

**General Joseph Hooker**

Warner, Ezra J., Generals in Blue (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 233-235.

without recourse to habeas corpus and trying by military commission individuals who would normally have been tried by civil courts. The most notable of these extralegal proceedings were the trials of ex-Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, the Lincoln conspirators, and Henry Wirz, commandant of Andersonville. None of these prosecutions was creditable to the government, the perjury of its witnesses in the trial of the President's assassins and the suppression of evidence and of the recommendation of mercy for Mrs. Surratt appearing particularly shocking. Holt retired in 1875 and died, blind and alone, in his Washington home on August 1, 1894. He was buried in the family cemetery at Holt, Kentucky. (234)

Joseph Hooker, grandson of a Revolutionary War captain, was born on November 13, 1814, in Hadley, Massachusetts. He obtained his early education at the Hopkins Academy in his native village; then he attended West Point from which he was graduated in 1837, ranking midway in the class. His army career prior to the outbreak of the Mexican War was highly commendable; he demonstrated qualities of leadership and executive ability. As a staff officer in Mexico under Generals P. F. Smith, Benjamin F. Butler, and Gideon J. Pillow, he took part in both Zachary Taylor's and Winfield Scott's campaigns and won the brevets of all the grades through lieutenant colonel for gallant and meritorious conduct, a record not surpassed by any first lieutenant in the service. Hooker was appointed captain of the 1st Artillery on October 29,

1848, but for some reason vacated the appointment the same day. From then until June 9, 1849, when he became assistant adjutant general of the Pacific Division, his service record does not disclose his activities. He was on leave of absence



during 1851-53 and resigned his commission on February 21, 1853, to engage in farming near Sonoma. During the next five years his career declined; one historian remarked that "the dashing army officer had descended almost to the level of beachcomber. . . ." (235) During this period Hooker apparently repented his decision to resign, for in a letter dated early in 1858 to Secretary of War John B. Floyd, Hooker dwelt upon his past services while requesting that his name "be presented to the President [Buchanan] as a candidate for a Lieut. Colonelcy. . . ." (236) Nothing came of this solicitation and until the beginning of the Civil War, Hooker eked out a living in

Oregon and California. On August 6, 1862, he was commissioned a brigadier general of volunteers to rank from May 17, his name standing two numbers above that of U. S. Grant. The following spring, at Williamsburg on the Virginia Peninsula, there was hard fighting as George B. McClellan advanced his force toward the capital of the Confederacy; Hooker's division of Samuel P. Heintzelman's III Corps was in the van. A press wire reading, "Fighting—Joe Hooker," appeared throughout the North as "Fighting Joe Hooker." (237) Hooker never lived the sobriquet down. In the ensuing actions of the Seven Days, Second Manassas, Sharpsburg, and Fredericksburg, Hooker exhibited solid qualifications as a combat officer in charge of his division and then of the I Corps. In the course of Ambrose E. Burnside's abortive effort to cross the Rappahannock and storm Robert E. Lee's position on the south side, Hooker, then in command of the "Center Grand Division," criticized his superior officer; as a consequence, his name headed the list of officers Burnside wished relieved as an alternative to his own relief. Nevertheless, Burnside was relieved and Hooker became commander of the Army of the Potomac. (Much of this elevation to command resulted from Hooker's association with Salmon P. Chase and the radical members of the Cabinet. Because of Chase's aspirations to the presidency in 1864, it has been widely stated that Hooker's principal recommendations for army command were that he looked like a great general and had no political ambitions.) In the campaign of Chancellors-

ville, Hooker moved 135,000 troops across the Rapidan and Rappahannock rivers with great adroitness and seemed about to crush Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Suddenly obfuscated by Stonewall Jackson's counterstroke, which rolled up his right, Hooker later ordered a retreat upon the advice of a council of his corps commanders. He skillfully deployed his army so as to cover Washington and Baltimore while Lee advanced into Pennsylvania, a maneuver which won him the thanks of Congress. Refused the reenforcement of the Harpers Ferry garrison by Henry W. Halleck, he asked for relief and was supplanted by George G. Meade three days before the opening of the battle of Gettysburg. After the Chickamauga disaster in September, Hooker was sent west with the XI and XII Corps (under Oliver O. Howard and Henry W. Slocum), which were ultimately consolidated into the XX Corps. At Chattanooga in November, 1863, Hooker's troops drove a Confederate skirmish line off Lookout Mountain, an engagement which became celebrated in song and story as "The Battle Above the Clouds." Grant, who was present and in command of all the Union forces, trenchantly characterized it as "one of the romances of the war. There was no such battle and no action even worthy to be called a battle on Lookout Mountain." The *New York Tribune* remarked, "There were no clouds to fight above—only a heavy mist." (238) At this time Hooker was a brigadier general in the Regular Army and a major general of volunteers. After the death of James B. McPherson in front of Atlanta, W. T. Sherman

promoted Hooker's subordinate Howard to command of the Army of Tennessee and Hooker asked to be relieved from command in "an army in which rank and service are ignored." Sherman promptly obliged him and Hooker's field service came to an end. A contemporary who saw Hooker late in 1864 "was much disappointed with his appearance: red-faced, very, with a lack-lustre eye and an uncertainty of gait and carriage that suggested a used-up man." (239) Thereafter, Hooker exercised departmental command until his retirement in 1868 as a major general. He died in Garden City, New York, on October 31, 1879, and was buried in Cincinnati, his wife's hometown. Appraisals of Hooker's accomplishments, morals, and military know-how have been the subject of discussion for more than a century. The term "hooker," denoting a woman of questionable virtue, is said to have derived from the class of females who frequented his headquarters—headquarters to which it was said "no gentleman cared to go and no lady could go."

Alvin Peterson Hovey, a remote cousin of General Charles E. Hovey, was born September 26, 1821, near Mount Vernon, Indiana. Orphaned at the age of fifteen, he was in succession bricklayer, school-teacher, lawyer, officer of volunteers in the Mexican War (although he saw no service), member of the state constitutional convention, and circuit judge. In 1854 he was appointed to the state supreme court—the youngest man ever to serve on the Indiana bench up to that time. He served as U. S. District Attorney for a time, and in



1858 was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress on the Republican ticket. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Hovey was commissioned colonel of the 24th Indiana, and after some preliminary service in Missouri, took his regiment into the bloody battle of Shiloh in Morgan Smith's brigade of Lew Wallace's division. His gallantry in this battle was rewarded with a promotion to brigadier. That autumn (1862) he commanded a division in Arkansas under General Samuel R. Curtis and a division of General John McClelland's XIII Corps in the Vicksburg campaign. His division and two of McPherson's (Logan's and Crocker's) fought almost the entire battle of Champion's Hill. In December, 1863, he was sent to Indiana to organize and forward the troops being recruited there and to act as a go-between for General U. S. Grant and Governor Oliver Perry Morton. (240) During the preliminary stages of the

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U.S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 127 vols., index and atlas (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1880-1901), ser. I, vol. 21, pt. 1: 354-357.

The regiment having been formed in line of battle near the headquarters of Brigadier-General Willcox, was ordered to advance with its brigade to the support of the First Brigade, Third Division, Ninth Army Corps. The advance was made to where the Ninth New York lay on the ground, in the rear of and supporting a battery. At this moment, and before the regiment (which had been unavoidably somewhat broken by the obstacles around and over which it had been compelled to pass) had entirely reformed, the lieutenant-colonel commanding was shot dead by a fragment from a shell.

Maj. M. P. Buffum immediately assumed command; and the Fourth Rhode Island lay on its arms during the night in that place, the Ninth New York being withdrawn in the evening, occupying its proper position in line in the Second Brigade. In the morning the regiment was withdrawn with the brigade; and from that time until the evening of the 15th remained in line in the principal street of Fredericksburg, near the headquarters of General Willcox.

About dark on the evening of the 15th, the regiment accompanied its brigade to the road back of the city, and, forming in line of battle (with the Twenty-first Connecticut on our right and the Eighth Connecticut on our left), threw out guards 200 or 300 feet in advance, and stacked arms, the men lying down in the rear of the stacks. Presently orders were received to fall in, take arms, and march. The Fourth Rhode Island, following the Twenty-first Connecticut, marched down through the city, across the pontoon bridge, back to its old camp.

The following is a list\* of the killed, wounded, and missing of the Fourth Rhode Island: \* \* \*

*Summary.*—Commissioned officers, killed, 1; wounded, 1; enlisted men, wounded, 8; missing, 6. Total, 16.

I have the honor to be, colonel, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

M. P. BUFFUM,

*Major, Commanding Fourth Rhode Island Volunteers.*

COL. EDWARD HARLAND,  
*Commanding Second Brigade.*

No. 144.

*Report of Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, U. S. Army, commanding Center Grand Division.*

WASHINGTON, D. C., September 5, 1863.

COLONEL: I have the honor to submit herewith a report of the operations of the center grand division of the Army of the Potomac, under my command.

In obedience to General Orders, No. 184, dated November, 1862, Headquarters Army of the Potomac, Warrenton, I assumed command of the center grand division, composed of the Third Corps (General Stoneman) and Fifth Corps (General Butterfield), and a division of cavalry under General Averell. It having been determined to change the line of operations to the Fredericksburg line, upon the movement of the army I was directed to cover the rear of its march by the two routes from Warrenton, assembling at Hartwood Church. This was successfully and

\* Nominal list omitted.

properly accomplished, General Stoneman's corps moving from Bealeton and General Butterfield's corps moving from Warrenton Junction.

Upon my arrival at Hartwood Church, November 19, impressed with the necessity of a prompt and vigorous prosecution of the campaign, the fear of a delay in the construction of the bridges over the Rappahannock, and a belief that the enemy, by such a movement, would be effectually prevented from making the Rappahannock River (of itself a most formidable obstacle) his line of defense, I addressed the following letter to the major-general commanding the army:

HEADQUARTERS CENTER GRAND DIVISION,  
*Camp at Hartwood, Va., November 19, 1862.*

Lieut. Col. LEWIS RICHMOND,  
*Assistant Adjutant-General, Army of the Potomac:*

COLONEL: I have the honor to request that you will call the attention of the major-general commanding to the advantage it will be in the prosecution of the campaign to allow my command to cross the Rappahannock at the ford 4 miles distant from this point, and to march, by the most direct route, to Saxton's Junction. I have three days' rations from to-morrow morning, and forage I can obtain in the country. At Bowling Green I am nearer to supplies delivered at Port Royal than I can be here, and supplies can be landed at that point in a day and a half from Washington. I make this suggestion in order to have it brought to the general's attention, in the event it should not already have received his reflection. I cannot possibly encounter a force in this advance which I cannot easily push away, and, should Sickles join me and supplies be properly furnished, continue the advance. It has appeared to me that the lateness of the season almost demands celerity of movement on our part.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOSEPH HOOKER,  
*Major-General, Commanding Center Grand Division.*

This movement was not approved, and my command was moved to the vicinity of the Potomac Creek crossing and the railroad from Aquia Creek to Falmouth, and remained there until the movements for crossing the Rappahannock in December.

During this time a disgraceful affair at the outpost occurred, in consequence of the neglect of duty of some of the officers of the cavalry division, resulting in the capture of — men and — horses. The details of this affair are set forth in the report and correspondence hereto annexed, marked A.\*

Upon the arrival of the pontoons, which had been delayed, it was determined to cross the Rappahannock. Meanwhile the enemy had assembled in force and intrenched himself upon the opposite bank, in rear of the city of Fredericksburg.

The grand division commanders were assembled to discuss and determine the place and method of crossing the river. It was proposed by the major-general commanding that a portion of the army should cross at Falmouth and a portion 12 miles below. To this I objected by my vote, and proposed a crossing above. It was finally determined by General Burnside to cross at Falmouth and 12 miles below. This plan was afterward changed, and three bridges thrown across the river at Fredericksburg and two about 4 miles below, my orders being to hold my troops in hand, and, in event of a successful crossing, to spring upon the enemy's line of retreat with my whole force. My corps were moved to the three upper bridges to carry out the proposed plans, General Stoneman's corps in advance, followed by General Butterfield's corps.

The night previous to the attack (December 12), I was ordered to send two divisions (Sickles' and Birney's) of General Stoneman's corps to the bridges, 4 miles below, to support General Franklin.

On December 13, during the attack of General Franklin, without any

\* See affair near Hartwood Church, Va., November 29, 1862, p. 13.

knowledge or information on my part, these two divisions were ordered forward with Franklin. Subsequently I was ordered to send the remaining division (Whipple's) of the Third Corps to relieve the division of General Howard, in Fredericksburg. The corps of General Butterfield was left intact up to this time, ready to cross the bridges.

At 1.30 o'clock, or thereabouts, I received orders to cross this corps and attack. Before the corps had fully crossed, I was directed to send one division to support General Sturgis. General Griffin's division, the largest of the three, being nearest in position, for the purpose, was assigned to this duty. General Butterfield was then left with the two smallest divisions of his corps to make an attack upon the right, where General Sumner's (Second) and a portion of the Ninth Corps, greatly outnumbering this force, had been at work all day without making any impression.

A prisoner in the morning had given to General Burnside, General Sumner, and myself full information of the position and defenses of the enemy, stating that it was their desire that we should attack at that point, in rear of Fredericksburg, on the Telegraph road; that it was perfectly impossible for any troops to carry the position; that, if the first line was carried, a second line of batteries commanded it.

The result of the operations of General Sumner's corps, which had made a determined, spirited attack, without success, fully confirmed the statements of this prisoner. I carefully surveyed the point of attack, and, after conversation with several of the general officers of Sumner's and my own command, I was convinced that it would be a useless waste of life to attack with the force at my disposal. I dispatched an aide to General Burnside, to say that I advised him not to attack. The reply came that the attack must be made.

Under ordinary circumstances I should have complied at once, but so impressed was I with the conviction heretofore stated, that I determined it to be my duty to the troops under my command to give General Burnside a fuller explanation, and dissuade him, if possible, from what I considered a hopeless attack, especially as the few moments it would take for this purpose could not possibly affect the result of the attack in the slightest degree. Accordingly I did so. The general insisted upon the attack being made.

I returned and brought up every available battery, with the intention of breaking their barriers, to enable Butterfield's attacking column to carry the crest. This artillery fire was continued with great vigor until near sunset, when the attack with bayonet was made by Humphreys' division, General Sykes' division moving on its right, to assault *en echelon* and support. This attack was made with a spirit and determination seldom, if ever, equaled in war. The impregnable position of the enemy had given them so strong an advantage that the attack was almost immediately repulsed, and Sykes' division was recalled, without having fully assaulted, to cover the withdrawal of Humphreys'. This movement was a necessity, for the loss and repulse of the attacking columns had been so severe that, should the enemy have followed up their advantage, without this precaution, the result could not have failed to be of the most disastrous character.

During the cannonade the batteries of Randol, First U. S. Artillery, and Hazard, First Rhode Island Artillery, performed most valuable and gallant service. Hazard's battery was posted at the point marked \* on the map accompanying General Butterfield's report, inclosed with this. This position was within about 500 yards of the enemy's line, and the

\* Characters indicated represent four pieces of cannon.

fire of the battery was maintained with the greatest energy and gallantry, until suspended to enable the assault to be made. Great credit is due to this battery and its officers.

It is proper that I should speak of the position of my command at this time. The Third Corps, detached from me and ordered to General Franklin (see General Stoneman's report), was divided into seven different commands, and its commander was virtually without any particular control of any portion of it. The Fifth Corps (General Butterfield's) had been weakened by detaching its largest division (Griffin's) to the support of General Sturgis; my grand division being thus subdivided into nine different commands, with the largest of which, the two divisions of Butterfield, I was called upon to make the attack. After its failure, General Butterfield was directed to take and hold a position covering Fredericksburg from the approach by the road, near which his assault had been made. A ditch (indicated on the map B B B) was selected for this purpose, it having natural advantages, giving protection to our troops from the fire of the enemy. General Burnside ordered a more advanced position to be held, which caused a heavy loss in Sykes' division.

When the withdrawal of the troops from Fredericksburg was decided upon, General Butterfield was left to cover the movement with his corps; a difficult task, considering the nature of the position and the time of its execution, but it was accomplished in a most creditable manner to all concerned.

General Stoneman, with the divisions of Birney and Sickles, of the Third Corps, performed satisfactorily the duties intrusted to them. Their movements, by reason of their being detached, were not under my observation. A full account of their services will be found in General Stoneman's report, and the accompanying reports of his subordinates.

To General Butterfield and his division commanders of the Fifth Corps; also to General Whipple, commanding Third Division of the Third Corps, much praise is due for the spirit and energy displayed in the execution of orders and their gallantry throughout all the operations.

The members of my personal staff, Lieut. Col. Joseph Dickinson, assistant adjutant-general; Maj. W. H. Lawrence, Capt. W. L. Candler, Harry Russell, and Alexander Moore, deserve special and honorable mention at my hands for gallantry and faithful discharge of duty. Three of these officers, under a severe fire, drew off the field, by hand, a portion of one of the batteries, the horses having been killed in action. For the details of the part taken by brigades, regiments, and batteries, and the praise due the commanders and subordinates thereof, I would respectfully call attention to the accompanying reports.

It is with the deepest regret I mention the total casualties reported by the different commanders—in number 3,567, and among these over 200 commissioned officers killed and wounded.\* The devotion and gallantry exhibited by all, more especially by the brave officers and soldiers who fell on that day, has never been excelled in my experience. The country owes them lasting gratitude and honor.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOSEPH HOOKER,  
Major-General, Commanding.

Lieut. Col. LEWIS RICHMOND,  
Assistant Adjutant-General.

\* See revised statement, p. 133.