



Here is the full transcription of the 18-page handwritten document:

The Battle of the Wilderness.

In preparing a paper to read before my companions at this meeting, I have selected the battle of the Wilderness for several reasons: 1. This battle has not been reviewed by any member of this commandery so far as I know. 2. It was a battle unlike any other battle of the Civil War because, by reason of the ground upon which it was fought, Cavalry and Artillery played a small and unimportant part. 3. It was a battle in which I participated and the Division to which I belonged — the 2nd Div. of the 6th Corps — General Getty's Div. played an important part by seizing and holding by desperate fighting the Key — the most important strategic point of the entire battlefield. This statement is not a fancy of my brain, but a fact vouched for by all writers who have described this battle. 3. This battle was the first important engagement under Gen. Grant after his appointment as Commander of all

the Armies, and it was the first move in the great Military game which Gen. Grant had carefully planned and by which he crushed the rebellion in less than a year. But in choosing this subject I am handicapped with the fact that of all the important battles of the War none is more difficult to describe in detail, which no doubt accounts for the fact that no battle has been so poorly described as the battle of the Wilderness. Gen. Grant was commissioned Lieut. General and placed in command of all the Armies Mar. 9th 1864. As you all know, up to this time there had been no unity of action among the several Union Armies scattered over a large scope of country. This lack of cooperation had produced very unsatisfactory results. When Gen. Grant took command of all the armies cooperation became the key note of his general plan. His first work was to arrange for this cooperation. He issued an Order Mar. 17 that his Headquarters would be in the field and with the Army of the Potomac. He

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at once visited the Army of the Potomac and informed Gen. Meade who was in command that he — Meade — would retain command of that Army. Gen. Grant had Gen. Sherman appointed Commander of the Military Division of the Miss. and Gen. McPherson was assigned to the command of the Army of Tenn. He took Gen. Sheridan from the command of a Div. of Infantry in the Army of the Cumberland and placed him in command of the Cavalry Corps in the Army of the Potomac. The Ninth Corps under Gen. Burnside was brought from East Tenn. to cooperate with the Army of the Potomac. He concentrated scattered troops wherever practicable, even by the abandonment of places not essential to hold.

Gen. Sigel with 15,000 troops was to operate in the Shenandoah Valley. Gen. Butler reinforced with Gen. Gilmore's troops, giving him 33,000 men, was to operate against Richmond on the south side of James River; and Gen. Sherman was to attack Gen. Johnston, break up his army if possible, and not permit him to reinforce Gen. Lee's Army. The Army of the Potomac was to attack the Army of Northern Virginia under Gen. Lee, with Richmond as the objective point. These Generals were notified of this plan for a cooperative movement and the several Armies were to strike at the same time. Gen. Sherman wrote to Gen. Grant as follows: "Now that we are all to act on a common plan, converging on a common center, looks like enlightened War. From me you shall have hearty cooperation."

I have made these preliminary remarks to refresh your memory and help you to appreciate the importance of the battle of the Wilderness as being the initial step in Gen. Grant's comprehensive plan for crushing the Rebellion.

In the spring of 1864, the Army of the Potomac was camping along the Orange & Alexandria R.R. between the Rappahannock River and Culpeper Court House. This Army consisted of 3 Corps of infantry, a

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Corps of cavalry under Gen. Sheridan, and a large amount of artillery. The Ninth Corps of infantry stationed at Warrenton was to cooperate with the Army of the Potomac. Its commander was Gen. Burnside who out-ranked Gen. Meade, and once the unfortunate Commander of the Army of the Potomac. The 3 infantry Corps of the Army of the Potomac were commanded as follows: The Second Corps by Gen. Hancock, the Fifth Corps by Gen. Warren, and the Sixth Corps by Gen. Sedgwick.

The Confederate Army of Northern Va. lay along its entrenchment on the south side of the Rapidan River extending about 20 miles from Barnett's Ford to Mine Run. Gen. Ewell's Corps was on the right and Gen. A. P. Hill's Corps on the left. Longstreet had returned to the Army of Northern Va. with his Corps and was stationed at Gordonsville. Gen. Stuart's cavalry Corps consisted of about 11,000 men. Lee's artillery was about the same in number of guns as that belonging to the Army of the Potomac.

For Grant to have attacked Lee in his entrenched position upon the south bank of the Rapidan River would have been as unwise as it was for Burnside to attack Lee at Fredericksburg in Dec. '62. There were two ways open to Grant. He could move by the right flank, cross the Rapidan west of Lee's left, or he could move by the left flank and cross the Rapidan where he did at Germanna and Ely's Ford. By the former plan he would endanger his base of supplies and leave Washington exposed. By choosing the latter he could plan his base of supplies at Aquia [?], and [it] compelled him to pass through a densely timbered country known as the Wilderness from 10 to 15 miles in extent. This whole section, with the exception of a few cleared patches here and there, was covered with a dense growth of dwarfed pine, Cedar and scrub oak with a thick entangling underbrush. This section is fairly level with a few slight ridges and cut up with

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deep ravines. Neither Cavalry nor Artillery could be used to any advantage. It was a battle ground for Indians. Gen. Hancock describes this battleground as follows: "It was a dense forest almost impenetrable by troops in line of battle, where manoeuvring was an operation of extreme difficulty and uncertainty. The undergrowth was so heavy that it was scarcely possible to see more than 100 paces in any direction. The movements of the enemy could not be observed until the lines were almost in collision. Only the roar of the musketry disclosed the position of the combatants to those who were at any distance." Lee had much advantage here, because he knew every open place, all the roads even to narrow wood roads, and their destinations. But Grant's chosen route toward Richmond lay through this Wilderness and so he planned to fight Lee here, provided he could not pass through before coming into collision with Lee's army.

But here a word ought to be said about the principal roads that run through the Wilderness from Orange Court House, where Lee had his headquarters. Two good roads run to the East through the Wilderness. They are near together for some distance but where the battle was fought they are from two to three miles apart. The northern was a turnpike, the southern a plank road. They came together at Wilderness Church. From Germanna Ford a plank road extended in a south easterly direction and intersected the turnpike near the Wilderness Tavern and terminated at its junction with the Orange plank road. The Brock road started at the turnpike about one mile east of the Wilderness Tavern and runs nearly south till it intersects the Germanna road, then east of south intersecting at right angles the Orange plank road, then curving more to the east cuts across the Furnace road and then intersects the Catharpin road and leads on to Spotsylvania Court House. The Catharpin road may be called an east and west road but its direction is quite varied and it is some distance south of the Orange Pike.

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A fair road leads from Ely's Ford south to Chancellorsville. There are also some short farm and wood roads but narrow and hard to describe.

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The movement of our army began at midnight of Tuesday May 3rd '64 and by morning of the 4th the entire army, except the Ninth Corps, was on the move in two parallel columns. Hancock crossed at Ely's Ford and halted at noon of the 4th at Chancellorsville — Hooker's old battleground. Warren crossed at Germanna Ford, 8 miles above Ely's Ford, and marched to Wilderness Tavern, 6 miles south of the river, on the Germanna Plank Road and halted in the afternoon of the 4th. Sedgwick with the 6th Corps followed Warren, crossed the river during the afternoon and halted for the night near the river. But for our trains consisting of 4000 wagons, our troops could have marched several miles further into the Wilderness. Before crossing, this River 200 ft. wide, our troops had to lay two pontoon bridges at Germanna Ford, two at Ely's and one at Culpeper Mine Ford, and the steep river banks had to be graded down. The trains crossed at Culpeper Mine Ford and Ely's, and were not all over till the evening of the 5th. Speaking of this successful crossing Grant said, "I regarded this as a great success and it removed the most serious apprehension I had entertained — that of crossing the river in the face of an active, large, well-equipped and ably commanded Army." At 3 P.M. of the 4th when the Army of the Potomac was nearly over the river, Gen. Grant telegraphed Burnside to start the Ninth Corps at once, make a forced march and cross at Germanna Ford.

Early in the morning of the 4th Gen. Lee discovered the movement of our troops, and promptly set his army in motion toward the East in two columns — one, Gen. Ewell's Corps upon the turnpike, the other, Gen. A. P. Hill's Corps upon the Orange plank road. Early's Div. of Ewell's Corps reached [Locust] Grove 5 miles west of Old Wilderness Tavern, where a halt was made for the night. The advance of Hill's Corps halted for the night at New Verdierville. Longstreet left Gordonsville in the afternoon of the 4th and came in on the Catharpin road and by night of the 5th had reached a point near Shady Grove. He was probably kept on this road till it was seen what disposition was made of Hancock's Corps. This was the situation as darkness settled over the Wilderness.

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Our troops were ordered to renew their march southward at 5 o'clock on the morning of the 5th. Between 7 and 8 a.m. Warren moving south on the Germanna plank road had passed the intersection of the Orange turnpike, and had sent one Div. out on this turnpike to protect his flank where he discovered the enemy in force two miles west of the Wilderness Tavern. It was the advance Division of Ewell's Corps which I have mentioned. It was also discovered that Hill's advance on the Orange plank road had nearly reached Parker's store only 4 miles west of the Brock road. This convinced Gen. Grant that Lee was preparing to attack him on the flank and bring on a general engagement in the Wilderness. In the mean time, Hancock who started that morning from Chancellorsville had reached a point two miles beyond Todd's Tavern. Here he received a dispatch from Gen. Meade (all of Grant's orders were sent through Meade) to halt his Corps and await further orders. In view of this situation the intersection of the Germanna plank road with the Orange turnpike, and the intersection of the Brock road with the Orange plank road became

strategic points, but the intersection of the Brock road with the plank road was the most important. Gen. Badeau, Gen. Grant's Military Secretary, says in his Military History of Gen. Grant, that the Brock road was the key to all this region because it cut the east and west roads at right angles and it enabled whichever commander who held it to outflank the other. Swinton says this junction of roads was a strategic point of the first importance and if Hill should be able to seize it, he would interpose effectually between the two Union columns — Hancock to the south and Warren and Sedgwick to the North.

Between 9 and 10 a.m. the development of the enemy's force was such that Hancock was ordered to move up the Brock road to its intersection with the Orange plank road and move out on that road as far as Parker's Store. At the same time the 2nd Div. of the 6th Corps commanded by General Getty was detached from the 6th Corps and ordered to march past the rear of Warren's Corps to

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seize the junction of the Brock and plank roads and hold that point at all hazards until relieved. Gen. Getty by a rapid march reached the place a little before noon.

About noon the sharp rattle of continuous infantry fire was heard in front of Warren and he was attacking Ewell vigorously upon both sides of the Orange turnpike with Griffin's and Wadsworth's Divisions. At first, Warren was successful and the Confederates were driven back in much confusion for over a mile, but the density of the thicket prevented the alignment of the troops; the different brigades could not find each other and the lines became disjointed and concert of action became impossible. For the same reason, Sedgwick, who had been ordered to leave the Germanna plank road at Spottswood and take a wood road leading southwest and join Warren on his right, could not find Warren's right to join in the attack on Ewell. Warren's right was for this reason left exposed and the enemy discovering this took advantage of it flanking it and driving it back. Warren was compelled to retire to the line on which his troops had formed before the assault.

By 3 P.M. the lines were reformed with Warren on the right at the plank road and Sedgwick on the left of the plank road. Ricketts' Division of Sedgwick's Corps had been left to guard Germanna Ford until Burnside appeared, and Getty's Division, except Neill's brigade, had been sent to the junction of the Brock and plank roads, hence Sedgwick had only Wright's Div. and Neill's brigade of the 6th Div. The ground now in front of a part of Sedgwick's force had been fought over a short time before by Warren and the dead and wounded of both sides now lay upon it, and the woods were on fire along the entire front of Upton's Brigade. Soon after this new line was formed the enemy made a vigorous attack upon a part of the line and there

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repulsed with the loss of some prisoners, and Confederate Gen. Stafford was mortally wounded.

About 5 o'clock, while the battle was raging fiercely on our left under Getty and Hancock and to relieve the pressure there if possible, Grant ordered Sedgwick to attack the enemy now entrenched with a part of their troops. Some hard fighting was done with heavy loss but no real advantage was gained.

Returning now to our left, I said that Getty with his Division of the 6th Corps reached the junction of the Brock and plank roads about noon. This was none too soon, for, as Grant had anticipated, Hill was hurrying his troops forward to seize the place; but the small portion of our cavalry which had been sent down this plank road had delayed Hill's advance. When Getty reached that point he placed the Vermont Brigade on the left of the plank road and Wheaton's brigade and Eustis' brigade at the right of Wheaton's. Hancock, who was ordered at the same time Getty was, to move to this point, had not yet arrived. He was to join Getty on the left. Always prompt to obey orders, he was slow in obeying this order. The Brock road up which he was coming is quite narrow and the woods on either side almost impenetrable. Some artillery had been allowed to get into this road which impeded the movements of his infantry. At 2:15, and again at 2:30 orders were sent to Hancock to push forward and join Getty in an attack on the enemy. Grant was anxious to take the offensive. Getty learned that Heth's and Wilcox's Divisions of Hill's Corps were in front of him, 15,000 strong, and he momentarily expected to be attacked. Finally at 4:15 Getty received orders to wait no longer for Hancock but attack the enemy immediately. Getty at once moved forward to the assault. Hill's front line, as was afterwards discovered, lay along a

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slight ridge so screened by trees and underbrush that neither the nature of the ground nor the position of Hill's troops could be discerned 20 yards away. The Vermont Brigade, which I belonged to, was commanded by Gen. S. A. Grant, formerly a citizen of this city and whom many of you know. This brigade had moved forward scarcely 200 yards when it received a tremendous volley bursting from the thicket but a few yards in front. The other brigades on the right of the road soon became sharply engaged but their lines were not so close to the enemy and the fight along their line was less bloody. For an hour and a half the musketry was fearful. By this time, Hancock had formed a part of his troops in line on Getty's left and joined in the attack. The battle raged for two hours longer, until darkness put an end to it. During this fighting, Wadsworth's Div. of Warren's Corps was ordered to march in a south eastern direction so as to strike Hill on his left flank and rear and thus relieve Getty and Hancock. But his progress was so impeded by the thick woods and underbrush that he failed to reach the place before darkness came on, and he bivouacked where he was for the night.

Speaking of this fighting in front of Getty and Hancock, Gen. Badeau in his Military History of Gen. Grant says: "The sound was one incessant peal of thunder, and most remarkable to those familiar with battle, because so seldom interrupted by artillery, for neither cavalry nor artillery could be used, where infantry was hardly able to force a passage. For hours there was no intermission of this terribly and unusual sound." Hancock said of it: "The fight became very fierce at once; the lines of battle were exceedingly close; the musketry continuous and deadly along the entire line." Gen. Humphreys in his History of the Virginia Campaigns says of it: "The battle

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continued with great severity until near 8 o'clock when darkness put an end to it," and then Gen. Humphreys adds: "This was fortunate for Hill whose troops were shattered and his lines disjointed. An hour more of daylight and he would have been driven from the field."

Gen. Lee who was with Hill in person during a portion of this fighting says of it: "The enemy concentrated upon Hill who resisted repeated and desperate assaults."

While we were not able to drive the Confederates back, we retained our position and held the Brock road. If Hill's troops had driven Getty back before Hancock came to his assistance and gained the Brock road, it would have been most disastrous. Longstreet with his Corps was coming to reinforce Hill, and having cut our line at a vital point, Hancock could have been driven back on Fredericksburg and the 5th and 6th Corps entangled in the Wilderness with retreat as the only probable outcome.

The first day of the battle of the Wilderness has come to a close, and darkness once more broods over the Wilderness. Both commanders knew the battle has just begun. Longstreet was to march all night to reinforce Hill in the morning. Lee's evident plan was to crush our right and drive our army back on the Rapidan. Grant perceived this and prepared to meet it. Getty was ordered to remain with Hancock and Wadsworth, who failed to make connection before darkness overtook him, was ordered to form on the right of the plank road. Sedgwick, Warren and Hancock were ordered to attack at 5 o'clock in the morning. Grant was determined to take the offensive. Burnside was ordered to set his troops in motion in the night at 2 o'clock, leaving the Div. of colored troops to guard the trains and Stevenson's Div. at Wilderness Tavern as a reserve, and with the other two Divisions to get possession of the open ground at Chewning's and attack Hill's left and rear.

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This attack of Burnside was to be made simultaneously with the attack of the other Corps at 5 o'clock in the morning. This would fill the large gap between Wadsworth and the balance of Warren's troops. This movement of Burnside was highly important, and it should be noted here that the first troops which Burnside got into action was 2 o'clock in the afternoon. All of Burnside's Corps, except 6000, were inexperienced recruits.

Our attack was made promptly at 5 o'clock. Wright's Div. of the 6th Corps made two vigorous assaults against the entrenched lines of the enemy and these assaults were repulsed with heavy loss. Gen. Warren made an unsuccessful attack on Ewell's right. The fighting, however, by Warren and Sedgwick was kept up persistently throughout the morning in order to keep Lee from reinforcing Hill.

Hancock also attacked the enemy at 5 o'clock on both sides of the plank road, and after a desperate contest the enemy's lines were broken at all points and he was driven back in great disorder through the forest for more than a mile, losing heavily in killed, wounded and prisoners.

Writing of this, Gen. Badeau says: "The enemy's killed and wounded strewed the ground; prisoners and flags were captured; Lee's headquarters and the rebel trains were in full sight two or three sections back of the enemy's line and the battle was almost won."

In the mean time Longstreet had reached the battlefield. Some of his troops coming down the plank road at double quick. These troops formed on their right and in front of Wadsworth's Division with which they became hotly engaged.

This advance of over a mile through the timber and underbrush had so destroyed our alignment, some brigades being far in advance of others, with regiments so mixed up that commanders lost control of their troops, that Hancock thought best to call a halt and reform his lines. This action of Hancock has been criticized somewhat because it gave the

enemy, now demoralized, time to rally and reform their lines. This was about 6:30 in the morning.

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At 7 a.m. Hancock ordered Gen. Barlow on the extreme left to reconnoiter with one brigade and ascertain where and of what the enemy's extreme right was, and of what it consisted. This reconnaissance was so inefficiently made that it resulted in disaster to us later in the day.

In the meantime Hancock, having heard no fighting on his right, where Burnside was supposed to be, sent an urgent request to Grant (all orders to Burnside being sent by Grant) to order Burnside to attack at once. But the fact was, Burnside had not yet reached the place assigned him in the line of battle. Reiterated orders from Grant to Burnside to push forward and cooperate in the attack did not accomplish this result. As late as 11:45 Grant sent this order to him: "Push in and drive the enemy from Hancock's front on the plank road. Hancock has expected you for the last 3 hours and has been making his attacks and disposition of his troops with a view to your assistance." I may as well say here that it was 2 o'clock in the afternoon before the first of Burnside's troops became engaged.

At 9 o'clock, Hancock having reformed his lines again resumed his attack with all his forces and became furiously engaged with the enemy. One brigade of Wadsworth's Div. was driven back but the line was soon reestablished with other troops. This contest continued for some time without much change on either side.

At 10:30 Warren and Sedgwick were ordered to cease their attack and strengthen their entrenchments and throw up new works in order that some of their troops might be available to reinforce Hancock's extreme right which Burnside had failed to reach.

About 11 o'clock the firing on Hancock's front died away. Just about this time Hancock was to be surprised upon his extreme left, and by

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reason of the inefficient reconnaissance which I have mentioned. Four Confederate brigades, under the supervision of Longstreet, were sent by a circuitous way and were formed in line on an unfinished railway grade not far from, and which was at right angles to, our extreme left. On ordinary battlefields our wings are guarded with cavalry. That could not be done in the Wilderness. That reconnaissance should have discovered this railroad grade, serving the purpose of a road, and it should have been guarded.

This Confederate line advanced upon Hancock's left and rear. Frank's brigade on the extreme left was first encountered. It had been heavily engaged with troops in its front and the ammunition was nearly gone. It was vehemently driven back. McAllister's brigade was next encountered and being fired upon from front, flank and rear his line broke and fell back in disorder to the entrenchments at Brock's road. This confusion extended to adjoining troops. The contest became hot along Hancock's entire front and later for some time it was so difficult to readjust lines under such circumstances and in such a forest that Hancock ordered his troops to fall back to the entrenchments on the Brock road from which they had advanced in the early morning. The enemy followed up, but made no attempt to assault Hancock's troops in their entrenched position.

During this attack Wadsworth on the right of the road was also driven back and while trying to rally his troops this brave and intrepid General was mortally wounded, and his body fell into the enemy's hands.

In this affair, Gen. Longstreet was severely wounded, but by his own men. Longstreet while describing this part of the battle to Mr. Swinton the Historian, after the war, said: "We thought we had another Bull Run on you, for I had made my disposition of troops to seize the Brock road."

Having, as I fear in a paper of this kind, given too much prominence to the Vermont Brigade in describing the part it bore in holding the Brock road in the first day's fighting, I refrain from reciting here what it did in defending the Brock road during the episode just described.

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Warren and Sedgwick fought hard at intervals during the afternoon, but with no effect, except to keep Lee from reinforcing [Hill].

The Wilderness — except in a few open places it was one tangled mass of stunted evergreen dwarf chestnut oak and hazel with an undergrowth of low-limbed shrubs making the forest almost impenetrable.

At 4:15 p.m. an attack upon Hancock's line in force under immediate command of Gen. Lee. They approached within 100 paces of our lines and for half an hour maintained a fierce assault. At one point they broke our line and planted their battle flags upon our entrenchments, but Carroll's brigade, at this time in reserve, advanced at double quick, retook our works and drove the enemy back at that point in disorder.

By 5 o'clock the enemy was entirely repulsed and fell back with heavy loss in killed, wounded and missing. This ended the fighting for the second day on Hancock's front. Now let us return to the 6th Corps. Just before night Shaler's brigade, which had been guarding trains, joined the 6th Corps and was placed in the extreme right and at the right of Seymour's brigade. All bridges had been taken up, except at Germanna Ford. It seems that Lee had planned an assault upon our extreme right hoping to turn our right and gain possession of Germanna Ford. Shaler's troops had been set to work entrenching their front. Just before sunset the enemy under Gen. Early made an onslaught on the front and flank of Shaler's brigade which was at once thrown into confusion. Seymour's brigade upon Shaler's left became badly disordered. Shaler and Seymour with several hundred of the troops were captured. But the enemy became too mixed up with our troops as the darkness came on. Sedgwick soon restored order and Early withdrew his troops. Speaking of this, Early in his Memoirs says: "It was fortunate,

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however, that darkness came to close this affair, as the enemy, if he had been able to discover the disorder on our side, might have brought up fresh troops and availed himself of our condition."

This closed the fighting for the second day and once more darkness settled like a pall over the Wilderness battlefield.

On the third morning — the 7th — our troops were held in readiness for another attack from the enemy, but none came. Our pickets were advanced a mile and a half, and

skirmishing parties sent out on all our fronts, but no movement of the enemy could be discovered. Gen. Lee had withdrawn his army behind his breastworks and refused to take the offensive. Grant did not propose to attack Lee in his entrenched position when he was sure of having a better plan. The way to Richmond was unblocked, and another forward movement in that direction would compel Lee to leave his entrenchments as he had done at the Rapidan three days before, and fight Grant on equal ground and far better ground. At 3 o'clock Grant received a dispatch that Butler had successfully landed his whole force at City Point on the 5th, completely surprising the enemy; and that Sherman was advancing upon Johnston expecting to give him battle that very day — the 7th. Grant at once gave orders for a night march of the whole army by the left flank towards Spotsylvania. The battle of the Wilderness was over. One writer describing this battle says that "it was one unbroken roll of musketry, sometimes on a part of the line and sometimes along the entire line. There were bayonet charges, surgings to and fro of the opposing lines. The fighting was fierce, terrible, bloody and indecisive." Grant in his personal Memoirs said of this battle: "Our losses were severe, but those of the enemy must have been more so. More desperate fighting has not been witnessed on this Continent."

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I suppose that upon no important battlefield of the Civil War was it so difficult to rescue and care for the severely wounded as in the Wilderness. From beginning to close the opposing lines were close together. All of the second day in Hancock's front the battle had swayed to and fro over a strip of ground varying from 200 yards to a mile in width where the severely wounded of both sides lay scattered. During the battle the woods took fire in several places, blazing for hours, and hundreds, unable to escape, were either suffocated or burned alive.

Our losses in this battle were not far from 15,000. Capt. Phisterer in his Statistical Record gives the loss at 17,737 but this is a mistake. Had artillery been used as in ordinary battles the loss would have been much greater. I do not know how many Getty lost in his Division but the Vermont brigade suffered severely. The colonel and lieut.-col. of my regiment — the 2nd Vt. were killed, Col. Foster of the 4th Vt. was shot through the thigh, Lieut.-Col. Lewis of the 5th Vt. lost an arm, Col. Barnes of the 6th Vt. was killed, and in the brigade, 51 officers were killed or wounded and 1234 men, nearly one half of the entire number. No one can tell the losses in Lee's army. No official report of his losses exists, if any was ever made, but there is good reason to believe that his losses were as great as ours at least.

Permit me just a closing word as to the results of this battle. While this battle has been spoken of many times as indecisive, yet I think in many ways it was a decided victory for the Union troops. Grant's successful crossing of the Rapidan without any loss, and establishing a new base of supplies at Aquia Creek with fine water communication with Washington, was a victory. Burnside in '62 and Hooker in '64 tried to establish

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themselves on the south side of the river and failed. This battle must not be considered as an isolated engagement, but, as I said in the beginning, as the initial step in Grant's cooperative plan for crushing the rebellion. Lee had utterly failed in his attempt to crush Grant in the Wilderness by an impetuous and persistent attack upon his flank. In the words

of President Lincoln, "Lee had not been able to even jostle Grant from his chosen line of march." Upon the night of the 7th Grant's troops were moving by the left flank upon the same chosen lines of route to Spotsylvania and towards Richmond. Only four days later in a dispatch to the Secretary of War Grant said: "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

The people of the North interpreted this battle as a victory. The soldiers in the Army of the Potomac so regarded it, and this thought nerved them for the future conflicts with the enemy. When the Army on the night of the 7th began to move, and the men saw that they were not retreating as on former occasions under Burnside and Hooker, but were actually moving to the south, and notwithstanding they were worn out with the fatigue and mental strain of the recent battle, sent up loud and vociferous cheers, although they were under strict orders to march in silence.

Gen. Lee never fought another offensive battle. From this time to Appomattox, Gen. Grant was the aggressor.

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[Claude is AI and can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.](#)