

Volume 18

Number 044

**A House Divided: (95) – Overland
Campaign, 1864 – II**

Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: West of Fredericksburg, Virginia is a dreary stretch of scrub oak and pine known as the Wilderness. There at Chancellorsville, a year before, Robert E. Lee had virtually executed Joseph Hooker's Army in perhaps Lee's most spectacular victory

of the war, but Ulysses Grant was no Hooker. He crossed the Rapidan with 115,000 men and plunged into the Wilderness fully aware that Lee would try his magic once again. On May 5, 1864 Lee pitched into Grant's flank, but in savage fighting in the smoke-clouded woods the two armies fought to a standstill.

The next morning the Yankees almost gained the day as the fight went back and forth until dusk. An evening assault led by Confederate Brigadier John B. Gordon pushed the Union forces back nearly to Grant's headquarters. When his men began to panic, Grant revealed the grit that was to transform his army. He really did not believe that Robert E. Lee was

herculean. He said, “I am heartily tired of hearing what Lee is going to do. Go back to your command, and try to think what we are going to do ourselves, instead of what Lee is going to do.”

And he did it. While the two giant forces skirmished, on the 7th Grant wheeled around Lee’s right, broke out of the Wilderness, and made for Spotsylvania Court House. When the Yankees realized that the army was going south, not north, into retreat, they understood that this was not “another skedaddle” and the men began to sing. Next time: the Bloody Angle.

**At the University of Richmond's
School of Professional and Continuing
Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

Resources

Carter, Samuel, III. *The Siege of Atlanta*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1973.

Catton, Bruce. *A Stillness at Appomattox*. New York, NY: - Doubleday, 1953.

Catton, Bruce. *Grant Takes Command*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1969.

Catton, Bruce. *The American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*. New York, NY: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1960, 1988.

Dowdey, Clifford. *Lee's Last Campaign: The Story of Lee and His Men Against Grant – 1864*. Boston, MA: 1960.

Hart, Basil H. Liddell. *Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American*. New York, NY: Dodd, Meade and Company, 1929.

Hattaway, Herman and Archer Jones. *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

Keegan, John. *The Face of Battle*. New York, NY: Viking Press, 1977.

Mahon, John K. "Civil War Infantry Assault Tactics," *Military Affairs* 25 (1961): 57-68.

McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988.

McWhiney, Grady and Perry D. Jamieson. *Attack and Die: Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 1982.

<http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/ransom.civil.war.us>

