



Educator Resource

Gettysburg

Dates & Eras 1863

Themes Battles
Soldiers,
Generals

Grades 5–7

Standards VS.7,
US1.9
VUS.7;
CCSS.ELA-
LITERACY.RH.6-8.4,
.9-10.4, 11-12.4

History Overview

The battle of Gettysburg was the culmination of Robert E. Lee's campaign into Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863. From July 1st through July 3rd, Lee's army clashed with the Army of the Potomac under General George G. Meade, near the town of Gettysburg. On the final day, Lee ordered about 15,000 Confederate soldiers to attack the U.S. Army center at Cemetery Ridge. The charge became known as Pickett's Charge because the majority of the troops were in the division led by Major General George Pickett. The charge failed, and in the end these three days of fighting resulted in roughly 51,000 casualties (men either killed, wounded or missing in action), making Gettysburg one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. It was a devastating defeat for Lee who lost approximately one-third of his army, putting an end to future Confederate incursions north.



Suggested Questions

1. After reading Estes' letter, what do you think the morale of the Confederate army was like following the battle of Gettysburg? Provide examples from the text.
2. Throughout Estes' letter, what kinds of words does he use to provide detailed imagery of the battle and the army? List the words or phrases below.
3. After looking at the photograph of captured soldiers at Gettysburg, write a short paragraph describing these men.
4. What were substitutes?
5. Discuss Estes' stance on substitutes and explain why you agree or disagree with him.

Resources

[Estes Letter and Transcription](#)

[Gettysburg Images](#)

Additional Links

[Encyclopedia Virginia](#)

[TeachingHistory.org](#)

[Library of Congress](#)

Suggested Activities

1. Have students read the Encyclopedia Virginia entry on "Pickett's Charge." Then, distribute to them the letter from Edward H. Estes describing Pickett's Charge during the battle of Gettysburg. You may want to have students as a class or in individual groups try to transcribe the letter before handing out the actual transcription. Hold a class discussion using the letter and the information in the article. Use the following questions to guide discussion: What does Sergeant Estes reveal about Pickett's Charge? What officers does he specifically mention? Whose gallantry does he describe? Are there some things he got wrong? Whom does he blame for the failure of Pickett's Charge? How does this letter reveal bias within the Army of Northern Virginia?
2. Have students read "Gettysburg: Turning Point or Small Stepping Stone to Union Victory?" by Aaron Sheehan-Dean at Teaching History. Org and hold a classroom discussion or debate about the significance of this battle. Have students use their own research as well as the article to answer the following questions: What were Lee's hopes in bringing the war to the North? If he had won, what might the possible results have been? What contributed to the Union victory at Gettysburg? What outcomes resulted from a Union victory at Gettysburg?
3. Have students make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the photo of Estes with the one of the captured Confederate soldiers.

Transcription of a letter from Edward H. Estes¹ to his sister

Williamport Md, July 11th 1863

Dear Sister

Your kind & affectionate letter came to hand to day Which was perused with more than ordinary interest as it has been a long time since hearing from you all before. I am exceedingly glad to hear that you are all well & that the late call is creating such consternation among the substituters. I hope they will soon begin to realize the existance of war by which thousand upon thousands of the bravest & best spirits of the south are being daily sacrifice [sic] for their country while those miserable sneaks chuckle, and gloats [sic] with delight over the news of goury [sic] field. for they know that it makes widows & orphans whom they can the more easily defraud. I understand that a great many are selling out up that way with the intension of moving south. I reckon they think that they will not liable there for military service but they will find it no go. As this war will never terminate while Abe is in power. I wrote a very hurried letter to Pa & Ma after the fight informing them of Joe's and my safety which I hope they have gotten by this. Oh it is a sad thing now to look at our Division Only a few hundred answer to the rolls where thousands answered a few days ago. it was one of finest divisions in army before it was cut up so. Genl Lee thought all & all of it. Our poor Col² was shot dead right through the head while gallantly leading his brave boys on to bloody graves. What few of regt is left, can hardly speak of him without shedding tear. There never was a better man or one more universally beloved Col. Whittle³ was wounded badly in two places. Every Brigadier in the Div was killed & wounded. Genl Armistead immortalized himself with every one on the field from Lee down for [his](struck through his) gallantry of himself & brigade. He fell on the yankee breast-works waving his hat. I am glad to hear that he is wounded & not killed. Kemper & Garnett⁴ were killed nearly every Col in the Div.

God forbid that I should ever see another such bloody field. We could have held the breastworks and all of their cannon if the the [sic] brigade of N C had not shown the white feather before they got properly on the field. they were to support our Div. All they had to do were to come up on a line with us and hold position we had gained. for we could not do it after having lost 4/5 of our men. Genl Pickett was in the thickest fight & escaped unhurt. When he came out and saw how few of us were left he wept like a child, & said he wished they had of killed him too. Genl Lee & Longstreet were present on the field. I take no interest at all in the company as I use to. For it make me almost cry to look at it. but thanks be to God our Div is not all of Lee's army. other Div are not hurt badly at all. My Regt is here doing provost duty & in fact (whole) brigade. Garnett Brigade has gone to winchester with prisoners, Kemper's, is on the other side river guarding waggons. James is here attending the wounded. I shall enclose my letter in his. my love to all. Give my love to Sue and tell her she had better try & content herself in old Virginia. I am afraid Joe will never be able for service again. As the Dr (?) think that his arm will be stiff. Good bye may God bless is the prayer of your affectionate bro.

Edward H. Estes

¹ Full Sergeant 3rd Class, Edward H. Estes Company K, 38th Virginia Infantry

² Colonel Edward Claxton Edmonds, 38th Virginia Infantry

³ Lt. Colonel Powhatan Bolling Whittle, 38th Virginia Infantry

⁴ Brigadier General James Kemper (only wounded) and Brigadier General Richard Garnett

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American Civil War Museum

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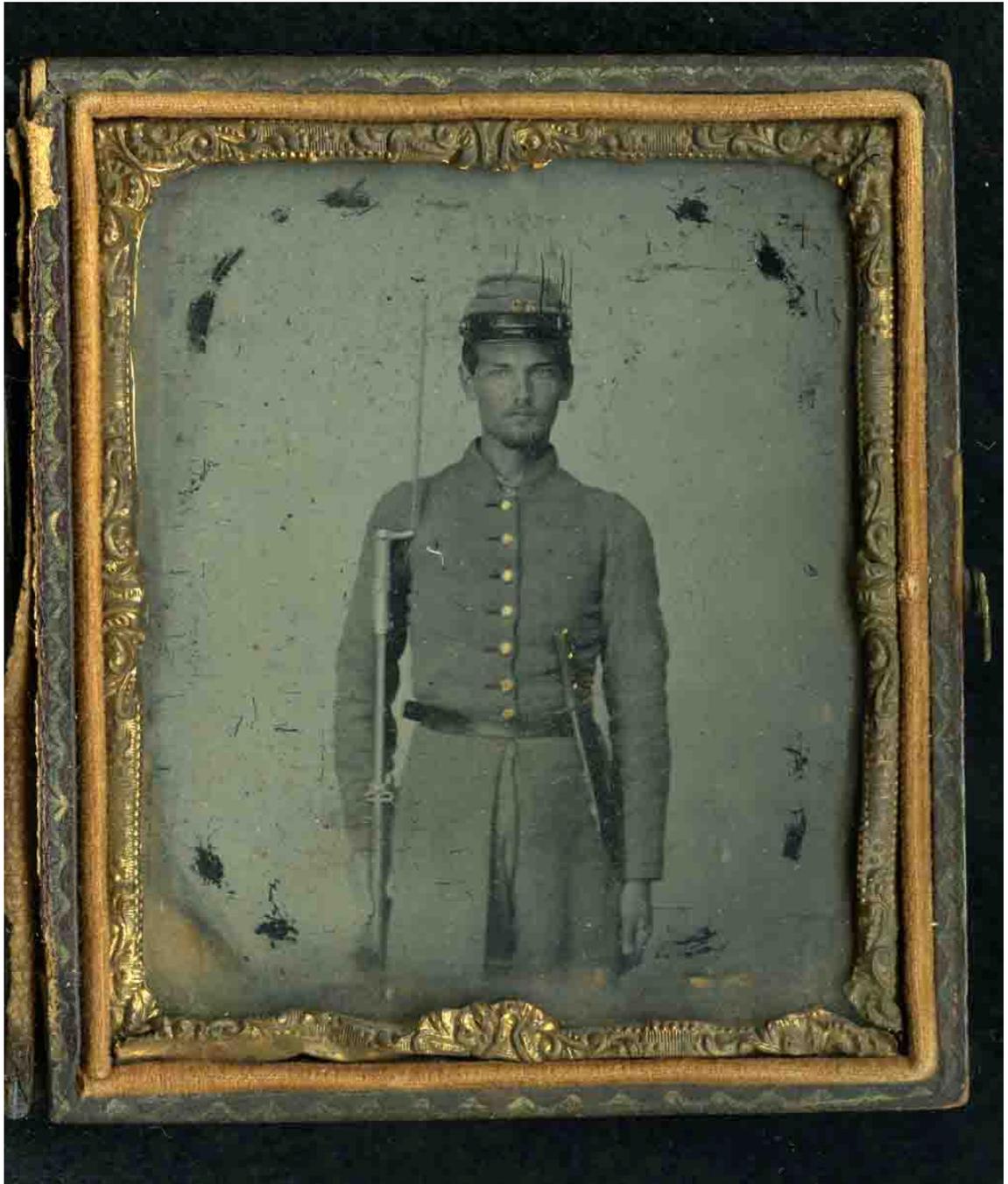
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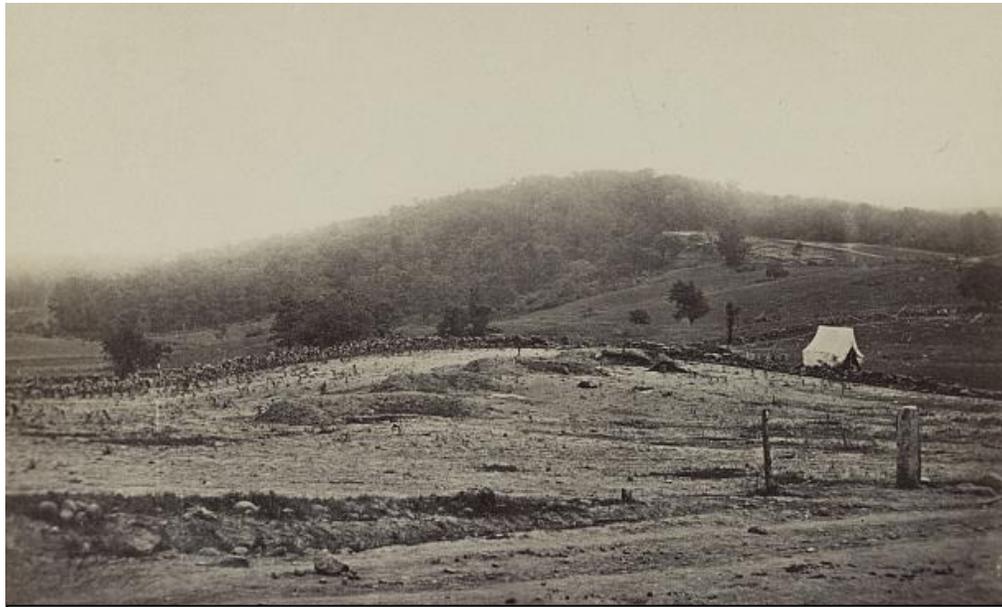
Ambrotype of Edward H. Estes
American Civil War Museum



Northern portion of **Gettysburg**, from a position west of the **town**, near the Theological Seminary



Battle of Gettysburg - Engagement in the **Peach Orchard**



Battlefield of Gettysburg. **Culp's Hill**



Photo shows three Confederate prisoners on **Seminary Ridge**, on or about July 15, 1863, with the town of Gettysburg, Pa., in the background.



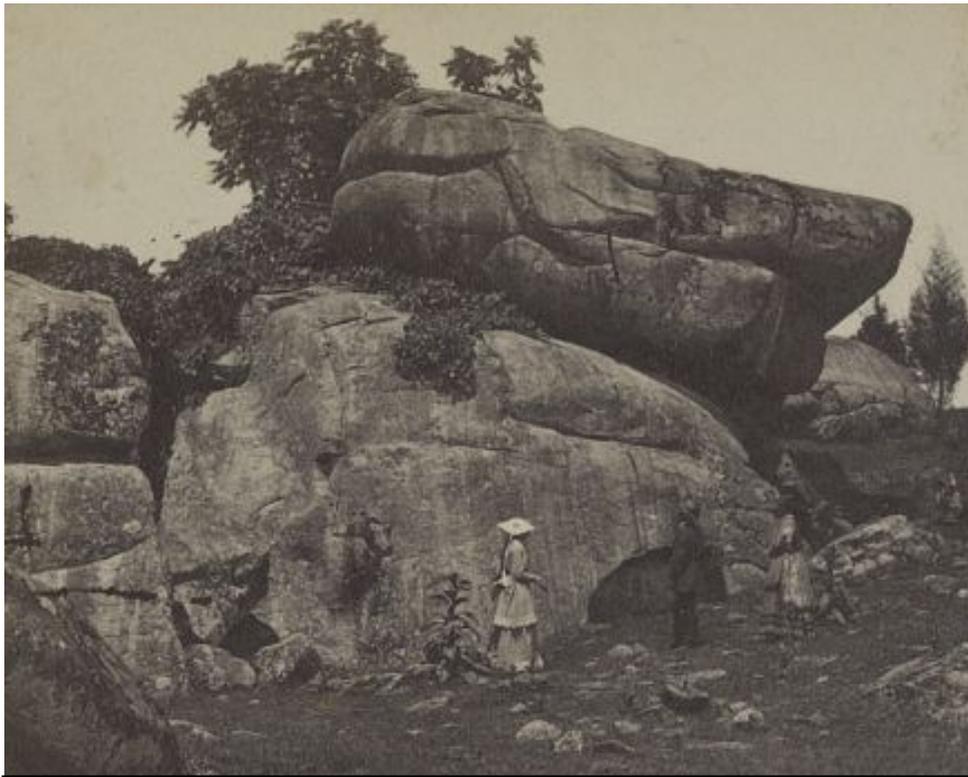
Little Round Top vista, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania



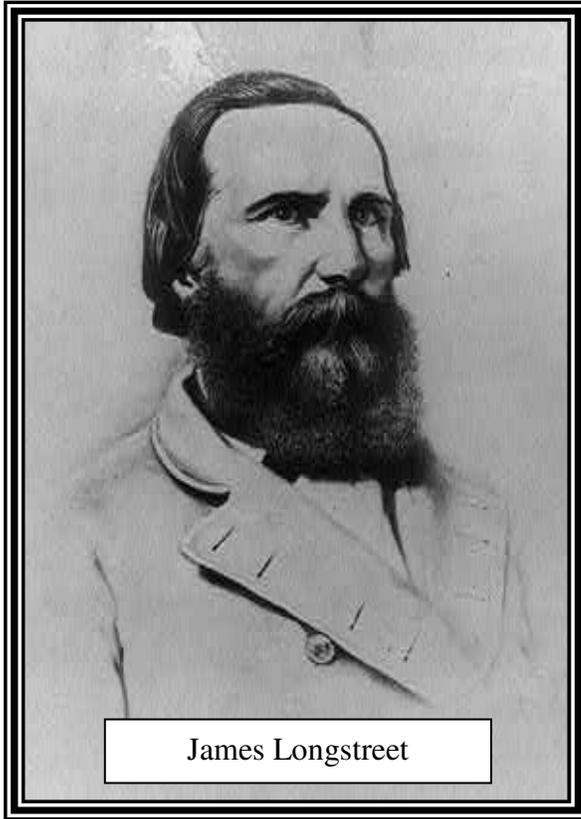
Gettysburg, Pa. Headquarters of Gen. George G. Meade on **Cemetery Ridge.**



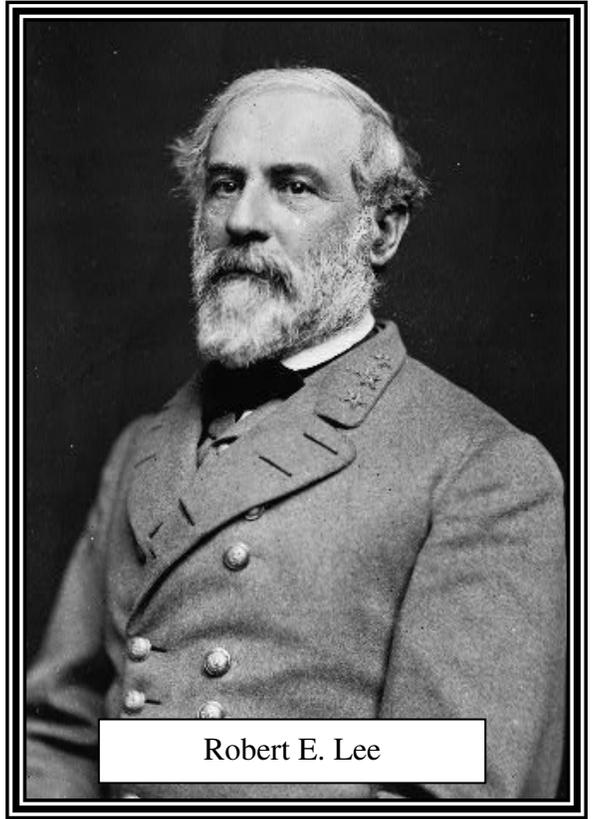
Gettysburg, Pa. July 1863. Battlefield of Gettysburg. Woods on left of Chambersburg Pike in which Archers Brigade was captured. (Also called the **Wheat Field**). Brady the photographer is shown.



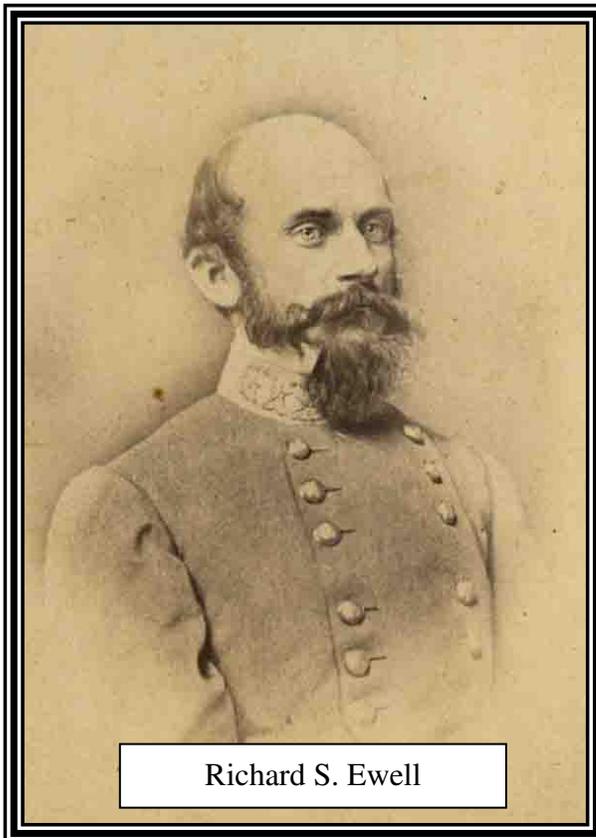
Devil's Den rock formations in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.



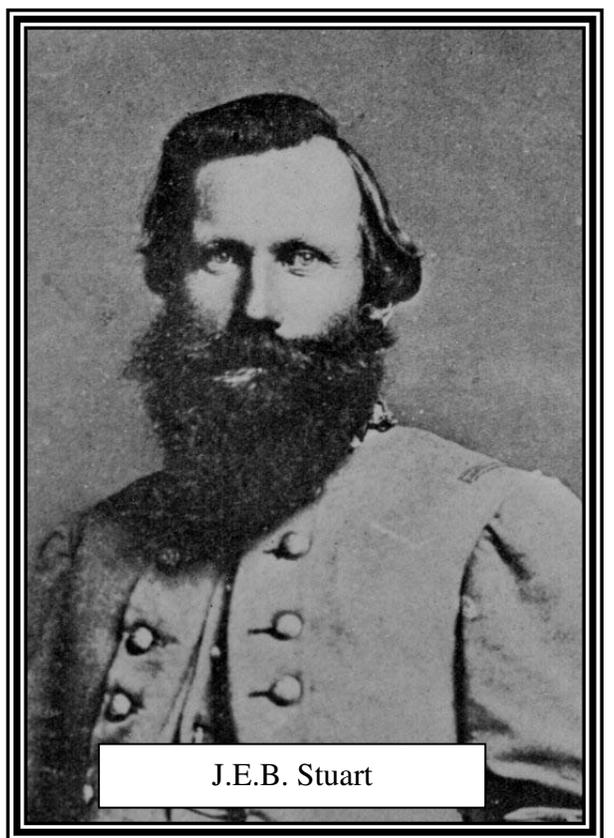
James Longstreet



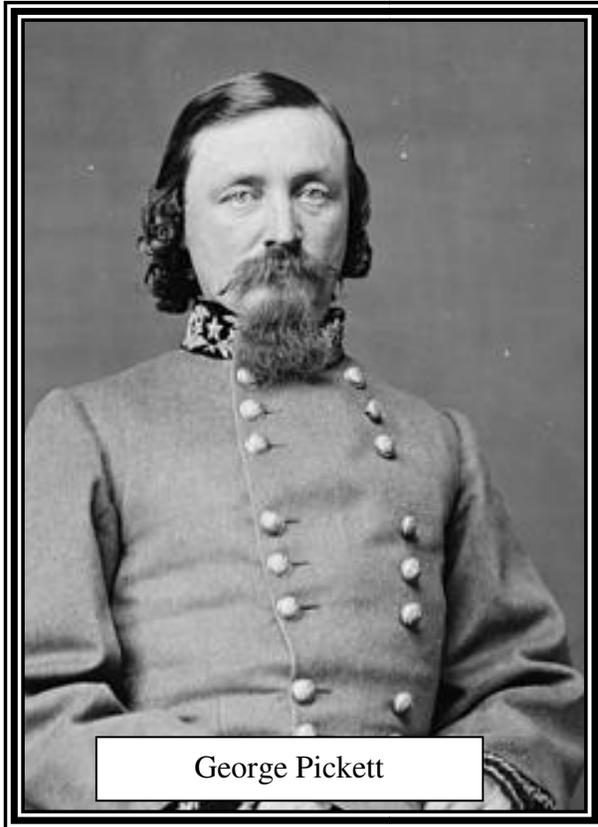
Robert E. Lee



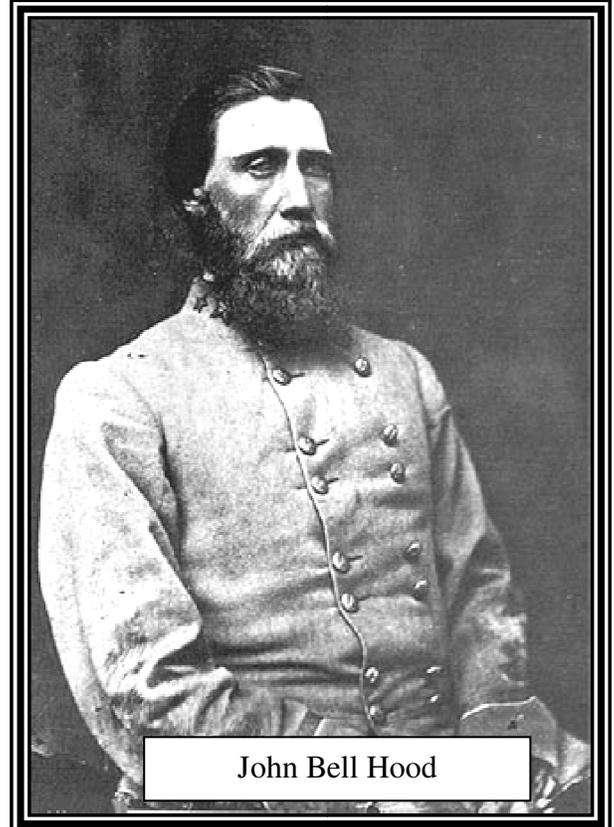
Richard S. Ewell



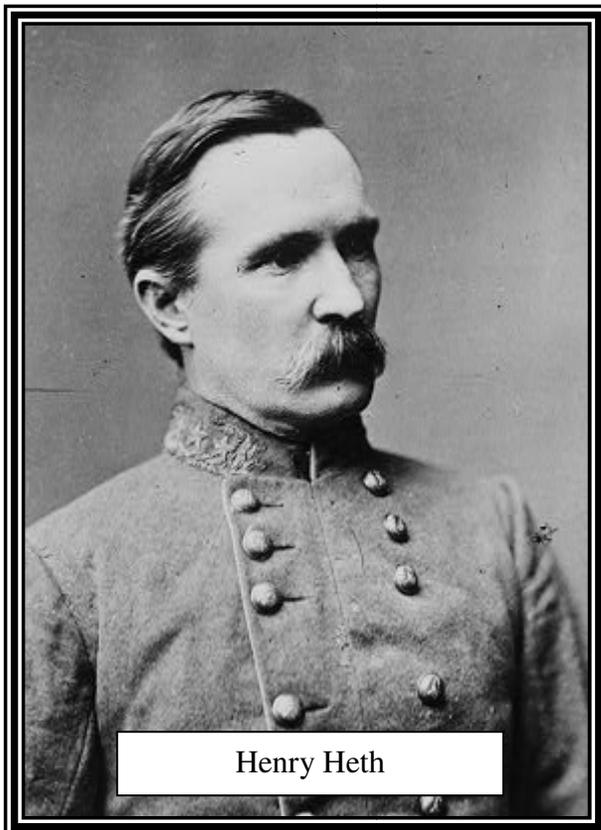
J.E.B. Stuart



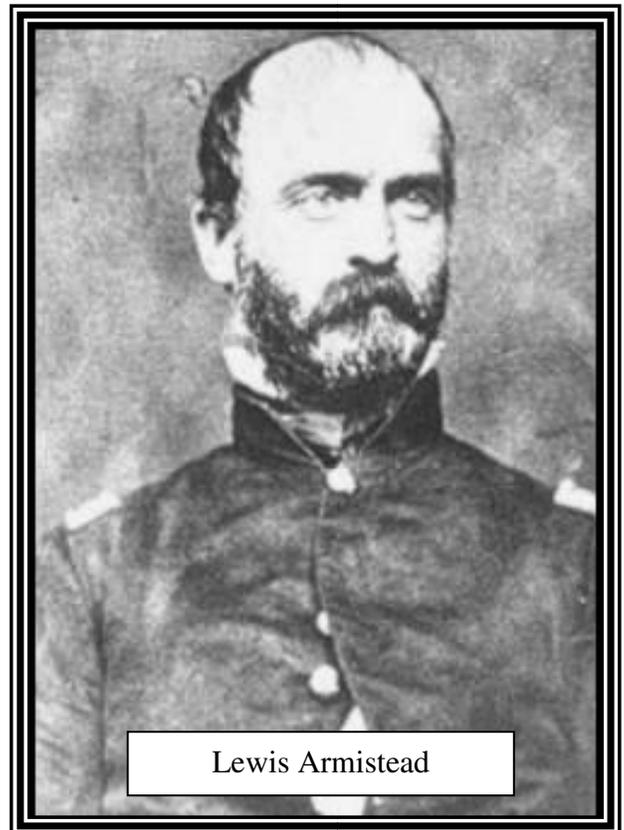
George Pickett



John Bell Hood



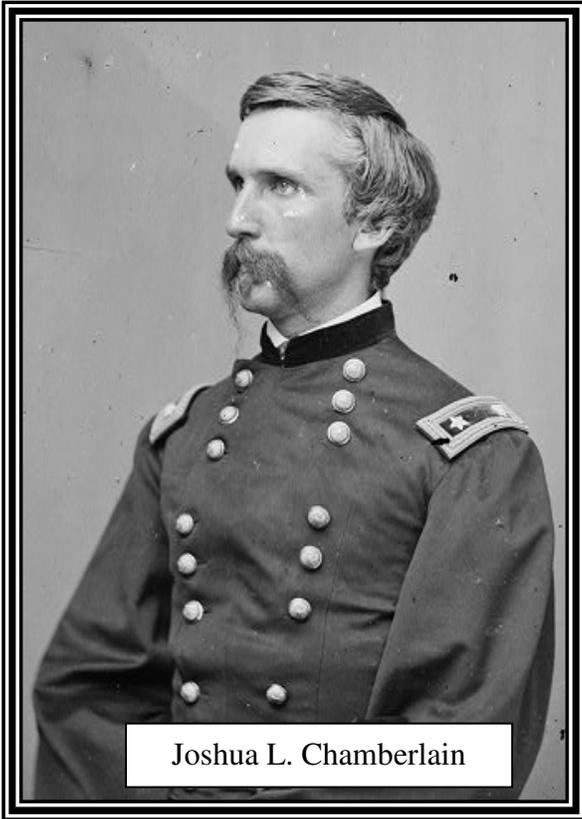
Henry Heth



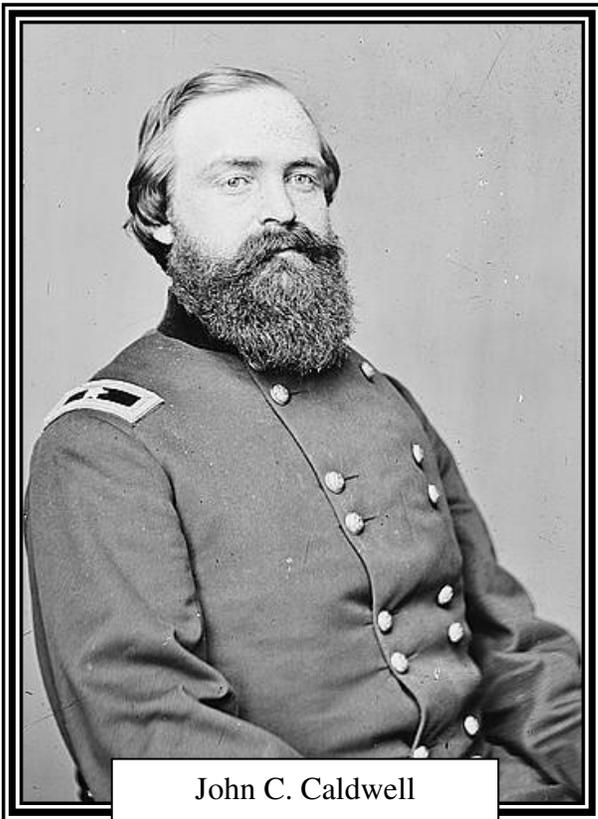
Lewis Armistead



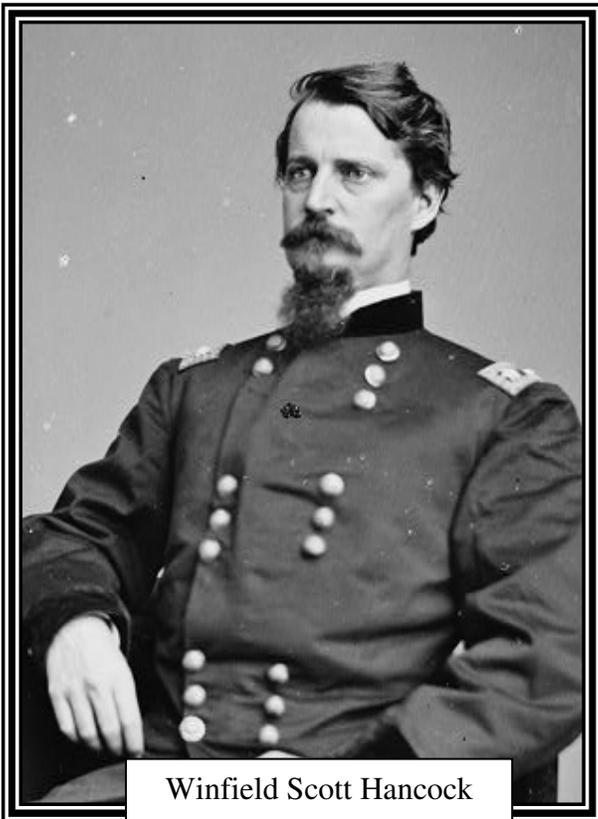
Daniel E. Sickles



Joshua L. Chamberlain



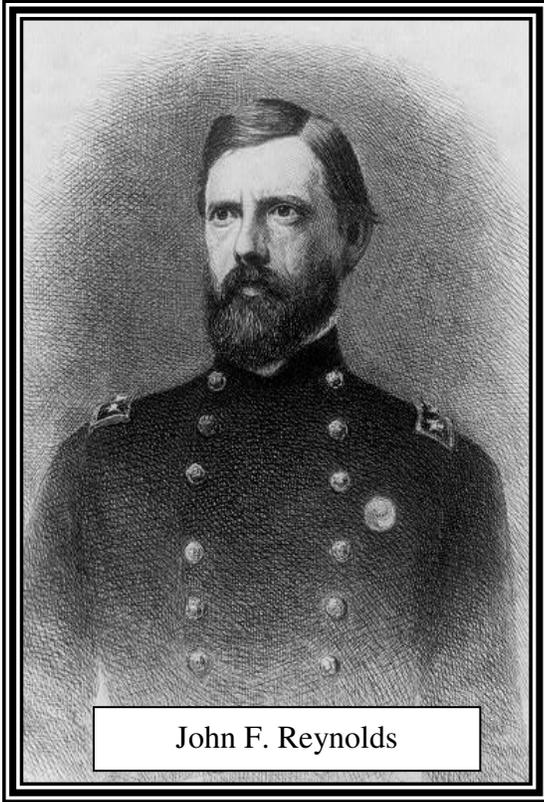
John C. Caldwell



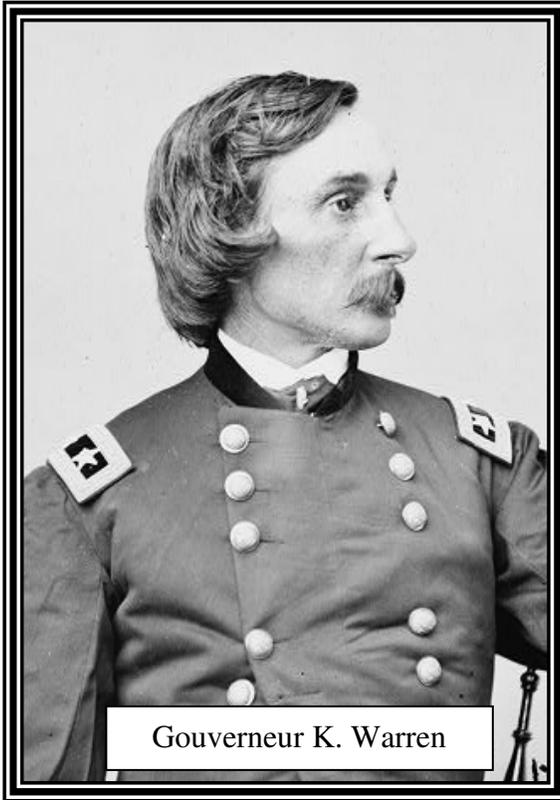
Winfield Scott Hancock



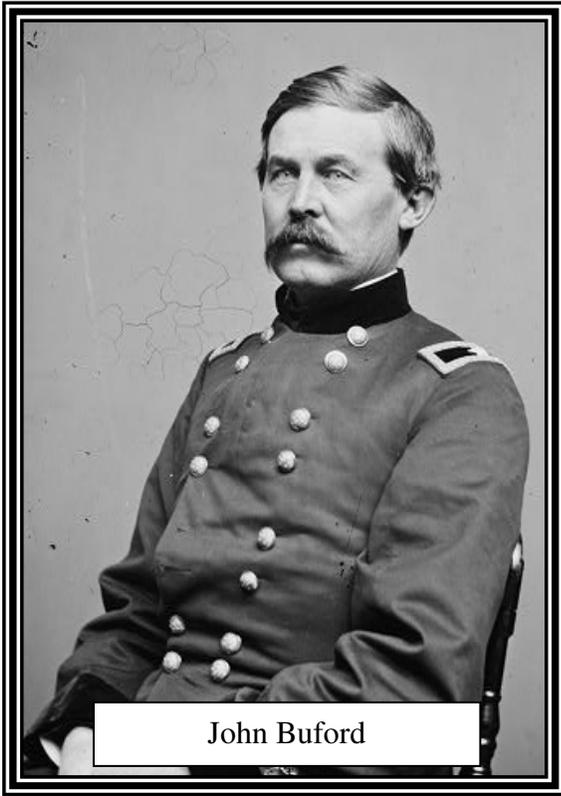
George G. Meade



John F. Reynolds



Gouverneur K. Warren



John Buford