

Railroads, Herman Haupt,

By Steven R. Ditmeyer

At the start of the Civil War, the Union had 20,500 miles of railroad track, and the Confederacy had 9,500 miles of railroad track.¹ The railroads of the Confederacy had originally been built from fields to seaports, and had only limited interconnections; Union railroads actually formed a network.² Some have stated that the Confederacy might 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.³

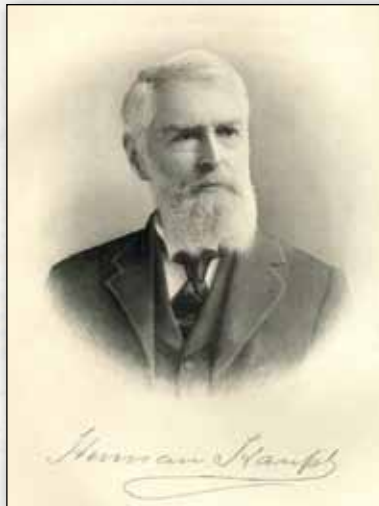
Herman Haupt: The Pre-War Years

Herman Haupt, a native of Philadelphia, was 18 years old when he graduated from West Point in the class of 1835 with an engineering degree and was commissioned an Army Second Lieutenant along with George G. Meade. Like his classmate Meade, Haupt gained a reputation for being a highly competent but irascible individual. Throughout his career, he earned a reputation for not getting along well with his colleagues and for offending his superiors and other influential people.⁴

Haupt resigned his commission three months after graduation and went to work as a surveyor for the State of Pennsylvania, laying out railroad routes in eastern Pennsylvania, including what was to become the Gettysburg Railroad. Construction started on the Gettysburg Railroad, but was then suspended, causing Haupt to leave and go to work for the York & Wrightsville Railroad in 1839. He became professor of mathematics and civil engineering at Pennsylvania College in Gettysburg in 1841, and bought a house on the outskirts of town. He went back into railroading, joining the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1848 and worked his way up to chief engineer in 1853. While there, he oversaw the construction of the main line to Pittsburgh, including the tunnel at Gallitzin, Pa., at the summit of the Alleghenies.⁵ He also designed a type of truss bridge that became known as the Haupt truss.⁶

In 1856, Haupt left the Pennsylvania Railroad to become chief engineer and contractor of the Troy & Greenfield Railroad and the Hoosac Tunnel project to build a five-mile-long tunnel through the Berkshire Mountains in northwestern Massachusetts. He invented the pneumatic drill, which was a significant development

for tunnel construction. The State of Massachusetts lent \$2 million to Haupt for the project. However, the backers of the Western Railroad, a parallel and competing line in southern Massachusetts that connected Boston with Albany, opposed the construction of the Hoosac Tunnel, attacking Haupt in the press as being a swindler who was pursuing an “impracticable scheme.”⁷ They also persuaded newly elected Massachusetts Gov. John Andrew to withhold disbursements for the project. Haupt was in litigation with the State of Massachusetts and Gov. Andrew when the Civil War broke out.⁸



Herman Haupt in later life.
Library of Congress

Herman Haupt: The Civil War Years Before Gettysburg

With tunnel construction at a standstill, Haupt sought appointment as assistant secretary of war in 1861. Thomas A. Scott, who Haupt had known on the Pennsylvania Railroad, received the appointment, however. Haupt, though, was called to Washington in April 1862 by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, most likely at Scott's suggestion, and was asked to spend three or four weeks to look into railroad operations matters for the secretary. In May, after reading Haupt's reports, Secretary Stanton appointed Haupt chief of construction and transportation in the Army of the Rappahannock under Gen. Irwin McDowell and commissioned him a colonel. Haupt nominally reported to Daniel McCallum, an official from the Erie Railroad who had been serving as superintendent of the United States Military Railroads. However, Haupt's orders made him independent of all authority except that

and the Battle of Gettysburg

of the secretary of war. Haupt, in turn, stipulated that he would not have to 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.⁹

Upon assuming his position, Haupt became immediately frustrated as various generals sought to control train operations. Gen. John Pope, who succeeded McDowell as commander of the Army of the Rappahannock, did not believe railroads were important and 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.

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 in the following months had further run-ins with Gen. Pope and Gen. Samuel Sturgis, a brigade commander under Pope, who would stop trains and try to reassign them to specific units. Haupt accused them of causing train delays on the Orange & Alexandria Railroad that kept 10,000 Union troops out of the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862.¹⁰

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."¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³

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.¹⁴ The orders and Haupt's promotion to lead the organization made him, for all practical purposes, the "czar" of the railroads controlled by the Union Army. 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.¹⁵

Throughout the last half of 1862 and the first half of 1863, Haupt made occasional trips to Massachusetts to pursue his litigation against the State of Massachusetts and Gov. Andrew.¹⁶

Herman Haupt: The Battle of Gettysburg and its Immediate Aftermath

In June 1863, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee held two strategic objectives for the Army of Northern Virginia before it was to move on Washington:

- Destroy the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad between Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg, Va. (now West Virginia). The B&O ran from Baltimore west through Cumberland, Md., crossing the Ohio River at Wheeling and Parkersburg, W. Va.

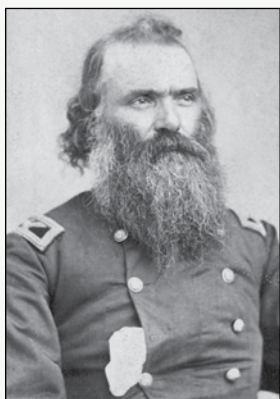
- Destroy railroads in Pennsylvania, particularly the Cumberland Valley Railroad from Hagerstown, Md., to Harrisburg, the Northern Central Railway in the vicinity of York, Pa., and, most important, the Pennsylvania Railroad main line and its bridge across the Susquehanna River at Harrisburg. The Pennsylvania Railroad ran and controlled lines from Philadelphia west through Pittsburgh and on into Ohio.

These objectives would isolate the large East Coast cities of Washington; Baltimore; Wilmington, Del.; and Philadelphia by severing the two major trunk-line railroads bringing them agricultural and manufactured goods from the west.¹⁷

Lee had accomplished his first objective of wrecking the B&O and was moving up the Cumberland Valley Railroad when scouts reported sighting the Union Army, under its new commander, Gen. Meade, moving north on the east side of South Mountain. Gen. Richard S. Ewell's

forces, moving ahead of the main body of Lee's army in south-central Pennsylvania, had already disrupted railroad operations on the Gettysburg Railroad east of Gettysburg and on the Northern Central Railway near York.¹⁸

As word reached Washington of the impending battle, Haupt's authority was expanded on Saturday, June 27, to cover all the commercial railroads in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.¹⁹ Haupt was intimately familiar with the territory, having worked for several of the railroads in the vicinity, and he still owned a house in Gettysburg.

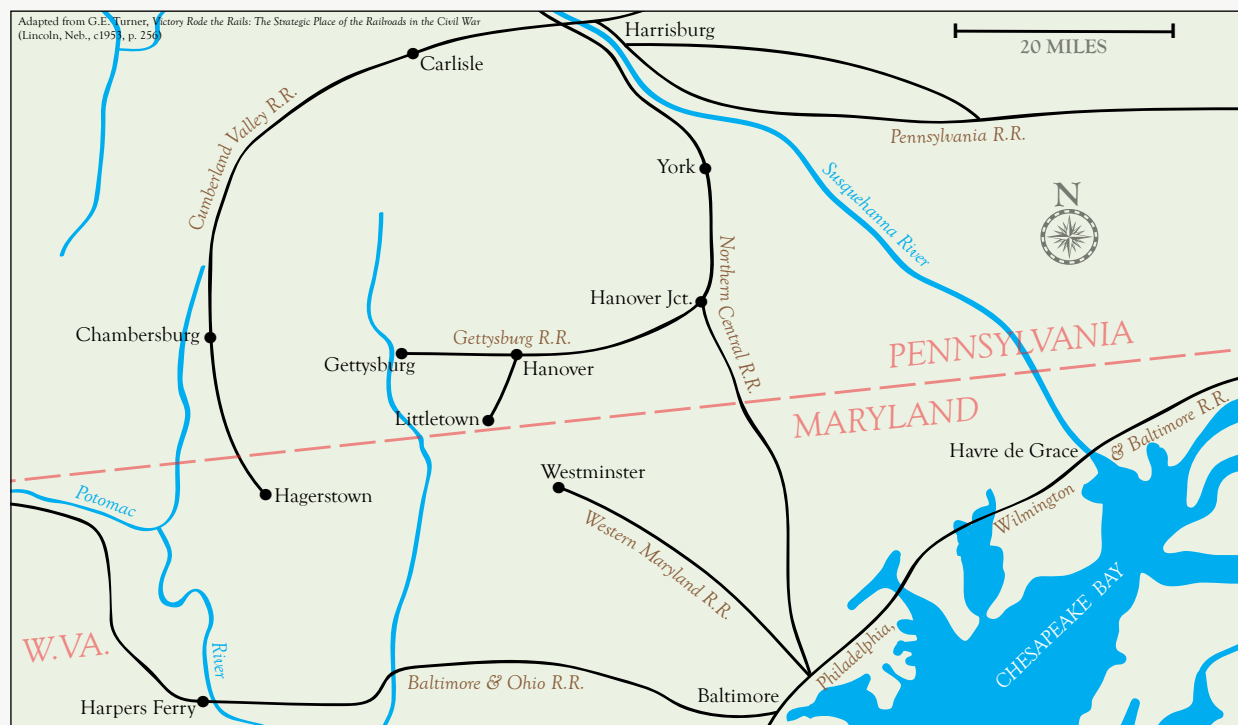


ABOVE: Colonel (later Brigadier General) Daniel Craig McCallum. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-32232



RIGHT: General George Gordon Meade. Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-19398

Railroads in the vicinity of Gettysburg, July 1863. Kevin J. Holland



Confederate Gen. James Longstreet set up one of his batteries in the front yard of that residence on Seminary Ridge.²⁰

After being unaccountably delayed by Secretary Stanton for three days, Haupt left Washington for Harrisburg on Tuesday, June 30, to gather information for Gen. Meade. Enroute, he found the Northern Central Railway to be unusable, and had to travel to Harrisburg via Philadelphia and Reading.²¹ That evening, Haupt arrived in Harrisburg, meeting there with Governor Andrew Curtin to confirm that the Pennsylvania Railroad had been protected. After checking with scouts, Haupt sent a telegram to Gen. Henry W. Halleck informing him of Lee's movements, stating that he believed Lee was concentrating his troops at Gettysburg and requesting that a mounted courier be dispatched to General Meade with that information.²²

On Wednesday, July 1, the day on which fighting started at Gettysburg, Haupt had a busy day. First, he went to Westminster, Md., to investigate the feasibility of using the Western Maryland Railroad that ran 29 miles from there to Baltimore. Westminster is a town about 20 miles southeast of Gettysburg. The Western Maryland was a single-track railroad with no passing sidings and no yard tracks at Westminster. Normally, only one train was permitted on the line at a time, and usually one, or at most two, round trips were operated on a given day, with a five-car train being the normal size. Haupt found that to be unsatisfactory.²³

On the afternoon of July 1, Haupt traveled on to Baltimore and went to work. Using his authority as

head of the U.S. Military Railroads, he commandeered locomotives; freight, passenger, and baggage cars; and crews from the private railroads serving Baltimore. He directed that, starting as soon as possible, five or six 10-car trains would leave Baltimore in convoy, running one immediately behind the other to Westminster. He instructed Gen. Meade's quartermasters 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 back at Baltimore, another set of trains that had already been loaded would depart for Westminster. Three round trips a day were planned, meaning that line capacity had been increased to 15 to 18 trains and 150 to 180 cars per day, which constituted over an order of magnitude increase in track capacity.²⁴ Because no telegraph lines were operational in the area, Haupt set up a pony express service to provide communications between Baltimore, Westminster, and Meade's headquarters in Gettysburg.²⁵

Also on July 1, Haupt ordered Adna Anderson to move his 400-man Railroad Construction Corps (which consisted largely of former slaves) from Alexandria, Va., to Baltimore immediately to stabilize the track on the Western Maryland Railroad and begin reconstruction of the Northern Central Railway and Gettysburg Railroad so that trains could run directly to Gettysburg.²⁶

By Friday, July 3, the third day of fighting at Gettysburg, the Western Maryland had moved 1,500 tons of cargo to Westminster, and returning trains brought out more than 2,000 wounded soldiers to hospitals in Baltimore. Haupt's plan worked perfectly. Anderson and his Railroad Construction Corps completed the reconstruction of the Northern Central from Baltimore to Hanover Junction and the Gettysburg Railroad on July 3, and the first trains ran directly to Gettysburg on July 4, the day after the Battle of Gettysburg ended.²⁷

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."²⁸

On Sunday, July 5, Haupt met with Meade and inquired about his movement plans so that arrangements could be made for supplies. Meade said he had no immediate plans as his men required rest. Haupt argued with Meade that he would miss an opportunity to cut off Lee's retreat, but Meade remained adamant that a period of rest was needed.²⁹ Disappointed, Haupt then requisitioned a locomotive that evening to take him back to Washington, and met separately on Monday, July 6, with Gen. Halleck, Secretary Stanton, and President Lincoln to urge them to order Meade to pursue Lee, saying

that 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 after he crossed the Potomac River "to finish up the war."³⁰ On Tuesday, July 7, Halleck ordered Meade to pursue and stop Lee before he reached the Potomac River, but Meade did not do so.³¹

Haupt returned to Gettysburg on July 9 to oversee the restoration of the Cumberland Valley Railroad between Harrisburg and Hagerstown and of the Northern Central Railway from Hanover Junction to Harrisburg. On July 14, with recognition that Lee and his army had already crossed the Potomac, 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 Railroad and the Manassas Gap Railroad. The reconstruction work in Pennsylvania was terminated.³²

At the urging of Massachusetts Gov. Andrew, who was Haupt's nemesis and who wanted to keep Haupt occupied and away from Massachusetts, 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."

Stanton, however, rejected the proposal, relieving Haupt of duty on September 14.³³ His subordinate, Col. Daniel C. 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, Tenn.³⁴ At age 46, and after 16 months of distinguished service with the Union Army, Haupt left Washington and moved back to Massachusetts.³⁵

In November 1863, President Lincoln traveled by train from Washington to Gettysburg for the dedication of the National Cemetery, where he delivered his Gettysburg Address. He rode the Baltimore & Ohio from Washington to Baltimore, the Northern Central Railway from Baltimore to Hanover Junction, and the Gettysburg Railroad from Hanover Junction to Gettysburg. Lincoln returned to Washington over the same route.

Herman Haupt: The Post-War Years

McCallum, who had not been pleased when Haupt had been promoted over him in 1862, and who did not get along well with Haupt when reporting to him, deliberately omitted any reference to Haupt in the final report of the U.S. Military Railroads at the end of the Civil War.³⁶

Haupt went on to a successful career in railroading and engineering. He won his lawsuit with the Commonwealth



The wood-burning 4-4-0 locomotive *Genl. Haupt*, beside the roundhouse at Alexandria, Va. A.J. Russell, Library of Congress Collection, LC-DIG-ppmsca-07297

U.S. Military Railroad Construction Corps workers repairing the Orange & Alexandria R.R. at Devereux Station. Their train is led by USMRR locomotive *Genl. Haupt*. The man standing atop the embankment is believed to be Haupt. A.J. Russell, Library of Congress Collection, LC-DIG-ppmsca-33475



of Massachusetts, but received only a small portion of the compensation he sought for the role he played in constructing the Hoosac Tunnel, which was finally completed in 1875. The Hoosac Tunnel was the first major railroad tunnel, and construction techniques developed by Haupt were used to construct even longer tunnels throughout the world. In Pennsylvania, Haupt built the nation's first extensive oil pipeline, the Tidewater Pipeline, earning a great deal of money from that enterprise. Haupt also served as general manager of the Richmond & Danville Railroad in the mid-1870s and general manager of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the early 1880s.³⁷ Haupt met Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, commander of the Union Army and later president of the United States (1869-1877) for the first time on the occasion of the opening of the Northern Pacific.³⁸ In 1884, he was elected president of the Dakota & Great Southern RR.³⁹

In 1889, Gov. Andrew admitted to Haupt that his Hoosac Tunnel policy had been a mistake, and that he had done a great injustice to Haupt.⁴⁰

By 1904, Haupt was the oldest living graduate of West Point. That year, he wrote 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." He went on, "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 Gen. George B.] 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."⁴¹

Herman Haupt died on December 14, 1905, at age 88, of a heart attack while riding a Pennsylvania Railroad train with his son from New York to Philadelphia.⁴² Because he never formally accepted his commissions as colonel and brigadier general, the adjutant general of the Army concluded in 1913 that, while Haupt held the nominal rank for enforcing decisions, he never was legally a member of the military establishment of the United States.⁴³ ♦

Notes

1. Lord, Francis A., *Lincoln's Railroad Man: Herman Haupt*, (Rutherford, N.J., 1969), p. 34.
2. Turner, George Edgar, *Victory Rode the Rails: The Strategic Place of the Railroads in the Civil War*, (Lincoln, Neb., c1953, also Westport, Conn., 1972), pp. 31-33.
3. Thompson, Slason, *Short History of American Railways*, (London and New York, 1925) as quoted in Thomas Weber, *The Northern Railroads in the Civil War, 1861-1865*, (New York, 1952), p. 3.
4. Weber, op. cit., pp. 138-140
5. Flower, Frank A., "General Herman Haupt (Personal Sketch)" in Herman Haupt, *Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt*, (Milwaukee, 1901), p. xx.
6. Lord, op. cit., pp. 23-24
7. Flower, op. cit., p. xxi.
8. Ibid., pp. 29-31.
9. Ibid., pp. 31, 53-56.
10. Weber, op. cit., pp. 147, 149.
11. Ibid., p. 150.
12. Ibid., p. 153.
13. Lord, op. cit., p. 140.
14. Weber, op. cit., p. 168, and Lord, op. cit. op. cit., pp. 60-61.
15. Lord, op. cit., p. 41.
16. Ibid., p. 244.
17. Turner, op. cit., p. 273.
18. Ibid., pp. 273-4.
19. United States War Department, *The war of the rebellion: a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate armies*; Series 1 - Volume 27 (Part I), Chap. 39, p. 24.
20. Haupt, op. cit., Chap. 22, p. 311.
21. Ibid., Chap. 13, pp. 208-209.
22. United States War Department, op.cit., Series 1 - Volume 27 (Part I), Chap. 39, p. 22.
23. Turner, op. cit., p. 278.
24. Weber, op. cit., p. 164.
25. Lord, op. cit., pp. 223-224.
26. Turner, op. cit., p. 279.
27. Ibid., pp. 279-280.
28. Ibid., p. 280.
29. Haupt, op. cit., Chap. 14, p. 223.
30. Ibid., Chap. 14, p. 227-228.
31. Ibid., Chap. 15, p. 235.
32. Ibid., Chap. 15, p. 243.
33. Ibid., Chap. 19, p. 261-264.
34. Campbell, E.G., "The United States Military Railroads, 1862-1865," *Journal of the American Military History Foundation*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 1938): pp. 70-89.
35. Ibid., pp. 167-168.
36. Lord, op. cit., p. 11.
37. Ibid., 290-291.
38. H. Haupt, op. cit., Chap. 22, p. 311.
39. Ibid., p. xxxvii.
40. Ibid., p. 290.
41. Web site: <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Lake/3234/HermanHauptLetter.html>
42. Web site: <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Lake/3234/Herman.html>
43. Lord, op. cit., p. 59.