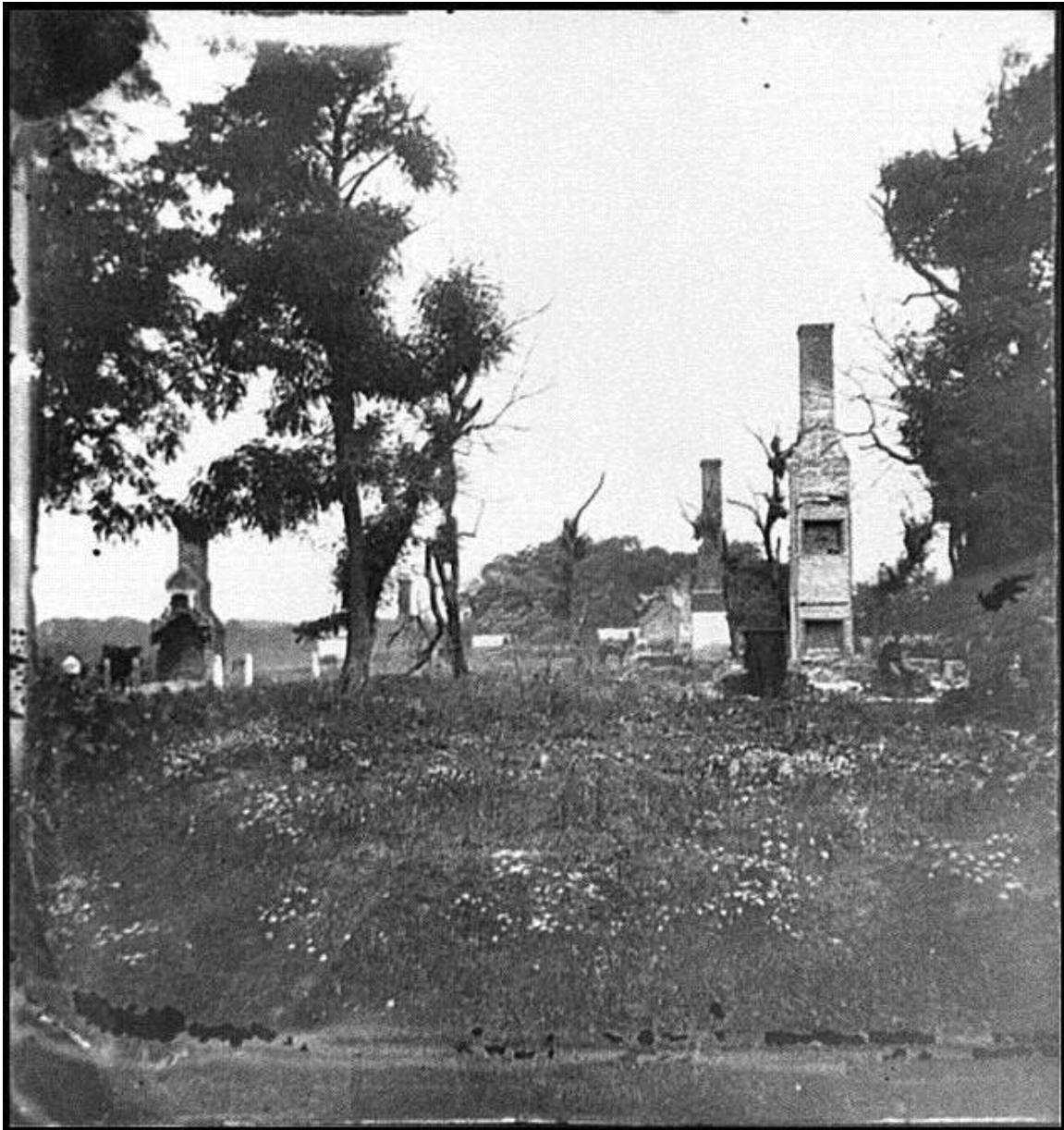


**Confederate ruins at nearby Charles City Courthouse.**



*The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania*



## *The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania*

---

### **SPOTSYLVANIA- STOP 1: Forming the “Mule Shoe”**

The Battle of Spotsylvania, fought 8-21 May 1864, included some of the most desperate hand-to-hand fighting of the Civil War. On May 12<sup>th</sup>, Union and Confederate soldiers struggled over this ground for more than 20 hours, through pouring rain, producing unparalleled examples of both courage and carnage.

Late on May 8th, Confederate General Edward "Allegheny" Johnson's division, about 3,000 men, built this outer line of entrenchments. These low earthen mounds are all that remain of the original works. During the battle, however, these trenches stood shoulder high, were reinforced with logs, and had walls running straight back from the main line about every 20 feet.

*The ground was examined, and General Johnson found we were on the brow of a ridge, which turned somewhat shortly to the right. The campfires in our front seemed to us to be considerably below the plane of our position...It was now quite late in the night, and General Johnson deflected his line and followed the ridge, so far as it could be distinguished in darkness.*

--Lieutenant W.W. Old, Johnson's aide



### **John Sedgwick's Death**

Next day, May 9, was a day of preparation, during which Grant learned that Lee was in firm possession of Spotsylvania Courthouse so that the projected march forward could not be made without a big fight. Preparations for such a fight were made promptly. During the morning Hancock had been held at Todd's Tavern, lest the Confederates strike at the Federal flank by way of Corbin's Bridge; but in the afternoon, when it became evident that the last of Lee's men had gone past Shady Grove Church along the Block House route to Spotsylvania, Hancock was ordered to leave Todd's Tavern and march south-east along the Brock Road. Coming up on Warren's right late in the day, Hancock formed line of battle half a mile short of the Po River and awaited developments. On Warren's left, Sedgwick's corps was perfecting its position, digging trenches and gun emplacements while the Confederates opposite did the same; and Burnside moved out in a wide arc still farther to the left, under orders to come in toward Spotsylvania Courthouse from the northeast. There was a good deal of scrimmaging along the skirmish lines in front of Warren and Sedgwick, and although an outright battle did not develop there was a hot long-range fire all day long.



## *The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania*

---

This fire cost the Army of the Potomac more than anybody wanted to lose. During the morning, after a conference with Grant, Sedgwick rode forward to an elevation near the center of his position, found that his men were a little nervous because of the fire of Confederate sharpshooters, assured them that there was nothing to worry about because "they couldn't hit an elephant at this distance"—and then himself fell dead with a sharpshooter's bullet in his brain. His staff got an ambulance and took his body to the rear, Grant remarked that to lose Sedgwick was as bad as to lose a whole division of infantry, General Horatio Wright was named to command the Sixth Corps. . . and the best-loved general in the army was gone forever.

### **Spotsylvania-STOP 1 METTT**

#### **UNION**

##### **MISSION**

- Destroy Confederate Army

##### **ENEMY**

- Confederates Army had about 48,000 effectives

##### **TROOPS**

- 105,000; no more than 25,000 engaged at once.

##### **TIME**

- 7-10 May 1864.

##### **TERRAIN**

- Wooded, with dug-in defensive positions on the high ground

#### **CONFEDERATE**

##### **MISSION**

- To prevent Grant from maneuvering between the Army of Northern Virginia and Richmond.

##### **ENEMY**

- 86,000 effectives in the Army of the Potomac.

##### **TROOPS**

- 30,000 effectives under Anderson, Ewell and Early.

##### **TIME**

- 7-10 May 1864.

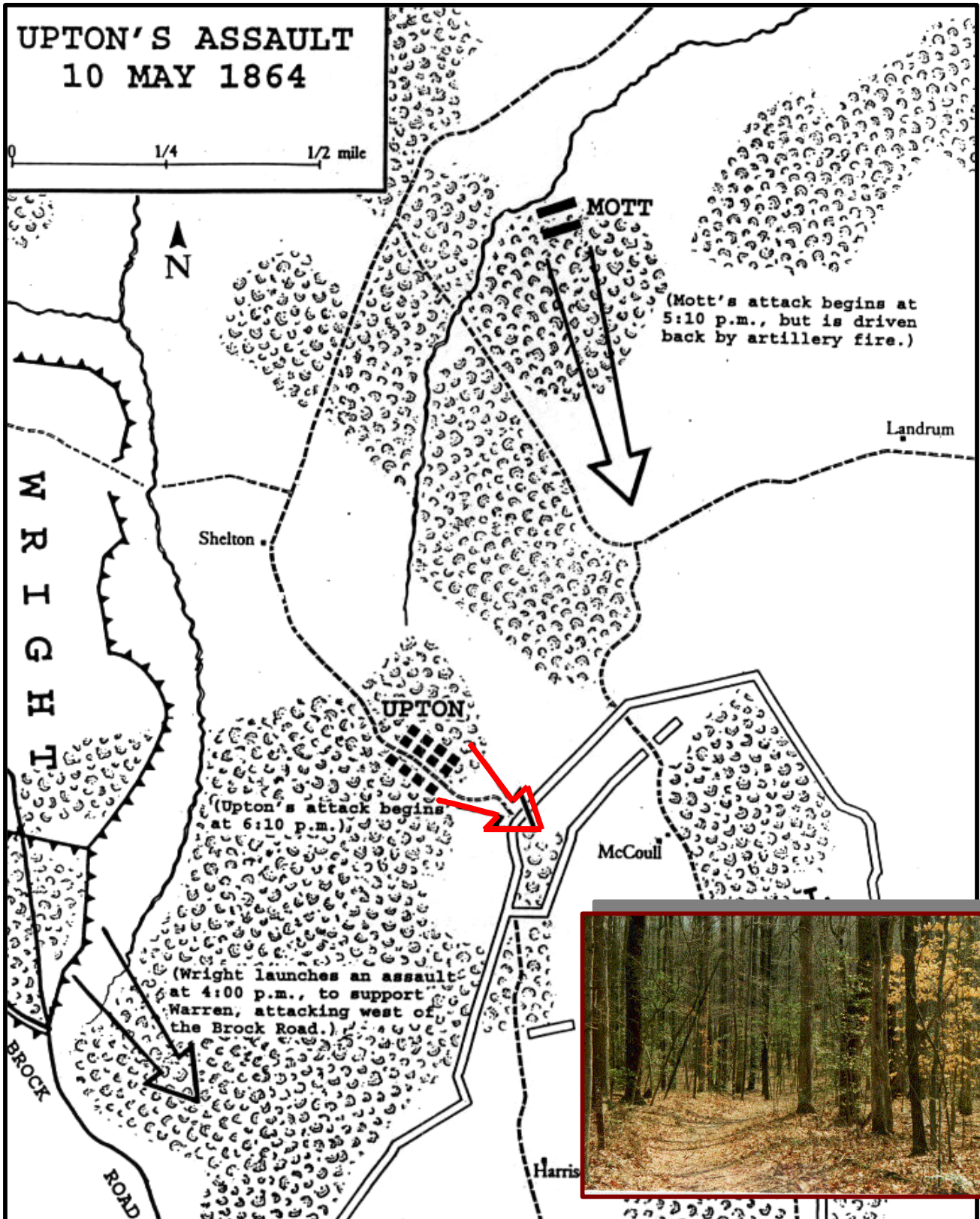
## *The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania*

---

As Lee's army began increasingly to practice entrenchment and defensive warfare, the Union employed massive artillery pieces to try to dislodge the Confederates. This is the "The Dictator," a railroad artillery piece that mostly made a lot of noise, but also created large craters in the Confederate lines.



*The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania*



## STOP-2: UPTON'S ATTACK

This "deflection" in the Southern line became known as the "Mule Shoe," or simply the "Salient." Confederate officers recognized the vulnerability of the position but, with the added support of over 20 artillery pieces, they thought the line could be held. On May 10th, a preliminary Union assault, led by Colonel Emory Upton, met with limited success against the northwestern portion of the Salient. Upton's achievement prompted Union commander Ulysses S. Grant to organize a much larger attack. He ordered together a massive storming column of 20,000 troops. Their objective: to carry the apex of the Salient. Peering through the morning mist in the predawn darkness of May 12th, the Confederates caught their first glimpse of the Union attack.

*Captain Dalton brought me the order to attack as soon as the column was formed, and stated that the [Union] artillery would cease firing at 6 p.m. Twenty minutes elapsed before all the preparations were completed, when, at command, the lines rose, moved noiselessly to the edge of the wood, and then, with a wild cheer and faces averted, rushed for the works.*

### --Gen. Emory Upton

*Click, click sounded along our ranks as each man cocked his musket and every eye was strained to discover in the dim light of early dawn, the first appearance of the Yankee line as it emerged from the woods. Some moments passed before we could see a single Yankee, when suddenly the enemy poured out of the woods on our right; as far as the eye could see the enemy was seen, covering the whole field. . . .*

### --Isaac Seymour, Confederate Staff Officer



**Emory Upton  
1839-81**

Graduated on 6 May 1861, he was commissioned 2d Lt. 4<sup>th</sup> US Artillery on that date and promoted 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. 5<sup>th</sup> US Artillery eight days later. He was General Tyler's A.D.C. at Blackburn's Ford and 1<sup>st</sup> Bull Run. He fought at Fredericksburg and took command of 2, 1, VI (1-2 July and 4 July-Aug. 1863) for the Battle of Gettysburg and pursuit to Warrenton. Returning to that brigade, he led it at Rappahannock Station, Mine Run.

Though wounded at Spotsylvania, he recovered in time for Cold Harbor and the battles about Petersburg. He was appointed B.G. on 12 May 1864 and went to the defense of Washington when Early threatened the capital. He was

**THE FAILURE OF COMBINED OPERATIONS:  
Bumbling Calvary**

**UNION**

The Union cavalry went largely unused during the battle for the Wilderness. Sheridan's (below) horsemen served as scouts and as guards for supply trains. They had failed miserably in the first



function, permitting Lee's entire army to approach undetected. And in the second function, which required the cavalrymen to remain close to the army's wagons, they had kept Sheridan from concentrating his riders into the powerful striking force he envisioned. The reason for the emphasis was General Meade's

erroneous and paranoid appraisal of J.E.B Stuart's position and intention. He had received reports that Stuart was at Hamilton's Crossing, near Fredericksburg, which may expose the Union wagon train to the pesky cavalryman's hungry troopers. So Meade shifted his focus for the cavalry from one of scout, harass, and attack to one of defend the wagons. Naturally, this conflicted with Sheridan's vision. Nonetheless, the cavalry had little impact on the battle's outcome.

**CONFEDERATE**

J.E.B. Stuart, (right) likewise, performed badly in the battle. First, he failed to locate Grant's army with precision. General Ewell did not know Warren was in his front until the two corps collided on the morning of the fifth. Lee, what's more, lacked accurate intelligence about the Union army's size. Indeed, most of Lee's



information came from infantry already engaged, from his staff, or from his own observations.

breveted for Rappahannock Station, Spotsylvania, Winchester, Selma (B.G. USA), war service (Maj. Gen. USA) and Winchester 19 Oct. 1864 (Maj. Gen. USV). Continuing in the R.A., he served as commandant at West Point and sat on several boards that reviewed and changed the combat arms' tactics in the postwar era. He wrote several books, *A New System of Infantry Tactics* (1867-74), *Tactics for Non-Military Bodies* (1870), and his monumental *Military Policy of the United States*, published posthumously in 1904 by Secretary of War Elihu Root. Discovering himself to be the victim of a fatal disease, he committed suicide 15 Mar. 1881, at the age of 42, as Col. 4th US Artillery. at the Presidio of San Francisco.



**Spotsylvania—STOP 2 METTT**

**UNION**

**MISSION**

- To break the "Mule Shoe" held by Ewell's II Corps and roll-up the Confederate lines.

**ENEMY**

- Confederates engaged numbered 20,000.

**TROOPS**

- Morale was extremely high because the Army of the Potomac was moving south instead of retreating.

**TIME**

- Afternoon of 10 May 1864.

**TERRAIN**

- A ridgeline strengthened with fortifications that dominated the avenues of approach.

**CONFEDERATE**

**MISSION**

- Hold the salient.

**ENEMY**

- Union soldiers engaged numbered 37, 822.

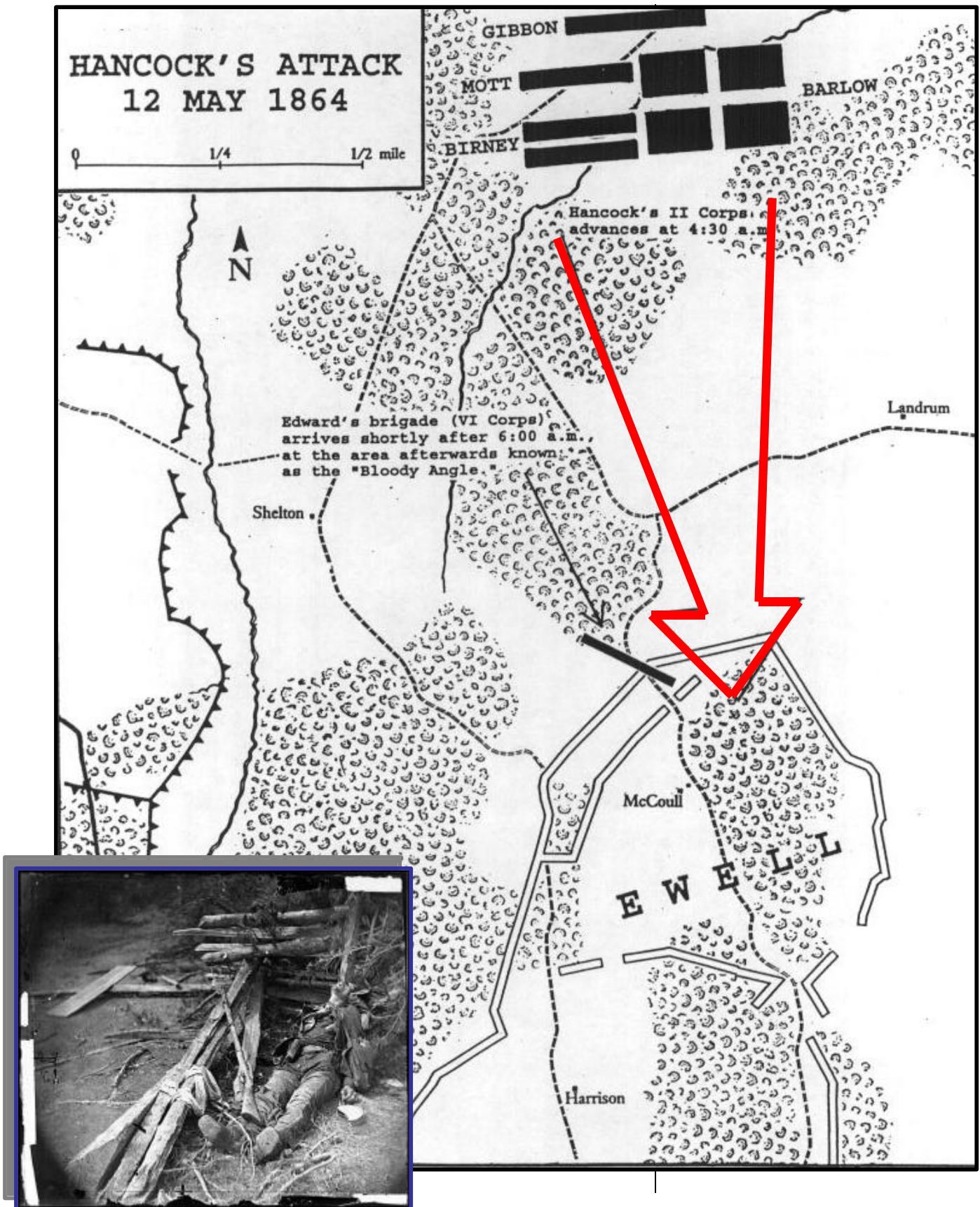
**TROOPS**

- Morale was lower because of the retreat before Grant and because the Yankee numbers were beginning to take their toll.

**TIME**

- Afternoon of 10 May 1864.

*The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania*



### STOP 3—THE BLOODY ANGLE



**Francis Barlow's Brigade attacking the Angle**

With a hurrah, the blue masses swept forward, first striking here at the "East Angle." They quickly captured General Johnson and over 2,500 of his men, thanks in part to the absence of Confederate artillery which had been ordered away the previous evening.

*The storm had burst upon us. I could see General Johnson with his cane striking at the enemy as they leaped over the works, and a sputtering fire swept up and down our line, many guns being damp, I found myself. . . in the midst of foes, who were rushing around me, with confusion and a general melee in full blast.*

**--Major Robert Hunter, Confederate Staff Officer**

*I remember the thin picket line of the enemy, with their bewildered look. There was a little patter of bullets, and I saw a few of our men on the ground; one discharge of artillery. . . and we were up on the works with our hands full of guns, prisoners and colors.*

**--General Francis Barlow, USA**



**Winfield Scott Hancock  
1824-1886**

Although named for America's top military hero of the day, Winfield Scott Hancock, he was not originally intended to pursue a military career. Nevertheless, he was destined to become one of the best corps commanders in the Union Army. An 1844 graduate of West Point, he had served in the infantry during the Mexican War with distinction before transferring to the quartermaster's department. Fearing that he would be left to sit in California—where he had been instrumental in frustrating the plans of local secessionists—while the war raged elsewhere—he was ordered East for quartermaster duties and received his brigadier's star. Leading his brigade to the Peninsula, he led a critical flank attack at Williamsburg

## *The Battles of The Wilderness and Spotsylvania*

---

*They received a tremendous fire as they came up out of the ravine. . . No troops could stand such a fire and they were driven back, leaving the ground strewn with their dead and wounded. Troops cannot live over that slope.*

**--Colonel J.B. Parsons, 10th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment.**

*The dead and wounded were torn to pieces by the canister as it swept the ground where they had fallen. The mud was halfway to our knees. . . Our losses were frightful. What remained of many different regiments that had come up to our support had concentrated at this point, and had planted their tattered colors upon a slight rise of ground where they staid [sic] during the latter part of the day.*

**--Private G. N. Galloway, 95th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment.**

*Nothing but the piled up logs of breastworks separated the combatants. Our men would reach over the logs and fire into the faces of the enemy, would stab over with their bayonets; many were shot and stabbed through crevices and holes between logs; men mounted the works and with muskets rapidly handed them kept up a continuous fire until they were shot down, when others would take their places.*

**--General L. A. Grant, USA**

The outnumbered Confederates eventually fell back to a new line, and the battle on May 12th ended. But the fight for the Bloody Angle illustrated, in sharp contrast to other battles, the murderous personality that the fighting had assumed. Its terrible slaughter seemed to signal a shift in each side's perception of the war. Never again would Lee have strength enough to lead his men north; now, he fought to survive. Grant, too, left with a clearer, albeit brutal, image of the future. No matter what the cost, he would fight Lee's army until he destroyed it.

and earned the sobriquet "Superb." Early on the first day Gettysburg, Meade dispatched Hancock to take control of that wing of the army and decide whether the battle should be fought there or not. On the second and third days, Hancock directed the Union center until wounded. A long recovery followed during which he performed some recruiting duty. Returning in time for the Overland Campaign he fought well at the Wilderness and was breveted Major General in the regular army for his breaking of the Confederate line. Following the Confederacy's collapse, he opposed Grant's method of treatment of the South. He was mustered out of the volunteer service on July 26, 1866, the same day that he received the appointment of Major General. Remaining in the army, he held various departmental commands and was a potential Democratic candidate for the presidency in 1868. In 1880 he was the nominee, but was defeated. He died a soldier.

**Spotsylvania--STOP 3 METTT**

**UNION**

**MISSION**

- To break the Confederate Line at the Angle.

**ENEMY**

- Confederates had 35,000 effectives.

**TIME**

- The attack was initiated at dawn on 12 May 1864.

**CONFEDERATE**

**MISSION**

- To repulse the Union army.

**ENEMY**

- Union had approximately 75,000 effectives.

**TROOPS**

- Lee was beginning to withdraw to a new defensive line.

**TIME**

- Dawn—12 May 1864.

**TERRAIN**

- Heavy entrenchments on a ridgeline, with defenders on the high ground. Attack launched up a strong slope.

**1864**

**MARCH**

9<sup>th</sup>-Grant appointed  
General-in-Chief.  
12<sup>th</sup>-May 20, Red  
River and Camden  
Campaigns, LA-AR.

**APRIL**

12<sup>th</sup>-- Fort Pillow  
Massacre, TN.

**MAY**

5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Wilderness  
7<sup>th</sup>-Sep 2 Sherman's  
Atlanta Campaign.  
8<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Spotsylvania  
9<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> Sheridan's  
Richmond Raid.  
13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Resaca, GA.  
25<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> New Hope  
Church, Pickett's Mill,  
Dallas, GA.  
31<sup>st</sup>-June 12, Cold  
Harbor, VA.

**JUNE**

5<sup>th</sup> Piedmont, VA.  
10<sup>th</sup> Battle of Brice's  
Cross Roads, MS--N. B.  
Forrest routs Sturgis.  
15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Battle of  
Petersburg, VA.  
17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Battle of  
Lynchburg, VA.  
18<sup>th</sup>-Dec 31 Siege of  
Petersburg.  
27<sup>th</sup> Battle of Kennesaw  
Mountain, GA.

**JULY**

14<sup>th</sup> Battle of Tupelo,  
MS.  
20<sup>th</sup> Battle of  
Peachtree Creek, GA.  
22<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Atlanta,  
GA.  
28<sup>th</sup> Battle of Ezra  
Church, GA.  
30<sup>th</sup> Battle of the  
Crater, VA.

**AUGUST**

5<sup>th</sup> Battle of Mobile  
Bay, AL.  
7<sup>th</sup>-Oct 19 Sheridan's  
Shenandoah Valley,  
Campaign, VA.

**SEPTEMBER**

2<sup>nd</sup> Atlanta Falls.

**NOVEMBER**

8<sup>th</sup> Lincoln reelected.  
15<sup>th</sup>-Dec 21 Sherman's  
March to the Sea.  
30<sup>th</sup> Battle of Franklin,  
TN.

**DECEMBER**

15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Battle of  
Nashville.  
21<sup>st</sup> Savannah, GA

**1865**

**JANUARY**

**1<sup>st</sup>-Apr 2** Siege of Petersburg continued  
**14<sup>th</sup>-Apr 26** Sherman's Carolinas Campaign.

**MARCH**

**22<sup>nd</sup>-Apr 22** Wilson's Alabama and Georgia Raid.

**APRIL**

**1<sup>st</sup>** Five Forks, VA.

**APRIL**

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Petersburg lines breached; Confederates evacuate Richmond and Petersburg.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** US forces occupy Richmond.

**9<sup>th</sup>** Lee surrenders at Appomattox Court House.

**12<sup>th</sup>** Surrender of Mobile, AL.

**13<sup>th</sup>** Raleigh, NC occupied

**APRIL**

**14<sup>th</sup>** Lincoln assassinated.

**26<sup>th</sup>** Surrender of Joe Johnston's Army of Tennessee near Durham Station, NC.

**MAY**

**4<sup>th</sup>** Surrender of Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor at Citronelle, AL.

**26<sup>th</sup>** Surrender of Lt. Gen. E. Kirby Smith at New



**The Mclean House, also known as Appomattox Courthouse, where Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to General U.S. Grant (April 1865). The owner of the house, Wilmer McLean had also owned a farm that**

**became the field of battle at First Bull Run, (July 1861). Angered by the threat of armies traversing his lands, he endeavored to find a home secluded from the war. Yet, in spite of his efforts, the armies found he and his family again. Ironically, history records Mr. McLean as having hosted the first and last battles of the Civil War.**

LESSONS LEARNED

- **TERRAIN IS A FORCE MULTIPLIER**

The Wilderness made Grant's superior numbers less effective because it confused the battlespace, and gave the advantage to the defender. It limited Union mass, maneuver, unity of effort, security and surprise. Conversely, it gave the Confederates all of these advantages.

- **THE USE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES**



The telegraph, railroad (Longstreet's First Corps arrived from Tennessee by railroad in time for the campaign in late April), and new weaponry provided the Union, though not decisively, with the ability to effectively mass, maneuver and with the unity of force. Tactics could, however, overwhelm technology, for example, Sorrel's attack rolled-up Hancock's left flank despite Union possession of advanced Spencer rifles.

Even the higher rate of Union fire could not stop the Confederate-flanking maneuver.

- **INFORMATION WARFARE**

A lack of information dominance impaired the operations of both opponents. Cavalry, the eyes of the army, were used ineffectively in the Wilderness, in part because of terrain and poor command and control. This impeded security, unity of effort, and mass.

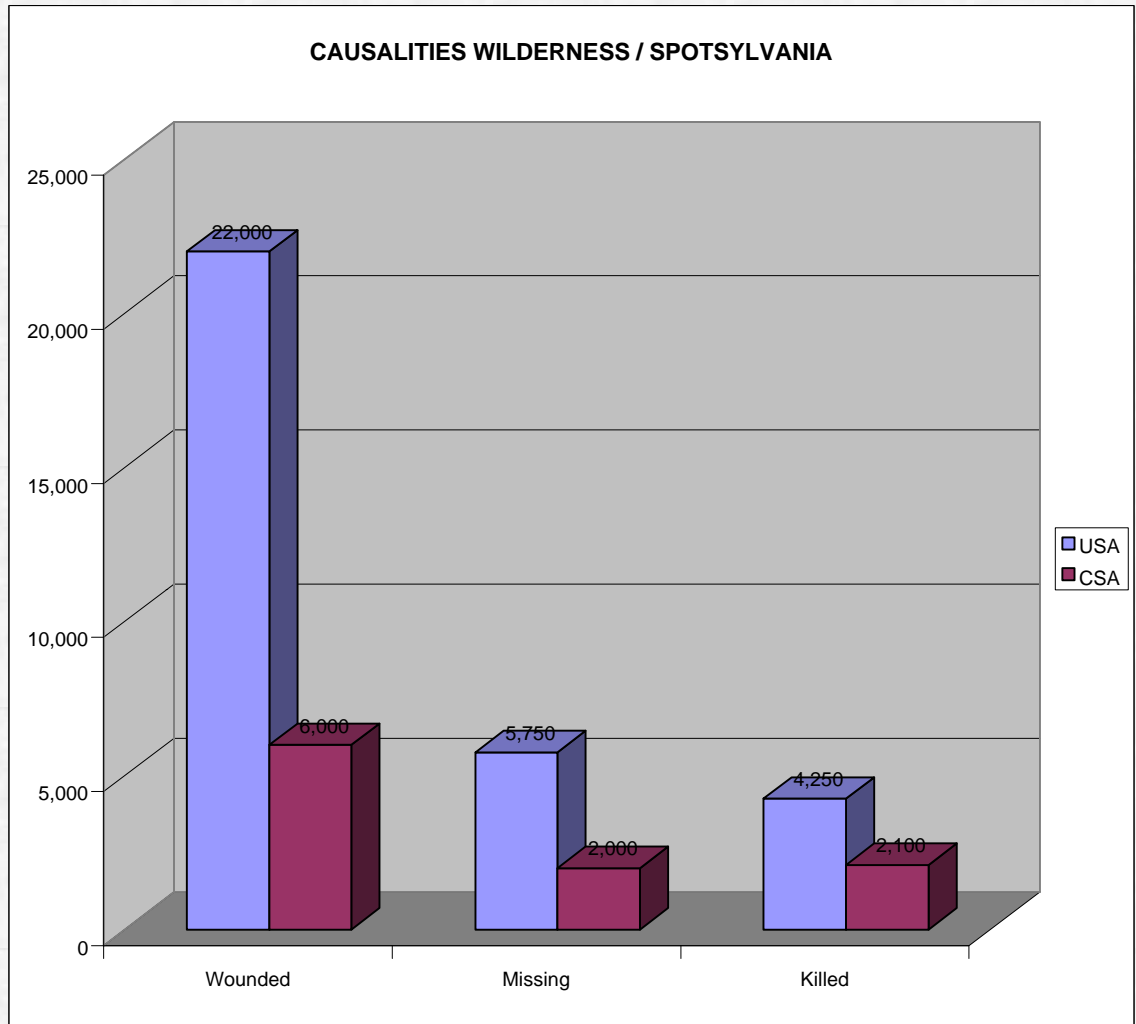
- **UNITY OF EFFORT AND SIMPLICITY**

There was no doubt as to the Union armies intent. The destruction of the Confederate armies.



**CASUALTIES FROM WILDERNESS/SPOTSYLVANIA**

	<b><u>KILLED</u></b>	<b><u>WOUNDED</u></b>	<b><u>MISSING</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
<b><u>U.S.A.</u></b>	<b><u>4,250</u></b>	<b><u>22,000</u></b>	<b><u>5,750</u></b>	<b><u>32,000</u></b>
<b><u>C.S.A.</u></b>	<b><u>2,100</u></b>	<b><u>6,000</u></b>	<b><u>2,000</u></b>	<b><u>10,100</u></b>



**Wounded from the Wilderness resting.**