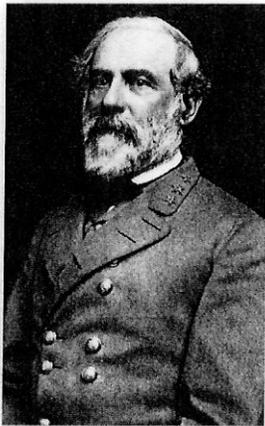


# OPPOSING COMMANDERS



A member of a prominent Virginia family, Robert E. Lee was born at Stafford Hall, Virginia, in 1807 and graduated from West Point second in a class of 46 in 1829. Serving in the Corps of Engineers, he emerged from the Mexican-American War with one wound, three brevets for bravery, and a brilliant reputation. He was superintendent at West Point from 1852 to 1855. In Washington, DC when the John Brown raid at Harpers Ferry occurred in October 1859, he was sent to put down that insurrection. He opposed the secession of his home state, but rejected President Lincoln's offer to command the Union forces. When Virginia seceded from the Union in April 17, 1861, Lee resigned from the US Army and accepted the command of the Virginia state forces. (Library of Congress LC-B8172-0001)

## CONFEDERATE

Rejecting an offer from Lincoln to command the Union forces, Robert E. Lee resigned his commission in April 1861, holding the rank of colonel in the 1st Cavalry. Following his home state out of the Union on April 17, 1861, he accepted command of the Virginia State Forces with rank of major general, and served as senior military advisor to President Jefferson Davis. His first field command for the Confederate States (CS) came in June 1862 when he took command of Confederate forces in the Eastern Theater, which he renamed the Army of Northern Virginia. While he was responsible for Confederate victories at the Seven Days Battles, Second Bull Run, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, both his campaigns to invade the North ended in failure. He barely escaped defeat at Sharpsburg, or Antietam, in September 1862, and was decisively defeated during the third day at Gettysburg in July 1863, although Meade permitted him to withdraw back into Virginia. When Grant began his Overland Campaign on May 4, 1864, Lee's forces inflicted heavy casualties on the larger Union army, particularly at Cold Harbor, although Lee was unable to replace his own losses. Lee took command of the Petersburg defenses in June 1864. He was promoted to general-in-chief of Confederate forces on January 31, 1865.

Resigning from his post as superintendent of West Point five days after the secession of his home state of Louisiana, P.G.T. Beauregard was commissioned a brigadier general in the Confederate Army in March 1861, and was promoted to become one of the eight full generals in the Confederacy on July 21 of that year. His recommendation that strong forces should be stationed at New Orleans was rejected by Jefferson Davis, which resulted in a friction between the two men that would intensify as the Civil War progressed. He commanded the Confederate forces in Charleston Harbor that fired on Fort Sumter on April 12-13, 1861, and won the first main Confederate victory at Manassas, Virginia, in conjunction with General Joseph E. Johnston. Transferred to Tennessee in early 1862, he assumed command at Shiloh when General Albert Sidney Johnston was killed. He became sick in June of that year, and believed he had temporarily handed command to General Braxton Bragg while he went on leave. However, the Confederate president relieved him on the charge of abandoning his post without authority. Following recovery he returned to Charleston to take command of the defenses of the Carolina and Georgia coast, which he managed successfully until 1864 when he was ordered north to assist Robert E. Lee in the defense of Richmond and Petersburg.



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### A Civil War Biography

#### William Farrar Smith

Smith was born on 17 February 1824 in St. Albans, Vermont. He graduated 4th in the West Point class of 1845 and was assigned to the engineers. He was initially assigned to lake surveys then returned to West Point as an assistant professor of mathematics in 1846. In 1848 he was part of the survey team defining the border of Texas for the Mexican boundary commission and then was sent to Florida where he contracted malaria which affected his health for the rest of his life.

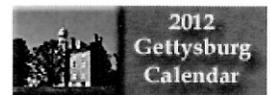
In 1855 Smith returned to the assistant professorship at West Point. When the war began Smith was appointed colonel of the 3rd Vermont to rank from 16 July 1861. He was at First Bull Run assigned to the staff of Irvin McDowell. Smith was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers on 13 August 1861. He commanded the 2nd division of the IV Corps at the siege of Yorktown, Lee's Mill, and Williamsburg. He commanded the 2nd division of the VI Corps during the Seven Days, at South Mountain and Antietam. He commanded the VI Corps at Fredericksburg and was designated for promotion to major general to rank from 4 July 1862.

After Fredericksburg, however, Smith and Major General William B. Franklin, the commander of the "Left Grand Division" wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln criticizing Ambrose E. Burnside's leadership and offering a plan for a future campaign. Compounded by the fact that Smith was a close friend of George B. McClelland, Smith was removed from Corps command on 5 February 1863. The Senate also refused to confirm Smith's promotion and the nomination expired on 4 March 1863.

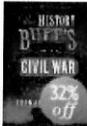
Smith was given command of a division in the Department of the Susquehanna which took part in the pursuit after Gettysburg. He then commanded a division in West Virginia before being sent West as Chief Engineer of the Department of the Cumberland, then Ulysses S. Grant's newly designated Military Division of the Mississippi. Always finding controversy Smith openly disagreed with William S. Rosecrans over who was due credit for opening the "Cracker Line" which brought supplies to Chattanooga after Braxton Bragg had cut off supply lines to the city. Smith was praised for his engineering skills by Grant, William T. Sherman, and George H. Thomas and was reappointed major general of volunteers to rank from 9 March 1864. This time the promotion was confirmed.

When Grant headed east he brought Smith along. Smith was given command of the XVIII Corps in Benjamin Butler's Army of the James but Smith criticized Butler likening him to a "child on the field of battle" with the vision of an "opium eater." The XVIII Corps was transferred to the Army of the Potomac and took part in the repulse at Cold Harbor. This time Smith bitterly criticized George G. Meade. Smith was then ordered with his XVIII Corps and a division of colored troops to take Petersburg. Smith hesitated in front of the Confederate works, some speculate due to a bout with malaria, and failed to take the then lightly defended works.

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Grant had no choice but to relieve Smith from command which was done on 19 July 1864.

Smith spent the remainder of the war on "special duty." He did receive brevet promotions to brigadier general and major general US Army on 13 March 1865. He resigned his volunteer commission before the end of 1865 and his regular commission as a major of engineers in 1867. He was placed on the retirement ranks as a major in 1889.

Following his military service Smith was president of a cable telegraph company, president of the board of police commissioners of New York City, and a civilian engineer in government service on various river and harbor improvements. He wrote extensively of his war experience including several articles for "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War." Smith moved to Philadelphia in 1893 where he died on 28 February 1903. He was buried with honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

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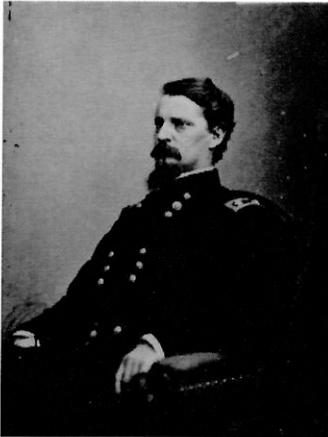
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# Winfield Scott Hancock

MAJOR GENERAL

FEBRUARY 14, 1824 – FEBRUARY 9, 1886

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Major General Winfield Scott Hancock  
(National Archives)

“General Hancock is one of the handsomest men in the United States Army,” wrote Regis de Trobriand in July 1864. “He is tall in stature, robust in figure, with movements of easy dignity ... In action ... dignity gives way to activity; his features become animated, his voice loud, his eyes are on fire, his blood kindles, and his bearing is that of a man carried away by passion – the character of his bravery” (Tucker 246-247). Winfield Scott Hancock impressed his superiors and his soldiers alike. After the Battle of Williamsburg, General George B. McClellan wrote to his wife, “Hancock was superb today.” “Superb” stuck with him throughout the war. However, like many other great Civil War leaders, the public’s high regard disintegrated after the war. Today he is highly esteemed again, with memorials such as the renaming of the courthouse square in his old home town, “General Winfield Scott Hancock Square.”

Hancock graduated from West Point in 1844, 18th in a class of 25. He served in the Mexican War and was honored for his bravery at the battle of Churubusco. When the war began he was serving at Los Angeles, struggling to keep Union ammunition from Southern sympathizers. He was assigned to be General Robert Anderson’s quartermaster in Kentucky. Thankfully for the Union, Gen. McClellan recognized Hancock’s potential and made him a Brigadier General in William “Baldy” Smith’s Division.

On May 5, 1862, Hancock took the initiative in the Battle of Williamsburg and occupied two abandoned redoubts. Despite an overall Union loss, Hancock’s reputation skyrocketed because of this battle. During the September 17, 1862 Battle of Antietam, Hancock was ordered to command mortally wounded Gen. Israel Richardson’s division at the sunken Road. In November he was promoted to Major General.

At Chancellorsville, May 1-3, 1863; Hancock’s division was the last on the field, holding on long enough for the Federals to withdraw. General Darius Couch, commander of the Union Second Corps, had been extremely disgusted with the performance of Gen. “Fighting Joe” Hooker. Couch left the corps and Hancock became its new commander. By the July 1-3, 1863 Battle of Gettysburg, George Gordon Meade was the new commanding general. After learning that the armies were engaged at Gettysburg and Gen. John Reynolds was killed, Meade sent Hancock to command the 1st, 3rd and 11th corps and decide if this was a good battle position. On July 2nd Hancock helped fix Gen. Daniel Sickles’ blunder at the Peach Orchard, he also sent the 1st Minnesota to halt Gen. A.P. Hill’s corps at Cemetery Ridge. On the 3rd, his men helped beat back “Pickett’s Charge” Hancock was seriously wounded in the thigh during the battle, and General Gouverneur Warren took command of the Second Corps. Hancock spent months in excruciating pain while several doctors attempted to remove the minie ball. A Joint Resolution of Congress was passed on January 28, 1864 thanking Generals Meade, Hooker and Howard for their roles at Gettysburg. Hancock’s name was absent.

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By the time Hancock rejoined the Second Corps in March, Ulysses S. Grant was the commander of all Union forces. Under Grant the Union's style of fighting had changed significantly. Even though the Federals lost the Battle of the Wilderness on May 5-7, 1864 they did not retreat. Hancock's Second Corps attacked A.P. Hill's corps at the Plank Road, driving the Confederates back in confusion. Gen. James Longstreet's arrival prevented the Confederate right flank from collapsing.

At Spotsylvania Courthouse, Hancock's men successfully attacked the "Mule Shoe Salient" on May 12, 1864 and captured approximately 2800 prisoners. Hancock's men also took part in the infamous June 3rd attacks at Cold Harbor, in which thousands of men were lost in minutes. By June 10th, his Gettysburg wound had left him immobilized. A tremendous opportunity was lost at Petersburg, July 15-18, 1864. On June 15th, General "Baldy" Smith's forces defeated a small Confederate force three miles east of the primary defensive line. Had Hancock taken command as the ranking officer, and ordered another charge, Union forces might have prevailed.

On July 27th, Hancock's Second Corps coordinated with Philip Sheridan's cavalry, crossing north of the James River at Deep Bottom in an attempt to sever the railroad lines linking Lee and Jubal Early (in the Shenandoah Valley). He fell short of his goal, breaking only the outer Confederate lines. There was a second fight at Deep Bottom; however, due to the heat and the high number of new recruits, the battle was lost. This loss was followed by a humiliating defeat at Ream's Station, August 24, 1864. Hancock's adjutant recalled that "the agony of that day never passed away from the proud soldier" (Jordan 163). At Burgess Mill, October 27-28, 1864, the Second Corps performed well, but gained and then lost the Boydton Plank Road. This was Hancock's last battle. He went on to head the Department of West Virginia until war's end, and also organized the 1st Veterans Corp.

After the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Hancock received criticism for his role in the execution of Mary Surratt, one of the conspirators. He did not want Surratt to be executed. He also received criticism while commander of the Fifth Military District during Reconstruction. He had issued "General Orders No. 40", declaring that a state of peace existed in the district so he would not interfere with civil authorities. This also meant that no soldiers would appear at polling places.

When Ulysses S. Grant was inaugurated as the 18th president, Hancock was sent to the Department of Dakota. When George Meade died in November 1872, Hancock became the new Commander of the Division of the Atlantic, a position he held for the rest of his life. In 1880, Hancock was the Democratic presidential candidate. He was defeated by James A. Garfield. On February 9th 1886, Winfield Hancock died due to complications from diabetes. He was laid to rest at Norristown, PA.

Jordan, David M. *Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldier's Life*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington: 1988.

Tucker, Glenn. *Hancock the Superb*. Morningside Books, Dayton, OH: 1980.

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