

RATING CIVIL WAR GENERALS: WHAT'S WRONG WITH HAVING MORE MEN?

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People enjoy making comparisons and compiling lists: aficionados, be they of hamburgers, athletes, or World War II bombers, are often fond of rating their favorites. This is a natural extension of enjoying an activity, especially one involving competition. Historians, however, must be careful to understand the limitations of such lists, notably those of their construction, ultimate meaning, and utility.

Not surprisingly, the Civil War in particular is a lightning rod for comparisons and rankings, especially concerning its generals. On a casual level, one can read through *The Civil War Book of Lists* to learn who were the best and worst commanders on both sides, and if the reader is interested, the ugliest. In another publication, a word chosen to describe a general can obfuscate any reasonable assessment of his qualities. One might even view a cable show on Generals Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee and hear an author call another general "stupid."

All too often, these comparisons and ratings are not based totally on fact, but on myth and ignorance of what went into the making of generals who fought in the 1860s. This paper analyzes Civil War leadership, starting with the education of military officers and ending with modern management concepts. It uses contemporary knowledge, hindsight, and comparisons to non-Civil War fields.

In particular, this paper treats Civil War leadership as a single entity with minor differences between the two opposing combatants rather than as distinct styles, i.e., Northern leadership and Southern leadership. Furthermore, it concentrates on the subset

of generals who graduated from The United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point (WP), referred to hereafter as simply "graduates." This streamlined, unbiased approach has the benefit of treating both sides equally as well as being closest to reality.

This paper compares Civil War actions and persons to those in other wars. This technique is uncommon in Civil War historiography. Notable exceptions are Fletcher Pratt and John Keegan. But it can often help cast new light on Civil War topics and serve to explain them better than in solitude. Although many aficionados think that our civil war was fought in a historical vacuum and is unique among world conflicts with *absolutely* no comparison, the similarities are there if one is both willing to look and accept what they reveal.

Indeed, at the start of the war, the two sides turned to their graduates first to lead their armies. Whereas it is true that the conflict produced outstanding civilian generals—such as Confederates Nathan Bedford Forrest and John B. Gordon and Federals Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and Benjamin Grierson—the uniformity of backgrounds and experiences among the graduates allows a group analysis and therefore offers more consistent comparisons. This paper investigates these and offers overlooked for rating generals. It does not, however, provide ratings of generals: that is too incendiary for its own good and better left to those who think it important.

Limiting this study to army officers is not meant to insult their naval brethren. The United States Navy indeed participated in many important actions, but the Civil War was largely a land conflict. Because almost all of the controversy about the war involves land battles and their commanders, they will be the military emphasis of this paper.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

At the start of the war, the United States Army had 1,080 regular officers of which 821 were WP graduates. (1) The entire army numbered about 15,000 men most of who were garrisoned at forts or protected western settlements from Indian attacks. With the onset of war and the buildup of the two armies, more graduates returned to active status, mostly through state commissions. Antebellum WP graduating classes were not large and seldom numbered over 60. Accounting for the number of graduates dead, ill, or too old in 1861, it is easy to see that graduates both on active duty and from civilian life were considered valuable commodities in a population of 33 million trying to organize for war.

West Point graduates had formal military training and, depending on their service, combat experience. At the bare minimum they were familiar with the drill manual, a necessity in training raw recruits. Even WP dropouts were sought after: many of them became generals, such as Lewis Armistead and John Corse. In addition, because state governors controlled commissions, a returning officer who had left the regular army as a lieutenant or captain in the 1850s could return as a colonel in his state militia. One graduate with war experience, Jefferson Davis, even served as president of the Confederate States of America.

For clarity, this paper tries to explain the disparate military competence of Civil War generals, not cowardice or drunkenness for which there is neither explanation nor excuse. With the exception of blatant acts of abandonment or cowardice, most officers, even those who proved their incompetence to history, were for the most part honest and loyal officers. They served to the best of their ability, although that ability was

sometimes insufficient. They did not awaken on the day of their defeat and say, "Today I will be stupid for the benefit of historians," although this is how historians sometimes portray them.

OVERLOOKED CONSIDERATIONS IN RATING CIVIL WAR GENERALS

Overall, They Were Highly Intelligent.

Other than physicians or clergymen, most antebellum Americans met few college graduates. The educational requirements for these professions were not standardized as they are today. For example, not all states required formal certification for physicians: one could finish medical school in three years without the pre-medical training required today. Law school was not necessary to practice law: one could merely study law books and apprentice with a firm to prepare for the bar exam. President Abraham Lincoln is an excellent example of this path.

Similarly, engineering colleges did not appear in quantity until mid-century. By contrast, West Point, modeled on European national military academies, offered a structured engineering curriculum. Although neither the curriculum nor the duration of attendance was standardized when the academy was established in 1802, both were set later by Colonel Sylvanius Thayer. And by the 1820s, with its four-year curriculum, WP was the pre-eminent engineering school in the country.

To appreciate the intelligence of the graduates, an examination of their studies is instructive. Shown below are the curricula for two representative years 1823 and

1843. (2) Graduates from this 20-year period include many prominent Civil War generals of varying success, such as Grant and Lee, Leonidas Polk, Joseph E. Johnston, George Meade, Braxton Bragg, Joseph Hooker, William Sherman, George Thomas, John Reynolds, and William Rosecrans. The academic year went from September 1 to July 1, with an average daily class time of approximately six to seven hours depending on the year. There were no academic majors, no elective courses, and no degrees; each cadet took the same courses. These are shown in Table 1.

1823-4	FIRST CLASS (SENIOR YEAR)	1843-4
Engineering, Military Art Geography, History, Ethics, National Law Mineralogy, Geology, Chemistry		Engineering and Science of War Ethics Infantry Tactics Artillery Mineralogy, Geology
SECOND CLASS (JUNIOR YEAR)		
Natural and Experimental Philosophy (Physics) Drawing Chemistry		Natural and Experimental Philosophy Drawing (Landscape, Topography) Chemistry
THIRD CLASS (SOPHOMORE YEAR)		
Mathematics French Drawing		Mathematics French Language Drawing (Human Figure, Topography) English Grammar
FOURTH CLASS (FRESHMAN YEAR)		
Mathematics French		Mathematics French Language

TABLE 1. West Point Curricula 1823-4 and 1843-4. Provided by USMA Command Historian's Office.

In addition, the topics covered in these courses, as shown from the titles of their textbooks (not shown), illustrate their advanced nature. For instance, the 1843 mathematics sequence includes algebra, geometry, analytic geometry, spherical projections, surveying, and calculus. Military Studies includes field fortifications, attack and defense, composition of armies, and civil engineering. Ethics includes moral science and logic. Finally, the Natural and Experimental Philosophy, i.e., physics, covers mechanics (with a French text), astronomy, optics, and the topic of electricity and magnetism. Considering that in the 1840s, the science of electricity and magnetism was still a new part of physics—Samuel Morse perfected the telegraph in 1844 and James Clerk Maxwell would not publish his four unifying equations until the 1860s—it is farsighted for the curriculum to include this subject.

In general, the antebellum WP curriculum was both comprehensive and demanding. It is fair to say that this curriculum would daunt the unprepared or lazy student of today. For students of this period and for decades afterward, the average American's education was at an elementary level and did not include topics such as trigonometry, chemistry, or physics. Therefore, many prospective cadets such as Lee attended special academies or saw tutors to prepare for WP studies, although others, notably Thomas Jackson and Grant, did not.

Attending WP in the antebellum years was more than an academic ordeal: it required discipline, as one might expect. First, the cadets had to get there, which was not as straightforward as today. In 1839, at age 17, Grant departed Ohio in mid-May and arrived at WP by the end of the month, about two weeks later. He took a steamer from

Ripley, Ohio, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a canal boat (rather than a coach, to enjoy the scenery) to Harrisburg, then a train to Philadelphia. After spending five days sightseeing in Philadelphia, he left for New York City, where he stayed for a day or two, then to WP. Grant was well traveled prior to this trip, having visited Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia), and Kentucky, but many young folk of that day were not. Yet to enter WP, prospective officers took these long trips involving multiple legs and modes. (3)

Second, the accommodations were spartan compared to those of today. Attending a military academy is never easy, but the period in question involved 19th century tasks not obvious to the modern observer. Barracks chores took considerable time but were also of a different nature from today. For instance, cadets had to take firewood and well water to their rooms and empty chamber pots. Their menus were unplanned, unvaried, and bland. As now, the cadet's day was highly regimented. (2, 4) The 1832 curriculum shows that the day started at sunrise and ended with room inspection at 10 p.m., presumably to verify that cadets were indeed abed. Free time throughout the day totaled about four hours, including meals and preparation for room inspection.

The WP connections were not solely among cadets but also among cadets and instructors. A subtle change in the level of WP instruction between 1841 and 1848 is the increase in the number of instructors of higher rank. In 1841, the faculty included five professors—one of whom is Dennis H. Mahan, class of 1824—one captain, and a number of lieutenants and civilians. By 1848, there are six professors and three captains, indicating a slow upgrade in instructive quality. Curiously, scanning the faculty lists during this period reveals a number of future generals assigned as instructors: Capt.

Charles. F. Smith and Lt. Thomas in 1841, Lt. Horatio Wright in 1843, Lt. Rosecrans in 1844, Lts. William Hardee and Simon Buckner in 1846, and Lts. Henry Hunt and William F. Smith in 1847.

So in an era when medical school was two or three years, when most colleges offered a liberal arts education, and when high school as we know it was almost non-existent, young men were graduating from WP after a rigorous four-year engineering curriculum. Compared to medicine or law at that time, one could argue that a graduate possessed the equivalent of at least a master's degree today. Given that the largest class was no bigger than 60, the WP classes represented the country's elite.

This elite status applies to all graduates. Much is made of class standing, or "order of merit," but this can be deceiving and predicts almost nothing: Lee was second, but so was George McClellan; George Pickett was last, but so was George Custer. It was and certainly remains important in determining assignments for new lieutenants, but this was not solely a measure of academic achievement. Instead, it was computed from academic records and their score on a "conduct ranking," which encompassed everything from appearance to military demeanor to room inspections to shined shoes to promptitude and anything else that instructors or senior cadets deemed important. It is known that Lee graduated second in his class with high grades and without a single demerit, but the last person in a class was not necessarily the one with the poorest grades. There is an old joke that puts class standing in proper perspective: "What do you call the person who graduates last in his class in medical school?"..."Doctor."

All WP graduates, all called "Lieutenant," appear to have demonstrated high intelligence, unique discipline, and willingness to serve their country. These qualities,

however, guarantee nothing, especially one's battle performance as an officer or years later as a general. They are a foundation on which one must build for success, but that success is in no way guaranteed.

No Opportunity Existed For Advanced Training Or Experimentation.

West Point prepared cadets to serve as lieutenants in a small army spread out in small units across the country. It did not prepare them to command anything above a company of 100 men. Other than the Mexican War (more on this below), most would never maneuver or fight in units above the level of a company or battalion, i.e., a collection of companies less than a full regiment; consequently, when the war began, few officers, even WP graduates, had any idea how to do this.

In contrast, the military today offers a multitude of advanced training, both practical and academic, for officers and enlisted personnel. Each military specialty has initial and advanced training commensurate with rank, such as advanced infantry training following basic training. It has a number of professional schools for officers as they increase in rank, such as the Air Force's Squadron Officers School for captains. In addition, the military encourages post-graduate education for its officers.

In particular, it has a number of service schools for senior officers, i.e., major or above, such as a War College for each service (Army, Naval, Air, Marine Corps), Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, the Naval Postgraduate School, and the National War College, to name a few. (Curiously, the Army War College, established in 1901, is located at Carlisle Barracks in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, which was burned by the Confederates during the approach to Gettysburg.)

They provide professional military education at the strategic level with the goal of producing senior officers who are critical thinkers and solvers of complex problems. The instruction offers a balance of theory, history, practice, and communication skills to solve problems and articulate solutions.

Why then the modern emphasis on schooling for higher officers?

First, as they have always been, military operations are complex. General Winfield Scott's expedition to Vera Cruz in the Mexican War, Grant's joint operations with the gunboats of Admirals Hull Foote and David Porter, the mobilizations for the two world wars, the Normandy landings, and Desert Storm are examples of operations demanding extremely intelligent leadership. No mere chumps plan D-Day, especially without computers; on the contrary, the Britons and Americans who designed and planned that invasion were brilliant.

Second, technology changes. Rifled muskets give way to breech loaders, then to repeating rifles. The Minie Bullet appears. Cannons improve in size, accuracy, and with breech loaders, rate of fire. Machine guns, tanks, airplanes, and radios appear: these multiply the power, speed, and reach of the army. Although they would never drive one, General Dwight Eisenhower and his staff needed to learn the use of Dual Drive tanks and Dual Drive landing craft to plan for D-Day, or at least they had to understand what their subordinates were telling them. One could argue that an NFL coach today has access to more information during a game than did a commanding general in the Civil War with of course much less at stake.

Third, procedures and methods must be thought up and worked out. New tactics just do not appear nor are their applications obvious, except, of course, to experts in

hindsight: The Flying Artillery of the Mexican War and the Thach Weave in modern naval aviation are two such examples. Prior to the Mexican War in 1845, Lt. Samuel Ringgold developed techniques and equipment for quickly moving light artillery on a battlefield. Early in World War II, Lieutenant Commander John Thach devised a method to counter the Japanese Zero fighter's superiority with his less maneuverable but sturdier U. S. Navy's Wildcat fighter. Both tactics proved successful in combat, but only after development and training.

No schooling for any of this existed in the antebellum era. The army's size and mission did not demand it. Neither was there a need for critical thinkers, as leading in battle meant simply following orders. Instead, much of an officer's knowledge came from on-the-job training and from experience, as indeed it does today. The army had manuals on infantry and artillery tactics, such as those written by Hardee and Hunt, respectively, but these were updated only every few years. Formal texts on military strategy and tactics existed, but they were largely European and written in French, which explains two things about the era: the use of Napoleonic tactics throughout the war and the two-year study of French at WP. Most generals thus fought the war with the same tactics they learned at WP because they had no training or experience (with its resulting lessons) to tell them otherwise.

This makes analysis of Civil War tactics important. Modern thinking about those tactics often berates the generals for the high percentage of casualties, but this is somewhat myopic and unfair. One could just as easily criticize a Civil War doctor for not sterilizing his bandages or washing his hands between amputations, or indeed for the amputations themselves; however, that was the only treatment medicine provided for a

shattered limb. Those doctors, therefore, were practicing *the best medicine they knew*, regardless of how primitive or repugnant we might deem it. Yes, modern medicine knows of the germ theory and much better surgical techniques, but Civil War doctors did not, and it is unseemly to use modern standards to judge them.

The same is true for Civil War tactics. The line and other geometric formations in attack with soldiers advancing shoulder-to-shoulder—the foundation of Napoleonic tactics—were the formations of choice for generals of both sides throughout the war, from First Manassas to Franklin. For visitors to Gettysburg standing at the Virginia Monument looking out toward Cemetery Ridge, a common rumination about Lee is "what was he thinking?" The answer is simple: that he would win.

It is often said about the Civil War that "the tactics did not keep pace with the weapons," e.g., the rifled musket, but few generals of the era found an alternative. Modern historians state this by rote almost as an axiom, but one must consider that the standard muzzle-loading weapons almost required that they be loaded while standing in one place: the small infantry tactic of fire-and-motion was impractical with a muzzle-loading weapon. In addition, it is true that the rifled musket allowed a much longer effective aimed range, about 500 yards; however, once a regiment of infantry shot the first two or three volleys, the resulting smoke obscured everything in sight. Scores of regiments and artillery firing rendered the 500 yard range meaningless. Few critics of these generals, if any, offer an alternative tactic even with the benefit of hindsight.

Grant, Lee, James Longstreet, McClellan, Jackson, Thomas, Sherman, Ambrose Burnside, and others all accepted the line formation and used it. Lt. Col. Thomas Kane developed a dispersed formation for his 42nd Pennsylvania (the first "Bucktail

Regiment") as did Colonel Hiram Berdan for his 1st and 2nd U.S. Sharpshooter regiments (along with green uniforms to blend into the brush). These tactics proved particularly helpful when these regiments were deployed as skirmishers. (5) Longstreet at Chickamauga and Emory Upton at Spotsylvania attacked in block column formation rather than lines, but these four examples are notable exceptions to a rather large norm. Why? Because that is what they were taught, it matched the weapons available to them, and the war came upon them with little time to experiment.

Active Duty Experience Differed.

Assignments for graduates were based then, as now, on class standing. To the higher-ranking lieutenants were offered the prestigious assignments such as the Army Corps of Engineers and the Cavalry with the Infantry saved for last. Rarely, officers who excelled as students in certain areas started their military careers as academy instructors. P.G.T. Beauregard, for example, stayed on as an artillery instructor after graduation. Others, as noted earlier, also returned to WP as instructors.

Many officers spent their careers performing various engineering tasks (harbor forts, river control, lighthouses, for example) throughout the growing country, as did Lee, Meade, Beauregard, and Andrew Humphries, or patrolling in small cavalry troops protecting the westward migration of settlers. Except for the Mexican War between 1846 and 1848, engineering and protecting settlers from Indians represented the routine of army life.

The Mexican War afforded its participants real combat experience against a modern army. An officer's experience depended on one's assignment, which was based

on rank and branch of service. One must be careful, however, in extrapolating how young officers would use this experience in later years. Some officers served as commanders or on the staffs of commanders as did Lt. Col. Lee serving with General Scott, a non-West Point graduate. Most officers, of lower rank, served in regiments at the company level: Grant, Longstreet, Pickett, Jackson, McClellan, and Winfield Scott Hancock, for example. They faced fire and survived—perhaps their most valuable experience—but they had no hand in commanding large forces such as regiments or brigades.

This point of experience gained is often quoted relative to the young officers in the Mexican War, and it is equally misunderstood. As lieutenants and captains, they performed in the capacity for which they were trained at WP, i.e., as company officers. Based on the number of brevet commissions they received for bravery, they performed well. Their experience as company officers, however, gave them no first-hand experience that they would need later to command division, corps, or armies. This they would have to learn on the battlefield as they served early in the Civil War.

A Good Man Is Hard To Find.

Performing at a professional level is extremely difficult in almost any field of endeavor. Sports provide an excellent example. Becoming a quarterback in the National Football League (NFL) is a major feat, but becoming a starting quarterback is extremely rare: there are only 32 at the start of each annual season and they are of different quality. The required skills at the professional level, both physical and mental, are such that, of

the scores of available college quarterbacks each year, only a few are chosen and almost never begin their careers as starters.

The difficulty of this position is evident when one is injured: the second and third string quarterbacks are serviceable and can do the job, but in most cases, the team requires the starter for them to hope for the playoffs. No pool of unsigned, spare quarterbacks exists because the ability drops off drastically from the professionals, starting or non-starting. Finally, of those recognized as great quarterbacks, not all have won championships because these games pit the best against each other with only one winner possible: Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino is an excellent example of this. Whereas football is the ultimate team sport, and much of a team's success depends on their collective performance, these are elements of the team's success, not the quarterback skills required.

Military command also requires a specific skill set, and different skills appear at various command levels. Civil War regimental commanders, nominally colonels, moved their regiments based on the movement of the brigade. This was the basic unit of movement on the battlefield; the brigadier general was normally the highest command level that actually led his unit directly into battle. Above the brigade, for divisions, corps, and army command, generals had to direct the movement of subordinate units on the battlefield and respond quickly to information about the battle. In addition, commanders had to ensure the care of their men, handle the various logistical and administrative functions required of a commander, and maintain discipline within the unit. Often commanders brave under fire showed little ability in tending to these seeming mundane but important tasks.

Another requirement for command was what is called "moral courage." This is the ability to see opportunity and exploit it, to move fast and not waste time, to not proffer excuses to exculpate oneself after a defeat, and to be willing to fight the army to the point of disarray if it brings victory. For all of his intelligence and organizational and tactical skills, McClellan lacked these qualities, which contributed to his eventual downfall. His was a character flaw, not a lack of skill. (6) His manifest distrust of civilian authority did not help here either, but Lincoln would overlook this if McClellan won battles.

In the Jeff Shaara novel *The Last Full Measure*, after the disaster at Cold Harbor Grant thinks (italics added), "There are no comforting words here. Here, it is all about duty, and making the right decisions. *And men must die...even when the decisions are the very best ones.*" (7) Few could meet this ultimate requirement, to understand, face, and accept "the awful arithmetic," as Lincoln phrased it. Some call this "the killer instinct," and it is not farfetched to think that Grant and Lee had it, but that for whatever reasons McClellan and Johnston did not.

For these and other reasons, Lee and Grant were both troubled by the lack of suitable candidates for higher command levels. In addition to the normal attrition of officers from death, wounds, illness, or transfers, both sides had to deal with established law and procedures for promotions, in addition to various political considerations. Apparently when politics became involved, a good man was even harder to find. The combination complicated the selection of new commanders. For the Confederate side, Douglas Southall Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants* covers this in welcome and wonderful

detail after each major campaign or battle, showing that the effects started shortly after Lee assumed command in June 1862.

For instance, Grant retained the incompetent Benjamin Butler (not a West Point graduate) for political reasons—he was a northern Democrat—even though Grant had the authority to replace any general in the army. Similarly, Lee could not dismiss the inept William Pendleton as his artillery chief because he was a WP contemporary and friend of President Davis. (Davis, Lee, and Pendleton graduated in 1828, 1829, and 1830, respectively.) In May 1863, Lee's re-organization of the ANV even went so far as to eliminate its Artillery Reserve and spread its cannon among the three corps leaving Pendleton with no actual guns to command.

When a prominent commander was killed, the normal successor was the highest ranking subordinate, and during a battle, this assumption of command was immediate and automatic. Often, however, the new commander sometimes did not last long if his superiors thought him unfit. An excellent example of this is what followed after the death of John Reynolds on July 1 at Gettysburg. Abner Doubleday, the senior division commander, automatically assumed command of I Corps and led it ably through the day. When General Meade arrived early on July 2, Oliver Howard reported that I Corps broke before his XI Corps. This caused Meade to replace Doubleday with John Newton, a division commander from VI Corps. Newton retained command of I Corps until it was dissolved prior to the Overland Campaign of 1864.

There is no evidence, however, that Doubleday performed poorly leading the division on July 1. The defeat of I Corps on July 1 was based on position and numbers, and not on Doubleday's performance. One could argue that XI Corps, often criticized for

extending itself too far—up to what is today known as Barlow's Knoll—was trying to erase the stain of Chancellorsville by standing and holding its ground. Both Doubleday and Howard, however, failed to recognize the importance of abandoning their advanced positions and retreating to Seminary Ridge and Cemetery Hill at an opportune time. They did, however, hold their positions as long as possible, but only Doubleday was replaced. The importance of the Doubleday example is that the subordinate's continuance of command was based on his superiors' impressions of him and perhaps not on his actual performance.

Evaluating a command structure with multiple vacancies after a battle is not an overnight task and requires serious study of each vacancy and each possible command replacement. Ideally, the commander has time to perform this evaluation before the next battle occurs. One result of battles occurring frequently is that generals wounded in an earlier battle might not have recovered in time to resume command for later ones. If competent commanders are wounded and replaced by subordinates, and the army has not had time to replace the wounded commanders, then the next battle is fought with their substitutes. This was especially true because of the state of medicine in the 1860s when long recuperations were common. If any of the substitutes are then wounded, then another subordinate assumes command. Eventually major units are led by officers who might be unfit for those positions. In these cases, the substitute continued to command the unit but was not offered rank commensurate with the position because he was not considered fit for the higher rank.

This was the situation facing Lee as early as the fall of 1862 after the Battle of Antietam. Assigning Longstreet and Jackson to command the two wings of the ANV

after the Seven Days battles in June—essentially corps command which was not approved until September 1862—was the easiest part of the command restructuring of the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV). But the reorganization was not completed by Second Manassas in August, resulting in a degraded command situation prior to the Maryland operation in September. Only four of its nine divisions were commanded by major generals, the normal rank for a division. The remaining five were commanded by four brigadier generals and one colonel. Of 40 brigades, only 14 had brigadier generals; the remaining 26 were commanded by colonels or officers of lower rank. Although the result of the Maryland campaign depended on factors and did not destroy the ANV was, it is nonetheless unacceptable for an army to function for so long under such a large number of temporary commanders. Freeman calls this situation "a crisis in command," and it is important to note that it occurs midway through 1862, not yet halfway through the war. (8) Nonetheless, it never improves.

The same circumstance existed for the Federals. After assuming command of the U. S. Army in March 1864, Grant was interested in using the best officers possible and thought that many from WP were available. At one point, he was "prepared and anxious to assign McClellan, Buell, and others to command." (9) Although no formal tender has been found in the records, he was disappointed because personal and political reasons blunted any further consideration. One can assume that by "command," Grant meant corps command because Sherman and Thomas had considered Buell for command of XIV Corps. (10)

The Army of the Potomac (AOP) suffered from a similar lack of corps command material which is part of the reason for the spring 1864 reorganization that trimmed the

army down to three corps, II, V, and VI, commanded by Hancock, Warren, and Sedgwick, respectively. (11) Of the three, Hancock was the most aggressive. In the ensuing Overland Campaign when Sedgwick was killed at Spotsylvania on May 9, Meade chose Horatio Wright to replace him. Wright, though competent, served in this capacity until Appomattox, but he was not as aggressive as Hancock. For the rest of the war, Grant was at times frustrated by the indigenous AOP command structure because it reacted slowly and cautiously with continual problems in coordination. This indicates that the quality of candidates for corps command had decreased and it remained so until the end of the war. (Caution was a common trait in the AOP, and it was a constant irritant to Grant.)

Not only did the job description for commander contain qualities that most officers could not meet, but the quest for good commanders was limited by two other considerations, one arithmetic and the other managerial. Army leaders of the time would have had no access to formal descriptions of these, but they might have understood them empirically. Regardless, their effect on the selection of competent commanders was real and cannot be ignored by historians. They are explained in the next two sections.

The Curve Applies.

Although the graduates represent an elite group, there are still differences among them, namely, some are better officers than others. The war shows that their abilities as commanders varied widely also. One might think this instinctive, but it does follow a common pattern familiar to college students all over the country. Suppose that historians assigned a performance grade to each of the approximately 360 WP graduates of both

sides who served as generals much as professors would assign grades for examinations. For this illustration (and *not* a full mathematical treatment), it is reasonable to assume that these grades would follow a distribution similar to that for a freshman chemistry class at a large state university. (12)

Once all the grades are assembled, one then segregates them into arbitrary sections about the mean or average grade by percentage the values of which depend on how many grades of each level are desired. For the 360 graduates (or freshman chemistry class), the numbers might be 2% for A+, 15% for B, 2% for F, and so forth. Assume that a large sample size such as the set of graduates can be described by a curve commonly called a bell curve, which is thin at the edges and thick in the middle. This is "the curve," by the way, on which college students hope to be graded on tests: this analogy serves this discussion. This curve resembles, but is not identical to, other statistical distributions such as the normal distribution. The result of such a distribution offers partial explanation for why historians should expect many generals to be ineffective. Table 2 shows the result of assigning grades in this way.

PERCENT OF POPULATION IN SECTION	ROUNDED NUMBER PER 360	GRADE "ON THE CURVE"	DESCRIPTOR
2	7	F-	Dismally Inept
3	11	F	Incompetent
15	54	D	Poor
30	108	C-	Low Average
Mean grade			
30	108	C+	High Average
15	54	B	Good
3	11	A	Excellent
2	7	A+	Outstanding

TABLE 2. Hypothetical result of the curve for generals' grades.

What does this mean for the graduates? It means that out of a population of approximately 360 WP generals, one should expect only 18 to be excellent or outstanding, i.e., A or A+ and a different 18 to be extremely incompetent (F or F-). About 108 will be very good (B), and another 108 should be poor (D). Most of them, however, about 216, will be average (C), and the war would be fought largely with officers of all ranks whose competence along the spectrum will be a grade of C.

This explains partly why the quality of corps commanders for both sides decreased as the war continued. As attrition eliminated the likes of Jackson and Hancock, the grades of the replacements were more in the average, or C area. Also, the

small number of outstanding generals from the curve agrees roughly with the normal set of names nominated for this section, including Grant, Lee, Jackson, Sherman, Longstreet, Sheridan, Thomas, and Stuart.

Remember The Peter Principle.

Hidden among the education, experience, skills, and ambition of the graduates, one feature requires exposure. Even with no attrition from wounds or deaths, not all graduates would be fit for higher command levels. As indicated in the previous section, Civil War army commanders understood this implicitly, although they had no name for it.

This decrease of fitness for higher command is an example of the Peter Principle. This states that in a hierarchy where advancement is based upon performance and merit, people eventually get promoted to a position where they are not effective, i.e., their "level of incompetence." (13) Two major features of this principle are: (a) it is based on the superior's evaluation of the performance of a subordinate, and (b) if a person is *judged* competent and *wants to be promoted*, then he will be. People rarely refuse promotions especially military officers for whom promotion to higher rank is paramount. A close examination shows that this heuristic applies to the performance of the WP generals in the Civil War—*not as an excuse* for performance, but rather as explanation.

One cannot blame officers for wanting promotion. As stated earlier, many company grade regular army officers resigned their commissions to seek immediate promotion to colonels in state militias. And one cannot blame officers for accepting promotions, especially early in the war as the armies formed. These were smart, ambitious men who found opportunities to serve their country, North or South, at levels

of command they never expected to see in their lifetimes. At the start of the war when few battles had occurred, promotions were quick and based on little more than having graduated from WP or performing well in an earlier, smaller battle or skirmish. This was especially true of promotions in state militias or United States Volunteers (USV) versus regular commissions in the United States Army. Because the states were raising far more regiments than the increase in regular army regiments, governors had far more promotions to hand out.

Although one could easily cite more, four simple and obvious cases illustrate this principle: Confederate Hood, and Federals McClellan, Hancock, and Burnside. John Bell Hood successfully commanded a brigade as well as a division. After recuperating from a leg amputation following his wounding in the Battle of Chickamauga, he served as a corps commander under Johnston in Georgia. Corps command was his highest recorded level of competence. He was then placed in command of the Army of Tennessee replacing Johnston whereupon he attacked Sherman's army multiple times outside of Atlanta and was defeated each time. Eventually losing Atlanta, he proceeded to destroy his army at the Battles of Franklin and Nashville. One might mitigate this criticism by noting that he took command of the army in 1864 when the combination of Northern industry and competent generals was enough to overwhelm the South no matter who commanded its armies, but his repeated rash attacks of the fortified line at Franklin offer proof of his incompetence as an army commander.

McClellan also reached his level of incompetence at the army level, but history will never really know his highest level of competence. This is because in 1861, he rose from the rank of captain to major general in the Ohio militia in a matter of weeks,

skipping regiment, brigade, division, and even corps command. Apparently, his antebellum experience as a railroad executive gave the impression that he was adept at managing large operations and complicated logistics. After a minor victory in northwest Virginia (later West Virginia), he was offered command of the AOP, where he excelled in organizing and training the army and proved adept at strategy and even tactics. Recall that in 1864 Grant considered him for corps command but never tendered it formally. His pride, caution, and contempt for civilian authority prevented him, however, from ranking as one of the great generals of the war.

Finally, Grant considered Hancock "the most conspicuous figure of all the general officers who did not exercise a separate command." (14) Hancock rose through brigade command on the Peninsula in 1862 to division command at Chancellorsville in 1863. By Gettysburg, he commanded II Corps, and he was prominent on all three days being wounded in the leg during Pickett's Charge. (If one could name a Most Valuable Player for that battle, he would be the easy choice.) He retained this command until voluntarily stepping down in November 1864 owing to his Gettysburg wound that never healed properly. There are two possible reasons he was never offered command of the AOP: Lincoln and Halleck knew that he would want full command of the army, and that he was too valuable as a corps commander. One could argue that Hancock understood his own political limits better than his commanders, but that is beyond the scope of this treatment. In any case, history knows that Hancock's highest level of competence was *at least* the corps level, but of course *will never know* if he could command an independent army successfully.

This brings us to the curious case of Ambrose Burnside, a classic example of the Peter Principle who remained on active service until the disastrous Battle of the Crater in July 1864. He is one of the traditional poster boys for Civil War command ineptitude, and he is treated almost as a buffoon, but is this the entire story?

An analogy from sports again serves here. In the 1995 NFL draft, the Philadelphia Eagles drafted Boston College defensive end Mike Mamula in the first round at number seven. He so impressed the Eagles that they traded up expensively to acquire the number seven pick. Mamula was so impressive because he trained extensively and precisely for the exact tests for the NFL Scouting Combine, a week-long invitation-only exhibition for prospective NFL talent. The Eagles kept him at defensive end, his college position, for which at 250 pounds he was too small for the professional level. They considered him for, but did not move him to, the position of defensive linebacker; consequently, his performance as defensive end never lived up to the expectations of the team or especially of the fans. His name is now used pejoratively in discussions of players who excel in the Combines and who do not perform well in the NFL.

If one looks at the sequence of events, however, one might conclude that Mamula is actually blameless. No one faults him for practicing for the Combines, no one blames him for the Eagles' choosing to trade up for him and then keep him in a position for which he was undersized to play well, and no one has ever accused him of not playing hard. The only fault in the entire episode is on the Eagles for being overly impressed by him in the Combines and trading up for him, and by keeping him in the same position when it was clear that it was not working.

Prior to the war, Burnside invented a carbine and served as a railroad executive. After his initial success as a brigade commander at First Manassas and on the coast after Manassas, Burnside served in the AOP, eventually rising to command IX Corps in which position he performed dismally at Antietam. After Lincoln removed McClellan from command, he offered it to Burnside—next in line in rank—who responded that he was not qualified to be commander. Upon hearing from the president that Hooker would be offered command if Burnside refused, Burnside accepted. He might be the only WP officer during the entire war that initially refused command because he thought himself unqualified. After his defeat at Fredericksburg, he was transferred to command the Department of the Ohio, where he again assumed command of IX Corps. In November 1864, he advanced his forces to protect Knoxville, Tennessee, where he stopped a drive by Longstreet to take the town. He remained in command of his corps until the disaster at The Crater outside Petersburg in July 1864, after which he was ordered home, staying there for the remainder of the war.

Grant assumed command of all Federal armies in March 1864. At the same time, Meade was in the process of reducing the AOP from four corps to three. Despite Meade's and Grant's concerns for the lack of corps commanders, Burnside somehow managed to remain commander of IX Corps. Part of his retention is because Burnside outranked Meade and retaining his corps as a separate command under Grant avoided an awkward command arrangement. Another part is because Burnside was able and honest and loyal and wanted only to serve his country. He never schemed or connived to attain higher command: in fact, he refused command of the AOP when first offered it. (15) Grant said of him (*italics and underline added*): "General Burnside was an officer who was

generally liked and respected. He was not, however, *fitted to command an army*. No one knew this better than himself...*It was hardly his fault that he was ever assigned to a separate command.*" (16)

Here is a man who commanded successful amphibious assaults and stopped Longstreet, yet he failed to reconnoiter properly at Antietam and failed miserably at Fredericksburg. Despite the disbelief of modern historians, both professional and amateur, Burnside's record up to March 1864 was enough for him to maintain corps command after Grant took command. Why? Grant wrote it twice: Burnside was unfit to command an army, *but he says nothing about a corps*. Remember that fitness is based upon the *superior's assessment* of a subordinate's performance; apparently Meade and Grant both judged Burnside fit to command a corps.

So, Burnside was capable, in their eyes, of managing the activities, movements, training, discipline, and supply of 20,000 men. And more important, for a battle, that he was capable of deploying those 20,000 men at almost the right time doing almost the right thing based upon the battle plan and his orders. This is quite a tall order, and it indicates that, although not fit to command an army, Burnside might not have been the buffoon that he is often made out to be. Like the Mamula experience, Burnside's career shows that disappointment and fault for a particular performance are often misplaced: it was not Burnside's fault that he was offered commands for which he was unfit. However, Burnside had other abilities: he later served as U.S. Senator and then Governor of Rhode Island.

Do Not Declare Blunders Selectively.

Fredericksburg was a blunder. Burnside admitted this. Pickett's Charge was a blunder, and Lee knew it. The Civil War is filled with mistakes, misjudgments, and oversights made at the command level; yet, not all are treated equally. The Civil War, however, is not unique in containing many command blunders. One needs only to look at other conflicts for more.

In World War II, for instance, the Japanese attacked the Philippine Islands 12 hours after Pearl Harbor. Washington had warned its commander, General Douglas MacArthur, but the Japanese still found American planes lined up on the ground totally unprepared for the attack. MacArthur and history had no answer for this. At Midway in June 1944, a Japanese scout plane discovered an American carrier where it should not be according to the Japanese plan. However, the Japanese commander, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, adhered to the original battle design even though it assumed no American carriers anywhere near the fleet; consequently, the Japanese had no alternate plan available to handle this. History's only answer is that the Japanese were overconfident with "victory disease."

Another example is Allied D-Day planners, who spent almost two years planning for the Normandy landings yet somehow made absolutely no provision for tactics or equipment necessary for fighting just behind the American beaches in the French bocage (or hedgerow) country. The Germans used this excellent defensive ground to delay, with high American casualties, the breakout from Normandy for weeks after D-Day. The only

answer for this omission is that the technical and logistical problems of the landings were so immense and complex that Allied planners simply overlooked it.

In all of these cases, historians note and critique the blunder; in none do they refer to the offending generals as "stupid." In most cases, they are considered competent professionals who made errors in judgment. This is different from the treatment of Civil War generals, for whom mockery is not only allowed but promulgated. Bragg, another incompetent army commander whose loyalty and integrity were never questioned, is often the butt of negative commentary as is the aforementioned Burnside.

Do Not Confuse Dereliction With Simple Ineptitude.

Generals John B. Floyd and Gideon Pillow, non-West Point graduates, abandoned their men at Fort Donnellson in February 1862. Floyd, in command, departed the fort and left command to Pillow. Pillow departed promptly, leaving Buckner in command to surrender Fort Donnellson to Grant. Buckner was a graduate who understood his duty to surrender with his men. In contrast, Generals James Ledlie and Edward Ferraro together swilled spirits in a bunker while their men were slaughtered in The Crater at Petersburg in July 1864. Both were removed from command and later from the army.

The question for historians is this: do incompetent army commanders such as Burnside and Hood belong on the same list as Floyd, Pillow, Ledlie, or Ferraro? The answer should be no. History must distinguish between honest, loyal generals who were simply incompetent but honorable, from those who were cowards, drunkards, or grossly derelict. For such gross misconduct there is neither explanation nor excuse. Again, as

this paper tries to explain the disparate military competence of Civil War generals, it purposefully excludes disgraceful conduct from the list of considerations.

What's Wrong With Having More Men?

Another characteristic of history's rating or over-estimating generals is its tendency to favor underdogs who won battles when the odds were longest. Victory under such conditions certainly requires skill and courage, and one should respect that. This does not, however, negate the skill of generals who happen to be victorious with larger armies than their opponents. It is not contradictory for one to admire the tactical skill of a Lee, Jackson or German Erwin Rommel as well as the strategic acumen of a Grant, Sherman, or Eisenhower. They neither contradict nor deprecate the other. A material advantage held by commanders does not diminish or mask their inherent ability.

An egregious and classic case of this is the contention of Lee adherents that Grant won because "he was a lucky drunk that had more men." For a long time, this was the conventional wisdom, and probably made Lee supporters feel good. Grant's reputation has long since recovered from this crass and baseless misconception. His drinking problem has been long considered and documented: most modern historians recognize that it was not as serious as originally thought nor seemingly a significant impediment. But, although those who believe this might not realize, this statement does not say much for Lee either. The victor of Second Manassas and Chancellorsville was defeated by a drunk whose *only* advantage was more men? No skill was involved? Lee adherents should not settle for such a simplistic and insulting explanation. Comparisons to other wars can shed light on this.

George Washington had more men (and a French fleet) at Yorktown, the Duke of Wellington had more men at Waterloo, and Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery had more men (and everything else) at El Alamein. In particular, the Allies had overwhelming superiority at Normandy. Overall, in World War II, the Allies had more men than the Germans. Having a larger army is a goal of any general in any war. For Federal generals and Grant in particular, why is numerical superiority a flaw that somehow vitiates their victory? This leads again to the obvious question. What's wrong with having more men? Or more resources in general?

It is a fact that the AOP had more men than the ANV at Gettysburg. The AOP *also* had more men in all of its previous bouts with the ANV, which seems to not have helped in any of them, especially considering the difference in tactical skill between Lee and his Federal counterparts. There is absolutely no reason that superiority of men or materiel should diminish the esteem of Meade or Grant any more than it should diminish the reputations of Eisenhower, Wellington, or the Russian Georgy Zhukov from World War II. It can, however, justly enhance the reputations of generals who lead outnumbered armies, such as Lee, Jackson, or Rommel.

As outlined previously, the basic flaw in this reasoning of understanding leaders with greater resources is that it ignores or obscures the skills required to command, as outlined previously. The best example of this is Grant. Jackson and his swift maneuvers with his well-known "foot cavalry" are renowned for occupying three Federal armies of total larger size in the Shenandoah Valley. However, few realize that after Grant crossed the Mississippi River in May 1863, he was *outnumbered* by two Confederate armies, John Pemberton's in Vicksburg and Johnston's relief army near Jackson. Using speed,

guile, and deception, including Grierson's 400-mile cavalry raid through Mississippi, Grant fooled the two generals, fought and won five battles in three weeks, and eventually surrounded Pemberton's army in Vicksburg. Somehow this feat seems to never measure up to Jackson.

One year later when Grant (with Meade commanding the AOP) had more men in Virginia, it is important to notice three things: Grant's determination, the skill required to maneuver the AOP from battle line to road for withdrawal without exposing itself to attack, and the fact that Lee never found an opportunity to counterattack. In particular, his determination, mainly in form of a willingness to accept heavy losses without retreating—think of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor, all defeats or draws at best—exceeded even Lee's expectation. The combination of a larger army and a general who knew how to use it skillfully was enough to win the war; this should be of no detriment to Grant.

One could argue that the biggest miscalculation of World War II was the gross underestimation by Axis Powers of American industrial capacity in both the quantity *and quality* of weaponry. (17) The Japanese Zero and German Me-109 had ruled the skies in 1941, but by 1944, the Hellcat, Corsair, and Mustang bested them in both numbers and capability. The Confederacy made a similar miscalculation in 1861, and gentlemen, chivalry, and cavaliers—dashing and gallant as they might be—proved no match for superior numbers, technology, innovation, and organization.

Sherman referred to the North as "a nation of machinists," and history confirms this assessment. At Midway, in addition to the four Japanese aircraft carriers sunk and over 300 top pilots killed, few realize that the loss of four carrier's worth of trained

aircraft maintenance crews, or "machinists," was just as devastating. The United States could and did train far more. By late 1943, just two years after Pearl Harbor, the U. S. Pacific Fleet was the largest navy in the world.

Additionally, almost anyone could recite that the Germans perfected *blitzkrieg*, but as implemented in 1939-1941, this tactic was not totally mechanized; its one major flaw was that most transport of supplies and artillery in the German army was horse-drawn. Over 600,000 horses were used in Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union in June 1941. It took a true nation of machinists, the United States, to show the world, and the Germans in particular, what a fully mechanized army could do. If these advantages do not diminish the reputations of Admiral Chester Nimitz or Eisenhower, then they should not for Grant.

Superior numbers, technology, innovation, and organization are strengths that have served our nation well, and they should not be used to diminish the reputations of Federal generals verses the brave futility of gallant Confederates.

EXAMPLES OF RATING GENERALS

An interesting diversion is *The Civil War Book of Lists* by the editors of Combined Books. The subtitle is honest up front, "Over 300 lists, from the sublime...to the ridiculous." Most of the lists are factual—demographics, campaigns, battles, casualties, and so forth—making this a valuable addition to a bookshelf. Some of its lists are indeed ridiculous and somewhat subjective: generals with the best nicknames, oddest haircuts, and of course, the ugliest generals. Among this latter group are lists of

the "best" and "worst" Union and Confederate generals. As is often the case, the criteria for these latter lists are not stated. (18)

One curious rating of a general occurs from an imprecise choice of words. In his interesting and instructive monograph, *A Killer Angels Companion*, author D. Scott Hartwig discusses Richard Ewell's decision to not attack Cemetery Hill on July 1, 1863. He states, "There is little disagreement among historians that Ewell does not belong in the company of great soldiers." (19) This is an interesting word choice because it confuses "soldier" with "general" and "commander." Ewell was promoted to brigadier general in 1861, major general in 1862, and remained a general officer until his capture at Saylor's Creek just days before the surrender at Appomattox. He commanded a brigade then a division under the demanding Jackson. He later replaced Jackson as corps commander because Lee knew that Jackson preferred Ewell to assume his command if he was unable to do so. From 1863 until the end of the war he served as II Corps commander despite having suffered an amputated leg in 1862; Lee never removed him from command because of bad performance.

Ewell's entire record, therefore, would seem to characterize him as a great soldier. He made an unpopular decision at Gettysburg and he might have reached his level of incompetence—perhaps disqualifying him as a great commander—but his longevity under generals as demanding as Jackson and Lee certainly qualifies him as a good general. This is not to suggest that the author meant to overtly disparage Ewell in any way, but such linguistic distinctions are important because his record should be judged and labeled appropriately. Needless to say, this need for precision applies to all Civil War generals.

In addition, a cable show on Grant and Lee features an author who states about the Battle of Fredericksburg that Lee "must have thought" he was fighting the "stupidest" Union general around. First, since there is no record of what Lee thought about Burnside during the battle, this statement is merely what the *author* thinks. Second, it shows the liberties taken by some historians to highlight their favorites with unsupported assertions at the expense of others historical figures. The professional historian should and can be critical without being pompous or scurrilous, i.e., professional.

North or South, officers were gentlemen. A gentleman of that era was a man of intelligence, social standing, and high moral character. A gentleman was set apart from the common man and held to a much higher standard of social conduct than today. For the WP graduates, the distinction of being "officers and gentlemen" was even higher. This consideration was offered to both friend and foe alike. After the Crater, Grant ordered Burnside home quietly to remain there "until orders arrived," which of course, they never did. Unlike some historians of today, Grant realized that there is no reason to insult or degrade a soldier with three years of honest and difficult service. He allowed Burnside to maintain a small measure of dignity.

Similarly, there is little recorded to indicate that opposing generals were as insulting of each other as some modern historians are of them. Even though they were in opposing armies, they respected and even helped each other. Custer stayed with his old friend Stephen Ramseur until he died after the Battle of Cedar Creek. Grant was always courteous to Confederate generals after they surrendered and even apologized to Lee at Appomattox for his tardiness and appearance. And during the Battle of Spotsylvania,

Lee, after hearing a general refer to Grant as a butcher, replied, "I think General Grant has managed his affairs remarkably well up to the present time." (20)

Despite his losing the cream of the Japanese Navy's carriers and pilots at Midway, a defeat far greater than Fredericksburg, few if any, historians or authors would consider calling Admiral Nagumo "stupid." They show respect for a skilled, professional admiral who made a bad decision during a major battle. Yet, some American historians and authors, most of whom have never fired a weapon or commanded anything, feel self-justified enough to call an honest and honorable American general stupid. It is fair for the historian to analyze and critique generals for their battle actions; it is unprofessional to throw insults at those figures for a cheap sound bite.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has presented an analysis of Civil War generalship using rare and novel criteria, including their intelligence, education, experience, and expectations from statistics and modern management methods. It is not intended to change anyone's opinion of any general, and it has probably not done so; rather, it has offered a list of overlooked criteria by which generals might be considered. Readers will still have their favorite generals, but it is possible that some will look at other generals differently. This would make the paper a success.

Much of the training given to senior military officers today, such as decision making and crisis management, did not exist at the time. However, given that education, class standing, and experience are not good predictors of performance as a commander, what is?

Intelligence is certainly important, but above all else, adaptability seems to be an important and overlooked feature of good commanders: it is a combination of intelligence, creativity, and initiative found rarely in one person. This is also difficult to predict. Scott offered command of the Federal army to Lee in April 1861, a testament to Lee's ability and promise that was eventually realized. Grant, on the other hand, was treated initially as a pariah because of rumors of drinking surrounding his separation from the army in 1854. Both Lee and Grant, however, had to wait until 1862 before their debut as effective commanders—Grant at Shiloh and Lee during the Seven Days Battles. Despite their common education and experiences, the great generals of the Civil War seem to have been adaptable, practicing what today is called "situational management."

Lee adapted quickly to changes on the battlefield, as did Jackson. Stuart, John Buford, and Forrest improved cavalry tactics as the war progressed. Hunt used massed artillery as an industrial killing machine, causing this arm of the service to be important in several battles. Sherman saw the need for a new kind of "hard war" against industry and transportation. Grant not only adapted well to tactical situations, as with Vicksburg, but realizing after Shiloh that the war would be long, he started to take a long view of winning on an entire continent, not just a state or a region. As commander of all Federal armies, he had control of national military policy proportionally greater than almost any American general ever. Lee occupied a similar office early in 1865, but his term was far too late in the war to evaluate. Both Grant and Lee responded well to the new technology of the telegraph.

Further, Grant coordinated operations with the Navy on the Mississippi and later in Virginia to an extent even greater than Scott at Vera Cruz in the Mexican War. For

these operations, gunboats were treated in planning as if they were a division of Grant's army, which laid a foundation for combined operations that reached its zenith in World War II. For clarity, this cooperation with the Navy does not intrinsically make Grant a better general—mainly because Lee never had gunboats to work with—so no comparison can be made. What it says is that Grant and Lee were adaptable enough to fight the war handed to them: that only one could be the victor does not denigrate the other.

A word about those generals who were not WP graduates. As stated above, the war produced outstanding civilian generals, the most notable of whom was Forrest. Of all 1200 or so generals in the war, approximately 32 percent were from the army and another 32 percent were from the military (including all services). Approximately 25 percent were attorneys, by far the largest percentage of all non-military generals. The rest were from business, engineering, education, students, clergy, and other occupations. (21) Some non-graduates had combat or command experience from the Mexican War, which was also valued. Many of these were graduates of various state military academies, the two most famous being the Virginia Military Institute and the Military Institute of South Carolina, also called the Citadel. So even among the non-military professionals or non-West Pointer graduates, generals seemed to be of good education and standing.

As the war dragged on, many of these civilian generals reached higher ranks. It is notable that although Grant and Lee met for the surrender of the ANV, each independently chose a non-West Point general to represent them at the surrender ceremony: Chamberlain and Gordon, both of whom had distinguished careers before, during, and after the war. Chamberlain's unexpected ordering V Corps to salute the

vanquished but proud Confederates marching before him was returned in kind by Gordon who stated that it was the beginning of unification.

Perhaps the best measure of the quality of Civil War generals is not from their origins or the battlefield or comparisons of victories or lists of the best or worst, but in what they did to heal the country after the fighting ceased.

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Most of the historical information in this paper is of a general nature, and can be found in most works on the subject; therefore, no footnotes are provided for these data. Footnotes do appear for quotes and for the more obscure items herein.

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