

Later Civil War Battles

The Confederates under Robert E. Lee had a plan for victory. Lee wanted to go on the offense and invade Pennsylvania. Here he would defeat the Union army on its own land. This plan if successful would help Virginia's burden with the war, strengthen the democrats in the north and at the same time weaken Lincoln's chances for reelection. They were also hoping to secure European support. The result of this plan would be the battle at Gettysburg. One of the largest and bloodiest battles of the Civil War.

In June of 1863, Lee led 75,000 soldiers to lower Pennsylvania. In response to Lee's army, General George Meade headed north with 95,000 union soldiers. When Lee heard he was outnumbered, he called for more generals to meet him near Gettysburg for battle. As the Confederate armies were joining up, Another Confederate general, AP Hill, heard there was a large supply of shoes and sent one of his divisions to get them at Gettysburg. As Hill was nearing Gettysburg from the west he ran into the Union Cavalry. He sent for reinforcements but by early afternoon, 40,000 men were on the battlefield. The Confederates outnumbered the Union troops who were pushed back to Cemetery Hill, south of town. Here the Union artillery on the hill were able to help and halt the retreat.

: On the second day of battle, Lee ordered all the divisions in the Confederate army to attack. He was hoping to destroy both sides of the Union line for the win. Two hills nearby had been left unprotected. They were Big Round Top and Little Round Top. The Confederates used these hills to surround the Union forces. More Union troops soon arrived and attacked the Confederates up the hill saving the union army. Lee was still determined for a victory. On the third day of fighting Lee ordered a major assault on Cemetery Ridge. At 3 p.m., 14,000 Confederate soldiers under the command of General George Pickett began their famous charge across three-quarters of a mile of open field to the Union line. Lee's attempt had failed. He lost 28,000 troops. Hope for a southern victory failed. There would still be two more years of fighting but Gettysburg was the end of the confederate offensives.

One day after the Battle at Gettysburg, The union captured Vicksburg. This was the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River. The Union began plans for the end of the war. This plan had five major goals.

1. Establish a naval blockade all Southern coasts. This strategy, known as the Anaconda Plan, would eliminate the possibility of Confederate help from abroad.
 2. Control the Mississippi River. The river was the South's major inland waterway. Also, Northern control of the rivers would separate many of the confederate states.
 3. Capture Richmond, VA. Without its capital, the Confederacy's command lines would be disrupted.
 4. Shatter Southern civilian morale by capturing and destroying Atlanta, Savannah, and the heart of Southern secession, South Carolina.
 5. Use the numerical advantage of Northern troops to engage the enemy everywhere to break the spirits of the Confederate Army.
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Early in 1864, the blockade was successful if stopping foreign aid from reaching the Confederates. General Grant's victory at Vicksburg also enabled him to deliver the Mississippi River to the Union. Soon after Grant was granted command of the whole Union army. Grant planned to end the war by November. With this he launched major offensives simultaneously. General William Tecumseh Sherman was to march through the heart of the south and cause as much damage as possible. From May 5 to May 24, the full force of Grant's and Lee's armies fought continually with enormous casualties. Despite losing almost a third of his army, Grant pressed on. On May 6, Sherman entered Georgia and burned all the southern resources. He forced the enemy back to Atlanta and lay siege to the city. 7 days later he burned Atlanta and started toward the sea. The soldiers destroyed everything in its path. They marched 285 miles to Savannah and on Dec. 33, Savannah fell.

The end was near. The last major opposition to the union was Lee's army in Northern Virginia. For the next nine months the two armies would face off. Lee was outnumbered. The Confederate troops dwindled and the end was in sight. Lee and his army escaped. Lee send a message to Jefferson Davis stating they could no longer defend Richmond. That night Davis burned everything of military value in Richmond and traveled south. Lee's small army was starving. When they arrived to get rations there were none. The need for food would prove fatal to the Confederate army. Lee's army was outnumbered and surrounded. As they tried to break out they were blocked at the Appomattox Court House. They were closed in and the war it seemed was over.

Lee sent a note to Grant who met him later that afternoon. Grant offered Lee terms of surrender. The Confederate officers and soldiers could go home with all of their possessions. They would not be persecuted for treason. They then saluted each other and parted. Grant then sent food rations to the Confederate soldiers. President Lincoln had prevailed as did the Union. He looked with great regret at all the devastation the war had caused. But this would not last, for Lincoln, five days later, would be assassinated.
