Choosing Leaders – The Key to Success

By John Baniszewski

<u>Attendees</u> – To enhance your enjoyment of this session, <u>please read the case studies</u> before the discussion starts

Structure & Agenda

- Description of the Case Study Exercise
- Distribute & Read Case Studies
- Group Discussion of Case Studies
- Presentation – Persons and events actually described in case studies
- Reaction & Discussion

Case Study – The Promising Rookie

You are the head of an organization that has grown dramatically during the past two years. You supervise four branch chiefs. Three have substantial relevant leadership experience and training, but one does not. That person is Pat.

Pat's degree is in a field that has nothing to do with your specialty. Pat has only 11 months total relevant job experience. Pat has been a branch chief for only six weeks. Pat has connections - a high-ranking executive in your organization was instrumental in getting Pat a job in your organization in the first place. Five weeks ago, you had to take disciplinary action against a number of problem employees. Pat's organization was the only place you could transfer them. They now make up a third of Pat's workforce.

Pat is likeable, extremely bright, and highly committed to your organization's mission. You are impressed that Pat once turned down a promotion opportunity because Pat felt unready for a leadership position at that time and wanted to learn the necessary technical skills first. Pat has been working hard to learn the job, studying books and professional journals after hours, and taking all of the training that is available. The employees in the organization like and respect Pat, and the previous leader of the organization thought very highly of Pat.

An emergency situation has come up. You need someone to handle it. It is an extremely difficult assignment. Failure would be catastrophic for you organization. All of your branch chiefs are heavily committed. It would be easiest to give the job to Pat, but your other three branch chiefs could take the assignment if absolutely necessary. Pat has never been the leader for this kind of project. You have to make a decision immediately. Due to other priorities, no one could help Pat during the project.

Do you give the job to Pat? Why?

Case Study – The Technical Expert

You are a Program Manager. You have three subordinate Project Managers. Two of them are managing projects for the first time. Their current projects are having lots of problems. The third Project Manager is Chris. Chris has successfully managed five projects for you in the past. Chris has a relevant degree from a respected institution. Chris is a proven technical expert, very deliberate, a person who believes in thorough preparation and careful analysis. Chris has many years of practical experience. You consider Chris to be your second-in-command. Chris has clearly outperformed all current peers.

Your Program is at a critical point. You have a special project you need done. It entails significant risk and failure could be disastrous. However, if it succeeds, it will be a huge breakthrough for your organization. This opportunity may never come again.

You have had little time for a detailed analysis, but you have come up with a plan that you think will work. Without hesitation, you decide to put Chris in charge. You tell Chris what you want achieved, give Chris what you think is an adequate budget, and give Chris a free hand concerning how to do execute the project.

To your surprise, Chris tells you the project cannot succeed. Chris says the resources are clearly inadequate, and schedule factors preclude you from finding more resources. Chris suggests that one of the other Project Managers be given the assignment. You are getting annoyed. This is the third time in three days that Chris has disagreed with your decision and openly questioned your judgment.
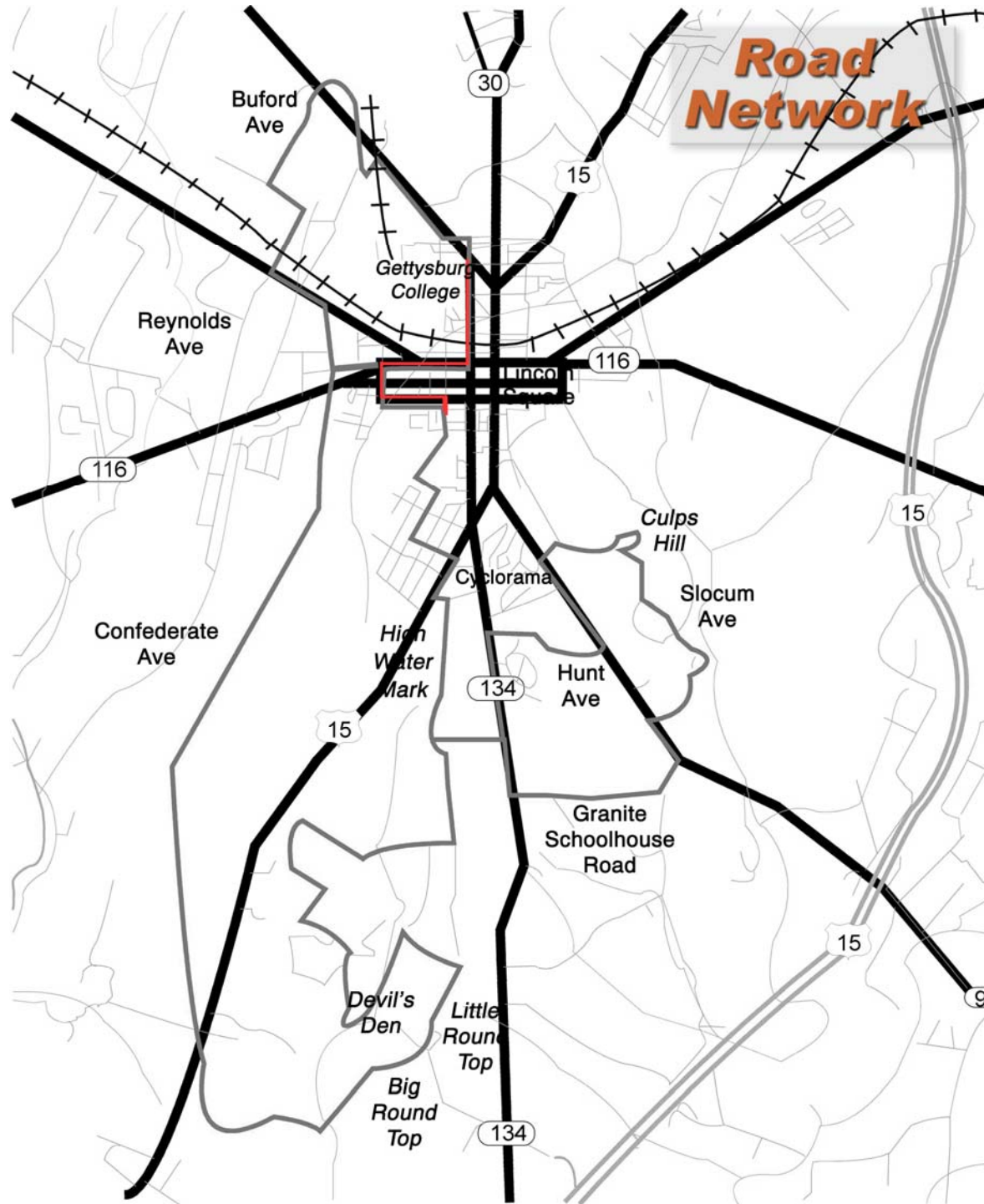
Chris clearly seems like the best candidate for the job.   Because of schedule constraints, you have to make an immediate decision. Should you go ahead with the project? If so, do you leave Chris in charge? What do you do?
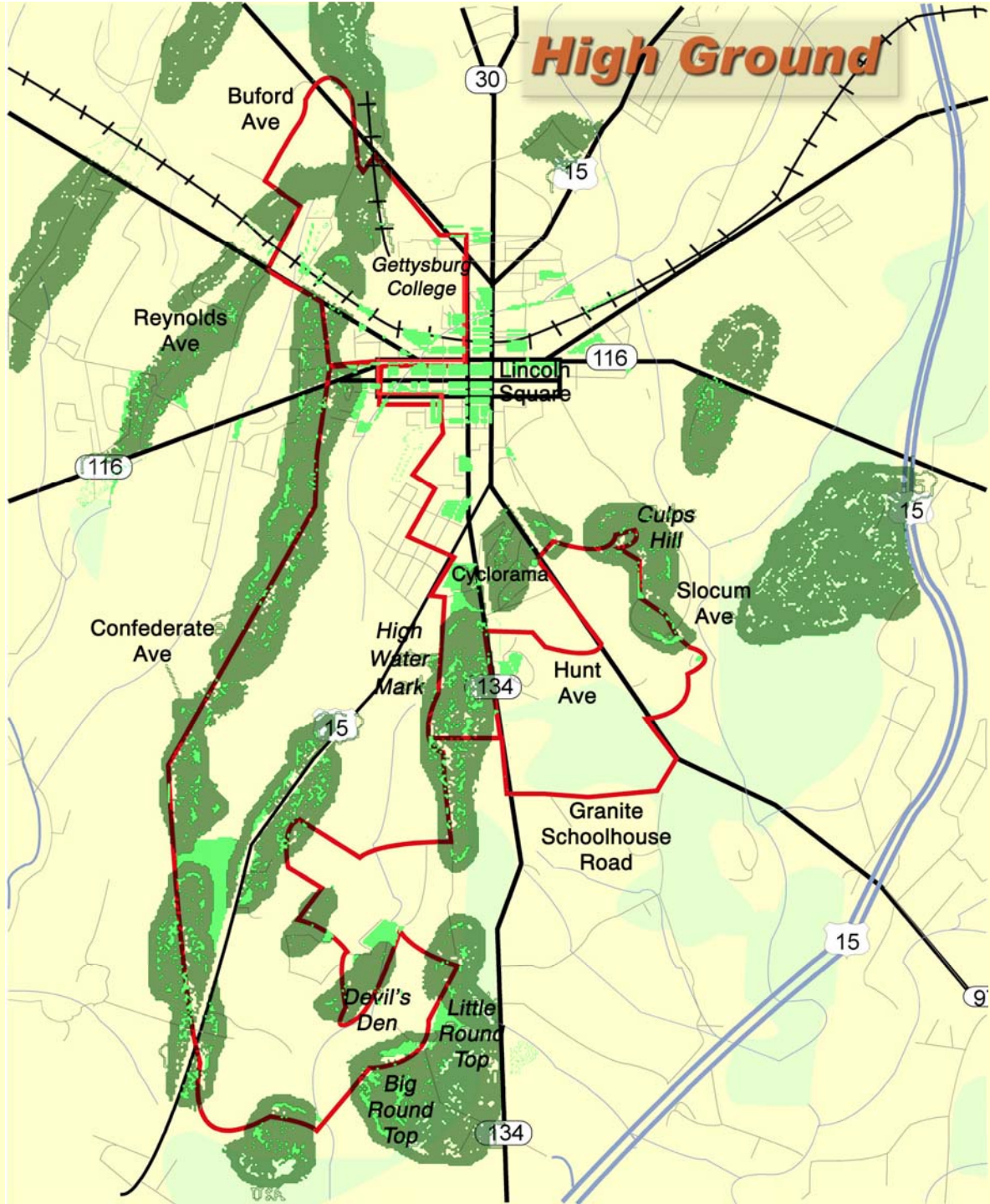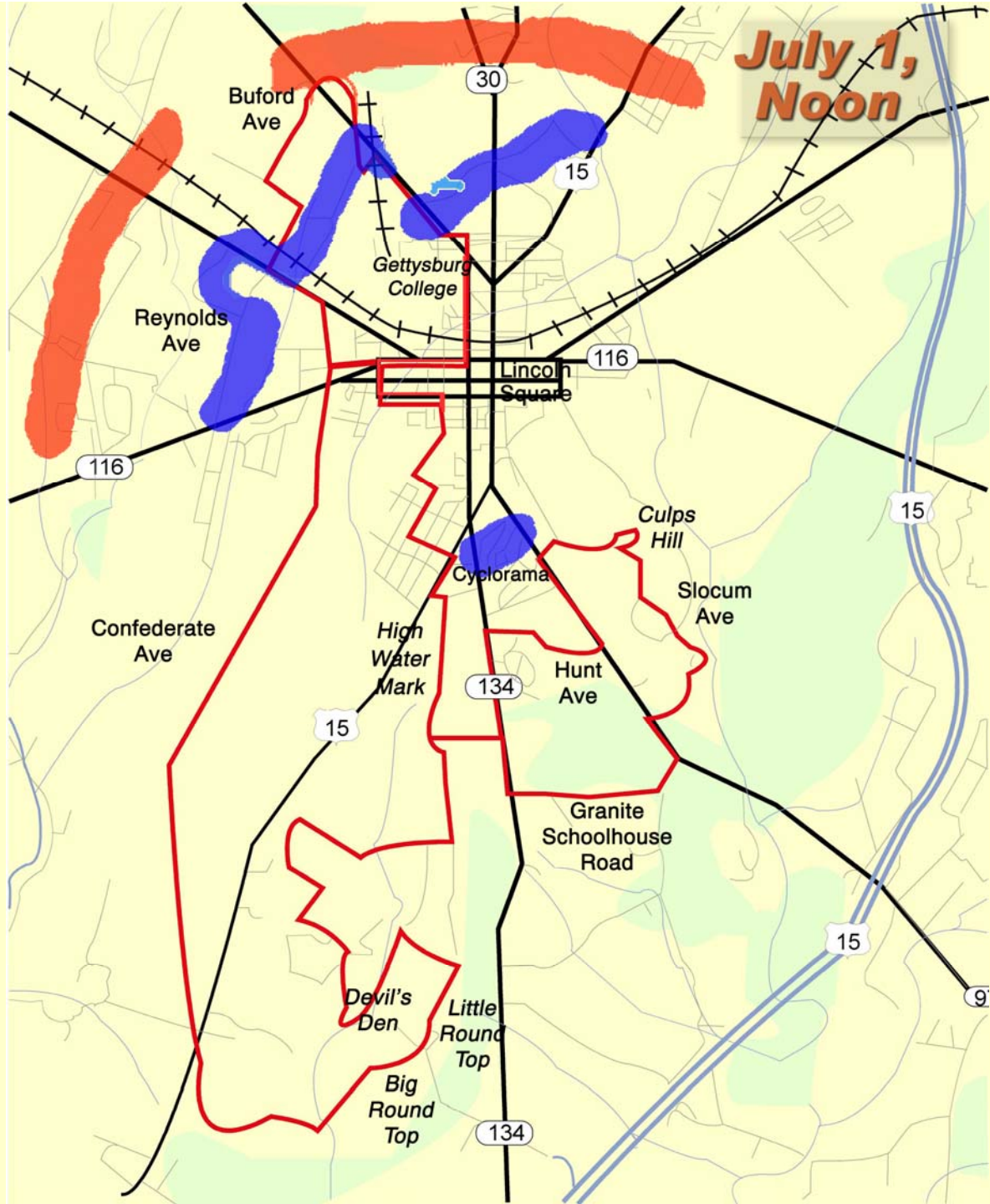
The Battle of Gettysburg

- ## When did it happen?
  - July 1 through July 3, 1863
- ## What was at stake?
  - The continued existence of the United States as a nation
  - The lives of thousands of people
- ## Who was involved?
  - 160,000 Americans, 68,000 of them in supervisory positions
  - Two separate Government Organizations (The Union and Confederate Armies)
- ## What was their mission?
  - Destroy the other army (win-lose situation for each organization)
- ## What were they like?
  - Almost identical in training, processes, organizational, equipment, and technology
  - 98% of personnel had less than 2 years of job experience
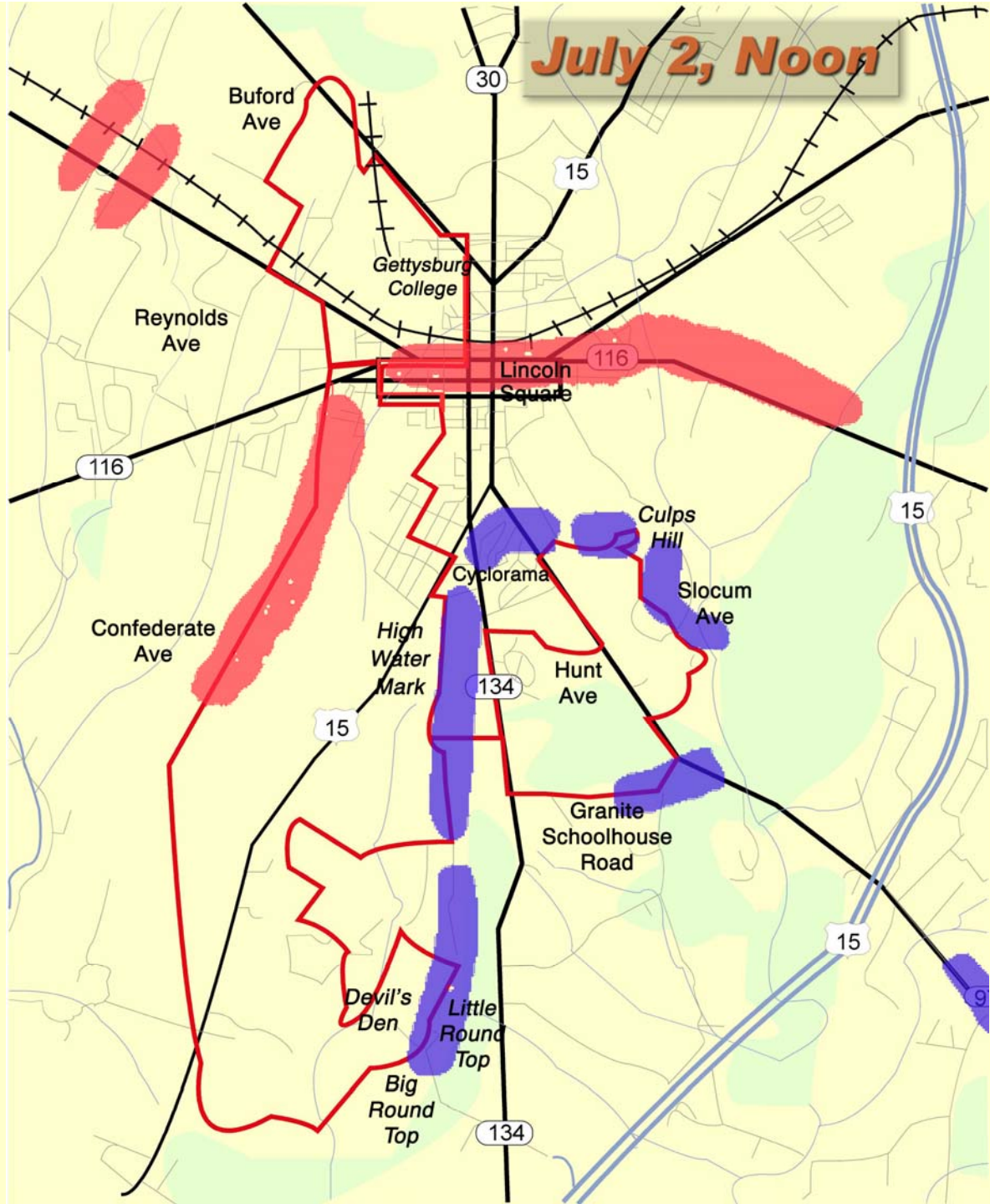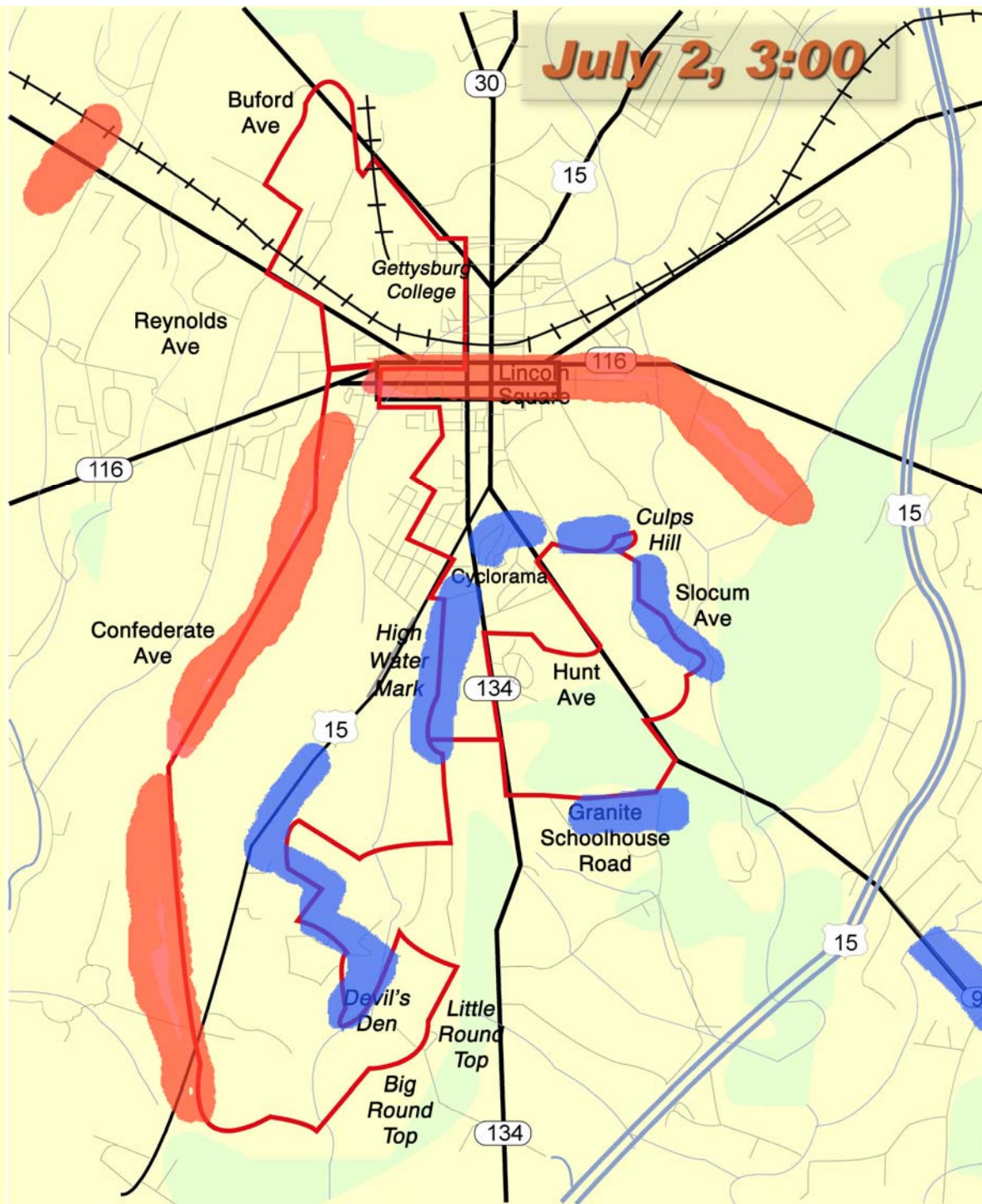- ## The difference between success or failure - Leadership

Road Network

Buford Ave

30

15

Gettysburg College

Reynolds Ave

116

116

Lincoln Square

Culps Hill

15

Cyclorama

Slocum Ave

Confederate Ave

High Water Mark

Hunt Ave

134

Granite Schoolhouse Road

15

15

Devil's Den

Little Round Top

Big Round Top

134

15

97

High Ground

July 1, Noon

Buford Ave

30

15

Gettysburg College

Reynolds Ave

Lincoln Square

116

116

Confederate Ave

Cyclorama

Culps Hill

Slocum Ave

High Water Mark

134

Hunt Ave

15

Granite Schoolhouse Road

15

Devil's Den

Little Round Top

Big Round Top

134

15

9

July 2, Noon

Case Study – The Promising Rookie

"Pat" – Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Qualifications - Age 35; Bachelor Degree in Classical Studies; Professor of Rhetoric at Bowdoin College; 11 months military experience, 7 weeks as leader of current organization

His organization - 396 men, of whom 120 were arrested for mutiny prior to being transferred to his unit 6 weeks ago

Personal Information – Modest, self-motivated, dedicated to mission, highly intelligent, committed to self improvement, respected by subordinates
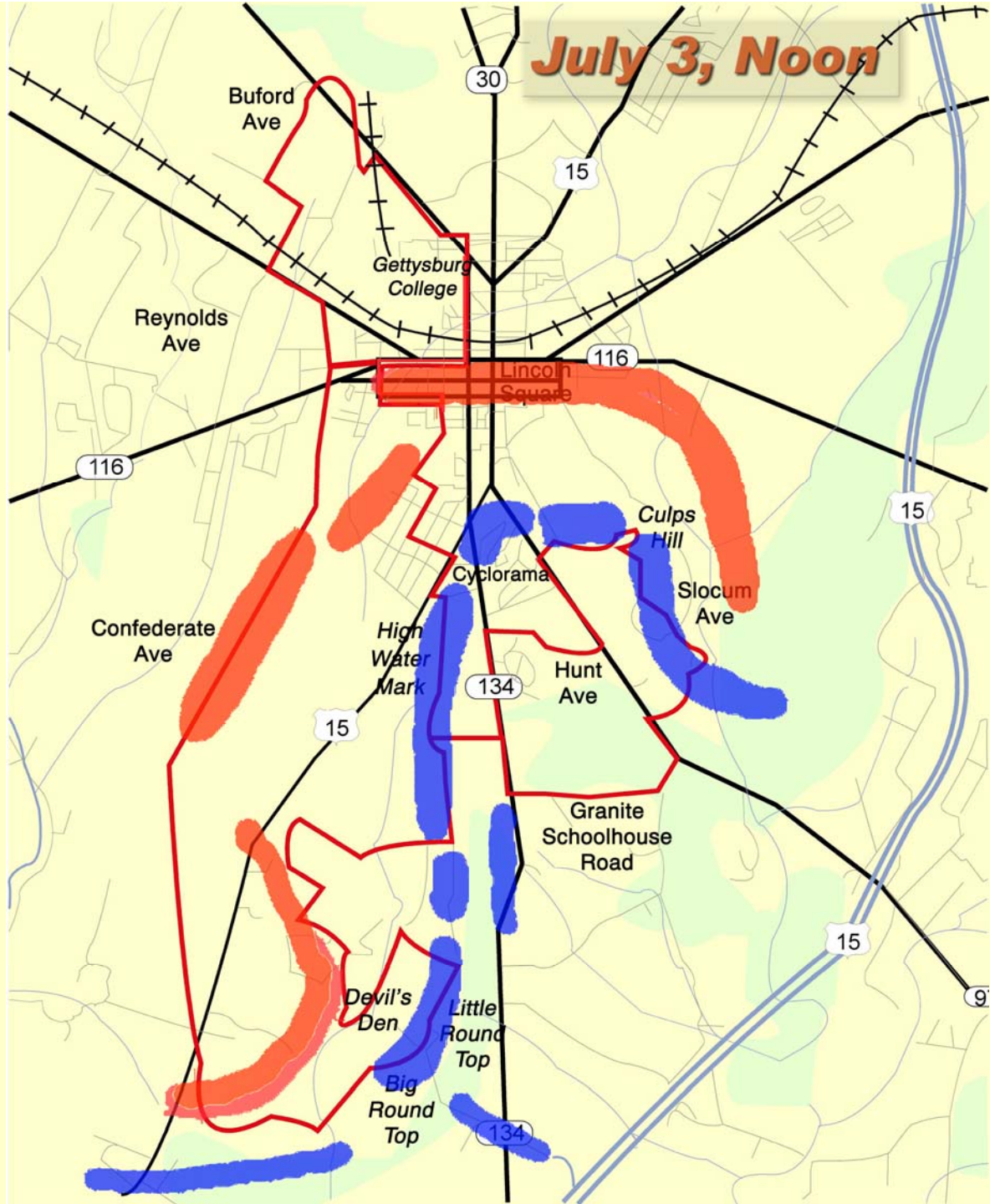
"Pat's" Boss – Colonel Strong Vincent

What he needs – A leader to defend the most critical and vulnerable point on the battlefield

His concern about "Pat" – Lack of overall experience, first time serving in his current capacity as leader, lack of combat leadership experience, the 120 mutineers in his organization

Case Study – The Technical Expert

"Chris" – General James Longstreet

Qualifications - Age 42; West Point graduate; 25 years military experience, 14 months as leader of current organization (most senior leader in army), second in command of entire army

Personal Information – Highly skilled, very deliberate, believes in thorough preparation and careful analysis, conservative

Past Performance – Most successful active general in Army, solid record of past success

"Chris's" Boss – General Robert E. Lee

What he needs – A leader to achieve a breakthrough that could win the battle and the war

His concern about "Chris" – His open disagreement with directions (three times in three days), his stated belief that the effort will fail
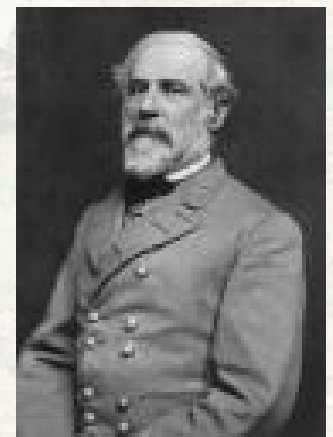
Why Study History?

"I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past" – Patrick Henry

"History is a vast early warning system" – Dr. Norman Cousins

"Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history" - Abraham Lincoln, Annual Message to Congress, December 1862

Every Organization Has a History

- Example – NASA, a long and distinguished history since 1959
  - Over 650 total NASA missions launched
  - 277 unmanned satellites spacecraft launched
  - Over 140 manned flights, almost 300 people in space
  - 46 planetary missions
- <u>Whatever problem exists today, someone in NASA once faced a similar problem</u>
- The lesson of history is that we should learn from past successes & failures
- The challenge of history – getting the relevant history into the hands of those who need it. But how?
  - Developing "Lessons Learned" Information Systems
  - By networking
  - By putting experienced & proven leaders in senior management positions
  - By other methods

The Lessons of History

**"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it" –
Professor of Philosophy George Santayana**

Columbia Accident Investigation Board, Report Volume 1, August 2003

–Finding F7.4-10 – "NASA… does not have a constructive program to use past lessons to educate engineers, managers, astronauts, or safety personnel".

–Chapter 8.1 - "History is not just a backdrop or a scene-setter. History is cause. History set the *Columbia* and *Challenger* accidents in motion".

CNN.Com Headline, September 30, 1999 – NASA's metric confusion caused Mars orbiter loss

YAHOO NEWS Headline, Monday December 5, 2005
NASA's Mars Rovers Continue to Explore & Amaze - "NASA's twin Mars rovers have explored the surface of the mysterious red planet for a full Martian year (687 Earth days). The original mission was scheduled for only three months".
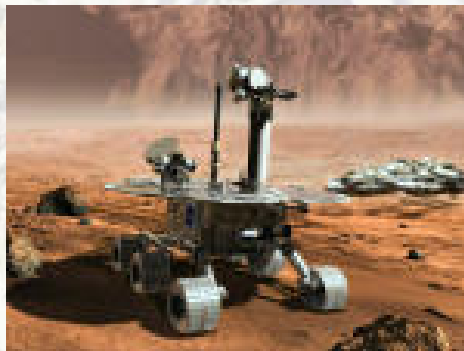
Case studies taken from the seminar

"Making a Difference – Lessons of Leadership from the Battle of Gettysburg"

By

John Baniszewski

- NASA GSFC, Mars Laser Communications Deputy Project Manager
- Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg National Military Park
- JDBano2001@yahoo.com