

Volume 10

Number 002

Stonewall Jackson and Friendly Fire

– Part II

Lead: At Chancellorsville, in May 1863, Robert E. Lee achieved his greatest military victory. He paid at a terrible price. Among the 13,000 Confederate casualties was his right arm, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson.

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

Content: Following the Battle of Fredericksburg, December 1862, Lee’s 60,000 men spent the winter in camps just south of that small Rappahannock village. Just across the

river Joe Hooker's Army of the Potomac, 130,000 strong.

In late April Hooker executed the first part of an ambitious plan. His intent was to remove Lee and then take Richmond. He sent the main body of his army, 70,000 men, up the Rappahannock, across the river and marched them southeast in an attempt to attack Lee's left flank and rear. In a densely wooded area, called the Wilderness, Hooker established his headquarters at a crossroads clearing called Chancellorsville, ten miles west of Fredericksburg. Lee realized what was happening, divided his army and moved the main body, about 45,000 men, to cut off Hooker at Chancellorsville. Lee also heard

that Hooker's right flank was exposed and weak and sent Stonewall, to take him out. Jackson led 26,000 Confederates on a two and half-mile march in front of Hooker's army. He then wheeled back broke out of the woods surprised and hit Hooker's right flank, the Union XI Corps, hard. Many of the unsuspecting Federals were cooking dinner over campfires at the time of the attack. Hooker's army began to fall apart.

After dark Jackson, considering a night mop up operation, went on a nighttime reconnaissance; when he and his aides returned, nervous Confederate pickets mistook them for Federal Cavalry and fired. Jackson was struck three times, and his left

arm was later amputated. Although expected to recover initially, he contracted pneumonia and died on May 10th. Hooker retreated and Lee began to prepare for his move into Pennsylvania and a July date at Gettysburg where the absence of Jackson may have been decisive in the Confederate defeat.

Research assistance by Ann H. Johnson at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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