

Liberty University

**A Shattered General:
The Impact of Defeat on James Longstreet in East Tennessee, 1863-1864**

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Abstract

Confederate General James Longstreet watched his dawn attack on Fort Sanders in Knoxville, Tennessee, fail through the frigid morning air on November 29, 1863. Fort Sanders would only be the beginning of Longstreet's personal descent from confidence he would be a perfect independent army commander to an individual mired in depression and regret. For the previous two years of the war, Longstreet's star was on the rise, and he certainly gained supreme confidence in his abilities to lead the Confederacy to victory. After being separated from his favorite commander, Joseph Johnston, early in the war, Longstreet often thought he had the best ideas to claim victory and famously reacted poorly during the Pennsylvania Campaign to the orders of his superior officer, Robert E. Lee. Since he believed he knew best how to command an army, Longstreet believed he could make a major difference when he was transferred to the West for a temporary assignment to reverse the Union advances there. With the eyes of the nation on his performance in East Tennessee, Longstreet floundered and could not achieve the victory he sought when he had finally achieved an independent command. To save his reputation after Fort Sanders, he sought retribution in the courts-martial of his subordinates. The First Corps under Longstreet in East Tennessee suffered greatly in the following winter, struggling to find supplies while attempting unsuccessfully to gain a victory over the Union forces in the region. As his belief in his own abilities dissipated and his enemies within the Confederacy multiplied, Longstreet asked to be relieved of command, but the request was denied. East Tennessee became a personal reckoning for Longstreet when he was faced with his limitations as an officer. He returned to the Army of Northern Virginia a changed commander who realized being a corps commander was his best destiny.

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Chapter 1

Frost touched the land and bit at the bones on a frigid November 29, 1863. After days of delay and adjustments to the plan on assaulting Fort Sanders defending Knoxville, Tennessee, Confederate General James Longstreet ordered the attack. The veteran rebels surged forward, soon tripping through telegraph line tied between tree stumps in a defensive obstacle the Union soldiers under General Ambrose Burnside's command called "the tangle."¹ The men in gray did not conduct a dawn artillery barrage in hopes they would surprise their foe.² A torrent of punishing cannon fire and incessant small arms revealed the surprise attempt failed. Still, the Confederates pushed forward, reaching the ditch before the fort. The defending fire blasted through flesh and bone, leaving dead and wounded piled on one another. The attackers used bayonets and swords to plunge into the hard ground since Longstreet had advised the soldiers would not need ladders.³ Some ascended the ice-covered glacis to the parapet, only to be cut down or captured.⁴ Once word reached him about the telegraph wire slowing his men, Longstreet called off the assault.⁵ It would be the beginning of the end for the First Corps' detachment from the Army of Northern Virginia to the Western Theater. The setback extinguished Longstreet's hope for either personal glory or the opportunity to help save the Confederate States of America from destruction.

Today, the battle of Fort Sanders is not well known. Longstreet is instead best remembered for his role during the battle of Gettysburg—the most famous clash of the entire American Civil War. Numerous books and articles have analyzed Longstreet's performance

¹ Byron M. Cutcheon, "Recollections of Burnside's East Tennessee Campaign," *Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* 39 (1902): 17.

² J.A.H. Granberry, "Longstreet Before Knoxville," *Confederate Veteran* 31, no. 10 (October 1923): 372.

³ J.B. Boothe, "The Siege of Knoxville and its Results," *Confederate Veteran* 22, no. 6 (June 1914): 266.

⁴ Cutcheon, 17.

⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1896), 273.

during the three days at Gettysburg, either condemning or defending his actions. However, Longstreet's reputation did not suffer widespread ridicule in the immediate weeks after Robert E. Lee withdrew the Army of Northern Virginia toward the relative safety of Virginia. Lee accepted full responsibility for the failure and offered his resignation.⁶ Of course, the rebellion at the time viewed Gettysburg as a disappointment, but it was not seen by the Confederacy as an outright defeat, nor did it receive the intense scrutiny that it would in the postwar era. The conflict raged for nearly two more years. Long before the world focused on Longstreet's actions at Gettysburg, the failure at Knoxville plagued the Confederate commander. Where he could have blamed Lee for not taking his advice in Pennsylvania during the summer of 1863 or other individuals on other battlefields, the result at Fort Sanders fell solely on Longstreet.

Longstreet's inability to find victory in the West is certainly not unique in the disastrous Confederate efforts in that theater throughout the war. However, it must have come as a devastating shock to a man who had previously either found much success on the battlefield or had the ability to transfer blame to another officer. Is it possible the events in East Tennessee, where he enjoyed a nearly independent command, bothered Longstreet more than Gettysburg? Should Fort Sanders, rather than the third day at Gettysburg, be Longstreet's personal turning point in his confidence and belief in his ability on the battlefield? It is conceivable Longstreet rode an emotional wave including a rise in morale and ambition from the beginning of the war to the summer of 1863 only to be stifled in the Western Theater by the end of that year. Longstreet often wrote about how Lee did not take his advice in seeking a defensive battle during the invasion of Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863.⁷ One could assume Longstreet shifted to Lee

⁶ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 250.

⁷ William L. Richter, "'The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions': James Longstreet in War and Peace," in *Lee and His Generals: Essays in Honor of T. Harry Williams*, edited by Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Thomas E. Schott (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 210.

any responsibility he felt for what did or did not happen at Gettysburg. Moreover, much of the Confederacy in July 1863 did not view the failed invasion of the north as the end of its struggle. If anything, morale remained high a year after the failed invasion of the North despite some grumblings of general discontent in the Confederacy toward Lee rather than Longstreet.⁸ As historian Brooks D. Simpson noted, Gettysburg was just another battle in a long list of costly clashes in a growing list of similar confrontations in the ongoing slugfest.⁹ However, Jefferson Davis knew the Confederacy needed dramatic action after the summer of setbacks in 1863, and his attention fell on Tennessee. While Davis at first suggested Lee should be sent to reverse the tide of failure in Tennessee, the latter said he was unfamiliar with the situation there and his efforts would be better utilized in Virginia. Therefore, Davis turned to Longstreet.¹⁰ This news would have been welcome to Longstreet since he had long considered his usefulness in the West could surpass his potential in the East, going so far as describing the Confederate Armies of the West as spectators toward the “tremendous threatenings” of the Union forces in that region.¹¹ Did Longstreet seek an independent command away from Lee to pursue personal glory or because he believed he could save the Confederacy?

Longstreet’s immediate actions after Fort Sanders certainly reveal a man trying to save his reputation in the face of a complete defeat. In the weeks after the failed assault, Longstreet court-martialed three officers under his command, including his friend and former classmate Lafayette McLaws. Viewed through the lens of this event, the road to Longstreet’s ultimate personal disappointment certainly seemed to begin at Gettysburg, whether or not Longstreet

⁸ Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War*, 244-248.

⁹ Brooks D Simpson, *The Civil War in the East: Struggle, Stalemate, and Victory* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2011), 133-135.

¹⁰ Steven Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 228-229.

¹¹ Longstreet, *Memoirs*, 371.

realized it at the time. Cracks in Longstreet's First Corps began in that campaign with McLaws blaming Longstreet in a letter four days after the battle. McClaws claimed his commanding officer gave "contrary orders to everyone, and was exceedingly overbearing. I consider him a humbug—a man of small capacity, very obstinate, not at all chivalrous, exceedingly conceited, and totally selfish. If I can, it is my intention to get away from his command."¹² Other commanders, Evander M. Law and Jerome B. Robertson, joined in the frustration leveled toward Longstreet's leadership at Gettysburg.¹³ These same commanders fell into Longstreet's crosshairs in the following months.

Despite many soldiers serving under Longstreet viewing him positively and describing him as “the best fighter in the whole army,” historians have also observed significant problems emerged at Gettysburg within Longstreet’s First Corps.¹⁴ Historian Edwin Coddington in *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* noted subordinate McLaws blamed Longstreet, his longtime friend and classmate, for failing on the second day of battle.¹⁵ Also analyzing Longstreet at Gettysburg, Jeffry D. Wert observed in *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier* Longstreet started a soldiers’ feud when appointing Micah Jenkins to lead John Bell Hood’s division instead of Evander M. Law.¹⁶

Propelled by the possibility he could make a significant difference in the West, Longstreet transferred these command troubles later that year where he encountered and joined

¹² Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*. Edited by John C. Oeffinger (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 197.

¹³ Jeffry D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier—A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 337, and United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 27, pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 406.

¹⁴ Arthur James Lyon Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States, April-June 1863* (Project Gutenberg, 2007): 242.

¹⁵ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1968), 381.

¹⁶ Wert, 337.

bickering generals rallying against Army of Tennessee commander Braxton Bragg. Peter Cozzens, in *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga*, covered the situation where Bragg's subordinates like General Leonidas Polk sought their commander's removal even before Longstreet arrived, which only served to create more inner turmoil in the First Corps as they entered a new theater of war.¹⁷ It is here Longstreet's critics sparked a significant reappraisal of his abilities. When Longstreet's fortunes dimmed in Tennessee by the end of 1863, is it possible the commander facing such failure decided to carry out vengeance against disgruntled subordinates to restore his reputation? Were they scapegoats to mask failure in Tennessee?

When conjuring reasons to accuse his subordinates of courts-martial in the aftermath of Fort Sanders, Longstreet never aggressively pursued the charges and granted leave to vital witnesses as if he hoped the problems would go away. Still, McLaws harbored the venom of a friend betrayed and would not let the slight on his honor disappear without a fight.¹⁸ The courts-martial only served to undermine Longstreet's standing in the Confederate capital. Evander Law, who also faced Longstreet's wrath after the failure in Tennessee, considered striking back with McLaws. Bragg joined the fray to accuse Longstreet of purposefully slowing in front of Knoxville because of his longtime friendship with Union General Ulysses S. Grant. It would not be the last time Longstreet's opponents would accuse him of being a traitor to the Confederate cause.¹⁹ The series of events drew the ire of Confederate leadership reaching to President Jefferson Davis.²⁰ Contrary to the common postwar assessment of Longstreet suggesting the commander's reputation had plunged after the failure at Gettysburg, it was the wartime

¹⁷ Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 4-5.

¹⁸ McLaws, 233.

¹⁹ Braxton Bragg to Lafayette McLaws, March 4, 1864, McLaws Papers, UNC, in Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 363.

²⁰ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 192.

disappointment in Tennessee followed by a flurry of finger-pointing and backstabbing that damaged Longstreet's wartime status. As a potential disgraceful end to Longstreet's war loomed in early 1864, his adversaries prepared to terminate his career.²¹ After Confederate leadership rejected several plans for new actions over the winter of 1863 to 1864 and he realized he had failed, a seemingly depressed Longstreet finally attempted to resign when he wrote, "It is fair to infer that the fault is entirely with me, and I desire, therefore, that some other commander be tried."²² However, Lee wanted his "Old War Horse" back under his direct command, and Davis acquiesced to the request.²³

Longstreet returned to the Army of Northern Virginia, allegedly pleased to no longer hold an independent command.²⁴ Longstreet served only one additional day of combat before receiving a wound during the Wilderness Campaign that knocked him out the war, ending the opportunity for his political opponents within the Confederacy to strike back since they did not want to suffer the indignity of attacking a man who might be on his deathbed. When he returned to active duty during the siege of Petersburg, the conflict had transformed into trench warfare. Those rivals who emerged during this period paused their search for vengeance until the postwar years when they believed Longstreet had become a traitorous "scalawag" by supporting the Republican Party.²⁵ The individuals targeting Longstreet sought to rewrite the Battle of Gettysburg by placing the sole responsibility on Longstreet's shoulders while lifting Lee's status. By many accounts, Longstreet sulked during the Battle of Gettysburg when Lee refused to

²¹ Wert, 363.

²² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 43, pt. 1, 467-468.

²³ Sorrel, 184.

²⁴ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 86.

²⁵ WM. L. Richter, "James Longstreet: From Rebel to Scalawag," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* Vol. 11, No. 3 (Summer, 1970): 215.

disengage and attempt a flanking maneuver. On many occasions during the three fateful days at Gettysburg, Longstreet grumbled about the hopelessness of attacking and appeared depressed. While Longstreet does have his defenders and the opinion of his performance at Gettysburg has balanced to the point many commanders—including Lee—can share the blame for the Army of Northern Virginia’s performance in Pennsylvania, the argument aimed at Longstreet lingers to this day. The attack on Longstreet, led with great enthusiasm by former Confederate officers like Jubal Early, first raged in memoirs, veterans' periodicals, and reunion speeches only to remain in the initial histories started by Lost Cause enthusiasts and perpetuated by generations of scholars.²⁶

Despite serious accusations and concerns brewing in the Confederate high command in early 1864, the disappointment in East Tennessee soon faded into the postwar shadow. Attention focused on Longstreet’s alleged failure at Gettysburg that only increased with the passage of time after Appomattox. The attempt to blame Longstreet for Gettysburg—based on the questionable assumption that Gettysburg decided or could have decided the war—certainly established a strong foundation for his detractors even if they exaggerated or fabricated some of the events in that campaign to make Longstreet look worse. Even today, Longstreet's name in popular culture is tied to the Army of Northern Virginia’s failure to effectively accomplish Lee's will at Gettysburg. It is as if Gettysburg tarnished Longstreet’s entire military career or, more accurately, how those who fought that battle remembered it. Since the former Confederacy had exalted Lee to near sainthood status in the postwar years, the idea spread that the Army of Northern Virginia could have failed only if sabotaged from within during its chance for its

²⁶ Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019), 8.

greatest glory. Thus, the revisionist history of Gettysburg began and has continued to flourish since the guns in Pennsylvania fell silent.²⁷

While never receiving the postwar spotlight like Lee and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Longstreet has been no stranger to historians in the generations since the Civil War ended, although the overall assessments are varied. Some readers may ask why another work on Longstreet is needed? In a field as crowded and well researched as the American Civil War, it would be difficult to add new insight on a commander's performance at Gettysburg that has convinced generations that the battle was the conflict's turning point and prompted many to criticize Longstreet's entire career. This work seeks to take a fresh look at Longstreet's self-confidence by analyzing the possibility he viewed Fort Sanders and his campaign in the West, rather than Gettysburg, as his greatest individual disappointment. It will be divided into three parts with the first focusing on Longstreet's war up through the Pennsylvania Campaign to establish the commander's morale and personal belief in his capabilities before his failure in Tennessee. The second part will focus on the detachment to the Western Theater, the difficulties he faced there and his efforts off the battlefield in the winter of 1863-1864. The third part will examine Longstreet's morale after the failed excursion to the Western Theater after he returned to the Army of Northern Virginia up to his wounding in the Wilderness and, thereafter, to Appomattox. In addition, it investigates Longstreet's focus in the postwar to see how the events in East Tennessee continued bothering the man even when the Lost Cause enthusiasts and subsequent historians and writers focused on Gettysburg.

Longstreet's wartime performance has attracted numerous varied assessments over the decades although one common factor has been a concentration on the events surrounding the

²⁷ Jeffrey D. Wert, “The Best Subordinate,” (*Civil War Times*, August 2006): 23.

Army of Northern Virginia's invasion of Pennsylvania. Immediately after the war, however, writers largely overlooked Longstreet in favor of other more dashing commanders. It is an interesting development when one considers Abraham Lincoln's Vice President and successor, Andrew Johnson, who was from Tennessee, viewed Longstreet as important enough to allegedly claim after the war that only three former rebels could never receive a pardon including Davis, Lee, and Longstreet.²⁸ The well-known war correspondent William Swinton's *Campaigns of Army of the Potomac* provided an initial introductory postwar viewpoint of Longstreet. In this volume, Swinton acknowledged he conferred with Longstreet upon the drafting of this manuscript in hopes to provide a balanced view.²⁹ The result in Swinton's prose read like an extended newspaper article depending greatly upon the primary sources utilized without significant editorializing, portraying Longstreet as a competent field commander willing to challenge his superiors if necessary.³⁰ John Esten Cooke's *Wearing of the Gray* and William Parker Snow's *Lee and his Generals* at times portrayed Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson as the senior subordinate serving under Robert E. Lee, kickstarting an early and incorrect portrayal of Longstreet's service that would linger. Cooke does not even mention Longstreet in his preface, focusing instead on Lee, Jackson, Johnston and Stuart.³¹ Snow's work is a collection of biographies starting with Lee, presenting Jackson as the second most important commander with Longstreet receiving his attention later in the sixth chapter.³²

²⁸ Wert, 409.

²⁹ William Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac: A Critical History of Operations in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, from the Commencement to the Close of the War, 1861-5* (New York: C.B. Richardson, 1866), 145.

³⁰ Swinton, 358.

³¹ John Esten Cooke, *Wearing of the Gray Being Personal Portraits, Scenes and Adventures of the War* (Wright American Fiction; Volume II, 1851-1875, Number 627, Research Publications. 1960), 13.

³² William Parker Snow, *Lee and His Generals* (New York; Avenel: Gramercy Books, 1996), 313.

The first wide postwar controversy hovered over Longstreet in 1867 after his opinions appeared in published editorials urging Southerners to accept defeat.³³ Longstreet soon received appointments from Republicans and the respect of Northerners for his magnanimous nature, prompting more ill will from Southerners either unwilling or unable to yet view the Yankees as fellow citizens rather than conquering foes. Some Confederate veterans branded Longstreet a “scalawag,” a term reserved for traitors to the past cause.³⁴ Jubal Early, also a former officer in the Army of Northern Virginia who had served under Longstreet from the early campaigns, led the charge against Longstreet by famously accusing the general of ignoring or delaying an order from Lee to attack at sunrise on the second day at Gettysburg.³⁵ Other critics, like former Army of Northern Virginia artillery officer William Nelson Pendleton, who embraced the Lost Cause mythology and deification of Lee, assaulted Longstreet, supporting the mythical “Sunrise Attack” order from Lee that Longstreet supposedly ignored at Gettysburg.³⁶ Even as most of the combatants had joined their fallen comrades in the grave, remaining veterans cast disparaging shots at Longstreet. One of the final officers to put their thoughts on paper in Longstreet’s life was former Army of Northern Virginia Second Corps commander John B. Gordon, who penned *Reminiscences of the Civil War* in 1903, where he further cemented the claim Longstreet’s delay had cost Lee a great victory at Gettysburg.³⁷ Although any notion of an early morning attack

³³ New Orleans *Times*, March 15, 1867. Longstreet’s letters explained the surrender of Confederate forces in 1865 involved a surrender to the right of secession, a surrender of restrictions to the freed people, and the surrender of the Confederacy. “These issues expire upon the fields last occupied by the Confederate Armies,” Longstreet wrote. “There they should have been buried . . . The political questions of the war should have been buried upon the fields that marked their end.” Longstreet’s words appeared in newspapers across the country in 1867 including the *Chicago Tribune* on April 16, 1867. These publications undoubtedly enhanced Longstreet’s reputation with the North while simultaneously sparking the ire of those in the former Confederacy not yet ready to join hands with their former foe.

³⁴ Richter, 215.

³⁵ Jubal A. Early, *The Campaigns of Gen. Robert E. Lee: An Address by Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early, before Washington and Lee University, January 19th, 1872* (Baltimore: J. Murphy and Company, 1872), 34.

³⁶ William Nelson Pendleton, *Memoirs of William Nelson Pendleton, D.D.* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1893), 286-290.

³⁷ John Brown Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 160.

order from Lee on July 2, 1863 has since been disproven, the lingering impact of these early strikes on Longstreet's character have endured in various forms from downplaying Longstreet's status as Lee's senior lieutenant to claims of purposefully delaying maneuvers to aid the enemy.

To respond to the critics he labeled "Knights of the Quill" who he believed aimed to re-fight battles long after the guns fell silent, Longstreet wrote articles and his memoirs to set the record straight and salvage his declining reputation. However, the result usually served to increase his opposition's vigor. He also often responded to mail from the public.³⁸ Despite his efforts, Longstreet's written word could not fend off the downward spiral started during the Reconstruction Era that influenced future writers and scholars. Douglass Southall Freeman's work, *R.E. Lee: A Biography* and Hamilton J. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad's controversial *James Longstreet: Lee's War Horse* are famous works propelling the damaging view on Longstreet in the twentieth century. Regarding the latter, the authors portrayed Longstreet as an individual concerned more with his personal achievements and self-promotion than the cause for which he fought.³⁹ As Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows wrote in *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and The Southern Mind*, "all of the weaponry of the Lost Cause was turned against Longstreet" and these efforts established a lasting impact.⁴⁰ Throughout much of

³⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 319; *The Annals of the War, Written by Leading Participants North and South* (Philadelphia, 1879), 619; *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Volume 5, where Longstreet directly stated on page 54 he wanted to reply to his "accusers" who continued to fuel a "misrepresentation" of his actions during the Gettysburg Campaign; Near the end of his life, Longstreet still swiftly responded to mail on the campaign in East Tennessee, as evidenced in James Longstreet, "James Longstreet to Captain J.M. Martin, March 30, 1895," *James Longstreet Papers, 1850-1904*, Box 1, Folder 3, Emory University, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, Georgia. The elderly Longstreet took only three days to respond to this inquiry about an engagement in Eastern Tennessee on December 14, 1863.

³⁹ Douglas Southall Freeman, and Richard Barksdale Harwell, *Lee: An Abridgment in One Volume of the Four-Volume R.E. Lee by Douglas Southall Freeman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986).

⁴⁰ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, and Barbara L. Bellows, *God and General Longstreet the Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 33.

the twentieth century, there appeared to be no shortage of writers and historians like Jeffry D. Wert and Robert Krick who claimed the general's writing did him no favors and at times bordered on fictitious.⁴¹ Many modern historians from the second half of the twentieth century have also not viewed Longstreet's accounts positively.⁴²

Longstreet has interested supporters as well. Perhaps the earliest and most devoted defender of all things Longstreet—specifically on the matters of Gettysburg—was his late wife, Helen Dortch, who was forty-two years his junior when they married in 1876. Ironically, this would be the same year another famous widow, Elizabeth Bacon Custer, would begin a lifelong crusade to defend her husband, George Armstrong Custer, after he led his men into their infamous deaths at the hands of chiefs Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. Like Elizabeth Bacon in that she never remarried, Helen Dortch never once wavered in a staunch defense of her husband before his death in 1904, defending him in print and by attending veterans' reunions until her death in 1962.⁴³ Of her husband, she once wrote, "I was writing for love of him whose dear name and fame had been attacked; to place before his fading vision enduring appreciation of his valiant deeds as a soldier and high qualities as a gentleman."⁴⁴ A new generation continued the efforts of Longstreet's widow that waged the war of words on what transpired in the American Civil War.

While she may have been outnumbered for many of these years, Helen was not completely alone as Longstreet did attract admirers. General Daniel Sickles, with whom

⁴¹ Robert Krick, "If Longstreet ... Says so, It Is Most Likely Not True," In *The Second Day at Gettysburg*, edited by Gary W. Gallagher (Kent State University Press, 1993), 86; Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography*, 13.

⁴² Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019), 8.

⁴³ John Banks, "Longstreet's Second Lady: The General's Remarkable Second Wife Defended her Husband's Reputation, Championed Black Rights, and Built World War II Bombers," *Civil War Times* (April 2018): 47; Helen D. Longstreet, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in the Light of the Official Records*. (Gainesville, Georgia: Published by the Author, 1904).

⁴⁴ Longstreet, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in the Light of the Official Records*, 9.

Longstreet clashed most famously at Gettysburg, wrote the former Confederate commander’s “splendid” record required no defense.⁴⁵ Professional historians also defended Longstreet’s legacy. In a book that would have delighted the late Mrs. Longstreet, Donald B. Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay in *James Longstreet* celebrated Longstreet’s heroic leadership at Chickamauga as proof of his brilliance and the loyalty he inspired from those he commanded.⁴⁶ Others like Ezra J. Warner in *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders*, Glenn Tucker in *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, Wilbur D. Thomas in *General James ‘Pete’ Longstreet: Lee’s ‘Old War Horse,’ Scapegoat for Gettysburg*, and William Garrett Piston in the 1987 work *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* suggested more positive overall assessments.⁴⁷

In the modern era, Longstreet’s rehabilitation and attention among Americans sparked from unlikely places. Two authors, Shelby Foote and Michael Shaara, had a substantial impact on Longstreet’s legacy in popular culture. Foote’s *Civil War: A Narrative* three-volume set published from the 1950s to the 1970s positively impacted readers on their viewpoint of Longstreet. Foote’s impact magnified in dramatic fashion when Ken Burns’ Civil War documentary aired on PBS in the 1990s, establishing Foote as a household name and increasing sales for his books. Ironically, that decade also saw renewed interest in Shaara’s 1974 novel *Killer Angels*, a fictitious portrayal of Gettysburg that earned the Pulitzer Prize.⁴⁸ Ted Turner helped finance a 1993 movie, *Gettysburg*, based on the novel that depicted Longstreet as a

⁴⁵ Longstreet, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in the Light of the Official Records*, 17.

⁴⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 200-216.

⁴⁷ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959, 1987), 192-193; Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 159-173; Piston, 86.

⁴⁸ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1958-1974); Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels: The Classic Novel of the Civil War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2019).

commander in Pennsylvania dutifully but reluctantly carrying out Lee's orders. While these works by writers untrained as professional historians had an impact on the public's opinion of Longstreet, did they impact scholarship as well? If one observes the number of academic works on Longstreet's performance at Gettysburg historians have published since the 1990s, the answer would be a resounding affirmative. The Longstreet Society, a volunteer organization in Gainesville, Georgia, lists more than twenty books that have been published on Longstreet and his battles since the 1990s.⁴⁹ Many others providing alternative analyses on Longstreet are not listed on the website, like Cory M. Pfarr's *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment*, and more focusing their argument on Gettysburg are awaiting publication.⁵⁰ Monuments devoted to Longstreet had also been scarce until this outpouring of new interested heaped onto the former Confederate commander, leading to a new statue appearing at Gettysburg for the battle's 135 anniversary in 1998.⁵¹ Once again, this flurry of material on Longstreet reveals a concentration on what happened in Pennsylvania in the summer of 1863.

While not as infamous, Longstreet's detachment in the Western Theater also received attention from scholars. Some works have used the endeavor in Eastern Tennessee to critique Longstreet's abilities at independent command. Historians dedicated to this campaign have examined the mounting pressure on Longstreet from Davis, Lee, Bragg and, in some ways, the entire Confederacy, to gain a swift victory. Steven Woodworth observed in *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (1999) the sluggish movements

⁴⁹ Editor, *Welcome to The Longstreet Society*, The Longstreet Society, <http://www.longstreetsociety.org/suggested-reading-list.html>.

⁵⁰ Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019); Harold M. Knudsen LTC (Ret.), *The Civil War and James Longstreet: The Confederate General Who Fought the Next War* (El Dorado Hill, California: Savas Beatie, 2022).

⁵¹ Sheridan Lyons, "Longstreet at last is cast as a hero Gettysburg: A statue returns to the ranks of honor a Confederate general reviled by Southerners for more than a century," *The Baltimore Sun*, June 26, 1998, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1998-06-26-1998177002-story.html>.

Longstreet once again exhibited in Tennessee earned him the moniker of “Peter the Slow” from his troops.⁵² Earl Hess in *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (2012) believes Longstreet lost his only opportunity to claim victory around Knoxville when he allowed Union General Ambrose Burnside to slip away into the stalwart defenses around the city and argues Longstreet’s subsequent siege was unable to make a serious impact on Knoxville’s defenses.⁵³

Contemporary criticism of Longstreet’s actions in Tennessee appeared across the country as word of Longstreet’s failure spread. An Indiana newspaper claimed great rebel losses and stated on December 5 that Longstreet was retreating to Virginia.⁵⁴ “It was an utter and disastrous failure,” wrote a special correspondent in a Nashville newspaper under the heading of *Desperate Effort of the Enemy*. “... We do not know if Longstreet has done his worst; but it is evident he expected to have exploited a brilliant and decisive *coup de guerre*. He was thirteen days deciding upon it.”⁵⁵ *The Daily Dispatch* in Richmond summarized the situation on December 10 by stating, “The affair is naturally discouraging to our men, and must be set down as the most unfortunate episode of the siege. Our dead are still lying within sight of our breastworks, but cannot be recovered.”⁵⁶ A South Carolina newspaper claimed on December 16 that Longstreet’s force “plunged into a boiling hell of lead” and left the ground “carpeted with the slain” only to end in “another rebel failure.”⁵⁷ With a torrent of bad press, some Confederate supporters had strong feelings toward Longstreet and his efforts in Tennessee. A farmer in Alabama made a note

⁵² Steven E. Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press – Bison Books, 1999), 206.

⁵³ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 105-107.

⁵⁴ Editor, “From Burnside’s Army,” *Evansville Daily Journal*, December 5, 1863, 3.

⁵⁵ S.C. Merger, ed., “Assault Upon Knoxville: Desperate Effort of the Enemy,” *Nashville Union*, 2.

⁵⁶ Editor, “Additional from the North,” *Daily Dispatch*, December 10, 1863, 1.

⁵⁷ No author, “Yankee Letter,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, December 16, 1863, 1.

of the defeat in his diary on December 4, writing, “No favourable signs for closing the war, the armies confront each other in all their strength, all foreign nations seem disposed to stand aloof, O God our help is in thee and thee only.”⁵⁸ Other critics were harsher. “Detached from General Lee, what a horrible failure,” Mary Chesnut wrote from South Carolina in her journal on December 21, less than a month after Fort Sanders. “What a slow old humbug is Longstreet.”⁵⁹ It surely did not escape Longstreet’s attention that his reputation had slipped by the end of 1863, from the Confederate High Command to the officers and infantry under his command.

As historian Gary Gallagher wrote in 1985, “the last word on James Longstreet is yet to appear.”⁶⁰ The truth of that statement remains decades later. The purpose of this work is not to refight the battles of Gettysburg or join the long list of publications arguing Longstreet's worth as a commander on a nineteenth-century battlefield. The questions posed here seek to analyze Longstreet's confidence through a consultation of personal correspondence during and after the war to see how he coped with a failure that may have plagued the man for the rest of his life. What if discontent and guilt consumed Longstreet because of what he was unable to accomplish in Tennessee in 1863? Did this failure forever change the commander? Addressing these questions will require researching Longstreet’s self-confidence and ambition from 1861 to 1863. The initial chapter will follow Longstreet’s early career with the Confederacy and his personal feelings including ambition, morale, and confidence. After being promoted to brigadier general in the first summer of the war, Longstreet fought in most major campaigns in the Eastern Theater starting with the first major land battle at Bull Run and was also present in the final campaign in

⁵⁸ James Mallory, *Fear God and Walk Humbly: The Agricultural Journal of James Mallory 1843-1877*, edited by Grady McWhiney, et al. (University of Alabama Press, 1997), 329

⁵⁹ Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 509.

⁶⁰ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan. Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), xx.

Virginia that culminated at Appomattox. Most Americans in 1861 did not believe the war would last long with many considering it would end after one major battle. Studying Longstreet's morale and evolving self-evaluation of his capabilities spanning the war grants an opportunity to see how the pressures of war impacted one individual and his belief in the cause in which he was fighting. General P.G.T. Beauregard praised Longstreet's actions in the initial campaign at the battle of Blackburn's Ford, which preceded Bull Run by three days in July of 1861. Despite slipping up in subsequent campaigns on accusations of slowness and bickering with fellow commanders including a duel challenge from A. Powell Hill that never materialized, Longstreet earned the praise in the defense of Richmond from Joseph Johnston and the newly promoted Lee.⁶¹ Longstreet's career in the Confederacy had started on a positive note, increasing the commander's confidence and belief in his abilities.

Subsequent chapters will analyze Longstreet's campaigns under Lee and how his opinions on warfare evolved with his apparent growth in confidence. During the war's second summer, his performance under Joseph Johnston had created a reputation for being a dependable yet sometimes slow field commander. Under Lee, Longstreet received promotion to command of the First Corps. Apart from Chancellorsville, Longstreet took part in Lee's major campaigns at Second Bull Run and Antietam. These initial chapters will culminate with an analysis of the Pennsylvania Campaign and its impact on Longstreet's morale. While Longstreet detractors often focus on the Gettysburg campaign, many experts have named Longstreet the finest corps commander in the rebel armies.⁶² However, the historian must go beyond Gettysburg and study

⁶¹ William L. Richter, "The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions": James Longstreet in War and Peace," in Lawrence Lee Hewitt and Thomas E. Schott, eds. *Lee and His Generals: Essays in Honor of T. Harry Williams* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012): 204-207.

⁶² Michael E. Haskew, *Appomattox: The Last Days of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2015), 25-26.

Longstreet's time away from Lee's shadow if a complete picture of Longstreet's personal assessment is possible. When compared to the campaigns in and around Northern Virginia, Longstreet's time away from Lee in the Western Theater has received less consideration.

The next chapters will focus on Longstreet leading his corps to Georgia in the fall of 1863. Soon after the Gettysburg campaign concluded, it has been suggested Longstreet sought the opportunity to shine away from Lee, eventually obtaining permission to assist the Confederate cause in the Western Theater.⁶³ William G. Robertson suggested ambition and the belief the Army of Tennessee's Braxton Bragg could not succeed propelled Longstreet to seek his chance to shine. William Garrett Piston argued Longstreet wanted to be reunited with his former commander, Joseph Johnston.⁶⁴ In a postwar interview, Longstreet claimed Johnston was the best commander in the Confederacy, so this idea certainly has merit.⁶⁵ Piston analyzed additional potential reasons for desiring the move, such as a fear Union moves threatened his friends and relatives in Alabama and Georgia and the Confederates required a determined effort in that region.⁶⁶ Regardless of why Longstreet believed in his transfer, his First Corps traveled along the rough rails of the American South in hopes of altering the course of events for the Confederate war effort.

Upon arriving in Georgia, Longstreet and his First Corps participated in the battle of Chickamauga—the greatest success for the Army of Tennessee. However, historians once again vary wildly on Longstreet's performance in this battle. Peter Cozzens in *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga*, Thomas Connelly in *The Autumn of Glory*, Archibald Gracie in *The*

⁶³ William G. Robertson, "Bull of the Woods? James Longstreet at Chickamauga" in *The Chickamauga Campaign*, ed. Steven E. Woodward (Southern Illinois University Press: 2010), 117.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁶⁵ Peter Cozzens, "'The war was a grievous error': General James Longstreet speaks his mind," (*Civil War Times*, April 2010): 32-39.

⁶⁶ Piston, 42-44.

Truth About Chickamauga, Glenn Tucker in *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West* and Judith Hallock in *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* all blame Longstreet for various mistakes during this battle. Other historians like James R. Furqueron and William Garrett Piston claim Chickamauga showcased Longstreet at his finest hour.⁶⁷ Longstreet constantly clashed with Bragg—especially after the latter did not capitalize off the dramatic and costly victory at Chickamauga in September of 1863. William G. Robertson in *The Chickamauga Campaign* (2010), who suggested naked ambition propelled Longstreet to seek a transfer to the Western Theater and the so-called stellar performance at Chickamauga has been exaggerated, believes pride was Longstreet’s motivating factor in partaking in the bickering generals seeking to remove Bragg from command.⁶⁸

When the infighting reached a head after Chickamauga and rumors suggested Longstreet would usurp Bragg’s position, historian Thomas Connelly contended Longstreet did not refute the rumors but instead provided alternatives of what he would have done differently had he been in command.⁶⁹ A letter-writing campaign to Richmond ensued with the goal of replacing Bragg. However, historian John Keegan observed Confederate President Jefferson Davis would not remove the embattled commander as he disliked the possible replacements, which included Longstreet.⁷⁰ While Bragg maintained position around Chattanooga, he detached Longstreet with

⁶⁷ James R. Furqueron, “The Bull of the Woods: James Longstreet and the Confederate Left at Chickamauga” in *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy*, ed. R.L. DiNardo and Albert A. Nofi (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001): 99-164.

⁶⁸ William G. Robertson, “Bull of the Woods? James Longstreet at Chickamauga” in *The Chickamauga Campaign*, ed. Steven E. Woodworth (Southern Illinois University Press, 2010): 117.

⁶⁹ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 238.

⁷⁰ John Keegan, *The American Civil War: A Military History* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 2009), 229.

orders to take Knoxville. Historian Richard M. McMurry in *Two Great Rebel Armies* (1989) believes Bragg was attempting to scatter his numerous critics rather than focus on the enemy.⁷¹

Crucial sections will focus on Longstreet's indecisive behavior as he led his men toward Knoxville and his reaction to these events. After the failure of Fort Sanders, Longstreet experienced his first defeat where he could not directly shift blame to a commanding officer. In subsequent weeks, Longstreet instead turned on his subordinates—many whom had grown angry at their commander for various reasons after Gettysburg. Perhaps the most potentially heartbreaking target of Longstreet's reaction was his friend Lafayette McLaws. Little scholarly attention has been focused on McLaws, who has yet to receive a full biography on his service in the war. McLaws would see his former friendship with Longstreet disappear in the fury of a court-martial after Fort Sanders.⁷²

Once Longstreet realized his opportunity in the West had failed, did he panic to find individuals to blame for his failure after seeking independent command? Is it possible those who opposed Longstreet for political reasons following his defeat in Tennessee and the courts-martial created the intense focus on Longstreet's career through the Gettysburg lens? Alexander Mendoza in *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (2008) published one of the most significant works on the situation, concluding it was the Longstreet's actions here that created the enemies who would shatter the General's reputation in the postwar era.⁷³ But there has been no comprehensive analysis of the emotional toll these events took on Lee's "Old War Horse" for the rest of his life or the impact his reaction

⁷¹ Richard M. McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 136.

⁷² Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 150-151.

⁷³ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008).

had on his friendship with McLaws. Since he could not blame a superior officer, did Longstreet seek scapegoats in his subordinates? Did Longstreet harbor an existing frustration toward McLaws before Fort Sanders and the campaign in Eastern Tennessee? Or did McLaws become a target in Longstreet's search for vindication? Did Longstreet fail to effectively command his officers in Eastern Tennessee? Did Longstreet sow seeds of insurrection against Bragg in hopes he could replace him? Why did Longstreet attack those under his command? Answering these questions could reshape the military history of a famous American Civil War general and analyze his state of mind following failure while also highlighting the importance contemporaries placed on the war in Tennessee.

The final chapters will focus on Longstreet's career after Eastern Tennessee including his return to the Army of Northern Virginia and his postwar career. Analyzing how the postwar era recast Longstreet's role could offer insight into the historic impact of how Americans remember their most devastating and impactful conflict. Accomplishing this task will require an investigation of the type of leadership Longstreet exhibited during the war up to his transfer to the Western Theater. As previously mentioned, many consider Longstreet one of the best battlefield commanders in America during the first half of the Civil War. Did such accolades hold true by the end of the war? Did Longstreet still exhibit in the second half of 1863 the positive characteristics witnessed by some of his commanding officers in the war's initial campaigns? How and why did he change from the initial outbreak of war to an older man who claimed the conflict had been a "grievous error" years after the war?⁷⁴ Personal communications will be vital to answering these questions. Wartime correspondence in the *Official Records of the*

⁷⁴ Henry W. Grady, "General Longstreet: His Reminiscences of the War Between the States," originally printed on August 2, 1879 in the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, edited by Peter Cozzens and reprinted in *Civil War Times* (April 2010): 32-39.

War of the Rebellion is crucial, along with personal correspondence, to see how Longstreet may have evolved as the conflict continued after the fall of 1863. Longstreet wrote often in the years after the war, both in published periodicals and in personal letters. The postwar concentration by Lost Cause enthusiasts on what Longstreet did or did not do at Gettysburg possibly masked the disaster he personally saw in his excursion to the Western Theater when it became impossible to blame others for his results. The near-fatal wound during the Wilderness Campaign only served to halt an attempt by his political enemies to destroy the general, a vendetta they would resume after Appomattox.

Researching Longstreet's feelings after his failure in Tennessee could offer a critical reassessment of the Civil War general and provide essential analysis of memory's role in impacting scholarship of historical events. Did those serving with and under him notice a shift in Longstreet's demeanor once he left Virginia? How had Longstreet changed once he returned to Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in 1864? Furthermore, did Longstreet see the Wilderness Campaign as his opportunity to rebuild his reputation? If so, did this desire lead him to an overly aggressive charge that resulted in his wounding from friendly fire? Longstreet returned to service after his wound a changed man both physically and mentally. He continued dutifully serving Lee right up to Appomattox and then, despite quietly coping with any lingering demons from his wartime service, entered his postwar years with a solid reputation. Longstreet brooded over the failure in the Western Theater more than what happened at Gettysburg. Of course, he often defended his actions at Gettysburg because the assault on his character only worsened as he worked with Republicans in the postwar era. It is in this atmosphere that the importance of Gettysburg magnified, and Longstreet became a target by those in the former Confederacy who believed they had waged the gallant fight against terrible odds. Longstreet went from a rebel to a

scalawag and his legacy became one focused upon Gettysburg to the point almost all other achievements in the war shrank to insignificance.⁷⁵

Longstreet became remembered for what he did or did not do at Gettysburg, leaving history to evaluate his legacy based on the Pennsylvania Campaign. It is interesting to wonder if Longstreet, who only served about one more day of combat at his full capacity after Tennessee before being wounded by his own men in the Wilderness Campaign, did not suffer guilt over Gettysburg but rather worried continuously about his performance in Tennessee. Interestingly, when given the opportunity to muse openly about the happenings of the war, his thoughts often drifted back to the events in the Western Theater in late 1863 and one-fifth of his memoir is devoted to the time in Georgia and Tennessee where he once claimed existed the last chance for a Confederate victory.⁷⁶ It is important to reassess Longstreet's importance beyond that of three days in July on the fields around Gettysburg. Did Longstreet worry over Gettysburg the way postwar generals trading in Lost Cause mythology did? Or was Longstreet so shattered by his failure as an independent commander in Tennessee that he was never the same? The answers to these questions could offer an additional viewpoint on Longstreet and support a greater critical eye on Civil War memory in terms of how the Lost Cause years painted current understanding of this vital conflict in the history of the United States.

Few individuals live to see their wildest dreams come to fruition. Most must cope with that shocking moment when reality collides with desire, when one realizes their grandest ambitions may remain out of reach and they are forced to reassess their life goals. For James

⁷⁵ WM. L. Richter, "James Longstreet: From Rebel to Scalawag," *The Journal of Louisiana Historical Association* 11, no. 3 (Summer, 1970): 215.

⁷⁶ Henry W. Grady, "General Longstreet: His Reminiscences of the War Between the States." Originally printed on August 2, 1879 in the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, edited by Peter Cozzens and reprinted in *Civil War Times* (April 2010), 35.

Longstreet, that fateful realization occurred not at Gettysburg in July 1863, but in Tennessee that fall. Moxley Sorrel, who served as Longstreet's chief of staff and functioned as his right hand for most of the war, certainly believed his former commander quietly worried about what he had failed to accomplish in East Tennessee more than any other wartime event. When viewing Longstreet's memoirs and the lengthy concentration on the events in Tennessee, Sorrel remarked, "Its recital had apparently occupied him more than any part of the four years' war."⁷⁷ This project takes a fresh look at Longstreet's confidence by acknowledging he viewed Fort Sanders and his campaign in the West, rather than Gettysburg, as his greatest individual disappointment.

⁷⁷ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 182.

Chapter 2

Two famous Georgians met for an interview on a hot summer day in July 1879.

Philadelphia Weekly Times' editor Alexander K. McClure dispatched the interviewer, a twenty-nine-year-old Henry Grady, who would become famous for encouraging the developing "New South" to rise from the ashes of Civil War. The assignment's objective was to continue adding to the narrative begun in McClure's "Annals of the War" series. The interview's subject was at the time the far more controversial Georgian, James Longstreet, who in 1879 worked as the postmaster in Gainesville, Georgia. McClure realized the public clamored for more stories of the Civil War that could move copies of his publication, but Longstreet carried the added interest of a veteran the public either loved or hated. In the years since the war ended, Longstreet's political leanings and writings combined with champions of the Lost Cause who blamed him for the loss at Gettysburg had caused his reputation to plummet with some and improve with others. Another Longstreet interview, McClure undoubtedly thought, would surely garner interest with readers. Many other editors believed the same about Longstreet as the former Confederate commander appeared often in newspapers around the country as the years passed and the twentieth century approached.

When Grady arrived at the country post office in Gainesville, where Longstreet had apparently settled with the intention to engage as a Republican in postwar Georgia state politics, he proceeded to meet with the former Confederate general to conduct a "long and easy talk" covering the war.¹ Over the next twenty years, Longstreet would remain in Gainesville more and more between his travels, spending time working in his vineyard near his farmhouse and

¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 382.

engaging with more reporters, one of whom described the former general in his later years as “a big, old man, stopping a little now and slow of gait” with hair as “white as snow.” Another of Longstreet’s passions in Gainesville became the operation of The Piedmont Hotel, where he would go to great lengths to ensure his guests were comfortable. For example, he was known for climbing three flights of stairs simply to bring someone an apple.² Despite the controversies surrounding Longstreet in the decades after the war, many people of Gainesville appeared proud of one of their most famous residents as numerous reporters strolled the quiet streets inquiring about the former rebel.³

Grady’s interview reached readers on August 2, 1879, revealing Longstreet had lost none of the blunt and bold talk he exhibited throughout his life and career. He parried Grady’s question on Southern troops revealing more valor on the battlefield. He suggested Joseph Johnston was the best Southern commander and Ulysses S. Grant the North’s most capable. He also postulated the Confederate government failed because it did not concentrate troops. When asked about the decisive battles of the war, Longstreet said the Confederacy only had one chance—victory in the West—after Gettysburg and repeatedly discussed examples from Chickamauga in open-ended questions, and he once again expressed his opposition to the invasion of Pennsylvania, an opinion he had shared many times and in different ways in the postwar years. Throughout the interview, Longstreet revealed an unwavering confidence in expressing his viewpoints on missed opportunities, hinting toward his failed operation in Eastern Tennessee over the winter of 1863 to 1864, more than a decade after the war ended, insinuating he still harbored regret from the failure of his detachment to the West. “Once after [Gettysburg]

² Editor, “Longstreet’s Old Age,” *The New York Times*, December 16, 1888.

³ Hamlin Garland, “Gen. James Longstreet,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, May 30, 1897, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress.

there was a chance (a bare chance) of saving the Confederacy,” Longstreet responded to one of Grady’s questions. “This was after the Battle of Chickamauga, which was in many respects the most brilliant victory of the war. The enemy was more thoroughly put to rout here than before or since. If ever there was an occasion that demanded pursuit pell-mell, this was the time. The Federals were rushing back on Chattanooga in the utmost confusion ... We might actually have entered Chattanooga with the flying Federals and thus recovered the key to Georgia and East Tennessee.” Despite his age, Longstreet still appeared to exude the confidence in his opinions and abilities that had characterized most of his life.⁴

Confidence and the ability to take charge was never a problem for Longstreet. One biography took this attribute to another level and described it as “excessive stubbornness.”⁵ The origins of this self-confidence trace back to his formative years when events and individuals helped steer Longstreet on the military path he would follow the rest of his life, leading into the chaos and terror of combat with more experience under fire than many other Civil War officers. During the war with Mexico, Longstreet faced the brutal cost of frontal assaults and the bloody reality of hand-to-hand combat. The prior combat experience also provided support for Longstreet’s belief in his ability and willingness to challenge other commanders in the face of the enemy. Some of that confidence may have been warranted as historians have labeled Longstreet as “the best corps commander in the Confederacy and one of the best on both sides.”⁶ Moreover, his former enemies after the war often commented on how the boys in blue feared

⁴ Henry W. Grady, “General Longstreet: His Reminiscences of the War Between the States.” Originally printed on August 2, 1879 in the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, edited by Peter Cozzens and reprinted in *Civil War Times* (April 2010): 32-39.

⁵ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 3.

⁶ R.L. DiNardo, “James Longstreet, the Modern Soldier: A Board Assessment,” in *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy*, ed. by R.L. DiNardo and Albert A. Nofi (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 42.

Longstreet's presence on the battlefield. "When we heard that Longstreet was coming," one Union officer commented, "we always knew we had a fight ahead, for whether he was supported by a single regiment or half the Confederate Army, his boys went into battle with the determination to win or die."⁷ Union hero Ulysses S. Grant, Longstreet's friend and former classmate, also allegedly "wholesomely feared" Longstreet and focused on his presence in East Tennessee in late 1863 and early 1864 as his "chief concern."⁸

The desire to enter the military arrived early in life. Longstreet was born on January 8, 1821, in the Edgefield district of South Carolina on the border of Georgia and was named after his father, a planer, who dreamt of sending his namesake to West Point for army service. His family soon moved to northeastern Georgia, establishing Longstreet's lifelong identity as a Georgian. While spending those early years on the family plantation, Longstreet spent time alone wandering the forest when he finished his chores. As a result, he allegedly grew comfortable with silence and contemplating his thoughts before speaking—a trait he would retain for the rest of his life as many future colleagues would comment on his relatively reserved nature.⁹ When he was nine, Longstreet moved to live with his aunt and uncle, Augustus and Frances, and started attending Richmond County Academy in 1830. Whether Longstreet graduated from that school is unclear, but it seems evident much of his early education came from the institution.¹⁰

⁷ Helen Longstreet, "Following the Bugles of War Over America's Battlefields," Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 15 Folder 211 "Speeches and Civil War," Savannah, Georgia.

⁸ Helen Longstreet, "Grant and Longstreet in East Tennessee," Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 15 Folder 211 "Speeches and Civil War," Savannah, Georgia.

⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 7.

¹⁰ Gordon Sawyer, *James Longstreet: Before Manassas and After Appomattox* (Alpharetta, Georgia: Book Logix, 2005, 2014), 15.

Augustus, a “talented, well-educated, and personable man,” spent his childhood wanting to “outrun, outjump, outshoot, throw down any man.”¹¹

Like Augustus before him, Longstreet gravitated toward the active pastimes rather than focusing on books. This is not to say he did not excel in certain subjects, like reading, but the young man preferred being outdoors rather than studying. Since his favorite books focused on Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, and George Washington, one could almost imagine the future general engaging in playful imaginary battles on the farm when he should have been focused on other endeavors. He harbored a desire to serve his country in an active way, not read about events later, and possibly went to sleep after those youthful days in the sun dreaming of glory on the battlefield after vanquishing his foe for his country, holding his country’s flag as he planted it on the enemy’s position.¹² “I had more interest in the school of the soldier, horsemanship, sword exercise, and the outside game of foot-ball than in academic courses,” he recalled.¹³

Because they maintained correspondence for years, Augustus Longstreet impacted his nephew’s political beliefs as well. Augustus, President of Emory College as well as a preacher and famous Southern writer, took an interest in his nephew’s education. Augustus believed in the right of nullification, standing with John C. Calhoun’s belief in a state’s power to nullify a federal law.¹⁴ He embraced the younger Longstreet as a member of the immediate family and

¹¹ Bishop O.P. Fitzgerald, *Judge Longstreet: A Life Sketch* (Nashville, Tennessee: Barbee and Smith, Agents, Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891), 16; Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 23.

¹² Helen D. Longstreet, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in the Light of the Official Records* (Gainesville, Georgia: Published by the Author, 1904), 98.

¹³ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 3.

¹⁴ Bishop O.P. Fitzgerald, *Judge Longstreet: A Life Sketch*. Nashville, Tennessee: Barbee and Smith, Agents, Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1891), 73.

Longstreet once claimed Augustus had been “more than a father” to him.¹⁵ Despite the early attention from Augustus that would suggest an early interest in academics, Longstreet still always preferred fishing and “chasing rabbits” over studying.¹⁶

However, Longstreet’s life soon took a tragic turn. When he was twelve, he lost his father, James, during a cholera epidemic. His mother moved the family first to Augusta, Georgia, and, later, to northern Alabama where, as a nearly six-foot-tall sixteen-year-old, he fulfilled his late father’s dream and gained admission to West Point.¹⁷ The “happiest day of his life was when Congressmen Reuben Chapman told him he would receive the appointment as a cadet.”¹⁸ The institution was one of the greatest in the nation, but life for cadets centered on routine and discipline—characteristics that would prove difficult for the young Longstreet.¹⁹ The appointment came through the work of Longstreet’s cousin in Alabama, who pushed Longstreet for admission to the prestigious military academy. In the absence of a father during these important years, historian Glenn Tucker contends Augustus became an even more important mentor to Longstreet than Benjamin Hallowell was to Robert E. Lee.²⁰ As a cadet, Longstreet reveled in active pursuits like games and learning skills that would impact the life of a soldier rather than an academic. He graduated sixty out of the sixty-two graduating members of the class

¹⁵ Fitzgerald, 174.

¹⁶ Helen D. Longstreet, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in the Light of the Official Records* (Gainesville, Georgia: Published by the Author, 1904), 98.

¹⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 3.

¹⁸ Helen Longstreet, *Longstreet, Soldier and Citizen*, Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 15 Folder 211 “Speeches and Civil War,” Savannah, Georgia.

¹⁹ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier—A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 27.

²⁰ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg*, (Dayton, Ohio: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1982), 161. Benjamin H. Hallowell was an educator who worked with Lee before he entered West Point, where latter would ultimately graduate second in his class. Hallowell spoke highly of Lee and his qualities in Frederick Warren Alexander’s 1912 work *Stratford Hall and the Lees*. On page 206 of this book, Hallowell is quoted referring to Lee as “the most exemplary student in every respect. He was never behind time in his studies, never failed in a single recitation, was perfectly observant of the rules and regulations of the institution; was gentlemanly, unobtrusive, and respectful in all his deportment to teachers and fellow-students. His specialty was finishing up.”

of 1842, alongside the likes of future Civil War generals P.G.T. Beauregard, Irvin McDowell, Braxton Bragg, Lafayette McLaws and W.J. Hardee.²¹

Longstreet was an imposing figure and voted the most handsome cadet at West Point. Such accolades did nothing to enhance his interest in academics and he struggled in subjects that he did not view as necessary to the life of a soldier.²² In nearly every subject, Longstreet lingered at the bottom of the list for his performance. In some subjects, Longstreet grumbled that a “soldier could not find use for such appliances,” so he did not put much effort into the subject or its coursework.²³ A good example of Longstreet’s academic ability to excel if he put his mind into it was the examination on the use of pulleys, revealing Longstreet could shine at subjects once he deemed them practical or when the only alternative was failing the course. Longstreet fared better in the subjects of artillery, engineering, and infantry tactics. Still, he never reached the top of the class on any of these subjects nor was he a perfectly behaved student as he racked up demerits for violations ranging from absence to causing a disturbance during study hours. As biographer Jeffry Wert noted, “Longstreet was neither a model student nor a gentleman.”²⁴ It was not until the genuine possibility of failure that Longstreet found the motivation to finish his studies.²⁵ At the age of twenty-one, Longstreet graduated from West Point in 1842 to receive a commission as a brevet second lieutenant.

²¹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 4.

²² Helen D. Longstreet, *Lee and Longstreet at High Tide: Gettysburg in the Light of the Official Records* (Gainesville, Georgia: Published by the Author, 1904), 100.

²³ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 3.

²⁴ Jeffry Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 30-31.

²⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 8.

Always known for enjoying social gatherings, Longstreet encountered many officers at West Point and in the Army with whom he would engage in the monumental years to come including a lifelong friend in Ulysses S. Grant, whom he described as a man with a “generous heart, a lovable character, a valued friend.”²⁶ They both loved a good time playing cards, laughing, joking and smoking.²⁷ However, Longstreet also gave the impression Grant did not impress at first sight, describing the “fragile form” he met as a cadet with “girlish modesty” in his hesitancy with certain activities and “a bullish devotion to duty.”²⁸ Grant’s tender nature combined with the initials of U.S. Grant made him the target of friendly ribbing between the cadets, earning the future Union general the lifelong nickname of “Sam” in reference to the “Uncle Sam.” Looking forward in time, the friendship certainly takes on the tale of a tragedy in the making. Longstreet later resigned his commission as an officer to join a rebellion bent on tearing apart the United States. On the other hand, even as a West Point cadet Grant detested traitors, growing visibly angry when he visited a home once inhabited by Benedict Arnold.²⁹ Both men lingered at the bottom of their class. For his part, Grant seemed more excited about attending West Point because it provided the opportunity to visit great nearby cities rather than for the chance to attend the academy and did not harbor grand ambitions for a life in the military.³⁰ By comparison, Longstreet’s family had encouraged him to seek a career in the military since he was a young man, and the opportunity had arrived.³¹

²⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 5.

²⁷ Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 42.

²⁸ P.J. Moran, in the *Atlanta Constitution*, “Grant and Longstreet: The Ex-Confederate General Talks of Their Lifelong Intimacy,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1890: 10.

²⁹ Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 20-21.

³⁰ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 27.

³¹ Helen Longstreet, *Longstreet, Soldier and Citizen*, Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 15 Folder 211 “Speeches and Civil War,” Savannah, Georgia.

Longstreet began his service with the U.S. Army in the Fourth Infantry and was stationed at the Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis, Missouri. Grant joined him a year later during this first assignment and their friendship strengthened as Longstreet recalled “the ties thus formed have never been broken, but there was a charm that held us together, of which the world has never heard.”³² Officers regularly left the barracks to attend social gatherings in St. Louis, meaning the young men in uniform had opportunities to make friends and potentially find a spouse.³³ Longstreet described the city as “hospitable” and commented on the enduring pleasure of its “charming belles.”³⁴ During this period, the pair rode to the home of Frederick Dent, where Grant would meet his future wife, Julia Dent, whom he married five years later.³⁵ Around the same time, Longstreet met the first love of his life, Maria Louisa Garland, who was the daughter of the regiment’s colonel, John Garland. Rumors circulated that their courtship did not result in marriage sooner because Colonel Garland allegedly would not allow his daughter to marry anyone below the rank of captain. Whether this was true is impossible to ascertain with certainty, yet it does suggest a possible motivation for the youthful and ambitious Longstreet to achieve notoriety that would result in a swift promotion to make his future father-in-law proud.³⁶ There is also the possibility Longstreet marrying into the Garland family helped him gain swift promotions in the years before the Civil War, leading one historian to suggestion nepotism may have aided in Longstreet’s ascension in the ranks.³⁷

³² P.J. Moran, in the *Atlanta Constitution*, “Grant and Longstreet: The Ex-Confederate General Talks of Their Lifelong Intimacy,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1890: 10.

³³ Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 29.

³⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 9.

³⁷ William Garrett Piston, “Petticoats, Promotions, and Military Assignments: Favoritism and the Antebellum Career of James Longstreet,” in in *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy*, ed. by R.L. DiNardo and Albert A. Nofi (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 53-75.

Although the first years with the army were uneventful, clouds of war loomed on Longstreet's horizon by the time he received promotion to second lieutenant and was reassigned to the Eighth Infantry at St Augustine, Florida.³⁸ Tensions mounted for years between the United States and its neighbor to the south, Mexico. The Texas territory had revolted against its Mexican government in 1836, resulting in the infamous battles of the Alamo and Goliad before culminating in the rebel victory over General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. Texas believed it had gained its independence even if the belligerents could not agree on the borders. After several years operating as an independent nation and offering itself for annexation, the United States accepted in 1845 and officially voted to annex the Texas territory into the Union. Such an action infuriated the Mexican government since they had never officially recognized the independence of its Texas territory, but the ambition of some in the United States government seemed "limitless."³⁹ Newly elected President James Polk, a Manifest Destiny politician eyeing Mexico's Northern Territories, did not concern himself with the tense affairs and believed a war, if it happened, would be a swift affair.⁴⁰

Polk was not alone in his prediction of a quick conflict. Both sides contemplated a war most politicians believed would be short when it ultimately lasted longer and became more expensive than predicted. Nearly four-thousand American troops massed at Corpus Christi in preparation for the impending conflict even while the talks to avert violence continued.

Longstreet honed his experience instructing the troops as the weeks passed while also dealing with the challenges of army camp such as coping with serious storms and keeping morale high.

³⁸ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 7.

³⁹ Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2018), 250.

⁴⁰ Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*. Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: [Dallas, TX]: Yale University Press; Published in Association with the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University, 2008), 253.

The winter passed as the officers tried to keep their inexperienced troops entertained with a live theater as they awaited the results of the talks between Mexico and the United States. Once negotiations between the two countries appeared to stall, Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to take his so-called “Army of Observation,” later known as the “Army of Occupation,” into Texas and cross the disputed border of the Nueces River in an action many officers believed was an action to instigate war with Mexico.⁴¹

Longstreet would be among those who marched south in 1846, and although they may not have realized it, they would soon experience their first taste of combat. Crossing the Nueces River and entering what Mexico viewed as their territory became a surreal experience for the American soldiers. Where once an observer could witness Mexican farmers utilizing the land to their benefit, the soldiers now walked through an eerily deserted land. Comanche warriors raided the territory so often to fuel their empire north into the Great Plains that Mexican farmers could no longer thrive. When the farmers looked to their government for aid, their leaders could not respond with ample assistance.⁴² Longstreet would experience nearly barren lands stripped of resources later in the Civil War, but the march into Mexico was the first time he witnessed lands with little or no sustenance. He viewed similar scenes years later in East Tennessee when his men and animals nearly starved.

The American forces established a base known as Fort Texas along the disputed banks of the Rio Grande. From Matamoros, the Mexicans fielded a responding force of about five thousand to counter Taylor’s presence. Both sides proceeded with a series of posturing, sending

⁴¹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 8; Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 57.

⁴² Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 71.

marauding and scouting parties while exchanging artillery barrages that became Longstreet's first experience near hostile fire. Scouts obtained information on the opposition by slipping through the dense and difficult terrain. In April 1846, the brewing tension boiled over into violence when an American force was ambushed, and the entire party was killed or captured. The event sent waves of excitement through the army camp for all believed the long-awaited war had arrived. More heated exchanges took place between the artillery of both sides. In the first major battle of Palo Alto, when Longstreet heard the thunder of cannons commencing and described the entire battle as more of an artillery duel, he experienced the anxiety and excitement of soldiers awaiting their chance to fight.⁴³

Although outnumbered, Taylor capitalized on his modern and light "flying" artillery to relocate across the battlefield with "terrible effect" on the masses of Mexican soldiers.⁴⁴ The Mexican cannons did not have the ammunition or the trained horses to maneuver their guns, and much of the fire they managed to return toward the Americans fell short or arrived so slowly infantrymen stepped aside to dodge the cannon balls. "They would strike the ground long before they reached our line," Grant remembered, "and ricocheted through the tall grass so slowly that the men would see them and open ranks and let them pass."⁴⁵

That is not to say all the Mexican fire was ineffective. Some American soldiers witnessed the deadly impact of a well-placed cannonball and the sight of a comrade's body coming apart. One grisly example from American soldier C.M. Reeves told of a soldier obliterated so completely that his teeth slammed into a nearby officer, "breaking his skin and causing enough

⁴³ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 9-12.

⁴⁴ Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*, Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: [Dallas, TX]: Yale University Press; Published in Association with the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University, 2008), 254.

⁴⁵ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 93.

pain to convince him that he had [also] been shot.”⁴⁶ While Longstreet did not later write many details of this artillery display, he faced the grim and brutal reality of combat for the first time on May 8, 1846. It is important to note these experiences of witnessing the bloody truth of war started Longstreet’s journey toward later being described during the Civil War as having “no superior in either army as a battlefield tactician.”⁴⁷ These events advanced his tactical knowledge beyond the theoretical found in books and lessons at West Point and into the execution of orders in the face of the enemy. Longstreet wrote very little on his feelings of his time in Mexico, leaving one biography to describe this as “an unfortunate void.” However, the same writer claimed, like many future Civil War generals, “Longstreet learned tactics and strategy under actual combat conditions on the battlefields of the Mexican War.”⁴⁸

The next day Longstreet moved toward another clash with an opponent attempting to retreat to Matamoros. Marching in the rough country exposed him to the potential misery of leading men during an extended exposure to the elements and the reality war might not be the glorious enterprise many young men expect when they first put on the uniform. On the way to participate in his first major engagement of the war, the Battle of Resaca de la Palma, mosquitoes plagued the men and swarmed in thick clouds while they listened to the howling wolves stalking their every movement. Sickness quickly proved to be the deadliest foe in Mexico. Distraction also demonstrated its lethal effect as the inexperienced soldiers’ carelessness took its toll. For example, Lieutenant J.E. Blake died from an accidental discharge while tossing his pistol to the ground. Along the side of the road near a stream entitled Resaca de la Palma which would later

⁴⁶ Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 79.

⁴⁷ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959, 1987), 193.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 38.

bear the battle's name, Longstreet also experienced what may have been his first glimpse of a civilian casualty when his battalion passed by the body of a young Mexican woman. "She had ceased to breathe," Longstreet recalled, "but blood heat was still in her body, and her expression life like. A profusion of black hair covered her shoulders and person, the only covering to her waist. This sad spectacle, so unlike our thoughts of battle, unnerved us a little."⁴⁹ Grant, too, witnessed the horrors of combat, writing that the enemy fire "whizzing thick and fast" around him did not spark fear until the man next to him was hit in the face and the force the impact tore his jaw apart.⁵⁰

These events became a frightening omen for things to come. More American soldiers would die from sickness and injuries away from the battlefield than from combat during the Mexican American War. Almost as many soldiers suffered injuries that left them incapacitated and forced to return home. On both sides, the small armies suffered extremely high casualties leaving the war with Mexico with the label as one of the deadliest the United States ever fought.⁵¹ And it would be a sobering introduction to combat for many future officers of the American Civil War like Longstreet, who soon received promotion to the position of company commander—a testament to how his superior officers viewed the young man's capabilities.⁵²

Although he published his recollections decades later, Longstreet's observations on his first engagement with the enemy offer a telling glimpse into what the man admired and, possibly, the kind of soldier he wanted to emulate. On the other hand, this story may have been

⁴⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 11-12.

⁵⁰ John Y. Simon, "Ulysses S. Grant to Julia Dent, May 11, 1846," *Volumes of The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1967, Digital Publisher: Mississippi State University Libraries, <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/usg-volumes>.

⁵¹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 752.

⁵² Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 11.

Longstreet's attempt at showcasing he was not the only officer who, when necessary, altered orders in the heat of battle. Aiming to oust the Mexican army from Texas, General Taylor deployed his force and ordered the cavalry to charge the enemy artillery that supported a stubborn defense of the position. Terrain made maneuvering difficult and added to the confusion. During the chaotic battle of two forces experiencing combat for the first time, Longstreet's attention fell upon his colleagues Lieutenant Randolph Ridgely and Captain Charles May. An imposing figure atop his black stallion, May prepared to carry out Taylor's order and charge the position when Ridgely shouted, "Hold on Charlie, till I draw their fire." Ridgely proceeded to attack with his six cannons in hopes it would reveal the Mexican cannons, delaying the execution of Taylor's order, who repeated it when seeing the orders not executed. After Ridgely's attack, the cavalry charged forward and successfully took the position, capturing an enemy general, Romulo Diaz de La Vega, in the process. Years later, Longstreet suggested Ridgely's action as the most courageous he had ever witnessed, and he ended the retelling of his service in the war in his memoirs with this story, deciding to highlight this event over his lengthy and, at times, bloody service remaining in the Mexican American War. Since he published the memoirs later in life when he had many detractors attacking his performance in the Civil War, Longstreet could have been responding to his critics who claimed he often bristled at orders and this story served to showcase the fact such alterations to battle plans during an engagement was standard practice in the face of an enemy. Regardless of his reasoning for devoting time and pages to this event later in life, it is interesting to note Longstreet admired the cavalry's success after Ridgely's delay in complying with Taylor's order to charge, possibly learning a lesson regarding a certain fluidity toward orders on the battlefield to be remembered for future engagements.⁵³ When

⁵³ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 11-14.

wearing Confederate gray years later, Longstreet often clashed with other commanders and his superiors when carrying out actions on the battlefield, drawing the ire of many colleagues, superior officers, and, later, writers.

The first two battles of the U.S.-Mexican War resulted in two American victories. The Mexican morale took a serious hit, and some survivors deserted their posts.⁵⁴ American soldiers also disappeared from the ranks, melting into the countryside while others actually defected to fight for Mexico—some of whom would be captured and executed as the Americans closed in on Mexico City later in the war, providing another ugly truth of war for Longstreet and all young officers experiencing a military campaign for the first time.⁵⁵ The dangers of desertion or being labeled a traitor did not prevent Longstreet from leaving the United States later in life to join the rebellion. It is possible those involved in these initial battles believed the talk of a short war would come true and hoped to soon return home. Even Longstreet claimed he took time at the end of the battle of Resaca de la Palma to stare at a daguerreotype to gaze into the “charming smile” he left behind and with whom he possible hope to soon reunite.⁵⁶ But Longstreet’s war was just beginning or, more accurately, had not yet officially begun. And his confidence was on the rise.

After news of the sporadic violence along the border reached Washington, the United States Congress voted for war with Mexico on May 13, 1846. Most Americans and their politicians resolved to support the troops even if some believed the government “had abused

⁵⁴ Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 82.

⁵⁵ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 159.

⁵⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 14.

their trust in pursuing the path to war.”⁵⁷ The press utilized the relatively new invention of the telegraph to capitalize on war correspondents sent to the front. For the first time in the history of the United States, Americans read about the events of their military soon after they occurred. Entire newspapers covered the events from the war with gory details printed sometimes only days after they occurred. Americans read not only of the battles but of the foreign country they had sent their soldiers to invade with editors explaining the meanings of the names “Palo Alto” and “Resaca de la Palma.”⁵⁸ Others told of excited accounts focused on the previously unseen exotic spiders that were a “bright yellow color” with horns on the body.⁵⁹ However, most of the newsprint focused on the realities of war. A graphic account told of the events at Resaca de la Palma by Lieutenant C. D. Jordan of the Eight Infantry who engaged in hand-to-hand combat, receiving three “bayonet stabs” in the fray.⁶⁰ As one correspondent after Resaca de la Palma acknowledged after leaving the field hospital, “I left the hospital shocked with the horrors of war.”⁶¹ As the sun set at Resaca de la Palma, Longstreet rested having experienced his first day of the carnage of combat, watching friends and comrades slain on the battlefield.

The U.S. government knew it was unprepared to fight an offensive war with the paltry number of professional soldiers it currently had in uniform after the initial campaigns. In 1845, the year before the Mexican War, the total number of enlisted soldiers serving in all branches of the military amounted to less than nineteen thousand soldiers.⁶² As a result, citizen soldiers carried the brunt of the fighting. These amateur soldiers came into service for this war and

⁵⁷ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 763.

⁵⁸ John Gatewood, “Mexican Names,” *The Sentinel of the Valley* 26, no. 39 (June 18, 1846): 1.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Row, “Our Army in Mexico,” *The Somerset Herald* 4, no. 33 (June 30, 1846): 2.

⁶⁰ Loring Guild, “Incidents on the Battle Field,” *Southport Telegraph* 6, no. 52 (June 23, 1846): 1.

⁶¹ Jonathan Row, “Our Army in Mexico,” *The Somerset Herald* 4, no. 33 (June 30, 1846): 1.

⁶² United States Department of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1997), 65.

returned home when the Mexican forces were defeated. Armies became symbols of their nation and embodied many of their ideals. Previous wars like the War of 1812 saw these volunteer units comprised of militias, but that conflict revealed the militia did not favor campaigns far from home and were prone to desertion. Instead, Polk knew he needed volunteer regiments that differed from the militia, yet they were still recruited from their states and volunteered as large groups often from their communities. Many lulls in the fighting resulted in men from one state insulting the other, resulting in frequent fisticuffs in their camps.⁶³ Being joined by recruits during the war against Mexico, Longstreet gained invaluable experience leading a diverse group of men from all walks of life while learning what such men could—and could not—accomplish in war.

“War fever” spread across the United States in 1846 as publications glorified “the bravery and sacrifice of America’s gallant soldiers who were avenging the nation’s honor on exotic battlefields” reached readers hungry for news.⁶⁴ Such an atmosphere was a thrilling prospect for an ambitious Longstreet who had long yearned for the chance of glory on the battlefield. “Excitement in the United States increased as the suspense continued,” he remembered about those days before the war began. “... We looked with confidence for a fight and the flow of blood.”⁶⁵ Self-assurance certainly increased after victories; however, the reality of battle did not appear to breed an enjoyment of war’s glory for all. “I believe we are bound to beat the Mexicans whenever and wherever we meet them, no matter how large their numbers,”

⁶³ Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 91-96.

⁶⁴ Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005), 586.

⁶⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 8.

Grant wrote in August 1846. “But then wherever there are battles a great many must suffer, and for the sake of the little glory gained I do not care to see it.”⁶⁶

News of the victories appeared in more newspapers across the country. Taylor eventually moved on to Monterrey, the largest urban center in northern Mexico, and laid siege to the city. Longstreet witnessed the logistical complexities of successfully operating a large force in hostile territory, a skill he would later put to great use when he served the Confederacy. The challenges of keeping a large force fed and well-armed forced Taylor to improvise, sometimes hiring citizen mule teams to keep the supplies coming.⁶⁷ By September 19, Taylor prepared to assault with about six thousand soldiers the well-defended Monterrey bolstered by the unfinished cathedral structure soldiers labeled the Citadel.⁶⁸ In stark contrast to the previous battles, the initial effort to seize Monterrey was a bloodbath for both sides as the struggle became mired in close quarters fighting that raged for hours. In the men directly under his command, Taylor had suffered more than four-hundred casualties in the fierce struggle. Brigadier General William Worth in command of the Second Division that included the Eight Infantry, of which Longstreet was a part, split off from Taylor to launch an attack on the undefended side of the city and became the Americans’ primary attack.⁶⁹

Before the sun illuminated the city early on the morning of September 22, Worth handpicked members of the Eighth Infantry for a surprise attack on Fort Libertad on the western approach to the city that called for climbing nine-hundred feet ascent. When they came within

⁶⁶ John Y. Simon, “Ulysses S. Grant to Julia Dent, August 14, 1846,” *Volumes of The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1967, Digital Publisher: Mississippi State University Libraries, <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/usg-volumes>.

⁶⁷ Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 134.

⁶⁸ Stephen A. Carney, and Center of Military History, *Gateway South: The Campaign for Monterrey* (The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Mexican War, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2005), 19.

⁶⁹ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 112

one-hundred yards, a Mexican sentry noticed the approaching Americans and sounded the alarm. The members of the Eighth Infantry charged with bayonets gleaming before them and took the position. Stunned by the early morning assault, the defenders throughout the city soon collapsed.⁷⁰

Longstreet led his company in the assault starting at 3 a.m., engaging in fierce hand-to-hand combat to seize Fort Libertad around the same time Taylor took the Citadel. The U.S. suffered more than five hundred casualties taking the city. It is unclear exactly how Longstreet felt about his participation in the battle since he skipped over the event entirely in his memoirs and rarely wrote about his detailed experiences in Mexico, but the involvement combating the enemy lancers and taking Fort Libertad was a significant moment in the young officer's career. One historian suggested Longstreet learned the human cost of launching offensive tactics and, moving forward, Longstreet "could always be expected to show a high degree of empathy with his men."⁷¹ In command of Company A of his regiment, he maintained command during the fierce fighting around the city that included surviving an enemy cavalry charge "skillfully and quickly." After taking Fort Libertad, he led his troops clearing the enemy in "deadly work in the city's streets," losing one of his men in the process.⁷² His commanding officers took notice of his accomplishments in the operation, swiftly promoting him to adjutant of the Eight Infantry and, on February 23, 1847, to the rank of first lieutenant.⁷³

Other individuals involved at Monterrey who would make a substantial impact on the Civil War—and Longstreet's career—also played a part in the battle including Braxton Bragg

⁷⁰ Stephen A. Carney, and Center of Military History, *Gateway South: The Campaign for Monterrey* (The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Mexican War, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2005), 28.

⁷¹ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 7.

⁷² Jeffry Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 41.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

and Jefferson Davis.⁷⁴ Officers recognized the latter for keeping his men, most of whom had enlisted from around his home, in “good cheer” and leading them with distinction at Monterrey that General Taylor recognized. The determined American effort that slowly made progress combined with civilian casualties implored the Mexican leadership to call a ceasefire to negotiate a withdrawal.⁷⁵ The sad state of the Mexican forces, especially the cavalry mounted on “half-staved horses that did not look as if they could carry their riders out of town,” caused many of the American soldiers to view their foe with pity.⁷⁶

After the fierce urban fighting concluded by October 1846, Taylor controlled most of northeastern Mexico and had, with these impressive victories, become the “darling of the Whig press.”⁷⁷ However, support for the war in the United States faded. Hopes of a quick war dissipated with the realities of invading a foreign country against a foe unwilling to give up. Despite the poorly equipped Mexican forces, many American soldiers witnessed brave stands by their enemy that was only betrayed by the lackluster performances of their inexperienced officers.⁷⁸ Reports of atrocities committed on both sides reached the press. The administration decided the time had come to strike at the heart of Mexico in an effort to end the war quickly, and Longstreet would be at the front of this attempt.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Stephen A. Carney, and Center of Military History, *Gateway South: The Campaign for Monterrey* (The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Mexican War, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2005), 19.

⁷⁵ Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 138-139.

⁷⁶ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 117.

⁷⁷ Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*, Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven: [Dallas, TX]: Yale University Press; Published in Association with the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University, 2008), 255; Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 49.

⁷⁸ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 158.

⁷⁹ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 115-116.

General Winfield Scott, a hero from the War of 1812 organizing an invasion bent on taking Mexico City, took his cue from President Polk's original demand for a swift conclusion to the war and ordered Taylor to remain in Monterrey. Soon, Scott transferred some of Taylor's forces—including Longstreet and the Eight Infantry—under his command for the upcoming operation that would take a different invasion route. Scott also gathered junior officers to serve under his command for the campaign that included P.G.T. Beauregard, George McClellan, and Robert E. Lee. Longstreet's experience in the Mexican War may have intensified at Monterrey, but his involvement would only increase.⁸⁰

Scott's mission included landing at Vera Cruz as the first major amphibious assault in U.S. military history. He then planned to move into the interior of Mexico with the goal ultimately taking the enemy capital to force the country to negotiate. The flotilla reached the enemy shores on March 9, 1847, debarking on a small island named Sacrificios south of the walled city of Vera Cruz, and Longstreet's regiment marched into the first line of troops to attack the city.⁸¹ Mostly ineffective fire came from the Mexican defenses, with a notable exception of one unfortunate major being decapitated by a solid shot from Vera Cruz.⁸² An intense bombardment, with some of the guns positioned by Captain Robert E. Lee, pummeled the city's defenses for several days with the Mexicans only able to return ineffective fire in response.⁸³

Sixty-seven hundred projectiles landed in the city, which caught fire, swirling into a blaze filled

⁸⁰ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography*. (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 42.

⁸¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 11; Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 123.

⁸² Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 124.

⁸³ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 140.

with shrieking victims. “My heart bled for the inhabitants,” Lee commented, “it was terrible to think of the women and children.”⁸⁴

A siege commenced until U.S. forces made a breach into the wall at the end of the month. At this point, the governor of Vera Cruz surrendered, and the Americans claimed five thousand prisoners and scores of artillery, small arms and ammunition.⁸⁵ The clash at Vera Cruz marked the beginning for Longstreet of a series of battles and skirmishes where he would accumulate more combat experience than he could have previously anticipated.

An idle army invited disease like yellow fever.⁸⁶ Combining this with the reality of penetrating the Mexican countryside without adequate supply, Scott decided to send his forces in piecemeal. Longstreet continued marching under Worth, and the soldiers endured searing heat that slowed their progress.⁸⁷ Scott’s army proceeded to march along the same route taken by Hernan Cortes three-hundred-twenty-eight years earlier on his way to conquering the Aztec Empire.⁸⁸

By April, Scott’s weary forces stopped three miles east of the Mexican positions at Cerro Gordo under General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Polk allowed Santa Anna to return to Mexico in hopes he would take control of Mexico and end the war. To Polk’s disappointment, Santa Anna proceeded to take over the war and had yet to make a difference at the helm because of continued in-fighting within Mexico. On April 18, Scott ordered an elaborate attack on the Mexican position. Worth’s forces, of which Longstreet commanded his company, charged, and

⁸⁴ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 781.

⁸⁵ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 124.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 125.

⁸⁷ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 141.

⁸⁸ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 782.

engaged in fierce fighting that intensified into a hand-to-hand struggle. The charge broke the Mexican position, leading to a retreat.⁸⁹ Officers later remembered the attack as one of perfect execution of a battle plan, and the surprise inflicted on Santa Anna's forces was complete.⁹⁰ While Longstreet did not write of this event, either, he once again experienced the horrors of close-quarter combat that shattered the Mexican forces, experiencing the brutality of a hand-to-hand struggle. "It was an unmitigated disaster," one Mexican soldier revealed in a letter. "As a defeat that is both complete and shameful; everything has been lost, nothing saved, absolutely nothing; not even hope."⁹¹

Despite this disastrous setback for Mexico that could have ended the war, the people and their struggling government refused to accept defeat. Scott proceeded to occupy Puebla as he awaited reinforcements to bolster his dwindling army. The truths of war convinced many volunteers they had seen enough and returned home after their one-year enlistment had expired.⁹² Scott refused to linger and continued battling toward Mexico City, skirmishes flashing occasionally in the hot summer sun. By August, Scott pressed close to the enemy capital and prepared to assault the Mexican positions at Churubusco with a two-pronged pincer movement aimed at smashing the forces between them led by Santa Anna. Scott ordered Worth's infantry to bring up the rear of the assault force and ultimately deliver the killing blow. As the battle raged, Scott believed, "Not an American—and we had less than a third of the enemy's numbers—had a

⁸⁹ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 144.

⁹⁰ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 128.

⁹¹ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 144.

⁹² Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 784.

doubt as to the result.⁹³ Many years later, Grant praised Scott's overall plan of attack as "faultless."⁹⁴

Worth's infantry assaulted a heavily defended position. Captain James Bomford ran toward the enemy followed closely by Longstreet hoisting the regimental flag. The Americans used one another's bodies, standing on the shoulders of their comrades, to reach the parapet. The assault's intensity was too much for the Mexican defenders to bear and they broke.⁹⁵ The Battle of Churubusco became one of the bloodiest clashes of the war. Officers once again recognized Longstreet with a promotion to breveted captain for "gallant and meritorious conduct."⁹⁶ Once he received these early promotions at the young age of twenty-five, Longstreet never again was "deprived a position of responsibility" while he served in uniform.⁹⁷ Although Longstreet had no way of knowing it at the time, the end of his service in the Mexican War was near.

After a brief ceasefire, the push for Mexico City continued. The Americans examined the ground still before them protecting Mexico City and focused on a ridge known as Chapultepec where an old palace had been built that was now used as the Mexican military academy. Buildings known as Molino del Ray lay at the base of Chapultepec where, on September 8, Worth's infantry once again clashed with the Mexican forces in a bloody two-hour struggle that saw nearly a quarter of the Americans engaged killed or wounded. Still, the Mexican forces

⁹³ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 152-154.

⁹⁴ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 139.

⁹⁵ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography*. (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 44.

⁹⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 12.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

withdrew.⁹⁸ In this violent clash, Longstreet once again demonstrated his bravery under fire and earned promotion to breveted major for gallantry.⁹⁹ Longstreet commented on the battle in an interview many years later that Grant also distinguished himself with a “superb coolness and courage under fire.”¹⁰⁰

In the aftermath, Scott held a council of war where they decided to assault the imposing Chapultepec. The endless confidence Scott projected in the previous battles started to wane when he admitted, “I have my misgivings.”¹⁰¹ Scott had no way of knowing Santa Anna had not adequately defended the position crucial to Mexico City’s security.¹⁰² Longstreet stared up at the walls atop Chapultepec, knowing he would soon lead his men up the slope.

Regardless of any apprehension, the attack went forward on September 12 and commenced with an artillery barrage that lasted the entire night. At 8 a.m. on the next morning, a massive infantry assault commenced. In the face of the imposing defenses on the heights of Chapultepec, Longstreet led his men forward. The three-pronged American assault overwhelmed the defenders as they sought refuge in the palace walls. The attackers, some seeking revenge for their fallen comrades killed at Molina del Rey, scaled ladders, and surged over the defense, offering no quarter to the Mexican troops as vicious hand-to-hand combat raged.¹⁰³ Longstreet

⁹⁸ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 157-158; It is interesting to note intelligence reports reaching Scott reported a flour mill at Molina del Rey had been used by the Mexicans to melt church bells into cannons. However, the report proved to be inaccurate. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 787.

⁹⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 12.

¹⁰⁰ P.J. Moran, in the *Atlanta Constitution*, “Grant and Longstreet: The Ex-Confederate General Talks of Their Lifelong Intimacy,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1890: 10.

¹⁰¹ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 158.

¹⁰² Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 787-788.

¹⁰³ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 158; Peter Guardino, *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War* (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 2018), 274.

neared the parapet, hoisting the regimental colors when an enemy musket ball struck his thigh. George Pickett, another future Confederate commander, grabbed the flag and planted it on the castle wall.¹⁰⁴ It would not be the last time Longstreet suffered a combat wound.

As Longstreet suffered, bleeding, and the sounds of battle raged around him, his company continued the assault with the rest of the American forces. Nearly every defending soldier died in Chapultepec's defense. Six teenage soldiers refused to surrender, and allegedly committed suicide by leaping to their deaths rather than being captured by the Americans.¹⁰⁵ The American flag soon fluttered in the sunlight from the heights of Chapultepec, visible to all Mexican citizens in the city who knew the war approached their streets.¹⁰⁶

Longstreet's war in Mexico ended that day. He remained wounded on the battlefield until being removed to a private home serving as a hospital. The painful wound healed slowly.¹⁰⁷ Later, he stayed in the city with the Escandon family, who served wounded Americans like Longstreet for several weeks. During this recovery, he fell in love with the daughter of the house and promised to return for her, but did not come back until 1898 when he returned with his second wife, Helen.¹⁰⁸ The wound finally improved, and he soon felt well enough to leave, demonstrating a willingness and ability to recover from serious wounds that he would display later in life.¹⁰⁹ He remained in Mexico City until December 10, recovering from the injuries, and undoubtedly contemplated all the violence, horror, fear and excitement he had experienced since

¹⁰⁴ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 12.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Calore, *The Texas Revolution and the U.S.-Mexican War: A Concise History* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2014), 158; these cadets are remembered today as the Los Ninos Heroes.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁰⁷ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography*. (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 45.

¹⁰⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 440.

¹⁰⁹ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography*. (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 45.

his war began at Palo Alto nineteen months earlier.¹¹⁰ If Longstreet wrote any letters during this time to provide an idea of his thought process or his reflection on his first nearly year and half of campaigning during wartime, they have apparently been lost to time.¹¹¹

The United States reached a peace with Mexico a few months later on February 2, 1848, with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Longstreet returned to the United States and married Maria Louisa Garland the next month, probably leaving out any details of the love he found in Mexico.¹¹²

While the United States military finished its campaign in Mexico, the war's impact reverberated for years in the minds of veterans and the country's politicians. Grant, who believed like others that the war with Mexico had been unjust, may have best summarized the impact of the Mexican War for the entire country when he wrote, "The Southern rebellion was largely the outgrowth of the Mexican war. Nations, like individuals, are punished for their transgressions."¹¹³ For his part, Longstreet left Mexican battlefields with hours of combat experience, leading small groups of men in dangerous charges, and learning how to project confidence when facing a foe that enjoyed superior numbers. He dodged the buzz of musket balls zipping through the air, felt his pulse pound in the desperate struggle of a close quarters struggle where you had to look you enemy in the eye, and heard the screams of men and horses dying in horrendous fashion.

Although the twenty-six-year-old had no way of knowing it at the time, the war with Mexico became the military training ground providing the knowledge he would carry forth into a

¹¹⁰ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 12.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹³ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 57.

war thirteen years later that engulfed men and material in unimaginable and unprecedented numbers. And in that war, Longstreet entered with the supreme conviction of an officer who had seen combat combined with the additional maturity of his forty years. For example in his first Civil War engagement at Blackburn's Ford on July 18, 1861, that preceded the Battle of Bull Run, the steadiness in combat he exhibited helped rally a line that wavered under enemy fire and the self-confidence in his abilities only strengthened.¹¹⁴ Without his time in the Mexican War, Longstreet may not have been able to demonstrate the coolness under fire for which he would become known for the rest of his life and that his soldiers would often recognize.

¹¹⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 23.

Chapter 3

A thunderous predawn barrage rattled windows in Charleston, bringing voice to the brewing animosity on April 12, 1861, that had been festering in the United States for decades. “I sprang out of bed,” Mary Chesnut wrote about the bombardment on Fort Sumter that began around 4 a.m. “And on my knees—prostrate—I prayed as I never prayed before.” As she listened to the “shells bursting,” Chesnut was not alone. The cacophony awakened other Charleston residents, who watched from rooftops with great excitement and trepidation.¹ Major Robert Anderson’s force on the island fort in the harbor had not surrendered, threatening legitimacy of the newly formed Confederate States of America. Anderson’s resolve forced Confederate President Jefferson Davis to act.

The long-awaited actions of secession and rebellion rippled through families across the nation as Americans attempted to determine their loyalty. Now, the rebel states had taken violent action with the attack, so the decision point for many had arrived in both North and South. “Nobody holds back,” a man wrote from Boston. “Civil war is freely accepted everywhere; by some with alacrity, as the only means of settling a controversy based on long-cherished hatreds; by others as something sent as a judgment from Heaven, like a flood or an earthquake; by all as inevitable, by all as the least of the evils among which we are permitted to choose, anarchy being the obvious, and perhaps the only alternative.”²

“Wild excitement” also spread across the South at the fall of Fort Sumter and many youths swept up into the fervor, trying to volunteer or reach the new Confederate capital,

¹ Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, Edited by C. Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press), 46.

² Henry Steele Commager, *The Blue and the Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants* (Crescent, 1995), 41.

Richmond, as soon as possible.³ One Texas man wrote that April he “advocated Secession, believing that we would have to fight to sustain [seceding]. I am ready to do it, and more than willing.”⁴ Others claimed women across the South “without exception all took the secession side.”⁵

Not all Southerners delighted at the development, however. “Everyone seems to have gone wild,” one Georgian remembered. “Nothing but war talk.”⁶ Augustus Longstreet implored South Carolinians to seek the peaceful road as tensions flared in early 1861 in the Charleston Harbor. “If all the forts were crammed full of men,” he argued, “they would not attack the city unless first attacked. If we were sure they would, we cannot prevent it; why, then, in the name of God, bring on a war of such fearful consequences? ... I implore you to let the first shot come from the enemy ... I would abandon [the forts] now if demanded ... or we shall be called cowards. Fools may so call you—no wise man will ... It never will end in a war if the South will be prudent, and we must let no Southern State begin it. And if, a Southern State is to begin it, let her not begin it on water.”⁷

James Longstreet, who had remained in the Army after the war with Mexico and been promoted to the rank of major in the Eight Infantry, had watched the events transpiring over the winter of 1860 to 1861 from more than 1,500 miles away with his soldiers in New Mexico. In the intervening years since the Mexican War, Longstreet had married Maria Louisa Garland and

³ Moxley Sorrel, G., *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 2; Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 36.

⁴ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 15.

⁵ Henry Steele Commager, *The Blue and the Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants* (Crescent, 1995), 62.

⁶ W.H. Andrews, *Footprints of a Regiment: A Recollections of the 1st Georgia Regulars, 1861-1865* (Atlanta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1992), 1.

⁷ Augustus Longstreet, “Judge Longstreet’s Appeal,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1861.

watched his family grow to four children while working in various positions across the western territories. His marriage to the daughter of a prominent officer, John Garland, who interestingly remained loyal to the Union until his death in 1861, may have had a positive impact on his advancement in the military, providing him with choice assignments and impressive promotions.⁸ In the immediate years before the war erupted in April 1861, Longstreet led men while combating marauding Comanche parties in Texas.⁹ He gained experience combating hostile tribes in the western territories, leading soldiers in harsh and unforgiving territory.¹⁰

Many other officers who would later play a role in the Civil War chose not to remain in the service. During these peace years, in an odd twist of fate, Longstreet crossed paths in 1858 with an old West Point friend in St. Louis during a card game they called "brag" when they were short one player. Another officer paused the games to search for the needed player, returning with a "man poorly dressed in citizen's clothes" who turned out on second glance to be his friend, Ulysses S. Grant, who had fared poorly in civilian life after leaving the service. The next day, their paths crossed again, and Grant pressed a five-dollar gold piece into his hand for a debt of honor from fifteen years previously. Longstreet tried to refuse the money, but Grant insisted. At that moment, Longstreet's fortunes fared better in life than his former classmate who had chosen to leave the army. They would not meet again until Appomattox in April 1865.¹¹

⁸ William Garrett Piston, "Petticoats, Promotions, and Military Assignments: Favoritism and the Antebellum Career of James Longstreet," in *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy*, ed. by R.L. DiNardo and Albert A. Nofi (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 53-75.

⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 14.

¹⁰ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 47.

¹¹ P.J. Moran, in the *Atlanta Constitution*, "Grant and Longstreet: The Ex-Confederate General Talks of Their Lifelong Intimacy," *New York Times*, January 12, 1890: 10; Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 13-16.

During his time in the West, mail came infrequently to Longstreet and the winter of 1860 to 1861 was a terrible time to be out of touch in the United States. The November 1860 election saw Abraham Lincoln named as the new president of the United States, and South Carolina left the Union a month later followed by six other states that winter. By February, the Confederate States of America had coalesced into a new entity and set about forming its new government. Longstreet and the men under his command watched the growing crisis in the East with great concern. Stress hovered over the camp like a dark cloud and late-night discussions washed in firelight occurred as each man discussed their loyalty. “Most of my time was passed in restless and anxious thought,” Longstreet recalled years later of these tense months immediately before the war started. “It seemed a terrible fate that those of us who had long served, formed strong ties of friendship and periled our lives in fostering cares for the Nation, should be called upon to sever all ties of friendship, professional pride, and lifetime aspirations, and abandon it through quarrels at the will of ambitious sectional politicians. At the same time the feeling was that we belonged to the States that had given us position in the profession.”¹² Would they stay with the United States Army? Or would they resign to join the newly formed Confederate States of America? Men like Edward Porter Alexander, Longstreet’s future chief of artillery and trusted aide, knew he would have to resign the moment his home state of Georgia seceded. “But I did not believe war inevitable,” Alexander remembered years later, “... and I really never realized the gravity of the situation.”¹³

For Major Longstreet, there appeared to be no internal debate of where he would serve. He wrote the governor of Alabama on February 15, 1861, the same month seven seceding states

¹² James Longstreet, “How They Left the Old Army,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1894.

¹³ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 21.

formed the Confederate States of America, to declare his intention to offer his services to the new nation, but the hostile tribes in the area and the severe winter season prevented travel. “I am the senior officer of the army, from Alabama,” Longstreet wrote, “and should be the first to offer her such assistance in my profession as I may be able to render.”¹⁴ The words Longstreet chose for his letter are important. He may have seen great opportunity by writing the governor of Alabama rather than Georgia or South Carolina because he was the senior officer in the army from that state who had graduated from West Point, so he could have expected a superior rank in response.¹⁵

He wrote this letter despite other officers from the North pleading with him to remain in the Army. In response to his northern comrades, he once asked one of the Northern officers “what he would do if his State should leave the Union and call him home? Would he hold his commission in the army and draw his sword against his own State? He confessed he would return to his State.” For Longstreet, his loyalty fell in with Alabama and Georgia. But he was in no mood to celebrate. Giving up the professional life he had known, the loyalty he held, and the steady paycheck must have been a difficult choice for a husband and father. Since no letters between the Longstreet couple have survived, it is possible Longstreet’s decision to join the Confederacy may not have sat well with Mrs. Longstreet since secession would likely mean war, but the officer appeared to have made up his mind no matter what others thought of the decision. However, he acknowledged the decision to leave friends and comrades was difficult for both the officers and their families.¹⁶

¹⁴ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 4, volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 182.

¹⁵ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier—A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 52.

¹⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 16.

The Army accepted Longstreet's resignation with a scheduled separation date of June 1861. Since he had served as a paymaster in the United States Army, Longstreet later claimed he expressed a desire to continue his previous role in the United States Army with the Confederate counterpart and did openly mention a field command. Longstreet claimed all he sought was to serve as paymaster because he had "given up all aspirations of military honor, and thought to settle down into more peaceful pursuits."¹⁷ At age forty, he may have believed his days of combat would remain in his past. However, his ultimate intentions seemed a little more complicated as he made his way East, separating from his family in Texas before ultimately taking a train to Richmond to see what the newly formed Confederate government would have in store for him.¹⁸ He traveled with several individuals including a future aide from Texas, Thomas J. Goree. According to Goree in a June 23 letter to his mother, Longstreet allegedly made sure his traveling companions knew of his extensive experience and made lavish promises to the young men "if he received the appointment of Brig. Genl."¹⁹ This brief exchange suggests Longstreet expected a field command while he traveled the new Confederacy.

Exciting spectacles of cheering men, women and children greeted Longstreet along the way, and a thrilling "spirit electrified the air."²⁰ Many future soldiers answering the call for volunteers feared they may miss out on the fighting, but some hoped they would "get there in time to have a hand in the pie."²¹ Richmond bustled with activity as troops and officers all over

¹⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 18.

¹⁸ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 11-12.

¹⁹ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 19.

²⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 18.

²¹ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 16.

the South arrived daily and drilled, giving the city the appearance of a massive army camp.²² One Confederate officer remembered hearing men at this time claim “there was no need of so many troops from the South as the Yankees would not fight” and they hoped “Jeff Davis would not stop until he overran all the North and burned the principal cities, including Boston.”²³ Regardless of what Longstreet expected to happen upon his arrival, he soon received an appointment as brigadier general with orders to report to Manassas Junction to the command of P.G.T. Beauregard who had decided to halt any Union invasion along a creek known as Bull Run.²⁴

Commanding three regiments in the Fourth Brigade, Longstreet immediately attempted to organize a band of green recruits, most who had never shot at anything more than squirrels and deer.²⁵ He quickly assembled an able staff around him that soon became acquainted with their commander. One of those individuals, Thomas Goree, had met Longstreet in route to Richmond. Goree remarked in a letter later that summer that “Longstreet is one of the kindest, best hearted men I ever knew” and claimed Longstreet became “short and crabbed” only in the presence of ladies, at the dinner table, and on the field of battle.²⁶ Before the war, Longstreet had combat experience but the largest group he had ever commanded was 240-men against the Mescalero Apaches in 1855, and in 1861, he commanded thousands.²⁷ However, most in the mass of

²² Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 37; G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 3.

²³ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, Edited by John C. Oeffinger, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 88.

²⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 18.

²⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 19.

²⁶ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 39.

²⁷ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 6.

amateurs did not constitute soldiers in any sense of the word because they did not know the realities of being a soldier nor did they understand the horrors of combat. Longstreet did not have much time to rectify this situation as the blue host under General Irwin McDowell marched into Virginia with hopes of ending the Rebellion in one swift campaign. Compounding his challenge, Longstreet received orders to hold with his approximately twelve hundred men the line along Blackburn's Ford, one likely location where the Union could be expected to cross Bull Run that was in a "bend of the river" about "seventy feet wide, covered by large forest-trees and some tangled undergrowth." With a short time to organize his position, Longstreet prepared to meet his new enemy.²⁸

On July 18, Longstreet led the men he had recently met into a battle that became one of the first major fights of the Civil War against the government he had officially left a little more than one month prior. Lieutenant Colonel E. Porter Alexander, who served on Longstreet's staff, provided many bloody details of Longstreet's first major engagement of the war and remembered "the most terrible shrieking and groaning." Alexander recalled "if being wounded hurt like that, war was a sight more awful even than I had imagined."²⁹ Battle records and recollections reveal Longstreet came alive when the fighting started and his rebels repelled the Union attack with "some difficulty."³⁰ Placing himself into harm's way as the guns blazed while clamping down on a cigar in his mouth, he rallied the green troops who nearly broke under the

²⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 24; Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 67; James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 19.

²⁹ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 48.

³⁰ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 462.

initial Union fire.³¹ Longstreet had the wherewithal to recognize the determined efforts of the enemy, and swiftly called for the reserve to be called up. His reserved nature arranging a large number of troops for battle with “confidence and enthusiasm” inspired the men under his command, and they held back the Union attempt to cross.³² One veteran under Longstreet remembered, “We gave the Yankees hell there and we always gave them hell when Longstreet was along.”³³

Longstreet admitted he did not know his men well given the short time he had been assigned to lead them, but credited the officers for coming to his “assistance at the only critical moment” and celebrated their efforts in his official report when he wrote, “Under a terrific fire these staff officers seemed to take peculiar delight in having occasion to show those around them their great confidence in our cause and our success.”³⁴ However, he appeared a bit more arrogant in a letter to his uncle Augustus when he asserted his brigade did all the fighting on its own and he claimed, “I felt able to hold my position against any force that could be brought against me.”³⁵ While Longstreet’s forces became understandably confused in their first firefight, the Union forces faced the same challenges of leading a coordinated attack with inexperienced troops.

³¹ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 26.

³² Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 93; H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 17.

³³ Helen Longstreet, “Headquarters Army of Northern Virginia, Gettysburg Battlefield, July 1,” Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 14, Folder 205, “Gettysburg Reunion Articles,” Savannah, Georgia.

³⁴ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 463.

³⁵ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 72.

Longstreet suffered sixty-three killed or wounded and inflicted perhaps twice that number as his force ultimately held its ground “most gloriously.”³⁶

The fight at Blackburn’s Ford became the only significant engagement of troops under Beauregard that day and provided an interesting glimpse into the type of commander Longstreet would become over the next four years. Longstreet often gave credit to those under his command and became known to some of his superiors as a commander who kept his cool under pressure. Beauregard perhaps said it best in his official report of the day when he acknowledged Longstreet’s efforts had “equaled my confident expectations, and I may fitly say that by his presence at the right place at the right moment among his men, by the exhibition of characteristic coolness, he infused a confidence and spirit that contributed largely to the success of our arms on that day.”³⁷ The Union troops outnumbered Longstreet’s forces at Blackburn’s Ford, as they would often over the course of the war. Yet, Longstreet led his men with vigor. By all accounts, Longstreet exuded commitment in a firefight that motivated his untested men, encouraging his soldiers to keep their composure under fire because some believed their commander was the best in the army.³⁸ One Confederate believed Longstreet deserved “all the credit” for starting a spirit of victory on July 18 that spilled over to July 21. “Had he not rode amongst his troops and himself rallied them when they started to fall back,” the man wrote later that summer, “had he

³⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 25-26; Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 22.

³⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 444-445.

³⁸ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 23.

not exhibited the coolness and courage that he did, the result of the whole affair might have been very different.”³⁹

The first major battle of Bull Run took place three days later when General Irvin McDowell attempted to thrust the Union Army toward Manassas Junction. Beauregard knew of the Union movements thanks to the effective network of spies in Washington headed by Rose O’Neal Greenhow. Despite the advanced warning of the Federal maneuvers, McDowell’s force battled with the rebels in a confusing and chaotic struggle that saw both sides fight “surprisingly well” for men who had never been under fire. By midafternoon, however, the Federal Army lost cohesion, and thanks in part to reinforcements under General Joseph Johnston from the Shenandoah Valley, the rebels turned the tide.⁴⁰ “The news from Manassas is so very glorious that I cannot believe all that is told,” wrote Lafayette McLaws, Longstreet’s friend and future subordinate, on July 23. “It seems a dream only, to think of our army meeting with such extraordinary success.”⁴¹

Longstreet’s force did not play a major role in that engagement. Late in the day, Longstreet received orders to pursue the retreating Union Army embroiled in a “singular jumble of soldiers and officers, sutlers, clerks, reporters, politicians, and harlots.”⁴² A member of Longstreet’s staff recognized their commander looked anxious to pursue since he knew it is “utterly impossible” to rally a demoralized army.⁴³ However, Brigadier General Milledge L. Bonham held Longstreet back and halted the attack. The soldiers then witnessed Longstreet’s

³⁹ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 27.

⁴⁰ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 340-344.

⁴¹ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, Edited by John C. Oeffinger (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 96.

⁴² H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 22.

⁴³ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 30.

fury toward Bonham, which would be the first of many arguments in the Civil War Longstreet would have with a superior officer. When Bonham told Longstreet they would not continue the assault at the end of the day to potentially rout the defeated Union force, Longstreet's temper flared as he allegedly "dashed his hat furiously on the ground" because he wanted to exploit the victory.⁴⁴

Many southern soldiers applauded Longstreet's aggressive nature and some thought not attacking was a missed opportunity because one strike would have revealed "how utterly demoralized the enemy was" and "there was no legitimate excuse for our not following" the enemy.⁴⁵ Some Confederates claimed they could have easily claimed Washington but political considerations held them back, to which Longstreet allegedly scoffed "that it may be very good politics, but it was very poor fighting."⁴⁶ Apparently confirming this suspicion, a Union soldier recalled a few days later that if the rebels had begun "an immediate attack, nothing in heaven's name could have saved us."⁴⁷ Even Lincoln's Secretary of War Edwin Stanton believed nearly a week after the battle that, "The capture of Washington seems now to be inevitable...The rout, overthrow, and utter demoralization of the whole army is complete."⁴⁸ However, Stanton overrated since the Union still had unbroken forces in reserve. For his part, Longstreet wrote

⁴⁴ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 9.

⁴⁵ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 57-58.

⁴⁶ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 45-46.

⁴⁷ Elisha Hunt Rhodes, *All for the Union: The Civil War Diary and Letters of Elisha Hunt Rhodes*, ed. by Robert Hunt Rhodes (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 1991), 26.

⁴⁸ Henry Steele Commager, *The Blue and the Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants* (Crescent, 1995), 115.

nothing of his rage years after the war and claimed to have deferred to Bonham, the ranking officer, and, also hinted a further assault would not have mattered since “it was near night.”⁴⁹

It is difficult to gauge precisely how Longstreet’s first clash with the Union Army impacted him. One officer bluntly stated of both sides at Bull Run that “neither of us played the game as well as it might have been done.”⁵⁰ In other words, no officer acted perfectly during that first campaign—Longstreet included. Some historians argued his solid performance in a new position at Blackburn’s Ford allowed him to exhibit his “greatest quality” which was the talent for defensive tactics.⁵¹ His openly defiant nature with a superior officer coupled with the support from his subordinates and troops may have given Longstreet more encouragement in his abilities. In addition, one biographer suggested Longstreet gained important experience through his success at Blackburn’s Ford that influenced his tactical thinking for the rest of the war since he would often repeat the pattern of remaining on the defensive and allowing the enemy to attack until a counterattack seemed destined to succeed.⁵² Longstreet’s part in the Confederate victory served to enhance his personal conviction in his capabilities on the battlefield and the trust the men under his command had in him magnified that belief.

Longstreet’s assuredness in his abilities grew as his actions throughout the Summer garnered the respect and attention of Beauregard and Johnston, establishing a relationship that would continue for the rest of the war and in some cases, especially Longstreet’s feelings toward Johnston, the rest of their lives. Longstreet tried to convert that initial goodwill into more

⁴⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 35.

⁵⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 36.

⁵¹ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 18.

⁵² William Garrett Piston, *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 14.

authority in future campaigns. Later that summer, Longstreet attempted to expand his command within the new Confederate Army. On August 13, Longstreet suggested to Johnston that he should be placed in command of a fifty-mile line of defense in Virginia in addition to his responsibilities to the Fourth Brigade. As the shock of Bull Run continued into late 1861 and both sides maneuvered and reorganized their forces for a longer war than anyone had anticipated, Johnston sought to promote Longstreet to command two brigades and ultimately promoted him to command the Third Division of First Corps.⁵³ Beauregard also inquired that fall about Longstreet potentially being promoted to second in command even when others outranked him.⁵⁴

Just as it seemed Longstreet had become used to the relationship he had with his superior officers, tension brewed in the Confederate high command, and Beauregard transferred to the West to command under General Albert Sydney Johnston. Joseph Johnston also faced the critical eye of Davis and other Confederate politicians while Longstreet proceeded to organize the force under his command.⁵⁵ As he often did, Longstreet simultaneously yearned for personal advancement while also being concerned with the overall cause of the Confederacy, which was common of many military leaders during the Civil War.⁵⁶ Some historians have argued whether Longstreet would push for promotion because of ambition or patriotic duty to his new nation. For example, Peter Cozzens wrote that Longstreet coveted an army command and later set his sights on taking command of the Army of Tennessee in the West.⁵⁷ In September 1861, as the command structure of the Confederate forces bristled with discord, Longstreet revealed at least

⁵³ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 5 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), 897-898.

⁵⁴ Jeffrey D. Wert, "The Best Subordinate," *Civil War Times*, August 2006, 24.

⁵⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 36.

⁵⁶ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 20.

⁵⁷ Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 28-29.

part of his ambition came from what he viewed as sense of a personal injustice when other, as he believed, less deserving officers received promotions he believed should have gone to him. His ire grew so great that he even demanded to be relieved of duty only two months after Bull Run. He believed officers with less experience being promoted ahead of him to be “a great injustice” and even requested to be relieved of command, insinuating he perceived a significant slight to his honor had taken place. “I think that I have done my share of this service, which is not altogether the most agreeable.”⁵⁸

In October, Longstreet received what he desired and was promoted to major general in command of the Third Division of the Confederacy’s Army of the Potomac (later to be called the Army of Northern Virginia). Johnston once tried to have Longstreet promoted to corps-level command to replace Beauregard as second in command of the army, claiming he appreciated Longstreet’s “promptness of thought and action.”⁵⁹ At this point in his career, some historians claim Longstreet had “unlimited self-confidence” because he believed he could accomplish any task assigned to him “better than anybody else.”⁶⁰ Historian James I. Robertson, Jr. argued Longstreet’s “spotty” performance at this point in the war did nothing to dissolve the man’s confidence as he was “dogged, opinionated, and unbreakable.”⁶¹

During this time, no major engagements took place other than skirmishes that Longstreet claimed “served to season the troops and teach the importance of discipline and vigilance.”⁶² One staff officer noticed that fall, “Our men are very eager for the fray. They seem to have

⁵⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 51, Part II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), 310.

⁵⁹ Piston, 16.

⁶⁰ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 25.

⁶¹ James I. Robertson, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend* (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1997), 463.

⁶² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 42.

confidence in themselves to cope successfully with any numbers” the enemy utilized.⁶³ As winter approached, Longstreet wanted to ensure the troops had entertainment and a theater, revealing he had learned lessons from the Mexican War he intended to employ to keep spirits high.⁶⁴ The lull in the fighting in Virginia led one staff officer to remarkably hope Longstreet could transfer to East Tennessee to deal with pro-Union “traitors” because they were weary of the “inactivity.”⁶⁵

As the Virginia front remained in a state of relative stunned silence after the shock of Bull Run, disaster of a personal nature struck Longstreet in early 1862 when three of his four children died within one week of a scarlet fever epidemic sweeping through Richmond. While he did not write about this event in his memoirs, his subordinates noticed an understandable change come over Longstreet as his mood darkened. Once known for drinking and playing games with other officers, Longstreet appeared to his staff to fall into a quiet depression.⁶⁶ Moxley Sorrel, the staff officer who would become one of Longstreet’s closest aides during the war, remembered a significant transformation in the man when he returned to duty. “He had become very serious and reserved and a consistent member of the Episcopal Church,” Sorrel wrote years later. “His grief was very deep and he had all our sympathies; later years lightened the memory of his sorrow and he became rather more like his cheerful old self, but with no dissipation of any kind.”⁶⁷

By late 1861 and early 1862, Johnston placed Longstreet and General G.W. Smith into his “inner council.” As evidence of the growing faith Johnston had in his subordinate, he ordered

⁶³ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 54.

⁶⁴ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 17.

⁶⁵ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 54.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁶⁷ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 18-19.

Longstreet to lead an expeditionary force away from the front that had existed since the Battle of Bull Run. The march soon became mired in mud and the continuing inexperience combined with poor discipline slowed this effort to a crawl. By March 1862, Longstreet established a defensive position along the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers, ready to counter the expected movement of the Union's Army of the Potomac under General George McClellan.⁶⁸ Over the next month, as Johnston repeatedly convened with Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee in Richmond on how best to counter the overwhelming force threatening Virginia and the Confederate capital, Longstreet proceeded to reposition the Confederacy's forces in Northern Virginia. Effectively leading his troops during complex military movements is evidence Longstreet's consistent drilling over the previous months had been worthwhile since he could now "manage a division of eight or ten thousand men with as much ease as he would a company of fifty men."⁶⁹ Fortunately for the Confederacy, McClellan had greatly overestimated the rebel force and proceeded cautiously.⁷⁰

Longstreet attended a war council in Richmond on April 14 where he remained mostly silent other than a critical assessment of McClellan's abilities that President Davis quickly silenced. Longstreet suggested Davis interrupted him because of his criticism of McClellan. "From the hasty interruption I concluded that my opinion had only been asked through polite recognition of my presence, not that it was wanted," Longstreet recalled, "and said no more."⁷¹

⁶⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 37-38.

⁶⁹ Sanger and Hay, 41; Piston, 17.

⁷⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 74.

⁷¹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 48.

The exchange started a terse relationship between Longstreet and his President that would continue for the rest of the war.⁷²

Johnston's reliance on Longstreet only increased as McClellan threatened Richmond from the peninsula while another Union force appeared poised to march from the North in early 1862.⁷³ Despite the approaching enemy, morale amongst the troops remained high. One Southern officer believed any upcoming battle would "result gloriously to our arms" since the "Confederacy never had a better nor a larger army concentrated than the one we now have, and the country is of such character that our force is as formidable as the greatest number the enemy can bring to bear against us."⁷⁴

The Southern defenses in front of McClellan were "so weak that it is surprising that McClellan did not crash through the thin lines."⁷⁵ Johnston seemed convinced McClellan could soon push them away from the peninsula and Richmond would fall if the Confederacy did not properly prepare. "We must abandon the Peninsula soon," he wrote on April 29.⁷⁶ Johnston assigned Longstreet's force to the area around Williamsburg, but Davis wanted G.W. Smith or Longstreet transferred to the Rappahannock.⁷⁷ Johnston hesitated to carry out the order, claiming Smith and Longstreet were essential to preserve the organization of the army and going as far as to suggest the force could not be commanded without them.

⁷² Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 42.

⁷³ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 29.

⁷⁴ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, Edited by John C. Oeffinger, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 137-138.

⁷⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 44.

⁷⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume XI, pt. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 473.

⁷⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume XI, pt. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 485.

Growing concern permeated the Confederate government as McClellan's massive force continued its push toward the capital. In this storm of pressure from Confederate leadership, Johnston leaned on Longstreet's dependability and ability to place his troops in the right place at the right time as demonstrated by the defense and timely counterattacks at Williamsburg on May 5. Longstreet disrupted McClellan's efforts to destroy the entire rebel force standing in the way of Richmond in a "stubborn, all-day fight, with serious losses on both sides." Johnston was on the battlefield with Longstreet much of the day but did not interfere in Longstreet's operations.⁷⁸ The organization of Longstreet's force is worthy of note—especially in a complex campaign early in the war. The defense and counterattack at Williamsburg demonstrated Longstreet had assembled a dependable staff. He also noted "no soldier left the field unauthorized" during the engagement, which could have been cast off as an exaggeration if not for it also being noticed by Johnston.⁷⁹ While Johnston praised Longstreet's spirit in face of the enemy, he also needed Longstreet's ability to organize his force before a major battle. "Stragglers cover the country," Johnston wrote on May 9, "and Richmond is no doubt filled with the absent without leave."⁸⁰

By late May, the Confederates found themselves pushed to Richmond with no place to retreat. Viewing the situation in Virginia at the time, it appeared to one historian that "Union victory might not be far off."⁸¹ It was in this campaign that a curious event took place where the communication between Longstreet, Johnston and other Confederate commanders collapsed during an attack on May 31 that would become known as the Battle of Seven Pines. Days of

⁷⁸ Sorrel 41-43; Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 81.

⁷⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume XI, pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 566.

⁸⁰ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume XI, pt. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 503.

⁸¹ Brooks D. Simpson, *The Civil War in the East: Struggle, Stalemate, and Victory* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2011), 37.

torrential rain storms had made all grounds difficult to traverse or impassable, adding to the confusion and complexity of maneuvering troops.⁸² Johnston issued Longstreet verbal instructions and had apparently also not provided ample orders to other generals under his command that Longstreet was in tactical command.⁸³ For whatever reason, Longstreet either did not understand, misheard the directives, or altered Johnston's orders.⁸⁴ One Longstreet biography blamed his "burning ambition" for the situation since following the original orders may have seen him "play second fiddle" to Smith.⁸⁵

While maneuvering into position along a different route than Johnston had indicated, Longstreet's men crossed a creek by a narrow one-plank bridge in a single file and blocked the troops led by a furious Major General Benjamin Huger, who protested. Longstreet claimed he outranked Huger even though that was not true. No one at the Confederate headquarters knew where Longstreet and his men had gone, and it was this moment that Johnston assumed Longstreet misinterpreted his orders but for some reason did little to rectify the situation. Longstreet led his men in a disjointed assault, encouraging his soldiers forward at the right time. While Longstreet suffered heavy casualties in the fight, he ultimately inflicted greater damage on the enemy and praised the men under his command in the battle he described as "a very handsome affair."⁸⁶ Johnston commended Longstreet's actions under fire, admiring his "clear head and brave heart" and did not see the need to interfere in his command, even going as far as

⁸² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 70; Sorrel, 43.

⁸³ Wert, 113; Steven E. Woodworth, ed. *Civil War Generals in Defeat* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 67.

⁸⁴ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 85.

⁸⁵ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 53.

⁸⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume XI, pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 584.

to cover up the misunderstanding in the battle reports.⁸⁷ However, some believe Seven Pines may have been the lowest point in Longstreet's military career and went as far as to say his poor performance showcased "he was as unskillful at offensive tactics as he was skillful at defensive."⁸⁸ Even Sorrel mentioned the day should have been a great victory but, instead, was "a waste of life and a great disappointment."⁸⁹ Longstreet interestingly never discussed any failure or blunder on his part at Seven Pines and one of his officers blamed the entire incident on Johnston for failing to make his orders clear and not maintaining an eye on Longstreet's movements that day.⁹⁰

Regardless of where the fault lies in this situation, Longstreet's attack was a disjointed affair. However, Longstreet's assault on the Confederate right had been more successful than other efforts to defend Richmond that day filled with heavy casualties. Perhaps the most critical casualty in Longstreet's opinion was Johnston being hit around the shoulder, unhorsed, and severely wounded, robbing the men of a commander for whom Longstreet claimed many would willingly give their lives. The Confederates carried Johnston from the field, leaving G.W. Smith to decide upon the course of action for June 1 and robbing Longstreet of the commanding officer he preferred above all others. Longstreet met with Smith after midnight to discuss the course of action, which became one of countless controversies in Civil War command. Smith and Longstreet had much in common, having both graduated from West Point in 1842 and served in

⁸⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume XI, pt. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 275; Wert 125.

⁸⁸ Piston, 19; H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 49.

⁸⁹ Sorrel, 48.

⁹⁰ Wert, 115; Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 86.

the Mexican War. However, unlike Longstreet who continued to serve in the U.S. Army until secession, Smith resigned his commission in 1854.⁹¹

Whether any previous animosity existed between the two men is unknown, but the events that transpired June 1 soon ignited a conflict between them. Smith apparently ordered an attack the day after the wounded Johnston left the field but placed part of his force on the defensive. Longstreet accused Smith of doing nothing to help him during the engagement, launching a protracted war of words that lasted for the rest of their lives.⁹² The clash of personalities demonstrates Longstreet's growing confidence and, possibly, arrogance, on the field of battle after receiving the support and endorsements of Beauregard and Johnston. The event also showcases Longstreet's belief that he knew best how to win the day in absence of his favorite commanding officer. Regardless of the reasons behind the Confederate failure, McClellan, who commented early that morning, "We are driving the enemy back," rejoiced at what he viewed at the time as one of the final battles before the ultimate Union victory.⁹³

Longstreet emerged from the two days of bloody fighting outside Richmond as a commander with an expanding admiration from the men around him.⁹⁴ Since he had the confidence of Johnston and, as some historians have argued, the ability to control his superior officer, it is reasonable to assume Longstreet may have thought he could have succeeded him as army commander—especially after Smith apparently suffered a nervous breakdown when coping

⁹¹ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959, 1987), 280-281; James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 78; Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 88.

⁹² Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 55-59.

⁹³ George Brinton McClellan, "Telegram from Rifle Pits, June 1st, 8:30 a.m.," *George Brinton McClellan Papers: Correspondence I, -1888; 1862; June 1-3. 1862*. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss318980062/>.

⁹⁴ Sorrel, 61.

with the rigors of command.⁹⁵ At times during the war, Longstreet seems to attempt to overpower others—even superior officers—to force them into his way of thinking. As one biography stated about Longstreet, “there was something in his physical bigness and soundness, his calm assurance that affected men with weaker nerves.”⁹⁶ The growth in his confidence is evident when he showcased personal ambition after the early campaigns as he attempted to gain more responsibility and the glory that went with it. One biography claims Longstreet resorted to “significant and even sinister” measures at the beginning of the war to gain command of an army.⁹⁷ Despite the mishap at Seven Pines where he either misunderstood his orders or altered them for his benefit, Longstreet had spent the first nine months of the war continually exhibiting a coolness under pressure that garnered attention from his superiors and those serving beneath him. He had shown an uncanny ability to place his troops at the right place and had assembled a staff around him that may have been the best in the entire war. However, he had lost the general, Johnston, he considered to be the best in the Confederacy at the very time his notoriety increased.

Regardless of what position Longstreet desired, word soon came that a new commander, Robert E. Lee, had been tapped with defending the Confederate capital. In his memoirs, Longstreet made it clear the army had grown to count on Johnston’s leadership since all soldiers “had learned to lean upon him with confidence, and to love him dearly.”⁹⁸ Longstreet had grown accustomed to Johnston’s hands off approach to leadership when the latter allowed great freedom on the battlefield. In his memoirs, Longstreet quoted Johnston’s appraisal of his

⁹⁵ Piston, 20; H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 55.

⁹⁶ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 24.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 88.

performance on the battlefield when his favorite commanding officer wrote he found himself “compelled to be a spectator, for General Longstreet’s clear head and brave heart left no apology for interference.”⁹⁹ But such freedom to command as he saw fit undoubtedly enhanced Longstreet’s belief in his abilities to effectively lead troops on the battlefield. Longstreet soon met his new commanding officer, Robert E. Lee, in June during the first war council to determine what should be done to counter McClellan’s threat on the Confederate capital. Lee’s promotion attracted significant attention across the Confederacy, and not all of it was positive since his one command in this war had been “unfortunate” and consistent editorials in Southern newspapers appeared “bitter” toward the new commander.¹⁰⁰ One member of Longstreet’s staff observed Lee had “sad eyes” as he listened in an approachable manner and “gave attention to all in the simplest manner.”¹⁰¹

During this discussion, Lee asked Longstreet for his suggestions, beginning a relationship that would continue throughout the war. Lee followed in the steps of Beauregard and Johnston by placing Longstreet as his second in command, transferring all other officers until Longstreet became the senior commander appropriate for second in command.¹⁰² In this way, Lee worked in a similar fashion as Longstreet’s previous superiors by listening to the latter’s advice and suggestions on how to proceed in a campaign. But, in 1862, Lee had yet to ignore or overrule Longstreet’s advice. Would Longstreet’s ever-growing confidence in his abilities be able to withstand a slight to his strategic planning?

⁹⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004, originally published in 1896), 60.

¹⁰⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 90.

¹⁰¹ Sorrel, 50.

¹⁰² Piston, 22.

Any such event remained in the future as Lee looked to free Richmond from the immediate threat of McClellan with the newly renamed Army of Northern Virginia, formerly the Confederate Army of the Potomac. As he took the reins, Lee appeared to quickly develop a bond with Longstreet, telling Davis of Longstreet's merits as a commander and expressing confidence in his abilities.¹⁰³ Historians noted that Longstreet's understanding of the practical side of war served as a "brake on the more rapid and often intuitive reasoning" of Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson.¹⁰⁴ While Lee appeared to have great confidence in Longstreet, it is unclear how his new subordinate felt about the change in commanders. Southern newspapers derided the choice because Lee had given little reason for confidence thus far in the war.¹⁰⁵ There must have been a swift mutual respect, however, as the two men soon camped near one another and appeared to quickly become quite close as they turned their attention toward the Union threat.¹⁰⁶

In his first campaign in command of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee launched into a series of aggressive and costly attacks known as the Seven Days in hopes of cutting off, trapping, and destroying McClellan's army. These assaults provided bloody lessons on the dangers of multiple frontal attacks on the enemy.¹⁰⁷ While Longstreet displayed some tactical errors in these attacks, he continued to show Lee his value and dependability. For example, Longstreet led a costly but successful attack at Gaines's Mill that resulted in the capture of "many prisoners, guns, and colors" that drove the enemy into a panic. Several attacks such as Fraser's Farm and a

¹⁰³ Robert E. Lee, and Jefferson Davis, *Lee's Dispatches: Unpublished Letters of General Robert E. Lee, C.S.A. to Jefferson Davis and the War Department of the Confederate States of America, 1862-65, from the Private Collection of Wymberley Jones De Renne, of Wormsloe, Georgia*, ed. by Douglas Southall Freeman and Grady McWhiney (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 21-22.

¹⁰⁴ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 63.

¹⁰⁵ Piston, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Sorrel, 52.

¹⁰⁷ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 120.

vicious fight at Malvern Hill bled the Confederacy in struggles one veteran remembered resulted in many deserters. “Each one had a tale to tell worse than the other. Some claimed they were the only ones left of their regiment.” After the clash at Malvern Hill, another Confederate observed McClellan’s army was “beaten and dispirited” but not destroyed as Lee hoped. However, Richmond appeared safe for now and the men had faith in their new army commander.¹⁰⁸ In a June 28 letter, one Confederate officer believed “General Lee is rapidly regaining...the confidence of the army and the people as a skillful and even a dashing officer...You cannot imagine how gratifying is the feeling to soldiers, to know that their chief is competent to all positions.”¹⁰⁹

Longstreet learned important lessons in the Seven Days regarding the dangers of offensive operations, battering his forces “fruitlessly” with the assaults.¹¹⁰ He also revealed his discontent if a subordinate received glory instead of him. When an article appeared in the *Richmond Whig* celebrating the actions of A.P. Hill, who served under Longstreet, the latter replied in the paper with a piece that was “uncomplimentary” to Hill. The incident revealed Longstreet as a “superior resenting glory given a subordinate.”¹¹¹

By July, despite heavy casualties, Lee felt confident he had frightened McClellan enough to await Union reinforcements. Now, just as the South celebrated a brief salvation for their capital and Longstreet enjoyed great fame as the “fighting general,” Lee turned his attention to

¹⁰⁸ Sorrel, 57-58; W.H. Andrews, *Footprints of a Regiment: A Recollections of the 1st Georgia Regulars, 1861-1865* (Atlanta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1992), 50; H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 85; Douglas Freeman Southall, *Lee: An Abridgment by Richard Harwell of the Pulitzer Prize-Winning 4-Volume Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961, 1991), 222.

¹⁰⁹ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, Edited by John C. Oeffinger, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 148-149.

¹¹⁰ James I. Robertson, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend* (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1997), 495.

¹¹¹ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 88.

another army in blue bearing down on them from the North under the command of General John Pope, the commander the Union brought from the West to take command of forces in Northern Virginia. Lee ordered Longstreet to Gordonsville to be prepared to counter Pope's aggressions. Longstreet continued to showcase his abilities as a tactical commander, keeping Lee constantly informed about his progress and possible suggestions to bring Lee's forces into "a high point of efficiency."¹¹²

During the next campaign that culminated with the Second Battle of Bull Run, an episode also revealed how Longstreet would react to any disobedience from his subordinates. Longstreet had ordered elements of Robert Toombs' brigade to cover Raccoon Ford when he had discovered it was unguarded. Toombs had not been at his headquarters when the order arrived, so he ordered these elements back into formation. Furious, Longstreet relieved Toombs of command and placed him under arrest. Toombs swiftly crafted a lengthy apology to Longstreet, who soon restored Toombs to command.¹¹³ The episode offers an interesting glimpse into Longstreet's command style and a stunning comparison to internal events that would occur in Longstreet's First Corps later in the war.

Some scholars criticized Longstreet for his actions in the days before Second Manassas. Lee desired an attack on the Union left rear, but Longstreet convinced Lee an August 29 attack on Pope's forces would be unwise since he believed a Union corps lurked somewhere near Manassas on his right. An older Longstreet recalled Lee was "inclined to engage as soon as

¹¹² Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 77-79; H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 17.

¹¹³ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 79-80.

practicable, but [he] did not order.”¹¹⁴ Longstreet may have remembered his success on the defensive at Blackburn’s Ford and wanted to wait while Pope maneuvered. Lee accepted these recommendations, and an attack was postponed until August 30 when Longstreet fell into position on Jackson’s right. When a Federal attack came on Jackson’s front, Lee ordered Longstreet to send support. Instead, Longstreet decided to utilize his artillery for a counterattack, altering Lee’s orders as he saw fit. Following the artillery barrage that left the enemy “broken and confused,” a well-timed rebel counter-attack sent panic rippling through the Union lines. A private in the 17th Virginia watched the staggering enemy “throwing away their knapsacks and rushing madly for the rear.” By the end of the day, Pope had withdrawn toward Washington. A staff officer described Longstreet as being at his best that day. “His consummate ability in managing troops was well displayed that day and his large bodies of men were moved with great skill and without the least confusion.” Despite the fact Longstreet had not directly obeyed Lee’s orders, the actions had resulted in a successful battle for the commanders in gray.¹¹⁵ One soldier claimed Longstreet now shared a “full share of our love and esteem” and added he trusted him blindly, going “to the jumping-off place if they so direct.”¹¹⁶

Weighing his options after more than a year of campaigning armies in Virginia, the victorious Lee looked to take the war out of his home state. The goal was Maryland. Perhaps a successful campaign there would at best convince Europe to side with the Confederacy or even

¹¹⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 147.

¹¹⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 89; Piston, 23; Sorrel, 72; Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 134; Henry Steele Commager, *The Blue and the Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants* (Crescent, 1995), 189.

¹¹⁶ W.H. Andrews, *Footprints of a Regiment: A Recollections of the 1st Georgia Regulars, 1861-1865* (Atlanta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1992), 69.

entice the border state to join the Rebellion. At the very least, a campaign in Maryland could give the Virginia citizenry a break from the hordes of hungry soldiers marching across their land. Longstreet approved of Lee's plan but disagreed with its execution when Lee decided to divide his forces to capture Harpers Ferry to protect his flank. "I thought it was a venture not worth the game," Longstreet recalled.¹¹⁷ Longstreet's soldiers welcomed the chance to march out of Virginia. Some of the southern soldiers delighted at maneuvering into a "sister state" they expected soon to join the Confederate cause.¹¹⁸ Others remarked on how it did not "look like wartimes in Maryland" since "everything looks flush and prosperous."¹¹⁹ However, the abundant green-corn and apples the Army of Northern Virginia consumed due to scarce provisions caused sickness that slowed their march.¹²⁰ Moreover, some officers noted many of the soldiers had no shoes to wear on the long, hard marches. "But our men do not grumble," an officer under Longstreet wrote in September, "they only straggle."¹²¹

Longstreet's fears of splitting Confederate forces in the border state of Maryland would prove warranted. In one of the most famous events of the war, Union troops discovered Lee's orders, known as Special Orders 191, despite attempts at secrecy. McClellan, determined to prove to Lincoln and the world he was the one who could save the Union, now knew Lee's plan and prepared to act, claiming he now had the information that would allow him to "whip Bobby Lee." But McClellan proceeded to move slowly and cautiously, allowing Lee precious time to

¹¹⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 164.

¹¹⁸ Sorrel, 78.

¹¹⁹ W.H. Andrews, *Footprints of a Regiment: A Recollections of the 1st Georgia Regulars, 1861-1865* (Atlanta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1992), 71.

¹²⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 141-142.

¹²¹ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, Edited by John C. Oeffinger, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 154.

gather his forces around Sharpsburg in hopes he could claim the victory outside of the Confederacy that he desired.¹²²

The Battle of Sharpsburg, better known in the North as Antietam, took place on September 17 and would ultimately give birth to Lee's moniker for Longstreet of "Old War Horse." By all accounts, the struggle was a slugfest that bled both sides and became the bloodiest day in American history. The fighting spanned the entire day and the Confederate line appeared ready to buckle many times, but McClellan did not fully commit his entire force.¹²³ Longstreet's forces served admirably in a fight he described as "hard" before adding in a note to a subordinate on the battlefield, "We had all better die than lose it."¹²⁴ Since Longstreet's war began in earnest in July 1861, he had forged a bond with his subordinates like Lafayette McLaws that became evident on the battlefield. "No better proof of the high quality that characterized his work as a soldier can be found than the conduct of his subordinate officers at Sharpsburg."¹²⁵ McLaws even claimed the Confederacy "actually whipped the Yankees at Sharpsburg very badly." The same coordination could be attributed to Longstreet's staff, which historians have recognized as one of the best and an essential reason Longstreet had success as a corps commander.¹²⁶ Sorrel remembered Longstreet never failed to reward good work and "praised freely and liberally where he thought it due, constantly recommending meritorious young officers for promotion."¹²⁷

¹²² Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Counter-Thrust: From the Peninsula to the Antietam* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 191-195; Brooks D. Simpson, *The Civil War in the East: Struggle, Stalemate, and Victory* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2011), 52.

¹²³ Sorrel, 84.

¹²⁴ Wert, 197.

¹²⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 103.

¹²⁶ R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi, *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 165-189.

¹²⁷ Sorrel, 86.

Longstreet's leadership spilled down to the ranks of the common soldiers as well, prompting one historian to write of Sharpsburg that "the spirit of Longstreet had also been stamped on the men who stood in ranks with empty muskets and awaited the oncoming Union assault. Their ammunition gone, they were ready to use their guns as clubs. Rocks were used, too—and naked fists."¹²⁸ One soldier ran ahead to Antietam before the battle claiming "I want to see if 'old Pete's' up ahead. If he is, I know we'll lick 'em."¹²⁹ Despite such boasting, McLaws noted the challenges within the Army of Northern Virginia at Sharpsburg, observing their forces were "exhausted from hunger, fatigue and exposure and were often without ammunition."¹³⁰ A veteran recalled seeing Longstreet, wearing carpet slippers due to a heel blister, directing artillery pieces while seeming "to be perfectly indifferent in regard to the shells that was filling the air with death and destruction." The same soldier observed the coolness under fire spread to all in the First Corps, accounting for the "fighting qualities of our men" because the "officers lead and the men strive to emulate their example."¹³¹ In addition to fighting hard battles after marching incredible distances, many of the troops, as Longstreet recognized, bore the additional burden of having returned to service after being wounded two or three times while fighting sickness, weakness and "irregular food, collected in the stress of march." It all contributed to making a campaign more difficult.¹³² By the time the sun set on Antietam, desperate fighting

¹²⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 103.

¹²⁹ Helen Longstreet, "Glory's Bivouac: Bloody at Antietam," Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 14, Folder 207, "75th Anniversary of Antietam," Savannah, Georgia.

¹³⁰ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, Edited by John C. Oeffinger, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 155.

¹³¹ W.H. Andrews, *Footprints of a Regiment: A Recollections of the 1st Georgia Regulars, 1861-1865* (Atlanta, Georgia: Longstreet Press, 1992), 75; James I. Robertson, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend* (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1997), 588.

¹³² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 241.

without reserves had drained the Army of Northern Virginia of its energy and left it in a “perfect frazzle.”¹³³

Despite these heroics, the bloody clash at Antietam Creek for the South was at best a stalemate and, at worst, a defeat that would bring an end to Lee’s march into Maryland. Historian Benjamin Franklin Cooling described the confrontation as a “pyrrhic success at best” for McClellan.¹³⁴ The Army of Northern Virginia would return south, bloodied and weary from its campaign. Many regiments reported extreme losses in the Maryland Campaign. The 35th Georgia had boasted 741 men the year before and now marched back to Virginia with 240.¹³⁵ Longstreet had worried about the hard marching and those concerns now consumed the general’s mind. Some writers suggest the march into Maryland was a key moment in Longstreet’s growth where he continued to improve his tactical abilities in defense. He even once exclaimed to Lee, “General, I wish we could stand still and let the damned Yankees come to us!” Perhaps even more importantly, Longstreet’s opinion of Lee’s leadership declined after Antietam.¹³⁶ In addition to superior numbers and supplies, Longstreet claimed the enemy had been “better prepared” for the Battle of Antietam.¹³⁷ “General Lee’s signals failed to connect,” Longstreet recalled years later. “...The Confederates were dispersed and divided by rivers, and drifting thirty and forty and fifty miles apart.”¹³⁸ Going a bit further in his criticism, Longstreet claimed

¹³³ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 153.

¹³⁴ Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Counter-Thrust: From the Peninsula to the Antietam* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 258.

¹³⁵ James J. Fox, *Red Clay to Richmond: Trail of the 35th Georgia Infantry Regiment, C.S.A.* (Winchester, Virginia: Angle Valley Press, 2004), 123.

¹³⁶ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 133; James I. Robertson, Jr., *Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend* (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1997), 592.

¹³⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 217.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 236.

Lee may have been a master “of the science but not the art of war.” Lee, Longstreet argued, “found it hard, the enemy in sight, to withhold his blows” and even claimed Lee’s aggressiveness at Sharpsburg allowed Lincoln the opportunity to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, suggesting different choices could have resulted in Confederate independence after the Maryland Campaign.¹³⁹ “If the Southern Army had been carefully held in hand,” Longstreet contended, “refreshed by easy marches and comfortable supplies, the proclamation could not have found its place in history. On the other hand, the Southern President would have been in Maryland at the head of his army with his manifesto for peace and independence.”¹⁴⁰ Although Longstreet does not outright chastise Lee, these comments suggest his overall frustration with his commander for the march into Maryland and a growing discontent with his leadership.

Straggling plagued the Army of Northern Virginia on the maneuver into Maryland, and Lee worried another move so soon would risk further men in the ranks wandering from their units. Instead, Lee allowed his force time to regain its strength and looked to internal matters. Lee organized his Army of Northern Virginia into two corps, with Longstreet earning the promotion to lieutenant general of the First Corps and Jackson assuming command of the Second Corps. Such a change in the organization of Lee’s army revealed the faith he had in both men, and the extent to which their abilities had become apparent to the general. The changes increased Longstreet’s responsibilities as the calendar neared the end of 1862 to about forty thousand soldiers, giving his staff more work. Yet his leadership also granted them “experience and confidence” after nearly two years of campaigning.¹⁴¹ Shirkers, and those who had fallen out due to sickness or debilitating hunger, soon returned to the army, swelling its numbers, and

¹³⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 241.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁴¹ Sorrel, 101.

improving morale. “It was really wonderful how our numbers increased during the month,” Alexander remembered. “Brigades which had been reduced until they looked like only small regiments began again to look like brigades.”¹⁴²

Frustrated with McClellan’s inability to pursue Lee and destroy him, Lincoln looked for a new commander for his Army of the Potomac. He found that leader in Ambrose Burnside, who had distinguished himself in operations along the Atlantic coast but internally faced doubts that he could do the job.¹⁴³ Burnside developed a plan to move past Lee’s right by crossing the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg.¹⁴⁴ It might have worked if it had not been executed so slowly, as Burnside famously waited for the Army to deliver pontoon bridges before he committed to his occupation of Fredericksburg. The delay provided Lee time to amass an impressive force along the high ground around Fredericksburg known as Marye’s Heights. The Army of Northern Virginia swelled to become one of the largest single concentrations of forces he would have throughout the war, totaling about seventy-five thousand.¹⁴⁵ McLaws wrote at the end of November that the entire First Corps had circled the hills around Fredericksburg, lighting up the skies with so many campfires that “we no longer care for any attempts [the enemy] may make to cross the river.”¹⁴⁶

Longstreet positioned his men defensively, which probably made the commander happy, since he continued to prefer fighting on the tactical defensive whenever possible, a lesson he had

¹⁴² Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 155.

¹⁴³ Herman Hattaway, and Archer Jones *How the North Won a Military History of the Civil War* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 304.

¹⁴⁴ Brooks D. Simpson, *The Civil War in the East: Struggle, Stalemate, and Victory* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2011), 61.

¹⁴⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 257,

¹⁴⁶ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, Edited by John C. Oeffinger, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 163.

learned at Blackburn's Ford and gained from his original commanders Beauregard and Johnston. He probably also remembered the heavy casualties involved in the aggressive offensives of the Mexican War. With time to prepare the defenses as Burnside prepared to cross the river, Longstreet continued to improve his line as the days passed into a cold December.¹⁴⁷ He used traverse trenches to "section off his main line and not allow exploding shells or enfilade fire to sweep down his whole line."¹⁴⁸ Alexander placed his guns to cover most of the field before the hills and mentioned "the ground was so thoroughly covered that I never thought Burnside would choose that point for attack."¹⁴⁹ A stone wall before Marye's Heights also would prove helpful, and the men established three tiers of "light trenchwork" along the slope of the hill.¹⁵⁰ A captain in the 18th Georgia remarked of their position that "it took no military genius to quickly assess that it was the greatest folly to attack us."¹⁵¹

Despite the assessment of that Confederate officer, Burnside ordered his men to cross the river. Elements of Longstreet's First Corps occupied Fredericksburg and "would not budge" when Union artillery shelled the town, hiding in "cellars, wells, holes of any kind" to continue resisting the immense force of more than one hundred and twenty thousand preparing to cross the river while knowing they could not hold the town. Under continuous pestering fire from

¹⁴⁷ Herman Hattaway, and Archer Jones *How the North Won a Military History of the Civil War* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 306-307.

¹⁴⁸ William L. Richter, "'The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions': James Longstreet in War and Peace," In *Lee and his Generals: Essays in Honor of T. Harry Williams*, edited by Lawrence Lee Hewitt, and Thomas E. Schott (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 208.

¹⁴⁹ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 169.

¹⁵⁰ Sorrel, 104.

¹⁵¹ James Lile Lemon, *Feed them the Steel!: Being, The Wartime Recollections of Captain James Lile Lemon, Co. A, 18th Georgia Infantry, C.S.A.* (Mark H. Lemon, 2013), 37.

sharpshooters in Fredericksburg on December 11, the Union troops took the town and prepared to assault the Confederate positions on the high ground outside the town.¹⁵²

The assault came on December 13 in a “blind and impotent fury” and one witness claimed only “half a dozen” made it within sixty yards of the stone wall.¹⁵³ Longstreet recognized his guns opened on the advancing columns and “ploughed their ranks by a fire that would test the nerves of the bravest soldiers.”¹⁵⁴ Union soldiers gazed at the ghastly scene of dead and wounded blanketing the ground before Marye’s Heights.¹⁵⁵ One Confederate officer said he “enjoyed the sight of hundreds of dead Yankees” and the “severed limbs, decapitated bodies, and mutilated remains of all kinds.”¹⁵⁶ The Confederate position proved to be too strong and more than twelve thousand Union casualties proved the assault had been a mistake.¹⁵⁷ Fredericksburg, which has been described as Longstreet’s “ideal battle,” undoubtedly strengthened Longstreet’s belief in the power of the defensive and probably hoped Lee would continue to search for ways to fight in such a manner in future months to lead the Confederacy to victory.¹⁵⁸

The armies entered the winter period in a state of relative quiet. Burnside became mired in the famous mud march as Lee kept a close eye on his movements. By early 1863, it appeared Longstreet had become famous for being one of the best corps commanders in the war. “He was

¹⁵² Sorrel, 109.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 111.

¹⁵⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 260.

¹⁵⁵ Elisha Hunt Rhodes, *All for the Union: The Civil War Diary and Letters of Elisha Hunt Rhodes*, ed. by Robert Hunt Rhodes (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 1991), 82.

¹⁵⁶ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 150.

¹⁵⁷ Herman Hattaway, and Archer Jones *How the North Won a Military History of the Civil War* (University of Illinois Press, 2006), 307.

¹⁵⁸ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 149.

a good corps commander—the equal of any in either army,” wrote one historian, “and his steady progress in the art and science of war was no unknown to his superiors. The time had come to test his worth and ability in a larger field.”¹⁵⁹ According to some historians, Longstreet recognized his value and started to set his sights on grander glories—perhaps away from Lee—that could lead him to greater notoriety while leading his new nation to victory and independence.¹⁶⁰

Lee granted Longstreet’s apparent wish when elements of First Corps started 1863 campaigning away from the Army of Northern Virginia. Longstreet embarked on a nearly independent command in southern Virginia and eastern North Carolina to seek supplies. During this excursion, Longstreet met the scout Henry Thomas Harrison who was made famous by the book *The Killer Angels*.¹⁶¹ Longstreet acquired corn and bacon from the counties around Suffolk, Virginia to supply his force and the Army of Northern Virginia for two months, demonstrating Longstreet had impressive skills in leading a massive foraging party.¹⁶² Longstreet later claimed the “movements were executed without serious trouble” right up to the point Lee recalled him to the Army of Northern Virginia, which Longstreet attempted to delay because he seemed to prefer his current role as departmental commander.¹⁶³ However, Longstreet’s detachment did not return in time for the Battle of Chancellorsville, but his two divisions under Lafayette McLaws and Richard Anderson that remained with the Army of Northern Virginia fought well.¹⁶⁴ Longstreet’s

¹⁵⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 118.

¹⁶⁰ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 152.

¹⁶¹ Sorrel, 124-126.

¹⁶² Goree, 106.

¹⁶³ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 275; H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 161.

¹⁶⁴ Sorrel, 126-127.

memoirs, written many years after the war, devoted time to criticizing Lee's performance in the Chancellorsville victory, in which Longstreet did not participate.¹⁶⁵

Throughout the first quarter of 1863, Longstreet spent a great deal of time considering grand strategy to ensure a Confederate victory, and he saw potential in the Western Theater. More specifically, he believed the Southern cause would benefit from a concentration of forces in Tennessee.¹⁶⁶ Historian Alexander Mendoza observed Longstreet's persistent but unsuccessful efforts to convince Lee and Confederate leadership to send some of his army to Tennessee started in January 1863 and continued into the Spring.¹⁶⁷ When Longstreet rejoined Lee in Fredericksburg to find his commander brooding over the loss of Jackson and the thousands of Confederate casualties at Chancellorsville, he considered approaching the subject again. In this meeting, Longstreet boldly suggested a plan he had already mentioned to Confederate Secretary of War James A. Seddon that Lee should send reinforcements to General Braxton Bragg, who currently faced the Union Army under General William Rosecrans in Tennessee.¹⁶⁸ By April 1863, Longstreet remained convinced he knew what needed to be done to ensure a Confederate victory, and Longstreet believed the key piece to that puzzle appeared in at least some form in the Western Theater. "There seems but little doubt, but the enemy is inclined to make his great effort in the West," he wrote Lee on April 4, "but we may break him up in the East and then re-enforce the West in time to crush him there."¹⁶⁹ But, after the Army of Northern

¹⁶⁵ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 169.

¹⁶⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 277.

¹⁶⁷ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 20.

¹⁶⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 280.

¹⁶⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume XVIII (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 960.

Virginia's dazzling victory at Chancellorsville in May 1863, Longstreet would soon find out that Lee had other plans in the works for the summer of 1863.

Chapter 4

The Battle of Gettysburg has received more attention than any other in the American Civil War. From scholars to those with a casual interest in the Civil War, the clash of blue and gray in Pennsylvania captured the attention of people around the world through countless articles and books. The movie, *Gettysburg*, renewed and enhanced interest in 1993 among individuals who had only a passing interest in American history, as people around the world watched the events of those violent days played out on the silver screen. Two armies collided in an epic struggle full of drama and controversy, and tens of thousands of soldiers never left that small town where the roads converged. But amid this fight in July of 1863, the controversy of what James Longstreet did or did not do to support the plans of his commander Robert E. Lee has dominated the pages of postwar memoirs and history books. Longstreet's actions and behavior on that day have been examined, exaggerated, sometimes fabricated, and transformed into an almost mythical story. The fascination with Longstreet's role at Gettysburg did not manifest until after the war ended. As Harold M. Knudsen wrote, Lee's death in 1870 sparked a "century-and-a-half-long assault from many writers in different periods who invented one falsehood after the next on why Lee was defeated at Gettysburg. Nearly all these falsehoods attributed the defeat to Longstreet for one reason or another."¹

Longstreet's journey to Gettysburg essentially started in May of 1863. By this point in the conflict, Longstreet had received acclaim as one of the best Confederate generals by participating in a string of victories and had recently carried out a successful detached duty away from Robert E. Lee. While Longstreet was away, the Army of Northern Virginia's most recent

¹ Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019), 1.

victory at Chancellorsville was the talk of the world by the time a confident Longstreet returned from his supply operation in southeastern Virginia on May 9, rejoining Lee near Fredericksburg. The successful campaign for Longstreet was close to an independent command that received little attention in the wake of Lee's dazzling victory. The press and public focused on Lee's performance at Chancellorsville that took place without Longstreet and believed the Confederacy had a certain "invincibility."² Some historians have suggested the impressive victory while Longstreet operated elsewhere hurt Longstreet's pride and perhaps even exacerbated a potential rivalry between Lee's subordinates Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and Longstreet. "If Longstreet's divisions had been [at Chancellorsville]," one Longstreet biography observed, "the Confederate tactics would have been different."³ Years later, Longstreet described the battle as a "brilliant" independent affair that was "crippling in resources and of future progress."⁴ Lee agreed and admitted his depression after Chancellorsville. "Our people were wild with delight," he recalled, "[but] our loss was severe, and again we had gained not an inch of ground and the enemy could not be pursued."⁵

Following his excursion to southeastern Virginia that caused him to miss Chancellorsville, Longstreet returned to a weary army that had suffered tremendous casualties in the clash against Joe Hooker's Army of the Potomac. The Army of Northern Virginia had suffered twenty-one percent casualties in the victory while inflicting fifteen percent on its enemy.⁶ Longstreet concluded Chancellorsville had been an empty success, which may have also

² Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1968), 4.

³ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 168.

⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 280.

⁵ Allen C. Guezlo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 2013), 18.

⁶ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 247.

been his opinion because he did not participate in the battle. “Our losses were so heavy when we attacked that our army must soon be depleted to such extent that we should not be able to hold a force in the field sufficient to meet our adversary.”⁷

The grim realities of this campaign cast an ominous tone over the reunion between Lee and Longstreet. As if to underscore the importance of the upcoming discussions on the day after Longstreet arrived, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson died from his wounds suffered because of friendly fire in the Chancellorsville campaign, bringing another stark reminder of the dangers of continued victories that carried such a cost for the outnumbered Confederacy. Jackson’s death also received significant attention in the press as writers mourned and recognized the qualities “for which Stonewall Jackson was celebrated—his heroism, his bravery, his sublime devotion, his purity of character.”⁸ Historian Stephen W. Sears contends Jackson’s death elevated Longstreet’s status under Lee, writing “Longstreet expected to be listened to and have his views respected.”⁹

In the wake of these significant developments, the Confederate commanders turned their attention on how best to end the war now entering another summer. While they did not agree on the course of action to pursue, both Lee and Longstreet believed ultimate victory required bold action because the Confederacy could not survive an extended war with such dreadful casualties. One historian wrote, “Longstreet and Lee shared similar beliefs: direct attacks cost too many casualties, the South cannot win a war of attrition, the North must be outgeneraled on its own ground.”¹⁰ In previous months, there is evidence Longstreet campaigned for a shift in

⁷ DiNardo, and Nofi, 83.

⁸ Editor, *Alexandria Gazette* (May 13, 1863): 1.

⁹ Stephen W. Sears, “General Longstreet and the Lost Cause,” *American Heritage* (Feb, 2005): 46-53.

¹⁰ William L. Richter, “‘The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions’: James Longstreet in War and Peace,” in *Lee and his Generals: Essays in Honor of T. Harry Williams*, edited by Lawrence Lee Hewitt, and Thomas E. Schott (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 210.

Confederate focus to the Western Theater. Others in the Confederate leadership also discussed similar plans, including President Jefferson Davis. But Lee always found reasons to object to the suggestions. Never one to shy away from offering his perspective, Longstreet felt confident enough to express the belief his role was to provide his superior officer “the full benefit of my views.” And the forty-two-year-old Longstreet, now in his third year of Confederate service, had many strategies to present to Lee and the rebellion’s leadership. At first, Longstreet and others desired a concentration of forces to protect the threatened city of Vicksburg, Mississippi, the last significant Confederate position on the vital river. But Longstreet’s old friend, Union Major General Ulysses S. Grant had disrupted any such plans. As a result, Longstreet corresponded with the Secretary of War James Seddon on the possibility of reinforcing Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee to conduct an offensive operation that may indirectly relieve Vicksburg. Longstreet’s meetings with Lee continued until May 13 where they discussed strategy and, given the fact Longstreet had been adamant on the shift to the West, it is likely he pressed Lee to agree with such a strategy.¹¹

However, one Longstreet biographer suggested the general was not a “firm member of the so-called western concentration bloc” even if he suggested such a course of action to Lee.¹² Longstreet’s reasons for the move West have been discussed and analyzed by many historians. While some have suggested Longstreet believed shifting to the Western Theater was primarily patriotism for the Confederacy, others have pondered his personal ambitions for the move

¹¹ R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi, *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 79; William Garrett Piston, *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 38; Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 138; Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1968), 5.

¹² Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 245-246.

whether it was promotion to army commander or to simply get away from the shadows of Lee and Jackson.¹³ Others have suggested the desire to focus on protecting Georgia and Alabama originated because he had relatives in those states or that he wanted to reunite with Johnston or Beauregard. In hindsight, Longstreet's strategy had the support of at least some of his men. Edward Porter Alexander, Longstreet's chief of artillery, believed Longstreet's plan to remain on the defensive in the East while the Confederacy redirected its efforts elsewhere would have been the safer and more successful strategy over any northern invasion. When given a choice between reinforcing the western theater or invading Maryland or Pennsylvania, Alexander maintained, "I must confess that the former seems to me so very much the best that I can excuse one who suggested it at the time for some warmth and earnestness in now pointing out its possibilities."¹⁴

Lee rejected the plan to send any troops to the West, choosing instead to maintain the initiative gained from Chancellorsville and conduct an offensive into Pennsylvania in hopes a lull in major campaigning in Virginia would give the farmers and the land a reprieve from the armies maneuvering through the countryside. Lee had secretly contemplated a northern invasion since February 1863.¹⁵ Several times in the war thus far, such as the combined invasions of Lee and Braxton Bragg into Maryland and Kentucky and Lee's Spring 1863 victories, Confederate aggressive measures "seriously threatened northern civilian morale."¹⁶ It is understandable Lee believed one more major victory could bring Confederate independence. Urgency to end the war swiftly appeared to consume Lee as he conducted an "intense barrage of argument" toward Davis

¹³ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 172.

¹⁴ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 219-220.

¹⁵ Allen C. Guezlo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 2013), 54.

¹⁶ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 116.

that he had never done in the past with the goal of strengthening rather than diminishing the Army of Northern Virginia.¹⁷ It has also been suggested Lee may not have necessarily been seeking a decisive end to the war but instead an aggressive raid for supplies, which may have been part of why Longstreet shelved his plans to concentrate on the Western Theater since Lee apparently did not seek an offensive thrust into Pennsylvania but instead wanted to maneuver into a position to force the Union to attack while gathering supplies and frightening the northern public.¹⁸ Lee's secretary, Colonel Armistead L. Long, quoted his commanding general as proposing, "Should we defeat General Hooker in a general engagement south of the Potomac, anywhere in the vicinity of Washington, his shattered army would find refuge within the defense of the city, as two Federal armies have previously done, and the fruits of victory would again be lost. But should we draw him far away from the defenses of his capital, and defeat him on a field of our own choosing, his army would be irretrievably lost, and victory would be attended with results of the utmost importance."¹⁹

The strategy received approval from the Confederate government, leaving Longstreet's favorite former commander, Joseph Johnston, the man Longstreet revered and respected more than any other Confederate leader, to complain Lee's army had "absorbed the interest of the government, and therefore occupied the attention of the country."²⁰ Longstreet was undoubtedly frustrated to see another potential offensive campaign when he preferred remaining on the defensive. Since the initial campaigns, Longstreet preferred to remain on the defensive and force the Yankees to attack him. His preference for defensive tactics had only grown with subsequent

¹⁷ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 228-229.

¹⁸ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 45.

¹⁹ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 94.

²⁰ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 247.

victories like Fredericksburg, and he later recalled the “ruling idea of the campaign” into Pennsylvania was that “under no circumstances were we to give battle but exhaust our skill in trying to force the enemy to do so in a position of our own choosing.”²¹ Douglas Southall Freeman observed that Lee’s plan received support from everyone but Longstreet, who the historian believed had allowed “vanity” to take over his position in resisting his commanding officer. “It would have been better,” Freeman noted, “if Lee had stood Longstreet before him and had bluntly reminded him that he and not the chief of the First Corps commanded the Army of Northern Virginia.”²² With Longstreet’s rising confidence since the beginning of the war, however, such a dressing-down as Freeman suggested may not have had the desired result.

Many in the Army of Northern Virginia and the Confederacy did not vehemently object to the strategy despite the controversial debate over Gettysburg in the years since the war ended that would suggest otherwise. There is contemporary evidence to suggest Longstreet’s support of Lee’s plan to move into Pennsylvania.²³ Yet, if one is to believe Longstreet’s recollections written years after the war, Longstreet approved of the march north as long as any battle was fought “on the *tactical* defensive.”²⁴ However, a letter written on May 13 to Senator Louis T. Wigfall suggested Longstreet supported the move into Pennsylvania and did not mention a discussion of the defensive tactics. Instead, Longstreet mentioned a major move across the Potomac could impact President Abraham Lincoln’s ability to maintain Northern support for the war. Such an offensive movement, Longstreet postulated, prevented any detachment to the West

²¹ Jeffrey D. Wert, “Lee’s Old War Horse,” *American History*, vol. 33, no. 1 (Mar. 1998): 16.

²² Douglas Southall Freeman, and Richard Barksdale Harwell. *Lee: An Abridgment in One Volume of the Four-Volume R.E. Lee* by Douglas Southall Freeman (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 308.

²³ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 94.

²⁴ Allen C. Guezlo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 2013), 35.

in the summer of 1863 because “every available man and means should be brought to bear” against the enemy if the Confederate forces moved in Pennsylvania.²⁵

Others agreed with the strategy and saw the benefit of campaigning away from Virginia. As one of Longstreet’s staff officers noted, “Virginia had been fiercely fought over, and ravaged by the tramp of hostile armies. Now, it looked as if the enemy should feel something of such sacrifices.”²⁶ Colonel Walter Taylor supported this notion when he wrote Lee’s “design was to free the State of Virginia ... from the presence of the enemy, to transfer the theater of war to Northern soil, and, by selecting a favorable time and place in which to receive the attack which his adversary would be compelled to make on him, to take the reasonable chances of defeating him in a pitched battle.”²⁷ The strategic discussions between Longstreet and Lee continued from their initial reunion up to the battle of Gettysburg. In these talks, they analyzed the previous campaigns and came to the conclusion that the Army of Northern Virginia’s victories were all of a pyrrhic nature as they “were consuming us, and would eventually destroy us.”²⁸ Because of these discussions, it can be assumed that Longstreet was well aware of the overall goals of the move into the North and possibly even helped establish the strategy.

Despite these discussions in the Spring of 1863 and the apparent positive working relationship between Longstreet and Lee, the former’s frustration mounted along with some others within the Army of Northern Virginia regarding Lee’s plan and the direction of the war. Longstreet remained loyal to his former commander, Joseph Johnston, and would remain so for the rest of his life. From Longstreet’s perspective, many in the Army of Northern Virginia shared

²⁵ DiNardo, and Nofi, 80-81.

²⁶ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 128.

²⁷ Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019) 27.

²⁸ DiNardo, and Nofi, 82.

his feelings for Johnston and would have preferred to serve under their former commander. As a result, Longstreet sought on different occasions to return to Johnston's service in the West.²⁹

In June of 1863, Longstreet and his subordinate, Lafayette McLaws, felt discontent to the point they discussed leaving the Army of Northern Virginia. McLaws wrote to his wife that Longstreet had been considering switching roles with P.G.T. Beauregard who was overseeing the coastal defenses. For his part, Longstreet hoped Beauregard could eventually join the Army of Northern Virginia. Historian William Garrett Piston suggested Longstreet desired a transfer to coastal defense because the role would necessitate primarily defensive tactics and, possibly, a promotion to full general. Piston also suggested Longstreet desired to leave the bias toward Virginians in Lee's army. "Probably more significant," Piston wrote, "was the growing divergence of their views on the overall war effort."³⁰ Lee's aggressive nature and willingness to go toe-to-toe with the enemy or take bold chances on the battlefield clashed with the school of Longstreet that focused on defensive tactics. Since his days in the Mexican War, Longstreet had seen the price of frontal assaults and hand-to-hand combat as well as the positive experience on the defensive since the Civil War started in 1861.

But Longstreet would receive no such transfer and the most famous army in the Confederacy turned its eyes to the North. Planning for the Northern invasion commenced as the Army of Northern Virginia reorganized and refitted. Davis and Lee worked hard to address issues of personnel, army organization and logistics as the Confederate efforts in the East reeled from the Chancellorsville campaign.³¹ One of Longstreet's divisions, Anderson's, moved to the newly formed Third Corps. Lee felt the previous two corps of 30,000 men each to be too large

²⁹ Allen C. Guezlo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 2013), 35.

³⁰ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 39-40.

³¹ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 233.

over rough terrain and dense forests. If the army could be properly reorganized, Lee believed it would be invincible with the proper leadership.³²

Despite a heat wave plaguing the soldiers on both sides, the Army of Northern Virginia moved away from Hooker around Fredericksburg, and the march proceeded smoothly as the calendar moved into June.³³ Lee moved his army toward Harrisburg to cut communications between East and West, but the plan depended on J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry, which had recently remained quiet.³⁴ The lack of proper cavalry frustrated Lee and Longstreet as the absence rendered the army blind. It was around this time Longstreet's chief of staff, Moxley Sorrel, met with Harrison, Longstreet's favorite scout, who brought news of the Army of the Potomac's movements and the change of command from Hooker to George Meade. Sorrel rushed to wake Longstreet, who fumed at the news coming from a lone scout rather than the cavalry. When faced with the news from Harrison, Lee ordered his three corps to converge on the town of Gettysburg where several roads intersected in hopes they could meet the enemy and destroy it.³⁵ Lee believed a successful battle here or the surrounding area could end the war and the South would earn its independence.³⁶

No one in blue or gray believed a battle would start on July 1, but the convergence of large masses of soldiers soon snowballed into a fierce fight. Lee's army started the engagement without J.E.B Stuart's cavalry, rendering the Army of Northern Virginia blind. One historian

³² Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1968), 11-12.

³³ *Ibid.*, 73-75.

³⁴ Douglas Southall Freeman, and Richard Barksdale Harwell, *Lee: An Abridgment in One Volume of the Four-Volume R.E. Lee by Douglas Southall Freeman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 319.

³⁵ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 132-133.

³⁶ Douglas Southall Freeman, and Richard Barksdale Harwell. *Lee: An Abridgment in One Volume of the Four-Volume R.E. Lee by Douglas Southall Freeman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 320.

claimed Lee had never “been so dangerously in the dark.”³⁷ In his memoirs, Longstreet criticized Stuart’s actions when he wrote, “So our plans, adopted after deep study, were suddenly given over to gratify the youthful cavalryman’s wish for a nomadic ride.”³⁸ Stuart, having died in Richmond in May 1864 after being wounded on the battlefield, could obviously not offer a retort to the elder Longstreet’s criticism.

The combat around Gettysburg that began on July 1 did so without Longstreet’s immediate presence, who was impatient as he pressed forward but did not arrive on the battlefield until around 5 p.m. when the “broken elements” of two Union corps fled through the town. Longstreet took in the scene, peering through his field glasses while remaining near the Lutheran Theological Seminary on Seminary Ridge. The arriving Union forces rallied in a strong position on a ridge anchored by hills, convincing Longstreet a direct assault on such a position was out of the question.³⁹ Lee thought otherwise, believing that the successful combat on July 1 warranted renewing an attack on Meade’s force even if they were in a strong position. Longstreet countered, arguing the Army of Northern Virginia could move around behind the Union force on ground of their choosing and position themselves between the enemy and Washington.⁴⁰ Choosing land of their choosing and forcing Meade to attack had been what “Longstreet wanted all along.”⁴¹ While such a maneuver would have been difficult, the logistical challenges of a flank march were not “insurmountable” but the execution of the such a movement never did not advance beyond “proposal and reflection.”⁴² Regardless of Longstreet’s suggestions, Lee was

³⁷ Douglas Southall Freeman, and Richard Barksdale Harwell. *Lee: An Abridgment in One Volume of the Four-Volume R.E. Lee by Douglas Southall Freeman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 322.

³⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 291.

³⁹ DiNardo, and Nofi, 78.

⁴⁰ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 186.

⁴¹ Michael Scott, *Scapegoats: Thirteen Victims of Military Injustice* (Elliott & Thompson, 2013), 100.

⁴² Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 50.

adamant an attack should move forward.⁴³ However, Longstreet recalled years later Lee had no specific orders for the actions on July 2 other than seizing Culp's Hill and the lack of cavalry information left him a "desperate mood" that was "painfully evident" and giving "rise to serious apprehensions."⁴⁴

When Longstreet realized Lee leaned toward offensive tactics at Gettysburg, he became down and noticeably unenthusiastic about the prospect of an attack. Longstreet's Chief-of-Staff noted his commanding officer did not want to fight on the ground around Gettysburg and observed Longstreet "failed to conceal some anger" during the battle that resulted in an "apparent apathy in his movements. They lacked the fire and point of his usual bearing on the battlefield."⁴⁵ But Longstreet, believing his operational ideas of maneuvering around the enemy to be the best course of action, continued to balk at Lee's attack orders and did not appreciate Lee's perspective that operating without a supply line "meant he would have to fight here and defeat the enemy quickly."⁴⁶ On the evening of July 1, others observed Longstreet as "depressed" and continuing to describe the enemy's position as "very formidable."⁴⁷ Longstreet's confidence led him to believe he knew best how to lead the Army of Northern Virginia, and Lee was risking its destruction.

With stars still twinkling in the early morning heavens, Longstreet continued his attempt to sway Lee to disengage and flank the enemy on July 2.⁴⁸ General Hood also appealed for a

⁴³ DiNardo, and Nofi, 84; Piston, 50.

⁴⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 306.

⁴⁵ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 136.

⁴⁶ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 245.

⁴⁷ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 189.

⁴⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 307.

move around the enemy.⁴⁹ Longstreet found Lee unwilling to alter the course for an assault on the enemy position, which only strengthened with time as Meade gathered more forces into the line. Lee's determination to assault the enemy positions on July 2 and July 3 has been described as "one of the baffling riddles of Gettysburg."⁵⁰ However, one scholar argued "Lee was the invader and therefore had to attack; withdrawal would be an admission of defeat."⁵¹ Lee desired a coordinated attack on the Union position, but that never occurred as one member of Lee's staff recalled the entire offensive being "disjointed" with "an utter absence of accord in the movements of several commands, and no decisive results attended the operations of the second day."⁵² One of Longstreet's staff recalled, "The situation on the morning of the 2nd was far from favorable to us."⁵³ Another claimed the Union position "could never have been successfully assaulted" before adding, "Longstreet did not wish to take the offensive."⁵⁴ To make matters worse, observers described Lee on July 2 as "nervous, irritable, and restless," which combined with Longstreet's sullen demeanor and reluctance to attack and a newly reorganized army made for a dangerous command attitude for the Army of Northern Virginia.⁵⁵ Part of Lee's behavior may have been health related, but Longstreet's sullen attitude certainly did not help as one historian noted, "Longstreet clearly withheld his cooperation and obstructed Lee's plans to some degree."⁵⁶ Longstreet's behavior displays his excessive self-confidence by this point in the war

⁴⁹ Robert Krick, "If Longstreet ... Says so, It Is Most Likely Not True," In *The Second Day at Gettysburg*, edited by Gary W. Gallagher (Kent State University Press, 1993), 102.

⁵⁰ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 95.

⁵¹ Michael Scott, *Scapegoats: Thirteen Victims of Military Injustice* (Elliott & Thompson, 2013), 97.

⁵² DiNardo, and Nofi, 89.

⁵³ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 136.

⁵⁴ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 234-237.

⁵⁵ Piston, 50-53.

⁵⁶ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 245.

since he clearly believed he knew better than Lee what the Army of Northern Virginia should be doing to achieve victory.

Regardless of how he felt about the attack order, Longstreet's First Corps carried out aggressive attacks on the Union left after much delay, battling against relentless fire and difficult terrain for an assault. But the late assault started in the afternoon and "began to go awry with the first step" taken by Longstreet's force as each element faced delays and hesitation, further irritating the First Corps' commander.⁵⁷ One scholar claimed Longstreet was "responsible for the coordination of his own attack. It would seem that he failed in this" because he failed to coordinate the attack and "lost control of the battle as a whole."⁵⁸ However, if this is the case, it certainly would never be recognized or admitted by the confident Longstreet. Still, Longstreet believed elements of his First Corps, especially Hood's division, had carried out the "best three hours' fighting ever done by any troops on any battlefield."⁵⁹ The fighting in this sector of the battle raged as determined veterans faced off, firing with such rapidity their guns became too hot to hold.⁶⁰ Despite these efforts, little had been gained other than heavy casualties because the Union Army had bent without breaking.⁶¹

Longstreet called his men back after the bloody assaults had not pushed the Federals off their strong position. "While Meade's lines were growing my men were dropping; we had no others to call to their aid, and the weight against us was too heavy to carry."⁶² By the end of July

⁵⁷ Allen C. Guezlo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 2013), 262; Piston, 55.

⁵⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 178-179.

⁵⁹ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1968), 386.

⁶⁰ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 198.

⁶¹ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 137.

⁶² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 316.

2, Longstreet's losses exceeded six thousand and the survivors had fought until exhaustion.⁶³ The butcher's bill for July 2 exceeded 15,000 casualties when including the both armies.⁶⁴

Longstreet's leadership on July 2 disturbed many of his subordinates. Cracks within the dependable First Corps started to appear as internal strife brewed beneath the surface. Although he did not seem to fully realize it at the time, Longstreet had lost some of his luster in his subordinates' eyes following the ultimate defeat and much of the problems occurred on the second day. McLaws blamed Longstreet for the failure to dislodge Union forces, writing to his wife that his commanding officer gave "contrary orders to everyone, and was exceedingly overbearing. I consider him a humbug—a man of small capacity, very obstinate, not at all chivalrous, exceedingly conceited, and totally selfish. If I can it is my intention to get away from his command."⁶⁵ McLaws would get his wish that winter when his professional relationship with Longstreet deteriorated even further. It is quite a shift in a relationship that had appeared cordial and friendly for years before this moment.

McLaws, who later gained recognition for his performance at Gettysburg, was not alone in his bitterness toward Longstreet.⁶⁶ Brigadier General Evander M. Law, who led his division's attack on the Union left at Gettysburg after John Bell Hood was wounded, also had problems with Longstreet, who favored another commander, Micah Jenkins of South Carolina, to lead Hood's division. Longstreet created intense "feuding within the division" as the soldiers preferred Law as

⁶³ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 178.

⁶⁴ David Shultz, and Mingus, Scott, *The Second Day at Gettysburg : The Attack and Defense of the Union Center on Cemetery Ridge, July 2, 1863* (Havertown: Savas Beatie, 2011), 487.

⁶⁵ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: A Touchstone Book, 1968), 381.

⁶⁶ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 67.

their leader.⁶⁷ The “intense rivalry” between Law and Jenkins only magnified the growing tension in the First Corps.⁶⁸

Compounding the First Corps’ internal divisions, Longstreet also eventually issued charges toward General Jerome B. Robertson, who also coincidentally participated closely with Law in the assault on the Union lines during the second day at Gettysburg, describing the contest as the “hardest fought battle of the war in which I have been engaged.”⁶⁹ Like many fighting that day, Robertson saw officers killed or wounded in the assaults as he demanded reinforcements that did not come. After being hit above the knee by enemy fire, Robertson praised all his men for acting “nobly” in the fight and admitted the losses were difficult to bear.⁷⁰ It is worth noting the three commanders with whom Longstreet would later have severe issues all took part in the second day’s assault during the Battle of Gettysburg, which was famously unsuccessful and led to the Longstreet’s low postwar reputation throughout the former Confederacy. It is also possibly evidence Longstreet was not properly controlling dissent within the ranks. Longstreet would take these existing issues within his command to the western theater two months later.

The failures of July 2 do not rest solely on Longstreet’s shoulders. As the sun set, historian William Garret Piston claimed the Confederate success would have been much greater if Longstreet’s corps did not have to fight “virtually alone” and the attacks had been properly coordinated.⁷¹ But as both armies rested and prepared for the next day, the Union soldiers still held the favorable position and high ground with reserves close by.

⁶⁷ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 337.

⁶⁸ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 153.

⁶⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 27, pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 406.

⁷⁰ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 27, pt. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 406.

⁷¹ Piston, 58.

On July 3, Longstreet renewed his attempt to convince Lee to move around Meade and even proceeded to plan a flanking maneuver. Interestingly, Union General George Meade feared Lee would attempt such a movement.⁷² Years later, Longstreet claimed he tried once more to change Lee's mind by saying, "General, I have had many scouts out all night, and I find that you still have an excellent opportunity to move around to the right of Meade's army and maneuver him into attacking us." When Lee still refused, Longstreet said, "I felt I must say a word against the sacrifice of my men; and then I felt that my record was such that General Lee would or could not misconstrue my motives. I said no more, however, but turned away."⁷³ Longstreet simply could not understand why Lee refused to listen to his plans, which were superior in his opinion, so he spent much of the night scouting a route to move around the enemy. When Lee found out about the plans, he immediately cancelled them and reiterated his order to begin an assault.⁷⁴ One scholar observed that Lee behaved at Gettysburg as if the Confederacy had no tomorrow, indicting he had been shaken by the death of Jackson and wanted to end the war with this campaign.⁷⁵ Seeing his "Old War Horse" continuing to bristle at his orders must have frustrated Lee. After the war, Lee allegedly claimed, "If I had had Stonewall Jackson with me, so far as man can see, I should have won the battle of Gettysburg."⁷⁶ Longstreet claimed Lee would not be convinced no matter the argument and wanted the attack to resume on the Union center. Still, he told Lee that there were never fifteen thousand men in history who could take the Union position.⁷⁷ Although Longstreet did not appear to hide his discontent for the attack, Sorrell said

⁷² Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 54.

⁷³ James Longstreet, "Strategy of Gettysburg," McClure's *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, 1877, Georgia Historical Society, Helen Longstreet, 1341, box 15, folder 211.

⁷⁴ Piston, 58-59.

⁷⁵ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 245.

⁷⁶ Douglas Southall Freeman, and Richard Barksdale Harwell. *Lee: An Abridgment in One Volume of the Four-Volume R.E. Lee by Douglas Southall Freeman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 347.

⁷⁷ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad, *James Longstreet Lee's War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 202.

Longstreet “watched every feature” of the assault and his “anxiety for Pickett and the men was very apparent.”⁷⁸

Longstreet claimed years later that he informed a subordinate “that I could find no way out” of the attack and that Lee “had considered and would listen to nothing else.”⁷⁹ The artillery opened on Meade’s positions to precede the Confederate assault. The cannons boomed for minutes but Pickett’s attack had not started. As he became impatient with the delay in Pickett’s movement while his guns fired on the Union center, his artillery chief Alexander recalled Longstreet riding up alone. Alexander told Longstreet the attack should come soon, or the guns could not support the infantry. Longstreet’s response while looking through his field glasses at the enemy’s position is telling: “I don’t want to make this attack. I believe it will fail. I do not see how it can succeed. I would not make it ever now, but that Gen. Lee had ordered and expects it.”⁸⁰ Making such negative remarks in front of a subordinate prompts the question of how many additional Confederates heard Lee’s Old War Horse deriding an attack order and expressing such disdain for the commander’s battle plan. As historian Glenn Tucker observed, “Longstreet opposed the assault as stubbornly as he could and still remain in the army. To the end, he withheld his written and oral assent to it and when pressed at the last moment, he sanctioned it with a nod of his head.”⁸¹ Putting in simply in his normal blunt fashion, Longstreet allegedly told Lee that “No 15,000 men can take that hill.”⁸²

⁷⁸ Sorrel, 141.

⁷⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 329.

⁸⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 261.

⁸¹ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 93.

⁸² William L. Richter, “‘The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions’: James Longstreet in War and Peace.” In *Lee and his Generals: Essays in Honor of T. Harry Williams*, edited by Lawrence Lee Hewitt, and Thomas E. Schott (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 211.

Ultimately, the time came to assault the position. The delay in attacking plagued Longstreet in the postwar years as his critics searched his record for evidence in his war record “of the plodding, stubborn, and self-centered behavior” his showcased at Gettysburg and allegedly found the same problems with his command in his performance at Second Manassas.⁸³ Emotion threatening to overtake him, Longstreet could not verbally give the order to Pickett to attack. Instead, he only nodded the affirmative. The assault on the Union lines moved forward and became forever known as “Pickett’s Charge.” In this case, Longstreet’s fears had been correct—the Federal position had been too strong, and Pickett’s division shattered on the Union center in a “cul-de-sac of death.”⁸⁴ A posthumous account written by Longstreet’s widow, Helen, claimed her late husband’s “heart broke that day He always said it was the saddest moment of his life ... the most fruitless sacrifice of life every made on any field.”⁸⁵ Other postwar accounts falsely accused Longstreet of sleeping during the assault, but Charles H. Reynard of the 46th Pennsylvania Volunteers refuted such a comment by saying “Longstreet was always wide enough awake for the Yankees. It would have been better for us if he had slept more. Whenever we faced him, we had a fight ... Longstreet was Lee’s best General and the lies now being circulated about his war record, are little short of crimes.”⁸⁶

Lee accepted responsibility for the failed attack and offered his resignation to President Davis, who rejected the request in a detailed letter to “dispute Lee’s grounds for resignation.”⁸⁷ Also, according to Longstreet in his postwar writings, the only replacements for Lee were

⁸³ Gary W. Gallagher, “Scapegoat in Victory: James Longstreet and the Battle of Second Manassas,” *Civil War history*. 34, no. 4 (1988): 294.

⁸⁴ DiNardo, and Nofi, 90.

⁸⁵ Helen Longstreet, “Around America’s Campfires,” Longstreet Memorial Association meeting at Savannah Beach, Georgia, Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 15, Folder 211 “Speeches and Civil War.”

⁸⁶ Editor, “Gettysburg Reunion,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 3, 1888.

⁸⁷ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 251.

Johnston and Beauregard. “The President was jealous of Johnston, and nourished prejudice against Beauregard.”⁸⁸

One Confederate veteran who lost his leg in the battle bemoaned the defeat, claiming “it was powerful hard to lose one’s leg and be whipped, too.”⁸⁹ Despite the disappointment, evidence suggests the morale remained relatively high amongst the troops in Lee’s army. One year after the Pennsylvania Campaign Longstreet’s First Corps reenlisted for the entirety of the war no matter how long it lasted. However, weather plagued the march, and the entire affair became “slow and tedious.”⁹⁰ Worn down by the recent events, Lee left Longstreet in charge of the complex movements to cross the army over the Potomac.⁹¹ The trail of limping wounded and wagons dripping blood from dying men injured around Gettysburg spilled into the muddy roads for miles, a stark reminder Lee’s invasion of Pennsylvania failed. Much had been risked on the campaign as Confederate leadership acquiesced to Lee’s plan rather than other strategies that would have sent the rebellion’s limited resources into other theaters to counter the Union movements. By the time the Army of Northern Virginia had reached relative safety by crossing back into the Old Dominion, Longstreet prepared to resume his efforts at transferring to the West and Lee appeared weary and ready to relinquish command. “The strain of the past few days had left its mark on Lee. He withdrew from active command.”⁹²

⁸⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 370.

⁸⁹ Helen Longstreet, “Around America’s Campfires,” Longstreet Memorial Association meeting at Savannah Beach, Georgia, Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 15, Folder 211 “Speeches and Civil War.”

⁹⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 267; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 94.

⁹¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 192.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 192.

No contemporary accounts placed blame on Longstreet for the failure at Gettysburg.⁹³ Years later, Lost Cause enthusiasts vilified Longstreet for his actions at Gettysburg, some going as far as claiming Longstreet should have been shot for insubordination.⁹⁴ More recent writers and historians have offered a more balanced view while not absolving Longstreet of his faults—especially on July 2.⁹⁵ Even historians sympathetic to Longstreet claimed he could have done more to support Lee’s plan. “The one man who spoke up, and declaimed passionately and with insistence that the foe stood fast only because he was ready and willing to accept the decision of battle, was James Longstreet. But Longstreet, even though we may admire his reasoning, was not without his sins of omission. He could have given Lee more generous support; he could have shown a willingness to subscribe to Lee’s plan, even though it may not have been the best plan to follow. Longstreet erred—but not to the extent that most writers have asserted.”⁹⁶

Upon Longstreet’s death in 1904, numerous obituaries focused on Longstreet’s role at Gettysburg. “From the lips of Lee no word of censure every fell upon the military renown of his great corps commander, the intrepid and immovable Longstreet,” Judge Emory Speer wrote in the *Macon Telegraph* in Georgia. “However, men may differ as to that last fateful day at Gettysburg, on the historic page there is blazoned the military glory of James Longstreet. No earthly power can blot it out.”⁹⁷ Another claimed of Longstreet that in the “military annals of the Anglo-Saxon race there is nothing finer than his fighting record.”⁹⁸

⁹³ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 208.

⁹⁴ Editor, “Longstreet Would Have Been Shot,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 1885.

⁹⁵ DiNardo, and Nofi, 92-93.

⁹⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 188.

⁹⁷ Emory Speer, *Macon Telegraph*, January 1904.

⁹⁸ Glenn Tucker, *Lee and Longstreet at Gettysburg* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 173.

Criticism toward Lee's failed invasion of Pennsylvania sparked immediately after Pickett's Charge and continued.⁹⁹ While overseeing the withdrawal from Pennsylvania, Longstreet did not openly blame Lee and instead almost immediately started turning his attention back to the transfer to the western theater. In the weeks after the guns fell silent at Gettysburg, Longstreet did not vigorously criticize his commanding officer like others did but he revealed his frustration with Lee in a letter to his uncle Augustus while also suggesting he knew better than Lee how that campaign should have been conducted. "The battle was not made as I would have made it," he grumbled. "My idea was to throw ourselves between the enemy and Washington, select a strong position, and force the enemy to attack us."¹⁰⁰ If Longstreet believed he would have made better decisions than Lee as the army commander, he would soon get a chance to see what he could do when leading men in a nearly independent command.

While he viewed Gettysburg as a setback and did not refer to the extent of the defeat in his letters, Lee renewed interest in taking the offensive against Meade in late summer since he knew the Army of Potomac had been battered by Gettysburg the same as his army. He wrote Longstreet on August 31 to prepare for offensive operations. "I can see nothing better to be done than to endeavor to bring General Meade out and use our efforts to crush his army in its present condition."¹⁰¹ However, Longstreet pressed for other strategies rather than an offensive in the East and he once again took matters into his own hands. Regardless of his reason for wanting to do so, perhaps Longstreet sensed Lee's defeat provided him the chance to continue his campaign to transfer forces to the West. "To me," Longstreet wrote years later regarding the situation after

⁹⁹ Piston, 62.

¹⁰⁰ Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019) 20; Piston, 64-65.

¹⁰¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 51, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 761; Piston, 62-63.

Gettysburg, “the emergency seemed so grave that I decided to write the Honorable Secretary of War ... expressing my opinion of affairs in that military zone.” He maintained reinforcements should be sent with all speed to counter Union General William Rosecrans threatening to invade Georgia.¹⁰² Longstreet going over Lee’s head was a breach of protocol that often took place in the Confederacy, but one historian charged “it cannot be excused on any ground. The channel for such communications was through the superior who was affected.”¹⁰³

Regardless of the breach, Lee did not seem impacted by Longstreet’s actions as a late summer debate continued between Longstreet, Davis and Lee. The President suggested Lee should go to the West, but Lee thought his ignorance of the situation in Tennessee would be too much of a hinderance and, possibly, wanted to remain in a position to defend his home state. If reinforcements were to be sent to the West, that left Longstreet as the potential candidate.¹⁰⁴ Gettysburg had apparently done nothing to shake Longstreet’s belief in his own abilities. If anything, the campaign in Pennsylvania seems to have strengthened his confidence and nothing had “lessened his belief in his capacity to command an army or quenched his thirst for glory.”¹⁰⁵ As he had done in the past, Longstreet continued maneuvering for a change in status and personal advancement. In a letter to Lee, Longstreet suggested he should be placed in Bragg’s place and Bragg could command the First Corps, suggesting Longstreet sought control of the Army of Tennessee. Later, however, Longstreet denounced in several letters any personal motive in a potential move to the West. Some historians have used this discrepancy in Longstreet’s correspondence to support the claim he quietly held ambitions for an independent army command

¹⁰² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 371.

¹⁰³ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 195-196.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁰⁵ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 219.

and one away from Lee.¹⁰⁶ Longstreet's farewell letter to Lee before leaving for the West possibly reveals the desire to flee from Lee has been exaggerated or fabricated when he wrote, "All that we have to be proud of has been accomplished under your eye and your orders. Our affections for you are stronger, if it is possible for them to be stronger, than our admiration for you."¹⁰⁷ Of course, it is possible Longstreet's words revealed politeness and respect to his commander of the past year and half. Others have argued Longstreet's actions to transfer to the West were sincere and contained no hidden attempt at self-promotion.¹⁰⁸ Regardless of his reasoning, Longstreet believed reinforcements to the West led by him would make a significant difference in the war effort—especially after the failure of Gettysburg.

If Lee, who had led Longstreet since taking command in 1862, remained on the defensive in Virginia, Longstreet believed a brief but decisive excursion by his First Corps to the West would reap significant rewards and he was the man to carry out this mission. "I don't know that we can reasonably hope to accomplish much [in Virginia] by offensive operations," he wrote Lee on September 2, 1863. "...I know but little of the condition of our affairs in the west, but am inclined to the opinion that our best opportunity for great results is in Tennessee." Pressing the issue, Longstreet believed showing active operations at all points and concentrating on the destruction of the Union army at Chattanooga under the commander of General William Rosecrans would be the surest path to ultimate victory. "I feel assured that this is practicable and that greater advantages will be gained than by any operation from here."¹⁰⁹ With the fall of Knoxville on September 2, Davis believed the Confederate positions there under Braxton Bragg should be reinforced and,

¹⁰⁶ Piston, 66.

¹⁰⁷ Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 199.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 196

¹⁰⁹ James Longstreet, "James Longstreet to Robert E. Lee, September 2, 1863," *James Longstreet Papers – 1838 and 1863-1899*, 1937-0101M, Georgia Archives.

since Longstreet seemed “most anxious to go,” portions of the First Corps should be detached for the West.¹¹⁰ Lee had faith in his subordinate to detach to the West for a brief excursion, but declared, if the movement of First Corps were to be tried, “No time ought now to be wasted. Everything should be done that can be done at once, so that the troops may be speedily returned to this department.”¹¹¹

Even before Longstreet arrived in Georgia to assist in the southern victory at Chickamauga, the struggle between bickering Confederate generals in the western theater at times outdid the objective of ousting the Union invader. Army of Tennessee commander Braxton Bragg had an “excellent strategic mind” but suffered with execution and “chronic ill health.” Moreover, some of his subordinates, like General Leonidas Polk, called for Bragg’s removal. In response, Bragg did not exhibit “even the most rudimentary tact in dealing with his subordinates,” further complicating the situation Longstreet’s force would be entering.¹¹² The problematic situation in Bragg’s command seemed to be known by all. Earlier in the year, a Confederate citizen in Tennessee even speculated Bragg was a traitor and wondered if Longstreet would take over.¹¹³ Upon arriving in Georgia following an arduous transfer from Virginia, Longstreet paused at the Trout House in Atlanta to greet a supportive crowd where he said, “I came not to speak; I came to meet the enemy.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Douglas Southall Freeman, and Richard Barksdale Harwell. *Lee: An Abridgment in One Volume of the Four-Volume R.E. Lee by Douglas Southall Freeman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 349.

¹¹¹ Brooks D. Simpson, *The Civil War in the East: Struggle, Stalemate, and Victory* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2011), 91.

¹¹² Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 4-5.

¹¹³ Eleanora Willauer Diary, Feb. 5, 1863, *Eleanora Willauer Diary, 1862 October 1-1869 November 9*, n.d.

¹¹⁴ Sears Wilson Cabell, “The Bulldog at Gettysburg,” *Helen Dortch Longstreet Papers – Sears Wilson Cabell Manuscripts - 1938*, MSS 136, Manuscripts, Box 3-Folder 2, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

Chapter 5

As the Fall of 1863 approached, James Longstreet felt nothing other than a bold move would save the Confederate States of America's fight for independence. And he believed his talents would be better used in another theater of the war. Following the bloody aftermath of Robert E. Lee's failed campaign to invade Pennsylvania, Longstreet resumed his crusade to seek command elsewhere away from the East. "If I remain here," Longstreet wrote Senator Louis Wigfall, "I fear that we shall go, little at a time, till all will be lost. I hope that I may get west in time to save what there is left of us. I dislike to ask for anything, and only do it under the impression that if I do not, our days will be numbered." He added a statement showcasing the extreme confidence he had in his abilities by stating "I am not essential here ... and I am satisfied that it is a great mistake to keep me here."¹

Frustrated with the Confederate tendency to resort to the strategic and tactical offensive, Longstreet believed the only hope the Confederacy had "was to outgeneral the Federals... Our purpose should have been to impair the morale of the Federal army and shake Northern confidence in the Federal leaders."² He rather consistently believed the way to "outgeneral" the enemy would be to shift the Southern focus to the Western Theater. One historian contended a victory in the West that allowed the Confederacy to reclaim territory could have forced a stalemate that encouraged the anti-war movement in the North to force Lincoln to seek peace.³ By September, Longstreet finally received the transfer that he had been seeking periodically over the previous year. President Jefferson Davis first considered Lee as the man to lead a proposed

¹ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 300.

² Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee & His Army in Confederate History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 119.

³ Glenn Tucker, *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1961), 90.

offensive in Tennessee, but Lee thought his own ignorance of the situation there would cause more harm than good, and Davis ultimately agreed.⁴

It is evident both Lee and Longstreet harbored doubts about the detachment for different reasons. Historian Peter Cozzens said Lee became obsessed with Longstreet's expedited return that took away key portions of his Army of Northern Virginia for an extended and unknown amount of time. Lee's fear is certainly understandable since the Army of the Potomac could be expected to resume an offensive into Virginia in an attempt to end the war, meaning the Army of Northern Virginia would need every available man. A detachment of any size at the wrong time could spell disaster for the Confederate efforts in the East and, possibly, the entire war. "General, we must have a great victory out there," Lee told Longstreet. "The success of our cause depends on it. We need only inflict one great disaster upon the Federal army to recover everything that has been lost."⁵ Additional evidence of Lee's concern came in the form of his regularly writing letters to Davis regarding Longstreet's detachment, the first coming two days after elements of the First Corps left for Georgia, suggesting the Army of Northern Virginia commander wanted this business in the West handled quickly. "The blow at Rosecrans should be made promptly, and Longstreet returned," Lee wrote. "Should General Longstreet reach General Bragg in time to aid him in winning a victory, and return to this army, it will be well, but should he be detained there without being able to do any good, it will result in evil."⁶

For his part, Longstreet also expressed concern on September 14 about serving under the Army of Tennessee commander Braxton Bragg. However, he once again made it clear his

⁴ Steven Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 229.

⁵ Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 60.

⁶ Steven Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 257.

abilities made him the only man who could accomplish this task in the West. “I don’t think that I should be under Bragg,” Longstreet griped. “And would fight against it if I saw any hope of getting anyone in the responsible position except myself.” One Longstreet biographer claimed the prospect of serving under Bragg “rankled Longstreet deeply, because he regarded the abrasive Bragg as unfit for army command.”⁷

Longstreet’s concern is understandable given Bragg’s shaky reputation and the troubles with his commanders that had been continuing for more than a year by Fall 1863. The Army of Tennessee commander had been attacked by the Southern press for losing the confidence of the men under his command. One officer claimed Bragg “did not know whom to trust. He was not popular with his generals; hence I feared that zealous cooperation on their part was wanting.” Another officer argued Bragg “possessed the faculty of alienating every able man who he came in contact.” Compounding this problem, Confederate General Joseph Johnston also observed the troubles within Bragg’s army and recommended his removal in January 1863 but did not openly covet the position for himself. One historian argued Johnston still hoped to one day return to the Army of Northern Virginia. Despite these challenges, Davis left Bragg in command of the Army of Tennessee and hoped he would be able to gain a victory in this region.⁸ Longstreet, a confident commander never afraid to share his opinion on how best to fight the war, now traveled into an environment already rife with dissention when the official order to depart arrived on September 8.⁹

⁷ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 304-305.

⁸ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 59; R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi, *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 107.

⁹ R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi. *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 101.

The first train to load Longstreet's troops at Orange Courthouse arrived on September 9 and the journey to the Western Theater started.¹⁰ While the common soldiers did not know of the exact purpose of the movement to the West, many guessed they were being sent to help Bragg.¹¹ The First Corps received a heroes' welcome on their excursion as people gathered at each station to cheer and provide the troops with the rations they could spare.¹² "Kisses and tokens of love" awaited the soldiers at every stop.¹³ However, Longstreet's First Corps did not have an easy journey making its way from Virginia to Georgia to begin its new mission with the battered Army of Tennessee under the embattled Bragg. The journey was slow and plodding, frustrating Longstreet since the success of this plan required a swift movement to the West.¹⁴ By September 1863, the Union Army under William Rosecrans appeared poised to launch an invasion straight into Georgia, what many considered the heart of the Confederacy. Rosecrans crossed the Tennessee on September 8, the same day the First Corps received its marching orders, forcing Bragg to evacuate Chattanooga. A day later, General Ambrose Burnside captured Knoxville and started working to improve the supply situation around the city. Bragg claims he moved to try and "bring [Burnside] to action" but these efforts were unsuccessful.¹⁵ Burnside had been marching his men on half rations on the way to Knoxville, reminding his men they traveled through "a friendly territory" because of all the Union Loyalists remaining in East Tennessee.¹⁶

¹⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 374.

¹¹ Lemon, 51.

¹² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 375.

¹³ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 157.

¹⁴ R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi, *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 101.

¹⁵ Bragg papers, September 9, Georgia Historical Society.

¹⁶ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 12-18.

Union forces had now penetrated into Tennessee, severing the primary railroad Longstreet's force would have used to expedite its expedition to link up with its new army.

Now, these developments forced the First Corps to take a longer, winding trip through the Carolinas to Augusta, Georgia, and then up through Atlanta to Ringgold in northern Georgia. The First Corps, comprised of the divisions led by Lafayette McLaws and John B. Hood amounting to eight brigades and six batteries, traversed rough rails that struggled to handle the traffic required to transport men and supplies across a territory as expansive as the Confederate States of America. "The gauges of the roads were not uniform," Longstreet complained years later, "nor did the roads connect at the cities... The roads had not been heavily worked before the war, to that their rolling stock was light and limited."¹⁷ Longstreet's chief of staff marveled at the feat of transporting so many troops on inadequate railroads. "Never before were so many troops moved over such worn-out railways, not first-class from the beginning. Never before were such crazy cars—passenger, baggage, mail, coal, box, platform, all every sort wabbling on the jumping iron—used for hauling good soldiers."¹⁸ The rough ride even forced a stock car door open in the middle of the night, causing horses to fall out of the train car that were not recovered until the next morning.¹⁹ As a result of these transportation difficulties, Hood's division that was first shipped did not arrive until September 18 and 19, with the majority of artillery not arriving until September 25.²⁰

¹⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 374; R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi. *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 101.

¹⁸ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 156.

¹⁹ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 286.

²⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 374-375.

Longstreet certainly was not alone in his frustration at the delays. Before parting from the Army of Northern Virginia, Longstreet and Lee discussed the urgency of speed in this detached assignment. Lee halted Longstreet before he left, urging, “Now, general, you must beat those people out in the West” to which Longstreet replied, “If I live, but I would not give a single man of my command for a fruitless victory.”²¹ Many units on both sides, North and South, went into motion in September. By the first week of that month, the Union forces knew the rebels sent at least a portion of Lee’s army to help Bragg’s Army of Tennessee.²² Growing dissatisfied with the slow movements by the Army of the Cumberland, officials in Washington pushed for Rosecrans to break his current policy of inactivity and secure Tennessee before pushing into Georgia.²³ Longstreet knew time was a factor and believed the fate of the entire Confederacy hinged on the success of his First Corps in helping the Army of Tennessee “strike a crushing blow” against Rosecrans. Longstreet thought to do otherwise could court disaster. Of course, he often assumed he knew best how to plan grand strategy for the Confederacy. Longstreet believed a successful march by Rosecrans through Georgia “would virtually be the finishing stroke of the war.”²⁴ However, all the delays in decisions and transportation challenges consumed nine days “on a journey that ought to have been accomplished in two or three.”²⁵

In early September before Longstreet’s corps arrived, Bragg claimed the situation forced him to remain on the defensive but should the enemy “present us an opportunity we shall not fail

²¹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 375.

²² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 30, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 644.

²³ Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 189.

²⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 371-372.

²⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 199.

to strike him. My position is to some extent embarrassing in regard to offensive movements...No effort will be spared to bring [Rosecrans] to an engagement whenever the chances shall favor us.”²⁶ Bragg complained the supply situation in the mountainous terrain constantly plagued his force and limited his movements. Further complicating the matter, according to Bragg, is the enemy’s unwillingness to engage in battle. “His policy seems to be to avoid an engagement.”²⁷ But Bragg’s moves south and abandonment of Chattanooga attracted critics, prompting some to complain when Bragg maneuvered they would “not be surprised to wake up one of these September mornings and find the entire Army at or near Atlanta instead of Nashville as we all so much desired.”²⁸

The Army of the Cumberland under Rosecrans started the move south with approximately eighty-thousand men, but the extending supply and communications line siphoned off some of those soldiers to protect against rebel cavalry. On September 19, along the winding Chickamauga Creek, Bragg’s Army of Tennessee with its forty-nine thousand troops had started its fight against the Army of the Cumberland with intense skirmishing before Longstreet arrived.²⁹ By the end of the day on September 19, Bragg became convinced he had encountered the Federals entire force and sent word for reinforcements to rush to their current position.³⁰ Soon, the Confederates in northwest Georgia had managed to arrange the “most effective concentration of their strength in the Western campaigns.”³¹ However, the value of this

²⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 30, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 21.

²⁷ Bragg papers, GA Historical Society, September 10, 1863; *OR* 30 pt 2, 22.

²⁸ Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat: Volume II* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 64.

²⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 201.

³⁰ *OR*, Pt. 2, 32-33.

³¹ Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 190.

concentration evaporated as one historian assessed Bragg as being both rigid and plagued with indecisiveness, claiming he could never adjust to the “fluid nature of combat nor commit his units at crucial moments when a battle’s outcome hung in the balance.”³² These character flaws became evident in the clash along Chickamauga Creek the Cherokees named “the river of death.”³³

Longstreet arrived on September 19, the day after Hood’s division and did not receive a warm welcome both literally and figuratively. A cold front drifted into the region, chilling the air, and making life difficult for the thousands of troops in the area attempting to stay warm as the nights lengthened. The temperatures across northwest Georgia had dipped to nearly freezing, and the cries echoed through the trees of the wounded already injured during the fighting along Chickamauga Creek.³⁴ In terms of meeting with Bragg’s staff, he barely received any welcome at all other than instructions to “follow the main road” to find Bragg’s headquarters. Longstreet’s chief of staff hinted that they expected a better greeting. “The General should surely have had guides to meet and conduct us to the conference on which so much depended. A sharp action had taken place during the day and it would appear that if Bragg wanted to see anybody, Longstreet was the man.”³⁵ With the rest of First Corps spread out for miles across the tracks behind him, Longstreet wanted to obtain information on the current state of affairs with the Army of Tennessee as quickly as possible. Longstreet and his staff heard sounds of battle rattling through

³² Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 307.

³³ Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Fort Donelson’s Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862-1863* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 305.

³⁴ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 102.

³⁵ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 159.

the North Georgia hills and saw trails of wounded trickling through the forest, but had still not found Bragg as the moon lit the night sky.³⁶

The arrival of Longstreet certainly bolstered Bragg's force in North Georgia. However, some have noted that Longstreet's actual reputation as a commander was linked to Lee and his battlefield ability, as some believed was proven at Gettysburg, could be seen as a liability rather than a resource. Historian Steven Woodworth observed Longstreet "could be anything but reliable and more than a little childish when the plan chosen by his commander did not meet with his approval ... lack of self-confidence was not a problem that plagued James Longstreet."³⁷ Considering Longstreet's trend of believing he knew how best to fight a war and comparing it to the internal problems rife within the Army of Tennessee, it is evident in hindsight that these two strong personalities would clash once they united in Georgia. Longstreet's existing low opinion of Bragg only intensified when no guides met them at the railroad depot, an "antagonism" that "manifested itself" in multiple ways over the next two months.³⁸

To make matters worse, Longstreet and his staff nearly ran into a Federal picket line, but Longstreet recognized the danger in the darkness and eluded capture.³⁹ Bragg's failure to send a staff officer to meet Longstreet, who knew nothing of the current state of the Army of Tennessee, was "unpardonable" and presented Longstreet with an indication the situation in the West would be much different than what he had encountered in Virginia.⁴⁰ Whether or not Longstreet ultimately believed he should replace Bragg or if he wanted Johnston to take command is

³⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 375.

³⁷ Steven Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 234.

³⁸ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 51.

³⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 202.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

difficult to ascertain with certainty. However, it is clear through Longstreet's correspondence that he did not respect Bragg and several witnesses over the coming weeks observed Longstreet's open defiance and disrespect toward Bragg.

Finally finding Bragg's headquarters just before midnight and the commanding general asleep in his ambulance, Longstreet received attack orders to take position as the commander of the Army of Tennessee's left wing while General Leonidas Polk took the right.⁴¹ Bragg ordered his men to cross the Chickamauga Creek on September 20 and smash into the Union left and cut the line between Rosecrans and Chattanooga. But Longstreet acknowledged in his memoirs that Rosecrans knew about their plan and had reacted accordingly.⁴² One historian observed "the element of surprise had been lost...when Bragg was ready to throw his main force into the assault to dislodge the Union left, he found the Federal army massed against it."⁴³ Moreover, another scholar argued Bragg's plan to reorganize his force in the face of the enemy "only held disaster."⁴⁴ Even as the situation on the battlefield changed, Bragg remained attached to his initial plan of turning the Federal left and severing Rosecrans connection with Chattanooga.⁴⁵ The inability to "readjust his plans had cost him heavily" on September 19.⁴⁶

Bragg revealed he prepared for a daylight attack on September 20 and had handed Longstreet a map of the area, which helped Longstreet obtain a basic understanding of the area,

⁴¹ *OR* 30, Pt. 2, 288.

⁴² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 376; G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 160.

⁴³ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 201.

⁴⁴ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 208.

⁴⁵ R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi. *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 105.

⁴⁶ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 207; *OR* 30, Pt. 2, 288.

but his orders meant Longstreet had to enter an unfamiliar situation a few hours after arriving on the scene.⁴⁷ As he tried to organize an attack with little time, Longstreet observed the chosen ground for the battle did not lend itself to a skillful use of artillery since it was a “heavy woodland” and not a field. Making matters worse, he noted the right wing had dissolved into a force with little organization since “some of the troops were without rations, their wagons, having lost the lines of march through the woodlands, failing to reach them until after daylight, when they were further delayed cooking their food.”⁴⁸

With little time to prepare or plan the attack, Longstreet’s challenges multiplied as he tried to organize his force as many arrived piecemeal directly from the trains. The darkness and dense forests only increased the confusion among the First Corps.⁴⁹ One scholar noted “it would be difficult to imagine a more inhibiting set of circumstances than those facing Longstreet, but he did not hesitate.”⁵⁰ Longstreet went to his new command around 6 a.m. on September 20 after having been with the Army of Tennessee for about seven hours.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Longstreet organized his assault force into a “sound disposition which provided depth for the attacking force.”⁵² Sunrise resulted in both armies maneuvering, ultimately engaging in heavy skirmishing around 9:30 a.m. According to Longstreet, the early morning clash “seemed to rage with considerable fury, but did not progress as had been anticipated.”⁵³ However, Bragg’s desire for a

⁴⁷ H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 230; *OR* 30, Pt 2. 24.

⁴⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 378.

⁴⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 203; *OR* 30, Pt. 2, 288.

⁵⁰ William Garrett Piston, *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 70.

⁵¹ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 220.

⁵² R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi. *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 112.

⁵³ *OR* 30 Pt. 2, 288.

daylight attack did not materialize until almost midday and he expressed “increasing anxiety and disappointment” he did not hear gunfire at sunrise.⁵⁴ Bragg’s wings knew little about the location or situation of one another and the early fighting on September 20 resulted in little progress, prompting one historian to remark “perhaps in no other battle was the staff work so poor.”⁵⁵

The soldiers under Union General George H. Thomas absorbed numerous assaults from determined rebels attempting to dislodge the Federals from their position, prompting Thomas to call for reinforcements to resist the onslaught. But the Army of the Cumberland made a series of “mistakes, oversights, unauthorized actions, and other aberrations” that are difficult to explain.⁵⁶ The Union shifted its forces, unknowingly exposing its flank to Longstreet, who promptly observed the weakening of the enemy line. Longstreet believed the enemy line vulnerable to an assault and that “my column of attack could probably break the enemy’s line if [Bragg] cared to have it go in.”⁵⁷

To further complicate the situation, Bragg reissued a general attack order around 11 a.m. to assault all Union positions, abandoning his previous plan and leaving “every general to himself” that would offer no coordinated attack on the enemy.⁵⁸ One Confederate officer noted the costly delay in launching an attack, what he described as “for mortal hours,” allowed the enemy to commence “intrenching and strengthening their positions” and also squandered daylight that saved the “enemy from a regular Bull Run panic.”⁵⁹ Bragg seemed to know the

⁵⁴ *OR* 30, Pt. 2, 24; *OR* 30, Pt. 2, 33.

⁵⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 205.

⁵⁶ Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Fort Donelson’s Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862-1863* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 305.

⁵⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 383.

⁵⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 205.

⁵⁹ Alexander, 289.

delay, which he described as not being “satisfactorily explained,” cost his army dearly. “We met with the most obstinate resistance,” he wrote later, “the enemy holding selected positions strengthened by barricades, slight breastworks of timber and abatis, all concealed from us in a dense forest.”⁶⁰ Longstreet then launched a full attack into the Union right. He claimed the performance of the men under his command was “worthy of the highest praise and admiration.”⁶¹ Bragg agreed. “Though frequently repulsed at points, our troops invariably returned to the charge.”⁶² Upon the initial success of this assault, Longstreet hurled his entire wing into an attack plan of his own and abandoned Bragg’s original plan. “His keen battle sense perceived the opportunity,” one historian argued, “his initiative and courage based on experienced impelled the prompt action which brought success before the startled Federal commander could rectify his false position. It was the work of a master tactician.”⁶³ By 1 p.m., Longstreet remembered that the “hot and dry and dusty day made work fatiguing.”⁶⁴ Another officer recalled “the fighting was very desperate and bloody.”⁶⁵ Some of the men in blue dissolved across the battlefield, supposedly melting away in the face of Longstreet’s fierce onslaught. With the Union Army in disarray, Thomas held his position in the shape of a horseshoe on a hill in a strong position and refused to withdraw, later earning him the moniker of the “Rock of Chickamauga.”⁶⁶ Longstreet soon realized the importance of Thomas’s position. “It was evident that with this position gained I should be complete master of the field.”⁶⁷

⁶⁰ OR 30, Pt. 2, 24.

⁶¹ OR 30, Pt. 2, 290.

⁶² OR 30, Pt. 2, 24.

⁶³ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 206-207..

⁶⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 385.

⁶⁵ Alexander, 290.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁶⁷ OR 30, Pt. 2, 289.

In midafternoon, Bragg demanded an update that forced Longstreet to leave the battle and report to headquarters. Longstreet proposed the left wing cut through the rear of the Union position to prevent their escape while the right wing remained on the defensive except for a small detachment that would join the left wing to pursue the retreating Union force.⁶⁸ Such an action may have advanced the victory to a complete rout that “might have won the war,” but Bragg refused to accept such a plan from his new subordinate and rejected it.⁶⁹ He allegedly told Longstreet “there is not a man in the right wing who has any fight in him.”⁷⁰ Longstreet claimed he found the orders “a little surprising.”⁷¹

The fighting on the left continued with the First Corps while Longstreet was away, descending into a vicious hand-to-hand struggle as the ammunition ran low.⁷² Confederate General D.H. Hill said of Longstreet’s assault that “I have never seen the Federal dead lie so thickly on the ground, save in front of the sunken wall at Fredericksburg.”⁷³ A Texas officer relished the opportunity to view the Yankee dead at Chickamauga, remembering “the black and swollen corpses that will never be buried and whose bones will be bleached by the pelting rains of the coming winter ... It actually done me good to see them laying dead, and every one else that I heard expressed [the same] opinion.”⁷⁴ After his meeting with Bragg, Longstreet claimed

⁶⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 387.

⁶⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 207-208.

⁷⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 387.

⁷¹ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 317.

⁷² Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 208.

⁷³ Henry Steele Commager, *The Blue and the Gray: The Story of the Civil War as Told by Participants* (Crescent, 1995), 885.

⁷⁴ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 150-151.

years later that the left wing had been left alone to “work along as best it could.”⁷⁵ Such a self-serving comment shows Longstreet once again had no shortage of confidence in his abilities, revealing he wanted to establish a narrative of Chickamauga that portrayed him as the most significant if not the primary reason for the only Confederate victory in the West.

The situation on the right certainly made Longstreet’s success on the left even more impressive, adding to Longstreet’s belief in his crucial role in the battle. In the afternoon, the Army of Tennessee’s right wing did not see such success and failed to capitalize off the Union confusion. Polk did not properly lead his men in the attack because he “was so little the professional soldier,” especially when compared to Longstreet’s performance that day.⁷⁶ The lack of aggressiveness on Polk’s part infuriated Bragg. “When I give a general an order, I look to him for its execution. I cannot be hunting up excuses for him. If his subordinates do not obey his orders, he must suffer the consequences so far as I am concerned, for I must look to him.”⁷⁷

That afternoon, Longstreet ordered multiple afternoon attacks on Thomas’ position, “inflicting and suffering heavy losses.”⁷⁸ The stubborn Union commander earned the respect of the Confederates, prompting one officer to state “I heartily wish he had been anywhere but at Chickamauga.”⁷⁹ Longstreet requested reinforcements from Bragg but the commander responded he had “no fresh troops to send, all the troops along the whole line had been engaged today and are alike exhausted.”⁸⁰ By sunset, Longstreet’s determined men had taken Snodgrass Hill that

⁷⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 387.

⁷⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 209.

⁷⁷ Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 529.

⁷⁸ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 48.

⁷⁹ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 163.

⁸⁰ Bragg papers, September 20, 1863, GA historical Society.

had become the key to Thomas' position, and the First Corps halted to organize, regroup, and gather ammunition for the pursuit Longstreet expected would resume the next day. Thomas withdrew from the battlefield and Bragg failed to organize a chase even though some portions of his army did not fully engage.⁸¹

Longstreet had committed all his reserves by nightfall and happily remembered, "Like magic the Union army had melted away in our presence...the Army of Tennessee knew how to enjoy its first grand victory."⁸² While this may have been a bit of an exaggeration, Longstreet did not engage in hyperbole as Chickamauga became the sole major victory for the Confederates in the West. Nevertheless, Longstreet must have been exercising his creative writing skills with the comment on "magic" since it ignores the fact Longstreet's First Corps had suffered extreme casualties in the effort, meaning the victory had come a great cost beyond magical. In less than two hours, Longstreet's command had lost nearly forty-four percent of its strength with one regiment, the Tenth Tennessee, reporting a casualty rate of an astounding sixty-eight percent.⁸³ Bragg admitted "the losses are heavy on both sides."⁸⁴

The battlefield descended into a nightmarish scene of hellish proportions as daylight faded. Drought had created conditions ideal for forest fires, and now sparkling embers filled the night sky. Flames caught the uniforms of wounded men, and the cries of hundreds "burned beyond recognition" filled the air. Field hospitals conducted their grim work, amputating limbs and tossing them into piles that would be raided by wild hogs.⁸⁵ "The sleep of the victorious

⁸¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 210; Glenn Tucker, *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1961), 359.

⁸² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 390.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 393.

⁸⁴ *OR* 30, Pt. 2, 23.

⁸⁵ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 227.

army on a field won is not very sweet,” one soldier recalled, “when we are haunted all night long with the groans and cries of the wounded dying.”⁸⁶ Bragg faced the uncomfortable reality that the heavy losses cost his army many irreplaceable officers.⁸⁷ Despite these terrible sights and sounds, the Army of Tennessee’s spirits remained high as it basked in its first major victory.

Plenty of comments supported Longstreet as at least some of the soldiers in the Army of Tennessee knew Longstreet’s First Corps made the significant difference in the Confederate victory at Chickamauga. “Bragg was then running like a scared dog,” wrote one Confederate soldier, “and the Battle of Chickamauga is alone attributable to General Longstreet.”⁸⁸ Other soldiers exclaimed, “Longstreet is the man,” and one newspaper asserted, “never in the war has any General been found who was superior to General Longstreet” before adding that his presence on the battlefield was “equivalent to a thousand fresh men.”⁸⁹ These grand comments and positive assessments, if Longstreet heard any of them, would certainly add to the commander’s perception of his abilities.

While there are many critics of the Confederate performance at Chickamauga, the victory showed Longstreet and many of his subordinates at their best, giving the Union one of its “worst defeats of the war.”⁹⁰ Also described as the “highwater mark in Longstreet’s career,”

⁸⁶ Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat: Volume II* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 77.

⁸⁷ *OR* 30, Pt. 2, 23.

⁸⁸ Sam R. Watkins, *Company Aytch or a Side Show to the Big Show: A Memoir of the Civil War*, ed. Ruth Hill Fulton McAllister (New York: Turner Publishing Company, 2011), 113.

⁸⁹ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier—A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 320.

⁹⁰ William Garrett Piston, *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 72; Many historians have criticized Longstreet’s actions at Chickamauga including Peter Cozzens in *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga*, Archibald Gracie’s *The Truth About Chickamauga*, Thomas Connelly’s *The Autumn of Glory*, Glenn Tucker’s *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West*, and Judith Hallock’s *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* as well as her *James Longstreet in the West: A Monumental Failure*.

Chickamauga revealed his “growth as a battlefield tactician.”⁹¹ One biographer declared “it was the performance of a first-rate soldier, of a man who knew his trade.”⁹² Another historian believed Longstreet, who earned his new nickname from the western soldiers as the “Bull of the Woods,” deserved credit for quickly organizing his left wing into an attack position almost immediately after he arrived in Georgia. “He led his troops much as he had in Virginia, allowing his subordinates to direct the fighting while he plotted strategy.”⁹³ Longstreet wanted at least some, if not all, of the acclaim for the impressive victory. “General Bragg claimed everything for himself,” Longstreet remembered in his typically sullen fashion, “failing to mention that other hands were there.”⁹⁴ However, Bragg did acknowledge Longstreet’s effort as commencing “promptly, vigorously, and satisfactorily” and praised the “admirable” performance of the soldiers who “never failed to respond when called on.”⁹⁵

The day after the major fighting at Chickamauga concluded Bragg seemed poised to strike when he told his army that “your task is not ended. We must drop a soldier’s tear upon the graves of the noble men who have fallen by our sides and move forward. Much has been accomplished. More remains to be done before we can enjoy the blessings of peace and freedom.”⁹⁶ Bragg even claimed “the enemy had entirely disappeared from our front, leaving his

⁹¹ R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi. *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 153; H. J. (Hamilton James) Eckenrode, and Bryan Conrad. *James Longstreet Lee’s War Horse* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936, 1986), 238.

⁹² Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 321.

⁹³ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 51.

⁹⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 402.

⁹⁵ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 30, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 24; OR 30, Pt. 2, 25.

⁹⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 30, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 38.

dead and wounded.”⁹⁷ With thousands of dead and wounded enemy soldiers before him, Bragg estimated in official correspondence that the damage inflicted on the enemy to be “very large in men, artillery, small arms” and also recognized the losses in the Army of Tennessee. Still, he claimed “the victory is complete and our cavalry is pursuing.”⁹⁸ Despite these pronouncements, Bragg reported he ultimately did not aggressively pursue or attack the enemy forces in front of him because of their strong defensive position. “The next morning the enemy had entirely disappeared from our front, leaving his dead and wounded,” Bragg wrote. “A vigorous pursuit followed his rear guard into Chattanooga, where we found him strongly intrenched.”⁹⁹ Bragg observed the enemy to be in “heavy force” and noted that “half of McLaws Division” had not yet arrived in position.¹⁰⁰ One soldier in gray claimed he overheard the generals discussing how to follow up the battle of September 20 when Longstreet called for a renewed attack to which Bragg allegedly replied, “How can I? Here is two-fifths of my army left on the field. My artillery is without horses.”¹⁰¹ However, historian Thomas Connelly claims Bragg’s desire to purge his army of malcontents as the primary reason for his refusal to assault Chattanooga and would instead set his sights on Leonidas Polk, one of his loudest detractors.¹⁰²

Longstreet expected an immediate pursuit of Rosecrans that would force the Union to abandon Chattanooga. Furthermore, he expected the victory would lead to the greater glory of liberating the rest of Tennessee and, perhaps, Kentucky, too.¹⁰³ “I knew nothing of the country

⁹⁷ OR 30, Pt. 2, 24.

⁹⁸ Bragg Papers, September 21, Georgia Historical Society.

⁹⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 30, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 24.

¹⁰⁰ Bragg Papers, September 23, Georgia Historical Society.

¹⁰¹ Glenn Tucker, *Chickamauga: Bloody Battle in the West* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1961), 392.

¹⁰² Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 234.

¹⁰³ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 19.

except of its general geographical features,” Longstreet recalled, “but the hunt was up and on the go, when any move toward his rear was safe, and a speedy one encouraging of great results.”¹⁰⁴ According to Longstreet’s plan, the Army of Tennessee could then pivot and focus their attention on ousting Burnside from Knoxville. Longstreet’s chief of staff, Moxley Sorrel, recalled Longstreet telling Bragg that the Army of Tennessee should “move instantly against Rosecrans’s rear to destroy him. Should we fail, we can put him in retreat, and then clear East Tennessee of Burnside and the Union forces.”¹⁰⁵ However, the talk of immediate pursuit in the postwar years ignores the fact the Confederates remained uncertain on September 21 if the Union invaders had withdrawn from the battlefield. Early that morning, Longstreet ordered cavalry to “ascertain the position of the enemy.”¹⁰⁶ Even on September 24, a dispatch from Longstreet’s headquarters indicated the desire to positively ascertain the intentions of the enemy and, if possible, “prevent the escape of their whole army across the river.”¹⁰⁷

For his part, Bragg allegedly remarked the Army of Tennessee marching through Chattanooga would result in a morale boost across the Confederacy. Since he preferred to cross the river and threaten Rosecrans’ rear, Longstreet claimed he countered that “it would give them greater pleasure to know that [the enemy] had passed the Tennessee River, turned the enemy out of Chattanooga in eager flight, to save his rearward lines, whilst we marched hammering against the broken flanks of his columns.”¹⁰⁸ At first, it seemed Bragg agreed to the plan until he later deemed a pursuit “impracticable.”¹⁰⁹ “Any immediate pursuit by our infantry and artillery would

¹⁰⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 394.

¹⁰⁵ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 164.

¹⁰⁶ *OR* Pt. 4, 682; *OR* Pt. 2, 521.

¹⁰⁷ *OR* Pt. 4, 701.

¹⁰⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 395.

¹⁰⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 211-212.

have been fruitless,” he later wrote, “as it was not deemed practicable with our weak and exhausted force to assail the enemy, now more than double our numbers, behind intrenchments.”¹¹⁰ Bragg further scoffed at any pursuit because “such a movement was utterly impossible for want of transportation.”¹¹¹ Despite pressure to assault Rosecrans, Bragg remained steadfast against an assault and the Army of Tennessee formed a semicircle of six miles in front of Chattanooga to shell the enemy, who had apparently decided to remain in Chattanooga while the rest of the Union scrambled to send reinforcements to secure the situation.¹¹² One historian described Bragg’s decision “to starve out the beleaguered Rosecrans” and “await the inevitable.”¹¹³ Problems with supply certainly troubled Bragg. The Army of Tennessee commander ordered his commanders to use their baggage trains to transport supplies because “the general supply train cannot be used at present for that purpose.”¹¹⁴ Despite his disappointment in Bragg’s orders, Longstreet ordered his men to prepare to capitalize off enemy confusion in the future bombardment.¹¹⁵

Longstreet continued criticizing Bragg’s decisions after Chickamauga until his dying day. However, maneuvers Longstreet proposed were difficult at best or, as one historian argued, “simply impossible for the Army of Tennessee at that time” for reasons including a lack of rations depending on an undependable railroad line from Atlanta that had just been tasked with

¹¹⁰ OR 30, pt 4, 35.

¹¹¹ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 319.

¹¹² Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 193.

¹¹³ Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Fort Donelson’s Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862-1863* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 306.

¹¹⁴ Bragg Papers, September 27, 1863, Georgia Historical Society.

¹¹⁵ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 30, Part 4 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 710.

transporting Longstreet's troops.¹¹⁶ An honest look at the Army of Tennessee revealed the fighting at Chickamauga drained the troops of their energy, preventing an immediate vigorous pursuit of the enemy to Chattanooga and thwarting any prolonged offensive.¹¹⁷ Historian William Garrett Piston claimed "the Confederates were virtually paralyzed by their success."¹¹⁸

Longstreet made no attempt to mask his frustration, either in his contemporary letters or his writings after the war, at the lack of action after the victory in North Georgia that resulted in a "strategically barren" win.¹¹⁹ "After moving from Virginia to try to relieve our comrades of the Army of Tennessee, we thought that we had cause to complain that the fruits of our labor had been lost, but it soon became manifest that the superior officers of that army themselves felt as much aggrieved as we at the halting policy of their chief, and were calling letters and petitions for his removal." Longstreet claimed other frustrated officers asked him to write Davis to interfere, but Longstreet preferred to write Seddon and Lee.¹²⁰

Unfortunately for the Confederacy, Bragg focused more on accusations in the aftermath of Chickamauga than the enemy. The euphoria of victory transitioned to accusations and counteraccusations as if the entire Confederate command structure rotted at the core.¹²¹ Similarly to the controversy that would surround Longstreet in the postwar years on his actions (or alleged inaction) on the second day at Gettysburg, Bragg repeatedly demanded to know why Polk had

¹¹⁶ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 132-133.

¹¹⁷ Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat: Volume II* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 83; Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 518.

¹¹⁸ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 71.

¹¹⁹ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 53.

¹²⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 397.

¹²¹ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 124.

not attacked at daybreak on September 20. The infighting only worsened in the aftermath of victory. Polk, of course responded, but not directly to Bragg. He wrote President Davis on October 6 to notify him of a committee consisting of Longstreet, D.H. Hill and Polk who aligned against Bragg.¹²²

As he planned, Longstreet wrote an impassioned letter to Secretary of War James Seddon regarding Bragg's failures as a commander. "I am convinced that nothing but the hand of God can save us or help us as long as we have our present commander ... Can't you send us General Lee? The army in Virginia can operate defensively, while our operations here should be offensive—until we have recovered Tennessee, at all events. We need some such great mind as General Lee's (nothing more) to accomplish this." Continuing his attack on Bragg, Longstreet informed Seddon, "You will be surprised to learn that this army has neither organization nor mobility, and I have doubts if its commander can give it them...we have too much at stake in this to remain quiet under such distressing circumstances. Our most precious blood is now flowing in streams from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains, and may yet be exhausted before we have succeeded. Then goes honor, treasure, and independence. When I came here I hoped to find our commander willing and anxious to do all things that would aid us in our great cause, and ready to receive what aid he could get from his subordinates. It seems that I was greatly mistaken. It seems that he cannot adopt and adhere to any plan or course, whether of his own or of some one else. I desire to impress upon your mind that there is no exaggeration in these statements."¹²³

Seddon received other letters of a similar nature suggesting more reinforcements sent West from Lee or imploring a change of command for the Army of Tennessee. It is impossible to

¹²² Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 212.

¹²³ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 30, Part 4 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 705-706.

say how much influence a commander of Longstreet's stature had on these letters although his own subordinate Lafayette McLaws claimed his commanding officer and friend led the charge to remove Bragg.¹²⁴ Earl Hess argued, "Longstreet worked to undermine confidence in his superior" the moment it became clear Bragg would not take the offensive on Chattanooga.¹²⁵ In addition to Longstreet, other officers begged the Confederate government to send Lee to the West and claimed it would be the "turning point of the war, and I think the road to independence lies incitingly before us." G.A. Henry wrote the Confederate Secretary of War that the war could end in "blaze of glory" and a Confederate victory if more troops were sent to East Tennessee. "The real defense of Virginia," he pleaded, "is to be made in Tennessee. Drive the enemy out of East Tennessee, and defeat or capture Rosecrans, and the war will be at an end."¹²⁶ The October 24 letter concluded with the ominous statement that "Bragg...is on very bad terms with his officers. No matter whose fault it is, such a total want of harmony between a commander and his officers must lead to disaster. I wish to God Lee could be put in command of that army. It would produce a thrill through every department of it that would insure its triumph."¹²⁷

The growing mutiny in the Army of Tennessee expanded when Polk also wrote Lee on September 27 claiming that "if both [Union] armies were driven back to the Mississippi, and Tennessee—not to say Kentucky—freed, and we on Grant's line of communications and in

¹²⁴ Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 238.

¹²⁵ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 20.

¹²⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 586.

¹²⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 586; United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 593-594; United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 611-612.

connection with the trans-Mississippi army, we might, by moving south, make short work of the army of the latter.”¹²⁸ Lee apparently shared the frustration of the officers of the Army of Tennessee, claiming the victory pleased him but that he “wished it could have been followed up by the destruction of the Federal army.”¹²⁹

While there were relatively few, Bragg did have his defenders, including a vital ally in President Davis. One of Bragg’s staff officers worried on October 20 that more “troubles are brewing in the command.”¹³⁰ Another officer did not take part in the attempt to remove Bragg because “he did not know any better general to take his place.”¹³¹ General W.W. Mackall, Bragg’s chief of staff and ironically Sorrel’s brother-in-law, claimed Longstreet acted in an insubordinate fashion in front of the other officers when he claimed Bragg was not on the field at Chickamauga the way Lee would have been.¹³² Mackall also claimed Longstreet had “done more injury” to Bragg than all the other officers combined.¹³³ Whether or not Mackall’s claims are accurate, it shows the deteriorating relationship between Longstreet and Bragg in the aftermath of the Chickamauga victory. Many years later, Longstreet claimed the Confederacy’s “last opportunity was lost when we failed to follow the success at Chickamauga.”¹³⁴

As time passed after the battle in northern Georgia, Longstreet continued to make no attempt to get along with Bragg, whom Polk considered an “imbecile” and other commanders

¹²⁸ Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Fort Donelson’s Legacy: War and Society in Kentucky and Tennessee, 1862-1863* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 307.

¹²⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 52, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 549.

¹³⁰ James Lee McDonough, *Chattanooga: A Death Grip on the Confederacy* (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 39.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³² Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 213.

¹³³ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 326.

¹³⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 398.

disliked. As historian William Garrett Piston noted, “For the first time in his career Longstreet was forced to operate under a commander he thoroughly disliked, and he soon joined the growing clique of anti-Bragg officers within the army.”¹³⁵ Another historian commented that Longstreet “openly criticized his new commander, eagerly anticipated his removal, and hoped that Johnston would soon take over.”¹³⁶

Now that the initial rush to reach the Army of Tennessee ended and the adrenaline from battle faded, the First Corps had the opportunity to observe their surroundings and compare them to those they had left in Virginia. Sorrel, a prominent member of Longstreet’s staff, noticed stark differences in the western theater, from the “primitive” artillery to the open contempt many held for Bragg. “The tone of the army among its higher officers toward the commander was the worst conceivable,” he recalled. “... The army was thus left a helpless machine.”¹³⁷ Hood also noted the commanders of the West did not speak “in the sanguine tone regarding the results of the battle” and rejoiced when Longstreet arrived because “he was the first general I had met since my arrival who talked of victory.”¹³⁸

Even Confederate soldiers knew of the inner disorder. “All are down on Bragg; want him removed,” one rebel soldier wrote to his wife. “I can see for no other cause than to be promoted themselves. I am no part of a general, nor a judge of one; do not consider Bragg a No. 1 general, but I think he is the best in this department.”¹³⁹ Another veteran later said of Chickamauga that “we won that fight and then wasn’t allowed to follow up our victory. Somebody blundered there

¹³⁵ William Garret Piston, *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 73.

¹³⁶ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 53.

¹³⁷ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 167.

¹³⁸ Earl J. Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 191.

¹³⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 43, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 208.

just as they did at Bull Run. But it wasn't Longstreet. I was with him from Manassas to Appomattox. We always did the hard fighting and won the big victories and then some mistake would be made by somebody else and the fruits of our fighting would be lost."¹⁴⁰ McLaws hinted in a postwar letter that it had become too "fashionable to abuse General Bragg attributing every thing that happened wrong, to his unfitness for command."¹⁴¹

The discontent magnified into outright insubordination as Longstreet and other commanders actively sought Bragg's removal in a meeting on September 26. Confederate President Davis stepped in by traveling to the Army of Tennessee, declaring his support of Bragg and desiring the focus to be placed back on the enemy.¹⁴² The bickering reached a boiling point with a petition signed by twelve generals advocating for Bragg's removal although it is unclear who actually penned the document itself.¹⁴³ However, Davis would not remove the embattled commander as he disliked the possible replacements.¹⁴⁴ Davis left Richmond on October 6 to attempt to restore unity to the Army of Tennessee, carrying with him an urgent message from Lee, who hoped Davis could "reconcile many difficulties and unite the scattered troops." As one historian noted, Lee's letter revealed "it was distressing" that the dangers to the South should be increased by personal quarrels."¹⁴⁵ Moreover, Lee continued to communicate his desire to

¹⁴⁰ Helen D. Longstreet, "Didn't Have Wings and Couldn't Fly," Georgia Historical Society, 1341, Box 15, Folder 211 *Speeches and Civil War*.

¹⁴¹ Lafayette McLaws, "Lafayette McLaws to Isaac R. Pennybacker, April 25, 1888," *Lafayette McLaws Papers* 3, Sandor Teszler Library Archives and Special Collections, Digital Commons at Wofford College.

¹⁴² Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 73.

¹⁴³ James Lee McDonough, *Chattanooga: A Death Grip on the Confederacy* (Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 30.

¹⁴⁴ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 73.

¹⁴⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 215.

reclaim Longstreet to Davis in almost all of their correspondence, “bemoaning the loss of troops.”¹⁴⁶

Davis arrived at the Army of Tennessee on October 9 and held a conference where he invited all commanders to declare their assessment of Bragg’s command in an “unprecedented scene” that resulted in “some very plain language.”¹⁴⁷ However, Davis later denied asking for opinions of Bragg’s leadership and said little of the “conversation” that described as being of “little importance.”¹⁴⁸ Longstreet did not hesitate to state Bragg belonged anywhere else than as the commander of the Army of Tennessee. Since Davis was Bragg’s friend, this may have cast Longstreet into a bad light with the Confederate president.¹⁴⁹ Longstreet described the entire meeting as awkward and a “stretch of authority, even with a President,” so he claimed to have provided an “evasive answer.”¹⁵⁰ Davis allegedly asked Longstreet to an all-day conference after this October 9 meeting. The discussion covered numerous topics including Longstreet taking command of the Army of Tennessee, which he declined. One scholar observed “Longstreet should have accepted this task in spite of the difficulties surrounding it. To decline was an error of policy; to mention, as he said he did, that the army belong properly to General Joseph E. Johnston’s department and command compounded Longstreet’s tactlessness. Since Longstreet could not agree with, or meet the desires of, Davis, he offered at once his only alternative: his own resignation.”¹⁵¹ Rumors circulated Longstreet would take command of the Army of

¹⁴⁶ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 176.

¹⁴⁷ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 167.

¹⁴⁸ Steven Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 242: OR, Pt. 4, 751.

¹⁴⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 397.

¹⁵⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 397.

¹⁵¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 216.

Tennessee. Longstreet “did nothing to discourage the rumors” and instead “encouraged such talk by openly criticizing Bragg’s conduct of Chickamauga, and by stating what he would have done if he had held command.”¹⁵² Others contend Longstreet wanted to come west to obtain command of an army and may have believed Bragg made for an easy target to usurp, citing evidence Longstreet “found material for criticism in Lee, and he would have no shortage with Bragg.”¹⁵³

Historian Alexander Mendoza noted that Longstreet outranked every officer in the West except Bragg and Johnston, so the efforts are replacing the Army of Tennessee commander with either Lee or Johnston could have been Longstreet’s attempt at either eventually claiming command of the army once Lee returned to Virginia or serving once again under his favorite general, Johnston, who had allowed Longstreet “considerable latitude in his operations.”¹⁵⁴ Longstreet did not receive any punishment for allegedly leading the attack on Bragg that has been described as a “sordid conspiracy.”¹⁵⁵ Regardless of why Longstreet supported Bragg’s removal, the effort reveals Longstreet’s confidence in arriving in the Western Theater and immediately attempting to shake up the command structure less than a month after his arrival.

By the time Davis left the Army of Tennessee with Bragg still in charge, Longstreet grumbled Davis “left the army more despondent than he found it.”¹⁵⁶ The situation in Chattanooga with the Army of Tennessee continued to bother Davis through October as he knew there had been no solution to the problem, yet, but he said the information pouring in from that

¹⁵² Thomas Lawrence Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 238.

¹⁵³ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 138.

¹⁵⁴ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 63.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 533.

¹⁵⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 400.

location prompted him to write the news from Chattanooga “painfully impresses me with the fact that there is a want there of that harmony among the highest officers which is essential to success.”¹⁵⁷ Right before departing from the Army of Tennessee on October 14, Davis warned those plotting against Bragg that “he who sows the seeds of discontent and distrust prepares the harvest of slaughter and defeat.”¹⁵⁸ Bragg responded to the president’s visit by reorganizing his army to scatter his political enemies, leaving Longstreet’s First Corps alone for now.

Internal troubles existed not only with Bragg and his commanders. At the same time the infighting took place at the top of the Army of Tennessee, Longstreet continued to cope with the bitter rivalry within his own command between his subordinates, Evander Law and Micah Jenkins, over command of Hood’s division. These problems had persisted since Gettysburg. During engagements around Chattanooga at the end of October, the situation escalated to a potential insurrection in the First Corps when on November 1, Longstreet dismissed General Robertson for failing to support Jenkins in the struggle at Wauhatchie near Chattanooga.¹⁵⁹ Robertson flatly denied the charge.¹⁶⁰

Longstreet did not issue official charges against Robertson until the end of the year, and Robertson was removed from active command by January 1864. The move prompted written support from several regiments demanding Robertson’s reinstatement, claiming his loss “will be seriously felt, both in our social and official relations.”¹⁶¹ When Hood, who was recovering from the amputation of his leg at Chickamauga, found out about the strife within his division, he

¹⁵⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 609.

¹⁵⁸ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 140.

¹⁵⁹ Jerome Bonaparte Robertson, and Harold Simpson, *Touched with Valor: Civil War Papers and Casualty Reports of Hood’s Texas Brigade* (Hillsboro, Texas: Hill Junior College, 1964), 13.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 57-60.

responded to Robertson, “It grieves me very much to know that my old troops are not doing well, and am sorry you are in trouble with Genl. Jenkins.”¹⁶² In a heartfelt farewell to his troops written in April 1864, Robertson said, “After an association sealed by so many sacrifices and cemented by their blood, with so many evidences of confidence and affection on the part of the officers and the men, this separation is like severing the strongest family ties.”¹⁶³ Robertson received his new command in May and served for the rest of the war in Texas.¹⁶⁴ It is ironic that while Longstreet had wanted to oust Bragg, he faced a potential mutiny within his own command due to the rivalry in Hood’s division.

After the spectacular but costly victory at Chickamauga and, by many accounts, Longstreet’s stellar performance on that battlefield, the Confederate success had become mired in an internal struggle that allowed the Union time to reinforce Chattanooga while the men of the Army of Tennessee could do nothing but watch as the enemy fortified the city.¹⁶⁵ Longstreet’s frustration intensified in October as the Confederate action constituted nothing more than occasional shells fired in Chattanooga. On October 19, the Union hero of Vicksburg, Ulysses S. Grant, took overall command in Chattanooga with Thomas taking command of the Army of the Cumberland and the activity increased because, according to Abraham Lincoln, Rosecrans had been “confused and stunned like a duck hit on the head” after Chickamauga.¹⁶⁶ Longstreet’s favorite commander, Joseph Johnston, wrote about Grant’s change of command on October 26

¹⁶² Jerome Bonaparte Robertson, and Harold Simpson, *Touched with Valor: Civil War Papers and Casualty Reports of Hood’s Texas Brigade* (Hillsboro, Texas: Hill Junior College, 1964), 56.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

¹⁶⁵ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 300.

¹⁶⁶ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 331; Steven Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 245.

and it could not have come at a better time for the soldiers in blue.¹⁶⁷ As the Federals waited for action in Chattanooga, one officer said morale had dropped to levels never before seen in that army.¹⁶⁸ At the same time as Grant took command of the Union forces in Chattanooga, the situation in Tennessee would soon experience a drastic change for both the Confederacy and Longstreet. Bragg ultimately found a mission for Longstreet's First Corps that would send Longstreet away from the Army of Tennessee forever and start Longstreet on a nearly independent command. However, the once confident Longstreet partly responsible for orchestrating Bragg's downfall would soon become mired in hesitation and indecisiveness as the First Corps command structure started to come apart at the seams, ultimately leading to Longstreet making decisions uncharacteristic of the type of commander he had been for the entire Civil War.

¹⁶⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 1, volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 596.

¹⁶⁸ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 144.

Chapter 6

“I never was more disgusted in my life,” Confederate General Edward Porter Alexander recalled of the frustrating situation in November 1863 amid indecision from his commanding officer, James Longstreet, during the campaign outside of Union-held Knoxville, Tennessee.¹ The situation worsened when Longstreet ordered a delayed attack on November 29 on the formidable Fort Sanders, controlled by Federal forces under the command of Ambrose Burnside. In the aftermath, Longstreet charged several subordinates with insubordination and ineffective leadership following the disastrous assault because he initially wanted to shift blame to someone else for the failure. He lashed out at his commanders, including his friend and former West Point classmate Lafayette McLaws, and almost immediately regretted the charges he had filed and requested to be relieved of duty. Instead, the Confederacy’s adjutant and inspector general, Samuel Cooper told Longstreet to prepare for trial.² The subsequent courts-martial and resources assigned to the pursuit of responsibility for Fort Sanders could have been better spent by the Confederacy as it entered its final full year in 1864. In the immediate aftermath of his excursion into East Tennessee, Longstreet lamented his failure and the inability for the Confederacy to maintain its momentum in the western theater after Chickamauga, referring to these actions long after the war. Moxley Sorrel, who served as Longstreet’s chief of staff and functioned as his right hand for most of the war, observed in his general’s memoirs the lengthy concentration on the events in Tennessee when he remarked, “Its recital had apparently occupied him more than any part of the four years’ war.”³

¹ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 323.

² Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 153.

³ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 182.

The failed assault on Fort Sanders culminated a series of internal problems within the Army of Tennessee that had lasted for much of the war, intensifying in the weeks since the Chickamauga campaign and the arrival of Longstreet and his corps. The friction in the Army of Tennessee only worsened when Bragg failed to deliver the knockout blow and settled for a quasi-siege of the enemy at Chattanooga. When Confederate President Jefferson Davis stepped in by traveling to the Army of Tennessee to declare his support for Bragg and order the focus placed back on the enemy, any effort to oust Bragg temporarily halted.⁴ Davis mentioned the discontent in a letter to General William Hardee. “The information from the army at Chattanooga painfully impresses me with the fact that there is a want there of that harmony among the highest officers which is essential to success. I rely greatly upon you for the restoration of a proper feeling, and know that you will realize the comparative insignificance of personal considerations when weighed against the duty of imparting to the army all the efficiency of which it is capable.”⁵

Letters arrived at the Confederate Secretary of War’s office at the end of October, pleading with the Confederate leadership for more reinforcements to help East Tennessee.⁶ General Sam Jones wrote two separate letters on October 31 claiming that with a “few thousand additional infantry” he could possibly drive the enemy from East Tennessee.⁷ Confederate leadership sustained a focus on Tennessee as the Fall of 1863 continued. Around the same time Longstreet received his marching orders to move toward Knoxville, Davis transferred cavalry under Nathan

⁴ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 73.

⁵ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 609.

⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 593-594.

⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 611-612.

Bedford Forrest to the Western Tennessee to aid in operations there.⁸ It seemed the Confederacy expected a major operation in Tennessee, and the primary question of what would happen next hovered over everything in that region.

The proverbial last straw for Bragg in terms of his clash with Longstreet came with a minor engagement at Wauhatchie or Lookout Valley. Union troops near Chattanooga had crossed the Tennessee River to open a supply line and occupy Lookout Valley. After “deliberately” failing to obey Bragg’s orders and allowing the Union forces to occupy valuable territory, Longstreet attempted an ineffective night attack on October 28 and blamed the cavalry for its failure.⁹ Accusing others for the botched operation, Longstreet confirmed on the day after the engagement at Wauhatchie that confusion in the chain of command existed that partially led to the troubles during this small battle.¹⁰ In response, Bragg and Davis blamed Longstreet for allowing the enemy to cross the river in the first place. Bragg claimed, “we have thus lost our important position on the left, and the enemy holds the railroad within six miles of Chattanooga.”¹¹ Davis expressed his “bitter disappointment” and threatened “such disobedience of orders and disastrous failure as you describe cannot consistently be overlooked.”¹² Longstreet, the man known for contributing to the only major Confederate victory in the West, started to appear as a liability as he sowed insurrection in the Army of Tennessee and now dealt with severe criticism of his commanders.

⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 603-604.

⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 218.

¹⁰ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 606-607.

¹¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 52, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 556.

¹² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 52, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 558.

At the same time Longstreet coped with his superiors' disappointment and his internal strife in the First Corps at the start of November, Bragg contemplated sending Longstreet away from the Army of Tennessee less than two months after the First Corps arrived. With support from Davis, Bragg split his forces on November 3 and ordered Longstreet to liberate Knoxville to prevent reinforcements from bolstering Union forces in Chattanooga now under the command of the recently arrived Ulysses S. Grant.¹³

At the end of October, rebel cavalry reported additional Union guns being transported to reinforce Knoxville and Confederate observers believed this meant Ambrose Burnside prepared the city to defend against an assault, but the Union commander struggled with supply problems in Knoxville he desperately tried to rectify.¹⁴ Additional reports arrived that the Union had no intention of leaving East Tennessee. If Knoxville was to be attacked, time was of the essence.¹⁵ Davis ultimately wanted Longstreet back with Lee and believed liberating Knoxville on the way back to Virginia accomplished two objectives with one assignment.¹⁶ Historian Richard M. McMurry believed Bragg was attempting to scatter his numerous critics.¹⁷ For his part, Longstreet seemed ensnared with a sense of fatalism and chronic indecision regarding the Knoxville campaign. "It was to be the fate of our army to wait until all good opportunities had passed," he wrote on November 5, "and then, in desperation, seize upon the least favorable movement."¹⁸ Still,

¹³ John Keegan, *The American Civil War: A Military History* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 2009), 229.

¹⁴ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 28.

¹⁵ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 600-601; United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 624.

¹⁶ Steven E. Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press – Bison Books, 1999), 176.

¹⁷ Richard M. McMurry, *Two Great Rebel Armies* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 136

¹⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 262.

Longstreet started preparing to march on Knoxville, asking comrades for maps or reliable information from people around the area on the enemy's strength and position.¹⁹

Bragg had started moving his critics—like his long-term antagonist Leonidas Polk—away from the Army of Tennessee, which left Longstreet's First Corps as the most significant opposition to harmony in Bragg's eyes. Longstreet suggested the Davis-supported Bragg turned a vindictive eye toward him. While First Corps marched toward Knoxville, Longstreet detected Bragg's intent on establishing a paper record setting First Corps up for failure. The harassing correspondence worsened, prompting Longstreet to consider or at least threaten resignation. "Weary of the continual calls of General Bragg for hurried movements," Longstreet wrote after the war of his excursion into eastern Tennessee, "it seemed well to make cause for him to assign another commander or to move him to discontinue his work at a paper record . . . It began to look more like a campaign against Longstreet than against Burnside."²⁰

Other than scattering his critics, Bragg's additional reason for ordering Longstreet to liberate Knoxville was to prevent reinforcements from bolstering Union forces in Chattanooga now under the command of the recently arrived Grant. The latter was also Longstreet's old friend.²¹ Grant, who knew both Longstreet and Bragg, understood how there "might be an irreconcilable difference" between their personalities.²² However, Grant could never bring himself to understand the movement of Longstreet's corps to Knoxville, a transition that contributed to the Union victory over Bragg at Chattanooga as thousands of invaluable veterans were miles away when the Federals

¹⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 52, Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 560.

²⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 263.

²¹ John Keegan, *The American Civil War: A Military History* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 2009), 229.

²² Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*. Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 564.

attacked. “Knoxville was of no earthly use to him while Chattanooga was in our hands,” Grant later wrote. “If he should capture Chattanooga, Knoxville with its garrison would have fallen into his hands without a struggle. I have never been able to see the wisdom of this move.”²³ Some rebel soldiers would have agreed with Grant and grumbled about Longstreet’s detachment, “while every private soldier in the whole army knew that the enemy was concentrating in Chattanooga.”²⁴

The eyes of the Confederacy fell on Longstreet, but he also attracted the attention of the Northern press and Union leadership. According to an account written after the war, Grant continuously worried about Longstreet’s ability to conquer Knoxville and allegedly descended into a “streak of blue cursing” his wife had never heard when the General received an update on Longstreet’s actions. Grant’s wife, Julia, supposedly said, “Now, Ulysses, you know you are not going to hurt Longstreet.” Grant barked, “I will if I can get him; he’s in bad company.”²⁵

Grant may have been more correct than he knew as Longstreet grew more frustrated with Bragg as he continued pelting Longstreet with correspondence, urging him to hurry. Bragg wrote on November 4 that “every preparation is ordered to advance you as fast as possible, and the success of the plan depends on rapid movements and sudden blows. The country through which you move until you strike the mountains will subsist your command and forage your animals, besides giving a large surplus of breadstuffs. Your object should be to drive Burnside out of East Tennessee first, or better, to capture or destroy him...I hope to hear from you fully and frequently, general, and sincerely wish you the same success which has ever marked your brilliant career.”²⁶

²³ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Annotated Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*. Edited by Elizabeth D. Samet, (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2019), 573.

²⁴ Sam R. Watkins, *Company Aytch or a Side Show to the Big Show: A Memoir of the Civil War*, ed. Ruth Hill Fulton McAllister (New York: Turner Publishing Company, 2011), 141.

²⁵ Helen Dortch Longstreet, “Untitled Manuscript,” *Helen Dortch Longstreet Papers – Manuscripts-Untitled - 1938*, MSS 136, Manuscripts, Box 3-Folder 8, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center.

²⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 634-637.

The kindness of Bragg’s message masks the tension that had been brewing in the Army of Tennessee over the previous weeks and may have been worded in such a way as to frame Longstreet, which is exactly what Longstreet ultimately believed. Soon, Bragg complained of Longstreet’s slowness—an accusation that increased in coming weeks. In Longstreet’s defense against accusations of sluggishness, the trains to Knoxville did not cooperate, requiring soldiers to march part of the way. Longstreet asked Bragg for assistance in the form of engineers and quartermasters to help with supplying his men with food and ammunition.²⁷ The situation sparked a war of words. Longstreet believed Bragg was creating a paper trail for future documentation to showcase the failed expedition. “He wanted papers that would throw the responsibility of delay upon other shoulders,” Longstreet would later write, despite the fact that “trains and conductors were under [Bragg’s] exclusive control.” Longstreet felt the enemy awaited him in Knoxville while a friendly foe assaulted him with “paper bullets” from behind.²⁸

Longstreet continued approaching his goal, Knoxville, prepared to win a great victory while enjoying a nearly independent command. However, the once confident Longstreet would soon become mired in hesitation and indecisiveness, ultimately making decisions uncharacteristic of the type of commander he had been for the entire Civil War.

Confederate scouts reported the enemy pickets “are as thick as hops,” making a march through the area extremely difficult.²⁹ Heavy skirmishing continued around Knoxville while Longstreet and his men plodded toward their objective. Reports claimed on November 4 that Burnside only had between one and two thousand soldiers defending Knoxville and guessed the

²⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 626.

²⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 261-263.

²⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 628.

Union might leave East Tennessee until a better supply line opened.³⁰ An opportunity seemed to be at hand, but Longstreet kept struggling to keep his men moving forward as they awaited proper transportation for his force since “feeble animals” wrestled the supply trains onward.³¹ He continued writing Bragg for information on the enemy’s strength, position, supply lines and “any fortified positions that may be in East Tennessee, and the nature of such fortifications.”³² Bragg responded with limited information, claiming the Confederate cavalry could cut off supplies to the enemy and he would be sending an informant, a member of Congress from Knoxville, to provide Longstreet with information on the region and surrounding area.³³

In a rambling November 5 response to Bragg, Longstreet bristled at Bragg’s assertion that the cavalry could make such a difference against the Union forces, claiming that was not probable and he did not want to rely on the cavalry “for such purposes.” He added that some of Bragg’s orders would lead to Longstreet’s embarrassment. He also bluntly requested clarification that Bragg wanted him to take Knoxville and keep his forces there while maintaining a line of communication with the Army of Tennessee at Chattanooga and also claimed Bragg “greatly” overestimated the enemy’s force at Chattanooga while he offered his multiple possible plans while detached from the Army of Tennessee that he believed would be successful. He closed the rambling November 5 letter by admitting his correspondence may have been scattered, but blamed it on the fact that “I am in the rain and mud, and find it a little difficult to write.”³⁴

³⁰ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 633-634.

³¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 634-637.

³² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 634-637.

³³ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 634-637.

³⁴ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 634-637.

Bragg responded to clarify his orders, stating he did not intend to imply the cavalry could not alone drive the enemy from East Tennessee and that his entire force should be used to “destroy or capture the enemy if possible.”³⁵ Longstreet had no shortage of complaints and excuses for his concerns as he continued correspondence complaining of a lack of proper transportation for his men and artillery.³⁶ He also feared the enemy’s artillery in the area was superior to his own.³⁷ And the bitter correspondence between Bragg and Longstreet continued over the first week of November 1863. One aspect of this detachment to Knoxville seemed clear: separating Longstreet from Bragg had not improved communication or reduced tension between the two men.

Longstreet’s concerns over proper supply persisted November 8 when he claimed his troops could not continue forward without adequate transportation. “I doubt whether we can more than subsist ourselves in the country, doing nothing else, with our present limited and inefficient transportation.”³⁸ Previously in the war, Longstreet had been able to adequately provide for his men in many different situations in the face of the enemy. Now, the logistical challenges consumed Longstreet’s mind. The next day, Longstreet commented on the opportunity in East Tennessee and once again cast a shot against Bragg claiming “there seems to be a fair opportunity to strike a favorable and decisive blow here the proper force is sent. It is worth the effort, and I trust that the general may give me the means to accomplish it.” In addition, Longstreet argued his force acting

³⁵ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 644.

³⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 634-637.

³⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 645.

³⁸ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 670-671.

offensively “should be made as strong as possible, particularly when its operations are to relieve the main force.”³⁹

Longstreet made similar complaints about timely transportation on November 10.⁴⁰ Continuing his grumbling, Longstreet spent a great deal of time on November 11 addressing his grievances to multiple recipients—especially regarding the lack of proper supplies and transportation. He must have heard rumblings of his slow movements on the way to Knoxville because he argued that he was “full aware of the importance of activity in military operations. I have lost no time on any occasion during this war. The delay that occurs is one that might have been prevented, but not by myself. The troops are not yet here, the supply train is not here, nor have my troops any meat rations. I was assured by the commanding general that we should find a surplus of provisions in this country, and really we find none but breadstuffs. As soon as I find a probability of moving without almost certain starvation, I shall move, provided the troops are up.”⁴¹ Also on November 11, Longstreet addressed Bragg directly about the difficulties and placed the blame on the transportation quartermaster.⁴²

Surprisingly on the same day, Longstreet sent Bragg another message informing him of the “entire failure of the preparations ordered” to assist the First Corps. “Our railroad affairs have been so badly managed that my troops could have marched up in half the time that has been consumed in transporting them by rail. In fact, there is no certainty that they will reach here at all by rail, and this is the only means left, as our battery horses were sent through by road, leaving the guns to be

³⁹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 671.

⁴⁰ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 679.

⁴¹ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 680-681.

⁴² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 680-681.

transported by rail.” Longstreet concluded his direct letter to Bragg by predicting failure in his current expedition to Knoxville, once again casting an accusing finger at Bragg. “There are many reasons for anticipating great results from the expedition against General Burnside’s army with a proper force; but with the force that I now have I think it would be unreasonable to expect much. In fact, it will, in all probability, be another fine opportunity lost. [The enemy’s] force should not be allowed to escape without an effort to destroy it, and the force now here is not strong enough to make any such effort; that is, with any reasonable hope of success.”⁴³ Ironically, Bragg also responded on November 11 with accusations at Longstreet being out of touch and moving too slowly. “Longstreet ought to be over the Tennessee,” Bragg complained in a letter to Richmond. “But I hear nothing from him.”⁴⁴

Longstreet’s comments lamenting the lack of proper transportation and lack of troops as well as the jabs against Bragg could be seen as defending himself against a possible failure he saw awaiting him in Knoxville. If a commanding officer foresaw failure on the horizon and worried about his reputation, as Longstreet undoubtedly did with so many eyes in America watching his movements, it is possible he started coming up with excuses before the campaign was completed. However, Longstreet spent a great deal of time writing letters focused on complaining of his problems and seemed to be doing little productively to rectify these troubles. Unlike other campaigns where Longstreet could shift the blame to his commanding officer, Bragg remained far away from the situation and Longstreet had a nearly independent command, something the Army of Tennessee commander would soon remind the visitor from the Eastern Theater.

⁴³ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 680-681.

⁴⁴ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 680-681.

Communication between the two officers became harsher over the next day. Bragg responded to Longstreet on November 12, dispensing with the pleasantries and unleashing his frustrations and placing all blame for the delays back on Longstreet's shoulders. "Transportation in abundance was on the road and subject to your orders. I regret it has not been energetically used. The means being furnished, you were expected to handle your own troops, and I cannot understand your constant applications for me to furnish them."⁴⁵ Of course, Longstreet responded the same day by complaining his force had been delayed since the beginning of the march on Knoxville, adding that "a considerable number of troops are still behind and a battalion of artillery."⁴⁶ On November 13, Longstreet added to his barrage accusing Bragg of incorrectly claiming Longstreet had any control over his transportation. "I have several times made known to you our delays, and your dispatch just received is the first intimation that I could exercise my authority."⁴⁷

Longstreet's men had an opportunity to capture a portion of Burnside's force in a battle at Campbell's Station as they approached Knoxville. By November 16, Longstreet had grown more frustrated with the entire situation. The vitriol disintegrating the Army of Tennessee attached to the First Corps as they marched on Knoxville. Frustration from Bragg grew to disappointment as the rivalry between Law and Jenkins intensified. Longstreet had hoped to destroy a significant portion of the Union army before they retreated to the fortifications, like Fort Sanders, around the city. Due in part to the enemy's "cleverly conducted" retreat and the Confederates' failure to execute Longstreet's plan, the Federals retreated when Longstreet believed they could have been

⁴⁵ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 686-687.

⁴⁶ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 686-687.

⁴⁷ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Volume 31, Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 686-687.

destroyed at Campbell’s Station.⁴⁸ In his memoirs, Longstreet blamed Law for changing direction to attack the enemy’s front rather than the rear of the left. “This gave him opportunity to change position to strong ground in rear, which made other movements necessary in view of the objective of the battle. There was yet time for successful battle, but it would have been a fruitless victory. Before other combinations suited to our purpose could be made it was night, and the enemy was away on his march to the fortified grounds about Knoxville.”⁴⁹

Soldiers in the First Corps could not understand what had happened to the efficiency of their commanders. “Without doubt we had several opportunities of capturing this detachment of Burnside’s army,” Turner Vaughan of the 4th Alabama decided. “But our generals seem to be deficient in strategy or military ability of any kind.”⁵⁰ Other veterans lamented the loss of Hood leading the division, claiming the five brigades without him were “practically paralyzed” by the continued rivalry between Jenkins and Law.⁵¹ General Alexander provided an objective assessment of the situation, since he claimed to have an equal appreciation of both Jenkins and Law when he said charges claim Law deliberately led his brigade into a position where it would prevent Jenkins from claiming a significant victory. Alexander added, “some of Law’s company officers wrote letters supporting such charges.”⁵² Longstreet corroborated this by claiming a staff report accused Law of attempting to prevent Jenkins from claiming credit for the victory.⁵³ Jenkins, whom Longstreet long favored for command of Hood’s Division, echoed Longstreet’s complaints in accusing Law of moving too far to the left to produce the desired results. “This causeless and

⁴⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 266.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁵⁰ Hess, 75.

⁵¹ Sorrel, 177.

⁵² Alexander, 317.

⁵³ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 263.

inexcusable movement lost us the few moments in which success from this point could be attained,” Jenkins complained.⁵⁴ Other similar incidents plagued Jenkins when he claimed he would have made successful attacks, but with “General Law not having arrived, I was compelled to stop the movements.”⁵⁵ Instead of a victory, it was little more than an artillery duel with “very little, musket ammunition being burnt. The next day the enemy was safely behind his works about Knoxville.”⁵⁶

To be fair, Law had reason to bristle at anything Jenkins suggested. While Law the previous month visited Hood, who was recovering thirty miles south of Chattanooga from wounds suffered at Gettysburg and Chickamauga before the Confederate’s loss of Chattanooga, Jenkins had taken the opportunity to move three of Law’s regiments from the line for reasons unclear. Law protested the movements, and the split between the two men widened. Their shared resentment degenerated near Chattanooga, where Law and Jenkins accused each other of costing the rebels a victory. Longstreet sided with Jenkins despite the fact the men preferred Law.⁵⁷ Jenkins believed the entire campaign in Tennessee was hampered “by the absence of high and cordial sustaining support to loyal authority on the part of some high officers, and that the spirit of the army, instead of being encouraged and sustained against sufferings and necessary hardships by some from whom the country had a right to expect it, was, on the contrary, depressed and recognition of dangers and hardships cultivated.”⁵⁸ Since Jenkins and Longstreet's mutual respect is well documented, they probably discussed these conceptions of the campaign. Later, as Longstreet frantically sought

⁵⁴ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 526-527.

⁵⁵ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 530.

⁵⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 263.

⁵⁷ Wert, 333-337.

⁵⁸ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 530.

targets to shoulder the blame for his failures in Tennessee amid a torrent of critical press, his focus on Law and his countryman in Hood's division, Robertson, seems an obvious choice.

Historian Earl Hess contends the fight at Campbell's Station proved Burnside had merit as a commander "despite his faults and weaknesses" and also revealed he could be a match for "Longstreet and the veterans of Lee's army."⁵⁹ After a clash at Campbell's Station on November 16, Burnside successfully withdrew his forces to Knoxville's defenses, giving him time to prepare for a potential siege and draw Longstreet farther away from Chattanooga to keep him occupied while Grant defeated the Confederates there.⁶⁰ Now, "everyone near Knoxville was getting ready for Longstreet."⁶¹

Whether it was the continued pressure from his superiors, mounting expectations for a swift and complete victory or a combination of both, Longstreet seemed hampered by a lack of initiative once he failed to destroy Burnside outside of Knoxville. Confederate veterans remembered the delay as a missed opportunity.⁶² "If we had pushed on," a Confederate soldier lamented, "we might have taken the city."⁶³ Every moment allowed Union troops time to improve the defenses of Fort Sanders.⁶⁴ These postponements earned Longstreet a new nickname: "Peter the Slow."⁶⁵ As the rebels moved on Knoxville, Grant believed Burnside's situation was "grave."⁶⁶ Despite his concern, no troops would be sent to aid Burnside as long as Chattanooga remained threatened.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Hess, 75.

⁶⁰ Gerald L. Augustus, *The Battle of Campbell's Station: 16 November 1863* (Cleveland, Tennessee: Cherohala Press, 2013), 84.

⁶¹ Hess, 76.

⁶² J.A.H. Granberry, "Longstreet Before Knoxville," *Confederate Veteran* 31, no. 10 (October 1923): 372.

⁶³ A.J. Cone, "In the Battle of Knoxville, Tenn.," *Confederate Veteran* 31, no. 8 (August 1923): 288.

⁶⁴ Will H. Thompson, "Who Lost Gettysburg?," *Confederate Veteran* 23, no. 6 (June 1915): 258.

⁶⁵ Steven E. Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press – Bison Books, 1999), *Six Armies*, 206.

⁶⁶ Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing but Victory: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2005), 462.

⁶⁷ Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won a Military History of the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 457.

Rather than launch an attack, Longstreet began a siege on November 17 that did not completely isolate the enemy as Union sympathizers ferried supplies down the Holston River to Burnside's waiting troops.⁶⁸ Longstreet appeared to have lost what may have been his only opportunity for the decisive victory he sought.⁶⁹

Beginning on November 20, the Confederates spent days placing artillery and planning the attack, only to postpone and begin alternate preparations as they searched for a weak point. Longstreet soon alleged the defenses around Knoxville to be more impressive than Grant's at Chattanooga.⁷⁰ Through the delays, Bragg continued badgering Longstreet for results. In the face of the enemy, an irritated Longstreet even suggested his removal from command as Bragg's criticism continued, showing his heart was not in the current operation as he grumbled, "it began to look more like a campaign against Longstreet than against Burnside."⁷¹ Bragg then sent Danville Ledbetter, his chief engineer, to Longstreet's headquarters November 23 with orders "that we should attack at Knoxville, and very promptly."⁷²

Ledbetter had planned the Confederate defenses of Knoxville earlier in the war, so Longstreet once again postponed any action until the knowledgeable newcomer could make a complete observation of the Union positions to provide advice on the assault's location.⁷³ Longstreet's chief of artillery, General Edward Porter Alexander, remembered Ledbetter's initial reconnaissance of the ground led to yet another change in the attack plan on November 24. "I never

⁶⁸ Steven E. Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press – Bison Books, 1999), 206.

⁶⁹ Earl J. Hess, "From Tullahoma to Knoxville," *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2012) 195.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 105-107.

⁷¹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 263.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 270.

⁷³ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 127.

was more disgusted in my life,” he later said of being repeatedly ordered to move his guns.⁷⁴ Soon after Ledbetter’s arrival, Bragg notified Longstreet that Grant had attacked at Chattanooga.⁷⁵ What the Confederates around Knoxville did not know, is that Grant had been “intensely impatient” to begin a battle in Chattanooga since Washington had been bombarding him about the threat to Burnside.⁷⁶ Grant soon liberated Chattanooga from Bragg’s army, but President Abraham Lincoln, long obsessed with relieving Unionist sympathizers in Eastern Tennessee, closed his congratulatory November 25 dispatch to Grant with the gentle but candid reminder, “Remember Burnside.”⁷⁷

Longstreet and his army knew time was of the essence. Union General William Tecumseh Sherman was on the march, driving hard toward Longstreet’s rear. “There stood Fort Sanders in all its terror, looming up on the horizon, right in our path,” remembered one Confederate veteran. “We had to either take the fort, or move on to greener pastures.”⁷⁸ With reinforcements from western Virginia expected in five or six days, Longstreet claimed he wanted to wait until all his chess pieces were on the board, “but General Ledbetter was impatient.”⁷⁹ Due to poor weather and more consultation with Ledbetter, the plan of attack changed again to a surprise assault on the morning of November 29 without a preceding artillery barrage, leading Alexander to declare he

⁷⁴ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 323.

⁷⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 270.

⁷⁶ Steven E. Woodworth, *Nothing but Victory: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1865* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2005), 465.

⁷⁷ *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 2, 25.

⁷⁸ W. Gart Johnson, “Charge on Fort Sanders at Knoxville,” *Confederate Veteran* 1, no. 11 (November 1893): 334.

⁷⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 271.

would go to his grave “believing that Ledbetter devised it and imposed it upon Longstreet.”⁸⁰ Via Ledbetter’s urging, Bragg had finally pushed Longstreet into an attack. One historian suggested Longstreet simply had no choice but to assault the fortifications around Knoxville. “The result could have been anticipated. Yet Longstreet felt that he must destroy Burnside. He had failed to do so by maneuver; now it seemed necessary to attempt to do so with the bayonet.”⁸¹

Before the assault, rumors circulated the Confederate camp that Grant had defeated Bragg’s forces around Chattanooga. These tales further complicated Longstreet’s considerations in launching the offensive that had now been delayed for most of the week. Lafayette McLaws, who had been ordered to send his brigades to attack Fort Sanders, asked Longstreet on the eve of battle that if Bragg has been defeated at Chattanooga, “Do we not gain by delay at this point?” Seemingly committed to attack Fort Sanders after such a postponement or perhaps weary of dealing with Bragg through Ledbetter, Longstreet was in no mood for a debate.⁸² With the assault ordered, Confederate officers instructed their men to sleep on their weapons and not make fires as the temperatures plummeted. With many soldiers wearing “ragged clothes” without shoes while remaining on frozen ground, the conditions were “almost unbearable” and resulted in widespread suffering. When learning of the attack plan from his commanding officer, Captain James Lile Lemon of the 18th Georgia scheduled to be second in line for the pre-dawn assault said it “discomfited him greatly.”⁸³

⁸⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 327.

⁸¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay, *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 232.

⁸² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 271-271.

⁸³ James Lile Lemon, *Feed Them the Steel!* (Mark H. Lemon, 2013), 52.

To preserve the element of surprise early on November 29, “not a cannon was fired,” as it was expected the lack of an artillery barrage would conceal the assault.⁸⁴ It did not. The soldiers in gray surged forward, many tripping on the telegraph wires crossing between tree stumps the Union troops called “the tangle.” A Union soldier remembered, “They seemed to rise up out of the fog, and came on—a dirty gray mass of brute courage. There was no pausing or faltering, until they struck the telegraph wire.”⁸⁵ Recovering, the charging columns slammed into the ditch as the Federals tossed hand grenades over the walls.⁸⁶ Confederates endeavored “with all their might to climb the steep embankment” by desperately climbing onto the shoulders of their comrades or seeking grips by thrusting bayonets into the frigid ground only to be shot.⁸⁷ The glacis was covered in a “sheet of ice,” meaning they could not climb the fort or retreat due to the devastating Union fire. “I plunged my sword into the earthen slope above my head and pulled myself almost to the top,” a Confederate veteran remembered, briefly ascending the walls only to be shot through the neck, the “ball entering just below my jaw on the right side, and passing through, exited just in front of my ear on the left.”⁸⁸ No ladders or climbing tools had been sent by McLaws because he claimed Longstreet incorrectly assured him the ditch would be no significant obstacle.⁸⁹ A Confederate soldier remembered “being exposed for a long time to a deadly fire, when it became apparent that our forces could not dislodge the Federals, we were withdrawn.”⁹⁰ Longstreet heard of Bragg’s defeat at Chattanooga about an hour after he had called off the assault.⁹¹ Union troops

⁸⁴ J.A.H. Granberry, “Longstreet Before Knoxville,” *Confederate Veteran* 31, no. 10 (October 1923): 372.

⁸⁵ Byron M. Cutcheon, “Recollections of Burnside’s East Tennessee Campaign,” *Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* 39 (1902): 17.

⁸⁶ J.A.H. Granberry, “The Assault on Fort Sanders,” *Confederate Veteran* 18, no. 1 (January 1910): 24.

⁸⁷ J.B. Boothe, “The Siege of Knoxville and its Results,” *Confederate Veteran* 22, no. 6 (June 1914): 266.

⁸⁸ James Lile Lemon, *Feed Them the Steel!* (Mark H. Lemon, 2013), 53-54.

⁸⁹ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*. Edited by John C. Oeffinger (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 217.

⁹⁰ N.D. Bachman, “Service with the Shelby Grays,” *Confederate Veteran* 26, no. 2 (February 1918): 69.

⁹¹ Steven E. Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press – Bison Books, 1999), 211.

celebrated their victory because they had heard Longstreet claimed he would eat breakfast in Knoxville that day.⁹² “They drove back two brigades of the enemy with terrible slaughter,” a Union soldier recalled in December.⁹³

Longstreet cancelled the assault due to reports of the telegraph wire making the attack impossible. However, he later admitted his intelligence on the wire’s effect was faulty, “but it was too late to reorganize and renew the attack.”⁹⁴ A veteran wounded in the assault believed the attack was poorly planned and supported, writing years later, “No attack was made on the lines of breastworks on each side of the fort, and had that been done, we could have taken the fort and captured Knoxville and the entire enemy’s force ... It was a short, but one of the most desperate struggles of the war, and deserved better success.” If another brigade had assisted in the attack, “I shall always think it could have been taken.”⁹⁵

Longstreet’s long delayed assault against Fort Sanders ultimately cost more than 800 casualties and ended shortly after it had begun.⁹⁶ Whereas Longstreet had been responsible for the death of thousands of soldiers under Burnside at Fredericksburg the year before, the Union commander had his revenge in Knoxville. “There was about 400 of them came in,” a Union soldier wrote of the assault in a letter weeks later, “and about that many of them in the ditch and on the ground dead and wounded. Such a night I never dreamed of. And such groaning, no person ever

⁹² Will H. Brearley, “Recollections of Burnside’s East Tennessee Campaign,” *Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (Detroit, 1871): 38.

⁹³ Geo. A. Hicks, “General Orders No. 82,” *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers, 1862-1865* (1884): 122.

⁹⁴ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 273.

⁹⁵ W. Gart Johnson, “Charge on Fort Sanders at Knoxville,” *Confederate Veteran* 1, no. 11 (November 1893): 334.

⁹⁶ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 170.

heard the like unless on a battle field.”⁹⁷ After the halfhearted siege, the catastrophic defeat revealed a leader stricken with indecision, earning Longstreet a new nickname: “Peter the Slow.”⁹⁸ Since Grant prevented Longstreet from reuniting with Bragg, the solitary Confederate commander in Tennessee pondered his next move. Grant allegedly worried that Longstreet threatened all Union success if he remained in Tennessee, so he made the Confederate forces in that region a primary target.⁹⁹ As a result, by December, the attempt to take Knoxville ended, and East Tennessee would remain in Union hands for the remainder of the war.¹⁰⁰

Longstreet’s reasoning for such indecision after being detached from Bragg around Chattanooga is unclear. It is possible Longstreet’s mind lingered on the October 20 birth of his new son, Robert Lee. While a child’s birth would be a moment of celebration for any parent, it became especially cherished for Longstreet and his wife, Louise, since they had lost three children in 1862 to scarlet fever.¹⁰¹ Or Longstreet could have been searching for the perfect moment to strike, awaiting a numerical superiority before assaulting Burnside that would never materialize. Regardless of his reasons for inaction that culminated with the failure at Fort Sanders, Longstreet was not about to take the blame for this colossal failure.

Longstreet’s wrath took time to materialize. At first, Longstreet wavered in the immediate aftermath of the assault as word arrived Grant moved a force between Knoxville and Bragg regrouping in Georgia. Grant expected Longstreet to withdraw after such a maneuver.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ John Watkins, “John Watkins in Knoxville, Tenn. to Sarah Probert in Pittsfield, Ohio, December 15, 1863,” University of Tennessee, Special Collections Online.

⁹⁸ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 206.

⁹⁹ Helen Dortch Longstreet, and James Longstreet. "The Great American: General James Longstreet." *Mark Twain Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1953): 6.

¹⁰⁰ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 355.

¹⁰¹ Wert, 331.

¹⁰² *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 2, 25.

In a war council held in the days immediately after the failed assault on Fort Sanders, he asked for suggestions on what to do since word arrived of Bragg's defeat at Chattanooga. The Confederate War Department gave Longstreet the authority to decide the next move. McLaws said he recommended lingering in Tennessee with their base changing back to Virginia since the road to link up with Bragg in Georgia did not seem plausible. Since Longstreet took the advice and the First Corps remained in Tennessee, McLaws had no idea his commanding officer disapproved of his performance at Fort Sanders.¹⁰³ It is possible Longstreet had not yet decided to heave the blame for Fort Sanders on McLaws' shoulders. Some soldiers grumbled after the defeat. "I shall always think it could have been taken," one former rebel said.¹⁰⁴ McLaws was not so sure, doubting the wisdom of the assault before and after it took place. He wrote not long after Fort Sanders, "I am convinced that, no matter what may have been attempted ... would have been attended with a very heavy loss and with very doubtful results."¹⁰⁵

Morale suffered as many in the Confederacy realized it had lost Tennessee, and nothing Longstreet could do would change that fact. If Longstreet had been successful in Knoxville, the war over the winter of 1863 to 1864 would have played out much differently. President Abraham Lincoln had become very anxious about the situation in Eastern Tennessee due to the number of citizens residing there who remained loyal to the United States.¹⁰⁶ A Longstreet victory would have forced Grant to proceed from his triumph over Bragg directly toward Knoxville. Regardless of what could have happened, word of Longstreet's failure soon spread across the nation. An Indiana newspaper claimed great rebel losses and stated on December 5 that Longstreet was

¹⁰³ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 499-500.

¹⁰⁴ W. Gart Johnson, "Charge on Fort Sanders at Knoxville," *Confederate Veteran* 1, no. 11 (November 1893): 334.

¹⁰⁵ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 494.

¹⁰⁶ *OR*, 43, pt. 2, 25.

retreating to Virginia.¹⁰⁷ “It was an utter and disastrous failure,” wrote a special correspondent in a Nashville newspaper under the heading of “Desperate Effort of the Enemy.” “... We do not know if Longstreet has done his worst; but it is evident he expected to have exploited a brilliant and decisive *coup de guerre*. He was thirteen days deciding upon it.”¹⁰⁸ *The Daily Dispatch* in Richmond summarized the situation on December 10 by stating, “The affair is naturally discouraging to our men, and must be set down as the most unfortunate episode of the siege. Our dead are still lying within sight of our breastworks, but cannot be recovered.”¹⁰⁹ A South Carolina newspaper claimed on December 16 that Longstreet’s force “plunged into a boiling hell of lead” and left the ground “carpeted with the slain” only to end in “another rebel failure.”¹¹⁰ With a torrent of bad press, some Confederate supporters had strong feelings toward Longstreet and his efforts in Tennessee. A farmer in Alabama made a note of the defeat in his diary on December 4, writing, “No favourable signs for closing the war, the armies confront each other in all their strength, all foreign nations seem disposed to stand aloof, O God our help is in thee and thee only.”¹¹¹ Other critics were harsher. “Detached from General Lee, what a horrible failure,” Mary Chesnut wrote from South Carolina in her journal on December 21, less than a month after Fort Sanders. “What a slow old humbug is Longstreet.”¹¹² Longstreet made his initial charges against his subordinates at approximately the same time as the bombardment of lousy press hit printers across the country. As more of the Confederacy and the North realized Longstreet had

¹⁰⁷ Editor, “From Burnside’s Army,” *Evansville Daily Journal*, December 5, 1863, 3.

¹⁰⁸ S.C. Merger, ed., “Assault Upon Knoxville: Desperate Effort of the Enemy,” *Nashville Union*, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Editor, “Additional from the North,” *Daily Dispatch*, December 10, 1863, 1.

¹¹⁰ No author, “Yankee Letter,” *Yorkville Enquirer*, December 16, 1863, 1.

¹¹¹ James Mallory, *Fear God and Walk Humbly: The Agricultural Journal of James Mallory 1843-1877*, edited by Grady McWhiney, et al. (University of Alabama Press, 1997), 329

¹¹² Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, ed. C. Vann Woodward (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 509.

failed in his independent command in Tennessee and he faced a scrutinizing spotlight, he decided someone else needed to take the fall for this disappointment.

Longstreet had potential targets within sight when searching for scapegoats. He ironically faced a dose of his own medicine after leading the effort to remove Bragg from command. As Longstreet frantically sought targets to shoulder the blame for his failures in Tennessee amid a torrent of critical press, his aforementioned focus on Law and his countryman in Hood's division, Jerome Robertson, seemed an obvious choice. The target of his friend, former classmate, and second in command, McLaws, was not.

Alexander said the collapse of the Longstreet-McLaws friendship was a mystery. "Similar feelings of distrust to those entertained by Jenkins toward Law, were being felt by Gen. Longstreet himself toward Gen. McLaws," he remembered. "I have never learned when they began or how they arose, but they ended in the next two or three months in Gen. L's preferring charges and Gen. McLaws being court-martialed."¹¹³ While it is evident McLaws' view of Longstreet worsened after Gettysburg, the origin of Longstreet's mistrust is uncertain. If anyone knew, it would have been Sorrel who had been at the General's side since 1861. "The commanding General had for some time been dissatisfied with his second command," Sorrel said of McLaws without providing further details.¹¹⁴ Official notice of Longstreet's disapproval arrived on December 17, 1863, exactly one week after a Richmond newspaper published an article on the First Corps' failure. "Maj. General L. McLaws is relieved from further duty with this army," the notice bluntly stated and was signed, "By command of Lieutenant-General Longstreet."¹¹⁵ In shock, McLaws

¹¹³ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 317.

¹¹⁴ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 183.

¹¹⁵ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 497.

responded, asking for the reason for this order. The reply on the same day stated McLaws had “exhibited a want of confidence in the efforts and plans” of Longstreet, and there was a fear this feeling would pass to the troops. Since Longstreet could not leave, he decided McLaws should depart.¹¹⁶ Since it is evident Jenkins had Longstreet’s ear and held his favor, it is essential to note observations the former made on McLaws’ behavior on the battlefield as they may have been shared. Jenkins accused McLaws of mishandling troop movements around Knoxville and causing “considerable delay by the slowness” in movements.¹¹⁷

McLaws fired back, blaming Jenkins for his failure at Lenoir’s Station on November 15 to march on instead of turn right that would have rendered the entire episode at Knoxville unnecessary. He believed, “Our army could then have either returned to Chattanooga or have threatened the enemy’s rear in the direction of Kingston, and the battle of Missionary Ridge would never have occurred, or the final result would have been more favorable to our cause.”¹¹⁸ There was no mutual respect between McLaws and Jenkins. Despite this reality, McLaws claimed he could have never faulted Longstreet’s overall plan as initially accused because he “was totally unacquainted” with what his commanding officer wanted to accomplish in Tennessee.¹¹⁹ Many in McLaws’s division believed Longstreet attempted to frame its commander.¹²⁰

After McLaws was relieved and departed as ordered to Augusta, Longstreet specified the charges to a neglect of duty with three specifications, including a failure to order his attacking force to carry ladders when assaulting Fort Sanders. McLaws argued he was assured by all involved, including Longstreet, who had allegedly seen a soldier marching into the fort over the

¹¹⁶ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 497-498.

¹¹⁷ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 528-529.

¹¹⁸ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 498.

¹¹⁹ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 497-498.

¹²⁰ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012, 235.

ditch, that the obstacle would provide no problems for his men since it was of such “small dimensions” that would not hinder an assault.¹²¹ Not only did McLaws contend he had been told ladders would not be necessary, but he also used the testimony of the acting quartermaster who claimed they could not manufacture ladders and had “no lumber out of which they could have been made properly” even if they did order the attacking force to carry ladders.¹²² A determined McLaws stated, “If General Longstreet, after reconnoitering the works, had considered that ladders, or other means for crossing the ditch, were necessary, I suppose he would have made some mention of them at least on some occasion. I should think it was his place to order them. His omission to do either looks very strange, when he charges me with being criminally negligent in not getting them. It is an easy matter after the assault is over to see where errors have been committed; but of those I am charged with, where there was any in fact, I do not consider myself responsible, and hold myself unjustly charged; and I object to being put forward as a blind to draw attention away from the main issue, which is the conduct of the campaign in East Tennessee under General Longstreet. I assert that the enemy could have been brought to an engagement before reaching Knoxville; that the town, if assaulted at all, should have been on the first day we arrived, or on the next at farthest; that when the assault was made on Fort Loudon it was not called for by any line of policy whatever; but, on the contrary, no good results could possibly have been attained.”¹²³ McLaws’ anger only intensified, claiming the attack on Fort Sanders should result in an indictment for murder against Longstreet that he believed would “stand before any impartial jury.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 488.

¹²² *OR* 43, pt. 1, 489.

¹²³ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 502.

¹²⁴ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier’s General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*. Edited by John C. Oeffinger (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 217.

As McLaws's resistance stiffened, Longstreet's resolve appeared to fade by December 30 as he did not want a court-martial to take McLaws away from duty elsewhere in the Confederacy.¹²⁵ In another letter on the same day, a depressed Longstreet wished the entire ordeal of a court-martial against McLaws and the rigors of an independent command would simply go away. The internal fire for leadership or salvaging his reputation at the expense of his friendship with McLaws had dissipated, leaving a man devastated by his failure at Fort Sanders, who felt defeated and ready to quit. Since First Corps was unable to reunite with Bragg's army, Longstreet asked to be reassigned as part of another command to relinquish his status as an independent commander. He also welcomed another leader taking over, offering to aid the new officer in any capacity. Regarding his failure in Tennessee, he admitted, "It is fair to infer that the fault is entirely with me, and I desire, therefore, that some other commander be tried."¹²⁶

Longstreet held similar feelings now about the court-martial of his friend and subordinate, McLaws, speaking in the past tense when he claimed, "I thought it necessary a few days ago to relieve Major-General McLaws from duty" but then added, "These are my excuses. But, as I have already stated, the fair and proper inference is that the fault is entirely with me. I am therefore exceedingly anxious that the country should have the services of some officer who may be better suited to such a position."¹²⁷

It is clear Longstreet had sought McLaws as the ultimate scapegoat for Fort Sanders, and now regretted the process he had put into motion. Perhaps he was slowly coming to grips with the fact he was facing his first true failure as a commander where he could not shift the blame onto a superior officer. No matter the reason, the decision to assault Fort Sanders had been his and his

¹²⁵ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 503.

¹²⁶ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 467-468.

¹²⁷ *OR* 43, pt. 1, 467-468.

alone. Had he held strong feelings against the attack, he could have saved the lives of eight-hundred of his soldiers. Processing such a setback takes time, and it seems Longstreet had reacted from emotion in the weeks after Fort Sanders. Longstreet evidently did not expect such fierce resistance to McLaws' dismissal, for he did not initially conjure up specific charges until McLaws demanded a court-martial in a January 17, 1864 letter.¹²⁸ Longstreet hampered the eventual February 13 court proceedings by granting leave to Jenkins and Brigadier General Benjamin Grubb Humphreys, "an important witness."¹²⁹ In an odd twist, the Confederate Congress issued a joint resolution on February 17, commending Longstreet for his actions in Eastern Tennessee.¹³⁰ Furious, McLaws wrote his wife saying the attack on Fort Sanders he resisted was "injudicious." He added, "I am charged with not having ladders to cross a ditch, which if crossed could have given us no advantage—and the superior [Longstreet] who failed for lack of sound judgment in the whole campaign receives the thanks of Congress."¹³¹

In his February court-martial, McLaws was initially found guilty of not providing ladders and suspended for sixty days. During this furor over courts-martial surrounding Longstreet, his old adversary, Bragg, was on the warpath. The former commander of the Army of Tennessee wanted to use the courts-martial to pin the blame on Longstreet for everything in the western theater since Chickamauga. A combined confrontation by Law, McLaws, and Bragg could bring down Longstreet forever. "This matter has been carried so far that self-defence may require you to attack," Bragg wrote McLaws on March 4, "and I can assure you the evidence in my possession is ample to convict [Longstreet] of disobedience of orders, neglect of duty, and want of cordial co-

¹²⁸ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 501-503.

¹²⁹ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 505-506.

¹³⁰ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 549-550.

¹³¹ Lafayette McLaws, *A Soldier's General: The Civil War Letters of Major General Lafayette McLaws*, ed. John C. Oeffinger (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 217.

operation and support, which resulted in all the disasters after Chickamauga. This matter is worthy of your consideration!”¹³² Some officers even suggested Longstreet’s “curious conduct” in Tennessee originated from his close connection to Grant. Still incensed about his friend and former commander’s betrayal, McLaws, who claimed the colossal failure around Knoxville should have been a success, condemned Longstreet’s actions in Tennessee, maintaining Longstreet “could not have ordered movements more to the advantage of the opposing forces, if he had acted only in conformity of the orders of Burnside and Gen. Grant.” In the same letter written after the war, McLaws tempered his anger by closing with a jab that Longstreet had a “badly ballanced [sic] nature which unfitted him for separate command.”¹³³ The initial decision on McLaws’ case would be overturned by the War Department and he was vindicated on May 4.¹³⁴ After the war, Longstreet admitted he was relieved the charges against McLaws had been lifted, revealing the news was “very gratifying to me.” He continued by stating, “General McLaws was a classmate, and had been a warm personal friend from childhood. I had no desire to put charges against him, and should have failed to do so even under the directions of the authorities.”¹³⁵ He later admitted to McLaws the entire action of relieving his former classmate from duty was made “in an unguarded moment.”¹³⁶ The damage, however, had been done, and McLaws would never serve with his former corps again.

For years after the war, McLaws remained hurt by Longstreet’s actions and never seemed to understand why Longstreet hurled the charges at him for any reason other than searching for a

¹³² Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 363.

¹³³ Lafayette McLaws, “Lafayette McLaws to Isaac R. Pennypacker, August 28, 1888,” *Lafayette McLaws Papers* 3, Sandor Tetzler Library Archives and Special Collections, Digital Commons at Wofford College.

¹³⁴ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 505-506.

¹³⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 295-296.

¹³⁶ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 365.

scapegoat. While they often corresponded, McLaws seemed content with keeping Longstreet at arm's length. When Longstreet offered a position with the Republican Party, McLaws declined.¹³⁷ Much of their correspondence concentrated on confirming or denying the ax-grinding that occupied many former officers in the Reconstruction Era as they refought battles on the pages of books and periodicals. McLaws wanted to set the record straight for posterity and, therefore, continued writing his former commanding officer and friend. He often bristled at Longstreet for communicating their correspondence to others, expressing annoyance at Longstreet's behavior after the war. He accused his former commanding officer of publishing their correspondence without permission. "I wrote freely to Gen. Longstreet who was a classmate—never supposing for a moment that it would be given to the public," McLaws complained, not referring to Longstreet as a friend. "But nevertheless he did publish it without my consent and without my knowledge."¹³⁸

The situations with Robertson, McLaws, and especially Law lowered Longstreet's standing with the Confederate government. While the court-martial against Robertson stood firm, with only one small change before he was removed from his brigade, the others did not end in Longstreet's favor. When Law obtained a leave of absence to travel to Richmond to deliver his resignation and then did nothing of the sort, Longstreet viewed it as the last time Law would trouble him and charged him with, among other serious accusations, obtaining a leave of absence under false pretenses and using his position to "create discontent amongst the troops."¹³⁹ When the government informed Longstreet the charges would not be entertained and Law was to return to

¹³⁷ Lafayette McLaws, "Lafayette McLaws to James Longstreet, August 22, 1884," *James Longstreet Papers, 1850-1904*, Box 1, Folder 2, Emory University, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹³⁸ Lafayette McLaws, "Lafayette McLaws to Isaac R. Pennypacker, February 13, 1888," *Lafayette McLaws Papers 3*, Sandor Tetzler Library Archives and Special Collections, Digital Commons at Wofford College.

¹³⁹ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 471.

active service, he pressed the issue and drew Lee into the fray as he prepared to arrest Law if he returned to duty.¹⁴⁰ McLaws pondered in a postwar letter that Law still harbored ill feelings toward Longstreet after being “harshly treated” after Fort Sanders.¹⁴¹ Lee believed the charges against Law to be of “a very grave character,” and he should be removed from duty until a proper investigation took place.¹⁴² When Longstreet arrested Law after the Confederate government had dismissed the charges, Davis was furious, claiming Longstreet had “seriously offended against good order and military discipline, in rearresting an officer who had been released by the War Department, without any new offense having been alleged.”¹⁴³ Longstreet again threatened to resign from the army, but Lee’s intervention halted such actions.¹⁴⁴

With the courts-martial spiraling beyond what Longstreet had intended, he turned his attention to embarking on a bold strategy that could impact Northern morale in the months leading up to Abraham Lincoln’s reelection attempt. It is also conceivable he sought to salvage his plummeting reputation. If his First Corps could strike out into Kentucky, perhaps the Union Army would have to relinquish Chattanooga and ultimately Nashville. Longstreet envisioned reuniting with fellow Confederate Generals Joseph Johnston or P.G.T. Beauregard in a grand campaign that would convince the Northern population the war effort was hopeless with a “powerful demonstration in Kentucky.” Before a war council including Davis, Secretary of War Judah Philip Benjamin, Bragg, and Lee, Longstreet revealed his proposal to Lee. Longstreet’s former commander was allegedly supportive and suggested Longstreet submit the plan to Richmond. Longstreet swiftly rejected the idea because he believed any strategic plan submitted

¹⁴⁰ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 474-475.

¹⁴¹ Lafayette McLaws, “Lafayette McLaws to Isaac R. Pennypacker, April 25, 1888,” *Lafayette McLaws Papers* 3, Sandor Teszler Library Archives and Special Collections, Digital Commons at Wofford College.

¹⁴² *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 473.

¹⁴³ *OR*, 43, pt. 1, 474.

¹⁴⁴ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 184.

by himself would only result in its rejection. Instead, Lee accompanied Longstreet for the meeting.¹⁴⁵ The entire series of events is further evidence Longstreet was suffering through a realization he had lost the support of Confederate leadership.

In the end, Davis nixed any of the plans. After the meeting, Longstreet returned to his headquarters after stopping in Petersburg to christen his newborn son. Davis blasted Longstreet for the unapproved diversion, accusing him of “loitering” and revealing the President still had bitter sentiments toward Longstreet.¹⁴⁶ He soon ordered Longstreet back under Lee’s command. The reunion was like a homecoming for some in the Army of Northern Virginia.¹⁴⁷

Morale suffered as many in the Confederacy realized it had lost Tennessee, and nothing Longstreet could do would change that fact. If Longstreet had been successful in Knoxville, the war over the winter of 1863 to 1864 would have played out much differently. President Abraham Lincoln had become very anxious about the situation in Eastern Tennessee due to the number of citizens residing there who remained loyal to the United States.¹⁴⁸ A Longstreet victory would have forced Grant to proceed from his triumph over Bragg directly toward Knoxville. Following Longstreet's defeat, however, much energy was spent by the Confederate military finger-pointing and defending one's honor in official courts-martial. Longstreet could have spent that time more productively than searching to place blame for Fort Sanders upon someone else's shoulders.

Later in life, Longstreet tried to mend his relationship with McLaws, showcasing he regretted his actions in East Tennessee, but the latter did not forgive his former friend for the charges. Longstreet was never the same after his campaign in Tennessee, as his brooding and

¹⁴⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895), 466.

¹⁴⁶ G. Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 192.

¹⁴⁷ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 369-373.

¹⁴⁸ *OR*, 43, pt. 2, 25.

melancholy nature intensified in the months after Fort Sanders. On multiple occasions, he even desired to be relieved of duty and contemplated resignation.¹⁴⁹ Longstreet's relationship with Davis also suffered as the Confederate Commander-in-Chief disliked Longstreet's actions following Fort Sanders.

While engaging in finger pointing and accusations that went nowhere, Longstreet spent the winter months in Tennessee trying to feed his troops in a difficult landscape and contemplating his failure. He sent many letters requesting the opportunity to avenge his defeat at Fort Sanders and take Knoxville, but it was not to be. Fort Sanders and not Pickett's Charge became the ultimate signpost for Longstreet during the war that his best destiny remained as a Corps Commander and not as an independent army commander. It was the life lesson he did not want to experience, the one that happens to most individuals, where one reconciles their dreams and ambitions with reality. When he returned to action under Lee in Spring 1864, he did so confident in the belief he would no longer have the pressure of an independent command. Longstreet allegedly said while independent command may be more honorable, he preferred being under Lee as it "relieved him of responsibility and assured confidence."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 364-365.

¹⁵⁰ William Garret Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 86.

Chapter 7

Warmth still filled the dead strewn across the frigid landscape before Fort Sanders when James Longstreet decided to call off the attempt to assault Knoxville. One Union veteran described the assault on Fort Sanders as “Fredericksburg reversed.”¹ Union officers praised the conduct of their men for fighting “splendidly” with one claiming he saw one man defending Fort Sanders with an ax while putting “my pistol within six inches of a rebel’s face” and pulling the trigger three times.”² Within minutes of the doomed Confederate charge, word arrived Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee surrounding Chattanooga had been defeated by the Union’s Ulysses S. Grant, and the time had come for Longstreet to decide what to do next with his detached First Corps.

The moment marked the beginning of a crucial time in Longstreet’s military career when he frantically tried to salvage his reputation while operating independently and show the world his detachment to the West had not been a mistake. Furthermore, one Longstreet biography claimed the campaign in East Tennessee is vital in understanding the man’s career. “In no other campaign, perhaps, can Longstreet be seen so clearly and the limits of his ability as a soldier defined so accurately.”³ After displaying what has been described as a “cavalier attitude” under Bragg’s command, Longstreet now faced scrutiny as he started an independent command.⁴ Searching for blame in his subordinates, primarily his former friend Lafayette McLaws, was not Longstreet’s only tactic in restoring his name. In the end, following military maneuvers in East

¹ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 174.

² *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 342.

³ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 235.

⁴ Judith Lee Hallock, *General James Longstreet in the West: A Monumental Failure* (McWhiney Foundation Press, Abilene Texas, 1998), 58.

Tennessee that did little but annoy Union leadership and rejected strategic plans to turn the tide in favor of the Confederates, Longstreet returned to the Army of Northern Virginia realizing being a corps commander—not an army commander—was his best destiny.

Longstreet suddenly had to look at the entire situation he faced after Fort Sanders. Winter approached, adding to the number of challenges he faced. The search for blame began immediately after the November 29 attack on Fort Sanders ended. Longstreet accepted the fact he called off the attack too early but also cast blame around to others—primarily Lafayette McLaws. One officer put it simply: the “attack [was] coldly made.” Earl Hess argues Longstreet placing the blame on McLaws contained faulty reasoning from the beginning as “there was ample evidence that before the attack Longstreet and everyone else had assumed the ditch [protecting Fort Sanders] was no obstacle. Modern-day historians also do not accept this line of reasoning, blaming Longstreet instead for faulty reconnaissance and sloppy preparation.”⁵

Jefferson Davis provided Longstreet considerable leeway in determining the next course of action. Messengers arrived informing Longstreet to depend on his own resources. For the immediate future, he decided to remain at Knoxville, but soon started thinking about his other options.⁶ He could attempt to connect with the Army of Tennessee now regrouping in North Georgia around Dalton, remain in East Tennessee, or withdraw from the West to reunite with Robert E. Lee and Army of Northern Virginia. Longstreet decided the day after Fort Sanders that he would continue the siege of Knoxville. Minor picket fighting continued, but the possibility of another assault on Fort Sanders dissipated as one captured Rebel said, “Our men just swear that they are never going into that slaughter-pen again.” The temperatures plunged as winter weather

⁵ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 173; Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 235.

⁶ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 455-477.

settled in, requiring both sides to forage in freezing cold and find intuitive ways to stay warm like Union soldiers building fireplaces within the trenches.⁷

Confederate dispatches captured in the wake of Fort Sanders revealed Longstreet to be “badly puzzled” about what to do after Bragg’s defeat. He briefly considered marching to connect with Bragg at Dalton in northern Georgia and asked about any attempts to restore reliable communication with the Army of Tennessee. With Union forces converging on Knoxville from multiple directions, Longstreet’s time to decide what to do next quickly diminished. Continued Confederate cavalry operations frustrated the Union approach, but Longstreet had not made a major move by early December other than to continue the siege.⁸ “As our position at Knoxville was somewhat complicated,” Longstreet wrote, “I determined to abandon the siege and to draw off in the direction of Virginia, with an idea that we might find an opportunity to strike that column of the enemy’s forces reported to be advancing by Cumberland Gap.”⁹ He informed Bragg on December 2 that he had no plans to march to Georgia, stating that “the best thing left for me to do is to capture the garrison here or force the enemy to great delays in other operations by sending a large force to its succor.”¹⁰

Other officers in early December had faith Longstreet could still accomplish much if sent proper reinforcements.¹¹ Thomas Goree, one of Longstreet’s staff and hardly an objective individual, claimed “had Genl. Longstreet received the proper cooperation from his subordinate commanders, and had his plans been promptly and energetically executed by them, he would

⁷ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 177-178.

⁸ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 185-189; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 767-769.

⁹ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 455-477.

¹⁰ *OR* 31, pt. 3, 777.

¹¹ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 785.

have made the most successful and brilliant campaign of the war.” Goree blamed Bragg for not holding Chattanooga one week longer—all the time Longstreet needed to capture Knoxville and Burnside, which is hardly a believable outcome.¹² General P.G.T. Beauregard also thought reinforcements should be sent to East Tennessee to allow Longstreet to take the offensive since “properly handled, it should crush any force that Grant could assemble in time” before he added “The hour is critical and grave. The enemy increases every day. We at the height, are ready to decline. I am filled with intense anxiety lest golden opportunities shall be lost—lost forever ... It is concentration and immediate mobility that are indispensable to save us.”¹³

Shortly after the defeat at Chattanooga, Davis relieved Bragg of command of the Army of Tennessee, placing a reluctant General William Hardee in command who made it clear he did not want the position to be permanent.¹⁴ Robert E. Lee wrote Davis expressing his concern about the deteriorating situation in Georgia, mentioning his concern Longstreet had been cut off from his base and would be forced to retire to Virginia or North Carolina.¹⁵ For a moment, it seemed the Confederacy became paralyzed over what to do next with the Army of Tennessee and the entire region. The lack of sustained leadership suddenly left Longstreet in a unique position of nearly independent command, giving him a long-awaited opportunity. However, now that the opportunity to freely decide his destiny had arrived after more than two years of war spent taking orders and watching his superiors make decisions with which he disagreed, Longstreet struggled under the weight of his role. Longstreet initially devised a plan to smash a Union column before turning his attention on the approaching force led by William Tecumseh Sherman, a move one

¹² Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet's Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 116.

¹³ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 813-816.

¹⁴ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 764-765.

¹⁵ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 779-780.

historian described as the “flash of the old Longstreet genius.”¹⁶ However, it could also be seen as the plans of a man desperate to reverse the poor press destined to hit Longstreet after Fort Sanders.

With the Union forces approaching and word spreading around the country about the disastrous attack on Fort Sanders, Longstreet held a meeting with his subordinates because he feared the fact he was “threatened on every side.”¹⁷ Not having any idea his commander would soon lob charges against him for the debacle at Fort Sanders, McLaws recommended not attempting to reunite with Bragg and remaining in East Tennessee to wave the proverbial flag for the Confederate loyalists in the area. Alexander wanted one more shot at Fort Sanders and Longstreet, who would repeatedly over the next several weeks consider a second assault on Knoxville to restore faith in his military abilities, allowed his subordinates to plan a renewed attack on Fort Sanders. But Alexander said, “the general consented to the scheme of renewing the attack merely to keep us amused, and did not really intend it.” Years later, Longstreet recalled realizing “that it would not be prudent” to join Bragg since the two forces were cut off. However, Longstreet captured a dispatch from Grant, one the Union commander had hoped his old friend would find, that announced the movement of three columns toward Knoxville, and decided around December 2 to start gathering his forces for a move back toward Virginia.¹⁸ He indicated a desire to receive reinforcements and restore communication with Bragg and Richmond as soon as possible, projecting a definitive fear he would soon be caught in an

¹⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 237.

¹⁷ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 777.

¹⁸ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 191.

impossible situation.¹⁹ Departing the Knoxville area became even more difficult as the temperatures continued to drop and a steady rain fell on the weary Confederates, many of whom wrapped their bare feet in ragged coats and blankets.²⁰ Confederate stragglers and deserters streamed into Knoxville after Longstreet's departure, revealing many Rebels had experienced enough of this war. The Union soldiers observed the "ragged and dirty" enemy troops and determined some had probably "wanted to be taken by us."²¹ Confederate civilians moaned when they realized Longstreet, their expected deliverer from the Yankee invasion, had departed. "The thought that it might be true almost kills me," one woman wrote before adding a critique of Longstreet's siege, "If they have gone, I don't know what in the world they sat down outside here so long for." Another citizen complained, "What a triumph for our enemies. Oh, why did they come? Things are a great deal worse than before."²²

These observations reveal Longstreet's siege and attack on Knoxville had certainly taken a toll on the morale in his command and the Confederacy. Knowing this, Longstreet knew he needed a victory to place himself and his men back in a positive light. The confident commander had always projected complete faith in his ability to determine the proper course of action throughout the war and now he had the opening to showcase what he could do independently. At the beginning of December, however, Longstreet knew he needed to change his base of operations as the forces in blue threatened his position at Knoxville.

¹⁹ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 778; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 790; James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 435; Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 329.

²⁰ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 192.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

²² Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 205; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 791.

Confirming the new responsibility, Longstreet received word in the beginning of December that Davis allowed him “full discretion” to decide upon his next move. However, Longstreet responded by flipflopping his ideas around in a flurry of correspondence, never landing on a definitive course of action. The indecision reveals Longstreet struggled to make a commitment now that he had the chance to operate on his own. First, Longstreet said he could remain in East Tennessee if the railroad to Virginia could be improved. He also suggested December 6 he could withdraw to Bean’s Station in “hopes of getting an opportunity to strike the enemy’s column,” but he bemoaned the worsening condition of the roads and the fact many of his men had no shoes. As a result, he contemplated again returning “slowly back to Virginia.” For the first eight days of December, Longstreet’s men endured a miserable march coping with the cold, rain, and food shortages. Making matters worse, some soldiers were “deeply disappointed” to be stopping in Tennessee instead of moving on to reunite with Lee. Longstreet again suggested he worried he would not be able to successfully engage the enemy without a proper railroad supply line and asked the Confederate leadership if he could accomplish more somewhere else. Longstreet’s First Corps had now been detached from the Army of Northern Virginia for three months.²³

The second week of December saw Longstreet concentrating on foraging for food and repairing the railroad to prepare for a lengthy stay in East Tennessee, indicating he had no immediate plans to relinquish his independent status despite the fact he challenged Davis on December 7 to order proper transportation if his “command can be more usefully employed in some other part of the country.”²⁴ On December 9, he placed his men on half rations while they

²³ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 192-193; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 795-796; James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 438.

²⁴ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 792.

attempted to obtain more food in a landscape that continued to prove challenging in terms of foraging.²⁵ Longstreet showcased his talents for logistics as the rations improved for some of his men since they enjoyed “biscuits, onions, apples, and beef” among other things, but the foraging in the heavy presence of Union cavalry made the operations challenging. Despite these minor improvements for some of the soldiers in gray, many remained depressed as one man wrote his wife that “we are whipped to death, now. We have to run all the time ... we will have to give up Tennessee and I fear all of the Confederacy. The Yankees are too strong for us.”²⁶ Others reported some “bad men” would commit atrocities on civilians, stealing clothing, blankets and other supplies in the “disgraceful spirit of plunder.”²⁷ But Longstreet believed his force could continue to survive off what was available in East Tennessee, showing he still believed he could restore the Confederacy’s faith in his abilities. “Our position here is, I think, a good one,” he wrote on December 13, “and important, provided our services are not essential elsewhere.”²⁸

Longstreet’s veterans complained the East Tennessee campaign caused more suffering than any other time in the war.²⁹ Micah Jenkins, one of Longstreet’s favorite subordinates, blamed the struggles in the ranks for increasing the challenges of the campaign and suggested more faith in their commander would have resulted in greater success. “I fear that difficulties were increased and the full benefit of well-aimed strategy prevented in this campaign by the absence of high and cordial sustaining support to loyal authority on the part of some high officers,” Jenkins wrote, “and that the spirit of the army, instead of being encouraged and

²⁵ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 455-477.

²⁶ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 194.

²⁷ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 518-520; *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 524-531.

²⁸ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 817-818; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 818-819.

²⁹ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 206.

sustained against sufferings and necessary hardships by some from whom the country had a right to expect it, was, on the contrary, depressed and recognition of the dangers and hardships cultivated.”³⁰ However, it could also be argued that Longstreet’s job as a commanding officer was to instill faith in his subordinates, something he had often accomplished in the war before his time as an independent commander in the West. If one is to believe the witnesses, Longstreet had encouraged dissent against Bragg and now saw the same occurring in his own command. Longstreet, it appeared, faced the prospect of losing control of his command.

After Davis granted Longstreet command of all the Confederate forces in East Tennessee on December 10, Longstreet contemplated resuming offensive operations in the region and halted any continued move east. He claimed the area near Mossy Creek allowed for good foraging opportunities that could also cut off the area from the enemy. As the food situation for his soldiers slowly improved, Longstreet finally made a determined decision to remain in East Tennessee and strike the Federals, considering attacks that could relieve Knoxville or threaten invasions of Kentucky or Middle Tennessee. He also pondered a move that could disrupt the Union army moving to attack the Army of Tennessee now free of Bragg, who had been relieved.³¹ Longstreet’s active mind contemplating offensive maneuvers reveals a man desperate to reclaim his place in the limelight and showcase his abilities as an independent commander. He pelted his subordinates with messages demanding information on a myriad of subjects, from the enemy’s movements to foraging opportunities.³² Longstreet worried about the enemy’s presence at Bean’s Station and made his decision to attack the enemy cavalry led by General James M. Shackleford there and, hopefully, gain supplies. He anticipated the maneuver could gain his

³⁰ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 524-531.

³¹ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 207; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 802.

³² *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 810-811.

command a great victory. “We may have the opportunity to do more than merely secure the foraging country.” Rainy weather flooded the roads and could have paused the attack, but Longstreet remained determined to strike back after the lingering disappointment of Knoxville despite the rumbling of his increasingly disgruntled men.³³ Longstreet continued to demand constant information from his subordinates, indicating he expected a grand victory to result from this operation.³⁴

When Longstreet reached Bean’s Station, the enemy allegedly got caught completely by surprise.³⁵ Showing some of his earlier energy leading troops on the battlefield, Longstreet urged his forces to attack with all available strength against the cavalry, some of whom carried Spencer repeating rifles. The engagement intensified as Longstreet sent more men, Lafayette McLaws division, in to support Johnson’s people.³⁶ Edward Porter Alexander wanted to unleash his guns on the Federal forces, but Longstreet feared his men might be hit by friendly fire as the sunlight faded.³⁷ Jenkins arrived late on the scene and blamed the slowness of McLaws for his inability to fully participate at Bean’s Station, indicating more dissention within Longstreet’s command.³⁸ Earl Hess described the battle of Bean’s Station as a “hard-fought battle” but Longstreet’s plan to disrupt the cavalry failed.³⁹ In his official correspondence after the engagement, Longstreet blamed bad roads, the weather, and the “want of shoes and clothing.”⁴⁰ His chief of staff, Moxley Sorrell, put it simply in a comment that could also summarize the work of Longstreet throughout

³³ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 208; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 818-819; *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 820.

³⁴ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 820.

³⁵ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 455-477.

³⁶ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 212-213.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁸ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 524-531.

³⁹ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 214.

⁴⁰ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 837.

the East Tennessee campaign: “We expected to accomplish something, but little came of it.”⁴¹

Years after the war in his memoirs, Longstreet suggested he only fought “for full and glorious victory; a fruitless one we did not want.”⁴²

When Longstreet asked for ten thousand blankets to keep his men warm in the continually frigid season, the government managed to send three thousand five hundred—less than half of what he requested.⁴³ He mentioned similar problems when he pressured his cavalry to break up the enemy because the “infantry is so distressed for want of shoes that we can’t venture to pursue.”⁴⁴ Some veterans recalled the ground froze more than half the time and the Union forces never engaged in a major battle. “Whenever we advanced on them, they turn and run to Knoxville.”⁴⁵ All follow up attempts to gain a swift victory failed, prompting much annoyance in Longstreet’s command. It seemed Longstreet risked losing the faith of those he commanded, a precious commodity for any military leader that he had once had in spades. In his official report, he cast blame on McLaws and Evander Law for various errors made in the brief campaign without ever accepting his own failure to command or bring victory.⁴⁶ Some historians have suggested the primary reason McLaws fell under Longstreet’s fire was the former’s refusal to join in plotting against Bragg back in Chattanooga.⁴⁷ One historian observed that “Longstreet became frustrated with his failure to win a quick victory over the isolated Federals at Bean’s Station, and complaints by his subordinates grated on his nerves,” and his aforementioned

⁴¹ Moxley G. Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 182.

⁴² James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 439.

⁴³ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 838.

⁴⁴ *OR*, 31, pt. 3, 838-839.

⁴⁵ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 116-117.

⁴⁶ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 455-477.

⁴⁷ Steven Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 253.

charges against his subordinates were “ludicrous.”⁴⁸ By December 19, Longstreet’s men had reached Russellville, and he ordered his men to establish winter quarters. “As winter had broken upon us in good earnest,” he remembered, “it seemed necessary for us to give up the game of war for the time, seek some good place for shelter, and repair railroads and bridges, to open our way back towards Richmond.”⁴⁹

In the days after the clash at Bean’s Station, while Longstreet contemplated blaming everyone else for his failure to achieve victory, he searched for a new objective to regain glory for himself and also possibly help turn the tide of the war for the Confederacy. His men gossiped about the next move and many agreed Longstreet sought a “war-winning strategy” by invading Kentucky, but some soldiers under him believed their commanding officer was a poor strategist.⁵⁰ The concept of invading the border state had persisted since the beginning of the war and was attempted by Longstreet’s political nemesis, Braxton Bragg, in the fall of 1862 while Longstreet participated in Robert E. Lee’s invasion of Maryland.

However, Federal cavalry pushed forward toward Longstreet, temporarily ending any thought of a Kentucky campaign with a battle at Mossy Creek on December 29—more than two weeks after Bean’s Station. Independent command had frozen Longstreet’s mind and obliterated his confidence. The man who once never hesitated to share what he believed to be his superior strategies and tactics could no longer make a decision now that he had command of a department. Longstreet’s morale plummeted in the aftermath as he seemed once again plagued by the same indecision he exhibited outside of Knoxville a month earlier. He once again

⁴⁸ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 218.

⁴⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 440.

⁵⁰ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 224.

considered abandoning East Tennessee or returning to Virginia. While blaming “a combination of circumstances” that prevented “the complete destruction of the enemy’s forces in this part of the State,” he asked unsuccessfully to be relieved of duty, stating, “The fault is entirely with me, and I desire, therefore, that some other commander be tried.”⁵¹ One Confederate officer under Longstreet noted the “want of energy” in his commander’s actions and believed he was better on the battlefield than conducting grand strategic ideas because Longstreet was “too slow and he is almost too kind-hearted to have control of a department.”⁵² Longstreet biographer Jeffrey Wert suggested this moment was perhaps the most depressing for the officer evidenced by Longstreet’s comment on the “impossible position that I held.”⁵³

The floundering Longstreet continued to search for First Corps purpose in remaining in East Tennessee. After considering Kentucky, abandoning East Tennessee, and returning to Virginia, Longstreet began 1864 by attempting yet another move toward his recent favorite target of Knoxville.⁵⁴ For a time, Longstreet portrayed an obsession with returning to Knoxville as if he could not let the failure of Fort Sanders pass. The result was a brief engagement at Dandridge that cost Longstreet another one hundred and fifty men.⁵⁵ But continued supply problems prevented adequate corn for the cavalry, slowing the campaign once again, and Longstreet reported local people coming down from the mountains who were near starvation.⁵⁶ Shifting his focus again, Longstreet returned his attention to Kentucky and consulted with Lee on his plans, but the Army of Northern Virginia commander declined to entertain the idea. President Jefferson

⁵¹ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 455-477.

⁵² Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 225.

⁵³ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 359.

⁵⁴ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 699.

⁵⁵ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 225.

⁵⁶ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 728; *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 743.

Davis also stated the Confederacy could not assemble the animals necessary to support Longstreet's proposed move into Kentucky.⁵⁷

At this time, Longstreet requested to be relieved of his current command. In his memoirs, he suggested the winter was the perfect season to ask for a change and suggested his failures fell to the fact Confederate leadership had let him down. "The season seemed an appropriate one for making another effort to be relieved from service," he recalled, "—that service in which the authorities would not support my plans or labors—for now during the lull in war they would have ample time to assign some one to whom they could give their confidence and aid. But this did not suit them ... It was difficult under the circumstances to find apology for remaining in service."⁵⁸ When that was ignored, Longstreet continued toward Knoxville once again in February because he noted "demoralization of the enemy" the closer they reached the city.⁵⁹ He continued correspondence regarding a "great opportunity" to attack Knoxville once again as he remained obsessed with avenging his failure there in November.⁶⁰

But then his request for additional men was declined and he realized the difficulties in crossing rivers to sustain pressure on Knoxville. Longstreet lamented this situation years later when he grumbled, "The prime object of the second advance upon Knoxville was to show the strategic strength in the field, and persuade the authorities that an army of twenty thousand in that zone could be of greater service than double that force on the enemy's front or elsewhere, but they could not or would not hear of plans that proposed to take them from the settled policy

⁵⁷ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 232.

⁵⁸ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 448.

⁵⁹ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 735.

⁶⁰ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 735.

of meeting the enemy where he was prepared for us.”⁶¹ The comment suggests Longstreet wished he had been given the opportunity to renew his pressure on Knoxville, but these observations were recorded years after the war and the reality of his renewed assault or siege of Knoxville seems questionable.

In evidence of his further hesitation to decide upon any course of action, Longstreet also repeatedly wrote Joseph Johnston at the end of February and early March suggesting he could strike Knoxville or even join Johnston now commanding the Army of Tennessee in Georgia. To further complicate Longstreet’s next decision, reports arrived that the enemy had been reinforcing Knoxville from Chattanooga. Longstreet informed Davis he could fight the force at Knoxville if it would come out of the defenses, and surprisingly even suggested renewing his siege of the city. Disappointed with the situation, Longstreet once again returned to winter quarters at Russellville.⁶²

At approximately the same time, Longstreet complained about his current situation and again pleaded in multiple letters with his former commander, Lee, to convince the government to send animals to him that would allow his force to ride into Kentucky. “We have no time to spare,” he begged, “and the whole thing should be kept from other parties.”⁶³ Lee did attempt to gauge the possibility of sending animals to aid Longstreet in his plan, but also had pressing concerns the Army of Northern Virginia faced in the coming spring of 1864 to consider.⁶⁴ However, Longstreet told Lee in April that Grant coming to Virginia would not cause him any trouble because he is not better than Pope. “They won their success in the same field,”

⁶¹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 463.

⁶² Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 226; *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 759; *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 789; *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 728; *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 810-811; *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 587; *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 637.

⁶³ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 790.

⁶⁴ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 654.

Longstreet assured Lee—probably to calm his former commander to maintain support for his Kentucky campaign. “If you will out general him, you will surely destroy him. His chief strength is in his prestige.”⁶⁵ Making such disparaging remarks toward his former classmate is odd and showcases Longstreet’s urgency to obtain permission for his daring (but nearly impossible) campaign into Kentucky. Longstreet also resumed pleading without success to the Confederate Secretary of War to adopt his plan to invade Kentucky.⁶⁶

By this point, Longstreet had been detached from Bragg for four months.

And he had done little with this time.

Supply problems enhanced the disappointment in Longstreet’s command. One officer remembered the “ground hard and sharp with ice, and not less than two thousand of our little army were without shoes. Their bleeding feet left marks at every step.”⁶⁷ Food became increasingly difficult to acquire as well. Even the Quartermaster Alexander R. Lawton suggested Longstreet should find food in East Tennessee or evacuate the region.⁶⁸ As a result, Longstreet focused on foraging to support his men and even took personal command of captured Yankee coffee to make sure it went to sick or injured men to help repair the falling morale. He also ordered a rail line repaired, which brought mail to further support the declining mood among his men.⁶⁹ By January, some of Longstreet’s officers said conditions had improved through the construction of huts complete with chimneys to fight off the bitter cold.⁷⁰ Despite these attempts at improvement, Longstreet’s men became a “breechless, shoeless, lousy, starving band, roving

⁶⁵ *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 737.

⁶⁶ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 791.

⁶⁷ Moxley G. Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 183.

⁶⁸ *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 559.

⁶⁹ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 229.

⁷⁰ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 518-520.

all about through the woods, preying on cattle, hogs, sheep, and almost every creeping thing they could run across, destroying a ten acre field of corn with all ease in one night and be squealing for more the next morning.”⁷¹ By the end of February, he reported the possibility for supplying his force had been “entirely exhausted.”⁷² Supply problems only worsened, and Longstreet’s correspondence became exceedingly panicked as he mentioned the real possibility of starvation for his animals at the same time he suggested a mounted invasion into Kentucky.⁷³ “Not during the war has a campaign been carried on under such adverse circumstances as was ours,” Goree recalled. “We were cut off from all communication from any direction. Could get no shoes, clothing, or provisions for the men except what we gathered up in the surrounding country. The consequence was that the suffering was very great.”⁷⁴ In a surprising move, the Confederate government congratulated Longstreet and his men in February for their efforts in East Tennessee, but the recognition did not alleviate the hardships First Corps continued to face.⁷⁵

This worsening situation affected Longstreet’s confidence, as he witnessed his proud First Corps that had left Virginia in September descending into such a disorganized, desperate state. “We have been away from railroad communications nearly two months,” an increasingly depressed Longstreet wrote in January. “Most of our baggage has been behind since we left Virginia. Our officers and men are suffering in consequence. The weather is now extremely severe and our service very hard.”⁷⁶ Longstreet regularly rode through the men, conversing with them as they suffered. One veteran recalled, “We didn’t have anything but parched corn to eat.

⁷¹ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 230.

⁷² *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 800.

⁷³ *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 655.

⁷⁴ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 116.

⁷⁵ *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 549-550.

⁷⁶ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 509.

To keep up our spirits, as the general rode among us, we frequently called out to know if we couldn't have some fodder to mix with our corn. There was so much hardship and suffering, we had to get what fun we could out of every situation.”⁷⁷ Years later, Longstreet's second wife and widow, Helen Longstreet, claimed Longstreet considered the East Tennessee campaign his most difficult campaign of the entire war. Whether that was the result of the challenges there or the disappointment of failing as an independent commander is impossible to say, but Longstreet's widow mentioned a number of reasons for the failure—none of which fell on Longstreet's shoulders. “He was cut off from supplies, improperly supported by the Confederate government, and sent, with an inadequate force, to attack Burnside in his stronghold...Longstreet often expressed the view that Washington at Valley Forge did not suffer more than his men in the hard campaigns of that severe winter. Much of the time, half-clad and shoeless, the snow-covered ground bore the bloody and thawed out by fires. During the severest of the winter, they had nothing to eat but parched corn.”⁷⁸ Consider Longstreet married his younger wife in 1897, more than thirty years after the war, and she wrote these words. Longstreet must have shared these complaints with his new wife before his death in 1904, suggesting he harbored significant discontent with his failure in East Tennessee.

Early 1864 was an odd time in the war when “apparently no one cared to make a move, and the armies lay idle while their respective leaders strove desperately to pierce the fog of war and determine what their next move should be.”⁷⁹ Reflecting this uncertainty among both sides of the war and continuing to struggle to determine his next move, Longstreet suddenly returned

⁷⁷ Helen Longstreet, “Didn't have wings and couldn't fly,” 1341, box 14, folder 211, Georgia Historical Society, Speeches and Civil War.

⁷⁸ Helen Longstreet, “Grant and Longstreet in East Tennessee,” 1341, box 14, folder 211, Georgia Historical Society, Speeches and Civil War.

⁷⁹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 241.

his attention to Kentucky and resumed his attempt at gaining support for the idea. He wanted Lee to present the idea because, as he put it years later, “the mere fact of its coming from me would be enough to cause its rejection.”⁸⁰ Longstreet believed the move into Kentucky could help win the war and convince northern voters to not support Lincoln’s re-election. Of course, Longstreet leading such a bold offensive would also allow him to recapture the spotlight and restore morale among his troops—and possibly his own self confidence.

Longstreet traveled to Richmond for a war council on these options that took place on March 14. He followed up with another letter pleading about his lack of supplies and imploring the government to send supplies so he may conduct his invasion of Kentucky to possibly impact the re-election campaign of Abraham Lincoln. An unexpected victory in the border state could shock northern voters into pressing Lincoln for an armistice. “If our armies can take the initiative in the spring campaign,” Longstreet implored, “they can march into Kentucky with little trouble and finish the war in this year. If we delay and give the enemy his full time the war will, in all probability, be prolonged for another four years.” While the war council’s topic shifted away from Kentucky and onto a strike in Middle Tennessee, Longstreet did not give up hope on the offensive he could lead into Kentucky. He repeatedly pressed Lee to help him acquire the animals to allow his men to ride mounted into Kentucky writing, “You complain of my excess of confidence, but I think that is based on good judgment and a proper appreciation of our difficulties.”⁸¹ Lee rejected the idea since his forces were outnumbered but recognized in February the importance of retaining East Tennessee.⁸² Not being content with pressuring Lee, Longstreet also urgently wrote Beauregard with hopes he could gain allies in his attempt to

⁸⁰ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 466.

⁸¹ *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 627-643; *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 655; *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 641-642.

⁸² *OR*, 33, 1,185.

secure animals for the proposed Kentucky invasion. “Our troops are in fine condition and in fine spirits and eager for a reasonable opportunity,” he wrote Beauregard in March. “...if we remain idle, I fear that we may become seriously demoralized, and of course the enemy, now demoralized, will gain morale, courage and confidence. I am very anxious to make my move about the first of April, if I can get the number of animals I require.”⁸³ Longstreet addressed the President, too, urgently making his case in a lengthy and detailed letter for the invasion of Kentucky while he visited with his wife and newborn son in Petersburg.⁸⁴ However, Davis refused to acquiesce. Longstreet’s dogged determination shows he desperately wanted to conduct a major operation to salvage his reputation, but he did not adequately consider the difficulties in mounting such an operation into Kentucky—no matter how sound the strategy may have been. Dreaming up a grand strategy on paper is one thing but executing efficiently is an entirely different manner. Longstreet should have known this, but he seemed unable to accept the current situation. Historian Earl Hess credited Longstreet for realizing a positive grand strategy but chastised him for being unable to accept the reality of his proposal and “the practical problems of implementing his bold ideas” that “mark him as unrealistic.”⁸⁵

Longstreet did not immediately return to his men after the March council in Richmond. Instead, he went to Petersburg for the christening for his newborn son, Robert Lee, who had been born in October. While there, Longstreet again wrote Davis about the Kentucky invasion, suggesting that, despite the birth of a son, he could not let go of a potential opportunity to showcase his talents as an independent commander. As one biography noted, “Longstreet never

⁸³ *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 590-591.

⁸⁴ *OR*, 32, pt. 2, 637-639; James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 468.

⁸⁵ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 238; *OR*, 32, pt. 3, 556-557.

seemed able to take no for answer.”⁸⁶ In the end, Confederate leadership declined to support Longstreet’s campaign into Kentucky because of the threat facing the Confederacy in northern Virginia and Georgia in 1864, dashing all hopes he had for reviving his declining reputation. Lee, Davis and Bragg all seemed to favor operations in the West in 1864, however, with the President and his new military adviser (Bragg) favoring a concentration in Middle Tennessee. As one historian stated, “The differences of opinion were all very confusing.”⁸⁷

The nation, North and South, continued to be concerned with Longstreet’s presence in East Tennessee. General Henry Halleck received a report in March from a Rebel deserter who claimed Longstreet would not join Lee but would link up with Johnston.⁸⁸ Grant allegedly claimed, “If Longstreet is not driven out of the valley entirely and the road destroyed east of Abingdon, I do not think it unlikely that the last great battle of the war will be fought in East Tennessee.”⁸⁹ If Grant actually made this statement, he did not know of the troubles Longstreet currently faced in supplying his troops. Northern and Southern newspapers regularly ran updates or rumors of Longstreet’s location, indicating the presence of First Corps in East Tennessee greatly interested and troubled the nation. When Longstreet’s forces paused at Rutledge, the *Richmond Examiner* informed its readers, “We are at last able to inform our readers where [Longstreet] is.”⁹⁰ And this article also ran in Northern newspapers. Northern readers read rumors in February that Longstreet received reinforcements to prepare for a new operation in East Tennessee.⁹¹ The *New York Times*, a publication that ran many articles in late 1863 and

⁸⁶ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 247.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁸⁸ *OR*, 33, 632.

⁸⁹ Helen Longstreet, “Grant and Longstreet in East Tennessee,” 1341, box 14, folder 211, Georgia Historical Society, Speeches and Civil War.

⁹⁰ Editor, “Longstreet’s Army,” *The New York Times*, December 13, 1863.

⁹¹ Editor, “Longstreet’s Reinforcements,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 1863.

early 1864 questioning Longstreet's location and intention in East Tennessee, reported in April, "Where Longstreet is going or what he intends to do no one knows, and ought not to tell if he did."⁹² With such a national focus on his presence in East Tennessee, it is obvious Longstreet felt the heat of that spotlight and this intense scrutiny and attention only magnified the level of disappointment in his sputtering and, at times, rudderless campaign. As one writer observed, Longstreet's "self-confidence had abandoned him."⁹³

By the end of March, the supply problems reached a critical level. Longstreet observed the supply animals starving to death and the morale in ranks plunging. At the end of this month, Longstreet met with an engineer who did not leave with a positive impression of the general as he stated many other generals were "all above him in point of intellect and genius."⁹⁴ Such a comment shows Longstreet's star had fallen swiftly and significantly in recent months. In a move that undoubtedly shocked and disappointed Longstreet, the Confederate government abruptly abandoned all attempt to retain East Tennessee on April 7 when Davis ordered Longstreet back to Virginia. The sudden change of direction certainly bothered Confederate sympathizers in East Tennessee, but Longstreet's overall performance since Chickamauga also received harsh criticism. "Never during the whole war was there such blundering and want of generalship displayed on the Confederate side" wrote one Confederate soldier. Another commented that Longstreet's "whole campaign in Tennessee has been a mystery to me and to all the rest of us."⁹⁵ The campaign's difficulty led another veteran to claim it the hardest of the war,

⁹² Editor, "Longstreet's Army," *The New York Times*, April 20, 1864.

⁹³ Jeffrey D. Wert, "The Best Subordinate." *Civil War Times* 8 (2006): 28.

⁹⁴ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 239.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 239.

adding “all the boys used to say that all east Tennessee lacked of being hell was a roof over it.”⁹⁶

One historian concluded the Eastern Tennessee campaign “raised questions concerning his leadership” across the Confederacy.⁹⁷

Longstreet once admitted the failure in East Tennessee was the result of his leadership, claiming it was “fair to infer that the fault is entirely with me.”⁹⁸ As he seemed to await being relieved of command of First Corps, he wrote to D.H. Hill an emotional letter revealing his state of mind, “I long for some relief from this constant toil and anxiety. When it comes without any fault of my own, and when it cannot be said that I abandoned my post, it will be hailed with delight... You have often spoken of my excess of confidence, and... you will be quite relieved when you learn that all confidence is gone.” Alexander Mendoza suggested the confidence had dissipated “because [Longstreet] feared that the administration sought his removal.”⁹⁹ While Longstreet still suggests he is not at fault for the setbacks and failures First Corps experienced in East Tennessee, the letter discloses Longstreet had suffered greatly as he came face-to-face with his limitations as a commander. A man of such former confidence would never reveal in writing the full extent these recent disappointments had on his self-esteem and confidence. However, many historians have noted the Longstreet paradox when comparing the officer before independent command in East Tennessee with the indecisive and vindictive man that emerged during the winter of 1863-1864.

⁹⁶ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 241.

⁹⁷ R. L. DiNardo, and Albert A. Nofi. *James Longstreet: The Man, the Soldier, the Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 195.

⁹⁸ Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), 240.

⁹⁹ Alexander Mendoza, *Confederate Struggle for Command: General James Longstreet and the First Corps in the West* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 170, 205.

In a lengthy passage that bears repeating nearly in its entirety, historians Donald Bridgman Sanger and Thomas Robson Hay argued that “these events had wrought vast psychological changes in Longstreet...When the leader of the First Corps had gone west to assist Bragg the previous September, he had left Lee’s side with a distinct feeling that he could do great things.” After Chickamauga, however, Sanger and Hay observed:

“there was a gradual decline in Longstreet’s morale until he became a shambling, indecisive, and at times utterly lethargic man. He was stale. He could not make things work; and he was seemingly unable to rise above the petty difficulties that under other circumstances might have proved annoying but that certainly were not fatal. When one compares the Longstreet of Second Manassas, of Sharpsburg, and of Chickamauga with the ghost of Longstreet at Knoxville and in the early phases of the East Tennessee campaign, it is difficult to believe that one is looking at the same man. He who had been so outstanding in leadership and in tactical decision became weak and wavering, relying too much on the opinions of others in fields where his own expertness of judgment had been ably demonstrated. All in all, he failed to measure up to the standard required for the role of an independent commander. There was a fatal lack of harmony in this command, and it appeared at times as if he could not handle his own troops and preserve the quality of discipline which he had formerly instilled into the First Corps. Most serious of all, Longstreet for the first time lost confidence in himself.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 249-250.

Longstreet and his men spent much of April relocating to Virginia. Before his men completed their transportation to the Army of Northern Virginia, Longstreet appeared to be having an unknown family emergency that required a request for leave that Lee granted.¹⁰¹ Longstreet received an April 1864 message from Walter Taylor, Lee's most trusted aide. "He is anxious to see you, and it will give him much pleasure to meet you and your corps once more. He hopes soon to be able to do this."¹⁰² Lee kept this promise and reviewed the returned First Corps on April 29, approximately eight months since they had been sent to the Western Theater.¹⁰³ The reunion of the First Corps would be one of relief for both sides as Lee welcomed the additional men and the soldiers enjoyed being away from the miserable campaign in East Tennessee. As he contemplated being back where he had been nearly a year before, Longstreet planned to be confirmed in the Episcopal Church by Bishop John Johns of Richmond on May 1 for reasons known only to himself.¹⁰⁴ It is possible that Longstreet felt sorrow and regret for his actions as his visit to the church coincided with his disintegrating reputation within the Confederate government with only Lee's protection to shield him, but he did not write of this decision to be confirmed in the church.

Instead, Longstreet claimed he took charge in resuming his role under Lee to suggest the aims of the Army of Northern Virginia should be focused on attrition and that the "enemy put his faith in numbers more than superior skill and generalship."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 259.

¹⁰² Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019), 175.

¹⁰³ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 469.

¹⁰⁴ William Garret Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 87.

¹⁰⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 473.

The Battle of the Wilderness, a land of dense brush about fifteen miles square between Orange Court-House and Fredericksburg, became the first major clash between Lee and Ulysses S. Grant. The latter hoped to avoid the stout defenses Lee had prepared near Mine Run and move around the Army of Northern Virginia for an open battle. Alexander admitted the Rebels knew they would be outnumbered and facing incredible odds. “We wanted to see Grant introduced to Gen. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, and to let him have a smell of our powder. For we knew that we simply could never be driven off a battle field, and that whatever force Grant brought, his luck would have to accommodate itself to that fact.”¹⁰⁶

The coming struggle would be especially intense and confusing in this first clash since the arrival of Longstreet’s Corps allowed Lee to extend his line before Grant and consider launching offensive operations.¹⁰⁷ It was Longstreet’s moment to shine in the place he knew best: serving under a commander he trusted and without being hindered by the tremendous responsibility of commanding an army. His happiness at returning to the Army of Northern Virginia and away from independent command raised his spirits, propelling him to launch a “tactically brilliant counterstroke” at just the right moment.¹⁰⁸ The dense brush that at times only allowed visibility of a few yards made standard battle lines difficult, so Longstreet improvised and led his men in “heavy skirmish lines.”¹⁰⁹ In a crucial moment, Longstreet assigned his chief of staff, Moxley Sorrel, to command an attack. “There is a fine chance of a great attack by our right,” Longstreet told the excited and nervous young man who had served under him since the

¹⁰⁶ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 345.

¹⁰⁷ Gary W. Gallagher, “The Wilderness Campaign,” *North Carolina Scholarship Online* (September 2014): 2.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen W. Sears, “General Longstreet and the Lost Cause,” *American Heritage* (Feb, 2005): 49.

¹⁰⁹ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 481.

beginning of the war, “If you will quickly get into those woods, some brigades will be found much scattered from the fight. Collect them and take charge. Form a good line and then move, your right pushed forward and turning as much as possible to the left. Hit hard when you start, but don’t start until you have everything ready. I shall be waiting for your gun fire, and be on hand with fresh troops for further advance.” The orders containing such faith from a superior officer thrilled Sorrell who remembered “No greater opportunity could be given to an aspiring young staff officer, and I was quickly at work.”¹¹⁰

With his blood pumping at the opportunity to catch the Union forces ill-prepared for a strong flanking attack and the opportunity to prove his worth after the disappointment of the previous nine months, Longstreet confidently rode with his staff near the lines of battle. He ignored the warnings from his staff as they galloped past freshly wounded men. Riding through dangerous situations “is our business,” Longstreet scoffed. Longstreet’s efforts turned “what promised to be a Union victory into what almost became a Union disaster.”¹¹¹ Once again, Longstreet’s ability to handle troops on an active battlefield was on display. “His performance was brilliant,” one historian concluded, “a confirmation of his consummate ability as a tactician.”¹¹² At a climactic moment in the battle, Lee nearly led a brigade into battle when the troops cried out for him to return to the rear. It was at this moment Longstreet arrived and the two men rode together, Longstreet now where he preferred to be, which was next to the commander he now knew made him the better. The ensuing attack briefly shattered the Union forces, and the Rebels—and Longstreet—had the chance for vindication in which they had been

¹¹⁰ Sorrel, 102.

¹¹¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 271.

¹¹² Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 385-389.

searching.¹¹³ Sorrell said the battle offered Longstreet a great opportunity: “never did his great qualities as a tenacious, fighting soldier shine forth in a better light. He instantly took charge of the battle.”¹¹⁴

As the Confederates pressed the attack, the Union troops fell back as the woods caught fire. In these moments, just as the Rebels prepared to launch a renewed attack, Longstreet’s favorite subordinate, Micah Jenkins, approached. In his memoirs, Longstreet claimed Jenkins allegedly said, “I am happy; I have felt despair of the cause for some months, but am relieved, and feel assured that we will put the enemy back across the Rapidan before night.”¹¹⁵ It would be the man’s final statement as a round struck him in the head, the ball lodging into his brain while he deliriously called for his men to press forward before dying a few hours later.¹¹⁶

A group of concealed Confederates, struggling in the chaos of dense woods ablaze, had unwittingly fired on their comrades and struck Jenkins. The same volley sent a minie ball into Longstreet’s throat and right shoulder. “The blow lifted me from the saddle,” Longstreet remembered, “and my right arm dropped to my side, but I settled back to my seat, and started to ride on, when in a minute the flow of blood admonished me that my work for the day was done.” Longstreet’s staff lifted him to the ground and, as he stated, his work for Battle of the Wilderness was finished.¹¹⁷ A witness said the loss of blood had “paled out [Longstreet’s] face and its somewhat gross aspect was gone. I noticed how white and dome-like his great forehead

¹¹³ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 272-273.

¹¹⁴ Moxley Sorrell, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 201.

¹¹⁵ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 483.

¹¹⁶ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 155.

¹¹⁷ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1895, 2004), 483-484.

looked.”¹¹⁸ One Rebel artilleryman claimed he had never in the war seen the officers and men more upset than when Longstreet fell. “They were literally bowed down with grief. All of them were in tears...It was not alone the general they admired, who had been shot down—it was, rather, the man they loved.”¹¹⁹ Another officer claimed Longstreet’s wound “seemed actually to paralyze our whole corps.”¹²⁰ News spread of the incident with some rumors escalating the situation to claim Longstreet had died from his wounds. Comparing the incident to the friendly fire incident that claimed Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson the year before at nearly the same place, one newspaper correspondent exclaimed, “Heaven grant that Lee may not lose his left arm now, as he lost his right arm then!”¹²¹ Longstreet’s Corps had prevented a Union victory that day, but the reversal could not be capitalized upon.¹²² Still, Sorrel claimed “Longstreet had redeemed his promise to his commander.”¹²³

The incident brought a wartime end to the internal struggle in First Corps. With Jenkins and Longstreet falling to friendly fire, Evander Law spent the Wilderness campaign under arrest. Claiming Longstreet had “seriously offended against good order and military discipline” in his actions against Law, Davis stepped in to restore Law to command after Longstreet was no longer with the First Corps, but Law soon fell wounded on June 3 and eventually ended his career in a gray uniform as a cavalry officer.¹²⁴ The epic struggle for command in the First Corps had ended,

¹¹⁸ Gary W. Gallagher, “The Wilderness Campaign,” *North Carolina Scholarship Online* (September 2014): 11.

¹¹⁹ William Garrett Piston, *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 89.

¹²⁰ Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 362.

¹²¹ Chris Mackowski, and Kristopher D. White. “Unfriendly fire: a Confederate bullet strikes James Longstreet and derails a Wilderness victory.” *America’s Civil War* (May 2009): 139.

¹²² Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 275.

¹²³ Moxley Sorrel, *Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 202.

¹²⁴ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 376; *OR*, 31, pt. 1, 455-477.

but as Longstreet survived his wound, the conflict over the general's character would continue long after the war. The internal division in the First Corps that had been simmering since the second day at Gettysburg and expanded to accusations and trials had seen Confederate commanders Jerome Robertson, McLaws, and Law removed from command and away from significant campaigns for the rest of the war. The potential counterattack from Law, McLaws, and Bragg faded in the blast of friendly fire that struck down Jenkins and Longstreet. Many believed Longstreet was not going to survive as he was carried from the field. It took months of recovery. However, as he had done in the Mexican War, Longstreet slowly recovered despite witnesses noticing his nervous nature resulted in him weeping "at the slightest provocation."¹²⁵ Union cavalry nearly captured Longstreet during his recovery.¹²⁶ Lee worried about his "Old War Horse," sending letters encouraging him while cautioning against pushing his recovery too hard. "You must not however be over impatient at the gradual progress you must necessarily make," Lee counseled Longstreet on August 24, 1864, "but be content with the steady advance you are making to health and strength ... Do not let Sherman capture you and I will endeavor to hold Grant till you come."¹²⁷

Longstreet received plenty of bad news for the Confederacy during his recovery. The Army of Northern Virginia continued falling back toward Richmond, courtesy of Ulysses S. Grant's relentless assault. Jefferson Davis sacked Longstreet's favorite commander, Joseph Johnston, for his continued withdrawal toward Atlanta, and the Confederate President considered Longstreet for filling the opening made by Johnston's replacement, John Bell Hood. Again

¹²⁵ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 277.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹²⁷ Robert E. Lee, "Robert E. Lee to James Longstreet, August 29, 1864," *James Longstreet Papers – 1838 and 1863-1899*, 1937-0101M, Georgia Archives.

showing his temperament had changed, Longstreet responded that he would do his duty and obey orders once he had fully recovered.¹²⁸ By the time Longstreet rejoined his command, the war in Virginia had settled into a siege at Petersburg. The Confederate government had less than a year to live, so there would be no other internal wartime campaigns against Longstreet. Despite his wounds, Longstreet returned to command the First Corps and became invaluable to Lee in these final months of the war. According to Goree, Lee missed the advice of Longstreet. “I feel very anxious that Genl. Longstreet should get back to the army. I hear from every one that his services are very much needed there. Genl. Lee needs him not only to advise with, but Genl. Longstreet has a very suggestive mind and none of the other Lt. Genls. have this.”¹²⁹ Longstreet tried to return to service quickly and had moved to Lynchburg by the Fall of 1864. However, he still had not recovered the use of his right arm. Still, Longstreet wanted to return to service and Lee allegedly appeared thrilled to have him back. Goree said Longstreet riding among the men resulted in wild cries for the “old bull of the woods” and stated “it is gratifying to Genl. L. to know that though he is no favorite with the President and Bragg, yet he has what is much better, the unbounded confidence of Genl. Lee and the officers and troops of his command.”¹³⁰ Longstreet returned for duty on October 19 to a worn down and weary Army of Northern Virginia guarding the paths the Union could take when assaulting Richmond. Many of his veterans have been depleted by the war of attrition that took place the entire summer of 1864, replaced by raw recruits. The war itself had changed in “incessant” fighting rather than grand battles.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 280.

¹²⁹ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 126.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹³¹ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 282.

Longstreet worked hard to help Lee in supplying the army, preparing the complex network of defenses, and moving troops when the Union threatened an offensive. As one Longstreet biographer stated, he acted “as a trusted lieutenant with full confidence in himself and in the decisions of his superior.”¹³² The Army of Northern Virginia suffered more desertions as news of defeats from around the Confederacy reached the trenches at Petersburg. Lee sent a “sharply critical letter” to Longstreet demanding better discipline and drill to keep the dwindling army together.¹³³ But Longstreet remained positive despite the growing darkness threatening to soon envelope the rebel nation. Longstreet never openly resorted to criticizing or attacking Lee, never succumbed to the sullen nature that often overtook his better judgment previously in the war. He continued to offer basic advice and information to Lee with little commentary, often suggesting the Army of Northern Virginia should remain on the defensive while also remaining relatively positive. “We shall fight him, of course, as long as we have a man,” he wrote in February 1865, “but we should fight with much better heart if we could have better hope of results.”¹³⁴

After the war, Longstreet suggested he felt sorry for Lee having to shoulder the burden of army command and, later in the war, command of the entire Confederate military. Specifically, Longstreet claimed he was sorry Lee spent time regretting he had not taken a different path—primarily Longstreet’s path of a flanking march instead of Pickett’s Charge—at Gettysburg. “I shall always regret that I did not see Genl. Lee before he died,” Longstreet said, “that I might endeavor to relieve his mind of this awful burden of his responsibility.”¹³⁵ In the final days of the

¹³² Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 285.

¹³³ Jeffrey D. Wert, *General James Longstreet: The Confederacy’s Most Controversial Soldier-A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1993), 396.

¹³⁴ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,203.

¹³⁵ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 160.

war, Longstreet remembered seeing Lee nearly collapsing in the dark because of Grant's forces threatening to overtake him. "Lee standing near, leaning against a small tree, passed off into slumber, and seemed so rigid I had to look a second time, to see if he had not passed into his last sleep. He was so troubled all of the march, that he had little rest, I may say no rest; though nature demanded a little quiet."¹³⁶ While these postwar words could be seen as self-serving and part of Longstreet's efforts at defending his name, the comment also suggests Longstreet knew of the tremendous responsibility of independent command. Perhaps he felt relief in knowing he did not have to shoulder this load again.

Longstreet continued his loyal service and offered Lee advice in a respectful way in January of 1865, stating he wanted to offer a "more simple, effective, and satisfactory way to executing" Lee's plan, indicating his change as a commander. Moreover, the content of the letter showed he had learned much from his time in East Tennessee. He offered simple advice on breaking up regiments and organizing new ones for 1865. "When you break up a regiment you destroy its prestige and its esprit de corps," Longstreet wrote, "which are the two most important elements in military organizations."¹³⁷ He continued to offer Lee suggestions and advice without badgering his commanding officer. In February, he suggested defensive tactics would be best because an attack would cost so many men they would not be able to hold the gains. However, he did not seem aggressive or overly confident as he had in the past. Instead, he simply stated, "When the time comes, I think that we shall make as good a fight as the same number of men ever did, but I do not think that it would be prudent to risk a battle outside of our lines."¹³⁸ When Lee was promoted in the final year of the war to command all of the southern forces, Longstreet

¹³⁶ Wert, 401.

¹³⁷ *OR*, 30, 1,032-1033.

¹³⁸ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,188-1,189.

respectfully hoped it was not “improper” to ask that his former and favorite commander, Joseph Johnston, be placed in command of the Army of Tennessee. “If I were not satisfied in my own mind that this was essential to the preservation of that army,” Longstreet wrote Lee in February, “I should not volunteer an opinion upon a matter beyond my proper sphere.”¹³⁹ Sanger and Hay wrote, “Longstreet was at Lee’s side with an ever-present helpfulness, an unfailing cheerfulness, and an abundant loyalty...Never was Longstreet better as a tactician, never was he of more help to Lee.”¹⁴⁰

By February 1865, Longstreet informed Lee the dire situation indicated Grant’s forces were concentrated for a push on Richmond, requiring a concentration of Confederate forces or abandonment of the capital. As he had in East Tennessee, Longstreet concentrated on supplying the men under his command and worried citizens would no longer accept Confederate money for compensation. “The only thing, then,” he implored Lee, “that will insure our rations and our national existence is gold.” He then added a surprisingly positive note, “It seems to my mind that our prospect will be brighter than they have ever been if we can only get food for our men, and I think the plan that I have proposed will secure the food.” Finally, Longstreet once again suggested his happiness to once again be serving under Lee after his time in the West. “We will feel more comfortable ourselves to know that all are under one head and one eye that is able to handle them.”¹⁴¹ Lee responded in agreement regarding the gold, but also ordered Longstreet to prepare for Grant’s expected strike as soon as the weather improved.¹⁴² On February 23, Longstreet once again stressed the importance of gold and acknowledged Lee’s orders to shift

¹³⁹ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,192.

¹⁴⁰ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 286.

¹⁴¹ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,234.

¹⁴² *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,251.

troops. Then, he cut his letter short as if he feared being too blunt to his commander. “My ideas are given rather hastily upon so grave a matter,” he said, “as I only received your letter this afternoon.”¹⁴³

Longstreet’s follow up letter came February 25 when he indicated he would comply with Lee’s orders to prepare for William Tecumseh Sherman to march north to unite with Grant but admitted the risk while acknowledging “nothing can be accomplished in war without risk.” However, Longstreet also discussed gold again because he feared continuing to impress food and supplies from the civilians. “We have expended too much blood and treasure in holding [gold] for the last four years to allow it to go now by default. I think that it may be saved.” Also, Longstreet once again returned to his desire to remain on the defensive rather than attacking when he stated, “the enemy’s positions are so well selected and fortified that we must either wait for an opportunity to draw him off from here or await his attack, for even a successful assault would probably cripple us so much that we could get no advantage commensurate with our loss.”¹⁴⁴ The gold discussion returned on March 7 when Longstreet appeared to desire gold to purchase “two and three years’ supply” from North Carolina. “The gold is in the country,” Longstreet said, “and most of it is lying idle. Let us take it at once, and use it to save Richmond and end the war. If we hold Richmond and save our cotton, the war cannot last more than a year longer. If we give up Richmond, we shall never be recognized by foreign powers until the Government of the United States sees fit to recognize us.”¹⁴⁵

All these comments made in the final months of the war—and Longstreet’s military career—are important in showing Longstreet’s respect for Lee and his position as the army

¹⁴³ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,253.

¹⁴⁴ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,258.

¹⁴⁵ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,289.

commander and also reveal he had learned from the dissension that had occurred in the First Corps in 1863 to 1864. Despite remaining positive, however, the reality of the Confederacy's situation became clear by Spring 1865. They were losing, and they should discuss the possibility of peace. Longstreet informed Lee on March 1 that he leaned toward ending the war on terms that would be "equally honorable to both parties." For such an important discussion, Longstreet deferred to Lee.¹⁴⁶ Lee continued to rely on Longstreet more in the war's final days. As Richmond fell and the defenses abandoned, Longstreet led the men with a "remarkable degree of discipline and order."¹⁴⁷ The discussion of surrender came up often as the Union forces nearly surrounded Lee around Appomattox. Several officers urged Longstreet to advise Lee to surrender, to which he stated, "If General Lee doesn't know when to surrender until I tell him, he will never know."¹⁴⁸ Despite realizing the danger of their situation, Longstreet refused to sow any dissent against Lee or suggest he wanted to pursue a different course than his commanding officer. When comparing this attitude to the Longstreet after Chickamauga or during the Gettysburg campaign, it is evident the man had changed. "For some time I had felt that we were fighting against hope," Longstreet recalled years later. "I kept my lips closed and fought ahead in silence. For the week preceding the surrender I fought almost without ceasing...The Federals pressed upon us relentlessly, and we fell back, fighting night and day, inch by inch, covering the slow retreat of our wagon trains."¹⁴⁹ Again showing the extent of how Longstreet had changed since July 2, 1863, at Gettysburg, the commander told Lee he would carry out an attack on the

¹⁴⁶ *OR*, 46, pt. 2, 1,275.

¹⁴⁷ William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 91.

¹⁴⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 302.

¹⁴⁹ Henry W. Grady, "General Longstreet: His Reminiscences of the War Between the States." Originally printed on August 2, 1879 in the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, edited by Peter Cozzens and reprinted in *Civil War Times* (April 2010): 32-39.

Union forces surrounding them if ordered. “You have only to give me the order, and the attack will be made in the morning.”¹⁵⁰ Compare this comment with the man who resisted Lee’s attack order around Gettysburg in 1863 and the change within Longstreet’s state-of-mind is apparent.

When it came time to surrender in April and a Union flag of truce party approached Longstreet to discuss terms, he correctly stated Lee was in command of the army and only he had the authority to surrender it. Gone were any pretensions of commanding the army or acting above Lee.¹⁵¹ He counseled Lee that “If you are satisfied that you cannot save the army, it should be surrendered. The people will know that we have done all that men can do.”¹⁵² Even in these final moments of his military career, it became obvious Longstreet had learned his true calling was being a solid and dependable corps commander. Longstreet could not excel as an army commander because his ability on the battlefield depended on the ability of his army commander and the relationship with that person. Sanger and Hay contend Longstreet “worked best in harness; and for reasons of temperament he rose to great heights under Lee, and, conversely, sank to almost unfathomable depths under the influence of Bragg.”¹⁵³ Historian Steven Woodworth made similar remarks in terms of Longstreet’s abilities highlighted by the East Tennessee campaign. “Though his abilities were considerable within their limits, they did not extend beyond carrying out the instructions of a wise commander. When Longstreet lacked an immediate, direct battlefield commander, or when he refused to obey the orders of the one he

¹⁵⁰ William Garrett Piston, *Lee’s Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 92.

¹⁵¹ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 166.

¹⁵² Henry W. Grady, “General Longstreet: His Reminiscences of the War Between the States.” Originally printed on August 2, 1879 in the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, edited by Peter Cozzens and reprinted in *Civil War Times* (April 2010): 32-39.

¹⁵³ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet : I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 250.

had, the results were uniformly dismal for the Confederacy.”¹⁵⁴ Lee famously met with Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, ending the war for the Army of Northern Virginia in April 1865. Concerned for his “Old War Horse,” Lee told Longstreet’s staff after signing the surrender, “I want you to take good care of him.”¹⁵⁵

Longstreet was appointed as one of the commissioners to arrange terms of the surrender when he came face-to-face with an old friend. Grant approached him as if nothing had happened—no Civil War with four years of suffering and death—since they had last met in St. Louis over a card game. Grant allegedly pulled Longstreet aside and, with the tenderness of a friend who had long been separated, said, “let us have another game of brag to recall the old days which were so pleasant to us all.” The gesture took Longstreet aback, and he remembered thinking, “Why do men fight who were born to be brothers?”¹⁵⁶ The United States District Court in Richmond had nearly charged Lee and Longstreet with treason before Grant intervened, declaring, “I have pledged my word for their safety.”¹⁵⁷

Longstreet ended the war with a relatively solid reputation that would be challenged in the war of words that occurred with the Lost Cause enthusiasts and the era of Reconstruction that attempted to redefine many aspects of life in the United States. While East Tennessee served as the bitter disappointment for Longstreet during the war, Gettysburg became the event he repeatedly had to defend for the rest of his life. It was this postwar struggle at defending his honor that left the lingering resentment in the man, and the realization of his wartime failure as an independent commander slowly faded with the passage of time. Instead, Longstreet focused

¹⁵⁴ Steven Woodworth, *Six Armies in Tennessee: The Chickamauga and Chattanooga Campaigns* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 215.

¹⁵⁵ Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019), 175.

¹⁵⁶ P.J. Moran, in the *Atlanta Constitution*, “Grant and Longstreet: The Ex-Confederate General Talks of Their Lifelong Intimacy,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1890: 10.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

on defending his actions at Gettysburg and even naively stated in 1875 that he wanted to write a response to “put the matter to rest” despite the fact he had to “fight the battle over again.”¹⁵⁸ As Cory Pfarr stated, “Gettysburg became a reoccurring battle, fought again and again with each new deliberate falsification and dubious claim made by Lost Cause partisans. He would not let such an obvious smear campaign go unanswered.”¹⁵⁹ However, there is evidence Longstreet privately brooded over his failure in East Tennessee.

Sorrel commented on Longstreet’s memoirs as focusing a great deal on Tennessee—more than “any part of the four years’ war.”¹⁶⁰ Longstreet grew concerned about writing the account of the East Tennessee Campaign for his memoirs. He pleaded with Goree in 1892 to “give an accurate account of affairs.” “If anything occurs to you of interest in the Tennessee campaign,” he stated, “please note it for me in case I may have omitted it.”¹⁶¹ The failure to achieve victory in East Tennessee devastated Longstreet and decreased his confidence, “bringing with it the bitter realization that he was not adequate to the task of independent command. [Longstreet] knew that he needed a leader. No more devastating a conviction can come upon a soldier than that of having failed.”¹⁶²

A Longstreet biographer, Jeffry Wert, claimed the commander was “the best subordinate,” an assessment the man himself would have probably quietly agreed with in 1864 rather than believing to be the best officer.¹⁶³ Wert continues his assessment by stating

¹⁵⁸ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 157.

¹⁵⁹ Cory M. Pfarr, *Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2019), 180.

¹⁶⁰ Sorrel, 182.

¹⁶¹ Thomas J. Goree, *Longstreet’s Aide: The Civil War Letters of Major Thomas J. Goree*, ed. Thomas W. Cutrer (Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), 174.

¹⁶² Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 252.

¹⁶³ Jeffry D. Wert, "The Best Subordinate." *Civil War Times* 8 (2006): 22-29.

Longstreet was a “skillful tactician” whose “personal courage was never questioned” although he lacked “Stonewall Jackson’s prowess in independent command, but in other key respects he was Jackson’s superior.”¹⁶⁴ These realizations had become apparent to Longstreet by January 1864 when he appeared to return to form as he realized his best role was as a Corps Commander when he wrote Lee. Defeat and disappointment can be difficult to overcome. One Civil War veteran recalled the depression after a defeat, writing “Yesterday was one of unmingled rage, hate and shame. These gradually gave way to the blues.”¹⁶⁵ Simon Wessely observed in soldiers of the twentieth century that “Men only had a limited ‘bank of courage,’ which would inevitably be expended...Eventually, every man had his breaking point.”¹⁶⁶ If East Tennessee was Longstreet’s “breaking point” in terms of a disappointing military career, then Wessely’s next observation that a soldier was “more often not so subtly encouraged to resume his military role, return to his unit, and prove himself a man.”¹⁶⁷ With this observation in mind, Longstreet’s return to the battlefield at Bean’s Station and subsequent efforts in East Tennessee could have been his effort at proving himself again. As Sanger and Hay noted, “he was not able to regain his accustomed poise and full vigor until after he rejoined Lee’s command early in April. The period has been a dark one for him, and it left its mark on him for the duration of the war. It was a stronger and better Longstreet who had passed through the fire and come from it with much of the dross in his system consumed.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Jeffry D. Wert, “The Best Subordinate.” *Civil War Times* 8 (2006): 29.

¹⁶⁵ Eric T. Dean, Jr., “A Scene of Surprising Terror and Awful Gracour”: Paradoxes of Military Service in the American Civil War (Fall 1995, Vol. 21): 50.

¹⁶⁶ Simon Wessely, “20th Century Theories on Combat Motivation and Breakdown,” *Journal of Contemporary History* (April 2006, Vol. 41, No. 2): 271.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁶⁸ Donald Bridgman Sanger, and Thomas Robson Hay. *James Longstreet: I. Soldier, II. Politician, Officeholder, and Writer* (Baton Rouge, LA : Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 255.

Despite the postwar controversy swirling around Longstreet because of his choice to side with the Republicans and call for reconciliation with the North in the postwar years, a move many Southerners viewed as siding with the enemy, most veterans still respected their former commander.¹⁶⁹ He became a popular inclusion at larger events such as fairs, barbeques and picnics. After a reunion in Georgia in 1886, a group of veterans traveled to see Longstreet in his Gainesville home. A reporter observed the veterans “hung upon every word the old general uttered, and in their eyes...[and in] the expression of their faces could be seen the deep respect and true love they bear for their old commander.”¹⁷⁰ After his passing in 1904, many obituaries spoke highly of his abilities as a corps commander and the love Longstreet’s men shared for their commander. When referring to his postwar controversies, *The New York Journal* wrote, “Briefly, his shipmates marooned him ... After a while, southern capitals will be adorned with statues of Longstreet and upon his grave posterity will see his foeman’s children loose the rose.”¹⁷¹

Nearly fifteen years after the war, when Henry Grady sat down for a lengthy interview with the aging Longstreet consisting of broad and open-ended questions, the conversation regularly returned to the missed opportunity and failure in East Tennessee. Many answers drifted back to the Battle of Chickamauga, one of Longstreet’s greatest moments in the war. When asked if he was proud of his victory at Chickamauga, a dark cloud fell over his response. “I felt just as if I was being congratulated over whipping my own brother.” He believed Braxton

¹⁶⁹ An anonymous writer, Son of the South, writing from Brooklyn, sent a letter to Helen Longstreet after her husband had passed away, threatening her to stop defending her late husband. “All the self-justification and sympathetic propaganda cannot turn back the facts...Please rest your mind, be at peace, and go on admiring your husband—but don’t try to bamboozle the Southern People who are shocked at present conditions caused by the results of their loss during the Civil War.” Helen wrote in red ink at the top of the letter: “This makes me fight harder.” The letter is located at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah, Georgia in the *Helen D. Longstreet* collection, 1341-Box 13, Folder 196.

¹⁷⁰ Keith S. Bohannon, “‘These Few Gray-Haired, Battle-Scared Veterans’ : Confederate Army Reunions in Georgia, 1885-95.” In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan. Indiana University Press, 2000: 92.

¹⁷¹ Editor, Longstreet Obituary, *New York Journal*, January 1904.

Bragg's failure to press forward after Chickamauga cost the Confederacy the war since "only a miracle could save us, and you know a soldier does not rely to any great extent on miracles." In another answer to an open-ended question, Longstreet once again returned to his time in the West in a self-serving answer also laced with regret. "Once after [Gettysburg] there was a chance (a bare chance) of saving the Confederacy," he remembered. "This was after the Battle of Chickamauga, which was in many respects the most brilliant victory of the war. The enemy was more thoroughly put to rout here than before or since."

Longstreet also expanded upon Grady's questions with answers beyond what was asked. For example, Grady inquired if Longstreet was thrilled by the initial victory at Bull Run. Of course, Longstreet confirmed his happiness at the victory when he said he knew "our people would make good fighters." However, he continued to say "the Southern armies were never properly organized or disciplined. The Northern armies were moved like machines and handled like machines. A spring was touched, the whole mass moved regularly and promptly."¹⁷² When considering the difficulties he faced in East Tennessee, when Longstreet confronted the challenges of independent command and often felt abandoned by the government, these comments become even more important when considering Longstreet's disappointment with the lack of victory in East Tennessee.

Despite the seemingly endless postwar concentration on Longstreet's role in the Gettysburg campaign and his unsuccessful attempts at defending his name, the most vital personal realization came from his failure in East Tennessee. The tides of war had granted him a unique opportunity to become a departmental commander trusted with an entire sector of

¹⁷² Henry W. Grady, "General Longstreet: His Reminiscences of the War Between the States." Originally printed on August 2, 1879 in the *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, edited by Peter Cozzens and reprinted in *Civil War Times* (April 2010): 32-39.

command, granting him the authority to operate independently for the first time of the war.

Following his disastrous decision to attack Fort Sanders in November 1863, Longstreet seemed incapable of deciding upon a successful course of action throughout the following winter. The eyes of the nation watched as he floundered, unable to make a significant impact. He lashed out at his subordinates, practically begged the government to allow him to conduct a desperate move into Kentucky, and continued contemplating a resumed attack or siege on Knoxville. None of these efforts came to fruition, and Longstreet realized he had failed as an independent commander. Returning to Lee, the commanding officer who had allowed Longstreet the opportunity to reach great heights and fame as a Corps Commander, was an assignment bringing great relief. While Longstreet had a number of qualities that made him a fine military officer, he realized his best destiny was serving under a commander who could grasp the grand strategies while he concentrated on what he did best, which was commanding troops in the face of the enemy. East Tennessee had taught him his limitations as an officer and drained his confidence in the process.

When he returned to the Army of Northern Virginia in Spring 1864, Longstreet's lost confidence started to return because he no longer had the burden of army command. He had returned to the place where he excelled, and that was under Lee's command. He did not have much time to regain his confidence before the wounding in the Wilderness Campaign, spending only a few hours in combat and taking him away from Grant's war of attrition until the fall of 1864 when the conflict had morphed into somewhat of a bloodletting stalemate the Confederacy was losing. While coming to grips with the realization one's dreams are not within one's grasp can be disappointing and result in a lingering cloud of frustration, it is a reality all individuals must face. For Longstreet, this proverbial moment of truth came not in Gettysburg when he

could place blame for defeat on Lee, but in East Tennessee when he was very much on his own. Although he often blamed many other individuals and factors for his failure in East Tennessee, evidence through personal correspondence and remembrances reveal a significant personal disappointment that remained until the end of his days.

Longstreet longed to retain his citizenship with his former country, but never expected it to happen. In 1866, he visited Washington on business and decided to stop by to see his old friend, Sam Grant. The meeting led to a dinner with Grant's family when talk turned to the possibility of amnesty. Taken aback, Longstreet admitted he yearned for a pardon but entertained no possibility of it happening. Grant implored him to fill out the application and, according to Longstreet, the paperwork was granted as a personal favor to Grant.¹⁷³ Upon his inauguration, Grant allegedly approached Longstreet and said, "I want you to come and see me after I am inaugurated and let me know what you want." Because of Grant's persistence and power as the new President of the United States, Longstreet had been suggested for the role of Surveyor of the Port of New Orleans.¹⁷⁴

After the war, Longstreet met with Davis before a large crowd in Atlanta during the unveiling of a Benjamin Harvey Hill monument on May 1, 1886. Helen Dortch, Longstreet's future widow, along with another writer, retold the story in a manuscript in the 1930s as if the event meant a great deal to the former general. Only a college student when she attended the ceremony with a classmate, Helen watched as Longstreet approached in his Confederate uniform only to be carried to the stage on his former soldiers' shoulders. "Davis rose quickly," the manuscript revealed, "stepped forward and threw his arms around Longstreet ... Davis did not step out from

¹⁷³ P.J. Moran, in the *Atlanta Constitution*, "Grant and Longstreet: The Ex-Confederate General Talks of Their Lifelong Intimacy," *New York Times*, January 12, 1890: 10.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

the mighty throng in Atlanta to clasp to his bosom a Commander who failed the Southern Cause at Gettysburg or anywhere else.”¹⁷⁵ Longstreet later supposedly told his wife, “All the differences he had with the Confederacy’s President during the war period, were forgotten and forgiven, when Davis threw his arms about him before the vast outpouring in Atlanta.”¹⁷⁶ For Longstreet to mention this later in life to his much younger wife he married in 1897 suggests he brooded on his actions following Fort Sanders until his dying day.

¹⁷⁵ Sears Wilson Cabell and Helen Dortch Longstreet, “The Bulldog,” *Helen Dortch Longstreet Papers*, MSS 136, Manuscripts, Box 3-Folder 2, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center, 43.

¹⁷⁶ Helen Dortch Longstreet, “Wooded to the Warrior’s Tent” in *Helen Dortch Longstreet Papers*, MSS 136, Manuscripts, Box 3-Folder 6, James G. Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center, 3.

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