

History of the 2nd Corps and Army of the Valley

The 2nd Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia was a military organization of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. It was officially created and named following the Battle of Sharpsburg in 1862, but was made up of units in a corps organization for quite some time prior to that. The Second Corps developed its reputation as a hard fighting arm of the Confederate Army under the commander Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson.

General Jackson commanded the 2nd Division, which became the 2nd Corps until his death after the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863. Jackson's official promotion to lieutenant general was made on October 10, 1862, and "Jackson's Corps" began going by the title 2nd Corp about 6 November. Jackson commanded the "Army of the Valley District" of the Department of Northern Virginia and operated his 2nd Corps near Winchester, Virginia, guarding the lower Shenandoah Valley, when not fully needed by Lee to be close at hand to the main army. Stonewall commanded the corps at the Battle of Fredericksburg and in the following series of engagements along the Rappahannock River. The corps' finest moment came during the Battle of Chancellorsville, when Jackson led the famous left flank attack that routed much of Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's Federal Army of the Potomac. The resulting loss of Jackson was devastating to Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, and it was the turning point for Lee's ability to command his army without Jackson.

From May 2 to May 30, 1863, the Second Corps was commanded temporarily by Maj. Gen. A. P. Hill, except for one day under Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart on May 2, during the crucial loss of the mortally wounded Jackson.

When Gen. Ewell was reassigned, Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early took command of the 2nd Corps. Early had experience as a division commander and had served under Generals Jackson and Ewell. In June 1864, Lee decided to use the Second Corps on another (and last) invasion of the North in an attempt to cause General Ulysses S. Grant to turn his attention away from Lee's front. Early took the Second Corps, as a detached Army of the Valley, northward through the Shenandoah Valley and became engaged at the Battle of Monocacy.

Originally organized as the Second Corps in Lee's army, the Army of the Valley numbered approximately 14,000 soldiers. The infantry, totaling near 9,000, was organized into two corps, each consisting of two divisions.

December 20, 1864, the Second Corps rejoined the main body of the Army of Northern Virginia, and Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon was placed in command. Gordon commanded the corps, the "left wing" of Lee's depleted army, until it was surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865.