

The Battle of Chancellorsville Story Script

By Darrell Osburn

[Fade in on Lincoln]

President Lincoln was frantic for a victory. The Union army in the east was still shaken

[Outtake of US getting mowed down]

by the terrible defeat at the battle of Fredericksburg on Dec. 13th, 1862. Lincoln needed a general who could defeat

[Picture of Lee]

General Robert E. Lee's army of Northern Virginia.

[Picture of Scott]

He first tried Gen. Winfield Scott, but Scott was much too old to lead an army in the field.

[Picture of McDowell]

Next, he gave command to Gen. Irvin McDowell, but had to replace him after

[Outtakes US army running away]

his army was routed at the Battle of 1st Bull Run.

[Picture of McClellan]

Next Lincoln put Gen. George McClellan in the top spot. But McClellan proved to be too slow and cautious and although Lee was greatly outnumbered,

[rebs push back yanks]

he managed to push McClellan back.

[Picture John Pope]

President Lincoln next gave John Pope a try, but had to remove him after the massive defeat of the Union army at the Battle of 2nd Bull Run.

[Picture of McClellan]

Lincoln then reinstated Gen. McClellan. But when Lincoln again saw that McClellan would not move, Lincoln asked

[Picture of Burnside]

Gen. Ambrose Burnside to lead the army.

[Outtakes of US getting mowed down]

Burnside commanded at only one battle, the battle of Fredericksburg. That was such a terrible defeat for the Northern forces that Lincoln accepted Burnside's request to be relieved of command.

[Picture of Hooker]

Lincoln now put Gen. Joseph Hooker in charge.

[US troops training, doing drills]

Hooker turned out to be a good organizer and greatly improved the condition of the army in blue.

[US march by]

Hooker was very confident that his splendidly equipped, 130,000 man army would quickly defeat Lee's

[CS march by]

poorly equipped 60,000 man army.

[Picture of Lincoln]

Lincoln suspected that Hooker was a little TOO confident. Lincoln said, "The wisest creature in all creation is the chicken. She never cackles until the egg is laid."

[US march by]

It was as though Lincoln could see into the future when he advised Hooker, "In your next battle, put all of your men into the fight."

Hooker would not tell Lincoln or anyone else about his battle plans. One thing seemed certain, though. The Federals would not attack again at Fredericksburg

[rebels dug in]

especially since the Confederates had strengthened their fortifications there.

[Picture of Sedgwick]

Hooker ordered Gen. John Sedgwick and 40,000 men to keep Lee occupied at Fredericksburg and he took 70,000 infantrymen to try to outflank Lee.

[US march by]

Hooker's troops crossed the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers 10 to 20 miles upstream from Fredericksburg.

[US moving their cannons]

Hooker also brought long most of his heavy artillery. He was attempting to get in behind Lee's army. He believed this move would force Lee to either retreat to defend the Confederate capital at Richmond Virginia, or would force him to fight at a terrible disadvantage.

[US cavalry outtakes]

Hooker had collected 10,000 cavalry. He sent these men on a raid to try to cut off Lee's supplies and his communications with Richmond. But due to a late start and heavy rains, the raid failed. So Hooker had almost no cavalry to call upon when it came time to fight Ge. Robert E. Lee.

[US march by]

Hooker's flank march was well-carried out. The yankees succeeded in getting behind Lee. Gen. George Meade, who would later become the Union commander, and would lead the Federal forces at Gettysburg, was quoted as saying,

[US officers talking]

"Gen. Slocum, this is splendid. We are on Lee's flank and does does not even know it."

Gen. Hooker said, "Now Lee must give us battle or ingloriously fly."

[CS march by]

When Lincoln kept changing generals, he was not being impatient or indecisive.

[Pictures of Lee and Stonewall Jackson]

It was Lee and Stonewall Jackson who were creating most of Lincoln's problems. These two would soundly defeat any Northern army sent against them.

[US march by]

Hooker thought his successful secret march had already determined the outcome of the war. What he did not count on, was Lee and Jackson.

[CS waiting in battle line, prepared]

Although fooled at first about Hooker's intentions, and now finding a huge Union army in his rear, Lee moved fast. He left 10,000 southerners under Ge. Jubal Early to hold Sedgwick in check at Fredericksburg,

[CS march by, double-quick]

and he quickly moved his army to Chancellorsville. Lee knew where the Union forces had crossed the river, and since all the roads in the area converged at Chancellorsville, Lee correctly guessed that the main Union force would be there.

General Hooker should have pushed on to open ground, where his superior numbers and his artillery could have made all the difference.

[Minor battle, US pulls back into the woods]

But instead, at first contact with Lee's army, Hooker lost his nerve and ordered his troops to pull back into the woods.

Hooker's generals saw that order as a huge mistake, but they obeyed and pulled back.

[At night, CS generals conferring]

Lee and Jackson spent the night of May 1st, 1863, trying to decide where and how to attack the Union army.

[[US in battle line, prepared and waiting]

The left flank was strongly entrenched and so was the front.

[US in camp, expecting no trouble]

But the right flank was vulnerable. It was "up in the air". meaning that there was no protection using a natural barrier, such as a river.

[CS march by, double-quick]

Lee sent Jackson and 26,000 men to Hit Hooker's right flank. He kept about 18,000 men in Hooker's front, to hold them in place.

This was a very dangerous plan, because if Lee divided his small army again and Hooker decided to attack, Lee's scattered forces would be in a terrible fix. But Gen. Lee seemed to know that Hooker would not attack. He knew that if he hit Hooker's army endwise, he would have a good chance at destroying the entire Union army.

[US officers get reports]

Reports of Jackson's flank march arrived at Hooker's headquarters. But the General falsely believed that Lee was retreating! Hooker thought the dense woods would be enough to prevent an attack.

[US in camp, unprepared]

The Union soldiers were completely unprepared for what happened next.

[Wildlife on the move]

They were amused to see foxes and deer scrambling towards them from the woods. They were NOT amused to see what had been driving them forward.

[Rebels army attacks camp, yanks fall back]

Out of the woods came Jackson's 26,000 men, screaming the rebel yell, shooting and taking prisoners. This attack sent the entire 11th corps into a panic which seemed to spread to each Yankee line that tried to stop it. The Southerners pushed the Northerners back over 2 miles before the Northerners could organize enough resistance to stop them.

[Other rebels attack]

Lee's 18,000 men also joined the attack, which lasted until after dark. Only isolated pockets of resistance stood to stem the rebel rush.

[Jackson and staff move through woods]

That night, while Jackson and his staff was returning from a scouting mission, some Confederates mistook them for Union cavalry.

A staff officer shouted to them, "Don't shoot, boys it is Gen. Jackson!" The rebels shouted back, "Its' a lie, its Yankee cavalry! Pour it into 'em, boys!"

The rebels poured a volley into their own leader. Jackson was hit twice in the left arm and once in the right hand. The commotion attracted the attention of some union artillerymen that began dropping shells in the area.

[The General on a stretcher]

Jackson's men fashioned a stretcher and put the general on it. But with explosions all around and stumbling in the dark woods, his men dropped him onto his wounded arm. No one had ever heard Jackson complain about anything before, but on being dropped he groaned aloud.

The arm would have to be amputated, but he was still expected to recover. When Lee heard of the accident, he said, "Jackson has lost his left arm, but I have lost my right."

[Picture of J.E.B. Stuart]

Jeb Stuart was given command of Jackson's corps.

[US general giving orders]

On May 3rd, Hooker ordered Gen. Sedgwick to fight his way through to rescue the main army at Chancellorsville.

[US attacks fortified rebels, pull back, pull back again, and then take the hill]

Sedgwick threw his own divisions against Jubal Early's prepared rebels. The first 2 attacks were thrown back. But the Yankees took the hill on the 3rd try, in a genuine bayonet charge.

[Panicky soldier stream past General Hooker]

Hooker should have ordered his troops around Chancellorsville to attack. Apparently he forgot Lincoln's advice: "Next time, put all of your troops into the fight."

[Idle Union troops, standing in line waiting for orders]

Almost half of Hooker's men were not put into the battle.

[US pull back]

Hooker ordered his troops to fall back and regroup, causing them to give up whatever good positioning they did have.

[Cannon blasts the doorway, general stunned]

Hooker was further stunned when a cannon ball hit the doorway he was standing under. Hooker recovered in time to retain command of his army.

[Southern troops laying down, refusing to move]

Successful as it was, the southern attack bogged down in a few places. Confederate Gen. Sam McGowan's South Carolina brigade, exhausted, out of ammunition and horrified at the thought of further combat, refused to advance against the yankees.

After repeated pleading and plodding and threats to no avail, the Stonewall Jackson brigade marched over and through them and continued the attack.

[CS officers get reports]

Gen. Lee got word of Sedgwick's breakthrough and had to move fast.

[CS double quick march by]

Correctly believing that Hooker would stay put, Lee sent most of his army east to attack Sedgwick.

[US holds their ground, fights off attacks, then retreats]

Sedgwick held off the attackers but pulled back, across the river, when he heard that Hooker had ordered a general retreat.

[[CS officers planning, get reports]

Lee planned yet another attack for May 6th, but found the Yankees had gone. Lee did not destroy the entire Union army, as he had hoped. Both North and South realized that Lee had won an important victory.

[CS march by]

Lee had taken a poorly equipped, heavily outnumbered army and had yet again forced back a greatly superior enemy.

[Dead and wounded]

But that victory came at a high cost. The south lost 13,000 casualties and the north lost 17,000. Since the north had over 3 times as many people as the south, the south had a much harder time replacing the troops they had lost.

[Picture of Jackson]

And the south never was able to replace Stonewall Jackson, the great general who had made the victory at Chancellorsville possible.

[?]

Eight days after he was shot, Stonewall Jackson died of his wounds. His fevered last words were: "Tell A.P. Hill to prepare for action! No, let us cross over the river and rest in the shade of the trees."

[Picture of old tired Lincoln]

When Lincoln heard the magnitude of the defeat, he said, "My God, what will the country say? What will the country say?"

Lincoln's next action was to remove Gen. Hooker from command.

[Picture of Meade]

He placed Gen. George G. Meade in charge. Lincoln hoped Meade would be the general who could finally win the war for the Union.