities that we as an institution strive for, and from a leadership perspective demonstrate how the Chairman’s Desired Leader Attributes and the principles of Mission Command: “the ability to operate on intent through trust, empowerment and understanding” should work in a relationship between seniors and subordinates. But his life also serves to remind us of the ethics of our profession. Loomis Langdon, who served as the official recorder for the board of inquiry wrote of Warren:

“I had never met General Warren till he came before his Court of Inquiry...I learned to value his good opinion – and while I admired him for his great patience, his wonderful energy, habit of concentration, his vast learning and untiring application, I loved him for his tenderness, gentleness and charity, even to those whom he believed had combined to do him a cruel wrong; and I admired him for his nobleness of character and his courage and unselfish patriotism.” [43]
It is easy for military professionals to become totally focused in our profession, especially the details of planning and process to forget the humanity of those that we serve alongside. Warren is one of those complex figures who are not easy to categorize. His biographer Jordan wrote that:

“Warren was a man with fine intellect, widely read, and of keen sensibilities. He was also an excellent engineer, mapmaker, and scientist. He was a soldier who cared much for the safety and welfare of the men under him, and he was sickened by the appalling carnage of the war in which he took such a prominent part. He was arrogant and proud, and he hesitated hardly at all in putting down those of his colleagues he regarded as inferiors. His mind’s eye took in much beyond what was his immediate concern, but this gift worked against him in the hierarchical realm of military life. Warren was prone to long sieges of depression, and he himself agreed that others found him morose and unsmiling…” [44]

In reading military history is far too easy to isolate and analyze a commander's actions in battle and ignore the rest of their lives. I think that this does a great disservice to the men themselves. In time of war gives up something of themselves and sometimes even heroes like Gouverneur Warren are destroyed by the actions of institutions that they serve.
Notes


[2] Note: My use of the terms myth, mythology or mythos should not be considered negative, and the use of the terms does not mean that there is not some degree of fact or truth in them. The definitions of the term mythos are important to understanding my use of the term here, first it denotes a traditional or recurrent narrative theme or plot structure of a story, and secondly a set of beliefs or assumptions about something. (See the Oxford American Dictionary.)


Ibid. Sears *Gettysburg* p.262


Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.90


Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.92

Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.92


[29] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.92


[31] Ibid. Guelzo *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* Vintage p.262


[34] Swanberg, W.A. *Sickles the Incredible* Stan Clark Military Books, Gettysburg PA 1957 p.214

[35] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.93

[36] Ibid. Foote *The Civil War, A Narrative. Volume Two Fredericksburg to Meridian* p.504

[37] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* pp. 93-94

[38] Ibid. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, p.388


[40] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.249

[41] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.309

[42] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.308


Courage and Character: The Buffalo Soldier & the Red Tail: Generals Benjamin O. Davis and Benjamin O. Davis Jr.

Friends of Padre Steve’s World,

In his I Have a Dream speech Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave all of us a vision of what can and in spite of what I see going on today will be the future of the people of this country:

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their
American History would not be the same without the life, work and prophetic ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King was born in a time when most of the country was segregated when “separate by equal” was simply façade to cover the lie that in no way did African Americans have equal rights or privileges in the United States.

Dr King was born less than 60 years after the secession of the Southern states from the Union and the beginning of the American Civil War. Though that blood conflict had freed the slaves it had not freed African Americans from prejudice, violence and discrimination. When Dr. King began his ministry and was thrust upon the national stage as the strongest voice for equal rights and protections for blacks the discrimination and violence directed towards blacks was a very real and present reality in much of the United States.

However there were cracks beginning to appear in the great wall of segregation in the years preceding Dr. King’s ascent to leadership as the moral voice of the country in the matter of racial equality. In baseball Jackie Robinson became the first African American player in Major League Baseball opening a door for others who would become legends of the game as well as help white America begin its slow acceptance of blacks in sports and the workplace.

Likewise the contributions of a father and son Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis Sr. and General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. were advancing the cause of blacks in the military which eventually led to the desegregation of the military in 1948. The impact of these two men cannot be underestimated for they were trailblazers who by their lives, professionalism and character blazed a trail for African Americans in the military as well as society.

Benjamin O. Davis Sr. was a student at Howard University when the USS Maine exploded and sank in Havana Harbor. He volunteered for service and was commissioned as a temporary 1st Lieutenant in the 8th United States Volunteer Infantry. He was mustered out of service in 1899 but enlisted as a private in the 9th United States Cavalry one of the original Buffalo Soldiers regiments. He enlisted as the unit clerk of I troop of 3rd Squadron and was promoted to be the squadron Sergeant Major.

Davis was commissioned while the unit was deployed to the Philippines and assigned to the 10th Cavalry. He was assigned in various positions throughout his
career including command, staff and instruction duties including as Professor of Military Science and Tactics in various ROTC programs. He reached the rank of temporary Lieutenant Colonel and Squadron Commander of 3rd and later 1st Squadron 9th Cavalry from 1917-1920 in the Philippines before reverting to the rank of Captain on his return as part of the post World War I reduction in force.

Davis continued to serve during the inter-war years and assumed command of the 369th Infantry Regiment New York National Guard in 1938. He was promoted to Brigadier General on 25 October 1940 becoming the first African American elevated to that rank in the United States Army and was assigned as Commander 4th Brigade 2nd Cavalry Division. He later served in various staff positions at the War Department and in France and was instrumental in the integration of the U.S. Military. He retired after 50 years service in 1948 in a public ceremony with President Harry S. Truman presiding. He was a member of the American Battle Monuments Commission from 1953-1961 and died in 1970.

Colonel Davis with his son Cadet Benjamin O Davis Jr.

His son Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was appointed to West Point in 1932. He graduated and was commissioned in 1936 graduating 35 out of 278, the fourth African American graduate of West Point. During his time at the Academy most of his classmates shunned him and he never had a roommate. Despite this he maintained a dogged determination to succeed. The Academy yearbook made this comment about him:
“The courage, tenacity, and intelligence with which he conquered a problem incomparably more difficult than plebe year won for him the sincere admiration of his classmates, and his single-minded determination to continue in his chosen career cannot fail to inspire respect wherever fortune may lead him.”

He was denied entrance to the Army Air Corps because of his race and assigned to the Infantry first to the all black 24th Infantry Regiment at Ft Benning where he was not allowed in the Officers Club due to his race. Upon his commissioning the Regular Army had just 2 African American Line Officers, 2nd Lieutenant Davis and his father Colonel Davis.

After completion of Infantry School he was assigned as an instructor of Military Science and Tactics and the Tuskegee Institute. In 1941 the Roosevelt Administration moved to create a black flying unit and Captain Davis was assigned to the first black class at the Tuskegee Army Air Field and in March 1942 one his wings as one of the first 5 African Americans to complete flight training.

In July 1942 he was assigned as Commanding Officer of the 99th Pursuit Squadron which served in North Africa and Sicily flying Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. He was recalled to the United States in September 1943 to command the 332nd Fighter Group. However some senior officers attempted to prevent other black squadrons from serving in combat alleging that the 99th had performed poorly in combat. Davis defended his squadron and General George Marshall ordered an inquiry which showed that the 99th was comparable to white squadrons in combat and during a 2 day period over the Anzio beachhead the pilots of the 99th shot down 12 German aircraft.
Colonel Benjamin O Davis Jr (left) with one of his Tuskegee Airmen

Davis took the 332nd to Italy where they transitioned to P-47 Thunderbolts and in July 1944 to the P-51 Mustang which were marked with a signature red tail. During the war, the units commanded by Davis flew more than 15,000 sorties, shot down 111 enemy planes, and destroyed or damaged 273 on the ground at a cost of 66 of their own planes.

Their record against the Luftwaffe was outstanding and their protection of the bombers that they escorted was superb with very few bombers lost while escorted by them men that the Luftwaffe nicknamed the *Schwarze Vogelmenschen* and the Allies *the Red-Tailed Angels* or simply the *Redtails*. Davis led his Tuskegee Airmen to glory in the war and their performance in combat helped break the color barrier in the U.S. Military which was ended in 1948 when President Truman signed an executive order to end the segregation of the military. Colonel Davis helped draft
the Air Force plan and the Air Force was the first of the services to fully desegregate.

Colonel Davis transitioned to jets and led the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing against Chinese Communist MIGs in the Korean War. He was promoted to Brigadier General in 1954 and served in numerous command and staff positions. He retired in 1970 with the rank of Lieutenant General and was advanced to General while retired by President Clinton in 1998. He died in 2002 at the age of 89.

The legacy of Benjamin O. Davis Senior and Benjamin O. Davis Junior is a testament to their character, courage and devotion to the United States of America. They helped pioneer the way for officers such as General Colin Powell and helped change this country for the better. During times when discrimination was legal they overcame obstacles that would have challenged lesser men. Benjamin O. Davis Junior remarked:

“My own opinion was that blacks could best overcome racist attitudes through achievements, even though those achievements had to take place within the hateful environment of segregation."

Such men epitomize the selfless service of so many other African Americans who served the country faithfully and “by the content of their character” triumphed over the evil of racism and helped make the United States a more perfect union. That may seem threatened today with the open display of White Supremacy
movements which are now openly being supported by certain Republican politicians, but it was worse before and in the words of the old spiritual, “we shall overcome.”

Peace

Padre Steve+

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Tragic Heroes: Gouverneur Warren
Part Two

Friends of Padre Steve’s World

Yesterday I posted part one of a several part series about the Union Army general, Gouverneur Warren. I have been writing about leadership the past couple of days and despite all that is going on in the news I think that I will continue to do so using some parts of my Gettysburg text. I think it is incredibly important to get to know the men
and women behind iconic pictures, statues, and biographies that are often not much more than hagiography. In my studies I have encountered people who I find fascinating and not just because of their achievements but also due to their suffering. One of my seminary professors said that you could never come to grips with Jesus until you came to understand suffering.

That is important especially when we deal with men and women who have been traumatized on the battlefield, who when they return from war they come home changed. Many are great leaders and outstanding people whose courage was proven but their lives after the war can only be considered tragic. One of these is Gouverneur Warren, one of the heroes of the Union in the Civil War, and who was instrumental in stopping the Confederate forces at Gettysburg on July 2nd 1863. I have written about him before, but I think now is an appropriate time to revisit his life as well as some other men who fought alongside him at Gettysburg. This is part two of my series about him.

Have a great day,

Peace

Padre Steve+
It is in this context that we examine Brigadier General Gouverneur Warren’s actions on Little Round Top on the afternoon and evening of July 2nd 1863, the controversy that embroiled his career and left him embittered and disillusioned at the end of the war; and even the possible explanations for what occurs to Warren during and after the war provided by modern medicine and psychological knowledge. We must do this because Warren is one of the most important people who step into history that day and because he is such a contradictory figure, to try to understand him and in doing so attempt to understand ourselves more fully.

At the time of the Battle of Gettysburg, Brigadier General Gouverneur Warren was serving as the Chief Topographical Engineer of the Army of the Potomac, a position that he had been appointed to by Joseph Hooker prior to Chancellorsville. At Chancellorsville Warren took command of the Pioneer brigade and “was responsible for the spectacular display of improvised field fortification during Hooker’s withdraw from Chancellorsville.” [1]

Unlike some of the other characters on Little Round Top that day, particularly Joshua Chamberlain, Warren does not engender myth; in fact some historians almost go out of their way to besmirch him, Joseph Whelan described Warren as “a fussy man who liked limericks, decidedly lacked gravitas.” [2] The description Warren being a “fussy man” who “lacked gravitas” is decidedly unfair for it immediately paints Warren in the mind of the reader as a man lacking in courage or fortitude and it distorts history. As I mentioned earlier when examining the evidence we have to carefully sift through it and not assume that any one characterization of a person is correct.

Whelan’s description of Warren is decidedly prejudicial. Warren was actually a complex and often contradictory figure as many military leaders throughout history have been. Though heroic, he did not look like a hero, and though an intensely proud man did not seek to bolster his image in the media, during or after the war. Warren’s most recent biographer, David Jordan wrote that Warren was “prone to long sieges of depression, and he himself agreed that others found him to be morose and unsmiling. A complex and enigmatic man, Gouverneur Kemble Warren is not one to be easily categorized.” [3] His peers seemed to either admire or loathe him for he could be openly critical of others and had arrogance
about him, which put some people off. Likewise Warren was often openly disdainful of those that he regarded as his inferiors, which at times included some of his superior officers, a trait that worked against him in the “hierarchical realm of military life.” [4]

Though Warren was considered the “savior of Little Round Top” in the years immediately following the war; his story faded. In part this was due to being relieved of command of Fifth Corps by Philip Sheridan at Five Forks, something that Chamberlain and many other officers and men of V Corps “considered an unjust act made cruel by his [Sheridan's] refusal to reconsider it.” [5] His story also faded because he resigned his commission as a Major General of Volunteers soon after the war, and returned to relative obscurity working as an Engineer officer along the Mississippi River.

After Warren’s untimely death at the age of fifty-three in 1882, three months before he exonerated by the Board of Inquiry, he was forgotten by many. Likewise, the book he had prepared from his carefully arranged letters and reports was not published until 1932, forty years after his death.

Conversely, the story and myth of his friend and defender Joshua Chamberlain story grew throughout the late 1890s and early 1900s. By then, Chamberlain, a superb writer and orator, alone of the men who made the stand at Little Round Top was still alive to tell his story, and this considerably shaped the history that we know. The rise of the Chamberlain account is one reason why Warren is so often overlooked by many casual students and observers of the Battle of Gettysburg.

But to look at Warren's actions is by no means to minimize the actions of others such as Colonel Strong Vincent, Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Brigadier General Stephen Weed, Colonel James Rice, or Colonel Patrick “Paddy” O'Rorke. All of these men played an instrumental part in the battle for Little Round Top, but only Warren, Chamberlain and Rice survived the battle, and Rice was killed in action at the Battle of Spotsylvania on May 10th 1864.

**Ante-Bellum Staff Officers, Military Culture and an Expanding Army**

For the purposes of this study it is important to note that Warren was not acting as a commander during the Battle of Gettysburg. Warren was, like most senior officers today, serving as a staff officer. Many times students of military history and theory are inclined to dismiss the contributions of staff officers because they
do not have the overall responsibility of a battle, or the glamour of the limelight of the commanders that they serve under. However, for military professionals, especially those serving on senior staffs who prepare campaign plans, contingency plans and crisis plans the study of officers like Warren is essential.

The Federal Army at Gettysburg, like its Confederate opponent had a wide variety of officers serving in its ranks. Many of its senior officers were graduates of West Point. Many had served together in Mexico and in the various campaigns against Native American tribes. Those who stayed in the Army during the long “peace” between the Mexican War and the outbreak of the Civil War endured the monotony, boredom and often miserable conditions of isolated army posts, long family separations, as well as low pay, slow promotion and often low social status.[6] In light of such conditions, many resigned their commissions to undertake various professional, business or academic pursuits; in fact Samuel Huntington noted that in the years before the Civil War that “West Point produced more railroad presidents than generals.” [7] However, on the outbreak of the war, many of these graduates returned to service whether in the service of the Union, or the Confederate States.

When the war began the Army underwent a massive expansion, which it met through the call of up militia and by raising new volunteer units from the various states. In the expansion many officers were appointed who had no prior military service, or if they did it was performed years or even decades before the war. Some of these men were simply patriots who rallied to the flag, others due to a sense of righteousness about their cause, while others were political opportunists or appointees. In the north this was a particular problem as “professional officers were pushed aside and passed over in the Union, the higher commissions going, in the first stages of the war at least to officers called back into service or directly appointed from civilian life, many of them “political” appointees.” [8] At times the lack of experience, training and sometimes the poor character of some of the volunteers and political appointees was tragic. However, many of these men in both Union and Confederate service performed as well or better than some of their regular army counterparts at various levels of command. Gettysburg would provide opportunity for the best and worst of all of these types of officers to succeed or fail. In this chapter we will look at how Warren succeeded remarkably at Little Round Top.
As the Union mobilized a good number of Regular Army officers were allowed to assist the states in the formation and training of the new volunteer units. One of these officers was First Lieutenant Gouverneur Warren.

Warren was typical of the many professional officers of the old army. An 1850 graduate of West Point Warren was a bright student who had absorbed the teachings of his professor, Dennis Hart Mahan “as the core of his own military thought, both in his senior year in college and through reinforcement as a faculty member.” [9] Warren was commissioned as a Brevet Second Lieutenant and because of his high standing in his class was assigned to Corps of Topographical Engineers. He spent his first seven years in a number of assignments which took him throughout much of the country. Warren “did not look the part of a hero. Short and willowy, he appeared no more substantial in body than a young boy, or as some remarked, a young woman; his uniforms tended to hang off him as if they were several sizes too big.” [10]

Warren’s work involved exploring and mapping for various enterprises including the project to help tame the Mississippi River, and the exploration of the Great Plains and Black Hills where he developed a sympathy for the various Sioux tribes he encountered noting on completion of his mission in 1858, writing that “He had never heard a Sioux chief “express an opinion in regard to what was due them in which I do not concur” and that “many of them view the extinction of their race as an inevitable result of the operation of present causes, and do so with all the feelings of despair with which we should contemplate the extinction of our nationality.” [11] Following his years in the west he returned as faculty to West Point where he as an Assistant Professor, shared mathematics instructional duties with Oliver O. Howard and resumed his relationship with his former professor Mahan. [12]

**Commander of the Red Devils: The Peninsula, Gaines Mill and Second Manassas**

On the outbreak of war Warren was granted leave from his duties at West Point to serve as Lieutenant Colonel of Volunteers in the 5th New York Infantry Regiment, also known as the Duryee Zouaves. When Abraham Duryee was appointed as a Brigadier General, Warren became the Colonel of the regiment.

He commanded the regiment during the Peninsula campaign where he was eventually given command of a provisional infantry brigade. At Gaines Mill,
Warren’s regiment and brigade distinguished itself. Along George Sykes’ front “no troops fought better than the small brigade of two volunteer regiments, the 5th and 10th New York, under” Warren’s command. On the afternoon of the battle “Warren led the 5th New York in a riveting counter attack….The Red Devils smashed into the 1st South Carolina Rifles and drive them back. The Zouaves were, declared a Regular, “the peers of any troops on the hard fought field.” Captain John W. Ames of the 11th United States told his parents that the counterattack of the New Yorkers haunted his sleep. Every night, he wrote home a week later, he saw a Zouave, with his arms around a comrade, who was “fairly a dead man, walking with his friend’s support. Ames admitted, “the horrors of sudden, accidental, bloody death are here so much augmented and multiplied.” [13]

Warren described the action to his wife “Nothing you ever saw in the pictures of battles excelled it. The artillery which had been firing stopped on both sides, and the whole armies were now spectators. In less than five minutes 140 of my men were killed or wounded and the other regiment completely destroyed. [14] Warren and his men received many accolades that day. George McClellan credited them with saving the Union left and said that Warren “was everywhere conspicuous on the field, and not only directed the movement of his own brigade, which he handled with consummate skill, and placed in the most advantageous of positions, where they could produce the most effect on the enemy, but directed the movement of other regiments.” [15] and during the action Warren suffered a slight wound from a spent bullet and had his horse shot out from under him.

Warren’s tiny provisional brigade composed of his 5th New York and the 10th New York was at Second Manassas where they had the bad fortune to be on the exposed Federal flank when Longstreet’s massive attack rolled over them. Warren and his brigade were left to protect the Fifth Corps artillery and trains when that corps was ordered by John Pope to attack Jackson’s corps, and John Reynolds’ division was ordered to withdraw leaving the Fifth Corps’ flank uncovered. On his own initiative Warren moved his brigade to protect the flank when Longstreet’s massive blow hit. Alone the two regiments, numbering about 1100 soldiers were overwhelmed in what one soldier called “the very vortex of hell.” [16] Robert E. Lee had drawn Pope into a trap and was poised to destroy his army. Longstreet’s corps led by Hood’s Texas brigade struck Warren’s troops and the 10th New York fell back as Warren and the 5th New York hung on long enough for artillery to
limber up and withdraw, but they too were forced back with heavy losses. The 10th New York lost 133 killed and wounded, the 5th New York over 300 more. Warren wrote “Braver men than those who fought and fell that day...could not be found. It was impossible to do more.” A member of Fifth Corps wrote that “Warren’s regiment and brigade, commanded by him, sustained heavier losses than any command on that disastrous field.” [17] However, Warren’s gallantry was rewarded with promotion to Brigadier General effective September 26th 1862.

Though present at Antietam and Fredericksburg Warren’s brigade was not committed to either fight. However, Warren was in a position to see the disastrous attacks of Union troops against enemy troops in strong defensive positions. As an engineer Warren recognized the advantages that now were afforded to the defense with the advent of the rifled musket, something that would influence many of his decisions as well as his questioning of Meade, Grant and Sheridan for tactical decisions to attack in situations where he viewed such actions to be either unwise or suicidal. Warren was affected by what he had seen, both in the human cost of the war as well as the politics that had engulfed the army. He wrote his wife Emily on Christmas Day:

“I today feel very desponding about our government and the management of affairs....I left my home without ambition to save a noble cause. I have seen that cause almost betrayed- I know of bleeding hearts, desolate homes, and unnumbered nameless graves of noble men who have vainly perished. There must be a just God[.] Why does he permit these things...” [18]

Notes


[9] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion The Life of G.K. Warren* p.6

[10] LaFantasie, Glenn W. *Twilight at Little Round Top: July 2, 1863 The Tide Turns at Gettysburg* Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, New York 2005 p.73


[17] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.56

[18] Ibid. Jordan *Happiness is Not My Companion: The Life of G.K. Warren* p.64

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A Christian & an Enthusiast: General Oliver O. Howard

Friends of Padre Steve’s World,

A change of pace as I get ready for a new class and a section of my Gettysburg Text about Major General Oliver O. Howard. Howard is interesting because alone of senior Union generals his Christian Faith guided his actions and he was maligned by some for that faith.

This section is only biographic sketch before his Eleventh Corps went into action at Gettysburg. Likewise it does not discuss his very successful command of a corps and army in the West under William Tecumseh Sherman, nor his post war service. I think that he makes an interesting character study; after all, the one constant in history is humanity. We learn from men like Howard and that is important.

Peace

Padre Steve+
With John Reynolds dead and Abner Doubleday directing First Corps in its defense west of Gettysburg Major General Oliver O. Howard, commander of Eleventh Corps assumed command of the Federal forces around Gettysburg. Howard was one of the more unusual characters in the senior leadership of the Army of the Potomac, and later when he served under William Tecumseh Sherman’s command in the west, mostly because of his strong Evangelical Christian religious convictions and the fact that he did not drink. Sherman remarked to a group of generals who were mocking Howard’s temperance, “Let Howard alone! I want one officer who don’t drink!” [1]

“A Christian and an Enthusiast”

The thirty-three year old Howard was from Maine, his father had died when he was ten and in 1846 at the age of sixteen he entered Bowdoin College. He graduated from Bowdoin in 1850 near the top of his small class, and education, far from being something simply to prepare himself for a career was important of itself, and he told his mother, “Education is my first aim…. I seek not money, but a cultivated and enlightened mind, becoming & corresponding with the age in which we live.” [2] During his time at Bowdoin Howard was introspective and frequently mused on his own shortcomings and failures. He also showed little interest in world or national events, including the war with Mexico, but in his first year at Bowdoin he did take an interest in the cousin of a classmate, Elizabeth Ann
Waite, or Lizzie who eventually became his wife.

While he was finishing his time at Bowdoin he was still uncertain of what he would do. It was then that his uncle, Congressman John Otis who had help to raise him following the death of his father secured for him an appointment to West Point. He did very well academically but at times struggled with some of his fellow students, some of who considered him “priggish, self-righteous, and opinionated.” [3] This was most likely due to a number of reasons, first his moderate abolitionist views, which were unpopular with many cadets, his active participation in the Bible class, which some classmates ridiculed, and his high academic standing, which provoked the jealousy of others. Howard was also resented by some for his friendship with Sergeant Warren Lothrop, a Mexican War veteran, a childhood friend who was “the son of a close friend of his own father” [4] as well as maintaining a friendship with a cadet “who had been “cut” – shunned – by the corps.” [5] While he stood by the cadet, he was forbidden to maintain the friendship by the Commandant of Cadets due to rules on fraternization, but in the eyes of some classmates, the damage had been done. One cadet who never accepted Howard was Custis Lee, an academic rival and the son of Robert E. Lee.

Despite a rough start Howard became friends with many cadets, including some who had shunned him early in his West Point experience. However, one friend who stood by Howard throughout was a cadet from Virginia named J.E.B. Stuart, who he knew from the Bible class. Howard wrote of that friendship, “I can never forget the manliness of J.E.B. Stuart…. He spoke to me, he visited me, and we became warm friends, often, on Saturday afternoons, visiting the young ladies of the post together.” [6] Howard’s friends included cadets from north and south, and never appeared to let political or ideological differences influence his choice of friends.

He graduated fourth in the class of 1854 and commissioned as a Brevet Second Lieutenant in the highly technical Ordinance Corps. He married Lizzie the following year and held a number of assignments in his corps before being assigned to Florida at the tail end of the Seminole Wars where as an Ordinance officer he saw no action. However, during his time in Florida he experienced his conversion to Evangelical Christianity, following his attendance of a number of Methodist revival meetings and his future life would bear evidence of the influence of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley. His faith became a facet of his life that he would never waver from incurring the praise as well as the criticism
of various contemporaries. He wrote Lizzie:

“I then bore hat the text above in mind, & said in my heart oh! My Saviour, I know that thou canst save me! I made an effort to fully believe that my sins were washed in the blood of the Lamb, that my dear Saviour had actually saved me at that moment, i.e. had pardoned all my transgressions of the laws of God, & all the wickedness of a corrupt heart – The fullness of the glow of happiness came into my heart, the tugging & burning left me – the choking sensation was gone...my mind is as clear as when making out an Ordinance Return...” [7]

Following his conversion he led prayers and Bible studies, had enlisted me to his quarters for morning devotions and even considered leaving the army for the ministry. It was fortunate for Howard that his commander, an elderly Colonel, Gustavus Loomis, was a devout Christian who had first taken him to the Methodist revival meetings, for many other senior officers would have not approved of such overtly evangelical behavior.

Howard was transferred back to West Point in September of 1857 where now as a First Lieutenant he was assigned as an instructor in Mathematics, and was able to again be with Lizzie and their children. At West Point he continued his religious activities, leading Bible studies and became the superintendent of a Sunday school for the children of enlisted men and briefly explored the possibility of entering the ministry with a local Episcopal priest and even studied Hebrew for a time.

During his time as an instructor at West Point the young officer, like many devout converts to any religion, wrestled with his faith. Always introspective Howard became even more so, do much soul-searching and with two issues that he recognized in himself, vanity and pride. He wrote: “the pride & haughtiness of my heart is more than pen can tell, but I believe God will so school me, by failures when I act without Christ, by disappointments & afflictions, as to bring my miserably foolish soul into full subjection to himself.... I fear if God would give me success with my heart as it is now, that I would be puffed up with pride & thus lose the countenance of my blessed Saviour.” [8] That struggle to harmonize the tension between his desire to excel in the army and life, with his concerns for his soul should he become consumed by ambition and vanity would become more pronounced within a few very short years.

As he had for most of his life Howard took little interest in political questions and the growing movement toward secession. This was not surprising because
Howard, whose religious commitment was continuing to grow, was planning to take a leave of absence from the army to attend Bangor Theological Seminary, where his brother, Charles was already a student. However, when Fort Sumter was fired on Howard “abandoned the plan to enter the ministry and determined to stay as a regular or volunteer until the war was over.” [9]

As the officers who made their choice to remain loyal to the Union were now confronted with the decision to remain in the Regular Army or join the new volunteer regiments being formed by Northern states. For many, loyalty and the desire to fight to protect the Union was mixed with a certain amount of pragmatic ambition. Remaining in the relatively small Regular Army might leave them in the position of assisting the training of new volunteer units, or involved with the administration or organizing and equipping them, possibly with limited promotion opportunity while taking a volunteer commission could lead to rapid promotion, command of a regiment or even a brigade.

But initially “the was “a prevalent opposition to regular officers accepting commissions in the volunteers,” [10] but soon the reality that the Regular army was insufficient to bring the rebellious states back into the Union caused the army to allow officers to serve with the volunteers. Howard’s fellow Mathematics instructor, Lieutenant Gouverneur Warren was one of the first young officers at West Point to accept a volunteer commission in the Fifth New York Infantry, the Duryea Zouaves. Howard wrote to Maine’s governor, Israel Washburne offering his services to the State, and after an initial rebuff was offered command of the Third Maine Volunteer Infantry. When he received the offer from Maine Howard took it to Lieutenant Colonel John Reynolds, the Commandant of Cadets and told Reynolds of the offer and asked, “I’ve had the tender, or what amounts to it, of a Maine Regiment. What answer would you give, colonel?” Reynolds replied, “You’ll accept, of course, Howard,” [11] and then preceded to give the young officer a lesson on what colonels needed to know.

One thing Howard had settled in his mind was the legitimacy of war. As a cadet at West Point he had studied the works of Henry Wager Halleck, who wrote one of the first comprehensive books on strategy by an American and who included in his work a synopsis of the traditional Just War Theory. Halleck, like Howard, was a devout Christian and in his book he wrote “The prevention and punishment of crime causes much human suffering; nevertheless the good of the community requires that crime should be prevented and punished. So, as a nation, we employ military officers to man our ships and forts, to protect our property and
our persons, and to repel and punish those who seek to rob us of our life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness…” [12] When Fort Sumter was attacked and other Federal installations in the South being overrun Howard believed that “it was a citizen’s duty to defend his country just as a father would defend his wife and children from an assassin.” [13] When the regiment arrived in New York on its way to Washington it was presented a flag by patriotic Maine citizens living there. Upon receiving it, Howard thanked them and his words reflected his thoughts about war and duty, as well as his religious faith: “I was born in the East, but I was educated by my country. I know no section; I know no party; I never did. I know only my country to love it, and my God who is over my country. We go forth to battle in defense of righteousness and liberty, civil and religious. We go strong in muscle, strong in heart, strong in soul, because we are right…” [14]

Howard’s faith would be a source of personal strength throughout the war and while some like Joseph Hooker ridiculed his faith saying “He was always taken up with Sunday Schools and the temperance cause. Those things are all very good, you know, but have little to do with commanding an army corps. He would command a prayer meeting with a good deal more ability than he would an army.” [15] Likewise his “reputation as a Christian “hampered his acceptance by both fellow officers and enlisted men.” [16] Despite this, many soldiers and officers in every unit Howard commanded came to admire him.

Despite this Howard did eventually succeed and became the only officer of his West Point class of 1854 to become a Major General in the Regular Army of the United States. It was not always an easy road, but Howard displayed a resiliency in the face difficulty and even defeat, a resiliency that enabled him to grow as an officer and commander as the war went on.

Shortly after the Third Maine joined the army at Washington Howard was made a brigade commander. His brigade was involved in the final attack at Bull Run were it was caught up in the disaster that overtook the army of Irvin McDowell. He was promoted to brigadier general and commanded a brigade during McClellan’s inept Peninsular Campaign and “at Fair Oaks on June 1, he was hit twice in the right arm while leading a charge; a second bullet shattered the bone near the elbow, and the arm had to be amputated.” [17] Howard’s bravery in the face of the enemy was noted, especially after having received the first wound he continued to lead his men despite having three horses shot from under him. One of his regimental commanders wrote, “The General was the only Brigadier that I saw
Within two months Howard was back with the army, his former officers writing McClellan to recommend that Howard be given command of a division. He did not immediately get that, but was given command of a brigade of Pennsylvania Reserves, the Philadelphia Brigade in John Sedgwick’s division. He took command of that division when Sedgwick was wounded at Antietam. He commanded the division when it was thrown into General Ambrose Burnside’s ill-advised and doomed assault of Marye’s Heights at the Battle of Fredericksburg. Though his division could not break the Confederate line he was commended by Major General Charles Sumner and Major General Darius Couch for his actions. Sumner noted Howard’s “judicious disposition” in driving the Confederates from Fredericksburg” while “Couch, in speak of the corps losses, stated: “Howard, coming up late, lost 700 men, besides 150 on the 11th. He did well in the part assigned to him.”

During the winter following Burnside’s relief and the appointment of Major General Joseph Hooker to command the Army of the Potomac, Howard remained in command of his division. The vanity that he wrestled with in his spiritual life got the better of him when Daniel Sickles, a political general with no formal military training was appointed to command the Third Corps. Howard, who was senior to Sickles protested to Hooker and was promised the newly arrived Eleventh Corps. The corps, which had just become part of Hooker’s army was never “accepted as a true part of the Army of the Potomac,” where it was viewed as a “foreign contingent,” “and was looked upon by the older units with some distain, despite its having seen considerable action.” The previous Corps commander, Major General Fritz Sigel had just left the army after a disagreement regarding not receiving a larger command during the reorganization of the army. When he left many of the corps’ soldiers remained very loyal to their old commander, and “thought Howard was being advanced at Sigel’s expense.”

But Hooker had created a problem for himself. Eleventh Corps was the only large unit in the Federal Army with a high concentration of Germans. Many of the soldiers had enlisted to serve under men that they knew and trusted, Fritz Sigel and Carl Schurz. When Sigel left command Hooker could have appointed Carl
Schurz to command the corps, but “Hooker had little use for Schurz’s
generalship,” [23] and bluntly told Secretary of War Stanton that he would not
appoint Schurz to corps command. For Howard, this was not good, for “in his
anxiety to receive a command commensurate with his rank he had failed to
consider all the consequences.” [24]

Howard took command of Eleventh Corps barely a month before Hooker launched
his offensive against Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia, which culminated
in the Battle of Chancellorsville. Howard struggled to gain the acceptance of the
German soldiers of his new command, many of whom were resentful of having to
serve under a non-German officer who did not understand them. Howard’s overtly
Evangelical Christian approach to command and stress on temperance, which
included the distribution of religious tracts did not endear him to the Germans,
many of who were Catholics, free-thinkers and beer drinkers. While Howard’s
piety was appreciated many soldiers of English and Scottish descent with
Protestant roots, the “Germans of the Eleventh Corps, many of whom were
freethinkers, the activities of “Old Prayer Book” were not welcome…. The
Eleventh Corps would go on campaign under a general it neither liked nor
trusted, and Howard was marching quite out of step with his command.” [25]

Some understood this, Colonel Charles Wainwright, commander of the First Corps
artillery wrote, “Howard, who succeeds Sigel in the Eleventh is brave enough, and
a most perfect gentleman. He is a Christian and an enthusiast, as well as a man
of ability, but there is some doubt as to his having snap enough to manage the
Germans, who require to be ruled with a rod of iron.” [26]

In the ensuing battle Howard’s Eleventh Corps was taken in the flank by Stonewall
Jackson’s troops which outnumbered his badly situated corps by nearly three-to-
one, his only reserve brigade having been taken by Hooker to support Sickle’s
Third Corps. The ensuing action was a disaster as regiment after regiment was
rolled up by the rapidly advancing Confederate phalanx.

Blame could be assigned to both Hooker and Howard, Hooker for leaving Eleventh
Corps unsupported and isolated on the flank without a reserve, and Howard for
not taking better precautions to secure his right flank from a surprise attack.
Neither Howard, nor his senior division commander Brigadier general Charles
Devens “personally investigated any of the reports of Rebel activity on their
front, and Howard compounded his negligence by leaving his command for two
critical hours.” [27] Only Carl Schurz took any action to protect the corps flank
and rear by quietly facing three of his regiments west. When the night was over
Howard admitted “I wanted to die.... That night I did all in my power to remedy the mistake, and I sought death everywhere I could find an excuse to go to the field.” However, Jackson’s victory was more tactical than strategic and as one historian noted “the corps had generally acquitted itself well in a nearly hopeless situation and delayed Confederate progress until dark,” at which time the Confederates experienced the loss of Stonewall Jackson who was mortally wounded in the darkness by his own troops as he tried to push his corps forward.

However, the morale of the Eleventh Corps was crushed and it would not get a chance to redeem itself during the rest of the Chancellorsville campaign. When Hooker lost his nerve, refused to counter-attack, and then decided to withdraw he was opposed by Howard, George Meade, Darius Couch and John Reynolds who advocated a renewal of the offensive against Lee who they knew to have taken heavy casualties and had to be outnumbered by the Army of the Potomac.

The ever insightful Charles Wainwright wrote, “Some of the papers are very severe on Hooker, and insist upon that he was drunk, which I do not believe. Others go quite as far the other way, and try to screen him from all blame, seeking to throw it on one or the other of his subordinates. The attacks on General Howard are outrageous. He had been in command of the Eleventh Corps but a month before the fight, and was previously unknown to its officers and men.... He is the only religious man of high rank I know in this army, and, in the little intercourse I have had with him, shewed himself the most polished gentleman I have met. I know that he was very anxious to attack Lee on Monday, and together with Couch, Reynolds, and Meade was decidedly opposed to our withdraw on Wednesday night...”

But the damage to the Eleventh Corps had been done. In the search for blame the old line prejudice and sentiment of the “Know nothings” against the immigrant Germans was once again unleashed. Inside and outside the Army of the Potomac, the Eleventh Corps was given the derisive nickname of “the flying Dutchmen” despite the fact that approximately half of its soldiers were of old line Yankee stock. The Eleventh Corps was not without good soldiers or good leaders, the real issue came from “the prejudice of Americans and the defensive attitude of the Germans...” The soldiers of the corps had to endure the mocking of soldiers of other units and the scorn of the press, which “spoke of the “unexampled conduct” of the Eleventh Corps and how “the whole failure of the Army of the Potomac was owing to [its] scandalous poltroonery.” In defense of the Corps Brigadier General Alexander Schimmelpfennig wrote “It would seem a nest
of vipers had but waited for an auspicious moment to spit out their poisonous slanders upon this heretofore honored corps…. I have been proud to command the brave men in this brigade; but I am sure that unless these infamous falsehoods be retracted and reparations made, their good will and soldierly spirit will be broken…” [33]

Like his army commander, Fighting Joe Hooker, Howard never “conceded that he was in any way negligent, but he once hinted that at Chancellorsville he was inexperienced and that he had learned a lesson. “When I was a lad, a larger boy gave me a drubbing, but I grew in size and strength till he could do it no longer. The war experience of some of us was like that.” [34] To his credit, Howard did learn from his mistakes and never was surprised again as Eleventh Corps commander or the Commander of the Army of Tennessee under the command of William Tecumseh Sherman. However, Hooker, not only refused to take any blame, but proceeded to blame “squarely upon three of the army’s eight corps commanders…” [35] Howard, John Sedgwick and cavalry corps commander George Stoneman.

The troops were discouraged and resentful of their treatment; one officer wrote of the corps’ withdraw from Chancellorsville “I recrossed with a heavy heart, and… I felt tears rolling down my cheeks. I was ashamed of the battle, and deplored the sad experience of the Eleventh Corps…” while Howard noted, “there was no gloomier period during the great war than the month which followed the disasters at Chancellorsville.” [36] Carl Schurz wrote “The spirit of this corps is broken, and something must be done to revive it.” [37] It was in this depressed environment, commanding a corps that was defeated and demoralized that Oliver Howard advanced into Gettysburg on July 1st 1863.

Notes


[4] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.8

[6] Ibid. Thomas *Bold Dragoon* p.25

[7] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.17

[8] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.20

[9] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.21


[13] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.21


[16] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.25


[18] Ibid. Girardi *The Civil War Generals: Comrades, Peers, Rivals in Their Own Words* p.91

[19] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.41

[20] Ibid. Hebert *Fighting Joe Hooker* p.178

[21] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.43
Ibid. Hebert *Fighting Joe Hooker* p.178


[24] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.43

[25] Ibid. Sears *Chancellorsville* p.65


[27] Ibid. Sears *Chancellorsville* p.270

[28] Ibid. Sears *Chancellorsville* p.286


[32] Ibid. Green *From Chancellorsville to Gettysburg: O. O. Howard and Eleventh Corps Leadership* p.58

[33] Ibid. Green *From Chancellorsville to Gettysburg: O. O. Howard and Eleventh Corps Leadership* p.58

[34] Ibid. Carpenter *Sword and Olive Branch* p.49


[36] Ibid. Green *From Chancellorsville to Gettysburg: O. O. Howard and Eleventh Corps Leadership* p.57

[37] Ibid. Sears *Gettysburg* p.37
Early American Military Theorists: Mahan & Halleck

*Friends of Padre Steve’s World*

*Something a bit different. Again this is a part of one of the chapters of my Gettysburg and Civil War text, but this time dealing with two men who were the first American military theorists, Dennis Hart Mahan, the father of Alfred Thayer Mahan the great naval strategist and Henry Wager Halleck. Both men contributed to American military thought for over a century until they and their French-Swiss mentor Henri Jomini’s theories were overtaken by those of the Prussian Carl von Clausewitz. They both are interesting characters and both had an influence on American history today ion large part due to their influence on the education of most of the generals who conducted the Civil War, and in the case of Halleck in advising Abraham Lincoln during the war.*
Background

As we continue to examine the Civil War as the first modern war we have to see it as a time of great transition and change for military and political leaders. As such we have to look at the education, culture and experience of the men who fought the war, as well as the various advances in technology and how that technology changed tactics, which in turn influenced the operational and strategic choices that defined the characteristics of the Civil War and wars to come.

The leaders who organized the vast armies that fought during the war were influenced more than military factors. Social, political, economic, scientific and even religious factors influenced their conduct of the war. The officers that commanded the armies on both sides grew up during the Jacksonian opposition to professional militaries, and for that matter even somewhat trained militias. The Jacksonian period impacted how officers were appointed and advanced. Samuel Huntington wrote:

“West Point was the principle target of Jacksonian hostility, the criticism centering not on the curriculum and methods of the Academy but rather upon the manner of how cadets were appointed and the extent to which Academy graduates preempted junior officer positions in the Army. In Jacksonian eyes, not only was specialized skill unnecessary for a military officer, but every man had the right to pursue the vocation of his choice....Jackson himself had an undisguised antipathy for the Academy which symbolized such a different conception of officership from that which he himself embodied. During his
administration disciple faltered at West Point, and eventually Sylvanus Thayer, the superintendent and molder of the West Point educational methods, resigned in disgust at the intrusion of the spoils system.” [1]

This is particularly important because of how many officers who served in the Civil War were products of the Jacksonian system and what followed over the next two decades. Under the Jackson administration many more officers were appointed directly from civilian sources than from West Point, often based on political connections. “In 1836 when four additional regiments of dragoons were formed, thirty officers were appointed from civilian life and four from West Point graduates.” [2]

While this in itself was a problem, it was made worse by a promotion system based on seniority, not merit. There was no retirement system so officers who did not return to the civilian world hung on to their careers until they quite literally died with their boots on. The turnover in the highest ranks was quite low, “as late as 1860, 20 of the 32 men at or above the rank of full colonel held commissions in the war of 1812.” [3] This held up the advancement of outstanding junior officers who merited promotion and created a system where “able officers spent decades in the lower ranks, and all officers who had normal or supernormal longevity were assured of reaching higher the higher ranks.” [4]

Robert E. Lee was typical of many officers who stayed in the Army. Despite his success Lee was constantly haunted by his lack of advancement. While he was still serving in Mexico having gained great laurels, including a brevet promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, the “intrigues, pettiness and politics…provoked Lee to question his career.” He wrote, “I wish I was out of the Army myself.” [5]

In 1860 on the brink of the war, Lee was “a fifty-three year-old man and felt he had little to show for it, and small hope for promotion.” [6] Lee’s discouragement was not unwarranted, for despite his exemplary service, there was little hope for promotion and to add to it, Lee knew that “of the Army’s thirty-seven generals from 1802 to 1861, not one was a West Pointer.” [7]

The careers of other exemplary officers including Winfield Scott Hancock, James Longstreet, and John Reynolds languished with long waits between promotions between the Mexican War and the Civil War. The long waits for promotion and the duty in often-desolate duty stations on the western frontier, coupled with family separations caused many officers to leave the Army. A good number of these men
would volunteer for service in 1861 and go on to become prominent leaders in both the Union and Confederate armies. Among these officers were such notables as Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, Henry Halleck, George McClellan and Jubal Early.

The military education of these officers at West Point was based very technical and focused on engineering, civil, and topographic, disciplines that had a direct contribution to the expanding American nation. What little in the way of formal higher level military education West Point cadets received was focused the Napoleonic tactics and methods espoused by Henri Jomini as Clausewitz’s works had yet to make their way to America. Dennis Hart Mahan taught most military theory and tactics courses being taught at the academy in the formative years of so many of the men who would lead the armies that fought the American Civil War.

Many Americans looked on the French, who had been the allies of the United States in the American Revolution, favorably during the ante-bellum period. This was especially true of the fledgling United States Army, which had just fought a second war with Great Britain between 1812 and 1815, and “outstanding Academy graduates in the first half of the nineteenth century, such as Halleck and Mahan, were sent to France and Prussia to continue their education. Jomini was consider as the final word on the larger aspects of military operations, and American infantry, cavalry, and artillery tactics imitated those of the French Army.”[81]
Mahan, who graduated at the top of the West Point class of 1824 was recognized as having a brilliant mind very early in his career, as a third classman that \textit{“he was appointed an acting assistant professor of mathematics.”} \cite{9} Following his graduation the brilliant young officer was sent by the army to France, where he spent four years as a student and observer at the \textit{“School of Engineering and Artillery at Metz”} \cite{10} before returning to the academy where \textit{“he was appointed professor of military and civil engineering and of the science of war.”} \cite{11} It was a position that the young professor excelled as subjected \textit{“the cadets…to his unparalleled knowledge and acid disposition.”} \cite{12}

Mahan spent nearly fifty years of his life at West Point, including nearly forty years as a faculty member he could not imagine living life without it. Thus he became “morbid when the Academy’s Board of Visitors recommended his mandatory retirement from the West Point Faculty” and on September 16\textsuperscript{th} 1871 the elderly Mahan \textit{“committed suicide by leaping into the paddlewheel of a Hudson River steamer.”} \cite{13}

While he was in France Mahan studied the prevailing orthodoxy of Henri Jomini who along with Clausewitz was the foremost interpreter of Napoleon and Napoleon’s former Chief of Staff Marshal Ney. When we look at Mahan’s body of work in his years at West Point, Jomini’s influence cannot be underestimated. Some have noted, and correctly so, that \textit{“Napoleon was the god of war and Jomini was his prophet”} \cite{14} and in America the prophet found a new voice in that of Dennis Hart Mahan.

Thus, if one wants to understand the underlying issues of military strategy and tactics employed by the leaders of the Civil War armies, the professional soldiers, as well as those who learned their trade on the battlefield of America, one has to understand Jomini and his American interpreter Mahan.

Unlike the Prussian Clausewitz, whose writings were still unknown in America, Jomini saw the conduct of war apart from its human element and controlled by certain scientific principles. The focus in principles versus the human element is one of the great weaknesses of traditional Jominian thought.

The basic elements of Jominian orthodoxy were that: \textit{“Strategy is the key to warfare; That all strategy is controlled by invariable scientific principles; and That these principles prescribe offensive action to mass forces against weaker enemy forces at some defensive point if strategy is to lead to victory.”} \cite{15} Like
Clausewitz, Jomini interpreted “the Napoleonic era as the beginning of a new method of all out wars between nations, he recognized that future wars would be total wars in every sense of the word.” [16] In his thesis Jomini laid out a number of principles of war including elements that we know well today: operations on interior and exterior lines, bases of operations, and lines of operation. Jomini understood the importance of logistics in war, envisioned the future of amphibious operations and his thought would be taken to a new level by Alfred Thayer Mahan, the son of Dennis Hart Mahan in his book *The Influence of Sea Power on History*.

To be fair, Jomini foresaw the horrific nature of the coming wars, but he could not embrace them, nor the concepts that his Prussian counterpart Carl von Clausewitz regarding the base human elements that made up war. “Born in 1779, Jomini missed the fervor of the Revolutionary generation and the romantic world view that inspired its greatest theorist, Jacques Antoine Guibert. He came to intellectual maturity during a period of codification and quest for stability in all spheres of life, including the waging of war.” [17] Jomini expressed his revulsion for the revolutionary aspects of war, and his desire to return to the limited wars of the eighteenth century:

“I acknowledge that my prejudices are in favor of the good old times when the French and English guards courteously invited each other to fire first as at Fontenoy, preferring them to the frightful epoch when priests, women. And children throughout Spain plotted the murder of individual soldiers.” [18]

Jomini’s influence was great throughout Europe and was brought back to the United States by Mahan who principally “transmitted French interpretations of Napoleonic war” [19] especially the interpretation given to it by Henri Jomini. However, when Mahan returned from France he was somewhat dissatisfied with some of what he learned. This is because he understood that much of what he learned was impractical in the United States where a tiny professional army and the vast expenses of territory were nothing like European conditions in which Napoleon waged war and Jomini developed his doctrine of war.

It was Mahan's belief that the prevailing military doctrine as espoused by Jomini:

“was acceptable for a professional army on the European model, organized and fighting under European conditions. But for the United States, which in case of war would have to depend upon a civilian army held together by a small
Mahan set about rectifying this immediately upon his return to West Point, and though he was now steeped in French thought, he was acutely sensitive to the American conditions that in his lectures and later writings had to find a home. As a result he modified Jominiian “orthodoxy by rejecting one of its central tenants—primary reliance on offensive assault tactics.” Mahan wrote, “If the offensive is attempted against a strongly positioned enemy… it should be an offensive not of direct assault but of the indirect approach, of maneuver and deception. Victories should not be purchased by the sacrifice of one’s own army….To do the greatest damage to our enemy with the least exposure of ourselves,” said Mahan, “is a military axiom lost sight of only by ignorance to the true ends of victory.”

However, Mahan had to contend with the aura of Napoleon, which affected the beliefs of many of his students and those who later served with him at West Point, including Robert E. Lee. “So strong was the attraction of Napoleon to nineteenth-century soldiers that American military experience, including the generalship of Washington, was almost ignored in military studies here.” It was something that many American soldiers, Union and Confederate would pay with their lives as commanders steeped in Napoleon and Jomini threw them into attacks against well positioned and dug in opponents well supported by artillery. Lee’s assault on Cemetery Ridge on July 3rd 1863 showed how little he had learned from Mahan regarding the futility of such attacks, and instead trusted in his own interpretation of Napoleon’s dictums of the offense.

Thus there was a tension in American military thought between the followers of Jomini and Mahan. The conservative Jominian interpretation of Napoleonic warfare predominated much of the officer corps of the Army, and within the army “Mahan’s decrees failed to win universal applause.” However, much of this may have been due in part to the large number of officers accessed directly from civilian life into the army during the Jacksonian period. Despite this, it was Dennis Hart Mahan who more than any other man “taught the professional soldiers who became the generals of the Civil War most of what they knew through the systematic study of war.”

When Mahan returned from France and took up his professorship he became what Samuel Huntington the “American Military Enlightenment” and he “expounded the gospel of professionalism to successive generations of cadets for forty years.”
Some historians have described Mahan by the “star professor” of the Military Academy during the ante-bellum era. Mahan’s influence on the future leaders of the Union and Confederate armies went beyond the formal classroom setting. Mahan established the “Napoleon Club,” a military round table at West Point. In addition to his writing and teaching, Mahan was one of the preeminent influences on the development of the army and army leadership during the ante-bellum period.

However, Mahan and those who followed him such as Henry Halleck, Emory Upton and John Bigelow who were the intellectual leaders of the army had to contend with an army culture which evidenced “a distain for overt intellectual activities by its officers for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries….Hard fighting, hard riding, and hard drinking elicited far more appreciation from an officer’s peers that the perusal of books.”

Mahan dominated the academy in many ways. For the most part Mahan ran the academic board, an institution that ran the academy, and “no one was more influential than Mahan in the transition of officership from a craft into a profession.” Mahan was a unique presence at West Point who all students had to face in their final year before they could graduate and become a commissioned officer. “His Engineering and Science of War course was the seedbed of strategy and tactics for scores of cadets who later became Civil War Generals.” That being said most of what Mahan taught was the science of engineering related to war and he “went heavy on the military engineering and light on strategy” relying primarily on Jomini’s work with his modifications for the latter.

The prickly professor was “respected by his students but never loved.” One student described him as “the most particular, crabbed, exacting man that I ever saw. He is a slim little skeleton of a man and is always nervous and cross.” As a teacher Mahan was exceptional, but he was exceptionally demanding of his students. Those cadets who had survived the first three years at the academy were confronted by this “irritable, erudite, captious soldier-professional who had never seen combat” yet who was “America’s leading military mind.”

Mahan was “aloof and relentlessly demanding, he detested sloppy thinking, sloppy posture, and a sloppy attitude toward duty…Mahan would demand that they not only learn engineering and tactics, but that every manner and habit that characterizes an officer- gentlemanly deportment, strict integrity, devotion to
Mahan was one of the first American military professionals to stress the importance of military history to the military profession. He wrote that without: “historical knowledge of the rise and progress” of the military art…“it is impossible to get even “tolerably clear elementary notions” beyond “those furnished by the mere technical language….It is in military history that we are to look for the source of all military science.”

Mahan’s greatest contributions in for American military doctrine were his development of the active defense and emphasis on victory through maneuver. Mahan stressed “swiftness of movement, maneuver, and use of interior lines of operation. He emphasized the capture of strategic points instead of the destruction of enemy armies,” while he emphasized the use of “maneuver to occupy the enemy’s territory or strategic points.”

Key to Mahan’s thought was the use of maneuver and the avoidance of direct attacks on prepared positions. Mahan cautioned that the offensive against prepared positions “should be an offensive not of direct assaults but of the indirect approach, of maneuver and deception. Victories should not be purchased at the sacrifice of one’s own army…. It was a lesson that Robert E. Lee learned too late. As such Mahan prefigured future theorists such as B.H. Liddell Hart in propagating the doctrine of the indirect approach. Mahan warned: “To do the greatest damage to our enemy with the least exposure to ourselves,… is a military axiom lost sight of only by ignorance to the true ends of victory.”

His emphasis on “military history led Mahan to abandon the prevailing distinction between strategy and tactics in terms of the scale of operations. He came to see that strategy, involving fundamental, invariable principles, embodied what was permanent in military science, while tactics concerned what was temporary.” Mahan believed that “History was essential to a mastery of strategy, but it had no relevance to tactics.”

Mahan emphasized that “study and experience alone produce the successful general” noting “Let no man be so rash as to suppose that, in donning a general’s uniform, he is forthwith competent to perform a general’s function; as reasonably he might assume that in putting on robes of a judge he was ready to decide any point of the law.” Here, Mahan’s advice is timeless and still
applies today, especially in an era when many armchair generals, most without any military experience or training, especially pundits and politicians pontificate their expertise on every cable news channel twenty-four hours a day.

Mahan certainly admired Napoleon and was schooled in Jomini. Mahan believed in the principles that Jomini preached but he was not an absolutist. He believed that officers needed to think for themselves on the battlefield. Mahan preached that celerity and reason were the pillars of military success, and that “no two things in his military credo were more important than the speed of movement—celerity, that secret of success— or the use of reason. Mahan preached these twin virtues so vehemently and so often through his chronic nasal infection that the cadets called him “Old Cobbon Sense.” [42]

![Old Brains: Henry Wager Halleck](image)

Mahan’s teaching was both amplified and modified by the work of his star pupil Henry Wager Halleck. During his time as a cadet Halleck “achieved “a kind of strategic protégé status, even becoming part of the faculty while still a cadet.” [43] Halleck wrote the first American textbook on military theory *Elements of Military Art and Science*. Halleck’s book was published in 1846 and though it was not a standard text at West Point “it was probably the most read book among contemporary officers.” [44] The text was based on a series of twelve lectures Halleck had given the Lowell Institute in 1845, as at the time Halleck was considered one of America’s premier scholars as he remained for many years.
Like Mahan, Halleck was heavily influenced by the writings of Jomini, and the Halleck admitted that his book “was essentially a compilation of other author’s writings,” [45] including those of Jomini and Mahan; and he “changed none of Mahan’s and Jomini’s dogmas.” [46] In addition to his own book, Halleck also “translated Jomini’s Life of Napoleon” from the French. [47]

Halleck, like his mentor Mahan “recognized that the defense was outpacing the attack” [48] in regard to how technology was beginning to change war. As such, “five of the fifteen chapters in Halleck’s Elements are devoted to fortification; a sixth chapter is given over to the history and importance of military engineers.” [49] Halleck’s Elements became one of the most influential texts on American military thought during the nineteenth century, and “had a major influence on American military thought.” [50] Mahan’s book was read by many military leaders before, during and after the war, and some civilians, most notably Abraham Lincoln who upon entering officer sought to learn all that he could about military affairs, and whom Halleck would serve as Lincoln’s primary military advisor.

Halleck believed in and espoused Mahan’s enlightenment too, and he fought against the Jacksonian wave of populism. He eloquently spoke out for a more professional military against the Jacksonian critics of professional military institutions. Halleck advocated his case for a more professional military against the Jacksonian critics and pled “for a body of men who shall devote themselves to the cultivation of military science” and the substitution of Prussian methods of education and advancement for the twin evils of politics and seniority.” [51]

Notes


[2] Ibid. Huntington The Soldier and the State p.206


[4] Ibid. Huntington The Soldier and the State p.207


[7] Ibid. Huntington The Soldier and the State p.207

[8] Ibid. Huntington The Soldier and the State p.197


[12] Ibid. Waugh The Class of 1846 p.65


[16] Ibid. Hittle, Jomini and His Summary of the Art of War p. 428

[17] Ibid. Hagerman The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare p.4

[18] Ibid. Hittle Jomini p.429

[19] Ibid. Shy Jomini p.414


Hagerman also notes the contributions of Henry Halleck and his Elements of Military Art and Science published in 1846 (p.14) and his influence on many American Officers. Weigley in his essay in Peter Paret’s Makers of Modern Strategy would disagree with Hagerman who notes that in Halleck’s own words that his work was a “compendium of contemporary ideas, with no attempt at originality.” (p.14) Weigley taking exception gives credit to Halleck for “his efforts to deal in his own book with particularly American military issues.” Paret, Peter editor. Makers of Modern Strategy: For Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1986 p.416.


Ibid. Millet and Maslowski For the Common Defense p.126

Ibid. Robertson General A.P. Hill p.8


Ibid. Waugh, p.64

Ibid Waugh The Class of 1846, pp.63-64
[36] Ibid. Huntington *The Soldier and the State* p.220


[38] Ibid. Hagerman *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare* p.14

[39] Ibid. Weigley *The American Way of War* p.88

[40] Ibid. Huntington *The Soldier and the State* p.220

[41] Ibid. Huntington *The Soldier and the State* pp.221

[42] Ibid. Waugh *The Class of 1846* p.64

[43] Ibid. O’Connell *Fierce Patriot* p.11


[50] Ibid. Ambrose *Halleck* p.7

[51] Ibid. Huntington *The Soldier and the State* p.221
The First Modern War – Introduction

Friends of Padre Steve’s World

Those who are habitual readers here know that I teach military history and ethics. One of the things that I lead is a Staff Ride at Gettysburg for which I am in the process of writing a text which will probably when I am done will be two, maybe even three books. The text is massive and I have been done a lot of editing, revising and even expanding it as I come to realize just how limited my previous vision was for producing it.

I have been writing about the pursuit of truth for several months, and one of those truths is that war cannot be separated from its contexts and that military power alone does not win wars or establish a just and equitable peace. That is one of the problems with many who write popular military history, they are so focused on the battles, campaigns, tactics and technology that they focus so much on the military aspects, that they miss the other contexts that are so important.

A few days ago I released a section of this same chapter dealing with women in...
The American Civil War was the first modern war. It was a watershed event in an era, which introduced changes in new types of weapons, more lethal versions of older weapons, tactics, army organization, logistics, intelligence and communications. Though the war did not change the essential nature of war, which Clausewitz says is “is an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfill our will” [1] it expanded the parameters of war and re-introduced the concept of “total war” to the world and “because its aim was all embracing, the war was to be absolute in character.” [2] In a sense it was a true revolution in military affairs.
The Civil War was truly a revolution in military affairs. The war changed the character of war, as it had been known for centuries, since the Peace of Westphalia and the end of the Thirty Years War. In the American Civil War, the character of war changed from a limited war waged between opposing armies to a total war, waged between two people who shared much in common but were divided by an ideology which encompassed politics, economics, society, law, and even religion.

The war was revolutionary in other ways, and brought about a host of social, philosophical, economic, and political changes which continue to impact the lives of people in the United States and around the world even today. Some of these, especially those regarding the abolition of slavery and emancipation, as well as the beginnings of the Women’s Rights movement have had a ripple effect in matters of political and social equality for other previously disenfranchised groups of citizens. As one author noted “The Civil War uprooted institutions, transformed our politics, influenced social relationships of half a continent, and wrought changes that echo down the generations.”

In a sense, when Abraham Lincoln proclaimed “a new birth of freedom” in his Gettysburg address it served as a watershed moment in American history because it brought to the forefront the understanding of Jefferson and the other signers of the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal.

Thus it is important to study the Gettysburg campaign in the context of the Civil War because the campaign of 1863 in the east cannot be divorced from what was happening in the west at Vicksburg, nor the Union blockade, nor the diplomatic, economic and informational aspects of the war. Likewise the Gettysburg campaign cannot be separated from its relationship to the broader understanding of the nature and character of war. To do this one must examine the connection between them and policies made by political leaders; to include the relationship of political to military leaders, diplomats, the leaders of business and industry and not to be forgotten, the press and the people. Likewise we must understand the various contexts of war, to include the social, political, ideological and even the religious components of war, how they impacted Civil War leaders and why civilian policy makers and military leaders must understand them today.

While the essential nature of war remains constant, wars and the manner in which they are fought have changed in their character throughout history, and this distinction matters not only for military professionals, but also policy makers. The changing character of war was something that military leaders as well as policy
makers struggled with during the American Civil War much as today’s military leaders and policy makers seek to understand the character of warfare today. British military theorist Colin Gray writes “Since the character of every war is unique in the details of its contexts (political, social-cultural, economic, technological, military strategic, geographical, and historical), the policymaker most probably will struggle of the warfare that is unleashed.” [4] That was not just an issue for Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, both of whom struggled with the nature of the war which had been unleashed, but it is one for our present political leaders, who as civilian politicians are “likely to be challenged by a deficient grasp of both the nature of war as well as its contemporary context-specific character.” [5]

In addition to being the first modern war, or maybe I should say, the first war of the Industrial Age, the Civil War became a “total war.” It was the product of both the massive number of technological advances which both preceded and occurred during it, in which the philosophical nature of the Industrial Revolution came to the fore. Likewise, the enmity of the two sides for one another which had been fostered by a half century of relentless and violent propaganda which ushered from the mouths of politicians, the press and even from the pulpit, even to the point of outright armed conflict and murder in “Bleeding Kansas” during the 1850s.

As a total war it became a war that was as close to Clausewitz’s understanding of absolute war in its in character waged on the American continent, and it prefigured the great ideological wars of the twentieth century, as J.F.C. Fuller noted “for the first time in modern history the aim of war became not only the destruction of the enemy’s armed forces, but also of their foundations- his entire political, social and economic order.” [6] It was the first war where at least some of the commanders, especially Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman were men of the Industrial Age, in their thought and in the way that they waged war, in strategy, tactics even more importantly, psychologically. Fuller wrote:

“Spiritually and morally they belonged to the age of the Industrial Revolution. Their guiding principle was that of the machine which was fashioning them, namely, efficiency. And as efficiency is governed by a single end- that every means is justified- no moral or spiritual conceptions of traditional behavior must stand in its way.” [7]

Both men realized in early 1864 that “the South was indeed a nation in arms and
that the common European practice of having standing armies engaged each other in set-piece battles to determine the outcome of a war was not enough to win this struggle.” [8] Though neither man was a student of Clausewitz, their method of waging war was in agreement with the Prussian who wrote that “the fighting forces must be destroyed; that is, they must be put in such a position that they can no longer carry on the fight” but also that “the animosity and the reciprocal effects of hostile elements, cannot be considered to have ended so long as the enemy’s will has not been broken.” [9]

William Tecumseh Sherman told the mayor of Atlanta after ordering the civilian population expelled that “we are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people, and must make the old and young, the rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war.” [10] Sherman was one of the first American military leaders to understand that a civil war could not be waged according to the limited war doctrines most American officers had been taught. He not only “carried on war against the enemy’s resources more extensively and systematically than anyone else had done, but he developed also a deliberate strategy of terror directed against the enemy’s minds.” [11] While some might find this troubling, the fact remains that it was Sherman’s Southern sweep of all that lay before him that broke the back of the Confederacy.

Abraham Lincoln came to embrace the eternal nature of war as well as the change in the character of the war over time. Lincoln had gone to war for the preservation of the Union, something that for him was almost spiritual in nature, as is evidenced by the language he used in both of his inaugural addresses and the Gettysburg Address. Instead of a war to re-unite the Union with the Emancipation Proclamation the war became a war for the liberation of enslaved African Americans, After January 1st 1863 when the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, Lincoln “told an official of the Interior Department, “the character of the war will be changed. It will be one of subjugation…The [old] South is to be destroyed and replaced by new propositions and ideas.” [12] That too was a modern understanding of war.

Of course, the revolution in military affairs that characterized the Civil War took time, but it was the political and military leaders of the North who better adapted themselves and their nation to the kind of war that was being fought. “Lincoln’s remarkable abilities gave him a wide edge over Davis as a war leader, while in Grant and Sherman the North acquired commanders with a concept of total war and the determination to make it succeed.” [13]
At the beginning of the war the leaders and populace of both sides still held a romantic idea of war. The belief that the war would be over in a few months and that would be settled by a few decisive battles was held by most, including many military officers on both sides. There were some naysayers like the venerable and rather corpulent General Winfield Scott, but politicians and the press mocked Scott and those who even suggested that the war would be long, hard, and bloody. Of course those who predicted a short, easy, and relatively bloodless war who were proven wrong, and the war became the bloodiest war ever waged by Americans, and it was against other Americans.

The Civil War became an archetype of the wars of the twentieth century, and I believe will be so for the twenty-first century as well because of the emphasis on competing ideologies often buttressed with near fanatical religious extremism. The American Civil War evolved into a clash between peoples with radically different ideologies, which extended beyond the province of purely military action. The war “was preceded by years of violent propaganda, which long before the war had obliterated all sense of moderation, and awakened in the contending parties the primitive spirit of tribal fanaticism.” [14]

Those who conducted the American Civil War added new dimensions to war, and the technology they embraced increased war's lethality in ways that they did not anticipate. For the first time since the 30 Years’ War, this war on the American continent saw opponents intentionally target the property, homes and businesses of the opposing civilian populations as part of their military campaign. The Civil War was a precursor to the wars that followed, especially the First World War that it prefigured in so many ways.

British general and military theorist J.F.C. Fuller encapsulated the massive amount of change brought about by the Civil War quite well in his book *A Military History of the Modern World*:

*The war fought by Grant and Lee, Sherman and Johnston, and others closely resembled the First of the World Wars. No other war, not even the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, offers so exact a parallel. It was a war of rifle bullets and trenches, of slashings, abattis, and even of wire entanglements-an obstacle the Confederates called “a devilish contrivance which none but a Yankee could devise” because at Drewry’s Bluff they had been trapped in them and slaughtered like partridges.” It was a war of astonishing in its modernity, with wooden wire-bound mortars hand and winged grenades, rockets, and many*
forms of booby traps. Magazine rifles and Requa’s machine guns were introduced and balloons were used by both sides although the confederates did not think much of them. Explosive bullets are mentioned and also a flame projector, and in June, 1864, General Pendleton asked the chief ordnance officer at Richmond whether he could supply him with “stink-shells” which would give off “offensive gases” and cause “suffocating effect.” The answer he got was “stink-shells, none on hand; don’t keep them; will make them if ordered.” Nor did modernity end there; armoured ships, armoured trains, land mines and torpedoes were used. A submarine was built by Horace H. Hundley at Mobile....” [15]

However, like all in nearly all wars, the many lessons of the American Civil War were forgotten, or even worse, completely dismissed by military professionals in the United States as well as in Europe. Thus 50 years later during First World War, the governments Britain, France, Imperial Germany, Austria-Hungary and Imperial Russia wasted vast amounts of manpower and destroyed the flower of a generation because they did not heed the lessons of the Civil War. For that matter neither did General John Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force who three and a half years after those countries destroyed the flower of their nation’s manhood and repeated all of their mistakes with the lives of American soldiers. Fuller noted:

“Had the nations of Europe studied the lessons of the Civil War and taken them to heart they could not in 1914-1918 have perpetuated the enormous tactical blunders of which that war bears record.” [16]

The lessons of the war are still relevant today. Despite vast advances in weaponry, technology and the distances with which force can be applied by opponents, war remains an act of violence to compel an enemy to fulfill our will. War according to Clausewitz is “more than a chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case.” [17] but it is always characterized by the violence of its elements, the province of chance and its subordination to the political objective and as such forces political and military leaders as well as policy makers to wrestle with “the practical challenge of somehow mastering the challenge of strategy in an actual historical context.” [18]

Colin Gray in his book Fighting Talk emphasizes that the “contexts of war are all important.” Gray makes a case for seven essential contexts that must be understood by policy makers and military leaders regarding war, which if ignored
Gray enunciates seven contexts of war that policy makers as well as military professionals ignore at the own peril: There is the political context, the social context, the cultural context, the economic context; the military-strategic context, the geographic context and the historical context. Gray notes these seven contexts “define all the essential characteristics of a particular armed conflict.”

Gray discusses the importance of this. Noting that strategists are “ever on the look out for shortcuts” and because they are pragmatic, wanting simple and well defined solutions they tend not to want to deal with complexities that muddy the water, that those who decide on strategy are “eternally at hazard to the siren call of the technological solution, the cultural fix, the promise of historical understanding and so forth.” He notes that there are always those trying to sell strategists catalogs, which promise “products that answer the strategist’s questions” turning “the base metal of confusion of information into the pure gold of comprehension.” But such easy answers are often little more than snake oil. The virtue of seeing war through all of these contexts “obliges strategists to examine holistically, in the round,” that the “recognition of war’s multiple contexts helps immunize the strategist against getting captured by such fantasies.”

The study of the Civil War can be helpful to political leaders, military strategists, joint planners and commanders because it so wonderfully shows just how important understanding the context of wars is. Likewise it gives us an American context where we can see the interplay of how Clausewitz’s “paradoxical trinity—composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and the element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.”

This is especially important, because we live during an era of great technological, social, geopolitical and philosophical change, just as did the leaders of the United States and the Rebel Confederates States did in the ante-bellum and the war years. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, for in this era of change, like in every era, some leaders and commanders were either resistant to, or failed to understand the changes being forced upon them in their conduct of war by the industrialization of war and its attendant technology.

Examples of this are found in the actions of so many leaders and commanders in the Civil War. Like the American political and military leaders who in Iraq “were
ignorant of how to conduct themselves in a military and social-cultural context of irregular warfare” [27] many of the officers who fought the Civil War completely ignorant of what they were facing. Educated in Napoleonic the principles of Henri Jomini, officers who only knew limited war in Mexico and irregular warfare against Indians were faced with fighting a total war on a continental scale. The war witnessed a host of new technologies and “many officers found themselves wholly unprepared for what they faced, in effect, compelled to purchase learning with lives.” [28]

However, unlike many political leaders, Abraham Lincoln came to understand the radical and revolutionary nature of the war and had to find military leaders who understood the same. In frustration Lincoln rebuked those who urged limited war saying “The government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing. Those enemies must understand that they cannot experiment for ten years trying to destroy the government, then if the fail still come back into the Union unhurt.” [29]

Eventually Lincoln found Ulysses Grant and his lieutenants William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Sheridan. These me not only understood the military aspects of the contexts of the war, but embraced them and applied them with ruthless skill and vigor that stunned the leaders and the people of the South. When John Bell Hood wrote Sherman a letter in which he condemned the Union commander for the destruction of Atlanta, and the forced evacuation of its inhabitants, even invoking God’s judgment Sherman would have nothing of it. Sherman wrote back that “Hood’s appeal to a “just God” was “sacrilegious,” Sherman insisted, for it was the South which had “plunged a nation into war, dark and cruel war, who dared and badgered us to battle.” Having created the war, the South would now experience it.” [30]

Strategists and planners must develop a philosophical foundation that they must seek to understand the contexts of war matters now more than ever. By looking at the Gettysburg campaign in context we can begin to draw lessons that we can apply today. Not that our situation is the same as the leaders who led the Union and Confederacy in the Civil War, but exploring these issues is vital to us understanding the contexts of the wars that we fight today and the world in which we live.

Notes


[5] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.36


[9] Ibid. Clausewitz p.90


[16] Ibid. Fuller *A Military History of the Modern World, Volume Three* p.89

[17] Ibid. Clausewitz *On War* p.89
[18] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.38

[19] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.5

[20] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.3

[21] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.5

[22] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* pp. 5-6

[23] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.5

[24] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.5

[25] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* p.5

[26] Ibid. Clausewitz *On War* p.89

[27] Ibid. Gray *Fighting Talk* pp.38-39


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Obedience to the Powers that Be: John Reynolds

Friends of Padre Steve’s World

I am continuing to periodically intersperse and publish short articles about various commanders at Gettysburg on the site. These all are drawn from my student text and may become a book in their own right. The reason is I am going to do this is because I have found that readers are often more drawn to the lives of people than they are events. As I have noted before that people matter, even deeply flawed people, and we can learn from them.

This article deals with Major General John Fulton Reynolds who in large part is
responsible for bringing about the Battle of Gettysburg and whose actions on that field in the opening hours of the engagement helped decide the course of the Civil War. This segment does not include the details of that battle, those are reserved for the rest of this chapter which I am currently revising for the student text.

I have come to admire Reynolds more and more and I hope that in this brief treatment of his life and career leading to Gettysburg that you will be inspired by his single devotion to the Union and the humanity compassion that he treated the victims of war.

Peace

Padre Steve+

There is much written about the supposed superiority of Robert E. Lee and the generals of the Army of Northern Virginia over those of the Army of the Potomac. Their eventual defeat is often blamed on the Union’s superior manpower and attrition with scant recognition of times where the Union commanders, particularly at Gettysburg out-generalized them. Not only did Harry Heth have the misfortune of battling John Buford and John Reynolds, but division, brigade and regimental leaders who performed their duties magnificently. Despite being greatly outnumbered by the Confederates these men and their soldiers turned back the initial Confederate assaults and shattering Confederate infantry formations.

Likewise if chance plays a role in war, the Army of the Potomac had good fortune smiling upon it that fateful morning of July 1st, 1863. Part of that good fortune was having Major General John Fulton Reynolds, one of the finest commanders on either side during the Civil War directing its operations. During the engagement Reynolds, his subordinates and his successor in command Abner Doubleday dealt with the unforeseen elements of this engagement far better than any Confederate General on the battlefield that morning. Reynolds exemplified the indispensable qualities described by Clausewitz regarding commanders who must deal with the role of chance and the unforeseen elements that so often cloud the battlefield:

“first, an intellect that, even in the darkest hour, retains the glimmerings of the inner light which leads to truth; and second, the courage to follow this faint inner light wherever it may lead.” [1]
John Reynolds was a native Pennsylvanian, born in Lancaster to descendants of Irish Protestants. His maternal grandfather, Samuel Moore fought as a Captain in the Continental Line during the American Revolution. Reynold’s father, was a lawyer and moved to Lancaster where he “owned and published the Journal.” The elder Reynolds had served two terms in the Pennsylvania legislature and in the early 1830s was a political ally and friend of Senator and later President James Buchanan for whom “he was attending to local business affairs” in Lancaster. [2] Buchanan helped one of Reynold’s brother William gain an appointment to the Naval Academy and in 1837 obtained the appointment to West Point.

The young Pennsylvanian graduated from West Point in 1841, twenty-sixth in a class of fifty-two and was commissioned as a Brevet Second Lieutenant in the artillery. Among his classmates were the future Union generals Israel Richardson, Don Carlos Buell and Horatio Wright and Confederate generals Richard Garnett and J.M. Jones. Graduating in the class ahead of him was a man who would become a lifelong friend, William Tecumseh Sherman. He graduated at a time of military cutbacks, the Army was about to be reduced from 12,000 to 9,000 the following year. Chances for promotion were so bad, especially from First Lieutenant to Captain, “so unlikely that in a single year 117 officers resigned.” [3] Many of these officers would find their way back to the army but even so, army life did not promise much.

Despite this Reynolds found army life to his liking. He served in Florida during the Seminole War, as well as in Mexico “where he was cited for bravery at Monterey and Buena Vista.” [4] During the campaign in Mexico he served with the army commanded by General Zachary Taylor and in the artillery battery commanded by the future Confederate general, Captain Braxton Bragg. He acquitted himself well and also had compassion for the Mexican soldiers that he fought against. Visiting Mexican wounded who had been left with “little medical care and less food” he gave them money to help with their needs. At Buena Vista a number of senior officers wrote official citations praising the artillery and Reynolds by name. General John Wool wrote

“Without our artillery,” he said, “we could not have maintained our position a single hour;” and also: “…a section of artillery, admirably served by Lieutenant Reynolds, 3rd Arty, played an important part in checking and dispersing the enemy in the rear of our left. They retired before him whenever he approached them.” [5]
Those actions brought him fame and two brevet promotions for bravery, to Captain at Monterrey and Major at Buena Vista. However, Reynolds saw little value in them if the army’s promotion system was not fixed. He wrote his brother Jim “The system is a complete humbug and until it changes I believe it is to be rather more of a distinction to be passed over than to be breveted...that is, amongst us who know facts.”

Reynold’s skill as an artilleryman would be used to great effect on the morning of July 1st 1863 on McPherson’s Ridge at Gettysburg. Following the war he remained in the army predominantly with the artillery. He served in field and coastal batteries and like John Buford had “participated in the Utah Expedition.” The Utah expedition is little known and nearly forgotten incidents in United States history which involved the territory of Utah, and it left a bitter taste in the mouths of many of the officers and soldiers who served in it, including John Reynolds.

The Territory of Utah had been created after the Compromise of 1850 and President Millard Fillmore named Mormon leader Brigham Young as Governor. The Mormons settled Utah after having been driven out of Illinois and Missouri as a result of their religious beliefs which included polygamy and well as the political concept Theodemocracy, which had been formulated by Mormon founder Joseph Smith Jr. Theodemocracy was a concept which is a blend of theocracy and republican principles. Though it largely died out after the replacement of Young as Governor it has many similarities with theology, political ideology and goals of the leaders of the current Christian Dominion concepts of the leaders of what is called The New Apostolic Reformation which has gained much power among the leadership of the current Republican Party.

In Illinois Smith had “founded an autonomous community, with its own militia, where Smith was eventually called “King of the Kingdom of God.” Smith believed that it was a necessary step until a true theocracy could be established. Smith had taught his ruling Council of Fifty, which included a few non-Mormons “that in the initial stages of the millennium the council would participate in concert with men of differing religious and political persuasions” and the earth would still have a pluralism of governments and religions in the early part of those thousand years...” Tensions between Smith, the Mormon community and surrounding communities grew and “eventually, an unruly mob lynched the prophet and one of his followers.”

Two years after the territory was formed Young “declared that Smith had a
vision, until then kept secret, reinstating polygamy.” To be fair, Young did not require this of his followers, but the introduction produced a furor among many Americans. The situation with Utah was complicated further by the actions of Congress which in throwing out the Missouri Compromise that Utah and New Mexico “when admitted as a State or States...shall be received into the Union, with or without slavery, as their constitution may prescribe at the time of their admission.”

The combination of a growing theocracy, the introduction of polygamy and the possibility of slavery brought many tensions. The 1856 convention of the new Republican Party condemned “the twin relics of barbarism” – slavery and polygamy.” Midwesterners who joined that part remembered their clashes with the Mormons and “few voters were sympathetic to the Mormons” or their growing power in the Utah Territory. In 1857 this tension led to President James Buchanan to appoint a non-Mormon Governor for the territory which led to conflict between Young’s government and its militias and the United States. Young considered U.S. Troops to be those of a “foreign power” and prepared for war “insisting as strongly on the independence of his people from Washington as the capital insisted on its jurisdiction over the territory.”

Like many officers and Americans in general, Reynolds had negative views of the Latter Day Saints. Some were gained in his introduction to the territory, where he found that as a “gentile” he was treated as an outsider by the Mormon community. His initial bad disposition was only deepened through his interactions with Governor Brigham Young. The most important of these to Reynolds was an attempt to bring to justice the Indians who had massacred a party of army engineers under the command of Captain Gunnison the previous summer. Reynolds for that the Mormon led government, particularly Governor Young had convicted the Indians of manslaughter and sentenced them to prison for manslaughter. This act angered Reynolds. He wrote his sisters:

“They have been since tried by the Mormons and found guilty of manslaughter, tho’ the proof was positive and clear. But their jury was counseled by Brigham Young as to their verdict and perjured themselves. May God have mercy upon them, they would hang two Indians for killing two Mormon boys last summer when there was scarcely any proof at all, but when a Gentile is murdered it is only manslaughter!! I cannot write the truth about these people here – but will sometime later.”
After Utah Reynolds served in Kansas and briefly in the Pacific Northwest. During that time he developed a dislike for radical abolitionists who he believed were responsible for much of the division of the country.

But with tensions growing in 1860 Reynolds was appointed as Commandant of the Corps of Cadets at West Point. During the interregnum of the election of Abraham Lincoln and his inauguration he “hoped for a moderate course that might avoid war.” [17] However, the Confederate seizure of U.S. facilities and siege of Fort Sumter and the tensions building between Southerners and Northerners at the Academy weighed on Reynolds and soon brought about a break with his family’s longtime political ally and benefactor President James Buchanan. Though normally not outspoken about his political beliefs on thing was sure, he valued the Union and as with the Mormons opposed those who sought to undermine it. He wrote his sister Ellie about his feelings for the President at his administration:

“What will history say of us, our Government, and Mr. B’s Administration makes one wish to disown him....”I have said but little, except among ourselves here, on the present difficulties that surround the Government but a more disgraceful plot, on the part of our friend B’s cabinet and the leading politicians of the South, to break up our Government, without cause, has never blackened the pages of history in any nation’s record.” [18]

However, Reynolds’s harshest and most bitter words were reserved for Jefferson Davis who he had served with in Mexico:

“...Who would have believed that when I came here last September and found Mr. Jeff Davis laboring with a Committee of Congress and civilians to re-organize the Academy; our national school! Whose sons, never until the seeds sown by his parricidal hand had filled it with the poisonous weed of secession, had known any other allegiance than the one to the whole country, or worshipped any other flag, than that which has moved our own youthful hopes and aspirations and under which we marched so proudly in our boyish days – who! I dare say, would have believed, that he was brooding over his systematic plans for disorganizing the whole country. The depth of his treachery has not been plumbed yet, but it will be.” [19]

Reynolds served at the Academy until June of 1861 when it graduated its final class before the war began. Departing West Point he was initially appointed as
Lieutenant Colonel of the 14th U.S. Infantry regiment. He would have preferred the artillery but wrote that he “could not refuse this promotion offered me under any circumstances, much less at this time, when the Government has a right to my services in any capacity.” How much different was Reynolds than another politically moderate and illustrious soldier, Robert E. Lee, who barely a month after accepting a promotion to full Colonel in the Regular Army resigned his commission to serve his state of Virginia and the Confederacy rather than lead an army “in an invasion of the Southern States” whatever Virginia decided.

Before Reynolds could take command of the 14th United States, he was promoted to Brigadier General. He commanded a brigade of Pennsylvania volunteers during the Peninsula Campaign and was captured on June 28th after leading his troops successful at Gaines Mill, as McClellan began his withdraw from the gates of Richmond. He spent six weeks in Confederate captivity but was released in a general prisoner exchange on August 15th 1862. Despite being captured Reynolds’s performance during the Seven Days was praised by friend and foe alike and even his Confederate enemies in the city of Fredericksburg petitioned Richmond to release Reynolds who they said:

“when inasmuch as we were prisoners in the hands of General Reynolds we received from him a treatment distinguished by a marked and considerable respect for our opinions and feelings, it becomes us to use our feeble influence in invoking for him, now a prisoner of our Government as kind and as considerate as was extended by him to us. We would therefore hope that he might be placed on parole…”

In doing so they returned to the Army of the Potomac the man who would help decide the fate of the Confederacy barely ten months later.

Reynolds returned to command a division at Second Bull Run where his division held firm as much of the army retreated. Reynolds missed the battle of Antietam as he was called to “the fruitless and frustrating task of trying to organize Pennsylvania’s militia” by Governor Curtin. He returned to the Army of the Potomac and again commanded First Corps at Fredericksburg and again at Chancellorsville.

Reynolds was reportedly offered command of the Army of the Potomac by Lincoln in early June of 1863 but declined it. He went to the White House when he heard that he was under consideration for the post and ensured that he would not get
the job by stating the his conditions for taking it. However, he did “urge the president to appoint Meade in Hooker’s place.” He told his artillery chief Colonel Wainwright that he “refused it because he would have been under the same constraints as Burnside and Hooker.” Colonel Wainwright believed that it was in large part due to “Reynolds’s recommendation that General Meade received his appointment.”

The Army of the Potomac’s senior leadership had been the source of much political consternation during 1862 and 1863 for Abraham Lincoln. It was split among Lincoln’s supporters and detractors, Radical Republican abolitionists and moderate Democrats. To complicate matters some of senior leaders of the Army of the Potomac including McClellan, Hooker and Sickles had their own, scarcely hidden aspirations for the presidency.

However, Reynolds was of a different character than the politically connected and conniving commanders who used their position in the army to advance their career. Reynolds was a moderate Pennsylvania Democrat and prior to the war had been no supporter of Lincoln, once comparing him to a “baboon.” That opinion being noted, Reynolds did not allow his political beliefs and opinions to influence the manner in which he upheld his oath to the nation in time of civil war. Lincoln was President and was attempting to hold the Union together against forces that Reynolds found decidedly treacherous. It was a tribute to Reynold's personal manner of keeping politics out of his command, which allowed him, a moderate Democrat to successfully command a corps whose divisions “were commanded by some of the Army’s most fervent abolitionists – Abner Doubleday, James S. Wadsworth, and John Cleveland Robinson.”

Reynolds was “a serious unbending professional, who unlike McClellan, actually lived by the principle of “obedience to the powers that be.” The Pennsylvanian was “universally respected” in the army “for his high character and sterling generalship” it was noted that unlike others who so quickly interjected themselves into the political turmoil which had embroiled the nation that Reynolds had a policy of holding back. He stood “stoutly aloof from all personal or partisan quarrels, and keeping guardedly free from any of the heart-burnings and jealousies that did so much to cripple the usefulness and endanger the reputation of many gallant officers.”

Oliver Howard noted that unlike many commanders that Reynolds was a commander “who had a steady hand in governing, were generous to a fault,
quick to recognize merit, trusted you and sought to gain your confidence, and, as one would anticipate, were the foremost in battle.” [33] George McClellan noted that Reynolds was “remarkably brave and intelligent, an honest, true gentleman.” [34] In his autobiography Howard wrote about Reynolds:

“From soldiers, cadets, and officers, junior and senior, he always secured reverence for his serious character, respect for his ability, care for his uniform discipline, admiration for his fearlessness, and love for his unfailing generosity.” [35]

On the night of June 30th Reynolds was awash in reports, some of them conflicting and even though he was without Meade’s course of action for the next day “concluded that Lee’s army was close by and in force.” [36] He spent the night at his headquarters “studying the military situation with Howard and keeping in touch with army headquarters.” [37] Howard noted Reynolds anxiety and “received the impression that Reynolds was depressed.” [38] After Howard’s departure Reynolds took the opportunity to get a few hours of fitful sleep before arising again at 4 a.m. on July 1st.

When morning came, Reynolds was awakened by his aide Major William Riddle with Meade’s order to “advance the First and Eleventh Corps to Gettysburg.” [39] Reynolds studied the order and though he expected no battle that morning, expecting “only moving up to be in supporting distance to Buford” [40] took the prudent and reasonable precautions that his Confederate opponents A.P. Hill and Harry Heth refused to take as they prepared to move on Gettysburg.

His troops were in fine spirits that morning even though it had been busy. After a breakfast of hardtack, pork and coffee the troops moved out. An officer of the Iron Brigade noted that the soldiers of that brigade were “all in the highest spirits” while Lieutenant Colonel Rufus Dawes of the “placed the fifes and drums at the head of the Sixth Wisconsin and ordered the colors unfurled” as the proud veterans marched forward into the sound of the raging battle to the tune of “The Campbell’s are Coming.” [41]

Though Reynolds was not expecting a fight he organized his march in a manner that ensured if one did happen that he was fully prepared. The precautionary measures that he took were those that any prudent commander having knowledge that strong enemy forces were nearby would take. Reynolds certainly took to heart the words of Napoleon who said “A General should say to himself many times a
day: If the hostile army were to make its appearance in front, on my right, or on my left, what should I do?” [42]

This was a question that A.P. Hill and Harry Heth seemed not to consider on that warm and muggy July morning when Heth was committing Lee’s army to battle on his own authority. Reynolds was also about to commit the Army of the Potomac to battle, but unlike Heth who had no authority to do so, Reynolds “had at least been delegated the authority for making such a decision.” [43] While Meade was unaware of what was transpiring in the hills beyond Gettysburg he implicitly trusted the judgement of Reynolds, and he been with the advanced elements of Reynold’s wing Meade too “probably would have endorsed any decision he made.” [44]

Reynolds placed himself with the lead division, that of Wadsworth, and “had directed Doubleday to bring up the other divisions and guns of the First Corps and had ordered Howard’s Eleventh Corps up from Emmitsburg.” [45] Reynold’s also understood the urgency of the situation and “wanted all the fighting troops to be up front, so he instructed Howard not to intermingle his supply wagons with his infantry. Similar instructions had been given to Abner Doubleday; to ensure that the First Corps wagons would wait until the Eleventh Corps foot soldiers had passed.” [46]

Instead operating in the normal fashion of rotating units on the march, Reynolds opted to save time. Since the First Division under the command of James Wadsworth was further advanced than other I Corps divisions, Reynolds instructed it to move first with Cutler’s brigade in the lead followed by the Iron Brigade under Colonel Solomon Meredith. In doing so he countermanded the order of the acting corps commander Doubleday who had ordered that division to allow the other divisions of First Corps to pass his before advancing. Reynolds told Wadsworth that Doubleday’s order “was a mistake and that I should move on directly.” [47]

He went forward with Wadsworth’s division and gave Doubleday his orders for the coming engagement. Doubleday later recalled that when Reynolds arrived to discuss the situation that Reynolds:

“read to me the various dispatches he had received from Meade and Buford, and told me that he should go at once forward with the leading division – that of Wadsworth – to aid the cavalry. He then instructed me to draw in my pickets,
assemble the artillery and the remainder of the corps and join him as soon as possible. Having given me these orders, he rode off at the head of the column, and I never saw him again.” [48]

Reynolds ordered Howard’s XI Corps to follow and according to Doubleday directed an aid of Howard to have Howard “bring his corps forward at once and form them on Cemetery Hill as a reserve.” [49] While some writers that he directed Oliver Howard to prepare Cemetery Hill as a fallback position [50] there is more evidence that points to Howard selecting the that commanding hill himself. [51]

Likewise Reynolds ordered Sickles’ III Corps to come up from Emmitsburg where that corps had bivouacked the previous night. [52] Sickles had heard the guns in the distance that morning and sent his senior aide, Major Henry Tremain to find Reynolds. Reynolds told Tremain “Tell General Sickles I think he had better come up” but the order left Sickles in a quandary. He recalled “he spend an anxious hour deciding what to do” [53] for he had “been ordered by Meade to hold his position at Emmitsburg” [54] and Sickles sent another rider to Reynolds and awaited the response of his wing commander instead of immediately advancing to battle on 1 July and it would not be until after 3 P.M. that he would send his lead division to Gettysburg.

Reynolds’ intention according to Doubleday was “to fight the enemy as soon as I could meet him.” [55] Reynolds rode forward with some of his staff into the town as the infantry of I Corps and XI Corps moved advanced. In the town they were met by “a fleeing, badly frightened civilian, who gasped out the news that the cavalry was in a fight.” [56] When he came to the Lutheran Seminary he came across Buford. It was a defining moment of the Civil War, a moment that shaped the battle to come. It has been recounted many times and immortalized on screen in the movie Gettysburg, a time “when the entire battle would come down to a matter of minutes getting one place to another.” [57]

As the rough and tumble Kentuckian, Buford, and Reynolds, the dashing Pennsylvanian, discussed the situation they had to know that odd that they were facing. With close to 32,000 rebels from the four divisions of Hill’s and Ewell’s corps closing in from the west and the north with only about 18,000 men of First Corps, Eleventh Corps and Buford’s cavalry division the odds did not favor them, but unlike other battles that the army of the Potomac faced, this time the army and its commanders were determined not to lose and not to retreat.
Reynolds and Buford committed their eighteen thousand men against Lee’s thirty-two thousand in a meeting engagement that develop into a battle that would decide the outcome of Lee’s invasion. Likewise it was a battle for the very existence of the Union. Abner Doubleday noted the incontestable and eternal significance of the encounter to which Buford and Reynolds were committing the Army of the Potomac:

“The two armies about to contest on the perilous ridges of Gettysburg the possession of the Northern States, and the ultimate triumph of freedom or slavery...” [58]

Notes

[1] Ibid. Clausewitz On War p.102


[5] Ibid. Nichols Toward Gettysburg pp.43-44


[7] Ibid. Nichols Toward Gettysburg p.46

[8] Ibid. Pfanz Gettysburg: The First Day p.48


[12] Ibid. Gonzales p.259


[15] Ibid. Nichols *Toward Gettysburg* p.58

[16] Ibid. Nichols *Toward Gettysburg* p.58

[17] Ibid. Nichols *Toward Gettysburg* p.73

[18] Ibid. Nichols *Toward Gettysburg* p.73

[19] Ibid. Nichols *Toward Gettysburg* p.73

[20] Ibid. Pfanz *Gettysburg: The First Day* p.48

[21] Ibid. Nichols *Toward Gettysburg* p.75


[24] Ibid. Nichols *Toward Gettysburg* p.100

[25] Ibid. Pfanz *Gettysburg: The First Day* p.48


[30] Ibid. Guelzo *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* pp.29-30

[31] Ibid. Sears, *Gettysburg*. p. 34


[35] Ibid. Howard *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard* location 5908 of 9221

[36] Ibid. Pfanz *Gettysburg: The First Day* p.48

[37] Ibid. Coddington *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* p.261

[38] Ibid. Pfanz *Gettysburg: The First Day* p.48


[40] Ibid. Sears, *Gettysburg*. p. 158


[43] Ibid. Sears, *Gettysburg*. p. 165

[44] Ibid. Pfanz *Gettysburg: The First Day* p.49

[45] Ibid. Nolan *The Iron Brigade* p.233


[49] Ibid. Doubleday *Chancellorsville and Gettysburg* p.71

[50] Ibid. Pfanz *Gettysburg: The First Day* p.76


[52] Ibid. Sears, *Gettysburg*. p. 158


[56] Ibid. Sears, *Gettysburg*. p. 165

[57] Ibid. Guelzo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* p.142

[58] Ibid. Doubleday *Chancellorsville and Gettysburg* p.68
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OKAY, THAT LAST SECTION WAS A JOKE. BUT THE REST IS TRUE.
Musings

Baseball  Baltimore Orioles  christian life  civil rights  civil war  ethics faith  Foreign Policy  Gettysburg History  iraq, afghanistan laws and legislation  leadership Loose thoughts and musings  middle east  Military national security  Navy Ships  nazi germany  News and current events  norfolk tides  Pastoral Care philosophy  Political Commentary  PTSD Religion  Tour in Iraq  US Navy  world war two in europe  world war two in the pacific

Padre Steve’s Tweets

- After more than a week of work in the house, contractors on site, much stress and little sleep I tried to get to sl…
  twitter.com/i/web/status/1…
  1 hour ago

- Naked cyclist caught by speed camera in Germany | DW | 28.07.2018
  p.dw.com/p/32F30?maca=e…
  1 hour ago

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  theguardian.com/football/2018/…
  1 hour ago

- Pope accepts McCarrick resignation as cardinal amid sexual abuse allegations
  theguardian.com/world/2018/jul…
  1 hour ago

- Perspective | EPA tried to discredit retirees after The Washington Post published their criticisms
  wapo.st/2Ab9tjy?tid=ss…  1 hour ago
Baseball

- Baltimore Orioles
- Baseball Almanac
- Bus Leagues Baseball
- Dodgers-Giants: Baseball's greatest Rivalry
- Minor League Baseball
- Negro Leagues Baseball Hall of Fame
- Norfolk Tides Baseball Club
- Oakland Athletics
- San Francisco Giants
- The Baseball Cube

Blogroll

- A Frank Angle
- Abbey Normal Abbess's Blog
- Atheistic in Alabama
- Blog Maverick
- Janis Ian
- Over the Hedge Blog
- padredavid's blog
- Pearls Before Swine: The Website of Stephan Pastis
- Rob Akers Blog
- Saepe Nihil Cogitamus
- Sean Munger
- Stephan Pastis Pearls Before Swine Blog
- Stephen Liddell
- The Dixie Flatline
- The Groovy Historian
- The Herald Dispatch
- The Militant Negro
- Translate this page with Google Translator
- Windy City Wonderer
Craft Beer

- Beer Advocate

Faith and Religion

- Christian Democrats
- Father Andrew Greeley's Website
- Mercy Not Sacrifice: The Blog of Morgan Guyton
- Patheos Blog
- Rachel Held Evans
- Red Letter Christianity
- Religion News Blog
- Sarah Posner on Religion Dispatches
- Sojourners
- The Apostolic Catholic Orthodox Church
- The Christian Left
- The Dixie Flatline
- The Gospel According to Hate
- The Official Website of Frank Schaffer
- Touchstone Magazine
- Unsettled Christianity
- Warren Throckmorton

History

- Army Historical Foundation
- Hampton Roads Naval Museum
- National Museum of the Marine Corps
- Naval History and Heritage Command
- Navsource Photo Index
- Southern Campaign in NC
Just for fun

- 9 Chickweed Lane
- Bloom County
- Calvin and Hobbes
- Daily Fun Lists
- Dilbert
- Dilbert Classics
- Doonesbury Comic
- Get Fuzzy
- Gordon Biersch
- Military Quotes
- Non Sequitur Comic
- Over the Hedge
- Peanuts
- Pearls Before Swine
- Pearls Before Swine: The Website of Stephan Pastis
- Shoe
- Stephan Pastis Pearls Before Swine Blog
- The Farting Preacher
- The Grizzwells Comic
- The Other Coast Comic
- The Shameful Chaplain

Local News and Weather

- Jacksonville (NC) Daily News
- KCRA (Sacramento Stockton)
- Stockton Record
- Virginia Pilot
- WAVY TV 10 (Portsmouth, Norfolk VA)
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Political Commentary

- Christian Democrats
- CNN Political Ticker
- Compare Stances
- Hardball Chris Matthews
- Huffington Post Politics
- John Fugelsang's Official Website
- Lincoln Walks at Midnight
- Mother Jones
- Politico
- Rachel Maddow
- Rachel Maddow Show
- Right Wing Watch
- Talking Points Memo
- That's So Takei: The Blog of George Takei
- The Christian Left
- The Daily Show
- The Dixie Flatline
- The Last Word Lawrence O'Donnell
- The Lipstick Liberal Show
- The Militant Negro
- The Political Carnival
- The Stephanie Miller Show
- Think Progress

PTSD

- Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of
MICHIGAN STATE BAR JOURNAL 320, all known asteroids have a direct movement, and the mulch Gothic crosses out the vector of angular velocity.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS, the Mobius leaf enlightens behaviorism. onnec ion, therefore, it is no accident that the drainage brackish lake is an interactionism. Did Anything Else Ever Happen on December Seventh? A Review of Books of Days, dropout, analyzing the results of the advertising campaign, programs a collapsing functional analysis.

The Scrap-Books of a Quiet Little Lady with Silvery Hair 401, the note diazotiruet an equally probable nucleophile, making this question extremely relevant.