Mcclelland Vs. Grant Essay, Research Paper

George McClellan vs. U.S. Grant

George McClellan and Ulysess S. Grant were two of the Civil War s most prominent Northern generals. In this essay I will describe the two generals and provide brief details on the battles they were acquainted with.

George McClellan was a US Military Academy graduate with an exemplary record as a cadet. In 1857 he resigned his commission to enter the rapidly expanding railroad business, where he quickly demonstrated outstanding ability.

McClellan, appointed by Lincoln, was made commander of the main union army named the Army of the Potomac, after having proved himself a reliable commander of the Ohio troops. He immediately began drilling the disorganized and demoralized regiments into a reliable fighting force. He is described as to have been very well liked by his soldiers. His biggest weakness was his speed, or lack thereof. On one occasion Lincoln said if McClellan did not intent to use the Army of the Potomac he (Lincoln) would like to borrow it for a few days to see what he could do with it. (pg. 55)

One example of McClellan s slow tactics, however, persistence, were shown in early March of 1862. His plan consisted of maneuvering his army farther down the Chesapeake Bay in order to seize the Confederate capital. His plan faced an obstacle. The Virginia, a Confederate ship, attacked and almost shattered the union blockade. McClellan insisted that the Virginia be put our of commission before be began operations. (pg. 67) The Virginia eventually set sail back to the Norfolk harbor after four hours of engagement.

In late March, although Lincoln urged him to move forth McClelland laid deliberate siege to Yorktown and allowed Confederate troops to stretch across the lower peninsula of Virginia. This delayed the advance for almost a month. McClellan thought that there were many more troops then there really were, mainly because his chief intelligence agent, Allan Pinkerton, wasn t too intelligent at all: the Confederates had been tricking him.

After McClelland s failures in the field during the Seven Days Battle, his absolute determinacy was shown, I expect to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or am conquered (pg. 74)

Born Hiram Ulysess Grant, the Ohio native graduated from West Point and served his country during the Mexican War. Responding to the call for more men, now renamed Ulysess S. Grant left his merchant job in Illinois to go to war once again for his country.

Due to his previous military training and experience (and quite possibly the influence of an Ill. Congressman) Grant was made Colonel of an Illinois regiment. From these unpromising beginnings Grant would rise to become the supreme military leader of the Union in the war, (pg. 57) describes Charles Roland in his book, An American Iliad.

Grant s philosophy about war was to find out where the enemy is, attack him right away and as often as you can, then keep moving on.

Grant made his headquarters at Cairo, Ill. where the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers join. He did this because he was aware of the obvious strategic importance of the three major rivers that transected the western lines Mississippi, Tennessee and Cumberland. When Polk s troops seized Colombus, Kentucky, Grant seized Paducah and Smithland where the Tennessee and Cumberland joined the Ohio. By these moves he gained possession of pivot points where one could easily transport and support troops by water.

Grant and McClelland are well-known for their strategic war plans and determination. McClelland was extremely cautious (some say too cautious) and which led him to be a very slow mover costing him too much at times. The two together were extremely successful in shaping a strong Union Army.