

Chapter 1 : George McClellan - HISTORY

The Peninsula Campaign (also known as the Peninsular Campaign) of the American Civil War was a major Union operation launched in southeastern Virginia from March through July , the first large-scale offensive in the Eastern Theater.

In the century and a half since he led the Union army, his personality and actions have inspired both contempt and adoration—though mostly the former. Biographies include hagiographies, ad hominem attacks, and everything in between. And certainly their criticisms are well founded: He did not take Richmond during his advance up the Peninsula and arguably missed a chance to destroy a Confederate army at Antietam. In the early days of the war, however, the year-old McClellan was called upon to be a strategist, to look far beyond tactics or operations to the larger scheme for fighting the war. His strategy was feasible, even promising. And when Lincoln himself interfered with the plan, the disarray of the Union war effort was complete. McClellan matriculated at the University of Pennsylvania at 13; two years later, he entered West Point, skirting its minimum-age requirement. He graduated second in the class of , which included George Pickett and Thomas J. During the Mexican War, McClellan won two brevet promotions for bravery. In , Secretary of War Jefferson Davis dispatched him to tour European military installations, a visit that included an inspection of Crimean War battlefields. McClellan acquired such a good reputation that the Illinois Central Railroad hired him in as its chief engineer. Within a year, he was vice president of the railroad. When the Confederates bombarded Fort Sumter in April , he was still a civilian. By May, however, he was back in uniform as the commander of the Department of Ohio, and soon led Union forces to victory at Rich Mountain, in what is now West Virginia. When McClellan arrived in the capital late on July 26, , a rapturous crowd greeted him at the railroad station. Few men could have resisted the allure of such Olympian hero worship. A week later, he delivered a grand scheme encompassing military, diplomatic, and political strategies. It was perhaps the first of its kind in American history. His proposal called for simultaneous offensive action against a variety of points of the Confederacy, [see map, page 66] and even suggested asking Mexico for assistance. McClellan hoped to end the war in one vast, multipronged campaign—after proper preparation, of course. The key components included: The plan even raised the possibility of an advance from California via New Mexico. But most important, a force of , would be raised for a thrust into Virginia, which McClellan viewed as the main theater. He intended for this army, under his direct command, to deliver the biggest and most decisive punch. Corresponding Union offensive movements were to key off his advance; once Virginia was taken, his men would drive farther into the Deep South in conjunction with the forces in the West. The navy would support these moves and coordinate with Union troops to seize important Confederate ports. Pleased with his creation, the general wrote his wife: Lincoln tapped McClellan to replace him, and the new commander began to prosecute the war according to that August plan. McClellan knew that political and strategic considerations necessitated an immediate advance into eastern Tennessee, and he had clear objectives: He also ordered Buell to advance on Knoxville. Halleck, the head of the new Department of the West, was more than a decade older than McClellan, an West Point graduate who had made a name for himself outside the army as an engineer, lawyer, and military intellectual. He was known for being irascible and irresolute. No one worked harder than Buell, a smart and fairly talented operational planner. But he was querulous, fierce looking, chilly in manner, and utterly unconcerned that most who knew him did not like him. Notes flew back and forth between the three generals, as McClellan vainly tried to coordinate the efforts of his two subordinates. Buell proposed operational plans, but sat. Halleck counseled McClellan to wait. Lincoln, meanwhile, grew impatient for action, then increasingly depressed. With nearly , men, the Army of the Potomac cost the U. The bottom is out of the tub. On January 13, McClellan rose from his sickbed to attend a third session at which Meigs pressed for movement against the Confederates at Manassas. McClellan mistakenly believed the South had , troops facing him; too many, he insisted, for his men to take on. But a sullen McClellan finally bent—a little. In fact McClellan was trying to figure out how to deploy all the Union forces. As he learned more about the situation in the West, he tweaked the operational advances he had conceived in August. His overall approach—with

the goal of crushing the South had changed little from August. But McClellan continued to overestimate the strength of the Confederate forces, leading to personal, tactical, operational, and strategic paralysis exacerbated by the inaction of Halleck and Buell. In a late January letter to Union adjutant general Lorenzo Thomas, McClellan described his slightly altered strategic plan. On February 2, , one element of the Union war machine had finally begun to uncoil. Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant and Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote struck in Tennessee, taking first Fort Henry, then Fort Donelson, and shattering the cordon of Confederate defensive positions in the West. At the same time, Buell began his long-awaited push into Kentucky and central Tennessee. The surrender of Fort Donelson, combined with the capture of Bowling Green, made the important industrial city of Nashville vulnerable to Union forces. The fall of the forts opened the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers to Union passage, which meant the Union could not only threaten Nashville and nearby Clarksville but also drive into Mississippi and Alabama. As Grant fought the shooting war, McClellan continued to press his battle of ideas with Lincoln. Instead, he tried to make a case for his own plan for the East. In a letter delivered to Secretary of War Edwin M. He reminded Lincoln through Stanton of the poor state of the Union forces in the East and West when he had come to town. Citing his August plan which was proving now to be a handy excuse he wrote: I have not the force I asked for. He wanted to prosecute the war in one great, multipronged campaign, the main thrust being toward Richmond. It could have begun near Washington, as Lincoln had commanded. But McClellan did not want to take this course. The general, to his credit, asked the kind of question that few other Civil War military or political leaders considered: Even if the North won at Manassas, what next? McClellan believed engaging the enemy near Washington would yield little, if any, long-term benefit, even with a victory. It would neither win the war nor destroy the main Confederate army, which could simply fall back when pressed by Union forces. McClellan was correct, as future campaigns proved. Direct attacks against Confederate forces in northern Virginia in and in forced the South to concentrate at or near Richmond to protect its lines of communication and supply. Landing there would force the enemy to abandon its lines in northern Virginia and hurry south to cover Richmond and Norfolk. McClellan promised dramatic, decisive results if this worked: McClellan also argued that the Peninsula launch point provided better Union alternatives in the event of a defeat. He later chose Fort Monroe instead. With rapid movement, he assumed his army could seize Richmond before the enemy could react. McClellan did not guarantee victory, but said: This would allow Union forces to occupy Southern ports, use the Mississippi River, and reassert control over Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. He believed it made far more sense to simply attack the Confederate army near Washington. It would cost less and could be carried out more quickly. A Union victory seemed more assured. Three days later, Buell reported that his advance elements were 10 miles down the rail lines toward Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Halleck had also begun pushing his forces south, along the Mississippi, and was massing troops to take Island No. He wired Halleck on March 2: This would isolate Memphis and Columbus, Kentucky, making them vulnerable. On March 11, McClellan set his own army in motion. With that, the key Union forces were finally on the march and moving into place to deliver the multiple blows that he was sure would cripple the Confederacy. The war might soon be over. Freeing McClellan of some responsibility, the president thought, would give him a chance to revive his wilting reputation. Lincoln, with the help of Secretary of War Stanton, took on the job of general in chief. He also gave Halleck command of all the Union forces in the West. With these moves, the Union strategy spun completely out of control. As commander of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan stayed true to his plan, landing his troops on the Virginia Peninsula and beginning his drive toward Richmond. Conceptually, an operational move to the Peninsula and a quick march on the Confederate capital were not bad ideas. But success depended upon too many things going his way. He expected, for example, the roads and weather to be better on the Peninsula than along the invasion route from Washington. Mitchel begged for reinforcements to help take the city. Yet with McClellan demoted, Mitchel now answered to Halleck and Buell, and the two refused his request, letting an astounding strategic opportunity likely a major early victory slip through their fingers. His idea was far more sound than not.

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The Peninsula (or Peninsular) Campaign was a major Union offensive against the Confederate capital of Richmond led by Major General George B. McClellan in the This website uses cookies for.

Visit Website He returned to West Point after the war and continued to serve as an engineer for three years before being transferred to the western frontier. Following a trip to Europe in , McClellan designed a horse saddle based upon a popular Russian model used in the Crimean War. War Department and remained standard issue equipment for the cavalry until it was disbanded in World War II. Railroad Career McClellan left the military in and became chief engineer of the newly constructed Illinois Central Railroad. By , he had become president of the Ohio and Mississippi River Railroad, headquartered in Cincinnati. During this time, McClellan met and wed Mary Ellen Marcy, the daughter of one of his former commanders. The couple would go on to have two children: Civil War Breaks Out Like many people at the time, McClellan opposed the outright abolition of slavery, though he was committed to the preservation of the Union. At the outbreak of the Civil War in , he accepted command of the volunteer army of the state of Ohio. His skill at training the Ohio Volunteers won him favor in Washington , and he was soon promoted to the rank of major general in the regular army. McClellan once again demonstrated his skill at marshalling his troops into a solid fighting unit, and his early command was marked by a period of high morale. By November , McClellan had assembled an army of , troops and fortified the capital of Washington, D. Despite having assembled a massive fighting force, McClellan was wary of the Confederate Armyâ€”which he believed, through faulty intelligence, to be much stronger than it actually wasâ€”and was reluctant to mount a mass offensive. His inaction annoyed President Abraham Lincoln and newly appointed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, and in January they issued a general order instructing the Army of the Potomac to move south into Confederate territory. Lincoln removed McClellan as general-in-chief in March of , stating that McClellan needed to focus his full attention on an attack on the South. Peninsula Campaign Lincoln preferred an overland campaign toward Richmond, but McClellan proposed an amphibious maneuver in which the Union Army would land on the Virginia Peninsula, effectively circumventing the rebels under General Joseph E. McClellan put his Peninsula Campaign into action in March , landing over , men on the coast and proceeding east toward the Confederate capital. Despite his strong position, McClellan failed to capitalize on his tactical advantage, once again believing that he might be outnumbered. When General Robert E. Lee took control of Confederate forces on June 1, he launched a series of bold offensives that culminated in the Seven Days Battles. Aggravated at what he saw as indecisiveness on the part of McClellan, Lincoln had grown dissatisfied with his most famous general. The Battle of Antietam was the single bloodiest day of combat in the Civil War, and while it was presented as a Union victory in the Northern press, it was in effect a tactical draw. His campaign was marred by a schism that split the Democratic vote along pro- and anti-war lines. Governor McClellan Following his presidential defeat, McClellan resigned from the army and spent several years in Europe. He would return to the railroad business in as president of the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad. From to , he served one term as the governor of New Jersey.

Peninsula Campaign. McClellan's army began to sail from Alexandria on March It was an armada that dwarfed all previous American expeditions, transporting , men, 44 artillery batteries, 1, wagons, over 15, horses, and tons of equipment and supplies.

It was an armada that dwarfed all previous American expeditions, transporting , men, 44 artillery batteries, 1, wagons, over 15, horses, and tons of equipment and supplies. An English observer remarked that it was the "stride of a giant. McClellan continued to believe intelligence reports that credited the Confederates with two or three times the men they actually had. Early in the campaign, Confederate General John B. He created a false impression of many troops behind the lines and of even more troops arriving. He accomplished this by marching small groups of men repeatedly past places where they could be observed at a distance or were just out of sight, accompanied by great noise and fanfare. During this time, General Johnston was able to provide Magruder with reinforcements, but even then there were far fewer troops than McClellan believed were opposite him. After a month of preparation, just before he was to assault the Confederate works at Yorktown, McClellan learned that Johnston had withdrawn up the Peninsula towards Williamsburg. McClellan was thus required to give chase without any benefit of the heavy artillery so carefully amassed in front of Yorktown. McClellan had also placed hopes on a simultaneous naval approach to Richmond via the James River. Basing artillery on a strategic bluff high above a bend in the river , and sinking boats to create an impassable series of obstacles in the river itself, the Confederates had effectively blocked this potential approach to Richmond. He established a supply base on the Pamunkey River a navigable tributary of the York River at White House Landing where the Richmond and York River Railroad extending to Richmond crossed, and commandeered the railroad, transporting steam locomotives and rolling stock to the site by barge. On May 31, as McClellan planned an assault, his army was surprised by a Confederate attack. Johnston saw that the Union army was split in half by the rain-swollen Chickahominy River and hoped to defeat it in detail at Seven Pines and Fair Oaks. McClellan was unable to command the army personally because of a recurrence of malarial fever, but his subordinates were able to repel the attacks. Nevertheless, McClellan received criticism from Washington for not counterattacking, which some believed could have opened the city of Richmond to capture. Johnston was wounded in the battle , and General Robert E. Lee assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia. The first major battle, at Mechanicsville, was poorly coordinated by Lee and his subordinates and caused heavy casualties for little tactical gain. The surprise appearance of Maj. He reported to Washington that he faced , Confederates, but there were actually 85, That night, he decided to withdraw his army to a safer base, well below Richmond, on a portion of the James River that was under control of the Union Navy. In doing so, he may have unwittingly saved his army. But McClellan was also tacitly acknowledging that he would no longer be able to invest Richmond, the object of his campaign; the heavy siege artillery required would be almost impossible to transport without the railroad connections available from his original supply base on the York River. In a telegram to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, reporting on these events, McClellan blamed the Lincoln administration for his reversals. You have done your best to sacrifice this army. McClellan was also fortunate that the failure of the campaign left his army mostly intact, because he was generally absent from the fighting and neglected to name a second-in-command to control his retreat. Military historian Stephen W. Sears wrote, "When he deserted his army on the Glendale and Malvern Hill battlefields during the Seven Days, he was guilty of dereliction of duty. Had the Army of the Potomac been wrecked on either of these fields at Glendale the possibility had been real , that charge under the Articles of War would likely have been brought against him. During the battle of Malvern Hill, he was on a gunboat, the U. Galena, which at one point was ten miles 16 km away down the James River. When the public heard about the Galena, it was yet another enormous embarrassment, comparable to the Quaker Guns at Manassas. Editorial cartoons during the presidential campaign would lampoon McClellan for preferring the safety of a ship while a battle was fought in the distance. Debates were held as to whether the army should be evacuated or attempt to resume an offensive toward Richmond. McClellan maintained his estrangement from Abraham Lincoln by his

continuous call for reinforcements and by writing a lengthy letter in which he proposed strategic and political guidance for the war, continuing his opposition to abolition or seizure of slaves as a tactic. He concluded by implying he should be restored as general-in-chief, but Lincoln responded by naming Maj. Halleck to the post without consulting, or even informing, McClellan. Lincoln and Stanton also offered command of the Army of the Potomac to Maj. Ambrose Burnside, who refused the appointment. Back in Washington, a reorganization of units created the Army of Virginia under Maj. John Pope, who was directed to advance towards Richmond from the northeast. He wrote to his wife before the battle, "Pope will be thrashed Such a villain as he is ought to bring defeat upon any cause that employs him. Read more about this topic: McClellan , Civil War Other articles related to "peninsula campaign, peninsula, campaign":

Chapter 4 : McClellan's War-Winning Strategy | HistoryNet

During spring , Major General George Brinton McClellan's Union army advanced up the Virginia Peninsula toward the Confederate capital. The campaign involved the largest amphibious operation of the war and saw perhaps Robert E. Lee's best chance to destroy the Army of the Potomac.

Balloon Reconnaissance in the Civil War Fighting paused for several weeks as McClellan, hoping to lay siege to Richmond, attempted to move his big guns closer to the city. Lee, meanwhile, began to plan an offensive, convinced that any siege of the Confederate capital would be disastrous. He ordered Thomas J. Stuart on a long ride around the Army of the Potomac to gather intelligence. However, the next day Lee attacked north of the Chickahominy near Mechanicsville. Lee and Jackson finally forced Porter to retreat after a savage struggle there on June 26. That night McClellan abandoned his supply line and began to move south and east to the James. On June 30 Lee had a chance to cut off half the Union army from its retreat route. Lee and James Longstreet saw that a successful artillery concentration might lead to a breakthrough. The artillery action failed, but through a combination of mistakes the Confederates attacked a nearly impregnable position and suffered a serious defeat. Aftermath The Peninsula Campaign had two primary outcomes. Confederate fortunes in the East changed dramatically, with Lee winning several battles and even in defeat keeping his army intact for almost three years. The second, and more important, consequence was the failure of the Union army to capture Richmond. In the early part of the war, when politics were still in flux and before hard-war tactics had hardened the resolve of both sides, such a decisive victory might have meant an end to the war. And Union victory in would likely have been very different than Union victory was in , restoring the Union to circumstances that were close to the status quo of A supplemental order designates Joseph E. March - Union general George B. McClellan of his status as general-in-chief of Union armies, while allowing him to retain command of the Army of the Potomac. April 4, - Union general George B. April 16, - Union troops advance on Confederate defensive fortifications at Dam No. This is the most significant skirmish of the month-long Union siege of Yorktown. May 3, - Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston withdraws his army from the Yorktown defensive fortifications under cover of night. May 5, - Three Union divisions battle to a draw the Confederate rear guard at Williamsburg. May 7, - Confederate general John B. Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston orders his army to cross the Chickahominy River and retreat to the Richmond defensive fortifications. Union general George B. McClellan follows with about half his army over the next week. Johnston takes advantage of a flooding Chickahominy River and attacks a split Union army under George B. Only stubborn fighting and timely reinforcements save McClellan from disaster. Johnston is severely wounded in the fighting. June 12, - Confederate general J. Stuart launches his famous "Ride around McClellan," leaving Richmond with 1,000 troopers and circling the Union Army of the Potomac in a three-day raid that supplies Robert E. Lee with critical intelligence. June 25, - Union general George B. The fighting ends with little tangible result. June 26, - Confederate general Robert E. Confederate forces under Thomas J. June 27, - After a series of assaults during the afternoon, Confederate forces under Robert E. McClellan starts his retreat to the James River. June 29, - After a day of confusion, Confederate general John B. Magruder attacks Union general George B. June 30, - Confederate general Robert E. McClellan is thwarted at Glendale by a combination of hard Union fighting and Confederate failures of command. July 1, - Several assaults on the Union position at Malvern Hill are bloodily repulsed because of Confederate command failures. Nevertheless, Union general George B. McClellan begins his final retreat to the James River during the night. July 4, - Confederate general Robert E. McClellan belatedly occupies the bluff overlooking his base. July 9, - Confederate general Robert E. August - Confederate general Robert E. Lee, hearing of plans to withdraw Union general George B. August - Union general George B. August 26, - The last of Union general George B. University of North Carolina Press, Yorktown to the Seven Days 3 vol. Savas Publishing, , , Johnston and the Defense of Richmond. University Press of Kansas, To the Gates of Richmond: Cite This Entry Burton, B. Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 5 Apr. June 17, Last modified: Give feedback about this entry Name Optional.

Chapter 5 : Peninsula Campaign - HISTORY

George B. McClellan Library of Congress George Brinton McClellan, often fondly called "Little Mac" or the "Young Napoleon," seemed to have the magic touch when he arrived in Washington in August following the Union debacle at Bull Run.

To give time for the bulk of his army to get free, Johnston detached part of his force to make a stand at a large earthen fortification, Fort Magruder, straddling the Williamsburg Road from Yorktown, constructed earlier by Magruder. The Battle of Williamsburg was the first pitched battle of the Peninsula Campaign, in which nearly 41,000 Union and 32,000 Confederates were engaged. They assaulted Fort Magruder and a line of rifle pits and smaller fortifications that extended in an arc southwest from the fort, but were repulsed. Confederate counterattacks, directed by Maj. He had been concerned that the Confederates would leave their fortifications and attack him on the Yorktown Road. The brigade of Brig. Kearny ostentatiously rode his horse out in front of his picket lines to reconnoiter and urged his men forward by flashing his saber with his only arm. There, sharp firefights occurred until late in the afternoon. He personally led the 24th Virginia Infantry on a futile assault and was wounded by a bullet through the shoulder. As the 24th Virginia charged, D. He called off the assault after it had begun, but Hancock ordered a counterattack. McClellan miscategorized his first significant battle as a "brilliant victory" over superior forces. However, the defense of Williamsburg was seen by the South as a means of delaying the Federals, which allowed the bulk of the Confederate army to continue its withdrawal toward Richmond. But McClellan had high hopes for his turning movement, planning to send other divisions those of Brig. The work was continued by torchlight through the night and the only enemy resistance was a few random shots fired by Confederate pickets on the bluff above the landing, ending at about 10 p. Smith to protect the road to Barhamsville and Smith assigned the division of Brig. Wade Hampton, to the task. On May 7, Franklin posted Brig. Slocum and Philip Kearny. Whiting employed artillery fire against the gunboats, but his guns had insufficient range, so he disengaged around 2 p. Union troops moved back into the woods after the Confederates left, but made no further attempt to advance. Although the action was tactically inconclusive, Franklin missed an opportunity to intercept the Confederate retreat from Williamsburg, allowing it to pass unmolested. Stanton and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Lincoln believed that the city of Norfolk was vulnerable and that control of the James was possible, but McClellan was too busy at the front to meet with the president. Exercising his direct powers as commander in chief, Lincoln ordered naval bombardments of Confederate batteries in the area on May 8 and set off in a small boat with his two Cabinet secretaries to conduct a personal reconnaissance on shore. Troops under the command of Maj. Wool, the elderly commander of Fort Monroe, occupied Norfolk on May 10, encountering little resistance. The Confederate defenders, including marines, sailors, and soldiers, were supervised by Navy Cmdr. Drewry, the owner of the property that bore his name. An underwater obstruction of sunken steamers, pilings, debris, and other vessels connected by chains was placed just below the bluff, making it difficult for vessels to maneuver in the narrow river. The battle lasted over three hours and during that time, Galena remained almost stationary and took 45 hits. Her crew reported casualties of 14 dead or mortally wounded and 10 injured. Monitor was also a frequent target, but her heavier armor withstood the blows. Contrary to some reports, the Monitor, despite its squat turret, did not have difficulty bringing its guns to bear and fired steadily against the fort. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. The two wooden gunboats remained safely out of range of the big guns, but the captain of the USS Port Royal was wounded by a sharpshooter. McClellan positioned his army to focus on the northeast sector, for two reasons. White House, the plantation of W. He moved slowly and deliberately, reacting to faulty intelligence that led him to believe the Confederates outnumbered him significantly. By the end of May, the army had built bridges across the Chickahominy and was facing Richmond, straddling the river, with one third of the Army south of the river, two thirds north. This disposition, which made it difficult for one part of the army to reinforce the other quickly, would prove to be a significant problem in the upcoming Battle of Seven Pines.

Chapter 6 : The Peninsula Campaign Ends | Experience the 55 Months that Made America

The Peninsula Campaign Union General George B. McClellan's failed effort to seize Richmond, the Confederate Capital. Had McClellan taken Richmond and toppled the Confederacy, slavery would have most likely survived in the South for some time.

McClellan attended the University of Pennsylvania in at age twelve, resigning himself to the study of law. After two years, he changed his goal to military service. These associations gave McClellan what he considered to be an appreciation of the Southern mind and an understanding of the political and military implications of the sectional differences in the United States that led to the Civil War. Army Corps of Engineers. He arrived near the mouth of the Rio Grande in October , well prepared for action with a double-barreled shotgun, two pistols, a saber, a dress sword, and a Bowie knife. He complained that he had arrived too late to take any part in the American victory at Monterrey in September. During a temporary armistice in which the forces of Gen. Zachary Taylor awaited action, McClellan was stricken with dysentery and malaria , which kept him in the hospital for nearly a month. The malaria would recur in later years—he called it his "Mexican disease". He learned that flanking movements used by Scott at Cerro Gordo are often better than frontal assaults, and the value of siege operations Veracruz. McClellan also developed a disdain for volunteer soldiers and officers, particularly politicians who cared nothing for discipline and training. He chafed at the boredom of peacetime garrison service, although he greatly enjoyed the social life. In March , he was ordered to report to Capt. Marcy at Fort Smith , Arkansas , to serve as second-in-command on an expedition to discover the sources of the Red River. Upon their return to civilization on July 28, they were astonished to find that they had been given up for dead. A sensational story had reached the press that the expedition had been ambushed by 2, Comanches and killed to the last man. McClellan blamed the story on "a set of scoundrels, who seek to keep up agitation on the frontier in order to get employment from the Govt. He also received an assignment to the Department of Texas, with orders to perform a survey of Texas rivers and harbors. In he participated in the Pacific Railroad surveys , ordered by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis , to select an appropriate route for the planned transcontinental railroad. McClellan surveyed the western portion of the northern corridor along the 47th and 49th parallels from St. Paul to the Puget Sound. In doing so, he demonstrated a tendency for insubordination toward senior political figures. In so doing, he missed three greatly superior passes in the near vicinity, which were eventually used for railroads and interstate highways. The governor ordered McClellan to turn over his expedition logbooks, but McClellan steadfastly refused, most likely because of embarrassing personal comments that he had made throughout his adventures. McClellan assessed local defensive capabilities for the secretary. The information was not used until , when President Ulysses S. Grant unsuccessfully attempted to annex the Dominican Republic. Traveling widely, and interacting with the highest military commands and royal families, McClellan observed the siege of Sevastopol. Upon his return to the United States in he requested assignment in Philadelphia to prepare his report, which contained a critical analysis of the siege and a lengthy description of the organization of the European armies. He also wrote a manual on cavalry tactics that was based on Russian cavalry regulations. Like other observers, though, McClellan did not appreciate the importance of the emergence of rifled muskets in the Crimean War, and the fundamental changes in warfare tactics it would require. It became standard issue for as long as the U. McClellan and Mary Ellen Marcy Nelly McClellan McClellan resigned his commission January 16, , and, capitalizing on his experience with railroad assessment, became chief engineer and vice president of the Illinois Central Railroad , and then president of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad in He performed well in both jobs, expanding the Illinois Central toward New Orleans and helping the Ohio and Mississippi recover from the Panic of During the Utah War against the Mormons , he considered rejoining the Army. Douglas in the election. He claimed to have defeated an attempt at vote fraud by Republicans by ordering the delay of a train that was carrying men to vote illegally in another county, enabling Douglas to win the county. This placed him in great demand as the Union mobilized. Ohio Governor William Dennison was the most persistent, so McClellan was commissioned a major general of volunteers and took command of the

Ohio militia on April 23, Unlike some of his fellow Union officers who came from abolitionist families, he was opposed to federal interference with slavery. For this reason, some of his Southern colleagues approached him informally about siding with the Confederacy, but he could not accept the concept of secession. On May 14, he was commissioned a major general in the regular army. At age 34, he outranked everyone in the Army except Lt. Winfield Scott, the general-in-chief. Chase, Treasury Secretary and former Ohio governor and senator. He wrote a letter to Gen. Scott on April 27, four days after assuming command in Ohio, that presented the first proposal for a strategy for the war. It contained two alternatives, each envisioning a prominent role for himself as commander. The first would use 80,000 men to invade Virginia through the Kanawha Valley toward Richmond. The second would use the same force to drive south instead, crossing the Ohio River into Kentucky and Tennessee. Scott rejected both plans as logistically unfeasible. Although he complimented McClellan and expressed his "great confidence in your intelligence, zeal, science, and energy", he replied by letter that the 80,000 men would be better used on a river-based expedition to control the Mississippi River and split the Confederacy, accompanied by a strong Union blockade of Southern ports. This plan, which would require considerable patience of the Northern public, was derided in newspapers as the Anaconda Plan, but eventually proved to be the outline of the successful prosecution of the war. Relations between the two generals became increasingly strained over the summer and fall. He had received intelligence reports on May 26 that the critical Baltimore and Ohio Railroad bridges in that portion of the state were being burned. As he quickly implemented plans to invade the region, he triggered his first serious political controversy by proclaiming to the citizens there that his forces had no intentions of interfering with personal property—including slaves. His first personal command in battle was at Rich Mountain, which he also won, but only after displaying a strong sense of caution and a reluctance to commit reserve forces that would be his hallmark for the rest of his career. His subordinate commander, William S. Rosecrans, bitterly complained that his attack was not reinforced as McClellan had agreed. McClellan, the Napoleon of the Present War". McClellan in Washington, D. He traveled by special train on the main Pennsylvania line from Wheeling through Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and on to Washington City, and was greeted by enthusiastic crowds that met his train along the way. On August 20, several military units in Virginia were consolidated into his department and he immediately formed the Army of the Potomac, with himself as its first commander. It was a remarkable achievement, in which he came to personify the Army of the Potomac and reaped the adulation of his men. Scott, on matters of strategy. He proposed that his army should be expanded to 100,000 men and guns and "crush the rebels in one campaign". He favored a war that would impose little impact on civilian populations and require no emancipation of slaves. But he made no secret of his opposition to the radical Republicans. He told Ellen, "I will not fight for the abolitionists. On August 8, believing that the Confederacy had over 100,000 troops facing him in contrast to the 35,000 they had actually deployed at Bull Run a few weeks earlier, he declared a state of emergency in the capital. By August 19, he estimated 100,000 rebel soldiers on his front. Historian and biographer Stephen W. That fall, for example, Confederate forces ranged from 35,000 to 60,000, whereas the Army of the Potomac in September numbered 100,000 men; in early December, 100,000; by year end, 100,000. Scott as well as many in the War Department was outraged that McClellan refused to divulge any details about his strategic planning, or even such basic information as the strengths and dispositions of his units. McClellan claimed he could not trust anyone in the administration to keep his plans secret from the press, and thus the enemy. In the course of a disagreement about defensive forces on the Potomac River, McClellan wrote to his wife on August 10, "I have to fight my way against him. Rumors traveled through the capital that McClellan might resign, or instigate a military coup, if Scott were not removed. Many historians argue that he was talented in this aspect. General-in-chief [edit] " Quaker guns " logs used as ruses to imitate cannons in former Confederate fortifications at Manassas Junction On November 1, 1862, Winfield Scott retired and McClellan became general-in-chief of all the Union armies. The president expressed his concern about the "vast labor" involved in the dual role of army commander and general-in-chief, but McClellan responded, "I can do it all. In December, the Congress formed a Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, which became a thorn in the side of many generals throughout the war, accusing them of incompetence and, in some cases, treason. McClellan was called as the first witness on December 23, but he contracted typhoid fever and could not

attend. He privately referred to Lincoln, whom he had known before the war as a lawyer for the Illinois Central, as "nothing more than a well-meaning baboon", a "gorilla", and "ever unworthy of He refused to give any specific details of the proposed campaign, even to his friend, newly appointed War Secretary Edwin M. On January 31, he issued a supplementary order for the Army of the Potomac to move overland to attack the Confederates at Manassas Junction and Centreville. Although Lincoln believed his plan was superior, he was relieved that McClellan finally agreed to begin moving, and reluctantly approved. They expressed their confidence to varying degrees. The Confederate forces under General Joseph E. Johnston withdrew from their positions before Washington, assuming new positions south of the Rappahannock, which completely nullified the Urbanna strategy. McClellan revised his plans to have his troops disembark at Fort Monroe , Virginia , and advance up the Virginia Peninsula to Richmond, an operation that would be known as the Peninsula Campaign. On March 11, , Lincoln removed McClellan as general-in-chief, leaving him in command of only the Army of the Potomac, ostensibly so that McClellan would be free to devote all his attention to the move on Richmond. In fact, the general-in-chief position was left unfilled. Lincoln, Stanton, and a group of officers who formed the "War Board" directed the strategic actions of the Union armies that spring. Although McClellan was assuaged by supportive comments Lincoln made to him, in time he saw the change of command very differently, describing it as a part of an intrigue "to secure the failure of the approaching campaign". It was an armada that dwarfed all previous American expeditions, transporting , men, 44 artillery batteries, 1, wagons, over 15, horses, and tons of equipment and supplies. An English observer remarked that it was the "stride of a giant". McClellan continued to believe intelligence reports that credited the Confederates with two or three times the men they actually had. Early in the campaign, Confederate General John B.

Chapter 7 : Peninsular Campaign

Peninsular Campaign, (April 4-July 1,), in the American Civil War, large-scale but unsuccessful Union effort to capture the Confederate capital at Richmond, Va., by way of the peninsula formed by the York and the James rivers.

The long war of the Revolution culminated at length in victorious triumph on these very plains of Yorktown. These frowning battlements on the heights of York are turned in this second war of liberty against the enemies of our country. Shall we, their sons, imitate their example, or basely bow the neck to the yoke of the oppressor? I know your answer. Bankhead Magruder, Major General, Commanding While Yorktown is most significant for the Revolutionary War siege of , which effectively ended the conflict, during the American Civil War was again the site of major siege operations during the Peninsula Campaign of McClellan, persuaded Lincoln that a move on Richmond up what it known as "The Peninsula" was a better approach. And the Union army still held Fort Monroe at the tip of the Peninsula -- giving a base from which to begin operations. The Confederate leaders, however, had planned for this Union offensive. In , Major General John Bankhead Magruder, commander of the Army of the Peninsula, began constructing defensive lines across the peninsula. He anchored his left flank at Yorktown, improving and strengthening existing Revolutionary War fortifications. From Yorktown, 12 miles of new earthworks spanned southward to the Warwick River and then continued along the Warwick River for several miles before angling westward and ending at the James River. Magruder also made effective use of the terrain, using dams to flood the lowlands. He fortified the dams with earthworks and troops. Initially, Magruder had only 11, men to hold his entire line. In April , McClellan reached Fort Monroe, where an armada of almost vessels had delivered his army of over , troops. After making a reconnaissance of the Confederate line and with intelligence reports projecting southern forces as large as his own, McClellan decided to lay siege to Yorktown. Brigadier General Fitz-John Porter was placed in charge of siege operations and work on Union fortifications began. Meanwhile, Magruder, and later Johnston, kept improving the Confederate defenses. Rainy weather favored the defenders. However, the Union army made advances and prepared more positions. Minor forays gave new soldiers combat experience and broke the monotony of the siege. A serious threat came on April 16 when a Union assault tried to force the Confederates to halt work on their defenses at Dam No. When the mooring broke, the balloon drifted over the enemy. Before the Confederates could fire on Porter, a changing wind carried him back to his own lines. Despite this problem, Professor Lowe continued his observation flights. This was an early step in the development of aerial reconnaissance. The Union arsenal of siege guns included Parrott guns ranging from 20 pounders weight of the shell to pounders. There were over 40 siege mortars, the largest being the 13 inch seacoast mortar which weighed almost 9 tons and fired a pound shell. Never before had so much artillery been massed in one place in the history of the world. While Union field batteries fired continuously during the siege, only one siege battery fired on the Confederates. McClellan planned to open his artillery barrage on May 5, concentrating his efforts at Yorktown and along a portion of the Confederate line just outside Yorktown. The plan also called for Union gunboats to give supporting fire from the York River. McClellan, to the irritation of some, always insisted on thoroughness in planning and preparation, and the Peninsula Campaign was no exception. As early as April 30, Johnston had planned to withdraw. Around midnight of May 3, the Confederate heavy guns had ceased their diverting fire, were spiked and left behind by the retreating army. At dawn on the 4th, the Union army discovered Yorktown abandoned. However, the Confederates had left behind a new weapon of war -- land mines, which claimed the lives of several Union soldiers. The Confederate withdrawal was well planned and executed. A mile east of Williamsburg, Magruder had built another fortified line. Johnston elected to delay the Union pursuit here. On the afternoon of the 4th, the Battle of Williamsburg began, lasting into the next day. Confederate casualties for the battle were 1,, while Union losses were 2, On May 6, Johnston resumed his march towards Richmond. On August 26, , General George B. McClellan and most of the Army of the Potomac left the Peninsula. Some regiments were left behind at Yorktown. Yorktown remained in Union control for the rest of the war and was maintained as a military garrison until the summer of In , forces from Yorktown participated in what is known as the Second

Peninsula Campaign against Richmond. Grant ordered Yorktown abandoned. A National Cemetery, established in , contains over 2, interments, mostly Union dead. Nearby is a small Confederate burial ground of undetermined size.

Chapter 8 : Peninsular Campaign | HistoryNet

Peninsular Campaign Following the Union embarrassment at the First Battle of Bull Run, General George B. McClellan replaced Irvin McDowell. The new commander's plan involved building up a massive army over the winter of , then capturing the Confederate capital of Richmond by pushing up the peninsula between the York and James rivers.

Reserve force commanded by Maj. Smith Cavalry commanded by Brig. Holmes at Fredericksburg, and 9, under Maj. Benjamin Huger at Norfolk. In Richmond, General Robert E. Lee had returned from work on coastal fortifications in the Carolinas and on March 13 became the chief military adviser to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Approximately 50, men under Maj. He had planned to have 30, under McDowell to join him. Its primary purpose was to shield information from the Union about a second line extending from Yorktown to Mulberry Island. This Warwick Line consisted of redoubts, rifle pits, and fortifications behind the Warwick River. By enlarging two dams on the river, the river was turned into a significant military obstacle in its own right. The third defensive line was a series of forts at Williamsburg, which waited unmanned for use by the army if it had to fall back from Yorktown. It was an armada that dwarfed all previous American expeditions, transporting , men, 44 artillery batteries, 1, wagons, over 15, horses, and tons of equipment and supplies. An English observer remarked that it was the "stride of a giant. Navy could not assure McClellan that they could protect operations on either the James or the York, so his plan of amphibiously enveloping Yorktown was abandoned, and he ordered an advance up the Peninsula to begin April 4. Magruder, a fan of theatrics, set up a successful deception campaign. By moving one company in circles through a glen, he gained the appearance of an endless line of reinforcements marching to relieve him. He also spread his artillery very far apart and had it fire sporadically at the Union lines. Federals were convinced that his works were strongly held, reporting that an army of , was in their path. As the two armies fought an artillery duel, reconnaissance indicated to Keyes the strength and breadth of the Confederate fortifications, and he advised McClellan against assaulting them. McClellan ordered the construction of siege fortifications and brought his heavy siege guns to the front. In the meantime, Gen. Johnston brought reinforcements for Magruder. Irvin McDowell , would be withheld for the defense of Washington , instead of joining him on the Peninsula as McClellan had planned. McClellan protested that he was being forced to lead a major campaign without his promised resources, but he moved ahead anyway. By mid April, Magruder commanded 35, men, barely enough to defend his line. The siege preparations at Yorktown consisted of 15 batteries with more than 70 heavy guns. When fired in unison, these batteries would deliver over 7, pounds of ordnance onto the enemy positions with each volley. Magruder realized the weakness of his position and ordered it strengthened. Three regiments under Brig. Howell Cobb , with six other regiments nearby, were improving their position on the west bank of the river overlooking the dam. McClellan became concerned that this strengthening might impede his installation of siege batteries. Behind the lines, Cobb organized a defense with his brother, Colonel Thomas Cobb of the Georgia Legion , and attacked the Vermonters, who had occupied the Confederate rifle pits. Unable to obtain reinforcements, the Vermont companies withdrew across the dam, suffering casualties as they retreated. At about 5 p. This maneuver failed as the 6th Vermont came under heavy Confederate fire and were forced to withdraw. Some of the wounded men were drowned as they fell into the shallow pond behind the dam. Johnston knew that the impending bombardment would be difficult to withstand, so began sending his supply wagons in the direction of Richmond on May 3. Escaped slaves reported that fact to McClellan, who refused to believe them. He was convinced that an army whose strength he estimated as high as , would stay and fight. On the evening of May 3, the Confederates launched a brief bombardment of their own and then fell silent. Early the next morning, Heintzelman ascended in an observation balloon and found that the Confederate earthworks were empty. He sent cavalry under Brig. George Stoneman in pursuit and ordered Brig. To give time for the bulk of his army to get free, Johnston detached part of his force to make a stand at a large earthen fortification, Fort Magruder , straddling the Williamsburg Road from Yorktown , constructed earlier by Magruder. The Battle of Williamsburg was the first pitched battle of the Peninsula Campaign, in which nearly 41, Union and 32, Confederates were engaged. They assaulted Fort Magruder and

a line of rifle pits and smaller fortifications that extended in an arc southwest from the fort, but were repulsed. Confederate counterattacks, directed by Maj. He had been concerned that the Confederates would leave their fortifications and attack him on the Yorktown Road. The brigade of Brig. Kearny ostentatiously rode his horse out in front of his picket lines to reconnoiter and urged his men forward by flashing his saber with his only arm. There, sharp firefights occurred until late in the afternoon. Early and posted them on the grounds of the College of William and Mary. He personally led the 24th Virginia Infantry on a futile assault and was wounded by a bullet through the shoulder. As the 24th Virginia charged, D. He called off the assault after it had begun, but Hancock ordered a counterattack. McClellan miscategorized his first significant battle as a "brilliant victory" over superior forces. However, the defense of Williamsburg was seen by the South as a means of delaying the Federals, which allowed the bulk of the Confederate army to continue its withdrawal toward Richmond. But McClellan had high hopes for his turning movement, planning to send other divisions those of Brig. The work was continued by torchlight through the night and the only enemy resistance was a few random shots fired by Confederate pickets on the bluff above the landing, ending at about 10 p. Smith to protect the road to Barhamsville and Smith assigned the division of Brig. Wade Hampton , to the task. On May 7, Franklin posted Brig. Slocum and Philip Kearny. Whiting employed artillery fire against the gunboats, but his guns had insufficient range, so he disengaged around 2 p. Union troops moved back into the woods after the Confederates left, but made no further attempt to advance. Although the action was tactically inconclusive, Franklin missed an opportunity to intercept the Confederate retreat from Williamsburg, allowing it to pass unmolested. Stanton and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Lincoln believed that the city of Norfolk was vulnerable and that control of the James was possible, but McClellan was too busy at the front to meet with the president. Exercising his direct powers as commander in chief, Lincoln ordered naval bombardments of Confederate batteries in the area on May 8 and set off in a small boat with his two Cabinet secretaries to conduct a personal reconnaissance on shore. Troops under the command of Maj. Wool , the elderly commander of Fort Monroe, occupied Norfolk on May 10, encountering little resistance. The Confederate defenders, including marines, sailors, and soldiers, were supervised by Navy Cmdr. Drewry the owner of the property that bore his name of the Southside Heavy Artillery. An underwater obstruction of sunken steamers, pilings, debris, and other vessels connected by chains was placed just below the bluff, making it difficult for vessels to maneuver in the narrow river. The battle lasted over three hours and during that time, Galena remained almost stationary and took 45 hits. Her crew reported casualties of 14 dead or mortally wounded and 10 injured. Monitor was a frequent target, but her heavier armor withstood the blows. The two wooden gunboats remained safely out of range of the big guns, but the captain of the USS Port Royal was wounded by a sharpshooter. McClellan positioned his ,man army to focus on the northeast sector, for two reasons. White House, the plantation of W. He moved slowly and deliberately, reacting to faulty intelligence that led him to believe the Confederates outnumbered him significantly. By the end of May, the army had built bridges across the Chickahominy and was facing Richmond, straddling the river, with one third of the Army south of the river, two thirds north. This disposition, which made it difficult for one part of the army to reinforce the other quickly, would prove to be a significant problem in the upcoming Battle of Seven Pines.

Chapter 9 : Peninsula Campaign

Peninsula Campaign Other names: *Peninsular Campaign* The first major campaign for the Army of the Potomac, the Peninsula Campaign was the concept of George B. McClellan, who felt the best way to end the rebellion was to capture the Confederate capital.

August 13, 1862” Major General George B. McClellan tried one last time to persuade the Federal high command to cancel the order to pull the Army of the Potomac off the Virginia Peninsula. Halleck had ordered him to leave the Peninsula a week ago, he intended to stay and coax General Robert E. I will fall back. He cited the overwhelming logistical problems that went with moving such a large army to Aquia Creek, as well as the lack of adequate living space for his men once they got there. It is in much better position to do so from here than from Aquia. He received a final message from Halleck in the early hours of the 14th: There is no change of plans. You will send your troops as rapidly as possible. There is no difficulty in landing them. According to your own accounts there is now no difficulty in withdrawing your forces. Do so with all possible rapidity. I return at once. I had hoped to have had a longer and fuller conversation with you, after traveling so far for the purpose. Galena, Port Royal, and Satellite. His Federals had been as close as five miles to the Confederate capital, only to be driven off and neutralized on the Peninsula. Gramercy Books, [edition] , p. Fort Sumter to Perryville New York: Vintage Books, , p. Checkmark Books, , p. Simon and Schuster, , p. Da Capo Press, Inc. Time-Life Books, , p. Northern Virginia Campaign Advertisements.