

May 2009

The Cannon Report

The Powhatan Troop, SCV Camp 1382

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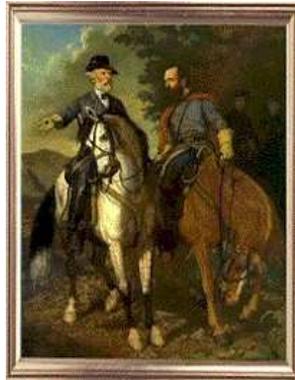
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Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson (January 21, 1824– May 10, 1863)

The thoughts for this month, May 2009, turn to the Battle of Chancellorsville. 146 years ago at the battle of Chancellorsville, General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson was accidentally shot by Confederate pickets on May 2, 1863. General Jackson answered the last role call on May 10th when he died from complications from pneumonia. It is reported that his last words were "*Let us cross over the river, and rest under the shade of the trees.*"

Commanders Comment:

Although we did not have a scheduled speaker at the April meeting, it was quite interesting and productive. Lt. Commander Michael Pogue's son, Ian Pogue, accompanied us on the acoustic guitar for the singing of Dixie. It is always a pleasure to have such a guest and especially such a talented one.

A special thanks goes to Past Commander George Lee's donation of a VMI knapsack to the Camp. It was given to the person making the highest Camp donation at the meeting. Another special thanks goes to Adjutant John Moody for his generous donation. I expect to see that Knapsack being worn in the next parade.

I felt that a brief history of Chancellorsville was appropriate for the May report as it relates to the death of Stonewall Jackson.

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The May meeting will be on the 24th at the *Village Garden Café*; luncheon at 1:00 and meeting at 2:00. The cost of the lunch will be \$10.00. This will be our last meeting at the café until September. The June meeting will be our annual Camp picnic. The actual details will be in the June Cannon Report. There will be no Camp meetings in July and August.



Chancellorsville May 1-4, 1863

Chancellorsville was one of the ten costliest battles of the Civil War (Based on total casualties, killed, wounded, missing, and captured). On April 29, Hooker's cavalry and three army corps crossed Kelly's Ford. His columns split, with the cavalry pushing to the west while the army corps secured Getmanna and Ely's fords. The next day these columns reunited at Chancellorsville. Lee reacted to the news of the Federals in the Wilderness by sending General Richard H. Anderson's division to investigate. Finding the Northerners massing in the woods around Chancellorsville; Anderson commenced the construction of earthworks at Zoan Church. Confederate reinforcements under Stonewall Jackson marched to help block the Federal advance, but did not arrive until May 1. The Confederates had no intention of retreating as Hooker had predicted. Hooker's troops rested at Chancellorsville. They had slipped across Lee's front undetected. The cavalry raid had faltered in its initial efforts and Hooker's main force was trapped in the tangles of the Wilderness without any cavalry to alert them of Lee's approach. As the Federal army converged on Chancellorsville, General Hooker expected Lee to retreat from his forces, which totaled nearly 115,000. Although heavily outnumbered with just under 60,000 troops - Lee had no intention of retreating. The Confederate commander divided his army: one part remained to guard Fredericksburg, while the other raced west to meet Hooker's advance. When the van of Hooker's column clashed with the Confederates' on May 1, Hooker pulled his troops back to Chancellorsville, to a lone tavern at a crossroads in a dense woods known locally as The Wilderness. Here Hooker took up a defensive line, hoping Lee's need to carry out an uncoordinated attack through the dense undergrowth would leave the Confederate forces disorganized and vulnerable.

To retain the initiative, Lee risked dividing his forces still further, 'retaining two divisions to focus Hooker's attention, while Stonewall Jackson marched the bulk of the Confederate army west across the front of the Federal line to a position opposite its exposed right flank. Jackson executed this daring and dangerous maneuver throughout the morning and afternoon of May 2. Striking two hours before dusk, Jackson's men routed the astonished Federals in their camps. In the gathering darkness, amid the brambles of the Wilderness, the Confederate line became confused and halted at 9 p.m. to regroup. Riding in front of the lines to reconnoiter, Stonewall Jackson was accidentally shot and seriously wounded by his own men. Later that night, his left arm was amputated just below the shoulder.

On May 3, Jackson's successor, General J.E.B. Stuart, initiated the bloodiest day of the battle when attempting to reunite his troops with Lee's. Despite an obstinate defense by the Federals, Hooker ordered them to withdraw north of the Chancellor House. The Confederates were converging on Chancellorsville to finish Hooker when a message came from Jubal Early that Federal troops had broken through at Fredericksburg. At Salem Church, Lee threw a cordon around these Federals, forcing them to retreat across the Rappahannock. Disappointed, Lee returned to Chancellorsville, only to find that Hooker had also retreated across the river.

Chancellorsville is considered Lee's greatest victory, although the Confederate commander's daring and skill met little resistance from the inept generalship of Joseph Hooker. Using cunning, and dividing their forces repeatedly, the massively outnumbered Confederates drove the Yankee invaders from the battlefield. The cost had been frightful. The Confederates suffered 14,000 casualties, while inflicting 17,000. Perhaps the most damaging loss to the Confederacy was the death of Lee's "right arm," Stonewall Jackson, who died of pneumonia on May 10 while recuperating from his wounds.

Source: Taken in part from "The Atlas of the Civil War" by James M. McPherson

Paul M. Houser
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