The Battle Of Antietam Essay, Research Paper

The battle of Antietam

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In the battle of Antietam, also known as the bloodiest battle of the Civil War, the Union forces vastly out-numbered the Confederates. The Unions inadequate commanders and generals included, Major-General George Brinton McClellan, Major-General Joseph Hooker (1Corps), Major-General Edwin V. Sumner (2 Corps), Major-General Fitz-John Porter (5 Corps), Major-general William B. Franklin (4 Corps), Major-General Ambrose E. Burnside (11 Corps), Major-General Joseph Mansfield (8 Corps), and Brigadier-General Alfred Pleasonton (Cavalry Division). The Union army was split up into 195 infantry regiments, 14 cavalry regiments and 63 batteries, which gave McClellan a total strength of approximately 87,000 men and 378 guns. Of these 2,108 men were killed, 9549 were wounded, and 753 were captured or missing. The Confederate Generals and leaders were as follows: General Robert E. Lee, Major-General Thomas J. Jackson (Jackson’s Corps), Major-General James Longstreet (Longstreet’s Corps), and Brigadier-General William Pendleton (Reserve Artillery). Lee’s strength only amassed to 86 regiments of infantry, 15 of cavalry and 73 batteries of artillery which gave him a total of 40,000 men and 292 guns. Of this force 1,512 men were killed, 7,816 wounded, and 1,844 captured or missing.

At 2 P.M., 117 September 1862, the actual order to start the attack on Lee was given but due to delays only a desultory artillery engagement took place. Due to the delay the original plan was changed. The new plan included moving Hooker’s Corps across the northern end of the creek that was farthest from the confederate’s lines. With Sumner and Mansfeild standing by, McClellan launched a devastating flank assault on the left side of Lee’s army. At 6 P.M., the men from Hooker’s Corps crossed the creek and stumbled into Jackson’s skirmish line. Thus alerting Jackson, after a small skirmish, to the presence of and movement of McClellan’s right wing. Lee was ready to face McClellan even though he only had 27,000 troops deployed. Where as McClellan had 75,000 in battle array. At 6.AM. Hooker sent his 10 brigades down the Hagerstown Turnpike. Brigadier-General Lawton sent a strong fore of Rebel Infantry into the cornfield, witch laid in the path of the Union attack. From hooker’s position he could see the sun shining off the bayonets of the confederate soldiers hidden in the corn. Hooker opens fire on the soldiers with his 36 cannons as well as Mclellans heavy battery.

Jackson called for more troops. In response . H. Hill sent up three of his brigades, and John Bell Hood, Who had taken the men of his demi-division out of the line to cook their first hot meal in three days, also came up to meet the Yankee onslaught. Jackson’s counter attack broke like a great wave on a breakwater. The tiring soldiers of the 1 corps fell back in confusion. Amongst the attacks and counter attacks Major-General Joseph K.F. Mansfield was hit with a stray shot. Brigadier-General Alpheus Williams tock over the 8 corps. Lee then ordered Walker and McLaws from the reserves to strengthen the left flank. By this time, Jackson had stopped the Union attacks but more than half his own command was now wounded or dead. Jackson (Stonwall) watched the long blue lines of troops approaching, and hurriedly scraped together the remains of his command, and placed them behind trees and rocks. When the Union forces were no more than a few yards away from the edge of the woods, the Confederates popped up and delivered a devistating volley of lead shot to the Union soldiers. Then Walker and Mclaws reached the field, ensuring the collapse of Sedgwick’s flank. Half of the Union’s 5000 men regiment had fallen and the other half retreated.

There were many other battles that made up the battle of Antietam but I have summed-up and described the basic tactics used by both sides. The battles forced Lee out of northern soil and gave the Union a victor