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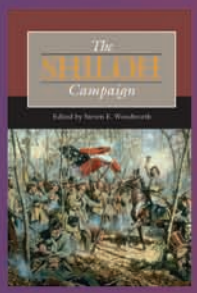

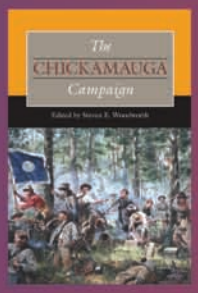

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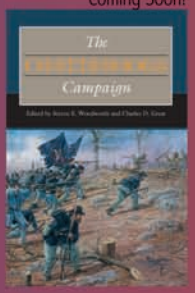

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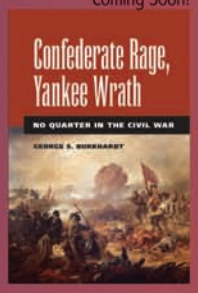

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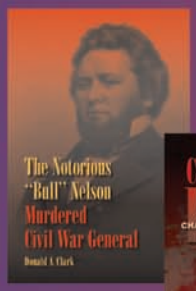

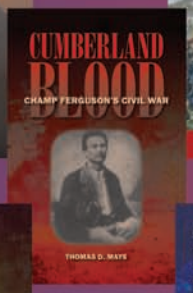

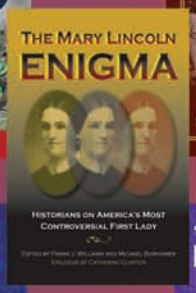

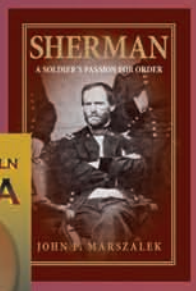

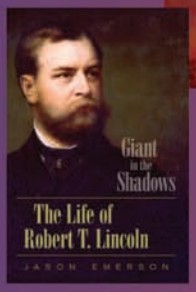

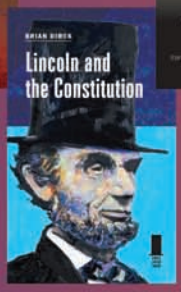

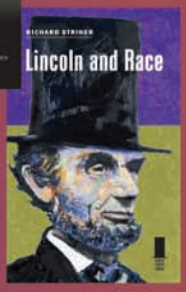

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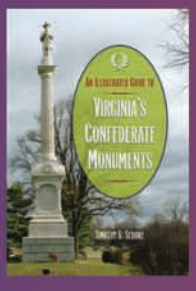

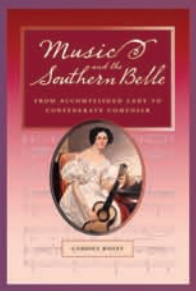

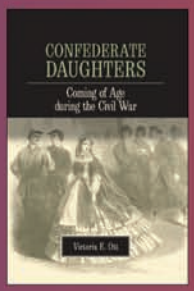

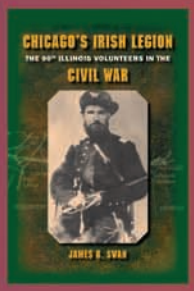

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CONTENTS

CIVIL WAR QUARTERLY

COVER: *The 5th Texas at Second Manassas*, detail of painting by Don Troiani, www.historicalimagebank.com. See story page 66.

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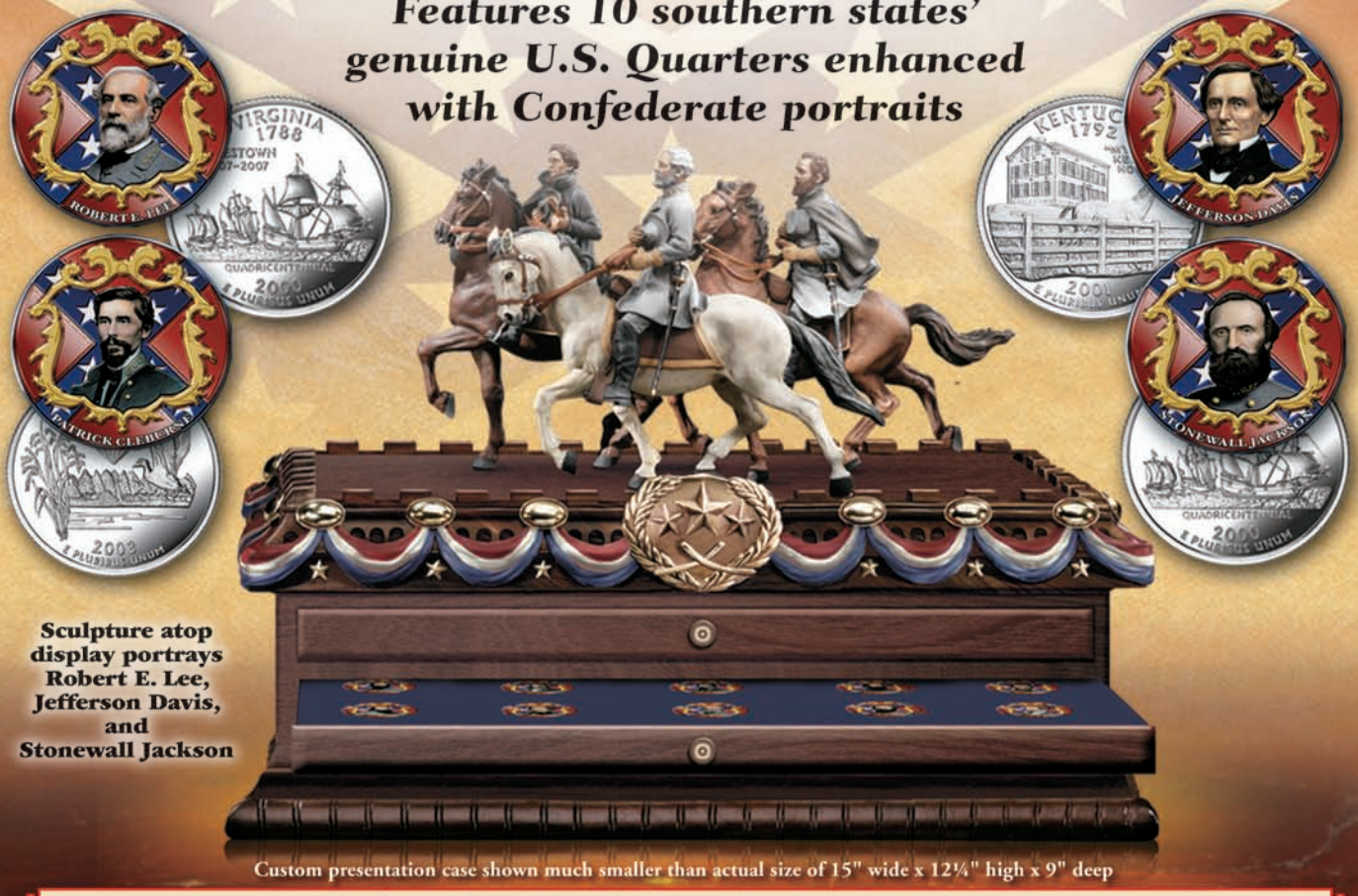

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In 1862, the Civil War became deadly serious, as new leaders rose to prominence and the people of the North and South realized the war would be long and bloody.

No one expected this—not the fiercest "fire-eater" in South Carolina or the flintiest abolitionist in New England. By the time the guns fell silent at Shiloh on the night of April 7, 1862, soldiers on both sides of the battlefield realized that they had endured something never before seen in American history. Nearly 24,000 men had fallen dead or wounded among the peach orchards and tangled woods in southwestern Tennessee, more than the total loss from all three of America's previous wars combined.

Small wonder that New Orleans writer George Washington Cable, himself a former Confederate, would later write: "The South never smiled again at Shiloh."

Neither, for that matter, did the North—at least not for another three long years. Shiloh was the first truly disorienting battle in the national experience, a battle in which large numbers of poorly led troops stumbled into one another, blazed away, fell back, came together again, and stopped butchering each other only after darkness, rain, and exhaustion put an end to the fighting. There would be other battles like Shiloh in 1862, many of them commemorated in this special issue of *Civil War Quarterly.* But there would never be another Shiloh, for that was where America's childhood ended. After Shiloh, all cocky talk of bloodless victories and cowardly foes gave way to the sickening realization that a war started almost cavalierly one year earlier would not be ending easily—or any time soon.

It was no coincidence that the two generals destined to lead the main armies of the opposing regions rose to prominence in 1862. For the North, it was an unprepossessing, rumpled officer from the Midwest, Ulysses S. Grant, a man who had failed at almost everything he touched since graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point two decades earlier. Grant began his improbable march to high command with his stunning victory at Fort Donelson in February 1862 and his hairbreadth survival at Shiloh six weeks later. For the South, the rising star was Robert E. Lee, also a graduate of West Point, but a man from a very different background than Grant. The patrician son of old-line Virginia royalty, Lee would lead the Army of Northern Virginia through some of its bitterest battles in 1862: Second Manassas, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. Two of those would be overwhelming Confederate victories, but the third—Antietam—would be a crushing defeat (and the bloodiest single day in American history). Grant and Lee would begin their long march toward each other in 1862, although it would be another two years before they met for the first time on the battlefield.

In the meantime, there were other battles to be fought in 1862, including the significant Union victory in the western theater of the war at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in March. Sandwiched between them were other Union victories, these on the water, when Admiral David Farragut successfully seized the South's largest city, New Orleans, and a Federal ironclad, *Monitor,* fought off the Confederate behemoth *Virginia* at Hampton Roads, Virginia, ushering in a new era in naval warfare.

For both sides, 1862 would be a watershed year, a time in which the amateur armies raised so hastily the previous spring would learn how to fight, and kill, each other with increasing efficiency. From the men in the ranks to the officers on horseback, the war would progress with a grim inevitability. The only certainty was that there would be even worse days to come. Shiloh had seen to that.

Roy Morris Jr.

CIVIL WAR Quarterly

Volume 2 ■ Number 1

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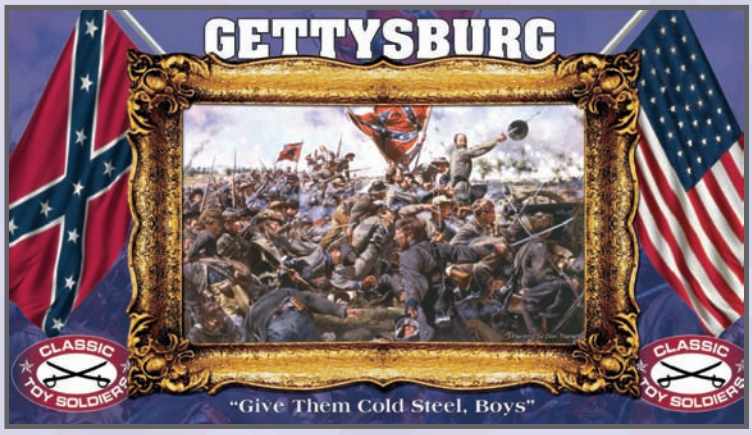

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ULYSSES S. GRANT SMASHED FORTS HENRY AND DONELSON IN KENTUCKY AND BECAME THE UNION'S PREMIER COMMANDER. By Pedro Garcia

Ulysses Grant (on horseback) watches his men assault the defenses of Fort Donelson in February 1862 in this painting by Paul Phillipateaux. The fort defended the Cumberland River flowing to Tennessee's capital, Nashville.

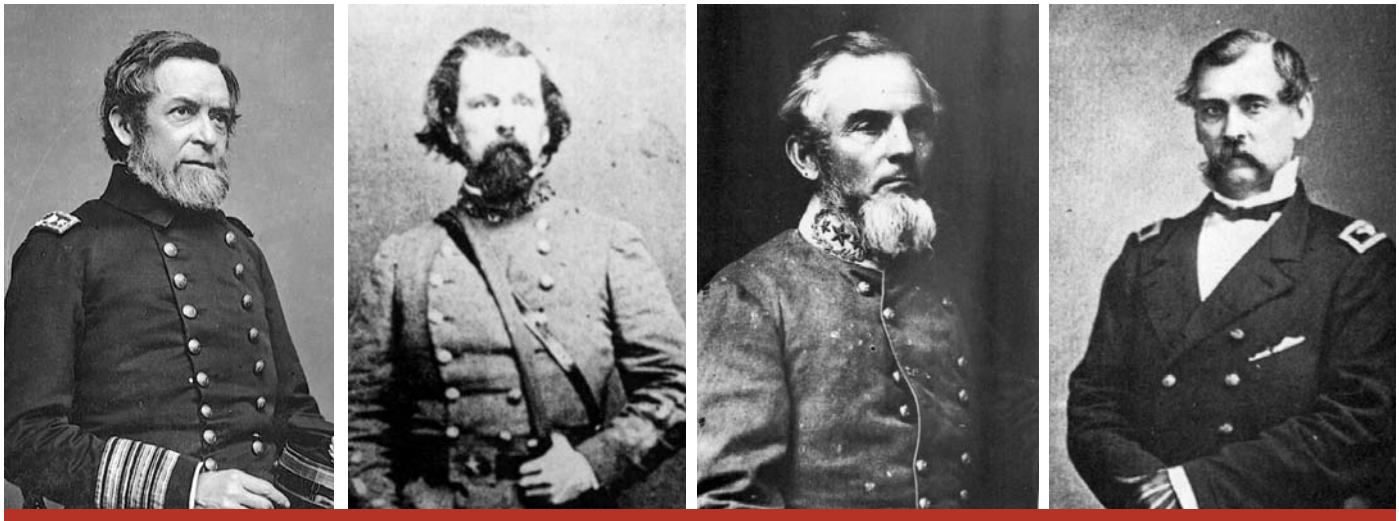
One evening around Christmas of 1861 Union Maj. Gen. Henry "Old Brains" Halleck, commanding the Department of Missouri, dined with his chief of staff, Brig. Gen. George Cullum, and an old Mexican War friend, Brig. Gen. William T. Sherman. Halleck, standing over a map on his table with a large pencil in his hand, asked, "Where is the Rebel line?"

Cullum drew a line through three points: Bowling Green in south central Kentucky; Columbus, a Kentucky town on the Mississippi River; and Forts Henry and Donelson in between the two towns just south of the Tennessee border.

"That is their line," said Halleck. "Now where is the proper place to break it?" Either Cullum or Sherman responded, "Naturally, the center."

Then Halleck drew a line perpendicular to the first near its middle, the pencil stroke following the general course of the Tennessee River. He said, "That's the true line of operations." Halleck had marked the great geographical axis by which the lower South could be pierced.

Seen from the Atlantic coast, the task of Northern armies appeared (at least to a skeptic) almost impossible, for the South looked truly boundless, an ocean of fields, valleys, mountains, forests, and rivers. But rivers could be daggers as well as obstacles. They cut deeply into the Confederacy's heartland. Indeed, no geography was ever more favorable to a modern invading army than Kentucky's was to the Union Army in early 1862. What made it so were



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The forts' antagonists, from left to right: Union Admiral Andrew Foote, Fort Henry commander Lloyd Tilghman, Confederate Brig. Gen. Gideon Pillow, and Union Brig. Gen. Charles Smith. The Union men had the advantage in military experience and skills.

the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. The Tennessee, navigable all the way from its mouth at the Ohio River to the Muscle Shoals at Decatur, Ala., and the Cumberland, navigable from its mouth at the Ohio River to Nashville, Tenn., and beyond, pierced the Confederate east-west defensive line that Cullum had marked. They pierced it, in fact, not more than 20 miles apart. It was along this geographical axis that Generals Halleck and Ulysses S. Grant and Flag Officer Andrew Foote ruptured the defenses of Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston.

At the end of the summer of 1861, Southerners realized that the most immediate and potentially deadly threat to the Confederacy would not come from the east, but from the west, where the Union was unexpectedly seizing the initiative. In mid-August, the Missouri engineer and entrepreneur James Eads, a man of boundless energy, talent, and ability, was given a contract to build seven ironclad gunboats in 64 days. A true mechanical and organizational genius, the Indiana native was included in the Southern sneer at the North as "a race of pasty-faced mechanics." Working at drumbeat speed, by the end of November he was able to launch eight "turtle-backed" steamers. These vessels made a formidable squadron totaling 5,000 tons, mounting 107 guns, and with an average cruising speed of 9 knots. The 175-foot river craft drew only 5½ feet of water, and, in river parlance, "could run on a heavy dew."

To command this flotilla, the U.S. Navy commissioned Captain Andrew Foote with the rank of flag officer. A staunch Calvinist, Foote was a 56-year-old, teetotaling Connecticut Yankee with burning eyes. A man who spoke sparingly, he was one of those Puritans who "prayed like saints and fought like devils." A 40-year veteran, Foote had fought the Chinese in Canton, battled pirates in Sumatra, chased slave traders in the South Atlantic, and 20 years before had commanded the first temperance ship in the U.S. Navy. Indeed, he had spent his entire career fighting the two things he hated most: slavery and whisky.

Odd then was the fate that teamed Foote in the coming campaign with Ulysses S. Grant, a man who had a reputation as a drunkard and a drifter in the prewar Army. In 1854, Grant had resigned his captain's commission because of his drinking problems and had fared poorly in civilian life. When war came, however, Grant had impressed enough people that he received an appointment as colonel of Illinois volunteers, and soon was promoted to brigadier general, proving himself an excellent executive officer. Grant was an unobtrusive, mild-mannered, colorless officer, a recent biographer admitting that "there is almost no glamour in the figure." Yet Grant was a relentless warrior and an extraordinary general whose approach to war was uncomplicated. He later wrote that "the art of war is simple enough, find out where your enemy is, get at him as soon as you can, strike him as hard as you can, and keep moving on." Both Grant and Foote believed strongly in combined operations, trying to convince Halleck that the Army and Navy "were like blades of a shears—united, invincible, [but] divided, almost useless."

Albert Sidney Johnston was painfully

"FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE, THE COURSE OF THE RIVER COULD BE TRACED BY THE DENSE VOLUMES OF SMOKE ISSUING FROM THE FLOTILLA—INDICATING THAT THE LONG-THREATENED ATTEMPT TO BREAK OUR LINES WAS ABOUT TO BE MADE IN EARNEST."

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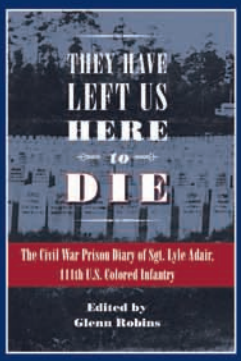
The Civil War Prison Diary of Sgt. Lyle Adair, 11th U.S. Colored Infantry

Edited by Glenn Robins

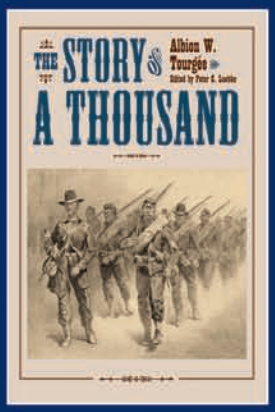


An edited and annotated version of the diary Sergeant Adair kept of his seven months as a POW in five different Confederate camps. As a white soldier serving with African American troops, Adair makes revealing observations about the influence of race on the experience of captivity.

THE STORY OF A THOUSAND

Albion W. Tourgée

Edited by Peter C. Luebke

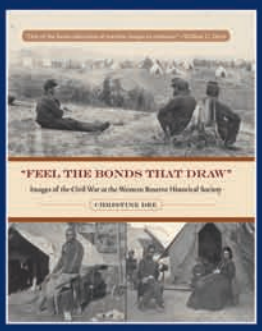


This facsimile edition of Tourgée's regimental history of the 105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry was first published in 1826. The text is enhanced by the inclusion of illustrator Frederic Remington's engravings, which accompanied the book's serialization in *The Cosmopolitan* magazine in 1894 and 1895.

"FEEL THE BONDS THAT DRAW"

Images of the Civil War at the Western Reserve Historical Society

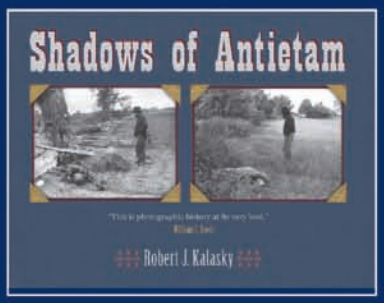
Christine Dee



Nearly 200 images from the Western Reserve Historical Society, whose extensive Civil War photographic archive historian William C. Davis calls "one of the finest collections of wartime images in existence," are made available.

SHADOWS OF ANTIETAM

Robert J. Kalasky



With the help of reenactors and using black-and-white photography, Kalasky painstakingly recreates the 74 known glass plates shot by Alexander Gardner and James Gibson at Antietam, retracing their footsteps by location, date, and time to chronologically and sequentially place their images.

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aware of the weakness of his position. Commanding the Confederacy's vast Department No. 2, he was expected to hold a line nearly 600 miles long and broken by three navigable rivers. He had few troops and even fewer arms. "The General lacked nothing except men, munitions of war and the means of obtaining them," his son later wrote in a bitter reminiscence. A 58-year-old, Kentucky-born Texan, he had distinguished himself in a colorful career: frontier officer, Texas revolutionist, Secretary of War in Sam Houston's cabinet, Mexican War colonel, and commander of the famed 2nd Cavalry, whose roster included the names of 10 future generals. Grant "expected him to be the most formidable the Confederacy would produce," and William Sherman pronounced him "a real general."

This counted for little, however, when he was outnumbered nearly 2 to 1. In reality, Johnston held no line. What he held was a series of points divided by wide stretches of unoccupied territory. In fact, there was a fourth avenue of invasion available to the Union along the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, which connected with rail lines to Chattanooga and the lower South. The river routes, however, were the most likely approaches because they offered excellent and secure communications. There was no practical limit to the capacity of navigable rivers to supply the Union armies so long as they had enough boats. As Sherman said, "We are much obliged to the Tennessee which has favored us most opportunely … for I am never easy with a railroad which takes a whole army to guard … whereas they can't stop the Tennessee, and each boat can make its own game."

The Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, crossing the critical center of Johnston's "line," constituted, as author Shelby Foote aptly put it, "a double barreled shotgun leveled at his heart." To protect against this threat, the rivers were guarded by hastily built forts. Forts Henry and Heiman stood on opposite banks of the Tennessee River near the Kentucky-Tennessee border. Fort Henry stood on the marshy eastern bank and was built in a tactically vulnerable position, being relatively low in elevation, partially inundated by floodwater, and on a dangerous salient open to enfilading fire.

The smaller Fort Heiman stood on the western shore, unfinished and unarmed, and in such bad shape that when Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman arrived on the scene to take command he ordered Heiman's men to abandon it in favor of consolidating at Fort Henry. In all, Tilghman counted 3,400 defenders who "were not drilled, badly equipped, and very indifferently armed with shotguns and hunting rifles." Additionally, poor camp sanitation and sickness had further reduced the garrison by as much as one- fifth, and one company's only duty was "trying to keep water out of the fort." In fact, the river had recently risen so quickly that only nine of the 15 guns bearing riverward remained above water. The rising water also negated the effectiveness of some 20 mines, called torpedoes, that had been placed in the river. These sheet-iron cylinders, 5 feet long by 1 foot in diameter, held 70 pounds of black powder and were anchored to the river bottom at normal flow level. A tiprod from the top of each activated a musket lock that fired the weapon when a vessel brushed the rod. As the water rose, these became useless.

Halleck, aware of the frightful condition of the winter roads, planned to use the superior mobility afforded by water transportation. But it was Grant who took the initiative and forced the issue. When Foote advised Grant about the onset of low water, Grant pressed his commander until Halleck committed himself to the action. The campaign began in the rainy, early evening darkness of February 3, when the fleet slipped its moorings and moved southward up the swift-flowing Tennessee toward Forts Henry and Heiman. Leading the way was a squadron of gunboats: five ironclads—USS *Essex, Lexington, St. Louis, Carondelet,* and Foote's own flagship, USS *Cincinnati*—and two timberclads—*Tyler* and *Conestoga*. They escorted nine transports that carried Grant's Army of West Tennessee, comprising 15,000 men in three divisions commanded by Brig. Gens. John McClernand, Charles Smith, and Lew Wallace. Sup-

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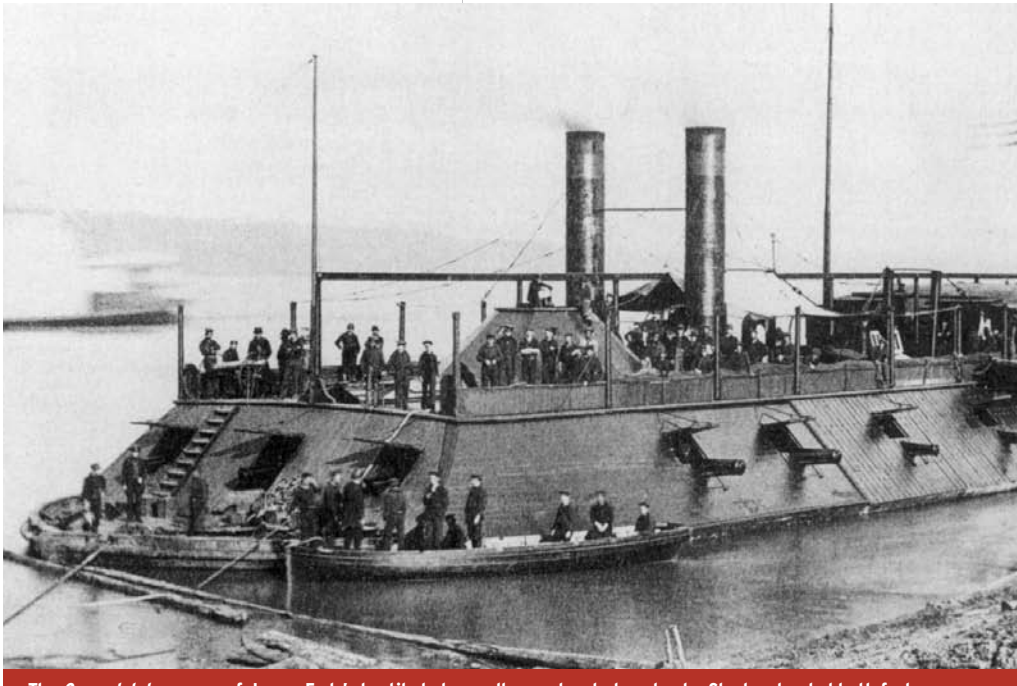

The *Carondelet* was one of James Eads's hastily but soundly constructed gunboats. She bombarded both forts and eventually became the most celebrated boat in the West.

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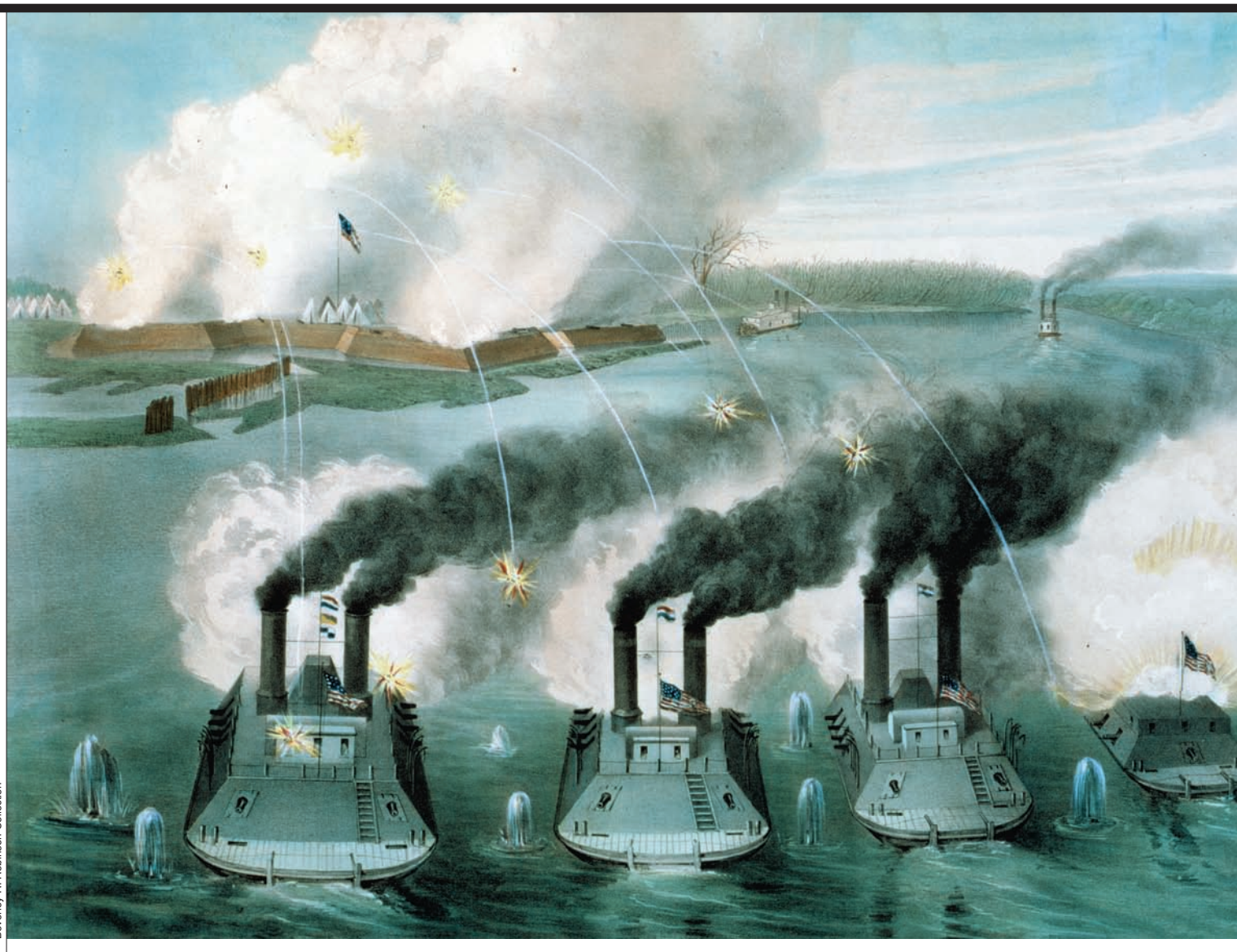

Beverley R. Robinson Collection

porting the infantry were two regiments of cavalry and eight batteries of artillery. Grant's movement would take place in two columns on either side of the river. He intended to land as close to the forts as possible.

Dawn brought good and ill for the Confederates. The temperature was unseasonably warm for February, which no doubt pleased them, but daylight also revealed the approach of their enemy. "Far as the eye could see, the course of the river could be traced by the dense volumes of smoke issuing from the flotilla—indicating that the long-threatened attempt to break our lines was about to be made in earnest," recalled Rebel artillery officer Captain Jesse Taylor.

To reconnoiter suitable points along the riverbanks for landing his troops, Grant boarded the ironclad *Essex*, William D. "Dirty Bill" Porter commanding. The boats steamed to within two miles of the forts, crabbed into line abreast, and opened fire. The guns of Fort Henry barked wildly in protest. They quickly found their range, and a solid shot was put squarely into the *Essex*. The shell screamed over the spar-deck, narrowly missing Grant and Porter, and slammed into the officer's quarters. After ripping through the captain's quarters and steerage, the shell erupted from the stern and dropped hissing into the river. A visibly shaken Grant decided to turn about and have his army disembark four miles downriver.

Union gunboats bombard Fort Henry on the Tennessee River. They are, from left to right, the *St. Louis, Carondelet, Cincinnati,* and *Essex*. Two Confederate boats flee south, up the river. The Union bombardment, unassisted by a land assault, was successful. Although the artist has shown otherwise, the three largest gunboats were exactly the same size.

That having been decided, Grant resolved to take command on the east bank, and ordered Smith to command the west bank and capture Fort Heiman. The landing was completed the next day, February 4.

Jesse Taylor recalled it as a day "of unwonted animation on the hitherto quiet waters of the Tennessee … the flood-tide of arriving and departing transports continued ceaselessly." Then, at sunset, the skies

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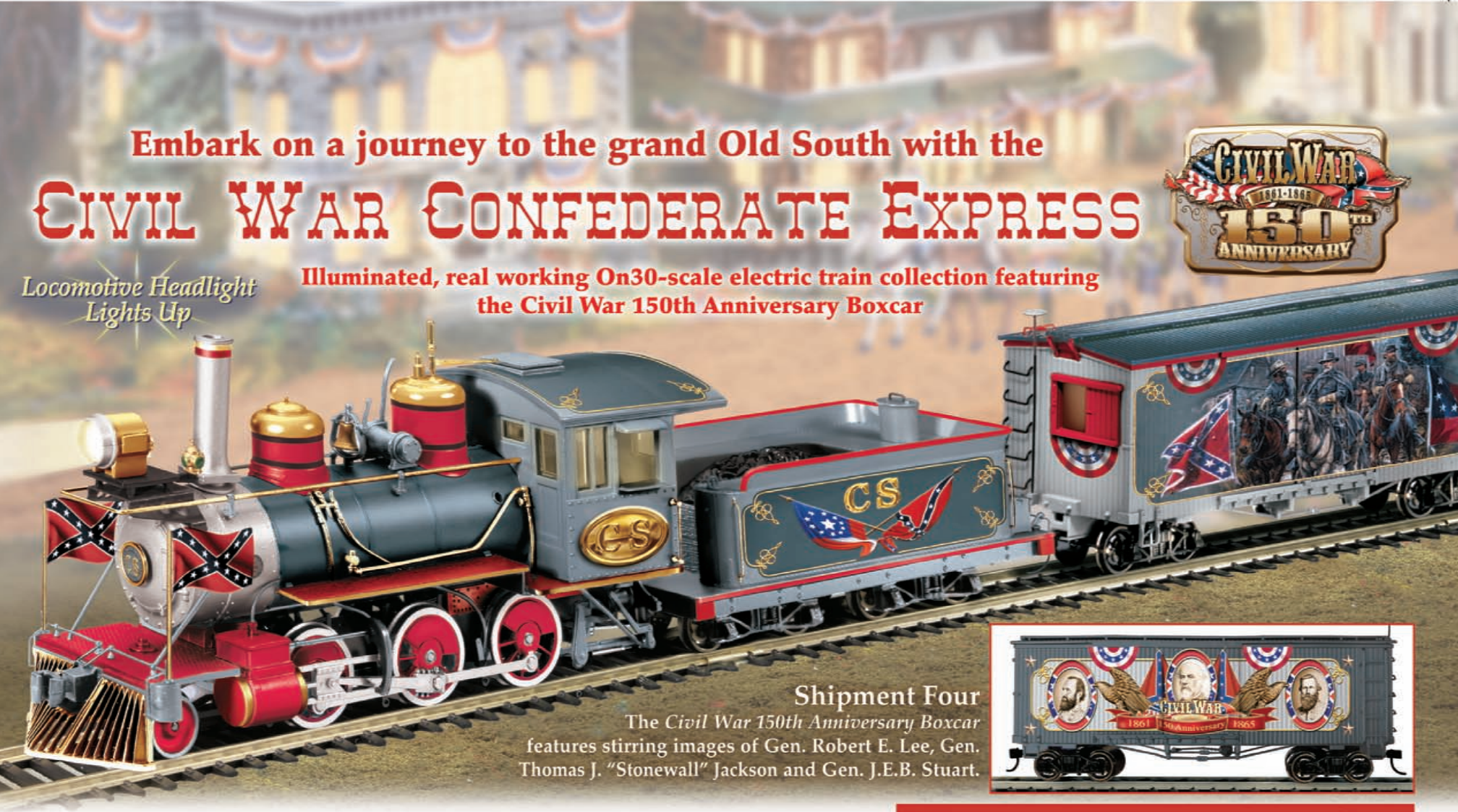

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opened up, flooding the already swollen river to new heights.

As the enemy buildup continued, General Tilghman began to comprehend the enormity of the odds he faced, and that night called a council of war. He announced that he could not allow himself to be entrapped in a shipwrecked fort or have his communications cut, and so would withdraw the garrison to Fort Donelson. As Tilghman's artillery chief observed, "Surrounded by water … cut off from the support of infantry, and on the point of being submerged, our whole force is wholly inadequate to cope with that of the enemy, even if there had been no extraordinary rise in the river." To discourage pursuit and buy time for the fleeing troops, Tilghman stayed with a skeletal force of about 75 men to work the guns. Only two of these, a high-velocity six-inch rifle, which had already struck the *Essex,* and a giant 128-pound Columbiad, were capable of damaging the gunboats' armor.

On the morning of February 6, the Union fleet awoke to a deep mist and found that the storm of the evening before had sent great bulwarks of rushing flotsam, including whole trees torn out by their roots, piling up around the bows of the vessels. Lookouts aboard the *Carondelet* reported a number of large white objects, "which through the fog looked like polar bears coming down the stream," recalled Captain Henry Walke. These were the mines that had lolled beneath the surface of the river, torn from their moorings by the swift current.

It was careful work to drag these mines ashore and remove all other impediments, but soon a breeze came up, clearing the fog, and the warships weighed anchor. The squadron of four ironclads and three timberclads steamed up to within 1,700 yards of Fort Henry, "until as they swung into the main channel … they showed one broad and leaping sheet of flame," observed Taylor. "At once the fort was ablaze with the flame of her heavy guns," recalled Walke. One defender proudly called the reply "as pretty and simultaneous a broadside as I ever saw flash from the sides of a frigate."

The guns also delivered with trip-hammer rapidity and accuracy. As many as 62 hits were scored against the Union flotilla, one against the luckless *Essex*. After taking the head off the master's mate, the solid shot smashed into one of *Essex*'s boilers, spewing forth a ghastly brew of gaseous fires and tons of boiling water. A wall of superheated steam, shooting through the forward end of the casemate, flashed up the hatchway into the pilothouse, instantly killing the helmsman and a gunner.

"The scene was almost indescribable," remembered James Laning. "The dead man, transformed into a hideous apparition, was still at the wheel, standing erect, his left hand holding the spoke, and his right hand holding the signal bell-rope.... One man was on his knees in the act of taking a shell from the box to be passed to the loader. The escaping steam had struck him square in the face, and he met death in that position." Badly mauled, and with 38 casualties, the out-of-control *Essex* drifted downstream.

"The fleet seemed to hesitate," noticed Taylor. But it was only for a moment. Relentlessly the "turtles" pressed forward, closing the range. Fifteen-second fuses were cut to 10, then five. Gun elevations came down nearly flat, "and every shot went straight home. His shot and shell penetrated our earthworks as readily as a ball from a navy Colt would pierce a pine board," Taylor recalled. The Confederates put up a valiant fight for about two hours, but when the six-inch rifle burst and the giant Columbiad was accidentally spiked by a broken priming wire, they lost heart. Aware that the long odds were getting longer, and satisfied that he had given the fleeing garrison a two-hour headstart to Fort Donelson, Tilghman struck his colors.

"The river had risen so high," wrote historian Stanley Horn, "that when Foote's officer approached to receive the surrender his cutter sailed through the sally port." Meanwhile, Grant's army was battling the backwater sloughs, slugging through the muck and mire in the marshy bottoms, arriving one hour later, at 3 PM.

This had been Foote's fight. He had lost 12 killed or missing and 27 wounded, compared to the fort's 10 killed or missing and 11 wounded. Drawing on the *Nashville Union and American* newspaper of February 8, Foote could proudly quote the Southern feeling about the operation: "We had nothing to fear from a land attack, but the gunboats are the devil."

Suddenly it was a different war. Fort Henry was like the first domino that, in falling, sets in motion the collapse of an entire row. Grant immediately exploited the success by sending Foote's gunboats upstream to break the Memphis and Ohio Railroad bridge over the river, thus protecting himself by severing a major artery of Rebel communications, supplies, and troops. The gunboats continued 150 miles upstream, knocking out other bridges and cutting telegraph lines, all the way to Muscle Shoals, Ala., where the town of Florence was surrendered. The fact was, with Fort Henry in Union hands, all the Confederates could do was retreat. This was clearly seen by the man who would eventually lead Union armies to victory in the war. Grant wrote his wife that the advance on the Tennessee River gave the Union "such an inside track on the enemy that by following up our success we can go anywhere."

As the Union commander was preparing to get his army across the 12-mile neck of land from Fort Henry to Fort Donelson, Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston decided on February 11 to abandon Bowling Green, a vital point of his defensive "line" in Kentucky, and concentrate his forces at Nashville, Tenn. He also reasoned that with Fort Henry taken, Fort Donelson would be untenable. Yet inexplicably, after deciding the fort was indefensible, he ordered several thousand troops into it. Thus Johnston divided his army, failing to achieve a concentration.

Brigadier General John B. Floyd commanded these reinforcements. Floyd was a former governor of Virginia whose ignorance of military affairs had not been remedied by lackluster service as secretary of war in the 1850s, nor by his feckless and

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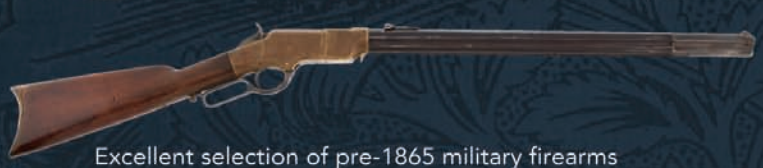

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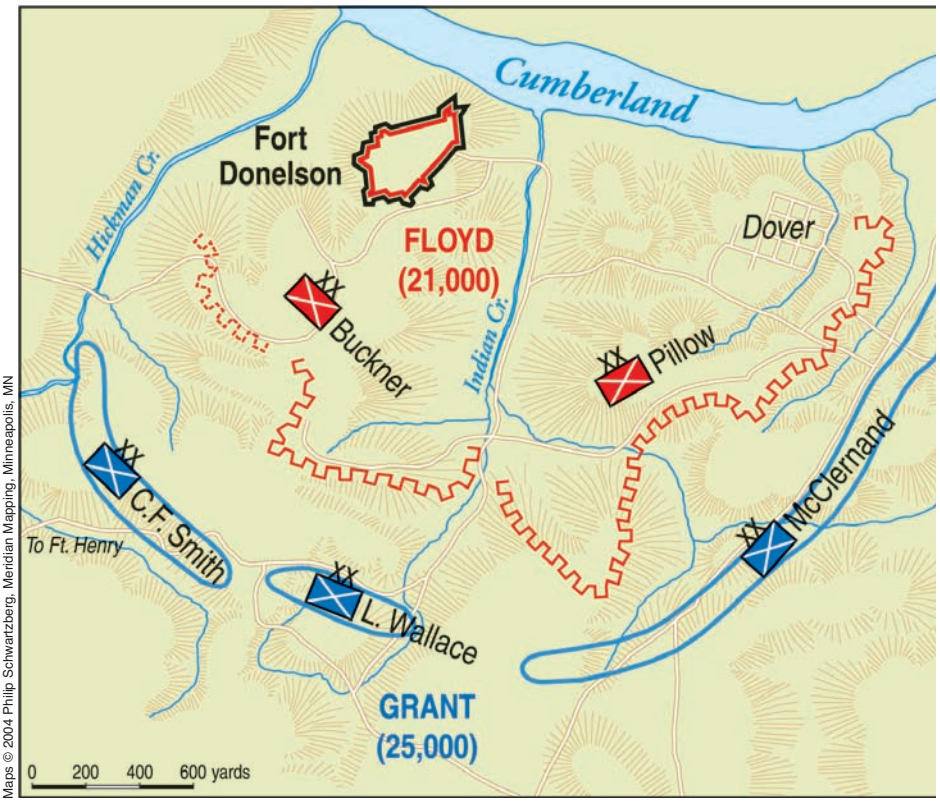


inept performance in the fall of 1861 under Robert E. Lee in West Virginia. He had shown a tendency to get flustered under pressure and would again prove indecisive and vacillating. His uninspiring subordinates were Brig. Gen. Gideon Pillow, a pretentious Tennessee lawyer who should have stayed at the bar, and Brig. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, an old friend and West Point classmate of U.S. Grant who inclined toward being saturnine.

Grant originally expected to take Fort Donelson two days after the fall of Fort Henry, but he found himself slowed, "perfectly locked in by high water and bad roads, and prevented from acting offensively." As he stood gazing forlornly at the waste of wetness in his path, it began to snow and then violently rain. The roads became "bottomless gumbo," wrote Grant. The rain "soaked the soft alluvial soil of the bottoms, until under the tread of troops it speedily became reduced to the consistency of soft porridge of almost immeasurable depth, rendering marching very difficult for the infantry, and for the artillery almost impassable."

Halleck, meanwhile, perceiving a Confederate counterattack because Grant had been delayed, reinforced him with 10,000 troops, as well as picks and shovels. About midmorning of the 12th the weather turned fair and the troops moved out under a hot sun. In the spring-like atmosphere the soldiers began to discard what they felt they could spare. Major James Connolly wrote that "the ground was strewn with … coats, pants, canteens, cartridge boxes, bayonet scabbards, knapsacks … all sorts of things that are found in the army." By nightfall, most of the Federals were deployed on a high ridge opposite Fort Donelson. "We kept closing in slowly, and at dusk were within pistol shot of their rifle pits," recalled Lieutenant W.D. Harland of the 18th Illinois. Meanwhile, Grant had urged Foote to bring his gunboats in position on the Cumberland and repeat the bombardment given at Henry.

Fort Donelson consisted of a semicircle of earthworks and entrenchments on a ridge west of Dover. The river approach was guarded by batteries located on a high bluff.

Fort Donelson, encompassing about 20 acres, consisted of a semicircle of earthworks and entrenchments situated on a ridge west of the hamlet of Dover, Tenn. Formidable batteries set high on a bluff guarded the river approach. It enjoyed the advantage of being fronted by deep gullies and flanked by swamps and two flooded creeks—Hickman Creek to the north and Indian Creek to the south. Floyd's ring of trenches had Pillow's troops south of the fort and town, and Buckner's west of it.

The cavalry was led by Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest, who would become one of war's more remarkable figures. Tennessee-born Forrest had moved to Mississippi and, despite receiving a scant education, had become a wealthy planter and slave trader.

Floyd commanded 28 regiments, 17,000 men in all, including cavalry and artillery, and carried six light batteries in addition to the big guns bearing riverward. He liked his chances, but he also had to defend a position that had a river at its back, which denied him security for his rear. The Confederates, focusing their attention on the river and the fort's batteries, thus allowed Grant to reach their positions and make contact with the river both above and below the fort, cutting their communications.

On February 13, the two principal Union divisions, those of Charles Smith and John McClernand, tested the defenses. The day saw heavy skirmishing, artillery duels, and sharpshooter activity. Little was accomplished, however, beyond bloodying

raw troops, expending ammunition, and bolstering the morale of the Rebels. Smith was placed on the Army's left, due west of Buckner's line, and McClernand on the right, south of Pillow's line.

McClernand was a political appointee, an Illinois lawyer-politician whose only military experience consisted of a few marches in the Black Hawk War. He was ambitious, untactful, hated West Pointers, and although energetic, had little ability. By contrast, Smith was Regular Army, thrice breveted for bravery in Mexico. A thoroughly outstanding soldier, he had the bearing of a marshal of France. Lew Wallace described him as "a person of superb physique, very tall, perfectly proportioned, straight, square-shouldered, ruddy-faced, with eyes of perfect blue and a long snow-white moustache."

That evening it began to rain, turning to sleet by nightfall as the temperature dropped to 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Troops who had abandoned coats and blankets cursed and spent a miserable night, while wounded men between the lines slowly froze to death. By midnight it was snowing heavily, and the armies awoke on February 14 to a wintry landscape. On the river, Foote and the remainder of his flotilla arrived, bringing with them the bulk of Wallace's division. Wallace, a newspaper reporter, lawyer, politician, veteran of the Mexican War, and future author of the novel *Ben-Hur,* was placed in the center between Smith and McClernand. Foote and Grant agreed that the simultaneous assault would begin with the Navy destroying the lower water batteries, then running past them to enfilade the open rear of the fort while the Army surrounded the garrison.

Foote, however, was reluctant to engage his gunboats in attack. Tilghman's rough handling of his turtles at Fort Henry had undermined his confidence. The *Cincinnati* and *Essex* were out of action, and repairs to equipment took time. Repairs to men's spirits took even longer—they feared being scalded to death aboard his iron coffins. Several of his tars had deserted and replacements balked. He would have pre-

ferred to wait a couple of weeks until he had enough men for all his gunboats and some mortar scows as well. Foote could then lay off at long range and methodically demolish the fort stone by stone.

Duty-bound, though against his better judgment, Foote ordered the fleet into the floodwaters of the Cumberland River at 1:45 PM. In line abreast were the ironclads (*Carondelet* on the starboard wing, nearest the fort, then *Pittsburgh, St. Louis,* and *Louisville*), followed by the timberclads, *Tyler* and *Conestoga.*

Except for the thudding of the engines and the gurgled screech of a flight of startled geese, nothing broke the profound silence that had settled over the snowy valley. Wrote Walke: "Not a living creature could be seen, only the black rows of heavy guns, pointing down at us, reminding me of the dismal-looking sepulchers cut in the rocky cliffs near Jerusalem, but far more repulsive." At 2:35, the flotilla came within sight of the fort, and at about 1 1/2 miles, the Confederates opened the affair by firing two shells to get the range. Both shots fell short, followed by several other misses.

Presently, Foote gave the word and the 8-inch bow gun of the *St. Louis* blasted forth, the shell dropping just in front of the lower battery. The firing on both sides was slow at first, but gradually became incessant. For a hellish hour the gunboats delivered a heavy and accurate fire, smashing the enemy parapets. Among the onlookers was Forrest, who turned and yelled to his preacher aide, "Parson, for God's sake, pray; nothing but God Almighty can save that fort!"

A newsman aboard the *St. Louis,* Foote's flagship, was more favorable of Confederate chances and thought their fire accurate. Confederate artillery Captain Reuben Ross recalled that "a singular paralysis" took possession of the flotilla. Nonetheless, Foote pressed forward to within 400 yards. Victory was a hairbreadth away; in 200 more yards the ironclads could slip past the Rebel batteries to enfilade the open rear of the fort.

Here their intentions dissolved. Confederate Captain Bell Bidwell recalled that the Union "fire was far more destructive to our works at two miles than at 200 yards. They over-fired us from that distance." Plunging Rebel fire from the bluffs produced a 30 to 35 degree depressed, right-angle bombardment that smashed into the turtles' angled sides and unarmored upper decks. Pillow wrote, "I could see distinctly the effect of our shot to one of his boats … when he shrunk back and drifted below the line. Several shots struck another boat, tearing her iron case, splintering her timbers and making them crack as if by a stroke of lightning, when she, too fell back."

Drawing a bead on the flagship, Confederate Private John Frequa shouted to his mates, "Now boys, see me take a chimney!" True to his word, Frequa's next shot carried away both the smokestack and flagstaff of the *St. Louis*. A 32-pound iron ball struck the pilothouse, wounding three men and killing its pilot. Foote, standing next to him, was hit in the ankle, but managed to grab the wheel and continue the fight. Yet the shot had badly damaged the steering mechanism and, unmanageable, the flagship drifted downriver. The commodore then went down to the gun deck to urge on his gunners and help supervise the treatment of the wounded. As he was standing on one side of a gun, a shell struck, knocking down five of the six men manning it and wounding Foote in the left arm.

Next in line for punishment was the *Louisville*. She took a 32-pound shot that swept her from bow to stern. Then a 128-pound projectile shattered the gun carriage of an 8-inch Dahlgren gun, decapitating three crewmen. Another Columbiad round struck an angle formed by the upper deck and pilothouse. Still a fourth shot, a short shell from the *Tyler,* severed her tiller ropes. Without steering, she was compelled to drop downriver.

Elsewhere, the *Pittsburgh* was staggered by numerous hits at the waterline and she began to flood. Her crew could not serve guns and pumps at the same time, so to keep from sinking she retired. Embarrassingly, in retreating, she struck the *Carondelet*'s stern, smashing her starboard rudder. Only the *Carondelet* remained in the point-blank fight. Rebel Captain Ross worried that the gunboat, by standing so close to the batteries, would send landing parties to capture the works. Ross claimed everybody determined to sell their lives dearly, using staves, sponger staffs, and handspikes in place of the customary but nonexistent cutlasses.

Ross need not have worried, for within minutes the ironclad was a shambles. Walke recalled that his "vessel was terribly cut up, with the pilot house and smoke pipes riddled, port side cut open 15 feet, and our decks ripped up." She was struck 54 times, many of these were from cannon balls skipped across the water's surface aimed at her waterline. Her decks slippery with blood, leaking badly, the final insult came as a 42-pounder cannon burst. Walke had had enough and retired in confusion.

Foote's flotilla had been cut to pieces, the *St. Louis* hit 59 times, the *Louisville* 36, and the *Pittsburgh* 20. He attempted to accentuate the positive, however, by assert-

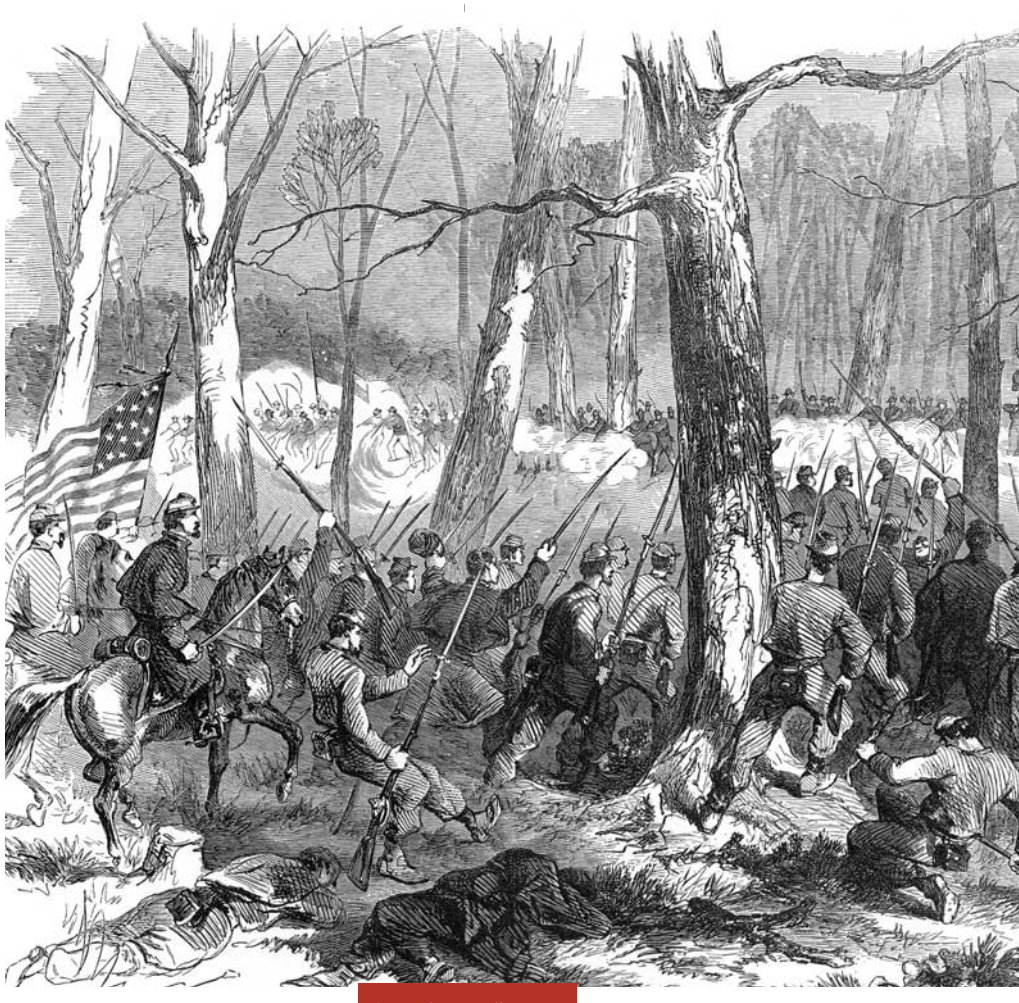
"NOT A LIVING CREATURE COULD BE SEEN, ONLY THE BLACK ROWS OF HEAVY GUNS, POINTING DOWN AT US, REMINDING ME OF THE DISMAL-LOOKING SEPULCHERS CUT IN THE ROCKY CLIFFS NEAR JERUSALEM, BUT FAR MORE REPULSIVE."

ing that the gunboat assault "would in 15 minutes more, could the action have been continued, have resulted in the capture of the fort bearing upon us, as the enemy were running from his batteries." Privately, he was shaken by the pounding he had taken. His wounded foot and arm, combined with the horribly mutilated bodies of his men, had made a profound impression. He felt he had been forced into battle before he was ready and wrote his wife the next day, assuring her that "we will keep off a good distance from the Rebel forts in future engagements. I won't run into fire again, as a burnt child dreads it."

Grant was also greatly disappointed at this rebuke of the Navy. He had done nothing in the way of any land diversion to supplement the assault—joint Army-Navy operations had not progressed that far at this stage of the war. The Confederates were jubilant at their decisive blow and were confident they could do the same to the Army. When the euphoria subsided, their commanders understood that they had inflicted little more than a temporary setback. News from them fluctuated from confidence to despair, leaving their theater commander, Sidney Johnston, to send a cryptic and enigmatic wire: "If you lose the fort, bring the troops to Nashville, if possible."

That night at a council of war, the three brigadiers decided that Grant's stranglehold must be broken. They planned a dawn attack "on our left, and thus to pass our people into the open country lying southward towards Nashville." However, there were procedural and logistical flaws in the planned breakout concerning the crucial issue of what would happen after a successful attack. Each man left the meeting with a different idea.

Pillow held the belief that his troops would return to the defenses and that victory would be so complete that time would permit retrieval of equipment, rations, and the skeletal units left behind guarding the fort's trenches during the assault. Then the retreat to Nashville would begin. Buckner and his subordinates thought that nobody would return after the battle, but rather

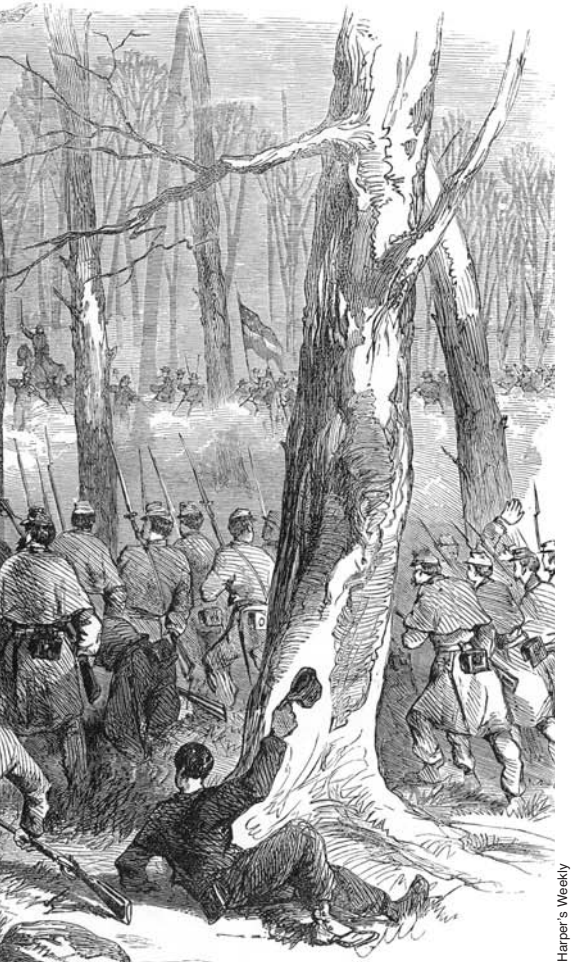


General Lew Wallace's men charge at Confederates who have broken out of Fort Donelson. The Rebels seemingly had an opening to make good their escape when Wallace's men moved in to cut them off.

press on to Nashville. In anticipation of this, Colonel John C. Brown's brigade had packed three days of rations in their haversacks. Floyd, as the senior commander, had the responsibility to make certain that everyone was on the same page. Perhaps at the time he thought they were. In any case, his subsequent actions implied agreement with Pillow's interpretation of the plan.

The third day at Fort Donelson began shortly before dawn on February 15, with the high-pitched Rebel yell—"a screeching sound symbolizing men's frustrations with cold, snow and Yankee bullets, a searching cry for freedom and warm food," wrote Mississippian John Simmonton. Eight to ten thousand Rebels, with Forrest's cavalry in the lead, charged toward McClernand's division. The sudden onrushing Southern tide scattered the sleepy Union pickets and struck with a heavy blow. For the next two hours there were sharp firefights between individual regiments and brigades, slashing thrusts by Confederate infantry and cavalry in combined assaults—and stubborn resistance from determined Federals.

Indeed, the Federals fought well but were simply swamped and outflanked. By 8 AM, McClernand was in trouble and called for help. Wallace, whose right flank was exposed as McClernand fell back, sent a brigade on his own authority, while couriers were sent to find Grant. Meanwhile, the mounting pressure from Confederate infantry and cavalry, and the relentless pounding from Confederate artillery, rapidly wore down Union resistance, which was also suffering from



Harper's Weekly

dwindling ammunition. Some sectors of the battlefield witnessed vicious hand-to-hand fighting as well as extensive use of bayonets.

In a fight where progress could be measured in yards from hillock to hillock, it was "the spirit and determination that insured success" for the Southern soldier, recalled Simmonton. In fact, after-action reports on both sides were sprinkled with phrases such as "the enemy pressing us very hard," the ground being "hotly contested," and the holding of ground "under a galling fire."

By early afternoon the Confederates had punched a hole in Union lines large enough to march their army through. "Our success against the right wing is complete," declared Major Jeremy Gilmer. The attack had cleared both the Wynne's Ferry and Forge roads and the way to Nashville lay before them. Yet, by 1:30 the punch had

quite literally gone out of the Confederate breakout attempt. Fatigued soldiers on both sides simply stopped moving as their officers tried to reorganize units broken, mixed, or scattered over the field.

The lull proved decisive for both sides, for the entire battle changed abruptly. (The results were to be governed by the vital qualities of initiative, character, and leadership.) Pillow, having achieved his objective, immediately ordered the troops back to the trenches to consolidate, pack gear, draw rations, and retrieve the artillery. An incredulous and indignant Buckner at first refused to obey the order. When Floyd arrived on the scene, he was confronted by the irate Buckner. "At his [Floyd's] request to know my opinion of the movement, I replied that nothing had occurred to change my views of the necessity of evacuation of the post, that the road was open, and I thought we should at once avail ourselves of the existing opportunity to regain our communications." Floyd seemed to agree, and then rode off to find Pillow. When Floyd found him, he demanded: "In the name of God, General Pillow, what have we been fighting all day for? Certainly not to show our powers, but solely to secure the Wynne's Ferry Road, and now after securing it, you order it to be given up?"

Using all of his political talents, Pillow sought to convince Floyd of the correctness of his action. Floyd's decision making seemed as frozen as the bloodstained soil. At this juncture, both generals became immobilized by reports of Union reinforcements, and the irresolution Floyd had previously displayed in West Virginia, together with his tendency to get flustered under pressure, took hold. The Army would return to the trenches.

Confederate Lieutenant Selden Spencer expressed the general opinion among the soldiers at this turn of events: "His [Pillow's] head was turned with the victory just gained, and he was too short-sighted [here Spencer crossed out the words 'a fool'] to see that it was entirely thrown away, unless we used it for escape."

Grant had risen at his headquarters before dawn, then set off to visit Foote at his anchorage below Donelson, there to see the damaged gunboats. When Grant arrived, the wounded and shaken Foote told him he was taking the gunboats back for repairs. At this point, neither man knew of the attempted breakout of the Rebels south of the fort. Apparently, the sounds of the battle were muffled by the intervening woods and river bends. When the conference ended, a visibly upset Grant was taken ashore where he met an aide, livid with fear, bearing news of imminent disaster.

It was about 1 PM when Grant finally arrived back at headquarters where his staff briefed him on the seriousness of the situation. Remaining imperturbable through it all, he calmly replied, "Gentlemen, the position on the right must be retaken." He correctly perceived that the Confederates had done their worst. Grant also reasoned that the strength of the Confederate attack meant that they had weakened their right, concluding that "the one who attacks first will be victorious." With that he proclaimed, "General Smith, all has failed on our right, you must take Fort Donelson."

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"I will do it," was Smith's simple reply. With much energy and precision the 60-year old general—who had been commandant at West Point when Grant was a cadet—deployed his troops, and by 2:35 all was in readiness. Smith, sword held aloft with hat on blade tip, his long white moustache flowing in the wind, was the stuff of heroic paintings. "You must take the fort; take your caps off your guns, fix bayonets, and I will lead you," he bellowed. Lead them he did, but regimental formations became ragged crossing incorrigible obstructions, and confusion attended the ascendance of a slippery slope into the Rebel abatis. Then came a murderous fire that struck down 400 of the bluecoats. Nevertheless, Smith and his soldiers pressed forward. By 3 PM, they had cleared out the Rebels on the left and had cracked Fort Donelson's outer defense line.

Wrote Captain Seth Leyard Phillips, USN: "Do you know that our army was at one time defeated before Fort Donelson & General Smith—one of the first soldiers of our country—retrieved the fortunes of the day by leading his brigade to the charge of the chief redoubt, himself the first man in it! It is no stretch to say that defeat or victory hung upon his life & heaven guarded him in the terrible fire that for a while was forced upon him and his command."

Meanwhile, Wallace was encountering feeble resistance reclaiming most of the ground on the right. He found Confederates withdrawing from positions gained at great cost only hours before. As the sun sank, the fighting dwindled.

Another bitterly cold night ensued, but Grant took advantage of the hours by moving up artillery and reinforcements to positions won by Smith and Wallace that commanded the whole Confederate defensive works. Inside the fort, Floyd and Pillow fatuously wired Johnston in Nashville that they had won a victory "complete and glorious." In time, a clearer picture began to emerge. The Confederate officers began to realize the hopelessness of their situation; the fort could not be held nor could its troops now escape to Nashville. They

resolved to surrender. Upon learning of the planned capitulation, Forrest exploded in anger. Insisting there was more fight in the army than the generals gave it credit for, he announced to his troopers, "Boys, these people are talking about surrender and I am going to go out of this place before they do or bust hell wide open." Accordingly, he started to make his plans.

Also during the night occurred one the most comic and shameful episodes of the war. Floyd abdicated his command to Pillow; then Pillow abdicated it to Buckner. Floyd escaped by river with a few of his regiments, while Pillow fled in a small boat. On a more heroic note, the wily Forrest managed to cut his entire command out of the trap. They rode through swamps of ice-cold water until they reached safety.

Early the next morning, February 16, the hapless but responsible Buckner sent word to Grant that he desired terms of surrender. Grant's answer to his old friend and classmate not only made Grant famous, but gave impetus and direction to the whole war: "No terms other than an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to immediately move upon your works." Buckner petulantly replied that he found the "ungenerous and unchivalrous" offer insulting, but he had no choice. Either by siege or starvation, surrender was now inevitable.

Although its strategic impact gave the battle at Fort Donelson significance, Grant had also attained one of the major tactical successes of war. His own casualties in killed and wounded were slightly more than those of the Confederates, but his total casualties amounted to only 2,832 or 10.5 percent of his 28,000 men. Because of the surrender, Confederate losses totaled 16,623 or 79 percent of their 21,000 men.

Grant had thus virtually annihilated an enemy army by cutting his opponent's communications by pinning him against a river. In spite of Halleck's excellent strategy and good management and Grant's energy and ability, the eminent 19th-century military theorist Karl von Clausewitz had foreseen that such a victory could not have taken place without "major, obvious, and exceptional mistakes on the enemy's part," as when the Confederate command had divided its forces and placed Floyd's command where Grant could so readily trap it.

The fall of these two forts ensured the collapse of the entire Rebel line across Kentucky and propelled Grant into the limelight as the North's premier commander. Indeed, the Henry and Donelson fights marked the first turning point of the war, because what followed in the next few weeks was a series of Union triumphs, several directly or indirectly attributable to the falls of the two forts. These losses left the western Confederacy struggling for its life.

First among these triumphs was the capture of Nashville, the first major Confederate city and first Confederate state capital to fall. Abandoned a week after Fort Donelson surrendered, this was a serious blow, since Nashville was not only the western Confederacy's most important city for manufacture, but also a major arsenal and supply depot. The total loss of middle Tennessee amounted to much more, as the state was the greatest iron-ore-producing region in the Confederacy. The heart of Tennessee's growing industrial complex and its great war potential were gone. The loss of the two forts effectively rocked the Confederacy to its core.

Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune,* wrote: "The cause of the Union now marches on in every section of the country. Every blow tells fearfully against the rebellion. The rebels themselves are panic-stricken … or despondent. It now requires no far-reaching prophet to predict the end of this struggle."

Robert Henry, in his book *Story of the Confederacy* (1931), echoed these thoughts when he wrote, "Fort Donelson, in many ways, may be considered the critical event of the Civil War." More recently (1987), Frank Cooling, in a study of the fall of the two forts, wrote of "the expedition that broke open the West." Bruce Catton further opined that "Fort Donelson was not only a beginning; it was one of the decisive engagements of the entire war, and out of it came the slow progression toward Appomattox. □

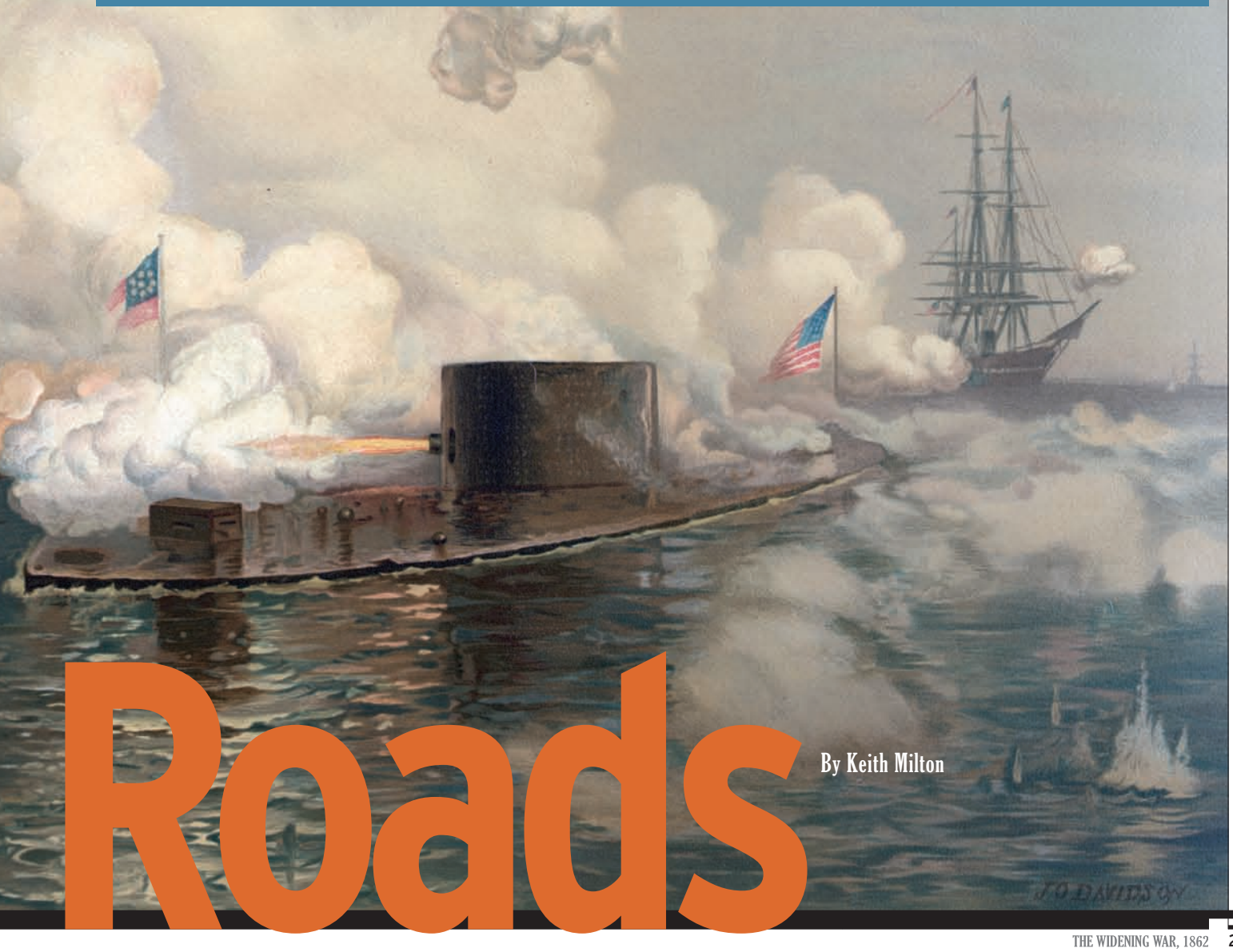
In this period chromolithograph, CSS *Virginia,* left, blasts away at the Union ironclad *Monitor* at the height of the Battle of Hampton Roads.

DUEL AT Hampton

Roads

The *Monitor* and the *Merrimack* tested the limits of naval warfare with the Federal blockade at risk.

By Keith Milton



Library of Congress

MOST history books teach that the Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate batteries ringing Charleston harbor fired on Fort Sumter and forced its surrender the following day. Actually, the Stars and Stripes was fired upon over three months earlier, on January 9, 1861, when the steamer *Star of the West,* under Federal charter, suffered hits from the same batteries that were to begin the war in April. The ship carried 204 Union troops along with their arms and baggage, and several tons of ammunition and provisions for the relief of Fort Sumter. She was, however, unarmed and unescorted, and was forced to stand out to sea to prevent her capture or destruction.

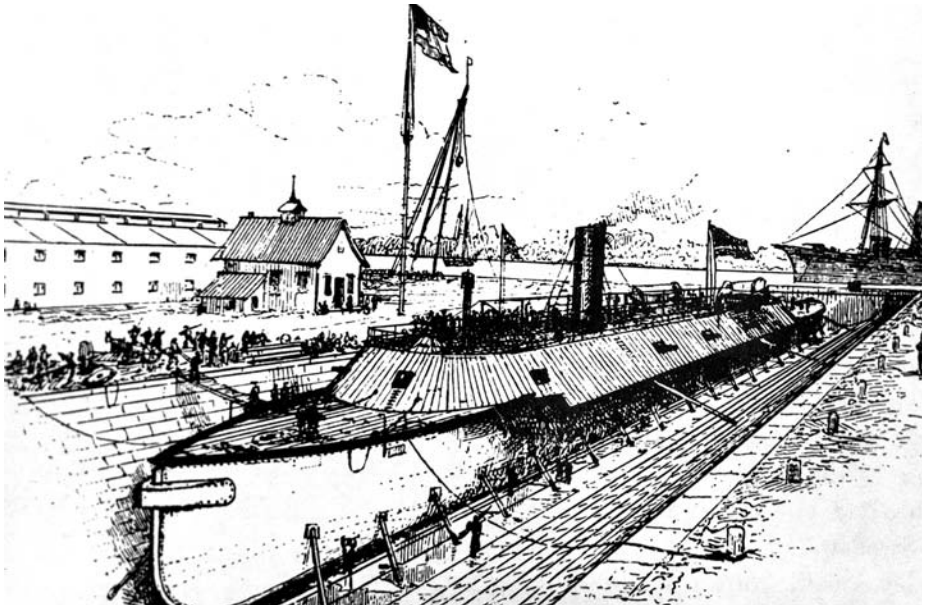
This overt act was swallowed by the U.S. government, at the time led by lame-duck President James Buchanan, who was loath to do anything that the Southerners might view as provocative, and thus drive more states out of the Union. Up until the *Star of the West* incident, only South Carolina had seceded, but feelings were running high in Dixie and more states were expected to follow. This policy of indecision and failed reconciliation was to be partly responsible for giving the Southerners their most famous ship of war.

By the time president-elect Abraham Lincoln was sworn in on March 4, 1861, six more states had joined South Carolina and had formed the Confederate States of America. Five weeks later, Lincoln ordered the naval blockade of the South, and called upon the loyal states to furnish 75,000 militia to retake the Federal property seized by the Confederates. When Virginia and North Carolina refused to turn over the required regiments, Lincoln ordered the blockade extended to include those two states, even though they were still in the Union, and in spite of the fact that the Virginia legislature had passed a resolution of loyalty only two weeks

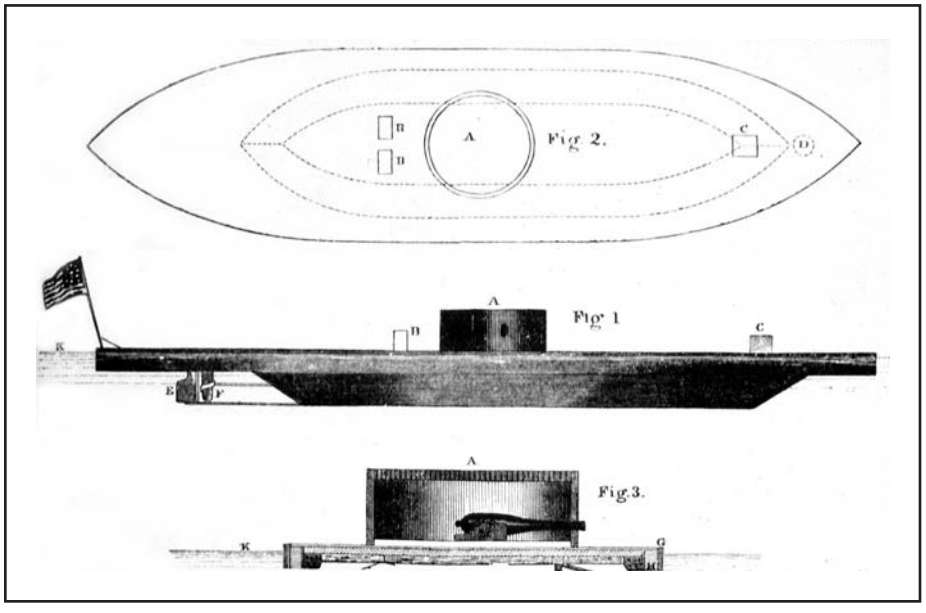
before. This proved to be the last straw for the Virginians, and within a month they had joined the Confederacy, making their state one of the last to leave the Union.

At the outbreak of hostilities, the U.S. Navy was in bad shape. There were 90 ships on the list, but more than half were sailing ships 40 to 50 years old. They lay rotting in various yards and were used as receiving and store-ships and would be of little use in the war. Of the steam-powered vessels, 21 were on foreign station, several were in yards being overhauled, and the balance were smaller vessels, tugs, supply craft, cutters, and other auxiliaries. The best of the lot were the six newly built Wabash-class steam frigates, of 40 guns and 3,300 tons—*Wabash, Colorado, Roanoke, Merrimack, Minnesota,* and *Niagara*. They were the pride of the Navy.

A crash program was started to build and charter vessels so that within three months of the loss of Norfolk, there was at least one U.S. warship off every Southern port.



ABOVE: Resourceful Southerners took the hull of the burned USS *Merrimack* and built it up into the Confederate ram *Virginia.* BELOW: Ericsson's design for an ironclad was so radical and advanced that it was at first rejected.



Both: Library of Congress

During the last weeks before the Virginia secession, the primary concern of the U.S War Department was the Navy Yard at Norfolk. It boasted the largest dry dock on the East Coast and housed the Navy's reserve supply of powder and shot. In addition to the many machine and boiler ships, sail lofts, foundries, and carpenter shops, it also housed nearly 1,200 naval gun barrels, including many of the new Dahlgren type. There were also several warships in various stages of repair, including the nearly new *Merrimack*, which was undergoing overhaul of her balky engines, and she was considered to be worth more than the rest of the ships in the yard combined.

Accordingly, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles alerted the aging commander of the yard, Commodore Charles S. McCauley, to rush completion of the repairs to *Merrimack* and get her ready for sea. He dispatched Commander James Alden to Norfolk to take command of the ship and get her clear as soon as possible. Chief Engineer Benjamin Isherwood was sent along with Alden to oversee the engine repairs. They managed to get the ship operational, but before they could sail McCauly ordered the fires drawn and a further delay, citing his orders to refrain from doing anything that might incite the Virginians to violence.

Isherwood then returned to Washington to inform Welles of the situation. Welles was furious. He was now convinced that McCauley had allowed himself to come under the influence of Southerner sympathizers on his staff. Welles then ordered Commodore Hiram Paulding to Norfolk to relieve McCauley.

Paulding gathered a force of a hundred Marines and took ship in the *Pawnee* for Norfolk. He stopped off at Fortress Mon-

roe to augment his force with a detachment of Regular Army troops, but by the time they arrived at the Navy Yard it was too late. McCauley had ordered the guns on the *Merrimack* spiked and the ship scuttled. Mobs were beginning to gather along the fence and at the main gate of the yard. Paulding was now sure he had no course left but to burn and wreck as much as he could and get away in the only three ships that were still in condition to sail. His Marines raced through the yard with sledges trying to destroy cannon and machinery but their efforts were mostly ineffective. One detachment placed charges and powder trains in the dry dock, but it was hastily done and did not destroy the dock.

Finally, Paulding gave the order to torch the last of the ships and buildings, and the *Pawnee*, followed by the *Cumberland* under tow of the steam tug *Yankee,* made her way down the Elizabeth River. It must have broken Paulding's heart to burn some of the proud old veteran ships, many of which he had served on in younger days. Among them was the *Pennsylvania,* a huge four-decker of 120 guns, which was at the time the largest warship in the world. As Paulding's little fleet departed, the Virginians broke through the main gate and busied themselves saving what they could.

When the fires were all out, the damage was found to be surprisingly light. The main magazine with nearly 3,000 barrels of powder was still intact and only a few of the guns had suffered more than superficial damage. U.S. forces were to face the wrong end of many of these cannon later in the war as the Rebels placed them strategically around their most important rivers and harbors.

The *Merrimack* had lost part of her superstructure and all of her top hamper, but the very act of scuttling had put out the fires in her hull as she settled into the mud. Welles called it one of the greatest losses of the war, and Congress, as might be expected, launched a full-scale investigation.

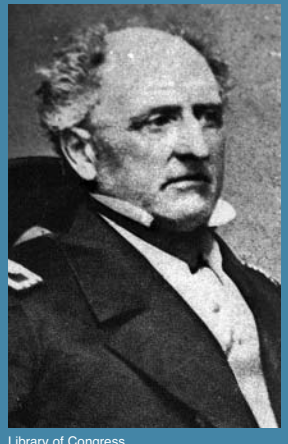
If the U.S. Navy was in bad shape when war began, the Confederate Navy was even worse; it was nonexistent. The South had managed to commandeer a few packets, ferrys, and other craft when hostilities were started, but most of their vessels came from purchases abroad. They had no ship yards and practically no manufacturing facilities to make the parts and accessories used to build ships.

Not so in the North. A crash program was started to build and charter vessels so that within three months of the loss of Norfolk, there was at least one U.S. warship off every Southern port. The rebels knew it would get worse before it got better unless something was done to raise the blockade. Confederate Navy Secretary Stephen Mallory is credited with the idea of constructing an ironclad battery with which to break the Union siege.

The *Merrimack* was soon raised in order to salvage her engines, but when Southerners discovered her hull was largely intact, they decided to build upon what was already available and thus save the time otherwise consumed in building a new hull.

Confederate naval engineers John M. Brooke and John L. Porter did the calculations and drew the plans. They called for a mansard-type framework to be erected on the stripped-down hull. The frame itself would be of 18-inch oak beams that would extend 3 feet into the water at an angle of 35 degrees to protect the wooden hull. Over this would be 20 inches of pine overlaid diagonally with 4 inches of oak plank. The plans called for 4-inch armor-plate on this base, but none was available. Instead, they used railroad iron rolled into 2-by-8-inch bars and bolted diagonally in two layers. There were four gun ports on each side and ports for 10-inch swivel guns fore and aft. The flat roof portion of the mansard superstructure was to have heavy iron grating which would shield the gun deck and provide ventilation. Work was started in July and proceeded as fast as the limited resources of the South would allow.

The Federals soon learned of the work being done on the *Merrimack* and got their heads together to plan a counter move. They had authorized construction of an ironclad warship some time earlier, but her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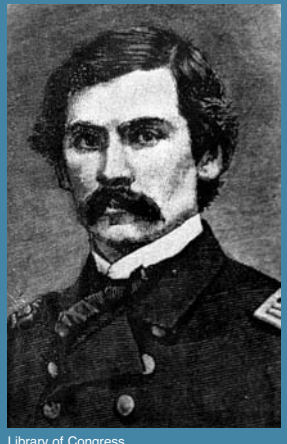
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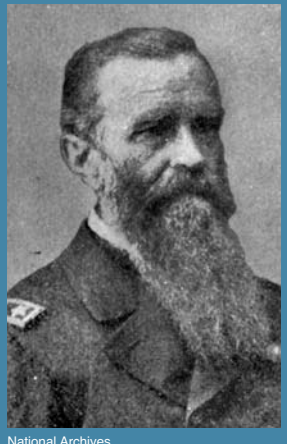
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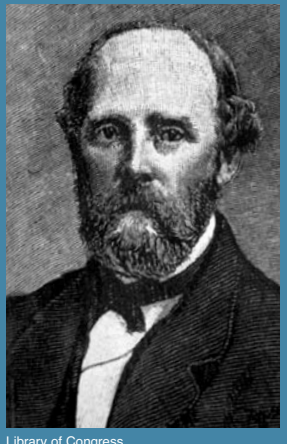
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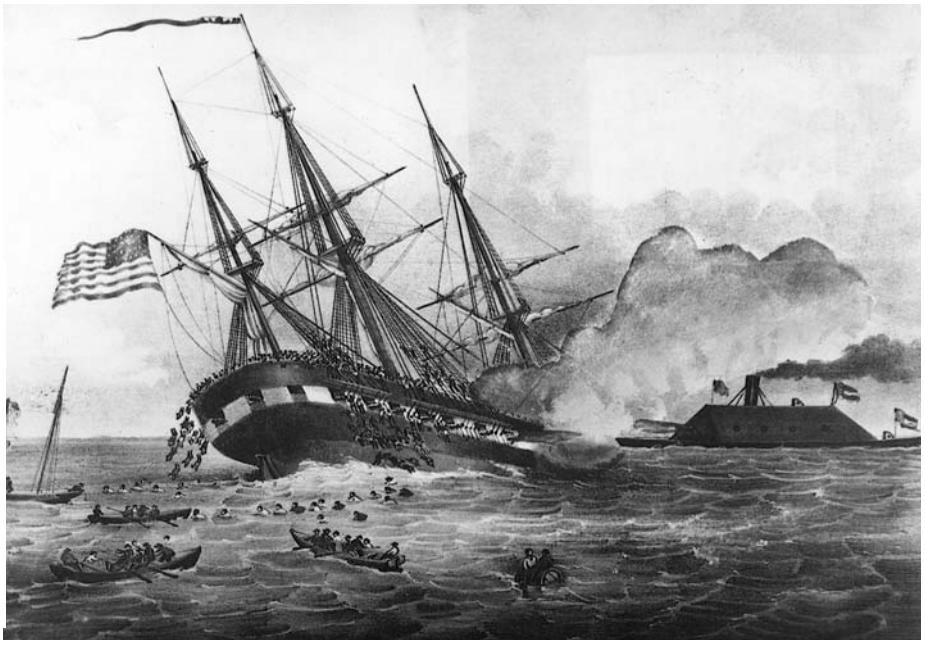
From left to Right: Franklin Buchanan commanded the *Virginia* on its day of greatest victory over Union wooden ships. Lt. Samuel Greene took over the *Monitor* when Worden was temporarily blinded. Lt. John Worden commanded *Monitor* until he was wounded (from a later photograph). Lt. Catesby ap R. Jones commanded *Virginia* on its second day of combat.

BELOW: Despite a wounding from *Cumberland*'s gunners, *Merrimack* drove hard into the Union ship's bow, sending her to the bottom with flags flying. OPPOSITE: In a depiction that combines two days' actions, Union soldiers struggle to assist their sailor comrades while the *Monitor* and *Merrimack* slug it out in the important body of water known as Hampton Roads.



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By some odd twist of fate, *Monitor* and *Merrimack* were launched the same week in January, and were commissioned three weeks later on successive days.

keel was not yet laid, and her completion was a year away. The files were searched for something that could be built quickly and still trade punches with the *Merrimack*. They came up with a radical design that had been offered by a somewhat eccentric Swedish-American inventor named John Ericsson. He had been co-inventor of the screw propeller and had many active patents. His specifications claimed the ship could be built in a hundred days and that it would "split the Rebel fleet at Norfolk into matches in half an hour."

A meeting of the ironclad board was called. Lincoln himself attended, along with his Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavus Fox. While all agreed that the design was radical and looked like "a cheese box on a raft," they could not agree on authorizing a trial model. A unanimous vote was required from all three naval officers on the board, and while two were in favor, the third was not—the proposal was turned down. Lincoln was willing to take the advice of his experts even though he was known to be in favor of the design. He is credited with one of his more Lincolnesque quotes as he turned the model over and over in his hands: "All I can say is what the girl said when she put her foot in the stocking. It strikes me there is something in it."

The board members who were in favor then prevailed upon Ericsson himself to convince the lone dissenting member. They arranged another meeting that the inventor attended, and in a two-hour discourse on hydraulics, dynamics, and the physics of ship stability, the skeptic's mind was changed and the plan approved.

It called for Ericsson to build, in 100 days, this very unusual vessel for the sum of $275,000. The main hull was to be 125 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 12 feet deep. The raft-like upper deck was to be 170 feet long and 40 feet wide with a 5-foot-deep overhang of thick, wooden blocks sheathed with iron to protect the half-inch iron of the hull. This extra shielding would also serve to protect the propeller and rudder aft and the novel anchor arrangement forward. The only projections above the flat deck of the raft portion, which had a scant freeboard of 18 inches, were to be the stubby pilot house, the 9-by-20-foot diameter gun turret, and the smokestack, which was designed to be removed during action.

Work was started at the Continental Iron Works in Brooklyn, while other area firms received orders for various component parts. Although the Rebels had a two-month head start, it was thought that the better facilities and more abundant manpower in the North would tip the scales.

Welles suggested that the new vessel be named the *Ericsson* in honor of its inventor, but Ericsson declined. He proposed instead that it be named *Monitor* so that the wayward Rebels might be admonished in their folly. He suggested that the British might also take note of the significance of the name because they were known to be building warships for the Confederates.

Work continued on both the *Monitor* and the *Merrimack* through the autumn and early winter of 1861. While the idea of iron ships and of wooden ships sheathed in iron was new to U.S. shipbuilders, it was not completely unknown. France had an armored ship of the line, the *Gloire,* in service and more in production. Britain had the *Warrior,* a large frigate with protected bulwarks and engine spaces, and more on the ways. They were in a kind of arms race, and though both countries had conducted extensive tests, none of their ships had been in actual combat. The French had used ironclad floating batteries in the Crimean War which they towed into position at Kinburn on the Black Sea. They pounded the Russian forts into piles of rubble as the return fire bounced harmlessly off their protected embrasures.

Ericcson's 100 days were up on January 15, 1862 and the *Monitor* was still not launched. He had designed the ship to take two 15-inch Dahlgren guns, but none was available. He settled for two 11-inch models that were removed from the battleship *Dacotah* and installed in the 8-inch-thick turret. The *Monitor* slid down the ways on January 30, 1862, just 115 days from the laying of her keel. Final fitting out and loading took three more weeks, and on February 25, Lieutenant John L. Worden took command of the ship and her 55-man crew, with Lieutenant Samuel D. Greene as his second in command.

On *Monitor*'s shake-down cruise, things went so badly that she had to be towed back into New York harbor. Ericcson had to completely redesign her steering gear and her main engine valves. Countless other minor defects cropped up and were corrected as quickly as possible. Her second sea trial went off without a hitch, so Paulding ordered the little ship to depart for Hampton Roads on March 6.

The *Monitor*'s voyage started in a snow squall with her in tow of the steam tug *Seth Low* and under power of her own engines to try to make better time. Paulding had also ordered two small gunboats, the *Currituck* and the *Sachem,* to act as escort. Next day Paulding received an order from Welles to send *Monitor* up the Potomac to Washington, but by what can only be described as the fortunes of war, the order arrived too late.

Monitor was having problems of her own as she ran into heavy weather on the day of her departure. As the wind and sea rose, she started taking on water where the turret joined the deck. Ericsson had understood that this might happen, since a small clearance had to be allowed for the turret to turn in its machined brass ring. He had provided a small pump to take off the small amounts of water that might be shipped. Unknown to him, shipwrights had pried up the turret and packed the widened slit with oakum. When some of the packing washed out, water poured in faster than it could be pumped out. Fortunately, the storm abated before the ship was in any real trouble.

Next day brought more of the same, only this time the incoming water partially doused fire in one of the boilers and filled the boiler room with steam and gas. To make matters worse, the steering gear jammed and the resultant wild swinging threatened to part the tow hawser. Worden signaled to his tug to slacken speed but could not make himself understood. A distress flare brought one of the escorting

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gunboats alongside and the message was relayed to the *Seth Low*. As if on cue, the wind went down and the storm subsided.

March 8 dawned sunny and clear with long swells and light choppy seas. By 5 in the afternoon the little group of ships turned into Chesapeake Bay and headed for Fortress Monroe. From his station atop the turret, Worden saw a huge column of black smoke rising from the direction of Newport News and heard the dull booming of heavy guns.

By some odd twist of fate, *Monitor* and *Merrimack* were launched the same week in January, and were commissioned three weeks later on successive days. The *Merrimack* was rechristened as the Confederate ironclad ram *Virginia,* but she has come down through history as the *Merrimac* (misspelled, *Merrimack* being her official name in the Navy list).

Named to command her was Captain Franklin Buchanan, a veteran of over 45 years in the U.S. Navy, whose last post was Commandant of the Washington Navy Yard. When it seemed apparent that his home state of Maryland would secede from the Union, Buchanan had tendered his resignation. Later, Maryland voted to remain in the Union and Buchanan requested his resignation be withdrawn. Welles refused and Buchanan went South. Appointed as second in command was Lieutenant Catesby ap R. Jones, the very embodiment of a dashing young Southern officer (the "ap" in his name is Welsh for "son of"). Like Buchanan, he had gained his experience in the U.S. Navy and was an ordnance specialist. As such, he had been chosen to oversee the installation of *Merrimack*'s guns. He was highly qualified. He had been in charge of ordnance installation when *Merrimack* was fitted out new six years earlier.

Final fitting out and loading of the rebuilt *Merrimack* was completed on March 7, so Buchanan ordered steam up and lines singled for early-morning departure. He would have preferred a traditional shakedown cruise, but the only area available was filled with enemy ships. Her shakedown would also be her baptism of fire.

Next morning, March 8, saw more hitches develop, and it was nearly noon before she cast off with many mechanics still aboard. She proved to be awkward and ungainly, her top speed only 6 knots. Her laden draft of 23 feet would restrict her to the deepest parts of the channel and Hampton Roads, but she was well armed and well armored and that was what was important. Just before her departure, her sloping sides had been slushed down with molten tallow in the hope that this would help the shot glance off more easily. At 1 o'clock the *Merrimack* stopped at Craney Island to disembark the last of the mechanics, and then she made her way out into Hampton Roads.

No one knows for sure who sighted the *Merrimack* first. The Federal fleet had been under alert for several weeks and had undergone several false alarms. Lookouts on the ramparts of Fortress Monroe sighted her smoke before the vessel herself came into view, and the signal gun had been fired. The crews aboard the Union fleet were lounging on deck and many had their laundry hanging in the lower rigging. Within minutes they had the washing in, the guns run out, the decks dampened and sanded, and ready ammunition at hand. The sailors could not believe what they were seeing. "A barn roof belching smoke" and "that thing" were just some of the remarks. They would have good reason to call it many other things before day's end.

Buchanan had already noted which ships in the Union fleet were most dangerous and which should be attacked first. The *Cumberland,* a 24-gun sloop, was smaller than many of the others, but she had been equipped with the new rifled cannon and would be first on his hit list. He had to pass by the 50-gun frigate *Congress* to get at *Cumberland* and traded a broadside with her as he swung past. Not a wooden ship afloat could have withstood that pounding from the *Congress,* but her shot clanged harmlessly off the iron plating of the *Merrimack*. Buchanan smiled as he saw his own shot raise splinters and smoke on *Congress* as two of her guns were knocked out.

Buchanan then assigned his two small escorting gunboats, *Raleigh* and *Beaufort,* to keep *Congress* occupied while he continued toward *Cumberland*. He maneuvered to come in on her forward quarter so that she could not bring her broadside guns to bear, and bored steadily on. His forward swivel gun kept up a steady fire while the forward pivot on the *Cumberland* replied. As the range closed to 60 yards, *Cumberland* scored two bull's-eyes through the *Merrimack*'s forward casemate causing 19 casualties. Still the *Merrimack* came on at full speed and rammed *Cumberland* just aft of her hawse hole. Frames, knees, and deck timbers splintered like laths as the iron spur of the *Merrimack* pierced the Union sloop. Gunners were knocked to the deck by the force of the blow, but were soon back at the guns again.

As Buchanan backed clear, *Merrimack*'s iron ram broke off and remained in the side of the *Cumberland*. This may have kept her afloat a little longer because it partially stopped up the gaping hole in her side. As *Merrimack* continued to back clear, another shot from *Cumberland* shattered *Merrimack*'s anchor shackle, and the heavy chain slashed back into the ship causing seven more casualties. *Merrimack*'s gunners were not idle either and poured round after round into the dying ship. *Cumberland* finally settled to the bottom with the tops of her masts still showing and her colors still flying.

Merrimack was now leaking in the bows where the iron ram had broken off; she had 26 casualties, three of her guns were out of action, and she had lost her anchor, but she was still able to fight. *Cumberland* had caused more damage to *Merrimack* than she was to endure for the rest of her service, but had died doing it. One of *Merrimack*'s officers was to write later that, "No ship ever fought more gallantly." Buchanan brought the *Merrimack* about and headed for the *Congress*.

Lieutenant Joe Smith, commanding *Congress,* watched in horror as the *Cumberland* sank. He had seen the ramming and was determined not to let it happen to his ship. He slipped his cables and brought

the *Congress* into shoal water, having correctly guessed that the *Merrimack* drew more water and would not venture too close. At least he would be safe from ramming, and he might even be able to lure the *Merrimack* into shoal water where she might ground and become a stationary target for the Federal batteries on shore. What Smith did not count on was going aground himself, which is what happened, and now the *Congress* was a stationary and helpless target.

Buchanan swung around where he could rake *Congress* from the stern and proceeded to pound her to pieces. One after another, the guns on *Congress* were silenced as shot and shell rifled her. Smith himself was killed by one blast, and the gun deck was slippery with blood. Command passed to Lieutenant Austin Pendergast, and when the last gun that would bear was knocked out, he could see no reason to continue. He struck the colors and ran up the white flag.

Firing ceased at once and the *Beaufort* sent a boat alongside to take off the wounded and prisoners. What happened next was to become one of the most debated and controversial events in naval history. Union rifleman and light artillery on shore either did not see or did not heed the white flag on *Congress* and opened a sharp fire on the *Beaufort* and her boats as she was accepting the surrender. Buchanan was flabbergasted.

He recalled the *Beaufort* at once, and as she was pulling away, fire was seen coming from *Congress* herself. It seemed almost impossible that there were still people aboard *Congress* that did not know she had struck. Buchanan had seen enough. He ordered fire resumed with heated shot, and determined to continue until *Congress* was beyond salvage. He also knew that his own brother was paymaster aboard *Congress*, but gave no hint of it as he ordered her destruction. Perhaps this ruthlessness drew upon him a Greek-like vengeance: As he mounted the grating to observe the action, he was struck in the hip by a rifle ball fired from shore and had to be carried below.

Command passed to Jones, who was just as determined to see the *Congress* totally destroyed. But by now several fires were seen on the target and Jones was satisfied. He ordered the *Merrimack* to proceed down channel and engage the next ship in the Union line. This was the *Minnesota*, onetime sister ship of the *Merrimack*, who along with the *Roanoke*, another sister, had followed the example of *Congress* and moved into shoal water to avoid *Merrimack*'s ram. Unfortunately, they also ran aground and lay fast in the mud, unable to maneuver. It remained only for Jones to move *Merrimack* down-channel, where even at the increased range, he could pound them to pieces. His pilots refused.

It was by now 6 o'clock and the light was failing. The tide was going out and the channel depth was decreasing every

As the two ironclads circled each other like prizefighters in the ring, the *Merrimack* came within range of *Minnesota*'s broadside guns, and Van Brunt blazed away, hoping by sheer weight of iron to breach her casemate.

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Union sailors relax on the flat deck of the *Monitor* after the battle. Note the dents in the turret from shot fired by *Monitor*'s adversary *Merrimack*.

minute. Jones knew that his pilots were right even though he ached to continue the action. The *Merrimack* had casualties aboard and was nearly out of ammunition. Three of her guns were out of action. Her stack was so riddled with holes that the engineers had trouble keeping up a draft, and steam pressure was dropping. Her anchor was gone, her bows were leaking badly now, and her crew was exhausted. Jones decided to break and resume action on the following day.

Merrimack retired under the guns at Craney Island, a good day's work done. On her maiden voyage she had sunk one Union warship, burned another, and driven two aground. She had caused nearly 400 Union casualties at a cost of 52 for herself and her escorts. The scene of battle continued to be lit by the fires aboard *Congress* until near midnight, when the flames reached her magazines. She blew up with a spectacular display that seemed to emphasize the completeness of the Confederate victory.

The *Monitor* and her escorts were just passing Fortress Monroe when the *Merrimack* called it a day. Darkness was descending when she pulled alongside the *Roanoke* to report to the squadron commander. *Monitor*'s crew had hoped for a little rest from their long and stormy voyage, but it was not to be. Captain John Marston ordered the *Monitor* to proceed at once to the *Minnesota* and stand by as several tugs tried to free her from her mud bed. *Minnesota* had taken some fire from *Merrimack*'s escorting gunboats, and in returning fire had forced herself further onto the shoal. Captain G.J. Van Brunt of *Minnesota* ordered her lightened, as two tugs and her own engines strained to get her off. It was no use. Finally it was decided to put off further efforts until full flood tide next day. The crews settled in for a few hours of fitful rest.

The crew of the *Merrimack* was up most of the night also. Quick repairs were made to the bow section and ammunition was loaded aboard. Promptly at 6 AM, Jones got under-way and headed out into the Roads. As it was not yet fully daylight, *Merrimack*'s lookouts were puzzled by the strange looking craft tied up alongside *Minnesota*. At two miles most thought it must be some kind of water tank on a barge which had come to replenish *Minnesota*'s tanks. Half a mile closer, it became evident that the strange vessel was making smoke and moving out to meet them. At a range of about a mile, all doubts were dispelled as *Monitor* opened fire with both guns. *Merrimack* replied at once as the two closed to less than 50 yards. Most of the shot found it's mark but bounded harmlessly away on both ships.

As the range closed still more, Worden on the *Monitor* decided to circle his opponent and try to find a vulnerable spot. His was the handier vessel, but he had a slower rate of fire. His speaking tubes were useless in the din of battle, and orders were passed by runner from the pilot house to engine room and turret. Men in both ships were nearly deafened by the clanging of the heavy shot on the iron plates, and learned quickly not to lean against or brace themselves against the armor. Several were injured by the concussion and two gunners in the *Monitor*'s turret were knocked unconscious.

As the two ironclads circled each other like prizefighters in the ring, the *Merrimack* came within range of *Minnesota*'s broadside guns, and Van Brunt blazed away, hoping by sheer weight of iron to breach her casemate. At least 50 shots were seen to strike the ironclad's side with no apparent effect. Jones in *Merrimack* now tried to ram the *Monitor,* but Worden maneuvered aside and took only a glanc-

AFTER THE FIGHT

The subsequent careers of the *Monitor* and *Merrimack* were not as dramatic as their first clashes. The two ironclads never met in combat again after March 9. They remained on station roughly where they were when their classic battle ended. The *Monitor* continued to protect the blockading squadron, and the *Merrimack* guarded the entrance to the James River, leading to the Confederate capital of Richmond, and Elizabeth River at Norfolk. Neither side seemed willing to risk its most powerful ship. *Merrimack* made a sortie into the Roads in early April, and with her consorts captured three Federal vessels lying unguarded, then beat a hasty retreat when *Monitor* appeared to challenge her. She made two more appearances in the Roads, but did not remain to give battle. *Monitor* also would probe toward the mouth of the James on occasion, but likewise was not looking for a fight.

When Norfolk fell to Union forces on May 10, the *Merrimack* had no place to call home. It was suggested that she might ascend the James and help in the defense of Richmond, but once again, her pilots refused to try. Shoal water between the mouth of the river and the Confederate capital would prevent such a move. Her new commander, Josiah Tatnall, saw no course left open to him but to destroy his vessel lest she be captured. He ran her ashore on Craney Island, disembarked the crew, and set her afire fore and aft. She burned for nearly an hour before she blew up as the flames reached her magazines. It was said that no part of her remained of sufficient size to give anyone an idea of the details of her construction.

With *Merrimack* gone, Federals tried taking *Monitor* up the James to attack Richmond. She made it up as far as Drewery's Bluff where a sharp turn in the river and a steep bank nearly 200 feet high brought her in range of Fort Darling, a hastily constructed battery. *Monitor*, and her wooden consorts *Galena* and *Naugatuck,* could not elevate their guns enough to trade shots with the Confederates, and the wooden vessels began to take a beating from the Rebel guns. The sailors also discovered that the river ahead had been blocked by pilings, sunken vessels, and other barriers. The Federal fleet withdrew with their noses bloodied.

By now, the Peninsular campaign was under way, and the *Monitor* was used to protect McClellan's right flank along the York River. She remained there until the end of the year,

ing blow. It did serve to start another leak in *Merrimack*'s hull, however, so Jones gave up on that tactic.

After two hours of steady but ineffective firing, the *Monitor* was forced to retire to shallow water to replenish ready ammunition in her turret. A hatch in the turret floor had to be lined up with a similar hole in the lower deck so that powder and shot could be passed up. VanBrunt on the *Minnesota* thought he had been abandoned, and though he kept up a steady fire as the *Merrimack* came closer, he also made provision for destroying his ship.

The *Monitor* was soon back in action again and found that the *Merrimack* had grounded in trying to close range on *Minnesota*. Worden closed on the Confederate ironclad and at one point was actually touching his opponent as he fired both his 11-inch Dahlgrens at point-blank range into her stern casemate. The heavy shot ripped up some of the plating and cracked it in several places. The crew serving *Merrimack*'s after swivel gun were all knocked to the deck bleeding from their ears and noses from the terrible concussion, but were not seriously hurt. If Worden had been allowed to increase his powder charges, he would probably have penetrated the *Merrimack*'s gun deck at that range—the Navy strictly forbade the use of more than 15 pounds. Later, gunners discovered that 30 and even 45 pounds could be used with safety.

While the ships were at close quarters, Jones in *Merrimack* ordered, "Boarders away." He thought boarders might be able to hammer wedges between *Monitor*'s turret and the deck. They could drop explosives down the vents, or cover the stubby pilot house with wet canvas. They might even be able to toss grenades through the gun ports. Worden saw his enemy's intention and backed the *Monitor* clear before anyone could get aboard.

The *Merrimack* was still aground and Jones knew that he must get off and maneuver. Chief Engineer H.A. Ramsay tied down his safety valves, unhinged the governor and fed pine knots and turpentine to his boilers until they seemed to literally jump up and down. The ship shuddered and shook as the prop churned the muddy water to a froth. Slowly at first, then with a lurch, the heavy *Merrimack* slid clear. Firing had continued all this time, but as before, without much effect.

Jones decided to try ramming again, but missed. Now *Monitor* tried to ram *Merrimack* on the stern in an attempt to disable her rudder or propeller, but she also missed. As she swung past, one of *Merrimack*'s guns scored a hit on *Monitor*'s pilot house. The armor was heavy enough here to withstand the shot, but Worden was peering through the five-eighths- inch slot and got his face peppered with cement. He was temporarily blinded and suffered a mild concussion. He ordered the *Monitor* into shallower water in an attempt to lure *Merrimack* aground, and turned over command to Greene. Jones in *Merrimack* did not take the bait, and in fact thought *Monitor* had quit and was retiring. He swung around for another try at *Minnesota*.

Once again, Jones's pilots declined to take *Merrimack* any closer for fear of grounding, and in a conference with his staff, Jones decided to retire and wait for higher tide before making another attempt. This would give his ship a chance to replenish ammunition, make some more needed repairs, take on coal and water, and rest his crew. At about this time, Greene, now commanding *Monitor*, decided that the *Merrimack* could not be lured into shallow water and returned to the channel to find his opponent heading for Sewell's Point.

Thus ended the Battle of Hampton Roads with each side claiming victory. History has called it a draw. □

The *Monitor* foundered in a storm off Cape Hatteras, N.C., in December 1862. Parts have since been retrieved from the ocean floor.

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when she was ordered to Beaufort, S.C. On December 31, 1862, she foundered in a storm off Cape Hatteras and went down about six miles offshore. Sixteen of her crew went with her but 47 were saved by the heroic efforts of her escorts.

To say that the Battle of Hampton Roads changed naval history is an understatement. Almost overnight, every wooden ship of the line of every naval power in the world was obsolete. It settled once and for all the wood-vs.-iron debate, just as the battleship-vs.-carrier debate would be settled 80 years later when the Japanese sank powerful U.S. and British battleships in December 1941.

Today, the *Monitor* wreck is a protected sanctuary. It is unlikely that her hull will ever be raised as it is considered too fragile after more than 130 years under water. But her anchor has been brought to the surface, and just recently her innovative steam engines. There are plans to raise her turret. You can read more about the efforts to preserve the monitor and her parts at the following Web sites: www.monitor.nos.noaa.gov; www.monitorcenter.org; and www.ironclads.com.

Keith Milton

SHOW

At snowy, muddy Pea Ridge, Arkansas, just across the border from Missouri, Union and Confederate forces met to decide the fate of the Show-Me State.

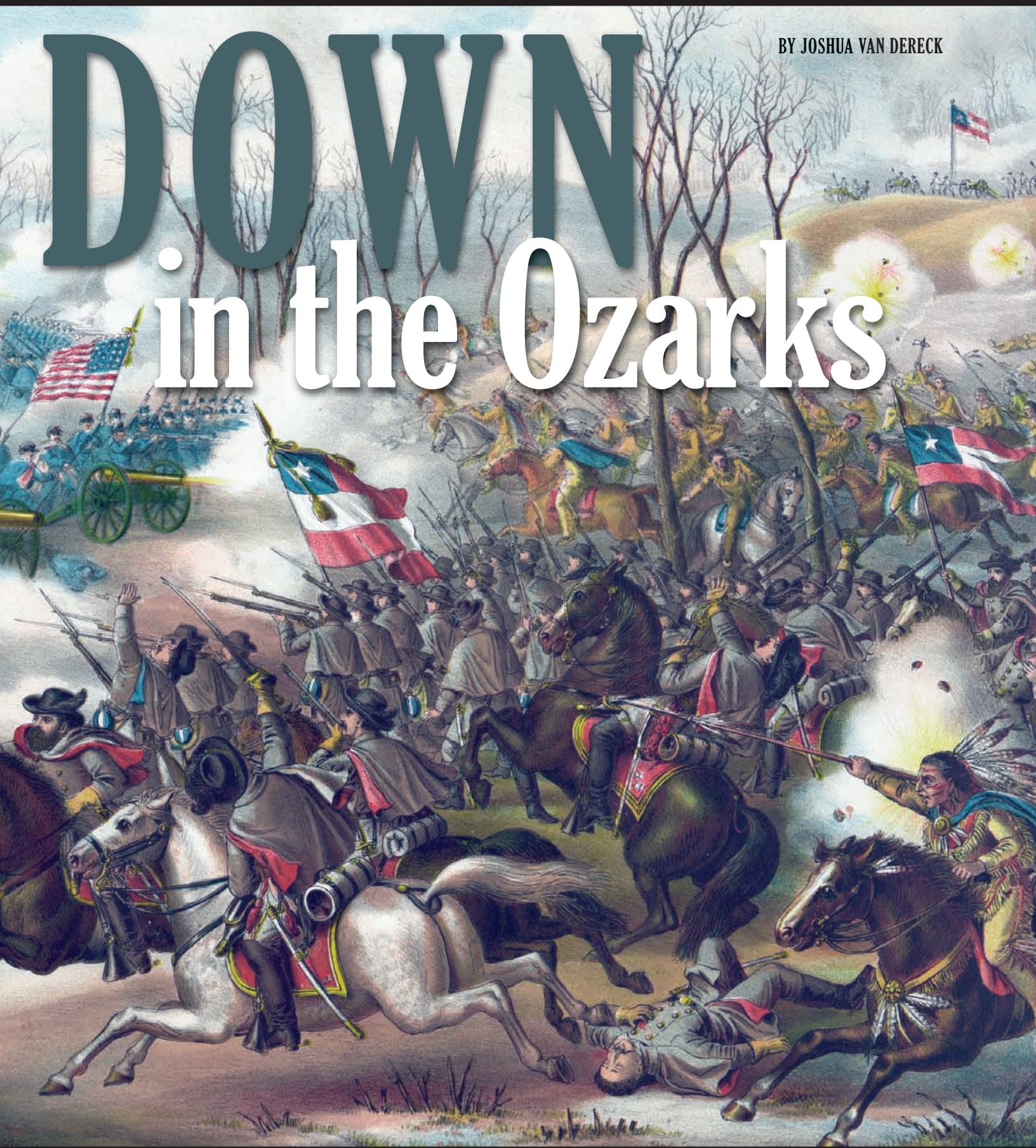
For three weeks in February 1862, Union Brig. Gen. Samuel Curtis led his Army of the Southwest on a 200-mile advance southward across the Ozark plateau in Missouri and into northern Arkansas. The February weather made for abysmal campaigning, pelting the men with snow and alternately freezing the primitive dirt roads or flooding them with mud. The advance was of such vital importance to the Union cause that Curtis's department commander, Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, ordered it to proceed despite the terrible weather. Halleck was committed to a series of grand river offensives aimed at striking into the heart of Confederate Tennessee. However, as long as Rebel forces lurked in southern Missouri within range of the vital base of St. Louis, any Union gains in Tennessee would be untenable. Halleck ordered Curtis's army to advance through Missouri and drive out the Confederate forces, securing St. Louis as a forward staging base.

The task was a logistical nightmare, but Curtis embraced the challenge. A diligent and methodical officer, he was an 1831 graduate of West Point and had gained substantial administrative expertise through work as a civil engineer and congressional representative from Iowa. Appointed as field commander in Missouri in December 1861, he immediately set about organizing his command and preparing a base of military and commissary supplies at the railhead at Rolla, which would serve as the launching point for a tenuous wagon supply line for the upcoming campaign.

This fanciful rendering of the Confederate cavalry charge at Pea Ridge shows Albert Pike's Indian troops in the foreground, although they did not participate in the charge.

DOWN in the Ozarks

BY JOSHUA VAN DERECK



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The force Curtis had at his disposal was small—four tiny divisions, adding up to about 12,000 troops from Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, and Ohio. More than one-third of the men were foreign born, mostly German immigrants. They had rallied to the banner of the Union behind the appeal of the enigmatic Brig. Gen. Franz Sigel, who had served in the 1849 German revolution. Sigel was immensely popular with the German immigrant population. Seeking to defuse hostility between natives and immigrants, Curtis appointed Sigel second in command and gave him nominal charge of two of his divisions; both commanded foreign-born officers and troops made up mainly of immigrants. This segregated arrangement was not optimal, but it did help to ease tensions among the men.

Once Curtis was satisfied that his expeditionary force was thoroughly prepared, he began advancing southwest across Missouri. He moved steadily in the first weeks of February, driving Confederate forces out of their base in Springfield and toward the Arkansas border with surprising ease. In truth, the Confederates were stunned at the sudden appearance of the Union Army amid the wintry snow and were ill-prepared for a military confrontation. Under the command of former Missouri governor Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, a genial, portly officer of little experience or ability, the Confederates were a haphazard military force. Deficient in training and armed with a chaotic assortment of weapons, including shotguns, pistols, and old smoothbore muskets, they numbered about 7,000 men. Just across the border in Arkansas, however, was a substantial force of about 8,700 Confederate regulars—Texans, Arkansans, and Louisianans who were also waiting out the winter months in their camps.

Price decided to fall back toward these reinforcements, racing for the Arkansas border as fast as he could go. Scarcely halting for sleep along the way, Price's men fell back 50 miles in less than 36 hours. They kept going southward past the Confederate base at Fayetteville, Arkansas, until their commander finally recovered his composure and allowed his men to collapse into bivouac.

Curtis pursued the retreating Confederates vigorously until his advance likewise ran out of steam for want of supplies. By then, he had covered some 200 miles, and his supply line was growing increasingly tenuous. Moreover, his army was showing signs of wear, having lost many draft animals to exertion as well as a goodly number of shoes and outer garments, which had worn away through repeated exposure to the elements. The army was also diminished in numbers, as Curtis had detached about 1,500 men to garrison cap-

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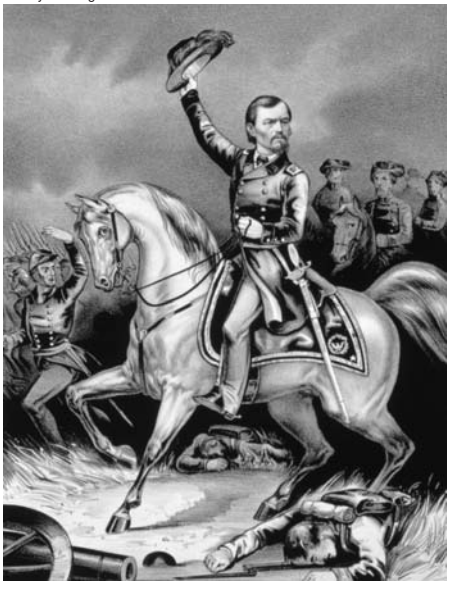

ABOVE: Union Brigadier General Franz Sigel was born in Germany. RIGHT: Brigadier General Samuel Curtis commanded Union forces at Pea Ridge.

tured towns and guard the supply line. None of this was overly disheartening—Curtis had already accomplished all that he had set out to do, having secured Missouri from Rebel incursions and even overrun a small portion of Arkansas.

During the last week of February, Curtis decided to pull back his men a short distance to the north to forage and rest. In the meantime, he sent repeated requests to Halleck for reinforcements and supplies. In true engineer fashion, he also sited a defensive position along a range of bluffs on the north side of a stream called Little Sugar Creek. There, the Union army would concentrate in case the Confederates somehow recovered their pluck and decided to launch a counteroffensive.

That was precisely what the Confederates intended to do, although they did not know it yet. Price's Missourians were still in the midst of recovering from their harrowing retreat, and their allies in gray were camped nearby, having scrambled to concentrate in the face of the surprising Federal advance. These forces were under the command of Brig. Gen. Benjamin McCulloch, an adopted Texan and notable frontier Indian fighter. McCulloch, a friend of the legendary David Crockett, was a veteran of the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican War, as well as a former California gold prospector, representative for the Republic of Texas, and a United States marshal. As a military leader, he was a skilled administrator, tactician, and strategist, and he took good care of the men in his charge, a fact that showed in their high morale. Unfortunately for the Confeder-

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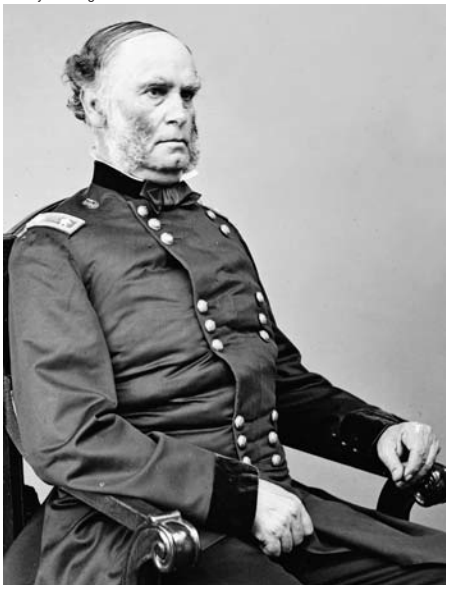


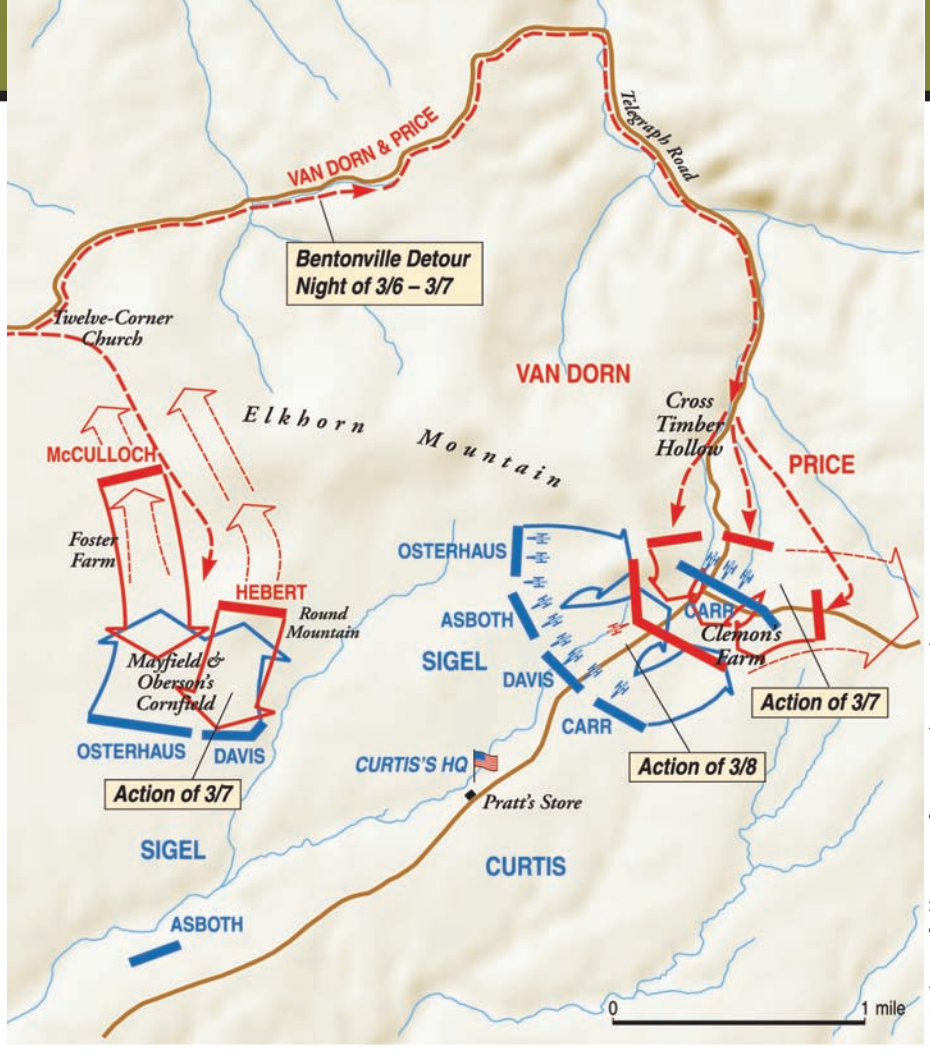
ates, he and Price did not get along, and their squabbling had already led to a command change from above.

En route to take charge of the southern forces was Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn of Mississippi, a West Pointer who was a personal friend of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Van Dorn, who had served along the Texas frontier in the U.S. Army

before the war, had all of the necessary credentials for high command, but not the temperament. Impetuous to the core, he had little patience for staff work, logistics, or careful planning. He was very ambitious, however, and was excited about the prospects for a decisive victory over Curtis. Summarizing his strategic vision in a letter to his wife, he wrote, "I must have St. Louis—then Huzza!"

Envisioning a grand advance by all available Confederate forces in the trans-Mississippi, Van Dorn instructed Price and McCulloch to prepare for immediate action, and he moved to reinforce them with a series of units of Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indians from the nearby Indian territory. Brig. Gen. Albert Pike of Arkansas was nominally in charge of these unusual soldiers, having negotiated treaties with their tribes at the beginning of the war. The 900-odd Indians who made their way east for the campaign were not particularly well organized or drilled. Nevertheless, Van Dorn assigned them to McCulloch, hoping that they would prove at least somewhat useful.

Hurrying by horse and boat to his new command, Van Dorn moved with such haste that he did not even pause to change clothes after taking an unfortunate spill in an icy river along the way. By the time he arrived, he was feverish. Undaunted, Van Dorn held a council of war with McCulloch and Price on March 3 and settled on an immediate advance against Curtis. The two Confederate commands, which Van Dorn jointly styled the Army of the West, would move out shortly after dawn the next morning, their ranks comprising a little over 16,000 men of all arms and 65 cannons. In preparation for the offensive, however, Van Dorn had not conducted any reconnaissance, nor had he familiarized himself with the quality or character of his troops. He scarcely knew the officers, and he made no inquiries into supplies. He ordered the men to travel fast and light, each taking a weapon, 40 rounds of ammunition, and three days' rations—no heavy clothing or tents. The trains would contain one day's emergency



Map © 2008 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Confederate commander Earl Van Dorn fatally divided his forces at Pea Ridge, forcing his troops to maneuver in bad weather over broken terrain. Union lines were more compact.

rations. After that, the men would have to make do by foraging.

Through the opening flurries of a blizzard, the Confederate army set out at a breathtaking pace on the morning of March 4. One soldier recalled: "It seemed as if General Van Dorn imagined the men were made of cast-steel, with the strength and powers and endurance of a horse, whose mettle he was testing to its utmost capacity and tension. Scarcely time was given the men to prepare food and snatch a little rest." The army made good progress, but it was still two days' march shy of the Federal encampment, and the men had to sleep that night without tents, huddled up and shivering in the snow.

The next morning, Curtis received word from his scouts (including future gunfighting legend James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok) that the Confederates were coming, and he immediately recalled the various detachments of his army to the position he had laid out previously along Little Sugar Creek. Van Dorn's men toiled northward all that day and the next, skirmishing briefly with a rear guard that Sigel had inexplicably left behind in a dangerous position. By 5 o'clock in the afternoon of March 6, McCulloch's cavalry had located Curtis's defensive line, and Van Dorn called a meeting with his generals to discuss tactics. Nobody thought to mention the poor condition of the men, whose combat readiness had noticeably deteriorated during the course of the advance. As one Louisiana soldier recalled, "We arrived almost frozen and starved, having only one biscuit for breakfast that morning, and no prospect of supper." The men had reached the bottoms of their haversacks and, lacking tents or overcoats, they had scarcely managed to sleep over the past few nights. The result was that straggling and bone-

wearying fatigue would soon become major problems.

All the same, Van Dorn enthusiastically entertained various offensive proposals. All three generals agreed that a frontal assault on Curtis's line would be foolhardy. McCulloch, who best knew the lay of the land in this part of Arkansas, suggested a limited turning movement of the Federal right wing. Such a maneuver might force the Federals to fight in the open. Van Dorn immediately seized on the proposal and expanded it into an enveloping maneuver with the whole army. He envisioned a spectacular surprise descent upon the Union position from the rear, severing Curtis's communications and line of supply and destroying the Federal Army in detail before its commander knew what had hit him. To bring this to pass, Van Dorn ordered Price and McCulloch to move out at once with their respective commands on an all-night march around the Union position. Price and McCulloch were horrified. "For God sake," Price said, "let the poor, worn-out and hungry soldiers rest and sleep." McCulloch protested as well, but Van Dorn had made up his mind and would not be deterred.

"WHO WOULD HAVE SUPPOSED THAT MEN EVER GET HUNGRY ENOUGH TO EAT CRACKERS THAT HAD BEEN THROWN IN THE DIRT AND RUN OVER BY WAGONS?"

After ordering the men to build an extensive line of campfires to fool Curtis into thinking they were staying on the south side of Little Sugar Creek, Price and McCulloch set out that evening on a long, slow, wearying march. "The night was one of intense severity," one Arkansan recalled, and the column of soldiers was forced to halt repeatedly. First, they encountered Little Sugar Creek, and Van Dorn learned that his army contained no pioneers. The men had to fashion a makeshift bridge of hewn logs over the icy stream. Next, they found their path along the gravelly road blocked by a dense cluster of felled trees that Curtis had arranged to discourage just such a movement as the Confederates were attempting. Price's Missourians in the van struggled through the night clearing the road. All the while, the Confederate column was thinning as starved and frozen men collapsed into desperate sleep. By the time the battle was finally joined, the Army of the West had only about 12,000 men in the ranks to engage Curtis's 10,500 troops, and they were hardly in fighting condition.

As dawn approached, some of Price's Missouri soldiers found crushed pieces of hardtack along the road where Union troops had dropped them. Watching his compatriots dig frantically for these unappealing cracker crumbs, one soldier remarked, "Who would have supposed that men ever get hungry enough to eat crackers that had been thrown in the dirt and run over by wagons?" An embittered Missourian replied, "When you get to supposing, who the devil would have imagined that an army would be marched all day and night without anything to eat, and then go into a hard day's fight on an empty stomach?"

Van Dorn did not worry about such complaints. He hurried to the head of the column, reaching it at about 8 AM on March 7. There he was delighted to learn that Price's men had reached Telegraph Road and were firmly astride the Union army's main line of supply. At this juncture, Van Dorn belatedly observed that the army was badly strung out along the road, an unfortunate occurrence that would delay the delivery of the blow he wished to strike. To hurry a concentration, he ordered McCulloch to turn his men south onto Ford Road, a shortcut that passed several miles to the west of Price's column. McCulloch would then reunite with Price and Van Dorn near a hostelry called Elkhorn Tavern, from which place they would press south and give battle. In effect, Van Dorn was choosing to divide his army at the last minute in the face of the enemy. It was a decision that would have far-reaching consequences.

Two miles to the south at his headquarters at Pratt's store, Curtis was in the process of evaluating intelligence reports detailing enemy movements around his right flank and rear. Federal pickets had first sighted Van Dorn's turning movement at about 5 AM, and it was becoming increasingly clear that a considerable body of enemy soldiers was approaching from the north. Curtis interpreted these reports as evidence that Van Dorn was trying to turn him out of his entrenchments—the very plan that McCulloch had proposed. It would be many hours before the Federal commander could actually bring himself to believe the improbable truth that Van Dorn had moved against him with his entire army.

At 9 AM, Curtis assembled his division and brigade commanders for a council of war. Informing the various officers of the intelligence he had received, Curtis listened patiently to their responses. Some counseled retreat, saying that the army had no choice since its flank had been turned. Others urged aggression. Curtis heard them out and then announced that the Army of the Southwest would stay and fight. Not ready to abandon his entrenchments and bare his men to a potential spoiling attack, Curtis pulled a detachment of about 2,500 infantry, cavalry, and artillery from his line and sent it northward to investigate. In command of this force he placed the steady German, Colonel Peter Osterhaus, whom he instructed to locate the Rebels, determine their numbers, and, if possible, engage them. Osterhaus struck straight for McCulloch's column on the Ford Road, where scouts had last seen the Confederates.

In the meantime, Curtis continued discussing the situation with Sigel and other

officers. He was soon interrupted with the astounding news that there was also a column of Rebel soldiers due north on Telegraph Road, advancing southward toward Elkhorn Tavern. Flustered, Curtis immediately dispatched Colonel Eugene Carr, a pugnacious and argumentative subordinate, with a brigade of about 1,400 men to engage the enemy and drive them away. Curtis sent the other officers back to their various commands and settled down at headquarters to await further developments.

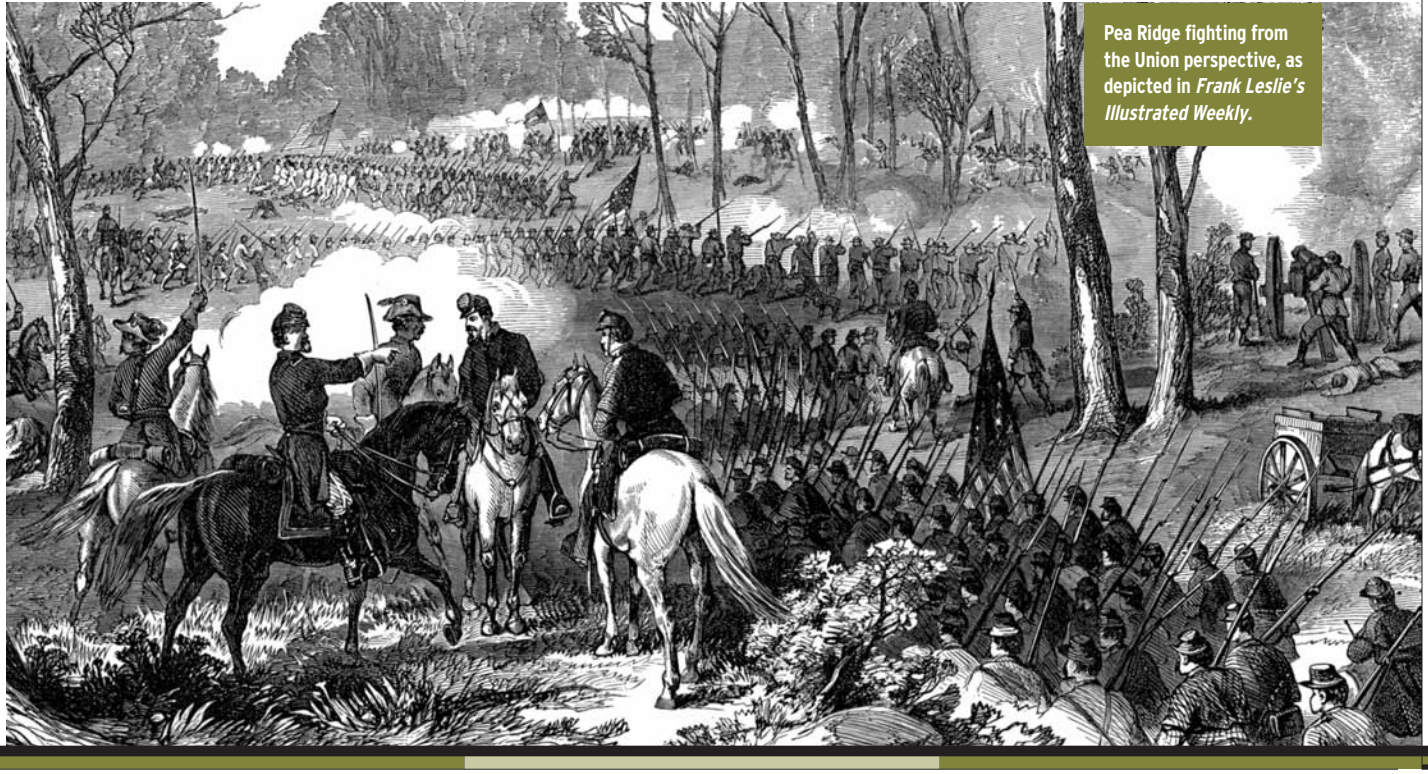
Van Dorn, who was still at the head of Price's Missouri column, soon encountered enemy soldiers. At 10 AM, Federals had commenced nipping at the vanguard of his column with a scattering of skirmish fire. By that time, the Confederates had reached a forested ravine called Cross Timber Hollow, which marked the northern edge of Pea Ridge, a broad plateau covered with hardwoods and dense thickets of vines and brush. It was terrible ground for soldiers to fight on, since it did not afford much room to maneuver. At the edge of the ridge, Cross Timber Hollow was a low point just before the ground began ascending 300 feet to the top of the plateau. From the floor of the hollow, Van Dorn could see nothing of what lay beyond, and this blindness gave him pause. In truth, there was nothing more than a few companies of Federal cavalry at the front, but Van Dorn ordered Price to halt, deploy his entire force into a line of battle, and advance cautiously. It was a cumbersome maneuver to perform, and one that would take time. At one stroke, Van Dorn conceded an enormous advantage in time and terrain.

While Price's deployment was taking place, McCulloch's column of Texans, Louisianans, Arkansans, and Indians was shuffling down Ford Road to effect the junction that Van Dorn intended. Their advance was sluggish, as the men were weak with hunger and exhaustion, and the cavalry and artillery horses were jaded and no less famished than the men. McCulloch appeared to have lost some of his customary confidence, remarking cryptically to a group of Louisiana soldiers, "I tell you, men, the army that is defeated in this fight will get a hell of a whipping!"

McCulloch's column reached a point a little over two miles from Cross Timber Hollow. As they marched, the men listened intently to the growing sounds of musketry rolling from the east, where Price's men were skirmishing. All at once, however, their attention was fully occupied with matters closer at hand when hostile artillery fire erupted directly to the south.

Osterhaus had arrived per Curtis's instructions, and he sized up the situation immediately. Realizing that McCulloch's force represented a grave threat to the Federal rear, Osterhaus determined to launch a preemptive strike to keep the Rebels busy until he could report to headquarters and obtain reinforcements. Not waiting for his infantry to catch up, Osterhaus deployed three cannons and about 500 cavalry in the corner of a snowy wheat field, and ordered them to open fire. The resultant surprise was complete, as solid shot blasted the approaching Confederate columns. McCulloch was astounded, but recovered his composure quickly and ordered a massed cavalry charge against the thin Union line.

Thousands of mounted Texans and Arkansans wheeled their tired horses and spurred across the wheat field, screaming out Rebel yells and brandishing sabers, hatchets, knives, and shotguns. Firepower usually negated the shock value of massed cavalry, but this time the attackers had the advantage of overwhelming numbers, and they closed on the Federals almost imme-



Pea Ridge fighting from the Union perspective, as depicted in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly.*

Painting: Andy Thomas; www.andythomas.com

The entire Union army surged forward on the morning of March 8 in a spirited counterattack. Painting by Andy Thomas.

diately and commenced slashing and firing in a whirling storm. One of the Union defenders recalled: "In every direction I could see my comrades falling. Men and horses ran in collision crushing each other to the ground. Dismounted troopers ran in every direction."

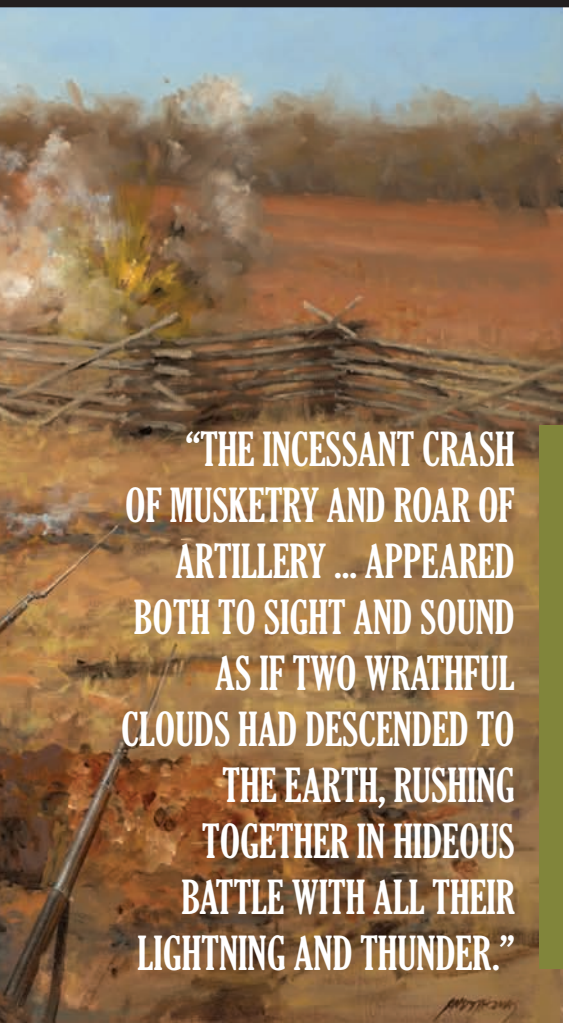
Osterhaus's defense collapsed quickly, his cavalry breaking pell-mell for the rear. All three guns were lost. In a small accompanying action a short distance to the west, two companies of Union cavalry had the misfortune to blunder into Pike's Indians. After a short victorious fight, the Indians went wild, dancing about the fallen Federals, scalping (so it was reputed) the dead and murdering a number of the wounded. That was the extent of the Indian participation in the battle—Pike was unable to get them back into line.

The ill-fated Union stand had bought Osterhaus the time to deploy his infantry, which he positioned along the southern rim just to the south beyond a belt of trees. This line too was thin, and Osterhaus penned a hasty note to Curtis requesting reinforcement, then opened with his remaining cannons.

For McCulloch, the appearance of the new force was a further vexation, and he determined that he could not continue his march to join Van Dorn while leaving Federals waiting compactly in his rear. He would have to smash them. To do so, McCulloch ordered up his weary infantry, instructed his cavalry to reform, and began sending out orders to coordinate a fresh attack. At this point, he made the serious oversight of neglecting to send word to Van Dorn of what had happened. This omission left Van Dorn with the inaccurate impression that the two wings of his army were still on schedule for an imminent junction at Elkhorn Tavern.

Not satisfied that everything was in order, McCulloch rode up to his skirmish line for a last-minute reconnaissance in person. Nearing the belt of trees between the fields, he was suddenly met with a burst of musketry from Osterhaus's skirmishers. One of the bullets pierced his heart, killing him instantly. The general's staff was horrified, worrying that news of their beloved chief's death would demoralize the soldiers. "We must not let the men know that General McCulloch is killed," one officer declared, and the information was withheld from everyone except the next in command, McCulloch's cavalry commander, Brig. Gen. James McIntosh.

McIntosh was an impetuous character in his own right, and he had no sooner assumed command than he ordered a piecemeal resumption of the attack. Making matters worse, he opted to lead the advance from the front, riding exuberantly



along with the lead regiment. There, in the midst of the same belt of trees where McCulloch had fallen, McIntosh was killed almost immediately by Osterhaus's skirmishers. The Confederate attack ground to a halt and confusion reigned. Most of the colonels were completely in the dark about who was in command; McIntosh's instructions had been uncertain at best. With no direction from above, the various officers decided to cancel the forward movement and await orders—orders that would never come.

In the meantime, four regiments of Arkansas and Louisiana infantry did attack, striking southward pursuant to orders McCulloch had given just before he died. This action was wholly unsupported by the rest of the force at hand, and Osterhaus managed to repulse it with the help of 1,400 new troops that Curtis had sent him in response to his earlier request.

That ended the fighting on Osterhaus's front, although he kept his men alertly in position throughout the day, watching the thousands of milling Confederate soldiers for any sign of belligerence. None was forthcoming. The various colonels kept sending couriers back and forth looking for McCulloch and McIntosh, and McCulloch's staff never shared the critical information that the general was dead. The day passed agonizingly slowly, as the southern soldiers waited in the ranks, "in the most perplexed condition and mental anguish." Finally, news of McCulloch's and McIntosh's deaths got out in the late afternoon. Even then, no one assumed command assertively, and regiments drifted rearward, some retreating back the way they had come, others moving to join Van Dorn. Many men simply fell out and collapsed into sleep. Van Dorn, too, remained in the dark about what was happening with McCulloch's command. Still bottled up in Cross Timber Hollow, he was overseeing the final stages of Price's deployment when hostile artillery fire broke from the ridge to the front.

Carr had arrived at Elkhorn Tavern with his brigade. As with Osterhaus to the west, Carr immediately surmised that the Confederate force in his front was considerably larger than his own command. (In fact, Price's column was down to about 5,000 exhausted men after subtractions due to straggling, but Carr had only 1,400 troops of his own with which to meet them.) After dispatching a courier to Curtis with the now-familiar request for reinforcements, Carr settled on a spoiling attack to discombobulate the Confederates, and he proceeded north in person to lead a battery into position to start the action.

This was the artillery fire that confronted Van Dorn, and Price's Missourians immediately ducked for cover as shrieking shots exploded overhead and pelted them with bark and leaves. In short order, Van Dorn summoned a battery to reply, and Price's men hurried forward two more on their own initiative. There was a clear path to a reasonable incline in the terrain at the edge of the hollow, and the Missouri gunners were able to deploy their pieces to good effect, blasting the Federals with a blistering barrage of metal. The duel was uneven at the beginning—14 Confederate guns against four Federal pieces.

Carr's gunners were pounded; limber chests exploded with great eruptions of fire and smoke, and Carr sustained a minor injury. The lopsided duel would probably have been more destructive but for the massive quantities of smoke the guns put up, which hovered densely in the hollow, making accurate fire all but impossible. To support the guns, Carr ordered forward his infantry, and the men shuffled about a third of the way down the uneven, icy slope and opened fire before ducking to the ground. It was a clever tactic, for Price assumed that he was about to be struck by an assault and concentrated on defending himself instead of marshalling his strength for a renewed attack that might have enabled him to break free of the hollow. Reinforcing Price's passivity was Van Dorn's steady optimism that McCulloch would arrive shortly to strike the Federals in flank and clear the ridge.

The battle raged monotonously. One participant remembered, "The incessant crash of musketry and roar of artillery, amid curtains of rising smoke, appeared both to sight and sound as if two wrathful clouds had descended to the earth, rushing together in hideous battle with all their lightning and thunder." Curtis finally arrived at the front, having been drawn northward by the steady roar of gunfire. It had been a taxing morning for him. Curtis located Carr and rode up to confer with him, braving the crash of Confederate shrapnel. After a short conference, Curtis turned around to return to headquarters, having assured Carr that another brigade would soon be coming up to help him hold his position. On the way back, Curtis passed by the army's trains where they were stationed in a field just south of Elkhorn Tavern. Curtis immediately ordered the trains moved to a safe location. It was a difficult maneuver for the teamsters to effect, but they did it well,

providing a little breathing room for Carr in case he found it necessary to fall back.

At 12:30 PM, the first reinforcements arrived for Carr in the form of a brigade of 850 men. Carr immediately swapped out the beat-up artillery battery in his front line for a fresh one, and he ordered the new infantry to deploy and attack the enemy. This they did twice, and both times were repulsed. Price's men were armed mostly with shotguns and outmoded smoothbores, but the smoke on the field was so dense that the Federals approached within 100 yards, and at that distance, the weight of numbers told. Carr was forced again to reassume a defensive posture, and the battle settled into a stalemate.

> "A CHARGE LIKE THAT LAST CLOSING SCENE HAS NEVER BEEN MADE ON THIS CONTINENT. IT WAS THE MOST TERRIBLY MAGNIFICENT SIGHT THAT CAN BE IMAGINED."

At 2 PM, Van Dorn finally learned by messenger that McCulloch was not coming to the rescue, information that trigged a change in tactics. Van Dorn immediately set about preparing for a frontal assault up the face of Pea Ridge. Realigning the weary Missouri soldiers took time, however, and in the midst of the movement the Confederate commander received a report that there was a clear path up the ridge to the east around the Federal right wing. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Van Dorn modified his plan and ordered Price to take a portion of his command out of line and up the ridge to strike the Federals in flank. If the two attacks could be coordinated, they would pin Carr in position and roll up his line, clearing the ridge entirely.

The wait for Price's men to move into position was agonizingly long; the Confederate soldiers were reaching the limits of their physical endurance. Slumped on the cold, rugged ground, many fell asleep in spite of the continuing crackle of gunfire. Price, whose wounded arm was tied up in a sling, finally moved into position on the ridge with a detachment of 2,000 men and 11 guns. From there, he opened a brisk bombardment on Carr's right wing. Unfortunately for him, Carr was not surprised, and in fact had prepared for just such an eventuality by refusing his right flank.

Carr had sensed that the long lull in the fighting corresponded to a Confederate buildup, and although he had only about 2,200 men in line to face Van Dorn's command of 5,000, he was well placed to meet them, especially along his refused right flank, which enjoyed the cover of a breastwork of fence rails and logs. Price attempted to soften the Union position with a sustained artillery barrage, but the fire was largely ineffectual, and the subsequent assault was a bloody disaster. "We were met by a most terrific and deadly volley of musketry," remembered one participant. The Missourians quickly returned to their jump-off point. Undaunted, Price opened with his artillery to try again.

In the meantime, Van Dorn had heard Price's attack and ordered in the rest of the infantry straight up the face of the ridge. The terrain was not suited to linear battle, and the men, some of whom had to be awakened to participate, were hardly in condition for a vigorous assault. The result was a stumbling confusion of overlapping lines, with the men slipping and tangling their way through snags and brush. Carr's men heard the approaching enemy soldiers crunching leaves before they could see them through the smoke. All at once the ridge erupted in musketry as the two sides came to grips with each other at less than 100 yards. The firing "was extremely heavy," one officer recalled. The Confederate assault spent its forward momentum almost immediately, and the fighting settled into another stationary battle of attrition.

Somewhere in the midst of the chaos, Van Dorn finally received confirmation that McCulloch was dead and that his command was effectively without leadership. Van Dorn was too engaged in the fighting to respond actively to the disheartening news. He simply sent a quixotic order addressed to the ranking colonel to "hold his position at all hazards."

By now, the weight of numbers was beginning to tell on Van Dorn's front. His right overlapped Carr's left, and as the Federal soldiers fell backward, the Confederates came whooping on. The advance was chaotic and disjointed, but it was enough, and Carr determined grimly to order a retreat. Price meanwhile had repeated his futile frontal assault on the Union breastwork before resorting to a more cautious attempt to turn the position. Carr's men held on doggedly. Many who were too badly wounded to leave the field stayed at their places, sitting on the ground reloading and firing.

The Confederates swarmed over the top of the ridge and captured several cannons, but their movement quickly lost all remaining semblance of cohesion. Men fell out by the hundreds to search Elkhorn Tavern and the bodies of the fallen Federals for any scrap of food they could find. Those who did press on found out unhappily that Carr was still dangerous and resourceful, even in retreat. He had located another strong position some 600 yards to the rear along a fence on the south side of a cornfield. There he rallied his men and commenced punishing the exhausted Confederates, who flung themselves raggedly at his new line.

In a climactic flourish, Curtis arrived on the dusky field in person at the head of his last division, which he had pulled from the entrenchments along Little Sugar Creek to rescue the beleaguered Carr. The force Curtis brought with him was small—only about 500 men—but its arrival had an electric effect on Carr's division. Curtis ordered an immediate counterattack, and when Carr's brigade commanders com-

plained that they were out of ammunition, he told them to charge with bayonets. This they did. "Such a yell as they crossed that field with, you never heard," one colonel recalled. "It was unearthly, and scared the rebels so bad they never stopped to fire at us or to let us reach them."

The reversal was complete, but it was night now, and Curtis realized that he would have to finish the job in the morning. With this in mind, he pulled back the men into a compact line and ordered Sigel to bring up the forces that had been engaging McCulloch's command, thereby effecting a concentration of the entire army. Curtis retired for the night in good spirits, confident of success the next day.

Across the field, the Confederate soldiers of Price's command also passed the evening in an upbeat state. They suffered from lack of food and warmth, but most believed that they had won the day. Little was done to ready them for the next day's fighting. Van Dorn did not concern himself with dressing ranks or realigning units. He did send orders to one of McCulloch's colonels to bring that wing to Elkhorn Tavern. McCulloch's men were still far away, however, and after making another terrible night march they arrived at dawn, staggering with fatigue and half-dead with cold and hunger.

Van Dorn arose feeling refreshed on March 8, having finally recovered from his illness. Hastily he reorganized his line, bringing up some of McCulloch's haggard men. Then he opened the action with a strangely weak infantry probe against the cornfield where Price's attack had petered out the previous night. Curtis was unimpressed. Leaving two of his divisions in position south of the cornfield, he ordered Sigel to swing his command around to the left and open the day's attack with a preliminary artillery bombardment. Sigel complied immediately, and the result was the most intense, sustained bombardment to date on the American continent. It lasted over two hours and was brutally effective. "It was a continual thunder," one man recalled. "A fellow might have believed that the day of judgment had come."

Cowed by the thunderous artillery fire, Confederate soldiers hugged the ground while Van Dorn struggled to bring up his own batteries to reply, only to learn that his ammunition trains had gone missing in the night. The trains had followed the army on the march around the enemy's Little Sugar Creek entrenchments, but Van Dorn had not kept track of their movements or thought to send orders to ensure that they followed closely. The result was that they were still far to the rear, some five to six hours away, and the Confederate soldiers and cannoneers on the scene were out of ammunition.

Impetuous as he was, Van Dorn realized that the game was up, and he ordered a peremptory retreat. As the Confederates began pulling out, Curtis launched a massive infantry attack with his whole force. They went in "with banners streaming, with drums beating and every man and officer yelling at the top of his lungs." Some Confederate regiments did their best to resist the Union tide, but many were already retreating. Van Dorn was at the head of the withdrawal, and he left the field while a substantial portion of his army was still engaged. He did not even bother to ensure that all units got the order to retreat, which meant that many men were abandoned to their own devices. They scattered as they saw fit, fading into the countryside.

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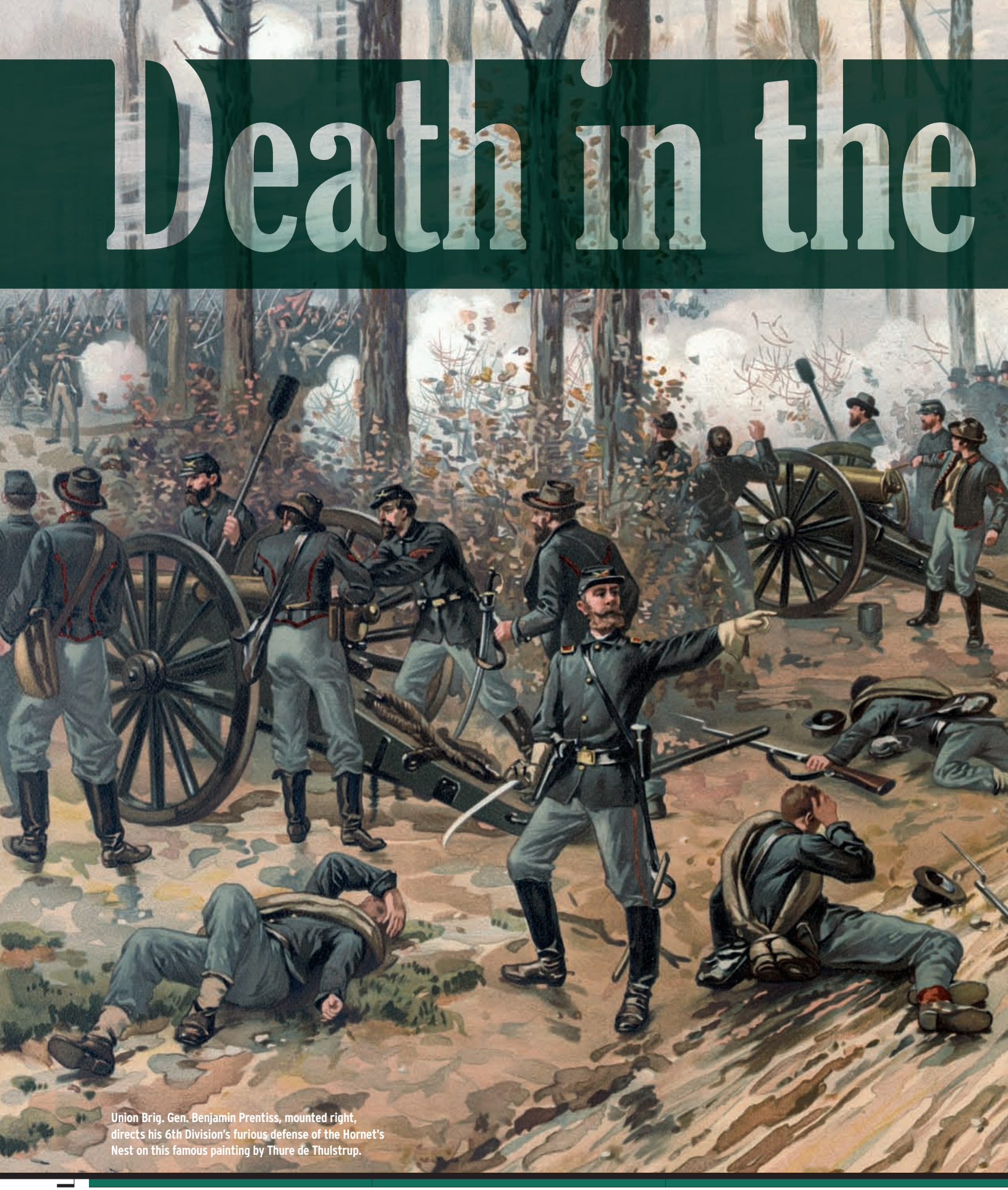
As it became clear that the Confederates were in retreat, Curtis rode his lines exuberantly, shouting: "Victory! Victory!" He was especially proud of the final push of his infantry. As he wrote later: "A charge like that last closing scene has never been made on this continent. It was the most terribly magnificent sight that can be imagined." In the glow of success, Curtis momentarily lost track of Sigel, and the German general added a rather eccentric epilogue to the battle. Having convinced himself that the Federal attack was a desperate attempt to break free for a retreat instead of the final victorious jab at a defeated foe, he gathered his two divisions and broke across Cross Timber Hollow in a farcical lunge for the rear. It took Curtis a full day to catch up with him.

In the meantime, broken and demoralized, the surviving Confederates staggered across northern Arkansas in search of food. They pillaged farms, slaughtering and eating animals raw. "I was so hungry I even picked up turnip peelings out of the mud and ate them," one Missouri soldier recalled. Eventually, Van Dorn managed to lead them south to a supply depot, where they slowly recovered. Once safely settled in, Van Dorn began blaming everything and everyone for the reversal. He refused to call it a defeat, insisting, "I was not defeated, but only foiled in my intentions."

Regardless of such claims, the disastrous impact of Pea Ridge on Confederate fortunes was immense. Van Dorn lost some 2,000 men in the battle and an untold number of deserters and casualties due to illness and exhaustion, while he inflicted only 1,384 casualties on Curtis's Army of the Southwest. More important, Curtis succeeded in his objective of securing Missouri for the Union. St. Louis would never again be seriously threatened, and Missouri would serve as stable base for the 1862 river offensives in Tennessee, which proved to be a smashing success. The Union victory at Pea Ridge was a blow from which the Confederacy would never fully recover. □

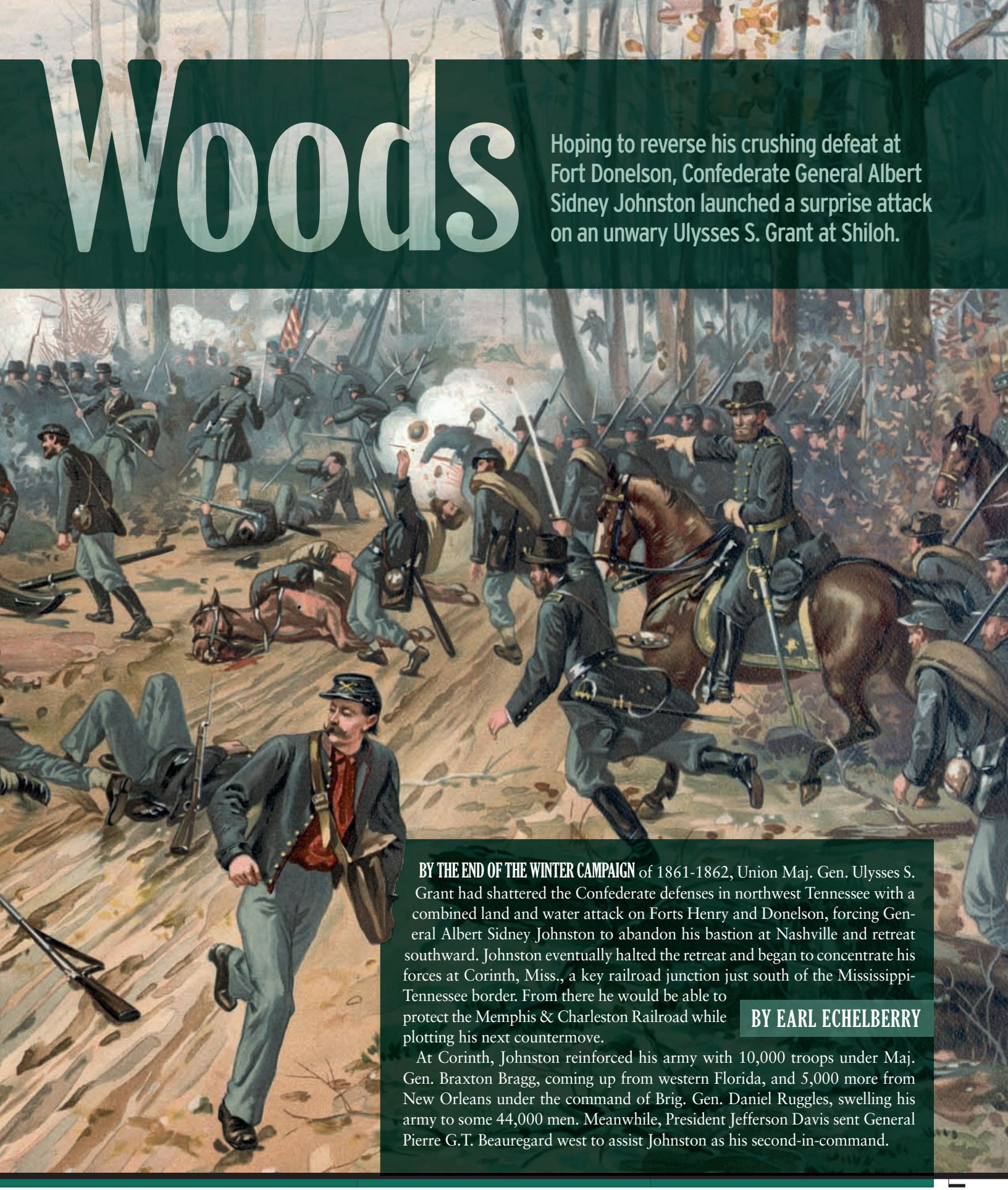
Death in the



Union Brig. Gen. Benjamin Prentiss, mounted right, directs his 6th Division's furious defense of the Hornet's Nest on this famous painting by Thure de Thulstrup.

Woods

Hoping to reverse his crushing defeat at Fort Donelson, Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston launched a surprise attack on an unwary Ulysses S. Grant at Shiloh.



BY EARL ECHELBERRY

BY THE END OF THE WINTER CAMPAIGN of 1861-1862, Union Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant had shattered the Confederate defenses in northwest Tennessee with a combined land and water attack on Forts Henry and Donelson, forcing General Albert Sidney Johnston to abandon his bastion at Nashville and retreat southward. Johnston eventually halted the retreat and began to concentrate his forces at Corinth, Miss., a key railroad junction just south of the Mississippi-Tennessee border. From there he would be able to protect the Memphis & Charleston Railroad while plotting his next countermove.

At Corinth, Johnston reinforced his army with 10,000 troops under Maj. Gen. Braxton Bragg, coming up from western Florida, and 5,000 more from New Orleans under the command of Brig. Gen. Daniel Ruggles, swelling his army to some 44,000 men. Meanwhile, President Jefferson Davis sent General Pierre G.T. Beauregard west to assist Johnston as his second-in-command.

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The Confederate withdrawal caught the Federals by surprise, and it took some time to initiate a new offensive. Army politics reared its ugly head after the victories at Forts Henry and Donelson, and the victor of those battles—Ulysses S. Grant—was supplanted by Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck, commander of the newly formed Department of the Mississippi. To make matters worse, Halleck gave Grant's old command, the Army of the Tennessee, to Maj. Gen. Charles F. Smith, who had no experience whatsoever in directing such a large body of men. Nevertheless, in mid-March Smith sent Brig. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman scouting down the Tennessee River to locate and exploit any weakness in the Southern defenses. Sherman traveled down the Tennessee to northern Alabama and attempted to cut the Memphis-Charleston Railroad. Failing to do so, he retreated upriver and selected Pittsburg Landing, near Savannah, Tenn., as the place to launch the next phase of the Federal offensive.

Reinforcing Sherman's advance force, Smith camped on the west bank of the Tennessee River to await the arrival of Maj. Gen. Carlos Buell, who was leading the Army of the Ohio south from Nashville. The plan was to use the combined strength of both armies to attack the gathering Southern forces at Corinth and seize the railroad there, thus breaking a crucial link between the lower Mississippi Valley and the flourishing cities on the Confederacy's east coast.

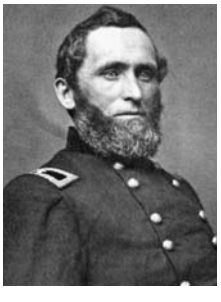
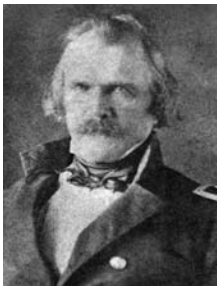
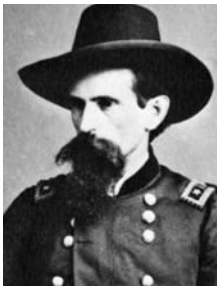
Smith's divisions camped in a thickly wooded area that was the shape of an irregular wedge, with each side of the wedge being three to four miles long. Snake Creek and Owl Creek made up the north and west legs, while the east side was bounded by the Tennessee River. The southeast side was formed by Lick Creek and its branch, Locust Grove Creek; the Shiloh Branch of Owl Creek bordered the southwest side. No entrenchments were constructed due to a lack of engineering expertise in the army and the somewhat casual attitude fostered by the general staff that the Confederates lacked the ability or desire to become the aggressor.

While the Union army lounged about awaiting the arrival of Buell's army, Beauregard, in his role as Johnston's chief of staff, began assembling one of the largest military forces west of the Appalachians. He divided the army into three corps: Maj. Gen. Leonidas Polk commanded the I Corps, Bragg commanded the II Corps, and Maj. Gen. William Hardee commanded the III Corps. Major General John C. Breckinridge took charge of the reserve corps. By April 2, Johnston had a combined strength of 44,700 men, only slightly less than the Army of Tennessee's 48,000.

Johnston feared that the united Federal armies would move against him soon, and on April 2 he decided to launch a preemptive attack against the Union position at Pittsburg Landing. Johnston planned to execute a turning movement with his army to get around the Federal left and drive toward the landing, thereby forcing the Federals to retreat from the river into the swamps of Owl Creek, which flowed just north of Shiloh Church, a Methodist meeting place three miles west of Pittsburg Landing. Orders were issued on the 3rd, and the Army of the Mississippi began its movement toward the Federal camp. However, the roads from Corinth to Shiloh were few in number and poor in quality, and the land was covered in heavy woods and frequently cut by ravines and swamps. Even though Johnston's plan called for his men to be in position to launch their attack on April 4, it took them three days to cover a grand total of 20 miles.

The combination of unfamiliar terrain, rainy weather, an inexperienced makeshift army, and a weak command structure contributed to a sputtering start and a critical delay. Not until the 6th was the Army of the Mississippi finally in position to launch its attack. Smith, who had badly injured his leg when he slipped getting into a skiff at Savannah—he would die of an infection a few weeks later—had arranged his forces across the southern base of the wedge between Owl and Lick creeks. On the right flank, near Owl Creek and the Hamburg-Purdy Road at Shiloh Church, was Sherman's 5th Division. To Sherman's left and in an extreme forward position was Brig. Gen. Benjamin Prentiss's 6th Division. A mile and a half to the rear was Maj. Gen. John McClernand's 1st Division. To McClernand's left was Brig. Gen. William Wallace's 2nd Division. Brig. Gen. Stephen Hurlbut's 4th Division, aided by Colonel David Stuart's and Brig. Gen. John McArthur's detached brigades, held the extreme left, anchored on the banks of Lick Creek. Major General Lew Wallace's 3rd Division was positioned across a bridge north of Snake Creek, connected to the rest of the Union army by the Hamburg-Savannah Road.

Bullets buzzed like hornets in the heavy woods and dense undergrowth, giving the evocative name "Hornet's Nest" to this part of the battlefield.


All photos National Archives

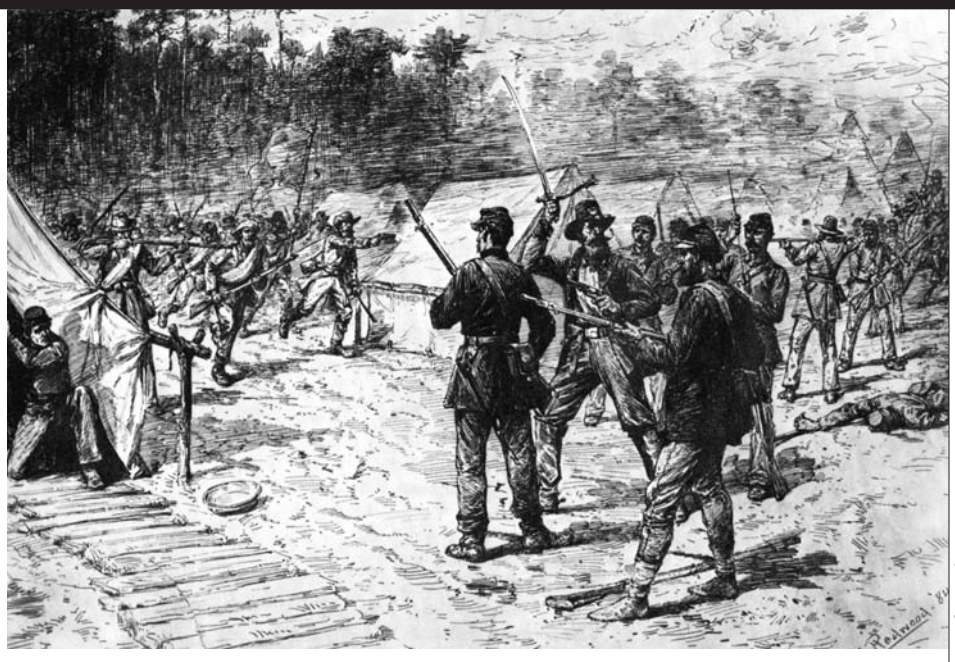
Grant, now restored to overall command of the Army of the Tennessee after the brief misunderstanding with Halleck, established his headquarters a few miles away at Savannah. Reviewing Smith's troop placement, he saw no need to make any changes or to prepare a new line of defense. The Union front remained vulnerable to attack. Although confident that Johnston's army would not dare attack his position, Grant nevertheless ordered a reconnaissance toward Corinth on April 3. The men had not traveled more than three miles from camp before they ran into a company of Confederate cavalry. No shots were exchanged and both sides retired unmolested, but an alarmed Prentiss kept sending out scouting parties to reconnoiter the area in front of his position. When they encountered new Confederate resistance on the 5th, they immediately reported the encounter. Grant, however, treated this as an isolated event, and no further defensive action was undertaken.

Major General William Nelson arrived in Savannah with the advance division of Buell's army of the Ohio on April 5 and reported immediately to Grant. New orders were cut to move Nelson's 4th Division to Pittsburg Landing as soon as adequate transportation became available. Five Union divisions now were camped on a rugged plateau, while Nelson's wearied division rested just across the river. The remainder of Buell's army was still bivouacked a full 30 miles up the road from Savannah.

Beauregard, believing that the element of surprise had been lost due to the previous skirmishing between pickets, recommended calling off the attack. Johnston disagreed, reasoning that a quick, decisive strike would destroy Grant's army. Silently, in a heavy rainstorm, the Confederates moved to within four miles of the Federal camp. Halting at the intersection of the Hamburg-Purdy and Corinth-Pittsburg roads on the storm-swept night, the Confederates hunkered down to wait for dawn.

Long before first light, Johnston's army was up and fed, their cumbersome blankets and knapsacks stripped off as they prepared to move out. As the sun began to peep through the young foliage of the forest, 44,000 Confederate soldiers who had never seen combat, led by officers who had never attempted to manage a force of this magnitude, moved through dense woods intercut with deep ravines. Their advance, over pathways that resembled Indian trails more than roads, made it difficult for them to maintain a solid, linear formation. Communication between the advancing divisions was an equally daunting task. Johnston personally led the brigades from the front, while Beauregard remained in the rear directing reinforcements and supplies.

While Johnston was still concentrating his forces, a small Federal reconnaissance force passed through its own picket lines and moved forward. Entering the forest, the men marched in the direction of the Corinth road. The going was difficult because of the thick canopy and uncultivated brush. Upon breaking clear of the forest, the Union force stumbled directly



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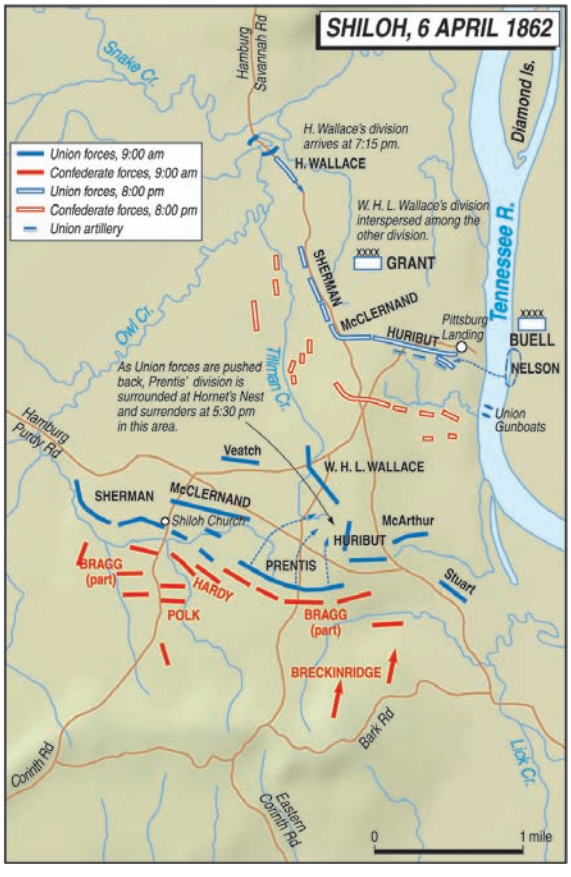

Map © Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: A hastily formed Federal battle line prepares to meet a mob of onrushing Confederates on the outskirts of the Federal camp during the first minutes of the battle on April 6, 1862. LEFT: The first day of fighting would see Union forces driven back by Hardee and Bragg in the south, with Johnston being killed during the attack just east of the Hornet's Nest. OPPOSITE (left to right): Brig. Gen. Benjamin Prentiss, General Albert Sidney Johnston, Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace, and General Pierre G.T. Beauregard.

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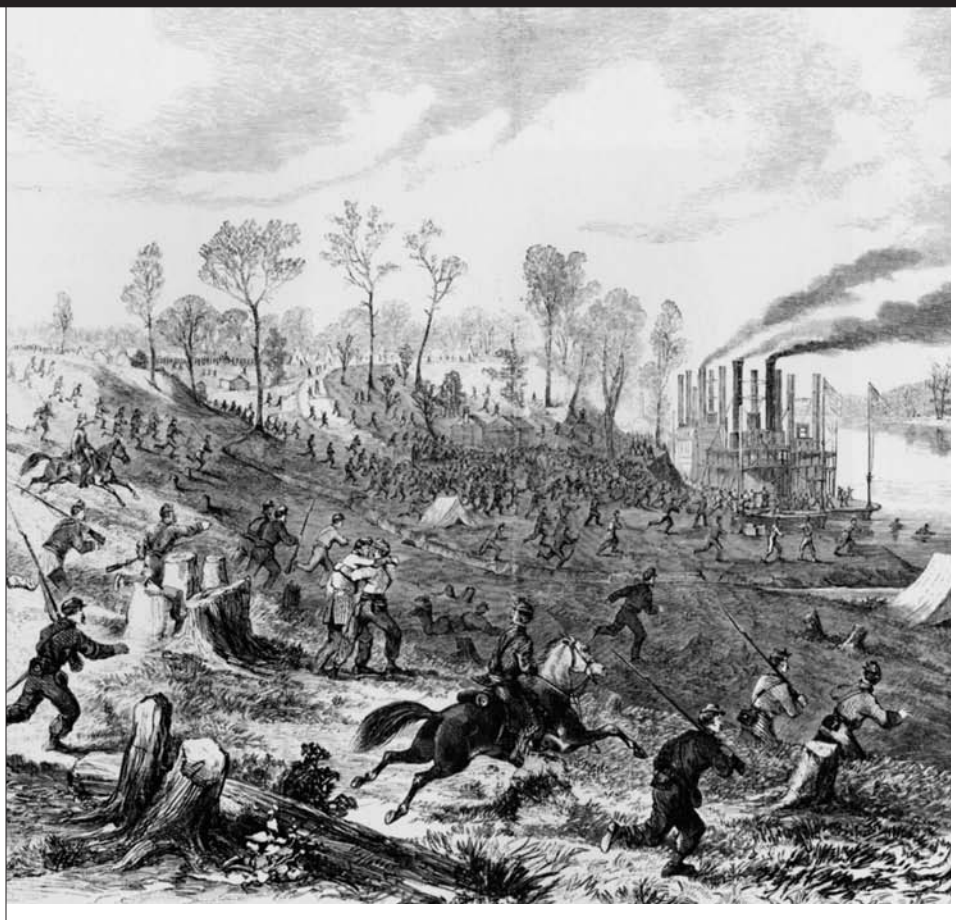

into the middle of Hardee's corps. More startled that anything else, both sides exchanged harmless musket fire before the Federals retreated to their camp.

While the main Union force went about its daily routine, blithely unaware of the most recent skirmishing, the gray-bloused Confederates made their final preparations. The plan was to attack along the broad front of the Federal line, which extended from Owl Creek to Lick Creek, a distance of three miles. Stacked into three distinct lines of battle, Hardee commanded the initial strike force, supported by Bragg and Polk in a second wave. Breckinridge would bring up the rear. Each battle line was separated from the other by a distance 500 to 800 yards.

The slashing attack began with a deep roar of heavy cannon, followed by the sharper rattling of musketry. Storming forward, the Confederate infantry attacked on all fronts as squadrons of cavalry charged both wings. With the force of a spring thunderstorm, Hardee's men fell upon the Federals. Pausing to deliver a second volley of fire, the surging Confederate masses charged Sherman's raw regiments. The first to bear the shock of the oncoming Confederates, Colonel Jesse Hildebrand's brigade quickly retreated in panic before the onslaught. Soon the brigades of Colonels Ralph Buckland and John A. McDowell came under fire as well and quickly sought shelter as the two sides began to blaze away at will.

Early in the assault, Hardee spotted a gap between Sherman's and Prentiss's lines that appeared to be an open highway to the Federal flanks and rear. He quickly ordered the brigades of Colonels Randall Gibson, Patton Anderson, and Preston Pond into the gap in an attempt to sweep around Sherman and enfilade his left flank. Sensing the mass confusion in his ranks, Sherman withdrew toward McClernand's camp. Upon reaching the Hamburg-Purdy Road, Sherman's men formed a new defensive line. Seeing Sherman falling back, McClernand pulled in his divisions and formed them along the Corinth-Pittsburg Road. The right wing of the Federal army was in a solid defensive position, but the withdrawal had unwittingly exposed the center's right side.

By mid-morning the Confederates seemed to be within easy reach of victory. Heartened by their initial success, the gray-coats stormed toward the enemy's newly established defensive line. Step by step they came. As they got within musket range, they were greeted by a furious barrage of bullets and driven back. The gap between the two armies was filled with deadly fire. Soon the bellowing of cannon was added to the ripping sound of explosive fragments raining death all along the battle line.

With the support of accurate cannon fire, the Confederates surged forward yet again. The solid blue line seemed to dissolve as more and more Federals fled backward. Eventually, the bluecoats collected themselves and organized a new battle line, this time across Tilghman Branch. With this withdrawal the battle fell into a deadly rhythm of battery pounding battery, while each side prepared for another assault. Artillery shells slicing through the branches signaled the arrival of another Confederate column of cavalry and infantry. From one end of the line to the other, a sheet of red flame erupted. Protected by a steel canopy of shells, Stuart's men stubbornly stood their ground.

For hours the battle raged. Over rolling hills, wooded forests, and deep ravines the two sides fought savagely. Dissatisfied with the progress of the battle, Bragg directed the three brigades of Brig. Gens. James Chalmers, John Jackson, and John Bowen to press their attack on the Federal left. With the release of a new storm of leaden hail, the Confederates renewed their assault. The Union line began to stagger and break under the onslaught, crowding the roads leading to the landing in a disorderly retreat. After seven hours of being heavily assaulted by Confederate forces, Stuart's brigade broke and tumbled back toward Pittsburg Landing, passing through the new defensive line formed by Grant's siege guns and Hurlbut's 4th Division.

Meanwhile, in the Union center, Prentiss ordered his division into line and advanced a short distance to engage Polk's and Bragg's men. With a heavy exchange of volleys, the Confederates began slowly pushing Prentiss's men back toward their tents. From behind every tree the Southerners poured a deadly fire into the Union forces. Somehow Prentiss's men held the attackers in check. Soon, however, the Confederates were reinforced and pressed forward again, first on the right and then on the left, until they were in full possession of Prentiss's camp.

Stopping to plunder the vacated camp, the Southerners inadvertently slowed their own attack, providing Federal commanders with much-needed time to reform their broken lines and prepare to meet the next assault. Prentiss's two brigades, broken and scattered, retreated toward Hurlbut's position. Amid the noise and confusion of battle, Prentiss halted and reformed his men along a sunken dirt road two miles to the rear. Sensing the collapse of the center, William Wallace committed the brigades of Colonels Thomas Sweeny and James Tuttle in support of Hurlbut's two brigades and the remnants of Prentiss's brigades. From this reinforced position, Prentiss was able to check the Confederate advance.

As hour followed hour, a series of irregular, confused, and bloody confrontations occurred. Bullets buzzed like hornets in the heavy woods and dense undergrowth, giving the evocative name "Hornet's Nest" to this part of the battlefield. For the next six hours, the Federal line wavered but never broke under repeated Confederate assaults. Frustrated, Bragg ordered Gibson to launch a head-on attack at the center of Prentiss's line. Gibson's men charged with muskets leveled into the impregnable Hornet's Nest, where they were greeted with an appalling crash of sound and a fusillade of hot metal from Captain Andrew Hickenlopper's massed cannon. Again and again Gibson's men surged forward, only to be forced back by the quick-firing artillery. Finally, Johnston realized that his army was being wasted in such frontal assaults and ordered Breckinridge's reserve corps to attack the Federal position at Sarah Bell's peach orchard, which lay just east of the Hornet's Nest.

Johnston, waving his sword, launched his assault on Hurlbut's position. During

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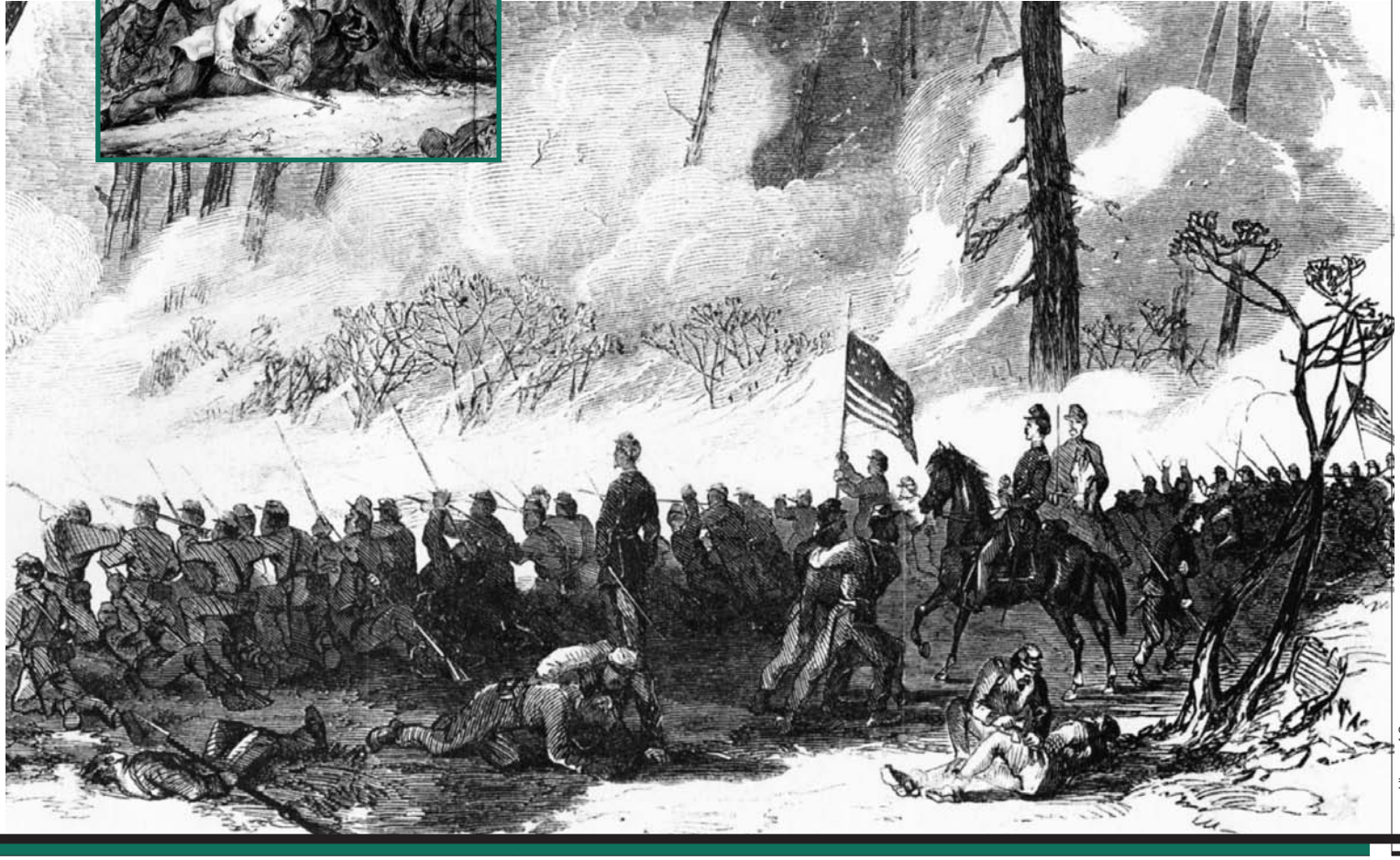
LEFT: General Albert Sidney Johnston lies dying after a round struck him behind the right knee, severing his femoral artery. BELOW: Men of the 44th Indiana exchange point-blank volleys with Confederates partially obscured by a raging brushfire that engulfed the battlefield—burning many soldiers to death. OPPOSITE: Panicked Federal soldiers flee the battleline and make for the Tennessee River.



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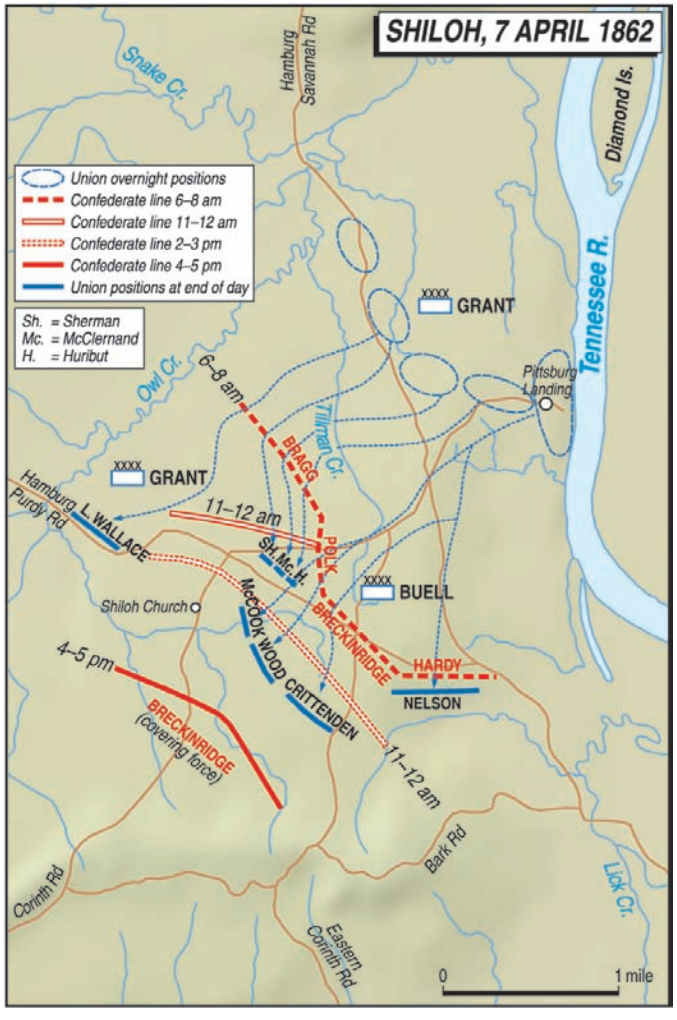

The second day of fighting would see Union and Confederate losses weighing in at 13,700 and 10,700, respectively.

this struggle a Minie bullet slammed into Johnston's leg behind his right knee, severing his femoral artery. Not realizing at first that he was grievously wounded, Johnston continued to direct the attack until he became faint from loss of blood and swooned in his saddle. Tennessee Governor Isham Harris, on hand that day as a civilian aide, caught the stricken general and lowered him to the ground. When Harris removed Johnston's boot, he found it full of blood. As the governor and other high-ranking officers fretted impotently above him, Johnston slowly bled to death, a six-foot-long stream of blood trailing from his leg. A field tourniquet that might have staunched the deadly flow of blood was found later in Johnston's pocket.

With the death of Johnston, Beauregard assumed command of the Confederate forces. Having forced back the Federals' left and right flanks, the new commander prepared his forces for one final push. Brig. Gen. Daniel Ruggles' 1st Division was ordered to move 62 cannons into position to support the renewed Confederate attack.

The withdrawal of Sherman's and McClernand's troops behind the Tilghman Branch exposed the army's flanks. Under the protection of Ruggles' artillery, Breckinridge smashed into Hurlbut's position, forcing him back to Pittsburg Landing, where he joined Sherman and McClernand in forming a new defensive position along the Hamburg-Savannah Road. This, in turn, exposed Prentiss's left flank, compelling him to change fronts under fire—always a risky maneuver. With Ruggles' artillery continually hammering the Federal line, Polk and Hardee attacked Prentiss and William Wallace from both flanks and front. Wallace was fatally wounded by a whirring piece of shrapnel, and his line crumbled and fell back. This left Prentiss's division surrounded on three sides.

With a chorus of Rebel yells, Beauregard's fresh brigades entered the fray, swooping over the field and capturing Prentiss and 2,200 of his officers and men. This effectively ended any resistance in the Federal center. Having taken the Peach Orchard and the Hornet's Nest, the Confederates continued pushing northward for a time, but finally stopped to eat and rest. The men were famished and exhausted.

Earlier that morning, when word of the battle reached Grant at his headquarters in Savannah, he ordered Nelson to assemble his troops opposite the landing, where they were to be ferried across the Tennessee River. Grant then hastened to the landing, where he found his former camps in the hands of the enemy and the remnants of his army cowering beneath the river bluff under continuous and heavy bombardment. Pushing his way forward, Grant met with his front-line commanders and discovered that Sherman, Prentiss, and McClernand were all falling back. A new line was established using Wallace's and Hurlbut's brigades in support of the retreating Federal force, and Grant sent urgent messages to both Buell and Lew Wallace to move with all speed toward Pittsburg Landing. Galloping along a sunken road, Grant was nearly killed when a Mississippi battery fired a charge of grapeshot into his group. A shell fragment struck his sword just below the hilt, breaking his scabbard and blade in two. After this, Grant never bothered to wear a sword.

Throughout the afternoon, Grant calmly directed the establishment of a new defensive position anchored on the left by the Tennessee River and on the right by Snake Creek. To strengthen the line Grant mounted batteries of heavy artillery on the high ground behind the Tilghman and Dill branches. Next, he moved into line the retreating remains of Hurlbut's, McClernand's, and Sherman's divisions. Lew Wallace's 3rd Division hurried along the Hamburg-Savannah Road to move into position on the left flank.

As the sun began to set on April 6, the remnants of the Army of the Tennessee took up their final defensive position as Federal batteries flung hot metal across the ravine at the enemy. To this barrage was added the ordnance of the gunboats *Lexington* and *Tyler*, which swept the Confederates' right flank with steaming broadsides of eight-inch shells.

On the opposite side of the river, Confederate batteries were pushed forward and responded to the cannon fire by

throwing shells across Dill Branch into the Federal position. The Army of the Mississippi's new alignment had Bragg on the right flank, Polk in the center, and Hardee anchoring the left flank above the Corinth-Pittsburg Road near Owl Creek.

Eager to press the attack, Bragg gathered his exhausted infantry and prepared for one final assault to ensure victory. This honor fell to Chalmer's and Jackson's brigades, and they moved forward across the ravine and up the opposite side. Coming within musket range, the men were met with a murderous fire from the rallying Federal forces. Easily repulsed, the exhausted and broken brigades scrambled back through the dense foliage and waded back to safety on the opposite bank. Beauregard, realizing that his lines were in disarray and that the Federal position was virtually impregnable, decided not to hazard another attack. With darkness descending on the battlefield, he withdrew his disorganized forces and regrouped for a new assault in the morning.

As Shiloh's first day of slaughter was ending, Nelson led his division through the interminable swamps and pathless bottom lands to the eastern bank of the Tennessee River. Colonel Jacob Ammen's brigade was the first to reach the eastern bank, where two Union steamers waited under fire. As the sky burst into flames, the blueclad soldiers boarded the steamers and made for the opposite bank, where they were greeted with the metallic sound of bursting shells and the occasional whisper of a stray bullet as it sliced through the air during the final Confederate assault of the day.

Throughout the night, Grant's army was reinforced by new divisions from the Army of the Ohio, while Lew Wallace's reserve division arrived from Crump's Landing. The timely arrival of these 22,500 reinforcements allowed Grant to lengthen his defensive perimeter. The three divisions from Buell's army were placed on the left flank of the Federal line. In the center were Hurlbut's and McClernand's relatively intact divisions and the badly mauled divisions of Sherman and William Wallace. On the right flank, Grant had Lew Wallace's fresh 5,000 men. At midnight a violent thunderstorm broke, announcing the end of the first day's fighting,

Before the sun rose over the battlefield, both sides made plans for the second day of battle. Grant had at his disposal a combined force of 40,000 men against Beauregard's 30,000 men. Believing that victory was still at hand, Beauregard's army had retired behind the Hamburg-Purdy Road to await the coming of dawn. The Confederate line had Hardee on the extreme right next to the river, with Polk and Breckinridge in the center and Bragg on the extreme left.

Seizing the initiative, Grant's newly inspired officers aroused their men from an uneasy slumber and prepared them to renew the fighting. In silence the Federals arranged an aggressive counterattack. With the sun about to peek above the horizon, a thin line of skirmishers detached themselves from their defensive perimeter. In a few moments they passed into the desolation of the previous day's struggle. Littering the battleground in every direction were discarded knapsacks, canteens, blankets, and rifles with bent barrels or splintered stocks. Dead bodies lay everywhere. Following the skirmishers, Nelson's advancing brigades silently struck out toward the Confederate lines. Brig. Gen. Thomas Crittenden's brigades were behind and on Nelson's right flank as they steadily marched toward the Confederate position.

Hastily fixing their own bayonets, the Federals charged after the retreating enemy. Unable to withstand the assault, Confederate cannoneers abandoned their guns and fled…

After advancing about a mile, the Union troops were assailed by Confederate artillery. Moving up their own batteries, a heavy exchange ensued. Taking charge, Buell dressed his lines, forming Brig. Gen. Alexander McCook's forces on Crittenden's right and Nelson's on the left flank and extending his line of attack from a point southeast of the Hamburg Road to Hurlbut's flank. All the while the ear-blasting exchange of cannon fire continued.

Even before first light of day, Lew Wallace's field guns had begun shelling the Confederate batteries posted on a bluff in front of his line, forcing them to pull back. Following on the heels of the retreating Confederates, Wallace's fresh troops soon occupied the hill. Perceiving that the enemy's withdrawal from the bluff had exposed their own left flank, Wallace prepared to shift his line of attack. Hoping to turn the Confederate left, he left-half-wheeled his division, leaving a gap between his division and Sherman's. The Confederates immediately tried to take advantage of the gap, but Wallace's cannon were able to keep them at bay. The battle reduced to exchanges of cannon fire, Sherman moved forward in support of Wallace's left flank.

It was just past noon when Wallace again changed fronts to attack, with Sherman still on his left in support. As Wallace's first brigade moved forward, a squadron of Confederate cavalry dashed out of the woods toward his temporarily exposed flank. After repulsing this attack, Wallace ordered his division to keep pressing on. With skirmishers leading the way, the main body of Union troops moved out of the forest and were starting across an open space when the forest exploded and the sickening sounds of bullets hitting soft flesh filled the air. Expecting to find only a screen of skirmishers, Wallace had run headfirst into a fully organized Confeder-

ate battle line that had coolly held its fire until the Federals had advanced into the killing zone. Once again the Union advance was halted.

Sherman's brigade soon gave way, exposing Wallace's flank. A heavy mass of Confederates rushed forward to take advantage of the break and isolate Wallace from the rest of the army. For a while the situation seemed critical, but Sherman's line recovered and moved abreast of Brig. Gen. Lovell Rousseau's brigade, reestablishing a solid line of attack. The Confederates found themselves hard pressed all across the battlefield. The battle steadily collapsed toward the center.

In a courageous if foolhardy move, Colonel William B. Hazen's newly arrived brigade charged a Confederate battery. Overextending his lines and exposing both his flanks to a withering fire of shot and canister, Hazen was forced to retreat with a loss of one-third his men. Colonel William S. Smith's brigade, not slackening its pace, charged into the melee on Nelson's right flank. Meanwhile, Union artillery silenced the Confederate batteries. Reinforced with Brig. Gen. Jeremiah Boyle's brigade, Nelson drove the Confederates back, exposing their cannon.

The Federals steadily pressed forward. Step by step the Confederate lines retreated. Crittenden's division, supported by two regiments of Hurlbut's division, advanced against the Confederate center-right. While the cannoneers feuded, the Federal columns pushed the Confederates back, sweeping everything before them. Bush by bush and tree by tree, the Confederate center was forced to give ground.

McCook ordered Rousseau's brigade to advance on the Confederate center-left. Seeing Rousseau's brigade moving up in support of Crittenden's right flank, Beauregard countered by sending Maj. Gen. Benjamin Cheatham's division to engage the enemy. The exchange of fire, which had been hot enough as it was, now redoubled, stalling the Federal attack. McCook deployed the brigades of Colonels Edward Kirk and William Gibson to the right and rear of Rousseau's brigade. This added pressure forced the Confederate center to gradually give way.

Rousseau, finding his advance no longer blocked, charged forward again, crashing into Brig. Gen. Patrick Cleburne's brigade at the Corinth-Pittsburg Road. Again the Confederates put up a stiff defense, but after the loss of another 1,700 killed or wounded they were forced to abandon their position and fall back. With the retreat of the Confederates' left flank, remnants of the army collapsed inward around the Shiloh meeting house. The Confederate cause was becoming desperate. Beauregard, moving to and fro, urged his troops to rally once again and somehow managed to sort out the disordered fragments of his army for a last-ditch stand.

Upon reaching a wooded area 500 yards east of Shiloh Church, McCook's division ran into a wall of grape and canister from two Confederate batteries followed by dozens of gray-clad infantrymen suddenly swarming out of the woods. With a resounding crash the Confederate line surged forward, only to be pelted in turn by the waiting Federal battalions. Stunned by a shattering volley of fire, the Southern attack collapsed. A second Confederate wave swept down, pouring in fire and forcing the blue line to stagger. Union reserves sprang forward, filling the gap left by their retreating comrades. This was met with a third attack as the desperate Confederates charged over their own dead and wounded with bayonets lowered. However, lead always wins over steel, and as quickly as it began the Southern attack evaporated.

Hastily fixing their own bayonets, the Federals charged after the retreating enemy. Unable to withstand the assault, Confederate cannoneers abandoned their guns and fled with the infantry across an open space into the woods beyond. With the support from Hurlbut's brigades on the left and McClernand's brigades on the right, McCook's force advanced as the Confederates steadily gave ground.

The last Confederate attack served only to cover their withdrawal from the battlefield. Beauregard, realizing at last that the day was lost, ordered a total retreat at 1:30 that afternoon. Commencing on their right flank and spreading to the left, the defeated men in gray retreated through the woods to a commanding ridge behind Shiloh Church. There they were met by reserves, who stood in line to support their withdrawal and blunt any further Federal advance.

The sound of battle ebbed and flowed as the exhausted men in Grant's army moved doggedly forward. Much of the fight had

The 14th Wisconsin Volunteers, temporarily attached to Colonel William Sooy Smith's 14th Brigade, surge forward to take an exposed New Orleans battery.

gone out of them as well, and they stopped to catch their breath. A new attack against the retreating Confederates was not in the cards so the remainder of the Confederate forces quit the field unmolested and silence fell over the ravaged countryside. The Battle of Shiloh had ended. During the night the greatly disorganized Confederates withdrew to their fortified stronghold at Corinth. Possession of the grisly battlefield passed to the victorious Federals, who reclaimed their camps and made an exhausted bivouac among the dead.

Johnston's massive concentration at Corinth and the surprise attack at Pittsburg Landing had presented the Confederacy with a golden opportunity to reverse the course of the war. The misbegotten aftermath left the invading Union forces poised to capture Corinth. This in turn would open up the entire Mississippi Valley, making Memphis and Vicksburg vulnerable to attack. The final number of dead or missing was 13,000 on the Federal side and 10,500 on the Confederate, including one of its most valuable generals. More men had fallen in two days at Shiloh than had fallen in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War combined. Across the nation spread the sickening realization that the fighting would not end quickly and that the idea of an easy victory over the South was ill-conceived.

For both sides, the war was going to be a very bloody affair. □

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Farragut's flagship, the *Hartford*, is attacked by a fire raft as the Union fleet attempts to run by the powerful forts downriver of New Orleans. Farragut thought all might be lost.

A RUN FOR New

Orleans

THE PRIZE WAS ENORMOUS: THE OUTLET AND QUEEN CITY OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER. ITS CAPTURE WOULD HOBBLE THE CONFEDERACY, BUT IT WOULD NOT BE EASY.

By Robert Suhr

From the deck of the *Hartford*, Flag-Officer David Farragut watched his signal officer in the rigging above him. When a 285-pound mortar shell landed in Fort Jackson, the signal officer waved a red flag. When the shell did not explode on target, he waved a white flag. The signal officer waved the white flag more often than the red.

"I guess we go up the river tonight," someone overheard Farragut mutter.

With this decision, Farragut started events that would lead to an attack on the largest city in the Confederacy—New Orleans. As a banking center, and the major port for exports coming down the river, it was a rich prize indeed. But to get at the city, Farragut's ships would have to do what many experts considered impossible: steam up the lower river past two powerful forts built especially to prevent such an excursion, Forts Jackson and St. Philip.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox first proposed running the ships past the forts in the summer of 1861. The proposal countered prevailing naval thinking that wooden ships could not stand against forts. But early Union naval victories along the Atlantic seaboard had convinced him it was not true. He persuaded Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to suggest the scheme to President Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln was not enthusiastic about the operation until Commander David Porter arrived in Washington in November. Porter's idea was much the same as

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Fox's. Having spent 76 days on blockade duty outside the mouth of the Mississippi, Porter had one thing Fox lacked—current information on Confederate defenses.

After Porter explained the situation to Lincoln, the president said: "This should have been done sooner. The Mississippi is the backbone of the Rebellion; it is the key to the whole situation."

With Lincoln convinced, they had to get help from the army. The navy intended to capture New Orleans, but it needed troops to garrison it first.

Major General George B. McClellan had just replaced Winfield Scott in command of the Union armies when they called upon him. Despite the situation, McClellan always believed the enemy had many more troops than he did. So he approved the attack on New Orleans, so long as he did not have to send any troops from the Army of the Potomac.

This set the stage for the emergence of one of the most controversial figures of the Civil War: Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler. A "War Democrat" from Massachusetts, Butler was a man whose support Lincoln needed. In addition, Butler offered to raise several regiments in New England. But because McClellan did not like him, he ordered Butler and his newly raised regiments to the New Orleans operation.

Fox had proposed steaming past the forts, but Porter thought the Union forces first needed to reduce the forts by smashing them with 13-inch siege mortars mounted on the decks of ships. Consequently, Welles gave Porter command of a mortar flotilla with the authority to outfit 20 schooners to serve as "bomb vessels."

At about the same time in Missouri, Maj. Gen. John C. Fremont came to a conclusion similar to Porter's. He ordered the construction of 40 "mortar boats" to reduce Confederate fortifications along the central Mississippi. He already had a foundry in Pittsburgh casting the giant guns. But Porter got Washington to intercede, resulting in the foundry shipping the first 20 mortars to New York for mounting on his schooners.

Attached to the mortar flotilla were six gunboats. Some were converted ferry boats that were so strong Porter could use them as tugs to maneuver the mortar schooners in the river.

The man Welles wanted for overall command of the expedition was Porter's foster brother, 60-year-old Captain David Farragut, who had impressed Welles with his boldness during the Mexican War. But the appointment was not without criticism. Some questioned Farragut's loyalty; he was born in Tennessee and had spent a number of years in Louisiana.

So Welles first sent Porter to question him. He then summoned Farragut to Washington, where Farragut met with Fox and Postmaster General Montgomery Blair. Fox gave Farragut a list of ships and asked if he could take New Orleans with them. After scanning the names, the venerable captain

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Union sailors surround one of Porter's massive guns aboard one of the fleet's mortar schooners. Such mortars could lob a missile three miles.

told Fox he could do it with two-thirds their number. Blair went to Lincoln convinced Farragut could take New Orleans.

When Farragut met with Welles, the secretary told him about the mortar attack that was to precede the run past the forts. Farragut agreed to use the mortars if ordered to, but he doubted they would be effective. He ventured the opinion that they might even be counterproductive because they would warn the Confederates that an attack was coming.

Through all this Welles and Fox kept the operation a secret. They even kept Secretary of War Simon Cameron ignorant of it. An unexpected benefit of this secrecy was the Confederate authorities' fixation on the ironclads under construction near St. Louis. Confederate authorities in Richmond became convinced that the main threat to New Orleans would be a strike from the north.

The fleet placed under Farragut's command was comprised of the *Colorado*, a 40-gun steam frigate, four sloops carrying 22 to 24 guns each, the side-wheeler *Mississippi* with 17 guns, three corvettes each with seven to nine guns, and eight gunboats carrying two guns each. The gunboats had a heavy and a light gun on pivots so they could fire to either side. None of the ships could fire at a target immediately in front of it.

In mid-March, the Union navy entered the Mississippi Delta at Pass à l'Outre. Getting across the bar was difficult. The crews had to remove guns, coal, sails and spars from the *Pensacola* and *Mississippi* to usher them across. The *Richmond* ran aground seven times trying to cross. When all the mortar schooners were across, Porter sent his steamers back to help the warships.

But the mighty *Colorado* would not pass over the bar, even unburdened of guns and much equipment. Farragut tried for two weeks to nurse it across before giving up. By leaving her behind, he lost almost 20 percent of his firepower.

Still, Farragut had several intangible advantages. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had built and maintained Forts Jackson and St. Philip. Before leaving Washington, Welles gave Farragut detailed engineering drawings of both forts, plus a detailed description by Brig. Gen. John Barnard, who had helped rebuild them.

Farragut also had a ship from the U.S. Coast Survey. He sent it ahead to find the best channel over the bar. In addition, while the warships prepared for fighting in the river, the surveyors established landmarks so Porter would know the exact distance and angle to each fort, even if the forts were not in sight. White flags along the shore showed where each mortar schooner was to anchor, and how far it was to the center of each fort.

In mid-April 1862, one year after the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston, the Union warships and mortar schooners moved up the river. On April 16, Farragut authorized Porter to begin the bombardment when he was ready.

Fort Jackson was on the western bank on the inside bend of the river, and its defenders had cut down trees to give themselves a clear view of part of the river below them. Fort St. Philip was farther upriver on the eastern bank. Porter placed the 1st and 3rd divisions of his flotilla on the west bank of the river so the lead schooner was exactly 2,850 yards from Fort Jackson and 3,680 yards from Fort St. Philip. From the masts, lookouts could see the forts, but to disguise the masts rising above the trees they covered them with brush.

The 2nd Division was set on the east bank, 3,680 yards from Fort Jackson, in full view of the Confederate forts. By the morning of April 18, Porter was ready to begin the attack.

The defenses Farragut faced seemed formidable, but reality might have been less so. The Confederates had a large variety of weapons and commands to oppose an advance by the Union navy, but that diversity harbored weaknesses.

The heart of the Confederate defenses were the two masonry forts. These, plus available ships, comprised 192 guns, but only one-third were large caliber (32-pound and larger). When Maj. Gen. Mansfield Lovell took command in December, he tried to secure larger guns but the Richmond government deemed his department a low priority.

Lovell decided that the forts would be effective only if the Union navy could be forced to remain stationary in front of them. To stop their advance, he built a barrier across the river five-hundred yards below Fort Jackson. His men built what he called a "raft" across the river. This raft was composed of cypress logs, four or five feet in diameter and 40 feet long, chained together with two-and-a-half-inch iron cables. Fifteen anchors at the end of 180-foot chains held the raft in place.

Unprecedented high water in March tore part of the raft away. Lovell repaired the barrier by chaining together seven or eight derelict boats in the opening.

Lovell recognized how vulnerable New Orleans was. The Confederate authorities in Richmond saw the direct threat to the Crescent City as a thrust up the river, but there were also a dozen bayous and canals that could allow the Union navy to outflank the forts.

Lovell thus established two lines of defense for New Orleans. Brigadier General Johnson Duncan commanded the outer line, Forts Jackson and St. Philip, which blocked the direct approach from the sea. An interior line guarded the city proper from land attacks by forces that may have avoided the forts. This line ran from Chalmette on the river to Lake Ponchartrain north of the city. More fortifications protected the western bank of the river, and New Orleans from the north and west.

To add to his difficulties, Lovell had trouble keeping troops and weapons in New Orleans. When Albert Sidney Johnston collected troops for the offensive that ended at Shiloh, 5,000 of Lovell's men transferred to Corinth, taking with them most of the weapons Lovell had. When the state of Louisiana smuggled muskets through Florida, the governor of Florida seized half the shipment.

The real key to defending New Orleans against a naval attack was a Confederate navy. Unfortunately, in 1861 the priority for the Confederacy was building an army and not a navy.

One of the few ships Lovell did have was the ironclad ram *Manassas*. Perhaps an early success deluded Confederate officials into thinking they had nothing to fear from a Union navy attack up the Mississippi.

That story went back to May 1861, when John Stevenson began converting the steamer *Enoch Train* into an ironclad commerce raider he named the *Manassas*. Five months later, Lieutenant Alexander Warley seized the ship for the Confederacy. The *Manassas* was poorly armed, but Warley intended to use her as a ram. Unfortunately the *Manassas* was so slow it could barely move against the current.

The day he seized the *Manassas*, Warley led some converted wooden gunboats against the Union blockade at the Head of the Passes, where the Mississippi River, well below New Orleans, branches in to three major outlets to the Gulf of Mexico and where the Union flotilla was gathered. An attempt to ram the Union ship *Richmond* failed, and the supporting gunboats did not arrive. Nevertheless the Union navy fled outside the bar and remained there until Farragut's arrival in March 1862.

To create ships that could stop the Union navy, Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory issued contracts for the building of two new ironclads, the *Mississippi* and the *Louisiana*. But the designs of the ships were ambitious—the *Mississippi,* if completed, would be the most fearsome and swiftest warship ever made—and beyond the capability of the South to build from scratch. The completion dates continued to slip from one delay after another.

What Lovell lacked in solid warships he made up for in diversity and numbers. Besides the *Manassas*, he had several wooden gunboats converted from civilian use early in the war. The state of Louisiana also had its own gunboats. In addition, there was the River Defense Fleet, six river steamers turned into rams and commanded by John Stevenson, the same man who had built the *Manassas*.

Commanding the *Governor Moore*, a Louisiana state sidewheeler, was Captain Beverley Kennon, a former U.S. Navy officer. After the war, Kennon described his ship (and the others similar to it): "Her stem [bow] was like that of hundreds of other vessels, being faced along its length on the edges above water with two strips of old-fashioned flat railroad iron, kept in place by short straps of like kind at the top, at the water-line, and at three intermediate points. These straps extended about two feet abaft the face of the stem, on each side, where they were bolted in place. The other 'rams' had their 'noses' hardened in like manner. All had the usual-shaped stems. Not one had an iron beak or projecting prow under water."

The Confederate defenses lacked weapons, men and ships. But perhaps the worst flaw was the command structure. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Higgins commanded the forts, but had no authority over the ships next to them. Mitchell commanded the Confederate navy, but his authority extended only to the Confederate ships—the ships of Louisiana did not have

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U.S. Navy

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Admiral Farragut, David Porter. RIGHT: Explosions crowd the sky as the scores of ships from the Union fleet attempt to run past the Confederate forts barring the way to New Orleans.

to follow his orders. Stevenson made it clear that the River Defense Fleet was taking orders from no one: "Every officer and man on the river-defense expedition joined it with the condition that it was to be independent of the Navy, and that it would not be governed by the regulations of the Navy, or be commanded by a naval officer."

When the mortars opened fire on the morning of April 18, the guns in the two forts returned the fire. Because of the work by the surveyors, the mortars quickly found their targets. The Confederates took longer to find their marks, and their fire concentrated on the exposed 2nd Division. To try to suppress the Confederate fire, Porter sent the gunboat *Oswego* to the head of the second division to fire its 11-inch smoothbore. She stayed there under fire for almost two hours, retiring only when she ran out of ammunition.

At about five o'clock, the Union officers saw fire near Fort Jackson. Most believed it was a fire raft but Porter went up the river after dark to get a better view. He reported to Farragut that he thought the fort was on fire. Indeed, several years later, an officer inside the fort wrote Porter that "the citadel and all buildings in rear of the fort were fired by bursting shell, and also the sandbag walls that had been thrown around the magazine doors. The fire, as you are aware, raged with great fury, and no effort of ours could subdue it."

On April 19, Confederate tugs maneuvered the *Louisiana* down to Fort St. Philip where they anchored her. Mechanics then came down to install her machinery while sailors installed cannon. But to the dismay of her commander, John Mitchell, the ports were too small to aim the cannon. Thus after the war Kennon wrote sarcastically that the *Louisiana* "could float and do nothing more."

Higgins wanted Mitchell to deploy the *Louisiana* downriver where her guns could drive off Porter's mortar schooners, but he refused. He cited several reasons, perhaps the most compelling being that a hit from one of those massive mortar shells would send the ironclad straight to the bottom.

By the third day, Porter's bombardment neared its end. The crews had fired about 16,800 shells and were almost out of ammunition. Farragut summoned his ship commanders to a meeting at 10 PM to discuss alternative courses of action. John Alden, captain of the *Richmond*, read a letter from Porter to Farragut complaining that the defenders would cut the ships to pieces unless Farragut gave Porter's mortars more time.

There was also the problem of the makeshift barrier across the river. To overcome it, Lieutenant Charles Caldwell of the gunboat *Itasca*, volunteered to cut an opening in the barrier if a second vessel helped. Farragut decided Caldwell could not control his ship in the channel and command the operation at the same time. So he put Commander Henry Bell in command of the *Itasca* and *Pinola* with orders to make an opening in the barrier during the night. Thus during the day, the crews of the two ships removed the ships' lower masts and rigging. That night, before the moon rose, they maneuvered the two vessels upriver to the barrier.

To keep the Confederates pinned down, the mortar boats increased their rate of fire. As the gunboats approached the raft, they fired a couple of rockets. The forts opened up, but their shots were high. Once the two Union ships were against the barrier, the Confederates had trouble distinguishing them from the hulks, and the ships went about their mission without further interference.

The *Pinola* moved up to the third hulk from the eastern shore. Her crew set gunpowder chargers to blow the chains that connected it to the ships on either side. They also rigged a torpedo with an electric detonator to go off under the bow. But the *Pinola* backed away faster than the operator could lay out wire and it broke. To add to the frustration, the fuses on the other two charges failed to ignite.

Over on the east side, the *Itasca* ran a grappling hook to the railing on the shoreside hulk. As the current pulled the gunboat downstream, the railing broke off. The *Itasca* then moved up to the barrier again. This time Caldwell kept the engine running to keep her in place. His plan was to blow the chains loose, but the crew discovered one chain was merely wrapped around the anchor chain. When they dropped the anchor chain in the water, it carried the second chain with it. Freed of the restraining chain, the hulk and the *Itasca* drifted down the river and became lodged upon the eastern riverbank.

Caldwell then sent a boat to the *Pinola*, which was steaming upriver to try again. The Federals ran two ropes to the stranded *Itasca*, but she was so hard aground that both ropes broke trying to loose her. A second try with a large hawser then pulled the *Itasca* free.

But instead of returning to safety, Caldwell took the warship past the barrier along the bank until she was almost to Fort St. Philip. He then ordered the *Itasca* about and surged full steam toward the barrier. Driving the bow between the third and fourth hulks, Caldwell broke the chain and created a large gap in the obstruction. The *Pinola* followed, cutting another opening through the linkage of hulks, logs and chains.

Knowing this, Farragut wanted to run past the forts on the night of the 22nd, but the *Mississippi* (not to be confused with the incomplete Confederate ironclad) was not ready. During the day, British and French naval officers came down from New Orleans. They warned Farragut that the forts would destroy his fleet if he tried to steam past. When Farragut repeated their report to Porter, the latter promised that with another day's bombardment he could ensure that they would pass with the loss of no more than one ship.

Thus Porter's mortar schooners continued to bombard the forts for another day, but without damaging them any further. In fact, both Confederate and Union officers would later state that when Farragut moved against them, the two forts were as strong as they had been before the bombardment began.

But now the crisis was at hand. On the 23rd, the Confederates knew something was imminent. Lookouts saw the surveyors planting new flags along the riverbank upriver from the position of the mortar schooners. Many believed Farragut intended to use his gunboats to attack the forts.

The Confederate ships lined the riverbank north from Fort St. Philip. The ram *Stonewall Jackson* was farther upriver to guard the canals in case Farragut chose to bypass the forts.

Mitchell sent a steam launch downriver to serve as a lookout, ordering its commander to light a signal fire if the Union ships advanced.

Farragut divided his flotilla into three divisions. His own command had only three ships in it, but they were the largest: the *Hartford*, *Brooklyn* and *Richmond*.

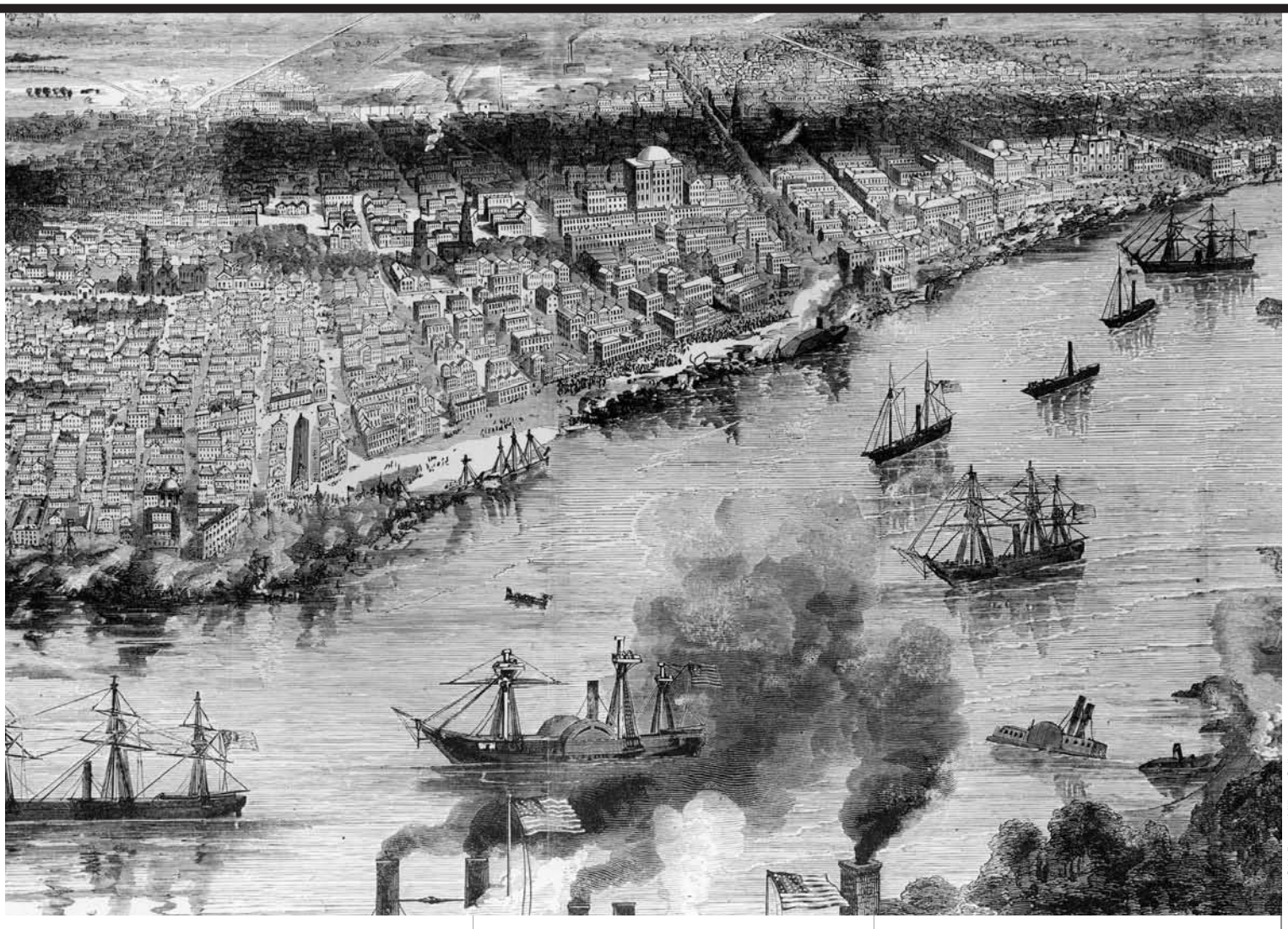
In his initial plan, Farragut intended to lead the attack and crush any opposition with the firepower of these ships. His lieutenants argued that leading from the front was unwise for the commander. So Farragut agreed to let Captain Theodorus Bailey lead the attack with a division comprised of eight lesser ships. Farragut's flotilla would be in the middle, and Bell would bring up the rear with a division of six small gunboats.

Farragut also gave Porter a role to play in the attack. The mortars would suppress the fire from the forts with a barrage, while the gunboats attacked the water battery below Fort Jackson.

At 1:55 AM—it was now the early morning of April 24—the *Hartford* raised two red lights, the signal to advance. For an hour and a half Farragut waited while the ships pulled in their anchors. It was not until almost 3:30 before the *Cayuga* had her anchor in and could start forward.

At the approach of the Union ships, the Confederate lookouts fled to the swamps without lighting the signal fire. Thus with as little noise as possible, Bailey's ships moved toward the gap in the barrier. At the water battery, Confederate artillery officers could see movement, but were unsure what it was.

On board the Louisiana state sidewheeler gunboat *Governor Moore*, Kennon thought he heard the splashing sound of the *Mississippi*'s paddle wheels. He



Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

The Federal fleet anchored at New Orleans the day after the battle. The Confederacy never regained its largest city.

descended toward the river to try to get in a better position to hear. As he reached the deck, cannon in both forts opened fire and the Union ships returned it.

"The bursting of every description of shells quickly following their discharge, increased a hundred-fold the terrific noise and fearfully grand and magnificent pyrotechnic display which centered in a space of about 1,200 yards in width," Kennon later wrote.

The *Cayuga*, mounting four guns, led the Union line forward. She passed through the hulks without incident. But as she approached the forts, cannon fire began to hit her before she could fire back.

Kennon ordered his crew to get the steam up on the *Governor Moore*. In three minutes she was ready to sortie but found herself in chaos at the Confederate position. Until the *Manassas* moved, the gunboat was trapped where she was. On the *Manassas*, Warley cast the lines off from the tug and turned the ram's bow to move downriver. As the ironclad started to turn, the *Moore* started forward and immediately collided with the tug *Belle Algerine*.

The *Manassas* steamed down the river faster than Warley thought possible, but still, the ironclad was slow. The first ship she encountered was the River Defense Fleet ram *Resolute,* which she struck on the side. She then exchanged shots with the *Mississippi*, which steamed away. Next she tried to ram the *Pensacola,* but that Union ship deftly maneuvered out of the way.

Warley knew he could not keep up with the ships moving upriver so he decided to go down to engage the mortar fleet. When the *Manassas* was between the forts, both opened fire on the ship, mistaking it for a drifting Union vessel. He turned the bow of the ironclad upriver.

With no room to ram, Kennon took the *Moore* up the east bank of the river until he could get a chance to turn and come down with the current. This would also get him out of the way of the fire between the forts and the Union ships.

Meanwhile, Porter ran his steamers up alongside the levee just below the water battery. When the Confederate forts opened fire, his ships delivered a broadside of 27 guns into the Confederate batteries. The Confederates returned fire, but the levee protected the hulls of the steamers. Confederate shells passed through the rig-

ATTACK OF THE IRONCLAD *MANASSAS*

IN LATE SEPTEMBER 1861, the Union navy moved to the Head of the Passes. From there, below New Orleans, the Mississippi River divided into three major passes leading to the Gulf of Mexico. Efforts to blockade the river from outside the passes had been only partially successful. From the Head of the Passes the Union sailors had a stranglehold on commerce in and out of the river.

Captain "Honest John" Pope commanded the detachment from his flagship, the *Richmond*. Besides this 22-gun steam sloop, he had the 20-gun sailing sloop *Vincennes*, the 16-gun sailing sloop *Preble*, and the 3-gun paddlewheel *Water Witch*.

While not impressive in numbers or size, the Union force certainly was stronger than what the Confederates could muster. Besides the rigged-up ironclad *Manassas*, they had only five steamers that carried 19 guns. But the Southerners were determined to win back Head of the Passes and resume what trade they could out of the South's largest city.

About 3:30 AM, the low-riding ironclad reached Head of the Passes. In the darkness, Captain Warley spotted lanterns hung by the *Richmond* as the crew transferred coal from a schooner. He ordered the pilot to steam toward the lights while the crew stoked the engine to gain as much speed as possible.

A lookout on a captured schooner spotted the *Manassas* approaching and shouted a warning to the *Richmond* that no one heard over the noise of the coaling operation. An officer on the *Preble* saw the ironclad, but it was too late.

At 10 knots per hour the *Manassas* rammed the *Richmond*. In severing the hawsers that connected the Union warship to the coal schooner, she lost both smokestacks. The impact damaged one engine.

As the *Manassas* limped away, a midshipman aboard fired the signal rocket for Confederate gunboats to advance. Three fire rafts preceded them down the river, but the wind drove them ashore. Dawn saw the *Manassas* and one gunboat aground. But the Union was in retreat.

The attack by the *Manassas* did little damage to the *Richmond*, but it had the desired effect. The *Richmond* and the two sailing ships retired from danger. The *Water Witch*, with the captured schooner in tow, guarded the rear.

At the bar, where the Mississippi finally ends in the Gulf, the *Vincennes* went aground. With smoke from the Confederate gunboats visible to the lookouts, Pope tried to swing the *Richmond* about to guard her. He succeeded only in driving his ship aground too.

Pope was shocked when Commander Robert Handy and the crew from the *Vincennes* suddenly appeared alongside the *Richmond* in several boats. Handy had misread a signal from the *Richmond* that he was to abandon ship. Handy had set a charge near the powder magazine so the vessel would not fall into Rebel hands, but a sailor who did not want to see the ship pulverized cut the fuse. Pope ordered Handy back on the *Vincennes*. Handy finally got the sloop free by throwing her guns overboard.

Pope soon removed Handy from command, writing, "He is a laughingstock

ging but did no major damage. Porter thought he had silenced the guns in the water battery after 10 minutes, so he gave the order to fire at Fort Jackson.

Upstream from the forts a fight erupted between the Union ships and some of the Confederate fleet. Trying to help, Kennon turned the *Moore* downriver to attack and found the Union ships *Oneida* and *Cayuga* to his port. To the challenge, "What ship is that?" and knowing the only Union paddle-wheeler was the *Mississippi*, he called back: "United States steamer *Mississippi*." But the blue identification light on the *Moore*'s mast revealed her identity. The *Oneida* gave her a broadside. Others joined in raking the Confederate gunboat, killing crew members at the bow guns and in the bunkers.

Then the *Varuna* shot past the *Moore* on her way upriver. Kennon knew General Duncan was on the steamer *Doubloon* not far ahead so he decided he had to do something to delay or destroy her. To hide the identity of his ship, Kennon used a musket to shoot out the identification lantern. He ordered the crew to show white and red lights like the Union ships.

The *Varuna* had a half-mile head start when the *Moore* turned upriver and started after her. But the gap separating them lessened with each minute because steam pressure was low in the Union ship. Kennon poured oil on the coal to make it burn hotter. The two vessels overtook and passed the ram *Stonewall Jackson*, struggling in a maneuver upriver against the current.

Meanwhile, the three largest Union ships blasted the forts. Confederate Lt. Col. Higgins exclaimed, "Better go to cover, boys; our cake is all dough!"

The passage was not without incident. When the *Hartford* unleashed her first broadside, the smoke hid her from the *Brooklyn*. Captain Thomas Craven thought he saw the flag ahead of him. Suddenly the sloop shuttered as she ran over one hulk in the river. A few minutes later she did the same to one of the moored tree trunks. Then she almost ran aground under the walls of Fort St. Philip.

As the *Brooklyn* passed Fort Jackson, a shot struck the rail and plowed into the deck. Another cut the signal quartermaster in half. When abreast of the fort, two shots hit near a gun, decapitating the gun captain and wounding nine men.

Then the *Richmond*, which was a slow ship, became entangled in the barrier. She ran so close to Fort Jackson that Alden would write that they could have thrown a stone from her deck into the fort.

When the *Hartford* was beyond the forts, Farragut saw a fire raft come toward them, pushed by the tug *Mosher*. When Farragut gave the order "Hard-a-port!" the *Hartford* moved only a short distance before running into the bank. They were so close to Fort St. Philip that they could hear gunners giving orders. Actually, they were even closer than the Confederates thought; the Rebel shots passed overhead without doing any damage. Then the tug pushed the fire raft up against the *Hartford*. But a broadside from the Union

The Confederate ram *Manassas*, here shown in the action of April against the USS *Brooklyn*, could deliver a mighty blow.

of all and everyone." Pope himself asked to be relieved of command for "health reasons," a request that was granted.

After the war, Commander David Porter wrote: "Perhaps this fiasco had a good effect by causing the Confederates to underrate the Northern navy; if so, they dearly paid for it, for only a few months afterwards all their rams, ironclads, fire-rafts and gunboats were swept away." □

sloop sent the tug to the bottom.

On the *Hartford*'s deck, the fire rafts made it as bright as noon. The danger to the ship was severe. An officer passing Farragut heard him exclaim, "My God, is it to end in this way?" But the crisis passed when a master's mate climbed into the rigging with a fire hose and put out the fire.

As the *Brooklyn* passed Fort Jackson, its crew saw the *Hartford* on the bank with flames running up the rigging. Craven ordered the engines to a halt. The *Brooklyn* fell downriver until she was between the fort and the *Hartford*.

The Confederates then renewed their fire on the *Brooklyn*, but they aimed high; their shots passed through the rigging. The *Brooklyn* returned fire from its port battery as fast as the men could load and fire.

Meanwhile Farragut gave the order to reverse engines, and the *Hartford* freed itself of the bank and the fire raft with a jolt. Seeing the *Hartford* free, Craven took the *Brooklyn* farther upriver. As she passed Fort Philip, her guns raked the Confederate batteries with canister. The Confederates opened fire with muskets, but after suffering a few shots of grape, they stopped.

Beyond Fort St. Philip the *Brooklyn* saw the *Louisiana* tied up to the bank. Craven ordered his crew to load round shot in the starboard battery. The ironclad, though, got off the first shots, firing as the Union warship approached. Then, as the *Brooklyn* began to pass, the *Louisiana*'s crew closed the port shutters so the balls from the broadside bounced off.

One of the *Louisiana*'s nine-inch shots had struck the *Brooklyn* about a foot above the waterline, passing through three feet of wood before stopping. When the *Brooklyn*'s crews later dug out the shell, they discovered that in the *Louisiana* gunners' haste to fire, they had failed to remove the lead patch from the fuse so the shell could not explode. Had it gone off, it would have blown off the bow of the *Brooklyn* and sunk her.

A few moments later a lookout on the *Brooklyn* yelled, "A steamer coming down on our port bow." Midshipman John Bartlett went to the poop ladder to get a better look. "I saw a good-sized river steamer coming down on us, crowded with men on her forward deck, as if ready to board. The order had already been given, 'Stand by to repel boarders,' and to load with shrapnel; the fuses were cut to burn one second."

Craven gave the order to bring the bow to starboard. As the guns came to bear, the *Brooklyn* and the Confederate attacker each opened fire, the shells exploding as they left the muzzle as though they were huge shotguns. By the time Bartlett's No. 10 gun was in position, he could no longer see the target through the smoke.

Men looking through the ports yelled out, "The ram, the ram!" Craven called out, "Put your helm hard-a-starboard!"

But it was too late. The impact threw Bartlett from his feet. "I ran to the No. 10 port, the gun being in, and looked out, and saw her almost directly alongside. A man came out of her little hatch aft, and ran forward along the port side of the deck, as far as the smoke-stacks, placed his hand against one, and looked to see what damage the ram had done." Before he could return to safety, a fellow crewman on the *Brooklyn* knocked him into the water.

It was the ram *Manassas*, which had smashed into the *Brooklyn* at a full coal bunker. Craven sent a carpenter below. The man reported little damage, but when the crew later emptied the bunker, they discovered how severe the impact had been. Had the *Manassas* rammed her almost anywhere else, the blow would have sunk her.

Continued on page 98

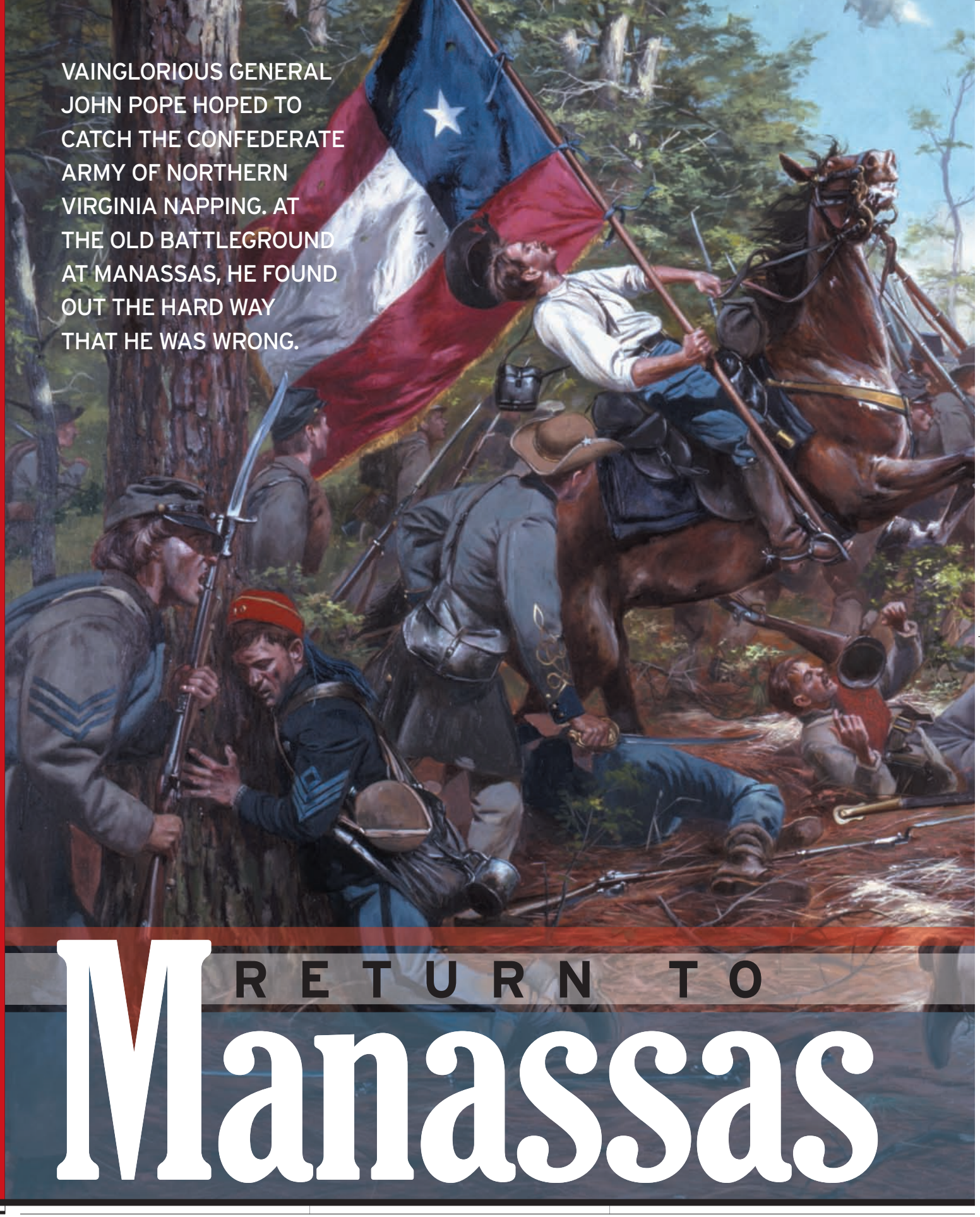
FURTHER READING

The Capture of New Orleans, 1862, by Chester G. Hearn

Naval History of the Civil War, by David Porter

History of the Confederate Navy, by Thomas J. Scharf

The Gulf and Inland Waters, by Alfred T. Mahan



VAINGLORIOUS GENERAL JOHN POPE HOPED TO CATCH THE CONFEDERATE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA NAPPING. AT THE OLD BATTLEGROUND AT MANASSAS, HE FOUND OUT THE HARD WAY THAT HE WAS WRONG.

RETURN TO Manassas

Lieutenant Colonel John Upton, carrying the flag of his 5th Texas Regiment, is fatally wounded while leading an attack on the 5th and 10th New York Zouaves at Manassas.

Painting by Don Troiani, www.historicalartprints.com

BY JOHN WALKER

WHEN THE SUN ROSE ON the morning of August 29, 1862, it ended a particularly hellish night for Maj. Gen. Irvin McDowell, commander of the massive 21,000-man III Corps of the newly formed Union Army of Virginia. Sent into north-central Virginia to threaten Richmond on a second front, McDowell had managed to get lost in the woods near Gainesville and lost touch with his command for 12 full hours. When he and his staff rode into Manassas Junction at dawn, he discovered that one of his three divisions—that of ailing Brig. Gen. Rufus King—had retreated during the night after a bloody two-hour clash with Confederate forces near Groveton. Another division, under Brig. Gen. James Ricketts, was four miles away at Bristoe Station, having withdrawn during the night from Gainesville.

Library of Congress

In McDowell's absence, Maj. Gen. John Pope, overall commander of the Army of Virginia, had issued orders to each of McDowell's divisions for that day's planned operations, a massive strike against the outnumbered Confederate corps of Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, dug in north of the strategic east-west Warrenton Turnpike near Groveton. Believing that he had Jackson boxed in, Pope planned an all-out attack on the troublesome and eccentric Rebel general. "The game is now in our own hands," Pope gleefully told his staff, "and I do not see how it is possible for Jackson to escape without very heavy loss, if at all."

To his dismay, Pope soon discovered that several of his units were not where he expected them to be. King and Ricketts had withdrawn from the Groveton-Gainesville area during the night. Convinced that he had to hold Gainesville for the morning's attack to succeed, Pope ordered Maj. Gen. Fitz-John Porter to march his V Corps and King's division to Gainesville (a much-chagrined McDowell would go along as well). Pope gave Porter and McDowell vague orders concerning what they were to do when they reached their objective. Although he did not issue specific orders for them to attack Jackson's exposed right flank, Pope fully expected them to do so once they reached the field. In a welter of confusion and misapprehension, the Union army was about to commence the Second Battle of Manassas.

As the sun rose, Jackson's troops, spread out for almost two miles, could see Union infantry and artillery massed on Henry Hill and Chinn Ridge. With Maj. Gen. James Longstreet still hurrying through Thoroughfare Gap to join him, Jackson moved his three divisions a short distance northeast behind an embankment of the unfinished Manassas Gap Railroad, a ready-made system of defensive works running from Sudley Springs down to the Warrenton Pike. Maj. Gen. A.P. Hill's 4,000 men took up positions on the critical left flank, 200 yards behind the embankment. On Hill's far left, Brig. Gen. Maxey Gregg's brigade of South Carolina regiments dug in on a ridge overlooking Sudley Road, 60 yards behind the unfinished railroad. Anchoring the Confederate center was the division of Brig. Gen. Alexander Lawton; two brigades were posted along the embankment and the remaining two, under Brig. Gen. Jubal Early, were held in reserve. On Jackson's right, Brig. Gen. William Starke threw out skirmishers on the embankment; the remainder of his division waited in three lines 200 yards behind the skirmishers on a wooded ridge.

Major General Franz Sigel, the senior Union officer on the field, was unaware of Jackson's exact location or strength, but he sent his troops forward along a two-mile front, feeling for the enemy's line. Brig. Gen. Carl Schurz's two brigades were on the Union right, marching north astride

the Manassas-Sudley Road. Brig. Gen. Robert Milroy's Independent Brigade was on Schurz's left; and Brig. Gen. Robert Schenck's two brigades advanced astride the Warrenton Pike toward the enemy's right. The division of Brig. Gen. John Reynolds moved up on Schenck's left, south of the pike.

One of Schurz's brigades quickly clashed with Rebel skirmishers in the woods on the extreme Confederate left. Hearing the firing, Gregg ordered Major Edward McCrady's 1st South Carolina forward, and it collided with the 54th and 58th New York Regiments. Despite orders to avoid a general engagement, Gregg committed more troops, sending in the 12th South Carolina under Colonel Dixon Barnes. Schurz committed another regiment as well, and the woods in front of the rocky knoll began filling with smoke from the fire of 1,500 muskets.

Milroy, Schenck, and Reynolds, meanwhile, dispatched their troops against Jackson's center and right; Milroy moved north of the pike toward the Groveton Woods, driving back Rebel skirmishers there. As Schenck's brigades advanced along the pike with Reynolds to their left and approached Groveton, they came under intense fire from eight Rebel batteries deployed in front of Starke's division northeast of the Brawner home. After Schenck asked that he send a battery north of the pike to outflank and drive off the Rebel guns, Reynolds sent forward a Pennsylvania battery and the infantry brigade of Brig. Gen. George Meade. Reynolds's four cannons moved north of the pike and up the slope near the Brawner home, unlimbering several hundred yards south of Shumaker's line, and an intense artillery duel raged for the next hour.

Milroy, an impetuous Indiana lawyer who despised West Pointers, committed a serious tactical error after hearing heavy firing coming from Schurz's front a half mile to his right. Although he actually knew little of Schurz's situation, he decided to send two regiments 600 yards across the enemy front in support. His troops, rather than coming up abreast of Schurz's line, advanced 400 yards across open ground into the front of Lawton's division along the embankment, where they were raked unmercifully by massed sheets of musket fire. Milroy committed another regiment; when it was routed he sent in his fourth and last regiment, which got to within 50 yards of the embankment before it too withered under heavy fire and fell back.

Schurz sent his entire division forward; two regiments fought their way across the unfinished railroad into a cornfield opposite Gregg's 14th South Carolina, but Confederate cannons and reinforcements drove the attackers back to the excavation. Two more Union regiments pushed through the woods and fought their way to the embankment across from Gregg's right where it connected with the brigade of Brig. Gen. E.L. Thomas. Hill's defenders held, and the fighting settled into a vicious stalemate.

"The game is now in our own hands," Pope gleefully told his staff, "and I do not see how it is possible for Jackson to escape without very heavy loss, if at all."

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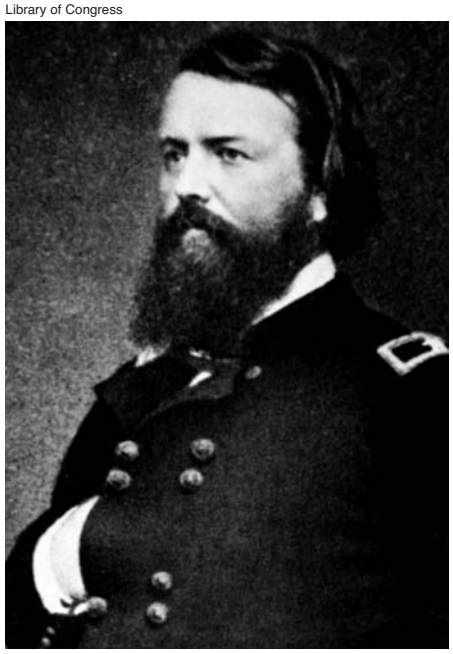


ABOVE: Major General John Pope, commanding the Union Army of Virginia, hoped to catch Robert E. Lee napping. OPPOSITE: German-born General Franz Sigel led the all-German 41st New York at Second Manassas. "I fights mit Sigel," the soldiers bragged.

Skirmishing and artillery fire continued through the morning while the other half of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia edged closer to the battlefield. Brig. Gen. John Bell Hood's Texas Brigade was in the lead. When the gray columns reached Gainesville, Lee turned the infantry units left onto the Warrenton Pike while Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry continued ahead to reconnoiter. At 10 AM, Hood arrived and moved his brigade into positions facing east, its left astride the pike. Colonel Evander Law brought up his brigade on Hood's left and connected with Jackson's right, after which Brig. Gens. D.R. Jones, James Kemper, and Cadmus Wilcox moved their divisions into line and sent out large numbers of skirmishers. The weight of Hood's arrival pushed back Reynolds. Lee's line now stretched for almost four miles and resembled a pair of huge, gaping jaws ready to snap shut.

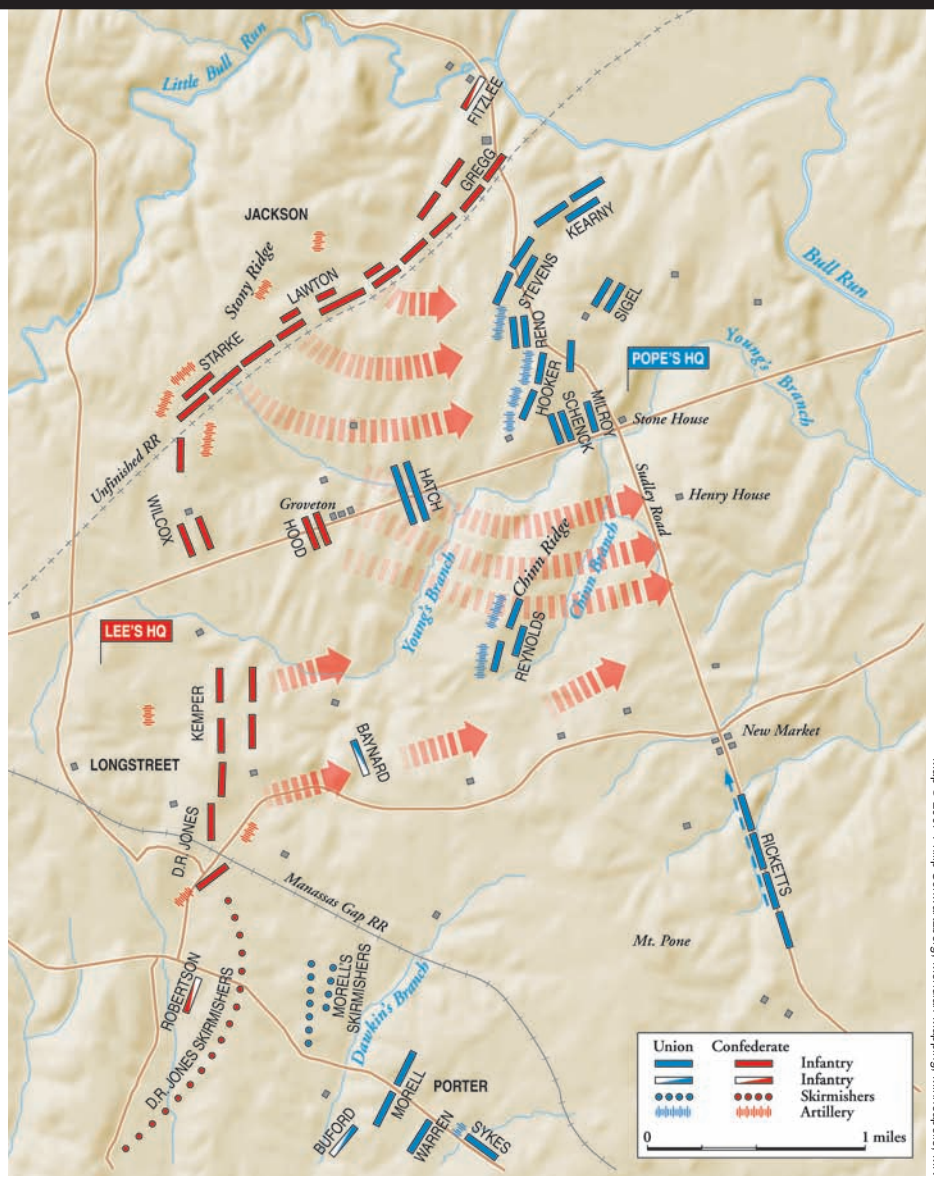
Having reached the battlefield ahead of his foot soldiers, Longstreet deployed his artillery along a low, clear ridge 200 yards northeast of the Brawner home, from which Confederate guns could bracket the Federal positions near Groveton as well as the open field in front of Starke's division on Jackson's right. Soon, 19 of Longstreet's cannons were dueling with Union batteries near Groveton, less than a mile away. Lee wanted an immediate advance, but Longstreet balked. Unsure of the ground to his front or the exact positions of the enemy forces, he asked for more time to conduct a reconnaissance.

Meanwhile, Porter and McDowell had been marching 14,000 men up the Manassas-Gainesville road, with Brig. Gen. George Morell's division leading the column and Brig. Gen. George Sykes's division of

regulars close behind. About two miles short of Gainesville, they spotted huge dust clouds to their front indicating a large enemy presence. (Stuart, immediately noticing Porter's advance, had ordered Captain Thomas Rosser to have his 5th Virginia horse soldiers drag brush and twigs along the ground as a ruse.) At 11 AM, the men of Morell's lead brigade approached a ridge over Dawkins' Branch and spotted mounted Confederates to their front. Brig. Gen. Charles Griffin sent half of the 62nd Pennsylvania ahead as skirmishers.

When the sounds of skirmishing to his front increased, Porter halted his column and conferred with McDowell, who had received a dispatch from Brig. Gen. John Buford that a huge Rebel column, Longstreet's corps, had passed through Gainesville that morning. Just then new orders from Pope arrived, instructing Porter and McDowell to continue their march, halt if they connected with friendly troops, and be prepared to fall back to Bull Run that evening. With a Confederate force of unknown size to his front, Porter decided to sit tight. He pulled his divisions into defensive positions astride the road and remained there for the rest of the day.

With Porter's corps stalled, McDowell countermarched King's division (now commanded by Brig. Gen. John Hatch, King having been incapacitated by a fit of epilepsy) back to the Manassas-Sudley road to connect with Ricketts's division moving up from Bristoe Station. Meanwhile, Pope arrived on the field at 1 PM and was pleased with what he found—skirmishing along a two-mile front and Jackson "brought to a stand." Pope was convinced that his decision to send Porter and McDowell up the road to Gainesville would turn out to be a stroke of genius; when they arrived they would be in perfect position to launch a devastating strike against Jackson's exposed right flank. The problem was that none of Pope's orders said anything about an attack upon enemy forces; Pope simply assumed Porter and McDowell would attack Jackson's right and based his plan of attack on that bit of particularly wishful thinking.



Map © 2007 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

ABOVE: Major General James Longstreet, on the Confederate right, led one of the largest counterattacks of the war on the afternoon of August 30, 1862. Stonewall Jackson pressed the Union right. OPPOSITE: This Currier & Ives print gives a somewhat prettified version of what was a brutal fight on the old killing grounds at Manassas.

Pope ordered Maj. Gen. Samuel Heintzelman to "occupy" Jackson by testing the Rebel center; a frontal assault by Brig. Gen. Cuvier Grover's brigade would be supported by Brig. Gen. John Robinson's brigade. Grover's three frontline regiments made it to within a few yards of the embankment before they were spotted by the Georgians of Thomas's brigade, who rose and delivered a deadly massed volley. The blue line slowed only briefly before carrying the embankment in a bayonet assault.

Grover's sudden thrust threatened to cut off Gregg's brigade from the rest of Jackson's line. Gregg withdrew Barnes's 12th South Carolina from his far left and sent it to Thomas's aid as the fighting escalated. The survivors of Grover's first wave, trapped in a deadly pocket of fire along a 500-yard front, were suddenly overlapped on both flanks, and in minutes Grover's attack sputtered and his survivors streamed to the rear, leaving behind 486 troops killed or wounded.

Pope was growing anxious—it was late afternoon and Porter and McDowell had not yet appeared. Another piecemeal, unsupported Union assault, this one

against Jackson's center by the 1,500-man brigade of Colonel James Nagle, met the same fate as Grover's: very little accomplished at a cost of another 500 casualties. Pope, sending a preemptory order to Porter to attack at once, ordered another strike, this time by Maj. Gen. Philip Kearny against the Rebel left near Sudley Church. Shortly after 5 PM, Kearny sent 2,700 men forward with orders to wrap around Hill's left and drive the defenders out of the excavation. Kearny personally led three regiments into battle over ground covered with dead and wounded. The 63rd Pennsylvania on Kearny's left soon lost contact with its two sister regiments—the 105th Pennsylvania and 3rd Michigan—in the thick underbrush.

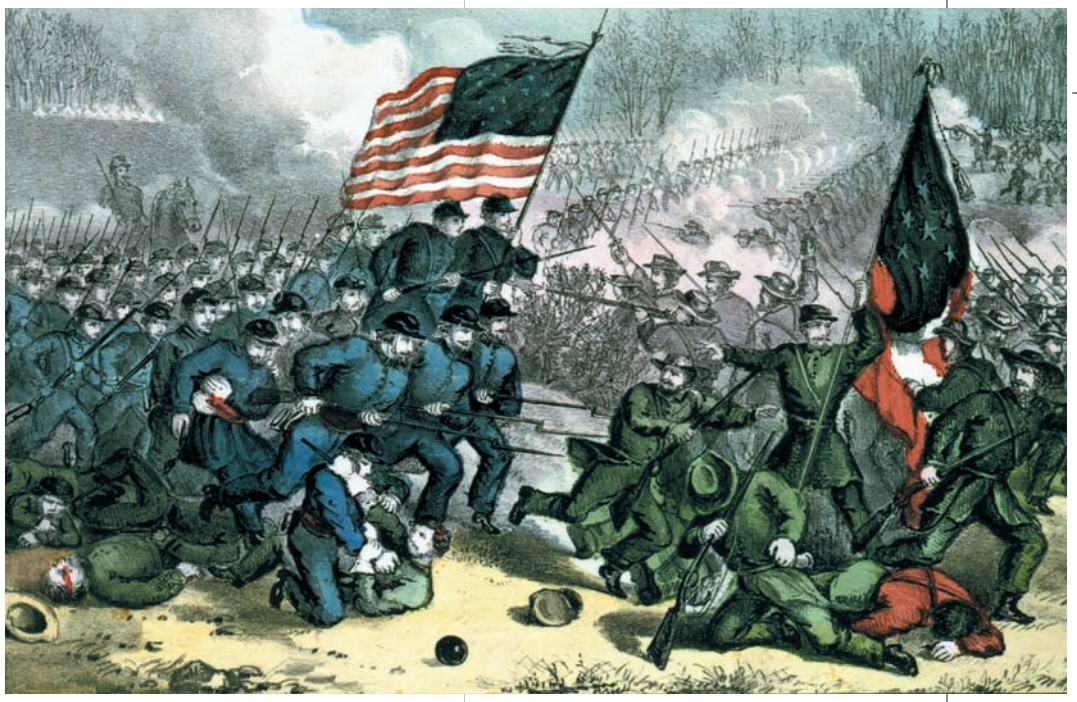
Meanwhile the 105th Pennsylvania and 3rd Michigan struck Gregg's South Carolinians, who fled after suffering severe losses, exposing the flank of Gregg's brigade, which was now under frontal assault by the 40th and 101st New York and the 4th Maine. After the exhausted 1st and 13th South Carolina also broke for the rear, the embattled Gregg appealed for help; it arrived in the shape of Brig. Gen. Lawrence Branch's three North Carolina regiments, who crashed against Kearny's right and slowed his advance. Gregg, brandishing his grandfather's Revolutionary War sword, called out, "Let us die here, my men," while groups of soldiers formed a strong line of resistance on a hill 200 yards behind the embankment.

Early hurried to the front, leading 2,500 reserve troops, and emerged from the woods to find the Confederate line barely holding along the lower slopes of Stony Ridge. Early's nine regiments crashed into Kearny's line and overwhelmed the exhausted attackers, who were low on ammunition and had suffered heavy losses in 45 minutes of intense fighting. Within 10 minutes of Early's arrival, Kearny's entire force was streaming back through the woods, pursued as far as the embankment, ending the fighting on Jackson's front for the day.

With less than two hours of daylight remaining, Lee again suggested a general advance. Longstreet demurred once more, suggesting a reconnaissance in force to prepare for an attack the following morning. Lee agreed, calling off a general advance set for the next morning and deciding instead to wait for an attack by Pope. Meanwhile, Pope sent an optimistic message to General-in-Chief Henry Halleck in Washington, estimating his losses at between 6,000 and 8,000 while grossly overestimating the Confederate casualties and claiming that the enemy was retreating toward the mountains. In fact, Lee's two wings occupied virtually the same ground they had the previous day, and Longstreet had been bolstered by the arrival of Colonel Stephen D. Lee's artillery battalion and the infantry division of Brig. Gen. R.H. Anderson.

Porter arrived early on August 30, adding 8,000 more troops to Pope's force. Pope met with his commanders at his headquarters near the Warrenton Pike-Sudley Road intersection, and they convinced him to launch a renewed strike against the enemy left, where some success had been gained the previous day. Pope agreed but issued no direct orders; instead, the morning hours passed while Pope waffled, paralyzed by indecision, trying to reconcile his belief that the enemy was retreating with numerous reports to the contrary.

At 11 AM, McDowell and Heintzelman asked to be allowed to reconnoiter the Union right on their own. While they were gone, Pope made up his mind—the Rebels were retreating, a pursuit was in order, and Porter was to attack immediately. A bit later, when McDowell and Heintzelman returned from their half-hearted reconnaissance and reported that they had seen little evidence of a strong enemy presence, Pope was further convinced. At noon he issued revised orders for a two-pronged pursuit. Rather than attacking, Porter would instead lead the pursuit west along the Warrenton Pike, supported by Hatch and Reynolds. Ricketts's division, backed by Heintzelman, would pursue Jackson along the road leading from Sudley west to Haymarket. The chase was to begin at once. Pope told his officers, "Press the enemy vigorously during the whole day."



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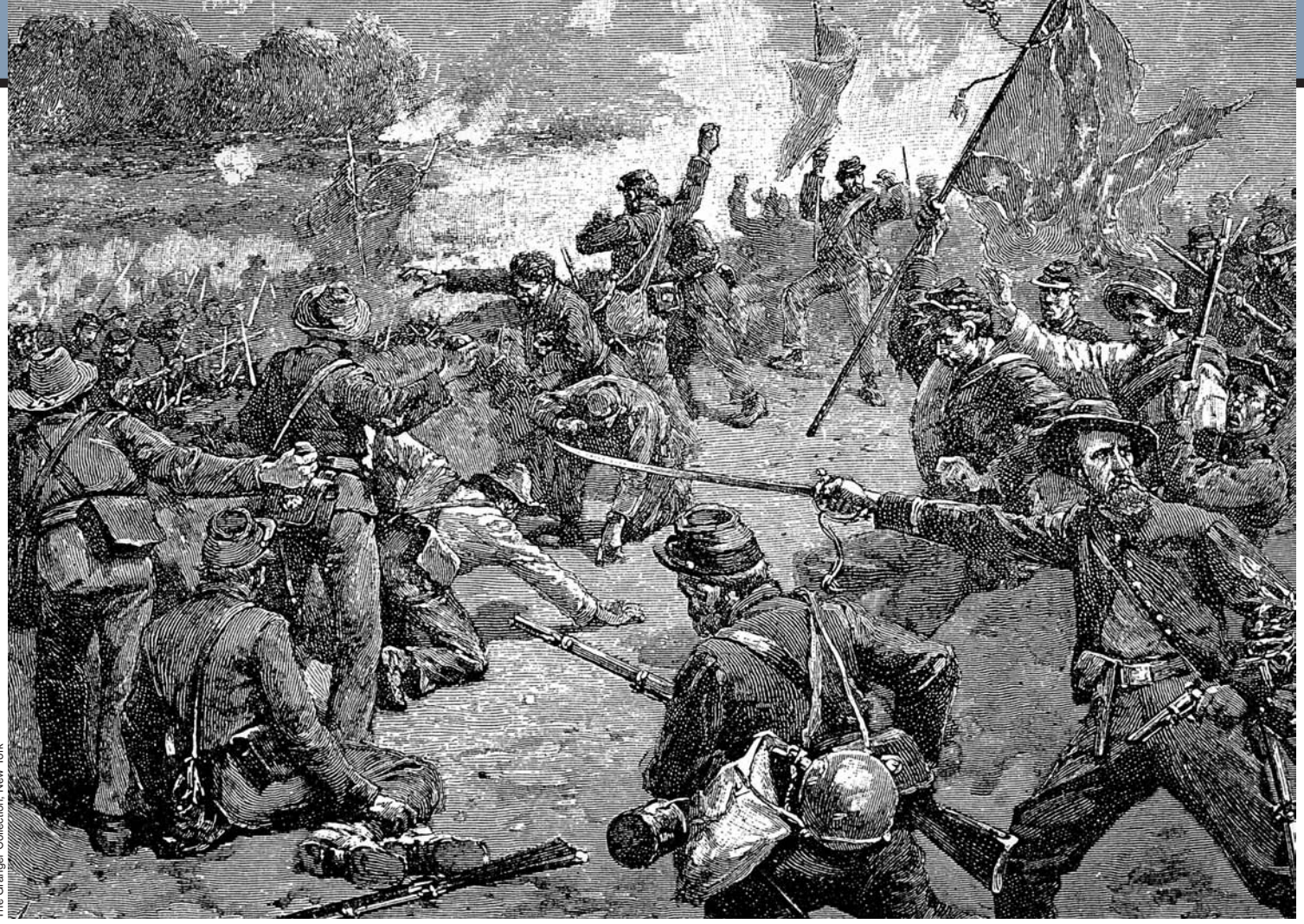
Porter prepared to launch the largest Union assault of the battle. He faced a formidable task. To Porter's front were some of the best troops in Lee's army—Jackson's old division, now commanded by Starke—holding a strong position behind the unfinished railroad, arrayed in two lines of bat-



The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: Stonewall Jackson's "foot cavalry" marched quickly and fought fiercely at Second Manassas. OPPOSITE: The defeated Federal soldiers of Pope's army retreat across the familiar stone bridge over Bull Run, heading away from the battlefield.

tle 200 yards apart. Porter's men would have to cross almost 700 yards of open pastureland, the last 150 sharply uphill, to close with the enemy. At 3 PM, Porter's 10,000 men poured out of the woods like an avalanche, the sudden appearance of the blue columns sending a shock wave through the Confederate ranks. Colonel Leroy Stafford's Louisiana brigade, arranged in two lines, held Starke's left; to Stafford's right, the 42nd Virginia of Colonel Bradley Johnson's brigade waited in the unfinished railroad at its deepest point—the "Deep Cut," as it was known. On the right of the 42nd, where the railroad bed ran over flat ground, Johnson's 48th Virginia waited in a grove of trees 80 yards in front of the excavation.

On the Union right, the 24th and 30th New York emerged from the timber and were immediately struck by a massed volley fired from the excavation by Stafford's 1,000 Louisianans. The blue line recoiled but continued forward as clouds of white smoke began to obscure the field. When the New Yorkers reached Schoolhouse Branch, the Confederates rose and fired a second volley. Unbroken, the 24th and 30th closed on the excavation. Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Daniel Butterfield's units were pushing across the field. At Schoolhouse Branch, the men of Brig. Gen. Benjamin Roberts's brigade felt the sting of enemy rifle fire from their front and artillery fire from their left. By now S.D. Lee had brought the full weight of his 18 guns to bear from the ridge 1,000 yards away. Roberts's men paused for a few moments before continuing on, the din of battle rising to a deafening roar.

The smoke, dust, and noise combined to sow confusion in the Union ranks. The 1st Michigan made it to within 50 yards of the embankment before it was halted by enfilading fire and went to ground. The 13th New York and 18th Massachusetts advanced to within yards of the excavation, took cover behind bushes and rocks, and continued their fire. On Roberts's left, the 17th New York emerged from the woods and moved forward alone. Without stopping at Schoolhouse Branch, the men of the 17th reached the base of the slope leading up to the unfinished railroad and rushed up the hill with a mad yell. When they reached the crest in front of Johnson's brigade 50 yards from the excavation, a deadly blast of artillery and musket fire halted their line.

The exposed 48th Virginia promptly turned and headed for the rear. Along a quarter-mile front, the fighting raged unabated at extremely close ranges. Con-

vinced that his two remaining regiments could not hold, Johnson ordered his two reserve units, the 1st Virginia Battalion and the 21st Virginia, to leave the woods and come up in support. The two fresh units moved into the open field and were promptly shredded by massed volleys of musket fire. Fewer than 300 men made it across the field, tumbling into the Deep Cut alongside the 42nd Virginia.

The retreat of the 48th Virginia opened a dangerous gap between Johnson's right and Brig. Gen. William Taliaferro's left. Jackson, after ordering Hill to reinforce the battered Rebel right, sent a request to Lee and Longstreet, asking for reinforcements. Longstreet concluded that sending a division of infantry would take too much time; the attack, he said, must be broken by artillery instead. Longstreet ordered Captain Will Chapman's Dixie Battery to move to a low knoll just north of the pike. Chapman's four guns added their fire to that of S.D. Lee. The Confederate cannons pinned the attacking Union columns against the railroad, making retreat nearly impossible.

Back at Groveton Woods, Porter concluded that sending additional troops across 700 yards of ground dominated by Rebel cannons would lead to disaster and decided to withhold Sykes's entire reserve division. Porter decided against committing his reserve brigades on the right, essentially abandoning the other Union troops to their fates. Almost an hour of sustained combat had pushed the Confederate defenders to their limits; some were leaving the line to scavenge among the dead and wounded for ammunition, while others had resorted to throwing rocks at their enemies. By that time, however, the Federal onslaught was almost spent. When a fresh brigade from Hill's division came up in support, the crisis ended for the southerners. All along the line Union officers passed the order to retreat.

Moments after Porter's attack dissolved, Longstreet and Lee simultaneously ordered a general advance of the Confederate right wing. With no more than three hours of daylight remaining, one of the largest counterattacks of the entire war got under way. Longstreet's objective, Henry Hill, was almost a mile and a half away and shielded the Union route of retreat along the Warrenton Pike. About 500 yards west of Henry Hill lay Chinn Ridge, the only terrain feature blocking Longstreet's legions. Another 500 yards farther west, directly in the path of the oncoming gray tide, waited Colonel Gouverneur Warren's brigade of two Zouave regiments. Just after 4 PM, the 5th Texas moved out of the woods and started forward. On their left was Hampton's Legion, many of its men veterans of the fighting 13 months earlier, along with the 18th Georgia and 4th Texas. Four fresh Confederate regiments entered the open fields into the path of the 10th New York's skirmishers, who managed to get off one massed volley before they were overwhelmed and fell back in panic.

By 11 PM, most of Pope's army had crossed Bull Run at the stone bridge or at Farm's Ford, their ebbing spirits further dampened by a driving rainstorm.

Library of Congress

The Zouaves could not see their enemy through the clouds of smoke. By the time the fleeing skirmishers of the 10th finally cleared the 5th New York's front, the men of Hood's brigade were already at the edge of the woods just 40 yards away. The 5th Texas outflanked the left of the 5th New York, while Hampton's Legion and the 18th Georgia crashed against their center and right. The colorfully dressed Zouaves made easy targets in the open field. In the first three or four minutes, the 5th suffered at least 100 casualties. Warren yelled out an order to retreat but could not be heard above the din; without orders to fall back, many Zouaves stubbornly held their ground. After another few minutes it became clear that to remain where they were was folly, and every man who could run broke to the rear, closely pursued by screaming Confederates.

As the Zouaves hurried down the slope leading to Young's Branch, Hood's troops moved to the crest of the ridge and slaughtered them as they attempted to follow Warren across the stream. In the first 10 minutes on the ridge, some 300 men of the 5th New York had been killed or wounded; at least 120 were killed outright—one of the heaviest regimental losses of the entire war.

After pausing at Young's Branch, Hood's four regiments splashed across the stream and headed up the slope. Hood's brigade advanced almost a mile, but its rapid pace put the men far ahead of the rest of the Southern forces. Knowing that his men needed cover, Hood ordered his regiments to the right toward a patch of woods. Convinced that his tired troops were not in sufficient numbers to capture Chinn Ridge, Hood decided to wait for reinforcements.

In short order, the 18th South Carolina charged out of the woods toward the Union left, only to be hit in the flank by artillery fire and in front by the fire of the 73rd and 25th Ohio. Next came the 17th South Carolina, commanded by that state's former governor, Colonel John Means, who soon fell mortally wounded. The Union regiments crumbled and fell back beyond the crest of the ridge. Three brigades of Kemper's division arrived in the fields south of the Chinn house as the fighting raged on. Kemper's front line consisted of the brigades of Brig. Gen. Micah Jenkins and Colonel Eppa Hunton, with Colonel Montgomery Corse's brigade 250 yards behind.

Thousands of Confederates in several lines of battle advanced up the ridge and closed on the Union line from three directions. When Hunton and Jenkins advanced toward the crest of the slope against the Union center and left, the blue-clad forces unleashed a devastating volley that staggered parts of Jenkins's line. Within minutes, however, the Confederates reorganized and came on once more, to within 40 yards of the Federals. The battle continued along a 400-yard front, the outnumbered Union brigades suffering horrendous losses.

As the Union line was pushed slowly back along the crest of the ridge, Confederate horse-drawn artillery reached Bald Hill southeast of Chinn Ridge and began firing into the Union left. This new flanking fire was more than the Federals remaining on the slope could bear; the blue line atop the ridge wavered and then broke altogether. Belated reinforcements arrived as the blue lines collapsed and watched as waves of Confederates advanced in deep, dense masses. Minutes later the remaining Union troops on Chinn Ridge, facing

Colonel Gouverneur Warren's Zouave brigade is overpowered by Longstreet's massive attack. Warren, later a hero at Gettysburg, ordered his men to save themselves.

Library of Congress

insurmountable odds, withdrew, leaving Chinn Ridge in Confederate hands.

Fortunately for Pope, the stubborn defense of Chinn Ridge gave him time to arrange his remaining troops into formidable defensive positions on nearby Henry Hill. At 5:30 PM, Pope ordered the right wing of his army to pull back on line with his left on Henry Hill. By 6 PM, he had four brigades on Henry Hill along a half-mile front extending from north of the Henry house ruins into and beyond the woods on the southern edge of the plateau. Three batteries on the crest of the hill would fire in support of the Union line; more troops were on the way.

Longstreet and Lee had been working to gather additional units for the drive on Henry Hill. The first to respond was Brig. Gen. R.H. Anderson, whose division left the Brawner farm at 4:50 PM, its three brigades crossing to the south of the pike for the two-mile march east. Longstreet ordered Wilcox to advance his division as well; unfortunately, Wilcox misunderstood the order and sent only one of his three brigades south of the pike and on toward Henry Hill. While these units began their march to Henry Hill, D.R. Jones renewed the Confederate advance, sending both of his brigades to capture the vital Warrenton Pike-Sudley Road intersection. His men got to within 200 yards of their objective before Union troops on Henry Hill spotted the movement.

Reynolds immediately ordered Meade's brigade to attack the Confederate column, and with artillery firing over their heads, Meade's men moved down the slope. The sudden appearance of Meade's brigade on the Georgians' right crushed Jones's hopes of cutting off the enemy units on Dogan Ridge. Brig. Gen. Henry Benning wheeled his men to the right to face Reynolds's line, pointed to the artillery on the hill above it, and ordered his regiment to charge. Anderson's brigade wheeled to the right as well and moved up on Benning's right. Minutes later nearly 3,000 Georgians were moving up the western slope of Henry Hill along a half-mile front, the largest single movement of Longstreet's attack.

Benning's regiments emerged from the Chinn Branch valley into the face of the combined fire of Meade, Seymour, Milroy, and the Union batteries. The gray line recoiled but recovered and continued up the slope, getting to within 80 yards of the enemy. On the Confederate right, Anderson's troops moved through heavy timber toward the crest. As they came out of the woods, Anderson's men recoiled from an initial volley but kept coming as well, getting to within 50 yards of Sudley Road before taking cover and continuing the fight.

Every frontline Union brigade was now heavily engaged. Despite the Union artillery and the formidable positions held by the defenders, the fire of the Georgians was putting tremendous pressure on the Federal line. Jones's brigades were delivering such a fire that the Union line, and not the Confederate, was wavering; Reynolds's two left-flank regiments gave ground, along with the bulk of Milroy's men, who abandoned Sudley Road altogether. The 15th Georgia seized the opportunity and lunged forward into the breach, gaining a foothold on the road just yards from the Yankee batteries. The situation on the Union far left deteriorated as well when a Confederate battery arrived, its four cannons opening fire from near the Conrad home directly on the Union left, raking the thin blue line.

The entire Union defense on Henry Hill was in crisis. After Milroy and Meade appealed for help, Lt. Col. Robert Buchanan's brigade came up at the most opportune moment. After getting his first three regiments deployed, Buchanan rode back and got his remaining two, the 3rd and 5th U.S., and placed them in the center of the Union line. The appearance of fresh troops after 45 minutes of heavy fighting was more than Benning's four tired regiments could bear. The 17th Georgia, on Benning's right, gave way, exposing the right of the 15th Georgia, and although they tried mightily to hold onto their salient on the road, the men of the 15th finally fell back down the hill to Chinn Branch. The situation on Benning's left deteriorated as well; the 20th Georgia, suffering in the open under a rain of shells fired from Henry Hill 300 yards away, was ordered to pull back. At that point, although the fighting continued sporadically for another 30 minutes in the growing darkness, the Confederate attempt to overrun Henry Hill essentially came to an end.

By 7 PM, the retreat on the Union right to the heights east of Sudley Road was complete, the blue army presenting a solid front even though division and corps cohesiveness had eroded significantly. By 11 PM, most of Pope's army had crossed Bull Run at the stone bridge or at Farm's Ford a half mile to the north, their ebbing spirits further dampened by a driving rainstorm. More than 3,000 dead and 15,000 wounded littered the field. Jackson had suffered almost 4,000 casualties, while Longstreet had lost more than 4,700 men killed, wounded, or missing in less than four hours—some 15 percent of the Confederate forces engaged. Pope's army, defeated but essentially intact, had suffered 13,824 casualties—1,716 killed, 8,215 wounded, and 3,893 missing.

With the Union facing its gravest threat since the commencement of hostilities, President Abraham Lincoln on September 2 reinstated Maj. Gen. George McClellan to command of all the Federal forces in and around Washington; Pope was banished to Minnesota to command Union troops fighting a Sioux uprising there, his 74 days in command of the Army of Virginia making for one of the sorriest chapters in the history of the United States Army. Conversely, the fortunes of the Confederacy had never looked brighter. Less than six months earlier, Southern armies had been on the defensive everywhere: New Orleans lost, Corinth and Richmond threatened, Missouri gone, and the entire Mississippi Valley seemingly about to follow. Now the South had regained the initiative and was on the offensive in every major theater of the war. The Confederacy had reached its true high-water mark at Manassas. Never again would it be as close to victory. □

LIFE IN UNION-OCCUPIED

THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA CITY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF WASHINGTON, D.C., HELD THE DUBIOUS DISTINCTION OF BEING THE FIRST, AND LONGEST HELD, CONFEDERATE CITY DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

By Kevin M. Hymel

UNDER bright moonlight, Union troops marched into Alexandria, Virginia, on May 24, 1861, one day after Virginia seceded from the Union. Alarmed by military drills during the day and campfires at night, President Abraham Lincoln had become concerned that Confederates were massing in the outlying suburbs to attack Washington. The fact that he could see a Confederate flag snapping in the wind above the city only heightened the president's anxiety.

It was an almost peaceful invasion. While the Confederates boarded trains for a clean escape, Union troops methodically occupied the railroad depot, telegraph office, and any other buildings of importance. That's when first blood was drawn. Colonel Elmer Ellsworth of the 11th New York Fire Zouaves spotted the offending Rebel flag hanging above the Marshall House Hotel. After cutting down the flag, Ellsworth was shot in the chest by hotel owner James Jackson. Jackson then leveled his weapon at Zouave Francis E. Brownell, but Brownell fired first, then bayoneted Jackson in the torso, killing him instantly. Ellsworth would die later that day.

The shootout in the Marshall Hotel was Alexandria's only frontline combat. For the next four years, the city became a major Union supply base for the soldiers in blue. Private homes and public buildings became offices, military headquarters, and hospitals, while Union engineers built forts and protective barricades around the city. On their off hours, troops toured like vacationers, visiting George Washington's pew at Christ Protestant Episcopal Church, examining the manacles and chains of the local slave pen on Duke Street, and tearing away parts of walls and floors at the now-infamous Marshall Hotel for souvenirs.

The city was less pleasant for the locals. When city officials refused to let Union Colonel Orlando Wilcox use their stables, he announced martial law. No one was allowed to congregate on the streets, buy liquor, or go outside after 9 PM.

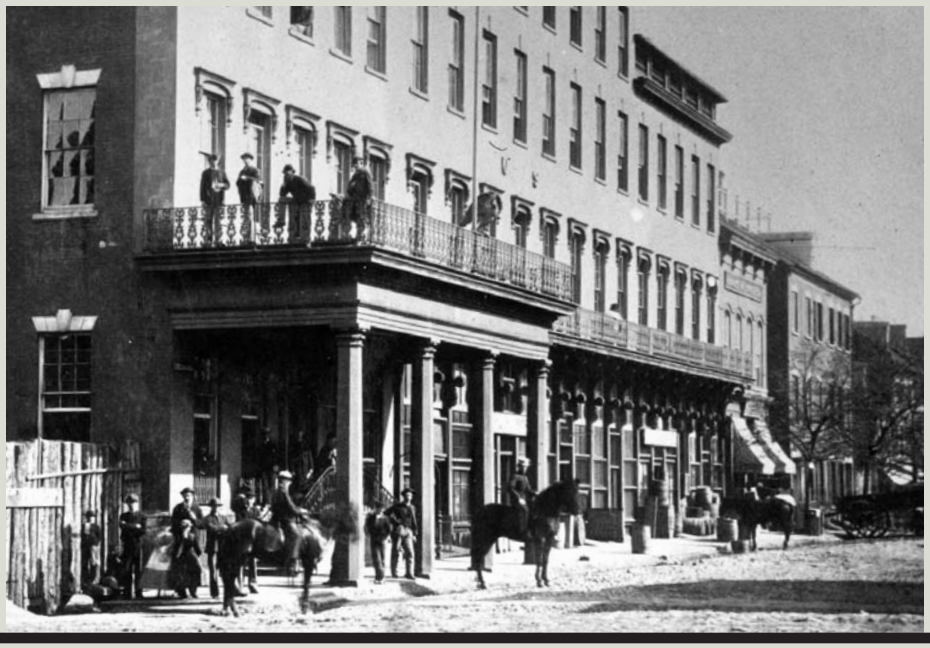
A particularly incendiary incident occurred on February 9, 1862, when Union soldiers interrupted a worship service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church and dragged off the interim minister, Dr. K.J. Stewart, at gunpoint. Union authorities had demanded that all local church services include a prayer for the health of the

Tents formed neat rows at the 44th New York Infantry Regiment's camp on the eastern edge of Alexandria.

ALEXANDRIA

president of the United States. Stewart declined to do so and was seized by a U.S. captain and six soldiers while still kneeling at prayer. The soldiers force-marched Stewart to the 8th Illinois regimental guardhouse (he was later freed) and closed the church. St. Paul's became a Union military hospital for the duration of the war. The *Alexandria Gazette*, after reporting the incident in great detail, was burned to the ground the next day.

And that's how life went on for the next five years in what would become the South's longest Union-occupied city. □



ABOVE: Union Colonel Elmer Ellsworth was killed in the Marshall House Hotel when he tore down a Rebel flag on the first night of occupation. BELOW: The largest building in Alexandria, James Green's Mansion House Hotel on Fairfax Street, became the Mission House Hospital.

TOP TO BOTTOM: Troops guard an out-of-business slave pen. It included a windowless room with dirt floors for the slaves. The Union quartermaster's headquarters. Rail cars filled with boats and wagons adorned with supplies flank the building. A train chugs away from the round house on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Black freedmen construct a fence to protect the Alexandria railroad from Confederate raiders. It encompassed 12 city blocks.

All photos: Library of Congress

AFTER A BREATHTAKING FORCED MARCH, A.P. HILL'S LIGHT DIVISION STILL HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH FIGHT LEFT IN IT TO TURN THE TIDE OF BATTLE AT ANTIETAM.

LITTLE POWELL'S BIG FIGHT

BY WILLIAM E. WELSH

BY mid-afternoon on September 17, 1862, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia were locked in mortal combat on the rolling hills overlooking the sluggish waters of Antietam Creek in northwestern Maryland. The two sides had been fighting each other since daylight in what would turn out to be the bloodiest one-day battle of the Civil War. As the sun began its slow descent in the sky, Confederate General Robert E. Lee feared that victory lay within his foe's bloodied but emboldened grasp.

Throughout the day, Maj. Gen. George McClellan's Union forces had steadily bled Lee's much smaller army of its reserves.

Clad in his famous red battle shirt, General A.P. Hill leads the Light Division across Beotler's Ford during their trek to Sharpsburg in this painting by Dale Gallon.

Increasingly desperate, Lee had pulled one unit after another from his right flank to strengthen other sectors of his hard-pressed line, and now the Federals were massing for a final assault on his weakened flank. When they struck, Lee feared that there would not be sufficient numbers of Confederates to hold them back. The army's last line of retreat would be severed, and the war in the East would be as good as over in one fell swoop.

Lee had one last card to play, however. His ace in the hole was Maj. Gen. Ambrose Powell Hill's Light Division, which was somewhere on the road between nearby Harpers Ferry, Va., and Sharpsburg, the small Maryland town around which Lee's line of battle was tightly wrapped. One of Lee's last acts on the eve of battle had been to send Hill an urgent dispatch ordering him to rejoin the army immediately.

Hill received Lee's dispatch at 6:30 AM. Leaving one brigade behind to complete

Gallon Historical Art

the parole of the last of the 11,000 Federal prisoners captured at Harpers Ferry, Hill quickly put his five other brigades on the road to Sharpsburg. As the Federals began their final advance on his lines, Lee had no idea where Hill was or, worse yet, when he would arrive. At his headquarters on the outskirts of Sharpsburg, the Confederate commander anxiously watched and waited for Hill's appearance.

Hill and several members of his staff rode breathlessly into Lee's headquarters at 2:30 PM. A man of slight build with a bright chestnut-red beard, Hill was affectionately known as "Little Powell" to the Confederate high command. At the time of the battle, he was the youngest major general in the Confederate Army. Having shed his jacket in the heat, Hill was easily identified by his troops on the march by his famous red "battle shirt," which he wore whenever the day promised to produce a good fight. After a quick greeting, Hill informed Lee that his infantry was at that very moment fording the Potomac River three miles away and would soon be on hand. When it arrived on the battlefield, Lee instructed, the reinforcements should support the right flank. Having received his orders, Hill and his staff returned to the infantry column.

At 3 PM, Union Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside's IX Corps began advancing on a broad front toward Sharpsburg. The Federals outnumbered the Confederates in that sector three-to-one. If Hill's troops didn't arrive soon, the Southern right flank would collapse and disintegrate. The battle would be lost.

Lee's eyes were riveted on the Harpers Ferry Road south of Sharpsburg, where the battle was intensifying and the Light Division was expected to arrive any minute. When he spied a column moving from the southeast, Lee called to an artillery officer nearby.

"What troops are those?" Lee asked.

The officer offered Lee his spyglass. "Can't use it," Lee said, raising his bandaged hands. The general had been thrown from his horse at the start of the campaign and had broken one of his hands and sprained both wrists. The officer raised his glass and focused the lens on the column. "They are flying the United States flag," he said.

Lee pointed to another column to the southwest and asked the same question. The officer trained his glass on the new column. "They are flying the Virginia and Confederate flags," he said.

Library of Congress

Lee sighed with relief. "It is A.P. Hill from Harpers Ferry." If the Light Division could get into battle quickly enough, it might be able to save Lee's army from what a few minutes before had seemed like certain destruction.

Lee had little need to worry about whether Hill would arrive in time. In the half-dozen major engagements since the beginning of the war in which Hill had led troops, he had shown himself to be a prompt, dependable, and hard-hitting commander. He pushed his troops hard, followed orders well, and never lost his cool in battle. A fighter by nature, Hill had conducted only one major defensive action since the war began. If Lee could rely on any of his division commanders to launch a successful counterattack, it was A.P. Hill.

Hill was bred from the same colorful cavalier Virginia stock as such other well-known Confederate officers as Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart. Born in Culpeper on November 9, 1825, Hill entered the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1842 at the age of 16. In the kind of ironic twist that typified the Civil War, he would become closely acquainted with the two individuals who would be his principal opponents at the Battle of Antietam. His first-year roommate was George McClellan. Although Hill should have graduated the same year as McClellan, he was held back a year because of a chronic illness. Thus, Hill and his close friend Ambrose Burnside graduated 15th and 18th, respectively, in the Class of 1847.

In August 1847, Hill received orders to report for service with the U.S. 1st Artillery Regiment in Mexico. He arrived at the port of Vera Cruz after the regional capital had fallen and participated in a limited fashion in two of the closing battles of the struggle. When the Americans sacked the town of Huamantla, Hill observed firsthand the great harm that volunteers were capable of doing if not properly disciplined. This experience deeply ingrained itself on the young lieutenant and afterwards would inform the authoritarian way in which he led those who served under him.

After the Mexican War, Hill served a year of garrison duty at Fort McHenry, Md., before shipping out with his unit to western Florida, where he participated in the ongoing suppression of the Seminoles. After five years of service in Florida, Hill transferred to the U.S. Coast Survey, in which post he was serving when the first seven southern states seceded from the Union following the election of Abraham Lincoln. Despite being urged by his comrades to remain in the service, Hill resigned in February 1861 and returned to his home state, hoping to receive an appointment commensurate with his extensive military experience.

Much to his chagrin, Hill was passed over for a generalship by Virginia Governor John Letcher and instead was named colonel of the 13th Virginia Infantry. The regiment comprised 10 companies, all drawn from Virginia with the exception of one company from Baltimore. Hill began training the regiment at Harpers Ferry, where it was part of General Joseph Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah. Little Powell drilled his men several times a day. His training was so effective that Johnston commended the 13th Virginia for its "veteran-like appearance." When Johnston received orders from Richmond on July 17 to move his army to Manassas to support Brig. Gen. Pierre G.T. Beauregard in a major battle then taking shape along the banks of Bull Run Creek, the 13th Virginia traveled by train to Manassas Junction, but saw no action at the ensuing Battle of First Manassas.

In February 1862, Hill was appointed brigadier general commanding the First Brigade of Maj. Gen. James Longstreet's Second Division. When McClellan, the new commander of the Army of the Potomac, landed in April with 120,000 Federal troops at Fort Monroe at the tip of the peninsula between the James and York Rivers, Hill's brigade marched to the aid of Maj. Gen. John Magruder, who had established a defensive line across the peninsula's lower portion to thwart the Federal advance.

Hill's first major action in the Civil War occurred on May 5 at Williamsburg. Longstreet ordered him to drive back Brig. Gen. Joseph Hooker's Federal division. Hill led his men against a strong enemy position in thick woods on the outskirts of Williamsburg. The two sides fought at close range in the driving rain throughout the afternoon. Just before nightfall, Hill's troops launched a successful charge that routed Hooker's troops and resulted in the capture of 160 prisoners, seven flags, and eight artillery pieces.

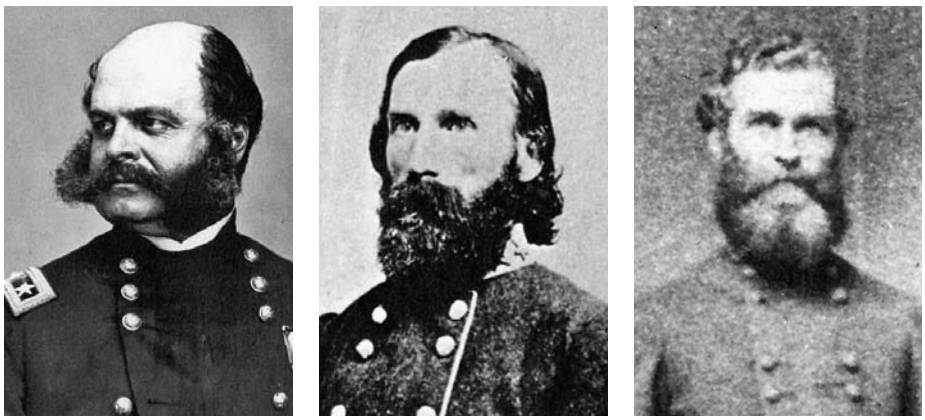
AN ONGOING DISPUTE BETWEEN HILL AND JACKSON OVER MARCHING PROCEDURES, WHICH COULD BE TRACED BACK TO CEDAR MOUNTAIN, REACHED CRISIS PROPORTIONS AT THE OUTSET OF THE MARYLAND CAMPAIGN.

On May 27, in recognition of his role at Williamsburg, Hill was promoted to major general. He had risen from colonel to major general in just 90 days.

Hill called his new command the Light Division, a name that stuck with it throughout the war. The division, which comprised six brigades, was actually the largest in the Confederate Army, and Hill gave no explanation for the name he had chosen. In the absence of such an explanation, the nickname came to be associated with his troops' ability to march fast and take little more than their rifles, cartridge boxes, and haversacks into battle. Division Private Wayland F. Dunaway recalled later that "the name was applicable, for we often marched without coats, blankets, knapsacks, or any other burdens except our arms and haversacks, which were never heavy and sometimes empty."

Hill solidified his growing reputation as an aggressive general during the Seven Days' Battles that followed. When Johnston was wounded at Seven Pines, Robert E. Lee assumed command of the Confederate army around Richmond. Shedding Johnston's defensive mindset, Lee at once sought to take the offensive and drive the Federals away from the city. In his first battle as a division commander, Hill launched a costly frontal attack on June 26 without support against Federals entrenched behind Beaver Dam Creek. Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was partly to blame for the debacle by failing to carry out an expected flank attack. Perhaps because Hill had shown initiative, which was notably lacking in some of his fellow generals, Lee did not rebuke him for his rashness.

The pattern of piecemeal attacks continued throughout the Seven Days. Whether from fatigue or a lack of familiarity with the countryside, Jackson repeatedly failed to strike at the time and place instructed by Lee. At Gaines' Mill on June 27, Hill's men



All photos: Library of Congress

LEFT: Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside. MIDDLE: Maj. Gen. A.P. Hill. RIGHT: Brig. Gen. David R. Jones. OPPOSITE: A ragged column of Confederate troops passes through Frederick, Maryland, in an extremely rare photograph depicting Southern troops in action.

were badly mauled when they attacked entrenched Federals on a rise behind Boatswain's Swamp. Hill lost more than 2,600 men in the battle. Despite these defeats, Hill showed a knack for carrying out orders and an ability to pin down large bodies of Federal troops and make it difficult for them to disengage. His star continued to rise.

The Light Division's marching skills were put to the test in the next phase of the campaign when Hill's troops made a forced march to attack McClellan's army on its retreat to the James River. At Frayser's Farm on June 30, Longstreet advanced first. When the Federals threatened to outflank Longstreet, Hill's division joined the battle. The Light Division drove the enemy back and captured 18 guns.

Although officially part of Magruder's command, Hill's division had been attached to Longstreet for the last part of the Seven Days' Battles. Following the campaign, Lee transferred Hill to Jackson's command for a new campaign unfolding in central Virginia against Maj. Gen. John Pope.

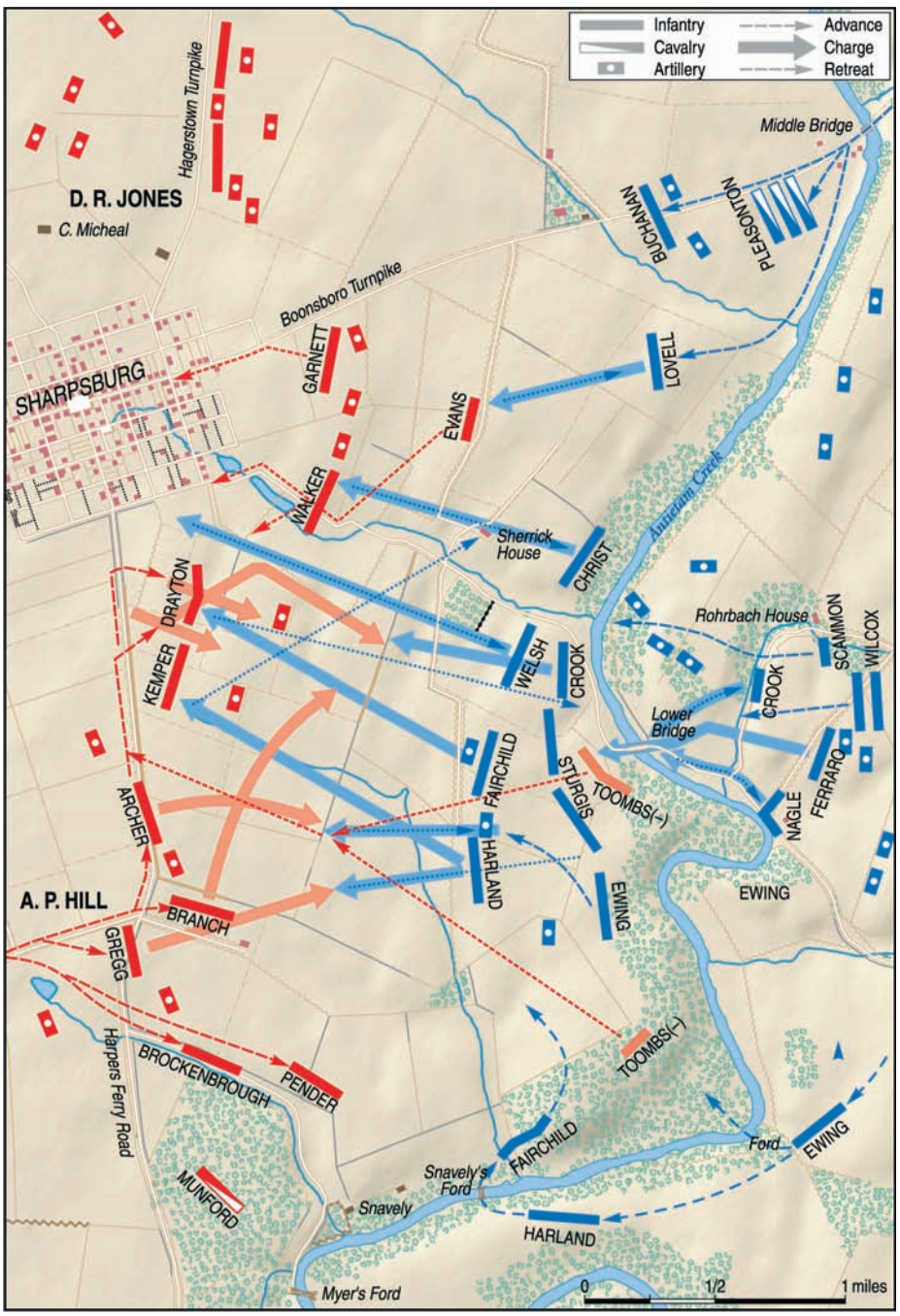
Because Jackson had failed to support him throughout the Peninsula campaign, it was with some reservation that Hill joined him at Gordonsville.

A twist of fate put Hill's division in the rear on the march to Culpeper, which led to the Battle of Cedar Mountain. When Jackson's left flank collapsed on the afternoon of August 9, Hill immediately stabilized the main Confederate line with his troops. Once it was stabilized, the Light Division advanced and swept the field. Although Jackson was too proud to admit it, Hill had saved his skin at Cedar Mountain.

That same month, Hill anchored Jackson's left flank behind the unfinished railroad bed on the old Bull Run battlefield. The Battle of Second Manassas was Hill's first defensive fight. With three brigades forward and the other three held in reserve, Hill repulsed six separate attacks on August 29. When the Federals pierced his line, he skillfully shifted his forces to close the breach. He showed a remarkable ability to coordinate movements among his units in the heat of the two-day battle. He received rare praise from the prickly Jackson for repulsing superior enemy numbers.

An ongoing dispute between Hill and Jackson over marching procedures, which could be traced back to Cedar Mountain, reached crisis proportions at the outset of the Maryland campaign, Lee's ambitious late-summer invasion of the North. Jackson required that the troops begin marching before sunrise and rest 10 minutes every hour. When one of Hill's brigades was not ready to march from Dranesville, Va., to the Potomac River on September 4, the first day of the campaign, Jackson's mood turned sour. To make up for lost time, Hill decided to forego Jackson's

Federal troops driving toward Sharpsburg were attacked suddenly on the left flank by Hill's troops, who had just reached the battlefield after marching from Harpers Ferry.



mandatory rest period each hour. When Jackson halted one of Hill's brigades without consulting him, Hill offered his sword to Jackson in disgust. Jackson immediately placed him under arrest, turned command over to Hill's senior brigadier, and ordered Hill to march at the rear of his division.

After two days in Frederick, Md., Lee divided his command into three parts. Jackson would command the part of the army entrusted with the capture of the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry, which lay across the Confederate line of retreat. Sensing that battle was imminent, Hill requested through a member of Jackson's staff to be temporarily reinstated to his command for the fighting that lay ahead. Without hesitating, Jackson agreed.

Jackson and his forces drove a contingent of Federals from Martinsburg on September 13. The retreating Federals took refuge with the larger force based in Harpers Ferry. Next, Jackson divided his command into three separate forces to invest Harpers Ferry. Lee's schedule for the campaign allowed no time for a protracted siege, so Jackson moved quickly to attack. While other units occupied the heights across the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers from the town, Jackson's corps bottled up the town on September 14 by occupying the neck of land behind Harpers Ferry.

The Light Division, which held the Confederate right flank along the Shenandoah River, drove the Federals back and captured the high ground, where Hill, the old artillery officer, carefully placed the division's guns.

At first light the following day, southern guns began shelling the town from three sides. After an hour-long bombardment, the Federals replied with desultory fire. At that point, Jackson ordered the Light Division forward again. At 9 AM, the Federals waved the white flag and surrendered to Jackson. The Confederates captured 11,000 prisoners, 12,000 rifles, 70 guns, and countless supplies.

Because the Light Division had borne the brunt of the fight, it was given the honor of paroling the Union prisoners. During their two days inside the town, many of Hill's soldiers exchanged their ragged clothes for parts of new Federal uniforms in storage. Since Lee needed all available Southern troops at his new position at Sharpsburg, plans were made to parole the prisoners and permit them to march home, provided they not rejoin the Union Army until they were properly exchanged. Jackson's other two divisions departed for Sharpsburg the night of September 16. The next morning, Hill received Lee's dispatch instructing him to join the army immediately for a major battle.

After receiving Lee's dispatch at daybreak, Hill donned his familitar red battle shirt, buckled on his dress sword, and began issuing orders to his brigadiers for a forced march. Telling Colonel Edward Thomas to remain with his brigade at Harpers Ferry to complete the surrender, Hill ordered Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg to get his troops on the road immediately. Gregg's South Carolinians were on the road within the hour. Rather than sending his division by the shortest route to Sharpsburg, on the north bank of the Potomac, Hill chose instead to send his troops on a route that was slightly longer on the south bank to avoid running into any stray Federal units that might delay him or bar him from reaching Lee.

Spirits were high in the ranks as the division marched north along a narrow dirt road that led toward Shepherdstown, where it would ford the river. The men in the column were well fed and wearing new clothing taken from the vast stores at Harpers Ferry. As they marched, the men could hear the boom of cannon ahead in the distance. The troops in the front were told to set a brisk pace. The shout frequently heard up and down the line was, "Speed the march, close up, close up!" Hill rode back and forth along the column prodding stragglers with the point of his sword.

The column stopped only two or three times for just a few minutes to allow the men to catch their breath before resuming the march. Such stops were not enough to keep dozens of men from dropping out of the ranks from exhaustion. Hill and his officers were able to produce a near superhuman effort from the men by telling them that their beloved commander Lee was counting on them.

When Hill's troops reached the river, they began crossing immediately. Holding their muskets and cartridge boxes high above their heads, they plunged into the water, doing their best to maintain their balance while walking over jagged ledges on the river bottom that ran perpendicular to the swift current.

The high expectations that Hill had for himself and his men were readily apparent in an episode that occurred after the division had forded the river. When he spied a second lieutenant crouching in fear behind a tree, Hill rode over to the officer, demanded his sword, and broke it across the man's shoulder. Without speaking a word, Hill returned to the column. When he reported to Lee, he would have in hand a force of some 1,900 soldiers to put into battle.

Meanwhile, Hill's old roommate, George McClellan, had sent orders to their mutual friend Ambrose Burnside, instructing him to take the lower bridge, known as Rohrbach Bridge, over Antietam Creek. In his battle plan, McClellan envisioned that Burnside would cross the bridge in the morning and be in position on the west bank of the Antietam by noon to exploit the costly advantages won by earlier Federal attacks on the Confederate left and center.

But Burnside was not in a cooperative mood. Having been stripped of Hooker's corps following the Battle of South Mountain, where he served as commander of the army's right wing, Burnside was having a hard time adjusting to the role of a mere corps commander. In fact, he still fancied himself a wing commander, and therefore had placed Brig. Gen. Jacob Cox in direct command of the IX Corps. Even after receiving multiple orders from McClellan ordering him to advance, Burnside made only a half-hearted attempt to get his men across the creek. After several repulses, two regiments of Brig. Gen. Edward Ferrero's brigade of Brig. Gen. Samuel Sturgis's division finally carried the bridge at 1 PM.

Although IX Corps would make its attack alone, unsupported by any other elements of the Union Army, it had enough manpower to wreck the Confederate right flank if handled properly. At his disposal, Burnside had four divisions numbering about 8,500 men. If he could get his men into battle quickly, the pressure he applied to Lee's right flank might be enough to make the entire Confederate position implode. But once across the creek, Burnside squandered the opportunity for surprise by taking two hours to replenish his troops' ammunition and shake them into a new line of battle before advancing.

Once under way, the Federals found the going tough. The terrain south of Sharpsburg rose gradually from Antietam Creek to the Harpers Ferry Road. Between the creek and the north-south road, the ground was wildly uneven and characterized by steep ravines that afforded a marked advantaged to whomever occupied the higher portion of a given slope. Hard by the road, which ran from the lower bridge to Sharpsburg, were two farms. At the time of the battle, the farms on the north and south sides belonged to Joseph Sherrick and John Otto, respectively. The crux of the battle between Hill and Burnside would mainly occur on the farm belonging to the latter, notably in his 40-acre cornfield. The fields were divided by stone and rail fences that would provide a distinct advantage to whichever side reached them first.

IX Corps advanced in three lines at 3 PM. On the left was Brig. Gen. Isaac Rodman's division, which had crossed two miles downstream at Snavely's Ford; on the right was Brig. Gen. Orlando Wilcox's division. Directly behind them was Cox's Kanawha Division under the command of Colonel Eliakim Scammon. Sturgis's division, which bore the brunt of the attack on the bridge, thereafter to be known as Burnside's Bridge, formed the reserve. The Federal infantry not only had the support of the long-range guns on the east bank of the Antietam, but also close artillery support from four batteries comprising 22 guns that followed the infantry over the bridge.

Facing them were the badly depleted ranks of Confederate Brig. Gen. David Jones's division. Down to less than half its original number, the division was all that stood between Burnside and Sharpsburg. Jones had five of his six brigades on hand for the late afternoon fight, having relinquished Colonel George "Tige" Anderson's brigade to support the Confederate center. By mid-afternoon, each brigade in the division was down to the size of a single regiment.

Despite his paper-thin ranks, Jones enjoyed ample artillery support, thanks to the foresight of Lee and Longstreet. The Confederate high command had assembled 28 guns to support Jones in what would be the last major clash of the day.

HILL ASSESSED THE SITUATION FROM A POINT ALONG THE HARPERS FERRY ROAD. "MY TROOPS WERE NOT IN A MOMENT TOO SOON. THE ENEMY HAD ALREADY ADVANCED IN THREE LINES, BROKEN THROUGH JONES' DIVISION, CAPTURED MCINTOSH'S GUNS, AND DROVE THEM BACK PELL MELL."

More guns would be added to the Confederate defense. Captain David McIntosh, who commanded the first of Hill's units to arrive on the field, quickly unlimbered three guns from his battery along the Harpers Ferry Road. They soon joined the other Confederate guns in shelling the Federal batteries opposite them.

The Federals, for their part, advanced steadily over uneven ground. The Confederate gunners switched their fire from the enemy batteries to the sea of blue infantry as it drew ever closer. Still, the Union tide surged forth. The Federals drove Jones's division back into Sharpsburg. Some of his troops shifted to the north side of town, while others entered city streets where enemy shells had set homes and buildings ablaze.

At that moment, Hill's infantry arrived.

Without taking time to reconnoiter the battlefield, Hill threw his troops into the fight at 3:30 pm Gregg's South Carolinians were first up. Following a quick discussion with Jones, Hill ordered Gregg to relieve Brig. Gen. Robert Toombs's hard-pressed brigade. His fellow division commander "gave me such information as my ignorance of the ground made necessary," wrote Hill in his battle report. Armed with the scanty information, Hill committed the first of his five brigades to the battle. With a shout, Gregg's five South Carolina regiments advanced onto the Otto farm. Hearing Gregg's men give the Rebel yell as they advanced on the enemy, Jones's weary soldiers found renewed strength. They weren't the only ones affected—Lee's demeanor changed noticeably from fear of defeat to confidence in his army's ability to withstand the latest Federal assault.

"My troops were rapidly thrown into position, [Dorsey] Pender and [John] Brockenbrough on the extreme right, looking to a road which crossed the Antietam near its mouth, [and Lawrence] Branch, Gregg, and [James] Archer extending to the left and connecting with D.R. Jones' Division," Hill wrote afterward.

In addition, Hill oversaw the deployment of his division's remaining batteries. He ordered Captain Carter Braxton's battery to a rise on Gregg's right and the batteries of Captains William Crenshaw and Willie Pegram to high ground on the left, where they would have a wide field of fire.

When the Light Division arrived on the field, Colonel Edward Harland's brigade of Rodman's division was pushing its way through the large cornfield south of the Otto farmhouse. Harland's four New England regiments—the 8th Connecticut, 11th Connecticut, 16th Connecticut, and 4th Rhode Island—would face the full fury of the Confederate counterattack spearheaded by Gregg's veterans. The two brigades collided head-on in the tall corn.

The 8th Connecticut was the farthest forward of Harland's regiments. Due to a mix-up in orders, it was directed to advance before the other regiments in the brigade. The regiment's objective was McIntosh's guns. As the 8th Connecticut bore down on its objective, McIntosh switched to canister. Realizing that if he tried to withdraw his guns in the face of the enemy he would lose his gunners in the process, the cool-headed artillery captain instructed his gun crews to abandon their pieces and retire to the rear. They did so just as the bluecoats swarmed over the three pieces.

Hill assessed the situation from a point along the Harpers Ferry Road. "My troops were not in a moment too soon," he wrote. "The enemy had already advanced in three lines, broken through Jones' division, captured McIntosh's guns, and drove them back pell mell." Both Hill and his brigadiers felt the weight of the moment and rose to the occasion. "Branch and Gregg, with their old veterans, sternly held their ground, and, pouring in destructive volleys, the tide of the enemy surged back, and, breaking in confusion, passed out of sight," Hill reported.

At several key moments during IX Corps' attack, Federal regiments would hold their fire when they saw troops wearing blue uniforms nearby. These units would invariably turn out to be troops belonging to Hill's division who had appropriated parts of new Federal uniforms to replace the torn and tattered clothing they had been wearing when they captured Harpers Ferry. One such unit was the 4th Rhode Island. Fearing that it might shoot into friendly troops, the regiment momentarily withheld its fire and received a deadly volley from Gregg's men before realizing its mistake.

Meanwhile, from a strong position behind a stone wall on the Otto Farm, Gregg's troops unhesitatingly blasted the 4th Rhode Island and 16th Connecticut. The Connecticut unit, a green regiment that had only been in the army for three weeks, had the unfortunate luck to face crack Confederate troops in its first fight.

The well-aimed fire was more than the Connecticut soldiers could stand. The regiment broke for the rear, carrying the 4th Rhode Island along with it. The tragedy was compounded for the Federals when a Confederate sharpshooter fired a round that struck Rodman flush in the chest and left him mortally wounded. Gregg was also struck by a bullet in the hip that knocked him from his horse. When he realized that the bullet had only grazed him, the feisty brigadier returned to his command.

The brigades of Branch and Archer moved to support Gregg. Branch bolstered Gregg's thrust into the Otto cornfield, while Archer's troops moved at the double quick along Gregg's left flank to support Jones's line, which was fast unraveling as a result of a coordinated Federal assault.

Although Gregg had managed to check Harland's brigade, three more Federal brigades were closing in on Sharpsburg. By 4 PM, Colonel Harrison Fairchild, commanding Rodman's other brigade on Harland's right, smashed the brigades of Brig. Gens. James Kemper and Thomas Drayton and reached the very gates of Sharpsburg.

Just north of Fairchild, the two brigades of Wilcox's division under Colonels Thomas Welsh and Benjamin Christ were locked in desperate combat

Artillerymen of Joseph Knap's Pennsylvania battery pose proudly beside their guns near Smoketown.

Library of Congress

with Jenkins' brigade, commanded by Colonel Joseph Walker. Unlike Kemper and Drayton, Walker was holding his ground by taking advantage of cover afforded by the Sherrick farm buildings and the terrain. His brigade was the last unit left between the Federals and Sharpsburg. With Gregg preoccupied with Harland, Hill ordered Archer's brigade to charge the enemy.

Strengthened by elements of Jones's division, Archer's men overwhelmed the 8th Connecticut and recaptured McIntosh's guns. The hapless Union regiment lost fully two-thirds of its men before retreating. Next, Archer formed his men into line of battle along the Harpers Ferry Road and advanced east toward Antietam Creek, driving Fairchild before him.

At one point the three Confederate brigadiers—Archer, Branch, and Gregg—were conferring about how best to press the attack on the Federal left flank when a sharpshooter put them in his sites. When his attention was directed to enemy soldiers closing on his flank, Branch raised his glass to have a closer look. At that moment, a bullet tore into his right cheek and exited from the back of his head. The shot killed him instantly. The North Carolinian collapsed near his fellow generals.

The rout of Harland's brigade by Gregg's South Carolinians threw the entire IX Corps offensive into jeopardy. In an immediate sense, it exposed Fairchild's flank to attack by Hill's division. For this reason, Cox ordered the withdrawal not only of Fairchild's brigade, but also Wilcox's division. Although they were furious at having to give up the ground they had captured, Cox's subordinates complied with his order. By 4:30 PM, the Federals were in full retreat.

Colonel Hugh Ewing's brigade of the Kanawha Division fruitlessly tried to try to plug the gap created by Harland's troops, who were streaming to the rear. His three Ohio regiments advanced toward Gregg's position on the Otto Farm. Like the 4th Rhode Island regiment before them, the Buckeyes mistook soldiers wearing blue for fellow Federals. While they held their fire, Gregg's men blasted their ranks mercilessly, dropping large numbers of Federals. The Ohio troops made a valiant try to wrest a stone wall from Gregg's veterans, but were forced to fall back with their retreating comrades.

The last major action of the battle occurred when Cox committed a portion of his reserves to stabilize his ranks. He sent forward troops from Sturgis's command to form a new line he was constructing along the bluffs overlooking the creek. By that point, the Confederates had clearly gained the upper hand. More than 40 Southern guns posted along the high ground around Sharpsburg swept the landscape across which the Federals were retreating. Most of the Union guns on the far bank had run out of ammunition by this point in the battle, and the batteries that had advanced with the infantry found themselves outgunned. The action gradually died out, and both sides were content with their new positions.

Because of the Light Division's late entrance to the battle, it came away with just 63 killed and 283 wounded from the 1,900 soldiers who participated in the battle.

Hill's performance at Antietam was nearly flawless. The battle highlighted his best attributes as a commander, most notably his ability to move his troops promptly and motivate them on the battlefield. At Antietam, Hill exhibited a willingness to fight a pitched battle against his foe without second-guessinghimself, unlike many of the Federal commanders he faced that day. At the same time, the battle masked his shortcomings as a commander—his repeated failure to reconnoiter ground before attacking and his bad habit of leaving a gap in his lines for the enemy to exploit when he was on the defensive.

Hill's performance was not overlooked by Lee or his principal lieutenants at the battle, Jackson and Longstreet. Although Hill had had a falling out of sorts with Longstreet after he left his command earlier that year, Old Pete found it in his heart to mention Hill's "exemplary" performance in his battle report. He noted that Hill's Light Division had helped check the advance against his corps in the vicinity of Sharpsburg. "The display of this force was of great value, and assisted us in holding our position," wrote Longstreet.

Following Antietam, Hill led the Light Division in the famous battles at Fredricksburg and Chancellorsville. After Jackson's tragic death at the latter battle, Hill was promoted to lieutenant general on May 23, 1863, and placed in charge of the III Corps of Lee's newly reorganized Army of Northern Virginia. During the army's second invasion of the North one year later, Hill attacked Federal forces he

The 9th New York Zouaves, in their distinctive baggy uniforms, repulse a Confederate charge from behind a rail fence outside of Sharpsburg.

stumbled upon at Gettysburg, thus helping to ignite that epic battle. Little Powell participated in the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, but because of illness was absent from the Battle of Spotsylvania later that month.

Still dogged by chronic illness, Hill participated off and on in the series of battles between Lt. Gen. Ulysses Grant and Lee that culminated in the siege of Petersburg. On April 2, 1865, Hill was convalescing at his temporary residence in Petersburg when news reached him that the Confederate line had snapped. He immediately rode to his troops and was in the process of trying to rally them when he was killed by enemy fire.

With the exception of the fight at Spotsylvania Court House, when he was too ill to lead his troops, Hill fought in every major battle of the Army of Northern Virginia waged by Lee. But his performance at the Battle of Antietam stands as his greatest achievement as a general. To say that Hill single-handedly saved the Army of Northern Virginia that day is an overstatement, but he certainly played a major role in the repulse of McClellan's much larger Union army. There can be little doubt that Antietam was the Culpeper Cavalier's finest hour. □

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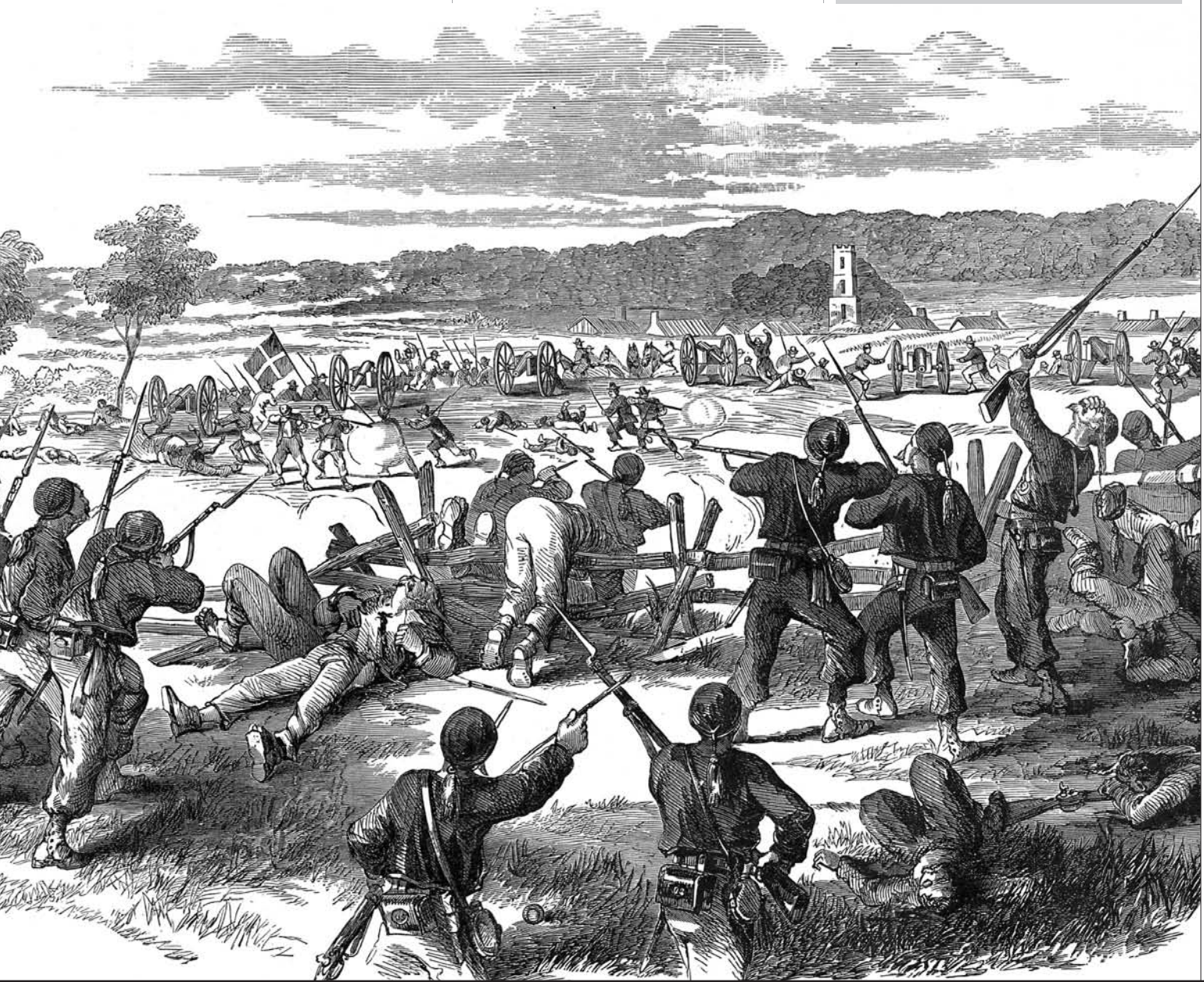

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Word spread like wildfire through the camps of the Army of the Potomac during the second week of November 1862: "Little Mac" was out, "Old Burn" was in. Nestled in numerous bivouacs situated from Snicker's Gap to Warrenton, Virginia, the bombshell news was received by the troops with disbelief and despair, followed by indignation. To many of the officers and enlisted members of the army it was incomprehensible that the beloved organizer and leader of the Federal government's premier field force, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, was being replaced by the genial but less than charismatic Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside. The able brigadier of the Iron Brigade, John Gibbon, spoke for many in the army when he postulated that booting McClellan proved "that the Government has gone mad."

Some men are born to greatness, others have greatness thrust upon them; Ambrose Burnside was neither. Born on May 23, 1824, in Liberty, Indiana, the fourth of nine children, Burnside grew into an imposing six-footer with a large head topped with thin brown hair. After graduating 18th of 38 in the class of 1847 from the United States Military Academy at West Point, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned to the 3rd United States Artillery Regiment. Service in the Mexican War was followed by a posting in New Mexico Territory. In 1853, Burnside resigned from the Army and moved to Rhode Island to manufacturer a breech-loading carbine of his own design. Failing to sell his weapon system to the Army, he took a job as a cashier with a railroad company.

As a graduate of West Point, Burnside rapidly rose from regimental to brigade to corps command during the first two years of the Civil War. His most distinguished achievement was his able handling of an amphibious operation along the North Carolina coast in 1862 against a greatly inferior

By Arnold Blumberg

As Stonewall Jackson's Confederates surge out of the woods beyond Prospect Hill at Fredericksburg, Union Colonel Charles H.T. Collis of the 114th Pennsylvania Infantry seizes the regimental flag to rally his Zouaves. Collis, who won the Medal of Honor, commissioned this painting by Carl Rochling.

Philadelphia Museum of Art / Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

WAR SO TERRIBLE

Against his better judgment, Union General Ambrose Burnside attacked Robert E. Lee's entrenched Confederates at Fredericksburg. Said Lee: "It is well that war is so terrible, lest we should grow too fond of it."

All photos: Library of Congress

ABOVE: Union troops land and pull up their pontoon bridges behind them in this painting by Alonzo Chappel. LEFT: A canvas pontoon boat manned by the 50th New York Engineers prepares to span the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg.

enemy force. His reward was promotion to major general and an offer from President Abraham Lincoln, after the failure of McClellan's mismanaged Peninsula campaign, to command the Army of the Potomac. Burnside turned down the offer, explaining that he was not up to such an important task. Nevertheless, even after his uninspired performance at the Battle of Antietam, the government prodded him to take charge of the main Union army in the East. This time the general, known mostly for the massive sideburns that curved around his lips into a full mustache, reluctantly accepted the post.

The choice of the transplanted Rhode Islander was puzzling to many since he clearly did not feel competent to hold the job. Nothing in Burnside's prior service had demonstrated strategic genius or originality. But given his senior rank and the fact that the North's leading politicians had no strong objections to his appointment, "Old Burn" got the top spot almost by default.

Burnside realized that the government wanted a rapid march on Richmond. As a result, his army would not be allowed to go into winter quarters, as was normal in November. He formulated a plan and sent it to Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck, general in chief of the Union Army, on November 9, the same day that he took over command of the Army of the Potomac. Burnside advised Halleck that he would take the most direct route to Richmond by moving from Warrenton to Fredericksburg, Virginia, crossing the Rappahannock River near Falmouth

and heading straight for the Confederate capital 50 miles farther south. Simultaneous with the advance of the main army, feints would be carried out in the direction of Gordonsville and Culpeper Court House, in the hopes of confusing the enemy as to the real objective of the Union campaign.

On November 14, Burnside received the go-ahead from the president to put his plan into action. Appended to the approval was the cautionary injunction that in Lincoln's view the scheme would only succeed "if you move rapidly; otherwise not."

With the final approval in his pocket, Burnside prepared to go forward. He organized his forces into three grand divisions: the Right Grand Division (II and IX Corps) under Maj. Gen. Edwin V. Sumner; the Left Grand Division (I and VI Corps) under Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin, and the Center Grand Division (III and V Corps) under Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker. XI Corps, under Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel, was designated as reserve. Cavalry and artillery units were scattered among the grand divisions. The new setup made controlling the army more difficult in battle because it placed an additional layer of command that would interfere with communications at critical times between the army leader and his subordinate commanders.

Burnside's division leaders were another weakness. They were, on the whole, a mediocre bunch when it came to military capability. Sumner, although brave in combat, was slow to move and needed constant supervision. Franklin was a good enough engineer and administrator, but no ball of fire on the battlefield. Hooker, the most aggressive of the group as well as a born leader of men, was highly unhappy with Burnside as the leader of the army.

On November 15, the 112,000-man Army of the Potomac began its journey from Warrenton to Fredericksburg. The countryside was mostly forested, with rough, open fields dissected by narrow country lanes whose condition was made worse by fall rains that continued to come down during the march. Slowing the army further were the thousands of cumbersome wagons pulled by horses and mules that made up the army's supply trains. Poor roads, mud, and the high attrition rate of the animals assured that the wagon trains could not keep up with the infantry, who frequently found themselves blocked by the masses of horse-drawn vehicles. Despite the obstacles, however, the trek to Fredericksburg averaged a respectable 15 miles a day.

As the Federals advanced in two main columns southeast from Warrenton, Robert E. Lee had only the slightest inkling of Burnside's intentions. While the Federals made their way toward Fredericksburg, only 35 miles from their starting point, Lee's army was badly divided. Thirty miles to the west at Culpeper Court House was Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's 41,000-man I Corps. In the Shenandoah Valley, 75 miles northwest of Fredericksburg at Winchester, stood Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson's 38,000-strong II Corps. Maj. Gen. James E.B. Stuart's 6,000 cavalrymen screened the countryside along the Rappahannock River. In the event of an enemy attack, Lee would have to unite his forces quickly—a daunting task even for the fast-moving Confederates.

On the 17th, Lee was informed about Sumner's initial move toward Fredericksburg. In response, he ordered two of Longstreet's infantry divisions, under Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws and Brig. Gen. Robert Ransom, Jr., to head immediately for the threatened city. By the 20th, he was sure of Burnside's destination and ordered the rest of his I Corps units (the infantry of Richard A. Anderson, George E. Pickett, and John B. Hood) to move swiftly to that location.

Major General Ambrose E. Burnside.

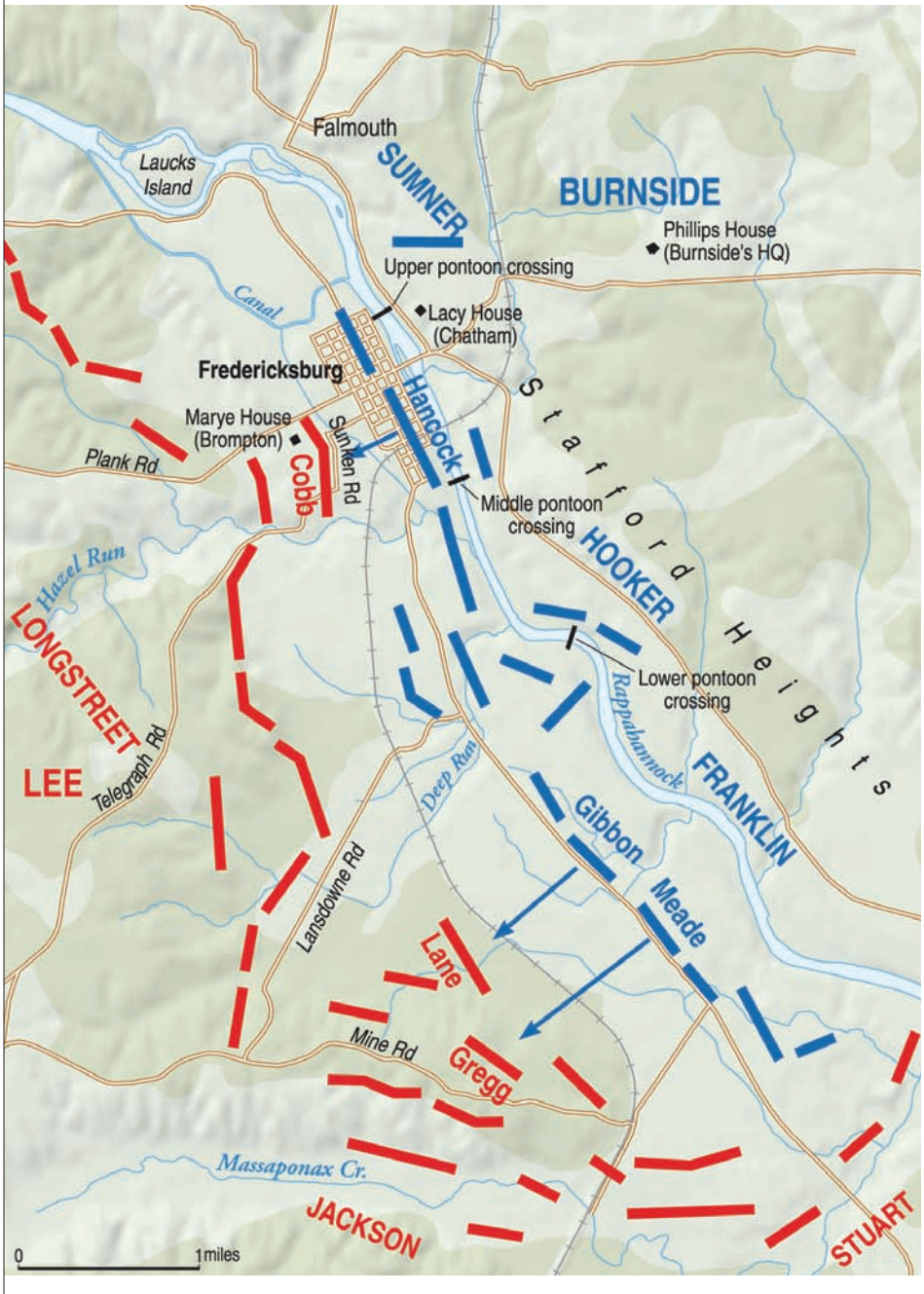
As November 23 dawned, nearly 40,000 Confederates were concentrated in the Fredericksburg vicinity. Without the presence of Jackson and his troops, Lee had not decided whether to fight or withdraw. He still held out the option of retreating to the North Anna River, where he could take a strong defensive position and then seek an opportunity to launch a counterattack. He decided to wait for the enemy's next move and the arrival of Jackson before making up his mind about which course to pursue.

By then, Sumner's divisions had reached the town of Falmouth, just three miles north of Fredericksburg on the north shore of the Rappahannock. After Burnside arrived, Sumner requested permission to cross the river and occupy Fredericksburg, which appeared to be empty of Southern forces. Burnside, fearful that Sumner's men might become trapped south of the river by rising water, denied the old officer's plea for action. He reasoned that it would be safer to wait for his pontoon train (which was expected to arrive at any time) to ensure a safe crossing and secure communications north of the river. In retrospect, Burnside's decision not to cross immediately was a mistake. The town was still empty of any Confederate troops, and its seizure would have permitted Federal artillery to be stationed on Stafford Heights, just across the river, to safeguard the crossing.

Burnside's entire plan of campaign hinged on the timely arrival of his pontoon train at Fredericksburg. What he did not know was that the train had bogged down completely. A series of poorly written orders, little initiative or understanding by junior officers of the importance of the

boats in the campaign, and lack of needed parts prevented the pontoon train from reaching Falmouth until November 27, even though the original order had been drafted on November 6. The critical delay in the arrival of his pontoons added to uncertainty about the whereabouts of Jackson's corps convinced Burnside not to storm across the river at once.

While the Army of the Potomac dithered on the north bank of the Rappahannock, Lee ordered Jackson to transfer his force from the Shenandoah Valley to Fredericksburg. Starting on November 21, Jackson's "foot cavalry" marched 175 miles in 12 days to reach the rest of the army. With the two armies now facing each other across the Rappahannock River, Lee was mystified by his opponent's inaction. "What the designs of the enemy are I do not know," he said. While Lee tried to decipher the enemies' plans, both sides built winter quarters and suffered alike from cold weather, shortage of supplies, and boredom.



Map © 2010 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

The main Union assault at Fredericksburg came through the city toward Marye's Heights, where Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's I Corps held the vital high ground, sheltered behind a low stone wall.

Pressure on Burnside to reignite his campaign continued coming from the Northern press, politicians, his own officers, and even President Lincoln himself. Looking for a way to strike a blow before the full impact of winter halted all military operations, the general considered storming the enemy positions 12 miles downriver from Fredericksburg but scrapped the plan because of the difficulty of achieving the element of surprise while moving the needed number of men and supplies to the point of attack. Meanwhile, the Confederate Army continued preparing defensive positions behind Fredericksburg. Longstreet's corps took up positions at Taylor's Farm, opposite Beck's Island in the Rappahannock, and along the high ground south of town. On the Lansdowne Valley Road, Longstreet's columns linked up with Jackson's corps. Jackson stretched his divisions along the Military Road to Hamilton's Crossing. Stuart's cavalry was posted on Jackson's right to guard the flank and keep watch on the road to Port Royal.

The morning of December 11 saw the temperature stand at a frigid 25 degrees, with dense fog hanging over the area. The Federals planned to cross the 400-foot-wide river that morning by constructing pontoon bridges at three points along a two-mile stretch. The northernmost point would be the site of two parallel pontoon bridges comprising the Upper Bridge, just to the north of Fredericksburg. The 50th New York Engineer Regiment was assigned this task. The second bridge, known as the Middle Bridge, was built by the 15th New York Engineer Regiment. It stood about one mile south of the Upper Bridge and connected with the southern fringe of the town. The southernmost structure, the Lower Bridge, was located a mile south of the Middle Bridge and a quarter of a mile south of Deep Run.

Sumner's Right Grand Division would

cross at the Upper Bridge, Hooker's Center Grand Division at the middle span, while Franklin's Left Grand Division debouched from the Lower Bridge. Supporting the crossing were 183 cannons under Brig. Gen. Henry J. Hunt. These guns were placed on the 30- to 50-foot-high bluffs known as Stafford Heights, which ran along the Federal side of the river for five miles. The artillery had three missions: drive the entrenched Confederates from the hills west of town, prevent enemy forces from massing on the plains opposite the Lower Bridge, and suppress enemy opposition to the bridge building and subsequent movement of friendly forces across the river.

Around 6 AM, all the bridges were more than half completed. As the fog began to thin out, Union work details laboring on the pontoon boats in the frigid water became visible to the Confederate riflemen concealed along the riverbank behind fences and breastworks and in cellars, warehouses, and houses on the south shore. These men were from Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's Mississippi Infantry Brigade (13th, 17th, 18th, and 21st Mississippi Volunteer Infantry Regiments, about 1,500 men in all), as well as the attached 8th Florida Infantry Regiment. They had been placed in the town by Lee to slow down any Union crossing of the Rappahannock in order to gain time for the Southern Army to meet the enemy south of the city.

As the engineers labored to finish their task, Barksdale's men poured unrelenting small-arms fire into them. At the Upper Bridge, galling fire was directed at the 50th New York, killing a captain and two enlisted men. Support fire from skirmishers of the 7th Michigan and 19th Massachusetts Infantry Regiments did nothing to drive away enemy riflemen, who were protected by the still considerable fog. The bridge parties had to repeatedly abandon their work and seek cover on the Federal side of the river on account of enemy fire.

At the Middle Bridge, Confederate snipers rushed from their hiding places and were joined by two companies of infantry

All photos: Library of Congress

ABOVE: Federal soldiers advance under fire through the rubble-strewn streets of Fredericksburg during the initial phase of the two-day battle. BELOW: Battery D, 5th U.S. Artillery, arrayed for battle. Union gunners did yeoman's work at Fredericksburg but could not turn the tide.

to fire at the hapless engineers, wounding six and piercing the pontoon boats in many places. Here, too, construction was temporarily suspended. By contrast, the Lower Bridge faced an empty plain with only token opposition, and the structure was completed by 9 AM. However, owing to the delay at the other crossing points, Burnside pushed back Franklin's crossing until 4 PM.

When the Federal infantry failed to dislodge the enemy sharpshooters, the mission was given to the artillery. Union batteries roared into action and began putting down heavy suppression fire. Whenever the deadly musketry ceased, Union engineers went back to work on the bridges, only to be driven away again by renewed Confederate fire. This went on for most of the day.

With the artillery bombardment a failure, Hunt proposed to Burnside that infantry be sent across the water to root out the murderous Rebel riflemen. Gaining approval of his plan, Hunt collared the first infantry leader he found, Colonel Norman J. Hall, commander of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, II Corps, and had

little trouble convincing him to take the job. Hall ordered the 7th Michigan Infantry to board pontoons and row to the south bank. Some 70 Wolverines composed the first wave.

Once on the far shore, they formed under the bank and rushed down Water Street, now Sophia Street, to attack the enemy. In the space of a few minutes, 31 Rebel prisoners were captured and a secure lodgment was effected. The rest of the 7th Michigan and 19th Massachusetts crossed the river as well, fanning out to the left and right of the landing site, with the 20th Massachusetts providing support. While the bluecoats consolidated their position, Union artillery blasted away, allowing the engineers to finish placing the Upper Bridge.

"General, if you put every man on the other side of the Potomac on that field to approach me over the same line, and give me plenty of ammunition, I will kill them before they reach my line."

With the Upper Bridge completed, the original Union amphibians were joined by the 42nd and 59th New York Infantry and the 127th Pennsylvania. In columns of four, shoulder-to-shoulder, the Federals advanced into Fredericksburg, all the while being fired upon by Confederates hiding in adjacent buildings and alleyways. At the corner of Caroline and Fauquier streets, the 20th Massachusetts ran into sweeping fire from the 21st Mississippi, which was acting as a rear guard for the Confederate withdrawal from the city. Slowly the Unionists gained ground, but at a huge loss. The 20th Massachusetts incurred 113 killed and wounded out of 335 engaged. By nightfall, the complete withdrawal of Confederate forces from Fredericksburg ended perhaps the bloodiest street fighting of the entire war.

With the coming of night, the Federals controlled Fredericksburg, but any satisfaction they derived was nothing compared with the satisfaction that Lee felt. The delay caused in taking the town had allowed Jackson's divisions to join him on December 12. It appeared that Burnside was determined to attack the entire Southern army in its well-defended positions just below Fredericksburg. Beginning at sunrise on the 12th, the entire Army of the Potomac started to cross the Rappahannock and deploy to the west and south of town. The passage of the Union troops throughout the day brought a wave of looting and destruction to the once-prosperous city.

Burnside's battle plan for the 13th was to seize the military road running along the Confederate front and split Lee's army in two. Early in the morning, Burnside sent imprecise orders to Franklin that could have been interpreted as an instruction to attack the enemy right or merely to make a diversion toward Prospect Hill, below Hamilton's Crossing. Two of Hooker's divisions were to remain near the Lower Bridge to support Franklin. In the meantime, Sumner was told to take Marye's Heights in the center-left of the opposing line, just to the east of Fredericksburg.

Early on the 13th, Lee's right was still vulnerable; all of Jackson's troops had not yet gotten into position. But by the time Franklin initiated his move, 35,000 Confederate soldiers and 54 artillery pieces covered the open plain, which was difficult to negotiate because of the presence of drainage ditches and muddy fields. One glaring weak point was a 600-yard gap between Brig. Gen. James H. Lane's North Carolina brigade on the left and James Archer's mixed Alabamians, Georgians, and Tennesseans on the right. Maj. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill, the division commander, assumed the swampy and thickly covered undergrowth would deter any Federal attack on that portion of the field. Just in case, he had placed an infantry brigade under Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg a quarter of a mile to the rear.

Around 9 AM, the fog that had shrouded the southern portion of the Fredericksburg battlefield began to lift. Its dissipation heralded the Federal attack, which was led by the V Corps division of Maj. Gen. George G. Meade. Meade felt his lone outfit would be able to take but not hold the area around Prospect Hill. Resigned but determined, Meade's command marched from Smithfield and approached the Richmond Stage Road. As the Federals came closer they were observed by Lee, Longstreet, Jackson, and Stuart. One of the latter's subordinates, Alabama-born Major John Pelham, Stuart's horse artillery leader, got permission from his chief to take a single 12-pounder Napoleon and advance beyond friendly lines to engage the oncoming enemy's left flank.

Moving toward the Union columns, Pelham unleashed shots from his single gun, cutting down dozens of the enemy. Pelham was soon joined by a Blakely rifled piece. In retaliation, five Union batteries zeroed in on the two enemy cannons. Pelham pulled away from the advancing foe but not before his amazing act slowed Meade's advance and forced the entire division of Abner Doubleday to sit out the rest of the battle to guard against similar threats to the Union left. Lee, who had watched Pelham's action, remarked emotionally, "It is glorious to see such courage in one so young."

With the departure of Pelham, Meade's and Gibbon's divisions resumed their movement toward Prospect Hill. They were supported by Federal artillery stationed on both sides of the Rappahannock, but the fire caused little damage to the Confederates because the Federal pieces could not see their targets. Confederate artillery, meanwhile, was instructed not to fire until the enemy was within 800 yards. With Gibbon on Meade's right, their combined 8,000 infantrymen moved forward. As the bluecoats crossed the railroad, 50

enemy cannons opened up, inflicting terrible losses. The Union advance stalled, with many troops either falling or else running back in the direction they came from. The dueling artillery commenced counterbattery fire, with heavy losses on both sides.

When the opposing artillery fire died down, Meade ordered his men to march over the rail line and attack the Rebel infantry line on Prospect Hill. By chance, Colonel William Sinclair's 1st Brigade of Meade's division stumbled into the gap between the Confederate brigades of Lane and Archer. The difficult terrain caused the brigade to split apart and prevented any coordination between the different regiments. Nevertheless, the disorganized Federals charged into the unprepared position held by Gregg's South Carolinians, sparking savage hand-to-hand fighting. Gregg was mortally wounded at this time.

Meade's men were astride the military road and set to cleave Lee's army in half, as planned by Burnside. The 13th and 2nd Pennsylvania Reserve Regiments reached the crest of Prospect Hill and were in position to flank Archer's command. Caught in a crossfire, Archer's formation was partially destroyed and forced to retreat.

Despite breaching the Confederate line, Meade's assault was losing momentum, and his fragmented regiments were advancing in the face of withering musket fire from Lane's Tarheels, who themselves were being flanked on their right. Fortunately for the Federals, Gibbon's division finally entered the fight. He sent two of his brigades forward, but under effective fire from Lane's men the advance sputtered to a halt. Gibbon then committed his third brigade. This carried the Federals over the railroad and initiated close-quarters fighting, the bayonet being freely employed by both sides. Lane's men were forced back.

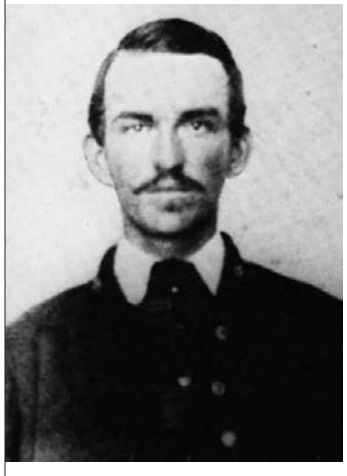
Although Meade had pierced the enemy line and Gibbon was pressing the Confederates hard, the tide of battle was about to turn. The unflappable Jackson committed Maj. Gen. Jubal Early's hard-fighting division. Archer's unit was reinforced by Colonel Edward N. Atkinson and Robert F. Hoke's brigade, while the Virginia brigade under Colonel James A. Walker closed the gap left open between Lane and Archer. Earlier that morning, Longstreet had kidded Jackson about the ocean of blue that was massing before them. "Are you not scared by that file of Yankees you have before you down there?" asked Longstreet. The laconic Virginian had replied without a trace of humor, "Wait till they come a little nearer, and they shall either scare me or I'll scare them."

As the Union wave crested and started to recede, Meade begged for reinforcements from Brig. Gen. David Birney's 1st Division, III Corps. Although this division had been sent across the Rappahannock to help in the attack, it would never enter the battle. By 4 PM, all the gains achieved on the Federal left were given up and the tattered remains of the attacking force with-

Deadeye Confederate marksmen under Brig. Gens. Thomas Cobb and Joseph Kershaw pepper Union attackers from behind the stone wall on Marye's Heights.

drew to the shelter of the Richmond Road whence the assault had been launched. On this part of the field, the Confederates had lost 2,338 men to the Federals' 3,340.

With encouraging reports about Franklin's apparent success on the Union left, Burnside decided to start an attack on the Confederate left directed at the formidable position on Marye's Heights. The Federal advance would have to travel over mostly open ground along two thoroughfares, the Telegraph and Orange Plank roads, to reach their objective.



Both: Library of Congress

LEFT: Sergeant Richard Kirkland, "the Angel of Marye's Heights." RIGHT: Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws.

Unknown to the Union commander, Telegraph Road became a sunken road as it wound around the base of Marye's Heights. The four-foot-high stone fences along each side of the road made excellent fortified positions that could conceal 1,000 men. In the area of the roads, as well as on Telegraph Hill and Marye's Heights, the Confederates had placed 37 artillery pieces to cover the approaches to the heights. Making it even more difficult for the attackers, an unfinished railroad cut south of the stone wall guarded the flank. Stationed behind the stone wall was Georgia Brig. Gen. Thomas R.R. Cobb's brigade of McLaws's division. In support, 200 yards behind Marye's Heights were Brig. Gen. John R. Cooke's men of Ransom's division. Ransom's own brigade lay within close proximity, while the rest of McLaws's men held the area south of Hazel Run. Richard Anderson's division anchored the left flank.

Burnside sent orders to Sumner to "push a column of a division or more along the Plank and Telegraph roads, with a view of seizing the heights in the rear of the town." The troops that were tasked to carry out the directive were the men of Brig. Gen. William H. French's 3rd Division and Brig. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock's 1st Division of Maj. Gen. Darius N. Couch's II Corps. The third division of Couch's command, Brig. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's 2nd Division, would stand fast and guard the upper part of Fredericksburg against a possible Confederate incursion.

Around noon, French's men moved out on the designated roads leading to Marye's Heights just as Confederate artillery started lobbing shells into Fredericksburg. Driving Confederate skirmishers before them, Brig. Gen. Nathan Kimball's brigade crossed the canal and reformed under the cover of the west bank, taking heavy losses from the enemy artillery. Kimball's men then charged and reached the swale 100 yards from the stone wall before being ripped apart by rifle fire from Cobb's infantry and projectiles from the Washington Artillery battery. Kimball was wounded and his men could advance no further. Kimball's brigade lost at least one-fourth of its original strength in the attack.

As Kimball advanced, Ransom moved Cooke's men up to Marye's Heights. Another of French's brigades, that of Colonel John W. Andrews, 150 yards behind Kimball's command, was cut to pieces, as was the last of French's units, Colonel Oliver H. Palmer's brigade. Entire Union companies fell at once to the devastating hurricane of fire coming from the Confederate line ahead of them.

As the advance of French's troops stalled, Cobb was mortally wounded in the thigh by a Federal artillery shell or sniper shot. Earlier, he had received a note from Longstreet advising him to fall back if pressed. "Well," said Cobb, "if they wait for me to fall back, they will wait a long time." The Rebels behind the stone wall had little time to mourn their fallen leader—more Yankees from Hancock's division were storming out of Fredericksburg and heading in their direction.

Colonel Samuel K. Zook led Hancock's lead brigade along the railway cut and, despite losing a third of his men, managed to get within 100 yards of the stone wall. Closely following Zook was the Irish Brigade under Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Meagher. The 1,200 Irishmen crossed the millrace at about 12:30 PM while being mauled by the gray artillery. Somehow, a few of the Gaels came within 25 yards of the stone wall and continued trading shots with the Rebels. By that time, three of their five regimental commanders were out of action due to wounds. Lee, watching the determined assault, worried aloud to Longstreet at the strength of the enemy attack. "General," said Longstreet, "if you put every man on the other side of the Potomac on that field to approach me over the same line, and give me plenty of ammunition, I will kill them all before they reach my line."

Hancock's last outfit, Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell's 2,000-man-strong brigade, followed its brother units into the maelstrom. Soon after it started, Caldwell's advance broke apart, falling precipitously back to Fredericksburg. By late afternoon, the remnants of French's and Hancock's commands found themselves pinned down and unable to go either forward or back due to the intense enemy fire. The only evidence of their gallant assault was three planted stands of colors, drooping unattended in no-man's-land.

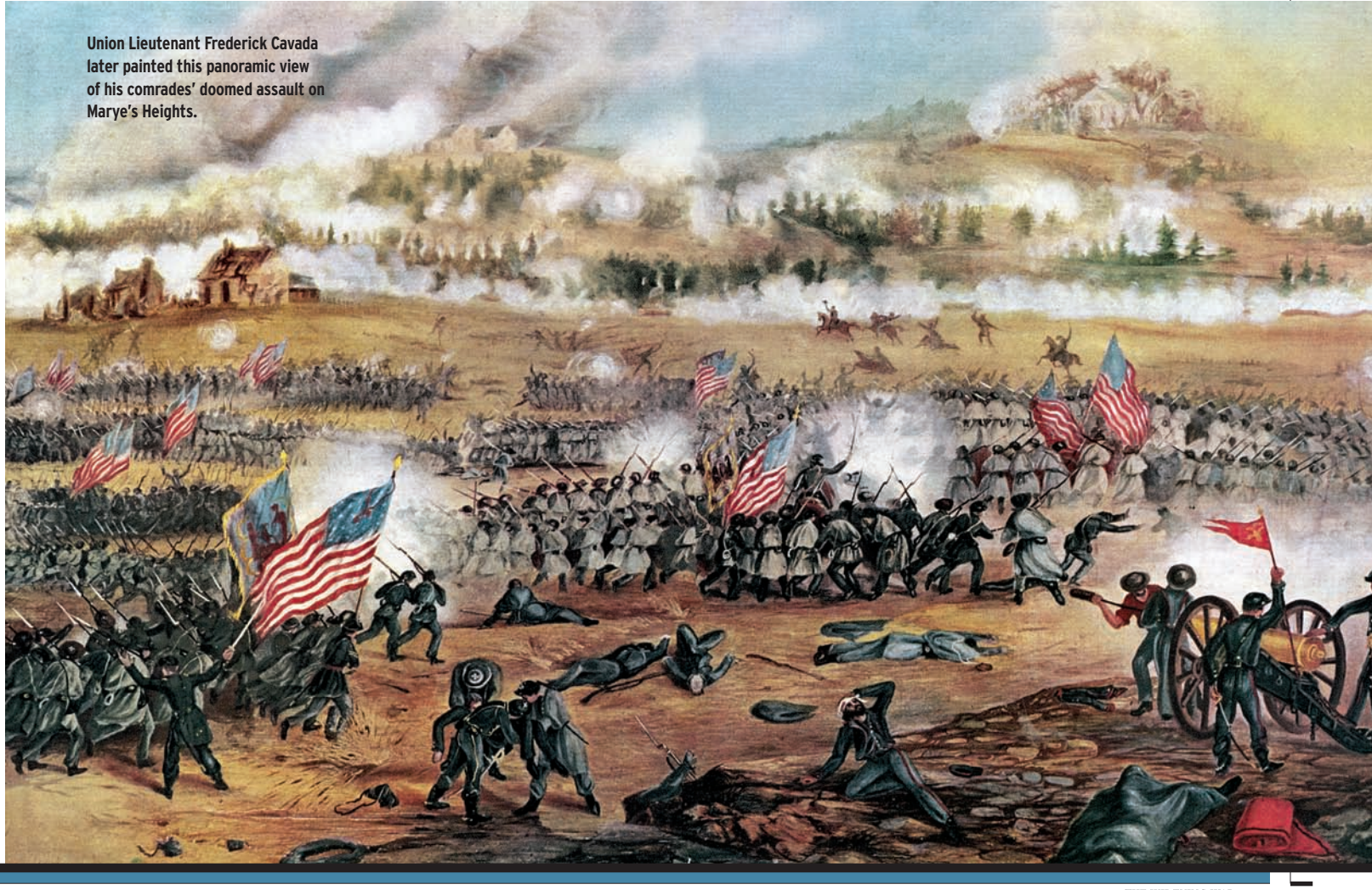
To cover the retreat of the battered divisions of French and Hancock, elements of Brig. Gen. Samuel D. Sturgis's 2nd Division, IX Corps, and parts of Howard's division attempted to assail the stone wall from

the left and right. Their efforts proved fruitless as well, as were those of Charles Griffin's and Andrew Humphreys's divisions. By 2 PM, Burnside had tried to drive the Confederates off of Marye's Heights using 10 brigades; his only reward was the loss of some 7,000 men. The Confederates lost about 1,398 killed and wounded. The Union dead were stacked three-deep in front of the now infamous stone wall. Several Confederates, most prominently 19-year-old Sergeant Richard Rowland Kirkland of South Carolina, the Angel of Marye's Heights, risked their own lives to take water to the wounded Federals. (Kirkland was fated to die nine months later at Chickamauga.)

Mercifully, the fighting died down as night approached. On the 14th, the troops of both sides remained on the battlefield. The Federals hunkered down in the mud, unable to move because of Confederate rifle fire and occasional artillery rounds. Incredibly, Burnside contemplated renewing the attack on the 15th, but after seeing the condition of his army, he ordered a general withdrawal across the Rappahannock. On the 16th, II Corps led the retreat on the Federal right while V Corps units acted as a rear guard. The operation was completed by 10 PM. The Union fallback was so sudden and stealthy that Lee's army had no opportunity to interfere with it. The ever-pugnacious Jackson lamented the fact that he had strengthened his position and perhaps encouraged the Federals to retreat. "I did not think that a little red earth would have frightened them," he scoffed. "I am sorry that they are gone. I am sorry I fortified."

The Battle of Fredericksburg cost the Union a total of 12,653 casualties; the Confederate lost less than half that amount. As part of its hideous legacy, Fredericksburg sent the morale of the Army of the Potomac to a new low and strained the resolve of the North to carry on the struggle. "It can hardly be in human nature for men to show more valor," reported one northern newspaper, "or generals to manifest less judgment." Burnside's military reputation would never recover, although he retained command of the army for another two months before being replaced by Joseph Hooker.

Surprisingly, the victor of this bloody contest, Robert E. Lee, was criticized by some of his fellow countrymen for not finishing off his opponent before the latter recrossed the Rappahannock. Perhaps Lee had seen enough for one day. "It is well that war is so terrible," he remarked during the height of the battle, "lest we should grow too fond of it." There was no chance of that happening—either now or in the foreseeable future. □



Union Lieutenant Frederick Cavada later painted this panoramic view of his comrades' doomed assault on Marye's Heights.

The Granger Collection, New York

New Orleans

Continued from page 65

The federal 3rd Division then started through with little trouble. There were so many Union ships, however, that it was daylight before the final three began their run past the forts. The *Kennebec* led the *Itasca* and *Winona* into the barrier, where they became stuck. A shell struck the boiler of the *Itasca*. As she drifted down the river, Caldwell ordered the crew to lay down on the deck until they were out of range. The *Winona* tried going through in daylight and was badly shot up.

The Confederate gunboat *McRae* fired at every Union ship as it passed, but most did not fire back thinking she was a Union vessel. Its luck ran out with the 3rd Division, however. Most of the shots from the Union gunboats missed, but one started a fire. Three were disgorging broadsides at the Confederate ship when the *Manassas* chased them off. The *McRae* then drifted down to Fort St. Philip.

Farther upstream, as they approached Chalmette about dawn, Kennon gave the order for the *Moore* to fire at the *Varuna*. The two ships traded shots with neither hitting. Kennon thought the Union ship was afraid of giving her a broadside for fear the *Moore* would ram her.

Because the bow gun on the *Moore* was in the wrong position, Kennon ordered a shot through her deck to try to reach the Union ship's boilers. The tactic worked. *Moore*'s first shell hit went through the *Varuna*'s smokestack. A second shot disabled a pivot gun.

Then the *Governor Moore* rammed the *Varuna* twice. Next, the *Stonewall Jackson* rammed her twice on the other side. The impact of ramming the Union ship broke a steam pipe connection on the *Jackson*, crippling her. The *Varuna* then ran her into shoal water where she sank.

Kennon's moment of triumph on the *Moore* was brief. More Union ships came into sight. He gave the order to ram but gunfire raked the *Governor Moore* before she could close. With 54 killed and 17 wounded out of a crew of 93, Kennon ordered what remained of the crew to burn the ship.

North of the forts, at Quarantine Point, Farragut gathered his ships. When the *Manassas* appeared after dawn, he shouted the order, "Send the *Mississippi* to sink that damn thing!" As the paddle-wheeler turned downriver, the *Kineo* joined her.

Thus Warley saw two warships bearing down on him. With his cannon disabled and unable to ram against the current, he decided his duty lay in trying to save his crew. He ordered them to run the ironclad up on the eastern river bank. His crew escaped through a front gun port to the swamps beyond the river.

Farragut now took stock of the situation. He had one ship sunk, the *Varuna*, and three missing. Most of the Confederate ships had been sunk or destroyed. He sent the *Cayuga* on up the river and the *Mississippi* back down to stand guard.

He then ordered the remainder of his fleet up to New Orleans—the navy had done the fighting, and he wanted to ensure that the city surrendered to it and not to Butler's troops. Craven had warned him six weeks before that if the attack failed, the failure would be attributed to Farragut, but that if it succeeded, credit might well go to Porter and Butler.

Down at the forts, Porter demanded surrender. When Higgins refused, the mortar schooners opened fire again with the same lack of success. Not until Porter sent some of Butler's troops through the bayous to land behind the forts did Higgins agree to capitulate.

The fight for one of the richest prizes of the Confederacy was all but over. With its port city at the mouth of the Mississippi in Federal hands its potential exports of cotton and grains was bound to suffer. For the South, it was a grievous loss, and one never retrieved.

For Farragut, New Orleans was only a step to further triumph as he worked his way north, increasingly cutting the Confederacy between eastern and western parts. The severance would be complete when Farragut teamed with Ulysses Grant to wrest the South of Vicksburg. □

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John D. Hoptak is an American and Civil War historian and educator. Author of *The Battle of South Mountain*, *Our Boys Did Nobly*, *First in Defense of the Union*, and *Antietam: September 17, 1862*, Hoptak brings to life the riveting conflicts that divided a nation. Hoptak's laboratory is the Antietam National Battlefield, where as a Park Ranger he shares his vast knowledge about the bloodiest day of battle in U.S. history.

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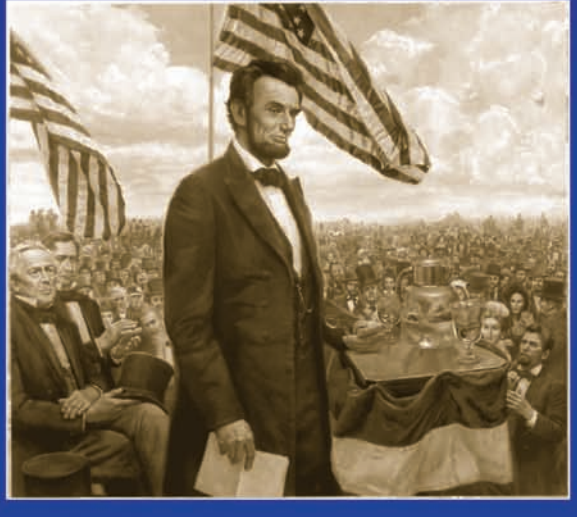

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