

Railroads, Herman Haupt, and the Battle of Gettysburg

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US Railroads just before the Civil War

- ◆ The Union had 20,500 miles of railroad track, and the railroads actually formed a network.
- ◆ The Confederacy had 9,500 miles of railroad track, originally built from fields to seaports, and had only limited interconnections.
- ◆ Some historians believe that the Confederacy would have had a better chance of breaking up the Union by force of arms had it attempted to do so a decade earlier, before the Union had built its railroad network.



Herman Haupt:

The Pre-War Years - 1

- ◆ Haupt was born in Philadelphia in 1817 and raised there.
- ◆ He graduated from West Point at age 18 in 1835, in the same class as George Meade, with an engineering degree, and they were commissioned as 2nd Lieutenants in the US Army.
- ◆ The two cadets gained reputations for being highly competent but difficult to deal with.
- ◆ Haupt resigned his commission after 3 months to go to work for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a surveyor for what was to become the Gettysburg Railroad.
- ◆ In 1841, he became a professor of mathematics and civil engineering at Pennsylvania College in Gettysburg; resigned in 1848 to join the Pennsylvania RR where he became chief engineer in 1853.
- ◆ On the PRR, he designed bridges and tunnels and oversaw construction of its main line across Pennsylvania between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.



Herman Haupt:

The Pre-War Years - 2

- ◆ Haupt left the Pennsylvania RR in 1856 to join the project to build the 5-mile Hoosac Tunnel through the Hoosac Mountain Range in northwestern Massachusetts on the Troy & Greenfield RR.
- ◆ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts agreed to lend him \$2 million for the project.
- ◆ The backers of the Western Railroad, a parallel and competing line across southern Massachusetts opposed the construction of the Hoosac Tunnel and, in attacks in the press, called Haupt a swindler.
- ◆ They persuaded newly-elected Massachusetts Governor John Andrew to withhold disbursements of the loan.
- ◆ Haupt was litigating the issue with the commonwealth when the Civil War broke out in 1861.

Herman Haupt:

The Civil War Before Gettysburg - 1

- ◆ In 1861, Haupt went to Washington to seek appointment as Assistant Secretary of War, but the position went instead to a colleague from the Pennsylvania RR, Thomas Scott.
- ◆ In April 1862, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, at the suggestion of Scott, called Haupt to Washington and asked him to spend 2 or 3 weeks looking into railroad operations.
- ◆ Pleased with Haupt's reports, Secretary Stanton in May appointed him chief of construction and transportation in the Army of the Rappahannock and commissioned him a colonel.
- ◆ Haupt nominally reported to Colonel Daniel McCallum, an official from the Erie Railroad who was serving as superintendent of the U.S. Military Railroads.
- ◆ However, Haupt's orders made him independent of all authority except that of the secretary of war.

Herman Haupt:

The Civil War Before Gettysburg - 2

- ◆ Haupt stipulated that he would not wear a uniform, and that he would accept no compensation beyond his expenses. He wanted the ability to spend time resolving Hoosac Tunnel matters in Massachusetts.
- ◆ Upon assuming his duties, Haupt became immediately frustrated as various generals sought to control train operations.
- ◆ General John Pope, commander of the Union Army of the Rappahanock, wanted to make Haupt's railroad organization subordinate to his army's Quartermaster Department.
- ◆ That was too much for Haupt to take, and a month and a half after accepting his position, he decided to resign and return to Massachusetts.

Herman Haupt:

The Civil War Before Gettysburg - 3

- ◆ Shortly thereafter, Assistant Secretary of War Peter Watson telegraphed Haupt, "Come back immediately; cannot get along without you; not a wheel turning on any of the [rail]roads."
- ◆ Haupt returned, but continued to have run-ins with generals who would stop trains and reassign them to specific units.
- ◆ Haupt accused them of causing train delays on the Orange & Alexandria RR that kept 10,000 Union troops out of the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862.
- ◆ As a result, Haupt sought and obtained orders from Army Chief of Staff General Henry Halleck on August 24, 1862, stating, "The railroad is entirely under your control. No military officer has any right to interfere."
- ◆ Even though the U.S. Military Railroads and its subordinate Railroad Construction Corps were military organizations within the War Department, they were staffed with civilian volunteers, including former slaves.

Herman Haupt:

The Civil War Before Gettysburg - 4

- ◆ Haupt was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers at a Cabinet meeting on September 5, 1862, in part because of improved railroad operations, and in part because of the quality of his reporting from the front directly to President Abraham Lincoln.
- ◆ However, Haupt did not formally accept this commission either. He again explained that he would accept no pay beyond his expenses because he did not want to limit his freedom to work on his private business matters.
- ◆ Consequently, Haupt was placed "in charge of," but not given the title "Commander of," the U.S. Military Railroads. Rather, his title was chief of construction and transportation in the War Department.
- ◆ Much to McCallum's displeasure, Haupt had been promoted over him and he remained a colonel with the title of military director and superintendent, U.S. Military Railroads.
- ◆ Throughout the last half of 1862 and the first half of 1863, Haupt made occasional trips to Massachusetts to pursue his litigation against the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Governor Andrew.

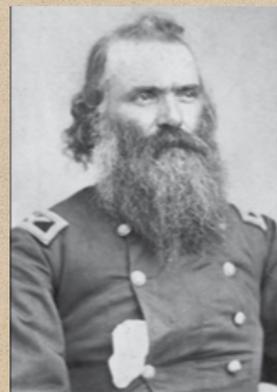
Herman Haupt: The Civil War Before Gettysburg - 5



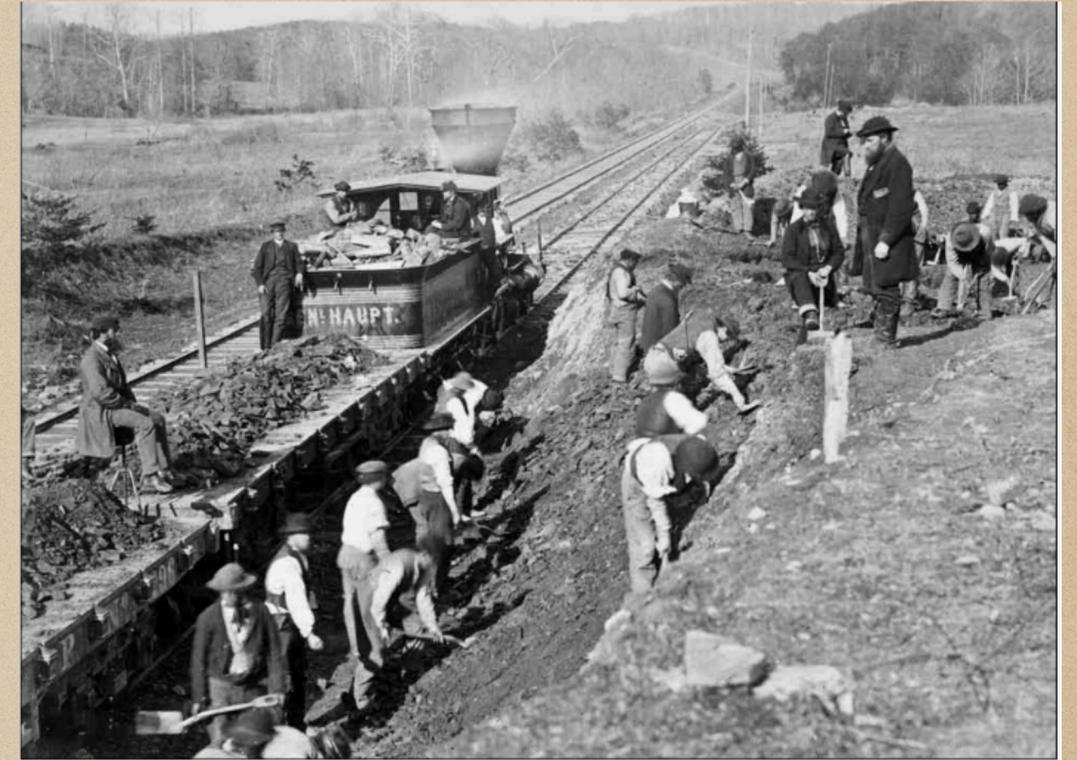
Herman Haupt in a
brigadier general's uniform



The wood-burning 4-4-0 locomotive Genl. Haupt
at the Alexandria, Virginia, roundhouse



Daniel McCallum,
Colonel, US Army
Superintendent, U.S Military Railroads



Railroad Construction Corps workers repairing
Orange & Alexandria RR at Devereux Station. The man
standing atop the embankment is believed to be Haupt

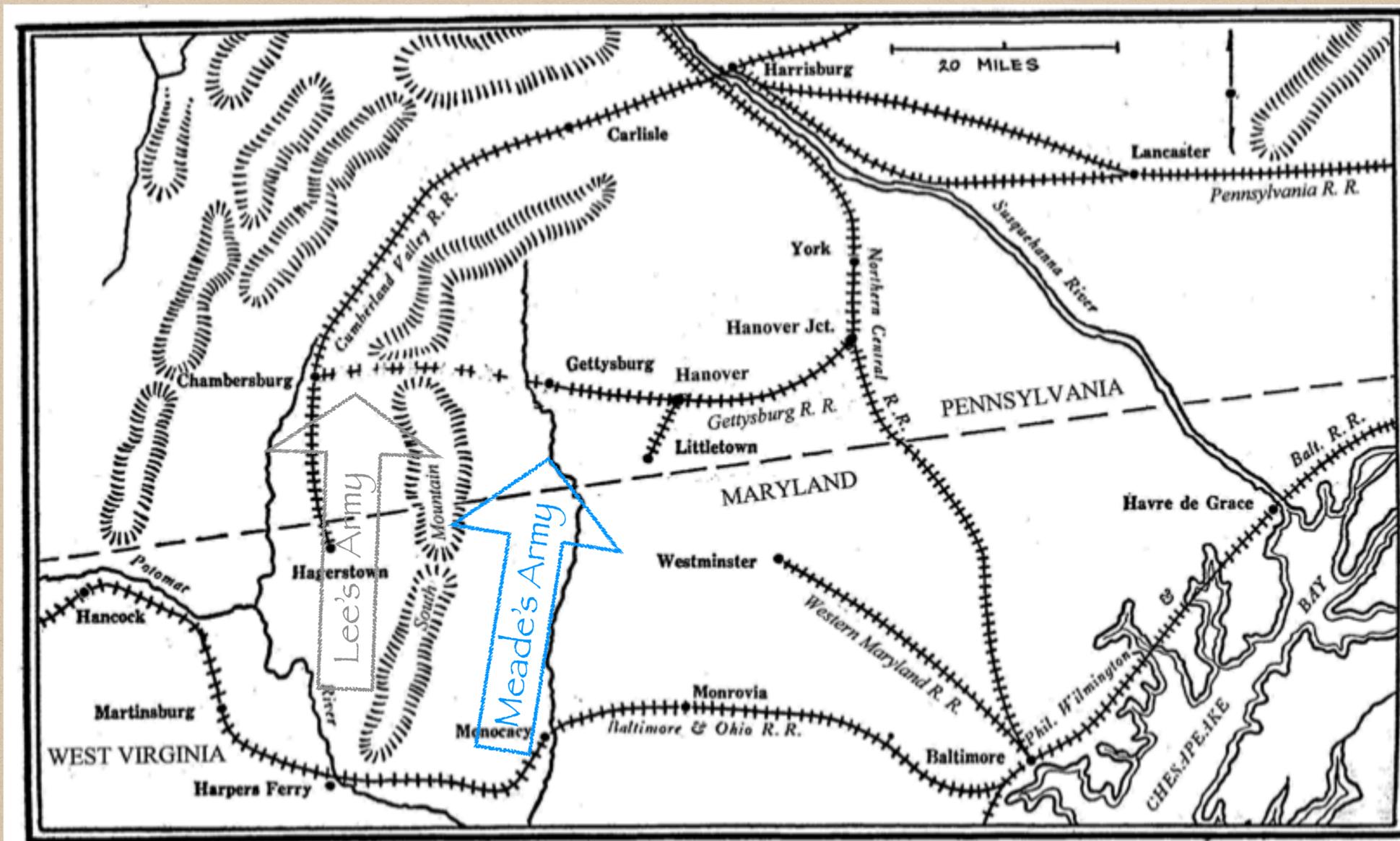
All photos credit: Library of Congress

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 1

- ◆ In June 1863, Confederate General Robert E. Lee had two strategic objectives for the Army of Northern Virginia before it was to move on Washington, DC:
 - ◆ Destroy the Baltimore & Ohio RR between Harper's Ferry and Martinsburg, and
 - ◆ Destroy the Pennsylvania RR main line and its bridge across the Susquehanna River at Harrisburg.
- ◆ These objectives would isolate the large East Coast cities of Washington, Baltimore, Wilmington, and Philadelphia by severing the two trunk-line railroads bringing them agricultural and manufactured products from the mid-west.
- ◆ By late June, Lee had accomplished his first objective and was moving north along the Cumberland Valley RR toward Harrisburg.

Armies and Railroads in the Vicinity of Gettysburg, late June 1863



Source: George Edgar Turner, *Victory Rode the Rails: The Strategic Place of the Railroads in the Civil War*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, c1953, p. 276 (annotated)

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 2

- ◆ General Lee's scouts reported sighting the Union Army under its new commander, General George Meade, moving north on the east side of South Mountain.
- ◆ Confederate General Richard Ewell's forces, moving ahead of the main body of Lee's army in south-central Pennsylvania, had already damaged the tracks of the Gettysburg and the Northern Central RRs.
- ◆ On Saturday, June 27, as word reached Washington of an impending battle in Pennsylvania, Haupt's authority was expanded to cover all the commercial railroads in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.
- ◆ Haupt knew the area very well, having lived and worked in the area, and still owned a house in Gettysburg.

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 3

- ◆ On Tuesday, June 30, after being unaccountably delayed by Secretary Stanton for three days, Haupt left Washington for Harrisburg to gather information for General Meade.
- ◆ Because the Northern Central RR's tracks had been damaged by General Ewell's troops, Haupt had to take a round-about route to Harrisburg through Philadelphia and Reading.
- ◆ Upon arriving in Harrisburg that evening, he first met with Governor Curtin to confirm that the Pennsylvania RR and its Susquehanna River bridge were being protected.
- ◆ After meeting with scouts, Haupt sent a telegram to General Halleck informing him of Lee's movements.
- ◆ He stated that he believed Lee was concentrating his troops at Gettysburg, and he requested that a mounted courier be dispatched to General Meade with that information.

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 4

- ◆ On Wednesday, July 1, the day the battle started at Gettysburg, Haupt had a busy day.
- ◆ First, he went to Westminster, Maryland, a town about 20 miles southeast of Gettysburg, to investigate the feasibility of using the Western Maryland RR that ran between there and Baltimore.
- ◆ The Western Maryland RR was a single-track line with no passing sidings and no yard tracks at Westminster.
- ◆ Normally, only one five-car train was permitted on the line at a time, and only one, or at most two, round trips were operated on a given day. Haupt found that to be unsatisfactory.

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 5

- ◆ In the afternoon of July 1, Haupt traveled on to Baltimore, where, using his authority, he commandeered locomotives; freight, passenger, and baggage cars; and crews from the major railroads serving Baltimore.
- ◆ He directed that, as soon as possible, five or six 10-car trains would leave Baltimore in convoy, running one immediately behind another to Westminster.
- ◆ Haupt instructed General Meade's quartermaster to have troops available at Westminster to simultaneously unload all five or six trains. When all the trains were unloaded, they would back down the line to Baltimore. Immediately upon their arrival, another set of trains that had already been loaded would depart for Westminster. Three round trips a day were planned.
- ◆ Instead of carrying 5 or 10 cars of freight or passengers daily between Baltimore and Westminster, the WMRR could now carry 150 to 180 cars a day. This was a massive increase in track capacity.

Herman Haupt:

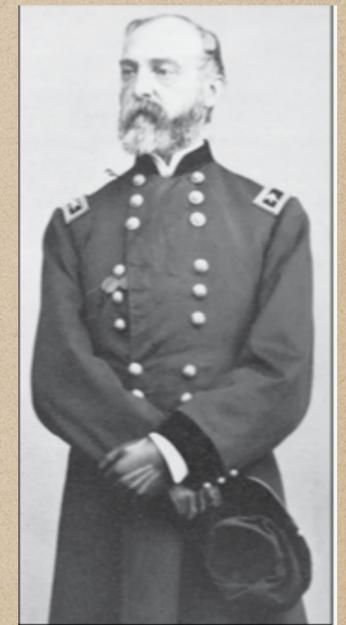
The Battle of Gettysburg - 6

- ◆ Because there were no telegraph lines in the area, Haupt set up a pony express to provide communications between Baltimore and Westminster.
- ◆ Still on July 1, Haupt ordered Adna Anderson to move his 400-man Railroad Construction Corps (mostly former slaves) from Alexandria, VA to Baltimore immediately to stabilize track on the Western Maryland RR and to begin reconstruction of the Northern Central and Gettysburg RRs so that trains could run directly to Gettysburg.
- ◆ By Friday, July 3, the third day of the battle, the Western Maryland RR had moved 1,500 tons of cargo to Westminster, and returning trains brought out more than 2,000 wounded soldiers to hospitals in Baltimore. The plan worked perfectly.
- ◆ By the end of July 3, the Railroad Construction Corps completed reconstruction of the lines to Gettysburg, and the first trains ran directly there on July 4, the day after the battle ended.

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 7

- ◆ One historian noted: "It is farther from Baltimore to Gettysburg than from Richmond to Fredericksburg, yet in four days during the heat of desperate battle, Haupt accomplished for Meade what the Confederate organization could not do for Lee in four months of quiet."
- ◆ On Sunday, July 5, Haupt met with General Meade to inquire about movement plans so that arrangements could be made for supplies. Meade said he had no plans as his men required rest.
- ◆ Haupt argued that Meade would miss an opportunity to cut off Lee's retreat, but Meade remained adamant that a period of rest was needed.
- ◆ Haupt then requisitioned a locomotive to take him to Washington that evening.



General George Meade

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 8

- ◆ On Monday, July 6, Haupt met separately with Army Chief of Staff General Halleck, Secretary of War Stanton, and President Lincoln to urge them to order Meade to pursue Lee, saying that to “finish up the war,” Lee could be intercepted either as he retreated down the Cumberland Valley, or by forwarding Union troops by rail from Alexandria to Front Royal, VA to stop Lee in the Shenandoah Valley.
- ◆ On Tuesday, July 7, Halleck ordered Meade to pursue and stop Lee before he crossed the Potomac River, but Meade did not do so.
- ◆ On Thursday, July 9, Haupt returned to Gettysburg to oversee the rebuilding of the Cumberland Valley and Northern Central RRs.
- ◆ On Tuesday, July 14, it was recognized that Lee and his army had already crossed the Potomac River back into Virginia, so Haupt was ordered to withdraw the Railroad Construction Corps from Pennsylvania and return it to Alexandria where it would work on securing the Orange & Alexandria and the Manassas Gap RRs.

Herman Haupt:

The Battle of Gettysburg - 9

- ◆ At the urging of Massachusetts Governor Andrews, who was Haupt's nemesis and who wanted to keep him away from the Commonwealth, Secretary Stanton, through the acting assistant secretary of war, issued an order to Haupt on September 1, 1863, stating that his commission would be vacated in five days if he did not formally accept it.
- ◆ Haupt, however, was still unwilling to accept his commission unconditionally and wrote Secretary Stanton proposing a civilian appointment as "Chief of a Bureau of Military Railroads."

Herman Haupt:

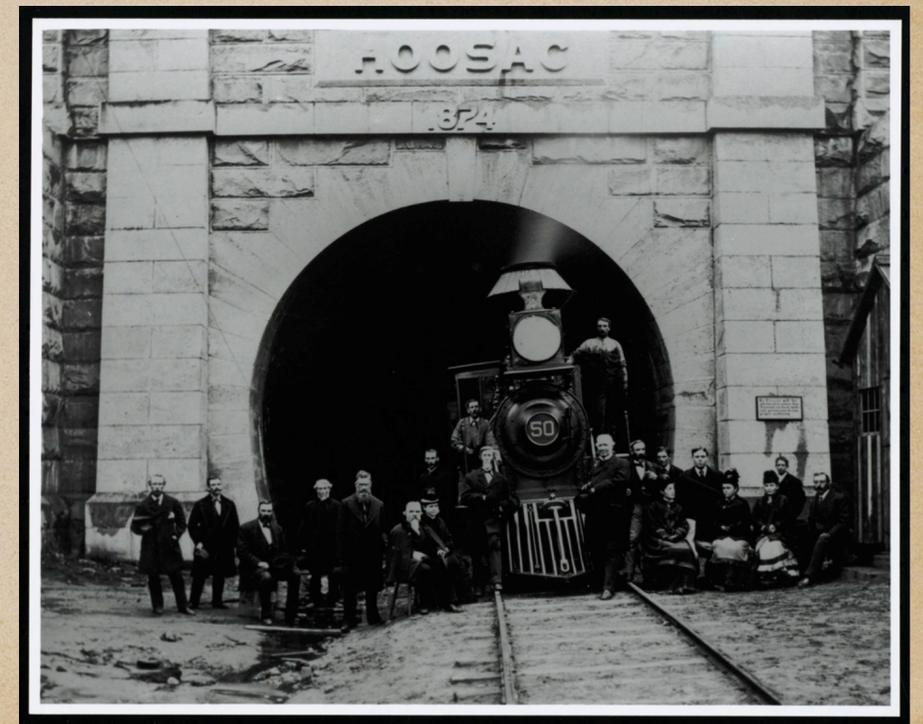
The Battle of Gettysburg - 10

- ◆ Secretary Stanton rejected Haupt's proposal, and relieved him from duty on September 14.
- ◆ Haupt's subordinate, Colonel McCallum, succeeded him and was promoted to brigadier general later that month following a successful redeployment by rail of 23,000 troops from Catlett's Station, VA to Chattanooga, TN.
- ◆ At age 46, and after 16 months of distinguished service with the Union Army, Haupt left Washington and moved back to Massachusetts.

Herman Haupt:

The Post-War Years - 1

- ◆ General McCallum had been displeased when Haupt was promoted over him, and did not get along well with Haupt when reporting to him.
- ◆ As a result, McCallum deliberately omitted any reference to Haupt in the final report of the US Military Railroads at the end of the Civil War.
- ◆ Haupt went on to a successful career in railroading and engineering.
- ◆ He won his lawsuit with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but only received a small portion of the money he sought for his work on the Hoosac Tunnel, which was completed in 1874.



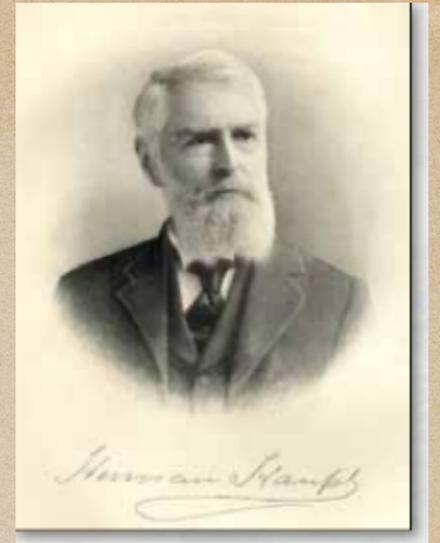
Herman Haupt:

The Post-War Years - 2

- ◆ In Pennsylvania, Haupt built the nation's first extensive oil pipeline, the Tidewater Pipeline, from the oil fields in the northwest part of the Commonwealth to Philadelphia, earning significant wealth from this project.
- ◆ He served as general manager of the Richmond & Danville RR in the mid-1870s, and as general manager of the Northern Pacific RR in the early 1880s.
- ◆ Haupt became president of the Dakota & Great Southern RR in 1884.
- ◆ In 1889, former Massachusetts Governor John Andrew admitted to Haupt that his Hoosac Tunnel policy had been a mistake, and that he had done a great injustice to Haupt.

Herman Haupt:

The Post-War Years - 3



In 1904, when Haupt was the oldest living graduate of West Point, he wrote this letter to his son:

"I ... saved the day at Gettysburg and saved the country; for defeat would have been sure. I was the only one who interpreted correctly the design of Lee's movements.... my telegram gave Meade the only information he received; he did not at the time know either the position of his own corps or those of the enemy. ... If [Meade] had moved and taken possession with a small part of his force and a few batteries on the south side of the river escape would have been hopeless, Lee would have surrendered, the war would have been over and Meade would have been President of the United States, but there was nothing in him. He was a weak character and not equal to the occasion. ... The public worshipped Meade as a hero and erected monuments to his memory. Tribute is often paid to the most unworthy as in the case of [Union General George] McClellan who was the worst of the many failures. I have been led inevitably into a scrap of lost history but I do feel somewhat proud of my war record in which I can discover no mistakes, but, on the contrary, much of inestimable value to the country but never recognized or appreciated, on the contrary treated with ingratitude by Stanton to please Governor Andrew who was at the time a political person and my bitter enemy."

Herman Haupt:

The Post-War Years - 4

- ◆ Herman Haupt died on December 14, 1905, at age 88, of a heart attack while riding a Pennsylvania RR train with his son from New York to Philadelphia.
- ◆ Because Haupt never formally accepted his commissions as Colonel and as Brigadier General, the Adjutant General of the Army concluded in 1913 that, while Haupt held the nominal ranks for enforcing decisions, he never was legally a member of the military establishment of the United States.

Questions?

Email me, call me, or talk with me after the session!

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Postscript

Ditmeyer and Haupt share the following similarities in their lives:

- ◆ Both worked for a half-dozen different railroads, including ones that were predecessors of today's BNSF, NS, and CSX
- ◆ Both had the following titles at some point in their respective careers:
 - ◆ Second Lieutenant, US Army
 - ◆ Professor
 - ◆ Chief Engineer
 - ◆ General Manager
- ◆ Haupt served with the US Military Railroads; Ditmeyer served in its successor, the 3rd Transportation Brigade (Railways), an Army Reserve unit
- ◆ Both rode trains with their sons