J.E.B Stuart and the Battle of Gettysburg: Was He Responsible for Lee’s Defeat?

By

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The research of this paper has been an interesting journey I am glad I embarked
upon.
Introduction

The Battle of Gettysburg is considered by many as the apex of the Confederacy. The Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by Robert E. Lee, had dominated the Union forces that opposed them in the Eastern Theater for the last year by the time it was decided to move the southern army north to invade Pennsylvania in June 1863. Lee was confident this would be a devastating blow to the North and potentially end the war. But the Confederacy was beaten in a three-day battle at Gettysburg on July 1-3, 1863, dashing Southern hopes of forcing the North to accept an independent Confederate nation. Often, after any battle, but particularly battles of great magnitude, the search by the defeated side for a scapegoat begins almost immediately. Gettysburg was no different in that respect. History, and historians have traditionally placed the blame for the loss not on the commander, Robert E. Lee, but on his subordinates, Generals Longstreet, Hill, Ewell and Stuart. General Longstreet was blamed for moving too slowly, seen as a result of his disapproval of Lee’s plan for the action of July 2nd. It was alleged by some that he moved slowly on purpose, and had his troops been in place earlier on July 2nd, the Confederates would have taken the mountainous area known as the Round Tops and had a commanding position on the battlefield, forcing the Federals from the field. General Ewell’s mistake, it has been argued, was not being aggressive enough on the evening of July 1st in taking the elevation at the north end of the battlefield, Culp’s Hill. By taking Culp’s Hill, the Confederates would have been on the high ground and in a position to
challenge from the rear the Federal Army encamped on Cemetery Hill, which was in front of Culp’s Hill. Ewell was blamed for not attacking at an opportune time when Culp’s Hill was, it was believed, virtually unoccupied. His failure allowed the Federals to fortify the hill and protect the rear of their line as well as their supply lines. General Hill was accused of not supporting Ewell’s corps in the seizure of Cemetery Hill on July 1st and not assisting in the assault on the left on July 3rd. Finally, General J.E.B. Stuart, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia’s cavalry, was also blamed for the loss at Gettysburg. Stuart was blamed for not providing reconnaissance during the march north and leaving Lee blind to the movements of the enemy, the Union Army. Stuart was accused of being off on a raid in enemy territory when he should have been supplying Lee with intelligence on the Federal Army’s position and strength.\textsuperscript{1} Jeffry Wert, a biographer of Stuart, alleges that Stuart’s actions showed his movement was a raid, even as he spoke of quickly getting to Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{2}

Another factor that influences the perceptions of the battle of Gettysburg is the myth of the “lost cause” of the Confederacy. While the myths that the lost cause mentality perpetuated are widespread, pertaining to more than just the battles waged during the war, the perception of Robert E. Lee as a soldier is often identified only through the veil of the myth. One of his greatest defenders, Jubal Early, wrote repeatedly that the Gettysburg loss was due to Lee’s subordinates’ failures, and Early said this was not apparent immediately after the battle because Lee was so magnanimous that he could not reveal the true cause of the Confederate loss. It is mainly this myth, and Lee’s many victories against superior odds before Gettysburg, that perpetuates the idea that Lee had no equal during the war, that he was one of the greatest of the generals in history.\textsuperscript{3} He
was portrayed as a tactical genius who compared with Frederick the Great and was seldom defeated by his own mistakes. This opinion has influenced much of the writing about the Civil War and the Battle of Gettysburg to the present day. However, while Lee is still respected as a great general, his reputation of infallibility has been in decline in recent times and more historians, led by a northerner, Alan Nolan, are viewed by many as correctly critiquing Lee’s costly offensive tactics and the consequent contribution to the loss of the war by the Confederacy.

This paper will look at the circumstances of the Gettysburg campaign, including the Confederate march northward, and analyze both Stuart’s and Lee’s actions and the orders given Stuart regarding the march. While many of Lee’s defenders have focused their attack on either General Longstreet or General Ewell, I have chosen to focus on the third general often blamed for the loss at Gettysburg, General Stuart. Using resources written by Stuart’s contemporaries, battle reports and contemporary orders and other documents reprinted in the 127-volumes of *The Official Record of the War of the Rebellion*, published by the War Department at the turn of the last century, as well as current analysis of the battle, this paper will strive to determine whether Stuart truly deserves the blame history has assigned to him for Confederate loss at Gettysburg. It will determine this by showing that Lee had sufficient cavalry for reconnaissance and to adequately to establish the whereabouts of the enemy prior to the battle and that Stuart’s actions were that of a seasoned army officer who was following the orders he was give. It will show that it was Lee’s actions and failures before and during the battle that caused the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg.
Chapter 1

Prelude to the Lee’s Invasion of the North

The plan for the invasion of Pennsylvania was formulated as a direct result of the successes of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville in December 1862 and May 1863. The victory at Fredericksburg had seemingly come so easily that Lee did not realize that he had come the closest he ever would to breaking his enemies resolve to continue the war. Federal General James A Garfield was quoted as saying after Fredericksburg “Generals Lee, Jackson and J.E.B Stuart have inspired their men with a kind of Cromwell Spirit which makes their battalions almost invincible. All this time our own men have grown discouraged.” After Fredericksburg followed the most audacious victory of all, Lee’s victorious surprise attack at Chancellorsville, which had two crucial impacts on Lee’s army. One was to further enhance the feeling of invincibility held by the Army of Northern Virginia. The other was the loss of Stonewall Jackson, Lee’s most daring general. Jackson’s wounding during a critical time in the battle could have been devastating to the divided army had General Stuart not stepped in to direct the infantry troops. After Jackson left the field, General A.P.Hill was in command, but shortly after Jackson was injured, Hill was wounded. After discussion with the next senior general in the corps, General Robert Rodes, Hill persuaded Rodes to allow Stuart to take command of the corps. Stuart,
knowing that the corps would be disconcerted by the loss of Jackson, made himself conspicuous in encouraging the troops with his magnetic presence. True to his vivacious form, he rode along the lines singing a song he made up for the occasion; “Old Joe Hooker, won’t you come out of the wilderness.” His conduct had a great influence on the men and they were able to storm and take the Fairview batteries.7

Edward Porter Alexander, who commanded an artillery battalion during the battle, said that had General Lee been on the left during Stuart’s command of the infantry, he would have immediately rewarded him with a promotion to the open Corps Commander position due to the spirit, energy and efficiency he showed. Alexander said Stuart was young, he was healthy and he had a boldness, persistence and magnitude that recommended him for the job.8 The overwhelming victory of the Army of Northern Virginia at Chancellorsville further bolstered the morale of the men and the feelings of invincibility of this supreme fighting force. It also bolstered Stuart’s reputation as more than a flamboyant cavalier, and made it apparent that he was capable of effective leadership of infantry troops.

Unfortunately, as well as the army was doing, the continued fighting in Northern Virginia created a lack of provisions for the army. The land was stripped of most resources, and even the abundance of the Shenandoah Valley could not provide sustenance for the army. Also, Lee could see no other outcome of the struggle but the defeat of the Confederacy unless the northern people became so discouraged that they would no longer support the war.9 So General Lee masterminded a plan to draw the Federal Army out of Northern Virginia back into its home territory and cause great concern in the North. It was a two-fold plan, which would allow him to find abundant
provisions in Maryland and Pennsylvania, which had not been ravaged by constant warfare, and also allowed Lee to assume the offensive while drawing General Hooker’s Army of the Potomac out of Northern Virginia. Lee did not think it was wise to move against Hooker and the Army of the Potomac while they were on the Rappahannock River, so he thought that by moving his army north, Hooker would be forced to move north as well to defend Washington D.C. and Lee might be able to maneuver the Army of Northern Virginia into a position to gain a decisive victory. This strategy had no clear objective, but rested on the chance that Lee might have been able to find the Federal Army in a position to beat it. He did not want to give the Federal Army the opportunity to fall back on the defenses of Washington D.C. as they had done so many times before. He wanted to go where he believed he could rout and destroy the Army of the Potomac. Looking at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Lee had many good reasons to think that was the place. It was close enough to the supply lines in Western Virginia, it would force the Federal Army to retreat to the Susquehanna River and it would give the Confederates Maryland and Western Pennsylvania, which would help the Confederate Army in the West. It might also have helped remove the threat that came from Washington D.C. being so close to the Army of Northern Virginia. Just as importantly, it would allow the army to forage for provisions in an area that was expected to have abundance because there had been no fighting to ravage the food supply. So Lee began to make plans for the northern invasion, knowing he had lost one of his key lieutenants and he would have to replace him with a general who had never been in such high command before for such a daring plan.
The personalities and styles of leadership of Lee and Stuart contributed to both the actions that took place over the two months between the Battle of Chancellorsville and the Battle of Gettysburg and the way history has remembered them. There were some southerners who believed there was something quixotic about Lee’s plan to move an army 200 miles from its home base to look for a battlefield in enemy territory while cut off from its supply line and therefore forced to carry all the necessary ammunition for the planned battle. This was somewhat characteristic of Lee’s approach to war. He had the utmost confidence in his men; he thought they could do anything if they were properly led. And at that point in the war, mid-1863, the Confederate Army under Lee was confident almost to the point of cockiness. They had never been in better spirits, and in Lee’s eyes, they were almost invincible. And the army had come to almost worship Lee as the man who would lead them to victory regardless of the odds. The *Encyclopedia Americana* indicates that Lee was “one of the truly gifted commanders of all time” and “one of the greatest, if not the greatest soldier who ever spoke the English language”. This was the consensus of most standard reference sources for a long time. It had not always been that way for Lee, however. The experiences of his life had made him a humble, self-effacing man who did not look for glory, but chose to let his actions speak for him.

The son of “Lighthorse” Harry Lee, a dashing cavalry leader of the American Revolution, he grew up in a family that was distinctive in the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia, although his father’s later life, with his overwhelming debts, often proved an embarrassment for Lee. Robert E. Lee was a West Point cadet who graduated second in his class while incurring no demerits during his entire time as a
student there. He served with distinction in the Mexican War under General Winfield Scott and later became superintendent of West Point. When the Civil War broke out, his decision to remain with his home state of Virginia was difficult, and cost him a high ranking position in the United States Army, which he had not been able to obtain previously. He began in the Confederate Army as full general, but suffered defeat and ridicule in his early assignments. Only when he took the place of General Joseph Johnston in June 1862 and stopped McClellan’s advance on Richmond during the Peninsula Campaign did he begin to garner the reputation as a winning general that would grow into a myth. He had learned from Winfield Scott in the Mexican War the function of a commanding general. It was to plan the general operation, acquaint the corps commanders with that plan and to see that their troops were brought to the scene of action at the proper time. Scott, and subsequently Lee, did not believe it was the commanding general’s job to fight the battle in detail. This was the theory he used during the Civil War, and even after Chancellorsville, he never made any adjustments. The circumstances of the Army of Northern Virginia had changed, with two of his three corps commanders being new in their jobs, but Lee never changed his style of command. He thought that the new generals would rise to meet the challenge and did not anticipate they would need time to learn his style of command.

There was another factor at play during the spring and summer of 1863 that affected General Lee and his leadership: his health. Sometime in late winter or early spring 1863, prior to the Battle of Chancellorsville, Lee was sick for the first time since 1849. He had pain in his chest, arms and back; often in sharp spasms as well as a serious throat infection. The symptoms suggested he was having a possible angina attack.
Historians such as Chuck Teague believe he may have been suffering from more serious cardiovascular problems. He recovered from the acute issues after ten days, but continued to suffer with some pain and weakness and in April he reported he was still weak, and felt feeble and worthless.\textsuperscript{21} This ill health and uneasiness continued to demonstrate itself all the way through the Gettysburg campaign. It was reported that he could no longer exercise by foot or ride rapidly without pain and difficulty breathing. It is also possible that Lee was treated with quinine, which could cause or aggravate heart issues, low blood pressure or cinchonism and lead to an overdose of quinine. Quinine produced certain side effects like double vision, restlessness, and confusion. At Gettysburg, Lee complained of dull vision.

One of Lee’s character traits was his stubbornness and he refused to relinquish his command when he was incapacitated, as he may have been prior to Gettysburg.\textsuperscript{22} Traveller, his primary horse, was difficult to ride as he had an uneasy gait and so Lee began to ride much more slowly than he had in the past. He also began staying in houses while in the field, where previously he had stayed in tents, as a result of his ill health.\textsuperscript{23} Many, including historian Teague, believe that some of Lee’s actions in the Gettysburg campaign were a direct result of this illness. Some of his aids and subordinate generals believed that there was something wrong during the campaign. General Longstreet thought that Lee had lost his “matchless equipoise” and became excited and off-balance. Other symptoms he displayed were anxiety and a lack of patience, when Lee was known for his calmness; he lacked promptness in the presence of the enemy; and he walked as if weak or in pain.\textsuperscript{24} He also appeared unusually tentative, uncertain and indecisive.\textsuperscript{25} This was clear when he asked an assistant, rather searchingly, if General Ewell had heard from
General Stuart. When the answer was no, Lee was uncharacteristically blunt that he had seen by newspaper that Stuart was near Washington D.C. and a scout reported Meade’s whole army was approaching but that was all he knew about the situation.\(^{26}\)

When he learned on July 1 that fighting had broken out in Gettysburg, he did not ride quickly to the battlefield. Instead he became disturbed and depressed, which was uncharacteristic for him.\(^{27}\) Lee was almost always in the thick of the battle with his men, but not at Gettysburg. During the battle he often stayed at headquarters, when he should have been on the field as the commanding general.\(^{28}\) He rode back and forth and made anxious inquiries on the whereabouts of Stuart, even sending riders to find him at all hazards.\(^{29}\)

After the battle, Lee mentioned several times the impact his health was having on him. In a letter to President Jefferson Davis, he talked about the growing failure of his strength and that he had not recovered from his previous attack. To his wife he wrote about being punished through sickness for his sins and follies.\(^{30}\) Robert E. Lee was a complex man and all the previously described factors influenced the decisions he made at Gettysburg and the orders he gave to his generals. These factors must be kept in mind while discussing the outcome of the battle.

As serious and somber as Lee was, James Ewell Brown Stuart, known as Jeb by many, was the complete opposite. While Stuart was sometimes dismissed as a dandy or a showoff, he was in fact a capable, resourceful, hard driving Chief of Cavalry who was a major figure in the eastern theater of the Civil War.\(^{31}\) Many accused him of vanity, including reporters, one of whom said that vanity drove his actions and he misused
cavalry for personal pride. Some of his fellow soldiers also disliked his behavior. General Lafayette McLaws, of Longstreet’s corps, wrote that “Stuart carries around with him a banjo player and a special correspondent. This claptrap is noticed and lauded as a peculiarity of genius when in fact it is nothing but an act of a buffoon to get attention.” Whether McLaws was jealous of the attention Stuart received, or was genuinely disturbed by his behavior is unknown, but it showed there were many who did not agree with the way he ran his cavalry corps. General Longstreet, the First Corps Commander whom he worked closely with wrote that “I often spoke of him [Stuart] to General Lee as the best material for cavalry service, but needing an older head to instruct and regulate him. The General was fond of him and gave way to him to the disadvantage of both.”

Lee had known Stuart for many years; Stuart was a cadet at West Point when Lee was Superintendent. He knew of his exuberance and often counseled him to accomplish what you can without feeling it necessary to obtain all that might be desired. Stuart also had an insecure side, like many who rose rapidly from obscurity to prominence. Some believe, that at age 27 when the war began, that he was still a schoolboy trying to impress his parents and other authority figures, including Lee. He still felt like the man who fell off the stage making a speech and he had to atone for that faux pas and show he was better than that. But Stuart only let people see about him what he wanted them to. He was worried if they got too close, they would see his flaws and his showmanship and frivolity were a way to deflect that. Even though his staff during the war was very close to Stuart, they too, only saw what he wanted them to. One of these staffers, Channing Price, told his brother that “Stuart always seems to be on stage; stories about raid, tickling and singing, all this seems excessive and over the top behavior that is inappropriate for a
hero.” Unfortunately, Price’s brother wrote this in a diary which fell into enemy hands and was published in *The New York Times*, and caused embarrassment to Stuart and his staff.\(^{38}\)

After the Battle of Brandy Station Virginia, which took place in June 1863 and was the first time Stuart’s cavalry had ever been seriously challenged by the Federal Cavalry, some newspapers, like the *Richmond Examiner* thought that Stuart was humiliated more deeply than he had been in all his campaigning. Humiliated and if not disillusioned, disconcerted because of the performance of the Army of the Potomac’s Cavalry, which stood up to the Confederate Cavalry in this battle more thoroughly than they ever had before. The *Richmond Examiner* wrote that the battle rankled Stuart and it used words to describe him and his cavalrymen such as: vain, weak-headed, and surprised. It said that there should have been more earnestness on the part of the officers.\(^{39}\) It also indicated that the Cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia was puffed up and had been surprised twice or three times by battles in December of 1862 and they were subject to negligence and bad management.\(^{40}\)

After the Battle at Gettysburg, many in the army began to talk of bad management of the cavalry because the dominance of the Southern horsemen had come to an end and Stuart could no longer dictate where and when battles occurred. This had very little to do with bad management and much to do with both the improvements in the Federal Cavalry and the deteriorating condition of the Southern horses because of lack of supplies and feed.\(^{41}\) While some newspapers believed that the reason Stuart took the route he took north during the Gettysburg Campaign was to redeem himself from a poor show at Brandy Station, he did not personally feel he made a poor showing. While it was
reported that his headquarters was stormed and he was surprised by the Federal attack, this was untrue. His headquarters was not captured, and at no point in the battle were his troopers forced from the field due to a surprise attack. There were mistakes made by some of his generals, but he was never in danger of being driven from the field.

The personalities of Generals Lee and Stuart and their state of mind as they began the march north are key to understanding the decisions they made throughout the Gettysburg campaign. We have seen that Lee’s health, Stuart’s ego and their communication styles all may have had an impact in the outcome of the battle.

Historians often point to the Battle of Brandy Station as the key to understanding Stuart’s subsequent actions during the Gettysburg campaign. The perception that he not only lost the battle to the previously incompetent Union Cavalry, but that he was surprised by their attack is exaggerated and misleading. It was even reported that one of the causes of the loss at Gettysburg was the Federal Cavalry’s seizure of Confederate correspondence at Brandy Station that provided information of Lee’s plans to move northward. There was no official report made by the Federals that indicated they had seized any such documents and they would have made that information public at some point to embarrass Stuart and the Confederates, making this assertion unlikely. Stuart also indicated in his report that the previous site of his headquarters had been temporarily in enemy hands, all his baggage had been sent to the rear earlier, thus there was nothing for the Federals to capture.

The Battle of Brandy Station is known as the largest cavalry engagement of the Civil War and in fact the largest ever to take place on American soil. It pitted the
Confederate cavalry with approximately 9,500 men led by General Stuart against the Federal cavalry with approximately 11,000 men led by General Alfred Pleasonton who met on the battlefield June 9, 1863. This was one day after General Lee had reviewed the cavalry, which had been a big event, full of the pomp Stuart loved. Even the soldiers who participated said it was a good show. The same day as the review came Lee’s orders for Stuart’s cavalry to cross the Rappahannock the next day to cover the right of Longstreet and Ewell’s corps as they began their northward march. At that point, the area north of the Rappahannock was empty of Federals and it appeared Hooker was still downstream, tranquilly awaiting Lee’s next move.44

The next morning, however, the Federal cavalry attacked, crossing the Rappahannock and hitting the pickets of General William “Grumble” Jones and General Beverly Robertson. Jones’ brigade became engaged in battle, and Jones sent word to Stuart that the Federals were flanking the Confederates on the right from the direction of Culpeper. Stuart and Jones showed the animosity that characterized their relationship in their subsequent exchanges, with Stuart indicating that Jones should “tend to the Yankees in his front and I’ll watch the flanks” and Jones replying “So he thinks they ain’t coming, does he? Well let him alone, he’ll damned soon see for himself”. And true to Jones’ prediction, around 1:00 p.m., the flanking force of the Federals showed up exactly in the rear of Stuart’s headquarters.45 This is certainly what led to the claims that his headquarters were captured, although his baggage had already been moved. This is also the source of the misinformation that Stuart was surprised by the attack. What surprised him was the appearance of Yankees from that direction, because they would have had to march right past Robertson’s brigade to get there, and he had not heard from Robertson at
Robertson had discovered this flanking movement, had sent word to Stuart, who was approximately four miles away and asked for instructions. He then let the Federal division walk past him untouched.\textsuperscript{47}

The controversy of the Battle of Brandy Station therefore, lay with Robertson.\textsuperscript{48} Stuart’s cavalry, by the normal course of war, should have been crushed and destroyed at Brandy Station, but true to his cavalry’s tenacious nature, they kept the field and could claim victory that day.\textsuperscript{49} But the victory also included the fact that Pleasonton gained very little information about the Confederate movements during the battle. He found out where the Confederate cavalry was and determined that there were some Confederate infantry nearby, but he learned nothing else about the whereabouts of Lee’s troops.\textsuperscript{50} So whether Stuart definitively defeated the Federal cavalry or not, he had accomplished his primary function of screening the Confederate troops from discovery by Hooker’s army. Hooker did not determine what Lee’s plans were.

The perception that Stuart was surprised and lost the battle is driven by two things. Firstly, that Ewell’s infantry corps was needed to support Stuart. While they did march to Stuart’s aid, they did not reach the field until the Federals were retiring.\textsuperscript{51} Secondly, the fact that the Federal cavalry could even give battle to Stuart’s cavalry was such a change, that it shocked many. One of the most important things to come out of this battle was that it established the reputation of the Federal Cavalry. Previous to June 1863, they had been weakly deployed, poorly trained and timidly led. This battle showed they had made vast improvements in not only their performance, but their confidence as well.\textsuperscript{52} This newfound confidence, not only in the cavaliers but their commanders as well,
enabled them to fiercely contest the subsequent battles of the Gettysburg campaign and later into the war.\textsuperscript{53}

Stuart responded to the criticism of him after the Battle of Brandy station by saying that the newspapers were in error. He had not been surprised, he had been aware of the enemy’s movements and he had defeated the enemy. He accused one paper, *The Richmond Examiner*, of writing nothing but lies, and said they had not been able to get any information from the Confederates, so they simply copied Pleasonton’s report, which had been published in the northern press. Pleasonton’s claims were greatly exaggerated. But Stuart suggested he would take no notice of any falsehoods.\textsuperscript{54} This seems to put to rest the ideas that he began the march northward with an idea that he had to redeem himself for his embarrassing performance at Brandy Station. He was confident in his and his corps performance and ready to move ahead with the next stage of the campaign.
Chapter 2

The Logistics of the Cavalry

and Their Orders during Lee’s Invasion

As the Confederates began their march northward, there were many logistics that had to be worked out related to communication, coordination of efforts and what path to take. On June 8th, General Lee assured Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon that he grasped the difficulty inherent in taking the offensive initiative with a large army in front of him. He had two new corps commanders and a large army to coordinate, and the only thing standing between his army and an attack by the Federals was his cavalry, which had to screen a large area and guard two sets of mountain gaps in order to keep his movements under wraps. At any given time, however, Lee gave the cavalry multiple tasks, some of which seemed contrary to each other, and therefore required Stuart to make decisions about what he should be doing based on his circumstances. Although guarding the flank of the army and screening their movements were often the main function of cavalry when an army was on the move, Lee advised Stuart it was vital to him that he knew as much as possible about the enemy. His whereabouts, strength,
movements, the condition of his men and his weaknesses were all required information. He also needed to know if General Hooker was aware of the Confederate movements. He additionally wanted Stuart to divert and punish enemy patrols, if possible, and menace communication and supply lines.\(^56\) All this is detailed in Lee’s correspondence of June 22, 1863:

General: I have just received your note of 7.45 this morning to General Longstreet. I judge the efforts of the enemy yesterday were to arrest our progress and ascertain our whereabouts. Perhaps he is satisfied. Do you know where he is and what he is doing? I fear he will steal a march on us, and get across the Potomac before we are aware. If you find that he is moving northward, and that two brigades can guard the Blue Ridge and take care of your rear, you can move with the other three into Maryland, and take position on General Ewell’s right, place yourself in communication with him, guard his flank, keep him informed of the enemy’s movements, and collect all the supplies you can for the use of the army. One column of General Ewell’s army will probably move toward the Susquehanna by the Emmitsburg route: another by Chambersburg. Accounts from him last night state there was no enemy west of Frederick. A cavalry force (about 100) guarded the Monocacy Bridge, which was barricaded. You will, of course, take charge of [A.G.] Jenkins’ brigade, and give him necessary instructions. All supplies in Maryland must be by authorized staff officers for their respective departments – by no one else. They will be paid for, or receipts for the same given to the owners. I will send you a general order on the subject, which I wish you to see is strictly complied with.\(^{57}\)

A key component of Stuart’s ability to scout was Major John Mosby’s unit. The leader of a group of partisan rangers that performed raids or scouting as needed, Mosby was an excellent scout, able to ferret out information almost anywhere he went. After Brandy Station, while Stuart was meeting with Lee and Longstreet to determine the plan for the cavalry, Mosby cut between the wings of Hooker’s Army of the Potomac by
crossing the Bull Run Mountains and crossing the Potomac at Seneca, Maryland. His scouting revealed that Hooker was not moving and that he was still afraid Lee was going to attack near Bull Run.\(^5\) Knowing this, Stuart proposed a plan of attack to Lee. His plan was to cause a panic in Washington D.C. by taking a portion of his cavalry off towards Washington. He reasoned he could quickly rejoin the Army of Northern Virginia if necessary\(^5\) and his movements would cause Hooker to pull back toward Washington and leave the road to Pennsylvania wide open for Lee. Lee thought about Stuart’s proposal, which in order to be successful, required the cavalry to operate in the rear of the Federals. His biggest concern was that Stuart would not be able to connect with the right of army when necessary for him to rejoin. As he responded to Stuart’s communication regarding the plan, he made it clear to his aide that he was to cover that point clearly.\(^6\) Lee finally agreed to the plan in principle, and advised Stuart that if he discovered Hooker crossing the Potomac, he was to cross the river himself and take up his appropriate position on the right flank of the Army of Northern Virginia.\(^6\) This agreement and the communications that followed, contain the information that drives much of the controversy of Stuart’s actions during the Gettysburg campaign.

It is important at this time to provide the composition and locations of the Lee’s corps as they began their journey north due to that fact that in Lee’s final report he indicated: “In the absence of the cavalry it was impossible to ascertain his [the enemy’s] intention”\(^6\) and later in the same report he indicated “the movements of the army preceding the Battle of Gettysburg had been much embarrassed by the absence of the cavalry”.\(^6\) As Lee, Longstreet and Stuart met to discuss the strategy on June 18\(^th\), Lee again reiterated what he believed the main force of the cavalry should be doing. He
believed they should keep the enemy as far to the east as possible, protect the
communication lines of the army, supply intelligence about the enemy’s movements and
also stay on the right flank of the army. General Ewell was in the lead of the army and
was the first to leave Virginia and enter Maryland and then Pennsylvania. His orders
were to proceed towards the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania in two columns, one
headed towards Harrisburg through Greencastle and Chambersburg and the other headed
towards York via Emmitsburg, Maryland and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. On June 22,
General Longstreet’s troops were in Central Virginia heading west across the mountain
gaps to follow Ewell’s men in to Maryland. Their plans were to cross the Potomac
within a day or two. Meanwhile, Hill’s corps was still in Fredericksburg, preparing to
move west.

As for available cavalry, not only were Stuart’s five brigades available, but Lee
had other independent cavalry units from which he could draw. General Albert Jenkins
and his cavalry brigade were called out of the Shenandoah Valley and attached to Ewell’s
corps to guard his flank on the march north. On paper, Jenkins brigade had 8,000 men,
well sufficient for any screening, foraging and scouting that would be necessary. But in
reality Jenkins only had 1,800 men on active duty due to the standard practice of
cavaliers leaving the army to obtain new horses for themselves. A General Order
released by the Confederate War Department in 1863 explains this practice.

“When a cavalryman fails and refuses to keep himself provided with a serviceable horse, he may, upon
the order of the corps commander, be transferred to any company of infantry or artillery of the same army that he
may select. In lieu of such soldiers, others belong to the infantry or artillery who are able to furnish horses, and
prefer that service may, in like manner, be transferred in equal number to the cavalry.  

Jenkins brigade was still numerically adequate for their mission as the advance guard of the army, but it turned out not to be as efficient as it could have been when it came to scouting and ascertaining the enemies position. Lee also had available to him General John Imboden’s cavalry force of 2,000. This force was attached to Longstreet’s corps as they moved north. Also part of Stuart’s plan was to leave two brigades behind under the control of General Lee. These two brigades were to guard the gaps of the Blue Ridge Mountains and when Lee’s army left the Shenandoah Valley, they were to follow and guard the flanks of the army. While Longstreet assumed that Stuart would leave General Wade Hampton, one of his best commanders behind, and asked that Hampton report to him during the campaign, Stuart decided to leave two other commanders behind. He determined that he would leave General Beverly Robertson’s brigade and General William “Grumble” Jones’ brigades behind.

While Stuart did not have a particularly high opinion of Robertson’s abilities, particularly after Robertson’s performance at Brandy Station, he did think that Jones was a good outpost officer, perhaps even one of the best. Unfortunately for Stuart, Robertson was the senior of the two officers and therefore he would be in command of the two brigades. Jones’ expertise as an outpost officer would have been much better used had he been in charge. Stuart’s orders did make it clear that they were to remain in contact with the army and they would receive subsequent orders from General Lee directly, in fact telling Robertson that he was to maintain a constant liaison with Lee. Additional orders were that when Lee started to move, they were to leave pickets behind
to guard the mountain passes and to clean up any stragglers in the valley as they moved north to close in on the rear of the army. Robertson confirmed that the “impression” of the orders he received were that they were to “move through Upperville and Ashby’s Gap into the valley as a rearguard to General Lee, and cross the Potomac at Williamsport, Maryland.” Robertson also confirmed that he was in constant contact with Lee while in the Valley and Lee was well aware of his position. Taking into account the varying numbers based on different sources, Stuart believed Lee had 9,000 cavalrymen at his disposal within two days of his position. Whatever the true number, Lee had a significant number of cavalry under his or his corps commanders orders, certainly more than Stuart, who had approximately 6,000 men available. So for Lee to charge that he was missing his cavalry during the Gettysburg campaign is a fallacy. Lee certainly had cavalry, he just did not make good use of them.

One of the biggest controversies of the campaign involving Stuart were the orders he received from Lee on how to conduct his cavalry move northward. A note from General Lee to General Ewell on the afternoon of June 22nd showed that early in the march, it appeared Lee is already losing control of the army. It said, in part:

I also directed General Stuart, should the enemy have so far retired from his front as to permit of the departure of a portion of the cavalry to march with three brigades over the Potomac, and place himself on your right and in communication with you, keep you advised of the movements of the enemy, and assist in collecting supplies for the army. I have not heard from him since. I also directed Imboden, if the opportunity offered, to cross the Potomac and perform the same offices on your left. I shall endeavor to get General Early’s regiments to him as soon as possible. I do not know what has become of the infantry on the Maryland Line.
The above indicated that Lee’s orders to Stuart allowed him to march three brigades across the Potomac and place them on the right of Ewell and he was to maintain communication with Ewell and advise him of the movements of the enemy and assist with collecting supplies. He indicated he had not heard from Stuart since, but he had received a communication from Stuart at 7:45 that morning. Lee continued that he directed Imboden to cross the Potomac if he had the opportunity and cover Ewell’s left, advising him of the movements of the enemy and assisting with gathering of supplies. He indicated he would get General Early’s regiments to him as soon as possible. Lee did not elaborate on whether he was talking about getting Early’s regiments to Stuart or Imboden, but since Early was on the right of Ewell’s line it would seem he would be speaking of Stuart. This was a piece of information that would have important implications later on in the campaign. Lee finished his note to Ewell indicating he had no idea where his infantry on the Maryland Line was, as they were intended to guard Winchester, but seemed to be missing.  

Lee believed the continual attacks by the enemy cavalry, including the one at Upperville Virginia on June 21st were to feel out the Confederates to find out where they were and what they were doing. Lee expressed his fear that Hooker’s army would cross the Potomac before the Confederates were aware of what they were doing. He also indicated that if Stuart found Hooker was moving northward, and if Stuart believed his two brigades covering the mountain gaps could cover his rear, he should cross into Maryland and move to Ewell’s right, guarding his flank, keeping him informed and gather supplies. Later that same day, Stuart received a note from Longstreet advising that if he could pass by the rear of the enemy, he would be less likely to alert the enemy
of the Confederate plans than he would be if he crossed behind Longstreet’s corps. Longstreet relayed the information that General Lee had provided about Stuart leaving the area via the Hopewell Gap and passing in the rear of the enemy. Longstreet’s note made it clear that if Stuart passed to the rear of his corps, he believed it would disclose the Confederate plans and that he had better not leave unless he could pass in the rear of the enemy.

The following day, Stuart received another note from Lee. This is the note that has been reviewed by many historians for over a hundred years. In part, it said:

If General Hooker’s army remains inactive you can leave two brigades to watch him, and withdraw with the three others, but should he not appear to be moving northward, I think you had better withdraw to this side of the mountains to-morrow night, cross at Shepherdstown next day, and move over to Frederictown. You will, however, be able to judge whether you can pass around their army without hindrance, doing them all damage you can and cross the river east of the mountains.

This is the note that many use to blame Stuart for the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg and to support the accusation that he disobeyed orders. Instead of this note clarifying his previous orders, it confused them, and possibly even contradicted the previous order with the word “not” possibly being substituted for the word “now”. Lee gave Stuart the discretion to judge whether he could pass around the Federal army without hindrance, doing all the damage he could and cross the river east of the mountains. Either way, after crossing the Potomac, he was to find the right of Ewell’s corps and collect supplies, and information. He also instructed Stuart to leave instructions for the brigades left behind to watch the flanks and rear of the army and when the enemy left their front, they were to leave pickets to guard the passes and follow
the Confederate Army north. As can be seen by Lee’s note, he offered Stuart wide latitude to what way the cavalry leader should go based on the circumstances he encountered. Longstreet’s note of the same day to Stuart indicated “he [Lee] speaks of your leaving, via the Hopewell Gap, and passing by the rear of the enemy. If you can get through by that route, I think that you would be less likely to indicate what our plans are than is you should cross by passing to our rear.” This provided further evidence that Lee agreed that Stuart should cross behind the Federal army so as not to reveal the Army of Northern Virginia’s position. Furthermore, when assessing the best path to follow prior to leaving, Mosby had advised Stuart there was an opening to cross the Potomac between Hooker and Washington D.C. The whole tone of Lee’s letter gave the impression that although Lee may have been apprehensive, he approved Stuart’s proposed movements and allowed Stuart to determine the specifics.

Lee handled his instructions as to Stuart’s mission poorly, if characteristically. He knew Stuart and his mannerisms very well, and he could not have expected to give Stuart the latitude he was given on this excursion and have the bold cavalryman not take it. As we have seen, this had always been General Lee’s style of leadership, to map out the overall plan and let his subordinates implement it as they saw fit. Longstreet said that “authority thus given to a subordinate general implies an opinion on the part of the commander that something better than the drudgery of a march on our flank might be open to him, and one of Stuart’s activity and gallantry should not be expected to fail to seek it”.

Any commander in control of his army, knowing his subordinates nature, would have issued orders that were short, single-minded and not discretionary. He should have been clear that Stuart needed to find out where the enemy was and keep him
constantly informed of the enemy’s movements. Lee did not do this. In fact, he gave him no deadlines at all. No specific timeframes to report in on, no specific timeframe to link up with Ewell’s corps and no specific time to cross the Potomac. He just told Stuart to get information, find supplies and inflict all possible damage to the enemy.⁹⁰

Stuart biographer John Thomason believes Lee probably meant for Stuart to cross the Potomac immediately east of the mountains, but he did not indicate that in his orders and no passage east of the mountains would have been possible due to the fact that the enemy held the approaches from the south from Harpers Ferry to Edwards Ferry.⁹¹ Had Stuart attempted crossings here, it would have alerted the Federals that the Confederates were crossing the river and moving north and thus betrayed their plans. The controversy over the action Stuart took next and Lee’s orders had to do with the fact that Stuart ran into Federal General Winfield Scott Hancock’s corps as he moved east towards the Potomac. Lee’s orders indicated that if Stuart could take the route he planned without hindrance, he should do all damage to the enemy and proceed to the Potomac.

Stuart’s choices once he ascertained that Hancock’s corps was marching along the same path he were to proceed farther east toward Fairfax Courthouse or to retrace his steps west and follow Longstreet’s corps northward through the Shenandoah Valley. The latter was problematic for two reasons. Not only would it have intentionally deprived the army of Stuart’s cavalry for several days as they would had to pass back behind the enemy and cross the mountain passes to get into the Valley, it would have left the northern cavalry free to attack Lee at any point along the march for those days that Stuart was retracing his steps. The Federal cavalry was very active at this time, constantly probing against Stuart’s brigades. Had Stuart not been there to provide resistance, they
would have not only discovered Lee’s plan, but they would have been free to attack and
do damage to both the troops and the supply trains. Since Stuart took the eastern route, he
was able to divert the Federal cavalry to the point that they were essentially useless to the
Federal leaders until July 1st. The path Stuart took allowed him to keep the Federal
 cavalry busy and also was the fastest way north. He arrived in Carlisle on July 1st, which
was sooner than he would have had he retraced his steps while still in Virginia.92

There was precedent for this. Immediately after the Battle of Fredericksburg in
1862, Lee had approved Stuart’s plan for a raid northward, only telling Stuart that he
relied on his judgment in attacking the enemy and cautioned him only to not attack
without the prospect of getting something in return. He trusted Stuart as an exceptional
cavalry commander who could control his troopers and do what was right for the
Confederacy, including choosing the most appropriate route to take during a march.93

Much of the confusion over this specific order in June 1863 and Stuart’s actions
carrying it out were created by the actual participants and their comments after the battle
and often after the war had ended. On June 18th, Lee indicated they had outmaneuvered
the enemy again and the enemy had no idea where they were or what they were planning.
This displayed something of a naiveté on Lee’s part. While the Federals did not know
exactly what he was planning, there had been battles in Winchester with Ewell’s corps
and in Aldie and Middleburg with the cavalry. So the Federals knew that the
Confederates were moving away from Fredericksburg and towards the Shenandoah
Valley and moving northward. Lee also believed at that point he could have his entire
army in Pennsylvania in two days. Even unimpeded by natural terrain, that would have
been a tall order and displays a faith in the army that may have been misplaced.94
Stuart’s recent biographer Jeffry Wert believes that by the time Stuart was ready to begin his march on June 23rd, Hooker already had reliable information on the direction of the march of Lee’s army. Lee’s staff also contributed to the confusion of the orders and events in their zealousness to defend Lee after the war. Several of them indicate that if Lee had known that the Federals were planning on crossing the Potomac on June 23rd, he would not have given Stuart the orders he did. But that same day Lee wrote to Jefferson Davis advising him that he had reports of enemy movement east of the Blue Ridge which made him believe that Hooker was preparing to cross the Potomac. In fact, on that day, his scouts affirmed the enemy was laying a bridge at Edward’s Ferry on the Potomac, which was about 20 miles south of Winchester. Lee had to know, based on this evidence, that the Federals were going to cross the river; it was just a question of when.

Major Charles Marshall, who transcribed many of Lee’s orders and reports, indicated that the order of June 23rd that provided Stuart with the discretionary orders to cross the Potomac east of the mountains was a reiteration of a prior order. This was untrue. The earlier order indicated if the Federals remained inactive, Stuart was to move through their rear to link up with Ewell. The later order indicated that if the Federals were not moving north he was to cross the Potomac at Shepherdstown. Lee reiterated that Stuart was to go to the Federal rear and meet General Early in York. This assertion was in Marshall’s own defense, as it is possible that the error in wording was made by him in his transcription of the order. While there is no proof of his error because only the final transcription still exists, the wording of the order of June 23rd makes it seem likely there was a mistake. Marshall clearly had his own agenda, evident when he drafted Lee’s
initial official report and he made no mention of the orders give to Stuart to go in the rear of the Federals. Marshall indicated Stuart was given orders to cross the Potomac to the right or left of the South Mountain and then take a position on the army’s right. The next draft says Stuart went to Fairfax Courthouse to impede the Army of the Potomac, and then he indicated that Stuart’s lack of communication caused Lee to move more slowly than he would have had he known where the enemy was. He believed that had Stuart been in advance, he could have forestalled the infantry clash of July 1st. Both Marshall and Lee seem to have struggled during this battle with accepting that delays were part of the circumstances of war, particularly when dealing with cavalry. In Lee’s final report of the Gettysburg campaign, written in January of 1864, he indicated that Stuart used the discretion given him. He also removed all of Marshall’s criticism, but this was to guard against dissention in the army more than a reflection of his own feelings. It seemed clear from Lee’s own words that he gave Stuart the discretion to cross where he wanted to cross the Potomac and Stuart took it. It also seems clear that Stuart did not disobey orders. What still needs to be investigated was whether Stuart used poor judgment in the path he took.
Chapter 3

The Beginning of the Gettysburg Campaign – The March North

Stuart’s cavalry was involved in several heated battles with the Federal cavalry around the areas of Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville in northern Virginia as they screened the movements of the Confederate infantry as it moved north across the Potomac river. To this point, the cavalry had accomplished its main function of screening the infantry movements exceptionally well. The Federal cavalry was frustrated with its inability to outmaneuver Stuart. After the Battle of Upperville, on June 23rd Stuart received his orders to cross the Potomac to the rear of the Federals. The next day he began his movement east. On June 25th Stuart’s men left Salem, rode through Ashby’s Gap and headed towards Haymarket, Virginia. Along the way they encountered the troops of General Winfield Scott Hancock’s Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Hancock’s corps blocked the route that Stuart had expected to take along the Warrenton-Centreville Turnpike and they were marching northward. Stuart fired on them but quickly withdrew because he did not want to disclose his force to the infantry corps.
At this point, Stuart and his staff indicate that Stuart wrote a dispatch to General Lee himself and sent it by courier. Lee did not receive this dispatch, and one of Stuart’s staff officers indicated it was not duplicated. But Stuart was able to ascertain from the people of the area that the Federal forces were still primarily well to the east. Stuart is not known to be a liar, but because no copy of the dispatch exists, some historians believe he and his staff lied about this dispatch to cover their absence and lack of contact during the Gettysburg campaign. However, somehow the dispatch made it to Richmond because a clerk in the Confederate War Department recorded it in his diary on July 1st. There is precedence for the belief that the courier did not make it to Lee based on the fact that two of Stuart’s key scouts were separated or captured during this time as well. During Stuart’s march, Major John Mosby became separated from Stuart because of his change of path and was unable to provide any reconnaissance detail. Mosby ended up crossing back over the mountains to the west. It is unknown if Mosby alerted Stuart’s troops guarding the mountain passes of the Yankee activity. If he did, it was apparently not reported to General Lee. Another spy, Frank Stringfellow who had worked extensively with Stuart was captured. The loss of the dispatch had significant impacts on the battle, because had Lee received it, he would have known definitively that Hooker’s men were moving northward towards the Potomac.

After Stuart ran into Hancock’s corps it was apparent he would have to adjust his route. At this point he had to decide if it made sense for him to retrace his steps back to Shepherdstown, or if he should continue on in the rear of the Federals and make a wider detour to the east. Understanding his orders were to find the fastest route across in order to catch up to General Early on Ewell’s right flank, and believing that Early was already
in Pennsylvania, Stuart calculated the fastest route. Haymarket, Stuart’s location, was approximately 60 miles from Shepherdstown through at least one set of mountains, so he would not cross the Potomac on that route until at least the evening of June 27th. From Shepherdstown to York was approximately another 60 miles through the South Mountains, meaning Stuart might not reach Early until June 30th. Considering that the alternate route was almost due north to York, approximately the same distance and did not entail traversing mountain passes, he made the assumption he would be able to travel faster and catch up with Early several days earlier following the eastern path. Stuart also believed, based on the dispatch he sent, that Jones and Robertson, guarding the mountain passes would be active on their front and would alert Lee of any activity. 107 To his knowledge also, the Federals still held Harper’s Ferry, a high elevation that allowed them to see down the Valley. To cross east of the Blue Ridge Mountains anywhere but where he was may have alerted Hooker to his intention, and brought the Confederate plan to light.108

All these factors led to Stuart’s decision to continue further east to cross the Potomac and then move north to meet the Confederates in Pennsylvania. While he probably assumed he would meet with some resistance from the Federal cavalry, he could not have predicted the delays he would encounter. There was no guarantee that the route to Shepherdstown and across Central Pennsylvania to York would not have hindrances as well. Since the Confederates were also marching on those roads, Stuart’s men could have been delayed by his own army’s troops or may have to make a detour further west and lost the ability to screen the flank movements. Also, Stuart believed that Lee generally favored mounted raids and would have factored some disruptions into his consideration
of the plan. Lee thought that Stuart’s movements would confuse the enemy to the true whereabouts of the army. If Stuart backtracked, the Confederates would have lost all those advantages. So Stuart made the ill-fated decision to move east.

Some have characterized this decision as a dereliction of duty by Stuart or an attempt for glory. Some believe if he had aborted the mission, he would have been confined simply to boring screening and reconnaissance work, and he did not want to do that. Fellow Confederates including Jubal Early and Fitzhugh Lee, as well as some subsequent historians, have weighed in on the motivations and repercussions of Stuart’s decision. Was it pride? Was it an attempt at redemption for Brandy Station? Or did Stuart believe he was doing his duty? One of his aides believed that immediately after he received the orders from General Lee he decided to ride around the enemy in a replay of his 1862 ride around McClellan’s army that had won him such fame. Wert believes that if Stuart had retraced his steps he could have been in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, by June 28th. That would have discounted the need for grazing of horses, traveling through the mountain passes and bypassing the Confederate Army that was still marching on the roads that led to Chambersburg. Unfortunately, many of those conclusions are based on the outcome of the battle, not the circumstances nor the contemporary evidence.

Stuart did not define a hindrance in terms of hours or days. Hancock’s troops did not impede him by stopping him from continuing with the plan; they just made him reassess the path he took. He determined that it was practicable to get in the enemy’s rear, disrupting their communications with Washington D.C. and inflicting damage on them. Stuart’s subordinate, brigade leader General Fitzhugh Lee, who was there, thought that Stuart was free to act on the discretion given by General Robert E. Lee, but in hindsight,
Fitzhugh Lee did not believe it was the best move to go forward.\textsuperscript{113} General Robert E. Lee stated he had been kept in the dark ever since his army crossed the Potomac and insinuated that Stuart’s “disappearance” had materially hampered his invasion.\textsuperscript{114} Robert E. Lee forgot about the cavalry at his disposal. While there is no firm evidence, it appears that Robert E. Lee ordered Robertson and Jones’ brigades to remain where they were until June 29\textsuperscript{th}, when it was apparent the Federals had already moved north. This showed there was a flaw in the plan. Just as Stuart would have struggled to backtrack to catch up with the army if they had to travel through the Shenandoah Valley, Robertson and Jones could have not made it north any sooner than June 28\textsuperscript{th} due to the Confederate Army marching on the road north. Also, had Stuart backtracked, he would have been blocked by the two lead Federal corps under Generals Reynolds and Slocum that were then occupying Middletown, Frederick and the South Mountain passes by June 25\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{115} It seems likely that had Stuart returned to Shepherdstown, he still would have been out of contact with Lee due to the movement of the Federal army. When all the factors are added up, it seems Stuart made the correct decision to continue east to cross the Potomac and then move northward into Pennsylvania.

On June 26\textsuperscript{th} Stuart’s brigades headed through Bristoe Station towards the Occoquan River in Virginia. The next day, while President Lincoln was relieving General Hooker of command of the Army of the Potomac and replacing him with General George G. Meade, the Confederate cavalry passed through Fairfax Courthouse and Dranesville to Rowser’s Ford on the Potomac and were ready to cross. Unfortunately they were delayed, not only by Federal cavalry, but also because the Potomac was running very high because of rain and they struggled to cross.\textsuperscript{116} Also
complicating the crossing was the movement of the artillery and Stuart’s troops were
tired once they made it across. After crossing the Potomac, Stuart learned that the
Federals were marching towards Frederick. He realized that he had to hurry to catch up to
the army, and his men resumed the trek after a brief rest. On June 28th, they were at
Rockville, Maryland when they come across a Federal wagon train. Remembering one of
Lee’s orders, to gather provisions for the Confederate army, they gave chase to the wagon
train and came within three or four miles of Washington D.C. before capturing the
wagons. Had Stuart been attempting a play at glory, he might have made a detour into
the Federal capital to embarrass the Federals, but he did not. Instead, after capturing the
supply train of 125 wagons, Stuart and his troopers continued moving north.

The captured wagon train, however, would prove to be another problem as the
Confederate cavalry continued to move north more slowly because of them. Many would
second guess Stuart’s decision to continue to hold onto the train. Instead of burning the
wagons, he kept them, perhaps thinking about Lee’s instructions to gather provisions.
Meanwhile, Stuart lost time paroling prisoners. Edward Porter Alexander suggested in
hindsight, that Stuart should have just taken the captured officers with him and let the
federal enlisted men go, but perhaps he was afraid that so close to the capital the men
would regroup with new officers and attack him. The biggest hindrances were the
wagons themselves, which he spent time guarding and they slowed his movements down
considerably. The point of the expedition was to move quickly and the wagons
negated that. Had he not had the wagon train, he might have reached Gettysburg or
Hanover on June 30th, in time for the battle. All of this is just speculation, however, and
there was no way of knowing if Stuart had reached Gettysburg before the battle, whether it would have changed the outcome of the battle.

On June 29th Stuart’s men also cut the tracks of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad and destroyed telegraph lines and Meade’s main line of supply and communication to Washington D.C. This was another goal of his mission, to do all possible damage. Damage to the enemy’s communication was an important goal, as it hindered their ability to get supplies, information and reserve troops. But again, this used valuable time. More time was lost when Stuart’s cavalry stopped in Westminster, Maryland to get provisions for the men and horses. They also became aware that the Federal cavalry was heading to Hanover and they needed to intercept them. However, the wagon trains again became a problem and they delayed both Hampton’s and Fitzhugh Lee’s brigades so that the Federal cavalry beat them to Hanover. The Confederates were surrounded by the Federal cavalry and a battle ensued around the town of Hanover. It ended in a stalemate, and Stuart was almost captured. In an effort to break off the battle, Stuart’s men detoured further east and north as they headed to York to meet with Early. The fact that Stuart was almost captured and yet continued to evade the Federal cavalry displayed his lack of need for glory and showed that he was truly focused on finding the right of the Confederate line so he can resume his correct position.

The problem at this point was that Stuart was unable to find the Confederate right. Stuart learned from newspapers on June 29th that Ewell was in Pennsylvania, but the papers did not indicate where. Stuart heard a rumor that the army was concentrating at Shippensburg, but he was unable to go east because of the Federal cavalry, so he had to continue north to York. At that point, Stuart was blundering around Pennsylvania
practically lost, looking for his own army. Stuart’s cavalry was getting information from locals, who may have been friendly or unfriendly, and from northern newspapers, neither source being reliable. General Fitzhugh Lee learned that Early had marched west from York, but no one is sure where he was headed. General Early claimed he had no idea that he was to look for Stuart. It should not have been Stuart’s responsibility to have to feel out where the Confederate right was. Lee should have arranged for Early to send out men to intercept Stuart’s cavalry at the time he expected them to reach York. Early had heard the sounds of the cavalry battle at Hanover, but instead of sending a messenger to find out who was fighting and what was happening, he marched on to Heidlersburg. Stuart arrived in York to find no army there. At that point he sent out his aide Venable to find Early. Venable did not find Early, instead he found Lee on July 1st, the first day of the battle at Gettysburg. Meanwhile Stuart was in Carlisle to gather provisions when he ran into Pennsylvania militia. He demanded their surrender but they refused, so he burned the Federal army barracks there and fired a few shells on the town in the evening of July 1st. Around midnight, Venable returned to report that he had found General Lee, and Stuart was to report to Gettysburg at once.

One of the main controversies of the battle concerns the belief that because of Stuart’s long absence, Lee had no cavalry at his disposal and so was blind in enemy territory. This has been shown to be untrue. Lee did have cavalry other than Stuart’s at his disposal. But what were the cavalry at Lee’s disposal doing for the campaign? Jenkins’ brigade was traveling with General Ewell, under the direct command of General Rodes. Jenkins’ troopers were ill prepared for the quick marching of Rodes division, who had learned that skill under General Jackson. There was no indication they were
asked to do any scouting or reconnaissance before reaching Harrisburg. Meanwhile, Imboden’s troopers had been on Ewell’s left throughout the march northward. But as Ewell neared the Susquehanna River, Imoden’s men disappeared as well. In reality, they were resting around Hancock, Maryland, about fifty miles southwest of Chambersburg. When Lee found this out it was, as Lee’s biographer Douglas S. Freeman, put it, to “provoke the wrath of Lee as did few events of the war.” Lee had believed that Imoden had been on Ewell’s left as he marched towards Harrisburg.126

One may be willing to accept that Jenkins and Imboden were unfamiliar with fighting alongside Lee’s force and therefore, good use was not made of them, but that does not explain Lee’s failure to use Robertson and Jones’ brigades, who were experienced in the exact type of work Lee needed in Stuart’s absence. Lee had to be aware that Stuart would be out of touch for a period of time as Stuart passed behind the Federal army, and Lee was in daily contact with Robertson, but Lee did not recall Robertson until June 29th and he did not use him for any reconnaissance at all. It also appeared that Robertson made no effort to do any reconnaissance on his own.127 Those who have studied the battle believe that Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee would have done the reconnaissance without orders to do so. Had Jones been in charge, he might well have done the reconnaissance. This failure was one of the consequences of Robertson being the senior officer. Lee was at fault as well, for wondering repeatedly where Stuart was and lamenting that he had no cavalry and then ignoring the four cavalry brigades he did have at his disposal.

It was also questionable if Stuart, had he stayed with Longstreet’s command, would have been able to do any reconnaissance as well. He would have had to rely on
individual scouts for information, and his command was insufficient for that. Stuart would have also had to leave men at all of the South Mountain passes, which would have left him with not enough troopers to respond to the Federal cavalry that would surely have challenged him. So while Stuart might have been able to infer where the enemy was if he had traveled with Longstreet, it was by no means certain he would have been able to perform the type of reconnaissance Lee needed.  

So how did Lee finally determine that the Federals were across the Potomac and quickly following the Confederates into Pennsylvania? On June 27th and 28th, Lee assumed that his cavalry was doing its job, but he was frustrated by the silence from Stuart and uneasy over the lack of information. It was at the same time that Stuart had apparently sent word several times regarding the Federal movements, but these messages did not reach Lee due to the Federal army being between him and Lee. On the evening of June 28th a southern spy, known as Harrison, under the employ of General Longstreet reported to Longstreet and subsequently to Lee, that the Federals were north of the Potomac, and in fact at least two corps were close to Frederick, Maryland. If Imboden were covering the mountain gaps near Hancock, he should have seen this movement and alerted General Lee. Harrison also advised that General George Meade was now the commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Lee was now facing an approaching enemy under a new commander in unfamiliar territory with his own Confederate army widely scattered. Lee determined he must concentrate his army east of the mountains so the Federals would follow his lead and the threat to his rear would be removed. Here Lee’s orders again became ambiguous, this time about where to concentrate the troops. Originally he had sent Ewell towards
Harrisburg to threaten the state capital. But with Meade’s exact whereabouts unknown, Lee now needed Ewell close. So he directed Ewell to Cashtown or Gettysburg to alleviate the traffic on the Chambersburg road. On June 29th Lee’s plan was to gather at Gettysburg, and he told his subordinates they would go see what General Meade was up to.

Gettysburg had become important once Lee realized the Army of the Potomac was across the Potomac. In previous discussions with General Isaac Trimble, Lee had indicated Gettysburg would be an ideal site for the battle since he could concentrate his men there within twenty-four hours. Ewell, however, had received a message from General Hill saying he was in Cashtown and the enemy cavalry and possibly other troops were in Gettysburg. This confused Ewell, as Lee had told him to go to Cashtown or Gettysburg, and as early as June 27th, Lee had discussed with General Trimble the geography of Gettysburg and indicated that he intended to assail the advance of the enemy there. So was Ewell to go to Gettysburg and potentially bring on an engagement or to Cashtown?

The decision was taken out of Ewell’s hands when Hill’s corps engaged the enemy at Gettysburg on July 1st. Although both Hill and one of his subordinates, General Henry Heth, indicated they were doing reconnaissance in Gettysburg, Lee already knew at least Buford’s cavalry and some Union infantry were in the town. And if Lee was still unaware of where the enemy was, Jenkins’ brigade of cavalry was with Ewell and could have done the reconnaissance instead of Hill’s infantry. Later Heth’s story changed and he indicated that his unit had been looking for shoes. But another group of Confederates including the units led by Generals Early and Gordon had been there the
day before and certainly would have obtained any shoes. Hill and his corps went to Gettysburg looking for the fight, contrary to Lee’s order, and this was what brought on the battle. Had Hill’s men not gone into Gettysburg, there was potential they could have delayed the battle until they found the favorable ground Lee was seeking.

Lee’s assertion that he was ignorant of the enemy numbers may have been true, but his statement that he did not know if it was just a detachment of Federals was plainly untrue. He knew that a week earlier the Federals were preparing to cross the Potomac, and he knew on the evening of the 28th that the enemy was massing around Frederick, thirty miles to the south. Lee had to suspect that if there was only a detachment in the town, there was a large contingent behind them and heading towards his army. Again Lee stressed on July 1st that he did not know what was in front of him and that he missed the “eyes” of his cavalry, but what he really missed was Stuart. Unaccustomed to using any other cavalry contingent, Lee made himself dependent on information from Stuart, and therefore was anxious and upset not have information from his favorite cavalry commander. It was not simply cavalry that Lee lacked and said he missed, for he had more than enough cavalry brigades if he had wanted and used them properly, it was Stuart’s absence he missed so intensely. He relied on Stuart’s information so heavily that it was only his information he truly trusted.

While Stuart was on his way to Carlisle, Lee’s corps commanders were concentrating around Gettysburg. On June 29th, Lee had directed his troops to move east of the mountains to hold the Federal army there and to prevent a disruption of his communication lines with Virginia. He had sent Hill to Cashtown, with Longstreet following him and Ewell had been sent to Carlisle. Cashtown was within ten miles of
Gettysburg, Carlisle being farther, almost thirty miles. At this point, General Hill, his
scouts and General Lee indicated they were confident the only Union troops in
Gettysburg are cavalry. On June 30\textsuperscript{th} General Pettigrew’s brigade ran into this cavalry
in Gettysburg and had a skirmish. Hill, however, said he was skeptical that this was the
cavalry of the Army of the Potomac. So Hill sent Heth’s division to Gettysburg to do
reconnaissance on July 1\textsuperscript{st}. As previously indicated, it appears Hill sent Heth to
Gettysburg to pick a fight. He knew it was a division of cavalry from the Army of the
Potomac. Heth engaged the two brigades of cavalry against orders and Hill sent
reinforcements towards Gettysburg. It was claimed by Edward Porter Alexander that
General Reynolds’ First Corps was not expected to be there and the Confederates had
been caught by surprise by the First Corps presence because Stuart was out on a raid.\textsuperscript{139}

A lack of attention to basics of war was what brought on the engagement at
Gettysburg. Generally, cavalry did not stray too far from its army. The primary
functions of cavalry was doing reconnaissance and guarding the flanks which meant that
they were usually within miles of infantry. So to say that no one had any idea the infantry
would be near the Federal cavalry was either untrue or naïve of the movements of the
Federal army. The question that needs to be asked is why Hill sent infantry to do
reconnaissance. Where was Jenkins’ cavalry, where was Imboden’s? Had Lee recalled
Robertson and Jones from the Shenandoah Valley when he learned the Federal Army was
approaching the Potomac, they might have been able to move north quickly enough to
handle the reconnaissance that was necessary without causing a general engagement.

Once Hill’s divisions were engaged, Lee saw no alternative to attacking the
enemy before General Meade could concentrate his forces. Lee indicated that he
disliked, however, forcing a general engagement so early in the campaign and such a
distance from Virginia.\textsuperscript{141} That had been his objective the whole time though, to pull the
Federals north out of Virginia and move the fighting into the north. The facts were that
Lee went ahead with the battle at Gettysburg without control of his army with respect to
reconnaissance at the onset of the battle and then the renewal of hostilities in the
afternoon of July 1\textsuperscript{st}. Lee was aware he did not know what he was facing due to a lack of
reconnaissance. The facts challenge Lee’s assumption that Stuart’s silence meant the
Army of the Potomac was not pursuing Lee north.\textsuperscript{142} Lee knew the Federals were
approaching the Potomac as early as June 23\textsuperscript{rd}. His experience as a general, even
knowing the Federal tendency to back away from the Army of Northern Virginia to
protect Washington D.C., should have told him that the Federals would cross the
Potomac, if only to protect Washington D.C. and Baltimore.

Lee’s defenders have stated that Stuart’s absence was what caused Hill to have to
send his infantry on a reconnaissance into Gettysburg on July 1\textsuperscript{st}. Had Stuart been there,
that infantry reconnaissance would not have been necessary, and it was Stuart’s absence
that caused it and brought on the battle. It was Lee, however, who gave the order to send
in additional men on the afternoon of July 1\textsuperscript{st} that turned a small engagement into a full
scale battle.\textsuperscript{143} For all Lee’s lack of knowledge of the whereabouts of the full Army of the
Potomac, and also the absence of his own First Corps under Longstreet, which was still
not yet at Gettysburg, Lee ordered the continuation of the battle on the afternoon of July
1\textsuperscript{st}. Without Longstreet, he had no reason to believe he had enough men to take the high
ground south of the town, particularly with his claims of not knowing what he was facing
in regards to enemy numbers.
Lee’s laxness with respect to reconnaissance and his lack of control of Hill’s corps caused him to stumble into the battle, not the absence of Stuart’s cavalry.\(^{144}\) Had Lee wished Hill to exercise restraint on entering Gettysburg, he could have communicated that to Hill the evening of June 30\(^{th}\), but he did not. Major Walter Taylor on Lee’s staff wrote after the war that early on July 1\(^{st}\) Lee determined, upon reaching the battlefield that the enemy artillery and infantry were present in force and Heth’s division was already engaged. He surmised that a serious engagement could not be avoided. However, at that point, only two of Heth’s brigades had seen serious action and the Army of Northern Virginia had not been drawn into a general battle. It was Lee who decided to commit Heth’s other brigades and Pender’s division to the battle, thus escalating the engagement rather than limiting it.\(^{145}\)

As the battle unfolded, further evidence of Lee’s lack of control of his army could be seen. He ordered Ewell to evacuate the town of Gettysburg and move his corps to the right, giving up the hard won territory of the first day of the battle. Later he changed his mind and allowed Ewell to stay where he is.\(^{146}\) When Ewell hesitated about taking Cemetery Hill, a key point at the northern end of Cemetery Ridge, believing he could not, Lee hesitated as well. He also did not commit Ewell to assist Hill’s men in pushing the Federals through the town and off the heights at Cemetery Hill, which allowed the Federals to keep the high ground. Lee decided to wait for Longstreet, losing what was probably the best advantage of the entire battle to decimate the Federals before additional reinforcements arrived.\(^{147}\) At the end of the fighting on July 2\(^{nd}\), a day which was filled with controversy over the movements of Longstreet and the delays of Ewell, Lee believed that with the proper coordination of action they should be able to succeed and determined
to continue the battle. He thought the day’s action had been a success, but not a victory because while the enemy’s extreme right and left were beaten, the large numbers the Confederates were facing held the high ground along Cemetery Ridge so the Confederates were forced to retire from the field without victory. Lee believed he would have been victorious if one simultaneous attack had been made along the whole Confederate line.

On July 2\textsuperscript{nd}, the expectation was that Ewell would take Culp’s Hill near Cemetery Hill at the north end of Cemetery Ridge and Longstreet would attack the Round Tops at the south end of the ridge. After Ewell was unable to take the Culp’s Hill, Lee wanted him to pull back and lessen his line, to provide a tighter and stronger Confederate line. Ewell was persuaded by his men to say no, and Lee allowed it. Meanwhile, after the fighting of July 2\textsuperscript{nd} was complete, Longstreet did not meet with Lee to discuss the next day’s plan. Such a discussion was generally their custom, but because of the tension over Longstreet’s perceived slowness in getting into position and his continued recommendation to move to the rear of the Federals and draw them off their commanding position, Longstreet stayed away. Lee was happy to decide the course of action for the next day by himself, with catastrophic results. Lee continued to allege after the battle that he knew little of the state of his army, the enemy army or the ground. In an interview given after the war, he renewed his disbelief of the lack of word from Stuart, indicating that he had specifically ordered the cavalryman to cover his movements and provide information\textsuperscript{148}. This was disingenuous, as Stuart had also been ordered by Lee to harass the enemy and gather provisions. As has been shown in this essay, some of these
four tasks came to be in opposition to each other and, therefore, became impossible for Stuart to perform all of them.

Lee’s state of mind immediately after the battle was such that he even said that “If I had had Stonewall Jackson with me, so far as man can see, I should have won the Battle of Gettysburg”. This quotation, uttered by Lee several years after the war ended, indicated that Lee had never adjusted to the changes in his army, and also indicated his reliance on specific commanders and their roles. While Ewell and Hill were new to corps command, given the right leadership, they might have been just as effective as Jackson. But Lee did not change his leadership style, he expected these generals to replicate Jackson’s leadership and the kind of understanding Lee had with Jackson, and when they did not, Lee was disappointed and longed for the past.

Lee had also indicated to General Trimble days before the battle began that his army could concentrate at any one point in twenty-four hours or less, and he had pointed to Gettysburg on a map and said that is where they would probably meet the Federal army and fight the decisive battle for southern independence. The fact was that it took Lee’s army more than two days to concentrate, with Longstreet’s last division not arriving on the field until late on the evening of July 2nd. Evidently Lee did not count the cavalry left to guard the mountain gaps in Virginia as part of that army, as he had to know it would take them more than twenty-four hours to cover the eighty miles to Gettysburg. The fact that Lee evidently picked the ground he wanted to fight on may have been a fluke. But it seems that if he believed that the fight would come in the vicinity of Gettysburg as early as June 29th, he would have called Jenkins or Imboden’s cavalry to Gettysburg to scout the area and determine the best ground. Lee learned from
Winfield Scott in the Mexican War the need for both careful reconnaissance and sound strategy and the relationship between the two. Studying the ground was what Lee understood was the first duty of the commanding officer. Had a study of the ground at Gettysburg had been adequately done in advance, it can be assumed that the Confederate army could have come into town from the south, claimed the high ground on Cemetery Ridge, taken a defensive stance, and forced the Federals to take the offensive or leave the field.

Lee’s plan for July 3rd was to attack the center of the Federal line. He hoped that an attack on the Union right by Ewell’s corps would force the Federals to redeploy from the center, allowing the Confederates to attack a weakened center, first with an artillery barrage and then a frontal attack that Lee hoped would cause the Federal line to break. This would allow Lee’s men to attack the split line from both sides and finally defeat the Federals. This was a daring maneuver, particularly since Lee had no firm knowledge of the strength of the enemy. It was during this planning that Stuart arrived at Lee’s headquarters late in the evening of July 2nd.
Chapter 4

Stuart at Gettysburg

There were several witnesses to Lee and Stuart’s meeting at Gettysburg on the evening of July 2nd, including Major McClellan and Colonel Munford. It was reported that Lee reddened at the sight of Stuart and raised his arm as if to strike him. Then he asked where Stuart had been. Observers say that Stuart seemed to wilt and quickly explained. Lee expressed his frustration at not having heard from him for days and being deprived of information in his absence. When Stuart explained that he had brought 125 wagons of provisions with him, Lee said they were just an impediment now. Lee then changed his attitude and said they would no longer speak of the matter and that he needed Stuart’s help to fight the enemy.153

Stuart’s orders for July 3rd were given to him verbally by Lee; he was to protect the left flank of the Confederate Army and move against the Federal right flank from the rear. Since there were no written orders, it can only be surmised his target was also the Baltimore Pike, which the Federals were using as their main supply line.154 The ranks of Stuart’s troopers were much diminished after their ride through Maryland and Pennsylvania due to abandonment of duty, loss of horses or physical exhaustion. But the diminished numbers did not adversely affect their performance on the field that day.
Unfortunately though, the Confederate cavalry movement was detected on July 3 by the Federals on Culp’s Hill, and a Federal cavalry brigade led by the flamboyant and aggressive General George Armstrong Custer was waiting for them when they arrived at Cress Ridge. Soon Custer was joined by General Gregg and additional brigades, which equalized the strength of the combatants. Stuart became frustrated as he watched the Federal Cavalry disable his cannons and force some of his men from the field because they had expended all their ammunition. Jenkins’ men only had ten rounds of ammunition each during the battle, rendering them useless after several minutes. To counteract the Federal firepower, Stuart ordered a mounted charge. During this attack, General Wade Hampton was seriously wounded and was carried from the field. Shortly after this, the Confederate cavalry was defeated and forced from the field.

In the main action of July 3rd, the charge of Pickett’s Infantry Division against the center of the Union line, the Confederates also failed against the Federal forces. Faced with that defeat and the horrendous losses the Army of Northern Virginia had suffered in the three days of bloody fighting, Lee ordered a retreat.

The withdrawal of the Confederate Army out of Pennsylvania back to Virginia required considerable cavalry assistance to guard the mountain passes, the army’s flanks and the wagon trains. Stuart’s cavalry constantly battled with the Federal cavalry, and Stuart even had a horse shot out from under him during the withdrawal. Between July 8th and July 12th, while waiting for the Potomac to fall after being swollen by heavy rains, Stuart guarded the entrenched Confederate Army. This entailed severe fighting at Boonsboro, Beaver Creek, Funkstown and near Sharpsburg. The Confederate cavalry fought predominately with Buford’s and Kilpatrick’s Federal Cavalry and ably...
accomplished their task of protecting Lee’s army. Stuart’s men were able to cover the final crossing of the Potomac back into Virginia by masking what the Confederates were doing. This entailed making noise, even singing, and taking other actions to create the impression among the Federals that the Confederates were still on the Maryland side of the river.

Even while satisfying his duty of effectively guarding the withdrawal of the Confederate Army, Stuart and his men were exhausted. A story which displays Stuart’s level of exhaustion is told by his aide Henry McClellan. It portrays a shocking departure from Stuart’s usual southern charm and vivacity. As Stuart and his men arrived at Hagerstown, Maryland, they were invited to dinner. Stuart fell asleep prior to food being served, and continued to sleep as dinner was served. Since his men believed that he needed food, not having eaten in the last twenty-four hours, they awoke him for dinner. When their hostess offered him a different type of food since he did not seem to be enjoying his dinner, he rudely agreed, took a few bites of the new dish and then left the table. He did not seem to be aware of his surroundings, and when later told of his behavior, he was mortified and apologized profusely. This is one incident of several that reflected the reaction the men had to the exhausting ride from Brandy Station to Gettysburg and back to Virginia. How many errors in judgment could have been made not due to malicious disregard of orders but due to mental and physical exhaustion? Stuart’s performance in the defense of the retreat of the Army of Northern Virginia was exemplary and showed no ill effects of his encounter with General Lee. Thus ended the Gettysburg Campaign and began the judgment of the events of the campaign.
Chapter 5

Aftermath and Judgment of the Gettysburg Campaign

In the immediate aftermath of the battle, Lee was quick to absolve his men of responsibility for the loss. He also was determined not to blame any of his subordinates for the loss. He believed the defeat was primarily due to the lack of coordination of effort, and if the Confederate attacks had been properly coordinated, they could have achieved success.\textsuperscript{162} On July 4\textsuperscript{th}, Lee wrote to Confederate President Jefferson Davis about the failure of the assault. He advised that the enemy had suffered severely and acknowledged that his army’s losses were not light. Three days later he wrote to Davis again, advising that it was the Union’s strong defensive position and the Confederate’s logistical difficulties that were the reasons for the Army of Northern Virginia’s retreat out of Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{163} General Stuart thought the Confederates had fought better at Gettysburg than the Federals and only retired because they could not hold the ground they captured and they lacked sufficient arms to have a continued battle away from their supply lines. Stuart thought if they had 10,000 reinforcements and plenty of ammunition it would have allowed the army to achieve decisive results.\textsuperscript{164} Edward Porter Alexander, the head of Longstreet’s artillery, did not believe the Confederates could ever have successfully invaded the North, because they could not carry enough ammunition. He
thought no amount of courage and territorial gain would overcome the deficiency of ammunition and the loss of men as casualties even if they won in enemy territory, because the Army of Northern Virginia was just not large enough and sufficiently supplied.\textsuperscript{165}

While the North hailed Gettysburg as a victory, the general southern sentiment was that Gettysburg was, although a loss, not a catastrophic defeat. Confederate soldiers saw it as a temporary setback and did not believe the retreat meant the Federals had won a decisive victory. The civilians at home made a sharp distinction between the capture of Vicksburg on July 4\textsuperscript{th}, which was seen as a disastrous loss because it allowed the Federals to control the upper Mississippi River, and the retreat from Gettysburg, which resulted in no loss of territory for the Confederacy. The southern newspapers were originally positive about the results of the northern invasion. \textit{The Richmond Daily Dispatch} called it a triumphant success. \textit{The Lynchburg Virginian} believed that Lee’s maneuvers disrupted the Union plans to advance on Richmond. Much of the southern press was reluctant to label the raid a failure even after the army returned to Virginia.\textsuperscript{166} Calling it a failure would have been devastating to the southern morale, not only of the soldiers but of the civilians as well. Privately however, Lee continued to blame himself, saying at one point “If …I had taken General Longstreet’s advice on the eve of the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg and had filed off the left corps of my army behind the right corps in the direction of Washington D.C. and Baltimore, along the Emmitsburg road, the Confederates would today be a free people.\textsuperscript{167}

Lee wrote two official reports about the battle of Gettysburg, the first of which was dated July 31, 1863, just weeks after the engagement. In this report, he indicated that
he had not intended to fight a general battle so far from his army’s home base unless attacked by the enemy. He wrote that because he was unexpectedly confronted by the Federal Army, he could not withdraw through the mountains with his wagon trains. This was inaccurate in two respects, the first being that it had always been his plan to pull the Federal forces north out of Virginia and strike a definitive blow against the Army of the Potomac to try and change the opinion of northerners so they would want to end the war. The second inaccuracy was that Lee was not attacked at Gettysburg; it was his army that initiated the battle and attacked the Federal cavalry. Specific to General Stuart’s orders, Lee indicated that he was left to guard the mountain passes and observe the movements of the enemy. Stuart was also instructed to harass and impede the enemy as much as possible should he try to cross the Potomac. If the enemy crossed the Potomac, Stuart was to move into Maryland, crossing the Potomac east or west of the Blue Ridge Mountains using his best judgment to the best path and then join the right flank of the Army of Northern Virginia as it advanced. Stuart found himself unable to impede the progress of the Federals, so he crossed the river and marched through Westminster, Maryland to Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Because of this route, wrote Lee, the Federal Army was interposed between Stuart and the main Confederate Army which prevented any communication until Stuart reached Carlisle.

Lee then wrote that since no report was received that the Federal Army had crossed the Potomac. Lee’s army had to move more slowly than they would have had Lee known where the Federal Army was. He also indicated that the absence of the cavalry rendered it impossible to obtain accurate information. But then he indicated that Jenkins had been engaged on Ewell’s left during his march into Maryland and Imboden’s cavalry
was directed to Hancock, Maryland after Hill and Longstreet reached Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. It was clear that Lee did have cavalry, he just did not have Stuart. While Lee’s July 31st report did not direct blame on any one person, Lee was clearly setting the stage to deflect blame from his strategy to his subordinate generals.

Lee’s second report, written more than six months later, in January of 1864, made some slight changes to his previous report but it added statements indicating that his subordinates were to blame for the Confederate failure at Gettysburg. While Lee reiterated that two of Stuart’s brigades were to hold the mountain passes as long as the enemy remained south of the Potomac and the others were to cross into Maryland and join the right of the Confederate Army, in this new version, Lee indicated that it was Stuart’s suggestion, not Lee’s, to damage the enemy and delay his crossing of the Potomac by getting in the rear of the enemy. He did write that Stuart was authorized to do so and that it was left up to Stuart’s discretion where to cross the Potomac, either east or west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, but then Lee added that he had instructed Stuart to lose no time joining the right flank of the Confederate Army as soon as he perceived the enemy moving north.

Lee made no mention of his ambiguous orders, and he embellished them when he now wrote that he had told Stuart to hurry to join the flank. He made it seem as if Stuart, on his own, determined to pass around the rear of the Federal Army. And then when he met with the enemy, he went further east, causing the Federal Army to be between him and the rest of Lee’s forces, thereby disrupting the communication lines between Stuart and Lee. The changes from the first to the second report were subtle, but the made it clear that Lee was indicting Stuart as having failed in his duty. Concerning the cavalry
Lee had with him, Lee indicated that it had consisted of Jenkins brigade and another battalion and this was just enough to cover Ewell’s advance into Pennsylvania. He mentioned that Imboden was at Hancock, Maryland, but he gave no reason for not recalling Imboden’s brigade on the 28th, when Lee became aware that the Federals were across the river and apparently trailing the Army of Northern Virginia. While Lee did not forget about Robertson and Jones, indicating that as soon as he knew the Federals were across the river he recalled them to rejoin the army. Lee did not indicate why, if he were in constant touch with these two brigades, he did not recall them as early as the 25th or 26th when he knew the Federals were approaching the Potomac. Lee said that the absence of the cavalry was an embarrassment to the Army because he had expected to hear from Stuart and anticipated his arrival by June 28th, but in reality, he had given Stuart no timeframe for his arrival. 170

In April of 1868, five years after the battle, Lee was interviewed by William Allan, a former staff officer in the Confederate Army for Generals Jackson and Early and also a teacher at Washington College, where Lee was president. 171 Three years had passed since the end of the war and Lee’s recollections had changed to further distance himself from any culpability in the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg. He said in the interview that he had not intended to have a general battle in Pennsylvania if he could have avoided it. He said he believed then that the South was too weak to carry on a war of invasion and the offense was never his intent except as part of a defensive system. That is surprising to hear, because Lee was known for his daring offensives, and part of the conflict with Longstreet during the battle was Lee’s insistence on taking the offensive when Longstreet believed they could find a strong defensive position and have the
Federals attack them. But then later in the interview he said that he expected to find it necessary to give battle before he returned to Virginia and it would have been difficult for him to retreat out of the north without challenging the Federals. He then said he did not know the Federal Army was at Gettysburg, and when told they were, he could not believe it as Stuart had been specifically ordered to cover his movements and keep him informed of the enemy position and he had not heard from Stuart. In the postwar interview, Lee came out and explicitly said that Stuart’s failure to carry out his instructions forced the battle at Gettysburg. He also said that the imperfect way that his corps commanders, specifically Ewell, fought the battle gave victory finally to the foe. Lee said Stuart’s failure to give him information misled him into a general battle, and the lack of simultaneous attacks on the enemy caused the loss. He thought that if Jackson had been there he would have succeeded.172

Lee settled on his January 1864 report as the final version of events and never reconsidered them, as his 1868 interview made clear. He died two years later in 1870. In this report, he emphasized that he had not proposed to invade the north; the Army of Northern Virginia was too weak for that. He also stated that the battle commenced in the absence of correct intelligence, presumably meaning the lack of information from Stuart. Lee believed the loss was a combination of that circumstance and the lack of one blow being struck by all his troops united in battle. In the 1864 version of his report, he painted the battle as a tactical draw and a strategic stalemate and the lull in fighting afterward was taken as a victory. Lee also made sure that in this report, while blaming his subordinates, he portrayed both the conduct of the army and his own conduct favorably. He understated the overall casualties of the battle, and when General George Pickett,
whose division was decimated on July 3rd, wrote a report describing the destruction of his division as orchestrated by the commanding general, Lee refused to allow him to file it. Lee said his rejection of Pickett’s report was to protect the army, but in fact that also protected his reputation as well. Thus, Lee became the first to imply that he did no wrong at the Battle of Gettysburg and that others were to blame for the loss. While he had initially been self reproaching about his own part in the loss, he began to focus more on others’ failures.\textsuperscript{173} His statements to William Allan reflected this as well, indicating that he held Stuart and less so, his three corps commanders, accountable for the loss. As shown, Lee thought that a concerted effort by his subordinates would have carried the day.\textsuperscript{174}

This theory of Lee’s about the blame for the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg is both self-serving and inaccurate. Most importantly, it is faulty because it is the responsibility of the commanding general to control the battle and make sure his orders are carried out. As has been shown in this essay, not only were Lee’s orders vague—ordering Ewell to take Cemetery Hill if practicable or not stopping Hill from sending men into Gettysburg in force—but Lee was in charge of the field. Blaming his subordinates, including Stuart, should have only reinforced his loss of control of the army, but Lee was able to make it seem that he and the enlisted men were partners and his subordinates were a separate entity. Lee expressed disappointment, claiming that three of his generals disobeyed him, Stuart, Hill and Heth. And Ewell was told to avoid a general engagement. What should have been of more concern to Lee was that in addition to Longstreet, three of his generals—Ewell, Early, and Rodes—voiced opposition to his plan after the first day of the battle. This was extremely unusual and should have caused
Lee to reflect and potentially reconsider his actions. But Lee remained committed to his plan. While he indicated Hill and Heth disobeyed orders, and they certainly did go to Gettysburg looking for a fight, it was Lee that committed Hill’s entire division on July 1st. His caution to Ewell to not bring on a general engagement was not practical. Once Ewell’s corps was engaged, as was Hill’s, was it practical to expect Ewell to withdraw? If Lee had withdrawn so as not to bring on a general engagement, was it reasonable to think the Federals would not have followed and attacked? The fact was that Lee changed his mind and decided on a general engagement when he reached the battlefield on July 1st. He found a favorable tactical situation with Hill pressing the Federals from the east and Ewell joining the field from the north, and so he told his commanders to press the enemy. This was entirely his decision. To then blame those same corps commanders for escalating the battle was unfair.

Lee also indicated Stuart disobeyed orders, but in Lee’s own report of January 1864 he indicated that Stuart used the discretion that Lee had allowed him to choose the cavalry’s path. There was no disobedience. The plan just failed to work as they had hoped. Lee laid all the blame for the lack of subsequent communication on Stuart. However, was it reasonable to leave Stuart’s movements to his discretion and move the rest of the army and then expect Stuart to find his way back to the moving army without any direction from Lee at all? Stuart’s last orders were to head to York, which he did, and when he arrived, the Confederate Army was gone. Had Lee, when he began concentrating his army on the evening of July 28th, sent scouts out to look for Stuart, they would have found him between Rockville and Westminster, Maryland, a mere thirty to forty miles south of Gettysburg. This would have allowed Stuart to join the army on the
29th or 30th and it would have been Stuart’s cavalry that challenged Buford’s cavalry in Gettysburg, not Hill’s infantry. This would have allowed a continued screening of Lee’s army so he could maneuver, if he wanted to, out of the path of the Federal Army. This also would have allowed Stuart’s men to provide reconnaissance of the rest of the Federal position. But Lee made no move to alert Stuart of any of the changes; he simply continued to lament the lack of word from Stuart.

In reality, there was no excuse for Lee to have even arrived in Chambersburg with what he called “no cavalry.” Jenkins’s cavalry was available, riding with Ewell, to do the advance into Gettysburg on the first day of the battle. Lee did not use Jenkins, instead allowing infantry to go in and do reconnaissance when he knew there was Federal cavalry already in the town.\textsuperscript{177} According to both Ewell’s official report and that of one of his division commanders, General Rodes, repeated use was made of Jenkins to screen and guard the flanks as well as advance guard duty. Jenkins’ cavalry was also used to do reconnaissance of Harrisburg.\textsuperscript{178} The excuse that Jenkins was not accustomed to this type of work did not seem to diminish his capability to do it successfully according to his immediate commanders. Although in Lee’s defense, his most extensive biographer, Douglas Southall Freeman, wrote in the 1930s that Lee overestimated Jenkins’ fighting value, as well as Imboden’s, as they had both primarily done raiding. While on the march north, however, that was what Lee needed, cavalry that could dart in, get information and dart out without engaging the enemy seriously. Freeman’s statement also brings up the question of Imboden again. If Lee needed the passes of the South Mountain guarded, he should have sent for Robertson and Jones, who were still guarding the passes further south in Virginia, apparently with no enemy in front of them.\textsuperscript{179} This was a key piece of
Stuart’s plan that was not carried out and it was one of the pieces that was left to Lee. Had Lee recalled Robertson and Jones earlier, he would have had four brigades of cavalry available to him, more than enough to guard the flanks and reconnoiter the Pennsylvania countryside.

In the aftermath of the battle and with Lee’s insinuations that his subordinates were to blame, what were the repercussions to Stuart? While Stuart was never formally reprimanded, Lee subsequently made a move to exert more direct control over him. He assigned someone from his own command, Lieutenant Colonel George St. Leger Grenfell as the assistant inspector general on Stuart’s staff. Grenfell was ordered both to clean up Stuart’s procedures and also to report back to Lee directly and regularly regarding Stuart’s activities. Lee had never done this with any of his commanders, and Stuart rightly took this as an insult to his command abilities. His retaliation was to move Grenfell to a point far away from his central command. Months later, however, Lee told Stuart to keep Grenfell with his personal staff, where he apparently acted effectively as a spy for Lee. Grenfell sent reports directly to Lee about Stuart’s handling of routine duties. Lee used these reports to send to Stuart reproving instructions on such mundane matters as the greasing of harnesses of his artillery horses, treatment of mules, filing of morning reports, cleaning of artillery pieces and the policies of his camp. Lee finally recalled Grenfell at the end of 1863. However, Lee never fully trusted Stuart again and never really forgave him for his absence at Gettysburg.

In September of 1863 Stuart’s cavalry division was reorganized into a corps. Stuart had every expectation to be promoted to Lieutenant General, the rank held by every other corps commander, but he was not promoted. Again Lee seems to have used
passive methods to chastise Stuart for his own failure at Gettysburg. It was clear Lee still had a fondness for Stuart, and he assumed a fatherly tone in his correspondence, gently but firmly providing detailed instructions where previously he would not have done so. While this showed his disappointment with Stuart and his need to be specific and detailed with him, it also implies that Lee understood that he himself had been at least partly to blame for Stuart’s absence because his own orders to Stuart had not been clear and explicit.\textsuperscript{181}

From Stuart’s perspective, while privately he may have chafed under Lee’s new treatment and he may have been unhappy about his lack of promotion, publicly he maintained the level of commitment to the army he had always had. In the spring of 1864, Stuart could be relied upon to carry out any orders he received. In U.S. Grant’s drive toward Spotsylvania on May 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} of that year, the Confederate cavalry defenses were able to delay the Federals long enough to allow the Confederates to reach the crossroads and avoid being routed.\textsuperscript{182} Days later, Stuart would be mortally wounded at an engagement at Yellow Tavern, ten miles north of Richmond. Even though Lee blamed Stuart for the loss of Gettysburg, upon hearing of the cavalry commander’s death, he honored Stuart’s abilities, saying “he never brought me a piece of false information”.

As this essay has shown, during the war, there were accusations of blame for the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg against all Lee’s subordinates, including Stuart. The cavalier was criticized for trying to perform another great feat by encircling the enemy, and in doing so he left Lee without knowledge of the Federal Army movement, he exhausted his men and lost communication with General Lee. It was argued he should have remained closer to General Lee and the army. There were even rumors in the
Confederate War Office that Stuart was going to be relieved from duty for going absent without leave. This of course did not happen and it turned out to be an unfounded rumor.\textsuperscript{183} It was after the war ended however, that the war of words began over who had ultimate responsibility for the loss of the battle, and therefore, many southerners believed, for the loss of the war.

The myth sprung up that Lee was not at fault at all and that those who surrounded him caused the loss. Lee began this legend himself in his 1868 interview with William Allan. Furthering that tradition, a group including commentators for the \textit{Southern Historical Society Papers} attempted to rationalize Lee’s failures during the battle, particularly on the first day. Although Longstreet stood at the center of the controversy over who was to blame for the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg, particularly in the 1870’s, Stuart’s absence during the campaign was also a major component of the rationalization to protect Lee’s reputation. These commentators also blamed Hill even though Lee knew of Hill’s planned movements on June 30\textsuperscript{th} and did not stop him. They also blamed Ewell, arguing that the other failures would have been irrelevant if Ewell had only taken Cemetery Hill or Culp’s Hill. Not mentioned were Lee’s words in his order to Ewell to take the hill “if practicable.” Had Lee wanted Ewell to take the hill at all costs, he should have indicated such to his subordinate, and not allowed Ewell to disagree. The failure in that case is truly Lee’s lack of assertive leadership.\textsuperscript{184} Lee’s aide, Charles Marshall spent a lot of time retelling his story, supporting Lee and creating an account of Gettysburg that fit Lee’s noble leadership as part of the myth of the lost cause of the Confederacy. Marshall alleged after the war that Stuart lied about orders from Lee and stated the June 23\textsuperscript{rd} order did not exist and that Lee specifically told Stuart not to cross the Potomac east
of the Federals. This was all done to release Lee from any indictment for the poorly written, vague orders he had actually given to Stuart. As we have seen, and Lee himself admitted in his report of January 1864 that he had given Stuart discretion to cross the Potomac east or west of the mountains, and a discussion of the Federal position and its relation to Stuart’s crossing was not involved in those communications at all.185

There were others, however, who indicated that Lee had made mistakes. Edward Porter Alexander, as a veteran of the battle, admired Lee but agreed Lee had erred. He said privately “never never never did General Lee himself bollox a fight as he had this” referring to Gettysburg. Lee had been unable to control his generals and he could not admit that his plan was faulty. These were among Lee’s errors during the battle.186 Alexander was rather harsh in his criticism of Lee regarding July 3rd, indicating that military critics would have had no difficulty agreeing against the frontal assault that Lee had ordered, and these critics could have pointed out alternatives to the attack on such a strong Federal position. Although making that determination after the fact was easier than making it in the moment, many critics of Lee agreed with Alexander. These modern critics use Gettysburg as proof that Lee’s aggressiveness sometimes overcame his good judgment.187 Longstreet had spent several days proposing alternatives to Lee, who was set on his path and would not deviate, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

After the war, one of the primary defenders of Stuart was John Mosby. Mosby accused both Longstreet and Heth of blaming Stuart to save their reputations.188 That may be true, as it was Heth’s division that brought on the engagement by storming into Gettysburg on July 1st and attacking the Federal cavalry. Today Heth is relatively unknown except by those interested in the battle and his reputation was not tarnished by
blame for the loss of the battle. Longstreet, on the other hand, received the lion’s share of the blame, for his slow movement, for his disagreements with Lee, but mostly because he had the audacity to criticize Lee publicly after the war. Not many Confederate veterans were willing to forgive Longstreet for his criticisms of Lee, and that sealed his fate as the scapegoat. Mosby also blamed a variety of others, specifically criticizing Robertson for not moving northward when the Federals left the Shenandoah Valley. Mosby was an ardent defender of his friend, Stuart, but some of his argument lost credibility because he blamed everyone except Stuart, never acknowledging the possibility that his friend may have made some less than wise decisions.

Any defense of Stuart should acknowledge that if Stuart had been on Lee’s flank at the front of the army, Pleasonton’s Federal cavalry would have been there as well. Pleasonton had dogged Stuart’s footsteps since Brandy Station, and there was no reason to believe he would have disappeared as Stuart moved north. If the Federal cavalry had known where Stuart was, the Federal command would have known, thereby alerting Hooker and later Meade to the whereabouts of the Army of Northern Virginia, and removing any element of surprise the Lee had hope for, desiring to get into Pennsylvania before the Federals were aware of it. If the Federals had known on June 24th that Stuart was heading north along the Blue Ridge Mountains, they would have been able to move directly towards Frederick, Maryland and potentially attack the separated Confederate corps before they even passed into Pennsylvania. Jubal Early, whose main target in his post-war writings was Longstreet, defended Stuart and indicated that he never received word from Lee’s staff that Stuart was heading to York. As has been shown, had Early sent word to Stuart that he was moving westward out of York towards Gettysburg as soon
as he was told to concentrate his force Stuart could have amended his course and arrived in Gettysburg earlier than July 2\textsuperscript{nd}.\textsuperscript{192}
Conclusion

So who was to blame for the Confederate defeat at the Battle of Gettysburg? There will always be differing opinions, but the more the battle is reviewed and studied, the more likely the conclusion that the loss was not due to delays, neglect of orders, the Federal superior position or lack of coordination of attacks, but the fact that Lee had come up with a plan that was beyond his Army’s capability to accomplish.\textsuperscript{193} In previous years, and still to some degree today, the investigation into the battle was less thorough because of Lee’s reputation and the lack of motivation to criticize him. This contributed to the mythology of Lee and his infallibility. It also contributed to the mythology of the valiant defense of “lost cause.” The men who helped contribute to this lost cause mythology also helped create the reputation of Lee as infallible and without equal. There were different reasons for creating this reputation, personal admiration of Lee, their own ambition or as a way to shield themselves from criticism of their own errors during the war.\textsuperscript{194} If Lee was infallible, then someone else needed to be blamed, and who else but his direct subordinates. Certainly the men were not to blame, as they fought valiantly. So only those who were Lee’s subordinates are left to take the blame.\textsuperscript{195} It becomes apparent the measure of that blame when observing the battlefield at Gettysburg and the
only Confederate Generals depicted are General Robert E. Lee, and belatedly, one hundred and thirty five years after the Battle of Gettysburg, General James Longstreet.\footnote{Longstreet’s is depicted on horseback in this statue but he is at ground level, unlike the other statues of generals on the battlefield, who are on tall bases allowing them to overlook the battlefield. This statue is also in Pitzer’s Woods, on the opposite side of Seminary Drive from the site of Pickett’s Charge, somewhat hidden from view.}

In recent years, as Lee’s reputation has declined among historians and many contemporary students of the battle disagree that the fault lies with Lee’s subordinates. They believe all, particularly Longstreet, were unfairly blamed for the loss at Gettysburg.\footnote{As we have seen, immediately after the war, and for sometime afterwards, historians, particularly Lee’s most faithful biographer and fellow Virginian, Douglas Southall Freeman, blamed Stuart for the loss at Gettysburg. As time has passed, and more letters and reports from the war have become available, however, Civil War historians, particularly scholars such as Alan Nolan and Gary Gallagher believe that Stuart was treated unfairly in order to preserve Lee’s reputation. Yet there are others, including Stuart biographer Jeffrey Wert, who still contend Stuart was completely at fault, although the cavalry commander’s other biographers, for example Burke Davis, believe that Stuart has been misjudged. While there will always be those who fervently defend General Lee and do not admit he made any serious mistakes, slowly historians, beginning with Thomas Connelly are realizing that Lee was not infallible and he made errors during the Battle of Gettysburg as elsewhere.}

Lee and, therefore, the Army of Northern Virginia failed at Gettysburg because Lee refused to accept reality. He determined to attack against the advice and better judgment of several subordinates because he wanted to attack. It had been his successful tactic for the past year to attack the Federals at their weak points despite their superior
numbers. In the end, the loss comes down to a series of bad decisions and staff mismanagement made by an aggressive, if often vague, commanding officer.197

This investigation makes it clear that General J.E.B. Stuart was not the cause of the loss at Gettysburg. Stuart was accused of disobeying orders, being out for his own glory and neglecting his duties. None of these particular accusations was true. Stuart was characteristically given orders by General Lee that allowed the cavalry commander a wide discretion, which he utilized. When confronted with the Federal Army moving in front of him, Stuart made the decision to press on around behind it instead of backtracking. He made this decision based on the distances involved in retracing his steps and the knowledge that returning to the west of the mountains would alert the Federals to his position. Nor were Stuart’s actions the result of an unbridled desire for glory, as his detractors have argued. When given the opportunity to stage a raid into largely unguarded Washington D.C. He did not raid the capital, since he knew that he needed to move into position on the right of the Confederate army as quickly as possible because he had lost time crossing the rain-swollen Potomac River. His objectives as outlined in his orders from Lee were to do reconnaissance, harass the enemy, keep Lee informed of the enemy’s position and to gather provisions for a starving Confederate army. So when Stuart came upon 125 wagons with provisions, he made the decision to capture rather than destroy them. In the long run, the wagons slowed him down. Perhaps he should have burned the wagons, but he believed they would fulfill one of the objectives Lee had given him: gathering food supplies for the Confederates. Stuart harassed and was harassed by the Federal Cavalry throughout his trek, but he was still able to cut the B&O railroad to disrupt Federal communications. He sent couriers at least twice to notify Lee
of the position of the Federal army. Unfortunately their messages apparently did not get through to Lee. Stuart, to the best of his ability performed the tasks given to him. In addition, Stuart had left with Lee four brigades of cavalry to guard Lee’s flanks and do his reconnaissance. It was Lee’s error that Lee underutilized all four of those cavalry brigades.

Lee lamented his missing cavalry force under J.E.B. Stuart, even as Lee left cavalrymen Robertson and Jones and their troopers sitting at the mountain passes in Virginia, not calling them until the 29th of June. Lee left Imboden sitting in Hancock, Maryland, and while Jenkins brigade did reconnaissance for Ewell in Harrisburg, Lee neglected to call on Jenkins to scout the enemy at Gettysburg. What Lee missed at Gettysburg was Stuart, whose information he trusted implicitly and whom he had come to rely upon heavily for all his intelligence information. Lee’s claims not to know the Federals were across the Potomac ring false, when it is documented that he knew by June 23rd that the Federals were at the banks of the Potomac. Lee’s boasts that he could concentrate the army within twenty-four hours were overstated, as it took him almost three days to get all his forces together on the battlefield. Had Lee been more realistic with his expectations of his soldiers, the Confederate army might have been able to mount a more coordinated effort because all troops would have been available.

Lastly, Lee claimed he was drawn into the battle because he did not know where the Federals were, and he did not know their strength. In fact, Lee knew on June 30th that Federal cavalry was in Gettysburg, and he should have known that the infantry could not have been far behind. It was Lee himself who, on the first day of the battle committed more resources and escalated the fight rather than seeking better ground elsewhere. Lee
told Ewell not to bring on a general engagement, but it was too late, the damage was already done. So while blaming Stuart may have saved General Lee’s reputation, and Stuart was not alive to defend himself, the evidence, weighed objectively, just does not show that Stuart was at fault for the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg. The cavalry commander had followed orders, moved as quickly as he could against the obstacles he faced, and achieved goals Lee established for him, even though they were in some cases contradictory. It was Robert E. Lee not J.E.B. Stuart who was responsible for the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg.
Endnotes


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37 Ibid.

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131 Taylor, Duty Faithfully Performed, 139-40.
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Path of the Federal and Confederate Armies During the Gettysburg Campaign

Map by Hal Jespersen, www.posix.com/CW
Cavalry Battle at Gettysburg, Starting Positions

Map by Hal Jespersen, www.posix.com/CW
Cavalry Battle at Gettysburg, Final Positions

Map by Hal Jespersen, www.posix.com/CW