



**The Union Sixth Army Corps in the
Chancellorsville Campaign: A Study of the
Engagements of Second Fredericksburg, Salem
Church and Banks's Ford, May 3-4, 1863**

Philip W. Parsons

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The winter of 1862-1863 found the Union's Army of the Potomac in sad shape. Bloody battles, multiple defeats, lack of adequate provisions and high desertion rates had left even the hardest Union soldiers dispirited. With Major General Joseph Hooker's advent to the army command, he set about revamping the army's conditions, establishing a generous furlough program, implementing a system of corps insignia and setting new sanitary standards. While his administrative efforts were extremely successful, his battlefield manner left something to be desired. Instructed by President Lincoln to make the destruction of General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia the Union's top priority, Hooker mounted the Chancellorsville Campaign. Lee's aggressive battlefield manner coupled with Hooker's failure to initiate an assault led to a sound defeat by Confederate forces and left Hooker--who ultimately had only himself and his lack of initiative to blame--looking for a scapegoat. Among those Hooker attempted to hold responsible was the courageous Sixth Army Corps, the unit responsible for the sole Union victory of the entire campaign. This military history focuses on the battlefield engagements of the Union's Sixth Army Corps on May 3 and 4, 1863. Compiled from contemporary accounts as well as a variety of postwar histories, it examines the role which the Sixth Army Corps and their commander, Major General John Sedgwick, played in the Chancellorsville Campaign. Particular attention is given to evaluating the impact that the Corps' actions had on Major General Hooker's offensive and refuting the accusations which Hooker made following Federal retreat from the engagement. The battles of Second Fredericksburg, Salem Church and Banks's Ford are consequently examined in detail. Appendices provide information detailing the organization of the Army of Northern Virginia, the Army of the Potomac and the Sixth Army Corps in the spring of 1863.

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